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ILLUSTRATED
POEMS

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POEMS

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THE
POETICAL WORKS

OWEN MEREDITH
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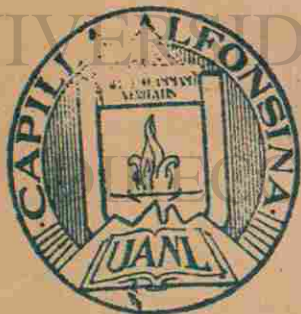
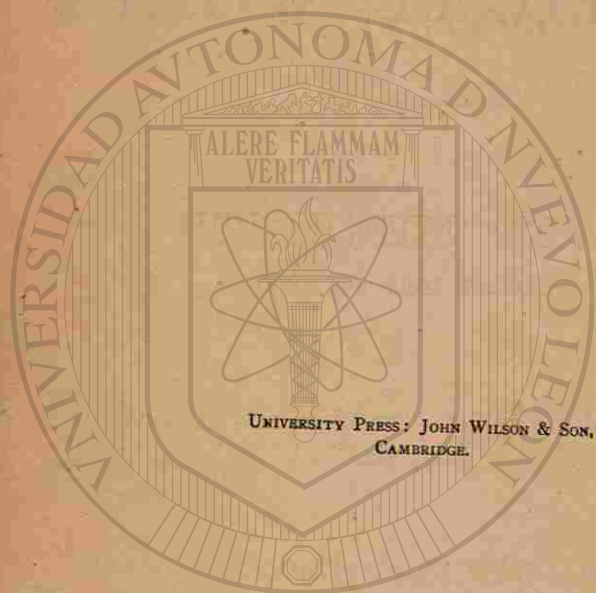
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LUCILE.

Dedication.

TO MY FATHER.

I DEDICATE to you a work, which is submitted to the public with a diffidence and hesitation proportioned to the novelty of the effort it represents. For in this poem I have abandoned those forms of verse with which I had most familiarized my thoughts, and have endeavored to follow a path on which I could discover no footprints before me, either to guide or to warn.

There is a moment of profound discouragement which succeeds to prolonged effort; when, the labor which has become a habit having ceased, we miss the sustaining sense of its companionship, and stand, with a feeling of strangeness and embarrassment, before the abrupt and naked result. As regards myself, in the present instance, the force of all such sensations is increased by the circumstances to which I have referred. And in this moment of discouragement and doubt my heart instinctively turns to you, from whom it has so often sought, from whom it has never failed to receive, support.

I do not inscribe to you this book because it contains anything that is worthy of the beloved and honored name with which I thus seek to associate it: nor yet, because I would avail myself of a vulgar pretext to display in public an affection that is best honored by the silence which it renders sacred.

Feelings only such as those with which, in days when there existed for me no critic less gentle than yourself, I brought to you my childish manuscripts, — feelings only such as those which have, in later years, associated with your heart all that has moved or occupied my own, — lead me once more to seek assurance from the grasp of that hand which has hitherto been my guide and comfort through the life I owe to you.

And as in childhood, when existence had no toil beyond the day's simple lesson, no ambition beyond the neighboring approval of the night, I brought to you the morning's task for the evening's sanction, so now I bring to you this self-appointed task-work of maturer years; less confident indeed of your approval, but not less confident of your love; and anxious only to realize your presence between myself and the public, and to mingle with those severer voices to whose final sentence I submit my work the beloved and gracious accents of your own.

OWEN MEREDITH.

PART I.

CANTO I.

I.

Letter from the COMTESSE DE NEVERS
to LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE.

"I HEAR from Bigorre you are there. I
am told
You are going to marry Miss Darcy.
Of old,

So long since you may have forgotten it
now,
(When we parted as friends, soon mere
strangers to grow.)
Your last words recorded a pledge —
what you will —
A promise — the time is now come to
fulfil.
The letters I ask you, my lord, to re-
turn,

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am told
You are going to marry Miss Darcy.
Of old,

So long since you may have forgotten it
now,
(When we parted as friends, soon mere
strangers to grow.)
Your last words recorded a pledge —
what you will —
A promise — the time is now come to
fulfil.
The letters I ask you, my lord, to re-
turn,

I desire to receive from your hand. You discern
My reasons, which, therefore, I need not explain.
The distance to Serchon is short. I remain
A month in these mountains. Miss Darcy, perchance,
Will forego one brief page from the summer romance
Of her courtship, and spare you one day from your place
At her feet, in the light of her fair English face.
I desire nothing more, and I trust you will feel
I desire nothing much.

"Your friend always,
"LUCILE."

II.

Now in May Fair, of course, — in the fair month of May, —
When life is abundant, and busy, and gay :
When the markets of London are noisy about
Young ladies, and strawberries, — "only just out" :
Fresh strawberries sold under all the house-caves,
And young ladies on sale for the strawberry leaves :
When cards, invitations, and three-cornered notes
Fly about like white butterflies, — gay little notes
In the sunbeam of Fashion ; and even Blue Books
Take a heavy-winged flight, and grow busy as rooks ;
And the postman (that Genius, indifferent and stern,
Who shakes out even-handed to all, from his urn,
Those lots which so often decide if our day
Shall be fretful and anxious, or joyous and gay),
Brings, each morning, more letters of one sort or other
Than Cadmus himself put together, to bother
The heads of Hellenes ; — I say, in the season

Of Fair May, in May Fair, there can be no reason
Why, when quietly munching your dry-toast and butter,
Your nerves should be suddenly thrown in a flutter
At the sight of a neat little letter, addressed
In a woman's handwriting, containing, half guessed,
An odor of violets faint as the Spring,
And coquettishly sealed with a small signet-ring.
But in Autumn, the season of sombre reflection,
When a damp day, at breakfast, begins with dejection ;
Far from London and Paris, and ill at one's ease,
Away in the heart of the blue Pyrenees,
Where a call from the doctor, a stroll to the bath,
A ride through the hills on a hack like a lath,
A cigar, a French novel, a tedious flirtation,
Are all a man finds for his day's occupation,
The whole case, believe me, is totally changed,
And a letter may alter the plans we arranged
Over-night, for the slaughter of Time, — a wild beast,
Which, though classified yet by no naturalist,
Abounds in these mountains, more hard to ensnare,
And more mischievous, too, than the lynx or the bear.

III.

I marvel less, therefore, that, having already
Torn open this note, with a hand most unsteady,
Lord Alfred was startled.
The month is September ;
Time, morning ; the scene at Bigorre ;
(pray remember
These facts, gentle reader, because I intend
To fling all the unities by at the end.)
He walked to the window. The morning was chill :



The brown woods were crisped in the cold on the hill :
The sole thing abroad in the streets was the wind ;
And the straws on the gust, like the thoughts in his mind,
Rose, and eddied around and around, as though teasing

Each other. The prospect, in truth, was displeasing :
And Lord Alfred, whilst moodily gazing around it,
To himself more than once (vexed in soul) sighed
..... "Confound it !"

IV.

What the thoughts were which led to this bad interjection, Sir, or Madam, I leave to your future detection ; For whatever they were, they were burst in upon, As the door was burst through, by my lord's Cousin John.

COUSIN JOHN.

A fool, Alfred, a fool, a most motley fool !

LORD ALFRED.

Who ?

JOHN.

The man who has anything better to do ; And yet so far forgets himself, so far degrades His position as Man, to this worst of all trades, Which even a well-brought-up ape were above, To travel about with a woman in love, — Unless she's in love with himself.

ALFRED.

Indeed ! why

Are you here then, dear Jack ?

JOHN.

Can't you guess it ?

ALFRED.

Not I.

JOHN.

Because I *have* nothing that's better to do, I had rather be bored, my dear Alfred, by you, On the whole (I must own), than be bored by myself. That perverse, imperturbable, golden-haired elf — Your Will-o'-the-wisp — that has led you and me Such a dance through these hills —

ALFRED.

Who, Matilda ?

JOHN.

Yes ! she, Of course ! who but she could contrive so to keep

One's eyes, and one's feet too, from falling asleep For even one half-hour of the long twenty-four ?

ALFRED.

What's the matter ?

JOHN.

Why, she is — a matter, the more I consider about it, the more it demands An attention it does not deserve ; and expands Beyond the dimensions which even crinoline, When possessed by a fair face and saucy Eighteen, Is entitled to take in this very small star, Already too crowded, as I think, by far. You read Malthus and Sadler !

ALFRED.

Of course.

JOHN.

To what use,

When you countenance, calmly, such monstrous abuse Of one mere human creature's legitimate space In this world ? Mars, Apollo, Virorum ! the case Wholly passes my patience.

ALFRED.

My own is worse tried.

JOHN.

Yours, Alfred ?

ALFRED.

Read this, if you doubt, and decide.

JOHN (*reading the letter*).

"I hear from Bigorre you are there. I am told You are going to marry Miss Darcy. Of old —"

What is this ?

ALFRED.

Read it on to the end, and you'll know.

JOHN (*continues reading*).

"When we parted, your last words recorded a vow — What you will"

Hang it ! this smells all over, I swear, Of adventures and violets. Was it your hair

You promised a lock of ?

ALFRED.

Read on. You'll discern.

JOHN (*continues*).

"Those letters I ask you, my lord, to return." . . .

Humph ! . . . Letters ! . . . the matter is worse than I guessed ; I have my misgivings —

ALFRED.

Well, read out the rest,

And advise.

JOHN.

Eh ? . . . Where was I ? . . .

(*Continues*.)

"Miss Darcy, perchance, Will forego one brief page from the summer romance Of her courtship." . . .

Egad ! a romance, for my part, I'd forego every page of, and not break my heart !

ALFRED.

Continue !

JOHN (*reading*).

"And spare you one day from your place At her feet." . . .

Pray forgive me the passing grimace. I wish you had my place !

(*Reads*.)

"I trust you will feel I desire nothing much. Your friend" . . .

Bless me ! "Lucile" ?

The Comtesse de Nevers ?

ALFRED.

Yes.

JOHN.

What will you do ?

ALFRED.

You ask me just what I would rather ask you.

JOHN.

You can't go.

ALFRED.
I must.

JOHN.

And Matilda ?

ALFRED.

O, that

You must manage !

JOHN.

Must I ? I decline it, though, flat. In an hour the horses will be at the door, And Matilda is now in her habit. Before I have finished my breakfast, of course I receive

A message for "Dear Cousin John !" . . . I must leave

At the jeweller's the bracelet which you broke last night ;

I must call for the music. "Dear Alfred is right :

The black shawl looks best : will I change it ? Of course

I can just stop, in passing, to order the horse.

Then Beau has the mumps, or St. Hubert knows what ;

Will I see the dog-doctor ?" Hang Beau ! I will not.

ALFRED.

Tush, tush ! this is serious.

JOHN.

It is.

ALFRED.

Very well,

You must think —

JOHN.

What excuse will you make, though ?

ALFRED.

O, tell

Mrs. Darcy that . . . lend me your wits, Jack ! . . . the deuce !

Can you not stretch your genius to fit a friend's use ?

Excuses are clothes which, when asked unawares,

Good Breeding to naked Necessity spares. You must have a whole wardrobe, no doubt.

JOHN.

My dear fellow !

Matilda is jealous, you know, as Othello.

ALFRED.
You joke.

JOHN.
I am serious. Why go to Serchon?

ALFRED.
Don't ask me. I have not a choice, my dear John.
Besides, shall I own a strange sort of desire,
Before I extinguish forever the fire
Of youth and romance, in whose shadowy light
Hope whispered her first fairy tales, to excite
The last spark, till it rise, and fade far
in that dawn
Of my days where the twilights of life
were first drawn
By the rosy, reluctant auroras of Love:
In short, from the dead Past the grave-
stone to move;
Of the years long departed forever to take
One last look, one final farewell; to awake
The Heroic of youth from the Hades of
joy,
And once more be, though but for an
hour, Jack—a boy!

JOHN.
You had better go hang yourself.

ALFRED.
No! were it but
To make sure that the Past from the
Future is shut,
It were worth the step back. Do you
think we should live
With the living so lightly, and learn to
survive
That wild moment in which to the grave
and its gloom
We consigned our heart's best, if the
doors of the tomb
Were not locked with a key which Fate
keeps for our sake?
If the dead could return, or the corpses
awake?

JOHN.
Nonsense!

ALFRED.
Not wholly. The man who gets up
A filled guest from the banquet, and
drains off his cup,

Sees the last lamp extinguished with
cheerfulness, goes
Well contented to bed, and enjoys its
repose.
But he who hath supped at the tables of
kings,
And yet starved in the sight of luxurious
things;
Who hath watched the wine flow, by
himself but half tasted,
Heard the music, and yet missed the
tune; who hath wasted
One part of life's grand possibilities;—
friend,
That man will bear with him, be sure,
to the end,
A blighted experience, a rancor within:
You may call it a virtue, I call it a sin.

JOHN.
I see you remember the cynical story
Of that wicked old piece of Experience,
— a hoary
Lothario, whom dying, the priest by his
bed
(Knowing well the unprincipled life he
had led,
And observing, with no small amount
of surprise,
Resignation and calm in the old sinner's
eyes)
Asked if he had nothing that weighed on
his mind:
"Well, . . . no," . . . says Lothario, "I
think not. I find
On reviewing my life, which in most
things was pleasant,
I never neglected, when once it was
present,
An occasion of pleasing myself. On the
whole,
I have naught to regret"; . . . and so,
smiling, his soul
Took its flight from this world.

ALFRED.
Well, Regret or Remorse,
Which is best?

JOHN.
Why, Regret.

ALFRED.
No; Remorse, Jack, of course;
For the one is related, be sure, to the
other.

Regret is a spiteful old maid; but her
brother,
Remorse, though a widower certainly,
yet
Has been wed to young Pleasure. Dear
Jack, hang Regret!

JOHN.
Bref! you mean, then, to go?

ALFRED.
Bref! I do.
JOHN.
One word . . . stay!
Are you really in love with Matilda?

ALFRED.
Love, eh?
What a question! Of course.

JOHN.
Were you really in love
With Madame de Nevers?

ALFRED.
What; Lucile? No, by Jove,
Never really.

JOHN.
She's pretty?

ALFRED.
Decidedly so.
At least, so she was, some ten summers
ago.

As soft and as fallow as Autumn, — with
hair

Neither black, nor yet brown, but that
tinge which the air

Takes at eve in September, when night
lingers lone

Through a vineyard, from beams of a
slow-setting sun.

Eyes—the wistful gazelle's; the fine
foot of a fairy;

And a hand fit a fay's wand to wave, —
white and airy;

A voice soft and sweet as a tune that
one knows.

Something in her there was, set you
thinking of those

Strange backgrounds of Raphael . . .
that hectic and deep

Brief twilight in which southern suns
fall asleep.

JOHN.
Coquette?
ALFRED.
Not at all. 'T was her own fault. Not
she!
I had loved her the better, had she less
loved me.
The heart of a man's like that delicate
weed
Which requires to be trampled on, boldly
indeed,
Ere it give forth the fragrance you wish
to extract.
'T is a simile, trust me, if not new, exact.

JOHN.
Women change so.

ALFRED.
Of course.

JOHN.
And, unless rumor errs,
I believe that, last year, the Comtesse
de Nevers*

Was at Baden the rage, — held an abso-
lute court

Of devoted adorers, and really made
sport

Of her subjects.

ALFRED.
Indeed!

JOHN.
When she broke off with you
Her engagement, her heart did not break
with it!

ALFRED.
Pooh!

* O Shakespeare! how couldst thou ask
"What's in a name?"

'T is the devil's in it when a bard has to frame
English rhymes for alliance with names that
are French;

And in these rhymes of mine, well I know that
I trench

All too far on that license which critics refuse,
With just right, to accord to a well-brought-up
Muse.

Yet, though faulty the union, in many a line,
'Twixt my British-born verse and my French
heroine,

Since, however auspiciously wedded they be,
There is many a pair that yet cannot agree,
Your forgiveness for this pair the author in-
vites,

Whom necessity, not inclination, unites.

Pray would you have had her dress always in black, And shut herself up in a convent, dear Jack ?
Besides, 't was my fault the engagement was broken.

JOHN.

Most likely. How was it ?

ALFRED.

The tale is soon spoken. She bored me. I showed it. She saw it. What next ?

She reproached. I retorted. Of course she was vexed.

I was vexed that she was so. She sulked. So did I.

If I asked her to sing, she looked ready to cry.

I was contrite, submissive. She softened. I hardened.

At noon I was banished. At eve I was pardoned.

She said I had no heart. I said she had no reason.

I swore she talked nonsense. She sobbed. I talked treason.

In short, my dear fellow, 't was time, as you see,

Things should come to a crisis, and finish. 'T was she

By whom to that crisis the matter was brought.

She released me. I lingered. I lingered, she thought,

With too sullen an aspect. This gave me, of course,

The occasion to fly in a rage, mount my horse,

And declare myself uncomprehended. And so

We parted. The rest of the story you know.

JOHN.

No, indeed.

ALFRED.

Well, we parted. Of course we could not Continue to meet, as before, in one spot.

You conceive it was awkward ? Even Don Ferdinando

Can do, you remember, no more than he can do.

I think that I acted exceedingly well,

Considering the time when this rupture befell,

For Paris was charming just then. It deranged

All my plans for the winter. I asked to be changed, —

Wrote for Naples, then vacant, — obtained it, — and so

Joined my new post at once ; but scarce reached it, when lo !

My first news from Paris informs me Lucile

Is ill, and in danger. Conceive what I feel.

I fly back. I find her recovered, but yet Looking pale. I am seized with a contrite regret ;

I ask to renew the engagement.

JOHN.

And she ?

ALFRED.

Reflects, but declines. We part, swearing to be

Friends ever, friends only. All that sort of thing !

We each keep our letters . . . a portrait . . . a ring . . .

With a pledge to return them whenever the one

Or the other shall call for them back.

JOHN.

Pray go on.

ALFRED.

My story is finished. Of course I enjoin On Lucile all those thousand good maxims we coin

To supply the grim deficit found in our days,

When Love leaves them bankrupt. I preach. She obeys.

She goes out in the world ; takes to dancing once more, —

A pleasure she rarely indulged in before. I go back to my post, and collect (I must own

'T is a taste I had never before, my dear John)

Antiques and small Elzevirs. Heigh-ho ! now, Jack,

You know all.

JOHN (after a pause).

You are really resolved to go back ?

Eh, where ?

ALFRED.

JOHN.

To that worst of all places, — the past. You remember Lot's wife ?

ALFRED.

'T was a promise when last We parted. My honor is pledged to it.

JOHN.

Well,

What is it you wish me to do ?

ALFRED.

You must tell Matilda, I meant to have called — to leave word —

To explain — but the time was so pressing —

JOHN.

My lord,

Your lordship's obedient ! I really can't do . . .

ALFRED.

You wish then to break off my marriage ?

JOHN.

No, no !

But indeed I can't see why yourself you need take

These letters.

ALFRED.

Not see ? would you have me, then, break

A promise my honor is pledged to ?

JOHN (humming).

"Off, off, And away ! said the stranger" . . .

ALFRED.

O, good ! O, you scoff !

JOHN.

At what, my dear Alfred ?

ALFRED.

At all things !

JOHN.

Indeed ?

ALFRED.

Yes ; I see that your heart is as dry as a reed :

That the dew of your youth is rubbed off you : I see

You have no feeling left in you, even for me !

At honor you jest ; you are cold as a stone

To the warm voice of friendship. Belief you have none ;

You have lost faith in all things. You carry a blight

About with you everywhere. Yes, at the sight

Of such callous indifference, who could be calm ?

I must leave you at once, Jack, or else the last balm

That is left me in Gilead you'll turn into gall.

Heartless, cold, unconcerned . . .

JOHN.

Have you done ? Is that all ?

Well, then, listen to me ! I presume when you made

Up your mind to propose to Miss Darcy, you weighed

All the drawbacks against the equivalent gains,

Ere you finally settled the point. What remains

But to stick to your choice ? You want money : 't is here.

A settled position : 't is yours. A career :

You secure it. A wife, young, and pretty as rich,

Whom all men will envy you. Why must you itch

To be running away, on the eve of all this,

To a woman whom never for once did you miss

All these years since you left her ? Who knows what may hap ?

This letter — to me — is a palpable trap. The woman has changed since you knew her. Perchance

She yet seeks to renew her youth's broken romance.

When women begin to feel youth and their beauty

Slip from them, they count it a sort of a duty

To let nothing else slip away unsecured

Which these, while they lasted, might once have procured.

Lucile's a coquette to the end of her fingers,
I will stake my last farthing. Perhaps the wish lingers
To recall the once reckless, indifferent lover
To the feet he has left; let intrigue now recover
What truth could not keep. 'T were a vengeance, no doubt —
A triumph; — but why must *you* bring it about?
You are risking the substance of all that you schemed
To obtain; and for what? some mad dream you have dreamed!

ALFRED.

But there's nothing to risk. You exaggerate, Jack.
You mistake. In three days, at the most, I am back.

JOHN.

Ay, but how? . . . discontented, unsettled, upset,
Bearing with you a comfortless twinge of regret;
Preoccupied, sulky, and likely enough
To make your betrothed break off all in a huff.
Three days, do you say? But in three days who knows
What may happen? I don't, nor do you, I suppose.

v.

Of all the good things in this good world around us,
The one most abundantly furnished and found us,
And which, for that reason, we least care about,
And can best spare our friends, is good counsel, no doubt.
But advice, when 'tis sought from a friend (though civility
May forbid to avow it), means mere liability
In the bill we already have drawn on Remorse,
Which we deem that a true friend is bound to indorse.
A mere lecture on debt from that friend is a bore.

Thus, the better his cousin's advice was, the more
Alfred Vargrave with angry resentment opposed it.
And, having the worst of the contest, he closed it
With so firm a resolve his bad ground to maintain,
That, sadly perceiving resistance was vain,
And argument fruitless, the amiable Jack
Came to terms, and assisted his cousin to pack
A slender valise (the one small condensation
Which his final remonstrance obtained), whose dimension
Excluded large outfits; and, cursing his stars, he
Shook hands with his friend and returned to Miss Darcy.

VI.

Lord Alfred, when last to the window he turned,
Ere he locked up and quitted his chamber, discerned
Matilda ride by, with her cheek beaming bright
In what Virgil has called "Youth's pure light"
(I like the expression, and can't find a better).
He sighed as he looked at her. Did he regret her?
In her habit and hat, with her glad golden hair,
As airy and blithe as a blithe bird in air,
And her arch rosy lips, and her eager blue eyes,
With their little impertinent look of surprise,
And her round youthful figure, and fair neck, below
The dark drooping feather, as radiant as snow, —
I can only declare, that if I had the chance
Of passing three days in the exquisite glance
Of those eyes, or caressing the hand that now petted
That fine English mare, I should much have regretted
Whatever might lose me one little half-hour

Of a pastime so pleasant, when once in my power.
For, if one drop of milk from the bright Milky-Way
Could turn into a woman, 't would look, I dare say,
Not more fresh than Matilda was looking that day.

VII.

But, whatever the feeling that prompted the sigh
With which Alfred Vargrave now watched her ride by,
I can only affirm that, in watching her ride,
As he turned from the window, he certainly sighed.

CANTO II.

I.

Letter from LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE to the COMTESSE DE NEVERS.

"BIGORRE, Tuesday.

"Your note, Madam, reached me to-day, at Bigorre,
And commands (need I add?) my obedience. Before
The night I shall be at Serchon, — where a line,
If sent to Duval's, the hotel where I dine,
Will find me, awaiting your orders. Receive
My respects.

"Yours sincerely,

"A. VARGRAVE.

"I leave

In an hour."

II.

In an hour from the time he wrote this, Alfred Vargrave, in tracking a mountain abyss,
Gave the rein to his steed and his thoughts, and pursued,
In pursuing his course through the blue solitude,
The reflections that journey gave rise to. And here
(Because, without some such precaution, I fear
You might fail to distinguish them each from the rest

Of the world they belong to; whose captives are drest,
As our convicts, precisely the same one and all,
While the coat cut for Peter is passed on to Paul)
I resolve, one by one, when I pick from the mass
The persons I want, as before you they pass,
To label them broadly in plain black and white
On the backs of them. Therefore whilst yet he's in sight,
I first label my hero.

III.

The age is gone o'er
When a man may in all things be all.
We have more
Painters, poets, musicians, and artists, no doubt,
Than the great Cinquecento gave birth to; but out
Of a million of mere dilettanti, when, when
Will a new LEONARDO arise on our ken?
He is gone with the age which begat him. Our own
Is too vast, and too complex, for one man alone
To embody its purpose, and hold it shut close
In the palm of his hand. There were irreclaimable days; but in these days of ours,
In dividing the work, we distribute the powers.
Yet a dwarf on a dead giant's shoulders sees more
Than the 'live giant's eyesight availed to explore;
And in life's lengthened alphabet what used to be
To our sires X Y Z is to us A B C.
A Vanini is roasted alive for his pains,
But a Bacon comes after and picks up his brains.
A Bruno is angrily seized by the throttle
And hunted about by thy ghost, Aristotle,
Till a More or Lavater step into his place:
Then the world turns and makes an admiring grimace.
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But a Bacon comes after and picks up his brains.
A Bruno is angrily seized by the throttle
And hunted about by thy ghost, Aristotle,
Till a More or Lavater step into his place:
Then the world turns and makes an admiring grimace.
Once the men were so great and so few, they appear,

Through a distant Olympian atmosphere,
Like vast Caryatids upholding the age.
Now the men are so many and small,
disengage
One man from the million to mark him,
next moment
The crowd sweeps him hurriedly out of
your comment ;

And since we seek vainly (to praise in
our songs)

'Mid our fellows the size which to heroes
belongs,
We take the whole age for a hero, in want
Of a better ; and still, in its favor, des-
cant

On the strength and the beauty which,
failing to find

In any one man, we ascribe to mankind.

IV.

Alfred Vargrave was one of those men
who achieve
So little, because of the much they con-
ceive.

With irresolute finger he knocked at each
one
Of the doorways of life, and abided in
none.

His course, by each star that would cross
it, was set,

And whatever he did he was sure to re-
gret.

That target, discussed by the travellers
of old,

Which to one appeared argent, to one
appeared gold,

To him, ever lingering on Doubt's dizzy
margin,

Appeared in one moment both golden
and argent.

The man who seeks one thing in life,
and but one,

May hope to achieve it before life be
done :

But he who seeks all things, wherever
he goes,

Only reaps from the hopes which around
him he sows

A harvest of barren regrets. And the
worm

That crawls on in the dust to the definite
term

Of its creeping existence, and sees noth-
ing more

Than the path it pursues till its creep-
ing be o'er,

In its limited vision, is happier far
Than the Half-Sage, whose course, fixed
by no friendly star,
Is by each star distracted in turn, and
who knows
Each will still be as distant wherever he
goes.

V.

Both brilliant and brittle, both bold and
unstable,
Indecisive yet keen, Alfred Vargrave
seemed able

To dazzle, but not to illumine man-
kind.

A vigorous, various, versatile mind ;
A character wavering, fitful, uncertain,
As the shadow that shakes o'er a luminous
curtain,

Vague, flitting, but on it forever impress-
ing

The shape of some substance at which
you stand guessing :

When you said, "All is worthless and
weak here," behold !

Into sight on a sudden there seemed to
unfold

Great outlines of strenuous truth in the
man :

When you said, "This is genius," the
outlines grew wan.

And his life, though in all things so
gifted and skilled,

Was, at best, but a promise which noth-
ing fulfilled.

VI.

In the budding of youth, ere wild winds
can deflower

The shut leaves of man's life, round the
germ of his power

Yet folded, his life had been earnest.
Alas !

In that life one occasion, one moment,
there was

When this earnestness might, with the
life-sap of youth,

Lusty fruitage have borne in his man-
hood's full growth ;

But it found him too soon, when his
nature was still

The delicate toy of too pliant a will,
The boisterous wind of the world to re-
sist,

Or the frost of the world's wintry wis-
dom.

He missed
That occasion, too rathe in its advent,
Since then,
He had made it a law, in his commerce
with men,
That intensity in him, which only left
sore
The heart it disturbed, to repel and ignore.

And thus, as some Prince by his subjects
deposed,
Whose strength he, by seeking to crush
it, disclosed,

In resigning the power he lacked power
to support,

Turns his back upon courts, with a sneer
at the court,

In his converse this man for self-com-
fort appealed

To a cynic denial of all he concealed
In the instincts and feelings belied by
his words.

Words, however, are things : and the
man who accords

To his language the license to outrage
his soul

Is controlled by the words he disdains to
control.

And, therefore, he seemed in the deeds
of each day,

The light code proclaimed on his lips to
obey ;

And, the slave of each whim, followed
wilfully aught

That perchance fooled the fancy, or flat-
tered the thought.

Yet, indeed, deep within him, the spirits
of truth,

Vast, vague aspirations, the powers of
his youth,

Lived and breathed, and made moan —
stirred themselves — strove to start

Into deeds — though deposed, in that
Hades, his heart,

Like those antique Theogonies ruined
and hurled

Under clefts of the hills, which, convuls-
ing the world,

Heaved, in earthquake, their heads the
rent caverns above,

To trouble at times in the light court of
Jove

All its frivolous gods, with an undefined
awe,

Of wronged rebel powers that owned not
their law.

For his sake, I am fain to believe that,
if born

To some lowlier rank (from the world's
languid scorn

Secured by the world's stern resistance),
where strife,

Strife and toil, and not pleasure, gave
purpose to life,

He possibly might have contrived to
attain

Not eminence only, but worth. So,
again,

Had he been of his own house the first-
born, each gift

Of a mind many-gifted had gone to uplift
A great name by a name's greatest uses.

But there

He stood isolated, opposed, as it were,
To life's great realities ; part of no plan ;

And if ever a nobler and happier man
He might hope to become, that alone
could be when

With all that is real in life and in men
What was real in him should have been
reconciled ;

When each influence now from experience
exiled

Should have seized on his being, com-
bined with his nature,

And formed, as by fusion, a new human
creature :

As when those airy elements viewless to
sight

(The amalgam of which, if our science
be right,

The germ of this populous planet doth
fold)

Unite in the glass of the chemist, behold !
Where a void seemed before there a sub-
stance appears,

From the fusion of forces whence issued
the spheres !

VII.

But the permanent cause why his life
failed and missed

The full value of life was, — where man
should resist

The world, which man's genius is called
to command,

He gave way, less from lack of the power
to withstand,

Than from lack of the resolute will to
retain

Those strongholds of life which the world
strives to gain.

Let this character go in the old-fashioned way,
With the moral thereof tightly tacked to it. Say—
“Let any man once show the world that he feels
Afraid of its bark, and 't will fly at his heels:
Let him fearlessly face it, 't will leave him alone:
But 't will fawn at his feet if he flings it a bone.”

VIII.

The moon of September, now half at the full,
Was unfolding from darkness and dream-land the full
Of the quiet blue air, where the many-faced hills
Watched, well-pleased, their fair slaves, the light, foam-footed rills,
Dance and sing down the steep marble stairs of their courts,
And gracefully fashion a thousand sweet sports.
Lord Alfred (by this on his journeying far)
Was pensively puffing his Lopez cigar,
And brokenly humming an old opera strain,
And thinking, perchance, of those castles in Spain
Which that long rocky barrier hid from his sight;
When suddenly, out of the neighboring night,
A horseman emerged from a fold of the hill,
And so startled his steed, that was winding at will
Up the thin dizzy strip of a pathway which led
O'er the mountain—the reins on its neck, and its head
Hanging lazily forward—that, but for a hand
Light and ready, yet firm, in familiar command,
Both rider and horse might have been in a trice
Hurled horribly over the grim precipice.

IX.

As soon as the moment's alarm had subsided,

And the oath, with which nothing can find unprovided
A thoroughbred Englishman, safely exploded,
Lord Alfred unbent (as Apollo his bow did
Now and then) his erectness; and looking, not ruder
Than such inroad would warrant, surveyed the intruder,
Whose arrival so nearly cut short in his glory
My hero, and finished abruptly this story.

X.

The stranger, a man of his own age or less,
Well mounted, and simple though rich in his dress,
Wore his beard and mustache in the fashion of France.
His face, which was pale, gathered force from the glance
Of a pair of dark, vivid, and eloquent eyes.
With a gest of apology, touched with surprise,
He lifted his hat, bowed and courteously made
Some excuse in such well-cadenced French as betrayed,
At the first word he spoke, the Parisian.

XI.

I swear
I have wandered about in the world everywhere;
From many strange mouths have heard many strange tongues;
Strained with many strange idioms my lips and my lungs;
Walked in many a far land, regretting my own;
In many a language groaned many a groan;
And have often had reason to curse those wild fellows
Who built the high house at which Heaven turned jealous,
Making human audacity stumble and stammer
When seized by the throat in the hard gripe of Grammar.
But the language of languages dearest to me
Is that in which once, *O ma toute chérie*,

When, together, we bent o'er your nose-gay for hours,
You explained what was silently said by the flowers,
And, selecting the sweetest of all, sent a flame
Through my heart, as, in laughing, you murmured, *Je t'aime*.

XII.

The Italians have voices like peacocks; the Spanish
Smell, I fancy, of garlic; the Swedish and Danish
Have something too Runic, too rough and unshod, in
Their accent for mouths not descended from Odin;
German gives me a cold in the head, sets me wheezing
And coughing; and Russian is nothing but sneezing;
But, by Belus and Babel! I never have heard,
And I never shall hear (I well know it), one word
Of that delicate idiom of Paris without feeling morally sure, beyond question or doubt,
By the wild way in which my heart inwardly fluttered
That my heart's native tongue to my heart had been uttered.
And whene'er I hear French spoken as I approve,
I feel myself quietly falling in love.

XIII.

Lord Alfred, on hearing the stranger, appeased
By a something, an accent, a cadence, which pleased
His ear with that pledge of good breeding which tells
At once of the world in whose fellowship dwells
The speaker that owns it, was glad to remark
In the horseman a man one might meet after dark
Without fear.
And thus, not disagreeably impressed,
As it seemed, with each other, the two men abreast
Rode on slowly a moment.

XIV.

STRANGER.

I see, Sir, you are
A smoker. Allow me!

ALFRED.

Pray take a cigar.

STRANGER.

Many thanks! . . . Such cigars are a luxury here.
Do you go to Serchon?

ALFRED.

Yes; and you?

STRANGER.

Yes. I fear,
Since our road is the same, that our journey must be
Somewhat closer than is our acquaintance.
You see
How narrow the path is. I'm tempted to ask
Your permission to finish (no difficult task!)
The cigar you have given me (really a prize!)
In your company.

ALFRED.

Charmed, Sir, to find your road lies
In the way of my own inclinations! Indeed

The dream of your nation I find in this weed.
In the distant savannas a talisman grows
That makes all men brothers that use it . . . who knows?
That blaze which erewhile from the *Boulevard* outbroke,
It has ended where wisdom begins, Sir,
—in smoke.
Messieurs Lopez (whatever your publicists write)
Have done more in their way human kind to unite,
Perchance, than ten Proudhons.

STRANGER.

Yes. Ah, what a scene!

ALFRED.
Humph! Nature is here too pretentious.
Her mien
Is too haughty. One likes to be coaxed,
not compelled,
To the notice such beauty resents if with-
held.
She seems to be saying too plainly,
"Admire me!"
And I answer, "Yes, madam, I do; but
you tire me."

STRANGER.
That sunset, just now though . . .

ALFRED.
A very old trick!
One would think that the sun by this
time must be sick
Of blushing at what, by this time, he
must know
Too well to be shocked by — this world.

STRANGER.
Ah, 't is so
With us all. 'T is the sinner that best
knew the world
At twenty, whose lip is, at sixty, most
curled
With disdain of its follies. You stay at
Serchon?

ALFRED.
A day or two only.

STRANGER.
The season is done.

ALFRED.
Already?

STRANGER.
'T was shorter this year than the last.
Folly soon wears her shoes out. She
dances so fast,
We are all of us tired.

ALFRED.
You know the place well?

STRANGER.
I have been there two seasons.

ALFRED.
Pray who is the Belle
Of the Baths at this moment?

STRANGER.
The same who has been
The belle of all places in which she is
seen;
The belle of all Paris last winter; last
spring
The belle of all Baden.

ALFRED.
An uncommon thing!

STRANGER.
Sir, an uncommon beauty! . . . I rather
should say,
An uncommon character. Truly, each
day
One meets women whose beauty is equal
to hers,
But none with the charm of Lucile de
Nevers.

ALFRED.
Madame de Nevers?

STRANGER.
Do you know her?

ALFRED.
I know,
Or, rather, I knew her — a long time
ago.
I almost forget . . .

STRANGER.
What a wit! what a grace
In her language! her movements! what
play in her face!
And yet what a sadness she seems to
conceal!

ALFRED.
You speak like a lover.

STRANGER.
I speak as I feel,
But not like a lover. What interests
me so
In Lucile, at the same time forbids me,
I know,
To give to that interest, whate'er the
sensation,
The name we men give to an hour's
admiration,
A night's passing passion, an actress's
eyes,
A dancing girl's ankles, a fine lady's
sighs.

ALFRED.
Yes, I quite comprehend. But this
sadness — this shade
Which you speak of? . . . it almost would
make me afraid
Your gay countrymen, Sir, less adroit
must have grown,
Since when, as a stripling, at Paris, I
own
I found in them terrible rivals, — if yet
They have all lacked the skill to console
this regret
(If regret be the word I should use), or
fulfil
This desire (if desire be the word), which
seems still
To endure unappeased. For I take it
for granted,
From all that you say, that the will was
not wanted.

XV.

The stranger replied, not without irrita-
tion:
"I have heard that an Englishman —
one of your nation,
I presume — and if so, I must beg you,
indeed,
To excuse the contempt which I . . ."

ALFRED.
Pray, Sir, proceed
With your tale. My compatriot, what
was his crime?

STRANGER.
O, nothing! His folly was not so sub-
lime
As to merit that term. If I blamed him
just now,
It was not for the sin, but the silliness.

ALFRED.
How?

STRANGER.
I own I hate Botany. Still, . . . I ad-
mit,
Although I myself have no passion for it,
And do not understand, yet I cannot
despise
The cold man of science, who walks with
his eyes
All alert through a garden of flowers,
and strips
The lilies' gold tongues, and the roses'
red lips,

With a ruthless dissection; since he, I
suppose,
Has some purpose beyond the mere mis-
chief he does.
But the stupid and mischievous boy,
that uproots
The exotics, and tramples the tender
young shoots,
For a boy's brutal pastime, and only be-
cause
He knows no distinction 'twixt hearts-
ease and haws, —
One would wish, for the sake of each
nursling so nipped
To catch the young rascal and have him
well whipped!

ALFRED.
Some compatriot of mine, do I then un-
derstand,
With a cold Northern heart, and a rude
English hand,
Has injured your Rosebud of France?

STRANGER.
Sir, I know,
But little, or nothing. Yet some faces
show
The last act of a tragedy in their regard:
Though the first scenes be wanting, it
yet is not hard
To divine, more or less, what the plot
may have been,
And what sort of actors have passed o'er
the scene.
And whenever I gaze on the face of
Lucile,
With its pensive and passionless lan-
guor, I feel
That some feeling hath burnt there . . .
burnt out, and burnt up
Health and hope. So you feel when you
gaze down the cup
Of extinguished volcanoes: you judge
of the fire
Once there, by the ravage you see; —
the desire,
By the apathy left in its wake, and that
sense
Of a moral, immovable, mute impotence.

ALFRED.
Humph! . . . I see you have finished, at
last, your cigar.
Can I offer another?

STRANGER.

No, thank you. We are
Not two miles from Serchon.

ALFRED.

You know the road well?

STRANGER.

I have often been over it.

XVI.

Here a pause fell
On their converse. Still musingly on,
side by side,
In the moonlight, the two men contin-
ued to ride
Down the dim mountain pathway. But
each, for the rest
Of their journey, although they still rode
on abreast,
Continued to follow in silence the train
Of the different feelings that haunted
his brain ;
And each, as though roused from a deep
revery,
Almost shouted, descending the moun-
tain, to see
Burst at once on the moonlight the sil-
very Baths,
The long lime-tree alley, the dark gleam-
ing paths,
With the lamps twinkling through them
— the quaint wooden roofs —
The little white houses.

The clatter of hoofs,
And the music of wandering bands, up
the walls
Of the steep hanging hill, at remote in-
tervals
Reached them, crossed by the sound of
the clacking of whips,
And here and there, faintly, through
serpentine slips
Of verdant rose-gardens, deep-sheltered
with screens
Of airy acacias and dark evergreens,
They could mark the white dresses, and
catch the light songs,
Of the lovely Parisians that wandered in
throng,
Led by Laughter and Love through the
cold eventide
Down the dream-haunted valley, or up
the hillside.

XVII.

At length, at the door of the inn l'HÉ-
RISSON,
(Pray go there, if ever you go to Ser-
chon !)

The two horsemen, well pleased to have
reached it, alighted
And exchanged their last greetings.

The Frenchman invited
Lord Alfred to dinner. Lord Alfred de-
clined.

He had letters to write, and felt tired.
So he dined

In his own rooms that night.

With an unquiet eye
He watched his companion depart ; nor
knew why,

Beyond all accountable reason or meas-
ure,

He felt in his breast such a sovran dis-
pleasure.

"The fellow's good-looking," he mur-
mured at last,

"And yet not a coxcomb." Some ghost
of the past
Vexed him still.

"If he love her," he thought, "let
him win her."

Then he turned to the future — and or-
dered his dinner.

XVIII.

O hour of all hours, the most blessed
upon earth,
Blesséd hour of our dinners !

The land of his birth ;
The face of his first love ; the bills that
he owes ;

The twaddle of friends and the venom of
foes ;

The sermon he heard when to church he
last went ;

The money he borrowed, the money he
spent ; —

All of these things a man, I believe, may
forget,

And not be the worse for forgetting ;
but yet

Never, never, O never ! earth's luckiest
sinner

Hath unpunished forgotten the hour of
his dinner !

Indigestion, that conscience of every
bad stomach,

Shall relentlessly gnaw and pursue him
with some ache

Or some pain ; and trouble, remorseless,
his best ease,
As the Furies once troubled the sleep of
Orestes.

XIX.

We may live without poetry, music, and
art ;

We may live without conscience, and
live without heart ;

We may live without friends ; we may
live without books ;

But civilized man cannot live without
cooks.

He may live without books, — what is
knowledge but grieving ?

He may live without hope, — what is
hope but deceiving ?

He may live without love, — what is pas-
sion but pining ?

But where is the man that can live with-
out dining ?

XX.

Lord Alfred found, waiting his coming,
a note
From Lucile.

"Your last letter has reached me," she
wrote.

"This evening, alas ! I must go to the
ball,

And shall not be at home till too late
for your call ;

But to-morrow, at any rate, *sans faute*,
at One

You will find me at home, and will find
me alone.

Meanwhile, let me thank you sincerely,
milord,

For the honor with which you adhere to
your word.

Yes, I thank you, Lord Alfred ! To-
morrow, then.

"L."

XXI.

I find myself terribly puzzled to tell
The feelings with which Alfred Vargrave
flung down

This note, as he poured out his wine. I
must own

That I think he himself could have
hardly explained

Those feelings exactly.

"Yes, yes," as he drained
The glass down, he muttered, "Jack's
right, after all.

The coquette !"

"Does milord mean to go to the
ball ?"

Asked the waiter, who lingered.

"Perhaps. I don't know.

You may keep me a ticket, in case I
should go."

XXII.

O, better, no doubt, is a dinner of herbs,
When seasoned by love, which no rancor
disturbs,

And sweetened by all that is sweetest in
life,

Than turbot, bisque, ortolans, eaten in
strife !

But if, out of humor, and hungry, alone,
A man should sit down to a dinner, each
one

Of the dishes of which the cook chooses
to spoil

With a horrible mixture of garlic and
oil,

The chances are ten against one, I must
own,

He gets up as ill-tempered as when he
sat down.

And if any reader this fact to dispute is
Disposed, I say . . . "*Allium edat cicutis
Nocentius !*"

Over the fruit and the wine
Undisturbed the wasp settled. The even-
ing was fine.

Lord Alfred his chair by the window had
set,

And languidly lighted his small cigar-
ette.

The window was open. The warm air
without

Waved the flame of the candles. The
moths were about.

In the gloom he sat gloomy.

XXIII.

Gay sounds from below
Floated up like faint echoes of joys long
ago,

And night deepened apace ; through the
dark avenues

The lamps twinkled bright ; and by
threes, and by twos,

The idlers of Serchon were strolling at
will,

As Lord Alfred could see from the cool
window-sill,

Where his gaze, as he languidly turned
it, fell o'er

His late travelling companion, now passing before
The inn, at the window of which he still sat,
In full toilet, — boots varnished, and snowy cravat,
Gayly smoothing and buttoning a yellow kid glove,
As he turned down the avenue.

Watching above,
From his window, the stranger, who stopped as he walked
To mix with those groups, and now nodded, now talked,
To the young Paris dandies, Lord Alfred discerned,
By the way hats were lifted, and glances were turned,
That this unknown acquaintance, now bound for the ball,
Was a person of rank or of fashion; for all
Whom he bowed to in passing, or stopped with and chattered,
Walked on with a look which implied . . . "I feel flattered!"

XXIV.

His form was soon lost in the distance and gloom.

XXV.

Lord Alfred still sat by himself in his room.
He had finished, one after the other, a dozen
Or more cigarettes. He had thought of his cousin:
He had thought of Matilda, and thought of Lucile:
He had thought about many things: thought a great deal
Of himself: of his past life, his future, his present:
He had thought of the moon, neither full moon nor crescent:
Of the gay world, so sad! life, so sweet and so sour!
He had thought, too, of glory, and fortune, and power:
Thought of love, and the country, and sympathy, and
A poet's asylum in some distant land:
Thought of man in the abstract, and woman, no doubt,

In particular; also he had thought much about
His digestion, his debts, and his dinner; and last,
He thought that the night would be stupidly passed,
If he thought any more of such matters at all:
So he rose, and resolved to set out for the ball.

XXVI.

I believe, ere he finished his tardy toilet,
That Lord Alfred had spoiled, and flung by in a pet,
Half a dozen white neckcloths, and looked for the nonce
Twenty times in the glass, if he looked in it once.
I believe that he split up, in drawing them on,
Three pair of pale lavender gloves, one by one.
And this is the reason, no doubt, that at last,
When he reached the Casino, although he walked fast,
He heard, as he hurriedly entered the door,
The church-clock strike Twelve.

XXVII.

The last waltz was just o'er.
The chaperons and dancers were all in a flutter.
A crowd blocked the door: and a buzz and a mutter
Went about in the room as a young man, whose face
Lord Alfred had seen ere he entered that place,
But a few hours ago, through the perfumed and warm
Flowery porch, with a lady that leaned on his arm
Like a queen in a fable of old fairy days,
Left the ballroom.

XXVIII.

The hubbub of comment and praise
Reached Lord Alfred as just then he entered.

"*Ma foi!*"

Said a Frenchman beside him, . . .
"That lucky Luvois
Has obtained all the gifts of the gods
. . . rank and wealth,

And good looks, and then such inexhaustible health!
He that hath shall have more; and this truth, I surmise,
Is the cause why, to-night, by the beautiful eyes
Of *la charmante Lucile* more distinguished than all,
He so gayly goes off with the belle of the ball."

"Is it true," asked a lady, aggressively fat,
Who, fierce as a female Leviathan, sat
By another that looked like a needle, all steel
And tenuity, — "Luvois will marry Lucile?"
The needle seemed jerked by a virulent twitch,
As though it were bent upon driving a stitch
Through somebody's character.

"Madam," replied,
Interposing, a young man who sat by their side,
And was languidly fanning his face with his hat,
"I am ready to bet my new Tilbury that, if Luvois has proposed, the Comtesse has refused."

The fat and thin ladies were highly amused.
"Refused! . . . what! a young Duke, not thirty, my dear,
With at least half a million (what is it?) a year!"

"That may be," said the third; "yet I know some time since
Castelmar was refused, though as rich, and a Prince.
But Luvois, who was never before in his life
In love with a woman who was not a wife,
Is now certainly serious."

XXIX.

The music once more
Recommenced.

XXX.

Said Lord Alfred, "This ball is a bore!"
And returned to the inn, somewhat worse than before.

XXXI.

There, whilst musing he leaned the dark valley above,

Through the warm land were wandering the spirits of love.
A soft breeze in the white window drapery stirred;
In the blossomed acacia the lone cricket chirred;
The scent of the roses fell faint o'er the night,
And the moon on the mountain was dreaming in light.

Repose, and yet rapture! that pensive wild nature
Impregnate with passion in each breathing feature!
A stone's-throw from thence, through the large lime-trees peeped,
In a garden of roses, a white chalet, steeped
In the moonbeams. The windows opened down to the lawn;
The casements were open; the curtains were drawn;

Lights streamed from the inside; and with them the sound
Of music and song. In the garden, around
A table with fruits, wine, tea, ices, there set,

Half a dozen young men and young women were met.
Light, laughter, and voices, and music, all streamed

Through the quiet-leaved limes. At the window there seemed
For one moment the outline, familiar and fair,

Of a white dress, a white neck, and soft dusky hair,
Which Lord Alfred remembered . . . a moment or so
It hovered, then passed into shadow; and slow

The soft notes, from a tender piano up-flung,
Floated forth, and a voice unforgettably thus sung:

"Hear a song that was born in the land of my birth!

The anchors are lifted, the fair ship is free,
And the shout of the mariners floats in its mirth

"Twixt the light in the sky and the light on the sea.

"And this ship is a world. She is freighted with souls,

She is freighted with merchandise :
proudly she sails
With the Labor that stores, and the
Will that controls
The gold in the ingots, the silk in
the bales.

“From the gardens of Pleasure, where
reddens the rose,
And the scent of the cedar is faint
on the air,
Past the harbors of Traffic, sublimely
she goes,
Man’s hopes o’er the world of the
waters to bear !

“Where the cheer from the harbors of
Traffic is heard,
Where the gardens of Pleasure fade
fast on the sight,
O’er the rose, o’er the cedar, there
passes a bird ;
’T is the Paradise Bird, never known
to alight.

“And that bird, bright and bold as a
Poet’s desire,
Roams her own native heavens, the
realms of her birth.
There she soars like a seraph, she
shines like a fire,
And her plumage hath never been
sullied by earth.

“And the mariners greet her ; there’s
song on each lip,
For that bird of good omen, and joy
in each eye.
And the ship and the bird, and the
bird and the ship,
Together go forth over ocean and
sky.

“Fast, fast fades the land ! far the rose-
gardens flee,
And far fleet the harbors. In re-
gions unknown
The ship is alone on a desert of sea,
And the bird in a desert of sky is
alone.

“In those regions unknown, o’er that
desert of air,
Down that desert of waters — tre-
mendous in wrath —
The storm-wind Euroclydon leaps from
his lair,
And cleaves, through the waves of
the ocean, his path.

“And the bird in the cloud, and the
ship on the wave,
Overtaken, are beaten about by wild
gales :
And the mariners all rush their cargo
to save,
Of the gold in the ingots, the silk
in the bales.

“Lo ! a wonder, which never before
hath been heard,
For it never before hath been given
to sight ;
On the ship hath descended the Para-
dise Bird,
The Paradise Bird, never known to
alight !

“The bird which the mariners blessed,
when each lip
Had a song for the omen that glad-
dened each eye ;
The bright bird for shelter hath flown
to the ship
From the wrath on the sea and the
wrath in the sky.

“But the mariners heed not the bird
any more.
They are felling the masts, — they
are cutting the sails ;
Some are working, some weeping, and
some wrangling o’er
Their gold in the ingots, their silk
in the bales.

“Souls of men are on board ; wealth of
man in the hold ;
And the storm-wind Euroclydon
sweeps to his prey ;
And who heeds the bird ? ‘Save the
silk and the gold !’
And the bird from her shelter the
gust sweeps away !

“Poor Paradise Bird ! on her lone flight
once more
Back again in the wake of the wind
she is driven, —
To be ‘whelmed in the storm, or above
it to soar,
And, if rescued from ocean, to van-
ish in heaven !

“And the ship rides the waters, and
weathers the gales :
From the haven she nears the re-
joicing is heard.

All hands are at work on the ingots,
the bales,
Save a child, sitting lonely, who
misses — the Bird !”

CANTO III.

I.

With stout iron shoes be my Pegasus
shod !
For my road is a rough one : flint, stub-
ble, and clod,
Blue clay, and black quagmire, brambles
no few,
And I gallop up-hill, now.
There’s terror that’s true
In that tale of a youth who, one night
at a revel,
Amidst music and mirth lured and wiled
by some devil,
Followed ever one mask through the mad
masquerade,
Till, pursued to some chamber deserted
(’t is said),
He unmasked, with a kiss, the strange
lady, and stood
Face to face with a Thing not of flesh nor
of blood.
In this Masque of the Passions, called
Life, there’s no human
Emotion, though masked, or in man or
in woman,
But, when faced and unmasked, it will
leave us at last
Struck by some supernatural aspect
aghast.
For truth is appalling and eldritch, as seen
By this world’s artificial lamplights, and
we screen
From our sight the strange vision that
troubles our life.
Alas ! why is Genius forever at strife
With the world, which, despite the
world’s self, it ennobles !
Why is it that Genius perplexes and
troubles
And offends the effete life it comes to
renew ?
’T is the terror of truth ! ’t is that Gen-
ius is true !

II.

Lucile de Nevers (if her riddle I read)
Was a woman of genius : whose genius,
indeed,

With her life was at war. Once, but
once, in that life
The chance had been hers to escape from
this strife
In herself ; finding peace in the life of
another
From the passionate wants she, in hers,
failed to smother.
But the chance fell too soon, when the
crude restless power
Which had been to her nature so fatal a
dower,
Only wearied the man it yet haunted
and thrall’d ;
And that moment, once lost, had been
never recalled.
Yet it left her heart sore : and, to shelter
her heart
From approach, she then sought, in that
delicate art
Of concealment, those thousand adroit
strategies
Of feminine wit, which repel while they
please,
A weapon, at once, and a shield, to con-
ceal
And defend all that women can earnestly
feel.
Thus, striving her instincts to hide and
repress,
She felt frightened at times by her very
success :
She pined for the hill-tops, the clouds,
and the stars :
Golden wires may annoy us as much as
steel bars
If they keep us behind prison-windows :
impassioned
Her heart rose and burst the light cage
she had fashioned
Out of glittering trifles around it.
Unknown
To herself, all her instincts, without
hesitation,
Embraced the idea of self-immolation.
The strong spirit in her, had her life
but been blended
With some man’s whose heart had her
own comprehended,
All its wealth at his feet would have
lavishly thrown.
For him she had struggled and striven
alone ;
For him had aspired ; in him had trans-
fused
All the gladness and grace of her nature :
and used

She is freighted with merchandise :
proudly she sails
With the Labor that stores, and the
Will that controls
The gold in the ingots, the silk in
the bales.

“From the gardens of Pleasure, where
reddens the rose,
And the scent of the cedar is faint
on the air,
Past the harbors of Traffic, sublimely
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Man’s hopes o’er the world of the
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gust sweeps away !

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once more
Back again in the wake of the wind
she is driven, —
To be ‘whelmed in the storm, or above
it to soar,
And, if rescued from ocean, to van-
ish in heaven !

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Save a child, sitting lonely, who
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In that tale of a youth who, one night
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Amidst music and mirth lured and wiled
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Followed ever one mask through the mad
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Till, pursued to some chamber deserted
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Face to face with a Thing not of flesh nor
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Emotion, though masked, or in man or
in woman,
But, when faced and unmasked, it will
leave us at last
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aghast.
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troubles
And offends the effete life it comes to
renew ?
’T is the terror of truth ! ’t is that Gen-
ius is true !

II.

Lucile de Nevers (if her riddle I read)
Was a woman of genius : whose genius,
indeed,

With her life was at war. Once, but
once, in that life
The chance had been hers to escape from
this strife
In herself ; finding peace in the life of
another
From the passionate wants she, in hers,
failed to smother.
But the chance fell too soon, when the
crude restless power
Which had been to her nature so fatal a
dower,
Only wearied the man it yet haunted
and thrall’d ;
And that moment, once lost, had been
never recalled.
Yet it left her heart sore : and, to shelter
her heart
From approach, she then sought, in that
delicate art
Of concealment, those thousand adroit
strategies
Of feminine wit, which repel while they
please,
A weapon, at once, and a shield, to con-
ceal
And defend all that women can earnestly
feel.
Thus, striving her instincts to hide and
repress,
She felt frightened at times by her very
success :
She pined for the hill-tops, the clouds,
and the stars :
Golden wires may annoy us as much as
steel bars
If they keep us behind prison-windows :
impassioned
Her heart rose and burst the light cage
she had fashioned
Out of glittering trifles around it.
Unknown
To herself, all her instincts, without
hesitation,
Embraced the idea of self-immolation.
The strong spirit in her, had her life
but been blended
With some man’s whose heart had her
own comprehended,
All its wealth at his feet would have
lavishly thrown.
For him she had struggled and striven
alone ;
For him had aspired ; in him had trans-
fused
All the gladness and grace of her nature :
and used

For him only the spells of its delicate power :
 Like the ministering fairy that brings from her bower
 To some mage all the treasures, whose use the fond elf,
 More enriched by her love, disregards for herself.
 But standing apart, as she ever had done,
 And her genius, which needed a vent, finding none
 In the broad fields of action thrown wide to man's power,
 She unconsciously made it her bulwark and tower,
 And built in it her refuge, whence lightly she hurled
 Her contempt at the fashions and forms of the world.

And the permanent cause why she now missed and failed
 That firm hold upon life she so keenly assailed,
 Was, in all those diurnal occasions that place
 Say — the world and the woman opposed face to face,
 Where the woman must yield, she, refusing to stir,
 Offended the world, which in turn wounded her.

As before, in the old-fashioned manner, I fit
 To this character, also, its moral : to wit,
 Say — the world is a nettle ; disturb it, it stings :
 Grasp it firmly, it stings not. On one of two things,
 If you would not be stung, it behooves you to settle :
 Avoid it, or crush it. She crushed not the nettle ;
 For she could not ; nor would she avoid it : she tried
 With the weak hand of woman to thrust it aside,
 And it stung her. A woman is too slight a thing
 To trample the world without feeling its sting.

III.

One lodges but simply at Serchon ; yet, thanks
 To the season that changes forever the banks

Of the blossoming mountains, and shifts the light cloud
 O'er the valley, and hushes or rouses the loud
 Wind that wails in the pines, or creeps murmuring down
 The dark evergreen slopes to the slumbering town,
 And the torrent that falls, faintly heard from afar,
 And the bluebells that purple the dapple-gray scour,
 One sees with each month of the many-faced year
 A thousand sweet changes of beauty appear.
 The chalet where dwelt the Comtesse de Nevers
 Rested half up the base of a mountain of firs,
 In a garden of roses, revealed to the road,
 Yet withdrawn from its noise : 't was a peaceful abode.
 And the walls, and the roofs, with their gables like hoods
 Which the monks wear, were built of sweet resinous woods.
 The sunlight of noon, as Lord Alfred ascended
 The steep garden paths, every odor had blended
 Of the ardent carnations, and faint heliotropes,
 With the balms floated down from the dark wooded slopes :
 A light breeze at the windows was playing about,
 And the white curtains floated, now in and now out.
 The house was all hushed when he rang at the door,
 Which was opened to him in a moment, or more,
 By an old nodding negress, whose sable head shined
 In the sun like a cocoa-nut polished in Ind,
 'Neath the snowy *foulard* which about it was wound.

IV.

Lord Alfred sprang forward at once, with a bound.
 He remembered the nurse of Lucile. The old dame,
 Whose teeth and whose eyes used to beam when he came,

With a boy's eager step, in the blithe days of yore,
 To pass, unannounced, her young mistress's door.
 The old woman had fondled Lucile on her knee
 When she left, as an infant, far over the sea,
 In India, the tomb of a mother, unknown,
 To pine, a pale floweret, in great Paris town.
 She had soothed the child's sobs on her breast, when she read
 The letter that told her her father was dead.
 An astute, shrewd adventurer, who, like Ulysses,
 Had studied men, cities, laws, wars, the abysses
 Of statecraft, with varying fortunes, was he.
 He had wandered the world through, by land and by sea,
 And knew it in most of its phases. Strong will,
 Subtle tact, and soft manners, had given him skill
 To conciliate Fortune, and courage to brave
 Her displeasure. Thrice shipwrecked, and cast by the wave
 On his own quick resources, they rarely had failed
 His command : often baffled, he ever prevailed,
 In his combat with fate : to-day flattered and fed
 By monarchs, to-morrow in search of mere bread.
 The offspring of times trouble-haunted, he came
 Of a family ruined, yet noble in name.
 He lost sight of his fortune, at twenty, in France ;
 And, half statesman, half soldier, and wholly Free-lance,
 Had wandered in search of it, over the world,
 Into India.
 But scarce had the nomad unfurled
 His wandering tent at Mysore, in the smile
 Of a Rajah (whose court he controlled for a while,
 And whose council he prompted and governed by stealth) ;

Scarce, indeed, had he wedded an Indian of wealth,
 Who died giving birth to this daughter, before
 He was borne to the tomb of his wife at Mysore.
 His fortune, which fell to his orphan, perchance,
 Had secured her a home with his sister in France,
 A lone woman, the last of the race left. Lucile
 Neither felt, nor affected, the wish to conceal
 The half-Eastern blood, which appeared to bequeath
 (Revealed now and then, though but rarely, beneath
 That outward repose that concealed it in her)
 A something half wild to her strange character.
 The nurse with the orphan, awhile broken-hearted,
 At the door of a convent in Paris had parted.
 But later, once more, with her mistress she tarried,
 When the girl, by that grim maiden aunt, had been married
 To a dreary old Count, who had sullenly died,
 With no claim on her tears, — she had wept as a bride.
 Said Lord Alfred, "Your mistress expects me."

The crone

Oped the drawing-room door, and there left him alone.

v.

O'er the soft atmosphere of this temple of grace
 Rested silence and perfume. No sound reached the place.
 In the white curtains wavered the delicate shade
 Of the heaving acacias, through which the breeze played.
 O'er the smooth wooden floor, polished dark as a glass,
 Fragrant white Indian matting allowed you to pass.
 In light olive baskets, by window and door,
 Some hung from the ceiling, some crowding the floor,

Rich wild-flowers plucked by Lucile
 from the hill,
 Seemed the room with their passionate
 presence to fill :
 Blueaconite, hid in white roses, reposed ;
 The deep belladonna its vermeil disclosed ;
 And the frail saponaire, and the tender
 bluebell,
 And the purple valerian, — each child
 of the fell
 And the solitude flourished, fed fair
 from the source
 Of waters the huntsman scarce heeds in
 his course,
 Where the chamois and izard, with deli-
 cate hoof,
 Pause or flit through the pinnacled silence
 aloof.

VI.

Here you felt, by the sense of its beauty
 reposed,
 That you stood in a shrine of sweet
 thoughts. Half unclosed
 In the light slept the flowers : all was
 pure and at rest ;
 All peaceful ; all modest ; all seemed self-
 possessed,
 And aware of the silence. No vestige
 nor trace
 Of a young woman's coquetry troubled
 the place.
 He stood by the window. A cloud
 passed the sun.
 A light breeze uplifted the leaves, one
 by one.
 Just then Lucile entered the room, un-
 discerned
 By Lord Alfred, whose face to the win-
 dow was turned,
 In a strange reverie.
 The time was, when Lucile,
 In beholding that man, could not help
 but reveal
 The rapture, the fear, which wrenched
 out every nerve
 In the heart of the girl from the woman's
 reserve.
 And now — she gazed at him, calm,
 smiling, — perchance
 Indifferent.

VII.

Indifferently turning his glance,
 Alfred Vargrave encountered that gaze
 unaware.
 O'er a bodice snow-white streamed her
 soft dusky hair ;

A rose-bud half blown in her hand ; in
 her eyes
 A half-pensive smile.

A sharp cry of surprise
 Escaped from his lips : some unknown
 agitation,
 An invincible trouble, a strange palpi-
 tation,
 Confused his ingenious and frivolous wit ;
 Overtook, and entangled, and paralyzed
 it.
 That wit so complacent and docile, that
 ever
 Lightly came at the call of the lightest
 endeavor,
 Ready coined, and available current as
 gold,
 Which, secure of its value, so fluently
 rolled
 In free circulation from hand on to hand
 For the usage of all, at a moment's com-
 mand ;
 For once it rebelled, it was mute and
 unstimulated,
 And he looked at Lucile without speak-
 ing a word.

VIII.

Perhaps what so troubled him was, that
 the face
 On whose features he gazed had no more
 than a trace
 Of the face his remembrance had imaged
 for years.
 Yes ! the face he remembered was faded
 with tears :
 Grief had famished the figure, and dimmed
 the dark eyes,
 And starved the pale lips, too acquainted
 with sighs.
 And that tender, and gracious, and fond
coquetterie
 Of a woman who knows her least ribbon
 to be
 Something dear to the lips that so warmly
 caress
 Every sacred detail of her exquisite
 dress,
 In the careless toilet of Lucile, — then
 too sad
 To care aught to her changeable beauty
 to add, —
 Lord Alfred had never admired before !
 Alas ! poor Lucile, in those weak days
 of yore,
 Had neglected herself, never heeding,
 nor thinking



(While the blossom and bloom of her
 beauty were shrinking)
 That sorrow can beautify only the heart —
 Not the face — of a woman ; and can
 but impart
 Its endearment to one that has suffered.
 In truth
 Grief hath beauty for grief ; but gay
 youth loves gay youth.

IX.

The woman that now met, unshrinking,
 his gaze,
 Seemed to bask in the silent but sumptu-
 ous haze
 Of that soft second summer, more ripe
 than the first,
 Which returns when the bud to the
 blossom hath burst

In despite of the stormiest April. Lucile
Had acquired that matchless unconscious
appeal
To the homage which none but a churl
would withhold —
That caressing and exquisite grace —
never bold,
Ever present — which just a few women
possess.
From a healthful repose, undisturbed by
the stress
Of unquiet emotions, her soft cheek had
drawn
A freshness as pure as the twilight of
dawn,
Her figure, though slight, had revived
everywhere
The luxurious proportions of youth; and
her hair —
Once shorn as an offering to passionate
love —
Now floated or rested redundant above
Her airy pure forehead and throat;
gathered loose
Under which, by one violet knot, the
profuse
Milk-white folds of a cool modest gar-
ment reposed,
Rippled faint by the breast they half
hid, half disclosed,
And her simple attire thus in all things
revealed
The fine art which so artfully all things
concealed.

X.

Lord Alfred, who never conceived that
Lucile
Could have looked so enchanting, felt
tempted to kneel
At her feet, and her pardon with passion
implore;
But the calm smile that met him sufficed
to restore
The pride and the bitterness needed to
meet
The occasion with dignity due and dis-
creet.

XI.

“Madam,” — thus he began with a voice
reassured, —
“You see that your latest command has
secured
My immediate obedience, — presuming I
may
Consider my freedom restored from this
day.” —

“I had thought,” said Lucile, with a
smile gay yet sad,
“That your freedom from me not a fetter
has had.
Indeed! . . . in my chains have you
rested till now?
I had not so flattered myself, I avow!”
“For Heaven’s sake, Madam,” Lord
Alfred replied,
“Do not jest! has the moment no sad-
ness?” he sighed.
“’Tis an ancient tradition,” she an-
swered, “a tale
Often told, — a position too sure to pre-
vail
In the end of all legends of love. If we
wrote,
When we first love, foreseeing that hour
yet remote,
Wherein of necessity each would recall
From the other the poor foolish records
of all
Those emotions, whose pain, when re-
corded, seemed bliss,
Should we write as we wrote? But one
thinks not of this!
At Twenty (who does not at Twenty?)
we write
Believing eternal the frail vows we
plight;
And we smile with a confident pity,
above
The vulgar results of all poor human
love:
For we deem, with that vanity common
to youth,
Because what we feel in our bosoms, in
truth,
Is novel to us — that ’t is novel to earth,
And will prove the exception, in durance
and worth,
To the great law to which all on earth
must incline.
The error was noble, the vanity fine!
Shall we blame it because we survive it?
ah, no;
’T was the youth of our youth, my lord,
is it not so?”

XII.

Lord Alfred was mute. He remembered
her yet
A child, — the weak sport of each mo-
ment’s regret,
Blindly yielding herself to the errors of
life,

The deceptions of youth, and borne down
by the strife
And the tumult of passion; the tremu-
lous toy
Of each transient emotion of grief or of
joy.
But to watch her pronounce the death-
warrant of all
The illusions of life, — lift, unflinching,
the pall
From the bier of the dead Past, — that
woman so fair,
And so young, yet her own self-survivor;
who there
Traced her life’s epitaph with a finger so
cold!
’T was a picture that pained his self-love
to behold.
He himself knew — none better — the
things to be said
Upon subjects like this. Yet he bowed
down his head:
And as thus, with a trouble he could
not command,
He paused, crumpling the letters he held
in his hand,
“You know me enough,” she continued,
“or what
I would say is, you yet recollect (do you
not,
Lord Alfred?) enough of my nature, to
know
That these pledges of what was perhaps
long ago
A foolish affection, I do not recall
From those motives of prudence which
actuate all
Or most women when their love ceases.
Indeed,
If you have such a doubt, to dispel it I
need
But remind you that ten years these
letters have rested
Unreclaimed in your hands.” A re-
proach seemed suggested
By these words. To meet it, Lord Al-
fred looked up.
(His gaze had been fixed on a blue Sevres
cup
With a look of profound connoisseurship,
— a smile
Of singular interest and care, all this
while.)
He looked up, and looked long in the
face of Lucile,
To mark if that face by a sign would
reveal

At the thought of Miss Darcy the least
jealous pain.
He looked keenly and long, yet he
looked there in vain.
“You are generous, Madam,” he mur-
mured at last,
And into his voice a light irony passed.
He had looked for reproaches, and fully
arranged
His forces. But straightway the enemy
changed
The position.

XIII.

“Come!” gayly Lucile interposed,
With a smile whose divinely deep sweet-
ness disclosed
Some depth in her nature he never had
known,
While she tenderly laid her light hand
on his own,
“Do not think I abuse the occasion.
We gain
Justice, judgment, with years, or else
years are in vain.
From me not a single reproach can you
hear.
I have sinned to myself, — to the world,
— nay, I fear
To you chiefly. The woman who loves
should, indeed,
Be the friend of the man that she loves.
She should heed
Not her selfish and often mistaken de-
sires,
But his interest whose fate her own in-
terest inspires;
And, rather than seek to allure, for her
sake,
His life down the turbulent, fanciful
wake
Of impossible destinies, use all her art
That his place in the world find its place
in her heart.
I, alas! — I perceived not this truth till
too late;
I tormented your youth, I have darkened
your fate.
Forgive me the ill I have done for the
sake
Of its long expiation!”

XIV.

Lord Alfred, awake,
Seemed to wander from dream on to
dream. In that seat
Where he sat as a criminal, ready to
meet

His accuser, he found himself turned by
some change,
As surprising and all unexpected as
strange,
To the judge from whose mercy indul-
gence was sought.
All the world's foolish pride in that mo-
ment was naught ;
He felt all his plausible theories posed ;
And, thrilled by the beauty of nature
disclosed.
In the pathos of all he had witnessed,
his head
He bowed, and faint words self-reproach-
fully said,
As he lifted her hand to his lips. 'T was
a hand
White, delicate, dimpled, warm, lan-
guid, and bland.
The hand of a woman is often, in youth,
Somewhat rough, somewhat red, some-
what graceless, in truth ;
Does its beauty refine, as its pulses grow
calm,
Or as Sorrow has crossed the life-line in
the palm ?

XV.

The more that he looked, that he listened,
the more
He discovered perfections unnoticed be-
fore.
Less salient than once, less poetic, per-
chance,
This woman who thus had survived the
romance
That had made him its hero, and breathed
him its sighs,
Seemed more charming a thousand times
o'er to his eyes.
Together they talked of the years since
when last
They parted, contrasting the present, the
past.
Yet no memory marred their light con-
verse. Lucile
Questioned much, with the interest a
sister might feel,
Of Lord Alfred's new life, — of Miss
Darcy, — her face,
Her temper, accomplishments, — pausing
to trace
The advantage derived from a hymen so fit.
Of herself, she recounted with humor
and wit
Her journeys, her daily employments,
the lands

She had seen, and the books she had
read, and the hands
She had shaken.
In all that she said there appeared
An amiable irony. Laughing, she reared
The temple of reason, with ever a touch
Of light scorn at her work, revealed only
so much
As there gleams, in the thyrsus that
Bacchanals bear,
Through the blooms of a garland the
point of a spear.
But above, and beneath, and beyond all
of this,
To that soul, whose experience had par-
alyzed bliss,
A benignant indulgence, to all things
resigned,
A justice, a sweetness, a meekness of
mind,
Gave a luminous beauty, as tender and
faint
And serene as the halo encircling a saint.

XVI.

Unobserved by Lord Alfred the time
fled by.
To each novel sensation spontaneously
He abandoned himself with that ardor
so strange
Which belongs to a mind grown accus-
tomed to change.
He sought, with well-practised and deli-
cate art,
To surprise from Lucile the true state
of her heart ;
But his efforts were vain, and the woman,
as ever,
More adroit than the man, baffled every
endeavor.
When he deemed he had touched on
some chord in her being,
At the touch it dissolved, and was gone.
Ever fleeing
As ever he near it advanced, when he
thought
To have seized, and proceeded to ana-
lyze aught
Of the moral existence, the absolute soul,
Light as vapor the phantom escaped his
control.

XVII.

From the hall, on a sudden, a sharp
ring was heard.
In the passage without a quick footstep
there stirred.

At the door knocked the negress, and
thrust in her head,
"The Duke de Luvois had just entered,"
she said,
"And insisted" —
"The Duke!" cried Lucile (as she
spoke
The Duke's step, approaching, a light
echo woke).
"Say I do not receive till the evening.
Explain,"
As she glanced at Lord Alfred, she
added again,
"I have business of private importance."
There came
O'er Lord Alfred at once, at the sound
of that name,
An invincible sense of vexation. He
turned
To Lucile, and he fancied he faintly dis-
cerned
On her face an indefinite look of confu-
sion.
On his mind instantaneously flashed the
conclusion,
That his presence had caused it.
He said, with a sneer
Which he could not repress, "Let not
me interfere
With the claims on your time, lady!
when you are free
From more pleasant engagements, allow
me to see
And to wait on you later."
The words were not said
Ere he wished to recall them. He bit-
terly read
The mistake he had made in Lucile's
flashing eye.
Inclining her head, as in haughty reply,
More reproachful perchance than all
uttered rebuke,
She said merely, resuming her seat,
"Tell the Duke
He may enter."
And vexed with his own words and
hers,
Alfred Vargrave bowed low to Lucile de
Nevers,
Passed the casement and entered the gar-
den. Before
His shadow was fled the Duke stood at
the door.

XVIII.

When left to his thoughts in the garden
alone,

Alfred Vargrave stood, strange to him-
self. With dull tone
Of importance, through cities of rose and
carnation,
Went the bee on his business from sta-
tion to station.
The minute mirth of summer was shrill
all around ;
Its incessant small voices like stings
seemed to sound
On his sore angry sense. He stood
grieving the hot
Solid sun with his shadow, nor stirred
from the spot.
The last look of Lucile still bewildered,
perplexed,
And reproached him. The Duke's visit
goaded and vexed.
He had not yet given the letters. Again
He must visit Lucile. He resolved to
remain
Where he was till the Duke went. In
short, he would stay,
Were it only to know when the Duke
went away.
But just as he formed this resolve, he
perceived
Approaching towards him, between the
thick-leaved
And luxuriant laurels, Lucile and the
Duke.
Thus surprised, his first thought was to
seek for some nook
Whence he might, unobserved, from the
garden retreat.
They had not yet seen him. The sound
of their feet
And their voices had warned him in
time. They were walking
Towards him. The Duke (a true French-
man) was talking
With the action of Talma. He saw at
a glance
That they barred the sole path to the
gateway. No chance
Of escape save in instant concealment!
Deep-dipped
In thick foliage, an arbor stood near.
In he slipped,
Saved from sight, as in front of that am-
bush they passed,
Still conversing. Beneath a laburnum
at last
They paused, and sat down on a bench
in the shade,
So close that he could not but hear what
they said.

XIX.

LUCILE.

Duke, I scarcely conceive . . .

LUVUOIS.

Ah, forgive! . . . I desired
So deeply to see you to-day. You retired
So early last night from the ball . . .
this whole week

I have seen you pale, silent, preoccupied
. . . speak,

Speak, Lucile, and forgive me! . . . I
know that I am

A rash fool — but I love you! I love
you, Madame,

More than language can say! Do not
deem, O Lucile,

That the love I no longer have strength
to conceal

Is a passing caprice! It is strange to
my nature,

It has made me, unknown to myself, a
new creature.

I implore you to sanction and save the
new life

Which I lay at your feet with this
prayer — Be my wife;

Stoop, and raise me!

Lord Alfred could scarcely restrain
The sudden, acute pang of anger and
pain

With which he had heard this. As
though to some wind

The leaves of the hushed windless lau-
rels behind

The two thus in converse were suddenly
stirred.

The sound half betrayed him. They
started. He heard

The low voice of Lucile; but so faint
was its tone

That her answer escaped him.

Luvouis hurried on,
As though in remonstrance with what
had been spoken.

"Nay, I know it, Lucile! but your
heart was not broken

By the trial in which all its fibres were
proved.

Love, perchance, you mistrust, yet you
need to be loved.

You mistake your own feelings. I fear
you mistake

What so ill I interpret, those feelings
which make

Words like these vague and feeble.
Whatever your heart

May have suffered of yore, this can only
impart

A pity profound to the love which I feel.
Hush! hush! I know all. Tell me
nothing, Lucile."

"You know all, Duke?" she said;
"well then, know that, in truth,

I have learned from the rude lesson
taught to my youth

From my own heart to shelter my life;
to mistrust

The heart of another. We are what we
must,

And not what we would be. I know
that one hour

Assures not another. The will and the
power

Are diverse."

"O madam!" he answered, "you
fence

With a feeling you know to be true and
intense.

'T is not *my* life, Lucile, that I plead for
alone:

If your nature I know, 't is no less for
your own.

That nature will prey on itself; it was
made

To influence others. Consider," he said,
"That genius craves power, — what scope
for it here?"

Gifts less noble to *me* give command of
that sphere

In which genius *is* power. Such gifts
you despise!

But you do not disdain what such gifts
realize!

I offer you, Lady, a name not unknown —
A fortune which worthless, without you,
is grown —

All my life at your feet I lay down — at
your feet

A heart which for you, and you only,
can beat."

LUCILE.

That heart, Duke, that life — I respect
both. The name

And position you offer, and all that you
claim

In behalf of their nobler employment, I
feel

To deserve what, in turn, I now ask
you —

LUVUOIS.

Lucile!

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me —

LUVUOIS.

You do not reject?

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me the time to reflect.

LUVUOIS.

You ask me? —

LUCILE.

— The time to reflect.

LUVUOIS.

Say — One word!

May I hope?

The reply of Lucile was not heard
By Lord Alfred; for just then she rose,
and moved on.

The Duke bowed his lips o'er her hand,
and was gone.

XX.

Not a sound save the birds in the bushes.
And when

Alfred Vargrave reeled forth to the sun-
light again,

He just saw the white robe of the woman
recede

As she entered the house.

Scarcely conscious indeed
Of his steps, he too followed, and en-
tered.

XXI.

He entered
Unnoticed; Lucile never stirred: so
concentrated

And wholly absorbed in her thoughts
she appeared.

Her back to the window was turned.
As he neared

The sofa, her face from the glass was
reflected.

Her dark eyes were fixed on the ground.
Pale, dejected,

And lost in profound meditation she
seemed.

Softly, silently, over her drooped shoul-
ders streamed

The afternoon sunlight. The cry of
alarm

And surprise which escaped her, as now
on her arm

Alfred Vargrave let fall a hand icily
cold

And clammy as death, all too cruelly
told

How far he had been from her thoughts.

XXII.

All his cheek
Was disturbed with the effort it cost him
to speak.

"It was not my fault. I have heard
all," he said.

"Now the letters — and farewell, Lucile!
When you wed

May —"

The sentence broke short, like a
weapon that snaps

When the weight of a man is upon it.
"Perhaps,"

Said Lucile (her sole answer revealed in
the flush

Of quick color which up to her brows
seemed to rush

In reply to those few broken words),
"this farewell

Is our last, Alfred Vargrave, in life.
Who can tell?

Let us part without bitterness. Here
are your letters.

Be assured I retain you no more in my
fettlers!" —

She laughed, as she said this, a little
sad laugh,

And stretched out her hand with the
letters. And half

Wroth to feel his wrath rise, and unable
to trust

His own powers of restraint, in his bosom
he thrust

The packet she gave, with a short angry
sigh,

Bowed his head, and departed without a
reply.

XXIII.

And Lucile was alone. And the men
of the world

Were gone back to the world. And the
world's self was furled

Far away from the heart of the woman.
Her hand

Drooped, and from it, unloosed from
their frail silken band,

Fell those early love-letters, strewn,
scattered, and shed
At her feet — life's lost blossoms! De-
jected, her head
On her bosom was bowed. Her gaze
vaguely strayed o'er
Those strewn records of passionate mo-
ments no more.
From each page to her sight leapt some
word that belied
The composure with which she that day
had denied
Every claim on her heart to those poor
perished years.
They avenged themselves now, and she
burst into tears.

CANTO IV.

I.

Letter from COUSIN JOHN to COUSIN
ALFRED.

"BIGORRE, Thursday.

"TIME up, you rascal! Come back, or
be hanged.

Matilda grows peevish. Her mother
harangued

For a whole hour this morning about
you. The deuce!

What on earth can I say to you? —
Nothing's of use.

And the blame of the whole of your
shocking behavior

Falls on *me*, sir! Come back, — do you
hear? — or I leave your

Affairs, and abjure you forever. Come
back

To your anxious betrothed; and per-
plexed

"COUSIN JACK."

II.

Alfred needed, in truth, no entreaties
from John

To increase his impatience to fly from
Serchon.

All the place was now fraught with sen-
sations of pain

Which, whilst in it, he strove to escape
from in vain.

A wild instinct warned him to fly from
a place

Where he felt that some fatal event,
swift of pace,

Was approaching his life. In despite
his endeavor

To think of Matilda, her image forever
Was effaced from his fancy by that of
Lucile.

From the ground which he stood on he
felt himself reel.

Scared, alarmed by those feelings to
which, on the day

Just before, all his heart had so soon
given way,

When he caught, with a strange sense
of fear, for assistance,

At what was, till then, the great fact in
existence,

'T was a phantom he grasped.

III.

Having sent for his guide,
He ordered his horse, and determined to
ride

Back forthwith to Bigorre.

Then, the guide, who well knew
Every haunt of those hills, said the wild
lake of Oo

Lay a league from Serchon; and sug-
gested a track

By the lake to Bigorre, which, transvers-
ing the back

Of the mountain, avoided a circuit be-
tween

Two long valleys; and thinking, "Per-
chance change of scene

May create change of thought," Alfred
Vargrave agreed,

Mounted horse, and set forth to Bigorre
at full speed.

IV.

His guide rode beside him.
The king of the guides!

The gallant Bernard! ever boldly he
rides,

Ever gayly he sings! For to him, from
of old,

The hills have confided their secrets,
and told

Where the white partridge lies, and the
cock o' the woods;

Where the izard flits fine through the
cold solitudes;

Where the bear lurks perdu; and the
lynx on his prey

At nightfall descends, when the moun-
tains are gray;

Where the sassafra blooms, and the
bluebell is born,

And the wild rhododendron first reddens
at morn;

Where the source of the waters is fine
as a thread;

How the storm on the wild Maladetta is
spread;

Where the thunder is hoarded, the snows
lie asleep,

Whence the torrents are fed, and the
cataracts leap;

And, familiarly known in the hamlets,
the vales

Have whispered to him all their thou-
sand love-tales;

He has laughed with the girls, he has
leaped with the boys;

Ever blithe, ever bold, ever boon, he
enjoys

An existence untroubled by envy or
strife,

While he feeds on the dews and the juices
of life.

And so lightly he sings, and so gayly
he rides,

For BERNARD LE SAUTEUR is the king
of all guides!

V.

But Bernard found, that day, neither
song nor love-tale,

Nor adventure, nor laughter, nor legend
avail

To arouse from his deep and profound
revery

Him that silent beside him rode fast as
could be.

VI.

Ascending the mountain they slackened
their pace,

And the marvellous prospect each moment
changed face.

The breezy and pure inspirations of morn
Breathed about them. The scarp'd

ravaged mountains, all worn

By the torrents, whose course they
watched faintly meander,

Were alive with the diamonded shy sal-
amander.

They paused o'er the bosom of purple
abysses,

And wound through a region of green
wildernesses;

The waters went wirbling above and
around,

The forests hung heaped in their shad-
ows profound.

Here the Larboust, and there Aventin,
Castellon,

Which the Demon of Tempest, descend-
ing upon,

Had wasted with fire, and the peaceful
Cazeaux

They marked; and far down in the sun-
shine below,

Half dipped in a valley of airiest blue,
The white happy homes of the village
of Oo,

Where the age is yet golden.

And high overhead
The wrecks of the combat of Titans were
spread.

Red granite and quartz, in the alchemic
sun,

Fused their splendors of crimson and
crystal in one;

And deep in the moss gleamed the deli-
cate shells,

And the dew lingered fresh in the heavy
harebells;

The large violet burned; the campanula
blue;

And Autumn's own flower, the saffron,
peered through

The red-berried brambles and thick sas-
safras;

And fragrant with thyme was the deli-
cate grass;

And high up, and higher, and highest
of all,

The secular phantom of snow!

O'er the wall
Of a gray sunless glen gaping drowsy
below,

That aerial spectre, revealed in the glow
Of the great golden dawn, hovers faint
on the eye,

And appears to grow in, and grow out
of, the sky,

And plays with the fancy, and baffles
the sight.

Only reached by the vast rosy ripple of
light,

And the cool star of eve, the Imperial
Thing,

Half unreal, like some mythological
king

That dominates all in a fable of old,
Takes command of a valley as fair to
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As aught in old fables; and, seen or
unseen,

Dwells aloof over all, in the vast and
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unseen,

Dwells aloof over all, in the vast and
serene

Sacred sky, where the footsteps of spirits are furled
 'Mid the clouds beyond which spreads the infinite world
 Of man's last aspirations, unfathomed, untrod,
 Save by Even and Morn, and the angels of God.

VII.

Meanwhile, as they journeyed, that serpentine road,
 Now abruptly reversed, unexpectedly showed
 A gay cavalcade some few feet in advance,
 Alfred Vargrave's heart beat; for he saw at a glance
 The slight form of Lucile in the midst.
 His next look
 Showed him, joyously ambling beside her, the Duke.
 The rest of the troop which had thus caught his ken
 He knew not, nor noticed them (women and men).
 They were laughing and talking together. Soon after
 His sudden appearance suspended their laughter.

VIII.

"You here! . . . I imagined you far on your way
 To Bigorre!" . . . said Lucile. "What has caused you to stay?"
 "I am on my way to Bigorre," he replied,
 "But, since my way would seem to be yours, let me ride
 For one moment beside you." And then, with a stoop,
 At her ear, . . . "and forgive me!"

IX.

By this time the troop
 Had regathered its numbers.
 Lucile was as pale
 As the cloud 'neath their feet, on its way to the vale.
 The Duke had observed it, nor quitted her side,
 For even one moment, the whole of the ride.
 Alfred smiled, as he thought, "he is jealous of her!"
 And the thought of this jealousy added a spur

To his firm resolution and effort to please.
 He talked much; was witty, and quite at his ease.

X.

After noontide, the clouds, which had traversed the east
 Half the day, gathered closer, and rose and increased.
 The air changed and chilled. As though out of the ground,
 There ran up the trees a confused hissing sound,
 And the wind rose. The guides sniffed, like chamois, the air,
 And looked at each other, and halted, and there
 Unbuckled the cloaks from the saddles.
 The white
 Aspens rustled, and turned up their frail leaves in fright.
 All announced the approach of the tempest.

Erelong,

Thick darkness descended the mountains among;
 And a vivid, vindictive, and serpentine flash
 Gored the darkness, and shore it across with a gash.
 The rain fell in large heavy drops. And anon
 Broke the thunder.
 The horses took fright, every one.
 The Duke's in a moment was far out of sight.
 The guides whooped. The band was obliged to alight;
 And, dispersed up the perilous pathway, walked blind
 To the darkness before from the darkness behind.

XI.

And the Storm is abroad in the mountains!
 He fills
 The crouched hollows and all the oracular hills
 With dread voices of power. A roused million or more
 Of wild echoes reluctantly rise from their hoar
 Immemorial ambush, and roll in the wake
 Of the cloud, whose reflection leaves vivid the lake.

And the wind, that wild robber, for plunder descends
 From invisible lands, o'er those black mountain ends;
 He howls as he hounds down his prey; and his lash
 Tears the hair of the timorous wan mountain-ash,
 That clings to the rocks, with her garments all torn,
 Like a woman in fear; then he blows his hoarse horn,
 And is off, the fierce guide of destruction and terror,
 Up the desolate heights, 'mid an intricate error
 Of mountain and mist.

XII.

There is war in the skies!
 Lo! the black-winged legions of tempest arise
 O'er those sharp splintered rocks that are gleaming below
 In the soft light, so fair and so fatal, as though
 Some seraph burned through them, the thunder-bolt searching
 Which the black cloud unbosomed just now. Lo! the lurching
 And shivering pine-trees, like phantoms, that seem
 To waver above, in the dark; and yon stream,
 How it hurries and roars, on its way to the white
 And paralyzed lake there, appalled at the sight
 Of the things seen in heaven!

XIII.

Through the darkness and awe
 That had gathered around him, Lord Alfred now saw,
 Revealed in the fierce and evanishing glare
 Of the lightning that momentarily pulsed through the air,
 A woman alone on a shelf of the hill,
 With her cheek coldly propped on her hand, — and as still
 As the rock that she sat on, which beetled above
 The black lake beneath her.
 All terror, all love,

Added speed to the instinct with which he rushed on.
 For one moment the blue lightning swathed the whole stone
 In its lurid embrace: like the sleek dazzling snake
 That encircles a sorceress, charmed for her sake
 And lulled by her loveliness; fawning, it played
 And caressingly twined round the feet and the head
 Of the woman who sat there, undaunted and calm
 As the soul of that solitude, listing the psalm
 Of the plangent and laboring tempest roll slow
 From the caldron of midnight and vapor below.
 Next moment from bastion to bastion, all round,
 Of the siege-circled mountains, there tumbled the sound
 Of the battering thunder's indefinite peal,
 And Lord Alfred had sprung to the feet of Lucile.

XIV.

She started. Once more, with its flickering wand,
 The lightning approached her. In terror, her hand
 Alfred Vargrave had seized within his; and he felt
 The light fingers that coldly and lingeringly dwelt
 In the grasp of his own, tremble faintly.
 "See! see!
 Where the whirlwind hath stricken and strangled yon tree!"
 She exclaimed, . . . "like the passion that brings on its breath,
 To the being it embraces, destruction and death!
 Alfred Vargrave, the lightning is round you!"
 "Lucile!
 I hear — I see — naught but yourself.
 I can feel
 Nothing here but your presence. My pride fights in vain
 With the truth that leaps from me. We two meet again
 'Neath yon terrible heaven that is watching above

To avenge if I lie when I swear that I love, —
 And beneath yonder terrible heaven, at your feet,
 I humble my head and my heart. I entreat
 Your pardon, Lucile, for the past, — I implore
 For the future your mercy, — implore it with more
 Of passion than prayer ever breathed. By the power
 Which invisibly touches us both in this hour,
 By the rights I have o'er you, Lucile, I demand" —

"The rights!" . . . said Lucile, and drew from him her hand.

"Yes, the rights! for what greater to man may belong
 Than the right to repair in the future the wrong
 To the past? and the wrong I have done you, of yore,
 Hath bequeathed to me all the sad right to restore,
 To retrieve, to amend! I, who injured your life,
 Urge the right to repair it, Lucile! Be my wife,
 My guide, my good angel, my all upon earth,
 And accept, for the sake of what yet may give worth
 To my life, its contrition!"

xv.

He paused, for there came
 O'er the cheek of Lucile a swift flush like the flame
 That illumined at moments the darkness o'erhead.
 With a voice faint and marred by emotion, she said,
 "And your pledge to another?"

xvi.

"Hush, hush!" he exclaimed,
 "My honor will live where my love lives, unshamed.
 'T were poor honor indeed, to another to give
 That life of which you keep the heart. Could I live

In the light of those young eyes, suppressing a lie?
 Alas, no! your hand holds my whole destiny.
 I can never recall what my lips have avowed;
 In your love lies whatever can render me proud.
 For the great crime of all my existence hath been
 To have known you in vain. And the duty best seen,
 And most hallowed, — the duty most sacred and sweet,
 Is that which hath led me, Lucile, to your feet.
 O speak! and restore me the blessing I lost
 When I lost you, — my pearl of all pearls beyond cost!
 And restore to your own life its youth, and restore
 The vision, the rapture, the passion of yore!
 Ere our brows had been dimmed in the dust of the world,
 When our souls their white wings yet exulting unfurled!
 For your eyes rest no more on the unquiet man,
 The wild star of whose course its pale orbit outran,
 Whom the formless indefinite future of youth,
 With its lying allurements, distracted. In truth
 I have wearily wandered the world, and I feel
 That the least of your lovely regards, O Lucile,
 Is worth all the world can afford, and the dream
 Which, though followed forever, forever doth seem
 As fleeting, and distant, and dim, as of yore
 When it brooded in twilight, at dawn, on the shore
 Of life's untraversed ocean! I know the sole path
 To repose, which my desolated destiny hath,
 Is the path by whose course to your feet I return.
 And who else, O Lucile, will so truly discern,
 And so deeply revere, all the passionate strength,

The sublimity in you, as he whom at length
 These have saved from himself, for the truth they reveal
 To his worship?"

xvii.

She spoke not; but Alfred could feel
 The light hand and arm, that upon him reposed,
 Thrill and tremble. Those dark eyes of hers were half closed;
 But, under their languid mysterious fringe,
 A passionate softness was beaming. One tinge
 Of faint inward fire flushed transparently through
 The delicate, pallid, and pure olive hue
 Of the cheek, half averted and drooped.
 The rich bosom
 Heaved, as when in the heart of a ruffled rose-blossom
 A bee is imprisoned and struggles.

xviii.

Meanwhile
 The sun, in his setting, sent up the last smile
 Of his power, to baffle the storm. And, behold!
 O'er the mountains embattled, his armies, all gold,
 Rose and rested: while far up the dim airy crags,
 Its artillery silenced, its banners in rags,
 The rear of the tempest its sullen retreat
 Drew off slowly, receding in silence, to meet
 The powers of the night, which, now gathering afar,
 Had already sent forward one bright, signal star.
 The curls of her soft and luxuriant hair,
 From the dark riding-hat, which Lucile used to wear,
 Had escaped; and Lord Alfred now covered with kisses
 The redolent warmth of those long falling tresses.
 Neither he, nor Lucile, felt the rain, which not yet
 Had ceased falling around them; when, splashed, drenched, and wet,
 The Duc de Lavois down the rough mountain course

Approached them as fast as the road, and his horse,
 Which was limping, would suffer. The beast had just now
 Lost his footing, and over the perilous brow
 Of the storm-haunted mountain his master had thrown;
 But the Duke, who was agile, had leaped to a stone,
 And the horse, being bred to the instinct which fills
 The breast of the wild mountaineer in these hills,
 Had scrambled again to his feet; and now master
 And horse bore about them the signs of disaster,
 As they heavily footed their way through the mist,
 The horse with his shoulder, the Duke with his wrist,
 Bruised and bleeding.

xix.

If ever your feet, like my own,
 O reader, have traversed these mountains alone,
 Have you felt your identity shrink and contract
 At the sound of the distant and dim cataract,
 In the presence of nature's immensities? Say,
 Have you hung o'er the torrent, bedewed with its spray,
 And, leaving the rock-way, contorted and rolled,
 Like a huge couchant Typhon, fold heaped over fold,
 Tracked the summits, from which every step that you tread
 Rolls the loose stones, with thunder below, to the bed
 Of invisible waters, whose mystical sound
 Fills with awful suggestions the dizzy profound?
 And, laboring onwards, at last through a break
 In the walls of the world, burst at once on the lake?
 If you have, this description I might have withheld.
 You remember how strangely your bosom has swelled

At the vision revealed. On the over-
worked soil
Of this planet, enjoyment is sharpened
by toil ;
And one seems, by the pain of ascending
the height,
To have conquered a claim to that won-
derful sight.

XX.

Hail, virginal daughter of cold Espingo !
Hail, Naiad, whose realm is the cloud
and the snow ;
For o'er thee the angels have whitened
their wings,
And the thirst of the seraphs is quenched
at thy springs.
What hand hath, in heaven, upheld
thine expanse ?
When the breath of creation first fash-
ioned fair France,
Did the Spirit of Ill, in his downthrow
appalling,
Bruise the world, and thus hollow thy
basin while falling !
Ere the mammoth was born hath some
monster unnamed
The base of thy mountainous pedestal
framed ?
And later, when Power to Beauty was
wed,
Did some delicate fairy embroider thy
bed
With the fragile valerian and wild col-
umbine ?

XXI.

But thy secret thou keepest, and I will
keep mine ;
For once gazing on thee, it flashed on
my soul,
All that secret ! I saw in a vision the
whole
Vast design of the ages ; what was and
shall be !
Hands unseen raised the veil of a great
mystery
For one moment. I saw, and I heard ;
and my heart
Bore witness within me to infinite art,
In infinite power proving infinite love ;
Caught the great choral chant, marked
the dread pageant move—
The divine Whence and Whither of life !
But, O daughter
Of Oo, not more safe in the deep silent
water

Is thy secret, than mine in my heart.
Even so.
What I then saw and heard, the world
never shall know.

XXII.

The dimness of eve o'er the valleys had
closed,
The rain had ceased falling, the moun-
tains reposed.
The stars had enkindled in luminous
courses
Their slow-sliding lamps, when, re-
mounting their horses,
The riders retraversed that mighty ser-
ration
Of rock-work. Thus left to its own
desolation,
The lake, from whose glimmering limits
the last
Transient pomp of the pageants of sun-
set had passed,
Drew into its bosom the darkness, and
only
Admitted within it one image, — a lonely
And tremulous phantom of flickering
light
That followed the mystical moon through
the night.

XXIII.

It was late when o'er Serchon at last
they descended.
To her chalet, in silence, Lord Alfred
attended
Lucile. As they parted she whispered
him low,
"You have made to me, Alfred, an offer
I know
All the worth of, believe me. I cannot
reply
Without time for reflection. Good night!
—not good by."

"Alas ! 'tis the very same answer you
made
To the Duc de Luvois but a day since,"
he said.

"No, Alfred ! the very same, no," she
replied.

Her voice shook. "If you love me,
obey me.

Abide my answer, to-morrow."

XXIV.

Alas, Cousin Jack !

You Cassandra in breeches and boots !
turn your back
To the ruins of Troy. Prophet, seek not
for glory
Amongst thine own people.
I follow my story.

CANTO V.

I.

UP !—forth again, Pegasus !—"Many's
the slip,"
Hath the proverb well said, "twixt the
cup and the lip !"
How blest should we be, have I often
conceived,
Had we really achieved what we nearly
achieved !
We but catch at the skirts of the thing
we would be,
And fall back on the lap of a false destiny.
So it will be, so has been, since this
world began !
And the happiest, noblest, and best part
of man
Is the part which he never hath fully
played out :
For the first and last word in life's vol-
ume is—Doubt.
The face the most fair to our vision al-
lowed
Is the face we encounter and lose in the
crowd.
The thought that most thrills our exist-
ence is one
Which, before we can frame it in lan-
guage, is gone.
O Horace ! the rustic still rests by the
river,
But the river flows on, and flows past
him forever !
Who can sit down, and say, . . . "What
I will be, I will" ?
Who stand up, and affirm . . . "What
I was, I am still" ?
Who is it that must not, if questioned,
say, . . . "What
I would have remained, or become, I
am not" ?
We are ever behind, or beyond, or beside
Our intrinsic existence. Forever at hide
And seek with our souls. Not in Hades
alone
Doth Sisyphus roll, ever frustrate, the
stone,

Do the Danaïds ply, ever vainly, the sieve.
Tasks as futile does earth to its denizens
give.
Yet there's none so unhappy, but what
he hath been
Just about to be happy, at some time, I
ween ;
And none so beguiled and defrauded by
chance,
But what once, in his life, some minute
circumstance
Would have fully sufficed to secure him
the bliss
Which, missing it then, he forever must
miss ;
And to most of us, ere we go down to
the grave,
Life, relenting, accords the good gift we
would have ;
But, as though by some strange imper-
fection in fate,
The good gift, when it comes, comes a
moment too late.
The Future's great veil our breath fit-
fully flaps,
And behind it broods ever the mighty
Perhaps.
Yet ! there's many a slip 'twixt the cup
and the lip ;
But while o'er the brim of life's beaker
I dip,
Though the cup may next moment be
shattered, the wine
Spilt, one deep health I'll pledge, and
that health shall be thine,
O being of beauty and bliss ! seen and
known
In the deeps of my soul, and possessed
there alone !
My days know thee not ; and my lips
name thee never.
Thy place in my poor life is vacant for-
ever.
We have met : we have parted. No
more is recorded
In my annals on earth. This alone was
afforded
To the man whom men knew me, or
deem me, to be.
But, far down, in the depth of my life's
mystery,
(Like the siren that under the deep
ocean dwells,
Whom the wind as it wails, and the
wave as it swells,
Cannot stir in the calm of her coralline
halls,

At the vision revealed. On the over-
worked soil
Of this planet, enjoyment is sharpened
by toil ;
And one seems, by the pain of ascending
the height,
To have conquered a claim to that won-
derful sight.

XX.

Hail, virginal daughter of cold Espingo !
Hail, Naiad, whose realm is the cloud
and the snow ;
For o'er thee the angels have whitened
their wings,
And the thirst of the seraphs is quenched
at thy springs.
What hand hath, in heaven, upheld
thine expanse ?
When the breath of creation first fash-
ioned fair France,
Did the Spirit of Ill, in his downthrow
appalling,
Bruise the world, and thus hollow thy
basin while falling !
Ere the mammoth was born hath some
monster unnamed
The base of thy mountainous pedestal
framed ?
And later, when Power to Beauty was
wed,
Did some delicate fairy embroider thy
bed
With the fragile valerian and wild col-
umbine ?

XXI.

But thy secret thou keepest, and I will
keep mine ;
For once gazing on thee, it flashed on
my soul,
All that secret ! I saw in a vision the
whole
Vast design of the ages ; what was and
shall be !
Hands unseen raised the veil of a great
mystery
For one moment. I saw, and I heard ;
and my heart
Bore witness within me to infinite art,
In infinite power proving infinite love ;
Caught the great choral chant, marked
the dread pageant move—
The divine Whence and Whither of life !
But, O daughter
Of Oo, not more safe in the deep silent
water

Is thy secret, than mine in my heart.
Even so.
What I then saw and heard, the world
never shall know.

XXII.

The dimness of eve o'er the valleys had
closed,
The rain had ceased falling, the moun-
tains reposed.
The stars had enkindled in luminous
courses
Their slow-sliding lamps, when, re-
mounting their horses,
The riders retraversed that mighty ser-
ration
Of rock-work. Thus left to its own
desolation,
The lake, from whose glimmering limits
the last
Transient pomp of the pageants of sun-
set had passed,
Drew into its bosom the darkness, and
only
Admitted within it one image, — a lonely
And tremulous phantom of flickering
light
That followed the mystical moon through
the night.

XXIII.

It was late when o'er Serchon at last
they descended.
To her chalet, in silence, Lord Alfred
attended
Lucile. As they parted she whispered
him low,
"You have made to me, Alfred, an offer
I know
All the worth of, believe me. I cannot
reply
Without time for reflection. Good night!
—not good by."

"Alas ! 't is the very same answer you
made
To the Duc de Luvois but a day since,"
he said.

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replied.

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In my annals on earth. This alone was
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To the man whom men knew me, or
deem me, to be.
But, far down, in the depth of my life's
mystery,
(Like the siren that under the deep
ocean dwells,
Whom the wind as it wails, and the
wave as it swells,
Cannot stir in the calm of her coralline
halls,

'Mid the world's adamant and dim
pedestals;
At whose feet sit the sylphs and sea
fairies; for whom
The almondine glimmers, the soft sam-
phires bloom) —
Thou abidest and reignest forever, O
Queen
Of that better world which thou swayest
unseen!
My one perfect mistress! my all things
in all!
Thee by no vulgar name known to men
do I call:
For the seraphs have named thee to me
in my sleep,
And that name is a secret I sacredly
keep.
But, wherever this nature of mine is
most fair,
And its thoughts are the purest — be-
loved, thou art there!
And whatever is noblest in aught that I
do,
Is done to exalt and to worship thee too.
The world gave thee not to me, no! and
the world
Cannot take thee away from me now.
I have furled
The wings of my spirit about thy bright
head;
At thy feet are my soul's immortalities
spread.
Thou mightest have been to me much.
Thou art more.
And in silence I worship, in darkness
adore.
If life be not that which without us we
find —
Chance, accident, merely — but rather
the mind,
And the soul which, within us, surviv-
eth these things,
If our real existence have truly its
springs
Less in that which we do than in that
which we feel,
Not in vain do I worship, not hopeless
I kneel!
For then, though I name thee not mis-
tress or wife,
Thou art mine — and mine only, — O
life of my life!
And though many's the slip 'twixt the
cup and the lip,
Yet while o'er the brim of life's beaker
I dip,

While there's life on the lip, while
there's warmth in the wine,
One deep health I'll pledge, and that
health shall be thine!

II.

This world, on whose peaceable breast
we repose
Unconvulsed by alarm, once confused in
the throes
Of a tumult divine, sea and land, moist
and dry,
And in fiery fusion commixed earth and
sky.
Time cooled it, and calmed it, and
taught it to go
The round of its orbit in peace, long ago.
The wind changeth and whirleth con-
tinually:
All the rivers run down and run into
the sea:
The wind whirleth about, and is pres-
ently stilled:
All the rivers run down, yet the sea is
not filled:
The sun goeth forth from his chambers:
the sun
Ariseth, and lo! he descendeth anon.
All returns to its place. Use and Habit
are powers
Far stronger than Passion, in this world
of ours.
The great laws of life readjust their in-
fraction,
And to every emotion appoint a reaction.

III.

Alfred Vargrave had time, after leaving
Lucile,
To review the rash step he had taken,
and feel
What the world would have called "*his
erroneous position.*"
Thought obtruded its claim, and enforced
recognition:
Like a creditor who, when the gloss is
worn out
On the coat which we once wore with
pleasure, no doubt,
Sends us in his account for the garment
we bought.
Every spendthrift to passion is debtor to
thought.

IV.

He felt ill at ease with himself. He
could feel

Little doubt what the answer would be
from Lucile.
Her eyes, when they parted, — her voice,
when they met,
Still enraptured his heart, which they
haunted. And yet,
Though, exulting, he deemed himself
loved, where he loved,
Through his mind a vague self-accusation
there moved.
O'er his fancy, when fancy was fairest,
would rise
The infantine face of Matilda, with eyes
So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,
That his heart failed within him. In vain
did he find
A thousand just reasons for what he had
done:
The vision that troubled him would not
be gone.
In vain did he say to himself, and with
truth,
"Matilda has beauty, and fortune, and
youth;
And her heart is too young to have deeply
involved
All its hopes in the tie which must now
be dissolved.
'T were a false sense of honor in me to
suppress
The sad truth which I owe it to her to
confess.
And what reason have I to presume this
poor life
Of my own, with its languid and frivolous
strife,
And without what alone might endear
it to her,
Were a boon all so precious, indeed, to
confer,
Its withdrawal can wrong her?
"It is not as though
I were bound to some poor village maiden,
I know,
Unto whose simple heart mine were all
upon earth,
Or to whose simple fortunes my own
could give worth.
Matilda, in all the world's gifts, will not
miss
Aught that I could procure her. 'T is
best as it is!"

V.

In vain did he say to himself, "When
I came
To this fatal spot, I had nothing to blame

Or reproach myself for, in the thoughts
of my heart.
I could not foresee that its pulses would
start
Into such strange emotion on seeing
once more
A woman I left with indifference before.
I believed, and with honest conviction
believed,
In my love for Matilda. I never con-
ceived
That another could shake it. I deemed
I had done
With the wild heart of youth, and looked
hopefully on
To the soberer manhood, the worthier
life,
Which I sought in the love that I vowed
to my wife.
Poor child! she shall learn the whole
truth. She shall know
What I knew not myself but a few days
ago.
The world will console her, — her pride
will support, —
Her youth will renew its emotions. In
short,
There is nothing in me that Matilda will
miss
When once we have parted. 'T is best
as it is!"

VI.

But in vain did he reason and argue.
Alas!
He yet felt unconvinced that 't was best
as it was.
Out of reach of all reason, forever would
rise
That infantine face of Matilda, with
eyes
So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,
That they harrowed his heart and dis-
tracted his mind.

VII.

And then, when he turned from these
thoughts to Lucile,
Though his heart rose enraptured, he
could not but feel
A vague sense of awe of her nature. Be-
hind
All the beauty of heart, and the graces
of mind,
Which he saw and revered in her, some-
thing unknown

And unseen in that nature still troubled
his own.
He felt that Lucile penetrated and prized
Whatever was noblest and best, though
disguised,
In himself; but he did not feel sure that
he knew,
Or completely possessed, what, half hid-
den from view,
Remained lofty and lonely in *her*.
Then, her life,
So untamed, and so free! would she
yield as a wife,
Independence, long claimed as a woman?
Her name,
So linked by the world with that spurious
fame
Which the beauty and wit of a woman
assert,
In some measure, alas! to her own loss
and hurt
In the serious thoughts of a man! . . .
This reflection
O'er the love which he felt cast a shade
of dejection,
From which he forever escaped to the
thought
Doubt could reach not. . . . "I love her,
and all else is naught!"

VIII.

His hand trembled strangely in breaking
the seal
Of the letter which reached him at last
from Lucile.
At the sight of the very first word that
he read,
That letter dropped down from his hand
like the dead
Leaf in autumn, that, falling, leaves
naked and bare
A desolate tree in a wide wintry air.
He passed his hand hurriedly over his
eyes,
Bewildered, incredulous. Angry sur-
prise
And dismay, in one sharp moan, broke
from him. Anon
He picked up the page, and read rapidly
on.

IX.

*The COMTESSE DE NEVERS to LORD
ALFRED VARGRAVE.*

"No, Alfred!
"If over the present, when last

We two met, rose the glamour and mist
of the past,
It hath now rolled away, and our two
paths are plain,
And those two paths divide us.
"That hand which again
Mine one moment has clasped as the
hand of a brother,
That hand and your honor are pledged
to another!
Forgive, Alfred Vargrave, forgive me, if
yet
For that moment (now past!) I have
made you forget
What was due to yourself and that other
one. Yes,
Mine the fault, and be mine the repent-
ance! Not less,
In now owning this fault, Alfred, let
me own, too,
I foresaw not the sorrow involved in it.
"True,
That meeting, which hath been so fatal,
I sought,
I alone! But O, deem not it was with
the thought
Or your heart to regain, or the past to
rewaken.
No! believe me, it was with the firm
and unshaken
Conviction, at least, that our meeting
would be
Without peril to *you*, although haply to
me
The salvation of all my existence.
"I own,
When the rumor first reached me, which
lightly made known
To the world your engagement, my heart
and my mind
Suffered torture intense. It was cruel
to find
That so much of the life of my life, half
unknown
To myself, had been silently settled on one
Upon whom but to think it would soon
be a crime.
Then I said to myself, 'From the thral-
dom which time
Hath not weakened there rests but one
hope of escape.
That image which Fancy seems ever to
shape
From the solitude left round the ruins
of yore
Is a phantom. The Being I loved is no
more.

What I hear in the silence, and see in
the lone
Void of life, is the young hero born of
my own
Perished youth: and his image, serene
and sublime,
In my heart rests unconscious of change
and of time.
Could I see it but once more, as time
and as change
Have made it, a thing unfamiliar and
strange,
See, indeed, that the Being I loved in
my youth
Is no more, and what rests now is only,
in truth,
The hard pupil of life and the world:
then, O, then,
I should wake from a dream, and my
life be again
Reconciled to the world; and, released
from regret,
Take the lot fate accords to my choice.'
"So we met.
But the danger I did not foresee has oc-
curred:
The danger, alas, to yourself! I have
erred.
But happy for both that this error hath
been
Discovered as soon as the danger was
seen!
We meet, Alfred Vargrave, no more. I,
indeed,
Shall be far from Serchon when this let-
ter you read.
My course is decided; my path I discern:
Doubt is over; my future is fixed now.
"Return,
O return to the young living love!
Whence, alas!
If, one moment, you wandered, think
only it was
More deeply to bury the past love.
"And, oh!
Believe, Alfred Vargrave, that I, where
I go
On my far distant pathway through life,
shall rejoice
To treasure in memory all that your
voice
Has avowed to me, all in which others
have clothed
To my fancy with beauty and worth
your betrothed!
In the fair morning light, in the orient
dew

Of that young life, now yours, can you
fail to renew
All the noble and pure aspirations, the
truth,
The freshness, the faith, of your own
earnest youth?
Yes! *you* will be happy. I, too, in the
bliss
I foresee for you, I shall be happy.
And this
Proves me worthy your friendship. And
so — let it prove
That I cannot — I do not — respond to
your love.
Yes, indeed! be convinced that I could
not (no, no,
Never, never!) have rendered you happy.
And so,
Rest assured that, if false to the vows
you have plighted,
You would have endured, when the first
brief, excited
Emotion was o'er, not alone the re-
morse
Of honor, but also (to render it worse)
Disappointed affection.
"Yes, Alfred; you start!
But think! if the world was too much
in your heart,
And too little in mine, when we parted
ten years
Ere this last fatal meeting, that time
(ay, and tears!)
Have but deepened the old demarcations
which then
Placed our natures asunder; and we
two again,
As we then were, would still have been
strangely at strife.
In that self-independence which is to
my life
Its necessity now, as it once was its
pride,
Had our course through the world been
henceforth side by side,
I should have revolted forever, and
shocked,
Your respect for the world's plausibilities,
mocked,
Without meaning to do so, and outraged,
all those
Social creeds which you live by.
"Oh! do not suppose
That I blame you. Perhaps it is you
that are right.
Best, then, all as it is!
"Deem these words life's Good-night

To the hope of a moment: no more!
If there fell
Any tear on this page, 't was a friend's.
"So farewell
To the past — and to you, Alfred Var-
grave.

"LUCILE."

X.

So ended that letter.
The room seemed to reel
Round and round in the mist that was
scorching his eyes
With a fiery dew. Grief, resentment,
surprise,
Half choked him; each word he had
read, as it smote
Down some hope, rose and grasped like
a hand at his throat,
To stifle and strangle him.
Gasping already
For relief from himself, with a footstep
unsteady,
He passed from his chamber. He felt
both oppressed
And excited. The letter he thrust in
his breast,
And, in search of fresh air and of soli-
tude, passed
The long lime-trees of Serchon. His
footsteps at last
Reached a bare narrow heath by the skirts
of a wood:
It was sombre and silent, and suited his
mood.
By a mineral spring, long unused, now
unknown,
Stood a small ruined abbey. He reached
it, sat down
On a fragment of stone, 'mid the wild
weed and thistle,
And read over again that perplexing
epistle.

XI.

In re-reading that letter, there rolled
from his mind
The raw mist of resentment which first
made him blind
To the pathos breathed through it.
Tears rose in his eyes,
And a hope sweet and strange in his
heart seemed to rise.
The truth which he saw not the first
time he read
That letter, he now saw, — that each
word betrayed

The love which the writer had sought to
conceal.

His love was received not, he could not
but feel,

For one reason alone, — that his love
was not free.

True! free yet he was not: but could
he not be

Free ere long, free as air to revoke that
farewell,

And to sanction his own hopes? he had
but to tell

The truth to Matilda, and she were the
first

To release him: he had but to wait at
the worst.

Matilda's relations would probably
snatch

Any pretext, with pleasure, to break off
a match

In which they had yielded, alone at the
whim

Of their spoiled child, a languid ap-
proval to him.

She herself, careless child! was her love
for him aught

Save the first joyous fancy succeeding the
thought

She last gave to her doll? was she able
to feel

Such a love as the love he divined in
Lucile?

He would seek her, obtain his release,
and, oh! then,

He had but to fly to Lucile, and again
claim the love which his heart would be
free to command.

But to press on Lucile any claim to her
hand,

Or even to seek, or to see her, before
He could say, "I am free! free, Lucile,
to implore

That great blessing on life you alone can
confer,"

'T were dishonor in him, 't would be in-
sult to her.

Thus still with the letter outspread on
his knee

He followed so fondly his own reverie,
That he felt not the angry regard of a
man

Fixed upon him; he saw not a face
stern and wan

Turned towards him; he heard not a
footstep that passed

And repassed the lone spot where he
stood, till at last

A hoarse voice aroused him.

He looked up and saw,
On the bare heath before him, the Duc
de Luvois.

XII.

With aggressive ironical tones, and a
look

Of concentrated insolent challenge, the
Duke

Addressed to Lord Alfred some sneering
allusion

To "the doubtless sublime reveries his
intrusion

Had, he feared, interrupted. Milord
would do better,

He fancied, however, to fold up a letter
The writing of which was too well known,
in fact,

His remark as he passed to have failed
to attract."

XIII.

It was obvious to Alfred the Frenchman
was bent

Upon picking a quarrel! and doubtless
't was meant

From *him* to provoke it by sneers such
as these.

A moment sufficed his quick instinct to
seize

The position. He felt that he could not
expose

His own name, or Lucile's, or Matilda's,
to those

Idle tongues that would bring down
upon him the ban

Of the world, if he now were to fight
with this man.

And indeed, when he looked in the
Duke's haggard face,

He was pained by the change there he
could not but trace.

And he almost felt pity.
He therefore put by

Each remark from the Duke with some
careless reply,

And coldly, but courteously, waving
away

The ill-humor the Duke seemed resolved
to display,

Rose, and turned, with a stern saluta-
tion, aside.

XIV.

Then the Duke put himself in the path,
made one stride

In advance, raised a hand, fixed upon
him his eyes,

And said . . .
"Hold, Lord Alfred! Away with
disguise!

I will own that I sought you a moment
ago,

To fix on you a quarrel. I still can do
so

Upon any excuse. I prefer to be frank.
I admit not a rival in fortune or rank

To the hand of a woman, whatever be
hers

Or her suitor's. I love the Comtesse de
Nevers.

I believed, ere you crossed me, and still
have the right

To believe, that she would have been
mine. To her sight

You return, and the woman is suddenly
changed.

You step in between us: her heart is
estranged.

You! who now are betrothed to another,
I know:

You! whose name with Lucile's nearly
ten years ago

Was coupled by ties which you broke:
you! the man

I reproached on the day our acquaint-
ance began:

You! that left her so lightly, — I can-
not believe

That you love, as I love, her; nor can
I conceive

You, indeed, have the right so to love
her.

"Milord

I will not thus tamely concede, at your
word,

What, a few days ago, I believed to be
mine!

I shall yet persevere: I shall yet be, in
fine,

A rival you dare not despise. It is plain
That to settle this contest there can but
remain

One way — need I say what it is?"

XV.

Not unmoved
With regretful respect for the earnest-
ness proved

By the speech he had heard, Alfred Var-
grave replied

In words which he trusted might yet
turn aside

The quarrel from which he felt bound to abstain,
And, with stately urbanity, strove to explain
To the Duke that he too (a fair rival at worst !)
Had not been accepted.

XVI.

"Accepted ! say first
Are you free to have offered ?"
Lord Alfred was mute.

XVII.

"Ah, you dare not reply !" cried the Duke. "Why dispute,
Why palter with me ? You are silent ! and why ?
Because, in your conscience, you cannot deny
'T was from vanity, wanton and cruel withal,
And the wish an ascendancy lost to recall,
That you stepped in between me and her. If, milord,
You be really sincere, I ask only one word.
Say at once you renounce her. At once, on my part,
I will ask your forgiveness with all truth of heart,
And there can be no quarrel between us. Say on !"
Lord Alfred grew galled and impatient. This tone
Roused a strong irritation he could not repress.
"You have not the right, sir," he said, "and still less
The power, to make terms and conditions with me.
I refuse to reply."

XVIII.

As diviners may see
Fates they cannot avert in some figure occult,
He foresaw in a moment each evil result
Of the quarrel now imminent.
There, face to face,
'Mid the ruins and tombs of a long-perished race,
With, for witness, the stern Autumn
Sky overhead,

And beneath them, unnoticed, the graves,
and the dead,
Those two men had met, as it were on the ridge
Of that perilous, narrow, invisible bridge
Dividing the Past from the Future, so small
That, if one should pass over, the other must fall.

XIX.

On the ear, at that moment, the sound of a hoof,
Urged with speed, sharply smote ; and from under the roof
Of the forest in view, where the skirts of it verged
On the heath where they stood, at full gallop emerged
A horseman.
A guide he appeared, by the sash
Of red silk round the waist, and the long leathern lash
With the short wooden handle, slung crosswise behind
The short jacket ; the loose canvastrouser, confined
By the long boots ; the woollen capote ; and the rein,
A mere hempen cord on a curb.

Up the plain

He wheeled his horse, white with the foam on his flank,
Leaped the rivulet lightly, turned sharp from the bank,
And, approaching the Duke, raised his woollen capote,
Bowed low in the selle, and delivered a note.

XX.

The two stood astonished. The Duke, with a gest
Of apology, turned, stretched his hand, and possessed
Himself of the letter, changed color, and tore
The page open, and read.

Ere a moment was o'er
His whole aspect changed. A light rose to his eyes,
And a smile to his lips. While with startled surprise
Lord Alfred yet watched him, he turned on his heel,
And said gayly, "A pressing request from Lucile !

You are quite right, Lord Alfred ! fair rivals at worst,
Our relative place may perchance be reversed.
You are not accepted — nor free to propose !
I, perchance, am accepted already ; who knows ?
I had warned you, milord, I should still persevere.
This letter — but stay ! you can read it — look here !"

XXI.

It was now Alfred's turn to feel roused and enraged.
But Lucile to himself was not pledged or engaged
By aught that could sanction resentment. He said
Not a word, but turned round, took the letter, and read . . .

The COMTESSE DE NEVERS to the DUC DE LUVOIS.

"SAINT SAVIOUR.

"Your letter, which followed me here, makes me stay
Till I see you again. With no moment's delay
I entreat, I conjure you, by all that you feel
Or profess, to come to me directly."
"LUCILE."

XXII.

"Your letter !" He then had been writing to her !
Coldly shrugging his shoulders, Lord Alfred said, "Sir,
Do not let me detain you !"
The Duke smiled and bowed ;
Placed the note in his bosom ; addressed, half aloud,
A few words to the messenger : . . .
"Say your despatch
Will be answered ere nightfall" ; then glanced at his watch,
And turned back to the Baths.

XXIII.

Alfred Vargrave stood still,
Torn, distracted in heart, and divided in will.
He turned to Lucile's farewell letter to him,

And read over her words ; rising tears made them dim ;
"Doubt is over : my future is fixed now," they said,
"My course is decided." Her course ? what ! to wed
With this insolent rival ! With that thought there shot
Through his heart an acute jealous anguish. But not
Even thus could his clear worldly sense quite excuse
Those strange words to the Duke. She was free to refuse
Himself, free the Duke to accept, it was true :
Even then, though, this eager and strange rendezvous
How imprudent ! To some unfrequented lone inn,
And so late (for the night was about to begin) —
She, companionless there ! — had she bidden that man ?
A fear, vague, and formless, and horrible, ran
Through his heart.

XXIV.

At that moment he looked up, and saw,
Riding fast through the forest, the Duc de Luvois,
Who waved his hand to him, and sped out of sight.
The day was descending. He felt 'twould be night
Ere that man reached Saint Saviour.

XXV.

He walked on, but not
Back toward Serchon : he walked on, but knew not in what
Direction, nor yet with what object, indeed,
He was walking ; but still he walked on without heed.

XXVI.

The day had been sullen ; but, towards his decline,
The sun sent a stream of wild light up the pine.
Darkly denting the red light revealed at its back,
The old ruined abbey rose roofless and black.

The spring that yet oozed through the
moss-paven floor
Had suggested, no doubt, to the monks
there, of yore,
The site of that refuge where, back to
its God
How many a heart, now at rest 'neath
the sod,
Had borne from the world all the same
wild unrest
That now preyed on his own!

XXVII.

By the thoughts in his breast
With varying impulse divided and torn,
He traversed the scant heath, and
reached the forlorn
Autumn woodland, in which but a short
while ago
He had seen the Duke rapidly enter;
and so
He too entered. The light waned
around him, and passed
Into darkness. The wrathful, red Oc-
cident cast
One glare of vindictive inquiry behind,
As the last light of day from the high
wood declined,
And the great forest sighed its farewell
to the beam,
And far off on the stillness the voice of
the stream
Fell faintly.

XXVIII.

O Nature, how fair is thy face,
And how light is thy heart, and how
friendless thy grace!
Thou false mistress of man! thou dost
sport with him lightly
In his hours of ease and enjoyment; and
brightly
Dost thou smile to his smile; to his joys
thou inclinest,
But his sorrows, thou knowest them
not, nor divinest.
While he woos, thou art wanton; thou
lettest him love thee;
But thou art not his friend, for his grief
cannot move thee;
And at last, when he sickens and dies,
what dost thou?
All as gay are thy garments, as careless
thy brow,
And thou laughest and toyst with any
new comer,

Not a tear more for winter, a smile less
for summer!
Hast thou never an anguish to heave
the heart under
That fair breast of thine, O thou feminine
wonder!
For all those — the young, and the fair,
and the strong,
Who have loved thee, and lived with
thee gayly and long,
And who now on thy bosom lie dead?
and their deeds
And their days are forgotten! O, hast
thou no weeds
And not one year of mourning, — one out
of the many
That deck thy new bridal forever, —
nor any
Regrets for thy lost loves, concealed from
the new,
O thou widow of earth's generations?
Go to!
If the sea and the night wind know aught
of these things,
They do not reveal it. We are not thy
kings

CANTO VI.

I.

"THE huntsman has ridden too far on
the chase,
And eldrich, and eerie, and strange is
the place!
The castle betokens a date long gone by.
He crosses the court-yard with curious
eye:
He wanders from chamber to chamber,
and yet
From strangeness to strangeness his foot-
steps are set;
And the whole place grows wilder and
wilder, and less
Like aught seen before. Each in obsolete
dress,
Strange portraits regard him with looks
of surprise,
Strange forms from the arras start forth
to his eyes;
Strange epigraphs, blazoned, burn out
of the wall:
The spell of a wizard is over it all.
In her chamber, enchanted, the Princess
is sleeping

The sleep which for centuries she has
been keeping.
If she smile in her sleep, it must be to
some lover
Whose lost golden locks the long grasses
now cover:
If she moan in her dream, it must be to
deplore
Some grief which the world cares to hear
of no more.
But how fair is her forehead, how calm
seems her cheek!
And how sweet must that voice be, if
once she would speak!
He looks and he loves her; but knows
he (not he!)
The clew to unravel this old mystery?
And he stoops to those shut lips. The
shapes on the wall,
The mute men in armor around him,
and all
The weird figures frown, as though striv-
ing to say,
'Halt! invade not the Past, reckless child
of To-day!
And give not, O madman! the heart in
thy breast
To a phantom, the soul of whose sense is
possessed
By an Age not thine own!'
"But unconscious is he,
And he heeds not the warning, he cares
not to see
Aught but *one* form before him!
"Rash, wild words are o'er;
And the vision is vanished from sight
evermore!
And the gray morning sees, as it drearily
moves
O'er a land long deserted, a madman
that roves
Through a ruin, and seeks to recapture
a dream.
Lost to life and its uses, withdrawn from
the scheme
Of man's waking existence, he wanders
apart."
And this is an old fairy-tale of the
heart.
It is told in all lands, in a different
tongue;
Told with tears by the old, heard with
smiles by the young.
And the tale to each heart unto which
it is known
Has a different sense. It has puzzled
my own.

II.

Eugène de Luvois was a man who, in
part
From strong physical health, and that
vigor of heart
Which physical health gives, and partly,
perchance,
From a generous vanity native to France,
With the heart of a hunter, whatever
the quarry,
Pursued it, too hotly impatient to tarry
Or turn, till he took it. His trophies
were trifles:
But trifler he was not. When rose-leaves
it rifles,
No less than when oak-trees it ruins, the
wind
Its pleasure pursues with impetuous
mind.
Both Eugène de Luvois and Lord Alfred
had been
Men of pleasure: but men's pleasant
vices, which, seen
Floating faint, in the sunshine of Alfred's
soft mood,
Seemed amiable foibles, by Luvois pur-
sued
With impetuous passion, seemed semi-
Satanic.
Half pleased you see brooks play with
pebbles; in panic
You watch them whirled down by the
torrent.
In truth,
To the sacred political creed of his youth
The century which he was born to de-
nied
All realization. Its generous pride
To degenerate protest on all things was
sunk;
Its principles each to a prejudice shrunk.
Down the path of a life that led no-
where he trod,
Where his whims were his guides, and
his will was his god,
And his pastime his purpose.
From boyhood possessed
Of inherited wealth, he had learned to
invest
Both his wealth and those passions wealth
frees from the cage
Which penury locks, in each vice of an
age
All the virtues of which, by the creed
he revered,
Were to him illegitimate.
Thus, he appeared

The spring that yet oozed through the
moss-paven floor
Had suggested, no doubt, to the monks
there, of yore,
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Both his wealth and those passions wealth
frees from the cage
Which penury locks, in each vice of an
age
All the virtues of which, by the creed
he revered,
Were to him illegitimate.
Thus, he appeared

To the world what the world chose to
have him appear, —
The frivolous tyrant of Fashion, a
mere
Reformer in coats, cards, and carriages!
Still
'T was this vigor of nature, and tension
of will,
That found for the first time — perchance
for the last —
In Lucile what they lacked yet to free
from the Past,
Force, and faith, in the Future.

And so, in his mind,
To the anguish of losing the woman was
joined
The terror of missing his life's destina-
tion,
Which in her had its mystical repre-
sentation.

III.

And truly, the thought of it, scaring
him, passed
O'er his heart, while he now through the
twilight rode fast.
As a shade from the wing of some great
bird obscene
In a wide silent land may be suddenly
seen,
Darkening over the sands, where it
startles and scares
Some traveller strayed in the waste un-
aware,
So that thought more than once darkened
over his heart
For a moment, and rapidly seemed to
depart.
Fast and furious he rode through the
thickets which rose
Up the shaggy hillside: and the quarrel-
ling crows
Clanged above him, and clustering down
the dim air
Dropped into the dark woods. By fits
here and there
Shepherd fires faintly gleamed from the
valleys. O, how
He envied the wings of each wild bird,
as now
He urged the steed over the dizzy as-
cent
Of the mountain! Behind him a mur-
mur was sent
From the torrent, — before him a sound
from the tracts

Of the woodlands that waved o'er the
wild cataracts,
And the loose earth and loose stones
rolled momentarily down
From the hoofs of his steed to abysses
unknown.
The red day had fallen beneath the black
woods,
And the Powers of the night through
the vast solitudes
Walked abroad and conversed with each
other. The trees
Were in sound and in motion, and mut-
tered like seas
In Elfland. The road through the for-
est was hollowed.
On he sped through the darkness, as
though he were followed
Fast, fast by the Erl King!

The wild wizard-work
Of the forest at last opened sharp, o'er
the fork

Of a savage ravine, and behind the black
stems

Of the last trees, whose leaves in the
light gleamed like gems,

Broke the broad moon above the volu-
minous

Rock-chaos, — the Hecate of that Tar-
tarus!

With his horse reeking white, he at last
reached the door

Of a small mountain inn, on the brow
of a hoar

Craggy promontory, o'er a fissure as
grim,

Through which, ever roaring, there
leaped o'er the limb

Of the rent rock a torrent of water, from
sight,

Into pools that were feeding the roots
of the night.

A balcony hung o'er the water. Above
In a glimmering casement a shade
seemed to move.

At the door the old negress was nodding
her head

As he reached it. "My mistress awaits
you," she said.

And up the rude stairway of creaking
pine rafter

He followed her silent. A few moments
after,

His heart almost stunned him, his head
seemed to reel,

For a door closed — Luvois was alone
with Lucile.

IV.

In a gray travelling dress, her dark hair
unconfined
Streaming o'er it, and tossed now and
then by the wind
From the lattice, that waved the dull
flame in a spire
From a brass lamp before her, — a faint
hectic fire
On her cheek, to her eyes lent the lustre
of fever.
They seemed to have wept themselves
wider than ever,
Those dark eyes, — so dark and so deep!
"You relent?"
And your plans have been changed by
the letter I sent?"
There his voice sank, borne down by a
strong inward strife.

LUCILE.

Your letter! yes, Duke. For it threat-
ens man's life, —
Woman's honor.

LUVOIS.

The last, madam, *not!*

LUCILE.

Both. I glance
At your own words; blush, son of the
knighthood of France,
As I read them! You say in this let-
ter . . .

"I know

Why now you refuse me; 't is (is it not
so?)

For the man who has trifled before, wan-
tonly,

And now trifles again with the heart you
deny

To myself. But he shall not! By man's
last wild law,

I will seize on the right (the right, Duc
de Luvois!)

To avenge for you, woman, the past, and
to give

To the future its freedom. That man
shall not live

To make you as wretched as you have
made me!"

LUVOIS.

Well, madam, in those words what word
do you see
That threatens the honor of woman?

LUCILE.

See! . . . what,
What word, do you ask? Every word!
would you not,
Had I taken your hand thus, have felt
that your name
Was soiled and dishonored by more than
mere shame
If the woman that bore it had first been
the cause
Of the crime which in these words is
menaced? You pause!
Woman's honor, you ask? Is there, sir,
no dishonor
In the smile of a woman, when men,
gazing on her,
Can shudder, and say, "In that smile
is a grave"?
No! you can have no cause, Duke, for
no right you have
In the contest you menace. That con-
test but draws
Every right into ruin. By all human
laws
Of man's heart I forbid it, by all sancti-
ties
Of man's social honor!
The Duke drooped his eyes.
"I obey you," he said, "but let woman
beware
How she plays fast and loose thus with
human despair,
And the storm in man's heart. Madam,
yours was the right,
When you saw that I hoped, to extinguish
hope quite,
But you should from the first have done
this, for I feel
That you knew from the first that I
loved you."

Lucile

This sudden reproach seemed to startle.
She raised
A slow, wistful regard to his features,
and gazed
On them silent awhile. His own looks
were downcast.
Through her heart, whence its first wild
alarm was now passed,
Pity crept, and perchance o'er her con-
science a tear,
Falling softly, awoke it.

However severe,

Were they unjust, these sudden up-
braidings, to her?
Had she lightly misconstrued this man's
character,

Which had seemed, even when most impassioned it seemed,
 Too self-conscious to lose all in love? Had she deemed
 That this airy, gay, insolent man of the world,
 So proud of the place the world gave him, held furl'd
 In his bosom no passion which once shaken wide
 Might tug, till it snapped, that erect lofty pride?
 Were those elements in him, which once roused to strife
 Overthrow a whole nature, and change a whole life?
 There are two kinds of strength. One, the strength of the river
 Which through continents pushes its pathway forever
 To fling its fond heart in the sea; if it lose
 This, the aim of its life, it is lost to its use,
 It goes mad, is diffused into deluge, and dies.
 The other, the strength of the sea; which supplies
 Its deep life from mysterious sources, and draws
 The river's life into its own life, by laws which it heeds not. The difference in each case is this:
 The river is lost, if the ocean it miss;
 If the sea miss the river, what matter? The sea
 Is the sea still, forever. Its deep heart will be
 Self-sufficing, unconscious of loss as of yore;
 Its sources are infinite; still to the shore,
 With no diminution of pride, it will say,
 "I am here; I, the sea! stand aside, and make way!"
 Was his love, then, the love of the river? and she,
 Had she taken that love for the love of the sea?

V.

At that thought, from her aspect whatever had been
 Stern or haughty departed; and, humbled in mien,
 She approached him, and brokenly murmured, as though

To herself more than him, "Was I wrong? is it so?
 Hear me, Duke! you must feel that, whatever you deem
 Your right to reproach me in this, your esteem
 I may claim on *one* ground, — I at least am sincere.
 You say that to me from the first it was clear
 That you loved me. But what if this knowledge were known
 At a moment in life when I felt most alone,
 And least able to be so? A moment, in fact,
 When I strove from one haunting regret to retract
 And emancipate life, and once more to fulfil
 Woman's destinies, duties, and hopes? would you still
 So bitterly blame me, Eugène de Luvois, if I hoped to see all this, or deemed that I saw
 For a moment the promise of this, in the plighted
 Affection of one who, in nature, united
 So much that from others affection might claim,
 If only affection were free? Do you blame
 The hope of that moment? I deemed my heart free
 From all, saving sorrow. I deemed that in me
 There was yet strength to mould it once more to my will,
 To uplift it once more to my hope. Do you still
 Blame me, Duke, that I did not then bid you refrain
 From hope? alas! I too then hoped!"

LUVOIS.

O, again,
 Yet again, say that thrice-blessed word!
 say, Lucile,
 That you then deigned to hope —

LUCILE.

Yes! to hope I could feel,
 And could give to you, that without which, all else given
 Were but to deceive, and to injure you even: —

A heart free from thoughts of another.
 Say, then,
 Do you blame that one hope?

LUVOIS.

O Lucile!

"Say again,"

She resumed, gazing down, and with faltering tone,
 "Do you blame me that, when I at last had to own
 To my heart that the hope it had cherished was o'er,
 And forever, I said to you then, 'Hope no more!'
 I myself hoped no more!"
 With but ill-suppressed wrath
 The Duke answered . . . "What, then! he recrosses your path
 This man, and you have but to see him, despite
 Of his troth to another, to take back that light
 Worthless heart to your own, which he wronged years ago!"
 Lucile faintly, brokenly murmured, . . .
 "No! no!
 'T is not that — but alas! — but I cannot conceal
 That I have not forgotten the past — but I feel
 That I cannot accept all these gifts on your part, —
 In return for what . . . ah, Duke, what is it? . . . a heart
 Which is only a ruin!"

With words warm and wild,
 "Though a ruin it be, trust me yet to rebuild
 And restore it," Luvois cried; "though ruined it be,
 Since so dear is that ruin, ah, yield it to me!"
 He approached her. She shrank back.
 The grief in her eyes
 Answered, "No!"
 An emotion more fierce seemed to rise
 And to break into flame, as though fired by the light
 Of that look, in his heart. He exclaimed,
 "Am I right?
 You reject me! accept him?"
 "I have not done so,"
 She said firmly. He hoarsely resumed,
 "Not yet, — no!"

But can you with accents as firm promise me
 That you will not accept him?"
 "Accept? Is he free?
 Free to offer?" she said.
 "You evade me, Lucile,"
 He replied; "ah, you will not avow what you feel!
 He might make himself free? O, you blush, — turn away!
 Dare you openly look in my face, lady, say!
 While you deign to reply to one question from me?
 I may hope not, you tell me: but tell me, may he?
 What! silent? I alter my question.
 If quite
 Freed in faith from this troth, might he hope then?"
 "He might,"
 She said softly.

VI.

Those two whispered words, in his breast,
 As he heard them, in one maddening moment releast
 All that's evil and fierce in man's nature, to crush
 And extinguish in man all that's good. In the rush
 Of wild jealousy, all the fierce passions that waste
 And darken and devastate intellect, chased
 From its realm human reason. The wild animal
 In the bosom of man was set free. And of all
 Human passions the fiercest, fierce jealousy, fierce
 As the fire, and more wild than the whirlwind, to pierce
 And to rend, rushed upon him; fierce jealousy, swelled
 By all passions bred from it, and ever impelled
 To involve all things else in the anguish within it,
 And on others inflict its own pangs!
 At that minute
 What passed through his mind, who shall say? who may tell
 The dark thoughts of man's heart, which the red glare of hell
 Can illumine alone?

He stared wildly around
That lone place, so lonely! That silence!
no sound
Reached that room, through the dark
evening air, save the drear
Drip and roar of the cataract ceaseless
and near!

It was midnight all round on the weird
silent weather;

Deep midnight in him! They two, —
lone and together,

Himself, and that woman defenceless
before him!

The triumph and bliss of his rival flashed
o'er him.

The abyss of his own black despair seemed
to ope

At his feet, with that awful exclusion of
hope

Which Dante read over the city of doom.
All the Tarquin passed into his soul in
the gloom,

And, uttering words he dared never re-
call,

Words of insult and menace, he thun-
dered down all

The brewed storm-cloud within him:
its flashes scorched blind

His own senses. His spirit was driven
on the wind

Of a reckless emotion beyond his con-
trol;

A torrent seemed loosened within him.
His soul

Surged up from that caldron of passion
that hissed

And seethed in his heart.

VII.

He had thrown, and had missed
His last stake.

VIII.

For, transfigured, she rose from the
place

Where he rested o'erawed: a saint's
scorn on her face;

Such a dread *vade retro* was written in
light

On her forehead, the fiend would himself,
at that sight,

Have sunk back abashed to perdition.
I know

If Lucretia at Tarquin but once had
looked so,

She had needed no dagger next morning.
She rose

And swept to the door, like that phan-
tom the snows

Feel at nightfall sweep o'er them, when
daylight is gone,

And Caucasus is with the moon all alone.
There she paused; and, as though from
immeasurable,

Insurpassable distance, she murmured —
"Farewell!"

We, alas! have mistaken each other.
Once more

Illusion, to-night, in my lifetime is o'er.
Duc de Luvois, adieu!"

From the heart-breaking gloom
Of that vacant, reproachful, and desolate
room,

He felt she was gone, — gone forever!

IX.

No word,

The sharpest that ever was edged like
a sword,

Could have pierced to his heart with
such keen accusation

As the silence, the sudden profound
isolation,

In which he remained.
"O, return; I repent!"

He exclaimed; but no sound through
the stillness was sent,

Save the roar of the water, in answer to
him,

And the beetle that, sleeping, yet hummed
her night-hymn:

An indistinct anthem, that troubled the
air

With a searching, and wistful, and ques-
tioning prayer.

"Return," sung the wandering insect.
The roar

Of the waters replied, "Nevermore!
nevermore!"

He walked to the window. The spray
on his brow

Was flung cold from the whirlpools of
water below;

The frail wooden balcony shook in the
sound

Of the torrent. The mountains gloomed
sullenly round.

A candle one ray from a closed casement
flung.

O'er the dim balustrade all bewildered
he hung,

Vaguely watching the broken and shim-
mering blink

Of the stars on the veering and vitreous
brink

Of that snake-like prone column of wa-
ter; and listing

Aloof o'er the languors of air the persist-
ing

Sharp horn of the gray gnat. Before he
relinquished

His unconscious employment, that light
was extinguished.

Wheels, at last, from the inn door
aroused him. He ran

Down the stairs; reached the door —
just to see her depart.

Down the mountain the carriage was
speeding.

X.

His heart

Pealed the knell of its last hope. He
rushed on; but whither

He knew not — on, into the dark cloudy
weather —

The midnight — the mountains — on,
over the shelf

Of the precipice — on, still — away from
himself!

Till, exhausted, he sank 'mid the dead
leaves and moss

At the mouth of the forest. A glim-
mering cross

Of gray stone stood for prayer by the
woodside. He sank

Prayerless, powerless, down at its base,
'mid the dank

Weeds and grasses; his face hid amongst
them. He knew

That the night had divided his whole
life in two.

Behind him a Past that was over for-
ever;

Before him a Future devoid of endeavor
And purpose. He felt a remorse for the
one,

Of the other a fear. What remained to
be done?

Whither now should he turn? Turn
again, as before,

To his old easy, careless existence of yore
He could not. He felt that for better
or worse

A change had passed o'er him; an angry
remorse

Of his own frantic failure and error had
marred

Such a refuge forever. The future
seemed barred

By the corpse of a dead hope o'er which
he must tread

To attain it. Life's wilderness round
him was spread.

What clew there to cling by?

He clung by a name
To a dynasty fallen forever. He came
Of an old princely house, true through
change to the race

And the sword of Saint Louis, — a faith
't were disgrace

To relinquish, and folly to live for!
Nor less

Was his ancient religion (once potent to
bless

Or to ban; and the crozier his ancestors
kneeled

To adore, when they fought for the
Cross, in hard field,

With the Crescent) become, ere it
reached him, tradition;

A mere faded badge of a social posi-
tion;

A thing to retain and say nothing about,
Lest, if used, it should draw degradation
from doubt.

Thus, the first time he sought them, the
creeds of his youth

Wholly failed the strong needs of his
manhood, in truth!

And beyond them, what region of ref-
uge? what field

For employment, this civilized age, did
it yield,

In that civilized land? or to thought?
or to action?

Blind deliriums, bewildered and endless
distraction!

Not even a desert, not even the cell
Of a hermit to flee to, wherein he might
quell

The wild devil-instincts which now, un-
represt,

Ran riot through that ruined world in
his breast.

XI.

So he lay there, like Lucifer, fresh from
the sight

Of a heaven scaled and lost; in the wide
arms of night

O'er the howling abysses of nothingness!
There

As he lay, Nature's deep voice was
teaching him prayer;

But what had he to pray to?
The winds in the woods

The voices abroad o'er those vast solitudes,
 Were in commune all round with the invisible Power
 That walked the dim world by Himself at that hour.
 But their language he had not yet learned — in despite
 Of the much he *had* learned — or forgotten it quite,
 With its once native accents. Alas! what had he
 To add to that deep-toned sublime symphony
 Of thanksgiving? . . . A fiery finger was still
 Scorching into his heart some dread sentence. His will,
 Like a wind that is put to no purpose, was wild
 At its work of destruction within him. The child
 Of an infidel age, he had been his own god,
 His own devil.
 He sat on the damp mountain sod,
 And stared sullenly up at the dark sky. The clouds
 Had heaped themselves over the bare west in crowds
 Of misshapen, incongruous portents. A green
 Streak of dreary, cold, luminous ether, between
 The base of their black barricades, and the ridge
 Of the grim world, gleamed ghastly, as under some bridge,
 Cyclop-sized, in a city of ruins o'erthrown
 By sieges forgotten, some river, unknown
 And unnamed, widens on into desolate lands.
 While he gazed, that cloud-city invisible hands
 Dismantled and rent; and revealed, through a loop
 In the breached dark, the blemished and half-broken hoop
 Of the moon, which soon silently sank; and anon
 The whole supernatural pageant was gone.
 The wide night, discomforted, conscious of loss,
 Darkened round him. One object alone — that gray cross —

Glimmered faint on the dark. Gazing up, he descried
 Through the void air, its desolate arms outstretched wide,
 As though to embrace him.
 He turned from the sight,
 Set his face to the darkness, and fled.

XII.

When the light
 Of the dawn grayly flickered and glared on the spent
 Wearied ends of the night, like a hope that is sent
 To the need of some grief when its need is the sorest,
 He was sullenly riding across the dark forest
 Toward Serchon.
 Thus riding, with eyes of defiance
 Set against the young day, as disclaiming alliance
 With aught that the day brings to man, he perceived
 Faintly, suddenly, fleetingly, through the damp-leaved
 Autumn branches that put forth gaunt arms on his way,
 The face of a man pale and wistful, and gray
 With the gray glare of morning. Eugène de Luvois,
 With the sense of a strange second-sight, when he saw
 That phantom-like face, could at once recognize,
 By the sole instinct now left to guide him, the eyes
 Of his rival, though fleeting the vision and dim,
 With a stern sad inquiry fixed keenly on him.
 And, to meet it, a lie leaped at once to his own;
 A lie born of that lying darkness now grown
 Over all in his nature! He answered that gaze
 With a look which, if ever a man's look conveys
 More intensely than words what a man means, conveyed
 Beyond doubt in its smile an announcement which said,
 "I have triumphed. The question your eyes would imply
 Comes too late, Alfred Vargrave!"

And so he rode by,
 And rode on, and rode gayly, and rode out of sight,
 Leaving that look behind him to rankle and bite.

XIII.

And it bit, and it rankled.

XIV.

Lord Alfred, scarce knowing,
 Or choosing, or heeding the way he was going,
 By one wild hope impelled, by one wild fear pursued,
 And led by one instinct, which seemed to exclude
 From his mind every human sensation, save one —
 The torture of doubt — had strayed moodily on,
 Down the highway deserted, that evening in which
 With the Duke he had parted; strayed on, through the rich
 Haze of sunset, or into the gradual night,
 Which darkened, unnoticed, the land from his sight,
 Toward Saint Saviour; nor did the changed aspect of all
 The wild scenery round him avail to recall
 To his senses their normal perceptions, until,
 As he stood on the black shaggy brow of the hill
 At the mouth of the forest, the moon, which had hung
 Two dark hours in a cloud, slipped on fire from among
 The rent vapors, and sunk o'er the ridge of the world.
 Then he lifted his eyes, and saw round him unfarled,
 In one moment of splendor, the leagues of dark trees,
 And the long rocky line of the wild Pyrenees.
 And he knew by the milestone scored rough on the face
 Of the bare rock, he was but two hours from the place
 Where Lucile and Luvois must have met. This same track
 The Duke must have traversed, perforce, to get back

To Serchon; not yet then the Duke had returned!
 He listened, he looked up the dark, but discerned
 Not a trace, not a sound of a horse by the way.
 He knew that the night was approaching to day.
 He resolved to proceed to Saint Saviour. The morn
 Which, at last, through the forest broke chill and forlorn,
 Revealed to him, riding toward Serchon, the Duke.
 'T was then that the two men exchanged look for look.

XV.

And the Duke's rankled in him.

XVI.

He rushed on. He tore
 His path through the thicket. Hereached the inn door,
 Roused the yet drowsing porter, reluctant to rise,
 And inquired for the Countess. The man rubbed his eyes.
 The Countess was gone. And the Duke? The man stared
 A sleepy inquiry. With accents that scared
 The man's dull sense awake, "He, the stranger," he cried,
 "Who had been there that night!"
 The man grinned and replied,
 With a vacant intelligence, "He, O ay, ay!
 He went after the lady."
 No further reply
 Could he give. Alfred Vargrave demanded no more,
 Flung a coin to the man, and so turned from the door.
 "What! the Duke then the night in that lone inn had passed?
 In that lone inn — with her!" Was that look he had cast
 When they met in the forest, that look which remained
 On his mind with its terrible smile, thus explained?

XVII.

The day was half turned to the evening, before

He re-entered Serchon, with a heart sick
and sore.
In the midst of a light crowd of babblers,
his look,
By their voices attracted, distinguished
the Duke,
Gay, insolent, noisy, with eyes sparkling
bright,
With laughter, shrill, airy, continuous.

Right
Through the throng Alfred Vargrave,
with swift sombre stride,
Glided on. The Duke noticed him,
turned, stepped aside,
And, cordially grasping his hand, whis-
pered low,

"O, how right have you been! There
can never be — no,
Never — any more contest between us!
Milord,
Let us henceforth be friends!"

Having uttered that word,
He turned lightly round on his heel,
and again
His gay laughter was heard, echoed loud
by that train
Of his young imitators.

Lord Alfred stood still,
Rooted, stunned to the spot. He felt
weary and ill,
Out of heart with his own heart, and
sick to the soul,
With a dull, stifling anguish he could
not control.
Does he hear in a dream, through the
buzz of the crowd,
The Duke's blithe associates, babbling
aloud

Some comment upon his gay humor that
day?

He never was gayer: what makes him
so gay?

'Tis, no doubt, say the flatterers, flat-
tering in tune,

Some vestal whose virtue no tongue dare
impugn

Has at last found a Mars, — who, of
course, shall be nameless,

The vestal that yields to Mars *only* is
blameless!

Hark! hears he a name which, thus
syllabled, stirs

All his heart into tumult? . . . Lucile
de Nevers

With the Duke's coupled gayly, in some
laughing, light,

Free allusion? Not so as might give
him the right

To turn fiercely round on the speaker,
but yet

To a trite and irreverent compliment
set!

XVIII.

Slowly, slowly, usurping that place in
his soul

Where the thought of Lucile was en-
shrined, did there roll

Back again, back again, on its smooth
downward course

O'er his nature, with gathered momentum
and force,

THE WORLD.

XIX.

"No!" he muttered, "she cannot have
sinned!

True! women there are (self-named
women of mind!)

Who love rather liberty — liberty, yes!
To choose and to leave — than the legal-
ized stress

Of the loveliest marriage. But she —
is she so?

I will not believe it. Lucile? O no,
no!

Not Lucile!

"But the world? and, ah, what would
it say?

O the look of that man, and his laughter,
to-day!

The gossip's light question! the slan-
derous jest!

She is right! no, we could not be happy.
'Tis best

As it is. I will write to her, — write,
O my heart!

And accept her farewell. *Our* farewell!
must we part, —

Part thus, then, — forever, Lucile? Is
it so?

Yes! I feel it. We could not be happy,
I know.

'T was a dream! we must waken!"

XX.

With head bowed, as though
By the weight of the heart's resignation,
and slow

Moody footsteps, he turned to his inn.
Drawn apart

From the gate, in the court-yard, and
ready to start,

Postboys mounted, portmanteaus packed
up and made fast,

A travelling-carriage, unnoticed, he
passed.

He ordered his horse to be ready anon:
Sent, and paid, for the reckoning, and
slowly passed on,

And ascended the staircase, and entered
his room.

It was twilight. The chamber was dark
in the gloom

Of the evening. He listlessly kindled
a light,

On the mantel-piece; there a large card
caught his sight, —

A large card, a stout card, well printed
and plain,

Nothing flourishing, flimsy, affected, or
vain.

It gave a respectable look to the slab
That it lay on. The name was —

SIR RIDLEY MACNAB.

Full familiar to him was the name that
he saw,

For 't was that of his own future uncle-
in-law,

Mrs. Darcy's rich brother, the banker,
well known

As wearing the longest-phyacteried
gown

Of all the rich Pharisees England can
boast of;

A shrewd Puritan Scot, whose sharp
wits made the most of

This world and the next; having largely
invested

Not only where treasure is never mo-
lest

By thieves, moth, or rust; but on this
earthly ball

Where interest was high, and security
small,

Of mankind there was never a theory
yet

Not by some individual instance upset:
And so to that sorrowful verse of the
Psalm

Which declares that the wicked expand
like the palm

In a world where the righteous are
stunted and pent,

A cheering exception did Ridley pre-
sent.

Like the worthy of Uz, Heaven prospered
his piety.

The leader of every religious society,
Christian knowledge he labored through
life to promote

With personal profit, and knew how to
quote

Both the Stocks and the Scripture, with
equal advantage

To himself and admiring friends, in this
Cant-Age.

XXI.

Whilst over this card Alfred vacantly
brooded,

A waiter his head through the doorway
protruded;

"Sir Ridley MacNab with Milord wished
to speak."

Alfred Vargrave could feel there were
tears on his cheek;

He brushed them away with a gesture
of pride.

He glanced at the glass; when his own
face he eyed,

He was scared by its pallor. Inclining
his head,

He with tones calm, unshaken, and sil-
very, said,

"Sir Ridley may enter."

In three minutes more
That benign apparition appeared at the
door.

Sir Ridley, released for a while from the
cares

Of business, and minded to breathe the
pure airs

Of the blue Pyrenees, and enjoy his re-
lease,

In company there with his sister and
niece,

Found himself now at Serchon, — dis-
tributing tracts,

Sowing seed by the way, and collecting
new facts

For Exeter Hall; he was starting that
night

For Bigorre: he had heard, to his cordial
delight,

That Lord Alfred was there, and, him-
self, setting out

For the same destination: impatient,
no doubt!
Here some commonplace compliments as
to "the marriage"
Through his speech trickled softly, like
honey: his carriage
Was ready. A storm seemed to threaten
the weather:
If his young friend agreed, why not
travel together?
With a footstep uncertain and restless,
a frown
Of perplexity, during this speech, up
and down
Alfred Vargrave was striding; but, after
a pause
And a slight hesitation, the which seemed
to cause
Some surprise to Sir Ridley, he answered,
—"My dear
Sir Ridley, allow me a few moments
here—
Half an hour at the most—to conclude
an affair
Of a nature so urgent as hardly to spare
My presence (which brought me, indeed,
to this spot),
Before I accept your kind offer."
"Why not?"
Said Sir Ridley, and smiled. Alfred
Vargrave, before
Sir Ridley observed it, had passed through
the door.
A few moments later, with footsteps re-
vealing
Intense agitation of uncontrolled feel-
ing,
He was rapidly pacing the garden below.
What passed through his mind then is
more than I know.
But before one half-hour into darkness
had fled,
In the courtyard he stood with Sir Rid-
ley. His tread
Was firm and composed. Not a sign on
his face
Betrayed there the least agitation. "The
place
You so kindly have offered," he said, "I
accept."
And he stretched out his hand. The
two travellers stepped
Smiling into the carriage.
And thus, out of sight,
They drove down the dark road, and
into the night.

XXII.

Sir Ridley was one of those wise men
who, so far
As their power of saying it goes, say
with Zophar,
"We, no doubt, are the people, and
wisdom shall die with us!"
Though of wisdom like theirs there is no
small supply with us.
Side by side in the carriage ensconced,
the two men
Began to converse, somewhat drowsily,
when
Alfred suddenly thought,—"Here's a
man of ripe age,
At my side, by his fellows reputed as
sage,
Who looks happy, and therefore who
must have been wise:
Suppose I with caution reveal to his
eyes
Some few of the reasons which make me
believe
That I neither am happy nor wise?
't would relieve
And enlighten, perchance, my own dark-
ness and doubt."
For which purpose a feeler he softly put
out.
It was snapped up at once.
"What is truth?" jesting Pilate
Asked, and passed from the question at
once with a smile at
Its utter futility. Had he addressed it
To Ridley MacNab, he at least had con-
fessed it
Admitted discussion! and certainly no
man
Could more promptly have answered the
sceptical Roman
Than Ridley. Hear some street astron-
omer talk!
Grant him two or three hearers, a morsel
of chalk,
And forthwith on the pavement he'll
sketch you the scheme
Of the heavens. Then hear him en-
large on his theme!
Not afraid of La Place, nor of Arago, he!
He'll prove you the whole plan in plain
A B C.
Here's your sun,—call him A; B's the
moon; it is clear
How the rest of the alphabet brings up
the rear
Of the planets. Now ask Arago, ask
La Place,

(Your sages, who speak with the heavens
face to face!)
Their science in plain A B C to accord
To your point-blank inquiry, my friends!
not a word
Will you get for your pains from their
sad lips. Alas!
Not a drop from the bottle that's quite
full will pass.
'T is the half-empty vessel that freest
emits
The water that's in it. 'T is thus with
men's wits;
Or at least with their knowledge. A
man's capability
Of imparting to others a truth with
facility
Is proportioned forever with painful
exactness
To the portable nature, the vulgar com-
pactness,
The minuteness in size, or the lightness
in weight
Of the truth he imparts. So small coins
circulate
More freely than large ones. A beggar
asks alms,
And we fling him a sixpence, nor feel
any qualms;
But if every street charity shook an
investment
Or each beggar to clothe we must strip
off a vestment,
The length of the process would limit
the act;
And therefore the truth that's summed
up in a tract
Is most lightly dispensed.
As for Alfred, indeed,
On what spoonfuls of truth he was suf-
fered to feed
By Sir Ridley, I know not. This only
I know,
That the two men thus talking contin-
ued to go
Onward somehow, together,—on into
the night,—
The midnight,—in which they escape
from our sight.

XXIII.

And meanwhile a world had been changed
in its place,
And those glittering chains that o'er
blue balmy space
Hang the blessing of darkness, had drawn
out of sight,

To solace unseen hemispheres, the soft
night;
And the dew of the dayspring benignly
descended,
And the fair morn to all things new sanc-
tion extended,
In the smile of the East. And the lark
soaring on,
Lost in light, shook the dawn with a
song from the sun.
And the world laughed.
It wanted but two rosy hours
From the noon, when they passed through
the thick passion-flowers
Of the little wild garden that dimpled
before
The small house where their carriage
now stopped, at Bigorre.
And more fair than the flowers, more
fresh than the dew,
With her white morning robe fitting
joyously through
The dark shrubs with which the soft
hillside was clothed,
Alfred Vargrave perceived, where he
paused, his betrothed.
Matilda sprang to him, at once, with a
face
Of such sunny sweetness, such gladness,
such grace,
And radiant confidence, childlike delight,
That his whole heart upbraided itself at
that sight.
And he murmured, or sighed, "O, how
could I have strayed
From this sweet child, or suffered in
aught to invade
Her young claim on my life, though it
were for an hour,
The thought of another?"
"Look up, my sweet flower!"
He whispered her softly, "my heart
unto thee
Is returned, as returns to the rose the
wild bee!"
"And will wander no more!" laughed
Matilda.
"No more,"
He repeated. And, low to himself,
"Yes, 'tis o'er!"
My course, too, is decided, Lucile!
Was I blind
To have dreamed that these clever French-
women of mind
Could satisfy simply a plain English
heart,
Or sympathize with it?"

XXIV.

And here the first part
Of this drama is over. The curtain falls
furled
On the actors within it,— the Heart and
the World.
Wooded and woeful have played with the
riddle of life,—
Have they solved it?
Appear! answer, Husband and Wife!

XXV.

Yet, ere bidding farewell to Lucile de
Nevers,
Hear her own heart's farewell in this
letter of hers.

*The COMTESSE DE NEVERS to a FRIEND
IN INDIA.*

"Once more, O my friend, to your arms
and your heart,
And the places of old . . . never, never
to part!
Once more to the palm and the fountain!
Once more
To the land of my birth, and the deep
skies of yore!
From the cities of Europe, pursued by
the fret
Of their turmoil wherever my footsteps
are set;
From the children that cry for the birth,
and behold,
There is no strength to bear them,— old
Time is so old!
From the world's weary masters, that
come upon earth
Sapped and mined by the fever they
bear from their birth;
From the men of small stature, mere
parts of a crowd,
Born too late, when the strength of the
world hath been bowed;
Back,— back to the Orient, from whose
sunbright womb
Sprang the giants which now are no
more, in the bloom
And the beauty of times that are faded
forever!
To the palms! to the tombs! to the
still Sacred River!
Where I too, the child of a day that is
done,
First leapt into life, and looked up at
the sun.

Back again, back again, to the hill-tops
of home
I come, O my friend, my consoler, I
come!
Are the three intense stars, that we
watched night by night
Burning broad on the band of Orion, as
bright?
Are the large Indian moons as serene as
of old,
When, as children, we gathered the
moonbeams for gold?
Do you yet recollect me, my friend? Do
you still
Remember the free games we played on
the hill,
'Mid those huge stones upheaped, where
we recklessly trod
O'er the old ruined fane of the old ruined
god?
How he frowned, while around him we
carelessly played!
That frown on my life ever after hath
stayed,
Like the shade of a solemn experience
upcast
From some vague supernatural grief in
the past.
For the poor god, in pain, more than
anger, he frowned,
To perceive that our youth, though so
fleeting, had found,
In its transient and ignorant gladness,
the bliss
Which his science divine seemed divine-
ly to miss.
Alas! you may haply remember me yet
The free child, whose glad childhood
myself I forget.
I come—a sad woman, defrauded of
rest:
I bear to you only a laboring breast:
My heart is a storm-beaten ark, wildly
hurled
O'er the whirlpools of time, with the
wrecks of a world:
The dove from my bosom hath flown far
away:
It is flown, and returns not, though
many a day
Have I watched from the windows of
life for its coming.
Friend, I sigh for repose, I am weary of
roaming.
I know not what Ararat rises for me
Far away, o'er the waves of the wander-
ing sea:

I know not what rainbow may yet, from
far hills,
Lift the promise of hope, the cessation
of ills:
But a voice, like the voice of my youth,
in my breast
Wakes and whispers me on—to the
East! to the East!
Shall I find the child's heart that I left
there? or find
The lost youth I recall with its pure
peace of mind?
Alas! who shall number the drops of
the rain?
Or give to the dead leaves their greenness
again?
Who shall seal up the caverns the earth-
quake hath rent?
Who shall bring forth the winds that
within them are pent?
To a voice who shall render an image?
or who
From the heats of the noontide shall
gather the dew?
I have burned out within me the fuel of
life
Wherefore lingers the flame? Rest is
sweet after strife.
I would sleep for a while. I am weary.
"My friend,
I had meant in these lines to regather,
and send
To our old home, my life's scattered
links. But 'tis vain!
Each attempt seems to shatter the chap-
let again;
Only fit now for fingers like mine to run
o'er,
Who return, a recluse, to those cloisters
of yore
Whence too far I have wandered.
"How many long years
Does it seem to me now since the quick,
scorching tears,
While I wrote to you, splashed out a
girl's premature
Moans of pain at what women in silence
endure!
To your eyes, friend of mine, and to
your eyes alone,
That now long-faded page of my life hath
been shown
Which recorded my heart's birth, and
death, as you know,
Many years since,— how many!
"A few months ago

I seemed reading it backward, that
page! Why explain
Whence or how? The old dream of my
life rose again.
The old superstition! the idol of old!
It is over. The leaf trodden down in
the mould
Is not to the forest more lost than to
me.
That emotion. I bury it here by the
sea
Which will bear me anon far away from
the shore
Of a land which my footsteps shall visit
no more.
And a heart's *requiescat* I write on that
grave.
Hark! the sigh of the wind, and the
sound of the wave,
Seem like voices of spirits that whisper
me home!
I come, O you whispering voices, I come!
My friend, ask me nothing.
"Receive me alone
As a Santon receives to his dwelling of
stone
In silence some pilgrim the midnight
may bring:
It may be an angel that, weary of wing,
Hath paused in his flight from some
city of doom,
Or only a wayfarer strayed in the gloom.
This only I know: that in Europe at
least
Lives the craft or the power that must
master our East.
Wherefore strive where the gods must
themselves yield at last?
Both they and their altars pass by with
the Past.
The gods of the household Time thrusts
from the shelf;
And I seem as unreal and weird to my-
self
As those idols of old.
"Other times, other men,
Other men, other passions!
"So be it! yet again
I turn to my birthplace, the birthplace
of morn,
And the light of those lands where the
great sun is born!
Spread your arms, O my friend! on your
breast let me feel
The repose which hath fled from my own.
"Your LUCILE."

PART II.

CANTO I.

I.

HAIL, Muse! But each Muse by this time has, I know, Been used up, and Apollo has bent his own bow All too long; so I leave unassaulted the portal Of Olympus, and only invoke here a mortal.

Hail, Murray! — not Lindley, — but Murray and Son.
Hail, omniscient, beneficent, great Two-in-One!
In Albemarle Street may thy temple long stand!
Long enlightened and led by thine erudite hand,
May each novice in science nomadic unravel
Statistical mazes of modernized travel!
May each inn-keeping knave long thy judgments revere,
And the postboys of Europe regard thee with fear;
While they feel, in the silence of baffled extortion,
That knowledge is power! Long, long, like that portion
Of the national soil which the Greek exile took
In his baggage wherever he went, may thy book
Cheer each poor British pilgrim, who trusts to thy wit
Not to pay through his nose just for following it!
Mayst thou long, O instructor! preside o'er his way,
And teach him alike what to praise and to pay!
Thee, pursuing this pathway of song, once again
I invoke, lest, unskilled, I should wander in vain.
To my call be propitious, nor, churlish, refuse
Thy great accents to lend to the lips of my Muse;

For I sing of the Naiads who dwell 'mid the stems
Of the green linden-trees by the waters of Ems.
Yes! thy spirit descends upon mine, O John Murray!
And I start — with thy book — for the Baths in a hurry.

II.

“At Coblenz a bridge of boats crosses the Rhine;
And from thence the road, winding by Ehrenbreitstein,
Passes over the frontier of Nassau. (“N. B. No custom-house here since the Zollverein.” See Murray, paragraph 30.)
“The route, at each turn,
Here the lover of nature allows to discern,
In varying prospect, a rich wooded dale:
The vine and acacia-tree mostly prevail
In the foliage observable here; and, moreover,
The soil is carbonic. The road, under cover
Of the grape-clad and mountainous upland that hems
Round this beautiful spot, brings the traveller to — “EMS.
A schnellpost from Frankfort arrives every day.
At the Kurhaus (the old Ducal mansion) you pay
Eight florins for lodgings. A Restaurateur
Is attached to the place; but most travellers prefer
(Including, indeed, many persons of note)
To dine at the usual-priced table d'hôte.
Through the town runs the Lahn, the steep green banks of which
Two rows of white picturesque houses enrich;
And between the high road and the river is laid
Out a sort of a garden, called ‘THE Promenade.’

Female visitors here, who may make up their mind
To ascend to the top of these mountains, will find
On the banks of the stream, saddled all the day long,
Troops of donkeys — sure-footed — proverbially strong”;
And the traveller at Ems may remark, as he passes,
Here, as elsewhere, the women run after the asses.

The firm foot on the earth, the high heart in the skies;
But a gray-headed infant, defrauded of youth,
Born too late or too early.
The lady, in truth,
Was young, fair, and gentle; and never was given
To more heavenly eyes the pure azure of heaven.
Never yet did the sun touch to ripples of gold
Tresses brighter than those which her soft hand unrolled
From her noble and innocent brow, when she rose,
An Aurora, at dawn, from her balmy repose,
And into the mirror the bloom and the blush
Of her beauty broke, glowing; like light in a gush
From the sunrise in summer.
Love, roaming, shall meet
But rarely a nature more sound or more sweet —
Eyes brighter — brows whiter — a figure more fair —
Or lovelier lengths of more radiant hair —
Than thine, Lady Alfred! And here I aver
(May those that have seen thee declare if I err)
That not all the oysters in Britain contain
A pearl pure as thou art.

III.

‘Mid the world’s weary denizens bound for these springs
In the month when the merle on the maple-bough sings,
Pursued to the place from dissimilar paths
By a similar sickness, there came to the baths
Four sufferers, — each stricken deep through the heart,
Or the head, by the self-same invisible dart
Of the arrow that fieth unheard in the noon,
From the sickness that walketh unseen in the moon,
Through this great lazaretto of life, wherein each
Infects with his own sores the next within reach.
First of these were a young English husband and wife,
Grown weary ere half through the journey of life.
O Nature, say where, thou gray mother of earth,
Is the strength of thy youth? that thy womb brings to birth
Only old men to-day! On the winds, as of old,
Thy voice in its accent is joyous and bold;
Thy forests are green as of yore; and thine oceans
Yet move in the might of their ancient emotions:
But man — thy last birth and thy best — is no more
Life’s free lord, that looked up to the starlight of yore,
With the faith on the brow, and the fire in the eyes,

Let some one explain, —
Who may know more than I of the intimate life
Of the pearl with the oyster, — why yet in his wife,
In despite of her beauty — and most when he felt
His soul to the sense of her loveliness melt —
Lord Alfred missed something he sought for: indeed,
The more that he missed it the greater the need;
Till it seemed to himself he could willingly spare
All the charms that he found for the one charm not there.

IV.

For the blessings Life lends us, it strictly demands



The worth of their full usufruct at our hands.
And the value of all things exists, not indeed
In themselves, but man's use of them,
feeding man's need.

Alfred Vargrave, in wedding with beauty and youth,
Had embraced both Ambition and Wealth. Yet in truth
Unfulfilled the ambition, and sterile the wealth

(In a life paralyzed by a moral ill-health),
Had remained, while the beauty and youth, unredeemed
From a vague disappointment at all things, but seemed
Day by day to reproach him in silence for all
That lost youth in himself they had failed to recall.
No career had he followed, no object obtained
In the world by those worldly advantages gained
From nuptials beyond which once seemed to appear,
Lit by love, the broad path of a brilliant career.
All that glittered and gleamed through the moonlight of youth
With a glory so fair, now that manhood in truth
Grasped and gathered it, seemed like that false fairy gold
Which leaves in the hand only moss, leaves, and mould!

v.

Fairy gold! moss and leaves! and the young Fairy Bride?
Lived there yet fairy-lands in the face at his side?
Say, O friend, if at evening thou ever hast watched
Some pale and palpable vapor, detached
From the dim and disconsolate earth, rise and fall
O'er the light of a sweet serene star, until all
The chilled splendor reluctantly waned in the deep
Of its own native heaven? Even so seemed to creep
O'er that fair and ethereal face, day by day,
While the radiant vermeil, subsiding away,
Hid its light in the heart, the faint gradual veil
Of a sadness unconscious.

The lady grew pale
As silent her lord grew: and both, as they eyed
Each the other askance, turned, and secretly sighed.
Ah, wise friend, what avails all experience can give!

True, we know what life is — but, alas! do we live?
The grammar of life we have gotten by heart,
But life's self we have made a dead language, — an art,
Not a voice. Could we speak it, but once, as 't was spoken
When the silence of passion the first time was broken!
Cuvier knew the world better than Adam, no doubt:
But the last man, at best, was but learned about
What the first, without learning, enjoyed.
What art thou
To the man of to-day, O Leviathan, now?
A science. What wert thou to him that from ocean
First beheld thee appear? A surprise, — an emotion!
When life leaps in the veins, when it beats in the heart,
When it thrills as it fills every animate part,
Where lurks it? how works it? . . . we scarcely detect it.
But life goes: the heart dies: haste, O leech, and dissect it!
This accursed æsthetic, ethical age
Hath so fingered life's hornbook, so blurred every page,
That the old glad romance, the gay chivalrous story,
With its fables of faery, its legends of glory,
Is turned to a tedious instruction, not new
To the children that read it insipidly through.
We know too much of Love ere we love.
We can trace
Nothing new, unexpected, or strange in his face
When we see it at last. 'Tis the same little Cupid,
With the same dimpled cheek, and the smile almost stupid,
We have seen in our pictures, and stuck on our shelves,
And copied a hundred times over, ourselves.
And wherever we turn, and whatever we do,
Still, that horrible sense of the *déjà connu*!

VI.

Perchance 't was the fault of the life
that they led ;
Perchance 't was the fault of the novels
they read ;
Perchance 't was a fault in themselves ;
I am bound not
To say : this I know — that these two
creatures found not
In each other some sign they expected
to find
Of a something unnamed in the heart or
the mind ;
And, missing it, each felt a right to com-
plain
Of a sadness which each found no word
to explain.
Whatever it was, the world noticed not
it
In the light-hearted beauty, the light-
hearted wit.
Still, as once with the actors in Greece,
't is the case,
Each must speak to the crown with a
mask on his face.
Praise followed Matilda wherever she
went.
She was flattered. Can flattery pur-
chase content ?
Yes. While to its voice, for a moment,
she listened,
The young cheek still bloomed, and the
soft eyes still glistened ;
And her lord, when, like one of those
light vivid things
That glide down the gauzes of summer
with wings
Of rapturous radiance, unconscious she
moved
Through that buzz of inferior creatures,
which proved
Her beauty, their envy, one moment
forgot
'Mid the many charms there, the one
charm that was not :
And when o'er her beauty enraptured he
bowed,
(As they turned to each other, each
flushed from the crowd,)
And murmured those praises which yet
seemed more dear
Than the praises of others had grown to
her ear,
She, too, ceased awhile her own fate to
regret :
" Yes ! . . . he loves me," she sighed ;
" this is love, then, — and yet — !"

VII.

Ah, that *yet!* fatal word ! 't is the
moral of all
Thought and felt, seen or done, in this
world since the Fall !
It stands at the end of each sentence we
learn ;
It flits in the vista of all we discern ;
It leads us, for ever and ever, away
To find in to-morrow what flies with
to-day.
'T was this same little fatal and mysti-
cal word
That now, like a mirage, led my lady
and lord
To the waters of Ems from the waters of
Marah ;
Drooping pilgrims in Fashion's blank,
arid Sahara !

VIII.

At the same time, pursued by a spell
much the same,
To these waters two other worn pilgrims
there came :
One a man, one a woman : just now, at
the latter,
As the Reader I mean by and by to look
at her
And judge for himself, I will not even
glance.

IX.

Of the self-crowned young kings of the
Fashion in France
Whose resplendent regalia so dazzled
the sight,
Whose horse was so perfect, whose boots
were so bright,
Who so hailed in the salon, so marked
in the Bois,
Who so welcomed by all, as Eugène de
Luvois ?
Of all the smooth-browed premature
debauchees
In that town of all towns, where De-
bauchery sees
On the forehead of youth her mark
everywhere graven, —
In Paris I mean, — where the streets
are all paven
By those two fiends whom Milton saw
bridging the way
From Hell to this planet, — who,
haughty and gay,
The free rebel of life, bound or led by
no law,

Walked that causeway as bold as Eugène
de Luvois ?
Yes ! he marched through the great
masquerade, loud of tongue,
Bold of brow : but the motley he masked
in, it hung
So loose, trailed so wide, and appeared
to impede
So strangely at times the vexed effort at
speed,
That a keen eye might guess it was
made — not for him,
But some brawler more stalwart of stat-
ure and limb.
That it irked him, in truth, you at
times could divine,
For when low was the music, and spilt
was the wine,
He would clutch at the garment, as
though it oppressed
And stifled some impulse that choked
in his breast.

X.

What ! he, . . . the light sport of his
frivolous ease !
Was he, too, a prey to a mortal disease ?
My friend, hear a parable : ponder it
well :
For a moral there is in the tale that I
tell.
One evening I sat in the Palais Royal,
And there, while I laughed at Grassot
and Arnal,
My eye fell on the face of a man at my
side ;
Every time that he laughed I observed
that he sighed,
As though vexed to be pleased. I re-
marked that he sat
Ill at ease on his seat, and kept twirling
his hat
In his hand, with a look of unquiet ab-
straction.
I inquired the cause of his dissatisfac-
tion.
" Sir," he said, " if what vexes me here
you would know,
Learn that, passing this way some few
half-hours ago,
I walked into the Français, to look at
Rachel.
(Sir, that woman in Phèdre is a mira-
cle !) — Well,
I asked for a box : they were occupied
all :

For a seat in the balcony : all taken ! a
stall :
Taken too : the whole house was as full
as could be, —
Not a hole for a rat ! I had just time to
see
The lady I love *elle-à-elle* with a friend
In a box out of reach at the opposite end :
Then the crowd pushed me out. What
was left me to do ?
I tried for the tragedy . . . *que voulez-
vous ?*
Every place for the tragedy booked ! . . .
mon ami,
The farce was close by : . . . at the farce
me voici !
The piece is a new one : and Grassot
plays well :
There is drollery, too, in that fellow
Ravel :
And Hyacinth's nose is superb ! . . . Yet
I meant
My evening elsewhere, and not thus, to
have spent.
Fate orders these things by her will, not
by ours !
Sir, mankind is the sport of invisible
powers."

I once met the Duc de Luvois for a mo-
ment ;
And I marked, when his features I fixed
in my comment,
O'er those features the same vague dis-
quietude stray
I had seen on the face of my friend at
the play ;
And I thought that he too, very proba-
bly, spent
His evenings not wholly as first he had
meant.

XI.

O source of the holiest joys we inherit,
O Sorrow, thou solemn, invisible spirit !
Ill fares it with man when, through
life's desert sand,
Grown impatient too soon for the long-
promised land
He turns from the worship of thee, as
thou art,
An expressless and imageless truth in
the heart,
And takes of the jewels of Egypt, the
pelf
And the gold of the Godless, to make to
himself

A gaudy, idolatrous image of thee,
And then bows to the sound of the cym-
bal the knee.
The sorrows we make to ourselves are
false gods:
Like the prophets of Baal, our bosoms
with rods
We may smite, we may gash at our
hearts till they bleed,
But these idols are blind, deaf, and dumb
to our need.
The land is athirst, and cries out! . . .
't is in vain;
The great blessing of Heaven descends
not in rain.

XII.

It was night; and the lamps were be-
ginning to gleam
Through the long linden-trees, folded
each in his dream,
From that building which looks like a
temple . . . and is
The Temple of — Health? Nay, but
enter! I wis
That never the rosy-hued deity knew
One votary out of that sallow-checked
crew
Of Courlanders, Wallacs, Greeks, affable
Russians,
Explosive Parisians, potato-faced Prus-
sians;
Jews — Hamburgers chiefly; — pure
patriots, — Suabians; —
“Cappadocians and Elamites, Cretes and
Arabians,
And the dwellers in Pontus” . . . My
muse will not weary
More lines with the list of them . . .
cur fremiere?
What is it they murmur, and mutter,
and hum?
Into what Pandemonium is Pentecost
come?
O, what is the name of the god at whose
fane
Every nation is mixed in so motley a
train?
What weird Kabala lies on those tables
outspread?
To what oracle turns with attention each
head?
What holds these pale worshippers each
so devout,
And what are those hierophants busied
about?

XIII.

Here passes, repasses, and flits to and fro,
And rolls without ceasing the great Yes
and No:
Round this altar alternate the weird
Passions dance,
And the God worshipped here is the old
God of Chance.
Through the wide-open doors of the dis-
tant saloon
Flute, hautboy, and fiddle are squeaking
in tune;
And an indistinct music forever is rolled,
That mixes and chimes with the chink
of the gold,
From a vision, that flits in a luminous
haze,
Of figures forever eluding the gaze;
It fleets through the doorway, it gleams
on the glass,
And the weird words pursue it — *Rouge,*
Impair, et Passe!
Like a sound borne in sleep through
such dreams as encumber
With haggard emotions the wild wicked
slumber
Of some witch when she seeks, through
a nightmare, to grab at
The hot hoof of the fiend, on her way
to the Sabbat.

XIV.

The Duc de Luvois and Lord Alfred
had met
Some few evenings ago (for the season
as yet
Was but young) in this self-same Pavil-
ion of Chance.
The idler from England, the idler from
France
Shook hands, each, of course, with much
cordial pleasure:
An acquaintance at Ems is to most men
a treasure,
And they both were too well-bred in
ought to betray
One discourteous remembrance of things
passed away.
'T was a sight that was pleasant, indeed,
to be seen,
These friends exchange greetings; — the
men who had been
Foes so nearly in days that were past.
This, no doubt,
Is why, on the night I am speaking
about,

My Lord Alfred sat down by himself at
roulette,
Without one suspicion his bosom to
fret,
Although he had left, with his pleasant
French friend,
Matilda, half vexed, at the room's farthest
end.

XV.

Lord Alfred his combat with Fortune
began
With a few modest thalers — away they
all ran —
The reserve followed fast in the rear.
As his purse
Grew lighter his spirits grew sensibly
worse.
One needs not a Bacon to find a cause
for it:
'T is an old law in physics — *Natura*
abhorret
Vacuum — and my lord, as he watched
his last crown
Tumble into the bank, turned away
with a frown
Which the brows of Napoleon himself
might have decked
On that day of all days when an empire
was wrecked
On thy plain, Waterloo, and he wit-
nessed the last
Of his favorite Guard cut to pieces,
aghast!
Just then Alfred felt, he could scarcely
tell why,
Within him the sudden strange sense
that some eye
Had long been intently regarding him
there, —
That some gaze was upon him too search-
ing to bear.
He rose and looked up. Was it fact?
Was it fable?
Was it dream? Was it waking? Across
the green table,
That face, with its features so fatally
known, —
Those eyes, whose deep gaze answered
strangely his own, —
What was it? Some ghost from its grave
come again?
Some cheat of a feverish, fanciful brain?
Or was it herself — with those deep eyes
of hers,
And that face unforgotten? — Lucile de
Nevers!

XVI.

Ah, well that pale woman a phantom
might seem,
Who appeared to herself but the dream
of a dream!
'Neath those features so calm, that fair
forehead so hushed,
That pale cheek forever by passion un-
flushed,
There yawned an insatiate void, and
there heaved
A tumult of restless regrets unrelieved.
The brief noon of beauty was passing
away,
And the chill of the twilight fell, silent
and gray,
O'er that deep, self-perceived isolation
of soul.
And now, as all round her the dim even-
ing stole,
With its weird desolations, she inwardly
grieved
For the want of that tender assurance
received
From the warmth of a whisper, the glance
of an eye,
Which should say, or should look, “Fear
thou naught, — I am by!”
And thus, through that lonely and self-
fixed existence,
Crept a vague sense of silence, and horror,
and distance:
A strange sort of faint-footed fear, —
like a mouse
That comes out, when 't is dark, in some
old ducal house
Long deserted, where no one the creature
can scare,
And the forms on the arras are all that
move there.
In Rome, — in the Forum, — there opened
one night
A gulf. All the augurs turned pale at
the sight.
In this omen the anger of Heaven they
read.
Men consulted the gods: then the oracle
said: —
“Ever open this gulf shall endure, till
at last
That which Rome hath most precious
within it be cast.”
The Romans threw in it their corn and
their stuff,
But the gulf yawned as wide. Rome
seemed likely enough

To be ruined ere this rent in her heart
she could choke.
Then Curtius, revering the oracle, spoke :
" O Quirites ! to this Heaven's question
is come :
What to Rome is most precious ! The
manhood of Rome."
He plunged, and the gulf closed.
The tale is not new ;
But the moral applies many ways, and
is true.
How, for hearts rent in twain, shall the
curse be destroyed ?
'T is a warm human life that must fill
up the void.
Thorough many a heart runs the rent in
the fable ;
But who to discover a Curtius is able ?

XVII.

Back she came from her long hiding-
place, at the source
Of the sunrise ; where, fair in their fab-
ulous course,
Run the rivers of Eden : an exile again,
To the cities of Europe, — the scenes,
and the men,
And the life, and the ways, she had left :
still oppressed
With the same hungry heart, and un-
peaceable breast.
The same, to the same things ! The
world, she had quitted
With a sigh, with a sigh she re-entered.
Soon flitted
Through the salons and clubs, to the
great satisfaction
Of Paris, the news of a novel attraction.
The enchanting Lucile, the gay Coun-
tess, once more
To her old friend, the World, had re-
opened her door ;
The World came, and shook hands, and
was pleased and amused
With what the World then went away
and abused.
From the woman's fair fame it in naught
could detract :
'T was the woman's free genius it vexed
and attacked
With a sneer at her freedom of action
and speech.
But its light careless cavils, in truth,
could not reach
The lone heart they aimed at. Her
tears fell beyond

The world's limit, to feel that the world
could respond
To that heart's deepest, innermost yearn-
ing, in naught.
'T was no longer this earth's idle inmates
she sought :
The wit of the woman sufficed to engage
In the woman's gay court the first men
of the age.
Some had genius ; and all, wealth of
mind to confer
On the world : but that wealth was not
lavished for her.
For the genius of man, though so human
indeed,
When called out to man's help by some
great human need,
The right to a man's chance acquaintance
refuses
To use what it hoards for mankind's no-
bler uses.
Genius touches the world at but one
point alone
Of that spacious circumference, never
quite known
To the world : all the infinite number of
lines
That radiate thither a mere point com-
bines,
But one only, — some central affection
apart
From the reach of the world, in which
Genius is Heart,
And love, life's fine centre, includes
heart and mind.
And therefore it was that Lucile sighed
to find
Men of genius appear, one and all in
her ken,
When they stooped themselves to it, as
mere clever men ;
Artists, statesmen, and they in whose
works are unfurled
Worlds new-fashioned for man, as mere
men of the world.
And so, as alone now she stood, in the
sight
Of the sunset of youth, with her face
from the light,
And watched her own shadow grow long
at her feet,
As though stretched out, the shade of
some *other* to meet,
The woman felt homeless and childless :
in scorn
She seemed mocked by the voices of
children unborn ;

And when from these sombre reflections
away
She turned, with a sigh, to that gay
world, more gay
For her presence within it, she knew
herself friendless ;
That her path led from peace, and that
path appeared endless !
That even her beauty had been but a
snare,
And her wit sharpened only the edge of
despair.

XVIII.

With a face all transfigured and flushed
by surprise,
Alfred turned to Lucile. With those
deep searching eyes
She looked into his own. Not a word
that she said,
Not a look, not a blush, one emotion
betrayed.
She seemed to smile through him, at
something beyond :
When she answered his questions, she
seemed to respond
To some voice in herself. With no
trouble desiered,
To each troubled inquiry she calmly
replied.
Not so he. At the sight of that face
back again
To his mind came the ghost of a long-
stifled pain,
A remembered resentment, half checked
by a wild
And relentful regret like a motherless
child
Softly seeking admittance, with plaintive
appeal,
To the heart which resisted its entrance.
Lucile
And himself thus, however, with free-
dom allowed
To old friends, talking still side by side,
left the crowd
By the crowd unobserved. Not unno-
ticed, however,
By the Duke and Matilda. Matilda had
never
Seen her husband's new friend.
She had followed by chance,
Or by instinct, the sudden half-menacing
glance
Which the Duke, when he witnessed
their meeting, had turned

On Lucile and Lord Alfred ; and, scared,
she discerned
On his features the shade of a gloom so
profound
That she shuddered instinctively. Deaf
to the sound
Of her voice, to some startled inquiry of
hers
He replied not, but murmured, " Lucile
de Nevers
Once again then ? so be it ! " In the
mind of that man,
At that moment, there shaped itself
vaguely the plan
Of a purpose malignant and dark, such
alone
(To his own secret heart but imperfectly
shown)
As could spring from the cloudy, fierce
chaos of thought
By which all his nature to tumult was
wrought.

XIX.

" So ! " he thought, " they meet thus :
and reweave the old charm !
And she hangs on his voice, and she
leans on his arm,
And she heeds me not, seeks me not,
recks not of me !
O, what if I showed her that I, too, can
be
Loved by one — her own rival — more
fair and more young ? "
The serpent rose in him : a serpent
which, stung,
Sought to sting.
Each unconscious, indeed, of the eye
Fixed upon them, Lucile and my lord
sauntered by,
In converse which seemed to be earnest.
A smile
Now and then seemed to show where their
thoughts touched. Meanwhile
The muse of this story, convinced that
they need her,
To the Duke and Matilda returns, gentle
Reader.

XX.

The Duke, with that sort of aggressive
false praise
Which is meant a resentful remonstrance
to raise
From a listener (as sometimes a judge,
just before
He pulls down the black cap, very gently
goes o'er

Was white as the rose in her hand. The last word
Seemed to die on her lip, and could scarcely be heard.
There was silence again.

A great step had been made
By the Duke in the words he that evening had said.

There, half drowned by the music, Matilda, that night,
Had listened, — long listened, — no doubt, in despite

Of herself, to a voice she should never have heard,
And her heart by that voice had been troubled and stirred.

And so, having suffered in silence his eye

To fathom her own, he resumed, with a sigh :

XXIV.

“Will you suffer me, lady, your thoughts to invade
By disclosing my own? The position,” he said,

“In which we so strangely seem placed may excuse
The frankness and force of the words which I use.

You say that your heart is your husband's. You say
That you love him. You think so, of course, lady . . . nay,

Such a love, I admit, were a merit, no doubt.

But, trust me, no true love there can be without

Its dread penalty — jealousy.

“Well, do not start !
Until now, — either thanks to a singular art

Of supreme self-control, you have held them all down

Unrevealed in your heart, — or you never have known

Even one of those fierce irresistible pangs
Which deep passion engenders ; that anguish which hangs

On the heart like a nightmare, by jealousy bred.

But if, lady, the love you describe, in the bed

Of a blissful security thus hath reposed
Undisturbed with mild eyelids on happiness closed,

Were it not to expose to a peril unjust,

And most cruel, that happy repose you so trust

To meet, to receive, and, indeed, it may be,

For how long I know not, continue to see

A woman whose place rivals yours in the life

And the heart which not only your title of wife,

But also (forgive me !) your beauty alone, Should have made wholly yours ! — You, who gave all your own !

Reflect ! — 't is the peace of existence you stake

On the turn of a die. And for whose — for his sake !

While you witness this woman, the false point of view

From which she must now be regarded by you

Will exaggerate to you, whatever they be, The charms I admit she possesses. To me

They are trivial indeed ; yet to your eyes, I fear

And foresee, they will true and intrinsic appear.

Self-unconscious, and sweetly unable to guess

How more lovely by far is the grace you possess,

You will wrong your own beauty. The graces of art,

You will take for the natural charm of the heart ;

Studied manners, the brilliant and bold repartee,

Will too soon in that fatal comparison be To your fancy more fair than the sweet timid sense

Which, in shrinking, betrays its own best eloquence.

O then, lady, then, you will feel in your heart

The poisonous pain of a fierce jealous dart !

While you see her, yourself you no longer will see, —

You will hear her, and hear not yourself, — you will be

Unhappy ; unhappy, because you will deem

Your own power less great than her power will seem.

And I shall not be by your side, day by day,

In despite of your noble displeasure, to say

‘You are fairer than she, as the star is more fair

Than the diamond, the brightest that beauty can wear !’ ”

XXV.

This appeal, both by looks and by language, increased

The trouble Matilda felt grow in her breast.

Still she spoke with what calmness she could : —

“Sir, the while I thank you,” she said, with a faint scornful smile,

“For your fervor in painting my fancied distress :

Allow me the right some surprise to express

At the zeal you betray in disclosing to me

The possible depth of my own misery.” “That zeal would not startle you, madam,” he said,

“Could you read in my heart, as myself I have read,

The peculiar interest which causes that zeal — ”

Matilda her terror no more could conceal.

“Duke,” she answered in accents short, cold, and severe,

As she rose from her seat, “I continue to hear ;

But permit me to say, I no more understand.”

“Forgive !” with a nervous appeal of the hand,

And a well-feigned confusion of voice and of look,

“Forgive, O, forgive me !” at once cried the Duke,

“I forgot that you know me so slightly. Your leave

I entreat (from your anger those words to retrieve)

For one moment to speak of myself, — for I think

That you wrong me — ”

His voice as in pain seemed to sink ;

And tears in his eyes, as he lifted them, glistened.

XXVI.

Matilda, despite of herself, sat and listened.

XXVII.

“Beneath an exterior which seems, and may be,

Worldly, frivolous, careless, my heart hides in me,”

He continued, “a sorrow which draws me to side

With all things that suffer. Nay, laugh not,” he cried,

“At so strange an avowal. “I seek at a ball,

For instance, — the beauty admired by all ?

No ! some plain, insignificant creature, who sits

Scorned of course by the beauties, and shunned by the wits.

All the world is accustomed to wound, or neglect,

Or oppress, claims my heart and commands my respect.

No Quixote, I do not affect to belong,

I admit, to those chartered redressers of wrong ;

But I seek to console, where I can. ‘Tis a part

Not brilliant, I own, yet its joys bring no smart.”

These trite words, from the tone which he gave them, received

An appearance of truth, which might well be believed

By a heart shrewder yet than Matilda's. And so

He continued . . . “O lady ! alas, could you know

What injustice and wrong in this world I have seen !

How many a woman, believed to have been

Without a regret, I have known turn aside

To burst into heart-broken tears undescried !

On how many a lip have I witnessed the smile

Which but hid what was breaking the poor heart the while ! ”

Said Matilda, “Your life, it would seem, then, must be

One long act of devotion.”

"Perhaps so," said he ;
 "But at least that devotion small merit
 can boast,
 For one day may yet come, — if one day
 at the most, —
 When, perceiving at last all the differ-
 ence — how great ! —
 'Twixt the heart that neglects and the
 heart that can wait,
 'Twixt the natures that pity, the natures
 that pain,
 Some woman, that else might have
 passed in disdain
 Or indifference by me, — in passing that
 day
 Might pause with a word or a smile to
 repay
 This devotion, — and then " . . .

XXVIII.

To Matilda's relief
 At that moment her husband approached.
 With some grief
 I must own that her welcome, perchance,
 was expressed
 The more eagerly just for one twinge in
 her breast
 Of a conscience disturbed, and her smile
 not less warm,
 Though she saw the Comtesse de Nevers
 on his arm.
 The Duke turned and adjusted his collar.
 Thought he,
 "Good ! the gods fight my battle to-
 night. I foresee
 That the family doctor's the part I
 must play.
 Very well ! but the patients my visits
 shall pay."
 Lord Alfred presented Lucile to his
 wife ;
 And Matilda, repressing with effort the
 strife
 Of emotions which made her voice shake,
 murmured low
 Some faint, troubled greeting. The
 Duke, with a bow
 Which betokened a distant defiance, re-
 plied
 To Lucile's startled cry, as surprised she
 descried
 Her former gay wooer. Anon, with the
 grace
 Of that kindness which seeks to win
 kindness, her place

She assumed by Matilda, unconscious,
 perchance,
 Or resolved not to notice, the half-
 frightened glance
 That followed that movement.
 The Duke to his feet
 Arose ; and, in silence, relinquished his
 seat.
 One must own that the moment was
 awkward for all ;
 But nevertheless, before long, the strange
 thrall
 Of Lucile's gracious tact was by every
 one felt,
 And from each the reserve seemed, re-
 luctant, to melt ;
 Thus, conversing together, the whole of
 the four
 Through the crowd sauntered, smiling.

XXIX.

Approaching the door,
 Eugène de Luvois, who had fallen be-
 hind,
 By Lucile, after some hesitation, was
 joined
 With a gesture of gentle and kindly
 appeal
 Which appeared to imply, without words,
 "Let us feel
 That the friendship between us in years
 that are fled,
 Has survived one mad moment forgot-
 ten," she said,
 "You remain, Duke, at Ems ?"
 He turned on her a look
 Of frigid, resentful, and sullen rebuke ;
 And then, with a more than significant
 glance
 At Matilda, maliciously answered, "Per-
 chance
 I have here an attraction. And you ?"
 he returned.
 Lucile's eyes had followed his own, and
 discerned
 The boast they implied.
 He repeated, "And you ?"
 And, still watching Matilda, she an-
 swered, "I too."
 And he thought, as with that word she
 left him, she sighed.
 The next moment her place she resumed
 by the side
 Of Matilda ; and soon they shook hands
 at the gate
 Of the selfsame hotel.

XXX.

One depressed, one elate,
 The Duke and Lord Alfred again, through
 the glooms
 Of the thick linden alley, returned to
 the Rooms.
 His cigar each had lighted, a moment
 before,
 At the inn, as they turned, arm-in-arm,
 from the door.
 Ems cigars do not cheer a man's spirits,
experto
 (*Me miscrum quoties !*) crede Roberto.
 In silence, awhile, they walked onward.
 At last
 The Duke's thoughts to language half
 consciously passed.

LUVUOIS.

Once more ! yet once more !

ALFRED.

What ?

LUVUOIS.

We meet her, once more,
 The woman for whom we two mad men
 of yore
 (Laugh, *mon cher Alfred*, laugh !) were
 about to destroy
 Each the other !

ALFRED.

It is not with laughter that I
 Raise the ghost of that once troubled
 time. Say ! can you
 Recall it with coolness and quietude
 now ?

LUVUOIS.

Now ? yes ! I, *mon cher*, am a true
Parisien :
 Now, the red revolution, the tocsin, and
 then
 The dance and the play. I am now at
 the play.

ALFRED.

At the play, are you now ? Then per-
 chance I now may
 Presume, Duke, to ask you what, ever
 until
 Such a moment, I waited . . .

LUVUOIS.

Oh ! ask what you will.

Francjeu ! on the table my cards I spread
 out.

Ask !

ALFRED.

Duke, you were called to a meeting
 (no doubt
 You remember it yet) with Lucile. It
 was night
 When you went ; and before you returned
 it was light.
 We met : you accosted me then with a
 brow
 Bright with triumph : your words (you
 remember them now ?)
 Were "Let us be friends !"

LUVUOIS.

Well ?

ALFRED.

How then, after that,
 Can you and she meet as acquaintances ?

LUVUOIS.

What !

Did she not then, herself, the Comtesse
 de Nevers,
 Solve your riddle to-night with those soft
 lips of hers ?

ALFRED.

In our converse to-night we avoided the
 past.
 But the question I ask should be an-
 swered at last :
 By you, if you will ; if you will not, by
 her.

LUVUOIS.

Indeed ? but that question, milord, can
 it stir
 Such an interest in you, if your passion
 be o'er ?

ALFRED.

Yes. Esteem may remain, although love
 be no more.
 Lucile asked me, this night, to my wife
 (understand
 To *my wife !*) to present her. I did so.
 Her hand
 Has clasped that of Matilda. We gen-
 tlemen owe
 Respect to the name that is ours : and,
 if so,

To the woman that bears it a twofold respect.
 Answer, Duc de Luvois! Did Lucile then reject
 The proffer you made of your hand and your name?
 Or did you on her love then relinquish a claim
 Urged before? I ask bluntly this question, because
 My title to do so is clear by the laws
 That all gentlemen honor. Make only one sign
 That you know of Lucile de Neversought,
 in fine,
 For which, if your own virgin sister were by,
 From Lucile you would shield her acquaintance, and I
 And Matilda leave Ems on the morrow.

XXXI.

The Duke
 Hesitated and paused. He could tell,
 by the look
 Of the man at his side, that he meant
 what he said,
 And there flashed in a moment these thoughts through his head:
 "Leave Ems! would that suit me? no! that were again
 To mar all. And besides, if I do not explain,
 She herself will . . . *et puis, il a raison; on est*
Gentilhomme avant tout!" He replied
 therefore,

"Nay!
 Madame de Nevers had rejected me. I, in those days, I was mad; and in some mad reply
 I threatened the life of the rival to whom
 That rejection was due, I was led to presume.
 She feared for his life; and the letter which then
 She wrote me, I showed you; we met: and again
 My hand was refused, and my love was denied,
 And the glance you mistook was the vizard which Pride
 Lends to Humiliation.

"And so," half in jest,
 He went on, "in this best world, 'tis all for the best;

You are wedded, (blessed Englishman!) wedded to one
 Whose past can be called into question by none:
 And I (fickle Frenchman!) can still laugh to feel
 I am lord of myself, and the Mode: and Lucile
 Still shines from her pedestal, frigid and fair
 As yon German moon o'er the linden-tops there!
 A Dian in marble that scorns any troth
 With the little love-gods, whom I thank for us both,
 While she smiles from her lonely Olympus apart,
 That her arrows are marble as well as her heart.
 Stay at Ems, Alfred Vargrave!"

XXXII.

The Duke, with a smile,
 Turned and entered the Rooms which, thus talking, meanwhile,
 They had reached.

XXXIII.

Alfred Vargrave strode on (overthrown Heart and mind!) in the darkness bewildered, alone:
 "And so," to himself did he mutter,
 "and so
 'T was to rescue my life, gentle spirit! and, oh,
 For this did I doubt her? . . . a light word — a look —

The mistake of a moment! . . . for this I forsook —

For this? Pardon, pardon, Lucile! O Lucile!"

Thought and memory rang, like a funeral peal,

Weary changes on one dirge-like note through his brain,

As he strayed down the darkness,

XXXIV.

Re-entering again
 The Casino, the Duke smiled. He turned to roulette,

And sat down, and played fast, and lost largely, and yet

He still smiled: night deepened: he played his last number:

Went home: and soon slept: and still smiled in his slumber.

XXXV.

In his desolate Maxims, La Rochefoucauld wrote,

"In the grief or mischance of a friend you may note,

There is something which always gives pleasure."

Alas!

That reflection fell short of the truth as it was.

La Rochefoucauld might have as truly set down, —

"No misfortune, but what some one turns to his own

Advantage its mischief: no sorrow, but of it

There ever is somebody ready to profit: No affliction without its stock-jobbers,

who all
 Gamble, speculate, play on the rise and the fall

Of another man's heart, and make traffic in it."

Burn thy book, O La Rochefoucauld!

Fool! one man's wit
 All men's selfishness how should it fathom?

O sage,
 Dost thou satirize Nature?

She laughs at thy page.

CANTO II.

I.

COUSIN JOHN to COUSIN ALFRED.

"LONDON, 18—.

"MY DEAR ALFRED:

Your last letters put me in pain.
 This contempt of existence, this listless disdain

Of your own life, — its joys and its duties, — the deuce

Take my wits if they find for it half an excuse!

I wish that some Frenchman would shoot off your leg,

And compel you to stump through the world on a peg.

I wish that you had, like myself, (more's the pity!)

To sit seven hours on this cursed committee.

I wish that you knew, sir, how salt is the bread

Of another — (what is it that Dante has said?)

And the trouble of other men's stairs.
 In a word,

I wish fate had some real affliction conferred

On your whimsical self, that, at least, you had cause

For neglecting life's duties, and damning its laws!

This pressure against all the purpose of life,

This self-ebullition, and ferment, and strife,

Betokened, I grant that it may be in truth,

The richness and strength of the new wine of youth.

But if, when the wine should have melted with time,

Being bottled and binned, to a flavor sublime

It retains the same acrid, incongruous taste,

Why, the sooner to throw it away that we haste

The better, I take it. And this vice of snarling,

Self-love's little lapdog, the overfed darling

Of a hypochondriacal fancy appears,
 To my thinking, at least, in a man of your years,

At the midnight of manhood with plenty to do,

And every incentive for doing it too, —
 With the duties of life just sufficiently pressing

For prayer, and of joys more than most men for blessing;

With a pretty young wife, and a pretty full purse, —

Like poltroonery, puerile truly, or worse!
 I wish I could get you at least to agree

To take life as it is, and consider with me,
 If it be not all smiles, that it is not all sneers;

It admits honest laughter, and needs honest tears.

Do you think none have known but yourself all the pain

Of hopes that retreat, and regrets that remain?

And all the wide distance fate fixes, no doubt,

'Twixt the life that's within, and the life that's without?

To the woman that bears it a twofold respect.
 Answer, Duc de Luvois! Did Lucile then reject
 The proffer you made of your hand and your name?
 Or did you on her love then relinquish a claim
 Urged before? I ask bluntly this question, because
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"MY DEAR ALFRED:

Your last letters put me in pain.
 This contempt of existence, this listless
 disdain

Of your own life, — its joys and its du-
 ties, — the deuce

Take my wits if they find for it half an
 excuse!

I wish that some Frenchman would
 shoot off your leg,

And compel you to stump through the
 world on a peg.

I wish that you had, like myself, (more's
 the pity!)

To sit seven hours on this cursed com-
 mittee.

I wish that you knew, sir, how salt is
 the bread

Of another — (what is it that Dante has
 said?)

And the trouble of other men's stairs.
 In a word,

I wish fate had some real affliction con-
 ferred

On your whimsical self, that, at least,
 you had cause

For neglecting life's duties, and damning
 its laws!

This pressure against all the purpose of
 life,

This self-ebullition, and ferment, and
 strife,

Betokened, I grant that it may be in
 truth,

The richness and strength of the new
 wine of youth.

But if, when the wine should have mel-
 lowed with time,

Being bottled and binned, to a flavor
 sublime

It retains the same acrid, incongruous
 taste,

Why, the sooner to throw it away that
 we haste

The better, I take it. And this vice of
 snarling,

Self-love's little lapdog, the overfed dar-
 ling

Of a hypochondriacal fancy appears,
 To my thinking, at least, in a man of
 your years,

At the midnight of manhood with plenty
 to do,

And every incentive for doing it too, —
 With the duties of life just sufficiently
 pressing

For prayer, and of joys more than most
 men for blessing;

With a pretty young wife, and a pretty
 full purse, —

Like poltroonery, puerile truly, or worse!
 I wish I could get you at least to agree

To take life as it is, and consider with me,
 If it be not all smiles, that it is not all
 sneers;

It admits honest laughter, and needs
 honest tears.

Do you think none have known but
 yourself all the pain

Of hopes that retreat, and regrets that
 remain?

And all the wide distance fate fixes, no
 doubt,

'Twixt the life that's within, and the
 life that's without?

What one of us finds the world just as he likes?
 Or gets what he wants when he wants it? Or strikes
 Without missing the thing that he strikes at the first?
 Or walks without stumbling? Or quenches his thirst
 At one draught? Bah! I tell you! I, bachelor John,
 Have had griefs of my own. But what then? I push on
 All the faster perchance that I yet feel the pain
 Of my last fall, albeit I may stumble again.
 God means every man to be happy, be sure.
 He sends us no sorrows that have not some cure.
 Our duty down here is to do, not to know.
 Live as though life were earnest, and life will be so.
 Let each moment, like Time's last ambassador, come:
 It will wait to deliver its message; and some
 Sort of answer it merits. It is not the deed
 A man does, but the way that he does it, should plead
 For the man's compensation in doing it.
 "Here,
 My next neighbor's a man with twelve thousand a year,
 Who deems that life has not a pastime more pleasant
 Than to follow a fox or to slaughter a pheasant.
 Yet this fellow goes through a contested election,
 Lives in London, and sits, like the soul of dejection,
 All the day through upon a committee, and late
 To the last, every night, through the dreary debate,
 As though he were getting each speaker by heart,
 Though amongst them he never presumes to take part.
 One asks himself why, without murmur or question,
 He foregoes all his tastes, and destroys his digestion,
 For a labor of which the result seems so small.

'The man is ambitious,' you say. Not at all.
 He has just sense enough to be fully aware
 That he never can hope to be Premier, or share
 The renown of a Tully;—or even to hold
 A subordinate office. He is not so bold
 As to fancy the House for ten minutes would bear
 With patience his modest opinions to hear.
 "But he wants something!"
 "What! with twelve thousand a year?
 What could Government give him would be half so dear
 To his heart as a walk with a dog and a gun
 Through his own pheasant woods, or a capital run?
 "No; but vanity fills out the emptiest brain;
 The man would be more than his neighbors, 't is plain;
 And the drudgery drearily gone through in town
 Is more than repaid by provincial renown.
 Enough if some Marchioness, lively and loose,
 Shall have eyed him with passing complaisance; the goose,
 If the Fashion to him open one of its doors,
 As proud as a sultan, returns to his boors.
 Wrong again! if you think so.
 "For, *primo*; my friend
 Is the head of a family known from one end
 Of his shire to the other, as the oldest; and therefore
 He despises fine lords and fine ladies.
 He care for
 A peerage? no, truly! *Secundo*; he rarely
 Or never goes out: dines at Bellamy's sparely,
 And abhors what you call the gay world.
 "Then, I ask,
 What inspires, and consoles, such a self-imposed task
 As the life of this man, — but the sense of its duty?
 And I swear that the eyes of the haughtiest beauty

Have never inspired in my soul that intense,
 Reverential, and loving, and absolute sense
 Of heartfelt admiration I feel for this man,
 As I see him beside me; — there, wearing the wan
 London daylight away, on his humdrum committee;
 So unconscious of all that awakens my pity,
 And wonder — and worship, I might say.
 "To me
 There seems something nobler than genius to be
 In that dull patient labor no genius relieves,
 That absence of all joy which yet never grieves;
 The humility of it! the grandeur withal!
 The sublimity of it! And yet, should you call
 The man's own very slow apprehension to this,
 He would ask, with a stare, what sublimity is!
 His work is the duty to which he was born;
 He accepts it, without ostentation or scorn:
 And this man is no uncommon type (I thank Heaven!)
 Of this land's common men. In all other lands, even
 The type's self is wanting. Perchance, 't is the reason
 That Government oscillates ever 'twixt treason
 And tyranny elsewhere.
 "I wander away
 Too far, though, from what I was wishing to say.
 You, for instance, read Plato. You know that the soul
 Is immortal; and put this in rhyme, on the whole,
 Very well, with sublime illustration.
 Man's heart
 Is a mystery, doubtless. You trace it in art: —
 The Greek Psyche, — that's beauty, — the perfect ideal.
 But then comes the imperfect, perfectible real,
 With its pained aspiration and strife.
 In those pale
 Ill-drawn virgins of Giotto you see it prevail.
 You have studied all this. Then, the universe, too,
 Is not a mere house to be lived in, for you.
 Geology opens the mind. So you know
 Something also of strata and fossils; these show
 The bases of cosmical structure: some mention
 Of the nebulous theory demands your attention;
 And so on.
 "In short, it is clear the interior
 Of your brain, my dear Alfred, is vastly superior
 In fibre, and fulness, and function, and fire,
 To that of my poor parliamentary squire;
 But your life leaves upon me (forgive me this heat
 Due to friendship) the sense of a thing incomplete.
 You fly high. But what is it, in truth, you fly at?
 My mind is not satisfied quite as to that.
 An old illustration's as good as a new,
 Provided the old illustration be true.
 We are children. Mere kites are the fancies we fly,
 Though we marvel to see them ascending so high;
 Things slight in themselves, — long-tailed toys, and no more.
 What is it that makes the kite steadily soar
 Through the realms where the cloud and the whirlwind have birth
 But the tie that attaches the kite to the earth?
 I remember the lessons of childhood, you see,
 And the hornbook I learned on my poor mother's knee.
 In truth, I suspect little else do we learn
 From this great book of life, which so shrewdly we turn.
 Saying how to apply, with a good or bad grace,
 What we learned in the hornbook of childhood.
 "Your case
 Is exactly in point.
 "Fly your kite, if you please,
 Out of sight: let it go where it will, on the breeze;

But cut not the one thread by which it
is bound,
Be it never so high, to this poor human
ground.
No man is the absolute lord of his
life.
You, my friend, have a home, and a
sweet and dear wife.
If I often have sighed by my own silent
fire,
With the sense of a sometimes recurring
desire
For a voice sweet and low, or a face fond
and fair,
Some dull winter evening to solace and
share
With the love which the world its good
children allows
To shake hands with, — in short, a leg-
itimate spouse,
This thought has consoled me: "At least
I have given
For my own good behavior no hostage
to heaven."
You have, though. Forget it not!
faith, if you do,
I would rather break stones on a road
than be you.
If any man wilfully injured, or led
That little girl wrong, I would sit on
his head,
Even though you yourself were the
sinner!
"And this
Leads me back (do not take it, dear
cousin, amiss!)
To the matter I meant to have men-
tioned at once,
But these thoughts put it out of my
head for the nonce.
Of all the preposterous humbugs and
shams,
Of all the old wolves ever taken for lambs,
The wolf best received by the flock he
devours
Is that uncle-in-law, my dear Alfred, of
yours.
At least, this has long been my settled
conviction,
And I almost would venture at once the
prediction
That before very long — but no matter!
I trust
For his sake and our own, that I may
be unjust.
But Heaven forgive me, if cautious I
am on

The score of such men as, with both
God and Mammon,
Seem so shrewdly familiar.
"Neglect not this warning.
There were rumors afloat in the City this
morning
Which I scarce like the sound of. Who
knows? would he fleece
At a pinch, the old hypocrite, even his
own niece?
For the sake of Matilda I cannot impor-
tune
Your attention too early. If all your
wife's fortune
Is yet in the hands of that specious old
sinner,
Who would dice with the devil, and yet
rise up winner,
I say, lose no time! get it out of the
grab
Of her trustee and uncle, Sir Ridley
MacNab.
I trust those deposits, at least, are drawn
out,
And safe at this moment from danger or
doubt.
A wink is as good as a nod to the wise.
Verbum sap. I admit nothing yet jus-
tifies
My mistrust; but I have in my own
mind a notion
That old Ridley's white waistcoat, and
airs of devotion,
Have long been the only ostensible cap-
ital
On which he does business. If so, time
must sap it all,
Sooner or later. Look sharp. Do not
wait,
Draw at once. In a fortnight it may
be too late.
I admit I know nothing. I can but
suspect;
I give you my notions. Form yours
and reflect.
My love to Matilda. Her mother looks
well.
I saw her last week. I have nothing
to tell
Worth your hearing. We think that
the Government here
Will not last our next session. Fitz
Funk is a peer,
You will see by the Times. There are
symptoms which show
That the ministers now are preparing to
go,

And finish their feast of the loaves and
the fishes.
It is evident that they are clearing the
dishes,
And cramming their pockets with bon-
bons. Your news
Will be always acceptable. Vere, of the
Blues,
Has bolted with Lady Selina. And so,
You have met with that hot-headed
Frenchman? I know
That the man is a sad *mauvais sujet*.
Take care
Of Matilda. I wish I could join you
both there;
But, before I am free, you are sure to
be gone.
Good by, my dear fellow. Yours, anx-
iously,
"JOHN."

II.

This is just the advice I myself would
have given
To Lord Alfred, had I been his cousin,
which, Heaven
Be praised, I am not. But it reached
him indeed
In an unlucky hour, and received little
heed.
A half-languid glance was the most that
he lent at
That time to these homilies. *Primum
dementat
Quem Deus vult perdere.* Alfred in fact
Was behaving just then in a way to dis-
tract
Job's self had Job known him. The
more you'd have thought
The Duke's court to Matilda his eye
would have caught,
The more did his aspect grow listless to
hers,
And the more did it beam to Lucile de
Nevers.
And Matilda, the less she found love in
the look
Of her husband, the less did she shrink
from the Duke.
With each day that passed o'er them,
they each, heart from heart,
Woke to feel themselves further and
further apart.
More and more of his time Alfred passed
at the table;
Played high; and lost more than to lose
he was able.

He grew feverish, querulous, absent,
perverse, —
And here I must mention, what made
matters worse,
That Lucile and the Duke at the self-
same hotel
With the Vargraves resided. It needs
not to tell
That they all saw too much of each other.
The weather
Was so fine that it brought them each
day all together
In the garden, to listen, of course, to the
band.
The house was a sort of phalanstery;
and
Lucile and Matilda were pleased to dis-
cover
A mutual passion for music. Moreover,
The Duke was an excellent tenor: could
sing
"Ange si pure" in a way to bring down
on the wing
All the angels St. Cicely played to. My
lord
Would also at times, when he was not
too bored,
Play Beethoven, and Wagner's new mu-
sic, not ill;
With some little things of his own, show-
ing skill.
For which reason, as well as for some
others too,
Their rooms were a pleasant enough
rendezvous.
Did Lucile, then, encourage (the heart-
less coquette!)
All the mischief she could not but mark?
Patience yet!

III.

In that garden, an arbor, withdrawn
from the sun,
By laburnum and lilac with blooms over-
run,
Formed a vault of cool verdure, which
made, when the heat
Of the noontide hung heavy, a gracious
retreat.
And here, with some friends of their own
little world,
In the warm afternoons, till the shadows
uncurled
From the feet of the lindens, and crept
through the grass,
Their blue hours would this gay little
colony pass.

The men loved to smoke, and the women
to bring,
Undeterred by tobacco, their work there,
and sing
Or converse, till the dew fell, and home-
ward the bee
Floated, heavy with honey. Towards
eve there was tea
(A luxury due to Matilda), and ice,
Fruit, and coffee. "Ὁ Ἑσπερος, πάντα
φέρεις!"
Such an evening it was, while Matilda
presided
O'er the rustic arrangements thus daily
provided,
With the Duke, and a small German
Prince with a thick head,
And an old Russian Countess both witty
and wicked,
And two Austrian Colonels, — that Al-
fred, who yet
Was lounging alone with his last cigar-
ette,
Saw Lucile de Nevers by herself pacing
slow
'Neath the shade of the cool linden-trees
to and fro,
And joining her, cried, "Thank the good
stars, we meet!"
I have so much to say to you!"
"Yes? . . ." with her sweet
Serene voice, she replied to him . . .
"Yes? and I too
Was wishing, indeed, to say somewhat
to you."
She was paler just then than her wont
was. The sound
Of her voice had within it a sadness pro-
found.
"You are ill?" he exclaimed.
"No!" she hurriedly said,
"You alarm me!"
She drooped down her head.
"If your thoughts have of late sought,
or cared, to divine
The purpose of what has been passing in
mine,
My farewell can scarcely alarm you."

ALFRED.

Your farewell! you go!

LUCILE.

Yes, Lord Alfred.

ALFRED. Reveal
The cause of this sudden unkindness.

LUCILE.

Unkind?

ALFRED.

Yes! what else is this parting?

LUCILE.

No, no! are you blind?

Look into your own heart and home.
Can you seeNo reason for this, save unkindness in
me?Look into the eyes of your wife, — those
true eyesToo pure and too honest in aught to dis-
guise

The sweet soul shining through them.

ALFRED.

Lucile! (first and last

Be the word, if you will!) let me speak
of the past.I know now, alas! though I know it too
late,What passed at that meeting which
settled my fate.Nay, nay, interrupt me not yet! let it
be!I but say what is due to yourself, — due
to me,

And must say it.

He rushed incoherently on,
Describing how, lately, the truth he had
known,To explain how, and whence, he had
wronged her before,All the complicate coil wound about him
of yore.All the hopes that had flown with the
faith that was fled,"And then, O Lucile, what was left me,"
he said,"When my life was defrauded of you,
but to takeThat life, as 't was left, and endeavor to
makeUnobserved by another, the void which
remainedUnconcealed to myself? If I have not
attained,I have striven. One word of unkindness
has never

Passed my lips to Matilda. Her least
wish has ever

Received my submission. And if, of a
truth,

I have failed to renew what I felt in my
youth,

I at least have been loyal to what I do
feel,

Respect, duty, honor, affection. Lucile,
I speak not of love now, nor love's long
regret:

I would not offend you, nor dare I for-
get

The ties that are round me. But may
there not be

A friendship yet hallowed between you
and me?

May we not be yet friends, — friends the
dearest?"

"Alas!"

She replied, "for one moment, perchance,
did it pass

Through my own heart, that dream
which forever hath brought

To those who indulge it in innocent
thought

So fatal and evil a waking! But no.

For in lives such as ours are, the Dream-
tree would grow

On the borders of Hades: beyond it,
what lies?

The wheel of Ixion, alas! and the cries
Of the lost and tormented. Departed,
for us,

Are the days when with innocence we
could discuss

Dreams like these. Fled, indeed, are
the dreams of my life!

O trust me, the best friend you have is
your wife.

And I, — in that pure child's pure virtue,
I bow

To the beauty of virtue. I felt on my
brow

Not one blush when I first took her
hand. With no blush

Shall I clasp it to-night, when I leave
you.

"Hush! hush!"

I would say what I wished to have said
when you came.

Do not think that years leave us and
find us the same!

The woman you knew long ago, long
ago,

Is no more. You yourself have within
you, I know,

The germ of a joy in the years yet to be,
Whereby the past years will bear fruit.

As for me,
I go my own way, — onward, upward!

"O yet,
Let me thank you for that which en-
nobled regret,

When it came, as it beautified hope ere
it fled, —

The love I once felt for you. True, it
is dead,

But it is not corrupted. I too have at
last

Lived to learn that love is not — (such
love as is past,

Such love as youth dreams of at least) —
the sole part

Of life, which is able to fill up the heart;
Even that of a woman.

"Between you and me
Heaven fixes a gulf, over which you
must see

That our guardian angels can bear us
no more.

We each of us stand on an opposite shore.
Trust a woman's opinion for once. Wom-
en learn,

By an instinct men never attain, to dis-
cern

Each other's true natures. Matilda is
fair,

Matilda is young — see her now, sitting
there! —

How tenderly fashioned — (O, is she not?
say,)

To love and be loved!"

IV.

He turned sharply away, —
"Matilda is young, and Matilda is fair;
Of all that you tell me pray deem me
aware;

But Matilda's a statue, Matilda's a child;
Matilda loves not —"

Lucile quietly smiled
As she answered him: — "Yesterday,
all that you say
Might be true; it is false, wholly false,
though, to-day."

"How? — what mean you?"

"I mean that to-day," she replied,
"The statue with life has become vivi-
fied:

I mean that the child to a woman has
grown:

And that woman is jealous."
"What! she?" with a tone

Of ironical wonder, he answered —
 "what, she!"
 She jealous! — Matilda! — of whom,
 pray? — not me!"

"My lord, you deceive yourself; no one
 but you
 Is she jealous of. Trust me. And thank
 Heaven, too,
 That so lately this passion within her
 hath grown.
 For who shall declare, if for months she
 had known
 What for days she has known all too
 keenly, I fear,
 That knowledge perchance might have
 cost you more dear?"

"Explain! explain, madam!" he cried
 in surprise;
 And terror and anger enkindled his eyes.

"How blind are you men!" she re-
 plied. "Can you doubt
 That a woman, young, fair, and neg-
 lected —"

"Speak out!"
 He gasped with emotion. "Lucile!
 you mean — what?"
 Do you doubt her fidelity?"

"Certainly not."
 Listen to me, my friend. What I wish
 to explain
 Is so hard to shape forth. I could al-
 most refrain
 From touching a subject so fragile.
 However,
 Bear with me awhile, if I frankly en-
 deavor
 To invade for one moment your inner-
 most life.
 Your honor, Lord Alfred, and that of
 your wife,
 Are dear to me, — most dear! And I
 am convinced
 That you rashly are risking that honor."
 He winced,
 And turned pale, as she spoke.
 She had aimed at his heart,
 And she saw, by his sudden and terrified
 start,
 That her aim had not missed.
 "Stay, Lucile!" he exclaimed,
 "What in truth do you mean by these
 words, vaguely framed
 To alarm me? Matilda? — My wife? —
 do you know?" —

"I know that your wife is as spotless
 as snow.
 But I know not how far your continued
 neglect
 Her nature, as well as her heart, might
 affect.
 Till at last, by degrees, that serene at-
 mosphere
 Of her unconscious purity, faint and
 yet clear,
 Like the indistinct golden and vaporous
 fleece
 Which surrounded and hid the celestials
 in Greece
 From the glances of men, would disperse
 and depart
 At the sighs of a sick and delirious
 heart, —
 For jealousy is to a woman, be sure,
 A disease healed too oft by a criminal
 cure;
 And the heart left too long to its ravage,
 in time
 May find weakness in virtue, reprisal
 in crime."

v.

"Such thoughts could have never," he
 faltered, "I know,
 Reached the heart of Matilda."
 "Matilda? O no!
 But reflect! when such thoughts do not
 come of themselves
 To the heart of a woman neglected, like
 elves
 That seek lonely places, — there rarely
 is wanting
 Some voice at her side, with an evil en-
 chanting
 To conjure them to her."
 "O lady, beware!
 At this moment, around me I search
 everywhere
 For a clew to your words" —
 "You mistake them," she said,
 Half fearing, indeed, the effect they had
 made.
 "I was putting a mere hypothetical case."
 With a long look of trouble he gazed in
 her face.
 "Woe to him, . . ." he exclaimed . . .
 "woe to him that shall feel
 Such a hope! for I swear, if he did but
 reveal
 One glimpse, — it should be the last
 hope of his life!"

The clenched hand and bent eyebrow
 betokened the strife
 She had roused in his heart.

"You forget," she began,
 "That you menace yourself. You your-
 self are the man
 That is guilty. Alas! must it ever be so?
 Do we stand in our own light, wherever
 we go,
 And fight our own shadows forever? O
 think!

The trial from which you, the stronger
 ones, shrink,
 You ask woman, the weaker one, still
 to endure;

You bid her be true to the laws you
 abjure;
 To abide by the ties you yourselves rend
 asunder,
 With the force that has failed you; and
 that too, when under
 The assumption of rights which to her
 you refuse,

The immunity claimed for yourselves
 you abuse!
 Where the contract exists, it involves
 obligation
 To both husband and wife, in an equal
 relation.

You unloose, in asserting your own lib-
 erty,
 A knot, which, unloosed, leaves another
 as free.

Then, O Alfred! be juster at heart:
 and thank Heaven
 That Heaven to your wife such a nature
 has given

That you have not wherewith to reproach
 her, albeit
 You have cause to reproach your own
 self, could you see it!"

VI.

In the silence that followed the last
 word she said,
 In the heave of his chest, and the droop
 of his head,

Poor Lucile marked her words had suf-
 ficed to impart
 A new germ of motion and life to that
 heart

Of which he himself had so recently
 spoken
 As dead to emotion, — exhausted, or
 broken!

New fears would awaken new hopes in
 his life.

In the husband indifferent no more to
 the wife
 She already, as she had foreseen, could
 discover

That Matilda had gained, at her hands,
 a new lover.
 So after some moments of silence, whose
 spell
 They both felt, she extended her hand
 to him. . . .

VII.

"Well?"

VIII.

"Lucile," he replied, as that soft quiet
 hand
 In his own he clasped warmly, "I both
 understand
 And obey you."
 "Thank Heaven!" she murmured.

"O yet,
 One word, I beseech you! I cannot
 forget,"

He exclaimed, "we are parting for life.
 You have shown
 My pathway to me: but say, what is
 your own?"

The calmness with which until then she
 had spoken
 In a moment seemed strangely and sud-
 denly broken.

She turned from him nervously, hur-
 riedly.

"Nay,

I know not," she murmured, "I follow
 the way
 Heaven leads me; I cannot foresee to
 what end.

I know only that far, far away it must
 tend
 From all places in which we have met,
 or might meet.

Far away! — onward — upward!"
 A smile strange and sweet
 As the incense that rises from some
 sacred cup

And mixes with music, stole forth, and
 breathed up
 Her whole face, with those words.

"Wheresoever it be,
 May all gentlest angels attend you!"
 sighed he,
 "And bear my heart's blessing wher-
 ever you are!"

And her hand, with emotion, he kissed.

IX.

From afar
That kiss was, alas! by Matilda beheld
With far other emotions: her young
bosom swelled,
And her young cheek with anger was
crimsoned.

The Duke
Adroitly attracted towards it her look
By a faint but significant smile.

X.

Much ill-construed,
Renowned Bishop Berkeley has fully, for
one, strewed
With arguments page upon page to teach
folks
That the world they inhabit is only a
hoax.
But it surely is hard, since we can't do
without them,
That our senses should make us so oft
wish to doubt them!

CANTO III.

I.

WHEN first the red savage called Man
strode, a king,
Through the wilds of creation, — the
very first thing
That his naked intelligence taught him
to feel
Was the shame of himself; and the
wish to conceal
Was the first step in art. From the
apron which Eve
In Eden sat down out of fig-leaves to
weave,
To the furbelowed flounce and the broad
crinoline
Of my lady . . . you all know of course
whom I mean . . .
This art of concealment has greatly in-
creased.
A whole world lies cryptic in each
human breast;
And that drama of passions as old as the
hills,
Which the moral of all men in each man
fulfils,
Is only revealed now and then to our
eyes
In the newspaper-files and the courts of
assize.

II.

In the group seen so lately in sunlight
assembled,
Mid those walks over which the labor-
num-bough trembled,
And the deep-bosomed lilac, empara-
dising
The haunts where the blackbird and
thrush flit and sing,
The keenest eye could but have seen,
and seen only,
A circle of friends, minded not to leave
lonely
The bird on the bough, or the bee on
the blossom;
Conversing at ease in the garden's green
bosom,
Like those who, when Florence was yet
in her glories,
Cheated death and killed time with
Boccaccian stories.
But at length the long twilight more
deeply grew shaded,
And the fair night the rosy horizon
invaded.
And the bee in the blossom, the bird on
the bough,
Through the shadowy garden were slum-
bering now.
The trees only, o'er every unvisited walk,
Began on a sudden to whisper and talk.
And, as each little sprightly and garru-
lous leaf
Woke up with an evident sense of relief,
They all seemed to be saying . . . "Once
more we're alone,
And, thank Heaven, those tiresome peo-
ple are gone!"

III.

Through the deep blue concave of the
luminous air,
Large, loving, and languid, the stars
here and there,
Like the eyes of shy passionate women,
looked down
O'er the dim world whose sole tender
light was their own,
When Matilda, alone, from her chamber
descended,
And entered the garden, unseen, unat-
tended.
Her forehead was aching and parched,
and her breast
By a vague inexpressible sadness op-
pressed;

A sadness which led her, she scarcely
knew how,
And she scarcely knew why . . . (save,
indeed, that just now
The house, out of which with a gasp she
had fled
Half-stifled, seemed ready to sink on
her head) . . .
Out into the night air, the silence, the
bright
Boundless starlight, the cool isolation
of night!
Her husband that day had looked once
in her face,
And pressed both her hands in a silent
embrace,
And reproachfully noticed her recent
dejection
With a smile of kind wonder and tacit
affection.
He, of late so indifferent and listless!
. . . at last
Was he startled and awed by the change
which had passed
O'er the once radiant face of his young
wife? Whence came
That long look of solicitous fondness?
. . . the same
Look and language of quiet affection, —
the look
And the language, alas! which so often
she took
For pure love in the simple repose of its
purity, —
Her own heart thus lulled to a fatal
security!
Ha! would he deceive her again by this
kindness?
Had she been, then, O fool! in her in-
nocent blindness
The sport of transparent illusion? ah,
folly!
And that feeling, so tranquil, so happy,
so holy,
She had taken, till then, in the heart,
not alone
Of her husband, but also, indeed, in
her own,
For true love, nothing else, after all,
did it prove
But a friendship profanely familiar?
"And love? . . .
What was love, then? . . . not calm,
not secure, — scarcely kind!
But in one, all intensest emotions com-
bined:
Life and death: pain and rapture."

Thus wandering astray,
Led by doubt, through the darkness she
wandered away.
All silently crossing, recrossing the night,
With faint, meteoric, miraculous light,
The swift-shooting stars through the
infinite burned,
And into the infinite ever returned.
And silently o'er the obscure and un-
known
In the heart of Matilda there darted and
shone
Thoughts, enkindling like meteors the
deeps, to expire,
Leaving traces behind them of tremulous
fire.

IV.

She entered that arbor of lilacs, in
which
The dark air with odors hung heavy and
rich,
Like a soul that grows faint with desire.
'T was the place
In which she so lately had sat, face to
face
With her husband, — and her, the pale
stranger detested,
Whose presence her heart like a plague
had infested.
The whole spot with evil remembrance
was haunted.
Through the darkness there rose on the
heart which it daunted
Each dreary detail of that desolate day,
So full, and yet so incomplete. Far
away
The acacias were muttering, like mis-
chievous elves,
The whole story over again to them-
selves,
Each word, — and each word was a
wound! By degrees
Her memory mingled its voice with the
trees.

V.

Like the whisper Eve heard, when she
paused by the root
Of the sad tree of knowledge, and gazed
on its fruit,
To the heart of Matilda the trees seemed
to hiss
Wild instructions, revealing man's last
right, which is
The right of reprisals.
An image uncertain,

IX.

From afar
That kiss was, alas! by Matilda beheld
With far other emotions: her young
bosom swelled,
And her young cheek with anger was
crimsoned.

The Duke
Adroitly attracted towards it her look
By a faint but significant smile.

X.

Much ill-construed,
Renowned Bishop Berkeley has fully, for
one, strewed
With arguments page upon page to teach
folks
That the world they inhabit is only a
hoax.
But it surely is hard, since we can't do
without them,
That our senses should make us so oft
wish to doubt them!

CANTO III.

I.

WHEN first the red savage called Man
strode, a king,
Through the wilds of creation, — the
very first thing
That his naked intelligence taught him
to feel
Was the shame of himself; and the
wish to conceal
Was the first step in art. From the
apron which Eve
In Eden sat down out of fig-leaves to
weave,
To the furbelowed flounce and the broad
crinoline
Of my lady . . . you all know of course
whom I mean . . .
This art of concealment has greatly in-
creased.
A whole world lies cryptic in each
human breast;
And that drama of passions as old as the
hills,
Which the moral of all men in each man
fulfils,
Is only revealed now and then to our
eyes
In the newspaper-files and the courts of
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Of the sad tree of knowledge, and gazed
on its fruit,
To the heart of Matilda the trees seemed
to hiss
Wild instructions, revealing man's last
right, which is
The right of reprisals.
An image uncertain,

And vague, dimly shaped itself forth on
the curtain
Of the darkness around her. It came,
and it went;
Through her senses a faint sense of peril
it sent:

It passed and repassed her; it went and
it came

Forever returning; forever the same;
And forever more clearly defined; till
her eyes

In that outline obscure could at last rec-
ognize

The man to whose image, the more and
the more

That her heart, now aroused from its
calm sleep of yore,

From her husband detached itself slowly,
with pain,

Her thoughts had returned, and returned
to, again,

As though by some secret indefinite
law,—

The vigilant Frenchman,—Eugène de
Luvois!

VI.

A light sound behind her. She trem-
bled. By some

Night-witchcraft her vision a fact had
become.

On a sudden she felt, without turning
to view,

That a man was approaching behind her.
She knew

By the fluttering pulse which she could
not restrain,

And the quick-beating heart, that this
man was Eugène.

Her first instinct was flight; but she felt
her slight foot

As heavy as though to the soil it had
root.

And the Duke's voice retained her, like
fear in a dream.

VII.

"Ah, lady! in life there are meetings
which seem

Like a fate. Dare I think like a sym-
pathy too?

Yet what else can I bless for this vision
of you?

Alone with my thoughts, on this star-
lighted lawn,

By an instinct resistless, I felt myself
drawn

To revisit the memories left in the place
Where so lately this evening I looked
in your face.

And I find,—you, yourself,—my own
dream!

"Can there be

In this world one thought common to
you and to me?

If so, . . . I, who deemed but a moment
ago

My heart unaccompanied, save only by
woe,

Should indeed be more blessed than I
dare to believe—

Ah, but *one* word, but one from your
lips to receive" . . .

Interrupting him quickly, she murmured,
"I sought,

Here, a moment of solitude, silence, and
thought,

Which I needed" . . .

"Lives solitude only for one?
Must its charm by my presence so soon
be undone?

Ah, cannot two share it? What needs
it for this?—

The same thought in both hearts,—be
it sorrow or bliss;

If my heart be the reflex of yours, lady,
—you,

Are you not yet alone,—even though
we be two?"

"For that," . . . said Matilda, . . .
"needs were, you should read

What I have in my heart" . . .

"Think you, lady, indeed,
You are yet of that age when a woman
conceals

In her heart so completely whatever she
feels

From the heart of the man whom it
interests to know

And find out what that feeling may be?
Ah, not so,

Lady Alfred! Forgive me that in it I
look,

But I read in your heart as I read in a
book."

"Well, Duke! and what read you
within it? unless

It be, of a truth, a profound weariness,
And some sadness?"

"No doubt. To all facts there are
laws.

The effect has its cause, and I mount to
the cause."

VIII.

Matilda shrank back; for she suddenly
found

That a finger was pressed on the yet
bleeding wound

She herself had but that day perceived
in her breast.

"You are sad," . . . said the Duke (and
that finger yet pressed

With a cruel persistence the wound it
made bleed)—

"You are sad, Lady Alfred, because the
first need

Of a young and a beautiful woman is
to be

Beloved, and to love. You are sad: for
you see

That you are not beloved, as you deemed
that you were:

You are sad: for that knowledge hath
left you aware

That you have not yet loved, though you
thought that you had.

Yes, yes! . . . you are sad—because
knowledge is sad!"

He could not have read more profoundly
her heart.

"What gave you," she cried, with a
terrified start,

"Such strange power?" . . .
"To read in your thoughts?" he

exclaimed,

"O lady,—a love, deep, profound,—
be it blamed.

Or rejected,—a love, true, intense,—
such, at least,

As you, and you only, could wake in my
breast!"

"Hush, hush! . . . I beseech you . . .
for pity!" she gasped,

Snatching hurriedly from him the hand
he had clasped

In her effort instinctive to fly from the
spot.

"For pity?" . . . he echoed, "for pity!
and what

Is the pity you owe him? his pity for
you!

He, the lord of a life, fresh as new-fallen
dew!

The guardian and guide of a woman,
young, fair,

And matchless! (whose happiness did
he not swear

To cherish through life?) he neglects her
—for whom?

For a fairer than she? No! the rose in
the bloom

Of that beauty which, even when hidden,
can prevail

To keep sleepless with song the aroused
nightingale,

Is not fairer; for even in the pure world
of flowers

Her symbol is not, and this poor world
of ours

Has no second Matilda! For whom?
Let that pass!

'T is not I, 't is not you, that can name
her, alas!

And I dare not question or judge her.
But why,

Why cherish the cause of your own
misery?

Why think of one, lady, who thinks not
of you?

Why be bound by a chain which himself
he breaks through?

And why, since you have but to stretch
forth your hand,

The love which you need and deserve to
command,

Why shrink? Why repel it?"

"O hush, sir! O hush!"
Cried Matilda, as though her whole heart
were one blush.

"Cease, cease, I conjure you, to trouble
my life!

Is not Alfred your friend? and am I not
his wife?"

IX.

"And have I not, lady," he answered,
. . . "respected

His rights as a friend, till himself he
neglected

Your rights as a wife? Do you think
't is alone

For three days I have loved you? My
love may have grown

I admit, day by day, since I first felt
your eyes,

In watching their tears, and in sounding
your sighs.

But, O lady! I loved you before I be-
lieved

That your eyes ever wept, or your heart
ever grieved.

Then I deemed you were happy — I deemed you possessed
 All the love you deserved, — and I hid in my breast
 My own love, till this hour — when I could not but feel
 Your grief gave me the right my own grief to reveal !
 I knew, years ago, of the singular power Which Lucile o'er your husband possessed. Till the hour
 In which he revealed it himself, did I, — say ! —
 By a word, or a look, such a secret betray !
 No ! no ! do me justice. I never have spoken
 Of this poor heart of mine, till all ties he had broken
 Which bound *your* heart to him. And now — now, that his love
 For another hath left your own heart free to rove,
 What is it, — even now, — that I kneel to implore you ?
 Only this, Lady Alfred ! . . . to let me adore you
 Unblamed : to have confidence in me : to spend
 On me not one thought, save to think me your friend.
 Let me speak to you, — ah, let me speak to you still !
 Hush to silence my words in your heart, if you will.
 I ask no response : I ask only your leave To live yet in your life, and to grieve when you grieve !"

x.

"Leave me, leave me !" . . . she gasped, with a voice thick and low
 From emotion. "For pity's sake, Duke, let me go !
 I feel that to blame we should both of us be,
 Did I linger."
 "To blame? yes, no doubt!" . . . answered he,
 "If the love of your husband, in bringing you peace,
 Had forbidden you hope. But he signs your release
 By the hand of another. One moment ! but one !
 Who knows when, alas ! I may see you alone

As to-night I have seen you? or when we may meet
 As to-night we have met? when, entranced at your feet,
 As in this blessed hour, I may ever avow
 The thoughts which are pining for utterance now?"
 "Duke ! Duke !" . . . she exclaimed . . .
 "for heaven's sake let me go !
 It is late. In the house they will miss me, I know.
 We must not be seen here together. The night
 Is advancing. I feel overwhelmed with affright !
 It is time to return to my lord."
 "To your lord?"
 He repeated, with lingering reproach on the word,
 "To your lord? do you think he awaits you, in truth?
 Is he anxiously missing your presence, forsooth?
 Return to your lord ! . . . his restraint to renew?
 And hinder the glances which are not for you?
 No, no ! . . . at this moment his looks seek the face
 Of another ! another is there in your place !
 Another consoles him ! another receives
 The soft speech which from silence your absence relieves !"

xi.

"You mistake, sir !" . . . responded a voice, calm, severe,
 And sad, . . . "You mistake, sir ! that other is here."
 Eugène and Matilda both started.
 "Lucile !"
 With a half-stifled scream, as she felt herself reel
 From the place where she stood, cried Matilda.
 "Ho, oh !
 What ! eaves-dropping, madam ?" . . . the Duke cried . . . "And so
 You were listening?"
 "Say, rather," she said, "that I heard,
 Without wishing to hear it, that infamous word, —
 Heard — and therefore reply."
 "Belle Comtesse," said the Duke,

With concentrated wrath in the savage rebuke,
 Which betrayed that he felt himself baffled . . . "you know
 That your place is not *here*."
 "Duke," she answered him slow,
 "My place is wherever my duty is clear ;
 And therefore my place, at this moment, is here.
 O lady, this morning my place was beside
 Your husband, because (as she said this she sighed)
 I felt that from folly fast growing to crime —
 The crime of self-blindness — Heaven yet spared me time
 To save for the love of an innocent wife
 All that such love deserved in the heart and the life
 Of the man to whose heart and whose life you alone
 Can with safety confide the pure trust of your own."

She turned to Matilda, and lightly laid on her
 Her soft, quiet hand . . .
 "Tis, O lady, the honor
 Which that man has confided to you, that, in spite
 Of his friend, I now trust I may yet save to-night —
 Save for both of you, lady ! for yours I revere ;
 Duc de Luvois, what say you ? — my place is not here ?"

xii.

And, so saying, the hand of Matilda she caught,
 Wound one arm round her waist unresisted, and sought
 Gently, softly, to draw her away from the spot.
 The Duke stood confounded, and followed them not.
 But not yet the house had they reached when Lucile
 Her tender and delicate burden could feel
 Sink and falter beside her. O, then she knelt down,
 Flung her arms round Matilda, and pressed to her own
 The poor bosom beating against her.
 The moon,

Bright, breathless, and buoyant, and brimful of June,
 Floated up from the hillside, sloped over the vale,
 And poised herself loose in mid-heaven, with one pale,
 Minute, scintillescent, and tremulous star
 Swinging under her globe like a wizard-lit car,
 Thus to each of those women revealing the face
 Of the other. Each bore on her features the trace
 Of a vivid emotion. A deep inward shame
 The cheek of Matilda had flooded with flame.
 With her enthusiastic emotion, Lucile Trembled visibly yet ; for she could not but feel
 That a heavenly hand was upon her that night,
 And it touched her pure brow to a heavenly light.
 "In the name of your husband, dear lady," she said ;
 "In the name of your mother, take heart ! Lift your head,
 For those blushes are noble. Alas ! do not trust
 To that maxim of virtue made ashes and dust,
 That the fault of the husband can cancel the wife's.
 Take heart ! and take refuge and strength in your life's
 Pure silence, — there, kneel, pray, and hope, weep, and wait !"
 "Saved, Lucile !" sobbed Matilda, "but saved to what fate ?
 Tears, prayers, yes ! not hopes."
 "Hush !" the sweet voice replied.
 "Fooled away by a fancy, again to your side
 Must your husband return. Doubt not this. And return
 For the love you can give, with the love that you yearn
 To receive, lady. What was it chilled you both now ?
 Not the absence of love, but the ignorance how
 Love is nourished by love. Well ! henceforth you will prove
 Your heart worthy of love, — since it knows how to love."

XIII.

"What gives you such power over me,
that I feel
Thus drawn to obey you? What are
you, Lucile?"
Sighed Matilda, and lifted her eyes to
the face
Of Lucile.
There passed suddenly through it the
trace
Of deep sadness; and o'er that fair fore-
head came down
A shadow which yet was too sweet for a
frown.
"The pupil of sorrow, perchance" . . .
she replied.
"Of sorrow?" Matilda exclaimed . . .
"O confide
To my heart your affliction. In all you
made known
I should find some instruction, no doubt,
for my own!"
"And I some consolation, no doubt;
for the tears
Of another have not flowed for me many
years."
It was then that Matilda herself seized
the hand
Of Lucile in her own, and uplifted her;
and
Thus together they entered the house.

XIV.

'T was the room

Of Matilda.
The languid and delicate gloom
Of a lamp of pure white alabaster, aloft
From the ceiling suspended, around it
slept soft.
The casement oped into the garden.
The pale
Cool moonlight streamed through it.
One lone nightingale
Sung aloof in the laurels.
And here, side by side,
Hand in hand, the two women sat down
undescried,
Save by guardian angels.
As, when, sparkling yet
From the rain, that, with drops that are
jewels, leaves wet
The bright head it humbles, a young
rose inclines
To some pale lily near it, the fair vision
shines

As one flower with two faces, in hushed,
tearful speech,
Like the showery whispers of flowers,
each to each
Linked, and leaning together, so loving,
so fair,
So united, yet diverse, the two women
there
Looked, indeed, like two flowers upon
one drooping stem,
In the soft light that tenderly rested on
them.
All that soul said to soul in that cham-
ber, who knows?
All that heart gained from heart?
Leave the lily, the rose,
Undisturbed with their secret within
them. For who
To the heart of the floweret can follow
the dew?
A night full of stars! O'er the silence,
unseen,
The footsteps of sentinel angels, between
The dark land and deep sky were mov-
ing. You heard
Passed from earth up to heaven the
happy watchword
Which brightened the stars as amongst
them it fell
From earth's heart, which it eased . . .
"All is well! all is well!"

CANTO IV.

I.

THE Poets pour wine; and, when 't is
new, all decry it,
But, once let it be old, every trifle
must try it.
And Polonius, who praises no wine
that's not Massie,
Complains of my verse, that my verse is
not classic.
And Miss Tilburina, who sings, and not
badly,
My earlier verses, sighs "Commonplace
sadly!"
As for you, O Polonius, you vex me but
slightly;
But you, Tilburina, your eyes beam so
brightly
In despite of their languishing looks, on
my word,

That to see you look cross I can scarcely
afford.
Yes! the silliest woman that smiles on
a bard
Better far than Longinus himself can
reward
The appeal to her feelings of which she
approves;
And the critics I most care to please are
the Loves.
Alas, friend! what boots it, a stone at
his head
And a brass on his breast, — when a
man is once dead?
Ay! were fame the sole guerdon, poor
guerdon were then
Theirs who, stripping life bare, stand
forth models for men.
The reformer's? — a creed by posterity
learnt
A century after its author is burnt!
The poet's? — a laurel that hides the
bald brow
It hath blighted! The painter's? — ask
Raphael now
Which Madonna's authentic! The
statesman's? — a name
For parties to blacken, or boys to de-
claim!
The soldier's? — three lines on the cold
Abbey pavement!
Were this all the life of the wise and the
brave meant,
All it ends in, thrice better, Neera, it
were
Unregarded to sport with thine odorous
hair,
Untroubled to lie at thy feet in the
shade
And be loved, while the roses yet bloom
overhead,
Than to sit by the lone hearth, and think
the long thought,
A severe, sad, blind schoolmaster, envied
for naught
Save the name of John Milton! For all
men, indeed,
Who in some choice edition may gracious-
ly read,
With fair illustration, and erudite note,
The song which the poet in bitterness
wrote,
Beat the poet, and notably beat him, in
this —
The joy of the genius is theirs, whilst
they miss

The grief of the man: Tasso's song, —
not his madness!
Dante's dreams, — not his waking to
exile and sadness!
Milton's music, — but not Milton's blind-
ness! . . .
Yet rise,
My Milton, and answer, with those noble
eyes
Which the glory of heaven hath blinded
to earth!
Say — the life, in the living it, savors
of worth:
That the deed, in the doing it, reaches
its aim:
That the fact has a value apart from the
fame:
That a deeper delight, in the mere labor,
pays
Scorn of lesser delights, and laborious
days:
And Shakespeare, though all Shake-
speare's writings were lost,
And his genius, though never a trace of
it crossed
Posterity's path, not the less would have
dwelt
In the isle with Miranda, with Hamlet
have felt
All that Hamlet hath uttered, and haply
where, pure
On its death-bed, wronged Love lay,
have moaned with the Moor!

II.

When Lord Alfred that night to the salon
returned
He found it deserted. The lamp dimly
burned
As though half out of humor to find itself
there
Forced to light for no purpose a room
that was bare.
He sat down by the window alone.
Never yet
Did the heavens a lovelier evening beget
Since Latona's bright childbed that bore
the new moon!
The dark world lay still, in a sort of
sweet swoon,
Wide open to heaven; and the stars on
the stream
Were trembling like eyes that are loved
on the dream
Of a lover; and all things were glad and
at rest

XIII.

"What gives you such power over me,
that I feel
Thus drawn to obey you? What are
you, Lucile?"
Sighed Matilda, and lifted her eyes to
the face
Of Lucile.
There passed suddenly through it the
trace
Of deep sadness; and o'er that fair fore-
head came down
A shadow which yet was too sweet for a
frown.
"The pupil of sorrow, perchance" . . .
she replied.
"Of sorrow?" Matilda exclaimed . . .
"O confide
To my heart your affliction. In all you
made known
I should find some instruction, no doubt,
for my own!"
"And I some consolation, no doubt;
for the tears
Of another have not flowed for me many
years."
It was then that Matilda herself seized
the hand
Of Lucile in her own, and uplifted her;
and
Thus together they entered the house.

XIV.

'T was the room

Of Matilda.
The languid and delicate gloom
Of a lamp of pure white alabaster, aloft
From the ceiling suspended, around it
slept soft.
The casement oped into the garden.
The pale
Cool moonlight streamed through it.
One lone nightingale
Sung aloof in the laurels.
And here, side by side,
Hand in hand, the two women sat down
undescried,
Save by guardian angels.
As, when, sparkling yet
From the rain, that, with drops that are
jewels, leaves wet
The bright head it humbles, a young
rose inclines
To some pale lily near it, the fair vision
shines

As one flower with two faces, in hushed,
tearful speech,
Like the showery whispers of flowers,
each to each
Linked, and leaning together, so loving,
so fair,
So united, yet diverse, the two women
there
Looked, indeed, like two flowers upon
one drooping stem,
In the soft light that tenderly rested on
them.
All that soul said to soul in that cham-
ber, who knows?
All that heart gained from heart?
Leave the lily, the rose,
Undisturbed with their secret within
them. For who
To the heart of the floweret can follow
the dew?
A night full of stars! O'er the silence,
unseen,
The footsteps of sentinel angels, between
The dark land and deep sky were mov-
ing. You heard
Passed from earth up to heaven the
happy watchword
Which brightened the stars as amongst
them it fell
From earth's heart, which it eased . . .
"All is well! all is well!"

CANTO IV.

I.

THE Poets pour wine; and, when 't is
new, all decry it,
But, once let it be old, every trifle
must try it.
And Polonius, who praises no wine
that's not Massie,
Complains of my verse, that my verse is
not classic.
And Miss Tilburina, who sings, and not
badly,
My earlier verses, sighs "Commonplace
sadly!"
As for you, O Polonius, you vex me but
slightly;
But you, Tilburina, your eyes beam so
brightly
In despite of their languishing looks, on
my word,

That to see you look cross I can scarcely
afford.
Yes! the silliest woman that smiles on
a bard
Better far than Longinus himself can
reward
The appeal to her feelings of which she
approves;
And the critics I most care to please are
the Loves.
Alas, friend! what boots it, a stone at
his head
And a brass on his breast, — when a
man is once dead?
Ay! were fame the sole guerdon, poor
guerdon were then
Theirs who, stripping life bare, stand
forth models for men.
The reformer's? — a creed by posterity
learnt
A century after its author is burnt!
The poet's? — a laurel that hides the
bald brow
It hath blighted! The painter's? — ask
Raphael now
Which Madonna's authentic! The
statesman's? — a name
For parties to blacken, or boys to de-
claim!
The soldier's? — three lines on the cold
Abbey pavement!
Were this all the life of the wise and the
brave meant,
All it ends in, thrice better, Neera, it
were
Unregarded to sport with thine odorous
hair,
Untroubled to lie at thy feet in the
shade
And be loved, while the roses yet bloom
overhead,
Than to sit by the lone hearth, and think
the long thought,
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for naught
Save the name of John Milton! For all
men, indeed,
Who in some choice edition may gracious-
ly read,
With fair illustration, and erudite note,
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sweet swoon,
Wide open to heaven; and the stars on
the stream
Were trembling like eyes that are loved
on the dream
Of a lover; and all things were glad and
at rest

Save the unquiet heart in his own troubled breast.
He endeavored to think, — an unwonted employment,
Which appeared to afford him no sort of enjoyment.

III.

“Withdraw into yourself. But, if peace you seek there for,
Your reception, beforehand, be sure to prepare for.”
Wrote the tutor of Nero; who wrote, be it said,
Better far than he acted, — but peace to the dead!
He bled for his pupil: what more could he do?
But Lord Alfred, when into himself he withdrew,
Found all there in disorder. For more than an hour
He sat with his head drooped like some stubborn flower
Beaten down by the rush of the rain, — with such force
Did the thick, gushing thoughts hold upon him the course
Of their sudden descent, rapid, rushing, and dim,
From the cloud that had darkened the evening for him.
At one moment he rose, — rose and opened the door,
And wistfully looked down the dark corridor
Toward the room of Matilda. Anon, with a sigh
Of an incomplete purpose, he crept quietly
Back again to his place in a sort of submission
To doubt, and returned to his former position, —
That loose fall of the arms, that dull droop of the face,
And the eye vaguely fixed on impalpable space.
The dream, which till then had been lulling his life,
As once Circe the winds, had sealed thought; and his wife
And his home for a time he had quite, like Ulysses,
Forgotten; but now o'er the troubled abysses

Of the spirit within him, æolian, forth leapt
To their freedom new-found, and resistlessly swept
All his heart into tumult, the thoughts which had been
Long pent up in their mystic recesses unseen.

IV.

How long he thus sat there, himself he knew not,
Till he started, as though he were suddenly shot,
To the sound of a voice too familiar to doubt,
Which was making some noise in the passage without.
A sound English voice, with a round English accent,
Which the scared German echoes resentfully back sent;
The complaint of a much disappointed cab-driver
Mingled with it, demanding some ultimate stiver:
Then, the heavy and hurried approach of a boot
Which revealed by its sound no diminutive foot:
And the door was flung suddenly open, and on
The threshold Lord Alfred by bachelor John
Was seized in that sort of affectionate rage or
Frenzy of hugs which some stout Ursa Major
On some lean Ursa Minor would doubtless bestow
With a warmth for which only starvation and snow
Could render one grateful. As soon as he could,
Lord Alfred contrived to escape, nor be food
Any more for those somewhat voracious embraces.
Then the two men sat down and scanned each other's faces;
And Alfred could see that his cousin was taken
With unwonted emotion. The hand that had shaken
His own trembled somewhat. In truth he desiered,
At a glance, something wrong.

v.
“What's the matter?” he cried.
“What have you to tell me?”

JOHN.
What! have you not heard?

ALFRED.
Heard what?

JOHN.
This sad business —

ALFRED.
I? no, not a word.

JOHN.
You received my last letter?

ALFRED.
I think so. If not,
What then?

JOHN.
You have acted upon it?

ALFRED.
On what?

JOHN.
The advice that I gave you —

ALFRED.
Advice? — let me see!
You *always* are giving advice, Jack, to me.

About Parliament was it?

JOHN.
Hang Parliament! no,
The Bank, the Bank, Alfred!

ALFRED.
What Bank?

JOHN.
Heavens! I know
You are careless; — but surely you have not forgotten, —
Or neglected . . . I warned you the whole thing was rotten.
You have drawn those deposits at least?

ALFRED.
No, I meant
To have written to-day; but the note shall be sent
To-morrow, however.

JOHN.
To-morrow? too late!
Too late! O, what devil bewitched you to wait?

ALFRED.
Mercy save us! you don't mean to say . . .

JOHN.
Yes, I do.

ALFRED.
What! Sir Ridley? . . .

JOHN.
Smashed, broken, blown up, bolted too!

ALFRED.
But his own niece? . . . In heaven's name, Jack . . .

JOHN.
O, I told you
The old hypocritical scoundrel would . . .

ALFRED.
Hold! you
Surely can't mean we are ruined?

JOHN.
Sit down!
A fortnight ago a report about town
Made me most apprehensive. Alas, and alas!

I at once wrote and warned you. Well, now let that pass.
A run on the Bank about five days ago
Confirmed my forebodings too terribly, though.

I drove down to the city at once: found the door
Of the Bank close: the Bank had stopped payment at four.

Next morning the failure was known to be fraud:
Warrant out for MacNab; but MacNab was abroad:

Gone — we cannot tell where. I endeavored to get
Information: have learned nothing certain as yet, —

Not even the way that old Ridley was gone:
Or with those securities what he had done:

Or whether they had been already called out:

If they are not, their fate is, I fear, past a doubt.
Twenty families ruined, they say: what was left, —
Unable to find any clew to the cleft
The old fox ran to earth in, — but join you as fast
As I could, my dear Alfred? *

VI.

He stopped here, aghast
At the change in his cousin, the hue of whose face
Had grown livid; and glassy his eyes fixed on space.
"Courage, courage!" . . . said John,
" . . . bear the blow like a man!"
And he caught the cold hand of Lord Alfred. There ran
Through that hand a quick tremor. "I bear it," he said,
"But Matilda? the blow is to her!"
And his head
Seemed forced down, as he said it.

JOHN.

Matilda? Pooh, pooh!
I half think I know the girl better than you.
She has courage enough — and to spare.
She cares less
Than most women for luxury, nonsense, and dress.

ALFRED.

The fault has been mine.

JOHN.

Be it yours to repair it:
If you did not avert, you may help her to bear it.

ALFRED.

I might have averted.

JOHN.

Perhaps so. But now
There is clearly no use in considering how,

* These events, it is needless to say, Mr. Morse, Took place when Bad News as yet travelled by horse.
Ere the world, like a cockchafer, buzzed on a wire,
Or Time was calmed by electrical fire;
Ere a cable went under the hoary Atlantic,
Or the word Telegram drove grammarians frantic.

Or whence, came the mischief. The mischief is here.
Broken shins are not mended by crying, — that's clear!
One has but to rub them, and get up again,
And push on, — and not think too much of the pain.
And at least it is much that you see that to her
You owe too much to think of yourself.
You must stir
And arouse yourself, Alfred, for her sake. Who knows?
Something yet may be saved from this wreck. I suppose
We shall make him disgorge all he can, at the least.

"O Jack, I have been a brute idiot! a beast!
A fool! I have sinned, and to her I have sinned!
I have been heedless, blind, inexcusably blind!
And now, in a flash, I see all things!"
As though
To shut out the vision, he bowed his head low
On his hands; and the great tears in silence rolled on,
And fell momentarily, heavily, one after one.
John felt no desire to find instant relief
For the trouble he witnessed.

He guessed, in the grief
Of his cousin, the broken and heartfelt admission
Of some error demanding a heartfelt contrition:
Some oblivion perchance which could plead less excuse
To the heart of a man re-aroused to the use
Of the conscience God gave him, than simply and merely
The neglect for which now he was paying so dearly.
So he rose without speaking, and paced up and down
The long room, much afflicted, indeed, in his own
Cordial heart for Matilda.

Thus, silently lost
In his anxious reflections, he crossed and recrossed

The place where his cousin yet hopelessly hung
O'er the table; his fingers entwisted among
The rich curls they were knotting and dragging: and there,
That sound of all sounds the most painful to hear,
The sobs of a man! Yet so far in his own
Kindly thoughts was he plunged, he already had grown
Unconscious of Alfred.
And so for a space
There was silence between them.

VII.

At last, with sad face
He stopped short, and bent on his cousin awhile
A pained sort of wistful, compassionate smile,
Approached him, — stood o'er him, — and suddenly laid
One hand on his shoulder —
"Where is she?" he said.
Alfred lifted his face all disfigured with tears
And gazed vacantly at him, like one that appears
In some foreign language to hear himself greeted,
Unable to answer.

"Where is she?" repeated
His cousin.
He motioned his hand to the door;
"There, I think," he replied. Cousin John said no more,
And appeared to relapse to his own cogitations,
Of which not a gesture vouchsafed indications.
So again there was silence.

A timepiece at last
Struck the twelve strokes of midnight.
Roused by them, he cast
A half-look to the dial; then quietly threw
His arm round the neck of his cousin, and drew
The hands down from his face.
"It is time she should know
What has happened," he said, . . . "let us go to her now."
Alfred started at once to his feet.

Drawn and wan
Though his face, he looked more than his wont was — a man.

Strong for once, in his weakness. Uplifted, filled through
With a manly resolve.

If that axiom be true
Of the "*Sum quia cogito*," I must opine
That "*id sum quod cogito*" : — that which, in fine,
A man thinks and feels, with his whole force of thought
And feeling, the man is himself.

He had fought
With himself, and rose up from his self-overthrow
The survivor of much which that strife had laid low.

At his feet, as he rose at the name of his wife,
Lay in ruins the brilliant unrealized life
Which, though yet unfulfilled, seemed till then, in that name,
To be his, had he claimed it. The man's dream of fame
And of power fell shattered before him; and only
There rested the heart of the woman, so lonely

In all save the love he could give her.
The lord
Of that heart he arose. Blush not, Muse, to record
That his first thought, and last, at that moment was not
Of the power and fame that seemed lost to his lot,
But the love that was left to it; not of the pelf

He had cared for, yet squandered; and not of himself,
But of her; as he murmured,
"One moment, dear Jack!
We have grown up from boyhood together. Our track
Has been through the same meadows in childhood: in youth
Through the same silent gateways, to manhood. In truth,
There is none that can know me as you do; and none
To whom I more wish to believe myself known.

Speak the truth; you are not wont to mince it, I know.
Nor I, shall I shirk it, or shrink from it now.
In despite of a wanton behavior, in spite

Of vanity, folly, and pride, Jack, which
might
Have turned from me many a heart
strong and true
As your own, I have never turned round
and missed YOU
From my side in one hour of affliction
or doubt
By my own blind and heedless self-will
brought about.
Tell me truth. Do I owe this alone to
the sake
Of those old recollections of boyhood
that make
In your heart yet some clinging and
crying appeal
From a judgment more harsh, which I
cannot but feel
Might have sentenced our friendship to
death long ago?
Or is it . . . (I would I could deem it
were so!)
That, not all overlaid by a listless exter-
rior,
Your heart has divined in me something
superior
To that which I seem; from my inner-
most nature
Not wholly expelled by the world's
usurpature?
Some instinct of earnestness, truth, or
desire
For truth? Some one spark of the
soul's native fire
Moving under the ashes, and cinders,
and dust
Which life hath heaped o'er it? Some
one fact to trust
And to hope in? Or by you alone am I
deemed
The mere frivolous fool I so often have
seemed
To my own self?"

JOHN.

No, Alfred! you will, I believe,
Be true, at the last, to what now makes
you grieve
For having belied your true nature so
long.
Necessity is a stern teacher. Be strong!
"Do you think," he resumed . . . "what
I feel while I speak
Is no more than a transient emotion, as
weak
As these weak tears would seem to be-
token it?"

JOHN.

No!

ALFRED.

Thank you, cousin! your hand then.
And now I will go
Alone, Jack. Trust to me.

VIII.

JOHN.

I do. But 't is late.

If she sleeps, you 'll not wake her.

ALFRED.

No, no! it will wait
(Poor infant!) too surely, this mission
of sorrow;
If she sleeps, I will not mar her dreams
of to-morrow.
He opened the door, and passed out.
Cousin John
Watched him wistful, and left him to
seek her alone.

IX.

His heart beat so loud when he knocked
at her door,
He could hear no reply from within.
Yet once more
He knocked lightly. No answer. The
handle he tried:
The door opened: he entered the room
undescried.

X.

No brighter than is that dim circlet of
light
Which enhaloes the moon when rains
form on the night,
The pale lamp and indistinct radiance
shed
Round the chamber, in which at her
pure snowy bed
Matilda was kneeling; so wrapt in deep
prayer
That she knew not her husband stood
watching her there.
With the lamplight the moonlight had
mingled a faint
And unearthly effulgence which seemed
to acquaint
The whole place with a sense of deep
peace made secure
By the presence of something angelic
and pure.
And not purer some angel Grief carves
o'er the tomb

Where Love lies, than the lady that
kneeled in that gloom.
She had put off her dress; and she
looked to his eyes
Like a young soul escaped from its
earthly disguise;
Her fair neck and innocent shoulders
were bare,
And over them rippled her soft golden
hair;
Her simple and slender white bodice
unlaced
Confined not one curve of her delicate
waist.
As the light that, from water reflected,
forever
Trembles up through the tremulous reeds
of a river,
So the beam of her beauty went trem-
bling in him,
Through the thoughts it suffused with
a sense soft and dim,
Reproducing itself in the broken and
bright
Lapse and pulse of a million emotions.
That sight
Bowed his heart, bowed his knee. Know-
ing scarce what he did,
To her side through the chamber he si-
lently slid,
And knelt down beside her,—and prayed
at her side.

XI.

Upstarting, she then for the first time
descried
That her husband was near her; suffused
with the blush
Which came o'er her soft pallid cheek
with a gush
Where the tears sparkled yet.
As a young fawn uncouches,
Shy with fear, from the fern where some
hunter approaches,
She shrank back; he caught her, and
circling his arm
Round her waist, on her brow pressed
one kiss long and warm.
Then her fear changed in impulse; and
hiding her face
On his breast, she hung locked in a
clinging embrace
With her soft arms wound heavily round
him, as though
She feared, if their clasp were relaxed,
he would go:

Her smooth naked shoulders, unearned
for, convulsed
By sob after sob, while her bosom yet
pulsed
In its pressure on his, as the effort with-
in it
Lived and died with each tender tumul-
tuous minute.
"O Alfred, O Alfred! forgive me," she
cried,—
"Forgive me!"
"Forgive you, my poor child!" he
sighed;
"But I never have blamed you for aught
that I know,
And I have not one thought that re-
proaches you now."
From her arms he unwound himself
gently. And so
He forced her down softly beside him.
Below
The canopy shading their couch, they
sat down.
And he said, clasping firmly her hand
in his own,
"When a proud man, Matilda, has found
out at length,
That he is but a child in the midst of
his strength,
But a fool in his wisdom, to whom can
he own
The weakness which thus to himself hath
been shown?
From whom seek the strength which his
need of is sore,
Although in his pride he might perish,
before
He could plead for the one, or the other
avow
Mid his intimate friends? Wife of mine,
tell me now,
Do you join me in feeling, in that dark-
ened hour,
The sole friend that *can* have the right
or the power
To be at his side, is the woman that
shares
His fate, if he falter; the woman that
bears
The name dear for *her* sake, and hallows
the life
She has mingled her own with,—in
short, that man's wife?"
"Yes," murmured Matilda, "O yes!"
"Then," he cried,
"This chamber in which we two sit,
side by side

(And his arm, as he spoke, seemed more softly to press her),
Is now a confessional, — *you*, my confessor!"

"I?" she faltered, and timidly lifted her head.

"Yes! but first answer one other question," he said:

"When a woman once feels that she is not alone;
That the heart of another is warmed by her own;
That another feels with her whatever she feel,
And halves her existence in woe or in weal;
That a man for her sake will, so long as he lives,
Live to put forth his strength which the thought of her gives;
Live to shield her from want, and to share with her sorrow;
Live to solace the day, and provide for the morrow:
Will that woman feel less than another,
O say,
The loss of what life, sparing this, takes away?
Will she feel (feeling this), when calamities come,
That they brighten the heart, though they darken the home?"

She turned, like a soft rainy heaven, on him
Eyes that smiled through fresh tears, trustful, tender, and dim.

"That woman," she murmured, "indeed were thrice blest!"

"Then courage, true wife of my heart!" to his breast
As he folded and gathered her closely, he cried.

"For the refuge, to-night in these arms opened wide
To your heart, can be never closed to it again,
And this room is for both an asylum!
For when
I passed through that door, at the door I left there
A calamity, sudden, and heavy to bear.
One step from that threshold, and daily, I fear,
We must face it henceforth: but it enters not here,
For that door shuts it out, and admits here alone

A heart which calamity leaves all your own!"

She started. . . "Calamity, Alfred! to you?"

"To both, my poor child, but 't will bring with it too
The courage, I trust, to subdue it."

"O speak!" she faltered in tones timid, anxious, and weak.

"O yet for a moment," he said, "hear me on!"

Matilda, this morn we went forth in the sun,
Like these children of sunshine, the bright summer flies,
That sport in the sunbeam, and play through the skies
While the skies smile, and heed not each other: at last,
When their sunbeam is gone, and their sky overcast,
Who recks in what ruin they fold their wet wings?
So indeed the morn found us, — poor frivolous things!
Now our sky is o'ercast, and our sunbeam is set,
And the night brings its darkness around us. O, yet,
Have we weathered no storm through those twelve cloudless hours?
Yes; you, too, have wept!
"While the world was yet ours,
While its sun was upon us, its incense streamed to us,
And its myriad voices of joy seemed to woo us,
We strayed from each other, too far, it may be,
Nor, wantonly wandering, then did I see
How deep was my need of thee, dearest, how great
Was thy claim on my heart and thy share in my fate!
But, Matilda, an angel was near us, meanwhile,
Watching o'er us, to warn, and to rescue!
"That smile
Which you saw with suspicion, that presence you eyed
With resentment, an angel's they were at your side
And at mine; nor perchance is the day all so far,
When we both in our prayers, when most heartfelt they are,

May murmur the name of that woman now gone
From our sight evermore.

"Here, this evening, alone,
I seek your forgiveness, in opening my heart
Unto yours, — from this clasp be it never to part!
Matilda, the fortune you brought me is gone,
But a prize richer far than that fortune has won
It is yours to confer, and I kneel for that prize,
"T is the heart of my wife!" With suffused happy eyes
She sprang from her seat, flung her arms wide apart,
And tenderly closing them round him, his heart
Clasped in one close embrace to her bosom; and there
Drooped her head on his shoulder; and sobbed.

Not despair,
Not sorrow, not even the sense of her loss,
Flowed in those happy tears, so oblivious she was
Of all save the sense of her own love!
Anon,
However, his words rushed back to her.
"All gone,
The fortune you brought me!"
And eyes that were dim
With soft tears she upraised: but those tears were for *him*.
"Gone! my husband?" she said, "tell me all! see! I need,
To sober this rapture, so selfish indeed,
Fuller sense of affliction."
"Poor innocent child!"
He kissed her fair forehead, and mournfully smiled,
As he told her the tale he had heard, — something more
The gain found in loss of what gain lost of yore.
"Rest, my heart, and my brain, and my right hand for you;
And with these, my Matilda, what may I not do?
You know not, I knew not myself till this hour,
Which so sternly revealed it, my nature's full power."

"And I too," she murmured, "I too am no more
The mere infant at heart you have known me before.
I have suffered since then. I have learned much in life.
O take, with the faith I have pledged as a wife,
The heart I have learned as a woman to feel!
For I — love you, my husband!"
As though to conceal
Less from him, than herself, what that motion expressed,
She dropped her bright head, and hid all on his breast.
"O lovely as woman, beloved as wife!
Evening star of my heart, light forever my life!
If from eyes fixed too long on this base earth thus far
You have missed your due homage, dear guardian star,
Believe that, uplifting those eyes unto heaven,
There I see you, and know you, and bless the light given
To lead me to life's late achievement; my own,
My blessing, my treasure, my all things in one!"

XII.

How lovely she looked in the lovely moonlight,
That streamed through the pane from the blue balmy night!
How lovely she looked in her own lovely youth,
As she clung to his side full of trust, and of truth!
How lovely to *him* as he tenderly pressed
Her young head on his bosom, and sadly caressed
The glittering tresses which now shaken loose
Showered gold in his hand, as he smoothed them!

XIII.

O Muse,
Interpose not one pulse of thine own beating heart
"Twixt these two silent souls! There's a joy beyond art,
And beyond sound the music it makes in the breast.

XIV.
 Here were lovers twice wed, that were
 happy at least !
 No music, save such as the nightingales
 sung,
 Breathed their bridals abroad ; and no
 cresset, uphung,
 Lit that festival hour, save what soft
 light was given
 From the pure stars that peopled the
 deep-purple heaven.
 He opened the casement : he led her
 with him,
 Hushed in heart, to the terrace, dipped
 cool in the dim
 Lustrous gloom of the shadowy laurels.
 They heard
 Aloof the invisible, rapturous bird,
 With her wild note bewildering the
 woodlands : they saw
 Not unheard, afar off, the hill-rivulet
 draw
 His long ripple of moon-kindled wavelets
 with cheer
 From the throat of the vale ; o'er the
 dark-sapphire sphere
 The mild, multitudinous lights lay asleep,
 Pastured free on the midnight, and bright
 as the sheep
 Of Apollo in pastoral Thrace ; from
 unknown
 Hollow glooms freshened odors around
 them were blown
 Intermittently ; then the moon dropped
 from their sight,
 Immersed in the mountains, and put out
 the light
 Which no longer they needed to read on
 the face
 Of each other's life's last revelation.
 The place
 Slept sumptuous round them ; and Na-
 ture, that never
 Sleeps, but waking reposes, with patient
 endeavor
 Continued about them, unheeded, unseen,
 Her old, quiet toil in the heart of the
 green
 Summer silence, preparing new buds for
 new blossoms,
 And stealing a finger of change o'er the
 bosoms
 Of the unconscious woodlands ; and
 Time, that halts not
 His forces, how lovely soever the spot
 Where their march lies, — the wary, gray
 strategist, Time,

With the armies of Life, lay encamped,
 — Grief and Crime,
 Love and Faith, in the darkness un-
 heeded ; maturing,
 For his great war with man, new sur-
 prises ; securing
 All outlets, pursuing and pushing his
 foe
 To his last narrow refuge, — the grave.

XV.

Sweetly though
 Smiled the stars like new hopes out of
 heaven, and sweetly
 Their hearts beat thanksgiving for all
 things, completely
 Confiding in that yet untrudged exist-
 ence
 Over which they were pausing. To-
 morrow, resistance
 And struggle ; to-night, Love his hal-
 lowed device
 Hung forth, and proclaimed his serene
 armistice.

CANTO V.

I.

WHEN Lucile left Matilda, she sat for
 long hours
 In her chamber, fatigued by long over-
 wrought powers,
 'Mid the signs of departure, about to
 turn back
 To her old vacant life, on her old home-
 less track.
 She felt her heart falter within her.
 She sat
 Like some poor player, gazing dejectedly
 at
 The insignia of royalty worn for a night ;
 Exhausted, fatigued, with the dazzle
 and light,
 And the effort of passionate feigning ;
 who thinks
 Of her own meagre, rush-lighted garret,
 and shrinks
 From the chill of the change that awaits
 her.

II.

From these
 Oppressive, and comfortless, blank rev-
 eries,
 Unable to sleep, she descended the stair
 That led from her room to the garden.

The air,
 With the chill of the dawn, yet unrisen,
 but at hand,
 Strangely smote on her feverish forehead.
 The land

Lay in darkness and change, like a world
 in its grave :
 No sound, save the voice of the long
 river wave,

And the crickets that sing all the night !
 She stood still,
 Vaguely watching the thin cloud that
 curled on the hill.

Emotions, long pent in her breast, were
 at stir,
 And the deeps of the spirit were troubled
 in her.

Ah, pale woman ! what, with that heart-
 broken look,
 Didst thou read then in nature's weird
 heart-breaking book ?

Have the wild rains of heaven a father ?
 and who
 Hath in pity begotten the drops of the
 dew ?

Orion, Arcturus, who pilots them both ?
 What leads forth in his season the bright
 Mazaroth ?

Hath the darkness a dwelling, — save
 there, in those eyes ?

And what name hath that half-revealed
 hope in the skies ?

Ay, question, and listen ! What an-
 swer ?

The sound

Of the long river wave through its stone-
 troubled bound,
 And the crickets that sing all the night.

There are hours
 Which belong to unknown, supernatural
 powers,
 Whose sudden and solemn suggestions
 are all

That to this race of worms — stinging
 creatures, that crawl,
 Lie, and fear, and die daily, beneath
 their own stings —

Can excuse the blind boast of inherited
 wings.

When the soul, on the impulse of an-
 guish, hath passed
 Beyond anguish, and risen into rapture
 at last ;

When she traverses nature and space,
 till she stands

In the Chamber of Fate ; where, through
 tremulous hands,

Hum the threads from an old-fashioned
 distaff uncurled,
 And those three blind old women sit
 spinning the world.

III.

The dark was blanched wan, overhead.
 One green star

Was slipping from sight in the pale void
 afar ;

The spirits of change, and of awe, with
 faint breath

Were shifting the midnight, above and
 beneath.

The spirits of awe and of change were
 around,

And about, and upon her.

A dull muffled sound,
 And a hand on her hand, like a ghostly
 surprise,

And she felt herself fixed by the hot
 hollow eyes

Of the Frenchman before her : those
 eyes seemed to burn,

And scorch out the darkness between
 them, and turn

Into fire as they fixed her. He looked
 like the shade

Of a creature by fancy from solitude
 made,

And sent forth by the darkness to scare
 and oppress

Some soul of a monk in a waste wilder-
 ness.

IV.

“ At last, then, — at last, and alone, —
 I and thou,

Lucile de Nevers, have we met ?

“ Hush ! I know
 Not for me was the tryst. Never mind !

it is mine ;
 And whatever led hither those proud
 steps of thine,

They remove not, until we have spoken.

My hour
 Is come ; and it holds thee and me in its
 power,

As the darkness holds both the horizons.

‘T is well !
 The timidest maiden that e'er to the spell
 Of her first lover's vows listened, hushed
 with delight,

When soft stars were brightly uphanging
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Never listened, I swear, more unques-
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Of a creature by fancy from solitude
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 They remove not, until we have spoken.

My hour
 Is come ; and it holds thee and me in its
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As the darkness holds both the horizons.
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The timidest maiden that e'er to the spell
 Of her first lover's vows listened, hushed
 with delight,

When soft stars were brightly uphanging
 the night,
 Never listened, I swear, more unques-
 tioningly,

Than thy fate hath compelled thee to
listen to me!"

To the sound of his voice, as though out
of a dream,

She appeared with a start to awaken.

The stream,
When he ceased, took the night with its
moaning again,

Like the voices of spirits departing in
pain.

"Continue," she answered, "I listen to
hear."

For a moment he did not reply.

Through the drear
And dim light between them, she saw
that his face

Was disturbed. To and fro he contin-
ued to pace,

With his arms folded close, and the low
restless stride

Of a panther, in circles around her, first
wide,

Then narrower, nearer, and quicker.

At last
He stood still, and one long look upon
her he cast.

"Lucile, dost thou dare to look into
my face?"

Is the sight so repugnant? ha, well!
Canst thou trace

One word of thy writing in this wicked
scroll,

With thine own name scrawled through
it, defacing a soul?"

In his face there was something so wrath-
ful and wild,

That the sight of it scared her.

He saw it, and smiled,
And then turned him from her, renewing
again

That short, restless stride; as though
searching in vain

For the point of some purpose within
him.

"Lucile,
You shudder to look in my face: do you
feel

No reproach when you look in your own
heart?"

"No, Duke,
In my conscience I do not deserve your
rebuke:

Not yours!" she replied.

"No," he muttered again,

"Gentle justice! you first bid Life hope
not, and then

To Despair you say 'Act not!'"

v.

He watched her awhile

With a chill sort of restless and suffering
smile.

They stood by the wall of the garden.
The skies,

Dark, sombre, were troubled with vague
prophecies

Of the dawn yet far distant. The moon
had long set,

And all in a glimmering light, pale, and
wet

With the night-dews, the white roses
sullenly loomed

Round about her. She spoke not. At
length he resumed.

"Wretched creatures we are! I and
thou, — one and all!

Only able to injure each other, and fall
Soon or late, in that void which our-
selves we prepare

For the souls that we boast of! weak
insects we are!

O heaven! and what has become of
them? all

Those instincts of Eden surviving the
Fall:

That glorious faith in inherited things:
That sense in the soul of the length of
her wings;

Gone! all gone! and the wail of the
night-wind sounds human,

Bewailing those once nightly visitants!
Woman,

Woman, what hast thou done with my
youth? Give again,

Give me back the young heart that I
gave thee . . . in vain!"

"Duke!" she faltered.

"Yes, yes!" he went on, "I was not
Always thus! what I once was, I have
not forgot."

vi.

As the wind that heaps sand in a desert,
there stirred

Through his voice an emotion that swept
every word

Into one angry wail; as, with feverish
change,

He continued his monologue, fitful and
strange.

"Woe to him, in whose nature, once
kindled, the torch

Of Passion burns downward to blacken
and scorch!

But shame, shame and sorrow, O woman,
to thee

Whose hand sowed the seed of destruction
in me!

Whose lip taught the lesson of falsehood
to mine!

Whose looks made me doubt lies that
looked so divine!

My soul by thy beauty was slain in its
sleep:

And if tears I mistrust, 't is that thou
too canst weep!

Well! . . . how utter soever it be, one
mistake

In the love of a man, what more change
need it make

In the steps of his soul through the course
love began,

Than all other mistakes in the life of a
man?

And I said to myself, 'I am young yet:
too young

To have wholly survived my own por-
tion among

The great needs of man's life, or ex-
hausted its joys;

What is broken? one only of youth's
pleasant toys!

Shall I be the less welcome, wherever I
go,

For one passion survived? No! the
roses will blow

As of yore, as of yore will the nightin-
gales sing,

Not less sweetly for one blossom can-
celled from Spring!

Hast thou loved, O my heart? to thy
love yet remains

All the wide loving-kindness of nature.
The plains

And the hills with each summer their
verdure renew.

Wouldst thou be as they are? do thou
then as they do,

Let the dead sleep in peace. Would
the living divine

Where they slumber? Let only new
flowers be the sign!

"Vain! all vain! . . . For when, laugh-
ing, the wine I would quaff,

I remembered too well all it cost me to
laugh.

Through the revel it was but the old
song I heard,

Through the crowd the old footsteps
behind me they stirred,

In the night-wind, the starlight, the
murmurs of even,

In the ardors of earth, and the languors
of heaven,

I could trace nothing more, nothing more
through the spheres,

But the sound of old sobs, and the
tracks of old tears!

It was with me the night long in dream-
ing or waking,

It abided in loathing, when daylight
was breaking,

The burden of the bitterness in me!
Behold,

All my days were become as a tale that
is told.

And I said to my sight, 'No good thing
shalt thou see,

For the noonday is turned to darkness
in me.

In the house of Oblivion my bed I have
made.'

And I said to the grave, 'Lo, my father!'
and said

To the worm, 'Lo, my sister!' The
dust to the dust,

And one end to the wicked shall be with
the just!"

vii.

He ceased, as a wind that wails out on
the night,

And moans itself mute. Through the
indistinct light

A voice clear, and tender, and pure with
a tone

Of ineffable pity replied to his own.
"And say you, and deem you, that I
wrecked your life?"

Alas! Duc de Luvois, had I been your
wife

By a fraud of the heart which could
yield you alone

For the love in your nature a lie in my
own,

Should I not, in deceiving, have injured
you worse?

Yes, I then should have merited justly
your curse,

For I then should have wronged you!"

"Wronged! ah, is it so?
You could never have loved me?"

"Duke!"

"Never! O no!"
(He broke into a fierce, angry laugh, as
he said)

"Yet, lady, you knew that I loved you :
 you led
 My love on to lay to its heart, hour by
 hour,
 All the pale, cruel, beautiful, passionless
 power
 Shut up in that cold face of yours ! was
 this well ?
 But enough ! not on you would I vent
 the wild hell
 Which has grown in my heart. O that
 man, first and last
 He tramples in triumph my life ! he has
 cast
 His shadow 'twixt me and the sun . . .
 let it pass !
 My hate yet may find him !"
 She murmured, "Alas !
 These words, at least, spare me the pain
 of reply.
 Enough, Duc de Luvois ! farewell. I
 shall try
 To forget every word I have heard,
 every sight
 That has grieved and appalled me in
 this wretched night
 Which must witness our final farewell.
 May you, Duke,
 Never know greater cause your own
 heart to rebuke
 Than mine thus to wrong and afflict you
 have had !
 Adieu !"
 "Stay, Lucile, stay !" . . . he groaned,
 . . . "I am mad,
 Brutalized, blind with pain ! I know
 not what I said.
 I meant it not. But" (he moaned,
 drooping his head)
 "Forgive me ! I — have I so wronged
 you, Lucile ?
 I . . . have I . . . forgive me, forgive me !"
 "I feel
 Only sad, very sad to the soul," she
 said, "far,
 Far too sad for resentment."
 "Yet stand as you are
 One moment," he murmured. "I think,
 could I gaze
 Thus awhile on your face, the old inno-
 cent days
 Would come back upon me, and this
 scorching heart
 Free itself in hot tears. Do not, do not
 depart
 Thus, Lucile ! stay one moment. I
 know why you shrink,
 Why you shudder ; I read in your face
 what you think.
 Do not speak to me of it. And yet, if
 you will,
 Whatever you say, my own lips shall be
 still.
 I lied. And the truth, now, could justify
 naught.
 There are battles, it may be, in which
 to have fought
 Is more shameful than, simply, to fail.
 Yet, Lucile,
 Had you helped me to bear what you
 forced me to feel —"
 "Could I help you," she murmured,
 "but what can I say
 That your life will respond to ?" "My
 life," he sighed. "Nay,
 My life hath brought forth only evil,
 and there
 The wild wind hath planted the wild
 weed : yet ere
 You exclaim, 'Fling the weed to the
 flames,' think again
 Why the field is so barren. With all
 other men
 First love, though it perish from life,
 only goes
 Like the primrose that falls to make way
 for the rose.
 For a man, at least most men, may love
 on through life :
 Love in fame ; love in knowledge ; in
 work : earth is rife
 With labor, and therefore with love, for
 a man.
 If one love fails, another succeeds, and
 the plan
 Of man's life includes love in all objects !
 But I ?
 All such loves from my life through its
 whole destiny
 Fate excluded. The love that I gave
 you, alas !
 Was the sole love that life gave to me.
 Let that pass !
 It perished, and all perished with it.
 Ambition ?
 Wealth left nothing to add to my social
 condition.
 Fame ? But fame in itself presupposes
 some great
 Field wherein to pursue and attain it.
 The State ?
 I, to eringe to an upstart ? The Camp ?
 I, to draw

From its sheath the old sword of the
 Dukes of Luvois
 To defend usurpation ? Books, then ?
 Science, Art ?
 But, alas ! I was fashioned for action :
 my heart,
 Withered though it be, I should
 hardly compress
 'Twixt the leaves of a treatise on Statics :
 life's stress
 Needs scope, not contraction ! what
 rests ? to wear out
 At some dark northern court an existence,
 no doubt,
 In wretched and paltry intrigues for a
 cause
 As hopeless as is my own life ! By the
 laws
 Of a fate I can neither control nor dis-
 pute,
 I am what I am !"

VIII.

For a while she was mute.
 Then she answered, "We are our own
 fates. Our own deeds
 Are our dooms. Man's life was made
 not for men's creeds,
 But men's actions. And, Duc de Luvois,
 I might say
 That all life attests, that 'the will makes
 the way.'
 Is the land of our birth less the land of
 our birth,
 Or its claim the less strong, or its cause
 the less worth
 Our upholding, because the white lily
 no more
 Is as sacred as all that it bloomed for of
 yore ?
 Yet be that as it may be ; I cannot per-
 chance
 Judge this matter. I am but a woman,
 and France
 Has for me simpler duties. Large hope,
 though, Eugene
 De Luvois, should be yours. There is
 purpose in pain,
 Otherwise it were devilish. I trust in
 my soul
 That the great master hand which sweeps
 over the whole
 Of this deep harp of life, if at moments
 it stretch
 To shrill tension some one wailing nerve,
 means to fetch
 Its response the truest, most stringent,
 and smart,
 Its pathos the purest, from out the wrung
 heart,
 Whose faculties, flaccid it may be, if less
 Sharply strung, sharply smitten, had
 failed to express
 Just the one note the great final harmony
 needs.
 And what best proves there's life in a
 heart ? — that it bleeds !
 Grant a cause to remove, grant an end
 to attain,
 Grant both to be just, and what mercy
 in pain !
 Cease the sin with the sorrow ! See
 morning begin !
 Pain must burn itself out if not fuelled
 by sin.
 There is hope in yon hill-tops, and love
 in yon light.
 Let hate and despondency die with the
 night !"
 He was moved by her words. As some
 poor wretch confined
 In cells low with meaningless laughter,
 whose mind
 Wanders trackless amidst its own ruins,
 may hear
 A voice heard long since, silenced many
 a year,
 And now, 'mid mad ravings recaptured
 again,
 Singing through the caged lattice a once
 well-known strain,
 Which brings back his boyhood upon it,
 until
 The mind's ruined crevices graciously fill
 With music and memory, and, as it
 were,
 The long-troubled spirit grows slowly
 aware
 Of the mockery round it, and shrinks
 from each thing
 It once sought, — the poor idiot who
 passed for a king,
 Hard by, with his squalid straw crown,
 now confessed
 A madman more painfully mad than the
 rest, —
 So the sound of her voice, as it there
 wandered o'er
 His echoing heart, seemed in part to re-
 store
 The forces of thought : he recaptured
 the whole

Of his life by the light which, in passing,
her soul
Reflected on his: he appeared to awake
From a dream, and perceived he had
dreamed a mistake:
His spirit was softened, yet troubled in
him:
He felt his lips falter, his eyesight grow
dim,
But he murmured . . .
"Lucile, not for me that sun's light
Which reveals — not restores — the wild
havoc of night.
There are some creatures born for the
night, not the day.
Broken-hearted the nightingale hides in
the spray,
And the owl's moody mind in his own
hollow tower
Dwells muffled. Be darkness hencefor-
ward my dower.
Light, be sure, in that darkness there
dwells, by which eyes
Grown familiar with ruins may yet re-
cognize
Enough desolation."

IX.

"The pride that claims here
On earth to itself (howsoever severe
To itself it may be) God's dread office
and right
Of punishing sin, is a sin in heaven's
sight,
And against heaven's service.

"Eugène de Luvois,
Leave the judgment to Him who alone
knows the law.
Surely no man can be his own judge,
least of all
His own doomsman."

Her words seemed to fall
With the weight of tears in them.
He looked up, and saw
That sad serene countenance, mournful
as law
And tender as pity, bowed o'er him: and
heard
In some thicket the matinal chirp of a
bird.

X.

"Vulgar natures alone suffer vainly.
"Eugène,"
She continued, "in life we have met
once again,
And once more life parts us. Yon day-
spring for me

Lifts the veil of a future in which it may
be
We shall meet nevermore. Grant, O
grant to me yet
The belief that it is not in vain we have
met!
I plead for the future. A new horoscope
I would cast: will you read it? I plead
for a hope:
I plead for a memory; yours, yours
alone,
To restore or to spare. Let the hope be
your own,
Be the memory mine.

"Once of yore, when for man
Faith yet lived, ere this age of the slug-
gard began,
Men, aroused to the knowledge of evil,
fled far
From the fading rose-gardens of sense,
to the war
With the Pagan, the cave in the desert,
and sought
Not repose, but employment in action
or thought,
Life's strong earnest, in all things! O
think not of me,
But yourself! for I plead for your own
destiny:
I plead for your life, with its duties un-
done,
With its claims unappeased, and its
trophies unwon;
And in pleading for life's fair fulfilment,
I plead
For all that you miss, and for all that
you need."

XI.

Through the calm crystal air, faint and
far, as she spoke,
A clear, chilly chime from a church-
turret broke;
And the sound of her voice, with the
sound of the bell,
On his ear, where he kneeled, softly,
soothingly fell.
All within him was wild and confused,
as within
A chamber deserted in some roadside
inn,
Where, passing, wild travellers paused,
over-night,
To quaff and carouse; in each socket
each light
Is extinct; crashed the glasses, and
scrawled is the wall

With wild ribald ballads: serenely o'er
all,
For the first time perceived, where the
dawn-light creeps faint
Through the wrecks of that orgy, the
face of a saint,
Seen through some broken frame, ap-
pears noting meanwhile
The ruin all round with a sorrowful
smile.
And he gazed round. The curtains of
Darkness half drawn
Oped behind her; and pure as the pure
light of dawn,
She stood, bathed in morning, and
seemed to his eyes
From their sight to be melting away in
the skies
That expanded around her.

XII.

There passed through his head
A fancy, — a vision. That woman was
dead
He had loved long ago, — loved and lost!
Dead to him,
Dead to all the life left him; but there,
in the dim
Dewy light of the dawn, stood a spirit;
't was hers;
And he said to the soul of Lucile de
Nevers:
"O soul to its sources departing away!
Pray for mine, if one soul for another
may pray.
I to ask have no right, thou to give hast
no power,
One hope to my heart. But in this
parting hour
I name not my heart, and I speak not
to thine.
Answer, soul of Lucile, to this dark soul
of mine,
Does not soul owe to soul, what to heart
heart denies,
Hope, when hope is salvation? Behold,
in yon skies,
This wild night is passing away while I
speak:
Lo, above us, the day-spring beginning
to break!
Something wakens within me, and
warms to the beam.
Is it hope that awakens? or do I but
dream?
I know not. It may be, perchance, the
first spark

Of a new light within me to solace the
dark
Unto which I return; or perchance it
may be
The last spark of fires half extinguished
in me.
I know not. Thou goest thy way: I
my own:
For good or for evil, I know not. Alone
This I know; we are parting. I wished
to say more,
But no matter! 't will pass. All be-
tween us is o'er.
Forget the wild words of to-night. 'T was
the pain
For long years hoarded up, that rushed
from me again.
I was unjust: forgive me. Spare now
to reprove
Other words, other deeds. It was mad-
ness, not love,
That you thwarted this night. What
is done is now done.
Death remains to avenge it, or life to
atone.
I was maddened, delirious! I saw you
return
To him — not to me; and I felt my
heart burn
With a fierce thirst for vengeance — and
thus . . . let it pass!
Long thoughts these, and so brief the
moments, alas!
Thou goest thy way, and I mine. I
suppose
'T is to meet nevermore. Is it not so?
Who knows,
Or who heeds, where the exile from
Paradise flies?
Or what altars of his in the desert may
rise?
Is it not so, Lucile? Well, well! Thus
then we part
Once again, soul from soul, as before
heart from heart!"

XIII.

And again, clearer far than the chime of
the bell,
That voice on his sense softly, soothingly
fell.
"Our two paths must part us, Eugène;
for my own
Seems no more through that world in
which henceforth alone
You must work out (as now I believe
that you will)

The hope which you speak of. That work I shall still
(If I live) watch and welcome, and bless far away.
Doubt not this. But mistake not the thought, if I say,
That the great moral combat between human life
And each human soul must be single. The strife
None can share, though by all its results may be known.
When the soul arms for battle, she goes forth alone.
I say not, indeed, we shall meet nevermore,
For I know not. But meet, as we have met of yore,
I know that we cannot. Perchance we may meet
By the death-bed, the tomb, in the crowd, in the street,
Or in solitude even, but never again
Shall we meet from henceforth as we have met, Eugène.
For we know not the way we are going, nor yet
Where our two ways may meet, or may cross. Life hath set
No landmarks before us. But this, this alone,
I will promise: whatever your path, or my own,
If, for once in the conflict before you, it chance
That the Dragon prevail, and with cleft shield, and lance
Lost or shattered, borne down by the stress of the war,
You falter and hesitate, if from afar
I, still watching (unknown to yourself, it may be)
O'er the conflict to which I conjure you, should see
That my presence could rescue, support you, or guide,
In the hour of that need I shall be at your side,
To warn, if you will, or incite, or control;
And again, once again, we shall meet, soul to soul!"

XIV.

The voice ceased.

He uplifted his eyes.
All alone

He stood on the bare edge of dawn.
She was gone,
Like a star, when up bay after bay of the night,
Ripples in, wave on wave, the broad ocean of light.
And at once, in her place, was the Sunrise! It rose
In its sumptuous splendor and solemn repose,
The supreme revelation of light. Domes of gold,
Realms of rose, in the Orient! And breathless, and bold,
While the great gates of heaven rolled back one by one,
The bright herald angel stood stern in the sun!
Thrice holy Eospheros! Light's reign began
In the heaven, on the earth, in the heart of the man.
The dawn on the mountains! the dawn everywhere!
Light! silence! the fresh innovations of air!
O earth, and O ether! A butterfly breeze
Floated up, fluttered down, and poised blithe on the trees.
Through the revelling woods, o'er the sharp-rippled stream,
Up the vale slow uncoiling itself out of dream,
Around the brown meadows, adown the hill-slope,
The spirits of morning were whispering, "Hope!"

XV.

He uplifted his eyes. In the place where she stood
But a moment before, and where now rolled the flood
Of the sunrise all golden, he seemed to behold,
In the young light of sunrise, an image unfold
Of his own youth, — its ardors, — its promise of fame, —
Its ancestral ambition; and France by the name
Of his sires seemed to call him. There, hovered in light,
That image aloft, o'er the shapeless and bright
And Aureorean clouds, which themselves seemed to be

Brilliant fragments of that golden world, wherein he
Had once dwelt, a native!
There, rooted and bound
To the earth, stood the man, gazing at it! Around
The rims of the sunrise it hovered and shone
Transcendent, that type of a youth that was gone;
And he, — as the body may yearn for the soul,
So he yearned to embody that image.
His whole
Heart arose to regain it.
"And is it too late?"
No! For time is a fiction, and limits not fate.
Thought alone is eternal. Time thralls it in vain.
For the thought that springs upward and yearns to regain
The pure source of spirit, there is no TOO LATE.
As the stream to its first mountain levels, elate
In the fountain arises, the spirit in him
Arose to that image. The image waned dim
Into heaven; and heavenward with it, to melt
As it melted, in day's broad expansion, he felt
With a thrill, sweet and strange, and intense, — awed, amazed, —
Something soar and ascend in his soul, as he gazed.

CANTO VI.

L.

MAN is born on a battle-field. Round him, to rend
Or resist, the dread Powers he displaces attend,
By the cradle which Nature, amidst the stern shocks
That have shattered creation, and shapen it, rocks.
He leaps with a wail into being; and lo!
His own mother, fierce Nature herself, is his foe.
Her whirlwinds are roused into wrath o'er his head:

'Neath his feet roll her earthquakes: her solitudes spread
To daunt him: her forces dispute his command:
Her snows fall to freeze him: her suns burn to brand:
Her seas yawn to engulf him: her rocks rise to crush:
And the lion and leopard, allied, lurk to rush
On their startled invader.
In lone Malabar,
Where the infinite forest spreads breathless and far,
'Mid the cruel of eye and the stealthy of claw
(Striped and spotted destroyers!) he sees, pale with awe,
On the menacing edge of a fiery sky
Grim Doorga, blue-limbed and red-handed, go by,
And the first thing he worships is Terror.
Anon,
Still impelled by necessity hungrily on,
He conquers the realms of his own self-reliance,
And the last cry of fear wakes the first of defiance.
From the serpent he crushes its poisonous soul:
Smitten down in his path see the dead lion roll!
On toward Heaven the son of Alcmena strides high on
The heads of the Hydra, the spoils of the lion:
And man, conquering Terror, is worshipped by man.
A camp has this world been since first it began!
From his tents sweeps the roving Arabian; at peace,
A mere wandering shepherd that follows the fleece;
But, warring his way through a world's destinies,
Lo, from Delhi, from Bagdad, from Cordova, rise
Domes of empire, dowered with science and art,
Schools, libraries, forums, the palace, the mart!
New realms to man's soul have been conquered. But those,

The hope which you speak of. That work I shall still
(If I live) watch and welcome, and bless far away.
Doubt not this. But mistake not the thought, if I say,
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New realms to man's soul have been conquered. But those,

Forthwith they are peopled for man by new foes!
The stars keep their secrets, the earth hides her own,
And bold must the man be that braves the Unknown!
Not a truth has to art or to science been given,
But brows have ached for it, and souls toiled and striven;
And many have striven, and many have failed,
And many died, slain by the truth they assailed.
But when Man hath tamed Nature, asserted his place
And dominion, behold! he is brought face to face
With a new foe, — himself!
Nor may man on his shield
Ever rest, for his foe is forever afield,
Danger ever at hand, till the arméd Archangel
Sound o'er him the trump of earth's final evangel.

II.

Silence straightway, stern Muse, the soft cymbals of pleasure,
Be all bronzen these numbers, and martial the measure!
Breathe, sonorously breathe, o'er the spirit in me
One strain, sad and stern, of that deep Epepee
Which thou, from the fashionless cloud of far time,
Chantest lonely, when Victory, pale, and sublime
In the light of the aureole over her head,
Hears, and heeds not the wound in her heart fresh and red.
Blown wide by the blare of the clarion, unfold
The shrill clanging curtains of war!
And behold
A vision!
The antique Heracleian seats;
And the long Black Sea billow that once bore those fleets,
Which said to the winds, "Be ye, too, Genoese!"
And the red angry sands of the chafed Chersonese;
And the two foes of man, War and Winter, allied

Round the Armies of England and France, side by side
Enduring and dying (Gaul and Briton abreast!)
Where the towers of the North fret the skies of the East.

III.

Since that sunrise, which rose through the calm linden stems
O'er Lucile and Eugène, in the garden at Ems,
Through twenty-five seasons encircling the sun,
This planet of ours on its pathway hath gone,
And the fates that I sing of have flowed with the fates
Of a world, in the red wake of war, round the gates
Of that doomed and heroical city, in which
(Fire crowning the rampart, blood bathing the ditch!)
At bay, fights the Russian as some hunted bear,
Whom the huntsmen have hemmed round at last in his lair.

IV.

A fanged, arid plain, sapped with underground fire,
Soaked with snow, torn with shot, mashed to one gory mire!
There Fate's iron scale hangs in horrid suspense,
While those two famished ogres, — the Siege, the Defence,
Face to face, through a vapor froze, dismal, and dun,
Glare, scenting the breath of each other.
The one
Double-bodied, two-headed, — by separate ways
Winding, serpent-wise, nearer; the other, each day's
Sullen toil adding size to, — concentrated, solid,
Indefatigable, — the brass-fronted, embodied,
And audible *avros* gone sombrely forth
To the world from that Autocrat Will of the north!

V.

In the dawn of a moody October, a pale

Ghostly motionless vapor began to prevail
Over city and camp; like the garment of death
Which (is formed by) the face it conceals.
"T was the breath
War, yet drowsily yawning, began to suspire;
Wherethrough, here and there, flashed an eye of red fire,
And closed, from some rampart beginning to bellow
Hoarse challenge; replied to anon, through the yellow
And sulphurous twilight: till day reeled and rocked,
And roared into dark. Then the midnight was mocked
With fierce apparitions. Ringed round by a rain
Of red fire, and of iron, the murderous plain
Flared with fitful combustion; where fitfully fell
Afar off the fatal, disgorged *scharpenelle*,
And fired the horizon, and singed the coiled gloom
With wings of swift flame round that City of Doom.

VI.

So the day — so the night! So by night, so by day,
With stern patient pathos, while time wears away,
In the trench flooded through, in the wind where it wails,
In the snow where it falls, in the fire where it hails
Shot and shell — link by link, out of hardship and pain,
Toil, sickness, endurance, is forged the bronze chain
Of those terrible siege-lines!
No change to that toil
Save the mine's sudden leap from the treacherous soil,
Save the midnight attack, save the groans of the maimed,
And Death's daily obolus due, whether claimed
By man or by nature.

VII.

Time passes. The dumb,
Bitter, snow-bound, and sullen November is come.

And its snows have been bathed in the blood of the brave:
And many a young heart has glutted the grave:
And on Inkerman yet the wild bramble is gory,
And those bleak heights henceforth shall be famous in story.

VIII.

The moon, swathed in storm, has long set: through the camp
No sound save the sentinel's slow sullen tramp,
The distant explosion, the wild sleety wind,
That seems searching for something it never can find.
The midnight is turning: the lamp is nigh spent:
And, wounded and lone, in a desolate tent
Lies a young British soldier whose sword . . .

In this place,
However, my Muse is compelled to retrace
Her precipitous steps and revert to the past.
The shock which had suddenly shattered at last
Alfred Vargrave's fantastical holiday nature,
Had sharply drawn forth to his full size and stature
The real man, concealed till that moment beneath
All he yet had appeared. From the gay broidered sheath
Which a man in his wrath flings aside, even so
Leaps the keen trenchant steel summoned forth by a blow.
And thus loss of fortune gave value to life.
The wife gained a husband, the husband a wife,
In that home which, though humbled and narrowed by fate,
Was enlarged and ennobled by love.
Low their state,
But large their possessions.
Sir Ridley, forgiven
By those he unwittingly brought nearer heaven
By one fraudulent act, than through all his sleek speech

The hypocrite brought his own soul,
safe from reach
Of the law, died abroad.
Cousin John, heart and hand,
Purse and person, henceforth (honest
man!) took his stand
By Matilda and Alfred; guest, guard-
ian, and friend
Of the home he both shared and assured,
to the end,
With his large lively love. Alfred Var-
grave meanwhile
Faced the world's frown, consoled by
his wife's faithful smile.
Late in life he began life in earnest;
and still,
With the tranquil exertion of resolute will,
Through long, and laborious, and diffi-
cult days,
Out of manifold failure, by wearisome
ways,
Worked his way through the world; till
at last he began
(Reconciled to the work which mankind
claims from man),
After years of unwitnessed, unwearied
endeavor,
Years impassioned yet patient, to realize
ever
More clear on the broad stream of cur-
rent opinion
The reflex of powers in himself, — that
dominion
Which the life of one man, if his life be
a truth,
May assert o'er the life of mankind.
Thus, his youth
In his manhood renewed, fame and for-
tune he won
Working only for home, love, and duty.
One son
Matilda had borne him; but scarce had
the boy,
With all Eton yet fresh in his full heart's
frank joy,
The darling of young soldier comrades,
just glanced
Down the glad dawn of manhood at
life, when it chanced
That a blight sharp and sudden was
breathed o'er the bloom
Of his joyous and generous years, and
the gloom
Of a grief premature on their fair prom-
ise fell:
No light cloud like those which, for
June to dispel,

Captious April engenders; but deep as
his own
Deep nature. Meanwhile, ere I fully
make known
The cause of this sorrow, I track the
event.
When first a wild war-note through
England was sent,
He, transferring without either token
or word,
To friend, parent, or comrade, a yet vir-
gin sword,
From a holiday troop, to one bound for
the war,
Had marched forth, with eyes that saw
death in the star
Whence others sought glory. Thus,
fighting, he fell
On the red field of Inkerman; found,
who can tell
By what miracle, breathing, though
shattered, and borne
To the rear by his comrades, pierced,
bleeding, and torn.
Where for long days and nights, with
the wound in his side,
He lay, dark.

IX.

But a wound deeper far, undescried,
In the young heart was rankling; for
there, of a truth,
In the first earnest faith of a pure pen-
sive youth,
A love large as life, deep and changeless
as death,
Lay ensheathed: and that love, ever
fretting its sheath,
The frail scabbard of life pierced and
wore through and through.
There are loves in man's life for which
time can renew
All that time may destroy. Lives there
are, though, in love,
Which cling to one faith, and die with
it; nor move,
Though earthquakes may shatter the
shrine.
Whence or how
Love laid claim to this young life, it
matters not now.

X.

O, is it a phantom? a dream of the night!
A vision which fever hath fashioned to
sight?

The wind wailing ever, with motion un-
certain,
Sways sighingly there the drenched tent's
tattered curtain,
To and fro, up and down.

But it is not the wind
That is lifting it now: and it is not the
mind
That hath moulded that vision.

A pale woman enters,
As wan as the lamp's waning light,
which concentrates
Its dull glare upon her. With eyes
dim and dimmer
There, all in a slumberous and shadowy
glimmer,
The sufferer sees that still form floating on,
And feels faintly aware that he is not
alone.

She is fitting before him. She pauses.
She stands
By his bedside, all silent. She lays her
white hands

On the brow of the boy. A light finger
is pressing
Softly, softly the sore wounds: the hot
blood-stained dressing
Slips from them. A comforting quiet-
ude steals

Through the racked weary frame: and,
throughout it, he feels
The slow sense of a merciful, mild neigh-
borhood.

Something smooths the tossed pillow.
Beneath a gray hood
Of rough serge, two intense tender eyes
are bent o'er him,

And thrill through and through him.
The sweet form before him,
It is surely Death's angel Life's last vigil
keeping!

A soft voice says . . . "Sleep!"
And he sleeps: he is sleeping.

XI.

He waked before dawn. Still the vision
is there:

Still that pale woman moves not. A
ministering care
Meanwhile has been silently changing
and cheering
The aspect of all things around him.

Revering
Some power unknown and benignant,
he blessed
In silence the sense of salvation. And
rest

Having loosened the mind's tangled
meshes, he faintly
Sighed . . . "Say what thou art, blessed
dream of a saintly
And ministering spirit!"

A whisper serene
Slid, softer than silence . . . "The Sœur
Seraphine,
A poor Sister of Charity. Shun to in-
quire

Aught further, young soldier. The son
of thy sire,
For the sake of that sire, I reclaim from
the grave.

Thou didst not shun death: shun not
life. 'T is more brave
To live, than to die. Sleep!"
He sleeps: he is sleeping.

XII.

He wakened again, when the dawn was
just steeping
The skies with chill splendor. And
there, never flitting,

Never flitting, that vision of mercy was
sitting.
As the dawn to the darkness, so life
seemed returning

Slowly, feebly within him. The night-
lamp, yet burning,
Made ghastly the glimmering daybreak.

He said,
"If thou be of the living, and not of
the dead,
Sweet minister, pour out yet further the
healing

Of that balmy voice; if it may be, re-
vealing
Thy mission of mercy! whence art thou?"
"O son
Of Matilda and Alfred, it matters not!

One
Who is not of the living nor yet of the
dead:

To thee, and to others, alive yet" . . .
she said . . .
"So long as there liveth the poor gift
in me

Of this ministration; to them, and to
thee,
Dead in all things beside. A French
Nun, whose vocation

Is now by this bedside. A nun hath no
nation.
Wherever man suffers, or woman may
soothe,
There her land! there her kindred!"

She bent down to smooth
The hot pillow; and added . . . "Yet
more than another
Is thy life dear to me. For thy father,
thy mother,
I knew them, — I know them."

"O can it be? you!
My dearest dear father! my mother!
you knew,
You know them?"
She bowed, half averting, her head
In silence.

He brokenly, timidly said,
"Do they know I am thus?"
"Hush!" . . . she smiled, as she drew
From her bosom two letters: and — can
it be true?

That beloved and familiar writing!
He burst
Into tears . . . "My poor mother — my
father! the worst
Will have reached them!"

"No, no!" she exclaimed with a
smile,
"They know you are living; they know
that meanwhile
I am watching beside you. Young soldier,
weep not!"

But still on the nun's nursing bosom,
the hot
Fevered brow of the boy weeping wildly
is pressed.

There, at last, the young heart sobs it-
self into rest:

And he hears, as it were between smil-
ing and weeping,
The calm voice say . . . "Sleep!"
And he sleeps, he is sleeping.

XIII.

And day followed day. And, as wave
follows wave,
With the tide, day by day, life, reissuing,
drave
Through that young hardy frame novel
currents of health.
Yet some strange obstruction, which
life's self by stealth
Seemed to cherish, impeded life's pro-
gress. And still
A feebleness, less of the frame than the
will,
Clung about the sick man: hid and
harbored within
The sad hollow eyes: pinched the cheek
pale and thin:
And clothed the wan fingers with languor.

And there,
Day by day, night by night, unremit-
ting in care,
Unwearied in watching, so cheerful of
mien,
And so gentle of hand, sat the Sœur
Seraphine!

XIV.

A strange woman truly! not young;
yet her face,
Wan and worn as it was, bore about it
the trace
Of a beauty which time could not ruin.
For the whole
Quiet cheek, youth's lost bloom left
transparent, the soul
Seemed to fill with its own light, like
some sunny fountain
Everlastingly fed from far off in the
mountain
That pours, in a garden deserted, its
streams,
And all the more lovely for loneliness
seems.
So that, watching that face, you would
scarce pause to guess
The years which its calm careworn lines
might express,
Feeling only what suffering with these
must have past
To have perfected there so much sweet-
ness at last.

XV.

Thus, one bronzen evening, when day
had put out
His brief thrifty fires, and the wind was
about,
The nun, watchful still by the boy, on
his own
Laid a firm quiet hand, and the deep
tender tone
Of her voice moved the silence.
She said . . . "I have healed
These wounds of the body. Why hast
thou concealed,
Young soldier, that yet open wound in
the heart?
Wilt thou trust no hand near it?"
He winced, with a start,
As of one that is suddenly touched on
the spot
From which every nerve derives suffering.
"What!
Lies my heart, then, so bare?" he
moaned bitterly.

"Nay,"
With compassionate accents she hastened
to say,
"Do you think that these eyes are with
sorrow, young man,
So all unfamiliar, indeed, as to scan
Her features, yet know them not?"

"O, was it spoken,
'Go ye forth, heal the sick, lift the low,
bind the broken!'
Of the body alone? Is our mission,
then, done,
When we leave the bruised hearts, if we
bind the bruised bone?"

Nay, is not the mission of mercy two-
fold?

Whence twofold, perchance, are the
powers, that we hold
To fulfil it, of Heaven! For Heaven
doth still

To us, Sisters, it may be, who seek it,
send skill

Won from long intercourse with afflic-
tion, and art
Helped of Heaven, to bind up the
broken of heart.

Trust to me!" (His two feeble hands
in her own
She drew gently.) "Trust to me!" (she
said, with soft tone):

"I am not so dead in remembrance to
all

I have died to in this world, but what I
recall

Enough of its sorrow, enough of its
trial,

To grieve for both, — save from both
haply! The dial

Receives many shades, and each points
to the sun.

The shadows are many, the sunlight is
one.

Life's sorrows still fluctuate: God's love
does not.

And His love is unchanged, when it
changes our lot.

Looking up to this light, which is com-
mon to all,

And down to these shadows, on each
side, that fall

In time's silent circle, so various for each,
Is it nothing to know that they never
can reach

So far, but what light lies beyond them
forever?

Trust to me! O, if in this hour I en-
deavor

To trace the shade creeping across the
young life

Which, in prayer till this hour, I have
watched through its strife

With the shadow of death, 't is with
this faith alone,

That, in tracing the shade, I shall find
out the sun.

Trust to me!"
She paused: he was weeping. Small
need

Of added appeal, or entreaty, indeed,
Had those gentle accents to win from
his pale

And parched, trembling lips, as it rose,
the brief tale

Of a life's early sorrow. The story is
old,

And in words few as may be shall
straightway be told.

XVI.

A few years ago, ere the fair form of
Peace

Was driven from Europe, a young girl
— the niece

Of a French noble, leaving an old Nor-
man pile

By the wild northern seas, came to dwell
for a while

With a lady allied to her race, — an old
dame

Of a threefold legitimate virtue, and
name,

In the Faubourg Saint Germain.
Upon that fair child,

From childhood, nor father nor mother
had smiled.

One uncle their place in her life had
supplied,

And their place in her heart: she had
grown at his side,

And under his roof-tree, and in his re-
gard,
From childhood to girlhood.

This fair orphan ward
Seemed the sole human creature that
lived in the heart

Of that stern rigid man, or whose smile
could impart

One ray of response to the eyes which,
above

Her fair infant forehead, looked down
with a love

That seemed almost stern, so intense
was its chill

Lofty stillness, like sunlight on some
lonely hill
Which is colder and stiller than sunlight
elsewhere.

Grass grew in the court-yard; the cham-
bers were bare
In that ancient mansion; when first the
stern tread
Of its owner awakened their echoes long
dead:
Bringing with him this infant (the child
of a brother),
Whom, dying, the hands of a desolate
mother
Had placed on his bosom. 'T was said
— right or wrong —
That, in the lone mausion, left tenant-
less long,
To which, as a stranger, its lord now
returned,
In years yet recalled, through loud mid-
nights had burned
The light of wild orgies. Be that false
or true,
Slow and sad was the footstep which
now wandered through
Those desolate chambers; and calm and
severe
Was the life of their inmate.
Men now saw appear
Every morn at the mass that firm sor-
rowful face,
Which seemed to lock up in a cold iron
case
Tears hardened to crystal. Yet harsh
if he were,
His severity seemed to be trebly severe
In the rule of his own rigid life, which,
at least,
Was benignant to others. The poor
parish priest,
Who lived on his largess, his piety
praised.
The peasant was fed, and the chapel was
raised,
And the cottage was built, by his liberal
hand.
Yet he seemed in the midst of his good
deeds to stand
A lone, and unloved, and unlovable man.
There appeared some inscrutable flaw in
the plan
Of his life, that love failed to pass over.
That child
Alone did not fear him, nor shrink from
him; smiled

To his frown, and dispelled it.
The sweet sportive elf
Seemed the type of some joy lost, and
missed, in himself.
Ever welcome he suffered her glad face
to glide
In on hours when to others his door was
denied:
And many a time with a mute moody
look
He would watch her at prattle and play,
like a brook
Whose babble disturbs not the quietest
spot,
But soothes us because we need answer
it not.

But few years had passed o'er that child-
hood before
A change came among them. A letter,
which bore
Sudden consequence with it, one morn-
ing was placed
In the hands of the lord of the château.
He paced
To and fro in his chamber a whole night
alone
After reading that letter. At dawn he
was gone.
Weeks passed. When he came back
again he returned
With a tall ancient dame, from whose
lips the child learned
That they were of the same race and
name. With a face
Sad and anxious, to this withered stock
of the race
He confided the orphan, and left them
alone
In the old lonely house.
In a few days 't was known,
To the angry surprise of half Paris, that
one
Of the chiefs of that party which, still
clinging on
To the banner that bears the white lilies
of France,
Will fight 'neath no other, nor yet for
the chance
Of restoring their own, had renounced
the watchword
And the creed of his youth in unsheath-
ing his sword
For a Fatherland fathered no more (such
is fate!)
By legitimate parents.
And meanwhile, elate

And in no wise disturbed by what Paris
might say,
The new soldier thus wrote to a friend
far away:—
"To the life of inaction farewell! After
all,
Creeds the oldest may crumble, and
dynasties fall,
But the sole grand Legitimacy will en-
dure,
In whatever makes death noble, life
strong and pure.
Freedom! action! . . . the desert to
breathe in, — the lance
Of the Arab to follow! I go! *Vive la
France!*"

Few and rare were the meetings hence-
forth, as years fled,
'T wixt the child and the soldier. The
two women led
Lone lives in the lone house. Mean-
while the child grew
Into girlhood; and, like a sunbeam,
sliding through
Her green quiet years, changed by gen-
tle degrees
To the loveliest vision of youth a youth
sees
In his loveliest fancies: as pure as a
pearl,
And as perfect: a noble and innocent
girl,
With eighteen sweet summers dissolved
in the light
Of her lovely and lovable eyes, soft and
bright!
Then her guardian wrote to the dame,
. . . "Let Constance
Go with you to Paris. I trust that in
France
I may be ere the close of the year. I
confide
My life's treasure to you. Let her see,
at your side,
The world which we live in."
To Paris then came
Constance to abide with that old stately
dame
In that old stately Faubourg.
The young Englishman
Thus met her. 'T was there their ac-
quaintance began,
There it closed. That old miracle —
Love-at-first-sight —
Needs no explanations. The heart reads
aright

Its destiny sometimes. His love neither
chidden
Nor checked, the young soldier was gra-
ciously bidden
An habitual guest to that house by the
dame.
His own candid graces, the world-hon-
ored name
Of his father (in him not dishonored)
were both
Fair titles to favor. His love, nothing
loath,
The old lady observed, was returned by
Constance.
And as the child's uncle his absence from
France
Yet prolonged, she (thus easing long
self-gratulation)
Wrote to him a lengthened and moving
narration
Of the graces and gifts of the young
English wooer:
His father's fair fame; the boy's defer-
ence to her;
His love for Constance, — unaffected,
sincere;
And the girl's love for him, read by her
in those clear
Limpid eyes; then the pleasure with
which she awaited
Her cousin's approval of all she had
stated.

At length from that cousin an answer
there came,
Brief, stern; such as stunned and as-
tonished the dame.

"Let Constance leave Paris with you
on the day
You receive this. Until my return she
may stay
At her convent awhile. If my niece
wishes ever
To behold me again, understand, she
will never
Wed that man.
"You have broken faith with me.
Farewell!"

No appeal from that sentence.
It needs not to tell
The tears of Constance, nor the grief of
her lover:
The dream they had laid out their lives
in was over.

Bravely strove the young soldier to look
in the face
Of a life, where invisible hands seemed
to trace
O'er the threshold, these words . . .
"Hope no more!"

Unreturned
Had his love been, the strong manful
heart would have spurned
That weakness which suffers a woman to
lie
At the roots of man's life, like a canker,
and dry

And wither the sap of life's purpose.
But there

Lay the bitterer part of the pain! Could
he dare

To forget he was loved? that he grieved
not alone?

Recording a love that drew sorrow upon
The woman he loved, for himself dare
he seek

Surcease to that sorrow, which thus
held him weak,

Beat him down, and destroyed him?

News reached him indeed,
Through a comrade, who brought him
a letter to read

From the dame who had care of Con-
stance (it was one

To whom, when at Paris, the boy had
been known,

A Frenchman, and friend of the Fau-
bourg), which said

That Constance, although never a mur-
mur betrayed

What she suffered, in silence grew paler
each day,

And seemed visibly drooping and dying
away.

It was then he sought death.

XVII.

Thus the tale ends. 'T was told
With such broken, passionate words, as
unfold

In glimpses alone, a coiled grief. Through
each pause

Of its fitful recital, in raw gusty flays,
The rain shook the canvas, unheeded;
aloof,

And unheeded, the night-wind around
the tent-roof

At intervals wibbled. And when all
was said,

The sick man, exhausted, drooped back-
ward his head,

And fell into a feverish slumber.

Long while
Sat the Sœur Seraphine, in deep thought.
The still smile

That was wont, angel-wise, to inhabit
her face

And make it like heaven, was fled from
its place

In her eyes, on her lips; and a deep
sadness there

Seemed to darken the lines of long sor-
row and care,

As low to herself she sighed . . .

"Hath it, Eugène,
Been so long, then, the struggle? . . .
and yet, all in vain!

Nay, not all in vain! Shall the world
gain a man,

And yet Heaven lose a soul? Have I
done all I can?

Soul to soul, did he say? Soul to soul,
be it so!

And then, — soul of mine, whither?
whither?"

XVIII.

Large, slow,
Silent tears in those deep eyes ascended,
and fell.

"Here, at least, I have failed not" . . .
she mused . . . "this is well!"

She drew from her bosom two letters.

In one,
A mother's heart, wild with alarm for
her son,

Breathed bitterly forth its despairing
appeal.

"The pledge of a love owed to thee, O
Lucile!

The hope of a home saved by thee, —
of a heart

Which hath never since then (thrice en-
deared as thou art!)

Ceased to bless thee, to pray for thee,
save! . . . save my son!

And if not" . . . the letter went brokenly
on,

"Heaven help us!"

Then followed, from Alfred, a few
Blotted heart-broken pages. He mourn-
fully drew,

With pathos, the picture of that earnest
youth,

So unlike his own: how in beauty and
truth

He had nurtured that nature, so simple
and brave!

And how he had striven his son's youth
to save

From the errors so sadly redeemed in
his own,

And so deeply repented: how thus, in
that son,

In whose youth he had garnered his age,
he had seemed

To be blessed by a pledge that the past
was redeemed,

And forgiven. He bitterly went on to
speak

Of the boy's baffled love; in which fate
seemed to break

Unawares on his dreams with retributive
pain,

And the ghosts of the past rose to scourge
back again

The hopes of the future. To sue for
consent

Pride forbade: and the hope his old foe
might relent

Experience rejected . . . "My life for
the boy's!"

(He exclaimed); "for I die with my son,
if he dies!

Lucile! Heaven bless you for all you
have done!

Save him, save him, Lucile! save my
son! save my son!"

XIX.

"Ay!" murmured the Sœur Seraphine
. . . "heart to heart!

There, at least, I have failed not! Ful-
filled is my part?

Accomplished my mission? One act
crowns the whole.

Do I linger? Nay, be it so, then! . . .
Soul to soul!"

She knelt down, and prayed. Still the
boy slumbered on.

Dawn broke. The pale nun from the
bedside was gone.

XX.

Meanwhile, 'mid his aides-de-camp, busi-
ly bent

O'er the daily reports, in his well-ordered
tent

There sits a French General, — bronzed
by the sun

And seared by the sands of Algeria.
One

Who forth from the wars of the wild
Kabylee

Had strangely and rapidly risen to be
The idol, the darling, the dream, and
the star

Of the younger French chivalry: daring
in war,

And wary in council. He entered, in-
deed,

Late in life (and discarding his Bour-
bonite creed)

The Army of France: and had risen, in
part,

From a singular aptitude proved for the
art

Of that wild desert warfare of ambush,
surprise,

And stratagem, which to the French
camp supplies

Its subtlest intelligence; partly from
chance;

Partly, too, from a name and position
which France

Was proud to put forward; but mainly,
in fact,

From the prudence to plan, and the
daring to act,

In frequent emergencies startlingly
shown,

To the rank which he now held, — in-
trepidly won

With many a wound, trenched in many
a scar,

From fierce Milianah and Sidi-Sakhdar.

XXI.

All within, and without, that warm tent
seems to bear

Smiling token of provident order and
care.

All about, a well-fed, well-clad soldiery
stands

In groups round the music of mirth-
breathing bands.

In and out of the tent, all day long, to
and fro,

The messengers come, and the messen-
gers go,

Upon missions of mercy, or errands of
toil:

To report how the sapper contends with
the soil

In the terrible trench, how the sick man
is faring

In the hospital tent: and, combining,
comparing,

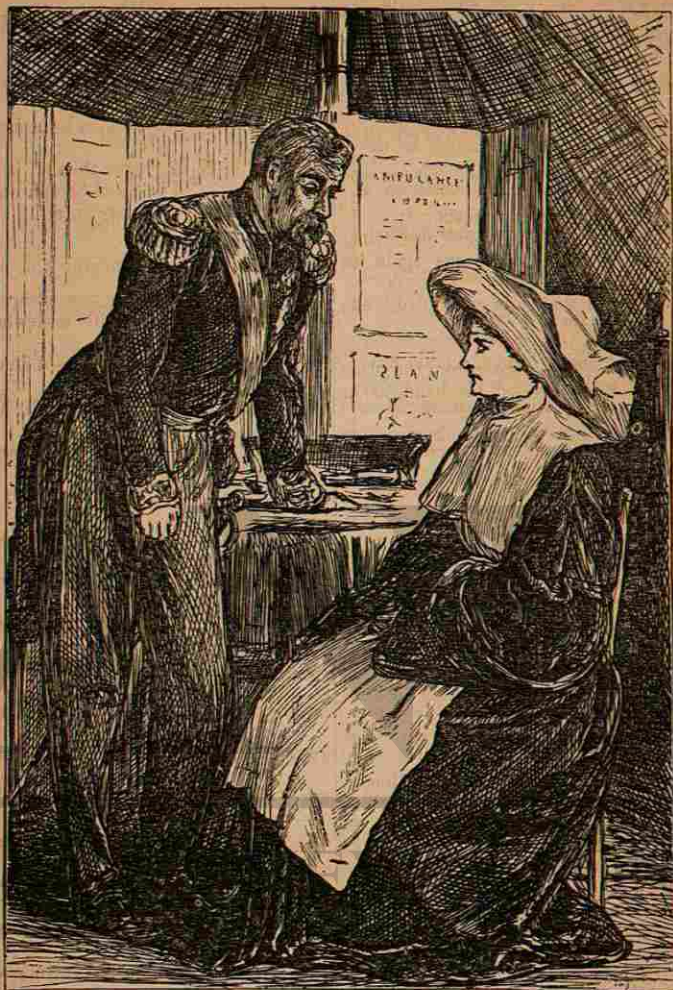
Constructing, within moves the brain of
one man,

Moving all.

He is bending his brow o'er some plan
For the hospital service, wise, skilful,
humane.
The officer standing beside him is
fain
To refer to the angel solicitous cares
Of the Sisters of Charity: one he de-
clares
To be known through the camp as a
seraph of grace:
He has seen, all have seen her indeed,
in each place
Where suffering is seen, silent, active, —
the Sœur . . .
Sœur . . . how do they call her?
"Ay, truly, of her
I have heard much," the General, mus-
ing, replies;
"And we owe her already (unless rumor
lies)
The lives of not few of our bravest. You
mean . . .
Ay, how do they call her? . . . the Sœur
— Seraphine,
(Is it not so?) I rarely forget names
once heard."
"Yes; the Sœur Seraphine. Her I
meant."
"On my word,
I have much wished to see her. I fancy
I trace,
In some facts traced to her, something
more than the grace
Of an angel: I mean an acute human
mind,
Ingenious, constructive, intelligent. Find
And, if possible, let her come to me.
We shall,
I think, aid each other."
"Oui, mon Général;
I believe she has lately obtained the
permission
To tend some sick man in the Second
Division
Of our Ally: they say a relation."
"Ay, so?"
"T is said so."
"The name do you know?"
"Non, mon Général."
While they spoke yet, there went
A murmur and stir round the door of
the tent.
"A Sister of Charity craves, in a case
Of urgent and serious importance, the
grace
Of brief private speech with the General
there.
Will the General speak with her?"
"Bid her declare
Her mission."
"She will not. She craves to be seen
And be heard."
"Well, her name then?"
"The Sœur Seraphine."
"Clear the tent. She may enter."

XXII.

The tent has been cleared.
The chieftain stroked moodily somewhat
his beard,
A sable long silvered: and pressed down
his brow
On his hand, heavy veined. All his
countenance, now
Unwitnessed, at once fell dejected, and
dreary,
As a curtain let fall by a hand that's
grown weary,
Into puckers and folds. From his lips,
unrepressed,
Steals th' impatient quick sigh, which
reveals in man's breast
A conflict concealed, an experience at
strife
With itself, — the vexed heart's passing
protest on life.
He turned to his papers. He heard the
light tread
Of a faint foot behind him: and, lifting
his head,
Said, "Sit, Holy Sister! your worth is
well known
To the hearts of our soldiers; nor less
to my own.
I have much wished to see you. I owe
you some thanks:
In the name of all those you have saved
to our ranks
I record them. Sit! Now then, your
mission?"
The nun
Paused silent. The General eyed her
anon
More keenly. His aspect grew troubled.
A change
Darkened over his features. He muttered
. . . "Strange! strange!
Any face should so strongly remind me
of her!
Fool! again the delirium, the dream!
does it stir?



Does it move as of old? Psha!
"Sit, Sister! I wait
Your answer, my time halts but hur-
riedly. State
The cause why you seek me?"
"The cause? ay, the cause!"
She vaguely repeated. Then, after a
pause, —
As one who, awaked unawares, would
put back
The sleep that forever returns in the
track
Of dreams which, though scared and
dispersed, not the less
Settle back to faint eyelids that yield
'neath their stress,
Like doves to a penthouse, — a move-
ment she made,
Less toward him than away from herself;
drooped her head

And folded her hands on her bosom :
 long, spare,
 Fatigued, mournful hands ! Not a
 stream of stray hair
 Escaped the pale bands ; scarce more
 pale than the face
 Which they bound and locked up in a
 rigid white case.
 She fixed her eyes on him. There crept
 a vague awe
 O'er his sense, such as ghosts cast.
 "Eugène de Luvois,
 The cause which recalls me again to
 your side
 Is a promise that rests unfulfilled," she
 replied.
 "I come to fulfil it."
 He sprang from the place
 Where he sat, pressed his hand, as in
 doubt, o'er his face ;
 And, cautiously feeling each step o'er
 the ground
 That he trod on (as one who walks fear-
 ing the sound
 Of his footstep may startle and scare out
 of sight
 Some strange sleeping creature on which
 he would 'light
 Unawares), crept towards her ; one heavy
 hand laid
 On her shoulder in silence ; bent o'er her
 his head,
 Searched her face with a long look of
 troubled appeal
 Against doubt ; staggered backward, and
 murmured : . . . "Lucile !
 Thus we meet then ? . . . here ! . . . thus ?"
 "Soul to soul, ay, Eugène,
 As I pledged you my word that we
 should meet again.
 Dead, . . ." she murmured, "long dead !
 all that lived in our lives, —
 Thine and mine, — saving that which
 ev'n life's self survives,
 The soul ! 'T is my soul seeks thine
 own. What may reach
 From my life to thy life (so wide each
 from each !)
 Save the soul to the soul ? To thy soul
 I would speak.
 May I do so ?"
 He said (worked and white was his cheek
 As he raised it), "Speak to me !"
 Deep, tender, serene,
 And sad was the gaze which the Sœur
 Seraphine
 Held on him. She spoke.

XXIII.

As some minstrel may fling,
 Preluding the music yet mute in each
 string,
 A swift hand athwart the hushed heart
 of the whole,
 Seeking which note most fitly may first
 move the soul ;
 And, leaving untroubled the deep chords
 below,
 Move pathetic in numbers remote ; —
 even so
 The voice which was moving the heart
 of that man
 Far away from its yet voiceless purpose
 began,
 Far away in the pathos remote of the
 past ;
 Until, through her words, rose before
 him, at last,
 Bright and dark in their beauty, the
 hopes that were gone
 Unaccomplished from life.
 He was mute.

XXIV.

She went on.
 And still further down the dim past did
 she lead
 Each yielding remembrance, far, far off,
 to feed
 'Mid the pastures of youth, in the twi-
 light of hope,
 And the valleys of boyhood, the fresh-
 flowered slope
 Of life's dawning land !
 'T is the heart of a boy,
 With its indistinct, passionate prescience
 of joy !
 The unproved desire, — the unaimed as-
 piration, —
 The deep conscious life that forestalls
 consummation ;
 With ever a flitting delight, — one arm's
 length
 In advance of the august inward impulse.
 The strength
 Of the spirit which troubles the seed in
 the sand
 With the birth of the palm-tree ! Let
 ages expand
 The glorious creature ! The ages lie
 shut
 (Safe, see !) in the seed, at time's signal
 to put
 Forth their beauty and power, leaf by
 leaf, layer on layer,

Till the palm strikes the sun, and stands
 broad in blue air.
 So the palm in the palm-seed ! so, slowly
 — so, wrought
 Year by year unperceived, hope on hope,
 thought by thought,
 Trace the growth of the man from its
 germ in the boy.
 Ah, but Nature, that nurtures, may also
 destroy !
 Charm the wind and the sun, lest some
 chance intervene !
 While the leaf's in the bud, while the
 stem's in the green,
 A light bird bends the branch, a light
 breeze breaks the bough,
 Which, if spared by the light breeze, the
 light bird, may grow
 To baffle the tempest, and rock the high
 nest,
 And take both the bird and the breeze
 to its breast.
 Shall we save a whole forest in sparing
 one seed ?
 Save the man in the boy ? in the thought
 save the deed ?
 Let the whirlwind uproot the grown
 tree, if it can !
 Save the seed from the north-wind. So
 let the grown man
 Face out fate. Spare the man-seed in
 youth.
 He was dumb.
 She went one step further.

XXV.
 Lo ! manhood is come.
 And love, the wild song-bird, hath flown
 to the tree,
 And the whirlwind comes after. Now
 prove we, and see :
 What shade from the leaf ? what sup-
 port from the branch ?
 Spreads the leaf broad and fair ? holds
 the bough strong and stanch ?
 There, he saw himself, — dark, as he
 stood on that night,
 The last when they met and they parted :
 a sight
 For heaven to mourn o'er, for hell to re-
 joice !
 An ineffable tenderness troubled her
 voice ;
 It grew weak, and a sigh broke it through.
 Then he said
 (Never looking at her, never lifting his
 head,

As though, at his feet, there lay visibly
 hurled
 Those fragments), "It was not a love,
 't was a world,
 'T was a life that lay ruined, Lucile !"

XXVI.

She went on.
 "So be it ! Perish Babel, arise Babylon !
 From ruins like these rise the fanes that
 shall last,
 And to build up the future heaven shat-
 ters the past."
 "Ay," he moodily murmured, "and
 who cares to scan
 The heart's perished world, if the world
 gains a man ?
 From the past to the present, though
 late, I appeal ;
 To the nun Seraphine, from the woman
 Lucile !"

XXVII.

Lucile ! . . . the old name, — the old self !
 silenced long :
 Heard once more ! felt once more !
 As some soul to the throng
 Of invisible spirits admitted, baptized
 By death to a new name and nature, —
 surprised
 'Mid the songs of the seraphs, hears
 faintly, and far,
 Some voice from the earth, left below a
 dim star,
 Calling to her forlornly ; and (saddening
 the psalms
 Of the angels, and piercing the Paradise
 palms !)
 The name borne 'mid earthly beloveds
 on earth
 Sighed above some lone grave in the land
 of her birth ; —
 So that one word . . . Lucile ! . . . stirred
 the Sœur Seraphine,
 For a moment. Anon she resumed her
 serene
 And concentrated calm.
 "Let the Nun, then, retrace
 The life of the Soldier !" . . . she said,
 with a face
 That glowed, gladdening her words.
 "To the present I come :
 Leave the Past."
 There her voice rose, and seemed as
 when some
 Pale Priestess proclaims from her temple
 the praise

Of the hero whose brows she is crowning
with bays.
Step by step did she follow his path from
the place
Where their two paths diverged. Year
by year did she trace
(Familiar with all) his, the soldier's ex-
istence.
Her words were of trial, endurance, re-
sistance ;
Of the leaguer around this besieged world
of ours :
And the same sentinels that ascend the
same towers
And report the same foes, the same fears,
the same strife,
Waged alike to the limits of each human
life.
She went on to speak of the lone moody
lord,
Shut up in his lone moody halls : every
word
Held the weight of a tear : she recorded
the good
He had patiently wrought through a
whole neighborhood ;
And the blessing that lived on the lips
of the poor,
By the peasant's hearthstone, or the cot-
tager's door.
There she paused : and her accents
seemed dipped in the hue
Of his own sombre heart, as the picture
she drew
Of the poor, proud, sad spirit, rejecting
love's wages,
Yet working love's work ; reading back-
wards life's pages
For penance ; and stubbornly, many a
time,
Both missing the moral, and marring
the rhyme.
Then she spoke of the soldier ! . . . the
man's work and fame,
The pride of a nation, a world's just
acclaim !
Life's inward approval !

XXVIII.

Her voice reached his heart,
And sank lower. She spoke of herself :
how, apart
And unseen, — far away, — she had
watched, year by year,
With how many a blessing, how many a
tear,

And how many a prayer, every stage in
the strife :
Guessed the thought in the deed : traced
the love in the life :
Blessed the man in the man's work !
" *They* work . . . O, not mine !
Thine, Lucile ! " . . . he exclaimed . . .
" all the worth of it thine
If worth there be in it ! "

Her answer conveyed
His reward, and her own : joy that can-
not be said
Alone by the voice . . . eyes — face —
spoke silently :
All the woman, one grateful emotion !

And she
A poor Sister of Charity ! hers a life spent
In one silent effort for others ! . . .
She bent
Her divine face above him, and filled up
his heart
With the look that glowed from it.
Then slow, with soft art,
Fixed her aim, and moved to it.

XXIX.

He, the soldier humane,
He, the hero ; whose heart hid in glory
the pain
Of a youth disappointed ; whose life had
made known
The value of man's life ! . . . that youth
overthrown
And retrieved, had it left him no pity
for youth
In another ? his own life of strenuous
truth
Accomplished in act, had it taught him
no care
For the life of another ? . . . O no ! every-
where
In the camp which she moved through,
she came face to face
With some noble token, some generous
trace
Of his active humanity . . .
" Well," he replied,

" If it be so ? "
" I come from the solemn bedside
Of a man that is dying," she said.
" While we speak
A life is in jeopardy."
" Quick then ! you seek
Aid or medicine, or what ? "
" 'T is not needed," she said.
" Medicine ? yes, for the mind ! 'T is a
heart that needs aid ! "

You, Eugène de Luvois, you (and you
only) can
Save the life of this man. Will you
save it ? "

" What man ?
How ! . . . where ? . . . can you ask ? "
She went rapidly on

To her object in brief vivid words . . .
The young son
Of Matilda and Alfred — the boy lying
there
Half a mile from that tent-door — the
father's despair,
The mother's deep anguish — the pride
of the boy

In the father — the father's one hope
and one joy
In the son : — the son now — wounded,
dying ! She told
Of the father's stern struggle with life :
the boy's bold,

Pure, and beautiful nature : the fair
life before him
If that life were but spared . . . yet a
word might restore him !
The boy's broken love for the niece of
Eugène !

Its pathos : the girl's love for him ; how,
half slain
In his tent she had found him ; won
from him the tale ;
Sought to nurse back his life ; found
her efforts still fail ;

Beaten back by a love that was stronger
than life ;
Of how bravely till then he had stood in
that strife

Wherein England and France in their
best blood, at last,
Had bathed from remembrance the wounds
of the past.

And shall nations be nobler than men ?
Are not great
Men the models of nations ? For what
is a state

But the man's confused imitation of
one ?
Shall he, the fair hero of France, on the
son

Of his ally seek vengeance, destroying
perchance
An innocent life, — here, when England
and France

Have forgiven the sins of their fathers
of yore,
And baptized a new hope in their sons'
recent gore !

She went on to tell how the boy had
clung still
To life, for the sake of life's uses, until
From his weak hands the strong effort
dropped, stricken down

By the news that the heart of Constance,
like his own,
Was breaking beneath . . .
But there " Hold ! " he exclaimed,
Interrupting, " forbear ! " . . . his whole
face was inflamed

With the heart's swarthy thunder which
yet, while she spoke,
Had been gathering silent, — at last the
storm broke

In grief or in wrath . . .
" 'T is to him, then," he cried, . . .
Checking suddenly short the tumultuous
stride,

" That I owe these late greetings, — for
him you are here, —
For his sake you seek me, — for him, it
is clear,

You have deigned at the last to bethink
you again
Of this long-forgotten existence ! "
" Eugène ! "

" Ha ! fool that I was ! " . . . he went
on, . . . " and just now,
While you spoke yet, my heart was
beginning to grow

Almost boyish again, almost sure of *one*
friend !
Yet this was the meaning of all, — this
the end !

Be it so ! There's a sort of slow justice
(admit !)
In this, — that the word that man's
finger hath writ

In fire on my heart, I return him at
last.
Let him learn that word, — Never ! "
" Ah, still to the past

Must the present be vassal ? " she said.
" In the hour
We last parted I urged you to put forth
the power

Which I felt to be yours, in the con-
quest of life,
Yours, the promise to strive : mine, —
to watch o'er the strife.

I foresaw you would conquer ; you *have*
conquered much,
Much, indeed, that is noble ! I hail it
as such,
And am here to record and applaud it.
I saw

Not the less in your nature, Eugène de Luvois,
 One peril, — one point where I feared
 you would fail
 To subdue that worst foe which a man
 can assail, —
 Himself: and I promised that, if I
 should see
 My champion once falter, or bend the
 brave knee,
 That moment would bring me again to
 his side.
 That moment is come! for that peril
 was pride,
 And you falter. I plead for yourself,
 and one other,
 For that gentle child without father or
 mother,
 To whom you are both. I plead, soldier
 of France,
 For your own nobler nature, — and plead
 for Constance!"
 At the sound of that name he averted
 his head.
 "Constance! . . . Ay, she entered my
 lone life" (he said)
 "When its sun was long set; and hung
 over its night
 Her own starry childhood. I have but
 that light,
 In the midst of much darkness! Who
 names me but she
 With titles of love? and what rests there
 for me
 In the silence of age save the voice of
 that child?
 The child of my own better life, unde-
 filed!
 My creature, carved out of my heart of
 hearts!"
 "Say,"
 Said the *Seur Seraphine*, — "are you
 able to lay
 Your hand as a knight on your heart as
 a man
 And swear that, whatever may happen,
 you can
 Feel assured for the life you thus cher-
 ish?"
 "How so?"
 He looked up. "If the boy should die
 thus?"
 "Yes, I know
 What your look would imply . . . this
 sleek stranger forsooth!
 Because on his cheek was the red rose
 of youth

The heart of my niece must break for
 it!"
 She cried,
 "Nay, but hear me yet further!"
 With slow heavy stride,
 Unheeding her words, he was pacing the
 tent,
 He was muttering low to himself as he
 went.
 "Ay, these young things lie safe in our
 heart just so long
 As their wings are in growing; and
 when these are strong
 They break it, and farewell! the bird
 flies!" . . .
 The nun
 Laid her hand on the soldier, and mur-
 mured, "The sun
 Is descending, life fleets while we talk
 thus! O, yet
 Let this day upon one final victory set,
 And complete a life's conquest!"
 He said, "Understand!
 If Constance wed the son of this man,
 by whose hand
 My heart hath been robbed, she is lost
 to my life!
 Can her home be my home? Can I
 claim in the wife
 Of that man's son the child of my age?
 At her side
 Shall he stand on my hearth? Shall I
 sue to the bride
 Of . . . enough!
 "Ah, and you immemorial halls
 Of my Norman forefathers, whose shadow
 yet falls
 On my fancy, and fuses hope, memory,
 past,
 Present, — all, in one silence! old trees
 to the blast
 Of the North Sea repeating the tale of
 old days,
 Nevermore, nevermore in the wild bosky
 ways
 Shall I hear through your umbrage an-
 cestral the wind
 Prophecy as of yore, when it shook the
 deep mind
 Of my boyhood, with whispers from out
 the far years
 Of love, fame, the raptures life cools
 down with tears!
 Henceforth shall the tread of a Vargrave
 alone
 Rouse your echoes?"
 "O, think not," she said, "of the son

Of the man whom unjustly you hate;
 only think
 Of this young human creature, that
 cries from the brink
 Of a grave to your mercy!
 "Recall your own words
 (Words my memory mournfully ever
 records!)
 How with love may be wrecked a whole
 life! then, Eugène,
 Look with me (still those words in our
 ears!) once again
 At this young soldier sinking from life
 here, — dragged down
 By the weight of the love in his heart:
 no renown,
 No fame comforts *him!* nations shout
 not above
 The lone grave down to which he is
 bearing the love
 Which life has rejected! Will *you*
 stand apart?
 You, with such a love's memory deep in
 your heart!
 You the hero, whose life hath perchance
 been led on
 Through the deeds it hath wrought to
 the fame it hath won,
 By recalling the visions and dreams of
 a youth,
 Such as lies at your door now: who
 have but, in truth,
 To stretch forth a hand, to speak only
 one word,
 And by that word you rescue a life!"
 He was stirred.
 Still he sought to put from him the cup;
 bowed his face
 On his hand; and anon, as though wish-
 ing to chase
 With one angry gesture his own thoughts
 aside,
 He sprang up, brushed past her, and
 bitterly cried,
 "No! — Constance wed a Vargrave! —
 I cannot consent!"
 Then uprose the *Seur Seraphine*.
 The low tent,
 In her sudden uprising, seemed dwarfed
 by the height
 From which those imperial eyes poured
 the light
 Of their deep silent sadness upon him.
 No wonder
 He felt, as it were, his own stature
 shrink under
 The compulsion of that grave regard!
 For between
 The Duc de Luvois and the *Seur Sera-
 phine*
 At that moment there rose all the height
 of one soul
 O'er another; she looked down on him
 from the whole
 Lonely length of a life. There were sad
 nights and days,
 There were long months and years in
 that heart-searching gaze;
 And her voice, when she spoke, with
 sharp pathos thrilled through
 And transfixed him.
 "Eugène de Luvois, but for you,
 I might have been now, — not this
 wandering nun,
 But a mother, a wife, — pleading, not
 for the son
 Of another, but blessing some child of my
 own,
 His, — the man's that I once loved! . . .
 Hush! that which is done
 I regret not. I breathe no reproaches.
 That's best
 Which God sends. 'Twas His will: it
 is mine. And the rest
 Of that riddle I will not look back to.
 He reads
 In your heart, — He that judges of all
 thoughts and deeds,
 With eyes, mine forestall not! This
 only I say:
 You have not the right (read it, you, as
 you may!)
 To say . . . 'I am the wronged.' . . .
 "Have I wronged thee? — wronged
 thee!"
 He faltered, "Lucile, ah, Lucile!"
 "Nay, not me,"
 She murmured, "but man! The lone
 nun standing here
 Has no claim upon earth, and is passed
 from the sphere
 Of earth's wrongs and earth's reparations.
 But she,
 The dead woman, Lucile, she whose
 grave is in me,
 Demands from her grave reparation to
 man,
 Reparation to God. Heed, O heed,
 while you can,
 This voice from the grave!"
 "Hush!" he moaned, "I obey
 The *Seur Seraphine*. There, Lucile! let
 this pay

Every debt that is due to that grave.
Now lead on :
I follow you, Sœur Seraphine ! . . . To
the son
Of Lord Alfred Vargrave . . . and
then," . . .

As he spoke
He lifted the tent-door, and down the dun
smoke
Pointed out the dark bastions, with bat-
teries crowned,
Of the city beneath them . . .

"Then, *there*, underground,
And *valete et plaudite*, soon as may be !
Let the old tree go down to the earth, —
the old tree,
With the worm at its heart ! Lay the
axe to the root !
Who will miss the old stump, so we save
the young shoot ?
A Vargrave ! . . . this pays all . . . Lead
on ! . . . In the seed
Save the forest ! . . .
"I follow . . . forth, forth ! where
you lead."

XXX.

The day was declining ; a day sick and
damp.
In a blank ghostly glare shone the bleak
ghostly camp
Of the English. Alone in his dim,
spectral tent
(Himself the wan spectre of youth), with
eyes bent
On the daylight departing, the sick man
was sitting
Upon his low pallet. These thoughts,
vaguely flitting,
Crossed the silence between him and
death, which seemed near.
— "Pain o'erreaches itself, so is balked !
else, how bear
This intense and intolerable solitude,
With its eye on my heart and its hand
on my blood ?
Pulse by pulse ! Day goes down : yet
she comes not again.
Other suffering, doubtless, where hope
is more plain,
Claims her elsewhere. I die, strange !
and scarcely feel sad.
O, to think of Constance *thus*, and not
to go mad !
But Death, it would seem, dulls the
sense to his own
Dull doings . . ."

XXXI.

Between those sick eyes and the sun
A shadow fell thwart.

XXXII.

'Tis the pale nun once more !
But who stands at her side, mute and
dark in the door ?
How oft had he watched through the
glory and gloom
Of the battle, with long, longing looks
that dim plume
Which now (one stray sunbeam upon it)
shook, stooped
To where the tent-curtain, dividing, was
looped !

How that stern face had haunted and
hovered about
The dreams it still scared ! through what
fond fear and doubt
Had the boy yearned in heart to the
hero ! (What's like

A boy's love for some famous man ?) . . .
O, to strike
A wild path through the battle, down
striking perchance
Some rash foeman too near the great
soldier of France,
And so fall in his glorious regard ! . . .
Oft, how oft

Had his heart flashed this hope out,
whilst watching aloft
The dim battle that plume dance and
dart, — never seen
So near till this moment ! how eager to
glean

Every stray word, dropped through the
camp-babble in praise
Of his hero, — each tale of old ventu-
rous days
In the desert ! And now . . . could he
speak out his heart
Face to face with that man ere he died !

XXXIII.

With a start
The sick soldier sprang up : the blood
sprang up in him,
To his throat, and o'erthrew him : he
reeled back : a dim
Sanguine haze filled his eyes ; in his
ears rose the din
And rush, as of cataracts loosened within,
Through which he saw faintly, and
heard, the pale nun
(Looking larger than life, where she
stood in the sun)

Point to him and murmur, "Behold !"
Then that plume
Seemed to wave like a fire, and fade off
in the gloom
Which momentarily put out the world.

XXXIV.

To his side
Moved the man the boy dreaded yet loved
. . . "Ah !" . . . he sighed,
"The smooth brow, the fair Vargrave
face ! and those eyes,
All the mother's ! The old things again !
"Do not rise.
You suffer, young man ?"

THE BOY.

Sir, I die.

THE DUKE.

Not so young !

THE BOY.

So young ? yes ! and yet I have tangled
among
The frayed warp and woof of this brief
life of mine
Other lives than my own. Could my
death but untwine
The vext skein . . . but it will not.
Yes, Duke, young — so young !
And I knew you not ? yet I have done
you a wrong
Irreparable ! . . . late, too late to repair.
If I knew any means . . . but I know
none ! . . . I swear,
If this broken fraction of time could ex-
tend
Into infinite lives of atonement, no end
Would seem too remote for my grief
(could that be !)
To include it ! Not too late, however,
for me
To entreat : is it too late for you to for-
give ?

THE DUKE.

You wrong — my forgiveness — explain.

THE BOY.

Could I live !
Such a very few hours left to life, yet I
shrink,
I falter ! . . . Yes, Duke, your forgive-
ness I think
Should free my soul hence.

Ah ! you could not surmise
That a boy's beating heart, burning
thoughts, longing eyes
Were following you evermore (heeded
not !)
While the battle was flowing between
us : nor what
Eager, dubious footsteps at nightfall oft
went
With the wind and the rain, round and
round your blind tent,
Persistent and wild as the wind and the
rain,
Unnoticed as these, weak as these, and
as vain !
O, how obdurate then looked your tent !
The waste air

Grew stern at the gleam which said . . .
"Off ! he is there !"

I know not what merciful mystery now
Brings you here, whence the man whom
you see lying low
Other footsteps (not those !) must soon
bear to the grave.

But death is at hand, and the few words
I have
Yet to speak, I must speak them at once.
Duke, I swear,

As I lie here, (Death's angel too close
not to hear !)

That I meant not this wrong to you.
Duc de Luvois,

I loved your niece — loved ? why, I love
her ! I saw,
And, seeing, how could I but love her ?
I seemed

Born to love her. Alas, were that all !
had I dreamed

Of this love's cruel consequence as it
rests now

Ever fearfully present before me, I vow
That the secret, unknown, had gone
down to the tomb

Into which I descend . . . O why, whilst
there was room
In life left for warning, had no one the
heart

To warn me ? Had any one whispered
. . . "Depart !"

To the hope the whole world seemed in
league then to nurse !

Had any one hinted . . . "Beware of
the curse

Which is coming !" There was not a
voice raised to tell,

Not a hand moved to warn from the
blow ere it fell,

And then . . . then the blow fell on *both* !
This is why
I implore you to pardon that great injury
Wrought on her, and, through her,
wrought on you, Heaven knows
How unwittingly !

THE DUKE.

Ah ! . . . and, young soldier, suppose
That I came here to seek, not grant,
pardon ! —

THE BOY.

Of whom ?

THE DUKE.

Of yourself.

THE BOY.

Duke, I bear in my heart to the tomb
No boyish resentment ; not one lonely
thought
That honors you not. In all this there
is nought
'T is for me to forgive.

Every glorious act
Of your great life starts forward, an elo-
quent fact,
To confirm in my boy's heart its faith in
your own.
And have I not hoarded, to ponder
upon,
A hundred great acts from your life ?
Nay, all these,
Were they so many lying and false wit-
nesses,
Does there rest not *one* voice, which was
never untrue ?
I believe in Constance, Duke, as she
does in you !
In this great world around us, wherever
we turn,
Some grief irremediable we discern ;
And yet — there sits God, calm in
Heaven above !
Do we trust one whit less in His justice
or love ?
I judge not.

THE DUKE.

Enough ! hear at last, then, the truth.
Your father and I, — foes we were in
our youth.
It matters not why. Yet thus much
understand :
The hope of my youth was signed out by
his hand.

I was not of those whom the buffets of
fate
Tame and teach : and my heart buried
slain love in hate.
If your own frank young heart, yet un-
conscious of all
Which turns the heart's blood in its
springtide to gall,
And unable to guess even aught that
the furrow
Across these gray brows hides of sin or
of sorrow,
Comprehends not the evil and grief of
my life,
'T will at least comprehend how intense
was the strife
Which is closed in this act of atone-
ment, whereby
I seek in the son of my youth's enemy
The friend of my age. Let the present
release
Here acquitted the past ! In the name
of my niece,
Whom for my life in yours as a hostage
I give,
Are you great enough, boy, to forgive
me, — and live ?

Whilst he spoke thus, a doubtful tu-
multuous joy
Chased its fleeting effects o'er the face
of the boy :
As when some stormy moon, in a long
cloud confined,
Struggles outward through shadows, the
varying wind
Alternates, and bursts, self-surprised,
from her prison,
So that slow joy grew clear in his face.
He had risen
To answer the Duke ; but strength failed
every limb ;
A strange, happy feebleness trembled
through him.
With a faint cry of rapturous wonder,
he sank
On the breast of the nun, who stood
near.

“Yes, boy ! thank
This guardian angel,” the Duke said.
“I — you,
We owe all to her. Crown her work.
Live ! be true
To your young life's fair promise, and
live for her sake !”
“Yes, Duke : I will live. I *must* live,
— live to make

My whole life the answer you claim,”
the boy said,
“For joy does not kill !”
Back again the faint head
Declined on the nun's gentle bosom.
She saw
His lips quiver, and motioned the Duke
to withdraw
And leave them a moment together.
He eyed
Them both with a wistful regard ; turned,
and sighed,
And lifted the tent-door, and passed from
the tent.

XXXV.

Like a furnace, the fervid, intense occi-
dent
From its hot seething levels a great glare
struck up
On the sick metal sky. And, as out of
a cup
Some with watches boiling wild por-
tents arise,
Monstrous clouds, massed, misshapen,
and tinged with strange dyes,
Hovered over the red fume, and changed
to weird shapes
As of snakes, salamanders, efts, lizards,
storks, apes,
Chimeras, and hydras : whilst — ever
the same —
In the midst of all these (creatures fused
by his flame,
And changed by his influence !) change-
less, as when,
Ere he lit down to death generations of
men,
O'er that crude and ungainly creation,
which there
With wild shapes this cloud-world seemed
to mimic in air,
The eye of Heaven's all-judging witness,
he shone,
And shall shine on the ages we reach
not, — the sun !

XXXVI.

Nature posted her parable thus in the
skies,
And the man's heart bore witness. Life's
vapors arise
And fall, pass and change, group them-
selves and revolve
Round the great central life, which is
Love : these dissolve

And resume themselves, here assume
beauty, there terror ;
And the phantasmagoria of infinite error,
And endless complexity, lasts but a
while ;
Life's self, the immortal, immutable
smile
Of God, on the soul, in the deep heart
of Heaven
Lives changeless, unchanged : and our
morning and even
Are earth's alternations, not Heaven's.

XXXVII.

While he yet
Watched the skies, with this thought in
his heart ; while he set
Thus unconsciously all his life forth in
his mind,
Summed it up, searched it out, proved
it vapor and wind,
And embraced the new life which that
hour had revealed, —
Love's life, which earth's life had de-
faced and concealed ;
Lucile left the tent and stood by him.
Her tread
Aroused him ; and, turning towards her,
he said :
“O Sœur Seraphine, are you happy ?”
“Eugene,
What is happier than to have hoped not
in vain ?”
She answered, — “And you ?”
“Yes.”
“You do not repent ?”
“No.”
“Thank Heaven !” she murmured.
He musingly bent
His looks on the sunset, and somewhat
apart
Where he stood, sighed, as though to
his innermost heart,
“O blessed are they, amongst whom
was not,
Whose morning unclouded, without stain
or spot,
Predicts a pure evening ; who, sunlike,
in light
Have traversed, un sullied, the world,
and set bright !”
But she in response, “Mark yon ship
far away,
Asleep on the wave, in the last light of
day,

With all its hushed thunders shut up !
 Would you know
 A thought which came to me a few days
 ago,
 Whilst watching those ships ? . . . When
 the great Ship of Life,
 Surviving, though shattered, the tumult
 and strife
 Of earth's angry element, — masts broken
 short,
 Decks drenched, bulwarks beaten, —
 drives safe into port,
 When the Pilot of Galilee, seen on the
 strand,
 Stretches over the waters a welcoming
 hand ;
 When, heeding no longer the sea's baffled
 roar,
 The mariner turns to his rest ever-
 more ;
 What will then be the answer the helms-
 man must give ?
 Will it be . . . ' Lo our log-book ! Thus
 once did we live
 In the zones of the South ; thus we trav-
 ersed the seas
 Of the Orient ; there dwelt with the
 Hesperides ;
 Thence followed the west-wind ; here,
 eastward we turned ;
 The stars failed us there ; just here land
 we discerned
 On our lee ; there the storm overtook us
 at last ;
 That day went the bowsprit, the next
 day the mast ;
 There the mermen came round us, and
 there we saw bask
 A siren ? The Captain of Port will he
 ask
 Any one of such questions ? I cannot
 think so !
 But . . . ' What is the last Bill of Health
 you can show ?'
 Not — How fared the soul through the
 trials she passed ?
 But — What is the state of that soul at
 the last ?"

"May it be so !" he sighed. "There !
 the sun drops, behold !"
 And indeed, whilst he spoke, all the pur-
 ple and gold
 In the west had turned ashen, save one
 fading strip
 Of light that yet gleamed from the dark
 nether lip

Of a long reef of cloud ; and o'er sullen
 ravines
 And ridges the raw damps were hanging
 white screens
 Of melancholy mist.
 "Nunc dimittis !" she said.
 "O God of the living ! whilst yet 'mid
 the dead
 And the dying we stand here alive, and
 thy days
 Returning, admit space for prayer and
 for praise,
 In both these confirm us !
 "The helmsman, Eugène,
 Needs the compass to steer by. Pray
 always. Again
 We two part : each to work out Heaven's
 will : you, I trust,
 In the world's ample witness ; and I, as
 I must,
 In secret and silence : you, love, fame,
 await ;
 Me, sorrow and sickness. We meet at
 one gate
 When all's over. The ways they are
 many and wide,
 And seldom are two ways the same.
 Side by side
 May we stand at the same little door
 when all's done !
 The ways they are many, the end it is one.
 He that knocketh shall enter : who asks
 shall obtain :
 And who seeketh, he findeth. Remem-
 ber, Eugène !"
 She turned to depart.
 "Whither ? whither ?" . . . he said.
 She stretched forth her hand where, al-
 ready outspread
 On the darkened horizon, remotely they
 saw
 The French camp-fires kindling.
 "O Duc de Luvois,
 See yonder vast host, with its manifold
 heart
 Made as one man's by one hope ! That
 hope 't is your part
 To aid towards achievement, to save from
 reverse :
 Mine, through suffering to soothe, and
 through sickness to nurse.
 I go to my work : you to yours."

XXXVII.

Whilst she spoke,
 On the wide wasting evening there dis-
 tantly broke

The low roll of musketry. Straightway,
 anon,
 From the dim Flag-staff Battery bel-
 lowed a gun.
 "Our chasseurs are at it !" he muttered.
 She turned,
 Smiled, and passed up the twilight.
 He faintly discerned
 Her form, now and then, on the flat
 lurid sky
 Rise, and sink, and recede through the
 mists ; by and by
 The vapors closed round, and he saw her
 no more.

XXXIX.

Nor shall we. For her mission, accom-
 plished, is o'er.
 The mission of genius on earth ! To
 uplift,
 Purify, and confirm by its own gracious
 gift,
 The world, in despite of the world's dull
 endeavor
 To degrade, and drag down, and oppose
 it forever.
 The mission of genius : to watch, and to
 wait,
 To renew, to redeem, and to regenerate.
 The mission of woman on earth ! to give
 birth
 To the mercy of Heaven descending on
 earth.
 The mission of woman : permitted to
 bruise
 The head of the serpent, and sweetly in-
 fuse,
 Through the sorrow and sin of earth's
 registered curse,
 The blessing which mitigates all : born
 to nurse,
 And to soothe, and to solace, to help
 and to heal
 The sick world that leans on her. This
 was Lucile.

XLI.

A power hid in pathos : a fire veiled in
 cloud :
 Yet still burning outward : a branch
 which, though bowed
 By the bird in its passage, springs up-
 ward again :
 Through all symbols I search for her
 sweetness — in vain !
 Judge her love by her life. For our life
 is but love

In act. Pure was hers : and the dear
 God above,
 Who knows what His creatures have
 need of for life,
 And whose love includes all loves,
 through much patient strife
 Led her soul into peace. Love, though
 love may be given
 In vain, is yet lovely. Her own native
 heaven
 More clearly she mirrored, as life's
 troubled dream
 Wore away ; and love sighed into rest,
 like a stream
 That breaks its heart over wild rocks
 toward the shore
 Of the great sea which hushes it up ever-
 more
 With its little wild wailing. No stream
 from its source
 Flows seaward, how lonely soever its
 course,
 But what some land is gladdened. No
 star ever rose
 And set, without influence somewhere.
 Who knows
 What earth needs from earth's lowest
 creature ? No life
 Can be pure in its purpose and strong in
 its strife
 And all life not be purer and stronger
 thereby.
 The spirits of just men made perfect on
 high,
 The army of martyrs who stand by the
 Throne
 And gaze into the Face that makes glo-
 rious their own,
 Know this, surely, at last. Honest love,
 honest sorrow,
 Honest work for the day, honest hope
 for the morrow,
 Are these worth nothing more than the
 hand they make weary,
 The heart they have saddened, the life
 they leave dreary ?
 Hush ! the sevenfold heavens to the
 voice of the Spirit
 Echo : He that o'ercometh shall all
 things inherit.

XLI.

The moon was, in fire, carried up through
 the fog ;
 The loud fortress barked at her like a
 chained dog.

<p>The horizon pulsed flame, the air sound. All without, War and winter, and twilight, and ter- ror, and doubt; All within, light, warmth, calm! In the twilight, long while</p>	<p>Eugène de Luvois with a deep, thought- ful smile Lingered, looking, and listening, lone by the tent. At last he withdrew, and night closed as he went.</p>
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THE APPLE OF LIFE.

FROM the river Euphrates, the river whose source is in Paradise, far As red Egypt, — sole lord of the land and the sea, 'twixt the home of the star That is born in the blush of the East, and the porch of the chambers of rest Where the great sea is girded with fire, and Orion returns in the West, And the ships come and go in grand silence, — King Solomon reigned. And behold, In that time there was everywhere silver as common as stones be, and gold That for plenty was 'counted as silver, and cedar as sycamore-trees That are found in the vale, for abundance. For God to the King gave all these, With glory exceeding; moreover all kings of the earth to him came, Because of his wisdom, to hear him. So great was King Solomon's fame.

And for all this the King's soul was sad. And his heart said within him, "Alas For man dies! if his glory abideth, himself from his glory shall pass. And that which remaineth behind him, he seeth it not any more: For how shall he know what comes after, who knoweth not what went before? I have planted me gardens and vineyards, and gotten me silver and gold, And my hand from whatever my heart hath desired I did not withhold: And what profit have I in the works of my hands which I take not away? I have searched out wisdom and knowledge: and what do they profit me, they? As the fool dieth, so doth the wise. What is gathered is scattered again. As the breath of the beasts, even so is the breath of the children of men: And the same thing befalleth them both. And not any man's soul is his own."

This he thought, as he sat in his garden and watched the great sun going down In the glory thereof; and the earth and the sky by the beam of the same Were clothed with the gladness of color, and bathed in the beauty of flame. And "Behold," said the King, "in a moment the glory shall vanish!" Even then, While he spake, he was 'ware of a man drawing near him, who seemed to his ken (By the hair in its blackness like flax that is burned in the hemp-dresser's shed, And the brow's smoky hue, and the smouldering eyeball more livid than lead) As the sons of the land that lies under the sword of the Cherub whose wing Wraps in wrath the shut gateways of Paradise. He, being come to the King, Seven times made obeisance before him. To whom, "What art thou," the King cried,

"That thus unannounced to King Solomon comest?" The man, spreading wide The palm of his right hand, showed in it an apple yet bright from the Tree In whose stem springs the life never-failing which Sin lost to Adam, when he, Tasting knowledge forbidden, found death in the fruit of it. . . . So doth the Giver Evil gifts to the evil apportion. And "Hail! let the King live forever!" Bowing down at the feet of the monarch, and laughingly, even as one Whose meaning, in joy or in jest, hovers hid 'twixt the word and the tone,

Said the stranger, "For lo ye" (and lightly he dropped in the hand of the King That apple), "from 'twixt the four rivers of Eden, God gave me to bring To his servant King Solomon, even to my lord that on Israel's throne He hath 'stablished, this fruit from the Tree in whose branch Life abideth: for none Shall taste death, having tasted this apple."

And therewith he vanished.

Remained

In the hand of the King the life-apple: ambrosial of breath, golden-grained, Rosy-bright as a star dipt in sunset. The King turned it o'er, and perused The fruit, which, alluring his lip, in his hand lay untasted.

He mused,

"Life is good: but not life in itself. Life eternal, eternally young, That were life to be lived, or desired! Well it were if a man could prolong The manhood that moves in the muscles, the rapture that mounts in the brain When life at the prime, in the pastime of living, led on by the train Of the jubilant senses, exulting goes forth, brave of body and spirit, To conquer, choose, claim, and enjoy what 't was born to achieve or inherit. The dance, and the festal procession! the pride in the strenuous play Of the sinews that, pliant of power, the will, though it wanton, obey! When the veins are yet wishful, and in them the bountiful impulses beat, When the lilies of Love are yet living, the roses of Beauty yet sweet: And the eye glows with glances that kindle, the lip breathes the warmth that inspires, And the hand hath yet vigor to seize the good thing which the spirit desires! O well for the foot that bounds forward! and ever the wind it awakes Lifts no lock from the forehead yet white, not a leaf that is withered yet shakes From the loose crown that laughs on young tresses! and ever the earth and the skies Are crammed with audacious contingencies, measureless means of surprise! Life is sweet to the young that yet know not what life is. But life, after Youth, The gay liar, leaves hold of the bauble, and Age, with his terrible truth, Picks it up, and perceives it is broken, and knows it unfit to engage The care it yet craves. . . . Life eternal, eternally wedded to Age! What gain were in that? Why should any man seek what he loathes to prolong? The twilight that darkens the eyeball: the dull ear that 's deaf to the song, When the maidens rejoice and the bride to the bridegroom, with music, is led: The palsy that shakes 'neath the blossoms that fall from the chill bridal bed. When the hand saith 'I did,' not 'I will do,' the heart saith 'It was,' not 'I will be,'

Too late in man's life is Forever, — too late comes this apple to me!" Then the King rose. And lo, it was evening. And leaning, because he was old, On the sceptre that, curiously sculptured in ivory garnished with gold, To others a rod of dominion, to him was a staff for support, Slow paced he the murmurous pathways where myrtles, in court up to court, Mixt with roses in garden on garden, were ranged around fountains that fed With cool music green odorous twilights: and so, never lifting his head To look up from the way he walked wearily, he to the House of his Pride Reascended, and entered.

In cluster, high lamps, spices, odors, each side, Burning inward and onward, from cinnamon ceilings, down distances vast Of voluptuous vistas, illumined deep halls through whose silentness passed King Solomon sighing; where columns colossal stood, gathered in groves As the trees of the forest in Libanus, — there where the wind, as it moves, Whispers, "I, too, am Solomon's servant!" — huge trunks hid in garlands of gold, On whose tops the skilled sculptors of Sidon had granted men's gaze to behold How the phoenix that sits on the cedar's lone summit 'mid fragrance and fire, Ever dying, and living, hath loaded with splendors her funeral pyre;

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How the stork builds her nest on the pine-top; the date from the palm-branch depends;
 And the aloe's great blossom bursts, crowning with beauty the life that it ends.
 And from hall on to hall, in the doors, mute, magnificent slaves, watchful-eyed,
 Bowed to earth as King Solomon passed them. And, passing, King Solomon sighed.
 And, from hall on to hall pacing feebly, the king mused. . . "O fair Shulamite!
 Thy beauty is brighter than starlight on Hebron when Hebron is bright,
 Thy sweetness is sweeter than Carmel. The King rules the nations; but thou,
 Thou rulest the King, my Belovéd."

So murmured King Solomon low
 To himself, as he passed through the portal of porphyry, that dripped, as he passed,
 From the myrrh-sprinkled wreaths on the locks and the lintels; and entered at last,
 Still sighing, the sweet cedarn chamber, contrived for repose and delight,
 Where the beautiful Shulamite slumbered. And straightway, to left and to right,
 Bowing down as he entered, the Spirits in bondage to Solomon, there
 Keeping watch o'er his love, sank their swords, spread their wings, and vanished
 in air.

The King with a kiss woke the sleeper. And, showing the fruit in his hand,
 "Behold! this was brought me erewhile by one coming," he said, "from the land
 That lies under the sword of the Cherub. 'T was pluckt by strange hands from
 the Tree

Of whose fruit whoso tastes lives forever. And therefore I bring it to thee,
 My Belovéd. For thou of the daughters of women art fairest. And lo,
 I, the King, I that love thee, whom men of man's sons have called wisest, I know
 That in knowledge is sorrow. Much thought is much care. In the beauty of youth,
 Not the wisdom of age, is enjoyment. Nor spring, is it sweeter, in truth,
 Than winter to roses once withered. The garment, though broidered with gold,
 Fades apace where the moth frets the fibres. So I, in my glory, grow old.
 And this life maketh mine (save the bliss of my soul in the beauty of thee)
 No sweetness so great now that greatly unsweet 't were to lose what to me
 Life prolonged, at its utmost, can promise. But thine, O thou spirit of bliss,
 Thine is all that the living desire, — youth, beauty, love, joy in all this!
 And O were it not well for the praise of the world to maintain evermore
 This mould of a woman, God's masterwork, made for mankind to adore?
 Wherefore keep thou the gift I resign. Live forever, rejoicing in life!
 And of women unborn yet the fairest shall still be King Solomon's wife."
 So he said, and so dropped in her bosom the apple.

But when he was gone,
 And the beautiful Shulamite, eying the gift of the King, sat alone
 With the thoughts the King's words had awakened, as ever she turned and perused
 The fruit that, alluring her lip, in her hand lay untasted — she mused,
 "Life is good; but not life in itself. So is youth, so is beauty. Mere stuff
 Are all these for Love's usance. To live, it is well; but it is not enough.
 Well, too, to be fair, to be young; but what good is in beauty and youth
 If the lovely and young are not surer than they that be neither, forsooth,
 Young nor lovely, of being beloved? O my love, if thou lovest not me,
 Shall I love my own life? Am I fair, if not fair, Azariah, to thee."
 Then she hid in her bosom the apple. And rose.

And, reversing the ring
 That, inscribed with the word that works wonders, and signed with the seal of the
 King,
 Compels even spirits to obedience — (for she, for a plaything, erewhile
 From King Solomon's awful forefinger, had won it away with a smile) —

The beautiful Shulamite folded her veil o'er her forehead and eyes,
 And unseen from the sweet cedarn chamber, unseen through the long galleries,
 Unseen from the palace, she passed, and passed down to the city unseen,
 Unseen passed the green garden wicket, the vineyard, the cypresses green,
 And stood by the doors of the house of the Prince Azariah. And cried,
 In the darkness she cried, — "Azariah, awaken! ope, ope to me wide!
 Ope the door, ope the lattice! Arise! Let me in, O my love! It is I.
 I, the bride of King Solomon, love thee. Love, tarry not. Love, shall I die
 At thy doors? I am sick of desire. For my love is more comely than gold.
 More precious to me is my love than the throne of a king that is old.
 Behold, I have passed through the city, unseen of the watchmen. I stand
 By the doors of the house of my love, till my love lead me in by the hand."
 Azariah arose. And unbolted the door to the fair Shulamite.
 "O my queen, what dear folly is this, that hath led thee alone, and by night,
 To the house of King Solomon's servant? For lo you, the watchmen awake.
 And much for my own, O my queen, must I fear, and much more for thy sake.
 For at that which is done in the chamber the leek on the house-top shall peep:
 And the hand of a king it is heavy: the eyes of a king never sleep:
 But the bird of the air beareth news to the king, and the stars of the sky
 Are as soldiers by night on the turrets. I fear, O my queen, lest we die."
 "Fear thou not, O my love! Azariah, fear nothing. For lo, what I bring!
 'T is the fruit of the Tree that in Paradise God hideth under the wing
 Of the Cherub that chased away Adam. And whose this apple doth eat
 Shall live — live forever! And since unto me my own life is less sweet
 Than thy love, Azariah, (sweet only my life is if thou lovest me!)
 Therefore eat! Live, and love, for life's sake, still, the love that gives life unto
 thee!"
 Then she held to his lips the life-apple, and kissed him.

But soon as alone,
 Azariah leaned out from his lattice, he muttered, "'T is well! She is gone."
 While the fruit in his hand lay untasted. "Such visits," he mused, "may cost
 dear.
 In the love of the great is great danger, much trouble, and care more than cheer."
 Then he laughed and stretched forth his strong arms. For he heard from the
 streets of the city

The song of the women that sing in the doors after dark their love ditty.
 And the clink of the wine-cup, the voice of the wanton, the tripping of feet,
 And the laughter of youths running after, allured him. And "Life, it is sweet
 While it lasts," sang the women, "and sweeter the good minute, in that it goes.
 For who, if the rose bloomed forever, so greatly would care for the rose?
 Wherefore haste! pluck the time in the blossom." The prince mused, "The coun-
 sel is well."

And the fruit to his lips he uplifted: yet paused. "Who is he that can tell
 What his days shall bring forth? — Life forever. . . But what sort of life? Ah,
 the doubt!"
 'Neath his cloak then he thrust back the apple. And opened the door and passed out
 To the house of the harlot Egyptian. And mused, as he went, "Life is good:
 But not life in itself. It is well while the wine-cup is hot in the blood,
 And a man goeth whither he listeth, and doeth the thing that he will,
 And liveth his life as he lusteth, and taketh in freedom his fill
 Of the pleasure that pleaseth his humor, and feareth no snare by the way.
 Shall I care to be loved by a queen, if my pride with my freedom I pay?
 Better far is a handful in quiet than both hands, though filled to o'erflow
 With pride, in vexation of spirit. And sweeter the roses that blow
 From the wild seeds the wind, where he wanders, with heedless beneficence flings,
 Than those that are guarded by dragons to brighten the gardens of kings.

Let a man take his chance, and be happy. The hart by the hunter pursued,
That far from the herd on the hill-top bounds swift through the blue solitude,
Is more to be envied, though Death with his dart follow fast to destroy,
Than the tame beast that, pent in the paddock, tastes neither the danger nor joy
Of the mountain, and all its surprises. The main thing is, not to live *long*,
But to *live*. Better moments of rapture soon ended than ages of wrong.
Life's feast is best spiced by the flavor of death in it. Just the one chance
To lose it to-morrow the life that a man lives to-day doth enhance.
The may-be for me, not the must-be! Best flourish while flourish the flowers,
And fall ere the frost falls. The dead, do they rest or arise with new powers?
Either way, well for them. Mine, meanwhile, be the cup of life's fulness to-night.
And to-morrow . . . Well, time to consider" (he felt at the fruit). "What delight
Of his birthright had Esau, when hungry? To-day with its pottage is sweet.
For a man cannot feed and be full on the faith of to-morrow's baked meat.
Open! open, my dark-eyed beguiler of darkness!"

Up rose to his knock,
Light of foot, the lascivious Egyptian, and lifted the latch from the lock,
And opened. And led in the prince to her chamber, and shook out her hair,
Dark, heavy, and humid with odors; her bosom beneath it laid bare,
And sleek sallow shoulder; and sloped back her face, as, when falls the slant South
In wet whispers of rain, flowers bend back to catch it; so she, with shut mouth
Half-unfolding for kisses; and sank, as they fell, 'twixt his knees, with a laugh,
On the floor, in a flood of deep hair flung behind her full throat; held him half
Aloof with one large, languid arm, while the other uppropped, where she lay,
Limbs flowing in fulness and lucid in surface as waters at play,
Though in firmness as slippery marble. Anon she sprang loose from his clasp,
And whirled from the table a flagon of silver twined round by an asp
That glittered, — rough gold and red rubies; and poured him, and praised him,
the wine
Wherewith she first brightened the moist lip that murmured, "Ha, fool! art
thou mine?
I am thine. This will last for an hour." Then, humming strange words of a song,
Sung by maidens in Memphis the old, when they bore the Crowned Image along,
Apples yellow and red from a basket with vine-leaves o'erlaid she 'gan take,
And played with, peeled, tost them, and caught them, and bit them, foridleness' sake;
But the rinds on the floor she flung from her, and laughed at the figures they made,
As her foot pusht them this way and that way together. And "Look, fool,"
she said,

"It is all sour fruit, this! But those I fling from me, — see here by the stain! —
Shall carry the mark of my teeth in their flesh. Could they feel but the pain,
O my soul, how these teeth should go through them! Fool, fool, what good gift
dost thou bring?

For thee have I sweetened with cassia my chambers." "A gift for a king,"
Azariah laughed loud; and tost to her the apple. "This comes from the Tree
Of whose fruit whoso tastes lives forever. I care not. I give it to thee.
Nay, witch! 'tis worth more than the shekels of gold thou hast charmed from
my purse.

Take it. Eat, and thank me for the meal, witch! for Eve, thy sly mother,
fared worse,

O thou white-toothed taster of apples?" "Thou liest, fool!" "Taste, then, and try.
For the truth of the fruit 's in the eating. 'T is thou art the serpent, not I."
And the strong man laughed loud as he pushed at her lip the life-apple. She caught
And held it away from her, musing; and muttered . . . "Go to! It is naught.
Fool, why dost thou laugh?" And he answered, "Because, witch, it tickles my
brain

Intensely to think that all we, that be Something while yet we remain,

We, the princes of people, — ay, even the King's self, — shall die in our day,
And thou, that art Nothing, shalt sit on our graves, with our grandsons, and play."
So he said, and laughed louder.

But when, in the gray of the dawn, he was gone,
And the wan light waxed large in the window, as she on her bed sat alone,
With the fruit that, alluring her lip, in her hand lay untasted, perusing,
Perplexed, the gay gift of the Prince, the dark woman thereat fell a musing,
And she thought . . . "What is Life without Honor? And what can the life that
I live

Give to me, I shall care to continue, not caring for aught it can give?
I, despising the fools that despise me, — a plaything not pleasing myself, —
Whose life, for the pelf that maintains it, must sell what is paid not by pelf!
I! . . . the man called me Nothing. He said well. 'The great in their glory
must go.'

And why should I linger, whose life leadeth nowhere? — a life which I know
To name is to shame — struck, unsexed, by the world from its list of the lives
Of the women whose womanhood, saved, gets them leave to be mothers and wives.
And the fancies of men change. And bitterly bought is the bread that I eat;
For, though purchased with body and spirit, when purchased 't is yet all unswheat."
Her tears fell: they fell on the apple. She sighed . . . "Sour fruit, like the
rest!

Let it go with the salt tears upon it. Yet life . . . it were sweet if possessed
In the power thereof, and the beauty. 'A gift for a king' . . . did he say?
Ay, a king's life is a life as it should be, — a life like the light of the day,
Wherein all that liveth rejoiceth. For is not the King as the sun
That shineth in heaven and seemeth both heaven and itself all in one?
Then to whom may this fruit, the life-giver, be worthily given? Not me.
Nor the fool Azariah that sold it for folly. The King! only he, —
Only he hath the life that's worth living forever. Whose life, not alone
Is the life of the King, but the life of the many made mighty in one.
To the King will I carry this apple. And he (for the hand of a king
Is a fountain of hope) in his handmaid shall honor the gift that I bring.
And men for this deed shall esteem me, with Rahab by Israel praised,
As first among those who, though lowly, their shame into honor have raised:
Such honor as lasts when life goes, and, while life lasts, shall lift it above
What, if loved by the many I loathe, must be loathed by the few I could love."

So she rose, and went forth through the city. And with her the apple she bore
In her bosom: and stood 'mid the multitude, waiting therewith in the door
Of the hall where the King, to give judgment, ascended at morning his throne:
And, kneeling there, cried, "Let the King live forever! Behold, I am one
Whom the vile of themselves count the vilest. But great is the grace of my lord.
And now let my lord on his handmaid look down, and give ear to her word."
Thereat, in the witness of all, she drew forth, and (uplifting her head)
Showed the Apple of Life, which who tastes, tastes not death. "And this apple,"
she said,

"Last night was delivered to me, that thy servant should eat, and not die.
But I said to the soul of thy servant, 'Not so. For behold, what am I?
That the King, in his glory and gladness, should cease from the light of the sun,
Whiles I, that am least of his slaves, in my shame and abasement live on.'
For not sweet is the life of thy servant, unless to thy servant my lord
Stretch his hand, and show favor. For surely the frown of a king is a sword,
But the smile of the King is as honey that flows from the clefts of the rock,
And his grace is as dew that from Horeb descends on the heads of the flock:
In the King is the heart of a host: the King's strength is an army of men:
And the wrath of the King is a lion that roareth by night from his den:

But as grapes from the vines of En-Gedi are favors that fall from his hands,
And as towers on the hill-tops of Shenir the throne of King Solomon stands.
And for this, it were well that forever the King, who is many in one,
Should sit, to be seen through all time, on a throne 'twixt the moon and the sun!
For how shall one lose what he hath not? Who hath, let him keep what he hath.
Wherefore I to the King give this apple."

Then great was King Solomon's wrath.
And he rose, rent his garment, and cried, "Woman, whence came this apple to thee?"

But when he was 'ware of the truth, then his heart was awakened. And he
Knew at once that the man who, erewhile, unawares coming to him, had brought
That Apple of Life was, indeed, God's good Angel of Death. And he thought
"In mercy, I doubt not, when man's eyes were opened, and made to see plain
All the wrong in himself, and the wretchedness, God sent to close them again
For man's sake, his last friend upon earth — Death, the servant of God, who is just.
Let man's spirit to Him whence it cometh return, and his dust to the dust!"

Then the Apple of Life did King Solomon seal in an urn that was signed
With the seal of Oblivion: and summoned the Spirits that walk in the wind
Unseen on the summits of mountains, where never the eagle yet flew;
And these he commanded to bear far away, — out of reach, out of view,
Out of hope, out of memory, — higher than Ararat buildeth his throne,
In the Urn of Oblivion the Apple of Life.

But on green jasper-stone
Did the King write the story thereof for instruction. And Enoch, the seer,
Coming afterward, searched out the meaning. And he that hath ears, let him hear.

THE WANDERER.

Dedication.

TO J. F.

As, in the laurel's murmurous leaves
'T was fabled, once, a Virgin dwelt;
Within the poet's page yet heaves
The poet's Heart, and loves or grieves
Or triumphs, as it felt.

A human spirit here records
The annals of its human strife.
A human hand hath touched these chords.
These songs may all be idle words:
And yet — they once were life.

I gave my harp to Memory.
She sung of hope, when hope was young,
Of youth, as youth no more may be;
And, since she sung of youth, to thee,
Friend of my youth, she sung.

For all youth seeks, all manhood needs,
All youth and manhood rarely find:
A strength more strong than codes or creeds,
In lofty thoughts and lovely deeds
Revealed to heart and mind;

A staff to stay, a star to guide;
A spell to soothe, a power to raise;
A faith by fortune firmly tried;
A judgment resolute to preside
O'er days at strife with days.

O large in lore, in nature sound!
O man to me, of all men, dear!
All these in thine my life hath found,
And force to tread the rugged ground
Of daily toil, with cheer.

Accept — not these, the broken cries
Of days receding far from me —
But all the love that in them lies,
The man's heart in the melodies,
The man's heart honoring thee!

Sighing I sung; for some sublime
Emotion made my music jar:
The forehead of this restless time
Pales in a fervid, passionate clime,
Lit by a changeful star;

And o'er the Age's threshold, traced
In characters of hectic fire,

The name of that keen, fervent-faced
And toiling seraph, hath been placed,
Which men have called Desire.

But thou art strong where, even of old,
The old heroic strength was rare,
In high emotions self-controlled,
And insight keen, but never cold,
To lay all falsehood bare;

Despising all those glittering lies
Which in these days can fool mankind;
But full of noble sympathies
For what is genuinely wise,
And beautiful, and kind.

And thou wilt pardon all the much
Of weakness which doth here abound,
Till music, little prized as such,
With thee find worth from one true touch
Of nature in its sound.

Though mighty spirits are no more,
Yet spirits of beauty still remain.
Gone is the Seer that, by the shore
Of lakes as limpid as his lore,
Lived to one ceaseless strain

And strenuous melody of mind.
But one there rests that hath the power
To charm the midnight moon, and bind
All spirits of the sweet south-wind,
And steal from every shower

That sweeps green England cool and clear,
The violet of tender song.
Great Alfred! long may England's ear
His music fill, his name be dear
To English bosoms long!

And one . . . in sacred silence sheathed
That name I keep, my verse would shame.
The name my lips in prayer first breathed
Was his: and prayer hath yet bequeathed
Its silence to that name; —

Which yet an age remote shall hear,
Borne on the fourfold wind sublime
By Fame, where, with some faded year
These songs shall sink, like leaflets sere,
In avenues of Time.

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In avenues of Time.

Love on my harp his finger lays ;
His hand is held against the chords.
My heart upon the music weighs,
And, beating, hushes foolish praise
From desultory words :

And Childhood steals, with wistful grace,
'Twixt him and me ; an infant hand
Chides gently back the thoughts that chase
The forward hour, and turns my face
To that remembered land :

Of legend, and the Summer sky,
And all the wild Welsh waterfalls,
And haunts where he, and thou, and I
Once wandered with the wandering Wye,
And scaled the airy walls :

Of Chepstow, from whose ancient height
We watched the liberal sun go down ;
Then onward, through the gradual night,
Till, ere the moon was fully bright,
We supped in Monmouth Town.

And though, dear friend, thy love retains
The choicest sons of song in fee,
To thee not less I pour these strains,
Knowing that in thy heart remains
A little place for me.

FLORENCE, September 24, 1857.

Nor wilt thou all forget the time
Though it be past, in which together,
On many an eve, with many a rhyme
Of old and modern bards sublime
We soothed the summer weather :

And, citing all he said or sung
With praise reserved for bards like him,
Spake of that friend who dwells among
The Apennine, and there hath strung
A harp of Anakim ;

Than whom a mightier master never
Touched the deep chords of hidden things ;
Nor error did from truth dis sever
With keener glance ; nor made endeavor
To rise on bolder wings

In those high regions of the soul
Where thought itself grows dim with awe.
But now the star of eve hath stole
Through the deep sunset, and the whole
Of heaven begins to draw

The darkness round me, and the dew.
And my pale Muse doth fold her eyes.
Adieu, my friend ; my guide, adieu !
May never night, 'twixt me and you,
With thoughts less fond arise !

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE.

PART I.

SWEET are the rosy memories of the
lips,
That first kissed ours, albeit they kiss
no more :
Sweet is the sight of sunset-sailing ships,
Although they leave us on a lonely
shore :
Sweet are familiar songs, though Music
dips
Her hollow shell in Thought's forlorn-
est wells :
And sweet, though sad, the sound of
midnight bells,
When the oped casement with the night-
rain drips.
There is a pleasure which is born of
pain :
The grave of all things hath its violet.
Else why, through days which never come
again,

Roams Hope with that strange longing,
like Regret ?
Why put the posy in the cold dead hand ?
Why plant the rose above the lonely
grave ?
Why bring the corpse across the salt
sea-wave ?
Why deem the dead more near in native
land ?
Thy name hath been a silence in my life
So long, it falters upon language now,
O more to me than sister or than wife
Once . . . and now — nothing ! It is
hard to know
That such things have been, and are not,
and yet
Life loiters, keeps a pulse at even meas-
ure,
And goes upon its business and its
pleasure,
And knows not all the depths of its re-
gret.

Thou art not in thy picture, O my
friend !

The years are sad and many since I
saw thee,
And seem with me to have survived their
end.

Far otherwise than thus did memory
draw thee
I ne'er shall know thee other than thou
wast.

Yet save, indeed, the same sad eyes
of old,
And that abundant hair's warm silken
gold,
Thou art changed, if this be like the look
thou hast.

Changed ! There the epitaph of all the
years
Was sounded ! I am changed too.
Let it be.

Yet is it sad to know my latest tears
Were faithful to a memory, — not to
thee.

Nothing is left us ! nothing — save the
soul.

Yet even the immortal in us alters
too.

Who is it his old sensations can re-
new ?

Slowly the seas are changed. Slow ages
roll

The mountains to a level. Nature
sleeps,

And dreams her dream, and to new
work awakes

After a hundred years are in the deeps.
But Man is changed before a wrinkle
breaks

The brow's serenity, or the curls are
gray.

We stand within the flux of sense :
the near

And far change place : and we see
nothing clear.

That's false to-morrow which was true
to-day.

Ah, could the memory cast her spots,
as do

The snake's brood theirs in spring !
and be once more

Wholly renewed, to dwell i' the time
that's new,

With no reiteration of those pangs of
yore.

Peace, peace ! My wild song will go
wandering

Too wantonly, down paths a private
pain

Hath trodden bare. What was it
jarred the strain ?

Some crushed illusion, left with crumpled
wing

Tangled in Music's web of twined
strings—

That started that false note, and
cracked the tune

In its beginning. Ah, forgotten things
Stumble back strangely ! And the
ghost of June

Stands by December's fire, cold, cold !
and puts

The last spark out.

How could I sing aright
With those old airs haunting me all
the night

And those old steps that sound when
daylight shuts ?

For back she comes, and moves reproach-
fully,

The mistress of my moods, and looks
bereft

(Cruel to the last !) as though 't were I,
not she,

That did the wrong, and broke the
spell, and left

Memory comfortless.

Away ! away !
Phantoms, about whose brows the
bindweed clings,

Hopeless regret !
In thinking of these things

Some men have lost their minds, and
others may.

Yet, O, for one deep draught in this dull
hour !

One deep, deep draught of the depart-
ed time ;

O, for one brief strong pulse of ancient
power,

To beat and breathe through all the
valves of rhyme !

Thou, Memory, with the downward eyes,
that art

The cupbearer of gods, pour deep and
long,

Brim all the vacant chalices of song
With health ! Droop down thine urn.
I hold my heart.

One draught of what I shall not taste
again,
Save when my brain with thy dark
wine is brimmed, —
One draught! and then straight onward,
spite of pain,
And spite of all things changed, with
gaze undimmed,
Love's footsteps through the waning Past
to explore
Undaunted; and to carve, in the wan
light
Of Hope's last outposts, on Song's ut-
most height
The sad resemblance of an hour no more.
Midnight, and love, and youth, and
Italy!
Love in the land where love most lovely
seems!
Land of my love, though I be far from thee,
Lend, for love's sake, the light of thy
moonbeams,
The spirit of thy cypress-groves, and all
Thy dark-eyed beauty, for a little while
To my desire. Yet once more let her
smile
Fall o'er me: o'er me let her long hair
fall,
The lady of my life, whose lovely eyes
Dreaming, or waking, lure me. I shall
know her
By Love's own planet o'er her in the skies,
And Beauty's blossom in the grass be-
low her!
Dreaming, or waking, in her soft, sad
gaze
Let my heart bathe, as on that fated
night
I saw her, when my life took in the
sight
Of her sweet face for all its nights and
days.
Her winsome head was bare: and she
had twined
Through its rich curls wild red anemo-
nes;
One stream of her soft hair strayed un-
confined
Down her ripe cheek, and shadowed
her deep eyes.
The bunch of sword-grass fell from her
loose hand.
Her modest foot beneath its snowy
skirt

Peeped, and the golden daisy was not
hurt.
Stately, yet slight, she stood, as fairies
stand.
Under the blessed darkness unproved
We were alone, in that blest hour of
time,
Which first revealed to us how much we
loved,
'Neath the thick starlight. The young
night sublime
Hung trembling o'er us. At her feet I
knelt,
And gazed up from her feet into her
eyes.
Her face was bowed: we breathed each
other's sighs:
We did not speak: not move: we looked:
we felt.
The night said not a word. The breeze
was dead.
The leaf lay without whispering on the
tree,
As I lay at her feet. Droopt was her
head:
One hand in mine: and one still pen-
sively
Went wandering through my hair. We
were together.
How? Where? What matter? Some-
where in a dream,
Drifting, slow drifting, down a wizard
stream:
Whither? Together: then what matter
whither?
It was enough for me to clasp her hand:
To blend with her love-looks my own:
no more.
Enough (with thoughts like ships that
cannot land,
Blown by faint winds about a magic
shore)
To realize, in each mysterious feeling,
The droop of the warm cheek so near
my own:
The cool white arm about my shoulder
thrown:
Those exquisite frail feet, where I was
kneeling.
How little know they life's divinest
bliss,
That know not to possess and yet re-
frain!

Let the young Psyche roam, a fleeting
kiss: —
Grasp it — a few poor grains of dust
remain.
See how those floating flowers, the but-
terflies,
Hover the garden through, and take
no root!
Desire forever hath a flying foot.
Free pleasure comes and goes beneath the
skies.
Close not thy hand upon the innocent
joy
That trusts itself within thy reach. It
may,
Or may not, linger. Thou canst but de-
stroy
The winged wanderer. Let it go or
stay.
Love thou the rose, yet leave it on its
stem.
Think! Midas starved by turning all
to gold.
Blesséd are those that spare, and that
withhold.
Because the whole world shall be trusted
then.
The foolish Faun pursues the unwilling
Nymph
That culls her flowers beside the preci-
pice,
Or dips her shining ankles in the lymph:
But, just when she must perish or be
his,
Heaven puts an arm out. She is safe.
The shore
Gains some new fountain; or the lilled
lawn
A rarer sort of rose: but, ah, poor
Faun!
To thee she shall be changed forevermore.
Chase not too close the fading rapture.
Leave
To Love his long auroras, slowly seen.
Be ready to release, as to receive.
Deem those the nearest, soul to soul,
between
Whose lips yet lingers reverence on a
sigh.
Judge what thy sense can reach not,
most thine own,
If once thy soul hath seized it. The
unknown
Is life to love, religion, poetry.

The moon had set. There was not any
light,
Save of the lonely legioned watch-stars
pale
In outer air, and what by fits made
bright
Hot oleanders in a rosy vale
Searched by the lamping fly, whose little
spark
Went in and out, like passion's bash-
ful hope.
Meanwhile the sleepy globe began to
slope
A ponderous shoulder sunward through
the dark,
And the night passed in beauty like a
dream.
Aloof in those dark heavens paused
Destiny,
With her last star descending in the
gleam
Of the cold morrow, from the emptied
sky.
The hour, the distance from her old
self, all
The novelty and liveness of the place,
Had left a lovely awe on that fair
face,
And all the land grew strange and
magical.
As droops some billowing cloud to the
crouched hill,
Heavy with all heaven's tears, for all
earth's care,
She drooped unto me, without force or
will,
And sank upon my bosom, murmur-
ing there
A woman's inarticulate, passionate words.
O moment of all moments upon earth!
O life's supreme! How worth, how
wildly worth,
Whole worlds of flame, to know this
world affords
What even Eternity cannot restore!
When all the ends of life take hands,
and meet
Round centres of sweet fire. Ah, never
more,
Ah never, shall the bitter with the
sweet
Be mingled so in the pale after-years!
One hour of life immortal spirits pos-
sess.

This drains the world, and leaves but
weariness,
And parching passion, and perplexing
tears.

Sad is it, that we cannot even keep
That hour to sweeten life's last toil :
but Youth

Grasps all, and leaves us : and, when
we would weep,
We dare not let our tears flow lest, in
truth,
They fall upon our work which must be
done.

And so we bind up our torn hearts
from breaking :
Our eyes from weeping, and our brows
from aching :
And follow the long pathway all alone.

O moment of sweet peril, perilous sweet !
When woman joins herself to man ;
and man
Assumes the full-lived woman, to com-
plete
The end of life, since human life be-
gan !

When in the perfect bliss of union,
Body and soul triumphal rapture
claim,
When there's a spirit in blood, in
spirit a flame,
And earth's lone hemispheres glow, fused
in one !

Rare moment of rare peril ! . . . The
bard's song,
The mystic's musing fancy. Did there
ever
Two perfect souls, in perfect forms, be-
long
Perfectly to each other ? Never, never !
Perilous were such moments, for a touch
Might mar their clear perfection. Ex-
quisite
Even for the peril of their frail delight.
Such things man feigns : such seeks :
but finds not such.

No ! for 't is in ourselves our love doth
grow :
And, when our love is fully risen
within us,
Round the first object doth it overflow,
Which, be it fair or foul, is sure to
win us

Out of ourselves. We clothe with our
own nature
The man or woman its first want doth
find.

The leafless prop with our own buds
we bind,
And hide in blossoms : fill the empty
feature

With our own meanings : even prize de-
fects
Which keep the mark of our own
choice upon
The chosen : bless each fault whose spot
protects
Our choice from possible confusion
With the world's other creatures : we
believe them
What most we wish, the more we find
they are not :
Our choice once made, with our own
choice we war not :
We worship them for what ourselves we
give them.

Doubt is this otherwise. . . . When fate
removes
The unworthy one from our reluctant
arms,
We die with that lost love to other loves,
And turn to its defects from other
charms.
And nobler forms, where moved those
forms, may move
With lingering looks : our cold fare-
wells we wave them.
We loved our lost loves for the love
we gave them,
And not for anything they gave our
love.

Old things return not as they were in
Time.
Trust nothing to the recompense of
Chance,
Which deals with novel forms. This
falling rhyme
Fails from the flowery steeps of old
romance,
Down that abyss which Memory droops
above,
And, gazing out of hopelessness down
there,
I see the shadow creep through Youth's
gold hair
And white Death watching over red-
dipped Love.

PART II.

THE soul lives on. What lives on with
the soul ?
Glimpses of something better than her
best ;
Truer than her truest : motion to a pole
Beyond the zones of this orb's dimness
guest :
And (since life dies not with the first
dead bliss)
Blind notions of some meaning moved
through time,
Some purpose in the deeps of the sub-
lime,
That stirs a pulse here, could we find
out this.

Visions and noises rouse us. I discern
Even in change some comfort, O Be-
loved !
Suns rise and set ; stars vanish and re-
turn ;
But never quite the same. And life
is moved
Toward new experience. Every eve and
morn
Descends and springs with increase on
the world.
And what is death but life in this life
furled ?
The outward cracks, the inward life is
born.

Friends pass beyond the borders of this
Known,
And draw our thoughts up after them.
We say
"They are : but their relations now are
done
With Nature, and the plan of night
and day."

If never mortal man from this world's
light
Did pass away to that surrounding
gloom,
'T were well to doubt the life beyond
the tomb ;
But now is Truth's dark side revealed to
sight.

Father of spirits ! Thine all secrets be.
I bless Thee for the light Thou hast
revealed,
And that Thou hidest. Part of me I see,
And part of me Thy wisdom hath
concealed,

Till the new life divulge it. Lord,
imbue me
With will to work in this diurnal
sphere,
Knowing myself my life's day-laborer
here,
Where evening brings the day's work's
wages to me.

I work my work. All its results are
Thine.
I know the loyal deed becomes a fact
Which Thou wilt deal with : nor will I
repine
Although I miss the value of the act.
Thou carest for the creatures : and the
end
Thou seest. The world unto Thy
hands I leave :
And to Thy hands my life. I will not
grieve
Because I know not all Thou dost in-
tend.

Something I know. Oft, shall it come
about
When every heart is full with hope for
man
The horizon straight is darkened, and a
doubt
Clouds all. The work the world so
well began
Wastes down, and by some deed of shame
is finished.
Ah yet, I will not be dismayed : nor
though
The good cause flourish fair, and Free-
dom flow
All round, my watch beyond shall be
diminished.

What seemed the triumph of the Fiend
at length
Might be the effort of some dying
Devil,
Permitted to put forth his fullest strength
To lose it all forever. While, the evil
Whose cloven crest our pæans float above
Might have been less than what un-
noticed lies
'Neath our rejoicings. Which of us is
wise ?
We know not what we mourn : nor why
we love.

But teach me, O Omnipotent, since strife,
Sorrow, and pain are but occurrences

Of that condition through which flows
my life,
Not part of me, the immortal, whom
distress
Cannot retain, to vex not thought for
these:
But to be patient, bear, forbear, re-
strain,
And hold my spirit pure above my
pain.
No star that looks through life's dark
lattices,
But what gives token of a world else-
where.
I bless Thee for the loss of all things
here
Which proves the gain to be: the hand
of Care
That shades the eyes from earth, and
beckons near
The rest which sweetens all: the shade
Time throws
On Love's pale countenance, that he
may gaze
Across Eternity for better days
Unblinded; and the wisdom of all woes:
I bless Thee for the life Thou gavest,
albeit
It hath known sorrow: for the sorrow's
self
I bless Thee; and the gift of wings to
flee it,
Led by this spirit of song, — this
ministering elf,
That to sweet uses doth unwind my pain,
And spin his palace out of poison-
flowers,
To float, an impulse, through the live-
long hours,
From sky to sky, on Fancy's glittering
skein.
Aid me, sweet Spirit, escaping from the
throng
Of those that raise the Corybantic
shout,
And barbarous, dissonant cymbal's clash
prolong,
In fear lest any hear the God cry out,
Now that the night resumes her bleak
retreat
In these dear lands, footing the un-
wandered waste
Of Loss, to walk in Italy, and taste
A little while of what was once so sweet.

PART III.

NURSE of an ailing world, beloved Night!
Our days are fretful children, weak to
bear
A little pain: they wrangle, wound, and
fight
Each other, weep, and sicken, and de-
spair.
Thou, with thy motherly hand that
healeth care,
Stillest our little noise: rebukest one,
Soothest another: blamest tasks un-
done;
Refreshest jaded hope; and teachest
prayer.
Thine is the mother's sweet hush-hush,
that stills
The flutterings of a plaintive heart to
rest.
Thine is the mother's medicining hand
that fills
Sleep's opiate: thine the mother's pa-
tient breast:
Thine, too, the mother's mute reproach-
ful eyes,
That gently look our angry noise to
shame
When all is done: we dare not meet
their blame:
They are so silent, and they are so wise.
Thou that from this lone casement, while
I write,
Seen in the shadowy upspring, swift
dost post
Without a sound the polar star to light,
Not idly did the Chaldee shepherds
boast
By thy stern lights man's life aright to
read.
All day he hides himself from his own
heart,
Swaggers and struts, and plays his
foolish part:
Thou only seest him as he is indeed.
For who could feign false worth, or give
the nod
Among his fellows, or this dust dis-
own,
With nought between him and those
lights of God,
Left awfully alone with the Alone?
Who vaunt high words, whose least
heart's beating jars

The hush of sentinel worlds that take
mute note
Of all beneath yon judgment plains
remote? —
A universal cognizance of stars!
And yet, O gentlest angel of the Lord!
Thou ledest by the hand the artisan
Away from work. Thou bringest, on
ship-board,
When gleam the dead-lights, to the
lonely man
That turns the wheel, a blessed memory
Of apple-blossoms, and the mountain
vales
About his little cottage in Green Wales,
Miles o'er the ridges of the rolling sea.
Thou bearest divine forgiveness amongst
men.
Relenting Anger pauses by the bed
Where Sleep looks so like Death. The
absent then
Return; and Memory beckons back
the dead.
Thou helpest home (thy balmy hand it is!)
The hard-worked husband to the pale-
cheeked wife,
And hushes up the poor day's house-
hold strife
On marriage pillows, with a good-night
kiss.
Thou bringest to the wretched and forlorn
Woman, that down the glimmering
by-street hovers,
A dream of better days: the gleam of
corn
About her father's field, and her first
lover's
Grave, long forgotten in the green
churchyard:
Voices, long-stilled, from purer hours,
before
The rushlight, Hope, went out; and,
through the door
Of the lone garret, when the nights were
hard,
Hunger, the wolf, put in his paw, and
found her
Sewing the winding-sheet of Youth,
alone;
And griped away the last cold comforts
round her: —
Her little bed; the mean clothes she
had on:

Her mother's picture — the sole saint
she knew:
Till nothing else was left for the last
crust
But the poor body, and the heart's
young trust
In its own courage: and so these went
too.
Home from the heated Ball flusht Beauty
stands,
Musing beside her costly couch alone:
But while she loosens, faint, with jew-
elled hands,
The diamonds from her dark hair, one
by one,
Thou whisperest in her empty heart the
name
Of one that died heart-broken for her
sake
Long since, and all at once the coiled
hell-snake
Turns stinging in his egg, — and pomp
is shame.
Thou comest to the man of many pleas-
ures
Without a joy, that, soulless, plays
for souls,
Whose life's a squandered heap of plun-
dered treasures,
While, listless loitering by, the mo-
ment rolls
From nothing on to nothing. From the
shelf
Perchance he takes a cynic book.
Perchance
A dead flower stains the leaves. The
old romance
Returns. Ere morn, perchance, he shoots
himself.
Thou comest, with a touch of scorn, to
me,
That o'er the broken wine-cup of my
youth
Sit brooding here, and pointest silently
To thine unchanging stars. Yes! yes!
in truth,
They seem more reachless now than when
of yore
Above the promist land I watcht them
shine,
And all among their cryptic serpentine
Went climbing Hope, new planets to ex-
plore.

Not for the flesh that fades.—although
decay
This thronged metropolis of sense o'er-
spread :
Not for the joys of youth, that fleet away
When the wise swallows to the south
are fled ;
Not that, beneath the law which fades
the flower,
An earthly hope should wither in the
cells
Of this poor earthly house of life,
where dwells
Unseen the solitary Thinking-Power ;
But that where fades the flower the weed
should flourish ;
For all the baffled efforts to achieve
The imperishable from the things that
perish,
For broken vows, and weakened will,
I grieve.
Knowing that night of all is creeping on
Wherein can no man work, I sorrow most
For what is gained, and not for what
is lost ;
Nor mourn alone what's undone, but
what's done.
What light, from yonder windless cloud
released,
Is widening up the peaks of yon black
hills ?
It is the full moon in the mystic east,
Whose coming half the unravished
darkness fills
Till all among the ribbed light cloudlets
pale,
From shore to shore of sapphirine deeps
divine,
The orbéd splendor seems to slide and
shine
Aslope the rolling vapors in the vale.
Abroad the stars' majestic light is flung,
And they fade brightening up the steps
of Night.
Cold mysteries of the midnight ! that,
among
The sleeps and pauses of this world,
in sight,
Reveal a doubtful hope to wild Desire ;
Which, hungering for the sources of
the suns,
Makes moan beyond the blue Septen-
trions,
And spidery Saturn in his webs of fire ;

Whether the unconscious destinies of
man
Move with the motions of your
spheréd lights,
And his brief course, foredoomed ere he
began,
Your shining symbols fixed in reach-
less heights,
Or whether all the purpose of his pain
Be shut in his wild heart and feverish
will,
He knows no more than this :— that
you are still,
But he is moved : he goes, but you
remain.
Fooled was the human vanity that wrote
Strange names in astral fire on yonder
pole.
Who and what were they — in what age
remote —
That scrawled weak boasts on yon
sidereal scroll ?
Orion shines. Now seek for Nimrod.
Where ?
Osiris is a fable, and no more :
But Sirius burns as brightly as of
yore.
There is no shade on Berenice's hair.
You that outlast the Pyramids, as they
Outlast their founders, tell us of our
doom !
You that see Love depart, and Error
stray,
And Genius toiling at a splendid tomb,
Like those Egyptian slaves : and Hope
deceived :
And Strength still failing when the
goal is near :
And Passion parcht : and Rapture
claspt to Fear :
And Trust betrayed : and Memory be-
reaved !
Vain question ! Shall some other voice
declare
What my soul knows not of herself ?
Ah no !
Dumb patient Monster, grieving every-
where,
Thou answerest nothing which I did
not know.
The broken fragments of ourselves we
seek
In alien forms, and leave our lives
behind.

In our own memories our graves we
find.
And when we lean upon our hearts,
they break.
I seem to see 'mid yonder glimmering
spheres
Another world :— not that our prayers
record,
Wherein our God shall wipe away all
tears,
And never voice of mourning shall be
heard ;
But one between the sunset and moon-
rise :
Near night, yet neighboring day : a
twilit land,
And peopled by a melancholy band —
The souls that loved and failed — with
hopeless eyes ;
More like that Hades of the antique
creeds ;—
A land of vales forlorn, where Thought
shall roam
Regretful, void of wholesome human
deeds,
An endless, homeless pining after
home,
To which all sights and sounds shall
minister
In vain :— white roses glimmering all
alone
In an evening light, and, with his
haunting tone,
The advancing twilight's shard-born
trumpeter.
A world like this world's worst come
back again ;
Still groaning 'neath the burthen of
a Fall :
Eternal longing with eternal pain,
Want without hope, and memory sad-
dening all.
All congregated failure and despair
Shall wander there, through some old
maze of wrong :—
Ophelia drowning in her own death-
song,
And First-Love strangled in his golden
hair.
Ah well, for those that overcome, no
doubt
The crowns are ready ; strength is to
the strong.

But we — but we — weak hearts that
grobe about
In darkness, with a lamp that fails
along
The lengthening midnight, dying ere
we reach
The bridal doors ! O, what for us
remains,
But mortal effort with immortal pains ?
And yet — God breathed a spirit into
each !
I know this miracle of the soul is
more
Than all the marvels that it looks
upon.
And we are kings whose heritage was
before
The spheres, and owes no homage to
the sun.
In my own breast a mightier world I
bear
Than all those orbs on orbs about me
rolled ;
Nor are you kinglier, stars, though
throned on gold,
And given the empires of the midnight-
air.
For I, too, am undying as you are.
O teach me calm, and teach me self-
control :—
To sphere my spirit like yon fixed star
That moves not ever in the utmost
pole,
But whirls, and sleeps, and turns all
heaven one way.
So, strong as Atlas, should the spirit
stand,
And turn the great globe round in her
right hand,
For recreation of her sovereign sway.
Ah yet !— For all, I shall not use my
power,
Nor reign within the light of my own
home,
Till speculation fades, and that strange
hour
Of the departing of the soul is come ;
Till all this wrinkled husk of care
falls by,
And my immortal nature stands up-
right
In her perpetual morning, and the
light
Of suns that set not on Eternity !

BOOK I.—IN ITALY.

THE MAGIC LAND.

By woodland belt, by ocean bar,
The full south breeze our foreheads
fanned,
And, under many a yellow star,
We dropped into the Magic Land.

There, every sound and every sight
Means more than sight or sound else-
where ;
Each twilight star a twofold light ;
Each rose a double redness, there.

By ocean bar, by woodland belt,
Our silent course a syren led,
Till dark in dawn began to melt,
Through the wild wizard-work o'er-
head.

A murmur from the violet vales !
A glory in the goblin dell !
There Beauty all her breast unveils,
And Music pours out all her shell.

We watched, toward the land of dreams,
The fair moon draw the murmuring
main ;
A single thread of silver beams
Was made the monster's rippling
chain.

We heard far off the syren's song ;
We caught the gleam of sea-maid's hair.
The glimmering isles and rocks among,
We moved through sparkling purple
air.

Then Morning rose, and smote from far,
Her elfin harps o'er land and sea ;
And woodland belt, and ocean bar,
To one sweet note, sighed "Italy!"

DESIRE.

THE golden Planet of the Occident
Warm from his bath comes up, i' the
rosy air,
And you may tell which way the Day-
light went,
Only by his last footsteps shining
there :

For now he dwells
Sea-deep o' the other shore of the world,
And winds himself in the pink-mouthéd
shells ;
Or, with his dusky, sun-dyed Priest,
Walks in the gardens of the gorgeous East ;
Or hides in Indian hills ; or saileth
where
Floats, curiously curled,
Leagues out of sight and scent of spicy
trees,
The cream-white nautilus on sapphirine
seas.

But here the Night from the hill-top
yonder
Steals all alone, nor yet too soon ;
I have sighed for, and sought for, her ;
sadder and fonder

(All through the lonely and lingering
noon)
Than a maiden that sits by the lattice to
ponder
On vows made in vain, long since,
under the moon.

Her dusky hair she hath shaken free,
And her tender eyes are wild with love ;
And her balmy bosom lies bare to me.
She hath lighted the seven sweet Plei-
ads above,

She is breathing over the dreaming sea,
She is murmuring low in the cedar
grove ;
She hath put to sleep the moaning dove
In the silent cypress-tree.

And there is no voice nor whisper, —
No voice nor whisper,
In the hillside olives all at rest,
Underneath blue-lighted Hesper,
Sinking, slowly, in the liquid west ;
For the night's heart knoweth best
Love by silence most exprest.
The nightingales keep mute
Each one his fairy flute,
Where the mute stars look down,
And the laurels close the green seaside :
Only one amorous lute
Twangs in the distant town,
From some lattice opened wide :
The climbing rose and vine are here, are
there.

On the terrace, around, above me :
The lone Ledaean * lights from yon en-
chanted air
Look down upon my spirit, like a spir-
it's eyes that love me.

How beautiful, at night, to muse on the
mountain height,
Moated in purple air, and all alone !
How beautiful, at night, to look into the
light
Of loving eyes, when loving lips lean
down unto our own !
But there is no hand in mine, no hand
in mine,
Nor any tender cheek against me prest :
O stars that o'er me shine, I pine, I pine,
I pine,
With hopeless fancies hidden in an
ever-hungering breast !

O where, O where is she that should be
here,
The spirit my spirit dreameth ?
With the passionate eyes, so deep, so
dear,
Where a secret sweetness beameth ?
O sleepeth she, with her soft gold hair
Streaming over the fragrant pillow,
And a rich dream glowing in her ripe
cheek,
Far away, I know not where,
By lonely shores, where the tumbling
billow
Sounds all night in an emerald creek ?

Or doth she lean o'er the casement stone
When the day's dull noise is done with,
And the sceptred spirit remounts alone
Into her long-usurped throne,
By the stairs the stars are won with ?
Hearing the white owl call
Where the river draws through the
meadows below,
By the beeches brown, and the broken
wall,
His silvery, seaward waters, slow
To the ocean bounding all :
With, here a star on his glowing breast,
And, there a lamp down-streaming,
And a musical motion towards the west
Where the long white cliffs are gleam-
ing ;

* "How oft, unwearied, have we spent the
nights,
Till the Ledaean stars, so famed for love,
Wondered at us from above." — COWLEY.

While, far in the moonlight, lies at rest
A great ship, asleep and dreaming ?

Or doth she linger yet
Among her sisters and brothers,
In the chamber where happy faces are
met,
Distinct from all the others ?
As my star up there, be it never so bright,
No other star resembles.
Doth she steal to the window, and strain
her sight
(While the pearl in her warm hair trem-
bles)
Over the dark, the distant night,
Feeling something changed in her home
yet ;
That old songs have lost their old de-
light,
And the true soul is not come yet ?
Till the nearest star in sight
Is drowned in a tearful light.

I would that I were nigh her,
Wherever she rest or rove !
My spirit waves as a spiral fire
In a viewless wind doth move.
Go forth, alone, go forth, wild-winged
Desire,
Thou art the bird of Jove,
That broodest lone by the Olympian
throne ;
And strong to bear the thunders which
destroy,
Or fetch the ravish'd, flute-playing Phry-
gian boy ;
Go forth, across the world, and find my
love !

FATALITY.

I HAVE seen her, with her golden hair,
And her exquisite primrose face,
And the violet in her eyes ;
And my heart received its own despair —
The thrall of a hopeless grace,
And the knowledge of how youth
dies.

Live hair afloat with snakes of gold,
And a throat as white as snow,
And a stately figure and foot ;
And that faint pink smile, so sweet, so
cold,
Like a wood anemone, closed below
The shade of an ilex root.

And her delicate milk-white hand in mine,
And her pensive voice in my ear,
And her eyes downcast as we speak.
I am filled with a rapture, vague and fine;
For there has fallen a sparkling tear
Over her soft, pale cheek.

And I know that all is hopeless now.
And that which might have been,
Had she only waited a year or two,
Is turned to a wild regret, I know,
Which will haunt us both, whatever
the scene,
And whatever the path we go.

Meanwhile, for one moment, hand in hand,
We gaze on each other's eyes;
And the red moon rises above us;
We linger with love in the lovely land, —
Italy with its yearning skies,
And its wild white stars that love us.

A VISION.

THE hour of Hesperus! the hour when
feeling
Grows likest memory, and the full
heart swells
With pensive pleasure to the mellow
pealing
Of mournful music upon distant bells:
The hour when it seems sweetest to be
loved,
And saddest to have loved in days no
more.

O love, O life, O lovely land of yore,
Through which, erewhile, these weary
footsteps roved,

Was it a vision? Or Irene, sitting,
Lone in her chamber, on her snowy
bed,

With listless fingers, lingeringly unknit-
ting
Her silken bodice; and, with bended
head,

Hiding in warm hair, half-way to her
knee,
Her pearl-pale shoulder, leaning on
one arm,

Athwart the darkness, odorous and
warm,
To watch the low, full moon set, pen-
sively?

A fragrant lamp burned dimly in the room,
With scarce a gleam in either looking-
glass.

The mellow moonlight, through the deep-
blue gloom,

Did all along the dreamy chamber pass,
As though it were a little toucht with awe
(Being new-come into that quiet place
In such a quiet way) at the strange
grace

Of that pale lady, and what else it saw; —

Rare flowers: narcissi; irises, each
crowned;

Red oleander blossoms; hyacinths
Flooding faint fragrance, richly curled
all round,

Corinthian, cool columnar flowers on
plinths;

Waxen camelias, white and crimson ones;
And amber lilies, and the regal rose,
Which for the breast of queens full-
scornful grows;

All pinnaled in urns of carven bronze:

Tables of inwrought stone, true Floren-
tine, —

Olympian circles thronged with Mer-
curies,

Minervas, little Junos dug i' the green
Of ruined Rome; and Juno sown rich eyes

Vivid on peacock plumes Sidonian:
A ribboned lute, young Music's cradle:

books,
Vellumed and claspt: and with be-
wildered looks,

Madonna's picture, — the old smile
grown wan.

From blooméd thickets, firefly-lamped,
beneath

The terrace, fluted cool the nightingale.

In at the open window came the breath
Of many a balmy, dim blue, dreaming
vale.

At intervals the howlet's note came clear,
Fluttering dark silence through the
cypress grove;

An infant breeze from the elf-land of
Love,

Lured by the dewy hour, crept, lisp-
ing,
near.

And now is all the night her own, to
make it

Or grave or gay with throngs of wak-
ing dreams.

Now grows her heart so ripe, a sigh
might shake it

To showers of fruit, all golden as be-
seems

Hesperian growth. Why not, on nights
like this,

Should Daphne out from yon green
laurel slip!

A Dryad from the ilex, with white hip
Quivered and thonged to hunt with Ar-
temis?

To-night, what wonder were it, while
such shadows

Are taking up such shapes on moonlit
mountains,

Such star-flies kindling o'er low emerald
meadows,

Such voices floating out of hillside
fountains,

If some full face should from the win-
dow greet her,

Whose eyes should be new planetary
lights,

Whose voice a well of liquid love-
delights,

And to the distance sighingly entreat
her?

EROS.

WHAT wonder that I loved her thus,
that night?

The Immortals know each other at first
sight,

And Love is of them.

In the fading light
Of that delicious eve, whose stars even yet
Gild the long dreamless nights, and can-
not set,

She passed me, through the silence: all
her hair,

Her waving, warm, bright hair neglect-
fully

Poured round her snowy throat as with-
out care

Of its own beauty.

And when she turned on me
The sorrowing light of desolate eyes di-
vine,

I knew in a moment what our lives must
be

Henceforth. It lightened on me then
and there,

How she was irretrievably all mine,
I hers, — through time, become eternity.

It could not ever have been otherwise,
Gazing into those eyes.

And if, before I gazed on them, my soul,
Oblivious of her destiny, had followed,
In days forever silent, the control
Of any beauty less divinely hallowed
Than that upon her beautiful white
brows,

(The serene summits of all earthly sweet-
ness!)

Straightway the records of all other vows
Of idol-worship faded silently

Out of the folding leaves of memory,
Forever and forever; and my heart be-
came

Pure white at once, to keep in its com-
pleteness,

And perfect purity,
Her mystic name.

INDIAN LOVE-SONG.

My body sleeps: my heart awakes.

My lips to breathe thy name are moved
In slumber's ear: then slumber breaks;

And I am drawn to thee, beloved.
Thou drawest me, thou drawest me,

Through sleep, through night. I hear
the rills,

And hear the leopard in the hills,
And down the dark I feel to thee.

The vineyards and the villages
Were silent in the vales, the rocks.

I followed past the myrrhy trees,
And by the footsteps of the flocks.

Wild honey, dropt from stone to stone,
Where bees have been, my path sug-
gests.

The winds are in the eagles' nests.
The moon is hid. I walk alone.

Thou drawest me, thou drawest me
Across the glimmering wildernesses,
And drawest me, my love, to thee,
With dove's eyes hidden in thy tresses

The world is many: my love is one.
I find no likeness for my love.

The cinnamons grow in the grove:
The Golden Tree grows all alone.

O who hath seen her wondrous hair!
Or seen my dove's eyes in the woods?

Or found her voice upon the air?
Her steps along the solitudes?

Or where is beauty like to hers?
She draweth me, she draweth me.
I sought her by the incense-tree,
And in the aloes, and in the firs.

Where art thou, O my heart's delight,
With dove's eyes hidden in thy locks?
My hair is wet with dew of night.
My feet are torn upon the rocks.
The cedarn scents, the spices, fail
About me. Strange and stranger seems
The path. There comes a sound of
streams
Above the darkness on the vale.

No trees drop gums; but poison flowers
From rifts and clefts all round me fall;
The perfumes of thy midnight bowers,
The fragrance of thy chambers, all
Is drawing me, is drawing me.
Thy baths prepare; anoint thine hair:
Open the window: meet me there:
I come to thee, to thee, to thee!

Thy lattices are dark, my own.
Thy doors are still. My love, look out.
Arise, my dove with tender tone.
The camphor-clusters all about
Are whitening. Dawn breaks silently,
And all my spirit with the dawn
Expands; and, slowly, slowly drawn,
Through mist and darkness moves toward
thee.

MORNING AND MEETING.

ONE yellow star, the largest and the last
Of all the lovely night, was fading slow
(As fades a happy moment in the past)
Out of the changing east, when, yet
aglow
With dreams her looks made magical,
from sleep
I waked; and oped the lattice. Like
a rose
All the red-opening morning gan
disclose
A ripened light upon the distant steep.
A bell was chiming through the crystal
air
From the high convent-church upon
the hill.
The folk were loitering by to matin prayer.
The church-bell called me out, and
seemed to fill

The air with little hopes. I reached the
door
Before the chanted hymn began to rise,
And float its liquid Latin melodies
O'er pious groups about the marble floor.

Breathless, I slid among the kneeling folk.
A little bell went tinkling through the
pauze
Of inward prayer. Then forth the low
chant broke
Among the glooming aisles, that
through a gauze
Of sunlight glimmered.

Thickly throbb'd my blood.
I saw, dark-tress'd in the rose-lit shade,
Many a little dusk Italian maid,
Kneeling with fervent face close where I
stood.

The morning, all a misty splendor,
shook
Deep in the mighty window's flame-
lit webs.

It touched the crowned Apostle with his
hook,
And brightened where the sea of jasper
ebbs

About those Saints' white feet that stand
serene

Each with his legend, each in his own
hue

Attired: some beryl-golden: sapphire
blue

Some: and some ruby-red: some emer-
ald-green.

Wherefrom, in rainbow-wreaths, the rich
light rolled

About the snowy altar, sparkling clean.
The organ groaned and pined, then,
growing bold,

Revelled the cherubs' golden wings
atween.

And in the light, beneath the music,
kneeled
(As pale as some stone Virgin bending
solemn

Out of the red gleam of a granite col-
umn)

Irene with claspt hands and cold lips
sealed.

As one who, pausing on some mountain-
height,

Above the breeze that breaks o'er vine-
yard walls,

Leans to the impulse of a wild delight,
Bows earthward, feels the hills bow
too, and falls —
I dropt beside her. Feeling seemed to
expand
And close: a mist of music filled the air:
And, when it ceased in heaven, I was
aware
That, through a rapture, I had toucht
her hand.

THE CLOUD.

WITH shape to shape, all day,
And change to change, by foreland, firth,
and bay,

The cloud comes down from wander-
ing with the wind,
Through gloom and gleam across the
green waste seas;
And, leaving the white cliff and lone
tower bare
To empty air,
Slips down the windless west, and
grows defined
In splendor by degrees.

And, blown by every wind
Of wonder through all regions of the mind,
From hope to fear, from doubt to sweet
despite
Changing all shapes, and mingling
snow with fire,
The thought of her descends, sleeps o'er
the bounds
Of passion, grows, and rounds
Its golden outlines in a gradual light
Of still desire.

ROOT AND LEAF.

THE love that deep within me lies
Unmoved abides in conscious power;
Yet in the heaven of thy sweet eyes
It varies every hour.

A look from thee will flush the cheek:
A word of thine awaken tears:
And, ah, in all I do and speak
How frail my love appears!

In yonder tree, Beloved, whose boughs
Are household both to earth and heaven,
Whose leaves have murmured of our vows
To many a balmy even,

The branch that wears the liveliest green,
Is shaken by the restless bird;
The leaves that nighest heaven are seen,
By every breeze are stirred:

But storms may rise, and thunders roll,
Nor move the giant roots below;
So, from the bases of the soul,
My love for thee doth grow.

It seeks the heaven, and trembles there
To every light and passing breath;
But from the heart no storm can tear
Its rooted growth beneath.

WARNINGS.

BEWARE, beware of witchery!
And fall not in the snare
That lurks and lies in wanton eyes,
Or hides in golden hair:
For the Witch hath sworn to catch thee,
And her spells are on the air.
"Thou art fair, fair, fatal fair,
O Irene!

What is it, what is it,
In the whispers of the leaves?
In the night-wind, when its bosom,
With the shower in it, grieves?
In the breaking of the breaker,
As it breaks upon the beach
Through the silence of the night?
Cordelia! Cordelia!

A warning in my ear —
"Not here! not here! not here!
But seek her yet, and seek her,
Seek her ever out of reach,
Out of reach, and out of sight!"
Cordelia!

Eyes on mine, when none can view me!
And a magic murmur through me!
And a presence out of Fairyland,
Invisible, yet near!
Cordelia!

"In a time which hath not been:
In a land thou hast not seen:
Thou shalt find her, but not now:
Thou shalt meet her, but not here!"
Cordelia! Cordelia!
"In the falling of the snow:
In the fading of the year:
When the light of hope is low,
And the last red leaf is sere."
Cordelia!

And my senses lie asleep, fast asleep,
O Irene!
In the chambers of this Sorceress, the
South,
In a slumber dim and deep,
She is seeking yet to keep,
Brimful of poisoned perfumes,
The shut blossom of my youth.
O fatal, fatal fair Irene!

But the whispering of the leaves,
And the night-wind, when it grieves,
And the breaking of the breaker,
As it breaks upon the beach
Through the silence of the night,
Cordelia!
Whisper ever in my ear
"Not here! not here! not here!
But awake, O wanderer! seek her,
Ever seek her out of reach,
Out of reach, and out of sight!"
Cordelia!

There is a star above me
Unlike all the millions round it.
There is a heart to love me,
Although not yet I have found it.
And awhile,

O Cordelia, Cordelia!
A light and careless singer,
In the subtle South I linger,
While the blue is on the mountain,
And the bloom is on the peach,
And the fire-fly on the night,
Cordelia!

But my course is ever norward,
And a whisper whispers "For-
ward!"

Arise, O wanderer, seek her,
Seek her ever out of reach,
Out of reach and out of sight!
Cordelia!

Out of sight,
Cordelia! Cordelia!
Out of reach, out of sight,
Cordelia!

A FANCY.

How sweet were life, — *this* life, if we
(My love and I) might dwell together
Here beyond the summer sea,
In the heart of summer weather!

With pomegranates on the bough,
And with lilies in the bower;

And a sight of distant snow,
Rosy in the sunset hour.

And a little house, — no more
In state than suits two quiet lovers;
And a woodbine round the door,
Where the swallow builds and hovers;

With a silver sickle-moon,
O'er hot gardens, red with roses:
And a window wide, in June,
For serenades when evening closes:

In a chamber cool and simple,
Trellised light from roof to basement;
And a summer wind to dimple
The white curtain at the casement:

Where, if we at midnight wake,
A green acacia-tree shall quiver
In the moonlight, o'er some lake
Where nightingales sing songs forever.

With a pine-wood dark in sight;
And a bean-field climbing to us,
To make odors faint at night
Where we roam with none to view us.

And a convent on the hill,
Through its light green olives peeping
In clear sunlight, and so still,
All the nuns, you'd say, were sleeping.

Seas at distance, seen beneath
Grated garden-wildernesses; —
Not so far but what their breath
At eve may fan my darling's tresses.

A piano, soft in sound,
To make music when speech wanders,
Poets reverently bound,
O'er whose pages rapture ponders.

Canvas, brushes, hues, to catch
Fleeting forms in vale or mountain:
And an evening star to watch
When all's still, save one sweet foun-
tain.

Ah! I idle time away
With impossible fond fancies!
For a lover lives all day
In a land of lone romances.

But the hot light o'er the city
Drops, — and see! on fire departs.

And the night comes down in pity
To the longing of our hearts.

Bind thy golden hair from falling,
O my love, my one, my own!
'T is for thee the cuckoo's calling
With a note of tenderer tone.

Up the hillside, near and nearer,
Through the vine, the corn, the flow-
ers,
Till the very air grows dearer,
Neighboring our pleasant bowers.

Now I pass the last Poderè:
There, the city lies behind me.
See her fluttering like a fairy
O'er the happy grass to find me!

ONCE.

A FALLING star that shot across
The intricate and twinkling dark
Vanisht, yet left no sense of loss
Throughout the wide ethereal arc

Of those serene and solemn skies
That round the dusky prospect rose,
And ever seemed to rise, and rise,
Through regions of unreach'd repose.

Far, on the windless mountain-range,
One crimson sparklet died: the blue
Flushed with a brilliance, faint and
strange,
The ghost of daylight, dying too.

But half-revealed, each terrace urn
Glimmered, where now, in filmy flight,
We watched return, and still return,
The blind bats searching air for sight.

With sullen fits of fleeting sound,
Borne half asleep on slumbrous air,
The drowsy beetle hummed around,
And passed, and oft repassed us, there;

Where, hand in hand, our looks alight
With thoughts our pale lips left un-
told,
We sat, in that delicious night,
On that dim terrace, green and old.

Deep down, far off, the city lay,
When forth from all its spires was
swept

A music o'er our souls; and they
To music's midmost meanings leapt;

And, crushing some delirious cry
Against each other's lips, we clung
Together silent, while the sky
Throbbing with sound around us hung:

For, borne from bells on music soft,
That solemn hour went forth through
heaven,
To stir the starry airs aloft,
And thrill the purple pulse of even.

O happy hush of heart to heart!
O moment molten through with bliss!
O Love, delaying long to part
That first, fast, individual kiss!

Whereon two lives on glowing lips
Hung claspt, each feeling fold in fold,
Like daisies closed with crimson tips,
That sleep about a heart of gold.

Was it some drowsy rose that moved?
Some dreaming dove's pathetic moan?
Or was it my name from lips beloved?
And was it thy sweet breath, mine own.

That made me feel the tides of sense
O'er life's low levels rise with might,
And pour my being down the immense
Shore of some mystic Infinite?

"O, have I found thee, my soul's soul!
My chosen forth from time and space!
And did we then break earth's control?
And have I seen thee face to face?"

"Close, closer to thy home, my breast,
Closer thy darling arms enfold!
I need such warmth, for else the rest
Of life will freeze me dead with cold.

"Long was the search, the effort long,
Ere I compelled thee from thy sphere,
I know not with what mystic song,
I know not with what nightly tear:

"But thou art here, beneath whose eyes
My passion falters, even as some
Pale wizard's taper sinks, and dies,
When to his spell a spirit is come.

"My brow is pale with much of pain:
Though I am young, my youth is gone,
And, shouldst thou leave me lone again,
I think I could not live alone.

"As some idea, half divined,
With tumult works within the brain
Of desolate genius, and the mind
Is vassal to imperious pain,

"For toil by day, for tears by night,
Till, in the sphere of vision brought,
Rises the beautiful and bright
Predestined, but relentless Thought ;

"So, gathering up the dreams of years,
Thy love doth to its destined seat
Rise sovran, through the light of tears —
Achieved, accomplisht, and complete !

"I fear not now lest any hour
Should chill the lips my own have
prest ;
For I possess thee by the power
Whereby I am myself possesst.

"These eyes must lose their guiding
light :
These lips from thine, I know, must
sever :
O looks and lips may disunite,
But ever love is love forever !"

SINCE.

WORDS like to these were said, or dreamed
(How long since !) on a night divine,
By lips from which such rapture streamed
I cannot deem those lips were mine.

The day comes up above the roofs,
All sallow from a night of rain ;
The sound of feet, and wheels, and hoofs
In the blurred street begins again :

The same old toil — no end — no aim !
The same vile babble in my ears ;
The same unmeaning smiles : the same
Most miserable dearth of tears.

The same dull sound : the same dull
lack
Of lustre in the level gray :
It seems like Yesterday come back
With his old things, and not To-day.

But now and then her name will fall
From careless lips with little praise,
On this dry shell, and shatter all
The smooth indifference of my days.

They chatter of her — deem her light —
The apes and liars ! they who know
As well to sound the unfathomed Night
As her impenetrable woe !

And here, where Slander's scorn is spilt,
And gabbling Folly clucks above
Her addled eggs, it feels like guilt,
To know that far away, my love

Her heart on every heartless hour
Is bruising, breaking, for my sake :
While, coiled and numbed, and void of
power,
My life sleeps like a winter snake.

I know that at the mid of night,
(When sheffings by the glittering stress
Of Pride, that mocks the vulgar sight,
And fronts her chamber's loneliness,)

She breaks in tears, and, overthrown
With sorrowing, weeps the night away,
Till back to his unlovely throne
Returns the unrelenting day.

All treachery could devise hath wrought
Against us : — letters robbed and read :
Snares hid in smiles : betrayal bought :
And lies imputed to the dead.

I will arise, and go to her,
And save her in her own despite ;
For in my breast begins to stir
A pulse of its old power and might.

They cannot so have slandered me
But what, I know, if I should call
And stretch my arms to her, that she
Would rush into them, spite of all.

In Life's great lazar-house, each breath
We breathe may bring or spread the
pest ;
And, woman, each may catch his death
From those that lean upon his breast.

I know how tender friends of me
Have talked with broken hint, and
glance :
— The choicest flowers of calumny,
That seem, like weeds, to spring from
chance ; —

That small, small, imperceptible
Small talk, which cuts like powdered
glass

Ground in Tophana — none can tell
Where lurks the power the poison has !

I may be worse than they would prove,
(Who knows the worst of any man ?)
But, right or wrong, be sure my love
Is not what they conceive, or can.

Nor do I question what thou art,
Nor what thy life, in great or small,
Thou art, I know, what all my heart
Must beat or break for. That is all.

A LOVE-LETTER.

My love, — my chosen, — but not mine !
I send
My whole heart to thee in these words
I write ;
So let the blotted lines, my soul's sole
friend,
Lie upon thine, and there be blest at
night.

This flower, whose bruised purple blood
will stain
The page now wet with the hot tears
that fall —
(Indeed, indeed, I struggle to restrain
This weakness, but the tears come,
spite of all !)

I plucked it from the branch you used to
praise,
The branch that hides the wall. I
tend your flowers.
I keep the paths we paced in happier
days.
How long ago they seem, those pleas-
ant hours.

The white laburnum's out. Your judas-
tree
Begins to shed those crimson buds of
his.
The nightingales sing — ah, too joyously !
Who says those birds are sad ! I think
there is

That in the books we read, which deeper
wings
My heart, so they lie dusty on the
shelf.

Ah me, I meant to speak of other things
Less sad. In vain ! they bring me to
myself.

I know your patience. And I would not
cast
New shade on days so dark as yours
are grown
By weak and wild repining for the past,
Since it is past forever, O mine own !

For hard enough the daily cross you bear,
Without that deeper pain reflection
brings ;
And all too sore the fretful household care,
Free of the contrast of remembered
things.

But ah ! it little profits, that we thrust
From all that 's said, what both must
feel, unnamed.
Better to face it boldly, as we must,
Than feel it in the silence, and be
shamed.

Irene, I have loved you, as men love
Light, music, odor, beauty, love it-
self ; —
Whatever is apart from, and above
Those daily needs which deal with dust
and pelf.

And I had been content, without one
thought
Our guardian angels could have blusht
to know,
So to have lived and died, demanding
nought
Save, living dying, to have loved you
so.

My youth was orphaned, and my age
will be
Childless. I have no sister. None,
to steal
One stray thought from the many
thoughts of thee,
Which are the source of all I think
and feel.

My wildest wish was vassal to thy will :
My haughtiest hope, a pensioner on
thy smile,
Which did with light my barren being
fill,
As moonlight glorifies some desert isle.

I never thought to know what I have
known, —
The rapture, dear, of being loved by
you :

I never thought, within my heart, to
own
One wish so blest that you should
share it too :

Nor ever did I deem, contemplating
The many sorrows in this place of pain,
So strange a sorrow to my life could
cling,
As, being thus loved, to be beloved in
vain.

But now we know the best, the worst.
We have

Interred, and prematurely, and un-
known,
Our youth, our hearts, our hopes, in one
small grave,
Whence we must wander, widowed,
to our own.

And if we comfort not each other, what
shall comfort us, in the dark days to
come ?

Not the light laughter of the world, and
not
The faces and the firelight of fond
home.

And so I write to you ; and write, and
write,
For the mere sake of writing to you,
dear.

What can I tell you, that you know
not ? Night
Is deepening through the rosy atmos-
phere

About the lonely casement of this room,
Which you have left familiar with the
grace

That grows where you have been. And
on the gloom
I almost fancy I can see your face.

Not pale with pain, and tears restrained
for me,
As when I last beheld it ; but as first,
A dream of rapture and of poesy,
Upon my youth, like dawn on dark, it
burst.

Perchance I shall not ever see again
That face. I know that I shall never
see

Its radiant beauty as I saw it then,
Save by this lonely lamp of memory,

With childhood's starry graces lingering
yet
I' the rosy orient of young womanhood ;
And eyes like woodland violets newly wet ;
And lips that left their meaning in
my blood !

I will not say to you what I might say
To one less worthily loved, less worthy
love.

I will not say . . . " Forget the past.
Be gay.
And let the all ill-judging world ap-
prove

" Light in your eyes, and laughter on
your lip."

I will not say . . . " Dissolve in thought
forever

Our sorrowful, but sacred, fellowship."
For that would be, to bid you, dear,
dissever

Your nature from its nobler heritage
In consolations registered in heaven,
For griefs this world is barren to assuage,
And hopes to which, on earth, no
home is given.

But I would whisper, what forevermore
My own heart whispers through the
wakeful night, . . .

" This grief is but a shadow, flung be-
fore,
From some refulgent substance out of
sight."

Wherefore it happens, in this riddling
world,

That, where sin came not, sorrow yet
should be ;

Why heaven's most hurtful thunders
should be hurled
At what seems noblest in humanity ;

And we are punished for our purest
deeds,

And chastened for our holiest
thoughts ; . . . alas !

There is no reason found in all the
creeds,

Why these things are, nor whence
they come to pass

But in the heart of man, a secret voice
There is, which speaks, and will not
be restrained,

Which cries to Grief . . . " Weep on,
while I rejoice,
Knowing that, somewhere, all will be
explained."

I will not cant that commonplace of
friends,

Which never yet hath dried one
mourner's tears,

Nor say that grief's slow wisdom makes
amends

For broken hearts and desolated years.

For who would barter all he hopes from
life,

To be a little wiser than his kind ?
Who arm his nature for continued

strife,
Where all he seeks for hath been left
behind ?

But I would say, O pure and perfect
pearl

Which I have dived so deep in life to
find,

Locked in my heart thou liest. The
wave may curl,

The wind may wail above us. Wave
and wind,

What are their storm and strife to me
and you ?

No strife can mar the pure heart's in-
most calm.

This life of ours, what is it ? A very
few

Soon-ended years, and then, — the
ceaseless psalm,

And the eternal sabbath of the soul !
Hush ! . . . while I write, from the
dim Carminé

The midnight angelus begins to roll,
And float athwart the darkness up to
me.

My messenger (a man by danger tried)
Waits in the courts below ; and ere
our star

Upon the forehead of the dawn hath
died,

Belovéd one, this letter will be far

Athwart the mountain, and the mist, to
you.

I know each robber hamlet. I know
all

This mountain people. I have friends,
both true
And trusted, sworn to aid whate'er be-
fall.

I have a bark upon the gulf. And I,
If to my heart I yielded in this hour,
Might say . . . " Sweet fellow-sufferer,
let us fly !

I know a little isle which doth em-
bower

" A home where exiled angels might for-
bear

Awhile to mourn for paradise." . . .
But no !

Never, whate'er fate now may bring us,
dear,

Shalt thou reproach me for that only
woe

Which even love is powerless to console ;
Which dwells where duty dies : and
haunts the tomb

Of life's abandoned purpose in the soul ;
And leaves to hope, in heaven itself,
no room.

Man cannot make, but may ennoble, fate,
By nobly bearing it. So let us trust,

Not to ourselves, but God, and calmly
wait

Love's orient, out of darkness and of
dust.

Farewell, and yet again farewell, and yet
Never farewell, — if farewell mean to
fare

Alone and disunited. Love hath set
Our days, in music, to the self-same
air ;

And I shall feel, wherever we may be,
Even though in absence and an alien
clime,

The shadow of the sunniness of thee,
Hovering, in patience, through a
clouded time.

Farewell ! The dawn is rising, and the
light

Is making, in the east, a faint en-
deavor

To illuminate the mountain peaks.
Good night.

Thine own, and only thine, my love,
forever.

CONDEMNED ONES.

ABOVE thy child I saw thee bend,
Where in that silent room we sat apart.
I watched the involuntary tear descend;
The firelight was not all so dim, my
friend,
But I could read thy heart.

Yet when, in that familiar room,
I strove, so moveless in my place,
To look with comfort in thy face,
That child's young smile was all that I
could see
Ever between us in the thoughtful
gloom, —
Ever between thyself and me, —
With its bewildering grace.

Life is not what it might have been,
Nor are we what we would!
And we must meet with smiling mien,
And part in careless mood,
Knowing that each retains unseen,
In cells of sense subdued,
A little lurking secret of the blood —
A little serpent-secret rankling keen —
That makes the heart its food.

Yet is there much for grateful tears, if
sad ones,
And Hope's young orphans Memory
mothers yet;
So let them go, the sunny days we had
once,
Our night hath stars that will not ever
set.

And in our hearts are harps, albeit not
glad ones,
Yet not all unmelodious, through whose
strings

The night-winds murmur their familiar
things,

Unto a kindred sadness: the sea brings
The spirits of its solitude, with wings
Folden about the music of its lyre,
Thrilled with deep duals by sublime de-
sire,

Which never can attain, yet ever must
aspire,
And glorify regret.

What might have been, I know, is not:
What must be, must be borne:
But, ah! what hath been will not be
forgot,
Never, oh! never, in the years to follow!

Though all their summers light a waste
forlorn,
Yet shall there be (hid from the careless
swallow
And sheltered from the bleak wind in
the thorn)
In Memory's mournful but beloved hol-
low,
One dear green spot!

Hope, the high will of Heaven
To help us hath not given;
But more than unto most of consolation:
Since heart from heart may borrow
Healing for deep heart-sorrow,
And draw from yesterday, to soothe to-
morrow,

The sad, sweet divination
Of that unuttered sympathy, which is
Love's sorceress, and for Love's dear sake,
About us both such spells doth make,
As none can see, and none can break,
And none restrain; — a secret pain
Claspt to a secret bliss!

A tone, a touch,
A little look, may be so much!
Those moments brief, nor often,
When, leaning laden breast to breast,
Pale cheek to cheek, life, long repress,
May gush with tears that leave half blest
The want of bliss they soften.
The little glance across the crowd,
None else can read, wherein there lies
A life of love at once avowed —
The embrace of pining eyes. . . .
So little more had made earth heaven,
That hope to help us was not given!

THE STORM.

BOTH hollow and hill were as dumb as
death,

While the skies were silently changing
form;
And the dread forecast of the thunder-
storm
Made the crouched land hold in its
breath.

But the monstrous vapor as yet was un-
riven

That was breeding the thunder and
lightning and rain;
And the wind that was waiting to ruin
the plain

Was yet fast in some far hold of heaven.

So, in absolute absence of stir or strife,
The red land lay as still as a drifted
leaf:
The roar of the thunder had been a
relief,
To the calm of that death-brooding life.

At the wide-flung casement she stood
full height,
With her long rolling hair tumbled
all down her back;
And, against the black sky's super-
natural black,
Her white neck gleamed scornfully white.

I could catch not a gleam of her angered
eyes
(She was sullenly watching the slow
storm roll),
But I felt they were drawing down
into her soul
The thunder that darkened the skies.

And how could I feign, in that heartless
gloom,
To be carelessly reading that stupid
page?
What harm, if I flung it in anguish
and rage,
Her book, to the end of the room?

"And so, do we part thus forever?"
. . . I said,
"O, speak only one word, and I par-
don the rest!"
She drew her white scarf tighter over
her breast,
But she never once turned round her
head.

"In this wicked old world is there
naught to disdain?
Or" — I groaned — "are those dark
eyes such deserts of blindness,
That, O Woman! your heart must
heard all its unkindness,
For the man on whose breast it hath
lain?"

"Leave it nameless, the grave of the
grief that is past;
Be its sole sign the silence we keep
for its sake.
I have loved you — lie still in my
heart till it break:
As I loved, I must love to the last.

"Speak! the horrible silence is stifling
my soul."
She turned on me at once all the storm
in her eyes;
And I heard the low thunder aloof in
the skies,
Beginning to mutter and roll.

She turned — by the lightning revealed
in its glare,
And the tempest had clothed her with
terror: it clung
To the folds of her vaporous garments,
and hung
In the heaps of her heavy wild hair.

But one word broke the silence; but
one; and it fell
With the weight of a mountain upon
me. Next moment
The fierce levin flashed in my eyes.
From my comment
She was gone when I turned. Who can
tell

How I got to my home on the mountain?
I know
That the thunder was rolling, the
lightning still flashing,
The great bells were tolling, my very
brain crashing
In my head, a few hours ago:

Then all hushed. In the distance the
blue rain receded;
And the fragments of storm were
spread out on the hills;
Hard by, from my lattice, I heard the
far rills
Leaping down their rock-channels, wild-
weeded.

The round, red moon was yet low in the
air. . . .

O, I knew it, foresaw it, and felt it,
before
I heard her light hand on the latch of
the door!
When it opened at last, — she was there.

Childlike, and wistful, and sorrowful-
eyed,
With the rain on her hair, and the
rain on her cheek;
She knelt down, with her fair forehead
fallen and meek
In the light of the moon at my side.

And she called me by every caressing old name
 She of old had invented and chosen for me:
 She crouched at my feet, with her cheek on my knee,
 Like a wild thing grown suddenly tame.

In the world there are women enough, maids or mothers;
 Yet, in multiplied millions, I never should find
 The symbol of aught in her face, or her mind.
 She has nothing in common with others.

And she loves me! This morning the earth, pressed beneath
 Her light foot, keeps the print. 'T was no vision last night,
 For the lily she dropped, as she went, is yet white
 With the dew on its delicate sheath!

THE VAMPYRE.

I FOUND a corpse, with golden hair,
 Of a maiden seven months dead.
 But the face, with the death in it, still was fair,
 And the lips with their love were red.
 Rose leaves on a snow-drift shed,
 Blood-drops by Adonis bled,
 Doubtless were not so red.

I combed her hair into curls of gold,
 And I kissed her lips till her lips were warm,
 And I bathed her body in moonlight cold,
 Till she grew to a living form:
 Till she stood up bold to a magic of old,
 And walked to a muttered charm—
 Life-like, without alarm.

And she walks by me, and she talks by me,
 Evermore, night and day;
 For she loves me so, that, wherever I go,
 She follows me all the way—
 This corpse—you would almost say
 There pined a soul in the clay.

Her eyes are so bright at the dead of night
 That they keep me awake with dread;
 And my life-blood fails in my veins, and pales

At the sight of her lips so red:
 For her face is as white as the pillow by night
 Where she kisses me on my bed:
 All her gold hair outspread—
 Neither alive nor dead.

I would that this woman's head
 Were less golden about the hair:
 I would her lips were less red,
 And her face less deadly fair.
 For this is the worst to bear—
 How came that redness there?

'T is my heart, be sure, she eats for her food;
 And it makes one's whole flesh creep
 To think that she drinks and drains my blood
 Unawares, when I am asleep.
 How else could those red lips keep
 Their redness so damson-deep?

There's a thought like a serpent, slips
 Ever into my heart and head,—
 There are plenty of women, alive and human,
 One might woo, if one wished, and wed—
 Women with hearts, and brains,—ay,
 and lips
 Not so very terribly red.

But to house with a corpse—and she so fair,
 With that dim, unearthly, golden hair,
 And those sad, serene, blue eyes,
 With their looks from who knows where,
 Which Death has made so wise,
 With the grave's own secret there—
 It is more than a man can bear!

It were better for me, ere I came nigh her,
 This corpse—ere I looked upon her,
 Had they burned my body in flame and fire
 With a sorcerer's dishonor.
 For when the Devil hath made his lair,
 And lurks in the eyes of a fair young woman
 (To grieve a man's soul with her golden hair,
 And break his heart, if his heart be human),
 Would not a saint despair
 To be saved by fast or prayer
 From perdition made so fair?

CHANGE.

SHE is unkind, unkind!
 On the windy hill, to-day,
 I sat in the sound of the wind.
 I knew what the wind would say.
 It said . . . or seemed to my mind . . .
 "The flowers are falling away.
 The summer," . . . it said, . . . "will not stay,
 And Love will be left behind."

The swallows were swinging themselves
 In the leaden-gray air aloft;
 Flitting by tens and twelves,
 And returning oft and oft;
 Like the thousand thoughts in me,
 That went, and came, and went,
 Not letting me even be
 Alone with my discontent.

The hard-veit weary vane
 Rattled, and moaned and was still,
 In the convent over the plain,
 By the side of the windy hill.
 It was sad to hear it complain,
 So fretful, and weak, and shrill,
 Again, and again, and in vain,
 While the wind was changing his will.

I thought of our walks last summer
 By the convent-walls so green;
 Of the first kiss stolen from her,
 With no one near to be seen.
 I thought (as we wandered on,
 Each of us waiting to speak)
 How the daylight left us alone,
 And left his last light on her cheek.

The plain was as cold and gray
 (With its villas like glimmering shells)
 As some north-ocean bay.
 All dumb in the church were the bells.
 In the mist, half a league away,
 Lay the little white house where she dwells.

I thought of her face so bright,
 By the firelight bending low
 O'er her work so neat and white;
 Of her singing so soft and slow;
 Of her tender-toned "Good-night";
 But a very few nights ago.

O'er the convent doors, I could see
 A pale and sorrowful-eyed
 Madonna looking at me,
 As when Our Lord first died.

There was not a lizard or spider
 To be seen on the broken walls.
 The ruts, with the rain, had grown wider
 And blacker since last night's falls.
 O'er the universal dulness
 There broke not a single beam.
 I thought how my love at its fulness
 Had changed like a change in a dream.

The olives were shedding fast
 About me, to left and right,
 In the lap of the scornful blast
 Black berries and leaflets white.
 I thought of the many romances
 One wintry word can blight;
 Of the tender and timorous fancies
 By a cold look put to flight.

How many noble deeds
 Strangled perchance at their birth!
 The smoke of the burning weeds
 Came up with the steam of the earth,
 From the red, wet ledges of soil,
 And the sere vines, row over row,—
 And the vineyard-men at their toil,
 Who sang in the vineyard below.

Last Spring, while I thought of her here,
 I found a red rose on the hill.
 There it lies, withered and sere!
 Let him trust to a woman who will.

I thought how her words had grown colder,
 And her fair face colder still,
 From the hour whose silence had told her
 What has left me heart-broken and ill;
 And "Oh!" I thought, . . . "if I be-
 hold her
 Walking there with him under the hill!"

O'er the mist, from the mournful city
 The bleak lamps gleamed aghast,—
 "She has neither justice, nor pity,"
 I thought, . . . "all's over at last!"
 The cold eve came. One star
 Through a ragged gray gap forlorn
 Fell down from some region afar,
 And sickened as soon as born.
 I thought, "How long and how lone
 The years will seem to be,
 When the last of her looks is gone,
 And my heart is silent in me!"

One streak of scornful gold,
 In the cloudy and billowy west,
 Burned with a light as cold
 As love in a much-wronged breast.

I thought of her face so fair;
Of her perfect bosom and arm;
Of her deep sweet eyes and hair;
Of her breath so pure and warm;
Of her foot so fine and fairy
Through the meadows where she would
pass;
Of the sweep of her skirts so airy
And fragrant over the grass.

I thought . . . "Can I live without her
Whatever she do, or say?"
I thought . . . "Can I dare to doubt her,
Now when I have given away
My whole self, body and spirit,
To keep, or to cast aside,
To dower or disinherit,
To use as she may decide?"

The West was beginning to close
O'er the last light burning there.
I thought . . . "And when that goes,
The dark will be everywhere!"

Oh! well is it hidden from man
Whatever the Future may bring.
The bells in the church began
On a sudden to sound and swing.
The chimes on the gust were caught,
And rolled up the windy height.
I rose, and returned, and thought . . .
"I SHALL NOT SEE HER TO-NIGHT."

A CHAIN TO WEAR.

AWAY! away! The dream was vain.
We meet too soon, or meet too late:
Still wear, as best you may, the chain
Your own hands forged about your fate,
Who could not wait!

What! . . . you had given your life away
Before you found what most life
misses?
Forsworn the bridal dream, you say,
Of that ideal love, whose kisses
Are vain as this is!

Well, I have left upon your mouth
The seal I know must burn there yet;
My claim is set upon your youth;
My sign upon your soul is set:
Dare you forget?

And you'll haunt, I know, where music
plays,
Yet find a pain in music's tone;

You'll blush, of course, when others
praise
That beauty scarcely now your own.
What's done, is done!

For me, you say, the world is wide,—
Too wide to find the grave I seek!
Enough! whatever now betide,
No greater pang can blanch my cheek.
Hush! . . . do not speak.

SILENCE.

WORDS of fire, and words of scorn,
I have written. Let them go!
Words of love—heart-broken, torn,
With this strong and sudden woe.
All my scorn, she could not doubt,
Was but love turned inside out.

Silence, silence, still unstirred;
Long, unbroken, unexplained:
Not one word, one little word,
Even to show her touched or pained:
Silence, silence, all unbroken:
Not a sound, a sign, a token.

Well, let silence gather round
All this shattered life of mine.
Shall I break it by a sound?
Let it grow, and be divine—
Divine as that Prometheus kept
When for his sake the sea-nymphs
wept.

Let silence settle, still and deep;
As the mist, the thunder-cloud,
O'er the lonely blasted steep,
Which the red bolt hath not bowed,
Settle, to drench out the star,
And cancel the blue vales afar.

In this silence I will sheathe
The sharp edge and point of all!
Not a sigh my lips shall breathe;
Not a groan, what'er befall.
And let this sworded silence be
A fence 'twixt prying fools and me.

Let silence be about her name,
And o'er the things which once have
been:

Let silence cover up my shame,
And annul that face, once seen
In fatal hours, and all the light
Of those eyes extinguish quite.

In silence, I go forth alone
O'er the solemn mystery
Of the deeds which, to be done,
Yet undone in the future lie.
I peer in Time's high nests, and there
Espy the callow brood of Care,

The fledgeless nurslings of Regret,
With beaks forever stretched for food:
But why should I forecount as yet
The ravage of that vulture brood?
O'er all these things let silence stay,
And lie, like snow, along my way.

Let silence in this outraged heart
Abide, and seal these lips forever;
Let silence dwell with me apart
Beside the ever-babbling river
Of that loud life in towns, that runs
Blind to the changes of the suns.

Ah! from what most mournful star,
Wasting down on evening's edge,
Or what barren isle afar
Flung by on some bare ocean ledge,
Came the wicked hag to us,
That changed the fairy revel thus?

There were sounds from sweet guitars
Once, and lights from lamps of amber;
Both went up among the stars
From many a perfumed palace-cham-
ber:
Suddenly the place seemed dead;
Light and music both were fled.

Darkness in each perfumed chamber;
Darkness, silence, in the stars;
Darkness on the lamps of amber;
Silence in the sweet guitars;
Darkness, silence, evermore
Guard empty chamber, moveless door.

NEWS.

NEWS, news, news, my gossiping
friends!
I have wonderful news to tell.
A lady, by me, her compliments sends;
And this is the news from Hell:

The Devil is dead. He died resigned,
Though somewhat opprest by cares;
But his wife, my friends, is a woman of
mind,
And looks after her lord's affairs.

I have just come back from that wonder-
ful place,
And kist hands with the Queen down
there;
But I cannot describe Her Majesty's face,
It has filled me so with despair.

The place is not what you might sup-
pose:
It is worse in some respects.
But all that I heard there, I must not
disclose,
For the lady that told me objects.

The laws of the land are not Salique,
But the King never dies, of course;
The new Queen is young, and pretty,
and *chic*,
There are women, I think, that are
worse.

But however that be, one thing I know,
And this I am free to tell;
The Devil, my friends, is a woman, just
now;
'T is a woman that reigns in Hell.

COUNT RINALDO RINALDI.

'T is a dark-purple, moonlighted mid-
night:
There is music about on the air.
And, where, through the water, fall
flashing

The oars of each gay gondolier,
The lamp-lighted ripples are dashing,
In the musical moonlighted air,
To the music, in merriment; washing,
And splashing, the black marble stair
That leads to the last garden-terrace,
Where many a gay cavalier
And many a lady yet loiter,
Round the Palace in festival there.

'T is a terrace all paven mosaic, —
Black marble, and green malachite;
Round an ancient Venetian Palace,
Where the windows with lampions are
bright.

'T is an evening of gala and festival,
Music, and passion, and light.
There is love in the nightingales' throats,
That sing in the garden so well:
There is love in the face of the moon:

There is love in the warm languid glances
Of the dancers adown the dim dances :
There is love in the low languid notes
That rise into rapture, and swell,
From viol, and flute, and bassoon.

The tree that bends down o'er the water
So black, is a black cypress-tree.
And the statue, there, under the terrace,
Mnemosyne's statue must be.
There comes a black gondola slowly
To the Palace in festival there :
And the Count Rinaldo Rinaldi
Has mounted the black marble stair.

There was nothing but darkness, and
midnight,
And tempest, and storm, in the breast
Of the Count Rinaldo Rinaldi,
As his foot o'er the black marble
prest : —
The glimmering black marble stair
Where the weed in the green ooze is
clinging,
That leads to the garden so fair,
Where the nightingales softly are
singing, —
Where the minstrels new music are
stringing,
And the dancers for dancing prepare.

There rustles a robe of white satin :
There's a footstep falls light by the
stair :

There rustles a robe of white satin :
There's a gleaming of soft golden hair :
And the Lady Irene Ricasoli
Stands near the cypress-tree there, —
Near Mnemosyne's statue so fair, —
The Lady Irene Ricasoli,
With the light in her long golden
hair.

And the nightingales softly are singing
In the mellow and moonlighted air ;
And the minstrels their viols are string-
ing ;
And the dancers for dancing prepare.

"Siora," the Count said unto her,
"The shafts of ill-fortune pursue me ;
The old grief grows newer and newer,
The old pangs are never at rest ;
And the foes that have sworn to undo
me
Have left me no peace in my breast.

They have slandered, and wronged, and
maligned me :

Though they broke not my sword in
my hand,

They have broken my heart in my bosom
And sorrow my youth has unmanned.
But I love you, Irene, Irene,

With such love as the wretched alone
Can feel from the desert within them
Which only the wretched have known !
And the heart of Rinaldo Rinaldi
Dreads, Lady, no frown but your
own.

To others be all that you are, love —
A lady more lovely than most ;
To me — be a fountain, a star, love,
That lights to his haven the lost ;
A shrine that with tender devotion,
The mariner kneeling, doth deck
With the dank weeds yet dripping from
ocean,
And the last jewel saved from the
wreck.

"None heeds us, beloved Irene !
None will mark if we linger or fly.
Amid all the mad masks in yon revel,
There is not an ear or an eye, —
Not one, — that will gaze or will listen ;
And, save the small star in the sky
Which, to light us, so softly doth glisten,
There is none will pursue us, Irene.
O love me, O save me, I die !
I am thine, O be mine, O beloved !

"Fly with me, Irene, Irene !
The moon drops : the morning is near,
My gondola waits by the garden
And fleet is my own gondolier !"
What the Lady Irene Ricasoli,
By Mnemosyne's statue in stone,
Where she leaned, 'neath the black
cypress-tree,

To the Count Rinaldo Rinaldi
Replied then, it never was known,
And known, now, it never will be.

But the moon hath been melted in
morning :
And the lamps in the windows are
dead :

And the gay cavaliers from the terrace,
And the ladies they laughed with, are
fled ;

And the music is hushed in the viols :
And the minstrels, and dancers, are
gone ;

And the nightingales now in the garden,
From singing have ceased, one by one :
But the Count Rinaldo Rinaldi
Still stands, where he last stood, alone,
'Neath the black cypress-tree, near the
water,
By Mnemosyne's statue in stone.

O'er his spirit was silence and midnight,
In his breast was the calm of despair.
He took, with a smile, from a casket
A single soft curl of gold hair, —
A wavy warm curl of gold hair,
And into the black-bosomed water
He flung it athwart the black stair.
The skies they were changing above him ;
The dawn, it came cold on the air ;
He drew from his bosom a kerchief —
"Would," he sighed, "that her face
was less fair !
That her face was less hopelessly fair."
And folding the kerchief, he covered
The eyes of Mnemosyne there.

THE LAST MESSAGE.

FLING the lattice open,
And the music plain you'll hear ;
Lean out of the window,
And you'll see the lamplight clear.

There, you see the palace
Where the bridal is to-night.
You may shut the window.
Come here, to the light.

Take this portrait with you,
Look well before you go.
She can scarce be altered
Since a year ago.

Women's hearts change lightly,
(Truth both trite and olden !)
But blue eyes remain blue ;
Golden hair stays golden.

Once I knew two sisters :
One was dark and grave
As the tomb ; one radiant
And changeful as the wave.

Now away, friend, quickly !
Mix among the masks :
Say you are the bride's friend,
If the bridegroom asks.

If the bride have dark hair,
And an olive brow,
Give her this gold bracelet ; —
Come and let me know.

If the bride have bright hair,
And a brow of snow,
In the great canal there
Quick the portrait throw :

And you'll merely give her
This poor faded flower.
Thanks ! now leave your stilet
With me for an hour.

You're my friend : whatever
I ask you now to do,
If the case were altered,
I would do for you.

And you'll promise me, my mother
Shall never miss her son,
If anything should happen
Before the night is done.

VENICE.

THE sylphs and ondines,
And the sea-kings and queens,
Long ago, long ago, on the waves built a
city,
As lovely as seems
To some bard, in his dreams,
The soul of his latest love-ditty.
Long ago, long ago, — ah ! that was long
ago

Thick as gems on the chalices
Kings keep for treasure,
Were the temples and palaces
In this city of pleasure :
And the night broke out shining
With lamps and with festival,
O'er the squares, o'er the streets ;
And the soft sea went, pining
With love, through the musical,
Musical bridges, and marble re-
treats

Of this city of wonder, where dwelt the
ondines,
Long ago, and the sylphs, and the sea-
kings and queens,
— Ah ! that was long ago !
But the sylphs and ondines,
And the sea-kings and queens
Are fled under the waves :

And I glide, and I glide
Up the glimmering tide
Through a city of graves.
Here will I bury my heart,
Wrapt in the dream it dreamed ;
One grave more to the many !
One grave as silent as any ;
Sculptured about with art, —
For a palace this tomb once seemed.
Light lips have laughed there,
Bright eyes have beamed.
Revel and dance ;
Lady and lover !
Pleasure hath quaffed there :
Beauty hath gleamed,
Love wooed Romance.
Now all is over !
And I glide, and I glide
Up the glimmering tide,
'Mid forms silently passing, as silent as
any,
Here, 'mid the waves,
In this city of graves
To bury my heart — one grave more to
the many !

ON THE SEA.

COME ! breathe thou soft, or blow thou
bold,
Thy coming be it kind or cold,
Thou soul of the heedless ocean wind ; —
Little I rede and little I reckon,
Though the mast be snapt on the mizzen-
deck,
So thou blow her last kiss from my neck,
And her memory from my mind !
Comrades around the mast,
The welkin is o'er-cast :
One watch is wellnigh past —
Out of sight of shore at last !
Fade fast, thou falling shore,
With that fair false face of yore,
And the love, and the life, now o'er !
What she sought, that let her have —
The praise of traitor and knave,
The simper of coward and slave,
And the worm that clings and stings —
The knowledge of nobler things.
But here shall the mighty sea
Make moan with my heart in me,
And her name be torn
By the winds in scorn,

In whose march we are moving free.
I am free, I am free, I am free !
Hark ! how the wild waves roar !
Hark ! how the wild winds rave !
Courage, true hearts and brave,
Whom Fate can afflict no more !

Comrades, the night is long.
I will sing you an ancient song
Of a tale that was told
In the days of old,
Of a Baron blithe and strong, —
High heart and bosom bold,
To strive for the right with wrong !

“ Who left his castled home,
When the Cross was raised in Rome,
And swore on his sword
To fight for the Lord,
And the banners of Christendom.
To die or to overcome !

“ In hauberk of mail, and helmet of steel,
And armor of proof from head to heel,
O, what is the wound which he shall
feel ?
And where the foe that shall make him
reel ?
True knight on whose crest the cross doth
shine !
They buckled his harness, brought him
his steed —

A stallion black of the land's best breed —
Belted his spurs, and bade him God-speed
'Mid the Paynim in Palestine.
But the wife that he loved, when she
poured him up

A last deep health in her golden cup,
Put poison into the wine.

“ So he rode till the land he loved grew
dim,
And that poison began to work in him, —
A true knight chanting his Christian
hymn,

With the cross on his gallant crest.
Eastward, aye, from the waning west,
Toward the land where the bones of the
Saviour rest,
And the Battle of God is to win :
With his young wife's picture upon his
breast,
And her poisoned wine within.

“ Alas ! poor knight, poor knight !
He carries the foe he cannot fight
In his own true breast shut up.

He shall die or ever he fight for the Lord,
And his heart be broken before his sword.
He hath pledged his life
To a faithless wife,
In the wine of a poisoned cup !”

Comrade, thy hand in mine !
Pledge me in our last wine,
While all is dark on the brine.
My friend, I reckon not now
If the wild night-wind should blow
Our bark beyond the poles : —
To drift through fire or snow,
Out of reach of all we know —
Cold heart, and narrow brow,
Smooth faces, sordid souls !
Lost, like some pale crew
From Ophir, in golden galleys,
On a witch's island ! who
Wander the tamarisk alleys,
Where the heaven is blue,
And the ocean too,
That murmurs among the valleys.

“ Perisht with all on board !”
So runs the vagrant fame —
Thy wife weds another lord,
My children forget my name,
While we count new stars by night.
Each wanders out of sight
Till the beard on his chin grows white
And scant grow the curls on his head.
One paces the placid hours
In dim enchanted bowers,
By a soft-eyed Panther led
To a magical milk-white bed
Of deep, pale poison-flowers.
With ruined gods one dwells,
In caverns among the fells,
Where, with desolate arms outspread,
A single tree stands dead,
Smitten by savage spells,
And striking a silent dread
From its black and blighted head
Through the horrible, hopeless, sultry
dells
Of Elephanta, the Red.

BOOK II.—IN FRANCE.

“PRENSUS IN ÆGÆO.”

“T is toil must help us to forget.
In strife, they say, grief finds repose.
Well, there's the game ! I throw the
stakes : —
A life of war, a world of foes,
A heart that triumphs while it breaks.
Some day I too, perchance, may lose
This shade which memory o'er me
throws,
And laugh as others laugh, (who
knows ?)
But ah, 't will not be yet !
How many years since she and I
Walked that old terrace, hand-in-
hand !
Just one star in the rosy sky,
And silence on the summer land.
And she ? . . . I think I hear her sing
That song, — the last of all our songs.
How all comes back ! — thing after thing,
The old life o'er me throngs !

But I must to the palace go ;
The ambassador's to-morrow :
Here 's little time for thought, I know,
And little more for sorrow.
Already in the *porte-cochère*
The carriage sounds . . . my hat and
gloves !
I hear my friend's foot on the stair, —
How joyously it moves !
He must have done some wicked thing
To make him tread so light :
Or is it only that the king
Admired his wife last night ?
We talk of nations by the way,
And praise the Nuncio's manners,
And end with something fine to say
About the “allied banners.”
’T is well to mix with all conditions
Of men in every station :
I sup to-morrow with musicians,
Upon the invitation
Of my clever friend, the journalist,
Who writes the reading plays
Which no one reads ; a socialist
Most social in his ways.

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How joyously it moves!

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And end with something fine to say
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'Tis well to mix with all conditions
Of men in every station:
I sup to-morrow with musicians,
Upon the invitation

Of my clever friend, the journalist,
Who writes the reading plays
Which no one reads; a socialist
Most social in his ways.

But I am sick of all the din
That's made, in praising Verdi,
Who only know a violin
Is not a hurdy-gurdy.

Here oft, while on a nerveless hand
An aching brow reclining,
Through this tall window where I stand,
I see the great town shining.

Hard by, the restless Boulevard roars,
Heard all the night through, even in
dreaming:

While from its hundred open doors
The many-headed Life is streaming,
Upon the world's wide thoroughfares
My lot is cast. So be it!

Each on his back his burthen bears,
And feels, though he may not see it.
My life is not more hard than theirs
Who toil on either side:
They cry for quiet in their prayers,
And it is still denied.

But sometimes, when I stand alone,
Life pauses, — now and then:
And in the distance dies the moan
Of miserable men.

As in a dream (how strange!) I seem
To be lapsing, slowly, slowly,
From noise and strife, to a stiller life,
Where all is hushed and holy.

Ah, love! our way's in a stranger land.
We may not rest together.
For an Angel takes me by the hand,
And leads me . . . whither? whither?

À L'ENTRESOL.

ONE circle of all its golden hours
The fitting hand of the Time-piece
there,
In its close white bower of china flowers,
Hath rounded unaware:

While the firelight, flung from the flicker-
ing wall
On the large and limpid mirror behind,
Hath reddened and darkened down o'er
all,
As the fire itself declined.

Something of pleasure and something of
pain
There lived in that sinking light.
What is it?

Faces I never shall look at again,
In places you never will visit,

Revealed themselves in each faltering
ember,

While, under a palely wavering flame,
Half of the years life aches to remember
Reappeared, and died as they came.

To its dark Forever an hour hath gone
Since either you or I have spoken:
Each of us might have been sitting
alone

In a silence so unbroken.

I never shall know what made me look
up
(In this cushioned chair so soft and
deep,

By the table where, over the empty cup,
I was leaning, half asleep)

To catch a gleam on the picture up
there
Of the saint in the wilderness under
the oak;

And a light on the brow of the bronze
Voltaire,
Like the ghost of a cynical joke.

To mark, in each violet velvet fold
Of the curtains that fall 'twixt room
and room,

The dip and dance of the manifold
Shadows of rosy gloom.

O'er the Rembrandt there — the Caracci
here —

Flutter warmly the ruddy and waver-
ing hues;
And St. Anthony over his book has a
leer

At the little French beauty by Greuze.

There, — the Leda, weighed over her
white swan's back,
By the weight of her passionate kiss,
ere it falls;

O'er the ebony cabinet, glittering black
Through its ivory cups and balls:

Your scissors and thimble, and work
laid away,

With its silks, in the scented rose-
wood box;

The journals, that tell truth every day,
And that novel of Paul de Kock's:

The flowers in the vase, with their bells
shut close

In a dream of the far green fields
where they grew;

The cards of the visiting people and
shows

In that bowl with the sea-green hue.

Your shawl, with a queenly droop of its
own,

Hanging over the arm of the crimson
chair:

And, last, — yourself, as silent as stone,
In a glow of the firelight there!

I thought you were reading all this time.
And was it some wonderful page of
your book

Telling of love, with its glory and crime,
That has left you that sorrowful look?

For a tear from those dark, deep, humid
orbs

'Neath their lashes, so long, and soft,
and sleek,

All the light in your lustrous eyes ab-
sorbs,

As it trembles over your cheek.

Were you thinking how we, sitting side
by side,

Might be dreaming miles and miles
apart?

Or if lips could meet over a gulf so wide
As separates heart from heart?

Ah, well! when time is flown, how it
fled

It is better neither to ask nor tell.

Leave the dead moments to bury their
dead.

Let us kiss and break the spell!

Come, arm in arm, to the window here;
Draw by the thick curtain, and see
how, to-night,

In the clear and frosty atmosphere,
The lamps are burning bright.

All night, and forever, in yon great town,
The heaving Boulevard flares and roars;

And the streaming Life flows up and
down

From its hundred open doors.

It is scarcely so cold, but I and you,
With never a friend to find us out,

May stare at the shops for a moment
or two,
And wander awhile about.

For when in the crowd we have taken
our place,
(— Just two more lives to the mighty
street there!)

Knowing no single form or face
Of the men and women we meet
there, —

Knowing, and known of, none in the
whole
Of that crowd all round, but our two
selves only,

We shall grow nearer, soul to soul,
Until we feel less lonely.

Here are your bonnet and gloves, dear.
There, —

How stately you look in that long
rich shawl!

Put back your beautiful golden hair,
That never a curl may fall.

Stand in the firelight . . . so, . . . as you
were, —

O my heart, how fearfully like her
she seemed!

Hide me up from my own despair,
And the ghost of a dream I dreamed!

TERRA INCOGNITA.

How sweet it is to sit beside her,
When the hour brings nought that's
better!

All day in my thoughts to hide her,
And, with fancies free from fetter,
Half remember, half forget her.
Just to find her out by times

In my mind, among sweet fancies
Laid away:

In the fall of mournful rhymes;
In a dream of distant climes;

In the sights a lonely man sees
At the dropping of the day;

Grave or gay.
As a maiden sometimes locks

With old letters, whose contents
Tears have faded,

In an old worm-eaten box,
Some sweet packet of faint scents,
Silken-braided;

And forgets it:

Careless, so I hide
 In my life her love, —
 Fancies on each side,
 Memories heaped above : —
 There it lies, unspied :
 Nothing frets it.
 On a sudden, when
 Deed, or word, or glance,
 Brings me back again
 To the old romance,
 With what rapture then, —
 When, in its completeness,
 Once my heart hath found it,
 By each sense detected,
 Steals on me the sweetness
 Of the air around it,
 Where it lies neglected !
 Shall I break the charm of this
 In a single minute ?
 For some chance with fuller bliss
 Proffered in it ?
 Secrets unsealed by a kiss,
 Could I win it !
 'T is so sweet to linger near her,
 Idly so !
 Never reckoning, while I hear her
 Whispering low,
 If each whisper will make clearer
 Bliss or woe ;
 Never roused to hope or fear her
 Yes or No !
 What if, seeking something more
 Than before,
 All that's given I displace —
 Calm and grace —
 Nothing ever can restore,
 As of yore,
 That old quiet face !
 Quiet skies in quiet lakes,
 No wind wakes,
 All their beauty double :
 But a single pebble breaks
 Lake and sky to trouble ;
 Then dissolves the foam it makes
 In a bubble.
 With the pebble in my hand,
 Here, upon the brink, I stand ;
 Meanwhile, standing on the brink,
 Let me think !
 Not for her sake, but for mine,
 Let those eyes unquestioned shine,
 Half divine :
 Let no hand disturb the rare
 Smoothness of that lustrous hair
 Anywhere :
 Let that white breast never break
 Its calm motion — sleep or wake —

For my sake.
 Not for her sake, but for mine,
 All I might have, I resign.
 Should I glow
 To the hue — the fragrance fine —
 The mere first sight of the wine,
 If I drained the goblet low ?
 Who can know ?
 With her beauty like the snow,
 Let her go ! Shall I repine
 That no idle breath of mine
 Melts it ? No ! 'T is better so.
 All the same, as she came,
 With her beauty like the snow,
 Cold, unspotted, let her go !

A REMEMBRANCE.

'T was eve and May when last, through
 tears,
 Thine eyes sought mine, thy hand my
 hand.
 The night came down her silent spheres,
 And up the silent land.
 In silence, too, my thoughts were furled,
 Like ring-doves in the dreaming grove.
 Who would not lightly lose the world
 To keep such love ?
 But many Mays, with all their flowers,
 Are faded since that blissful time —
 The last of all my happy hours
 I' the golden clime !
 By hands not thine these wreaths were
 curled
 That hide the care my brows above :
 And I have almost gained the world,
 But lost that love.
 As though for some serene dead brow,
 These wreaths for me I let them twine.
 I hear the voice of praise, and know
 It is not thine.
 How many long and lonely days
 I strove with life thy love to gain !
 I know my work was worth thy praise ;
 But all was vain.
 Vain Passion's fire, vain Music's art !
 For who from thorns grape-bunches
 gathers ?
 What depth is in the shallow heart ?
 What weight in feathers ?

As drops the blossom, ere the growth
 Of fruit, on some autumnal tree,
 I drop from my changed life, its youth
 And joy in thee :

And look beyond, and o'er thee, — right
 To some sublimer end than lies
 Within the compass of the sight
 Of thy cold eyes.

With thine my soul hath ceased its strife.
 Thy part is filled ; thy work is done ;
 Thy falsehood buried in my life,
 And known to none.

Yet still will golden memories frame
 Thy broken image in my heart,
 And love for what thou wast shut blame
 From what thou art.

In Life's long galleries, haunting-eyed,
 Thy pictured face no change shall show ;
 Like some dead Queen's who lived and died
 An age ago !

MADAME LA MARQUISE.

THE folds of her wine-dark violet dress
 Glow over the sofa, fall on fall,
 As she sits in the air of her loveliness
 With a smile for each and for all.

Half of her exquisite face in the shade
 Which o'er it the screen in her soft
 hand flings :
 Through the gloom glows her hair in its
 odorous braid :
 In the firelight are sparkling her rings.

As she leans, — the slow smile half shut
 up in her eyes
 Beams the sleepy, long, silk-soft lashes
 beneath ;
 Through her crimson lips, stirred by her
 faint replies,
 Breaks one gleam of her pearl-white
 teeth.

As she leans, — where your eye, by her
 beauty subdued,
 Droops — from under warm fringes of
 broidery white
 The slightest of feet — silken-slippered,
 protrude,
 For one moment, then slip out of
 sight.

As I bend o'er her bosom, to tell her the
 news,
 The faint scent of her hair, the ap-
 proach of her cheek,
 The vague warmth of her breath, all my
 senses suffuse
 With HERSELF : and I tremble to speak.

So she sits in the curtained, luxurious
 light
 Of that room, with its porcelain, and
 pictures, and flowers,
 When the dark day's half done, and the
 snow flutters white,
 Past the windows in feathery showers.

All without is so cold, — 'neath the low
 leaden sky !
 Down the bald, empty street, like a
 ghost, the gendarme
 Stalks surly : a distant carriage hums
 by : —
 All within is so bright and so warm !

Here we talk of the schemes and the
 scandals of court,
 How the courtesan pushes : the char-
 latan thrives :
 We put horns on the heads of our friends,
 just for sport :
 Put intrigues in the heads of their
 wives.

Her warm hand, at parting, so strangely
 thrilled mine,
 That at dinner I scarcely remark what
 they say, —
 Drop the ice in my soup, spill the salt
 in my wine,
 Then go yawn at my favorite play.

But she drives after noon : — then 's the
 time to behold her,
 With her fair face half hid, like a ripe
 peeping rose,
 'Neath that veil, — o'er the velvets and
 furs which enfold her,
 Leaning back with a queenly repose, —

As she glides up the sunlight ! . . . You'd
 say she was made
 To loll back in a carriage, all day, with
 a smile,
 And at dusk, on a sofa, to lean in the
 shade
 Of soft lamps, and be wooed for a
 while.

Could we find out her heart through
that velvet and lace!
Can it beat without ruffling her sumptuous dress?
She will show us her shoulder, her bosom, her face;
But what the heart's like, we must guess.

With live women and men to be found
in the world —
(— Live with sorrow and sin, — live
with pain and with passion, —)
Who could live with a doll, though its locks should be curled,
And its petticoats trimmed in the fashion?
'T is so fair! . . . would my bite, if I bit it, draw blood?
Will it cry if I hurt it? or sould if I kiss?
Is it made, with its beauty, of wax or of wood?
. . . Is it worth while to guess at all this?

THE NOVEL.

"HERE, I have a book at last —
Sure," I thought, "to make you weep!"
But a careless glance you cast
O'er its pages, half asleep.

'T is a novel, — a romance,
(What you will) of youth, of home,
And of brilliant days in France,
And long moonlit nights in Rome.

'T is a tale of tears and sins,
Of love's glory and its gloom;
In a ball-room it begins,
And it ends beside a tomb;

There's a little heroine too,
Whom each chapter leaves more pale;
And her eyes are dark and blue
Like the violet of the vale;

And her hand is frail and fair;
Could you but have seen it lie
O'er the convent death-bed, where
Wept the nuns to watch her die,

You, I think, had wept as well;
For the patience in her face
(Where the dying sunbeam fell)
Had such strange heart-breaking grace.

There's a lover, eager, bold,
Knocking at the convent gate:
But that little hand grows cold,
And the lover knocks too late.

There's a high-born lady stands
At a golden mirror, pale;
Something makes her jewelled hands
Tremble, as she hears the tale

Which her maid (while weaving roses
For the ball, through her dark hair)
Mixed with other news, discloses.
O, to-night she will look fair!

There's an old man, feeble-handed,
Counting gold . . . "My son shall wed
With the Princess, as I planned it,
Now that little girl is dead."

There's a young man, sullen, husht,
By remorse and grief unmanned,
With a withered primrose crusht
In his hot and feverish hand.

There's a broken-hearted woman,
Haggard, desolate, and wild,
Says . . . "The world hath grown in-
human!
Bury me beside my child."

And the little god of this world
Hears them, laughing in his sleeve.
He is master still in his world,
There's another, we believe.

Of this history every part
You have seen, yet did not heed it;
For 't is written in my heart,
And you have not learned to read it.

AUX ITALIENS.

At Paris it was, at the Opera there; —
And she looked like a queen in a book,
that night,
With the wreath of pearl in her raven
hair,
And the brooch on her breast, so
bright.

Of all the operas that Verdi wrote,
The best, to my taste, is the *Trovatore*:
And Mario can soothe with a tenor note
The souls in Purgatory.

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow:
And who was not thrilled in the
strangest way,
As we heard him sing, while the gas
burned low,
"Non ti scordar di me"?

The Emperor there, in his box of state,
Looked grave, as if he had just then
seen
The red flag wave from the city-gate,
Where his eagles in bronze had been.

The Empress, too, had a tear in her eye.
You'd have said that her fancy had
gone back again,
For one moment, under the old blue sky,
To the old glad life in Spain.

Well! there in our front-row box we sat,
Together, my bride-betrothed and I;
My gaze was fixed on my opera-hat,
And hers on the stage hard by.

And both were silent, and both were sad.
Like a queen, she leaned on her full
white arm,
With that regal, indolent air she had;
So confident of her charm!

I have not a doubt she was thinking then
Of her former lord, good soul that he
was!
Who died the richest and roundest of
men,
The Marquis of Carabas.

I hope that, to get to the kingdom of
heaven,
Through a needle's eye he had not to
pass.
I wish him well, for the jointure given
To my lady of Carabas.

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first
love,
As I had not been thinking of aught
for years,
Till over my eyes there began to move
Something that felt like tears.

I thought of the dress that she wore last
time,
When we stood, 'neath the cypress-
trees, together,
In that lost land, in that soft clime,
In the crimson evening weather:

Of that muslin dress (for the eye was hot),
And her warm white neck in its golden
chain
And her full, soft hair, just tied in a
knot,
And falling loose again:

And the jasmin-flower in her fair young
breast:
(O the faint, sweet smell of that jas-
min-flower!)
And the one bird singing alone to his
nest:
And the one star over the tower.

I thought of our little quarrels and strife;
And the letter that brought me back
my ring.
And it all seemed then, in the waste of
life,
Such a very little thing!

For I thought of her grave below the hill,
Which the sentinel cypress-tree stands
over.
And I thought . . . "were she only liv-
ing still,
How I could forgive her, and love
her!"

And I swear, as I thought of her thus,
in that hour,
And of how, after all, old things were
best,
That I smelt the smell of that jasmin-
flower,
Which she used to wear in her breast.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
It made me creep, and it made me cold!
Like the scent that steals from the
crumbling sheet
Where a mummy is half unrolled.

And I turned, and looked. She was sit-
ting there
In a dim box, over the stage; and drest
In that muslin dress, with that full soft
hair,
And that jasmin in her breast!

I was here: and she was there:
And the glittering horseshoe curved
between: —
From my bride-betrothed, with her raven
hair,
And her sumptuous, scornful mien.

To my early love, with her eyes downcast,
And over her primrose face the shade,
(In short from the Future back to the Past)
There was but a step to be made.

To my early love from my future bride
One moment I looked. Then I stole
to the door,
I traversed the passage; and down at
her side,
I was sitting, a moment more.

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,
Or something which never will be ex-
prest,
Had brought her back from the grave
again,
With the jasmin in her breast.

She is not dead, and she is not wed!
But she loves me now, and she loved
me then!
And the very first word that her sweet
lips said,
My heart grew youthful again.

The Marchioness there, of Carabas,
She is wealthy, and young, and hand-
some still,
And but for her . . . well, we'll let that
pass,
She may marry whomever she will.

But I will marry my own first love,
With her primrose face: for old things
are best,
And the flower in her bosom, I prize it
above
The brooch in my lady's breast.

The world is filled with folly and sin,
And Love must cling where it can, I say:
For Beauty is easy enough to win;
But one is n't loved every day.

And I think, in the lives of most women
and men,
There's a moment when all would go
smooth and even,
If only the dead could find out when
To come back, and be forgiven.

But O the smell of that jasmin-flower!
And O that music! and O the way
That voice rang out from the donjon tower
*Non ti scordar di me,
Non ti scordar di me!*

PROGRESS.

WHEN Liberty lives loud on every lip,
But Freedom moans,
Trampled by Nations whose faint foot-
falls slip
Round bloody thrones;
When, here and there, in dungeon and in
thrall,
Or exile pale,
Like torches dying at a funeral,
Brave natures fail;

When Truth, the armed archangel,
stretches wide
God's tromp in vain,
And the world, drowsing, turns upon its
side
To drowse again;
O Man, whose course hath called itself
sublime
Since it began,
What art thou in such dying age of time,
As man to man?

When Love's last wrong hath been for-
gotten coldly,
As First Love's face:
And, like a rat that comes to wanton
boldly
In some lone place,
Once festal, — in the realm of light and
laughter
Grim Doubt appears;

Whilst weird suggestions from Death's
vague Hereafter,
O'er ruined years,
Creep, dark and darker, with new dread
to mutter
Through Life's long shade,
Yet make no more in the chill breast the
flutter
Which once they made:
Whether it be, — that all doth at the
grave
Round to its term,
That nothing lives in that last darkness,
save
The little worm,
Or whether the tired spirit prolong its
course
Through realms unseen, —
Secure, that unknown world cannot be
worse
Than this hath been;

Then when through Thought's gold
chain, so frail and slender,
No link will meet;

When all the broken harps of Language
render
No sound that's sweet;
When, like torn books, sad days weigh
down each other
I' the dusty shelf;
O Man, what art thou, O my friend, my
brother,
Even to thyself?

THE PORTRAIT.

MIDNIGHT past! Not a sound of aught
Through the silent house, but the
wind at his prayers.
I sat by the dying fire, and thought
Of the dear dead woman up stairs.

A night of tears! for the gusty rain
Had ceased, but the eaves were drip-
ping yet;
And the moon looked forth, as though
in pain,
With her face all white and wet:

Nobody with me, my watch to keep,
But the friend of my bosom, the man
I love:
And grief had sent him fast to sleep
In the chamber up above.

Nobody else, in the country place
All round, that knew of my loss beside,
But the good young Priest with the
Raphael-face,
Who confessed her when she died.

That good young Priest is of gentle nerve,
And my grief had moved him beyond
control;
For his lip grew white, as I could observe,
When he speeded her parting soul.

I sat by the dreary hearth alone:
I thought of the pleasant days of
yore:
I said "the staff of my life is gone:
The woman I loved is no more.

"On her cold, dead bosom my portrait
lies,
Which next to her heart she used to
wear —
Haunting it o'er with her tender eyes
When my own face was not there.

"It is set all round with rubies red,
And pearls which a Peri might have
kept.
For each ruby there, my heart hath bled:
For each pearl, my eyes have wept."

And I said — "the thing is precious to
me:
They will bury her soon in the church-
yard clay;
It lies on her heart, and lost must be,
If I do not take it away."

I lighted my lamp at the dying flame,
And crept up the stairs that creaked for
fright,
Till into the chamber of death I came,
Where she lay all in white.

The moon shone over her winding-sheet.
There, stark she lay on her carven bed:
Seven burning tapers about her feet,
And seven about her head.

As I stretched my hand, I held my
breath;
I turned as I drew the curtains apart:
I dared not look on the face of death:
I knew where to find her heart,

I thought, at first, as my touch fell there,
It had warmed that heart to life, with
love;
For the thing I touched was warm, I
swear,
And I could feel it move.

'T was the hand of a man, that was mov-
ing slow
O'er the heart of the dead, — from the
other side;
And at once the sweat broke over my
brow,
"Who is robbing the corpse?" I cried.

Opposite me, by the tapers' light,
The friend of my bosom, the man I
loved,
Stood over the corpse, and all as white,
And neither of us moved.

"What do you here, my friend?" . . .
The man
Looked first at me, and then at the
dead.
"There is a portrait here," he began;
"There is. It is mine," I said.

Said the friend of my bosom, "yours, no doubt,
The portrait was, till a month ago,
When this suffering angel took that out,
And placed mine there, I know."

"This woman, she loved me well," said I.
"A month ago," said my friend to me;

"And in your throat," I groaned, "you lie!"
He answered . . . "let us see."

"Enough!" I returned, "let the dead decide:
And whose soever the portrait prove,
His shall it be, when the cause is tried,
Where Death is arraigned by Love."

We found the portrait there, in its place:
We opened it, by the tapers' shine:
The gems were all unchanged: the face
Was — neither his nor mine.

"One nail drives out another, at least!
The face of the portrait there," I cried,
"Is our friend's, the Raphael-faced
young Priest,
Who confessed her when she died."

The setting is all of rubies red,
And pearls which a Peri might have kept.
For each ruby there my heart hath bled:
For each pearl my eyes have wept.

ASTARTE.

WHEN the latest strife is lost, and all is done with,
Ere we slumber in the spirit and the brain,
We drowse back, in dreams, to days that life begun with,
And their tender light returns to us again.

I have cast away the tangle and the torment
Of the cords that bound my life up in a mesh:
And the pulse begins to throb that long lay dormant
'Neath their pressure; and the old wounds bleed afresh.

I am touched again with shades of early sadness,
Like the summer-cloud's light shadow in my hair:
I am thrilled again with breaths of boyish gladness,
Like the scent of some last primrose on the air.

And again she comes, with all her silent graces,
The lost woman of my youth, yet unpossessed:
And her cold face so unlike the other faces
Of the women whose dead lips I since have prest.

The motion and the fragrance of her garments
Seem about me, all the day long, in the room:
And her face, with its bewildering old endearments
Comes at night, between the curtains, in the gloom.

When vain dreams are stirred with sighing, near the morning,
To my own her phantom lips I feel approach:
And her smile, at eve, breaks o'er me without warning
From its speechless, pale, perpetual reproach.

When Life's dawning glimmer yet had all the tint there
Of the orient, in the freshness of the grass,
(Ah, what feet since then have trodden out the print there!)
Did her soft, her silent footsteps fall, and pass.

They fell lightly, as the dew falls, 'mid ungathered
Meadow-flowers; and lightly lingered with the dew.
But the dew is gone, the grass is dried and withered,
And the traces of those steps have faded too.

Other footsteps fall about me, — faint, uncertain,
In the shadow of the world, as it recedes:

Other forms peer through the half-uplifted curtain
Of that mystery which hangs behind the creeds.

What is gone, is gone forever. And new fashions
May replace old forms which nothing can restore:
But I turn from sighing back departed passions
With that pining at the bosom as of yore.

I remember to have murmured, morn and even,
"Though the Earth dispart these Earthlies, face from face,
Yet the Heavenlies shall surely join in Heaven,
For the spirit hath no bonds in time or space.

"Where it listeth, there it bloweth; all existence
Is its region; and it houseth, where it will.
I shall feel her through immeasurable distance,
And grow nearer and be gathered to her still.

"If I fail to find her out by her gold tresses,
Brows, and breast, and lips, and language of sweet strains,
I shall know her by the traces of dead kisses,
And that portion of myself which she retains."

But my being is confused with new experience,
And changed to something other than it was:
And the Future with the Past is set at variance;
And Life falters with the burthens which it has.

Earth's old sins press fast behind me, weakly wailing:
Faint before me fleets the good I have not done:
And my search for her may still be un-availing
'Mid the spirits that are passed beyond the sun.

AT HOME DURING THE BALL.

'T is hard upon the dawn, and yet
She comes not from the Ball.
The night is cold, and bleak, and wet,
And the snow lies over all.

I praised her with her diamonds on: —
And, as she went, she smiled.
And yet I sighed, when she was gone,
Above our sleeping child.

And all night long, as soft and slow
As falls the falling rain,
The thoughts of days gone long ago
Have filled my heart again.

Once more I hear the Rhine rush down,
(I hear it in my mind!)
Once more, about the sleeping town,
The lamps wink in the wind.

The narrow, silent street I pass:
The house stands o'er the river:
A light is at the casement-glass,
That leads my soul forever.

I feel my way along the gloom,
Stair after stair, I push the door:
I find no change within the room,
And all things as of yore.

One little room was all we had
For June and for December.
The world is wide, but O how sad
It seems, when I remember!

The cage with the canary-bird
Hangs in the window still:
The small red rose-tree is not stirred
Upon the window-sill.

Wide open her piano stands;
— That song I made to ease
A passing pain while her soft hands
Went faintly o'er the keys!

The fire within the stove burns down;
The light is dying fast.
How dear is all it shines upon,
That firelight of the Past!

No sound! the drowsy Dutch-clock ticks,
O, how should I forget
The slender ebon crucifix,
That by her bed is set?

Her little bed is white as snow, —
How dear that little bed !
Sweet dreams about the curtains go,
And whisper round her head.

That gentle head sleeps o'er her arm
— Sleeps all its soft brown hair :
And those dear clothes of hers, yet warm,
Droop open on the chair.

Yet warm the snowy petticoat !
The dainty corset too !
How warm the ribbon from her throat,
And warm each little shoe !

Lie soft, dear arm upon the pillow !
Sleep, foolish little head !
Ah, well she sleeps ! I know the willow
That curtains her cold bed. —

Since last I trod that silent street
'T is many a year ago :
And, if I there could set my feet
Once more, I do not know

If I should find it where it was,
That house upon the river :
But the light that lit the casement-glass
I know is dark forever.

Hark ! wheels below, . . . my lady's
knock !
— Farewell, the old romance ! —
Well, dear, you're late, — past four
o'clock ! —
How often did you dance ?

Not cooler from the crowning waltz,
She takes my half the pillow. —
Well, — well ! — the women free from
faults
Have beds below the willow !

AT HOME AFTER THE BALL.

THE clocks are calling Three
Across the silent floors.
The fire in the library
Dies out ; through the open doors
The red empty room you may see.

In the nursery, up stairs,
The child had gone to sleep,
Half-way 'twixt dreams and prayers,
When the hall-door made him leap
To its thunders unawares.

Like love in a worldly breast,
Alone in my lady's chamber,
The lamp burns low, supprest
'Mid satins of broidered amber,
Where she stands, half undrest :

Her bosom all unlaced :
Her cheeks with a bright red spot :
Her long dark hair displaced,
Down streaming, heeded not,
From her white throat to her waist :

She stands up her full height,
With her ball-dress slipping down her,
And her eyes as fixed and bright
As the diamond stars that crown her, —
An awful, beautiful sight.

Beautiful, yes . . . with her hair
So wild, and her cheeks so flushed !
Awful, yes . . . for there
In her beauty she stands husht
By the pomp of her own despair !

And fixt there, without doubt,
Face to face with her own sorrow,
She will stand, till, from without,
The light of the neighboring morrow
Creeps in, and finds her out.

With last night's music pealing
Youth's dirges in her ears :
With last night's lamps revealing,
In the charnels of old years,
The face of each dead feeling.

Ay, Madam, here alone
You may think, till your heart is broken,
Of the love that is dead and done,
Of the days that, with no token,
Forevermore are gone. —

Weep if you can, beseech you !
'There's no one by to curb you :
Your child's cry cannot reach you :
Your lord will not disturb you :
Weep ! . . . what can weeping teach you !

Your tears are dead in you.
"What harm, where all things change,"
You say, "if we change too ?"
— The old still sunny Grange !
Ah, that's far off i' the dew.

"Were those not pleasant hours,
Ere I was what I am ?"

My garden of fresh flowers !
My milk-white weanling lamb !
My bright laburnum bowers !

"The orchard walls so trim !
The redbreast in the thorn !
The twilight soft and dim !
The child's heart ! eye and morn,
So rich with thoughts of *him* !"

Hush ! your weanling lamb is dead :
Your garden trodden over.
They have broken the farm shed :
They have buried your first lover
With the grass above his head.

Has the Past, then, so much power,
You dare take not from the shelf
That book with the dry flower,
Lest it make you hang yourself
For being yourself for an hour ?

Why can't you let thought be
For even a little while ?
There's nought in memory
Can bring you back the smile
Those lips have lost. Just see,

Here what a costly gem
To-night in your hair you wore —
Pearls on a diamond stem !
When sweet things are no more,
Better not think of them.

Are you saved by pangs that pained you,
Is there comfort in all it cost you,
Before the world had gained you,
Before that God had lost you,
Or your soul had quite disdained you ?

For your soul (and this is worst
To bear, as you well know)
Has been watching you, from first,
As sadly as God could do ;
And yourself yourself have curst.

Talk of the flames of Hell !
We fuel ourselves, I conceive,
The fire the Fiend lights. Well,
Believe or disbelieve,
We know more than we tell !

Surely you need repose !
To-morrow again — the Ball.
And you must revive the rose
In your cheek, to bloom for all.
Not go ! . . . why the whole world goes.

To bed ! to bed ! 'T is sad
To find that Fancy's wings
Have lost the hues they had.
In thinking of these things
Some women have gone mad.

AU CAFÉ * * * .

A PARTY of friends, all light-hearted and
gay,
At a certain French café, where every
one goes,
Are met, in a well-curtained warm *cabi-
net*,
Overlooking a street there, which every
one knows.

The guests are, three ladies well known
and admired :
One adorns the *Lyrique* ; one . . . I oft
have beheld her
At the *Vaudeville*, with raptures ; the
third lives retired
" *Dans ses meubles*" . . . (we all know
her house) . . . Rue de Helder.

Besides these is a fourth . . . a young
Englishman, lately
Presented the round of the clubs in
the town.
A taciturn Anglican coldness sedately
Invests him : unthawed by Clarisse,
he sits down.

But little he speaks, and but rarely he
shares
In the laughter around him ; his
smiles are but few ;
There's a sneer in the look that his
countenance wears
In repose ; and fatigue in the eyes'
weary blue.

The rest are three Frenchmen. Three
Frenchmen (thank heaven !)
Are but rarely morose, with Cham-
pagne and Bordeaux :
And their wit, and their laughter, suf-
fices to leaven
With mirth their mute guest's imita-
tion of snow.

The dinner is done : the Lafitte in its
basket,
The Champagne in its cooler, is passed
in gay haste ;

Whatever you wish for, you have but to ask it:

Here are coffee, cigars, and liqueurs to your taste.

And forth from the bottles the corks fly; and chilly,

The bright wine, in bubbling and blushing, confounds

Its warmth with the ice that it seethes round; and shrilly

(Till stifled by kisses) the laughter resounds.

Strike, strike the piano, beat loud at the wall!

Let wealthy old Lycus with jealousy groan

Next door, while fair Chloris responds to the call,

Too fair to be supping with Lycus alone!*

Clarisse, with a smile, has subsided, oppressed,—

Half, perhaps, by Champagne . . . half, perhaps, by affection,—

In the arms of the taciturn, cold, English guest,

With, just rising athwart her imperial complexion,

One tinge that young Evian himself might have kist

From the fairest of Mænads that danced in his troop;

And her deep hair, unloosed from its sumptuous twist,

Overshowering her throat and her bosom a-droop.

The soft snowy throat, and the round, dimpled chin,

Upturned from the arm-fold where hangs the rich head!

And the warm lips apart, while the white lids begin

To close over the dark languid eyes which they shade!

And next to Clarisse (with her wild hair all wet

From the wine, in whose blush its faint fire-fly gold

* "Audeat invidus
Dementem strepitum Lycus
Et vicina seni non habilis Lyco."
HORACE.

She was steeping just now), the blue-eyed Juliette

Is murmuring her witty bad things to Arnold.

Cries Arnold to the dumb English guest . . . "*Mon ami,*

What's the matter! . . . you can't sing . . . well, speak, then, at least:

More grave, had a man seen a ghost, could he be?

Mais quel drôle de farceur! . . . comme il a le vin triste!"

And says Charles to Eugène (vainly seeking to borrow

Ideas from a yawn) . . . "At the club there are three of us

With the Duke, and we play lansquenet till to-morrow:

I am off on the spur . . . what say you! . . . will you be of us?"

"*Mon enfant, tu me boudes—tu me boudes, cheri.*"

Sighs the soft Celestine on the breast of Eugène;

"*Ah bah! ne me fais pas poser, mon amie,*"

Laughs her lover, and lifts to his lips—the Champagne.

And loud from the bottles the corks fly; and chilly

The wine gurgles up to its fine crystal bounds.

While Charles rolls his paper cigars round, how shrilly

(Till kist out) the laughter of Juliette resounds!

Strike, strike the piano! beat loud at the wall!

Let wealthy old Lycus with jealousy groan

Next door, while fair Chloris responds to the call,

Too fair to be supping with Lycus alone.

There is Celestine singing, and Eugène is swearing.—

In the midst of the laughter, the oaths, and the songs,

Falls a knock at the door; but there's nobody hearing:

Each, uninterrupted, the revel prolongs.

Said I . . . "nobody hearing?" one only;—the guest,

The morose English stranger, so dull to the charms

Of Clarisse, and Juliette, Celestine, and the rest;

Who sits, cold as a stone, with a girl in his arms.

Once, twice, and three times, he has heard it repeated;

And louder, and fiercer, each time the sound falls.

And his cheek is death pale, 'mid the others so heated;

There's a step at the door, too, his fancy recalls.

And he rises . . . (just so an automaton rises,—

Some man of mechanics made up,—that must move

In the way that the wheel moves within him;—there lies his

Sole path fixt before him, below and above).

He rises . . . and, scarcely a glance casting on her,

Flings from him the beauty asleep on his shoulder;

Charles springs to his feet; Eugène mutters of honor;

But there's that in the stranger that awes each beholder.

For the hue on his cheek, it is whiter than whiteness:

The hair creeps on his head like a strange living thing.

The lamp o'er the table has lost half its brightness;

Juliette cannot laugh; Celestine cannot sing.

He has opened the door in a silence unbroken:

And the gaze of all eyes where he stands is fixt wholly:

Not a hand is there raised; not a word is there spoken:

He has opened the door; . . . and there comes through it slowly

A woman, as pale as a dame on a tombstone,

With desolate violet eyes, open wide;

Her look, as she turns it, turns all in the room stone:

She sits down on the sofa, the stranger beside.

Her hair it is yellow, as moonlight on water

Which stones in some eddy torment into waves;

Her lips are as red as new blood spilt in slaughter;

Her cheek like a ghost's seen by night o'er the graves.

Her place by the taciturn guest she has taken;

And the glass at her side she has filled with Champagne.

As she bows o'er the board, all the revellers awaken.

She has pledged her mute friend, and she fills up again.

Clarisse has awaked; and with shrieks leaves the table.

Juliette wakes, and faints in the arms of Arnold.

And Charles and Eugène, with what speed they are able,

Are off to the club, where this tale shall be told.

Celestine for her brougham, on the stairs, was appealing,

With hysterical sobs, to the surly *concierge*,

When a ray through the doorway stole to her, revealing

A sight that soon changed her appeal to "*La vierge.*"

All the light-hearted friends from the chamber are fled:

And the café itself has grown silent by this.

From the dark street below, you can scarce hear a tread,

Save the Gendarme's, who reigns there as gloomy as Dis.

The shadow of night is beginning to flit:

Through the gray window shimmers the motionless town.

The ghost and the stranger, together they sit

Side by side at the table—the place is their own.

They nod and change glances, that pale man and woman ;
 For they both are well known to each other : and then,
 Some ghosts have a look that's so horribly human,
 In the street you might meet them, and take them for men.

"Thou art changed, my beloved ! and the lines have grown stronger,
 And the curls have grown scunter, that meet on thy brow.
 Ah, faithless ! and dost thou remember no longer
 The hour of our passion, the words of thy vow ?

"Thy kiss, on my lips it is burning forever !
 I cannot sleep calm, for my bed is so cold.
 Embrace me ! close . . . closer . . . O let us part never,
 And let all be again as it once was of old !"

So she murmurs repiningly ever. Her breath
 Lifts his hair like a night-wind in winter. And he . . .
 "Thy hand, O Irene, is icy as death,
 But thy face is unchanged in its beauty to me."

"Tis so cold, my beloved one, down there, and so drear."
 "Ah, thy sweet voice, Irene, sounds hollow and strange !"
 "Tis the chills of the grave that have changed it, I fear :
 But the voice of my heart there's no chill that can change."

"Ha ! thy pale cheek is flushed with a heat like my own.
 Is it breath, is it flame, on thy lips that is burning ?
 Ha ! thy heart flutters wild, as of old, 'neath thy zone.
 And those cold eyes of thine fill with passionate yearning."

Thus, embracing each other, they bend and they waver,
 And, laughing and weeping, converse.
 The pale ghost,

As the wine warms the grave-worm within her, grown braver,
 Fills her glass to the brim, and proposes a toast.

"Here's a health to the glow-worm,
 Death's sober lamplighter,
 That saves from the darkness below the gravestone

The tomb's pallid pictures . . . the sadder the brighter ;
 Shapes of beauty each stony-eyed corpse there hath known :

"Mere rough sketches of life, where a glimpse goes for all,
 Which the Master keeps (all the rest let the world have !)

But though only rough-srawled on the blank charnel wall,
 Is their truth the less sharp, that 't is sheathed in the grave ?

"Here's to Love . . . the prime passion . . . the harp that we sung to
 In the orient of youth, in the days pure of pain ;

The cup that we quaffed in : the stirrup we sprung to,
 So light, ere the journey was made — and in vain !

"O the life that we lived once ! the beauty so fair once !
 Let them go ! wherefore weep for what tears could not save ?

What old trick sets us aping the fools that we were once,
 And tickles our brains even under the grave ?

"There's a small stinging worm which the grave ever breeds
 From the folds of the shroud that around us is spread :

There's a little blind maggot that revels and feeds
 On the life of the living, the sleep of the dead.

"To our friends ! . . ." But the full flood of dawn through the pane,
 Having slowly rolled down the huge street there unheard

(While the great, new, blue sky, o'er the white Madeleine
 Was wide opening itself), from her lip washed the word ;

Washed her face faint and fainter ; while, dimmer and dimmer,
 In its seat, the pale form flickered out like a flame,
 As broader, and brighter, and fuller, the glimmer
 Of day through the heat-clouded window became.

And the day mounts apace. Some one opens the door.
 In shuffles a waiter with sleepy red eyes :
 He stares at the cushions flung loose on the floor,
 On the bottles, the glasses, the plates, with surprise.

Stranger still ! he sees seated a man at the table,
 With his head on his hands : in a slumber he seems,
 So wild, and so strange, he no longer is able
 In silence to thrid through the path of his dreams.

For he moans, and he mutters : he moves and he motions :
 To the dream that he dreams o'er his wine-cup he pledges.
 And his sighs sound, through sleep, like spent winds over ocean's
 Last verge, where the world hides its outermost edges.

The gas-lamp falls sick in the tube : and so, dying,
 To the fumes of spilt wine, and cigars but half smoked,
 Adds the stench of its last gasp : chairs broken are lying
 All about o'er the carpet stained, littered, and soaked.

A touch starts the sleeper. He wakes. It is day.
 And the beam that dispels all the phantoms of night
 Through the rooms sends its kindly and comforting ray :
 The streets are new-peopled : the morning is bright.

And the city's so fair ! and the dawn breaks so brightly !
 With gay flowers in the market, gay girls in the street.

Whate'er the strange beings that visit us nightly,
 When Paris awakes, from her smile they retreat.

I myself have, at morning, beheld them departing ;
 Some in masks, and in dominos, footing it on ;
 Some like imps, some like fairies ; at cockerow all starting,
 And speedily flitting from sight one by one.

And that wonderful night-flower, Memory, that, tearful,
 Unbosoms to darkness her heart full of dew,
 Folds her leaves round again, and from day shrinks up fearful
 In the cleft of her ruin, the shade of her yew.

This broad daylight life's strange enough : and wherever
 We wander, or walk ; in the club, in the streets ;
 Not a straw on the ground is too trivial to sever
 Each man in the crowd from the others he meets.

Each walks with a spy or a jailer behind him
 (Some word he has spoken, some deed he has done) ;
 And the step, now and then, quickens, just to remind him,
 In the crowd, in the sun, that he is not alone.

But 't is hard, when by lamplight, 'mid laughter and songs too,
 Those return, . . . we have buried, and mourned for, and prayed for,
 And done with . . . and, free of the grave it belongs to,
 Some ghost drinks your health in the wine you have paid for.

Wreathe the rose, O Young Man ; pour the wine. What thou hast
 That enjoy all the days of thy youth. Spare thou naught.
 Yet beware ! . . . at the board sits a ghost — 't is the Past ;
 In thy heart lurks a weird Necromancer — 't is Thought.

THE CHESS-BOARD.

My little love, do you remember,
 Ere we were grown so sadly wise,
 Those evenings in the bleak December,
 Curtained warm from the snowy weather,
 When you and I played chess together,
 Checkmated by each other's eyes?
 Ah, still I see your soft white hand
 Hovering warm o'er Queen and Knight.
 Brave Pawns in valiant battle stand.
 The double Castles guard the wings:
 The Bishop, bent on distant things,
 Moves, sidling through the fight.
 Our fingers touch; our glances meet,
 And falter; falls your golden hair
 Against my cheek; your bosom sweet
 Is heaving. Down the field, your Queen
 Rides slow her soldiery all between,
 And checks me unaware.
 Ah me! the little battle's done,
 Dispersed is all its chivalry;
 Full many a move, since then, have we
 'Mid Life's perplexing checkers made,
 And many a game with Fortune
 played,—
 What is it we have won?
 This, this at least — if this alone; —
 That never, never, never more,
 As in those old still nights of yore
 (Ere we were grown so sadly wise),
 Can you and I shut out the skies,
 Shut out the world, and wintry weather,
 And, eyes exchanging warmth with
 eyes,
 Play chess, as then we played, together!

SONG.

If Sorrow have taught me anything,
 She hath taught me to weep for you;
 And if Falsehood have left me a tear to
 shed
 For Truth, these tears are true.
 If the one star left by the morning
 Be dear to the dying night,
 If the late lone rose of October
 Be sweetest to scent and sight,
 If the last of the leaves in December
 Be dear to the desolate tree,
 Remember, beloved, O remember
 How dear is your beauty to me!

And more dear than the gold, is the silver
 Grief hath sown in that hair's young
 gold:

And lovelier than youth is the language
 Of the thoughts that have made youth
 old;
 We must love, and unlove, and forget,
 dear —
 Fashion and shatter the spell
 Of how many a love in a life, dear —
 Ere life learns to love once and love well.
 Then what matters it, yesterday's sorrow?
 Since I have outlived it — see!
 And what matter the cares of to-morrow,
 Since you, dear, will share them with
 me!

To love it is hard, and 't is harder
 Perchance to be loved again;
 But you'll love me, I know, now I love
 you. —

What I seek I am patient to gain.
 To the tears I have shed, and regret not,
 What matter a few more tears?
 Or a few days' waiting longer,
 To one that has waited for years?
 Hush! lay your head on my breast, there,
 Not a word! . . . while I weep for
 your sake,

Sleep, and forget me, and rest there:
 My heart will wait warm till you wake.
 For — if Sorrow have taught me any-
 thing

She hath taught me to weep for you;
 And if Falsehood have left me a tear to
 shed

For Truth, these tears are true!

THE LAST REMONSTRANCE.

Yes! I am worse than thou didst once
 believe me.

Worse than thou deem'st me now I
 cannot be —
 But say "the Fiend's no blacker," . . .
 canst thou leave me?
 Where wilt thou flee?

Where wilt thou bear the relics of the
 days
 Squandered round this dethroned love
 of thine?

Hast thou the silver and the gold to raise
 A new God's shrine?

Thy cheek hath lost its roundness and
 its bloom:

Who will forgive those signs where
 tears have fed

On thy once lustrous eyes, — save *he* for
 whom
 Those tears were shed?

Know I not every grief whose course hath
 sown
 Lines on thy brow, and silver in thy
 hair?

Will new love learn the language, mine
 alone
 Hath graven there?

Despite the blemish'd beauty of thy
 brow,
 Thou wouldst be lovely, couldst thou
 love again;

For Love renews the Beautiful: but thou
 Hast only pain.

How wilt thou bear from pity to im-
 plore
 What once those eyes from rapture
 could command?

How wilt thou stretch — who wast a
 Queen of yore —
 A suppliant's hand?

Even were thy heart content from love
 to ask
 No more than needs to keep it from
 the chill,

Hast thou the strength to recommence
 the task
 Of pardoning still?

Wilt thou to one, exacting all that I
 Have lost the right to ask for, still
 extend

Forgiveness on forgiveness, with that
 sigh
 That dreads the end?

Ah, if thy heart can pardon yet, why
 yet
 Should not its latest pardon be for
 me?
 For who will bend, the boon he seeks to
 get,
 On lowlier knee?

Where wilt thou find the unworthier
 heart than mine,
 That it may be more grateful, or more
 lowly?

To whom else, pardoning much, become
 divine
 By pardoning wholly!

Hath not thy forehead paled beneath my
 kiss?

And through thy life have I not writ
 my name?

Hath not my soul signed thine? . . . I
 gave thee bliss,
 If I gave shame:

The shame, but not the bliss, where'er
 thou goest,

Will haunt thee yet: to me no shame
 thou hast:

To me alone, what now thou art, thou
 knowest

By what thou wast.

What other hand will help thy heart to
 swell

To raptures mine first taught it how
 to feel?

Or from the unchorded harp and vacant
 shell

New notes reveal?

Ah, by my dark and sullen nature nurst,
 And rocked by passion on this stormy
 heart,

Be mine the last, as thou wert mine the
 first!

We dare not part!

At best a fallen Angel to mankind,
 To me be still the seraph I have dared
 To show my hell to, and whose love re-
 signed

Its pain hath shared.

If, faring on together, I have fed
 Thy lips on poisons, they were sweet
 at least,

Nor couldst thou thrive where holier Love
 hath spread
 His simpler feast.

Change would be death. Could sever-
 ance from my side

Bring thee repose, I would not bid
 thee stay.

My love should meet, as calmly as my
 pride,
 That parting day.

It may not be: for thou couldst not for-
 get me, —

Not that my own is more than other
 natures,

But that 't is different: and thou wouldst
regret me
'Mid purer creatures.

Then, if love's first ideal now grows wan,
And thou wilt love again, — again
love me,

For what I am: — no hero, but a man
Still loving thee.

SORCERY.

TO —

You're a milk-white Panther:
I'm a Genius of the air.
You're a Princess once enchanted;
That is why you seem so fair.

For a crime untold, unwritten,
That was done an age ago,
I have lost my wings, and wander
In the wilderness below.

In a dream too long indulged,
In a Palace by the sea,
You were changed to what you are
By a muttered sorcery.

Your name came on my lips
When I first looked in your eyes:
At my feet you fawned, you knew me
In despite of all disguise.

The black elephants of Delhi
Are the wisest of their kind,
And the libbards of Soumatra
Are full of eyes behind:

But they guessed not, they divined not,
They believed me of the earth,
When I walked among them, mourning
For the region of my birth.

Till I found you in the moonlight.
Then at once I knew it all.
You were sleeping in the sand here,
But you wakened to my call.

I knew why, in your slumber,
You were moaning piteously:
You heard a sound of harping
From a Palace by the sea.

Through the wilderness together
We must wander everywhere,

Till we find the magic berry
That shall make us what we were.

'T is a berry sweet and bitter,
I have heard; there is but one;
On a tall tree, by a fountain,
In the desert all alone.

When at last 't is found and eaten,
We shall both be what we were;
You, a Princess of the water,
I, a Genius of the air.

See! the Occident is flaring
Far behind us in the skies,
And our shadows float before us.
Night is coming forth. Arise!

ADIEU, MIGNONNE, MA BELLE.

ADIEU, Mignonne, ma belle . . . when
you are gone,
Vague thoughts of you will wander,
searching love

Through this dim heart: through this
dim room, Mignonne,
Vague fragrance from your hair and
dress will move.

How will you think of this poor heart
to-morrow,
This poor fond heart with all its joy
in you?

Which you were fain to lean on, once,
in sorrow,
Though now you bid it such a light
adieu.

You'll sing perchance . . . "I passed a
night of dreams
Once, in an old inn's old worm-eaten
bed,

Passing on life's highway. How strange
it seems,
That never more I there shall lean my
head!"

Adieu, Mignonne, adieu, Mignonne, ma
belle!

Ah, little witch, our greeting was so
gay,

Our love so painless, who'd have thought
"Farewell"

Could ever be so sad a word to say!

I leave a thousand fond farewells with
you:

Some for your red wet lips, which
were so sweet:

Some for your darling eyes, so dear, so
blue:

Some for your wicked, wanton little
feet:

But for your little heart, not yet
awake, —

What can I leave your little heart,
Mignonne?

It seems so fast asleep, I fear to break
The poor thing's slumber. Let it
still sleep on!

TO MIGNONNE.

At morning, from the sunlight
I shall miss your sunny face,
Leaning, laughing, on my shoulder
With its careless infant grace;
And your hand there,

With its rosy, inside color,
And the sparkle of its rings;
And your soul from this old chamber
Missed in fifty little things,
When I stand there.

And the roses in the garden
Droop stupid all the day, —
Red, thirsty mouths wide open,
With not a word to say!
Their last meaning

Is all faded, like a fragrance,
From the languishing late flowers,
With your feet, your slow white move-
ments,
And your face, in silent hours,
O'er them leaning.

And, in long, cool summer eyenings,
I shall never see you, drest
In those pale violet colors
Which suit your sweet face best.
Here's your glove, child,

Soiled and empty, as you left it,
Yet your hand's warmth seems to stay
In it still, as though this moment
You had drawn your hand away;
Like your love, child,

Which still stays about my fancy.
See this little, silken boot. —
What a plaything! was there ever
Such a slight and slender foot?
Is it strange now

How that, when your lips are nearest
To the lips they feed upon
For a summer time, till bees sleep,
On a sudden you are gone?
What new change now

Sets you sighing . . . eyes uplifted
To the starry night above?
"God is great . . . the soul's immortal . . .
Must we die, though! . . . Do you love?
One kiss more, then:

"Life might end now!" . . . And next
moment

With those wicked little feet,
You have vanished, — like a Fairy
From a fountain in the heat,
And all's o'er, then.

Well, no matter! . . . hearts are breaking
Every day, but not for you,
Little wanton, ever making
Chains of rose, to break them through.
I would mourn you,

But your red smile was too warm, Sweet,
And your little heart too cold,
And your blue eyes too blue merely,
For a strong, sad man to scold,
Weep, or scorn, you.

For that smile's soft, transient sunshine
At my hearth, when it was chill,
I shall never do your name wrong,
But think kindly of you still;
And each moment

Of your pretty infant angers,
(Who could help but smile at . . .
when
Those small feet would stamp our love
out?)

Why, I pass them now, as then,
Without comment.

Only, here, when I am searching
For the book I cannot find,
I must sometimes pass your boudoir,
Howsoever disinclined;
And must meet there

The gold bird-cage in the window,
Where no bird is singing now ;
The small sofa and the footstool,
Where I miss . . . I know not how . . .
Your young feet there,

Silken-soft in each quaint slipper ;
And the jewelled writing-case,
Where you never more will write now ;
And the vision of your face,
Just turned to me : —

I would save this, if I could, child,
But that's all . . . September's here !
I must write a book : read twenty :
Learn a language . . . what's to fear ?
Who grows gloomy

Being free to work, as I am ?
Yet these autumn nights are cold,
How I wonder how you'll pass them !
Ah, . . . could all be as of old !
But 't is best so.

All good things must go for better,
As the primrose for the rose.
Is love free ? why so is life, too !
Holds the grave fast ? . . . I suppose
Things must rest so.

COMPENSATION.

WHEN the days are silent all
Till the drear light falls ;
And the nights pass with the pall
Of Love's funerals ;
When the heart is weighed with years ;
And the eyes too weak for tears ;
And life like death appears ;

Is it nought, O soul of mine,
To hear i' the windy track
A voice with a song divine
Calling thy footsteps back
To the land thou lovest best,
Toward the Garden in the West
Where thou hast once been blest ?

Is it nought, O aching brow,
To feel in the dark hour,
Which came, though called, so slow,
And, though loathed, yet lingers
slower,
A hand upon thy pain,
Lovingly laid again,
Smoothing the ruffled brain ?

O love, my own and only !
The seraphs shall not see
By my looks that life was lonely ;
But that 't was blest by thee.
If few lives have been more lone,
Few have more rapture known,
Than mine and thine, my own !

When the lamp burns dim and dimmer ;
And the curtain close is drawn ;
And the twilight seems to glimmer
With a supernatural dawn ;
And the Genius at the door
Turns the torch down to the floor,
Till the world is seen no more ;

In the doubt, the dark, the fear,
'Mid the spirits come to take thee,
Shall mine to thine be near,
And my kiss the first to wake
thee.

Meanwhile, in life's December,
On the wind that strews the ember,
Shall a voice still moan . . . "Remember !"

TRANSLATIONS FROM PETER
RONSAARD.

"VOICI LE BOIS QUE MA SAINCTE AN-
GELETTE."

HERE is the wood that freshened to her
song ;
See here, the flowers that keep her
footprints yet ;
Where, all alone, my saintly Angel-
ette
Went wandering, with her maiden
thoughts, along.

Here is the little rivulet where she
stopped ;
And here the greenness of the grass
shows where
She lingered through it, searching here
and there
Those daisies dear, which in her breast
she dropped.

Here did she sing, and here she wept,
and here
Her smile came back ; and here I seem
to hear
Those faint half-words with which my
thoughts are rife ;

Here did she sit ; here, childlike, did
she dance,
To some vague impulse of her own ro-
mance —
Ah, Love, on all these thoughts, winds
out my life !

"CACHE POUR CETTE NUICT."

HIDE, for a night, thy horn, good Moon !
Fair fortune
For this shall keep Endymion ever prest
Deep-dreaming, amorous, on thine
argent breast,
Nor ever shall enchanter thee importune.

Hateful to me the day ; most sweet the
night !
I fear the myriad meddling eyes of day ;
But courage comes with night. Close,
close, I pray,
Your curtains, dear dark skies, on my
delight !

Thou too, thou Moon, thou too hast felt
love's power !
Pan, with a white fleece, won thee for an
hour ;
And you, sidereal Signs in yonder blue,
Favor the fire to which my heart is moved.
Forget not, Signs, the greater part of you
Was only set in heaven for having loved !

"PAGE SUIV MOY."

FOLLOW, my Page, where the green grass
embosoms
The enamelled Season's freshest-fallen
dew ;
Then home, and my still house with
handfuls strew
Of frail-lived April's newlied nurtured
blossoms.

Take from the wall now, my song-tuned
Lyre ;
Here will I sit and charm out the
sweet pain
Of a dark eye whose light hath burned
my brain,
The unloving loveliness of my desire !

And here my ink, and here my papers,
place : —
A hundred leaves of white, whereon to
trace
A hundred words of desultory woe —

Words which shall last, like graven dia-
monds, sure ; —
That, some day hence, a future race
may know
And ponder on the pain which I endure.

"LES ESPICES SONT À CERES."

CERES hath her harvest sweet :
Chlora's is the young green grass :
Woods for Fauns with cloven feet :
His green laurel Phœbus has :
Minerva has her Olive-tree :
And the Pine's for Cybele.

Sweet sounds are for Zephyr's wings :
Sweet fruit for Pomona's bosom :
For the Nymphs are crystal springs
And for Flora bud and blossom :
But sighs and tears, and sad ideas,
These alone are Cytherea's.

"MA DOUCE JOUVENCE."

My sweet youth now is all done ;
The strength and the beauty are gone.
The tooth now is black, and the head
now is white,
And the nerves now are loosed : in the
veins
Only water (not blood now) remains,
Where the pulse beat of old with de-
light.

Adieu, O my lyre, O adieu,
You sweet women, my lost loves, and you
Each dead passion ! . . . The end creep-
eth nigher.

Not one pastime of youth has kept pace
With my age : Nought remains in their
place
But the bed, and the cup, and the fire.

My head is confused with low fears,
And sickness, and too many years ;
Some care in each corner I meet —
And, wherever I linger or go,
I turn back, and look after, to know
If the Death be still dogging my feet : —

Dogging me down the dark stair,
Which windeth, I cannot tell where,
To some Pluto that opens forever
His cave to all comers — Alas !
How easily down it all pass,
And return from it — never, ah, never !

BOOK III.—IN ENGLAND.

THE ALOE.

A STRANGER sent from burning lands,
In realms where buzz and mutter yet
Old gods, with hundred heads and hands,
On jewelled thrones of jet, —

(Old gods as old as Time itself.)
And, in a hot and level calm,
Recline o'er many a sandy shelf
Dusk forms beneath the palm, —

To Lady Eve, who dwells beside
The river-meads, and oak-trees tall,
Whose dewy shades encircle wide
Her old Baronial Hall,

An Indian plant with leaves like horn,
And, all along its stubborn spine,
Mere humps, with angry spike and thorn
Armed like the porcupine.

In midst of which one sullen bud
Surveyed the world, with head aslant,
High-throned, and looking like the god
Of this strange Indian plant.

A stubborn plant, from looking cross
It seemed no kindness could retrieve !
But for his sake whose gift it was
It pleased the Lady Eve.

She set it on the terraced walk,
Within her own fair garden-ground ;
And every morn and eve its stalk
Was duly watered round.

And every eve and morn, the while
She tended this uncourteous thing,
I stood beside her, — watched her smile,
And often heard her sing.

The roses I at times would twist
To deck her hair, she oft forgot ;
But never that dark aloe missed
The daily watering-pot.

She seemed so gay, — I felt so sad, —
Her laugh but made me frown the more :
For each light word of hers I had
Some sharp reply in store.

Until she laughed . . . " This aloe shows
A kindlier nature than your own " . . .
Ah, Eve, you little dreamed what foes
The plant and I had grown !

At last, one summer night, when all
The garden-flowers were dreaming still,
And still the old Baronial Hall,
The oak-trees on the hill,

A loud and sudden sound there stirred,
As when a thunder-cloud is torn ;
Such thunder-claps are only heard
When little gods are born.

The echo went from place to place,
And wakened every early sleeper.
Some said that poachers in the chase
Had slain a buck — or keeper.

Some hinted burglars at the door :
Some questioned if it had not light-
ened :

While all the maids, as each one swore,
From their seven wits were frightened.

The peacocks screamed, and every rook
Upon the elms at roost did caw :
Each inmate straight the house forsook :
They searched — and, last, — they saw

That sullen bud to flower had burst
Upon the sharp-leaved aloe there ; —
A wondrous flower, whose breath disperst
Rich odors on the air.

A flower, colossal — dazzling white,
And fair as is a Sphinx's face,
Turned broadly to the moon by night
From some vast temple's base.

Yes, Eve ! your aloe paid the pains
With which its sullen growth you
nurst.

But ah ! my nature yet remains
As churlish as at first.

And yet, and yet — it might have proved
Not all unworth your heart's approv-
ing.

Ah, had I only been beloved, —
(Beloved as I was loving !)

I might have been . . . how much, how
much,
I am not now, and shall not be !
One gentle look, one tender touch,
Had done so much for me !

I too, perchance, if kindly tended,
Had roused the napping generation,
With something novel, strange, and
splendid,
Deserving admiration :

For all the while there grew, and grew
A germ, — a bud, within my bosom :
No flower, fair Eve ! — for, thanks to you,
It never came to blossom.

" MEDIO DE FONTE LEPORUM
SURGIT AMARI ALIQUID."
LUCRETIVS.

WE walked about at Hampton Court,
Alone in sunny weather,
And talked — half earnest, and half
sport,
Linked arm in arm together.

I pressed her hand upon the steps.
Its warmest light the sky lent.
She sought the shade : I sought her lips :
We kissed : and then were silent.

Clare thought, no doubt, of many things,
Besides the kiss I stole there ; —
The sun, and sunny founts in rings,
The bliss of soul with soul there,

The bonnet, fresh from France, she wore,
My praise of how she wore it,
The arms above the carven door,
The orange-trees before it ; —

But I could only think, as, mute
I watched her happy smile there,
With rising pain, of this curst boot,
That pinched me all the while there.

THE DEATH OF KING HACON.

It was Odin that whispered in Vingolf,
" Go forth to the heath by the sea ;
Find Hacon before the moon rises,
And bid him to supper with me."

They go forth to choose from the Princes
Of Yngvon, and summons from fight
A man who must perish in battle,
And sup where the gods sup to-night.

Leaning over her brazen spear, Gondula
Thus bespake her companions, " The
feast
Of the gods shall, in Vingolf, this
evening,
O ye Daughters of War, be increast.

" For Odin hath beckoned unto me,
For Odin hath whispered me forth,
To bid to his supper King Hacon
With the half of the hosts of the
North."

Their horses gleamed white through the
vapor :
In the moonlight their corselets did
shine :
As they wavered and whispered together,
And fashioned their solemn design.

Hacon heard them discoursing — " Why
hast thou
Thus disposed of the battle so soon ?
O, were we not worthy of conquest ?
Lo ! we die by the rise of the moon."

" It is not the moon that is rising,
But the glory which penetrates death,
When heroes to Odin are summoned :
Rise, Hacon, and stand on the heath !

" It is we," she replied, " that have given
To thy pasture the flower of the fight,
It is we, it is we that have scattered
Thine enemies yonder in flight.

" Come now, let us push on our horses
Over yonder green worlds in the east,
Where the great gods are gathered to-
gether,
And the tables are piled for the feast.

" Betimes to give notice to Odin,
Who waits in his sovran abodes,
That the King to his palace is coming
This evening to visit the gods."

Odin rose when he heard it, and with him
Rose the gods, every god to his feet.
He beckoned Hermoder and Brago,
They came to him, each from his
seat.

"Go forth, O my sons, to King Hacon,
And meet him and greet him from all,
A King that we know by his valor
Is coming to-night to our hall."

Then faintly King Hacon approaches,
Arriving from battle, and sore
With the wounds that yet bleed through
his armor
Bedabbled and dripping with gore.

His visage is pallid and awful
With the awe and the pallor of death,
Like the moon that at midnight arises
Where the battle lies strewn on the
heath.

To him spake Hermoder and Brago,
"We meet thee and greet thee from
all,

To the gods thou art known by thy valor,
And they bid thee a guest to their hall.

"Come hither, come hither, King Hacon,
And join those eight brothers of thine,
Who already, awaiting thy coming,
With the gods in Walhala recline.

"And loosen, O Hacon, thy corselet,
For thy wounds are yet ghastly to see.
Go pour ale in the circle of heroes,
And drink, for the gods drink to thee."

But he answered, the hero, "I never
Will part with the armor I wear.
Shall a warrior stand before Odin
Unshamed, without helmet and spear?"

Black Fenris, the wolf, the destroyer,
Shall arise and break loose from his
chain
Before that a hero like Hacon
Shall stand in the battle again.

"CARPE DIEM."

HORACE.

TO-MORROW is a day too far
To trust, whatever the day be.
We know, a little, what we are,
But who knows what he may be?

The oak that on the mountain grows
A goodly ship may be,
Next year; but it is as well (who knows?)
May be a gallows-tree.

'Tis God made man, no doubt, — not
Chance:
He made us, great and small;
But, being made, 'tis Circumstance
That finishes us all.

The Author of this world's great plan
The same results will draw
From human life, however man
May keep, or break, His law.

The Artist to his Art doth look;
And Art's great laws exact
That those portrayed in Nature's Book,
Should freely move and act.

The moral of the work unchanged
Endures eternally,
Howe'er by human wills arranged
The work's details may be.

"Give us this day our daily bread,
The morrow shall take heed
Unto itself." The Master said
No more. No more we need.

To-morrow cannot make or mar
To-day, whatever the day be:
Nor can the men which now we are
Foresee the men we may be.

THE FOUNT OF TRUTH.

It was the place by legends told.
I read the tale when yet a child.
The castle on the mountain hold,
The woodland in the wild.

The wrecks of unremembered days
Were heaped around. It was the
hour
When bold men fear, and timorous
fays
Grow bold, and know their power.

The month was in the downward year.
The breath of Autumn chilled the
sky:
And useless leaves, too early sere,
Muttered and eddied by.

It seemed that I was wending back
Among the ruins of my youth,
Along a wild night-haunted track
To seek the Fount of Truth.

The Fount of Truth, — that wondrous
fount!
Its solemn sound I seemed to hear
Wind-borne adown the clouded mount,
Desolate, cold, and clear.

By clews long lost, and found again
I know not how, my course was led
Through lands remote from living men,
As life is from the dead.

Yet up that wild road, here and there,
Large, awful footprints did I meet:
Footprints of gods perchance they were,
Prints — not of human feet.

The mandrake underneath my foot
Gave forth a shriek of angry pain.
I heard the roar of some wild brute
Prowling the windy plain.

I reached the gate. I blew with power
A blast upon the darkness wide.
"Who art thou?" from the gloomy tower
The sullen warder cried.

"A Pilgrim to the Fount of Truth."
He laughed a laugh of scornful spleen.
"Art thou not from the Land of Youth?
Report where thou hast been."

"The Land of Youth! an alien race
There, in my old dominions, reign;
And, with them, one in whose false
face
I will not gaze again.

"From to and fro the world I come,
Where I have fared as exiles fare,
Mocked by the memories of home
And homeless everywhere.

"The snake that slid through Paradise
Yet on my pathway slides and slips:
The apple plucked in Eden twice
Is yet upon my lips.

"I can report the world is still
Where it hath been since it began:
And Wisdom, with bewildered will,
Is still the same sick man,

"Whom yet the self-same visions fool,
The self-same nightmares haunt and
scare.
Folly still breeds the Public Fool,
Knowledge increaseth care:

"Joy hath his tears, and Grief her smile;
And still both tears and smiles deceive.
And in the Valley of the Nile
I hear — and I believe —

"The Fiend and Michael, as of yore,
Yet wage the ancient war: but how
This strife will end at last, is more
Than our new sages know."

I heard the gate behind me close.
It closed with a reluctant wail.
Roused by the sound from her repose
Started the Porteress pale:

In pity, or in scorn . . . "Forbear,
Madman," she cried, . . . "thy search
for Truth.
The curl is in thy careless hair.
Return to Love and Youth.

"What lured thee here, through dark,
and doubt,
The many-perilled prize to win?" —
"The dearth" . . . I said . . . "of all
without,
The thirst of all within.

"Age comes not with the wrinkled brow
But earlier, with the ravaged heart;
Full oft hath fallen the winter snow
Since Love from me did part.

"Long in dry places, void of cheer,
Long have I roamed. These features
scan:
If magic lore be thine, look here,
Behold the Talisman!"

I crossed the court. The bloodhound
bayed
Behind me from the outer wall.
The drowsy grooms my call obeyed
And lit the haunted hall.

They brought me horse, and lance, and
helm,
They bound the buckler on my breast,
Spread the weird chart of that wild
realm,
And armed me for the quest.

Uprose the Giant of the Keep.
"Rash fool, ride on!" . . . I heard
him say,
"The night is late, the heights are steep,
And Truth is far away!"

And . . . "Far away!" . . . the echoes
fell
Behind, as from that grisly hold
I turned. No tongue of man may
tell
What mine must leave untold.

The Fount of Truth, — that wondrous
fount!

Far off I heard its waters play.
But ere I scaled the solemn mount,
Dawn broke. The trivial day

To its accustomed course flowed back,
And all the glamour faded round.
Is it forever lost, — that track?
Or — was it never found?

MIDGES.

SHE is talking aesthetics, the dear clever
creature!

Upon Man, and his functions, she
speaks with a smile.

Her ideas are divine upon Art, upon
Nature,
The Sublime, the Heroic, and Mr.
Carlyle.

I no more am found worthy to join in
the talk, now;
So I follow with my surreptitious
cigar;

While she leads our poetical friend up
the walk, now,
Who quotes Wordsworth and praises
her "*Thoughts on a Star*."

Meanwhile, there is dancing in yonder
green bower

A swarm of young midges. They
dance high and low.

'T is a sweet little species that lives but
one hour,
And the eldest was born half an hour
ago.

One impulsive young midge I hear ar-
dently pouring

In the ears of a shy little wanton in
gauze,

His eternal devotion; his ceaseless ador-
ing;

Which shall last till the Universe
breaks from its laws:

His passion is not, he declares, the mere
fever

Of a rapturous moment. It knows no
control:

It will burn in his breast through exist-
ence forever,

Immutably fixed in the deeps of the
soul!

She wavers: she flutters: . . . male
midges are fickle:

Dare she trust him her future? . . .
she asks with a sigh:

He implores, . . . and a tear is beginning
to trickle:

She is weak: they embrace, and . . .
the lovers pass by.

While they pass me, down here on a
rose leaf has lighted

A pale midge, his feelers all drooping
and torn:

His existence is withered; its future is
blighted:

His hopes are betrayed: and his breast
is forlorn.

By the midge his heart trusted his heart
is deceived, now

In the virtue of midges no more he
believes:

From love in its falsehood, once wildly
believed, now

He will bury his desolate life in the
leaves.

His friends would console him . . . the
noblest and sagest

Of midges have held that a midge
lives again.

In Eternity, say they, the strife thou
now wagest

With sorrow shall cease . . . but their
words are in vain!

Can Eternity bring back the seconds now
wasted

In hopeless desire? or restore to his
breast

The belief he has lost, with the bliss he
once tasted,

Embracing the midge that his being
loved best?

His friends would console him . . . life
yet is before him;

Many hundred long seconds he still
has to live:

In the state yet a mighty career spreads
before him:

Let him seek in the great world of
action to strive!

There is Fame! there's Ambition! and,
grandier than either,

There is Freedom! . . . the progress
and march of the race! . . .

But to Freedom his breast beats no
longer, and neither

Ambition nor action her loss can replace.

If the time had been spent in acquiring
aesthetics

I have squandered in learning this
language of midges,

There might, for my friend in her peri-
patetics,

Have been now *two* asses to help o'er
the bridges.

As it is, . . . I'll report her the whole
conversation.

It would have been longer; but, some-
how or other

(In the midst of that misanthrope's
long lamentation),

A midge in my right eye became a
young mother.

Since my friend is so clever, I'll ask her
to tell me

Why the least living thing (a mere
midge in the egg!)

Can make a man's tears flow, as now it
befell me . . .

O you dear clever woman, explain it,
I beg!

THE LAST TIME THAT I MET
LADY RUTH.

THERE are some things hard to under-
stand.

O help me, my God, to trust in thee!
But I never shall forget her soft white
hand,

And her eyes when she looked at me.

It is hard to pray the very same prayer
Which once at our mother's knee we
prayed —

When, where we trusted our whole
heart, there

Our trust hath been betrayed.

I swear that the milk-white muslin so
light

On her virgin breast, where it lay
demure,

Seemed to be toucht to a purer white
By the touch of a breast so pure.

I deemed her the one thing undefiled
By the air we breathe, in a world of
sin:

The truest, the tenderest, purest child
A man ever trusted in!

When she blamed me (she, with her fair
child's face!)

That never with her to the Church I
went

To partake of the Gospel of truth and
grace,

And the Christian sacrament,

And I said I would go for her own sweet
sake,

Though it was but herself I should
worship there,

How that happy child's face strove to
take

On its dimples a serious air!

I remember the chair she would set for
me,

By the flowers, when all the house
was gone

To drive in the Park, and I and she
Were left to be happy alone.

There she leaned her head on my knees,
my Ruth,

With the primrose loose in her half-
closed hands:

And I told her tales of my wandering
youth

In the far fair foreign lands. —

The last time I met her was here in
town,

At a fancy ball at the Duchess of D.,
On the stairs, where her husband was
handing her down.

— There we met, and she talked to me.

She, with powder in hair, and patch on
chin,

And I, in the garb of a pilgrim Priest,
And between us both, without and
within,

A hundred years at least!

We talked of the House, and the late
long rains,
And the crush at the French Amba-
sador's ball,
And . . . well, I have not blown out my
brains.
You see I can laugh. That is all.

MATRIMONIAL COUNSELS.

You are going to marry my pretty rela-
tion,
My dove-like young cousin, so soft in
the eyes,
You are entering on life's settled dis-
simulation,
And, if you'd be happy, in season be
wise.
Take my counsel. The more that, in
church, you are tempted
To yawn at the sermon, the more
you'll attend.
The more you'd from milliner's bills be
exempted,
The more on your wife's little wishes
you'll spend.
You'll be sure, every Christmas, to send
to the rector
A dozen of wine, and a hamper or
two.
The more your wife plagues you, the
more you'll respect her,
She'll be pleasing your friend, if she's
not plaguing you.
For women of course, like ourselves,
need emotion;
And happy the husband, whose failings
afford
To the wife of his heart, such good
cause for commotion,
That she seeks no excitement, save
plaguing her lord.
Above all, you'll be careful that nothing
offends, too,
Your wife's lady's maid, though she
give herself airs.
With the friend of a friend it is well to
be friends too,
And especially so, when that friend
lives up stairs.

Under no provocation you'll ever avow
yourself
A little put out, when you're kept at
the door,
And you never, I scarcely need say, will
allow yourself
To call your wife's mother a vulgar
old bore.

However she dresses, you'll never sug-
gest to her
That her taste, as to colors, could
scarcely be worse,
Of the rooms in your house, you will
give up the best to her,
And you never will ask for the car-
riage, of course.

If, at times with a doubt on the soul
and her future,
Revelation and reason, existence
should trouble you,
You'll be always on guard to keep care-
fully mute your
Ideas on the subject, and read Dr. W.

Bring a shawl with you, home, when you
come from the Club, sir,
Or a ring, lest your wife, when you
meet her, should pout;
And don't fly in a rage and behave like
a cub, sir,
If you find that the fire, like yourself,
has gone out.

In eleven good instances out of a dozen,
'Tis the husband's a cur, when the
wife is a cat.
She is meekness itself, my soft-eyed
little cousin,
But a wife has her rights, and I'd
have you know that.

Keep my counsel. Life's struggles are
brief to be borne, friend.
In Heaven there's no marriage nor
giving in marriage.
When Death comes, think how truly
your widow will mourn, friend,
And your worth not the best of your
friends will disparage!

SEE-SAW.

SHE was a harlot, and I was a thief:
But we loved each other beyond belief:

She lived in the garret, and I in the
kitchen,
And love was all that we both were rich
in.

When they sent her at last to the hos-
pital,
Both day and night my tears did fall;
They fell so fast that, to dry their grief,
I borrowed my neighbor's handkerchief.

The world, which, as it is brutally taught,
Still judges the act in lieu of the thought,
Found my hand in my neighbor's pocket,
And clapped me, at once, under chain and
locket.

When they asked me about it, I told
them plain,
Love it was that had turned my brain:
How should I heed where my hand had
been,
When my heart was dreaming of Celes-
tine?

Twelve friends were so struck by my
woful air,
That they sent me abroad for change of
air:
And, to prove me the kindness of their
intent,
They sent me at charge of the Govern-
ment.

When I came back again, — whom, think
you, I meet
But Celestine, here, in Regent Street?
In a carriage adorned with a coronet,
And a dress, all flounces, and lace, and
jet:

For her carriage drew up to the book-
seller's door,
Where they publish those nice little
books for the poor:
I took off my hat: and my face she
knew,
And gave me — a sermon by Mr. Bellew.

But she gave me (God bless her!) along
with the book,
Such a sweet sort of smile, such a heav-
enly look,
That, as long as I live, I shall never for-
get
Celestine, in her coach with the earl's
coronet.

There's a game that men play at in great
London-town;
Whereby some must go up, sir, and some
must go down:
And, since the mud sticks to your coat
if you fall,
Why, the strongest among us keep close
to the wall.

But some day, soon or late, in my shoes
I shall stand,
More exalted than any great Duke in
the land;
A clean shirt on my back, and a rose in
my coat,
And a collar conferred by the Queen
round my throat.

And I know that my Celestine will not
forget
To be there, in her coach with my lord's
coronet:
She will smile to me then, as she smiled
to me now:
I shall nod to her gayly, and make her
my bow; —

Before I rejoin all those famous old
thieves
Whose deeds have immortalized Rome,
sir, and Greece:
Whose names are inscribed upon His-
tory's leaves,
Like my own on the books of the City
Police: —

Alexander, and Cæsar, and other great
robbers,
Who once tried to pocket the whole uni-
verse:
Not to speak of our own parliamentary
jobbers,
With their hands, bless them all, in the
popular purse!

BABYLONIA.

ENOUGH of simpering and grimace!
Enough of damning one's soul for
nothing!
Enough of Vacuity trimmed with lace!
And Poverty proud of her purple cloth-
ing!
In Babylon, whene'er there's a wind
(Whether it blow rain, or whether it
blow sand),

The weathercocks change their mighty mind;
And the weathercocks are forty thousand.
Forty thousand weathercocks,
Each well-minded to keep his place,
Turning about in the great and small ways!
Each knows, whatever the weather's shocks,
That the wind will never blow in his face;
And in Babylon the wind blows always.

I cannot tell how it may strike you,
But it strikes me now, for the first and last time,
That there may be better things to do,
Than watching the weathercocks for pastime.
And I wish I were out of Babylon,
Out of sight of column and steeple,
Out of fashion and form, for one,
And out of the midst of this double-faced people.
Enough of catgut! Enough of the sight
Of the dolls it sets dancing all the night!
For there is a notion come to me,
As here, in Babylon, I am lying,
That far away, over the sea,
And under another moon and star,
Braver, more beautiful beings are dying
(Dying, not dancing, dying, dying!)
To a music nobler far.

Full well I know that, before it came
To inhabit this feeble, faltering frame,
My soul was weary; and, ever since then,
It has seemed to me, in the stir and bustle
Of this eager world of women and men,
That my life was tired before it began,
That even the child had fatigued the man,
And brain and heart have done their part
To wear out sinew and muscle.

Yet, sometimes, a wish has come to me,
To wander, wander, I know not where,
Out of the sight of all that I see,
Out of the hearing of all that I hear;
Where only the tawny, bold, wild beast
Roams his realms; and find, at least,
The strength which even the beast finds there,

A joy, though but a savage joy;—
Were it only to find the food I need,
The scent to track, and the force to destroy,
And the very appetite to feed;
The bliss of the sense without the thought,
And the freedom, for once in my life,
From aught
That fills my life with care.

And never this thought hath so wildly crost
My mind, with its wildering, strange temptation,
As just when I was enjoying the most
The blessings of what is called Civilization:—
The glossy boot which tightens the foot;
The club at which my friend was black-balled
(I am sorry, of course, but one must be exclusive);
The yellow kid glove whose shape I approve,
And the journal in which I am kindly called
Whatever's not libellous—only abusive;
The ball to which I am careful to go,
Where the folks are so cool, and the rooms are so hot;
The opera, which shows one what music—is not;
And the simper from Lady . . . but why should you know?

Yet, I am a part of the things I despise,
Since my life is bound by their common span:
And each idler I meet, in square or in street,
Hath within him what all that's without him belies,—
The miraculous, infinite heart of man,
With its countless capabilities!
The sleekest guest at the general feast,
That at every sip, as he sips, says grace,
Hath in him a touch of the untamed beast;
And change of nature is change of place.
The judge on the bench, and the scamp at the dock,
Have, in each of them, much that is common to both;
Each is part of the parent stock,
And their difference comes of their different cloth.

'Twixt the Seven Dials and Exeter Hall
The gulf that is fixed is not so wide:
And the fool that, last year, at Her Majesty's Ball,
Sickened me so with his simper of pride,
Is the hero now heard of, the first on the wall,
With the bayonet-wound in his side.

O, for the times which were (if any
Time be heroic) heroic indeed!
When the men were few,
And the deeds to do
Were mighty, and many,
And each man in his hand held a noble deed.
Now the deeds are few,
And the men are many,
And each man has, at most, but a noble need.

Blind fool! . . . I know that all acted time
By that which succeeds it, is ever received
As calmer, completer, and more sublime,
Only because it is finished: because
We only behold the thing it achieved;
We behold not the thing that it was.
For, while it stands whole and immutable,
In the marble of memory—we, who have seen
But the statue before us,—how can we tell
What the men that have hewn at the block may have been?
Their passion is merged in its passionlessness;
Their strife in its stillness closed forever:
Their change upon change in its changelessness;
In its final achievement, their feverish endeavor:
Who knows how sculptor on sculptor starved
With the thought in the head by the hand uncarved?
And he that spread out in its ample repose
That grand, indifferent, godlike brow,
How vainly his own may have ached, who knows,
'Twixt the laurel above and the wrinkle below?

So again to Babylon I come back,
Where this fettered giant of Human Nature
Cramped in limb, and constrained in stature,
In the torture-chamber of Vanity lies;
Helpless and weak, and compelled to speak
The things he must despise.
You stars, so still in the midnight blue,
Which over these huddling roofs I view,
Out of reach of this Babylonian riot,—
We so restless, and you so quiet,
What is difference 'twixt us and you?

You each may have pined with a pain divine,
For aught I know,
As wildly as this weak heart of mine,
In an Age ago:
For whence should you have that stern repose,
Which, here, dwells but on the brows of those
Who have lived, and survived life's fever,
Had you never known the ravage and fire
Of that inexpressible Desire,
Which wastes and calcines whatever is less
In the soul, than the soul's deep consciousness
Of a life that shall last forever?

Doubtless, doubtless, again and again,
Many a mouth has starved for bread
In a city whose wharves are choked with corn
And many a heart hath perished dead
From being too utterly forlorn,
In a city whose streets are choked with men.
Yet the bread is there, could one find it out:
And there is a heart for a heart, no doubt,
Wherever a human heart may beat;
And room for courage, and truth, and love,
To move, wherever a man may move,
In the thickest crowded street.

O Lord of the soul of man, whose will
Made earth for man, and man for heaven,
Help all thy creatures to fulfil
The hopes to each one given!

So fair thou madest, and so complete,
The little daisies at our feet ;
So sound, and so robust in heart,
The patient beasts, that bear their part
In this world's labor, never asking
The reason of its ceaseless tasking ;
Hast thou made man, though more in
kind,
By reason of his soul and mind,
Yet less in unison with life,
By reason of an inward strife,
Than these, thy simpler creatures, are,
Submitted to his use and care ?

For these, indeed, appear to live
To the full verge of their own power,
Nor ever need that time should give
To life one space beyond the hour.
They do not pine for what is not ;
Nor quarrel with the things which are ;
Their yesterdays are all forgot ;
Their morrows are not feared from far :
They do not weep, and wail, and moan,
For what is past, or what 's to be,
Or what 's not yet, and may be never ;
They do not their own lives disown,

Nor haggle with eternity
For some unknown Forever.

Ah yet, — in this must I believe
That man is nobler than the rest : —
That, looking in on his own breast,
He measures thus his strength and size
With supernatural destinies,
Whose shades o'er all his being
fall ;

And, in that dread comparison
'Twixt what is deemed and what is
done,

He can, at intervals, perceive
How weak he is, and small.

Therefore, he knows himself a child,
Set in this rudimental star,
To learn the alphabet of Being ;
By straws dismayed, by toys beguiled,
Yet conscious of a home afar ;
With all things here but ill agreeing,
Because he trusts, in manhood's prime,
To walk in some celestial clime ;
Sit in his Father's house ; and be
The inmate of Eternity.

BOOK IV. — IN SWITZERLAND.

THE HEART AND NATURE.

The lake is calm ; and, calm, the skies
In yonder silent sunset glow,
Where, o'er the woodland, homeward flies
The solitary crow ;

The woodman to his hut is gone ;
The wood-dove in the elm is still ;
The last sheep drinks, and wanders on
To graze at will.

Nor aught the pensive prospect breaks,
Save where my slow feet stir the grass,
Or where the trout to diamonds breaks
The lake's pale glass.

No moan the cushat makes, to heave
A leaflet round her windless nest ;
The air is silent in the eve ;
The world 's at rest.

All bright below ; all calm above ;
No sense of pain, no sign of wrong ;

Save in thy heart of hopeless love,
Poor child of Song !

Why must the soul through Nature rove,
At variance with her general plan ?
A stranger to the Power, whose love
Soothes all save Man ?

Why lack the strength of meaner crea-
tures ?
The wandering sheep, the grazing kine,
Are surer of their simple natures
Than I of mine.

For all their wants the poorest land
Affords supply ; they browse and breed ;
I scarce divine, and ne'er have found,
What most I need.

O God, that in this human heart
Hath made Belief so hard to grow,
And set the doubt, the pang, the smart
In all we know —

Why hast thou, too, in solemn jest
At this tormented thinking-power,
Inscribed, in flame on yonder West,
In hues on every flower,

Through all the vast unthinking sphere
Of mere material Force without,
Rebuke so vehement and severe
To the least doubt ?

And robbed the world and hung the night,
With silent, stern, and solemn forms ;
And strown with sounds of awe and
might,
The seas and storms, —

All lacking power to impart
To man the secret he assails,
But armed to crush him, if his heart
Once doubts or fails !

To make him feel the same forlorn
Despair the Fiend hath felt ere now,
In gazing at the stern sweet scorn
On Michael's brow.

A QUIET MOMENT.

STAY with me, Lady, while you may !
For life's so sad, — this hour 's so
sweet ;

Ah, Lady, — life too long will stay ;
Too soon this hour will fleet.

How fair this mountain's purple bust,
Alone in high and glimmering air !
And see, . . . those village spires, up-
thrust
From yon dark plain, — how fair !

How sweet yon lone and lovely scene,
And yonder dropping fiery ball,
And eve's sweet spirit, that steals, un-
seen,
With darkness over all !

This blessed hour is yours, and eve's ;
And this is why it seems so sweet
To lie, as hushed as fallen leaves
In autumn, at your feet ;

And watch, awhile released from care,
The twilight in yon quiet skies,
The twilight in your quiet hair,
The twilight in your eyes :

Till in my soul the twilight stays,
— Eve's twilight, since the dawn's is
o'er !
And life's too well-known worthless
days
Become unknown once more.

Your face is no uncommon face ;
Like it, I have seen many a one,
And may again, before my race
Of care be wholly run.

But not the less, those earnest brows,
And that pure oval cheek can charm ; —
Those eyes of tender deep repose ;
That breast, the heart keeps warm.

Because a sense of goodness sleeps
In every sober, soft, uncreased tress,
That o'er those brows, uncared for, keeps
Its shadowy quietness :

Because that lip's soft silence shows,
Though passion it hath never known,
That well, to kiss one kiss, it knows —
— A woman's holiest one !

Yours is the charm of calm good sense,
Of wholesome views of earth and
heaven,
Of pity, touched with reverence,
To all things freely given.

Your face no sleepless midnight fills,
For all its serious sweet endeavor ;
It plants no pang, no rapture thrills,
But ah ! — it pleases ever !

Not yours is Cleopatra's eye,
And Juliet's tears you never knew :
Never will amorous Antony
Kiss kingdoms out for you !

Never for you will Romeo's love,
From deeps of moonlit musing, break
To poetry about the glove
Whose touch may press your cheek.

But ah, in one, — no Antony
Nor Romeo now, nor like to these, —
(Whom neither Cleopatra's eye,
Nor Juliet's tears, could please)

How well they lull the lurking care
Which else within the mind endures, —
That soft white hand, that soft dark hair,
And that soft voice of yours !

So fair thou madest, and so complete,
The little daisies at our feet ;
So sound, and so robust in heart,
The patient beasts, that bear their part
In this world's labor, never asking
The reason of its ceaseless tasking ;
Hast thou made man, though more in
kind,
By reason of his soul and mind,
Yet less in unison with life,
By reason of an inward strife,
Than these, thy simpler creatures, are,
Submitted to his use and care ?

For these, indeed, appear to live
To the full verge of their own power,
Nor ever need that time should give
To life one space beyond the hour.
They do not pine for what is not ;
Nor quarrel with the things which are ;
Their yesterdays are all forgot ;
Their morrows are not feared from far :
They do not weep, and wail, and moan,
For what is past, or what 's to be,
Or what 's not yet, and may be never ;
They do not their own lives disown,

Nor haggle with eternity
For some unknown Forever.

Ah yet, — in this must I believe
That man is nobler than the rest : —
That, looking in on his own breast,
He measures thus his strength and size
With supernatural destinies,
Whose shades o'er all his being
fall ;

And, in that dread comparison
'Twixt what is deemed and what is
done,

He can, at intervals, perceive
How weak he is, and small.

Therefore, he knows himself a child,
Set in this rudimental star,
To learn the alphabet of Being ;
By straws dismayed, by toys beguiled,
Yet conscious of a home afar ;
With all things here but ill agreeing,
Because he trusts, in manhood's prime,
To walk in some celestial clime ;
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From yon dark plain, — how fair !

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And that pure oval cheek can charm ; —
Those eyes of tender deep repose ;
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Because a sense of goodness sleeps
In every sober, soft, uncrown tress,
That o'er those brows, uncrown'd for, keeps
Its shadowy quietness :

Because that lip's soft silence shows,
Though passion it hath never known,
That well, to kiss one kiss, it knows —
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To poetry about the glove
Whose touch may press your cheek.

But ah, in one, — no Antony
Nor Romeo now, nor like to these, —
(Whom neither Cleopatra's eye,
Nor Juliet's tears, could please)

How well they lull the lurking care
Which else within the mind endures, —
That soft white hand, that soft dark hair,
And that soft voice of yours !

So, while you stand, a fragile form,
With that close shawl around you
drawn,
And eve's last ardors fading warm
Adown the mountain lawn,

'T is sweet, although we part to-morrow,
And ne'er, the same, shall meet again,
Awhile, from old habitual sorrow
To cease; to cease from pain;

To feel that, ages past, the soul
Hath lived — and ages hence will live;
And taste, in hours like this, the whole
Of all the years can give.

Then, Lady, yet one moment stay,
While your sweet face makes all things
sweet,
For ah, the charm will pass away
Before again we meet!

NENIE.

SOFT, soft be thy sleep in the land of
the West,
Fated maiden!
Fair lie the flowers, love, and light, on
thy breast
Passion-laden,
In the place where thou art, by the
storm-beaten strand
Of the moaning Atlantic,
While, alone with my sorrow, I roam
through thy land,
The beloved, the romantic!
And thy faults, child, sleep where in
those dark eyes Death closes
All their doings and undoings;
For who counts the thorns on last year's
perisht roses?
Smile, dead rose, in thy ruins!
With thy beauty, its frailty is over.
No token
Of all which thou wast!
Not so much as the stem whence the
blossom was broken
Hath been spared by the frost.
With thy lips, and thine eyes, and thy
long golden tresses,
Cold . . . and so young too!
All lost, like the sweetness which died
with our kisses,
On the lips we once clung to.
Be it so! O too loved, and too lovely, to
linger

Where Age in its bareness
Creeps slowly, and Time with his terri-
ble finger
Effaces all fairness.
Thy being was but beauty, thy life only
rapture,
And, ere both were over,
Or yet one delight had escaped from thy
capture,
Death came, — thy last lover,
And found thee, . . . no care on thy
brow, in thy tresses
No silver — all gold there!
On thy lips, when he kissed them, their
last human kisses
Had scarcely grown cold there.
Thine was only earth's joy, not its sor-
row, its sinning,
Its friends that are foes too.

O, fair was thy life in its lovely beginning,
And fair in its close too!
But I? . . . since we parted, both mourn-
ful and many
Life's changes have been to me:
And of all the love-garlands Youth wove
me, not any

Remain that are green to me.
O, where are the nights, with thy touch
and thy breath in them,
Faint with heart-beating?
The fragrance, the darkness, the life and
the death in them,
— Parting and meeting?
All the world ours in that hour! . . .
O, the silence,
The moonlight, and, far in it,
O, the one nightingale singing a mile
hence!

The oped window — one star in it!
Sole witness of stolen sweet moments,
unguest of
By the world in its primness; —
Just one smile to adore by the starlight:
the rest of
Thy soul in the dimness!
If I glide through the door of thy cham-
ber, and sit there,
The old, faint, uncertain
Fragrance, that followed thee, surely will
fit there, —
O'er the chairs, — in the curtain: —
But thou? . . . O thou missed, and thou
mourned one! O never,
Nevermore, shall we rove
Through chamber, or garden, or by the
dark river
Soft lamps burn above!

O dead, child, dead, dead — all the
shrunken romance
Of the dream life begun with!
But thou, love, canst alter no more —
smile or glance;
Thy last change is done with.
As a moon that is sunken, a sunset
that's o'er,
So thy face keeps the semblance
Of the last look of love, the last grace
that it wore,
In my mourning remembrance.
As a strain from the last of thy songs,
when we parted,
Whose echoes thrill yet,
Through the long dreamless nights of
sad years, lonely-hearted,
With their haunting regret, —

Though nerveless the hand now, and
shattered the lute too,
Once vocal for me,
There floats through life's ruins, when
all's dark and mute too,
The music of thee!
Beauty, how brief! Life, how long!
. . . well, love's done now!
Down the path fate arranged for me
I tread faster, because I must tread it
alone now.
— This is all that is changed for me.
My heart must have broken, ere I broke
the fetter
Thyself didst undo, love.
— Ah, there's many a purer, and many a
better,
But more loved, . . . O, how few, love!

BOOK V. — IN HOLLAND.

AUTUMN.

So now, then, Summer's over — by degrees.
Hark! 't is the wind in yon red region
grieves.
Who says the world grows better,
growing old?
See! what poor trumpery on those pau-
per trees,
That cannot keep, for all their fine
gold leaves,
Their last bird from the cold.

This is Dame Nature, puckered, pinched,
and sour,
Of all the charms her poets praised,
bereft,
Scowling and scolding (only hear
her, there!)
Like that old spiteful Queen, in her last
hour,
Whom Spenser, Shakespeare, sung to
. . . nothing left
But wrinkles and red hair!

LEAFLESS HOURS.

THE pale sun, through the spectral wood,
Gleams sparsely, where I pass:
My footstep, silent as my mood,
Falls in the silent grass.

Only my shadow points before me,
Where I am moving now:
Only sad memories murmur o'er me
From every leafless bough:
And out of the nest of last year's Red-
breast
Is stolen the very snow.

ON MY TWENTY-FOURTH YEAR.

THE night's in November: the winds
are at strife:
The snow's on the hill, and the ice on
the mere:
The world to its winter is turned: and
my life
To its twenty-fourth year.

The swallows are flown to the south long
ago:
The roses are fallen: the woodland is
sere.
Hope's flown with the swallows: Love's
rose will not grow
In my twenty-fourth year.

The snow on the threshold: the cold at
the heart:
But the fagot to warm, and the wine-
cup to cheer:

God's help to look up to: and courage
to start
On my twenty-fourth year.

And 'tis well that the month of the
roses is o'er!

The last, which I plucked for Neræa
to wear,

She gave her new lover. A man should
do more

With his twenty-fourth year

Than mourn for a woman, because she's
unkind,

Or pine for a woman, because she is fair.
Ah, I loved you, Neræa! But now . . .
never mind,

'T is my twenty-fourth year!

What a thing! to have done with the
follies of Youth,

Ere Age brings ITS follies! . . . though
many a tear

It should cost, to see Love fly away, and
find Truth

In one's twenty-fourth year.

The Past's golden valleys are drained.
I must plant

On the Future's rough upland new
harvests, I fear.

Ho, the plough and the team! . . . who
would perish of want

In his twenty-fourth year?

Man's heart is a well, which forever re-
news

The void at the bottom, no sounding
comes near:

And Love does not die, though its object
I lose

In my twenty-fourth year.

The great and the little are only in name.
The smoke from my chimney casts
shadows as drear

On the heart, as the smoke from Vesu-
vius in flame:

And my twenty-fourth year,

From the joys that have cheered it, the
cares that have troubled,

What is wise to pursue, what is well
to revere,

May judge all as fully as though life
were doubled

To its forty-eighth year!

If the prospect grow dim, 't is because it
grows wide.

Every loss hath its gain. So, from
sphere on to sphere,

Man mounts up the ladder of Time: so
I stride

Up my twenty-fourth year!

Exulting? . . . no . . . sorrowing? . . .
no . . . with a mind

Whose regret chastens hope, whose
faith triumphs o'er fear:

Not repining: not confident: no, but
resigned

To my twenty-fourth year.

JACQUELINE,

COUNTESS OF HOLLAND AND HAINAULT.*

Is it the twilight, or my fading sight,
Makes all so dim around me? No, the
night

Is come already. See! through yonder
pane,

Alone in the gray air, that star again—
Which shines so wan, I used to call it
mine

For its pale face: like Countess Jacque-
line

Who reigned in Brabant once . . . that's
years ago.

I called so much mine, then: so much
seemed so!

And see, my own!—of all those things,
my star

(Because God hung it there, in heaven,
so far

Above the reach and want of those hard
men)

Is all they have not taken from me.
Then

I call it still My Star. Why not? The
dust

Hath claimed the dust: no more. And
moth and rust

* Who was married to the impotent and worthless John of Brabant, affianced to "good Duke Humphry," of Gloucester, and finally wedded to Frank von Lorsele, a gentleman of Zealand, in consequence of which marriage she lost even the title of Countess. She died at the age of thirty-six, after a life of unparalleled adventure and misfortune. See any Biographical Dictionary, or any History of the Netherlands.

May rot the throne, the kingly purple
fray:—

What then? Yon star saw kingdoms
rolled away

Ere mine was taken from me. It sur-
vives.

But think, Beloved,—in that high life
of lives,

When our souls see the suns themselves
burn low

Before that Sun of Righteousness,—and
know

What is, and was, before the suns were
lit,—

How Love is all in all . . . Look, look at it,
My star,—God's star,—for being God's

't is mine:

Had it been man's . . . no matter . . .
see it shine—

The old wan beam, which I have watched
ere now

So many a wretched night, when this
poor brow

Ached 'neath the sorrows of its thorny
crown.

Its crown! . . . ah, droop not, dear, those
fond eyes down.

No gem in all that shattered coronet
Was half so precious as the tear which
wet

Just now this pale sick forehead. O my
own,

My husband, need was, that I should
have known

Much sorrow,—more than most Queens,
—all know some,—

Ere, dying, I could bless thee for the
home

Far dearer than the Palace,—call thy
tear,

The costliest gem that ever sparkled here.

Infold me, my Belovéd. One more kiss.
O, I must go! 'T was willed I should
not miss

Life's secret, ere I left it. And now
see,—

My lips touch thine—thine arm encir-
cles me—

The secret's found—God beckons—I
must go.

Earth's best is given.—Heaven's turn
is come to show

How much its best earth's best may yet
exceed,

Lest earth's should seem the very best
indeed.

So we must part a little; but not long.
I seem to see it all. My lands belong

To Philip still; but thine will be my
grave,

(The only strip of land which I could
save!)

Not much, but wide enough for some
few flowers,

Thou 'lt plant there, by and by, in later
hours:

Duke Humphry, when they tell him I
am dead

(And so young too!) will sigh, and shake
his head,

And if his wife should chide, "Poor
Jacqueline,"

He 'll add, "You know she never could
be mine."

And men will say, when some one speaks
of me,

"Alas, it was a piteous history,
The life of that poor countess!" For
the rest

Will never know, my love, how I was blest.
Some few of my poor Zealanders, per-
chance,

Will keep kind memories of me; and in
France

Some minstrel sing my story. Pitiless
John

Will prosper still, no doubt, as he has
done,

And still praise God with blood upon
the Rood.

Philip will, doubtless, still be called
"The Good."

And men will curse and kill: and the
old game

Will weary out new hands: the love of
fame

Will sow new sins: thou wilt not be
renowned:

And I shall lie quite quiet under ground.
My life is a torn book. But at the end

A little page, quite fair, is saved, my
friend,

Where thou didst write thy name. No
stain is there,

No blot,—from marge to marge, all
pure—no tear;—

The last page, saved from all, and writ
by thee,

Which I shall take safe up to Heaven
with me.

All's not in vain, since this be so. Dost
grieve?

Belovéd, I beseech thee to believe

Although this be the last page of my life,
It is my heart's first, only one. Thy
wife,
Poor though she be, O thou sole wealth
of mine,
Is happier than the Countess Jacqueline!

And since my heart owns thine, say, —
am I not

A Queen, my chosen, though by all
forgot?

Though all forsake, yet is not this thy
hand?

I, a lone wanderer in a darkened land,
I, a poor pilgrim with no staff of hope,
I, a late traveller down the evening slope,
Where any spark, the glow-worm's by
the way,

Had been a light to bless . . . have I,
O say,

Not found, Belovéd, in thy tender eyes,
A light more sweet than morning's? As
there dies

Some day of storm all glorious in its
even,

My life grows loveliest as it fades in
heaven.

This earthly house breaks up. This
flesh must fade.

So many shocks of grief slow breach
have made

In the poor frame. Wrongs, insults,
treacheries,

Hopes broken down, and memory which
sighs

In, like a night-wind! Life was never
meant

To bear so much in such frail tenement.
Why should we seek to patch and
plaster o'er

This shattered roof, crushed windows,
broken door

The light already shines through? Let
them break.

Yet would I gladly live for thy dear
sake,

O my heart's first and last, if that could
be!

In vain! . . . yet grieve not thou. I
shall not see

England again, and those white cliffs;
nor ever

Again those four gray towers beside the
river,

And London's roaring bridges: never
more

Those windows with the market-stalls
before,

Where the red-kirtled market-girls went
by

In the great square, beneath the great
gray sky,

In Brussels: nor in Holland, night or day,
Watch those long lines of siege, and
fight at bay

Among my broken army, in default
Of Gloucester's failing forces from Hai-
nault:

Nor shall I pace again those gardens
green,

With their clipt alleys, where they
called me Queen,

In Brabant once. For all these things
are gone.

But thee I shall behold, my chosen one,
Though we should seem whole worlds on
worlds apart,

Because thou wilt be ever in my heart.
Nor shall I leave thee wholly. I shall be
An evening thought, — a morning dream
to thee, —

A silence in thy life when, through the
night,

The bell strikes, or the sun, with sinking
light,

Smites all the empty windows. As there
sprout

Daisies, and dimpling tufts of violets, out
Among the grass where some corpse lies
asleep,

So round thy life, where I lie buried deep,
A thousand little tender thoughts shall
spring,

A thousand gentle memories wind and
cling.

O, promise me, my own, before my soul
Is houseless, — let the great world turn
and roll

Upon its way unvest . . . Its pomps,
its powers!

The dust says to the dust, . . . "the
earth is ours."

I would not, if I could, be Queen again
For all the walls of the wide world con-
tain.

Be thou content with silence. Who
would raise

A little dust and noise of human praise,
If he could see, in yonder distance dim,
The silent eye of God that watches him?
Oh! couldst thou see all that I see to-
night

Upon the brinks of the great Infinite!

"Come out of her, my people, lest ye be
Partakers of her sins!" . . . My love,
but we

Our treasure where no thieves break in
and steal,

Have stored, I trust. Earth's weal is
not our weal.

Let the world mind its business — peace
or war,

Ours is elsewhere. Look, look, — my
star, my star!

It grows, it glows, it spreads in light
unfurled; —

Said I "my star"? No star — a world
— God's world!

What hymns adown the jasper sea are
rolled,

Even to these sick pillows! Who in fold
White wings about me? Rest, rest,
rest . . . I come!

O Love! I think that I am near my
home.

Whence was that music? Was it Heav-
en's I heard?

Write "Blesséd are the dead that die in
the Lord,

Because they rest," . . . because their toil
is o'er.

The voice of weeping shall be heard no
more

In the Eternal city. Neither dying
Nor sickness, pain nor sorrow, neither
crying,

For God shall wipe away all tears. Rest,
rest,

Thy hand, my husband, — so — upon
thy breast!

MACROMICROS.

It is the star of solitude,
Alight in yon lonely sky.
The sea is silent in its mood,
Motherlike moaning a lullaby,
To hush the hungering mystery
To sleep on its breast subdued.
The night is alone, and I.

It is not the scene I am seeing,
The lonely sky and the sea,
It is the pathos of Being
That is making so dark in me
This silent and solemn hour: —
The bale of baffled power,
The wail of un baffled desire,

The fire that must ever devour
The source by which it is fire.

My spirit expands, expands!
I spread out my soul on the sea.

I feel for yet unbound lands,
And I find but the land where She

Sits, with her sad white hands,
At her golden broidery,

In sight of the sorrowful sands,
In an antique gallery,

Where, ever beside her, stands
(Moodily mimicking me)

The ghost of a something her heart de-
mands

For a blessing which cannot be.

And broider, broider by night and day
The brede of thy blazing broidery!

Till thy beauty be wholly woven away
Into the desolate tapestry.

Let the thread be scarlet, the gold be
gay,

For the damp to dim, and the moth to
fray:

Weave in the azure, and crimson, and
green!

Till the slow threads, needling out and in,
To take a fashion and form begin:

Yet, for all the time and toil, I see
The work is vain, and will not be
Like what it was meant to have been.

O woman, woman, with face so pale!
Pale woman, weaving away

A frustrate life at a lifeless loom,
Early or late, 't is of little avail

That thou lightest the lamp in the
gloom.

Full well, I see, there is coming a day
When the work shall forever rest in-
complete.

Fling, fling the foolish blazon away,
And weave me a winding-sheet!

It is not for thee, in this dreary hour,
That I walk, companionless here by
the shore.

I am caught in the eddy and whirl of a
power

Which is not grief, and is not love,
Though it loves, and grieves,

Within me, without me, wherever I
move

In the going out of the ghostly eyes,
And is changing me more and more.

I am not mourning for thee, although

I love thee, and thou art lost :
Nor yet for myself, albeit I know
That my life is flawed and crost :
But for that sightless, sorrowing Soul
That is feeling, blind with immortal
pain,
All round, for what it can never attain ;
That prisoned, pining, and passionate
soul,

So vast, and yet so small ;
That seems, now nothing, now all,
That moves me to pity beyond control,
And repulses pity again.

I am mourning, since mourn I must,
With those patient Powers that bear,
'Neath the unattainable stars up there,
With the pomp and pall of funeral,
Subject and yet august,
The weight of this world's dust : —

The ruined giant under the rock :
The stricken spirit below the ocean :
And the winged things wounded of old
by the shock
That set the earth in motion.

Ah yet, . . . and yet, and yet,
If she were here with me,
If she were here by the sea,
With the face I cannot forget,
Then all things would not be
So fraught with my own regret,
But what I should feel and see,
And seize it at last, at last, —
The secret known and lost in the past,
To unseal the Genii that sleep
In vials long hid in the deep ;
By forgotten, fashionless spells held fast,
Where through streets of the cities of
coral, aghast,
The sea-nymphs wander and weep.

MYSTERY.

THE hour was one of mystery,
When we were sailing, I and she,
Down the dark, the silent stream.
The stars above were pale with love,
And a wizard wind did faintly move,
Like a whisper through a dream.

Her head was on my breast,
Her loving little head !
Her hand in mine was prest,
And not a word we said ;

But round and round the night we
wound,
Till we came at last to the Isle of
Fays ;
And, all the while, from the magic isle,
Came that music, that music of other
days !

The lamps in the garden gleamed.
The Palace was all alight.
The sound of the viols streamed
Through the windows over the night.
We saw the dancers pass
At the windows, two by two.
The dew was on the grass,
And the glow-worm in the dew.

We came through the grass to the
cypress-tree.
We stood in its shadow, I and she.
"Thy face is pale, thine eyes are wild.
What aileth thee, what aileth thee ?"

"Naught aileth me," she murmured mild,
"Only the moonlight makes me pale ;
The moonlight, shining through the veil
Of this black cypress-tree."

"By yonder moon, whose light so soon
Will fade upon the gloom,
And this black tree, whose mystery
Is mingled with the tomb, —
By Love's brief moon, and Death's dark
tree,
Lovest thou me ?"

Upon my breast she leaned her head ;
"By yonder moon and tree,
I swear that all my soul," she said,
"Is given to thee."

"I know not what thy soul may be,
Nor canst thou make it mine.
Yon stars may all be worlds : for me
Enough to know they shine.
Thou art mine evening star. — I know
At dawn star-distant thou wilt be :
I shall not hear thee murmuring low ;
Thy face I shall not see.

I love thy beauty : 't will not stay :
Let it be all mine while it may.
I have no bliss save in the kiss
Thou givest me."

We came to the statue carved in stone,
Over the fountain. We stood there
alone.

"What aileth thee, that thou dost sigh ?
And why is thy hand so cold ?"
"T is the fountain that sighs," . . . she
said, "not I ;
And the statue, whose hand thou dost
hold."

"By yonder fount, that flows forever,
And this statue, that cannot move, —
By the fountain of Time, that ceases
never,
And the fixedness of Love, —
By motion and immutability
Lovest thou me ?"

"By the fountain of Time, with its
ceaseless flow,
And the image of Love that rests,"
sighed she,
"I love thee, I swear, come joy, come
woe,
For eternity !"

"Eternity is a word so long
That I cannot spell it now :
For the nightingale is singing her song
From yon pomegranate bough.
Let it mean what it may — Eternity,
If thou lovest me now as I love thee,
As I love thee !"

We came to the Palace. We mounted
the stair.
The great hall-doors wide open were.
And all the dancers that danced in the
hall
Greeted us to the festival.

There were ladies, as fair as fair might be,
But not one of them all was fair as she.
There were knights, that looked at them
lovingly,
But not one of them all was loving as I.

Only, each noble cavalier
Had his throat red-lined from ear to ear ;
'T was a collar of merit, I have heard,
Which a Queen upon each had once con-
ferred.

And each lovely lady that oped her lip
Let a little mouse's tail outslip ;
'T was the fashion there, I know not
why,
But fashions are changing constantly.
From the crescented naphtha lamps each
ray
Streamed into a still enchanted blaze ; —

And forth from the deep-toned orchestra
That music, that music of other days !

My arm enlaced her winsome waist,
And down the dance we flew :
We flew, we raced : our lips embraced :
And our breath was mingled too.
Round, and round, to a magic sound —
(A wizard waltz to a wizard air !)
Round and round, we whirled, we wound,
In a circle light and fine :
My cheek was fanned by her fragrant
hair,

And her bosom beat on mine :
And all the while, in the winding ways,
That music, that music of other days,
With its melodies divine !

The palace clock stands in the hall,
And talks, unheard, of the flight of
time :
With a face too pale for a festival
It telleth a tale too sad for rhyme.

The palace clock, with a silver note,
Is chanting the death of the hour
that dies.

"What aileth thee ? for I see float
A shade into thine eyes."

"Naught aileth me," . . . low murmured
she,
"I am faint with the dance, my love,
Give me thine arm : the air is warm :
Lead me unto the grove."

We wandered into the grove. We found
A bower by woodbine woven round.

Upon my breast she leaned her head :
I drew her into the bower apart.
"I swear to thee, my love," she said,
"Thou hast my heart !"

"Ah, leave thy little heart at rest !
For it is so light, I think, so light,
Some wind would blow it away to-night,
If it were not safe in thy breast.
But the wondrous brightness on thine
hair

Did never seem more bright :
And thy beauty never looked more fair
Than thy beauty looks to-night :
And this dim hour, and this wild bower,
Were made for our delight :
Here we will stay, until the day,
In yon dark east grows white."

"This may not be," . . . she answered
me,
"For I was lately wed
With a diamond ring to an Ogre-king,
And I am his wife," . . . she said.
"My husband is old; but his crown is
of gold:
And he hath a cruel eye:
And his arm is long, and his hand is
strong,
And his body is seven ells high:
And alas! I fear, if he found us here,
That we both should surely die.
"All day I take my harp, and play
To him on a golden string:
Thorough the weary livelong day
I play to him, and sing:
I sing to him till his white hair
Begins to curl and creep:
And his wrinkles old slowly unfold,
And his brows grow smooth as sleep.
But at night, when he calls for his
golden cup,
Into his wine I pour
A juice which he drinks duly up,
And sleeps till the night is o'er.
For one moment I wait: I look at him
straight,
And tell him for once how much I de-
test him:
I have no fear lest he should hear,
The drug he hath drained hath so
opprest him.
Then, finger on lip, away I slip,
And down the hills, till I reach the
stream:
I call to thee clear, till the boat appear,
And we sail together through dark and
dream.
And sweet it is, in this Isle of Fays,
To wander at will through a garden
of flowers,
While the flowers that bloom, and the
lamps that blaze,
And the very nightingales seem ours!
And sweeter it is, in the winding ways
Of the waltz, while the music falls in
showers,
While the minstrel plays, and the mo-
ment stays,
And the sweet brief rapture of love is
ours!
"But the night is far spent; and before
the first rent
In yon dark blue sky overhead,
My husband will wake, and the spell
will break,
And peril is near," . . . she said.
"For if he should wake, and not find
me,
By bower and brake, thorough bush and
tree,
He will come to seek me here;
And the Palace of Fays, in one vast blaze,
Will sink and disappear;
And the nightingales will die in the
vales,
And all will be changed and drear!
For the fays and elves can take care of
themselves:
They will slip on their slippers, and
go:
In their little green cloaks they will
hide in the oaks,
And the forests and brakes, for their
sweet sakes,
Will cover and keep them, I know.
And the knights, with their spurs, and
velvets and furs,
Will take off their heads, each one,
And to horse, and away, as fast as they
may,
Over brook, and bramble, and stone;
And each dame of the house has a little
dun mouse,
That will whisper her when to be gone;
But we, my love, in this desolate grove,
We shall be left alone;
And my husband will find us, take us
and bind us:
In his cave he will lock me up,
And pledge me for spite in thy blood by
night
When he drains down his golden cup."
"Thy husband, dear, is a monster, 'tis
clear,
But just now I will not tarry
Thy choice to dispute—how on earth
such a brute
Thou hadst ever the fancy to marry.
For wherefore, meanwhile, are we two
here,
In a fairy island under a spell,
By night, in a magical atmosphere,
In a lone enchanted dell,
If we are to say and do no more
Than is said and done by the dull
daylight,
In that dry old world, where both must
ignore,
To-morrow, the dream of to-night."

Her head drooped on my breast,
Fair foolish little head!
Her lips to mine were prest.
Never a word was said.

If it were but a dream of the night,
A dream that I dreamed in sleep—
Why, then, is my face so white,
And this wound so red and deep?
But whatever it was, it all took place
In a land where never your steps will go,
Though they wander, wherever they will,
through space;
In an hour you never will know,
Though you should outlive the crow
That is like to outlive your race.

And if it were but a dream, it broke
Too soon, albeit too late I woke,
Waked by the smart of a sounding stroke
Which has so confused my wits,
That I cannot remember, and never shall,
What was the close of that festival,
Nor how the Palace was shattered
to bits:

For all that, just now, I think I know,
Is what is the force of an Ogre's blow,
As my head, by starts and fits,
Aches and throbs; and, when I look
round,
All that I hear is the sickening sound
Of the nurse's watch, and the doctor's
boots,
Instead of the magical fairy flutes;
And ah that I see, in my love's lost
place,
Is that gin-drinking hag, with her nut-
cracker face,
By the hearth's half-burned out wood:
And the only stream is this stream of
blood

That flows from me, red and wide:
Yet still I hear, — as sharp and clear,
In the horrible, horrible silence outside,
The clock that stands in the empty hall,
And talks to my soul of the flight of
time;

With a face like a face at a funeral,
Telling a tale too sad for rhyme:
And still I hear, with as little cheer,
In the yet more horrible silence inside,
Chanted, perchance, by elves and fays,
From some far island, out of my gaze,
Where a house has fallen, and some
one has died,
That music, that music of other days,
With its minstrelsy undescried!

For Time, which surviveth everything,
And Memory which surviveth Time:—
These two sit by my side, and sing,
A song too sad for rhyme.

THE CANTICLE OF LOVE.

ONCE heard an angel, by night, in the sky,
Singing softly a song to a deep golden
lute:
The polestar, the seven little planets,
and I,
To the song that he sung listened mute.
For the song that he sung was so strange
and so sweet,
And so tender the tones of his lute's
golden strings,
That the Seraphs of Heaven sat hush
at his feet,
And folded their heads in their wings.

And the song that he sung by those
Seraphs up there
Is called . . . "Love." But the words, I
had heard them elsewhere.

For, when I was last in the nethermost
Hell,
On a rock 'mid the sulphurous surges,
I heard
A pale spirit sing to a wild hollow shell,
And his song was the same, every
word.

But so sad was his singing, all Hell to
the sound
Moaned, and, wailing, complained like
a monster in pain,
While the fiends hovered near o'er the
dismal profound,
With their black wings weighed down
by the strain.

And the song that was sung by the Lost
Ones down there
Is called . . . "Love." But the spirit
that sung was Despair.

When the moon sets to-night, I will go
down to ocean,
Bare my brow to the breeze, and my
heart to its anguish;
And sing till the Siren with pining emo-
tion
(Unroused in her sea-caves) shall lan-
guish.

And the Sylphs of the water shall crouch
at my feet,
With their white wistful faces turned
upward to hear,
And the soft Salamanders shall float, in
the heat
Of the ocean volcanoes, more near.

For the song I have learned, all that
listen shall move:
But there's one will not listen, and that
one I love.

THE PEDLER.

THERE was a man, whom you might see,
Toward nightfall, on the dusty track,
Faring, footsore and wearily —
A strong box on his back.

A speck against the flaring sky,
You saw him pass the line of dates,
The camel-drivers loitering by
From Bagdad's dusking gates.

The merchants from Bassora stared,
And of his wares would question him,
But, without answer, on he fared
Into the evening dim.

Nor only in the east: but oft
In northern lands of ice and snow,
You might have seen, past field and croft,
That figure faring slow.

His cheek was worn; his back bent double
Beneath the iron box he bore;
And in his walk there seemed such
trouble,
You saw his feet were sore.

You wondered if he ever had
A settled home, a wife, a child:
You marvelled if a face so sad
At any time had smiled.

The cheery housewife oft would fling
A pitying alms, as on he strode,
Where, round the hearth, a rosy ring,
Her children's faces glowed:

In the dark doorway, oft the maid,
Late-lingering on her lover's arm,
Watched through the twilight, half
afraid,
That solitary form.

The traveller hailed him off, . . . "Good
night:
The town is far: the road is lone:
God speed!" . . . already out of sight,
The wayfarer was gone.

But, when the night was late and still,
And the last star of all had crept
Into his place above the hill,
He laid him down and slept.

His head on that strong box he laid:
And there, beneath the star-cold skies,
In slumber, I have heard it said,
There rose before his eyes

A lovely dream, a vision fair,
Of some far-off, forgotten land,
And of a girl with golden hair,
And violets in her hand.

He sprang to kiss her . . . "Ah! once
more
Return, beloved, and bring with thee
The glory and delight of yore, —
Lost evermore to me!"

Then, ere she answered, o'er his back
There fell a brisk and sudden stroke, —
So sound and resolute a thwack
That, with the blow, he woke . . .

There comes out of that iron box
An ugly hag, an angry crone;
Her crutch about his ears she knocks:
She leaves him not alone:

"Thou lazy vagabond! come, budge,
And carry me again," . . . she says:
"Not half the journey's over . . .
trudge!"
. . . He groans, and he obeys.

Oft in the sea he sought to fling
That iron box. But witches swim:
And wave and wind were sure to bring
The old hag back to him;

Who all the more about his brains
Belabored him with such hard blows,
That the poor devil, for his pains,
Wished himself dead, heaven knows!

Love, is it thy hand in mine? . . . Behold!
I see the crutch uplifted high.
The angry hag prepares to scold.
O, yet we might Good by!

A GHOST STORY.

I LAY awake past midnight:
The moon set o'er the snow:
The very cocks, for coldness,
Could neither sleep nor crow.

There came to me, near morning,
A woman pale and fair:
She seemed a monarch's daughter,
By the red gold round her hair.

The ring upon her finger
Was one that well I know:
I knew her fair face also,
For I had loved it so!

But I felt I saw a spirit,
And I was sore afraid;
For it is many and many a year
Ago, since she was dead.

I would have spoken to her,
But I could not speak, for fear:
Because it was a homeless ghost
That walked beyond its sphere;

'Till her head from her white shoulders
She lifted up: and said . . .
'*Look in! you'll find I'm hollow.*
Pray do not be afraid!'

SMALL PEOPLE.

THE warm moon was up in the sky,
And the warm summer out on the land.
There trembled a tear from her eye:
There trembled a tear on my hand.

Her sweet face I could not see clear,
For the shade was so dark in the tree:
I only felt touched by a tear,
And I thought that the tear was for
me.

In her small ear I whispered a word, —
With her sweet lips she laughed in my
face
And, as light through the leaves as a
bird,
She flitted away from the place.

Then she told to her sister, the Snake,
All I said; and her cousin the Toad.
The Snake slipped away to the brake,
The Toad went to town by the road.

The Toad told the Devil's coach-horse,
Who cocked up his tail at the news.
The Snake hissed the secret, of course,
To the Newt, who was changing her
shoes.

The Newt drove away to the ball,
And told it the Scorpion and Asp.
The Spider, who lives in the wall,
Overheard it, and told it the Wasp.

The Wasp told the Midge and the Gnat:
And the Gnat told the Flea and the Nit.
The Nit dropped an egg as she sat:
The Flea shrugged his shoulders, and
bit.

The Nit and the Flea are too small,
And the Snake slips from under my
foot:
I wish I could find 'mid them all
A man, — to insult and to shoot!

METEMPSYCHOSIS.

SHE fanned my life out with her soft
little sighs:
She hushed me to death with her face
so fair:
I was drunk with the light of her wild
blue eyes,
And strangled dumb in her long gold
hair.

So now I'm a blessed and wandering
ghost,
Though I cannot quite find out my
way up to heaven:
But I hover about o'er the long reedy
coast,
In the wistful light of a low red eben.

I have borrowed the coat of a little gray
gnat:
There's a small sharp song I have
learned how to sing:
I know a green place she is sure to be at:
I shall light on her neck there, and
sting, and sting.

Tra-la-la, tra-la-la, life never pleased me!
I fly where I list now, and sleep at my
ease.
Buzz, buzz, buzz! the dead only are free.
Yonder's my way now. Give place, if
you please.

TO THE QUEEN OF SERPENTS.

I TRUST that never more in this world's
shade
Thine eyes will be upon me: never
more
Thy face come back to me. For thou
hast made
My whole life sore:

And I might curse thee, if thou camest
again
To mock me with the memory in thy
face
Of days I would had been not. So
much pain
Hath made me base—

Enough to wreak the wrath of years of
wrong
Even on so frail and weak a thing as
thou!
Fare hence, and be forgotten. . . . Sing
thy song,
And braid thy brow,

And be beloved, and beautiful, — and be
In beauty baleful still . . . a Serpent
Queen
To others not yet curst by kissing thee,
As I have been.

But come not nigh me till my end be
near,
And I have turned a dying face to-
ward heaven.
Then, if thou wilt, approach, — and
have no fear,
And be forgiven.

Close, if thou wilt, mine eyes, and
smooth my hair:
Fond words will come upon my part-
ing breath.
Nor, having desolated life, forbear
Kind offices to death.

BLUEBEARD.

I WAS to wed young Fatima,
As pure as April's snowdrops are,
In whose love lay hid my crooked life,
As in its sheath my scimitar.

Among the hot pomegranate boughs,
At sunset, here alone we sat.

To call back something from that hour
I'd give away my Caliphat.

She broke her song to gaze at me:
Her lips she leaned my lips above . . .
"Why art thou silent all this while,
Lord of my life, and of my love?"

"*Silent I am, young Fatima,
For silent is my soul in me,
And language will not help the want
Of that which cannot ever be.*"

"But wherefore is thy spirit sad,
My lord, my love, my life?" . . . she
said.

"*Because thy face is wondrous like
The face of one I knew, that's dead.*"

"Ah cruel, cruel," cried Fatima,
"That I should not possess the past!
What woman's lips first kissed the lips
Where my kiss lived and lingered last?"

"And she that's dead was loved by thee,
That so her memory moves thee
yet? . . .

Thy face grows cold and white, as looks
The moon o'er yonder minaret!"

"*Ay, Fatima! I loved her well,
With all of love's and life's despair,
Or else I had not strangled her,
That night, in her own fatal hair.*"

FATIMA.

A YEAR ago thy cheek was bright,
As oleander buds that break
The dark of yonder dells by night
Above the lamp-lit lake.

Pale as a snowdrop in Cashmere
Thy face to-night, fair infant, seems.
Ah, wretched child! What dost thou
hear
When I talk in my dreams?

GOING BACK AGAIN.

I DREAMED that I walked in Italy
When the day was going down,
By a water that flowed quite silently
Through an old dim-lighted town:

Till I came to a Palace fair to see:
Wide open the windows were:
My love at a window sat, and she
Beckoned me up the stair.

I roamed through many a corridor
And many a chamber of state:
I passed through many an open door,
While the day was growing late:

Till I came to the Bridal Chamber at last,
All dim in the darkening weather.
The flowers at the window were talking
fast,
And whispering all together.

The place was so still that I could hear
Every word that they said:
They were whispering under their breath
with fear,
For somebody there was dead.

When I came to the little rose-colored
room,
From the window there flew a bat.
The window was opened upon the gloom:
My love at the window sat:

She sat with her guitar on her knee,
But she was not singing a note,
For some one had drawn (ah, who could
it be?)
A knife across her throat.

THE CASTLE OF KING MACBETH.

THIS is the castle of King Macbeth.
And here he feasts — when the day-
light wanes,
And the moon goes softly over the
heath —
His Earls and Thaness.

A hundred harpers with harps of gold
Harp thorough the night high festival:
And the sound of the music they make
is rolled
From hall to hall.

They drink deep healths till the rafters
rock
In the Banquet Hall; and the shout
is borne
To the courts outside, where the crowing
cock
Is waked ere morn.

And the castle is all in a blaze of light
From cresset, and torch, and sconce:
and there
Each warrior dances all the night
With his lady fair.

They dance and sing till the raven is
stirred
On the wicked elm-tree outside in the
gloom:
And the rustle of silken robes is heard
From room to room.

But there is one room in that castle old,
In a lonely turret where no one goes,
And a dead man sits there, stark and cold,
Whom no one knows.

DEATH-IN-LIFE.

BLEST is the babe that dies within the
womb.
Blest is the corpse which lies within the
tomb.
And blest that death for which this life
makes room.

But dreary is the tomb where the corpse
lies:
And wretched is the womb where the
child dies:
And curst that death which steals this
life's disguise.

KING LIMOS.

THERE once was a wicked, old, gray
king —
Long damned, as I have reason to
know,
For he was buried (and no bad thing!)
Hundreds of years ago.

His wicked old heart had grown so chilled
That the leech, to warm him, did not
shrink
To give him each night a goblet, filled
With a virgin's blood, to drink.

"A splenic legend," . . . you say, of
course!
Yet there may be something in it, too.
Kill, or be killed . . . which choice were
the worse?
I know not. Solve it you.

But even the wolf must have his prey :
And even the gallows will have her food :
And a king, my friend, will have his way,
Though that way may lie through
blood.

My heart is hungry, and must be fed ;
My life is empty, and must be filled ;
One is not a Ghoul, to live on the dead :
What then if fresh blood be spilled ?

We follow the way that nature leads,
What's the very first thing that we
learn? To devour.

Each life the death of some other needs
To help it from hour to hour.

From the animalcule that swallows his
friends,

Nothing loath, in the wave as it rolls,
To man, as we see him, this law ascends ;
'T is the same in the world of souls.

The law of the one is still to absorb :
To be absorbed is the other's lot : —
The lesser orb by the larger orb,
The weak by the strong . . . why not ?

My want's at the worst : so why should
I spare
(Since just such a thing my want sup-
plies)

This little girl with the silky hair,
And the love in her two large eyes ?

THE FUGITIVE.

THERE is no quiet left in life,
Not any moment brings me rest :

THE SHORE.

CAN it be women that walk in the sea-mist under the cliffs there ?
Where, 'neath a briny bow, creaming, advances the lip
Of the foam, and out from the sand-choked anchors, on to the skiffs there,
The long ropes swing through the surge, as it tumbles ; and glitter, and drip.

All the place in a lurid, glimmering, emerald glory,
Glazes like a Titan world come back under heaven again :
Yonder, up there, are the steepes of the sea-kings, famous in story ;
But who are they on the beach ? They are neither women, nor men.

Who knows, are they the land's, or the water's, living creatures ?
Born of the boiling sea ? nursed in the seething storms ?

Forevermore, from shore to shore,
I bear about a laden breast.

I see new lands : I meet new men :
I learn strange tongues in novel places.
I cannot chase one phantom face
That haunts me, spite of newer faces.

For me the wine is poured by night,
And deep enough to drown much sad-
ness ;

But from the cup that face looks up,
And mirth and music turn to madness.

There's many a lip that's warm for me :
Many a heart with passion bounding :
But ah, my breast, when closest prest,
Creeps to a cold step near me sounding.

To this dark penthouse of the mind
I lure the bat-winged Sleep in vain ;
For on his wings a dream he brings
That deepens all the dark with pain.

I may write books which friends will
praise,
I may win fame, I may win treasure ;
But hope grows less with each success,
And pain grows more with every pleas-
ure.

The draughts I drain to slake my thirst
But fuel more the infernal flame.
There tangs a sting in everything : —
The more I change, the more the same !

A man that flies before the pest,
From wind to wind my course is whirled.
This fly accurst stung lo first,
And drove her wild across the world !

With their woman's hair dishevelled over their stern male features,
Striding, bare to the knee ; magnified maritime forms !

They may be the mothers and wives, they may be the sisters and daughters
Of men on the dark mid-seas, alone in those black-coiled hulls,
That toil 'neath yon white cloud, whence the moon will rise o'er the waters
To-night, with her face on fire, if the wind in the evening lulls.

But they may be merely visions, such as only sick men witness
(Sitting as I sit here, filled with a wild regret),
Framed from the sea's misshapen spume with a horrible fitness
To the winds in which they walk, and the surges by which they are wet : —

Salamanders, sea-wolves, witches, warlocks ; marine monsters,
Which the dying seaman beholds, when the rats are swimming away,
And an Indian wind 'gins hiss from an unknown isle, and alone stirs
The broken cloud which burns on the verge of the dead, red day,

I know not. All in my mind is confused ; nor can I dis sever
The mould of the visible world from the shape of my thoughts in me.
The Inward and Outward are fused : and, through them, murmur forever
The sorrow whose sound is the wind, and the roar of the limitless sea-

THE NORTH SEA.

By the gray sand-hills, o'er the cold sea-shore ; where, dumbly peering,
Pass the pale-sailed ships, scornfully, silently ; wheeling and veering
Swift out of sight again ; while the wind searches what it finds never,
O'er the sand-reaches, bays, billows, blown beaches, — homeless forever !
And, in a vision of the bare heaven seen and soon lost again,
Over the rolling foam, out in the mid-seas, round by the coast again,
Hovers the sea-gull, poised in the wind above, o'er the bleak surges,
In the green briny gleam, briefly revealed and gone ; . . . fleet, as emerges
Out of the tumult of some brain where memory labors, and fretfully
Moans all the night-long, — a wild winged hope, soon fading regretfully.
Here walk the lost Gods o' dark Scandinavia, morning and even ;
Faint pale divinities, realmless and sorrowful, exiled from Heaven ;
Burthened with memories of old theogonies ; each ruined monarchy
Roaming amazed by seas oblivious of ancient fealty.
Never, again at the tables of Odin, in their lost Banquet Hall,
Shall they from golden cups drink, hearing golden harps, harping high festival,
Never praise bright-haired Freya, in Vingolf, for her lost loveliness !
Never, with Ægir, sail round cool moonlit isles of green wilderness !
Here on the lone wind, through the long twilight, when day is waning,
Many a hopeless voice near the night is heard coldly complaining,
Here, in the glimmering darkness, when winds are dropped, and not a seaman
sings

From cape or foreland, pause, and pass silently, forms of dis-crowned kings,
With sweeping, floating folds of dim garments ; wandering in wonder
Of their own aspect ; trooping towards midnight ; feeling for thunder.
Here, in the afternoon ; while, in her father's boat, heavily laden,
Mending the torn nets, sings up the bleak bay the Fisher-Maiden,
I too, forlornly wandering, wandering, see, with the mind's eye,
Shadows beside me, . . . (hearing the wave moan, hearing the wind sigh) . . .
Shadows, and images balefully beautiful, of days departed :

Sounds of faint footsteps, gleams of pale foreheads, make me sad-hearted ;
Sad for the lost, irretrievable sweetness of former hours ;
Sad with delirious, desolate odors, from faded flowers ;
Sad for the beautiful gold hair, the exquisite, exquisite graces
Of a divine face, hopelessly unlike all other faces !

O'er the gray sand-hills (where I sit sullenly, full of black fancies),
Nipt by the sea-wind, drenched by the sea-salt, little wild pansies
Flower, and freshly tremble, and twinkle ; sweet sisterhoods,
Lone, and how lovely, with their frail green stems, and dark purple hoods !
Here, even here in the midst of monotonous, fixt desolation,
Nature has touches of tenderness, beauties of young variation ;
Where, O my heart, in thy ruined, and desolate, desolate places,
Springs there a floweret, or gleams there the green of a single oasis ?
Hidden, it may be perchance, and I know it not . . . hidden yet inviolate,
Pushes the germ of an unconscious rapture in me, like the violet
Which, on the bosom of March, the snows cover and keep till the coming
Of April, the first bee shall find, when he wanders, and welcome it humming.
Teach me, thou North where the winds lie in ambush ; the rains and foul weather
Are stored in the house of the storms ; and the snow-flakes are garnered together ;
Where man's stern, dominate, sovereign intelligence holds in allegiance
Whatever blue Sirius beholds on this Earth-ball, — all seas, and all regions ;
The iron in the hill's heart ; the spirit in the loadstone ; the ice in the poles ;
All powers, all dominions ; ships ; merchandise ; armaments ; beasts ; human
souls ; . . .
Teach me thy secrets : teach to refrain, to restrain, to be still ;
Teach me unspoken, steadfast endurance ; — the silence of Will !

A NIGHT IN THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

PART I.

THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER.

If the wind had been blowing the Devil
this way
The midnight could scarcely have
grown more unholy,
Or the sea have found secrets more
wicked to say
To the toothless old crags it is hiding
there wholly.

I love well the darkness. I love well
the sound
Of the thunder-drift, howling this way
over ocean.
For 't is though as in nature my spirit
had found
A trouble akin to its own fierce emotion.

The hoarse night may howl herself silent
for me.
When the silence comes, then comes
the howling within.

I am drenched to my knees in the surf
of the sea,
And wet with the salt bitter rain to
the skin.

Let it thunder and lighten ! this world's
ruined angel
Is but fooled by desire like the frailest
of men ;
Both seek in hysterics life's awful evan-
gel,
Then both settle down to life's silence
again.

Well I know the wild spirits of water
and air,
When the lean morrow turns up its
cynical gray,
Will, baffled, revert with familiar de-
spair
To their old listless work, in their old
helpless way.

Yonder's the light in the Fisherman's
hut :
But the old wolf himself is, I know,
off at sea.

And I see through the chinks, though
the shutters be shut,
By the firelight that some one is
watching for me.

Three years ago, on this very same night,
I walked in a ballroom of perfume and
splendor
With a pearl-bedecked lady below the
lamplight : —
Now I walk with the wild wind,
whose breath is more tender.

Hark ! the horses of ocean that crouch
at my feet,
They are moaning in impotent pain
on the beach !

Lo ! the storm-light, that swathes in its
blue winding-sheet
That lone desert of sky, where the
stars are dead, each !

Holloa, there ! open, you little wild
girl !

Hush, . . . 't is her soft little feet o'er
the floor.
Stay not to tie up a single dark curl,
But quick with the candle, and open
the door.

One kiss ? . . . there 's twenty ! . . . but
first, take my coat there,
Salt as a sea-sponge, and dripping all
through.
The old wolf, your father, is out in the
boat there.
Hark to the thunder ! . . . we're safe,
— I and you.

Put on the kettle. And now for the
cask
Of that famous old rum of your father's,
the king
Would have clawed on our frontier.
There, fill me the flask.
Ah, what a quick, little, neat-handed
thing !

There's my pipe. Stuff it with black
negro-head.
Soon I shall be in the cloud-land of
glory.

Faith, 't is better with you, dear, than
'fore the mast-head,
With such lights at the windows of
night's upper story !

Next, over the round open hole in the
shutter
You may pin up your shawl, . . . lest
a mermaid should peep.
Come, now, the kettle's beginning to
splutter,
And the cat recomposes herself into
sleep.

Poor little naked feet, . . . put them up
there . . .
Little white foam-flakes ! and now the
soft head,
Here, on my shoulder ; while all the
dark hair
Falls round us like sea-weed. What
matter the bed

If sleep will visit it, if kisses feel there
Sweet as they feel under curtains of silk ?
So, shut your eyes, while the firelight
will steal there
O'er the black bear-skin, the arm
white as milk !

Meanwhile I'll tell to you all I remember
Of the old legend, the northern romance
I heard of in Sweden, that snowy De-
cember
I passed there, about the wild Lord
Rosencrantz.

Then, when you're tired, take the cards
from the cupboard,
Thumbed over by every old thief in
our crew,
And I'll tell you your fortune, you
little Dame Hubbard ;
My own has been squandered on
witches like you.

Knave, King, and Queen, all the villa-
nous pack of 'em,
I know what they're worth in the
game, and have found
Upon all the trump-cards the small mark
at the back of 'em,
The Devil's nail-mark, who still cheat,
us all round.

PART II.

THE LEGEND OF LORD ROSENCRANTZ.
THE lamps in the castle hall burn bright,
And the music sounds, and the dancers
dance,

And lovely the young Queen looks to-night,
But pale is Lord Rosencrantz.

Lord Rosencrantz is always pale,
But never more deadly pale than now . . .

O, there is a whisper,—an ancient tale,—
A rumor, . . . but who should know ?

He has stepped to the dais. He has taken her hand.
And she gives it him with a tender glance.
And the hautboys sound, and the dancers stand,
And envy Lord Rosencrantz.

That jewelled hand to his lips he prest ;
And lightly he leads her towards the dance :
And the blush on the young Queen's cheek confest
Her love for Lord Rosencrantz.

The moon at the mullioned window shone ;
There a face and a hand in the moon-light glance ;
But that face and that hand were seen of none,
Save only Lord Rosencrantz.

A league aloof in the forest-land
There's a dead black pool, where a man by chance
. . . Again, again, that beckoning hand !
And it beckons Lord Rosencrantz.

While the young Queen turned to whisper him,
Lord Rosencrantz from the hall was gone ;
And the hautboys ceased, and the lamps grew dim,
And the castle clock struck One !

* * * *

It is a bleak December night,
And the snow on the highway gleams by fits :
But the fire on the cottage-hearth burns bright,
Where the little maiden sits.

Her spinning-wheel she has laid aside ;
And her blue eyes soft in the firelight glance ;
As she leans with love, and she leans with pride,
On the breast of Lord Rosencrantz.

Mother's asleep, up stairs in bed :
And the black cat, she looks wondrous wise
As she licks her paws in the firelight red,
And glares with her two green eyes :

And the little maiden is half afraid,
And closely she clings to Lord Rosencrantz ;
For she has been reading, that little maid,
All day, in an old romance,

A legend wild of a wicked pool
A league aloof in the forest-land,
And a crime done there, and a sinful soul,
And an awful face and hand.

"Our little cottage is bleak and drear,"
Says the little maid to Lord Rosencrantz ;
"And this is the loneliest time of the year,
And oft, when the wind, by chance,

"The ivy beats on the window-pane,
I wake to the sound in the gusty nights ;
And often, outside, in the drift and rain,
There seem to pass strange sights.

"And O, it is dreary here alone !
When mother's asleep, in bed, up stairs,
And the black cat, there, to the forest is gone,
— Look at her, how she glares !"

"Thou little maiden, my heart's own bliss,
Have thou no fear, for I love thee well ;
And sweetest it is upon nights like this,
When the wind, like the blast of hell,

"Roars up and down in the chimneys old,
And the wolf howls over the distant snow,

To kiss away both the night and the cold
With such kisses as we kiss now."

"Ah ! more than life I love thee, dear !"
Says the little maiden with eyes so blue ;

"And, when thou art near, I have no fear,
Whatever the night may do.

"But O, it is dreary when thou art away !
And in bed all night I pray for thee :
Now tell me, thou dearest heart, and say,
Dost thou ever pray for me ?"

"Thou little maiden, I thank thee much,
And well I would thou shouldst pray for me ;

But I am a sinful man, and such
As ill should pray for thee."

Hist ! . . . was it a face at the window past ?
Or was it the ivy leaf, by chance,
Tapping the pane in the fitful blast,
That startled Lord Rosencrantz ?

The little maid, she has seen it plain,
For she shrieked, and down she fell in a swoon :
Mutely it came, and went again,
In the light of the winter moon.

* * * *

The young Queen, — O, but her face was sweet ! —
She died on the night that she was wed :
And they laid her out in her winding-sheet,
Stark on her marriage-bed.

The little maiden, she went mad ;
But her soft blue eyes still smiled the same,
With ever that wistful smile they had :
Her mother, she died of shame.

The black cat lived from house to house,
And every night to the forest hied ;
And she killed many a rat and mouse
Before the day she died.

And do you wish that I should declare
What was the end of Lord Rosencrantz ?
Ah ! look in my heart, you will find it there,
— The end of the old romance !

PART III.

DAYBREAK.

YES, you have guessed it. The wild Rosencrantz,
It is I, dear, the wicked one ; who but I, maiden ?
My life is a tattered and worn-out romance,
And my heart with the curse of the Past hath been laden :

For still, where I wander or linger, forever
Comes a skeleton hand that is beckoning for me ;
And still, dogging my footsteps, life's long Never-never
Pursues me, wherever my footsteps may be :

The star of my course hath been long ago set, dear ;
And the wind is my pilot, wherever he blows :
He cannot blow from me what I would forget, dear,
Nor blow to me that which I seek for, — repose.

What ! if I were the Devil himself, would you cling to me,
Bear my ill humors, and share my wild nights ?
Crouch by me, fear me not, stay by me, sing to me,
While the dark haunts us with sounds and with sights ?

Follow me far away, pine not, but smile to me,
Never ask questions, and always be gay ?
Still the dear eyes meekly turned all the while to me,
Watchful the night through, and patient the day ?

What! if this hand, that now strays
through your tresses,
Three years ago had been dabbled in
gore?

What! if this lip, that your lip now
caresses,
A corpse had been pressing but three
years before?

Well then, behold! . . . 'tis the gray
light of morning
That breaks o'er the desolate waters
. . . and hark!

'Tis the first signal shot from my boat
gives me warning:
The dark moves away: and I follow
the lark.

On with your hat and your cloak! you
are mine, child,
Mine and the fiend's that pursues me,
henceforth!

We must be far, ere day breaks, o'er the
brine, child:
It may be south I go, it may be north.

What! really fetching your hat and
your cloak, dear?
Sweet little fool. Kiss me quick now,
and laugh!

All I have said to you was but a joke,
dear:
Half was in folly, in wantonness half.

PART IV.

BREAKFAST.

AY, maiden: the whole of my story to
you
Was but a deception, a silly romance:
From the first to the last word, no word
of it true;
And my name's Owen Meredith, not
Rosencrantz.

I never was loved by a Queen, I declare:
And no little maiden for me has gone
mad:

I never committed a murder, I swear;
And I probably should have been
hanged if I had.

I never have sold to the Devil my soul;
And but small is the price he would
give me, I know:

I live much as other folks live, on the
whole:
And the worst thing in me's my di-
gestion . . . heigh ho!

Let us leave to the night-wind the
thoughts which he brings,
And leave to the darkness the powers
of the dark;

For my hopes o'er the sea lightly flit,
like the wings
Of the curlews that hover and poise
round my bark.

Leave the wind and the water to mutter
together
Their weird metaphysical grief, as of
old,

For day's business begins, and the clerk
of the weather
To the powers of the air doth his pur-
pose unfold.

Be you sure those dread Titans, what-
ever they be,
That sport with this ball in the great
courts of Time,

To play practical jokes upon you, dear,
and me,
Will never desist from a sport so sub-
lime.

The old Oligarchy of Greece, now abol-
ished,
Were idle aristocrats fond of the arts,
But though thus refined, all their tastes
were so polished,
They were turbulent, dissolute gods,
without hearts.

They neglected their business, they gave
themselves airs,
Read the poets in Greek, sipped their
wine, took their rest,
Never troubling their beautiful heads
with affairs,
And as for their morals, the least said,
the best.

The scandal grew greater and greater:
and then
An appeal to the people was formally
made.

The old gods were displaced by the suf-
frage of men,
And a popular government formed in
their stead.

But these are high matters of state, — I
and you
May be thankful, meanwhile, we have
something to eat,
And nothing, just now, more important
to do,
Than to sit down at once, and say
grace before meat.

You may boil me some coffee, an egg, if
it's handy,
The sea's rolling mountains just now.
I shall wait
For King Neptune's *mollissima tempora*
fandi,
Who will presently lift up his curly
white pate,

Bid Eurus and Notus to mind their own
business,
And make me a speech in Hexameters
slow;
While I, by the honor elated to dizziness,
Shall yield him my offerings, and
make him my bow.

A DREAM.

I HAD a quiet dream last night:
For I dreamed that I was dead;
Wrapped around in my grave-clothes
white,
With my gravestone at my head.

I lay in a land I have not seen,
In a place I do not know,
And the grass was deathly, deathly green
Which over my grave did grow.

The place was as still as still could be,
With a few stars in the sky,
And an ocean whose waves I could not
see,
Though I heard them moan hard by.

There was a bird in a branch of yew,
Building a little nest.
The stars looked far and very few,
And I lay all at rest.

There came a footstep through the grass,
And a feeling through the mould:
And a woman pale did over me pass,
With hair like snakes of gold.

She read my name upon my grave:
She read my name with a smile.
A wild moan came from a wandering
wave,
But the stars smiled all the while.

The stars smiled soft. That woman pale
Over my grave did move,
Singing all to herself a tale
Of one that died for love.

There came a sparrow-hawk to the tree,
The little bird to slay:
There came a ship from over the sea,
To take that woman away.

The little bird I wished to save,
To finish his nest so sweet:
But so deep I lay within my grave
That I could not move my feet.

That woman pale I wished to keep
To finish the tale I heard:
But within my grave I lay so deep
That I could not speak a word.

KING SOLOMON.

KING Solomon stood, in his crown of
gold,
Between the pillars, before the altar
In the House of the Lord. And the
King was old,
And his strength began to falter,
So that he leaned on his ebony staff,
Sealed with the seal of the Pentagraph.

All of the golden fretted work,
Without and within so rich and rare,
As high as the nest of the building stork,
Those pillars of cedar were: —
Wrought up to the brazen chapters
Of the Sidonian artificers.

And the King stood still as a carven
king,
The carven cedarn beams below,
In his purple robe, with his signet-ring,
And his beard as white as snow,
And his face to the Oracle, where the
hymn
Dies under the wing of the cherubim.

The wings fold over the Oracle,
And cover the heart and eyes of God:

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

By the soul of each slumbrous instrument
Drawn soft through the musical misty air,

The stream of the folk that came and went,
For worship, and praise, and prayer.
Flowed to and fro, and up and down,
And round the King in his golden crown.

And it came to pass, as the King stood there,
And looked on the house he had built,
with pride,
That the Hand of the Lord came un-
ware,

And touched him ; so that he died,
In his purple robe, with his signet-ring
And the crown wherewith they had
crowned him king.

And the stream of the folk that came
and went

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

For he leaned on his ebony staff upright ;
And over his shoulders the purple
robe ;
And his hair and his beard were both
snow-white

And the fear of him filled the globe ;
So that none dared touch him, though
he was dead,
He looked so royal about the head.

And the moons were changed : and the
years rolled on :

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

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

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

CORDELIA.

THOUGH thou never hast sought to divine
it,

Though to know it thou hast not a care,
Yet my heart can no longer confine it,
Though my lip may be blanched to de-
clare

That I love thee, revere thee, adore thee,
O my dream, my desire, my despair !

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

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

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

In thy face, how I watch every shade
there ;

In thine eyes, how I learn every look ;
How the least sign thy spirit hath made
there

My heart reads, and writes in its book !

And each day of my life my love shapes
me
From the mien that thou wearest, Be-
loved.

Thou hast not a grace that escapes me,
Nor a movement that leaves me unmoved.
I live but to see thee, to hear thee ;
I count but the hours where thou art ;
I ask — only ask — to be near thee,
Albeit so far from thy heart.

In my life's lonely galleries never
Will be silenced thy lightest footfall :
For it lingers, and echoes, forever
Unto Memory mourning o'er all.
All thy fair little footsteps are bright
O'er the dark troubled spirit in me,
As the tracks of some sweet water-sprite
O'er the heaving and desolate sea.

And, though cold and unkind be thine
eyes,

Yet, unchilled their unkindness below,
In my heart all its love for thee lies,
Like a violet covered by snow.

Little child ! . . . were it mine to watch
o'er thee,

To guide, and to guard, and to soothe ;
To shape the long pathway before thee,
And all that was rugged to smooth ;
To kneel at one bedside by night,
And mingle our souls in one prayer ;
And, awaked by the same morning-
light,

The same daily duties to share ;

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

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

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

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

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

If Jesus came to earth again,
And walked, and talked, in field and
street,

Who would not lay his human pain
Low at those heavenly feet ?

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

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

Would leave the baffling earthly prize
Which fails the earthly, weak en-
deavor,

To gaze into those holy eyes,
And drink content forever !

The mortal hope, I ask with tears
Of Heaven, to soothe this mortal
pain, —

The dream of all my darkened years, —
I should not cling to then.

The pride that prompts the bitter jest —
(Sharp styptic of a bleeding heart !)

Would fail, and humbly leave confest
The sin that brought the smart,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO CORDELIA.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hadst thou been mine, — when skies
were drear
And waves were rough, for thy sweet
sake

I should have found in all some fear
My inmost breast to shake :

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

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

A LETTER TO CORDELIA.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FAILURE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISANTHROPOS.

Παντα κοις και παντα γελωσ και παντα
το μηδεν.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOOK VI.—PALINGENESIS.

A PRAYER.

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

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

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

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

EUTHANASIA.

(WRITTEN AFTER A SEVERE ILLNESS.)

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

Gone is Friendship's friendliness,
After Love's fidelity :
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Spat upon by Charity :
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Freely may their work begin.
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Can't you leave me where I'm lying ?
O, . . . you wait for our betrothing ?
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Are not so wretched. Ere it break,
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Not of my sorrows, but of Thine,
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Which now lies, cold, beneath the
clasp of Spring.

As last year's leaves : but such a life as seems
 A strange new-comer, coy and all-afraid.
 No motion heaves the heart where it is laid,
 Save when the past returns to me in dreams.
 In dreams, like memories of another world :
 The beauty, and the passion, and the pain,
 The wizardry by which my youth was whirled
 Round vain desires, — so violent, yet so vain !
 The love which desolated life, yet made
 So dear its desolation : and the creeds
 Which, one by one, snapped in my hold like reeds,
 Beneath the weight of need upon them laid !
 For each man deems his own sand-house secure
 While life's wild waves are lulled ; yet who can say,
 If yet his faith's foundations do endure,
 It is not that no wind hath blown that way ?
 Must we, even for their beauty's sake, keep furled
 Our fairest creeds, lest earth should sully them,
 And take what ruder help chance sends, to stem
 The rubs and wrenchings of this boisterous world ?
 Alas ! 't is not the creed that saves the man :
 It is the man that justifies the creed :
 And each must save his own soul as he can,
 Since each is burthened with a different need.
 Round each the bandit passions lurk ; and, fast
 And furious, swarm to strip the pilgrim bare ;
 Then, oft, in lonely places unaware,
 Fall on him, and do murder him at last.
 And oft the light of truth, which through the dark
 We fetched such toilsome compass to detect,

Glares through the broken cloud on the lost bark,
 And shows the rock — too late, when all is wrecked !
 Not from one watch-tower o'er the deep, alone,
 It streams, but lightens there and lightens here
 With lights so numberless (like heaven's eighth sphere)
 That all their myriad splendors seem but one.
 Time was, when it seemed possible to be
 (Then, when this shattered prow first felt the foam)
 Columbus to some far Philosophy,
 And bring, perchance, the golden Indies home.
 O siren isles of the enchanted main
 Through which I lingered ! altars, temples, groves,
 Whelmed in the salt sea wave, that rolls and roves
 Around each desolated lost domain !
 Over all these hath passed the deluge.
 And,
 Saved from the sea, forlornly face to face
 With the gaunt ruin of a world, I stand.
 But two alone of all that perisht race
 Survive to share with me my wanderings ;
 Doubt and Experience. These my steps attend,
 Ever ; and oft above my harp they bend,
 And, weeping with me, weep among its strings.
 Yet, — saved, though in a land unconsecrate
 By any memory, it seems good to me
 To build an altar to the Lord ; and wait
 Some token, either from the land or sea,
 To point me to my rest, which should be near.
 Rude is the work, and simple is my skill ;
 Yet, if the hand could answer to the will,
 This pile should lack not incense.
 Father, hear
 My cry unto thee. Make thy covenant
 Fast with my spirit. Bind within
 Thy bow

The whole horizon of my tears. I pant
 For Thy refreshing. Bid Thy fountains flow
 In this dry desert, where no springs I see.
 Before I venture in an unknown land,
 Here will I clear the ground on which I stand,
 And justify the hope Thou gavest me.
 I cannot make quite clear what comes and goes
 In fitful light, by waning gleams described.
 The Spirit, blowing where it listeth, blows
 Only at times, some single fold aside
 Of that great veil which hangs o'er the Unknown :
 Yet do the feeble, fleeting lights that fall,
 Reveal enough, in part, for hope in all :
 And that seems surest which the least is shown.
 God is a spirit. It is also said
 Man is a spirit. Can I therefore deem
 The two in nature separate ? The made
 Hath in it of the Maker. Hence I seem
 A step towards light ; — since 't is the property
 Of spirit to possess itself in all
 It is possess by ; — halved yet integral ;
 One person, various personality.
 To say the Infinite is that which lies
 Beyond the Finite, . . . were it not to set
 A border mark to the immensities !
 Far as these mortal senses measure yet
 Their little region of the mighty plan,
 Through valves of birth and death — are heard forever
 The finite steps of infinite endeavor
 Moving through Nature and the mind of man.
 If man, — the finite spirit, — in infinity
 Alone can find the truth of his ideal,
 Dare I not deem that infinite Divinity
 Within the finite must assume the real ?
 For what so feverish fancy, reckless hurled
 Through a ruined brain, did ever yet descry
 A symbol sad enough to signify
 The conscious God of an unconscious world ?
 Wherefore, thus much perceived, to recognize
 In God, the infinite spirit of Unity,
 In man, the finite spirit, here implies
 An interchanged perception ; — Deity
 Within humanity made manifest :
 Not here man lonely, there a lonely God ;
 But, in all paths by human nature trod,
 Infinity in Finitude express.
 This interchange, upon man's part, I call
 Religion : revelation on the part
 Of Deity : wherefrom there seems to fall
 'T is consequence (the point from which I start)
 If God and man be one (a unity
 Of which religion is the human side)
 This must in man's religion bedescried,
 A consciousness and a reality.
 Whilst man in nature dwells, his God is still
 In nature ; thence, in time, there intervenes
 The Law : he learns to fortify his will
 Against his passions, by external means :
 And God becomes the Lawgiver : but when
 Corruption in the natural state we see,
 And in the legal hopeless tyranny,
 We seem to need (if needed not till then)
 That which doth uplift nature, and yet makes
 More light the heavy letter of the law.
 Then for the Perfect the Imperfect aches,
 Till love is born upon the deeps of awe.
 Yet what of this, . . . that God in man may be,
 And man, though mortal, of a race divine,
 If no assurance lives which may incline
 The heart of man to man's divinity ?
 "There is no God" . . . the Fool saith
 — to his heart,
 Yet shapes a godhead from his intellect.
 Is mind than heart less human, . . . that we part
 Thought from affection, and from mind erect
 A deity merely intellectual ?
 If God there be, devoid of sympathy
 For man, he is not man's divinity.
 A God unloving were no God at all.

This felt . . . I ask not . . . "What is God?" but "What are my relations with Him?" this alone
 Concerns me now : since, if I know this not,
 Though I should know the sources of the sun,
 Or what within the hot heart of the earth
 Lulls the soft spirit of the fire, although
 The mandate of the thunder I should know,
 To me my knowledge would be nothing worth.

What message, or what messenger to man?
 Whereby shall revelation reach the soul?
 For who, by searching, finds out God?
 How can
 My utmost steps, unguided, gain the goal
 Of necessary knowledge? It is clear
 I cannot reach the gates of heaven,
 and knock
 And enter: though I stood upon the rock
 Like Moses, God must speak ere I can hear,

And touch me ere I feel him. He must come
 To me (I cannot join Him in the cloud),
 Stand at the dim doors of my mortal home;
 Lift the low latch of life; and enter,
 bowed
 Unto this earthly roof; and sit within
 The circle of the senses; at the hearth
 Of the affections; be my guest on earth,
 Loving my love, and sorrowing in my sin.

Since, though I stripped Divinity, in thought,
 From passion, which is personality,
 My God would still be human: though I sought
 In the bird's wing or in the insect's eye,
 Rather than in this broken heart of mine,
 His presence, human still: human would be
 All human thought conceives. Humanity,
 Being less human, is not more divine.

The soul, then, cannot stipulate or refuse
 The fashion of the heavenly embassy.
 Since God is here the speaker, He must choose
 The words He wills. Already I desery
 That God and man are one, divided here,
 Yet reconcilable. One doubt survives.
 There is a dread condition to men's lives:
 We die: and, from its death, it would appear

Our nature is not one with the divine.
 Not so. The Man-God dies; and by his death
 Doth with his own immortal life combine
 The spirit pining in this mortal breath.
 Who from himself himself did alienate
 That he, returning to himself, might pave
 A pathway hence, to heaven from the grave,
 For man to follow — through the heavenly gate.

Wert thou, my Christ, not ignorant of grief?
 A man of sorrows? Not for sorrow's sake
 (Lord, I believe: helphou mine unbelief!)
 Beneath the thorns did thy pure forehead ache:
 But that in sorrow only, unto sorrow,
 Can comfort come; in manhood only,
 man
 Perceive man's destiny. In Nature's plan
 Our path is over Midnight to To-morrow.

And so the Prince of Life, in dying, gave
 Undying life to mortals. Once he stood
 Among his fellows, on this side the grave,
 A man, perceptible to flesh and blood:
 Now, taken from our sight, he dwells no less
 Within our mortal memory and thought;
 The mystery of all he was, and wrought,
 Is made a part of general consciousness.

And in this consciousness I reach repose.
 Spent with the howling main and desert sand
 Almost too faint to pluck the unfading rose
 Of peace, that bows its beauty to my hand.

A PSALM OF CONFESSION.

Here Reason fails, and leaves me; my pale guide
 Across the wilderness — by a stern command,
 Shut out, like Moses, from the Promist Land.
 Touching its own achievement, it hath died.

Ah yet! I have but wrung the victory
 From Thought! Not passionless will be my path.
 Yet on my life's pale forehead I can see
 The flush of squandered fires. Passion hath
 Yet, in the purpose of my days, its place.
 But changed in aspect: turned unto the East,
 Whence grows the dayspring from on high, at least
 A finer fervor trembles on its face.

THE SOUL'S SCIENCE.

CAN History prove the truth which hath
 Its record in the silent soul?
 Or Mathematics mete the path
 Whereby the spirit seeks its goal?

Can Love of aught but Love inherit
 The blessing which is born of Love?
 The spirit knoweth of the spirit:
 The soul alone the soul can prove.

The eye to see: the ear to hear:
 The working hand to help the will:
 To every sense his separate sphere:
 And unto each his several skill.

The ear to sight, the eye to sound,
 Is callous: unto each is given
 His lorddom in his proper bound.
 The soul, the soul to find out heaven!

There is a glory veiled to sight;
 A voice which never ear hath heard;
 There is a law no hand can write,
 Yet stronger than the written word.

And hast thou tidings for my soul,
 O teacher? to my soul intrust
 Alone the purport of thy scroll:
 Or vex me not with learned dust.

FULL soon doth Sorrow make her covenant
 With Life; and leave her shadow in the door:
 And all those future days, for which we pant,
 Do come in mourning for the days of yore.

Still through the world gleams Memory
 seeking Love,
 Pale as the torch which grieving Ceres bore,
 Seeking Proserpina, on that dark shore
 Where only phantoms through the twilight move.

The more we change, the more is all the same,
 Our last grief was a tale of other years
 Quite outworn, till to our own hearts it came.
 Wishes are pilgrims to the Vale of Tears.

Our brightest joys are but as airy shapes
 Of cloud, that fade on evening's glimmering slope;
 And disappointment hawks the hovering hope
 Forever pecking at the painted grapes.

Why can we not one moment pause,
 and cherish
 Love, though love turn to tears? or for hope's sake
 Bless hope, albeit the thing we hope may perish?

For happiness is not in what we take,
 But what we give. What matter though the thing
 We cling to most should fail us?
 dust to dust,
 It is the feeling for the thing, — the trust
 In beauty somewhere, to which souls should cling.

My youth has failed, if failure lies in aught
 The warm heart dreams, or which the working hand
 Is set to do. I have failed in aidless thought,
 And steadfast purpose, and in self-command.

I have failed in hope, in health, in love:
 failed in the word,
 And in the deed too I have failed.
 Ah yet,
 Albeit with eyes from recent weepings
 wet,
 Sing thou, my Soul, thy psalm unto the
 Lord!

The burthen of the desert and the
 sea!
 The burthen of the vision in the vale!
 My threshing-floor, my threshing-floor!
 ah me,
 Thy wind hath strewn my corn, and
 spoiled the flail!

The burthen of Dumah and of Dedanim!
 What of the night, O watchman, of
 the night?
 The glory of Kedar faileth: and the
 might
 Of mighty men is minished and dim.

The morning cometh, and the night, he
 cries.
 The watchman cries the morning, too,
 is nigher.
 And, if ye would inquire, lift up your
 eyes,
 Inquire of the Lord, return, inquire!
 I stand upon the watchtower all day
 long:
 And all the night long I am set in
 ward.
 Is it thy feet upon the mountains,
 Lord?
 I sing against the darkness: hear my
 song!

The majesty of Kedar hath been spoiled:
 Bound are the arrows: broken is the
 bow.
 I come before the Lord with garments
 soiled.
 The ashes of my life are on my brow.
 Take thou thy harp, and go about the
 city.
 O daughter of Desire, with garments
 torn:
 Sing many songs, make melody, and
 mourn,
 That thou may'st be remembered unto
 pity.

Just, awful God! here at thy feet I lay
 My life's most precious offering:
 dearly bought,

Thou knowest with what toil by night
 and day:
 Thou knowest the pain, the passion,
 and the thought.
 I bring thee my youth's failure. I have
 spent
 My youth upon it. All I have is here.
 Were it worth all it is not, price more
 dear
 Could I have paid for its accomplishment?

Yet it is much. If I could say to thee,
 "Acquit me, Judge; for I am thus,
 and thus;
 And have achieved — even so much,"
 — should I be
 Thus wholly fearless and impetuous
 To rush into thy presence? I might weigh
 The little done against the undone
 much:
 My merit with thy mercy: and, as
 such,
 Haggle with pardon for a price to pay.

But now the fulness of its failure makes
 My spirit fearless; and despair grows
 bold.
 My brow, beneath its sad self-knowledge,
 aches.
 Life's presence passes Thine a thou-
 sand-fold
 In contemplated terror. Can I lose
 Aught by that desperate temerity
 Which leaves no choice but to surren-
 der Thee
 My life without condition? Could I
 choose

A stipulated sentence, I might ask
 For ceded dalliance to some cherisht
 vice:
 Or half-remission of some desperate task:
 Now, all I have is hateful. What is
 the price?
 Speak, Lord! I hear the Fiend's hand
 at the door.
 Hell's slavery or heaven's service is it
 the choice?
 How can I palter with the terms? O
 voice,
 Whence do I hear thee . . . "Go: and
 sin no more"?

No more, no more? But I have kist
 dead white
 The cheek of Vice. No more the
 harlot hides

Her loathsomeness of lineament from my
 sight.
 No more within my bosom there abides
 Her poisoned perfume. O, the witch's
 nice
 Have eat her scarlet robe and diaper,
 And she fares naked! Part from her
 — from her?
 Is this the price, O Lord, is this the
 price?

Yet, though her web be broken, bonds,
 I know,
 Slow custom frames in the strong forge
 of time,
 Which outlast love, and will not wear
 with woe,
 Nor break beneath the cognizance of
 crime.
 The witch goes bare. But he, — the
 father fiend,
 That roams the unthrifty furrows of
 my days,
 Yet walks the field of life; and,
 where he strays,
 The husbandry of heaven for hell is
 gleaned.

Lulls are there in man's life which are
 not peace.
 Tumults which are not triumphs. Do
 I take
 The pause of passion for the fiend's de-
 cease?
 This frost of grief hath numbed the
 drowsing snake;
 Which yet may wake, and sting me in
 the heat
 Of new emotions. What shall bar
 the door
 Against the old familiar, that of yore
 Came without call, and sat within my
 seat?

When evening brings its dim grim hour
 again,
 And hell lets loose its dusky brood
 awhile,
 Shall I not find him in the darkness then?
 The same subservient and yet insolent
 smile?
 The same indifferent ignominious face?
 The same old sense of household hor-
 ror, come
 Like a tame creature, back into its
 home?
 Meeting me, haply, in my wonted place,

With the loathed freedom of an unloved
 mate,
 Or crouching on my pillow as of old?
 Knowing I hate him, impotent in hate!
 Therefore more subtle, strenuous, and
 bold.
 Thus ancient habit will usurp young will,
 And each new effort rivet the old
 thrall.
 No matter! those who climb must
 count to fall,
 But each new fall will prove them climb-
 ing still.

O wretched man! the body of this death
 Which, groaning in the spirit, I yet
 bear
 On to the end (so that I breathe the breath
 Of its corruption, even though breath-
 ing prayer),
 What shall take from me? Must I drag
 forever
 The cold corpse of the life which I
 have killed
 But cannot bury? Must my heart be
 filled
 With the dry dust of every dead en-
 deavor?

For often, at the mid of the long night,
 Some devil enters into the dead clay,
 And gives it life unnatural in my sight.
 The dead man rises up; and roams
 away,
 Back to the mouldered mansions of the
 Past:
 And lights a lurid revel in the halls
 Of vacant years; and lifts his voice,
 and calls,
 Till troops of phantoms gather round
 him fast.

Frail gold-haired corpses, in whose eyes
 there lives
 A strange regret too wild to let them
 rest:
 Crowds of pale maidens, who were never
 wives
 And infants that all died upon the
 breast
 That suckled them. And these make
 revelry
 Mingled with wailing all the midnight
 through,
 Till the sad day doth with stern light
 renew
 The toiling land, and the complaining sea.

Full well I know that in this world of ours
The dreadful Commonplace succeeds
all change;
We catch at times a gleam of flying powers
That pass in storm some windy moun-
tain range:
But, while we gaze, the cloud returns
o'er all.
And each, to guide him up the devious
height,
Must take, and bless, whatever earthly
light
From household hearths, or shepherd
fires, may fall.

This wave, that groans and writhes upon
the beach,
To-morrow will submit itself to calm;
That wind that rushes, moaning, out of
reach,
Will die anon beneath some breathless
palm;
These tears, these sighs, these motions
of the soul,
This inexpressible pining of the mind,
The stern indifferent laws of life shall
bind,
And fix forever in their old control.

Behold this half-tamed universe of things!
That cannot break, nor wholly bear,
its chain.
Its heart by fits grows wild: it leaps, it
springs;
Then the chain galls, and kennels it
again.
If man were formed with all his faculties
For sorrow, I should sorrow for him
less.
Considering a life so brief, the stress
Of its short passion I might well despise:

But all man's faculties are for delight;
But all man's life is compassed with
what seems
Framed for enjoyment: but from all that
sight
And sense reveal a magic murmur
streams
Into man's heart, which says, or seems
to say,
"Be happy!" . . . and the heart of
man replies,
"Leave happiness to brutes: I would
be wise:
Give me, not peace, but science, glory,
art."

Therefore, age, sickness, and mortality
Are but the lightest portion of his pain:
Therefore, shut out from joy, incessantly
Death finds him toiling at a task that's
vain.
I weep the want of all he pines to have:
I weep the loss of all he leaves be-
hind:—
Contentment, and repose, and peace
of mind,
Pawned for the purchase of a little grave:
I weep the hundred centuries of time;
I weep the millions that have squan-
dered them
In error, doubt, anxiety, and crime,
Here, where the free birds sing from
leaf and stem:
I weep . . . but what are tears? What
I deplore
I knew not, half a hundred years ago:
And half a hundred years from hence,
I know
That what I weep for I shall know no
more.

The spirit of that wide and leafless wind
That wanders o'er the unaccompanied
sea,
Searching for what it never seems to find,
Stirred in my hair, and moved my
heart in me,
To follow it, far over land and main:
And everywhere over this earth's
scarred face
The footsteps of a God I seemed to
trace;
But everywhere steps of a God in pain.

If, haply, he that made this heart of
mine,
Himself in sorrow walked the world
erewhile,
What then am I, to marvel or repine
That I go mourning ever in the smile
Of universal nature, searching ever
The phantom of a joy which here I
miss?
My heart inhabits other worlds than
this,
Therefore my search is here a vain en-
deavor.

Methought, . . . (it was the midnight of
my soul,
Dead midnight) that I stood on Cal-
vary:

REQUIESCAT.

I found the cross, but not the Christ.
The whole
Of heaven was dark: and I went bit-
terly
Weeping, because I found him not.
Methought, . . .
(It was the twilight of the dawn and
mist)
I stood before the sepulchre of Christ:
The sepulchre was vacant, void of aught
Saving the cere-clothes of the grave,
which were
Upfolden straight and empty: bitterly
Weeping I stood, because not even there
I found him. Then a voice spake
unto me,
"Whom seekest thou? Why is thy
heart dismayed?
Jesus of Nazareth, he is not here:
Behold, the Lord is risen. Be of
cheer:
Approach, behold the place where he
was laid."

And while he spake, the sunrise smote
the world.
"Go forth, and tell thy brethren,"
spake the voice;
"The Lord is risen." Suddenly un-
furled,
The whole unclouded Orient did re-
joice
In glory. Wherefore should I mourn
that here
My heart feels vacant of what most it
needs?
Christ is arisen! . . . the cere-clothes
and the weeds
That wrapped him lying in this sepul-
chre

Of earth, he hath abandoned; being
gone
Back into heaven, where we too must
turn
Our gaze to find him. Pour, O risen
Sun
Of Righteousness, the light for which
I yearn
Upon the darkness of this mortal hour,
This tract of night in which I walk
forlorn:
Behold the night is now far spent.
The morn
Breaks, breaking from afar through a
night shower.

I SOUGHT to build a deathless monument
To my dead love. Therein I meant
to place
All precious things, and rare: as Nature
blent
All single sweetnesss in one sweet
face.
I could not build it worthy her mute
merit,
Nor worthy her white brows and holy
eyes,
Nor worthy of her perfect and pure spirit,
Nor of my own immortal memories.
But, as some rapt artificer of old,
To enshrine the ashes of a virgin saint,
Might scheme to work with ivory, and
fine gold,
And carven gems, and legended and
quaint
Seraphic heraldries; searching far lands,
Orient and occident, for all things rare,
To consecrate the toil of reverent hands,
And make his labor, like her virtue,
fair;
Knowing no beauty beautiful as she,
And all his labor void, but to beguile
A sacred sorrow; so I worked. Ah, see
Here are the fragments of my shattered
pile!
I keep them, and the flowers that sprang
between
Their broken workmanship—the flow-
ers and weeds!
Sleep soft among the violets, O my
Queen,—
Lie calm among my ruined thoughts
and deeds.

EPILOGUE.

PART I.

CHANGE without term, and strife without
result,
Persons that pass, and shadows that
remain,
One strange, impenetrable, and occult
Suggestion of a hope, that's hoped in
vain,
Behold the world man reigns in! His
delight
Deceives; his power fatigues; his
strength is brief;

Even his religion presupposes grief,
His morning is not certain of the night.

I have beheld, without regret, the trunk,
Which propped three hundred summers
on its boughs,
Which housed, of old, the merry bird,
and drunk

The divine dews of air, and gave ca-
rouse
To the free winds of heaven, lie over-
thrown
Amidst the trees which its own fruitage
bore.

Its promise is fulfilled. It is no more,
But it hath been. Its destiny is done.

But the wild ash, that springs above the
marsh!

Strong and superb it rises o'er the wild.
Vain energy of being! For the harsh
And fetid ooze already hath defiled
The roots whose sap it lives by. Heaven
doth give

No blessing to its boughs. The humid
wind

Rots them. The vapors warp them.
All declined,

Its life hath ceased, ere it hath ceased to
live.

Child of the waste, and nursling of the
pest!

A kindred fate hath watched and
wept thine own.

Thine epitaph is written in my breast.
Years change. Day treads out day.

For me alone
No change is nurst within the brooding
bud.

Satiety I have not known, and yet,
I wither in the void of life, and fret

A futile time, with an unpeaceful blood.

The days are all too long, the nights too
fair,

And too much redness satiates the rose.
O blissful season! blest and balmy air!

Waves! moonlight! silence! years of
lost repose!

Bowers and shades that echoed to the
tread

Of young Romance! birds that, from
woodland bars,

Sang, serenading forth the timid stars!
Youth! beauty! passion! whither are
ye fled?

I wait, and long have waited, and yet wait
The coming of the footsteps which ye
told

My heart to watch for. Yet the hour
is late,

And ye have left me. Did they lie, of
old,

Your thousand voices prophesying bliss?
That troubled all the current of a fate

Which else might have been peaceful!
I await

The thing I have not found, yet would
not miss.

To face out childhood, and grow up to
man,

To make a noise, and question all one
sees,

The astral orbit of a world to span,
And, after a few days, to take one's
ease

Under the graveyard grasses, — this, my
friend,

Appears to me a thing too strange but
what

I wish to know its meaning. I would
not

Depart before I have perceived the end.

And I would know what, here below the
sun,

He is, and what his place, that being
which seems

The end of all means, yet the means of
none;

Who searches and combines, aspires
and dreams;

Seeking new things with ever the same
hope,

Seeking new hopes in ever the same
thing;

A king without the powers of a king,
A beggar with a kingdom in his scope;

Who only sees in what he hath attained
The means whereby he may attain to
more;

Who only finds in that which he hath
gained

The want of what he did not want be-
fore;

Whom weakness strengthens; who is
soothed by strife;

Who seeks new joys to prize the ab-
sent most;

Still from illusion to illusion tost,
Himself the great illusion of his life!

Why is it, all deep emotion makes us sigh
To quit this world? What better
thing than death

Can follow after rapture? "Let us die!"
This is the last wish on the lover's
breath.

If thou wouldst live, content thee. To
enjoy

Is to begin to perish. What is bliss,
But transit to some other state from
this?

That which we live for must our life
destroy.

Hast thou not ever longed for death? If
not,

Not yet thy life's experience is at-
tained.

But if thy days be favored, if thy lot
Be easy, if hope's summit thou hast
gained,

Die! Death is the sole future left to
thee.

The knowledge of this life is bound,
for each,

By his own powers. Death lies be-
tween our reach

And all which, living, we have lived to
be.

Death is no evil, since it comes to all.
For evil is the exception, not the law.

What is it in the tempest that doth call
Our spirits down its pathways? or the
awe

Of that abyss and solitude beneath
High mountain passes, which doth
aye attract

Such strange desire? or in the cata-
ract?

The sea? It is the sentiment of death.

If life no more than a mere seeming be,
Away with the imposture! If it tend
To nothing, and to have lived seemingly

Prove to be vain and futile in the end,
Then let us die, that we may really live,
Or cease to feign to live. Let us
possess

Lasting delight, or lasting quietness.
What life desires, death, only death, can
give.

Where are the violets of vanished years?
The sunsets Rachel watched by La-
ban's well?

Where is Fidele's face? where Juliet's
tears?

There comes no answer. There is
none to tell

What we go questioning, till our mouths
are stopt

By a clod of earth. Ask of the plan-
gent sea,

The wild wind wailing through the
leafless tree,

Ask of the meteor from the midnight
dropt!

Come, Death, and bring the beauty back
to all!

I do not seek thee, but I will not shun.
And let thy coming be at even-fall,
Thy pathway through the setting of
the sun.

And let us go together, I with thee,
What time the lamps in Eden bowers
are lit,

And Melancholy, all alone, doth sit
By the wide marge of some neglected sea.

PART II.

ONE hour of English twilight once again!
Lo! in the rosy regions of the dew

The confines of the world begin to wane,
And Hesper doth his trembling lamp
renew.

Now is the inauguration of the night!
Nature's release to wearied earth and
skies!

Sweet truce of Care! Labor's brief
armistice!

Best, loveliest interlude of dark and
light!

The rookery, babbling in the sunken
wood;

The watchdog, barking from the dis-
tant farm,

The dim light fading from the hornéd
flood,

That winds the woodland in its silver
arm;

The massed and immemorial oaks, whose
leaves

Are husht in yonder heathy dells be-
low;

The fragrance of the meadows that I
know;

The bat, that now his wavering circle
weaves

Around these antique towers, and casements deep
That glimmer, through the ivy and the rose,
To the faint moon, which doth begin to creep
Out of the inmost heart o' the heavens' repose,
To wander, all night long, without a sound,
Above the fields my feet oft wandered once;
The larches tall and dark, which do ensconce
The little churchyard, in whose hallowed ground
Sleep half the simple friends my childhood knew:
All, all the sounds and sights of this blest hour,
Sinking within my heart of hearts, like dew,
Revive that so long parcht and drooping flower
Of youth, the world's hot breath for many years
Hath burned and withered; till once more, once more,
The revelation and the dream of yore
Return to solace these sad eyes with tears!

Where now, alone, a solitary man,
I pace once more the pathways of my home,
Light-hearted, and together, once we ran,
I, and the infant guide that used to roam
With me, the meads and meadow-banks among,
At dusk and dawn. How light those little feet
Danced through the dancing grass and waving wheat,
Where'er, far off, we heard the cuckoo's song!

I know now, little Ella, what the flowers
Said to you then, to make your cheek so pale;
And why the blackbird in our laurel bowers
Spake to you, only; and the poor, pink snail
Feared less your steps than those of the May-shower.
It was not strange these creatures loved you so,
And told you all. 'Twas not so long ago
You were, yourself, a bird, or else a flower.

And, little Ella, you were pale, because
So soon you were to die. I know that now.
And why there ever seemed a sort of gauze
Over your deep blue eyes, and sad young brow.
You were too good to grow up, Ella, you,
And le a woman such as I have known!
And so upon your heart they put a stone,
And left you, dear, amongst the flowers and dew.

God's will is good. He knew what would be best.
I will not weep thee, darling, any more;
I have not wept thee; though my heart, opprest
With many memories, for thy sake is sore.
God's will is good, and great His wisdom is.
Thou wast a little star, and thou didst shine
Upon my cradle; but thou wast not mine,
Thou wast not mine, my darling; thou art His.

My morning star! twin sister of my soul!
My little elfin friend from Fairy-Land!
Whose memory is yet innocent of the whole
Of that which makes me doubly need thy hand,
Thy little guiding hand so soon withdrawn!
Here where I find so little like to thee.
For thou wert as the breath of dawn to me,
Starry, and pure, and brief as is the dawn.

Thy knight was I, and thou my Fairy Queen.
(T was in the days of love and chivalry!)
And thou didst hide thee in a bower of green.
But thou so well hast hidden thee, that I
Have never found thee since. And thou didst set
Many a task, and quest, and high emprise,
Ere I should win my guerdon from thine eyes,
So many, and so many, that not yet
My tasks are ended or my wanderings o'er.
But some day thou wilt send across the main
A magic bark, and I shall quit this shore
Of care, and find thee, in thy bower, again;
And thou wilt say, "My brother, hast thou found
Our home, at last?" . . . Whilst I, in answer, Sweet,
Shall heap my life's last booty at thy feet,
And bare my breast with many a bleeding wound.

The spoils of time! the trophies of the world!
The keys of conquered towns, and captived kings;
And many a broken sword, and banner furled;
The heads of giants, and swart Soldan's rings;
And many a maiden's scarf; and many a wand
Of baffled wizard; many an amulet;
And many a shield, with mine own heart's blood wet;
And jewels, dear, from many a distant land!

God's will is good. He knew what would be best.
I thought last year to pass away from life.
I thought my toils were ended, and my quest
Completed, and my part in this world's strife
Accomplisht. And, behold! about me now
There rest the gloom, the glory, and the awe
Of a new martyrdom, no dreams foresaw;
And the thorn-crown hath blossomed on my brow.

A martyrdom, but with a martyr's joy!
A hope I never hoped for! and a sense
That nothing henceforth ever can destroy:—
Within my breast the serene confidence
Of mercy in the misery of things;
Of meaning in the mystery of all;
Of blessing in whatever may befall;
Of rest predestined to all wanderings.

Howsweet, with thee, my sister, to renew,
In lands of light, the search for those bright birds
Of plumage so ethereal in its hue,
And music sweeter than all mortal words,
Which some good angel to our childhood sent
With messages from Paradisal flowers,
So lately left, the scent of Eden bowers
Yet lingered in our hair, where'er we went!

Now, they are all fled by, this many a year,
Adown the viewless valleys of the wind,
And nevermore will cross this hemisphere,
Those birds of passage! Never shall I find,
Dropt from the flight, you followed, dear, so far
That you will never come again, I know,
One plumelet on the paths by which I go,
Missing thy light there, O my morning star!

Soft, over all, doth ancient twilight cast
Her dim gray robe, vague as futurity,
And sad and hoary as the ghostly past,
Till earth assumes invisibility.
I hear the night-bird's note, wherewith she starts
The bee within the blossom from his dream.
A light, like hope, from yonder pane doth beam,
And now, like hope, it silently departs.

Hush! from the clock within yon dark
church spire,
Another hour broke, clanging, out of
time,
And passed me, throbbing like my own
desire,
Into the seven-fold heavens. And now,
the chime
Over the vale, the woodland, and the
river,
More faint, more far, a quivering echo,
strays
From that small twelve-houred circle
of our days,
And spreads, and spreads, to the great
round Forever.

Pensive, the sombre ivied porch I pass.
Through the dark hall, the sound of
my own feet
Pursues me, like the ghost of what I
was,
Into this silent chamber, where I
meet
From wall to wall the fathers of my
race;
The pictures of the past from wall to
wall;
Wandering o'er which, my wistful
glances fall,
To sink, at last, on little Ella's face.

This is my home. And hither I re-
turn,
After much wandering in the ways of
men,
Weary but not outworn. Here, with
her urn
Shall Memory come, and be my deni-
zen.
And blue-eyed Hope shall through the
window look,
And lean her fair child's face into the
room,
What time the hawthorn buds anew,
and bloom
The bright forget-me-nots beside the
brook.

Father of all which is, or yet may
be,
Ere to the pillow which my childhood
prest
This night restores my troubled brows,
by Thee
May this, the last prayer I have
learned, be blest!

Grant me to live that I may need from
life
No more than life hath given me, and
to die
That I may give to death no more
than I
Have long abandoned. And, if toil and
strife
Yet in the portion of my days must be,
Firm be my faith, and quiet be my
heart!
That so my work may with my will agree,
And strength be mine to calmly fill my
part
In Nature's purpose, questioning not the
end.
For love is more than raiment or than
food.
Shall I not take the evil with the good?
Blesséd to me be all which thou dost
send!

Nor blest the least, recalling what hath
been,
The knowledge of the evil I have known
Without me, and within me. Since, to
lean
Upon a strength far mightier than my
own
Such knowledge brought me. In whose
strength I stand,
Firmly upheld, even though, in ruin
hurled,
The fixed foundations of this rolling
world
Should topple at the waving of Thy hand.

PART III.

HAIL thou! sole Muse that, in an age of
toil,
Of all the old Uranian sisterhood,
Art left to light us o'er the furrowed soil
Of this laborious star! Muse, unsub-
dued
By that strong hand which hath in ruin
razed
The temples of dread Jove! Muse
most divine,
Albeit but ill by these pale lips of mine,
In days degenerate, first named and
praised!

Now the high airy kingdoms of the day
Hyperion holds not. The disloyal seas

Have broken from Poseidon's purple
sway.
Through Heaven's harmonious golden
palaces
No more the silver-sandalled messengers
Slide to sweet airs. Upon Olympus'
brow
The gods' great citadel is vacant now.
And not a lute to Love in Lesbos stirs.

But thou wert born not on the Forkéd Hill,
Nor fed from Hybla's hives by Attic
bees,
Nor on the honey Cretan oaks distil,
Or once distilled, when gods had homes
in trees,
And young Apollo knew thee not. Yet
thou
With Ceres wast, when the pale mother
trod
The gloomy pathway to the nether god,
And spake with that dim Power which
dwells below

The surface of whatever, where he wends,
The circling sun illumineth. And thou
Wast aye a friend to man. Of all his
friends,
Perchance the friend most needed:
needed now
Yet more than ever; in a complex age
Which changes while we gaze at it:
from heaven
Seeking a sign, and finding no sign
given,
And questioning Life's worn book at
every page.

Nor ever yet, was song, untaught by
thee,
Worthy to live immortally with man.
Wherefore, divine Experience, bend on
me
Thy deep and searching eyes. Since
life began,
Meek at thy mighty knees, though oft
reproved,
I have sat, spelling out slow time with
tears,
Where down the riddling alphabet of
years
Thy guiding finger o'er the horn-book
moved.

And I have put together many names:
Sorrow, and Joy, and Hope, and Mem-
ory,

And Love, and Anger; as an infant
frames
The initials of a language wherein he
In manhood must with men communi-
cate.
And oft, the words were hard to un-
derstand,
Harder to utter; still the solemn hand
Would pause, and point, and wait, and
move, and wait;

Till words grew into language. Lan-
guage grew
To utterance. Utterance into music
passed.
I sang of all I learned, and all I knew.
And, looking upward in thy face, at
last,
Beheld it flusht, as when a mother hears
Her infant feebly singing his first
hymn,
And dreams she sees, albeit unseen of
him,
Some radiant listener lured from other
spheres.

Such songs have been my solace many a
while
And oft, when other solace I had none,
From grief which lay heart-broken on a
smile,
And joy that glittered like a winter
sun,
And froze, and fevered: from the great
man's scorn,
The mean man's envy; friends' un-
friendliness;
Love's want of human kindness, and
the stress
Of nights that hoped for nothing from
the morn.

From these, and worse than these, did
song unbar
A refuge through the ivory gate of
dreams,
Wherein my spirit grew familiar
With spirits that glide by spiritual
streams;
Song hath, for me, unsealed the genii
sleeping
Under mid seas, and lured out of their
lair
Beings with wondering eyes, and won-
drous hair,
Tame to my feet at twilight softly
creeping.

And song hath been my cymbal in the
hours
Of triumph; when behind me, far
away,
Lay Egypt, with its plagues; and, by
strange powers,
Not mine, upheld, life's heaped ocean
lay
On either side a passage for my soul.
A passage to the Land of Promise!
trod
By giants, where the chosen race of
God
Shall find, at last, its long predestined
goal.

The breath which stirred these songs a
little while
Has fled by; and, with it, fled
too
The days I sought, thus singing, to be-
guile
Of thoughts that spring like weeds,
which will creep through
The blank interstices of ruined fanes,
Where Youth, adoring, sacrificed—
its heart,
To gods forever fallen.

Now, we part,
My songs and I. We part, and what
remains?

Perchance an echo, and perchance no
more,
Harp of my heart, from thy brief mu-
sic dwells
In hearts, unknown, afar: as the wide
shore
Retains within its hundred hollow
shells
The voices of the spirits of the foam,
Which murmur in the language of the
deeps,
Though haply far away, to one who
keeps
Such ocean wealth to grace an inland
home.

Within these cells of song, how frail so-
e'er,
The vast and wandering tides of human
life
Have murmured once; and left, in pass-
ing, there,
Faint echoes of the tumult and the
strife
Of the great ocean of humanity.

Fairies have danced within these hol-
low caves,
And Memory mused above the moonlit
waves,
And Youth, the lover, here hath lingered
by.

I sung of life, as life would have me sing,
Of falsehood, and of evil, and of wrong;
For many a false, and many an evil
thing,
I found in life; and by my life my
song
Was shaped within me while I sung: I
sung
Of Good, for good is life's predestined
end;
Of Sorrow, for I knew her as my friend;
Of Love, for by his hand my harp was
strung.

I have not scrawled above the tomb of
Youth
Those lying epitaphs, which represent
All virtues, and all excellence, save
truth.
'T were easy, thus, to have been elo-
quent,
If I had held the fashion of the age
Which loves to hear its sounding flat-
tery
Blown by all dusty winds from sky to
sky,
And find its praises blotting every page.

And yet, the Poet and the Age are one.
And if the age be flawed, how'er
minute,
Deep through the poet's heart that rent
doth run,
And shakes and mars the music of his
lute.

It is not that his sympathy is less
With all that lives and all that feels
around him,
But that so close a sympathy hath
bound him
To these, that he must utter their dis-
tress.

We build the bridge, and swing the
wondrous wire,
Bind with an iron hoop the rolling
world;
Sport with the spirits of the ductile fire;
And leave our spells upon the vapor
furl'd;

And cry—Behold the progress of the
time!
Yet are we tending in an unknown
land,
Whither, we neither ask nor under-
stand,
Far from the peace of our unvalued
prime!

And Strength and Force, the fiends
which minister
To some new-risen Power beyond our
span,
On either hand, with hook and nail,
confer
To rivet the Promethean heart of man
Under the ravening and relentless beak
Of unappeasable Desire, which yet
The very vitals of the age doth fret.
The limbs are mighty, but the heart is
weak.

Writhe on, Prometheus! or what'er
thou art,
Thou giant sufferer, groaning for a
race
Thou canst not save, for all thy bleeding
heart!
Thy wail my harp hath wakened;
and my place
Shall be beside thee; and my blessing be
On all that makes me worthy yet to
share
Thy lonely martyrdom, and with thee
wear
That crown of anguish given to poets,
and thee!

If to have wept, and wildly; to have
loved
Till love grew torture; to have grieved
till grief
Became a part of life; if to have proved
The want of all things; if, to draw
relief
From poesy for passion, this avail,
I lack no title to my crown. The sea
Hath sent up nymphs for my society,
The mountains have been moved to hear
my wail.

Nature and man were children long ago
In glad simplicity of heart and speech.
Now they are strangers to each other's
woe;
And each hath language different from
each.

The simplest songs sound sweetest and
most good.
The simplest loves are the most loving
ones.
Happier were song's forefathers than
their sons.
And Homer sung as Byron never could.

But Homer cannot come again: nor ever
The quiet of the age in which he sung.
This age is one of tumult and endeavor,
And by a fevered hand its harps are
strung.
And yet, I do not quarrel with the time;
Nor quarrel with the tumult of my
heart,
Which of the tumult of the age is
part;
Because its very weakness is sublime.

The passions are as winds on the wide sea
Of human life; which do impel the
sails
Of man's great enterprise, what'er that
be.
The reckless helmsman, caught upon
these gales,
Under the roaring gulfs goes down
aghast.
The prudent pilot to the steadying
breeze
Sparsely gives head; and, over peril-
ous seas,
Drops anchor 'mid the Fortunate Isles,
at last.

We pray against the tempest and the
strife,
The storm, the whirlwind, and the
troubulous hour,
Which vex the fretful element of life.
Me rather save, O dread disposing
Power,
From those dead calms, that flat and
hopeless lull,
In which the dull sea rots around the
bark,
And nothing moves save the sure-
creeping dark,
That slowly settles o'er an idle hull.

For in the storm, the tumult, and the stir
That shakes the soul, man finds his
power and place
Among the elements. Deeps with deeps
confer,
And Nature's secret settles in her face.

Let ocean to his inmost caves be stirred ;
 Let the wild light be smitten from the
 cloud.
 The decks may reel, the masts be
 snapt and bowed,
 But God hath spoken out, and man
 hath heard !

Farewell, you lost inhabitants of my
 mind,
 You fair ephemerals of faded hours !
 Farewell, you lands of exile, whence
 each wind
 Of memory steals with fragrance over
 flowers !

Farewell, Cordelia ! Ella ! . . . But not so
 Farewell the memories of you which
 I have
 Till strangers shall be sitting on my
 grave
 And babbling of the dust which lies
 below.

Blesséd the man whose life, how sad
 soe'er,
 Hath felt the presence, and yet keeps
 the trace
 Of one pure woman ! With religious care
 We close the doors, with reverent feet
 we pace
 The vacant chambers, where, of yore, a
 Queen
 One night hath rested. From my
 Past's pale walls
 Yet gleam the unfaded fair memorials
 Of her whose beauty there, awhile, hath
 been.

She passed, into my youth, at its night-
 time,
 When low the lamplight, and the
 music husht.

She passed and passed away. Some
 broken rhyme
 Scrawled on the panel or the pane :
 the crusht
 And faded rose she dropped : the page
 she turned
 And finished not : the ribbon or the
 knot
 That fluttered from her . . . Stranger,
 harm them not !
 I keep these sacred relics undiscerned.

Men's truths are often lies, and women's
 lies
 Often the setting of a truth most tender

In an unconscious poesy. The child
 cries
 To clutch the star that lights its rosy
 splendor
 In airy Edens of the west afar.
 "Ah, folly !" sighs the father, o'er
 his book.
 "Millions of miles above thy foolish
 nook
 Of infantile desire, the Hesperus-star
 "Descends not, child, to twinkle on thy
 cot."
 Then readjusts his blind-wise specta-
 cles,
 While tears to sobs are changing, were
 it not
 The mother, with those tender sylla-
 bles
 Which even Dutch mothers can make
 musical too,
 Murmurs, "Sleep, sleep, my little one !
 and I
 Will pluck thy star for thee, and by
 and by
 Lay it upon thy pillow bright with dew."
 And the child sleeps, and dreams of stars
 whose light
 Beams in his own bright eyes when he
 awakes.
 So sleep ! so dream ! If aught I read
 aright
 That star, poor babe, which o'er thy
 cradle shakes,
 Thy fate may fall, in after years, to be
 That other child that, like thee, loves
 the star,
 And, like thee, weeps to find it all so
 far,
 Feeling its force in his nativity : —

That other infant, all as weak, as wild,
 As passionate, and as helpless, as thou
 art,
 Whom men will call a Poet (Poet, or
 child,
 The star is still so distant from the
 heart !)

If so, heaven grant that thou mayst find
 at last,
 Since such there are, some woman,
 whose sweet smile,
 Pitying, may thy fond fancy yet be-
 guile
 To dream the star, which thou hast
 sought, thou hast !

For men, if thou shouldst heed what
 they may say,
 Will break thy heart, or leave thee,
 like themselves
 No heart for breaking. Wherefore I do
 pray
 My book may lie upon no learned
 shelves,
 But that in some deep summer eve, per-
 chance,
 Some woman, melancholy-eyed, and
 pale,
 Whose heart, like mine, hath suffered,
 may this tale
 Read by the soft light of her own romance.

Go forth over the wide world, Song of
 mine !
 As Noah's dove out of his bosom flew
 Over the desolate, vast, and wandering
 brine.
 Seek thou thy nest afar. Thy plaint
 renew

From heart to heart, and on from land
 to land
 Fly boldly, till thou find that unknown
 friend
 Whose face, in dreams, above my own
 doth bend,
 Then tell that spirit what it will under-
 stand,

Why men can tell to strangers all the
 tale
 From friends reserved. And tell that
 spirit, my Song,
 Wherefore I have not faltered to unveil
 The cryptic forms of error and of
 wrong.
 And say, I suffered more than I re-
 corded,
 That each man's life is all men's lesson.
 Say,
 And let the world believe thee, as it
 may,
 Thy tale is true, however weakly worded.

TANNHÄUSER;*

OR,

THE BATTLE OF THE BARDS.

A portion of this poem was written by another hand.

THIS is the Land, the happy valleys these,
Broad breadths of plain, blue-veined by
many a stream,
Umbrageous hills, sweet glades, and forests fair,
O'er which our good liege, Landgrave Herman, rules.
This is Thuringia: yonder, on the heights,
Is Wartburg, seat of our dear lord's abode,
Famous through Christendom for many a feat
Of deffest knights, chief stars of chivalry,
At tourney in its courts; nor more renowned
For deeds of Prowess than exploits of Art,
Achieved when, vocal in its Muses' hall,
The minstrel-knights their glorious jousts renew,
And for the laurel wage harmonious war.
On this side spreads the Chase in wooded slopes
And sweet acclivities; and, all beyond,
The open flats lie fruitful to the sun
Full many a league; till, dark against the sky,
Bounding the limits of our lord's domain,
The Hill of Hürsel rears his horrid front.
Woe to the man who wanders in the vast
Of those unhallowed solitudes, if Sin,
Quickening the lust of carnal appetite,
Lurk secret in his heart: for all their caves
Echo weird strains of magic, direful-sweet,
That lap the wanton sense in blissful ease;
While through the ear a reptile music creeps,
And, blandly-busy, round about the soul
Weaves its fell web of sounds. The unhappy wight
Thus captive made in soft and silken bands
Of tangled harmony, is led away —
Away adown the ever-darkening caves,
Away from fairness and the face of God,
Away into the mountain's mystic womb,
To where, reclining on her impious couch
All the fair length of her lascivious limbs,
Languid in light from roseate tapers flung,
Incensed with perfumes, tended on by fays,
The lustful Queen, waiting damnation,
holds
Her bestial revels. The Queen of Beauty
once,
A goddess called and worshipped in the days
When men their own infirmities adored,
Deeming divine who in themselves summed up
The full-blown passions of humanity.
Large fame and lavish service had she then,
Venus ycleped, of all the Olympian crew
Least continent of Spirits and most fair.
So reaped she honor of unwistful men,
Roman, or Greek, or dwellers on the plains
Of Egypt, or the isles to utmost Ind;
Till came the crack of that tremendous Doom
That sent the false gods shivering from their seats,
Shattered the superstitious dome that bleared
Heaven's face to man, and on the lurid world

* The reader is solicited to adopt the German pronunciation of TANNHÄUSER, by sounding it as if it were written, in English, "Tannhoiser."

Let in effulgence of untainted light.
As when, laid bare beneath the delver's toil
On some huge bulk of buried masonry
In hoar Assyria, suddenly revealed
A chamber, gay with sculpture and the pomp
Of pictured tracery on its glowing walls,
No sooner breathes the wholesome heavenly air
Than fast its colored bravery fades, and fall
Its ruined statues, crumbled from their crypts,
And all its gauds grow dark at sight of day;
So darkened and to dusty ruin fell
The fleeting glories of a Pagan faith,
Bared to Truth's influences bland, and smit
Blind by the splendors of the Bethlehem Dawn.
Then from their shattered temple in the minds
Of men, and from their long familiar homes,
Their altars, fanes, and shrines, the sumptuous seats
Of their mendacious oracles, out-slunk
The wantons of Olympus. Forth they fled,
Forth from Dodona, Delos, and the depths
Of wooded Ida; from Athenæ forth,
Cithæron, Paphos, Thebes, and all their groves
Of oak or poplar, dismally to roam
About the new-baptized earth; exiled,
Bearing the curse, yet suffered for a space,
By Heaven's clear sapience and inscrutable ken,
To range the wide world, and assay their powers
To unregenerate redeemed mankind:
If haply they by shadows and by shows,
Phantasmagoria, and illusions wrought
Of sight or sound by sorcery, may draw
Unwary men, or weak, into the nets
Of Satan their great Captain. She renowned
"The fairest," fleeing from her Cyprian isle,
Swept to the northwards many a league,
and lodged
At length on Hürsel, into whose dark womb

She crept confounded. Thither soon she drew
Lewd Spirits to herself, and there abides,
Holding her devilish orgies; and has power
With siren voices crafty to compel
Into her wanton home unhappy men
Whose souls to sin are prone. The pure at heart
Nathless may roam about her pestilent hill
Untainted, proof against perfidious sounds
Within whose ears an angel ever sings
Good tidings of great joy. Nor even they,
Whose hearts are gross, and who inflamed with lust
Enter, entrapped by sorceries, to her cave,
Are damned beyond redemption. For a while,
Slaves of their bodies, in the sloughs of Sin,
They roll contented, wallowing in the arms
Of their libidinous goddess. But, ere long,
Comes loathing of the sensual air they breathe,
Loathing of light unhallowed, sickening sense
Of surfeited enjoyment; and their lips,
Spurning the reeky pasture, yearn for draughts
Of rock-rebounding rills, their eyes for sight
Of Heaven, their limbs for lengths of dewy grass:
What time sharp Conscience pricks them, and awake
Starts the requickenèd soul with all her powers,
And breaks, if so she will, the murderous spell,
Calling on God. God to her rescue sends
Voiced seraphims that lead the sinner forth
From darkness unto day, from foul embrace
Of that bloat Queen into the mother-lap
Of earth, and the caressent airs of Heaven;
Where he, by strong persistency of prayer,
By painful pilgrimage, by lengths of fast
That tame the rebel flesh, by many a night
Of vigil, days of deep repentant tears,

May cleanse his soul of her adulterate
 stains,
 May from his sin-incrusted spirit shake
 The leprous scales, — and, purely at the
 feet
 Of his Redemption falling, may arise
 Of Christ accepted. Whoso doubts the
 truth,
 Doubting how deep divine Compassion is,
 Lend to my tale a willing ear, and learn.
 Full twenty summers have fled o'er the
 land,
 A score of winters on our Landgrave's
 head
 Have showered their snowy honors, since
 the days
 When in his court no nobler knight was
 known,
 And in his halls no happier bard was
 heard,
 Than bright Tannhäuser. Warrior, minstrel,
 he
 Throve for a while within the general eye,
 As some king-cedar, in Crusader tales,
 The stately growth of Lebanonian
 groves:
 For now I sing him in his matchless
 prime,
 Not, as in latter days, defaced and
 marred
 By secret sin, and like the wasted torch
 Found in the dank grass at the ghastly
 dawn,
 After a witches' revel. He was a man
 In whom prompt Nature, as in those
 soft climes
 Where life is indolently opulent,
 Blossomed unbid to graces barely won
 From tedious culture, where less kindly
 stars
 Cold influence keep; and trothful men,
 who once
 Looked in his lordly, luminous eyes,
 and scanned
 His sinewous frame, compact of pliant
 power,
 Avere he was the fairest-favored knight
 That ever, in the light of ladies' looks,
 Made gay these goodly halls. Oh!
 deeper dole,
 That so august a Spirit, sphered so fair,
 Should from the starry sessions of his
 peers
 Decline, to quench so bright a brilliancy
 In Hell's sick spume. Ay me, the
 deeper dole!

From yonder tower the wheeling lap-
 wing loves
 Beyond all others, that o'ertops the pines,
 And from his one white, wistful window
 stares
 Into the sullen heart o' the land, — ere-
 while
 The wandering woodman oft, at night-
 fall, heard
 A sad, wild strain of solitary song
 Float o'er the forest. Whoso heard it,
 paused
 Compassionately, crossed himself, and
 sighed,
 "Alas! poor Princess, to thy piteous
 moan
 Heaven send sweet peace!" Heaven
 heard, and now she lies
 Under the marble, 'mid the silent tombs,
 Calm with her kindred; as her soul
 above
 Rests with the saints of God.
 The brother's child
 Of our good lord the Landgrave was
 this maid,
 And here with him abode; for in the
 breach
 At Ascalon, her sire in Holy Land
 Had fallen, fighting for the Cross. These
 halls
 Sheltered her infancy, and here she grew
 Among the shaggy barons, like the pale,
 Mild-eyed, March-violet of the North,
 that blows
 Bleak under bergs of ice. Full fair she
 grew,
 And all men loved the rare Elizabeth;
 But she, of all men, loved one man the
 most,
 Tannhäuser, minstrel, knight, the man
 in whom
 All mankind flowered. Fairer growth,
 indeed,
 Of knighthood never blossomed to the
 eye;
 But, furled beneath that florid surface,
 lurked
 A vice of nature, breeding death, not
 life;
 Such as where some rich Roman, to de-
 light
 Luxurious days with labyrinthian walks
 Of rose and lily, marble fountains, forms
 Wanton of Grace or Nymph, and wind-
 ing frieze
 With sculpture rough, hath decked the
 summer haunts

Of his voluptuous villa, — there, fes-
 tooned
 With flowers, among the Graces and the
 Gods,
 The lurking fever glides.
 A dangerous skill,
 Caught from the custom of those trou-
 badours
 That roam the wanton South, too near
 the homes
 Of the lost gods, had crept in careless use
 Among our northern bards; to play the
 thief
 Upon the poets of a pagan time,
 And steal, to purdle their embroidered
 lays,
 Voluptuous trappings of lascivious lore.
 Hence had Tannhäuser, from of old, in-
 dulged
 In song too lavish license to mislead
 The sense among those fair but phantom
 forms
 That haunt the unhallowed past: where-
 from One Shape
 Forth of the cloudy circle gradual grew
 Distinct, in dissolute beauty. She of
 old,
 Who from the idle foam uprose, to reign
 In fancies all as idle, — that fair fiend,
 Venus, whose temples are the veins in
 youth.
 Now more and ever more she mixed her-
 self
 With all his moods, and whispered in
 his walks;
 Or through the misty minster, when he
 kneeled
 Meek on the flint, athwart the incense-
 smoke
 She stole on sleeping sunbeams, sprinkled
 sounds
 Of cymbals through the silver psalms,
 and marred
 His adoration: most of all, when'er
 He sought to fan those fires of holy love
 That, sleeping oftenest, sometimes leapt
 to flame,
 Kindled by kindred passion in the eyes
 Of sweet Elizabeth, round him rose and
 rolled
 That miserable magic; and, at times,
 It drove him forth to wander in the waste
 And desert places, there where prayer-
 less man
 Is most within the power of prowling
 fiends.
 Time put his sickle in among the days.
 Outcropped the coming harvest; and
 there came
 An evening with the Princess, when
 they twain
 Together ranged the terrace that o'erlaps
 The great south garden. All her simple
 hair
 A single sunbeam from the sleepy west
 O'erfloated; swam her soft blue eyes
 suffused
 With tender ruth, and her meek face
 was moved
 To one slow, serious smile, that stole to
 find
 Its resting-place on his.
 Then, while he looked
 On that pure loveliness, within himself
 He faintly felt a mystery like pure love:
 For through the arid hollows of a heart
 Sere'd by delirious dreams, the dewy
 sense
 Of innocent worship stole. The one
 great word
 That long had hovered in the silent mind
 Now on the lip half settled; for not yet
 Had love between them been a spoken
 sound
 For after speech to lean on; only here
 And there, where scattered pauses strewed
 their talk,
 Love seemed to o'erpoise the silence, like
 a star
 Seen through a tender trouble of light
 clouds.
 But, in that moment, some mysterious
 touch,
 A thought — who knows? — a memory
 — something caught
 Perchance from flying fancies, taking
 form
 Among the sunset clouds, or scented
 gusts
 Of evening through the gorgeous glooms,
 shrunk up
 His better angel, and at once awaked
 The carnal creature sleeping in the flesh.
 Then died within his heart that word of
 life
 Unspoken, which, if spoken, might
 have saved
 The dreadful doom impending. So they
 twain
 Parted, and nothing said: she to her
 tower,
 There with meek wonder to renew the
 calm

And customary labor of the loom ;
And he into the gradual-creeping dark
Which now began to draw the rooks to
roost
Along the windless woods.

His soul that eve
Shook strangely if some flickering shad-
ow stole
Across the slopes where sunset, sleeping
out

The day's last dream, yet lingered low.
Old songs
Were sweet about his brain, old fancies
fair

O'erflowed with lurid life the lonely land :
The twilight trooped with antic shapes,
and swarmed

Above him, and the deep mysterious
woods
With mystic music drew him to his
doom.

So rapt, with idle and with errant foot
He wandered on to Hørsel, and those
glades

Of melancholy fame, whose poisonous
glooms,
Decked with the gleaming hemlock,
darkly fringe

The Mount of Venus. There, a drowsy
sense
Of languor seized him ; and he sat him
down

Among a litter of loose stones and blocks
Of broken columns, overrun with weed,
Remnants of heathen work that some-
time propped

A pagan temple.
Suddenly, the moon,
Slant from the shoulder of the mon-
strous hill,

Swung o'er a sullen lake, and softly
touched
With light a shattered statue in the
weed.

He lifted up his eyes, and all at once,
Bright in her baleful beauty, he beheld
The goddess of his dreams. Beholding
whom,

Lost to his love, forgetful of his faith,
And fevered by the stimulated sense
Of reprobate desire, the madman cried :
"Descend, Dame Venus, on my soul
descend !

Break up the marble sleep of those still
brows
Where beauty broods ! Down all my
senses swim,

As yonder moon to yonder love-lit lake
Swims down in glory !"

Hell the horrid prayer
Accorded with a curse. Scarce those
wild words

Were uttered, when like mist the marble
moved,
Flusht with false life. Deep in a sleepy
cloud

He seemed to sink beneath the sumptu-
ous face
Leaned o'er him, — all the whiteness, all
the warmth,

And all the luxury of languid limbs,
Where violet vein-streaks, lost in limp
lengths

Of snowy surface, wander faint and fine ;
Whilst cymballed music, stolen from
underneath,
Creeps through a throbbing light that
grows and glows

From glare to greater glare, until it gluts
And gulfs him in.

And from that hour, in court,
And chase, and tilted tourney, many a
month,

From mass in holy church, and mirth
in hall,
From all the fair assemblage of his peers,
And all the feudatory festivals,
Men missed Tannhäuser.

At the first, as when
From some great oak his goodliest branch
is lopped,

The little noisy birds, that built about
The foliage, gather in the gap with
shrill

And querulous curiosity ; even so,
From all the twittering tongues that
thronged the court

Rose general hubbub of astonishment,
And vext surmise about the absent man :
Why absent ? whither wandered ? on
what quest

Of errant prowess ? — for, as yet, none
knew
His miserable fall. But time wore on,
The wonder wore away ; round absence
crept

The weed of custom, and the absent
one
Became at last a memory, and no more.

One heart within that memory lived
aloof ;
One face, remembering his, forgot to
smile ;

Our Landgrave's niece the old familiar
ways
Walked like a ghost with unfamiliar
looks.

Time put his sickle in among the days.
The rose burned out ; red Autumn lit
the woods ;

The last snows, melting, changed to
snowy clouds ;
And Spring once more with incantations
came

To wake the buried year. Then did
our liege,
Lord Landgrave Herman, — for he loved
his niece,

And lightly from her simple heart had
won
The secret of lost smiles, and why she
drooped,

A wilted flower, — thinking to dispel,
If that might be, her mournfulness, let
cry

By heralds that, at coming Whitsuntide,
The minstrel-knights in Wartburg should
convene

To hold high combat in the craft of
song,
And sing before the Princess for the
prize.

But, ere that time, it fell upon a day
When our good lord went forth to hunt
the hart,

That he with certain of his court, 'mid
whom
Was Wolfram, — once Tannhäuser's
friend, himself

Among the minstrels held in high re-
nown, —
Came down the Wartburg valley, where
they deemed

To hold the hart at siege, and found
him not :
But found, far down, at bottom of the
glade,

Beneath a broken cross, a lonely knight
Who sat on a great stone, watching the
clouds.

And Wolfram, being a little in the van
Of all his fellows, eager for the hunt,
Hurriedly ran to question of the knight
If he had viewed the hart. But when
he came

To parley with him, suddenly he gave
A shout of great good cheer ; for, all at
once,

In that same knight he saw, and knew,
though changed,
Tannhäuser, his old friend and fellow-
bard.

Now, Wolfram long had loved Elizabeth
As one should love a star in heaven, who
knows

The distance of it, and the reachlessness.
But when he knew Tannhäuser in her
heart

(For loving eyes, in eyes beloved are
swift
To search out secrets) not the less his
own

Clave unto both ; and, from that time,
his love
Lived like an orphan child in charity,
Whose loss came early, and is gently
borne,

Too deep for tears, too constant for com-
plaint.

And, therefore, in the absence of his
friend
His inmost heart was heavy, when he
saw

The shadow of that absence in the face
He loved beyond all faces upon earth.

So that when now he found that friend
again
Whom he had missed and mourned,
right glad was he

Both for his own and for the Princess'
sake :
And ran and fell upon Tannhäuser's
neck,

And all for joy constrained him to his
heart,
Calling his fellows from the neighboring
hills,

Who, crowding, came, great hearts and
open arms
To welcome back their peer. The Land-
grave then,

When he perceived his well-belovéd
knight,
Was passing glad, and would have ques-
tioned him

Of his long absence. But the man him-
self
Could answer nothing ; staring with
blank eyes

From face to face, then up into the blue
Bland heavens above ; astonished, and
like one
Who, suddenly awaking out of sleep

After sore sickness, knows his friends
again,
And would peruse their faces, but breaks
off
To list the frolic bleating of the lamb
In far-off fields, and wonder at the world
And all its strangeness. Then, while
the glad knights
Clung round him, wrung his hands, and
dinned his ears
With clattering query, our fair lord him-
self
Unfolded how, upon the morrow morn,
There should be holden festive in his
halls
High meeting of the minstrels of the
land,
To sing before the Princess for the prize:
Whereto he bade him with, "O sir, be
sure
There lives a young voice that shall tax
your wit
To justify this absence from your friends.
We trust, at least, that you have brought
us back
A score of giants' beards, or dragons'
tails,
To lay them at the feet of our fair niece.
For think not, truant, that Elizabeth
Will hold you lightly quitted."
At that name,
Elizabeth, he started as a man
That hears on foreign shores, from alien
lips,
Some name familiar to his fatherland;
And all at once the man's heart inly
yearns
For brooks that bubble, and for woods
that wave
Before his father's door, while he forgets
The forms about him. So Tannhäuser
mused
A little space, then faltered: "O my
liege,
Fares my good lady well?— I pray my
lord
That I may draw me hence a little while,
For all my mind is troubled: and,
indeed,
I know not if my harp have lost his
skill,
But, skilled, or skillless, it shall find
some tone
To render thanks to-morrow to my lord;
To whose behests a bondsman, in so far
As my poor service holds, I will assay
To sing before the Princess for the prize."

Then, on the morrow morn, from far and
near
Flowed in the feudatory lords. The
hills
Broke out ablaze with banners, and rung
loud
With tingling trumpet notes, and neigh-
ing steeds.
For all the land, elate with lusty life,
Buzzed like a beehive in the sun; and
all
The castle swarmed from bridge to bar-
bican
With mantle and with mail, whilst
minster-bells
Rang hoarse their happy chimes, till the
high noon
Clanged from the towers. Then, o'er
the platform stoled
And canopied in crimson, lightly blew
The sceptred heralds on the silver trump
Intense sonorous music, sounding in
The knights to hall. Shrill clinked the
corridors
Through all the courts with clashing
heels, or moved
With silken murmurs, and elastic sounds
Of lady laughters light; as in they flowed
Lord, Liegeman, Peer, and Prince, and
Paladin,
And dame and damsel, clad in dimpling
silk
And gleaming pearl; who, while the
groaning roofs
Re-echoed royal music, swept adown
The spacious hall, with due obeisance
made
To the high dais, and on glittering seats
Dropped one by one, like flocks of bur-
nished birds
That settle down with sunset-painted
plumes
On gorgeous woods. Again from the
outer wall
The intermitted trumpet blared; and
each
Pert page, a-tiptoe, from the benches
leaned
To see the minstrel-knights, gold-filleted,
That entered now the hall: Sir Mandev-
ville,
The Swan of Eisnach; Wilfrid of the
Hills;
Wolfram, surnamed of Willow-brook;
and next
Tannhäuser, christened of the Golden
Harp;

With Walter of the Heron-chase; and
Max,
The seer; Sir Rudolph, of the Raven-
crest;
And Franz, the falconer. They entered,
each
In order, followed by a blooming boy
That bore his harp, and, pacing forward,
bowed
Before the Landgrave and Elizabeth.
Pale sat the Princess in her chair of
state,
Perusing with fixed eyes, that all be-
lief
Her throbbing heart, the carven archi-
trave,
Whereon the intricate much-vexed design
Of leaf and stem disinterwined itself
With infinite laboriousness, at last
Escaping in a flight of angel forms;
As though the carver's thought had
been to show
The weary struggle of the soul to free
Her flight from earth's bewilderment,
and all
That frets her in the flesh. But when,
erewhile,
The minstrels entered, and Tannhäuser
bowed
Before the dais, the Landgrave, at her
side,
Saw, as he mused what theme to give for
song,
The pallid forehead of Elizabeth
Flush to the fair roots of her golden hair,
And thought within himself: "Our
knight delays
To own a love that aims so near our
throne;
Hence, haply, this late absence from our
court,
And those bewildered moods which I
have marked;
But since love lightly catches, where it
can,
At any means to make itself approved,
And since the singer may to song confide
What the man dares not trust to simple
speech,
I, therefore, so to ease two hearts at once,
And signify our favor unto both,
Will to our well-belovéd minstrels give
No theme less sweet than Love: for,
surely, he
That loves the best, will sing the best,
and bear
The prize from all." Therewith the
Landgrave rose,
And all the murmuring Hall was hushed
to hear.
"O well-belovéd minstrels, in my mind
I do embrace you all, and heartily
Bid you a lavish welcome to these halls.
Oft have you flooded this fair space with
song,
Waked these voiced walls, and vocal
made yon roof,
As waves of surging music lapped against
Its resonant rafters. Often have your
strains
Ennobled souls of true nobility,
Rapt by your perfect pleadings in the
cause
Of all things pure unto a purer sense
Of their exceeding loveliness. No power
Is subtler o'er the spirit of man than
Song—
Sweet echo of great thoughts, that, in
the mind
Of him who hears congenial echoes wak-
ing,
Remultiplies the praise of what is good.
Song cheers the emulous spirit to the
top
Of Virtue's rugged steep, from whence,
all heights
Of human worth attained, the mortal
may
Conjecture of God's unattainable,
Which is Perfection. — Faith, with her
sisters twain
Of Hope and Charity, ye oft have sung,
And loyal Truth have lauded, and have
wreathed
A coronal of music round the brows
Of stainless Chastity; nor less have
praised
High-minded Valor, in whose righteous
hand
Burns the great sword of flaming Forti-
tude,
And have stirred up to deeds of high
emprise
Our noble knights (yourselves among the
noblest)
Whether on German soil for me, their
prince,
Fighting, or in the Land of Christ for
God.
Sing ye to-day another theme; to-day
Within our glad society we see,
To fellowship of loving friends restored,

A long-missed face; and hungerly our ears
 Wait the melodious murmurs of a harp
 That went to feed them daintily. What drew
 Our singer forth, and led the fairest light
 Of all our galaxy to swerve astray
 From his fixed orbit, and what now re-spheres,
 After deflection long, our errant orb,
 Implies a secret that the subtle power
 Of Song, perchance, may solve. Be then
 your theme
 As universal as the heart of man,
 Giving you scope to touch its deepest
 depths,
 Its highest heights, and reverently to
 explore
 Its mystery of mysteries. Sing of Love:
 Tell us, ye noble poets, from what source
 Springs the prime passion; to what goal
 it tends!
 Sing it how brave, how beautiful, how
 bright,
 In essence how ethereal, in effect
 How palpable, how human yet divine.
 Up! up! loved singers, smite into the
 chords,
 The lists are opened, set your lays in rest,
 And who of Love best chants the perfect
 praise,
 Him shall Elizabeth as conqueror hail
 And round his royal temples bind the
 bays."

He said, and sat. And from the middle-
 hall
 Four pages, bearers of the blazoned urn
 That held the name-scrolls of the listed
 bards,
 Moved to Elizabeth. Daintily her hand
 Dipped in the bowl, and one drawn
 scroll delivered
 Back to the pages, who, perusing, cried:
 "Sir Wolfram of the Willow-brook,—
 begin."

Up rose the gentle singer—he whose
 lays,
 Melodious-melancholy, through the Land
 Live to this day—and, fair obeisance
 made,
 Assumed his harp and stood in act to
 sing.
 Awhile, his dreamy fingers o'er the chords
 Wandered at will, and to the roof was
 turned

His meditative face; till, suddenly,
 A soft light from his spiritual eyes
 Broke, and his canticle he thus began:—

"Love among the saints of God,
 Love within the hearts of men,
 Love in every kindly sod
 That breeds a violet in the glen;
 Love in heaven, and Love on earth,
 Love in all the amorous air;
 Whence comes Love? ah! tell me
 where

Had such a gracious Presence birth?
 Lift thy thoughts to Him, all-knowing,
 In the hallowed courts above;
 From His throne, forever flowing,
 Springs the fountain of all Love:
 Down to earth the stream descending
 Meets the hills, and murmurs then,
 In a myriad channels wending,
 Through the happy haunts of men.
 Blessed ye, earth's sons and daugh-
 ters,

Love among you flowing free;
 Guard, oh! guard its sacred waters,
 Tend on them religiously:
 Let them through your hearts steal
 sweetly,

With the Spirit, wise and bland,
 Minister unto them meely,
 Touch them not with carnal hand.

"Maiden, fashioned so divinely,
 Whom I worship from afar,
 Smile thou on my soul benignly
 Sweet, my solitary star:
 Gentle harbinger of gladness,
 Still be with me on the way;
 Only soother of my sadness,
 Always near, though far away:
 Always near, since first upon me
 Fell thy brightness from above,
 And my troubled heart within me
 Felt the sudden flow of Love;
 At thy sight that gushing river
 Paused, and fell to perfect rest,
 And the pool of Love forever
 Took thy image to its breast.

"Let me keep my passion purely,
 Guard its waters free from blame,
 Hallow Love, as knowing surely
 It returneth whence it came;
 From all channels, good or evil,
 Love, to its pure source enticed,
 Finds its own immortal level
 In the charity of Christ.

"Ye who hear, behold the river,
 Whence it cometh, whither goes;
 Glory be to God, the Giver,
 From whose grace the fountain flows,
 Flows and spreads through all creation,
 Counter-charm of every curse,
 Love, the waters of Salvation,
 Flowing through the universe!"

And still the rapt bard, though his voice
 had ceased,
 And all the Hall had murmured into
 praise,
 Pursued his plaintive theme among the
 chords,
 Blending with instinct fine the intricate
 through
 Of thoughts that flowed beneath his touch
 to find
 Harmonious resolution. As he closed,
 Tannhäuser rising, fretted with delay,
 Sent flying fingers o'er the strings, and
 sang:—

"Love be my theme! Sing her awake,
 My harp, for she hath tamely slept
 In Wolfram's song, a stagnant lake
 O'er which a shivering star hath crept.

"Awake, dull waters, from your sleep,
 Rise, Love, from thy delicious well,
 A fountain!—yea, but flowing deep
 With nectar and with hydromel;

"With gurgling murmurs sweet, that
 teach
 My soul a sleep-distracting dream,
 Till on the marge I lie, and reach
 My longing lips towards the stream;

"Whose waves leap upwards to the
 brink
 With drowning kisses to invite
 And drag me, willing, down to drink
 Delirious draughts of rare Delight;

"Who careless drink, as knowing well
 The happy pastime shall not tire,
 For Love is inexhaustible,
 And all-unfailing my Desire.

"Love's fountain-marge is fairly spread
 With every incense-flower that blows,
 With flossy sedge, and moss that grows
 For fervid limbs a dewy bed;

"And fays and fairies flit and wend
 To keep the sweet stream flowing free,
 And on Love's languid votary
 The little elves delighted tend;

"And bring him honey-dews to sip,
 Rare balms to cool him after play,
 Or with sweet unguents smooth away
 The kiss-crease on his ruffled lip;

"And lilywhite his limbs they lave,
 And roses in his cheeks renew,
 That he, refreshed, return to glue
 His lips to Love's caressent wave;

"And feel, in that immortal kiss,
 His mortal instincts die the death,
 And human fancy fade beneath
 The taste of unimagined bliss!

"Thus, gentle audience, since your ear
 Best loves a metaphoric lay,
 Of mighty Love I warble here
 In figures, such as Fancy may:

"Now know ye how of Love I think
 As of a fountain, failing never,
 On whose soft marge I lie, and drink
 Delicious draughts of Joy forever."

Abrupt he ceased, and sat. And for a
 space,
 No longer than the subtle lightning rests
 Upon a sultry cloud at eventide,
 The Princess smiled, and on her parted
 lips
 Hung inarticulate applause; but she
 Sudden was 'ware that all the hall was
 mute
 With blank disapprobation; and her
 smile
 Died, and vague fear was quickened in
 her heart
 As Walter of the Heron-chase began:—

"O fountain ever fair and bright,
 He hath beheld thee, source of Love,
 Who sung thee springing from above,
 Celestial from the founts of Light;

"But he who from thy waters rare
 Hath thought to drain a gross delight,
 Blind in his spiritual sight,
 Hath ne'er beheld thee, fountain fair!

"Hath never seen the silver glow
Of thy glad waves, crystalline clear,
Hath never heard within his ear
The music of thy murmurous flow.

"The essence of all Good thou art,
Thy waters are immortal Ruth,
Thy murmurs are the voice of Truth,
And music in the human heart :

"Thou yieldest Faith that soars on
high,
And Sympathy that dwells on earth ;
The tender trust in human worth,
The hope that lives beyond the sky.

"Oh ! waters of the living Word,
Oh ! fair vouchsafed us from above,
Oh ! fountain of immortal Love,
What song of thee erewhile I heard !

"Learn, sacrilegious bard, from me
How all ignoble was thy strain,
That sought with trivial song to stain
The fountain of Love's purity ;

"That fountain thou hast never found,
And shouldst thou come with lips of
fire
To slake the thirst of brute Desire,
'T would shrink and shrivel to the
ground :

"Who seeks in Love's pure stream
to lave
His gross heart, finds damnation near ;
Who laves in Love his spirit clear
Shall win Salvation from the wave."

And now again, as when the plaintive lay
Of Wolfram warbled to harmonious close,
The crowd grew glad with plaudits ; and
again

Tannhäuser, ruffled, rose his height, and
smote
Rude in the chords his prelude of reply :

"What Love is this that melts with
Ruth,
Whose murmurs are the voice of
Truth ?

Ye dazed singers, cease to dream,
And learn of me your human theme :
Of that great Passion at whose feet
The vassal-world lies low,
Of Love the mighty, Love the sweet,
I sing, who reigns below ;

Who makes men fierce, tame, wild, or
kind,
Sovran of every mood,
Who rules the heart, and rules the
mind,
And courses through the blood :
Slave of that lavish Power I sing,
Dispenser of all good,
Whose pleasure-fountain is the spring
Of sole beatitude.

"Sing ye of Love ye ne'er possessed
In wretched tropes — a vain employ-
ment !
I sing the passion in my breast,
And know Love only in Enjoyment."

To whom, while all the rustling hall was
moved
With stormy indignation, stern uprose,
Sharp in retort, Sir Wilfrid of the Hills :

"Up, minstrels ! rally to the cry
Of outraged Love and Loyalty ;
Drive on this slanderer, all the throng,
And slay him in a storm of song.
O lecher ! shall I sing to thee
Of Love's untainted purity,
Of simple Faith, and tender Ruth,
Of Chastity and loyal Truth ?
As well sing Day's resplendent birth
To the blind mole that delves the earth,
As seek from gross hearts, sloughed in
sin,

Approval of pure Love to win !
Rather from thee I'll wring applause
For Love, the Avenger of his cause ;
Great Love, the chivalrous and strong,
To whose wide grasp all arms belong,
The lance, the battle-axe, and thong,
And eke the mastery in song.

"Love in my heart in all the pride
Of kingdom sits, and at his side,
To do the bidding of his lord,
Martial Valor holds the sword ;
He strikes for Honor, in the name
Of Virtue and fair woman's fame,
And bids me shed my dearest blood
To vengeance aspersed maidenhood :
Who soils her with licentious lie,
Him will I hew both hip and thigh,
Or in her cause will dearly die.
But thou, who in thy flashy song
Hast sought to do *all* Honor wrong,
Pass on, — I will not stoop my crest
To smite thee, nor lay lance in rest.

Thy brawling words, of riot born,
Are worthy only of my scorn ;
Thus at thy ears this song I fling,
Which in thy heart may plant its sting,
If ruined Conscience yet may wring
Remorse from such a guilty thing"

Scarce from his lips had parted the last
word
When, through the rapturous praise that
rang around,
Fierce from his seat, uprising, red with
rage,
With scornful lip, and contumelious
eye,
Tannhäuser clanged among the chords,
and sang :

"Floutest thou me, thou grisly Bard ?
Beware, lest I the just reward
On thy puffed insolence bestow,
And cleave thee with my falchion's
blow, —

When I in song have laid thee low.
I serve a Mistress mightier far
Than tinkling rill, or twinkling star,
And, as in my great Passion's glow
Thy passion-dream will melt like snow,
So I, Love's champion, at her call,
Will make thee shrink in field or hall,
And roll before me like a ball.

"Thou pauper-minded pedant dim,
Thou starveling-soul, lean heart and
grim,
Wouldst thou of Love the praises
hymn ?

Then let the gaunt hyena howl
In praise of Pity ; let the owl
Whoop the high glories of the noon,
And the hoarse chough becroak the
moon !

What canst thou prate of Love ? I
trow
She never graced thy open brow,
Nor flushed thy cheek, nor blossomed
fair

Upon thy parted lips ; nor e'er
Bade unpent passion wildly start
Through the forced portals of thy heart
To stream in triumph from thine eye,
Or else delicious death to die
On other lips, in sigh on sigh.

"Of Love, dispenser of all bliss,
Of Love, that crowns me with a kiss,
I here proclaim me champion-knight ;

And in her cause will dearly fight
With sword or song, in hall or plain,
And make the welkin ring again
With my fierce blows, or fervent strain.
But for such Love as thou canst feel,
Thou wisely hast abjured the steel,
Averse to lay thy hand on hilt,
Or in her honor ride a tilt :
Tame Love full tamely may'st thou
jilt,
And keep bone whole, and blood un-
spilt."

Out flushed Sir Wilfrid's weapon, and
outleapt

From every angry eye a thousand darts
Of unsheathed indignation, and a shout
Went up among the rafters, and the Hall
Swayed to and fro with tumult ; till the
voice

Of our liege lord roared "Peace !" and,
midst the clang
Of those who parted the incensed bards,
Sounded the harp of Wolfram. Calm
he stood,

He only calm of all the brawling crowd,
Which yet, as is its wont, contagion
caught

From neighboring nobleness, and a still-
ness fell
On all, and in the stillness soft he sang :

"O, from your sacred seats look down,
Angels and ministers of good ;
With sanctity our spirits crown,
And crush the vices of the blood !

"Open our hearts and set them free,
That heavenly light may enter in ;
And from this fair society
Obliterate the taint of sin.

"Thee, holy Love, I bid arise
Propitious to my votive lay ;
Shine thou upon our darkened eyes,
And lead us on the perfect way ;

"As, in the likeness of a Star,
Thou once arorest, guidance meet,
And led'st the sages from afar
To sit at holy Jesu's feet :

"So guide us, safe from Satan's snares,
Shine out, sweet Star, around, above,
Till we have scaled the mighty stairs,
And reached thy mansions, Heavenly
Love !"

Then, while great shouts went up of
 "Give the prize
 To Wolfram," leapt Tannhäuser from
 his seat,
 Fierce passion flaming from his lustrous
 orbs.
 And, as a sinner, desperate to add
 Depth to damnation by one latest crime,
 Dies boastful of his blasphemies — even
 so,
 Tannhäuser, conscious of the last disgrace
 Incur'd by such song in such company,
 Intent to vaunt the vastness of his sin,
 Thus, as in ecstasy, the song renewed :

"Goddess of Beauty, thee I hymn,
 And ever worship at thy shrine;
 Thou, who on mortal senses dim
 Descending, makest man divine.

"Who hath embraced thee on thy
 throne,
 And pastured on thy royal kiss,
 He, happy, knows, and knows alone,
 Love's full beatitude of bliss.

"Grim bards, of Love who nothing
 know,
 Now cease the unequal strife between
 us;
 Dare as I dared; to Hörsel go,
 And taste Love on the lips of Venus."

Uprose on every side and rustled down
 The affrighted dames; and, like the
 shuddering crowd
 Of party-colored leaves that flits before
 The gust of mid October, all at once
 A hundred jewelled shoulders, huddling,
 swept
 The hall, and slanted to the doors, and
 fled
 Before the storm, which now from shag-
 gy brows
 'Gan dart indignant lightnings. One
 alone
 Of all that awe-struck womanhood re-
 mained,
 The Princess. She, a purple harebell
 frail,
 That, swathed with whirlwind, to the
 bleak rock clings
 When half a forest falls before the blast,
 Rooted in utter wretchedness, and robed
 In mockery of splendid state, still sat;
 Still watched the waste that widened in
 her life;

And looked as one that in a nightmare
 hangs
 Upon an edge of horror, while from be-
 neath
 The creeping billow of calamity
 Sprays all his hair with cold; but hand
 or foot
 He may not move, because the formless
 Fear
 Gapes vast behind him. Grief within
 the void
 Of her stark eyes stood tearless: terror
 blanched
 Her countenance; and, over cloudy
 brows,
 The shaken diamond made a restless
 light,
 And trembled as the trembling star that
 hangs
 O'er Cassiopeia i' the windy north.

But now, from farthest end to end of all
 The sullen movement swarming under-
 neath,
 Uprolled deep hollow groans of growing
 wrath.
 And, where erewhile in rainbow crescent
 ranged
 The bright-eyed beauties of the court,
 fast thronged
 Faces inflamed with wrath, that rose and
 fell
 Tumultuously gathering from between
 Sharp-slanting lanes of steel. For every
 sword
 Flashed bare upon a sudden; and over
 these,
 Through the wide bursten doors the
 sinking sun
 Streamed lurid, lighting up that steely
 sea;
 Which, spotted white with foamy plumes,
 and ridged
 With glittering iron, clashed together
 and closed
 About Tannhäuser. Careless of the
 wrath
 Roused by his own rash song, the singer
 stood;
 Rapt in remembrance, or by fancy fooled
 A visionary Venus to pursue,
 With eyes that roamed in rapture the
 blank air.
 Until the sharp light of a hundred swords
 Smote on the fatal trance, and scattered
 all
 Its fervid fascination. Swift from sheath

Then leapt the glaive and glittered in
 his hand,
 And warily, with eye upon the watch,
 Receding to the mighty main support
 That, from the centre, propped the pon-
 derous roof,
 There, based against the pillar, fronting
 full
 His sudden foes, he rested resolute,
 Waiting assault.

But, hollow as a bell,
 That tolls for tempest from a storm-clad
 tower,
 Rang through the jangling shock of
 arms and men
 The loud voice of the Landgrave. Wide
 he swept
 The solemn sceptre, crying "Peace!"
 then said :

"Ye Lieges of Thuringia! whose just
 scorn,
 In judgment sitting on your righteous
 brows,
 Would seem to have forecast the dubious
 doom
 Awaiting our decision; ye have heard,
 Not wrung by torture from reluctant lips,
 Nor yet breathed forth with penitential
 pain
 In prayer for pardon, nay, but rather
 fledged
 And barbed with boastful insolence, such
 a crime
 Confest, as turns to burning coals of
 wrath
 The dewy eyes of Pity, nor to Hope
 One refuge spares, save such as rests
 perchance
 Within the bounteous bosom of the
 Church;
 Who, caring for the frailty of her flock,
 Holds mercy measureless as heaven is high.
 Shuddering, ourselves have listened to
 what breaks
 All bonds that bound to this unhappy
 man
 The covenanted courtesies of knights,
 The loyalties of lives by faith knit fast
 In spiritual communion. What behoves,
 After deliberation, to award
 In sentence, I to your high council leave,
 Undoubting. What may mitigate in
 aught
 The weight of this acknowledged infamy
 Weigh with due balance. What to
 justice steru

Mild-minded mercy yet may reconcile
 Search inly. Not with rashness, not in
 wrath,
 Invoking from the right hand of high God
 His dread irrevocable angel, Death;
 Yet not unwary how one spark of hell,
 If unextinguished, down the night of
 time
 May, like the wreckers' beacon from the
 reefs,
 Lure many to destruction: nor indeed
 Unmindful of the doom by fire or steel
 This realm's supreme tribunals have re-
 served
 For those that, dealing in damnation,
 hold
 Dark commerce with the common foe of
 man.
 Weigh you in all its circumstance this
 crime:
 And, worthily judging, though your
 judgment be
 As sharp as conscience, be it as con-
 science clear."

He ended: and a bitter interval
 Of silence o'er the solemn hall congealed,
 Like frost on a waste water, in a place
 Where rocks confront each other. Mar-
 shalled round,
 Black-bearded cheek and chin, with
 hand on heft
 Bent o'er the pommels of their planted
 swords
 A dreary cirque of faces ominous,
 The sullen barons on each other stared
 Significant. As, ere the storm descends
 Upon a Druid grove, the great trees
 stand
 Looking one way, and stiller than their
 wont,
 Until the thunder, rolling, frees the
 wind
 That rocks them altogether; even so,
 That savage circle of grim-gnarled men,
 Awhile in silence storing stormy thoughts,
 Stood breathless; till a murmur r'oved
 them all,
 And louder growing, and louder, burst
 at last
 To a universal irrepressible roar
 Of voices roaring, "Let him die the
 death!"
 And, in that roar released, a hundred
 swords
 Rushed forward, and in narrowing circle
 sloped

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!
 how low!

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 ap-
 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 sealed 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-winged 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 sprung, 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 eye 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 these 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 discovenanted 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,
Fealty 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
hé 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 intercessory 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 Aureorean 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'erflown 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 old,
 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.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

AGAMEMNON.
ÆGISTHUS.
ORESTES.
PHOICIAN.
HERALD.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
ELECTRA.
CASSANDRA.
CHORUS.

SCENE. — *Before the Palace of Agamemnon in Argos. Trophies, amongst which the shield of Agamemnon, on the wall.*

TIME. — *Morning. The action continues till Sunset.*

I. CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
MORNING at last! at last the lingering day
Creeps o'er the dewy side of yon dark world.
O dawning light already on the hills!
O universal earth, and air, and thou,
First freshness of the east, which art a breath
Breathed from the rapture of the gods,
who bless
Almost all other prayers on earth but mine!
Wherefore to me is solacing sleep denied?
And honorable rest, the right of all?
So that no medicine of the slumbrous shell,
Brimmed with divinest draughts of melody,
Nor silence under dreamful canopies,
Nor purple cushions of the lofty couch
May lull this fever for a little while.
Wherefore to me, — to me, of all mankind,
This retribution for a deed undone?
For many men outlive their sum of crimes,
And eat, and drink, and lift up thankful hands,
And take their rest securely in the dark.
Am I not innocent, — or more than these?
There is no blot of murder on my brow,
Nor any taint of blood upon my robe.

— It is the thought! it is the thought!
... and men
Judge us by acts!... as though one
thunder-clap
Let all Olympus out. Unquiet heart,
Ill fares it with thee since, ten sad years
past,
In one wild hour of unacquainted joy,
Thou didst set wide thy lonely bridal
doors
For a forbidden guest to enter in!
Last night, methought pale Helen, with
a frown,
Swept by me, murmuring, "I — such
as thou —
A Queen in Greece — weak-hearted, (woe
is me!)
Allured by love — did, in an evil hour,
Fall off from duty. Sorrow came. Be-
ware!"
And then, in sleep, there passed a bale-
ful band, —
The ghosts of all the slaughtered under
Troy,
From this side Styx, who cried, "For
such a crime
We fell from our fair palaces on earth,
And wander, starless, here. For such a
crime
A thousand ships were launched, and
tumbled down
The topless towers of Ilion, though they
rose
To magic music, in the time of Gods!"
With such fierce thoughts forevermore
at war,

Next not alone by hankering wild regrets,
But fears, yet worse, of that which soon
must come,
My heart waits armed, and from the
citadel
Of its high sorrow, sees far off dark
shapes,
And hears the footsteps of Necessity
Tread near, and nearer, hand in hand
with Woe.
Last night the flaming Herald warning
urged
Up all the hills, — small time to pause
and plan!
Counsel is weak: and much remains to
do,
That Agamemnon, and, if else remain
Of that enduring band who sailed for
Troy
Ten years ago (and some sailed Leth-
ward),
Find us not unprepared for their return.

But — hark! I hear the tread of nimble
feet
That sound this way. The rising town
is poured
About the festive altars of the Gods,
And from the heart of the great Agora,
Lets out its gladness for this last night's
news.
— Ah, so it is! Insidious, sly Report,
Sounding oblique, like Loxian oracles,
Tells double-tongued (and with the self-
same voice!)
To some new gladness, new despair to
some.

II. CHORUS AND CLYTEMNESTRA.

CHORUS.
O dearest Lady, daughter of Tyndarus!
With purple flowers we come, and offer-
ings —
Oil, and wine; and cakes of honey,
Soothing, unadulterate; tapestries
Woven by white Argive maidens,
God-descended (woven only
For the homeward feet of Heroes)
To celebrate this glad intelligence
Which last night the fiery courier
Brought us, posting up from Ilion,
Wheeled above the dusky circle
Of the hills from lighted Ida.
For now (Troy lying extinguish

Underneath a mighty Woe)
Our King and chief of men,
Agamemnon, returning
(And with him the hope of Argos),
Shall worship at the Tutelary Altars
Of their dear native land:
In the fane of ancient Herë,
Or the great Lycæan God;
Immortally crowned with reverend honor!
But tell us wherefore, O godlike woman,
Having a lofty trouble in your eye,
You walk alone with loosened tresses!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall the ship toss, and yet the helm
not heave?
Shall they drowse sitting at the lower
oars,
When those that hold the middle benches
wake?
He that is yet sole eye of all our state
Shining not here, shall ours be shut in
dreams?
But haply you (thrice happy!) prove
not this,
The curse of Queens, and worse than
widowed wives —
To wake, and hear, all night, the wan-
dering gnat
Sing through the silent chambers, while
Alarm,
In place of Slumber, by the haunted
couch
Stands sentinel; or when from coast to
coast
Wails the night-wandering wind, or
when o'er heaven
Boëtes hath unleashed his fiery hounds,
And Night her glittering camps hath
set, and lit
Her watch-fires through the silence of
the skies,
— To count ill chances in the dark, and
feel
Deserted pillows wet with tears, not
kisses,
Where kisses once fell.
But now Expectation
Stirs up such restless motions of the
blood
As suffer not my lids to harbor sleep.
Wherefore, O beloved companions,
I wake betimes, and wander up and down,
Looking toward the distant hill-tops,
From whence shall issue fair fulfilment
Of all our ten-years' hoping. For, be-
hold!

Troy being captived, we shall see once
more
Those whom we loved in days of old.
Yet some will come not from the Phry-
gian shore,
But there lie weltering to the surf and
wind;
Exiled from day, in darkness blind,
Or having crest unhappy Styx.
And some who left us full of vigorous
youth
Shall greet us now gray-headed men.
But if our eyes behold again
Our long-expected chief, in truth,
Fortune for us hath thrown the Treble
Six.

CHORUS.

By us, indeed, these things are also
wisht.
Wherefore, if now to this great son of
Atreus
(Having survived the woful walls of
Troy),
With us, once more, the Gods permit to
stand
A glad man by the pillars of his hearth,
Let his dear life henceforth be such
wherein
The Third Libation often shall be poured.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And let his place be numbered with the
Gods,
Who overlook the world's eternal walls,
Out of all reach of sad calamities.

CHORUS

It is not well, I think, that men should
set
Too near the Gods any of mortal kind:
But brave men are as Gods upon the
earth.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And whom Death daunts not, these are
truly brave.

CHORUS.

But more than all I reckon that man
blest,
Who, having sought Death nobly, finds
it not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Except he find it where he does not seek.

CHORUS.

You speak in riddles.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

For so Wisdom speaks.

But now do you with garlands wreath
the altars,
While I, within, the House prepare.
That so our King, at his returning,
With his golden armament,
Find us not unaware
Of the greatness of the event.

CHORUS.

Soon shall we see the faces that we loved.
Brother once more clasping brother,
As in the forgotten days:
And heroes, meeting one another
(Men by glorious toils approved)
Where once they roved,
Shall rove again the old familiar ways.
And they that from the distance come
Shall feed their hearts with tales of
home;

And tell the famous story of the war,
Rumored sometime from afar.
Now shall these again behold
The ancient Argos; and the grove
Long since trod

By the frenzied child of Inachus;
And the Forum, famed of old,
Of the wolf-destroying God;
And the opulent Mycenæ,
Home of the Pelopidae,

While they rove with those they love,
Holding pleasant talk with us.

O how gloriously they went,
That avenging armament!
As though Olympus in her womb
No longer did entomb

The greatness of a bygone world —
Gods and godlike men —
But cast them forth again

To frighten Troy: such storm was hurled
On her devoted towers

By the retributive Deity,
Whosoe'er he be

Of the Immortal Powers —

Or maddening Pan, if he chastise
His Shepherd's Phrygian treacheries;

Or vengeful Loxias; or Zeus,
Angered for the shame and abuse
Of a great man's hospitality.

As wide as is Olympus' span
Is the power of the high Gods;

Who, in their golden blest abodes
See all things, looking from the sky;
And Heaven is hard to pacify
For the wickedness of man.
My heart is filled with vague forebodings,
And oppress by unknown terrors
Lest, in the light of so much gladness,
Rise the shadow of ancient wrong.
O Dæmon of the double lineage
Of Tantalus; and the Pleisthenidæ,
Inexorable in thy mood,
On the venerable threshold
Of the ancient House of Pelops
Surely is enough of blood!
Wherefore does my heart misgive me?
Wherefore comes this doubt to grieve me?
O, may no Divine Envy
Follow home the Argive army,
Being vext for things ill-done
In wilful pride of stubborn war,
Long since, in the distant lands!
May no Immortal wrath pursue
Our dear King, the Light of Argos,
For the unhappy sacrifice
Of a daughter; working evil
In the dark heart of a woman;
Or some household treachery,
And a curse from kindred hands!

III. CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

[Re-entering from the house.]

To-morrow . . . ay, what if to-day? . . .
Well — then?

Why, if those tongues of flame, with
which last night

The land was eloquent, spoke certain
truth,

By this perchance through green Saronic
rocks

Those black ships glide . . . perchance . . .
well, what 's to fear?

'T were well to dare the worst — to know
the end —

Die soon, or live secure. What 's left to
add

To years of nights like those which I
have known?

Shall I shrink now to meet one little hour
Which I have dared to contemplate for
years?

By all the Gods, not so! The end
crowns all,

Which if we fail to seize, that 's also lost

Which went before: as who would lead
a host

Through desolate dry places, yet return
In sight of kingdoms, when the Gods are
roused

To mark the issue? . . . And yet, yet —
I think

Three nights ago there must have been
sea-storms.

The wind was wild among the Palace
towers:

Far off upon the hideous Element
I know it huddled up the petulant waves,
Whose shapeless and bewildering preci-
pices

Led to the belly of Orcus . . . O, to slip
Into dark Lethe from a dizzy plank,
When even the Gods are reeling on the
poop!

To drown at night, and have no sepul-
chre! —

That were too horrible! . . . yet it may
be

Some easy chance, that comes with little
pain,

Might rid me of the haunting of those
eyes,

And these wild thoughts . . . To know
he roved among

His old companions in the Happy Fields,
And ranged with heroes — I still inno-
cent!

Sleep would be natural then.
Yet will the old time

Never return! never those peaceful
hours!

Never that careless heart! and never-
more,

Ah, nevermore that laughter without
pain!

But I, that languish for repose, must
fly it,

Nor, save in daring, doing, taste of rest.
O, to have lost all these! To have bar-
tered calm,

And all the irrevocable wealth of youth,
And gained . . . what? But this change

had surely come,
Even were all things other than they are.

I blame myself o'ermuch, who should
blame time,

And life's inevitable loss, and fate,
And days grown lovelier in the retro-
spect.

We change: wherefore look back? The
path to safety

Lies forward . . . forward ever.

(In passing toward the house she recognizes the shield of Agamemnon, and pauses before it.)

Ha! old shield,
Hide up for shame that honest face of
thine.
Stare not so bluntly at us . . . O, this
man!
Why sticks the thought of him so in my
heart?
If I had loved him once — if for one
hour —
Then were there treason in this falling
off.
But never did I feel this wretched heart
Until it leaped beneath Ægisthus' eyes.
Who could have so forecounted all from
first?
From that flushed moment when his hand
in mine
Rested a thought too long, a touch too
kind,
To leave its pulse unwarmed . . . but I
remember
I dreamed sweet dreams that night, and
slept till dawn,
And woke with flutterings of a happy
thought,
And felt, not worse, but better . . . and
now . . . now?
When first a strange and novel tenderness
Quivered in these salt eyes, had one said
then
"A bead of dew may drag a deluge
down": —
In that first pensive pause, through
which I watched
Unwonted sadness on Ægisthus' brows,
Had some one whispered, "Ay, the
summer-cloud
Comes first: the tempest follows." —
Well, what's past
Is past. Perchance the worst's to follow
yet.
How thou art hackt, and hewn, and
bruised, old shield!
Was the whole edge of the war against
one man?
But one thrust more upon this dexter
ridge
Had quite cut through the double inmost
hide.
He must have stood to it well! O, he
was cast
I' the mould of Titans: a magnificent
man,
With head and shoulders like a God's.
He seemed

Too brimful of this merry vigorous life
To spill it all out at one stab of the sword.
Yet that had helped much ill . . . O
Destiny
Makes cowards or makes culprits of us
all!
Ah, had some Trojan weapon . . . Fool!
fool! fool!
Surely sometimes the unseen Eumenides
Do prompt our musing moods with
wicked hints,
And lash us for our crimes ere we com-
mit them.
Here, round this silver boss, he cut my
name,
Once — long ago: he cut it as he lay
Tired out with brawling pastimes —
prone — his limbs
At length diffused — his head droopt in
my lap —
His spear flung by: Electra by the hearth
Sat with the young Orestes on her knee;
While he, with an old broken sword,
hacked out
These crooked characters, and laughed
to see
(Sprawled from the unused strength of
his large hands)
The marks make CLYTEMNESTRA.
How he laughed!
Ægisthus' hands are smaller.
Yet I know
That matrons envied me my husband's
strength.
And I remember when he strode among
The Argive crowd he topped them by a
head,
And tall men stood wide-eyed to look at
him,
Where his great plumes went tossing up
and down
The brazen prores drawn out upon the
sand.
War on his front was graved, as on thy
disk,
Shield! which he left to keep his mem-
ory
Grand in men's mouths: that some re-
vered old man,
Winning to this the eyes of our hot
youth,
Might say, "T was here, and here —
this dent, and that —
On such, and such a field (which we re-
member)
That Agamemnon, in the great old time,
Held up the battle."

Now lie there, and rust!
Thy uses all have end. Thy master's
home
Should harbor none but friends.
O triple brass,
Iron, and oak! the blows of blundering
men
Clang idly on you: what fool's strength
is yours!
For, surely, not the adamantine tunic
Of Ares, nor whole shells of blazing
plates,
Nor ashen spear, nor all the cumbrous
coil
Of seven bulls' hides may guard the
strongest king
From one defenceless woman's quiet hate.
What noise was that? Where can
Ægisthus be?
Ægisthus! — my Ægisthus! . . . There
again!
Louder, and longer — from the Agora —
A mighty shout: and now I see i' the
air
A rolling dust the wind blows near.
Ægisthus!
O much I fear . . . this wild-willed race
of ours
Doth ever, like a young unbroken colt,
Chafe at the straightened bridle of our
state —
If they should find him lone, irresolute,
As is his wont . . . I know he lacks the
eye
And forehead wherewith crowned Ca-
pacity
Aves rash Rebellion back.
Again that shout!
Gods keep Ægisthus safe! myself will
front
This novel storm. How my heart leaps
to danger!
I have been so long a pilot on rough
seas,
And almost rudderless!
O yet 't is much
To feel a power, self-centred, self-assured,
Bridling a glorious danger! as when one
That knows the nature of the elements
Guides some frail plank with sublime
skill that wins
Progress from all obstruction; and, erect,
Looks bold and free down all the drip-
ping stars,
Hearing the hungry storm boom baffled,
by.

Ægisthus! . . . hark! . . . Ægisthus! . . .
there . . . Ægisthus!
I would to all the Gods I knew him safe!
Who comes this way, guiding his racing
feet
Safe to us, like a nimble charioteer?

IV. CLYTEMNESTRA. HERALD.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now, gloom-bird! are there prodigies
about?
What new ill-thing sent thee before?

HERALD.

O Queen —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Speak, if thou hast a voice! I listen.

HERALD.

O Queen —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hath an ox trodden on thy tongue? . . .
Speak then!

HERALD.

O Queen (for haste hath caught away my
breath),
The King is coming.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Say again — the King

Is coming —

HERALD.

Even now, the broad sea-fields
Grow white with flocks of sails, and
toward the west
The sloped horizon teems with rising
beaks.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The people know this?

HERALD.

Heard you not the noise?
For soon as this winged news had toucht
the gate
The whole land shouted in the sun.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

So soon!

The thought's outsped by the reality,
And halts agape . . . the King —

HERALD.

How she is moved.
A noble woman!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wherefore beat so fast,
Thou foolish heart? 'tis not thy master—

HERALD.

Truly
She looks all over Agamemnon's mate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Destiny, Destiny! The deed's half done.

HERALD.

She will not speak, save by that brooding eye
Whose light is language. Some great thought, I see,
Mounts up the royal chambers of her blood,
As a king mounts his palace; holds high pomp
In her Olympian bosom; gains her face,
Possesses all her noble glowing cheek
With sudden state; and gathers grandly up
Its slow majestic meanings in her eyes!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

So quick this sudden joy hath taken us,
I scarce can realize the sum of it.
You say the King comes here, — the King, my husband,
Whom we have waited for ten years, —
O joy!
Pardon our seeming roughness at the first.
Hope, that will often fawn upon despair
And flatter desperate chances, when the event
Falls at our feet, soon takes a querulous tone,
And jealous of that perfect joy she guards
(Lest the ambrosial fruit by some rude hand
Be stol'n away from her, and never tasted),
Barks like a lean watch-dog at all who come.
But now do you, with what good speed you may,
Make known this glad intelligence to all.

Ourselves, within, as best befits a wife
And woman, will prepare my husband's house.

Also, I pray you, summon to our side
Our cousin, Egisthus. We would speak with him.

We would that our own lips should be the first
To break these tidings to him; so obtaining

New joy by sharing his. And, for yourself,

Receive our gratitude. For this great news

Henceforth you hold our royal love in fee.
Our fairest fortunes from this day I date,
And to the House of Tantalus new honor.

HERALD.

She's gone! With what a majesty she filled
The whole of space! The statues of the Gods
Are not so godlike. She has Herë's eyes,
And looks immortal!

V. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*as she ascends the steps of the Palace*).

So . . . while on the verge
Of some wild purpose we hang dizzily,
Weighing the danger of the leap below
Against the danger of retreating steps,
Upon a sudden, some forecast event,
Issuing full-armed from Councils of the Gods,

Strides to us, plucks us by the hair, and hurls
Headlong pale conscience, to the abyss of crime.

Well — I shrink not. 'Tis but a leap in life.

There's fate in this. Why is he here so soon?

The sight of whose abhorred eyes will add

Whatever lacks of strength to this resolve.

Away with shame! I have had enough of it.

What's here for shame? . . . the weak against the strong?

And if the weak be victor? . . . what of that?

Tush! . . . there, — my soul is set to it.
What need

Of argument to justify an act
Necessity compels, and must absolve?
I have been at play with scruples — like a girl.

Now they are all flung by. I have talked with Crime

Too long to play the prude. These thoughts have been

Wild guests by night. Now I shall dare to do

That which I did not dare to think . . .
O, now

I know myself! Crime's easier than we dream.

CHORUS.

Upon the everlasting hills
Thronéd Justice works, and waits.

Between the shooting of a star,
That falls unseen on summer nights

Out of the bosom of the dark,
And the magnificent march of War,

Rolled from angry lands afar
Round some dooméd city-gates,

Nothing is to her unknown;

Nothing unseen.
Upon her hills she sits alone,

And in the balance of Eternity
Poises against the What-has-been

The weight of What-shall-be.
She sums the account of human ills.

The great world's hoarded wrongs and rights

Are in her treasures. She will mark,
With inward-searching eyes sublime,

The frauds of Time.
The empty future years she fills

Out of the past. All human wills
Sway to her on her reachless heights.

Wisdom she teaches men, with tears,
In the toilful school of years:

Climbing from event to event.
And, being patient, is content

To stretch her sightless arms about,
And find some human instrument,

From many sorrows to work out
Her doubtful, far accomplishment.

She the two Atrida sent
Upon Ilion: being intent

The heapt-up wrath of Heaven to move
Against the faithless Phrygian crime.

Them the Thunder-bird of Jove,

Swooping sudden from above,
Summoned to fates sublime.

She, being injured, for the sake
Of her, the often-wedded wife,
(Too loved, and too adoring!)

Many a brazen band did break
In many a breathless battle-strife;

Many a noble life did take;
Many a headlong agony,

Frenzied shout, and frantic cry,
For Greek and Trojan storing.

When, the spear in the onset being shivered,

The reeling ranks were rolled together
Like mad waves mingling in windy weather,

Dasht fearfully over and over each other.
And the plumes of Princes were tossed and thrust,

And dragged about in the shameful dust;

And the painful, panting breath
Came and went in the tug of death:

And the sinews were loosened, and the strong knees stricken:

And the eyes began to darken and thicken:

And the arm of the mighty and terrible quivered.

O Love! Love! Love! How terrible art thou!

How terrible!
O, what hast thou to do
With men of mortal years,
Who toil below,
And have enough of griefs for tears to flow?

O, range in higher spheres!
Hast thou, O hast thou, no diviner hues
To paint thy wings, but must transfuse
An Iris-light from tears?

For human hearts are all too weak to hold thee.

And how, O Love, shall human arms in-fold thee?

There is a seal of sorrow on thy brow.
There is a deadly fire in thy breath.
With life thou lurest, yet thou givest death.

O Love, the Gods are weak by reason of thee;

And many wars have been upon the earth.
Thou art the sweetest source of saltest sorrows.

Thy blest to-days bring such unblest to-morrows;
Thy softest hope makes saddest memory.
Thou hadst destruction in thee from the birth;
Incomprehensible!

O Love, thy brightest bridal garments
Are poisoned, like that robe of agonies
Which Deianira wove for Hercules,
And, being put on, turn presently to
cerements!

Thou art unconquered in the fight.
Thou rangest over land and sea.
O let the foolish nations be!
Keep thy divine desire
To upheave mountains or to kindle
fire

From the frore frost, and set the world
alight.

Why make thy red couch in the damask
cheek?

Or light thy torch at languid eyes?
Or lie entangled in soft sighs
On pensive lips that will not speak?
To sow the seeds of evil things
In the hearts of headstrong kings?
Preparing many a kindred strife
For the fearful future hour?
O leave the wretched race of man,
Whose days are but the dying seasons'
span;

Vex not his painful life!
Make thy immortal sport
In Heaven's high court,
And cope with Gods that are of equal
power.

VI. ELECTRA. CHORUS. CLY-
TEMNESTRA.

ELECTRA.

Now is at hand the hour of retribution.
For my father, at last returning,
In great power, being greatly injured,
Will destroy the base adulterer,
And efface the shameful Past.

CHORUS.

O child of the Godlike Agamemnon!
Leave vengeance to the power of Heaven;
Nor forestall with impious footsteps
The brazen tread of black Erinnys.

ELECTRA.

Is it, besotted with the adulterous sin,
Or, as with flattery pleasing present
power,
Or, being intimidated, you speak these
words?

CHORUS.

Nay, but desiring justice, like yourself.

ELECTRA.

Yet Justice oftentimes uses mortal means.

CHORUS.

But flings aside her tools when work is
done.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O dearest friends, inform me, went this
way
Ægisthus?

CHORUS.

Even now, hurrying hitherward
I see him walk, with irritated eyes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A reed may show which way the tem-
pest blows.

That face is pale, — those brows are dark
... ah!

VII. ÆGISTHUS. CLYTEMNES-
TRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

Agamemnon —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My husband . . . well?

ÆGISTHUS.

(Whom may the great Gods curse!)
Is scarce an hour hence.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then that hour's yet saved
From sorrow. Smile, Ægisthus —

ÆGISTHUS.

Hear me speak.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not as your later wont has been to
smile —

Quick, fierce, as though you scarce could
hurry out
The wild thing fast enough; for smil-
ing's sake,
As if to show you could smile, though
in fear
Of what might follow, — but as first
you smiled
Years, years ago, when some slow loving
thought
Stole down your face, and settled on your
lips,
As though a sunbeam halted on a rose,
And mixed with fragrance, light. Can
you smile still
Just so, Ægisthus?

ÆGISTHUS.

These are idle words,
And like the wanderings of some fevered
brain:
Extravagant phrases, void of import,
wild.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, no! you cannot smile so, more.
Nor I!

ÆGISTHUS.

Hark! in an hour the King —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hush! listen now, —
I hear, far down yon vale, a shepherd
piping

Hard by his milk-white flock. The
lazy things!

How quietly they sleep or feed among
The dry grass and the acanthus there!
... and he,

He hath flung his faun-skin by, and
white-ash stick,

You hear his hymn? Something of
Dryope.

Faunus, and Pan . . . an old wood tale,
no doubt!

It makes me think of songs when I was
young

I used to sing between the valleys there,
Or higher up among the red ash-berries,
Where the goats climb, and gaze. Do
you remember

That evening when we lingered all alone,
Below the city, and one yellow star

Shook o'er yon temple? . . . ah, and you
said then,

"Sweet, should this evening never
change to night,
But pause, and pause, and stay just so,
— you star
Still steadfast, and the moon behind the
hill,
Still rising, never risen, — would this
seem strange?
Or should we say, 'why halts the day
so late?'"
Do you remember?

ÆGISTHUS.

Woman! woman! this
Surpasses frenzy! Not a breath of time
Between us and the clutch of Destiny, —
Already sound there footsteps at our
heels,
Already comes a heat against our cheek,
Already fingers cold among our hair,
And you speak lightly thus, as though
the day
Lingered toward nuptial hours! . . .
awake! arouse!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I do wake . . . well, the King —

ÆGISTHUS.

Even while we speak
Draws near. And we —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Must meet him.

ÆGISTHUS.

Meet? ay . . . how?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

As mortals should meet fortune — calmly.

ÆGISTHUS.

Quick!

Consult! consult! Yet there is time to
choose
The path to follow.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I have chosen it

Long since.

ÆGISTHUS.

How? —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O, have we not had ten years
To ripen counsel, and mature resolve?
What's to add now?

ÆGISTHUS.

I comprehend you not.
The time is plucking at our sleeve.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There shall be time for deeds, and soon
enough,
Let that come when it may. And it
may be
Deeds must be done shall shut and shrivel
up
All quiet thoughts, and quite preclude
repose
To the end of time. Upon this awful
strait
And promontory of our mortal life
We stand between what was, and is not
yet.
The Gods allot to us a little space,
Before the contests which must soon
begin,
For calmer breathing. All before lies
dark,
And difficult, and perilous, and strange;
And all behind. . . . What if we take
one look,
One last long lingering look (before
Despair,
The shadow of failure, or remorse, which
often
Waits on success, can come 'twixt us
and it,
And darken all) at that which yet must
seem
Undimmed in the long retrospect of
years, —
The beautiful imperishable Past!
Were this not natural, being innocent
now
— At least of that which is the greater
crime?
To-night we shall not be so.

ÆGISTHUS.

Ah, to-night!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

All will be done which now the Gods
foresee.
The sun shines still.

ÆGISTHUS.

I oft have marked some day
Begin all gold in its flushed orient,
With splendid promise to the waiting
world,

And turn to blackness ere the sun ran
down.
So draws our love to its dark close.
To-night —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Shall bring our bridal, my Beloved!
For, either
Upon the melancholy shores of Death
(One shadow near the doors of Pluto)
greeted
By pale Proserpina, our steps shall be,
Or else, secure, in the great empty
palace
We shall sleep crowned — no noise to
startle us —
And Argos silent round us — all our
own!

ÆGISTHUS.

In truth I do not dare to think this
thing.
For all the Greeks will hate us.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What of that?

If that they do not harm us, — as who
shall?

ÆGISTHUS.

Moreover, though we triumph in the act
(And we may fail, and fall) we shall go
down
Covered with this reproach into the
tomb,
Hunted by all the red Eumenides;
And, in the end, the ghost of him we
slew,
Being beforehand there, will come be-
tween
Us and the awful Judges of the dead!
And no one on this earth will pray for
us;
And no hand will hang garlands on our
urns,
Either of man, or maid, or little child;
But we shall be dishonored.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O faint heart!

When this poor life of ours is done with
— all
Its foolish days put by — its bright and
dark —
Its praise and blame — rolled quite away
— gone o'er

Like some brief pageant — will it stir us
more,
Where we are gone, how men may hoot
or shout
After our footsteps, than the dust and
garlands
A few mad boys and girls fling in the
air
When a great host is passed, can cheer
or vex
The minds of men already out of sight
Toward other lands, with pean and with
pomp
Arrayed near vaster forces? For the
future,
We will smoke hecatombs, and build
new fanes,
And be you sure the gods deal leniently
With those who grapple for their life,
and pluck it
From the closed grip of Fate, albeit per-
chance
Some ugly smutch, some drop of blood
or so,
A spot here, there a streak, or stain of
gore,
Should in the contest fall to them, and
mar
That life's original whiteness.

ÆGISTHUS.

Tombs have tongues

That talk in Hades. Think it! Dare
we hope,
This done, to be more happy?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My Beloved,

We are not happy, — we may never be,
Perchance, again. Yet it is much to
think

We have been so: and even though we
must weep,
We have enjoyed.

The roses and the thorns

We have plucked together. We have
proved both. Say,

Was it not worth the bleeding hands
they left us

To have won such flowers? And if
't were possible

To keep them still, — keep even the
withered leaves,

Even the withered leaves are worth our
care.

We will not tamely give up life, — such
life!

What though the years before, like those
behind,
Be dark as clouds the thunder sits
among,
Tipt only here and there with a wan
gold
More bright for rains between? — 'tis
much, — 'tis more,
For we shall ever think "the sun's be-
hind.
The sun must shine before the day goes
down!"
Anything better than the long, long
night,
And that perpetual silence of the tomb!
'Tis not for happier hours, but life itself
Which may bring happier hours, we
strike at Fate.
Why, though from all the treasury of
the Past
'Tis but one solitary gem we save —
One kiss more such as we have kist, one
smile,
One more embrace, one night more such
as those
Which we have shared, how costly were
the prize,
How richly worth the attempt! Indeed,
I know,
When yet a child, in those dim pleasant
dreams
A girl will dream, perchance in twilight
hours,
Or under eve's first star (when we are
young
Happiness seems so possible, — so near!
One says, "it must go hard, but I shall
find it!")
Ofttimes I mused, — "My life shall be
my own,
To make it what I will." It is their
fault
(I thought) who miss the true delights.
I thought
Men might have saved themselves: they
flung away,
Too easily abasht, life's opening prom-
ise:
But all things will be different for me.
For I felt life so strong in me! indeed
I was so sure of my own power to love
And to enjoy, — I had so much to give,
I said, "be sure it must win something
back!"
Youth is so confident! And though I
saw
All women sad, — not only those I knew,

As Helen (whom from youth I knew,
nor ever
Divined that sad impenetrable smile
Which oft would darken through her
lustrous eyes,
As drawing slowly down o'er her cold
cheek
The yellow braids of odorous hair, she
turned
From Menelaus praising her, and
sighed, —
That was before he, flinging bitterly
down
The trampled parsley-crown and un-
drained goblet,
Cursed before all the Gods his sudden
shame
And young Hermione's deserted youth!)
Not only her, — but all whose lives I
learned,
Medea, Deianira, Ariadne,
And many others, — all weak, wronged,
opprest,
Or sick and sorrowful, as I am now, —
Yet in their fate I would not see my
own,
Nor grant allegiance to that general
law
From which a few, I knew a very few,
With whom it seemed I also might be
numbered,
Had yet escaped securely: — so exempt-
ing
From this world's desolation everywhere
One fate — my own!
Well, that was foolish! Now
I am not so exacting. As we move
Further and further down the path of
fate
To the sure tomb, we yield up, one by
one,
Our claims on Fortune, till with each
new year
We seek less and go further to obtain it.
'Tis the old tale, — aye, all of us must
learn it!
But yet I would not empty-handed
stand
Before the House of Hades. Still there's
life,
And hope with life; and much that may
be done.
Look up, O thou most dear and cherish'd
head!
We'll strive still, conquering; or, if
falling, fall
In sight of grand results.

EGISTHUS.
May these things be!
I know not. All is vague. I should be
strong
Even were you weak. 'Tis otherwise, —
I see
No path to safety sure. We have done
ill things.
Best let the past be past, lest new griefs
come.
Best we part now.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Part! what, to part from thee!
Never till death, — not in death even,
part!

EGISTHUS.
But one course now is left.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
And that is —

EGISTHUS. Flight.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Coward!

EGISTHUS.
I care not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Flight! I am a Queen.
A goddess once you said, — and why not
goddess?
Seeing the Gods are mightier than we
By so much more of courage. O, not I,
But you, are mad.

EGISTHUS.
Nay, wiser than I was.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
And you will leave me?

EGISTHUS.
Not if you will come.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
This was the Atlas of the world I built!

EGISTHUS.
Flight! . . . yes, I know not . . . some-
where . . . anywhere.
You come! . . . you come not! . . . well!
. . . no time to pause!

CLYTEMNESTRA.
And this is he — this he, the man I
loved!
And this is retribution! O my heart!
O Agamemnon, how art thou avenged!
And I have done so much for him! . . .
would do
So much! . . . a universe lies ruined
here.
Now by Apollo, be a man for once!
Be for once strong, or be forever weak!
If shame be dead, and honor be no more,
No more true faith, nor that which in
old time
Made us like Gods, sublime in our high
place,
Yet all surviving instincts warn from
flight.
Flight! — O, impossible! Even now
the steps
Of fate are at the threshold. Which
way fly?
For every avenue is barred by death.
Will these not scout your flying heels?
If now
They hate us powerful, will they love us
weak?
No land is safe; nor any neighboring
king
Will harbor Agamemnon's enemy.
Reflect on Troy; her ashes smoulder yet.

EGISTHUS.
Her words compel me with their awful
truth.
For so would vengeance hound and earth
us down.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
If I am weak to move you by that love
You swore long since — and sealed it
with false lips! —
Yet lives there nothing of the ambitious
will?
Of those proud plots, and dexterous
policy,
On which you builded such high hopes,
and swore
To rule this people Agamemnon rules;
Supplant him eminent on his own throne,
And push our power through Greece?

EGISTHUS.
The dream was great.
It was a dream. We dreamt it like a
king.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Ay, and shall so fulfil it — like a King!
Who talks of flight? For now, bethink
you well,
If to live on, the byword of a world,
Be any gain, even such flight offers not.
Will long-armed Vengeance never find
you out
When you have left the weapon in her
hands?
Be bold, and meet her! Who forestall
the bolts
Of heaven, the Gods deem worthy of the
Gods.
Success is made the measure of our acts.
And, think, Ægisthus, there has been
one thought
Before us in the intervals of years,
Between us ever in the long dark nights,
When, lying all awake, we heard the
wind.
Did you shrink then? or, only closer
drawing
Your lips to mine, your arms about my
neck,
Say, "Who would fear such chances,
when he saw
Behind them such a prize for him as
this?"
Do you shrink now? Dare you put all
this from you?
Revoke the promise of those years, and
say
This prospect meets you unprepared at
last?
Our motives are so mixt in their begin-
nings
And so confused, we recognize them not
Till they are grown to acts; but ne'er
were ours
So blindly wov'n, but what we both un-
tangled
Out of the intricacies of the heart
One purpose: — being found, best grap-
ple to it.
For to conceive ill deeds yet dare not do
them,
This is not virtue, but a twofold shame.
Between the culprit and the demigod
There's but one difference men regard —
success.
The weakly-wicked shall be doubly
damned!

EGISTHUS.
I am not weak . . . what will you? . . .
O, too weak

To bear this scorn! . . . She is a godlike fiend,
And hell and heaven seem meeting in her eyes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Those who on perilous ventures once embark
Should burn their ships, nor ever dream return.
Better, though all Olympus marched on us,
To die like fallen Titans, scorning Heaven,
Than live like slaves in scorn of our own selves!

ÆGISTHUS.

We wait then? Good! and dare this desperate chance.
And if we fall (as we, I think, must fall)
It is but some few sunny hours we lose,
Some few bright days. True! and a little less
Of life, or else of wrong a little more,
What's that? For one shade more or less the night
Will scarce seem darker or lighter, — the long night!
We'll fall together, if we fall; and if —
O, if we live! —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay, that was nobler thought.
Now you grow back into yourself, your true self.
My King! my chosen! my glad careless helpmate
In the old time! we shared its pleasant days
Royally, did we not? How brief they were!
Nor will I deem you less than what I know
You have it in you to become, for this
Strange freakish fear, — this passing brief alarm.
Do I not know the noble steed will start
Aside, scared lightly by a straw, a shadow,
A thorn-bush in the way, while the dull mule
Plods stupidly adown the dizziest paths?
And oft indeed, such trifles will dismay
The finest and most eager spirits, which yet

Daunt not a duller mind. O love, be sure

Whate'er betide, whether for well or ill,
Thy fate and mine are bound up in one skein;

Clotho must cut them both inseparate.
You dare not leave me — had you wings for flight!

You shall not leave me! You are mine, indeed,

(As I am yours!) by my strong right of grief.

Not death together, but together life!
Life — life with safe and honorable years,
And power to do with these that which we would!

— His lips compest — his eye dilates — he is saved!

O, when strong natures into frailer ones
Have struck deep root, if one exalt not both,

Both must drag down and perish!

ÆGISTHUS.

If we should live —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And we shall live.

ÆGISTHUS.

Yet . . . yet —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What! shrinking still?

I'll do the deed. Do not stand off from me.

ÆGISTHUS.

Terrible Spirit!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, not terrible,
Not to thee terrible — O say not so!
To thee I never have been anything
But a weak, passionate, unhappy woman,
(O woe is me!) and now you fear me —

ÆGISTHUS.

No,

But rather worship.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O my heart, my heart,
It sends up all its anguish in this cry —
Love me a little!

ÆGISTHUS.

What a spell she has
To sway the inmost courses of the soul!
My spirit is held up to such a height
I dare not breathe. How finely sits this sorrow
Upon her, like the garment of a God!
I cannot fathom her. Does the same birth
Bring forth the monster and the demi-god?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I will not doubt! All's lost, if love be lost, —

Peace, honor, innocence, — gone, gone! all gone!

And you, too — you, poor baffled crownless schemer,

Whose life my love makes royal, clothes in purple,

Establishes in state, without me, answer me,

What should you do but perish, as is fit?
O love, you dare not cease to love me now!

We have let the world go by us. We have trusted

To ourselves only: if we fail ourselves
What shall avail us now? Without my love

What rests for you but universal hate,
And Agamemnon's sword? Ah, no — you love me,

Must love me, better than you ever loved, —

Love me, I think, as you love life itself!
Ægisthus! Speak, Ægisthus!

ÆGISTHUS.

O great heart,
I am all yours. Do with me what you will.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O, if you love me, I have strength for both.

And you do love me still?

ÆGISTHUS.

O more, thrice more,
Thrice more than wert thou Aphrodite's self

Stept zoned and sandalled from the Olympian Feast

Or first revealed among the pink sea-foam.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whate'er I am, be sure that I am that
Which thou hast made me, — nothing of myself.

Once, all unheedful, careless of myself,
And wholly ignorant of what I was,

I grew up as a reed some wind will touch,

And wake to prophecy, — till then all mute,

And void of melody, — a foolish weed!
My soul was blind, and all my life was dark,

And all my heart pined with some ignorant want.

I moved about, a shadow in the house,
And felt unwedded though I was a wife;

And all the men and women which I saw

Were but as pictures painted on a wall:

To me they had not either heart, or brain,
Or lips, or language, — pictures! nothing more.

Then, suddenly, athwart those lonely hours

Which, day by day dreamed listlessly away,

Led to the dark and melancholy tomb,
Thy presence passed and touched me with a soul.

My life did but begin when I found thee.
O what a strength was hidden in this heart!

As, all unvalued, in its cold dark cave
Under snow hills, some rare and priceless gem

May sparkle and burn, so in this life of mine

Love lay shut up. You broke the rock away,

You lit upon the jewel that it hid,
You plucked it forth, — to wear it, my Beloved!

To set in the crown of thy dear life!
To embellish fortune! Cast it not away.

Now call me by the old familiar names:
Call me again your Queen, as once you used;

Your large-eyed Herè!

ÆGISTHUS.

O, you are a Queen
That should have none but Gods to rule over!

Make me immortal with one costly kiss!

VIII. CHORUS. ELECTRA. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGISTHUS.

CHORUS.

Io! Io! I hear the people shout.

ELECTRA.

See how these two do mutually confer,
Hatching new infamy. Now will he dare,
In his unbounded impudence, to meet
My father's eyes? The hour is nigh at hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O love, be bold! the hour is nigh at hand.

ELECTRA.

Laden with retribution, lingering slow.

ÆGISTHUS.

A time in travail with some great distress.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, rather safety for the rest of time.
O love! O hate!

ELECTRA.

O vengeance!

ÆGISTHUS.

O wild chance
If favoring fate —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Despair is more than fate.

CHORUS.

Io! Io! The King is on his march.

ÆGISTHUS.

Did you hear that?

ELECTRA.

The hour is nigh at hand!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Leave me to deal with these. I know
the arts
That guide the doubtful purpose of dis-
course
Through many windings to the appointed
goal.
I'll draw them on to such a frame of
mind

As best befits our purpose. You, mean-
while,
Scatter vague words among the other
crowd,
Lest the event, when it is due, fall foul
Of unpropitious natures.

ÆGISTHUS.

Do you fear
The helpless, blind ill-will of such a
crowd?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

He only fears mankind who knows them
not.

But him I praise not who despises them.
Whence come, Electra?

ELECTRA.

From my father's hearth
To meet him; for the hour is nigh at
hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

So do our hopes race hotly to one end,
(A noble rivalry!) as who shall first
Embrace this happy fortune. Tarry not.
We too will follow.

ELECTRA.

Justice, O be swift!

IX. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS.
SEMI-CHORUS. HERALD.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A froward child! She's gone. My
blood's in her.

Her father's, too, looks out of that proud
face.

She is too bold . . . ha, well — Ægis-
thus? . . . gone!

O fate! to be a woman! You great Gods,
Why did you fashion me in this soft
mould?

Give me these lengths of silky hair?
These hands

Too delicately dimpled! and these arms
Too white, too weak! yet leave the
man's heart in me,

To mar your masterpiece, — that I should
perish,

Who else had won renown among my
peers,

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Then Apollo, the king of
The lyre and the bow;
Who taught us to sing of
The deeds that we know, —
Deeds well done long ago.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Next, of all the Immortals,
Athenë's gray eyes;
Who sits throned in our portals,
Ever fair, ever wise.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Neither dare we despise
To extol the great Herë.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

And then,
As is due, shall our song
Be of those among men
Who were brave, who were strong,
Who endured.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Then, the wrong
Of the Phrygian: and Iliön's false sons:
And Scamander's wild wave
Through the bleak plain that runs.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Then, the death of the brave.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Last, of whom the Gods save
For new honors: of them none
So good or so great
As our chief Agamemnon
The crown of our State.

CLYTEMNESTRA. ®

O friends, true hearts, rejoice with me!
This day
Shall crown the hope of ten uncertain
years!

CHORUS.

For Agamemnon cannot be far off —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

He comes — and yet — O Heaven pre-
serve us all!
My heart is weak — there's One he brings
not back;

A man, with men, — perchance a god
with you,
Had you but better sexed me, you blind
Gods!

But, as for man, all things are fitting to
him.

He strikes his fellow 'mid the clanging
shields,

And leaps among the smoking walls, and
takes

Some long-haired virgin wailing at the
shrines,
Her brethren having fallen; and you
Gods

Commend him, crown him, grant him
ample days,

And dying honor, and an endless peace
Among the deep Elysian asphodels.

O fate, to be a woman! To be led
Dumb, like a poor mule, at a master's
will,

And be a slave, though bred in palaces,
And be a fool, though seated with the
wise, —

A poor and pitiful fool, as I am now,
Loving and hating my vain life away!

CHORUS.

These flowers — we plucked them
At morning, and took them
From bright bees that sucked them
And warm winds that shook them
'Neath blue hills that o'erlook them.

SEMI-CHORUS.

With the dew of the meadow
Our rosy warm fingers
Sparkle yet, and the shadow
Of the summer-cloud lingers
In the hair of us singers.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Ere these buds on our altars
Fade; ere the forked fire,
Fed with pure honey, falters
And fails: louder, higher
Raise the Pæan.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Draw nigher,
Stand closer! First praise we
The Father of all.
To him the song raise we.
Over Heaven's golden wall
Let it fall! Let it fall!

Who went with him; who will not
come again;
Whom we shall never see!—

CHORUS.

O Queen, for whom,
Lamenting thus, is your great heart cast
down?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The earliest loved—the early lost! my
child—

CHORUS.

Iphigenia?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

She—my child—

CHORUS.

—Alas!
That was a terrible necessity!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Was it necessity? O pardon, friends,
But in the dark, unsolaced solitude,
Wild thoughts come to me, and perplex
my heart.

This, which you call a dread necessity,
Was it a murder or a sacrifice?

CHORUS.

It was a God that did decree the death.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis through the heart the Gods do
speak to us.

High instincts are the oracles of heaven.
Did ever heart,—did ever God, before,
Suggest such foul infanticidal lie?

CHORUS.

Be comforted! The universal good
Needed this single, individual loss.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Can all men's good be helped by one
man's crime?

CHORUS.

He loosed the Greeks from Aulis by that
deed.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O casual argument! Who gave the
Greeks
Such bloody claim upon a virgin's life?

Shall the pure bleed to purge impurity?
A hundred Helens were not worth that
death!

What! had the manhood of combinéd
Greece,

Whose boast was in its untamed strength,
no help

Better than the spilt blood of one poor
girl?

Or, if it were of need that blood should
flow,

What God ordained him executioner?
Was it for him the armament was
planned?

For him that angry Greece was leagued
in war?

For him, or Menelaus, was this done?
Was the cause his, or Menelaus' cause?

Was he less sire than Menelaus was?
He, too, had children; did he murder
them?

O, was it manlike? was it human, even?

CHORUS.

Alas! alas! it was an evil thing.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O friends, if any one among you all,
If any be a mother, bear with me!
She was my earliest born, my best be-
loved.

The painful labor of that perilous birth
That gave her life did almost take my
own.

He had no pain. He did not bring her
forth.

How should he, therefore, love her as I
loved?

CHORUS.

Ai! ai! alas! Our tears run down
with yours.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O, who shall say with what delicious
tears,

With what ineffable tenderness, while
he

Took his blithe pastime on the windy
plain,

Among the ringing camps, and neighing
steeds,

First of his glad compeers, I sat apart,
Silent, within the solitary house:

Rocking the little child upon my breast;
And soothed its soft eyes into sleep with
song!

CHORUS.

Ai! ai! unhappy, sad, unchilded one!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Or, when I taught, from inarticulate
sounds,

The little, lisping lips, to breathe his
name.

Now they will never breathe that name
again!

CHORUS.

Alas! for Hades has not any hope,
Since Thracian women lopped the tune-
ful head

Of Orpheus, and Heracleus is no more.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Or, spread in prayer, the helpless, infant
hands,

That they, too, might invoke the Gods
for him.

Alas, who now invokes the Gods for her?
Unwedded, hapless, gone to glut the
womb

Of dark, untimely Orcus!

CHORUS.

Ai! alas!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I would have died, if that could be, for
her!

When life is half-way set to feeble eld,
And memory more than hope, and to
dim eyes

The gorgeous tapestry of existence shows
Mothed, fingered, frayed, and bare,
't were not so hard

To fling away this ravelled skein of
life,

Which else, a little later, Fate had cut.
And who would sorrow for the o'erblown

Sharp winter strews about its own bleak
thorns?

But, cropped before the time, to fall so
young!

And wither in the gloomy crown of Dis!
Never to look upon the blessed sun—

CHORUS.

Ai! ai! alonon! woe is me, this grief
Strikes pity paralyzed. All words are
weak!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And I had dreamed such splendid dreams
for her!

Who would not so for Agamemnon's
child?

For we had hoped that she, too, in her
time

Would be the mother of heroic men!

CHORUS.

There rises in my heart an awful fear,
Lest from these evils darker evils come;

For heaven exacts, for wrong, the utter-
most tear,

And death hath language after life is
dumb!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It works! it works!

CHORUS.

Look, some one comes this way.

HERALD.

O Honor of the House of Tantalus!
The king's wheels echo in the brazen
gates.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Our heart is half-way there, to welcome
him.

How looks he? Well? And all our
long-lost friends—

Their faces grow before me! Lead the
way

Where we may meet them. All our
haste seems slow.

CHORUS.

Would that he brought his dead child
back with him!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now let him come. The mischief works
apace!

X. CHORUS.

CHORUS.

The winds were lulled in Aulis; and the
day,

Down-sloped, was loitering to the lazy
west.

There was no motion of the glassy bay,

But all things by a heavy light oppress.
Windless, cut off from the destined way, —
Dark shrouds, distinct against the lurid lull, —
Dark ropes hung useless, loose, from mast to hull, —
The black ships lay abreast.
Not any cloud would cross the brooding skies.
The distant sea boomed faintly. Nothing more.
They walked about upon the yellow shore;
Or, lying listless, huddled groups supine,
With faces turned toward the flat sea-spine,
They planned the Phrygian battle o'er and o'er;
Till each grew sullen, and would talk no more,
But sat, dumb-dreaming. Then would some one rise,
And look toward the hollow hulls, with haggard, hopeless eyes —
Wild eyes — and, crowding round, yet wilder eyes —
And gaping, languid lips;
And everywhere that men could see,
About the black, black ships,
Was nothing but the deep-red sea;
The deep-red shore;
The deep-red skies;
The deep-red silence, thick with thirsty sighs;
And daylight, dying slowly. Nothing more.
The tall masts stood upright;
And not a sail above the burnished prores;
The languid sea, like one outworn quite,
Shrank, dying inward into hollow shores,
And breathless harbors, under sandy bars;
And, one by one, down tracts of quivering blue,
The singed and sultry stars
Looked from the inmost heaven, far, faint, and few,
While, all below, the sick and steaming brine
The spilled-out sunset did incarnadine.
At last one broke the silence; and a word
Was lisped and buzzed about, from mouth to mouth;

Pale faces grew more pale; wild whispers stirred;
And men, with moody, murmuring lips, conferred
In ominous tones, from shaggy beards uncouth:
As though some wind had broken from the blurred
And blazing prison of the stagnant drouth,
And stirred the salt sea in the stifled south.
The long-robed priests stood round; and, in the gloom,
Under black brows, their bright and greedy eyes
Shone deathfully; there was a sound of sighs,
Thick-sobbed from choking throats among the crowd,
That, whispering, gathered close, with dark heads bowed;
But no man lifted up his voice aloud,
For heavy hung o'er all the helpless sense of doom.
Then, after solemn prayer,
The father bade the attendants, tenderly
Lift her upon the lurid altar-stone.
There was no hope in any face; each eye
Swam tearful, that her own did gaze upon.
They bound her helpless hands with mournful care;
And looped up her long hair,
That hung about her, like an amber shower,
Mixed with the saffron robe, and falling lower,
Down from her bare and cold white shoulder flung.
Upon the heaving breast the pale cheek hung,
Suffused with that wild light that rolled among
The pausing crowd, out of the crimson drouth.
They held hot hands upon her pleading mouth;
And stifled on faint lips the natural cry.
Back from the altar-stone,
Slow-moving in his fixed place
A little space,
The speechless father turned. No word was said.
He wrapped his mantle close about his face,

In his dumb grief, without a moan.
The lopping axe was lifted overhead.
Then, suddenly,
There sounded a strange motion of the sea,
Booming far inland; and above the east
A ragged cloud rose slowly, and increased.
Not one line in the horoscope of Time
Is perfect. O, what falling off is this,
When some grand soul; that else had been sublime,
Falls unawares amiss,
And stoops its crested strength to sudden crime!

So gracious a thing is it, and sweet,
In life's clear centre one true man to see,
That holds strong nature in a wise control;
Throbbing out, all round, the heat
Of a large and liberal soul.
No shadow, simulating life,
But pulses warm with human nature,
In a soul of godlike stature;
Heart and brain, all rich and rife
With noble instincts; strong to meet
Time calmly, in his purposed place.
Sound through and through, and all complete;
Exalting what is low and base;
Enlarging what is narrow and small;
He stamps his character on all,
And with his grand identity
Fills up Creation's eye.
He will not dream the aimless years away
In blank delay,
But makes eternity of to-day,
And reaps the full-earned time. For him
Nature her affluent horn doth brim,
To strew with fruit and flowers his way —
Fruits ripe and flowers gay.

The clear soul in his earnest eyes
Looks through and through all plaited lies,
Time shall not rob him of his youth,
Nor narrow his large sympathies.
He is not true, he is a truth,
And such a truth as never dies.
Who knows his nature, feels his right,
And, toiling, toils for his delight;
Not as slaves toil: where'er he goes,
The desert blossoms with the rose.
He trusts himself in scorn of doubt,
And lets orbéd purpose widen out.
The world works with him; all men see

Some part of them fulfilled in him;
His memory never shall grow dim;
He holds the heaven and earth in fee,
Not following that, fulfilling this,
He is immortal, for he is!

O weep! weep! weep!
Weep for the young that die;
As it were pale flowers that wither under
The smiting sun, and fall asunder,
Before the dews on the grass are dry,
Or the tender twilight is out of the sky,
Or the lilies have fallen asleep;
Or ships by a wanton wind cut short
Are wrecked in sight of the placid port
Sinking strangely, and suddenly —
Sadly, and strangely, and suddenly —
Into the black Plutonian deep.
O weep! weep! weep!
Weep, and bow the head,
For those whose sun is set at noon;
Whose night is dark, without a moon;
Whose aim of life is sped
Beyond pursuing woes,
And the arrow of angry foes,
To the darkness that no man knows —
The darkness among the dead.
Let us mourn, and bow the head,
And lift up the voice, and weep
For the early dead!
For the early dead we may bow the head,
And strike the breast, and weep;
But, O, what shall be said
For the living sorrow?
For the living sorrow our grief —
Dumb grief — draws no relief
From tears, nor yet may borrow
Solace from sound or speech; —
For the living sorrow
That heaps to-morrow upon to-morrow
In piled-up pain, beyond Hope's reach!
It is well that we mourn for the early dead,
Strike the breast, and bow the head;
For the sorrow for these may be sung,
or said,
And the chaplets be woven for the fallen head,
And the urns to the stately tombs be led,
And Love from their memory may be fed,
And song may ennoble the anguish;
But, O, for the living sorrow, —
For the living sorrow what hopes remain?
For the prisoned, pining, passionate pain,
That is doomed forever to languish,

And to languish forever in vain,
For the want of the words that may be-
stead

The hunger that out of loss is bred.
O friends, for the living sorrow —
For the living sorrow —
For the living sorrow what shall be said ?

XI. A PHOCIAN. CHORUS. SEMI-
CHORUS.

PHOCIAN.

O noble strangers, if indeed you be
Such as you seem, of Argos, and the land
That the unconquer'd Agamemnon rules,
Tell me is this the palace, these the roofs
Of the Atridae, famed in ancient song ?

CHORUS.

Not without truth you name the neigh-
borhood,
Standing before the threshold, and the
doors

Of Pelops, and upon the Argive soil.
That which you see above the Agora
Is the old fane of the Lycean God,
And this the house of Agamemnon's
queen.

But whence art thou ? For if thy dusty
locks,

And those soiled sandals show with
aught of truth,

Thou shouldst be come from far.

PHOCIAN.

And am so, friends,
But, by Heaven's favor, here my jour-
ney ends.

CHORUS.

Whence, then, thy way ?

PHOCIAN.

From Phocis ; charged with gifts
For Agamemnon, and with messages
From Strophius, and the sister of your
king.

Our watchmen saw the beacon on the
hills,

And leaped for joy. Say, is the king
yet come ?

CHORUS.

He comes this way ; stand by, I hear
them shout ;

Here shall you meet him, as he mounts
the hill.

PHOCIAN.

Now blest be all the Gods, from Father
Zeus,

Who reigns o'er windy Cæta, far away,
To King Apollo, with the golden horns.

CHORUS.

Look how they cling about him ! Far
and near

The town breaks loose, and follows after,
Crowding up the ringing ways.

The boy forgets to watch the steer ;

The grazing steer forgets to graze ;

The shepherd leaves the herd ;

The priest will leave the fane ;

The deep heart of the land is stirred

To sunny tears, and tearful laughter,

To look into his face again.

Burst, burst the brazen gates !

Throw open the hearths, and follow !

Let the shouts of the youths go up to
Apollo,

Lord of the graceful quiver :

Till the tingling sky dilates —

Dilates, and palpitates ;

And, Pæan ! Pæan ! the virgins sing ;

Pæan ! Pæan ! the king ! the king !

Laden with spoils from Phrygia !

Io ! Io ! Io ! they sing

Till the pillars of Olympus ring :

Io ! to Queen Ortygia,

Whose double torch shall burn forever !

But thou, O Lord of the graceful quiver,

Bid, bid thy Pythian splendor halt,

Where'er he beams, surpassing sight ;

Or on some ocean isthmus bent,

Or wheeled from the dark continent,

Half-way down Heaven's rosy vault,

Toward the dewy cone of night.

Let not the breathless air grow dim,

Until the whole land look at him !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Stand back !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Will he come this way ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

No ; by us.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Gods, what a crowd !

SEMI-CHORUS.

How firm the old men walk !

SEMI-CHORUS.

There goes the king. I know him by
his beard.

SEMI-CHORUS.

And I, too, by the manner of his gait.
That Godlike spirit lifts him from the
earth.

SEMI-CHORUS.

How gray he looks !

SEMI-CHORUS.

His cheek is seamed with scars.

SEMI-CHORUS.

What a bull's front !

SEMI-CHORUS.

He stands up like a tower.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Ay, like some moving tower of arméd
men,
That carries conquest under city-walls.

SEMI-CHORUS.

He lifts his sublime head, and in his
port
Bears eminent authority.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Behold,
His spear shows like the spindle of a
Fate !

SEMI-CHORUS.

O, what an arm !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Most fit for such a sword ;
Look at that sword.

SEMI-CHORUS.

What shoulders !

SEMI-CHORUS.

What a throat !

SEMI-CHORUS.

What are these bearing ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Urns.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Alas ! alas !

SEMI-CHORUS.

O friends, look here ! how are the mighty
men

Shrunk up into a little vase of earth,
A child might lift. Sheathed each in
brazen plates,

They went so heavy, they come back so
light,

Sheathed, each one, in the brazen urn of
death !

SEMI-CHORUS.

With what a stateliness he moves along !

SEMI-CHORUS.

See, how they touch his skirt, and grasp
his hand !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Is that the queen ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Ay, how she matches him !
With what grand eyes she looks up, full
in his !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Say, what are these ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

O Phrygians ! how they walk !
The only sad men in the crowd, I think.

SEMI-CHORUS.

But who is this, that with such scornful
brows,

And looks averted, walks among the
rest ?

SEMI-CHORUS.

I know not, but some Phrygian woman,
sure.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Her heavy-fallen hair down her white
neck

(A dying sunbeam tangled in each tress)
All its neglected beauty pours one way.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Her looks bend ever on the alien ground,
As though the stones of Troy were in
her path.
And in the pained paleness of her brow
Sorrow hath made a regal tenement.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Here comes Electra; young Orestes, too;
See how he emulates his father's stride!

SEMI-CHORUS.

Look at Ægisthus, where he walks apart,
And bites his lip.

SEMI-CHORUS.

I oft have seen him so
When something chafes him in his bitter
moods.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Peace, here they come!

CHORUS.

Io! Io! The King!

XII. AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA,
ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA,
ORESTES, CASSANDRA, a Phocian,
Chorus, Semi-Chorus, and others in the
procession.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O blazing sun, that in thy skye tower
Pausest to see one kingly as thyself,
Lend all thy brightest beams to light his
head,
And gild our gladness! Friends, behold
the King!
Now hath Ætolian Jove, the arbiter
Of conquests, well disposed the issues
here;
For every night that brought not news
from Troy
Heaped fear on fear, as waves succeed to
waves,
When Northern blasts blow white the
Cretan main,—
Knowing that thou, far off, from toil to
toil
Climbedst, uncertain. Unto such an one
His children, and young offspring of the
house
Are as a field, which he, the husbandman,

Owning far off, does only look upon
At seedtime once, nor then till harvest
comes;
And his sad wife must wet with nightly
tears
Unsolaced pillows, fearing for his fate.
To these how welcome, then, his glad
return,
When he, as thou, comes heavy with the
weight
Of great achievements, and the spoils of
time.

AGAMEMNON.

Enough! enough! we weigh you at full
worth,
And hold you dear, whose gladness equals
yours;
But women ever err by over-talk.
Silence to women, as the beard to men,
Brings honor; and plain truth is hurt,
not helped
By many words. To each his separate
sphere
The Gods allot. To me the sounding
camp,
Steeds, and the oaken spear; to you the
hearth,
Children, and household duties of the
loom.
'Tis man's to win an honorable name;
Woman's to keep it honorable still.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

(O beast! O weakness of this woman-
hood!
To let these pompous male things strut
in our eyes,
And in their lordship lap themselves se-
cure,
Because the lots in life are fallen to them.
Am I less heart and head, less blood and
brain,
Less force and feeling, pulse and passion
—I—
Than this self-worshipper—a lie all
through?)
Forgive if joy too long unloose our lips,
Silent so long: your words fall on my
soul
As rain on thirsty lands, that feeds the
dearth
With blessed nourishment. My whole
heart hears.
You speaking thus, I would be silent
ever.

AGAMEMNON.

Who is this man!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A Phocian, by his look.

PHOCIAN.

O King, from Strophius, and your sister's
court,
Despatched with this sealed tablet, and
with gifts,
Though both express, so says my royal
Head,
But poorly the rich welcome they intend.
Will you see this?—and these?

AGAMEMNON.

Anon! anon!
We'll look at them within. O child,
thine eyes
Look warmer welcome than all words
express.
Thou art mine own child by that royal
brow.
Nature hath marked thee mine.

ELECTRA.

O Father!

AGAMEMNON.

Come!
And our Orestes! He is nobly grown;
He shall do great deeds when our own
are dim.
So shall men come to say "the father's
sword
In the son's hands hath hewn out nobler
fame."
Think of it, little one! where is our
cousin?

ÆGISTHUS.

Here! And the keys of the Acropolis?

AGAMEMNON.

O well! this dust and heat are over-
much.
And, cousin, you look pale. Anon!
anon!
Speak to us by and by. Let business
wait.
Is our house ordered? we will take the
bath.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Will you within? where all is ordered fair
Befitting state: cool chambers, marble-
floored

Or piled with blazing carpets, scented
rare
With the sweet spirit of each odorous gum
In dim, delicious, amorous mists about
The purple-paven, silver-sided bath,
Deep, flashing, pure.

AGAMEMNON.

Look to our captives then.
I charge you chiefly with this woman
here,
Cassandra, the mad prophetess of Troy.
See that you chafe her not in her wild
moods.

XIII. CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGIS-
THUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Linger not!

ÆGISTHUS.

What! you will to-day—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

—This hour.

ÆGISTHUS.

O, if some chance mar all!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

We'll make chance sure.
Doubt is the doomsman of self-judged
disgrace:
But every chance brings safety to self-
help.

ÆGISTHUS.

Ay, but the means—the time—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

—Fulfil themselves.
O most irresolute heart! is this a time
When through the awful pause of life,
distinct,
The sounding shears of Fate slope near,
to stand
Meek, like tame wethers, and be shorn?
How say you,
The blithe wind up, and the broad sea
before him,
Who would crouch all day long beside
the mast
Counting the surges beat his idle helm,
Because between him and the golden isles

The shadow of a passing storm might hang?
Danger, being pregnant, doth beget resolve.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou wert not born to fail. Give me thy hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Take it.

ÆGISTHUS.

It does not tremble.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O be strong!
The future hangs upon the die we cast:
Fortune plays high for us—

ÆGISTHUS.

Gods grant she win.

XIV. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS.
CASSANDRA.

CHORUS.

O thou that dost with globéd glory
Sweep the dark world at noon of night,
Or among snowy summits, wild and hoary,

Or through the mighty silences
Of immemorial seas,
With all the stars behind thee flying white,

O take with thee, where'er
Thou wanderest, ancient Care,
And hide her in some interlunar haunt;
Where but the wild bird's chaunt
At night, through rocky ridges gaunt,
Or moanings of some homeless sea may find her

There, Goddess, bar, and bind her;
Where she may pine, but wander not;
Loathe her haunts, but leave them not;
Wail and rave to the wind and wave
That hear, yet understand her not;
And curse her chains, yet cleave them not;

And hate her lot, yet help it not.
Or let her rove with Gods undone
Who dwell below the setting sun,
And the sad western hours
That burn in fiery bowers;
Or in Amphitrité's grot
Where the vexéd tides unite,
And the spent wind, howling, breaks

O'er sullen oceans out of sight
Among sea-snakes, that the white moon wakes

Till they shake themselves into diamond flakes,

Coil and twine in the glittering brine
And swing themselves in the long moon-shine;

Or by wild shores hoarsely rage,
And moan, and vent her spite,
In some inhospitable harborage
Of Thracian waters, white.

There let her grieve, and grieve, and hold her breath

Until she hate herself to death.

I seem with rapture lifted higher,
Like one in mystic trance.

O Pan! Pan! Pan!

First friend of man,
And founder of Heaven's choir,
Come thou from old Cyllené, and inspire
The Gnosian, and Nyssean dance!

Come thou, too, Delian king,
From the blue Ægean sea,
And Mycone's yellow coast:

Give my spirit such a wing
As there the foolish Icarus lost,
That she may soar above the cope

Of this high pinnacle of gladness,
And dizzy height of hope;
And there, beyond all reach of sadness,

May tune my lips to sing
Great Pæans, full and free,
Till the whole world ring

With such heart-melting madness
As bards are taught by thee!

SEMI-CHORUS.

Look to the sad Cassandra, how she stands!

SEMI-CHORUS.

She turns not from the wringing of her hands.

SEMI-CHORUS.

What is she doing?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Look, her lips are moved.

SEMI-CHORUS.

And yet their motion shapes not any sound.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Speak to her.

SEMI-CHORUS.

She will heed not.

SEMI-CHORUS.

But yet speak.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Unhappy woman, cease a little while
From mourning. Recognize the work
of Heaven.

Troy smoulders. Think not of it. Let
the past

Be buried in the past. Tears mend it
not.

Fate may be kindlier, yet, than she appears.

SEMI-CHORUS.

She does not answer.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Call to her again.

SEMI-CHORUS.

O break this scornful silence! Hear us
speak.

We would console you.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Look, how she is moved!

SEMI-CHORUS.

O speak! the heart's hurt oft is helped
by words.

CASSANDRA.

O Itys! Itys! Itys!

SEMI-CHORUS.

What a shriek!

She takes the language of the nightingale,
Unhappy bird! that mourns her perished form,

And leans her breast against a thorn, all
night.

CASSANDRA.

The bull is in the shambles.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Listen, friends!

She mutters something to herself.

CASSANDRA.

Alas!

Did any name Apollo? woe is me!

SEMI-CHORUS.

She calls upon the God.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Unhappy one,

What sorrow strikes thee with bewilderment?

SEMI-CHORUS.

Now she is mute again.

CHORUS.

A Stygian cold
Creeps through my limbs, and loosens
every joint.

The hot blood freezes in its arteries,
And stagnates round the region of the
heart.

A cloud comes up from sooty Acheron,
And clothes mine eyelids
With infernal night.

My hair stands up.
What supernatural awe
Shoots, shrivelling through me,
To the marrow and bone?

O dread and wise Prophetic Powers,
Whose strong-compelling law
Doth hold in awe

The laboring hours,
Your intervention I invoke,
My soul from this wild doubt to save;

Whether you have
Your dwelling in some dark, oracular
cave,

Or solemn, sacred oak;
Or in Dodona's ancient, honored beech,
Whose mystic boughs above

Sat the wise dove;
Or if the tuneful voice of old
Awake in Delos, to unfold

Dark wisdom in ambiguous speech,
Upon the verge of strange despair
My heart grows dizzy. Now I seem

Like one that dreams some ghastly
dream,
And cannot cast away his care,

But harrows all the haggard air
With his hard breath. Above, beneath,

The empty silence seems to teem
With apprehension. O declare
What hidden thing doth Fate prepare,
What hidden, horrible thing doth Fate
prepare?

For of some hidden grief my heart seems
half aware.

XV. CLYTEMNESTRA. CASSANDRA. CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

One blow makes all sure. Ay, but then,
— beyond?
I cannot trammel up the future thus,
And so forecast the time, as with one
blow
To break the hundred Hydra-heads of
Chance.
Beyond — beyond I dare not look, for
who,
If first he scanned the space, would leap
the gulf?
One blow secures the moment. O, but
he . . .
Ay, there it lies! I dread lest my love,
being
So much the stronger, scare his own to
death;
As what they comprehend not, men ab-
hor.
He has a wavering nature, easily
Unpoised; and trembling ever on ex-
tremes.
O, what if terror outweigh love, and
love,
Having defiled his countenance, take
part
Against himself, self-loathed, a fallen
God?
Ah, his was never yet the loving soul,
But rather that which lets itself be loved;
As some loose lily leans upon a lake,
Letting the lymph reflect it, as it will,
Still idly swayed, whichever way the
stream
Stirs the green tangles of the water moss.
The flower of his love never bloomed
upright,
But a sweet parasite, that loved to lean
On stronger natures, winning strength
from them, —
Not such a flower as whose delirious cup
Maddens the bee, and never can give
forth
Enough of fragrance, yet is ever sweet.
Yet which is sweetest, — to receive or
give?
Sweet to receive, and sweet to give, in
love!
When one is never sated that receives,
Nor ever all exhausted one that gives.
I think I love him more, that I resem-
ble
So little aught that pleases me in him.

Perchance, if I dared question this dark
heart,
'T is not for him, but for myself in him,
For that which is my softer self in him, —
I have done this, and this, — and shall
do more:
Hoped, wept, dared wildly, and will
overcome!
Does he not need me? It is sweet to
think
That I am all to him, whate'er I be
To others; and to one, — little, I know!
But to him, all things, — sceptre, sword,
and crown.
For who would live, but to be loved by
some one?
Be fair, but to give beauty to another?
Or wise, but to instruct some sweet de-
sire?
Or strong, but that thereby love may re-
joice?
Or who for crime's sake would be crimi-
nal?
And yet for love's sake would not dare
wild deeds?
A mutual necessity, one fear,
One hope, and the strange posture of the
time
Unite us now; — but this need over-
past,
O, if, 'twixt his embrace and mine,
there rise
The reflex of a murdered head! and he,
Remembering the crime, remember not
It was for him that I am criminal,
But rather hate me for the part he
took —
Against his soul, as he will say — in
this? —
I will not think it. Upon this wild
venture,
Freighted with love's last wealthiest
merchandise,
My heart sets forth. To-morrow I shall
wake
A beggar, as it may be, or thrice rich.
As one who plucks his last gem from his
crown
(Some pearl for which, in youth, he bar-
tered states)
And, sacrificing with an anxious heart,
Toward night puts seaward in a little
bark
For lands reported far beyond the sun,
Trusting to win back kingdoms, or there
drown —
So I — and with like perilous endeavor!

O, but I think I could implore the Gods
More fervently than ever, in my youth,
I prayed that help of Heaven I needed
not,
And lifted innocent hands to their great
sky.
So much to lose . . . so much to gain
. . . so much . . .
I dare not think how . . .
Ha, the Phrygian slave!
He dares to bring his mistress to the
hearth!
She looks unhappy. I will speak to her.
Perchance her hatred may approve my
own,
And help me in the work I am about.
'T were well to sound her.
Be not so cast down,
Unhappy stranger! Fear no jealous
hand.
In sorrow I, too, am not all untried.
Our fortunes are not so dissimilar,
Slaves both — and of one master.
Nay, approach.
Is my voice harsh in its appeal to thee?
If so, believe me, it belies my heart.
A woman speaks to thee.
What, silent still?
O, look not on me with such sullen eyes,
There is no accusation in my own.
Rather on him that brought thee, than
on thee,
Our scorn is settled. I would help thee.
Come!
Mute still?
I know that shame is ever dumb,
And ever weak; but here is no re-
proach.
Listen! Thy fate is given to thy hands.
Art thou a woman, and dost scorn con-
tempt?
Art thou a captive, and dost loathe
these bonds?
Art thou courageous, as men call thy
race?
Or, helpless art thou, and wouldst over-
come?
If so, — look up! For there is hope
for thee.
Give me thy hand —
CASSANDRA.
Pah! there is blood on it!
CLYTEMNESTRA.
What is she raving of?

CASSANDRA.

The place, from old,
Is evil.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay, there is a sickness, here,
That needs the knife.

CASSANDRA.

O, horrible! blood! blood!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I see you are a Phrygian to the bone!
Coward and slave! be so forevermore!

CASSANDRA.

Apollo! O Apollo! O blood! blood!
The whole place swims with it! The
slippery steps
Steam with the fumes! The rank air
smells of blood!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Heed her not! for she knows not what
she says.
This is some falling sickness of the soul.
Her fever frights itself.

CASSANDRA.

It reeks! it reeks!
It smokes! it stifles! blood! blood,
everywhere!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

See, he hath brought this mad woman
from Troy,
To shame our honor, and insult our care.
Look to her, friends, my hands have
other work!

CHORUS.

Alas, the House of Tantalus is doomed!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The King sleeps — like an infant. His
huge strength
Holds slumber thrice as close as other men.
How well he sleeps! Make garlands for
the Gods.
I go to watch the couch. Cull every
flower,
And honor all the tutelary fanes
With sacrifice as ample as our joy,
Lest some one say we reverence not the
Gods!

CHORUS.

O dooméd House and race!
 O toilsome, toilsome horsemanship
 Of Pelops; that ill omen brought to us!
 For since the drownéd Myrtilus
 Did from his golden chariot slip
 To his last sleep, below the deep,
 Nothing of sad calamitous disgrace
 Hath angry Heaven ceased to heap
 On this unhappy House of Tantalus.
 Not only upon sacred leaves of old,
 Preserved in many a guarded, mystic
 fold,
 But sometimes, too, enrolled
 On tablets fair
 Of stone or brass, with quaint and
 curious care,
 In characters of gold,
 And many an iron-bound, melancholy
 book,
 The wisdom of the wise is writ;
 And hardly shall a man,
 For all he can,
 By painful, slow degrees,
 And nightly reveries,
 Of long, laborious thought, grow learned
 in these.
 But who, that reads a woman's wily
 look,
 Shall say what evil hides, and lurks in
 it?
 Or fathom her false wit?
 For by a woman fell the man
 Who did Nemæa's pest destroy,
 And the brindéd Hydra slew,
 And many other wonders wrought.
 By a woman, fated Troy
 Was overset, and fell to naught.
 Royal Amphiarus, too,
 All his wisdom could not free
 From his false Eriphyle,
 Whom a golden necklace bought, —
 So has it been, and so shall be,
 Ever since the world began!

O woman, woman, of what other earth
 Hath dædal Nature moulded thee?
 Thou art not of our clay compact,
 Not of our common clay; —
 But when the painful world in labor
 lay —
 Labor long — and agony,
 In her heaving throes distract,
 And vexed with angry Heaven's red ire,
 Nature, kneading snow and fire,
 In thy mystic being pent
 Each contrary element.

Life and death within thee blent:
 All despair and all desire:
 There to mingle and ferment.
 While, mad midwives, at thy birth,
 Furies mixt with Sirens bent,
 Inter-wreathing snakes and smiles, —
 Fairest dreams and falsest guiles.

Such a splendid mischief thou!
 With thy light of languid eyes;
 And thy bosom of pure snow:
 And thine heart of fire below,
 Whose red light doth come and go
 Ever o'er thy changeful cheek
 When love-whispers tremble weak:
 Thy warm lips and pensive sighs,
 That the breathless spirit bow:
 And the heavenward life that lies
 In the still serenities
 Of thy snowy, airy brow, —
 Thine ethereal airy brow.
 Such a splendid mischief, thou!
 What are all thy witcheries?
 All thine evil beauty? All
 Thy soft looks, and subtle smiles?
 Tangled tresses? Mad caresses?
 Tendernesses? Tears and kisses?
 And the long look, between whiles,
 That the helpless heart beguiles,
 Tranced in such a subtle thrall?
 What are all thy sighs and smiles?
 Fairest dreams and falsest guiles!
 Hoofs to horses, teeth to lions,
 Horns to bulls, and speed to hares,
 To the fish to glide through waters,
 To the bird to glide through airs,
 Nature gave: to men gave courage,
 And the use of brazen spears.
 What was left to give to woman,
 All her gifts thus given? Ah, tears,
 Smiles, and kisses, whispers, glances,
 Only these; and merely beauty
 On her archéd brows unfurled.
 And with these she shatters lances,
 All unarmed binds arméd Duty,
 And in triumph drags the world!

XVI. SEMI-CHORUS. CHORUS.
 CASSANDRA. AGAMEMNON.
 CLYTEMNESTRA. ÆGISTHUS.

SEMI-CHORUS.
 Break off, break off! It seems I heard
 a cry.

CHORUS.

Surely one called within the house.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Stand by.

CHORUS.

The Prophetess is troubled. Look, her
 eye
 Rolls fearfully.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Now all is hush once more.

CHORUS.

I hear the feet of some one at the door.

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Murderess! oh, oh!

SEMI-CHORUS.

The house is filled with shrieks.

CHORUS.

The sound deceives or that was the
 King's voice.

SEMI-CHORUS.

The voice of Agamemnon!

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Ai! ai! ai!

CASSANDRA.

The bull is in the toils.

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

I will not die!

ÆGISTHUS (*within*).

O Zeus! he will escape.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*within*).

He has it.

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Ai! ai!

CHORUS.

Some hideous deed is being done within.
 Burst in the doors!

SEMI-CHORUS.

I cannot open them.
 Barred, barred within!

CASSANDRA.

The axe is at the bull.

CHORUS.

Call the elders.

SEMI-CHORUS.

And the People. O Argives! Argives!
 Alinon! Alinon!

CHORUS.

You to the Agora.

SEMI-CHORUS.

To the temples we.

CHORUS.

Hearken, O maidens!

SEMI-CHORUS.

This way.

CHORUS.

That way.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Quick! quick!

CASSANDRA.

Seal my sight, O Apollo! O Apollo!

CHORUS.

To the Agora!

SEMI-CHORUS.

To the temples!

CHORUS.

Haste! haste!

AGAMEMNON (*within*).

Stabbed, oh!

CHORUS.

Too late!

CASSANDRA.

The bull is bellowing.

ÆGISTHUS (*within*).

Thrust there again.

CLYTEMNESTRA (*within*).

One blow has done it all.

ÆGISTHUS (*within*).
Is it quite through ?

CLYTEMNESTRA (*within*).
He will not move again.

SEMI-CHORUS.
O Heaven and Earth ! My heart stands
still with awe !
Where will this murder end ?

CHORUS.
Hold ! some one comes !
XVII. ELECTRA. ORESTES. CHO-
RUS. A PHOCIAN.

ELECTRA (*leading* ORESTES).
Save us ! save him — Orestes !

CHORUS.
What has fallen ?
ELECTRA.
An evil thing. O, we are fatherless !

CHORUS.
Ill-starred Electra ! But how fell this
chance ?

ELECTRA.
Here is no time for words, — scarce
time for flight.
When from his royal bath the King
would rise, —

That devilish woman, lying long in lurk,
Behind him crept, with stealthy feet un-
heard,

And flung o'er all his limbs a subtle web.
Caught in the craft of whose contrived
folds,
Stumbling, he fell. Ægisthus seized a
sword ;

But halted, half irresolute to strike.
My father, like a lion in the toils,
Upheaved his head, and, writhing,
roared with wrath,

And angry shame at this infernal snare.
Almost he reut the blinding nets atwain.
But Clytemnestra on him flung herself,
And caught the steel, and smit him
through the ribs.

He slipped, and reeled. She drove the
weapon through,
Piercing the heart !

CHORUS.
O woe ! what tale is this ?

ELECTRA.
I, too, with him, had died, but for this
child,
And that high vengeance which is yet
to be.

CHORUS.
Alas ! then Agamemnon is no more,
Who stood, but now, amongst us, full
of life,
Crowned with achieving years ! The
roof and cope
Of honor, fallen ! Where shall we lift
our eyes ?

Where set renown ? Where garner up
our hopes ?
All worth is dying out. The land is
dark,
And Treason looks abroad in the eclipse.
He did not die the death of men that
live

Such life as he lived, fall'n among his
peers,
Whom the red battle rolled away, while
yet
The shout of Gods was ringing through
and through them ;

But Death that feared to front him in
full field,
Lurked by the hearth and smote him
from behind.

A mighty man is gone. A mighty grief
Remains. And rumor of undying deeds
For song and legend, to the end of time !
What tower is strong ?

ELECTRA.
O friends — if friends you be —
For who shall say where falsehood festers
not,
Those being falsest, who should most be
true ?

Where is that Phocian ? Let him take
the boy,
And bear him with him to his master's
court.
Else will Ægisthus slay him.

CHORUS.
Orphaned one,
Fear you not ?

ORESTES.
I am Agamemnon's son.

CHORUS.
Therefore shouldst fear —

ORESTES.
And therefore cannot fear.

PHOCIAN.
I heard a cry. Did any call ?

CHORUS.
O, well !
You happen this way in the need of
time.

ELECTRA.
O loyal stranger, Agamemnon's child
Is fatherless. This boy appeals to you.
O save him, save him from his father's
foes !

PHOCIAN.
Unhappy lady, what wild words are
these ?

ELECTRA.
The house runs blood. Ægisthus, like
a fiend,
Is raging loose, his weapon dripping
gore.

CHORUS.
The king is dead.

PHOCIAN.
Is dead !

ELECTRA.
Dead.

PHOCIAN.
Do I dream ?

ELECTRA.
Such dreams are dreamed in hell — such
dreams — O no !
Is not the earth as solid — heaven
above —
The sun in heaven — and Nature at her
work —
And men at theirs — the same ? O,
no ! no dream !
We shall not wake — nor he ; though
the Gods sleep !
Unnaturally murdered —

PHOCIAN.
Murdered !

ELECTRA.
Ay.
And the sun blackens not ; the world is
green ;
The fires of the red west are not put out.
Is not the cricket singing in the grass ?
And the shy lizard shooting through the
leaves ?
I hear the ox low in the labored field.
Those swallows build, and are as gar-
rulous
High up i' the towers. Yet I speak the
truth,
By Heaven I speak the truth —

PHOCIAN.
Yet more, vouchsafe
How died the king ?

ELECTRA.
O, there shall be a time
For words hereafter. While we dally
here,
Fate haunts, and hounds us. Friend,
receive this boy.
Bear him to Strophius. All this tragedy
Relate as best you may ; it beggars
speech.
Tell him a tower of hope is fallen this
day —
A name in Greece —

PHOCIAN.
— But you —

ELECTRA.
Away ! away !
Destruction posts apace, while we delay.

PHOCIAN.
Come then !

ELECTRA.
I dare not leave my father's hearth,
For who would then do honor to his urn ?
It may be that my womanhood and
youth
May help me here. It may be I shall fall,
And mix my own with Agamemnon's
blood.
No matter. On Orestes hangs the hope
Of all this House. Him save for better
days,
And ripened vengeance.

PHOCIAN.
Noble-hearted one!
Come then, last offspring of this fated
race.
The future calls thee!

ORESTES.

Sister! Sister!

ELECTRA.

Go!

ORESTES.

O Sister!

ELECTRA.

O my brother! . . . One last kiss, —
One last long kiss, — how I have loved
thee, boy!
Was it for this I nourished thy young
years
With stately tales, and legends of the
gods?
For this? . . . How the past crowds upon
me! Ah —
Wilt thou recall, in lonely, lonely hours,
How once we sat together on still eves,
(Ah me!) and brooded on all serious
themes
Of sweet, and high, and beautiful, and
good,
That throng the ancient years. Alceme-
na's son,
And how his life went out in fire on Ceta;
Or of that bright-haired wanderer after
fame,
That brought the great gold-fleece across
the sea,
And left a name in Colchis; or we spake
Of the wise Theseus, councils, kingdoms,
thrones,
And laws in distant lands; or, later still,
Of the great leaguer set round Ilion,
And what heart-stirring tidings of the
war
Bards brought to Hellas. But when I
would breathe
Thy father's name, didst thou not grasp
my hand,
And glorious deeds shone round us like
the stars
That lit the dark world from a great way
off,
And died up into heaven, among the
Gods?

ORESTES.

Sister, O Sister!

ELECTRA.

Ah, too long we linger.
Away! away!

PHOCIAN.

Come!

CHORUS.

Heaven go with thee!
To Crissa points the hand of Destiny.

ELECTRA.

O boy, on thee Fate hangs an awful
weight
Of retribution! Let thy father's ghost
Forever whisper in thine ear. Be strong.
About thee, yet unborn, thy mother wove
The mystic web of life in such-like form
That Agamemnon's spirit in thine eyes
Seems living yet. His seal is set on
thee;
And Pelops' ivory shoulder marks thee
his.
Thee, child, nor contests on the Isthmian
plain,
Nor sacred apple, nor green laurel-leaf,
But graver deeds await. Forget not,
son,
Whose blood, unwashed, defiles thy
mother's doors!

CHORUS.

O haste! I hear a sound within the
house.

ELECTRA.

Farewell, then, son of Agamemnon!

PHOCIAN.

Come!

XVIII. ELECTRA. CHORUS. ÆGIS-
THUS.

ELECTRA.

Gone! gone! Ah saved! . . . O fool,
thou missest, here!

CHORUS.

Alas, Electra, whither wilt thou go?

ELECTRA.

Touch me not! Come not near me!
Let me be!
For this day, which I hoped for, is not
mine.

CHORUS.

See how she gathers round her all her
robe,
And sits apart with grief. O, can it be
Great Agamemnon is among the shades?

ELECTRA.

Would I had grasped his skirt, and fol-
lowed him!

CHORUS.

Alas! there is an eminence of joy,
Where Fate grows dizzy, being mounted
there,
And so tilts over on the other side!

O fallen, O fallen
The tower, which stood so high!
Whose base and girth were strong i' the
earth,
Whose head was in the sky!
O fall'n that tower of noble power,
That filled up every eye!

He stood so sure, that noble tower!
To make secure, and fill with power,
From length to length, the land of
Greece!

In whose strong bulwarks all men saw,
Garnered on the lap of law,
For dearth or danger, spears of war,
And harvest sheaves of peace!
O fall'n, O fall'n that lofty tower, —
The loftiest tower in Greece!

His brows he lift above the noon,
Filled with the day, a noble tower!
Who took the sunshine and the shower,
And flung them back in merry scorn.
Who now shall stand when tempests
lower?

He was the first to catch the morn,
The last to see the moon.
O friends, he was a noble tower!
O friends, and fall'n so soon!

Ah, well! lament! lament!
His walls are rent, his bulwarks bent,
And stooped that crested eminence,
Which stood so high for our defence!
For our defence, — to guard, and fence
From all alarm of hurt and harm,
The fulness of a land's content!
O fall'n away, fall'n at midday,
And set before the sun is down,
The highest height of our renown!

O overthrown, the ivory throne!
The spoils of war, the golden crown,
And chiefest honor of the state!
O mourn with me! what tower is free
From over-topping destiny?
What strength is strong to fate?
O mourn with me! when shall we see
Another such, so good, so great?
Another such, to guard the state!

ÆGISTHUS.

He should have stayed to shout through
Troy, or bellow
With bulls in Ida —

CHORUS.

Look! Ægisthus comes!
Like some lean tiger, having dipt in
blood
His dripping fangs, and hot athirst for
more.
His lurid eyeball rolls, as though it
swam
Through sanguine films. He staggers,
drunk with rage
And crazy mischief.

ÆGISTHUS.

Hold! let no one stir!
I charge you, all of you, who hear me
speak,
Where may the boy Orestes lie concealed?
I hold the life of each in gage for his.
If any know where now he hides from
us,
Let him beware, not rendering true re-
ply!

CHORUS.

The boy is fled —

ELECTRA.

— is saved!

ÆGISTHUS.

Electra here!
How mean you? What is this?

ELECTRA.

Enough is left
Of Agamemnon's blood to drown you in.

ÆGISTHUS.

You shall not trifle with me, by my
beard!
There's peril in this pastime. Where's
the boy?

ELECTRA.
Half-way to Phocis, Heaven helping him.

EGISTHUS.
By the black Styx!

ELECTRA.
Take not the oath of Gods,
Who art but half a man, blaspheming
coward!

EGISTHUS.
But you, by Heaven, if this be a sword,
Shall not be any more —

ELECTRA.
A slave to thee,
Blundering bloodshedder, though thou
boast thyself
As huge as Ossa piled on Pelion,
Or anything but that weak wretch thou
art!
O, thou hast only half done thy black
work!
Thou shouldst have slain the young lion
with the old.
Look that he come not back, and find
himself
Ungiven food, and still the lion's share!

EGISTHUS.
Insolent! but I know to seal thy lips —

ELECTRA.
—For thou art only strong among the
weak.
We know thou hast an aptitude for blood.
To take a woman's is an easy task,
And one well worthy thee.

EGISTHUS.
O, but for words!

ELECTRA.
Yet, couldst thou feed on all the noble
blood
Of godlike generations on this earth,
It should not help thee to a hero's heart.

CHORUS.
O peace, Electra, but for pity's sake!
Heap not his madness to such dangerous
heights.

ELECTRA.
I will speak out my heart's scorn, though
I die.

EGISTHUS.
And thou shalt die, but not till I have
tamed
That stubborn spirit to a wish for life.

CHORUS.
O cease, infatuate! I hear the Queen.

*[By a movement of the Ecyclema the palace
is thrown open, and discovers CLYTEM-
NESTRA standing over the body of AGAMEM-
NON.]*

XIX. CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS.
EGISTHUS. ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Argives! behold the man who was your
King!

CHORUS.
Dead! dead!

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Not I, but Fate hath dealt this blow.

CHORUS.
Dead! dead, alas! look where he lies,
O friends!
That noble head, and to be brought so
low!

CLYTEMNESTRA.
He who set light by woman, with blind
scorn,
And held her with the beasts we sacri-
fice,
Lies, by a woman sacrificed himself.
This is high justice which appeals to you.

CHORUS.
Alas! alas! I know not words for this.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
We are but as the instrument of heaven.
Our work is not design, but destiny.
A God directs the lightning to its fall;
It smites and slays, and passes other-
where,
Pure in itself, as when, in light, it left

The bosom of Olympus, to its end.
In this cold heart the wrong of all the
past
Lies buried. I avenged, and I forgive.
Honor him yet. He is a king, though
fallen.

CHORUS.
O, how she sets Virtue's own crest on
Crime,
And stands there stern as Fate's wild arbi-
tress!
Not any deed could make her less than
great.

*(CLYTEMNESTRA descends the steps, and lays
her hand on the arm of EGISTHUS.)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Put up the sword! Enough of blood is
spilt.

EGISTHUS.
Hist! O, not half, — Orestes is escaped.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
Sufficient for the future be that thought.
What's done is well done. What's un-
done — yet more:
Something still saved from crime.

EGISTHUS.
This lion's whelp
Will work some mischief yet.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
He is a child —
— Our own — we will but war upon the
strong.
Not upon infants. Let this matter rest.

EGISTHUS.
O, ever, in the wake of thy great will
Let me steer sure! and we will leave
behind
Great tracks of light upon the wonder-
ing world.
If but you err not here —

CLYTEMNESTRA.
These pale-eyed groups!
See how they huddle shuddering, and
stand round;
As when some mighty beast, the brin-
dled lord

Of the rough woodside, sends his wild
death-roar
Up the shrill caves, the meaner denizens
Of ancient woods, shy deer, and timorous
hares,
Peer from the hairy thickets, and shrink
back.
We feared the lion, and we smote him
down.
Now fear is over. Shall we turn aside
To harry jackals? Laugh! we have
not laughed
So long, I think you have forgotten how!
Have we no right to laugh like other
men?
Ha! Ha! I laugh. Now it is time to
laugh!

CHORUS.
O, awful sight! Look where the bloody
sun,
As though with Agamemnon he were
slain,
Runs reeking, lurid, down the palace
floors!

CLYTEMNESTRA.
O my beloved! Now will we reign
sublime,
And set our foot upon the neck of For-
tune!
And, for the rest — O, much remains!
— for you,

(To the CHORUS.)
A milder sway, if mildly you submit
To our free service and supremacy.
Nor tax, nor toll, to carry dim results
Of distant war beyond the perilous seas.
But gateless justice in our halls of state,
And peace in all the borders of our land!
For you —

*(To ELECTRA, who has thrown herself upon the
body of AGAMEMNON.)*

ELECTRA.
O, hush! What more remains to me,
But this dead hand, whose clasp is cold
in mine?
And all the baffled memory of the past,
Buried with him? What more?

CLYTEMNESTRA.
— A mother's heart,
If you will come to it. Free confidence.
A liberal share in all our future hope.

Now, more than ever—mutually weak—
We stand in need, each of the other's
love.

Our love! it shall not sacrifice thee,
child,
To wanton whims of war, as he, of old,
Did thy dead sister. If you will not
these,

But answer love with scorn, why then—

ELECTRA.

— What then?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Safe silence. And permission to forget.

XX. CHORUS. SEMI-CHORUS.
CLYTEMNESTRA. CASSANDRA.
EGISTHUS.

CHORUS.

What shall we say? What has been
done?

Shed no tear! O, shed no tear!
Hang up his harness in the sun;
The hooked car, and barbéd spear;
And all war's adamant gear
Of trophied spoils; for all his toils
Are over, alas! are over, and done!
What shall we say? What has been
done?

Shed no tear! O, shed no tear!
But keep solemn silence all,
As befits when heroes fall;
Solemn as his fame is; sad
As his end was; earth shall wear
Mourning for him. See, the sun
Blushes red for what is done!
And the wild stars, one by one,
Peer out of the lurid air,
And shrink back with awe and fear,
Shuddering, for what is done.

When the night comes, dark and dun
As our sorrow; blackness far
Shutting out the crimson sun;
Turn his face to the moon and star,—
These are bright as his glories are,—
And great Heaven shall see its son!
What shall we say? What has been
done?

Shed no tear! O, shed no tear!
Gather round him, friends! Look here!
All the wreaths which he hath won
In the race that he hath run,—
Laurel garlands, every one!

These are things to think upon,
Mourning till the set of sun,—
Till the mourning moon appear.
Now the wreaths which Fame begun
To uplift, to crown his head,
Memory shall seize upon,
And make chaplets for his bier.
He shall have wreaths though he be
dead!

But his monument is here,
Built up in our hearts, and dear
To all honor. Shed no tear!
O, let not any tear be shed!

SEMI-CHORUS.

Look at Cassandra! she is stooping down.

SEMI-CHORUS.

She dips and moves her fingers in the
blood!

SEMI-CHORUS.

Look to her! There's a wildness in her
eye!

SEMI-CHORUS.

What does she?

SEMI-CHORUS.

O, in Agamemnon's blood,
She hath writ *Orestes* on the palace steps!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ægisthus!

EGISTHUS.

Queen and bride!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

We have not failed.

CHORUS.

Come, venerable, ancient Night!
From sources of the western stars,
In darkest shade that fits this woe.
Consoler of a thousand griefs,
And likest death unalterably calm.
We toil, aspire, and sorrow,
And in a little while shall cease.
For we know not whence we came,
And who can insure the morrow?
Thou, eternally the same,
From of old, in endless peace
Eternally survivest;
Enduring on through good and ill,

Coeval with the Gods; and still
In thine own silence livest.
Our days thou ledest home
To the great Whither which has no
Again!
Impartially to pleasure and to pain
Thou sett'st the bourn. To thee shall all
things come.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But, if he cease to love me, what is
gained?

CASSANDRA.

With wings darkly spreading,
Like ravens to the carcass
Scenting far off the savor of blood,
From shores of the unutterable River.
They gather and swoop,
They waver, they darken.
From the fangs that raven,
From the eyes that glare
Intolerably fierce,
Save me, Apollo!
Ai! Ai! Ai!
Alinon! Alinon!
Blood, blood! and of kindred nature,
Which the young wolf returning
Shall dip his fangs in,
Thereby accursedly
Imbibing madness!

CHORUS.

The wild woman is uttering strange
things
Fearful to listen to.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Within the house
Straightway confine her,
There to learn wisdom.

EGISTHUS.

Orestes—O, this child's life now out-
weighs
That mighty ruin, Agamemnon dead!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ægisthus, dost thou love me?

EGISTHUS.

As my life!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou lovest me! O love, we have not
failed.

Give me thy hand! So . . . lead me to
the house.

Let me lean on thee. I am very weak.

CHORUS.

Only Heaven is high.
Only the Gods are great.
Above the searchless sky,
In unremoved state,
They from their golden mansions
Look over the lands, and the seas;
The ocean's wide expansions,
And the earth's varieties:
Secure of their supremacy,
And sure of affluent ease.
Who shall say "I stand!" nor fall?
Destiny is over all!
Rust will crumble old renown.
Bust and column tumble down;
Keep and castle; tower and town;
Throne and sceptre; crest and crown.
Destiny is over all!
One by one, the pale guests fall
At lighted feast, in palace hall;
And feast is turned to funeral.
Who shall say "I stand!" nor fall?
Destiny is over all!

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 nursed,
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 peans 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 champagne 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 eyes,
Through some gusty pause in the moan-
ing sea,

When the pools were splashed pink by
the thirsty bees.

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 Pleasance 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 spiked, or ridged 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 control.

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 between the black oak Fiends sat she,
And under the moth-flitted canopy
Of the mighty antique bed in her chamber,

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 gorgeous 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 Arimathean, so it was writ,
 When he came from the holy Orient,
 Had worn, with his prayers embalm-
 ing it,
 As with the San-Graël 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.

Meanwhile the pale lady grew white and whiter,
As the poplar pales when the keen winds smite her :
And, as the tree sways to the gust, and heaves
Quick ripples of white alarm up the leaves,
So did she seem to shrink and reel
From the casement — one quiver from head to heel
Of whitest fear. For she heard below,
On the creaking stairway loud and slow,
Like drops that plunge audibly down from the thunder
Into a sea that is groaning under,
The heavy foot of the Earl as he mounted
Step after step to the turret : she counted
Step after step, as he hastened or halted ;
Now clashing shrill through the archways vaulted ;
Now muffled and thick ; now loud, and more
Loud as he came near the Chamber door.
Then there fell, with a rattle and shock,
An iron glove on the iron lock,
And the door burst open — the Earl burst through it —
But she saw him not. The window-pane,
Far off, grew large and small again ;
The staggering light did wax and wane,
Till there came a snap of the heavy brain ;
And a slow-subsiding pulse of pain ;
And the whole world darkened into rest,
As the grim Earl pressed to his gausome breast
His white wife. She hung heavy there
On his shoulder without breath,
Darkly filled with sleepy death
From her heart up to her eyes ;
Dead asleep : and ere he knew it
(How Death took her by surprise
Helpless in her great despair)
Smoothing back her yellow hair,
He kissed her icy brows ; unwound
His rough arms, and she fell to the ground.

*"The woman was fairer than she was wise:
But the serpent was wiser than she was fair :*

*For the serpent was lord in Paradise
Or ever the woman came there.
But when Eden-gates were barred amain,
And the fiery sword on guard in the East,
The lion arose from a long repose,
And quoth he, as he shook out his royal mane,*

*'Now I am the strongest beast.'
Had the woman been wiser when she was queen*

*The lion had never been king, I ween.
But ever since storms began to lower
Beauty on earth hath been second to Power."*
And this is the song that the Minstrel sung,

With the silver hair and the golden tongue,
Who sung by night in the grim Earl's hall.
And they held him in reverence one and all.

And so she died, — the pale-faced girl.
And, for nine days after that, the Earl
Fumed and fret, and raved and swore,
Pacing up and down the chamber-floor,
And tearing his black beard as he went,
In the fit of his sullen discontent.
And the Seneschal said it was fearful to hear him ;
And not even the weather-worn Warden went near him ;
And the shock-headed Pages huddled apear,
And bit their white lips till they bled, for fear.

But at last he bade them lift her lightly,
And bury her by the gray sea-shore,
Where the winds that blew from her own land nightly
Might wail round her grave through the wild rocks hoar.

So they lifted her lightly at dead of night,
And bore her down by the long torch-light,

Lank-haired faces, sallow and keen,
That burned out of the glassy pools between

The splashing sands which, as they plunged through,

The coffin-lead weighed them down into ;
And their feet, as they plucked them up, left pits

Which the water oozed into and out of by fits —

— And so to the deep-mouthed bay's black brim,

Where the pale priests, all white-stoled and dim,

Lifted the cross and chanted the hymn,
That her soul might have peace when her bones were dust,

And her name be written among the Just.

The Warden walked after the Seneschal grim ;
And the shock-headed Pages walked after him :
And with mattock and spade a grave was made,
Where they carved the cross, and they wrote her name,
And, returning each by the way that he came,
They left her under the bare black thorn.

The salt sea-wind sang shrill in the head of it ;
And the bitter night grew chill with the dread of it ;
When the great round moon rose up forlorn
From the reefs, and whitened towards the morn.
For the forked tree, as the bleak blast took it,
Howled through it, and beat it, and bit it, and shook it,
Like a living thing bewitched and bewilded.
Visibly shrunk, and shuddered and shrivelled.

And again the swallow, that false new-comer,
Fluttered over the sea in the front of the summer ;
A careless singer, as he should be
That only skimmeth the mighty sea ;
Dipped his wings as he came and went,
And chirruped and twittered for heart's content,
And built on the new-made grave. But when
The Summer was over he flew back again.

And the Earl, as years went by, and his life
Grew listless, took him another wife :
And the Seneschal grim and the Warden gray

Walked about in their wonted way :
And the lean-jawed shock-haired Pages too

Sung and swilled as they used to do.
And the grooms and the squires gamed and swore

And quarrelled again as they quarrelled before ;

And the flowers decayed in their dismal beds,

And dropped off from their lean shanks one by one,
Till nothing was left but the stalks and the heads,
Clumped into heaps, or ripped into shreds,
To steam into salt in the sickly sun.

And the cattle lowed late up the glimmering plain,
Or dipped knee-deep, and splashed themselves

In the pools spat out by the spiteful main,
Wallowing in sandy dikes and delves :
And the bear-eyed filmy sea did boom
With his old mysterious hungering sound :
And the wet wind wailed in the chinks of the tomb,
Till the weeds in the surf were drenched and drowned.

But once a stranger came over the wave,
And paused by the pale-faced Lady's grave.

It was when, just about to set,
A sadness held the sinking sun.
The moon delayed to shine as yet :
The Ave-Mary chime was done :
And from the bell-tower leaned the ringers ;

And in the chancel paused the singers,
With lingering looks, and clasped fingers :
And the day reluctantly turned to his rest,
Like some untold life, that leaves exprest
But the half of its hungering love ere it close :

So he went sadly toward his repose
Deep in the heart of the slumbrous waves
Kindled far off in the desolate West.
And the breeze sprang up in the cool sea-caves,

The castle stood with its courts in shade,
And all its toothéd towers imprest
On the sorrowful light that sunset made, —

Such a light as sleeps shut up in the breast

Of some pining crimson-hearted rose,
Which, as you gaze at it, grows and grows

And all the warm leaves overflows ;
Leaving its sweet source still to be guest.
The crumpled shadow of the thorn
Crawled over the sand-heaps raggedly,
And over the gray stone cross forlorn,
And on to that one man musing there
Moveless, while o'er him the night crept on,

And the hot yellow stars, slowly, one
after one,
Mounted into the dark blue air
And brightened, and brightened. Then
suddenly,
And sadly and silently,
Down the dim breezy brink of the sea
sank the sun.

Ere the moon was abroad, the owl
Made himself heard in the echoing tower
Three times, four times. The bat with
his cowl

Came and went round the lonely Bower
Where dwelt of yore the Earl's lost Lady.
There night after night, for years, in vain
The lingering moon had looked through
the pane,

And missed the face she used to find
there,

White and wan like some mountain flower
In its rocky nook, as it paled and pined
there,

Only known to the moon and the wind
there.

Lights flitted faint in the halls down
lower

From lattice to lattice, and then glowed
steady.

The dipping gull: and the long gray
pool:

And the reed that shows which way the
breeze blows cool,

From the wide warm sea to the low black
land:

And the wave makes no sound on the
soft yellow sand:

But the inland shallows sharp and small
Are swarmed about with the sultry
midge.

And the land is still, and the ocean still:

And the weeds in the rifted rocks at will
Move on the tide, and float or glide.

And into the silent western side
Of the heaven the moon begins to fall.

But is it the fall of a plover's call
That is answered warily, low yet shrill,
From the sand-heapt mound and the
rocky ridge?

And now o'er the dark plain so wild and
wide

Falls the note of a horn from the old
drawbridge.

Who is it that waits at the castle-gates?
Call in the minstrel, and fill the bowl.

Bid him loose the great music and let
the song roll.

Fill the bowl.

And first, as was due, to the Earl he
bowed:

Next to all the Sea-chieftains, blithe
friends of the Earl's:

Then advanced through the praise of the
murmuring crowd,

And sat down, as they bade him, and
all his black curls

Bowed over his harp, as in doubt which
to choose

From the melodies coiled at his heart.
For a man

O'er some Beauty asleep for one moment
might muse,

Half in love, ere he woke her. So ere
he began,

He paused over his song. And they
brought him, the Squires,

A heavy gold cup with the red wine ripe
in it,

Then wave over wave of the sweet silver
wires

'Gan ripple, and the minstrel took heart
to begin it.

A harper that harps thorough mountain
and glen,

Wandering, wandering the wide world
over,

Sweetest of singers, yet saddest of men,
His soul's lost Lady in vain to discover.

Most fair and most frail of the daughters
of men,

O blest and O curst, the man that should
love her!

Who has not loved? and who has not
lost?

Wherever he wander, the wide world over,
Singing by city, and castle, and plain,

Abiding never, forever a rover,
Each man that shall hear him will swear
almost

In the minstrel's song that his heart can
discover

The self-same lady by whom it was crost,
For love is love the wide world over.

What shall he liken his love unto?
Have you seen some cloud the sun sets
through,

When the lingering night is close at
hand?

Have you seen some rose lie on the
snow?

Or a summer bird in a winter land?
Or a lily dying for dearth of dew?

Or a pearl sea-cast on a barren strand?
Some garden never sunshine warms

Nor any tend? some lonely tree
That stretches bleak its barren arms

Turned inland from the blighting sea?
Her cheek was pale: her face was fair:

Her heart, he sung, was weak and warm;
All golden was the sleepy hair

That floated round about her form,
And hid the sweetness breathing there.

Her eyes were wild, like stars that shine
Far off in summer nights divine:

But her smile — it was like the golden
wine

Poured into the spirit, as into a cup,
With passion brimming it up and up,

And marvellous fancies fair and fine.
He took her hair to make sweet strings:

He hid her smile deep in his song.
This makes so rich the tune he sings

That o'er the world 't will linger long.

There is a land far, far away from yours.
And there the stars are thrice as bright

as these.
And there the nightingale strange music
pours

All day out of the hearts of myrtle-trees.
There the voice of the cuckoo sounds

never forlorn
As you hear it far off through the deep
purple valleys.

And the fire-fly dances by night in the
corn.

And the little round owls in the long
cypress alleys

Whoop for joy when the moon is born.
There ripen the olive and the tulip tree,

And in the sun broadens the green prickly
pear;

And the bright galingales in the grass
you may see;

And the vine, with her royal blue globes,
dwelleth there,

Climbing and hanging deliciously
By every doorway and lone latticed cham-
ber,

Where the damsel-fly flits, and the heavy
brown bee

Hums alone, and the quick lizards rustle
and clamber.

And all things, there, live and rejoice
together,

From the frail peach-blossom that first
appears

When birds are about in the blue sum-
mer weather,

To the oak that has lived through his
eight hundred years.

And the castles are built on the hills,
not the plains.

(And the wild wind-flowers burn about
in the courts there)

They are white and undrenched by the
gray winter rains.

And the swallows, and all things, are
blithe at their sports there.

O for one moment, at sunset, to stand
Far, far away, in that dear distant land

Whence they bore her, — the loveliest
lady that ever

Crost the bleak ocean. O, nevermore,
never,

Shall she stand with her feet in the
warm dry grasses

Where the faint balm-heaving breeze
heavily passes

And the white lotus-flower leans lone on
the river.

Rare were the gems which she had for
her dower.

But all the wild-flowers she left behind
her.

— A broken heart and a rose-roofed
bower.

O oft, and in many a desolate hour,
The cold strange faces she sees shall re-
mind her

Of hearts that were warmer, and smiles
that were kinder,

Lost, like the roses they plucked from
her bower!

Lonely and far from her own land they
laid her!

— A swallow flew over the sea to find
her.

Ah cold, cold and narrow, the bed that
they made her!

The swallow went forth with the summer
to find her.

The summer and the swallow came back
o'er the sea,

And strange were the tidings the bird
brought to me.

And the minstrel sung, and they praised
and listened, —

Gazed and praised while the minstrel
sung.

Flusht was each cheek, and each fixt
eye glistened,

And hush was each voice to the minstrel's tongue.
But the Earl grew paler more and more
As the song of the Singer grew louder
and clearer,
And so dumb was the hall, you might
hear the roar
Of the sea in its pauses grow nearer and
drearer.

And . . . hush ! hush ! hush !
O was it the wind ? or was it the rush
Of the restless waters that tumble and
splash
On the wild sea-rocks ? or was it the
crash
Of stones on the old wet bridge up there ?
Or the sound of the tempest come over
the main ?

— Nay, but just now the night was fair.
Was it the march of the midnight rain
Clattering down in the courts ? or the
crash
Of armor yonder ? . . . Listen again !

Can it be lightning ? — can it be thunder ?
For a light is all round the lurid hall
That reddens and reddens the windows
all,
And far away you may hear the fall
As of rafter and boulder splitting asunder.

It is not the thunder, and it is not the
lightning
To which the castle is sounding and
brightening,
But something worse than lightning or
thunder ;

For what is this that is coming yonder ?

Which way ? Here ! Where ?
Call the men ! . . . Is it there ?
Call them out ! Ring the bell !
Ring the Fiend back to Hell !
Ring, ring the alarum for mercy ! . . .
Too late !

It has crawled up the walls — it has
burst in the gate —
It looks through the windows — it creeps
near the hall —
Near, more near — red and clear —
It is here !
Now the saints save us all !

And little, in truth, boots it ringing the
bell.
For the fire is loose on its way one may
tell

By the hot simmering whispers and
humming up there
In the oak-beams and rafters. Now one
of the Squires
His elbow hath thrust through the half-
smouldered door, —

Such a hole as some rat for his brown
wife might bore, —
And straightway in snaky, white, waver-
ing spires
The thin smoke twirls through, and
spreads eddying in gyres
Here and there toucht with vanishing
tints from the glare

That has swathed in its rose-light the
sharp turret stair.
Soon the door ruined through : and in
tumbled a cloud
Of black vapor. And first 't was all
blackness, and then

The quick forked fires leapt out from
their shroud
In the blackness : and through it rushed
in the armed men
From the court-yard. And then there
was flying and fighting,
And praying and cursing, — confusion
confounded.
Each man, at wild hazard, through smoke
ramparts smiting,
Has struck . . . is it friend ? is it foe ?
Who is wounded ?

But the Earl, — who last saw him ? Who
cares ? who knows ?
Some one, no doubt, by the weight of
his blows.

And they all, at times, heard his oath, —
so they swore : —
Such a cry as some speared wild beast
might give vent to
When the lean dogs are on him, and
forth with that roar
Of desolate wrath, the life is sent
too.

If he die, he will die with the dying
about him,
And his red wet sword in his hand, never
doubt him :

If he live, perchance he will bear his new
bride
Through them all, past the bridge, to
the wild seaside.

And there, whether he leave, or keep his
wife still,
There's the free sea round him, new
lands, and new life still.

And . . . but ah, the red light there !
And high up and higher
The soft, warm, vivid sparkles crowd
kindling, and wander
Far away down the breathless blue cone
of the night.

Saints ! can it be that the ships are on
fire,
Those fierce hot clots of crimson light,
Brightening, whitening in the distance
yonder ?
Slowly over the slumbrous dark
Up from those fountains of fire spark on
spark
(You might count them almost) floats
silent : and clear

In the steadfast glow the great cross-
beams,
And the sharp and delicate masts show
black ;
While wider and higher the red light
streams,
And oozes and overflows at the back.
Then faint through the distance a sound
you hear,
And the bare poles totter and disappear.

Of the Earl, in truth, the Seneschal swore
(And over the ocean this tale he bore)
That when, as he fled on that last wild
night,
He had gained the other side of the
moat,
Dripping, he shook off his wet leathern
coat,
And turning round beheld, from base-
ment

To cope, the castle swathed in light,
And, revealed in the glare through My
Lady's casement,
He saw, or dreamed he saw, this sight —

Two forms (and one for the Earl's he
knew,
By the long shaggy beard and the broad
back too)

Struggling, grappling, like things half
human.
The other, he said, he but vaguely dis-
tinguished,
When a sound like the shriek of an ag-
onized woman
Made him shudder, and lo, all the vision
was gone !

Ceiling and floor had fallen through,
In a glut of vomited flame extinguished ;
And the still fire rose and broadened on.

How fearful a thing is fire !
You might make up your mind to die by
water
A slow cool death, — nay, at times, when
weary

Of pains that pass not, and pleasures that
pall,
When the temples throb, and the heart
is dreary
And life is dried up, you could even de-
sire
Through the flat green weeds to fall and
fall
Half asleep down the green light under
them all,

As in a dream, while all things seem
Wavering, wavering, to feel the stream
Wind, and gurgle, and sound and gleam.
And who would very much fear to expire
By steel, in the front of victorious
slaughter,
The blithe battle about him, and com-
rades in call ?
But to die by fire —
O that night in the hall !

And the castle burned from base to top.
You had thought that the fire would
never stop,
For it roared like the great north-wind
in the pines,
And shone as the boreal meteor shines
Watched by wild hunters in shuddering
hands,
When wolves are about in the icy lands.
From the sea you might mark for a space
of three days,

Or fainter or fiercer, the dull red blaze.
And when this ceased, the smoke above it
Hung so heavy not even the wind seemed
to move it ;
So it glared and groaned, and night after
night
Smouldered, — a terrible beacon-light.

Now the Earl's old minstrel, — he that
had sung
His youth out in those halls, — the man
beloved,
With the silver hair and the golden
tongue,
They bore him out from the fire ; but he
roved

Back to the stifled courts ; and there
They watched him hovering, day after
day,
To and fro, with his long white hair

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 sickening;
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 perisht 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.
Life remains, 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.
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Chanting and changing it o'er and o'er,
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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 swatéd 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.
Shakspeare'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 Shakspeare shows so small!
Plato palter with relief.
Grief is greater than them all!

They were pedants who could speak.
Grander 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,
 Lovc'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 Rannymede 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
Glares 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 plucked 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 drear —
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 —
Shrunken, shrunken! 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; (R)

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, 't is 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
Tarrid 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

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.

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From my bosom. See, 't is sucking!
If it sleep we must not wake it.

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

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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?

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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.

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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
Tarrid 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

And priceless diadem of peerless Queens,—
I make appeal to you, that hear perchance
The last appeal which I shall ever make.
So weigh my words not lightly! for I feel
The fluttering fires of life grow faint and
cold

About my heart. And oft, indeed, to
me
Lying whole hours awake in the dead
nights

The end seems near, as though the dark-
ness knew

The angel waiting there to call my soul
Perchance before the house awakes; and
oft

When faint, and all at once, from far
away,

The mournful midnight bells begin to
sound

Across the river, all the days that were
(Brief, evil days!) return upon my heart,
And, where the sweetness seemed, I see
the sin.

For, waking lone, long hours before the
dawn,

Beyond the borders of the dark I seem
To see the twilight of another world,
That grows and grows and glimmers on
my gaze.

And oft, when late, before the languor-
ous moon

Through yonder windows to the West
goes down

Among the pines, deep peace upon me
falls,

Deep peace like death, so that I think I
know

The blessed Mary and the righteous
saints

Stand at the throne, and intercede for
me.

Wherefore these things are thus I can-
not tell.

But now I pray you of your fealty,
And by all knightly faith which may be
left,

Arise and get you hence, and join the
King.

For wherefore hold you thus behind the
court,

Seeing my liege the King is moved in
wrath?

For wete you well what say your foes and
mine.

'See how Sir Launcelot and Queen
Guenevere

Do hold them ever thus behind the King

That they may take their pleasure!
Knowing not
How that for me all these delights are
come
To be as withered violets."

Half in tears
She ceased abrupt. Given up to a proud
grief,
Vexed to be vexed. With love and anger
moved.

Love toucht with scorn, and anger
pierced with love.

About her, all unheeded, her long hair
Loosed its warm, yellow, waving loveli-
ness,

And o'er her bare and shining shoulder
cold

Fell floating free. Upon one full white
arm,

To which the amorous purple coverlet
Clung dimpling close, her drooping state
was propt.

There, half in shadow of her soft gold
curls,

She leaned, and like a rose enricht with
dew,

Whose heart is heavy with the clinging
bee,

Bowed down toward him all her glowing
face,

While in the light of her large angry
eyes

Uprose, and rose, a slow imperious sorrow,
And o'er the shine of still, unquivering
tears

Swam on to him.

But he, with brows averse
And orgolous looks, three times to speech
addressed,

Three times in vain. The silence of the
place

Fell like a hand upon his heart, and
hushed

His foolish anger with authority.
He would not see the wretched Queen:
he saw

Only the hunter on the arrassed wall
Prepare to wind amort his bugle horn,
And the long daylight dying down the
floors;

For half-way through the golden gates
of eve

The sun was rolled. The dropping tap-
estry glowed

With awful hues. Far off among his
reeds

The river, smitten with a waning light,
Shone; and, behind black lengths of
pine revealed,
The red West smouldered, and the day
declined.

Then year by year, as wave on wave a
sea,

The tided Past came softly o'er his heart,
And all the days which had been.

So he stood
Long in his mind divided: with himself
At strife: and, like a steed that hotly
chafes

His silver bit, which yet some silken
rein

Swayed by a skilled accustomed hand
restrains,

His heart against the knowledge of its
love

Made vain revolt, and fretful rose and
sunk.

But at the last, quelling a wayward grief,
That swelled against all utterance, and
sought

To force its salt and sorrowful overflow
Upon weak language, "Now indeed,"
he cried,

"I see the face of the old time is
changed,

And all things altered! Will the sun
still burn?

Still burn the eternal stars? For love
was deemed

Not less secure than these. Needs
should there be

Something remarkable to prove the world
I am no more that Launcelot, nor thou
That Guenevere, of whom, long since,
the fame,

Fruitful of noble deeds, with such a
light

Did fill this nook and cantle of the
earth,

That all great lands of Christendom be-
side

Showed darkened of their glory. But I
see

That there is nothing left for men to
swear by.

For then thy will did never urge me
hence,

But drew me through all dangers to thy
feet.

And none can say, least thou, I have
not been

The staff and burgonet of thy fair fame.

Nor mind you, Madam, how in Surluse
once,

When all the estates were met, and no-
ble judges,

Armed clean with shields, set round to
keep the right,

Before you sitting throned with Galahault
In great array, on fair green quilts of
samite,

Rich, ancient, fringed with gold, seven
summer days,

And all before the Earls of Northgalies,
Such service then with this old sword
was wrought,

To crown thy beauty in the courts of
Fame,

That in that time fell many noble
knights,

And all men marvelled greatly? So
when last

The loud horns blew to lodging, and we
supped

With Palamedes and with Lamorak,
All those great dukes and kings, and
famous queens,

Beholding us with a deep joy, avouched
Across the golden cups of costly wine

'There is no Queen of love but Guene-
vere,

And no true knight but Launcelot of the
Lake!'"

Thus he, transported by the thought of
days

And deeds that, like the mournful mar-
tial sounds

Blown through sad towns where some
dead king goes by,

Made music in the chambers of his heart,
Swept by the mighty memory of the past.

Nor spake the sorrowful Queen, nor from
deep muse

Unbent the grieving beauty of her brows,
But held her heart's proud pain superbly
still.

But when he lifted up his looks, it seemed
Something of sadness in the ancient
place,

Like dying breath from lips beloved of
yore,

Or unforgotten touch of tender hands
After long years, upon his spirit fell.

For near the carven casement hung the
bird,

With hood and jess, that oft had led
them forth,

These lovers, through the heart of rippling woods
 At morning, in the old and pleasant time.
 And o'er the brodered canopies of state
 Blazed Uther's dragons, curious, wrought
 with gems.
 Then to his mind that dear and distant
 dawn
 Came back, when first, a boy at Arthur's
 court,
 He paused abasht before the youthful
 Queen.
 And, feeling now her long imploring gaze
 Holding him in its sorrow, when he
 marked
 How changed her state, and all unlike
 to her,
 The most renowned beauty of the time,
 And pearl of chivalry, for whom himself
 All on a summer's day broke, long of
 yore
 A hundred lances in the field, he sprang
 And caught her hand, and, falling to one
 knee,
 Arched all his haughty neck to a quick
 kiss.
 And there was silence. Silently the
 West
 Grew red and redder, and the day decl-
 ined.
 As o'er the hungering heart of some deep
 sea,
 That swells against the planets and the
 moon
 With sad continual strife and vain un-
 rest,
 In silence rise and roll the laboring
 clouds
 That bind the thunder, o'er the heaving
 heart
 Of Guenevere all sorrows fraught with
 love,
 All stormy sorrows, in that silence passed.
 And like a star in that tumultuous night
 Love waxed and waned, and came and
 went, changed hue,
 And was and was not: till the cloud
 came down,
 And all her soul dissolved in showers:
 and love
 Rose through the broken storm: and,
 with a cry
 Of passion sheathed in sharpest pain, she
 stretched
 Wide her warm arms: she rose, she
 reeled, and fell

(All her great heart unqueened) upon
 the breast
 Of Launcelot; and, lifting up her voice,
 She wept aloud, "Unhappy that I am,"
 She wept, "Unhappy! Would that I
 had died
 Long since, long ere I loved thee, Laun-
 celot!
 Would I had died long since! ere I had
 known
 This pain, which hath become my pun-
 ishment,
 To have thirsted for the sea: to have
 received
 A drop no bigger than a drop of dew!
 I have done ill," she wept, "I am for-
 lorn,
 Forlorn! I falter where I stood secure:
 The tower I built is fall'n, is fall'n: the
 staff
 I leaned upon hath broken in my hand.
 And I, disrobed, dethroned, discrowned,
 and all undone,
 Survive my kingdom, widowed of all
 rule,
 And men shall mock me for a foolish
 Queen.
 For now I see thy love for me is dead,
 Dead that brief love which was the light
 of life,
 And all is dark: and I have lived too
 long.
 For how henceforth, unhappy, shall I
 bear
 To dwell among these halls where we
 have been?
 How keep these chambers emptied of thy
 voice?
 The walks where we have lingered long
 ago,
 The gardens and the places of our love,
 Which shall recall the days that come
 no more,
 And all the joy which has been?"
 Thus o'erthrown,
 And on the breast of Launcelot weeping
 wild —
 Weeping and murmuring — hung Queen
 Guenevere.
 But, while she wept, upon her brows
 and lips
 Warm kisses fell, warm kisses wet with
 tears.
 For all his mind was melted with remorse,
 And all his scorn was killed, and all his
 heart
 Gave way in that caress, and all the love

Of happier years rolled down upon his
 soul
 Redoubled; and he bowed his head, and
 cried,
 "Though thou be variable as the waves,
 More sharp than winds among the Heb-
 rides
 That shut the frozen Spring in stormy
 clouds,
 As wayward as a child, and all unjust,
 Yet must I love thee in despite of pain,
 Thou peerless Queen of perfect love!
 Thou star
 That draw'st all tides! Thou goddess
 far above
 My heart's weak worship! so adored thou
 art,
 And I so irretrievably all thine!
 But now I will arise, as thou hast said,
 And join the King: and these thine
 enemies
 Shall know thee not defenceless any
 more.
 For, either, living, I yet hold my life
 To arm for thine, or, dying, by my death
 Will steep love's injured honor in such
 blood
 Shall wash out every stain! And so
 farewell,
 Beloved. Forget me not when I am far,
 But in thy prayers and in thine evening
 thoughts
 Remember me: as I, when sundown
 crowns
 The distant hills, and Ave-Mary rings,
 Shall pine for thee on ways where thou
 art not."
 So these two lovers in one long embrace,
 An agony of reconciliation, hung
 Blinded in tears and kisses, lip to lip,
 And tranced from past and future, time
 and space.
 But by this time, the beam of the slope
 day,
 Edging blue mountain glooms with sullen
 gold,
 A dying fire, fell mournfully athwart
 The purple chambers. In the courts
 below
 The shadow of the keep from wall to wall
 Shook his dark skirt: great chimes began
 to sound,
 And swing, and rock in glimmering
 heights, and roll

A reeling music down: but ere it fell
 Faint bells in misty spires adown the vale
 Caught it, and bore it floating on to
 night.
 So from that long love-trance the envious
 time
 Reclaimed them. Then with a great
 pang he rose
 Like one that plucked his heart out from
 his breast,
 And, bitterly unwinding her white arms
 From the warm circle of their amorous fold,
 Left living on her lips the lingering heat
 Of one long kiss: and, gathering strong-
 ly back
 His poured-out anguish to his soul, he
 went.
 And the sun set.
 Long while she sat alone,
 Searching the silence with her fixed eyes,
 While far and farther off o'er distant
 floors
 The intervals of brazen echoes fell.
 A changeful light, from varying passions
 caught,
 Flushed all her stately cheek from white
 to red
 In doubtful alternation, as some star
 Changes his fiery beauty: for her blood
 Set headlong to all wayward moods of
 sense,
 Stirred with swift ebb and flow: till
 suddenly all
 The frozen heights of grief fell loosed,
 fast, fast,
 In cataract over cataract, on her soul.
 Then at the last she rose, a reeling shape
 That like a shadow swayed against the
 wall,
 Her slight hand held upon her bosom,
 and fell
 Before the Virgin Mother on her knees.
 There, in a halo of the silver shrine,
 That touched and turned to starlight her
 slow tears,
 Below the feet of the pale-pictured saint
 She lay, poured out in prayer.
 Meanwhile, without,
 A sighing rain from a low fringe of cloud
 Whispered among the melancholy hills.
 The night's dark limits widened: far
 above
 The crystal sky lay open: and the star

Of eve, his rosy circlet trembling clear,
Grew large and bright, and in the silver
moats,
Between the accumulated terraces,
Tangled a trail of fire: and all was still.

A SUNSET FANCY.

Just at sunset, I would be
In some isle-garden, where the sea
I look into shall seem more blue
Than those dear and deep eyes do.
And, if anywhere the breeze
Shall have stirred the cypress-trees,
Straight the yellow light falls through,
Catching me, for once, at ease;
Just so much as may impinge
Some tall lily with a tinge
Of orange; while, above the wall,
Tumbles downward into view
(With a sort of small surprise)
One star more among them all,
For me to watch with half-shut eyes.

Or else upon the breezy deck
Of some felucca; and one speck
'Twixt the crimson and the yellow,
Which may be a little fleck
Of cloud, or gull with outstretched neck,
To Spezia bound from Cape Circello;
With a sea-song in my ears
Of the bronzed buccaneers:
While the night is waxing mellow,
And the helmsman slackly steers,—
Leaning, talking to his fellow,
Who has oaths for all he hears,—
Each thief swarthier than Othello.
Or, in fault of better things,
Close in sound of one who sings
To casements, in a southern city;
Tinkling upon tender strings
Some melodious old love-ditty;
While a laughing lady flings
One rose to him, just for pity.
But I have not any want
Sweeter than to be with you,
When the long light falleth slant,
And heaven turns a darker blue;
And a deeper smile grows through
The glance asleep 'neath those soft lashes,
Which the heart it steals into
First inspires and then abashes.
Just to hold your hand,—one touch
So light you scarce should feel it such!
Just to watch you leaning o'er
Those window-roses, love, . . . no more.

ASSOCIATIONS.

You know the place is just the same!
The rooks build here: the sandy hill is
Ablaze with broom, as when she came
Across the sea with her new name
To dwell among the moated lilies.

The trifoly is on the walls:
The daisies in the bowling-alley:
The ox at eve lows from the stalls:
At eve the cuckoo, floating, calls,
When foxgloves tremble in the valley.

The iris blows from court to court:
The bald white spider flits, or stays in
The chinks behind the dragonwort:
That Triton still, at his old sport,
Blows bubbles in his broken basin.

The terrace where she used to walk
Still shines at noon between the roses:
The garden paths are blind with chalk:
The dragon-fly from stalk to stalk
Swims sparkling blue till evening
closes.

Then, just above that long dark copse,
One warm red star comes out, and passes
Westward, and mounts, and mounts, and
stops
(Or seems to) o'er the turret-tops,
And lights those lonely casement-
glasses.

Sir Ralph still wears that old grim smile.
The staircase creaks as up I clamber
To those still rooms, to muse awhile.
I see the little meadow-stile
As I lean from the great south-chamber.

And Lady Ruth is just as white.
(Ah, still, that face seems strangely
like her!)
The lady and the wicked knight—
All just the same—she swooned for
fright—
And he—his arm still raised to strike
her.

Her boudoir—no one enters there:
The very flowers which last she gath-
ered
Are in the vase; the lute—the chair—
And all things—just as then they were!
Except the jasmins,—those are with-
ered.

But when along the corridors
The last red pause of day is streaming,
I seem to hear her up the floors:
I seem to see her through the doors:
And then I know that I am dreaming.

MEETING AGAIN.

Yes; I remember the white rose. And
since then the young ivy has grown;
From your window we could not reach it,
and now it is over the stone.
We did not part as we meet, Dear. Well,
Time hath his own stern cures!
And Alice's eyes are deeper, and her hair
has grown like yours.

Is our greeting all so strange then? But
there's something here amiss,
When it is not well to speak kindly. And
the olives are ripe by this.
I had not thought you so altered. But
all is changed, God knows!
Good-night. It is night so soon now. Look
there! you have dropt your rose.

Nay, I have one that is withered and
dearer to me. I came
To say good night, little Alice. She does
not remember my name.
It is but the damp that is making my
head and my heart ache so.
I never was strong in the old time, as the
others were, you know.

And you'll sleep well, will you not, Dar-
ling? The old words sound so dear!
'Tis the last time I shall use them; you
need show neither anger nor fear.
It is well that you look so cheerful. And
is time so smooth with you?
How foolish I am! Good night, Dear.
And bid Alice good night too.

ARISTOCRACY.

To thee be all men heroes: every race
Noble: all women virgins: and each
place
A temple: know thou nothing that is
base.

THE MERMAIDEN.

HE was a Prince with golden hair
(In a palace beside the sea),
And I but a poor Mermaid,—
And how should he care for me?

Last summer I came, in the long blue
nights,
To sit in the cool sea-caves:
Last summer he came to count the stars
From his terrace above the waves.

There's nothing so fair in the sea down
there
As the light on his golden tresses:
There's nothing so sweet as his voice:
ah, nothing
So warm as the warmth of his kisses!

I could not help but love him, love him,
Till my love grew pain to me.
And to-morrow he weds the Princess
In that palace beside the sea.

AT HER CASEMENT.

I AM knee-deep in grass, in this warm
June night,
In the shade here, shut off from the great
moonlight.
All alone, at her casement there,
She sits in the light, and she combs her
hair.

She shakes it over the carven seat,
And combs it down to her stately feet.
And I watch her, hid in the blue June
night,
Till my soul grows faint with the costly
sight.

There's no flaw on that fair fine brow of
hers,
As fair and as proud as Lucifer's.
She looks in the glass as she turns her
head:

She knows that the rose on her cheek is
red:
She knows how her dark eyes shine,—
their light
Would scarcely be dimmed though I
died to-night.

I would that there in her chamber I
stood,
Full-face to her terrible beauty: I would

I were laid on her queenly breast, at her lips,
With her warm hair wound through my finger-tips,
Draining her soul at one deep-drawn kiss.
And I would be humbly content for this
To die, as is due, before the morn,
Killed by her slowly returning scorn.

A FAREWELL.

BE happy, child. The last wild words
are spoken.
To-morrow, mine no more, the world will
claim thee.
I blame thee not. But all my life is
broken.
Of that brief Past I have no single token.
Never in years to come my lips shall
name thee,
Never, child, never !
I will not say "Forget me"; nor those
hours
Which were so sweet. Some scent dead
leaves retain.
Keep all the flowers I gave thee — all
the flowers
Dead, dead ! Though years on years of
life were ours,
As we have met we shall not meet again ;
Forever, child, forever !

AN EVENING IN TUSCANY.

LOOK ! the sun sets. Now 's the rarest
Hour of all the blessed day.
(Just the hour, love, you look fairest !)
Even the snails are out to play.
Cool the breeze mounts, like this Chianti
Which I drain down to the sun.
— There ! shut up that old green Dante, —
Turn the page, where we began,
At the last news of Ulysses, —
A grand image, fit to close
Just such grand gold eyes as this is,
Full of splendor and repose !
So loop up those long bright tresses, —
Only, one or two must fall
Down your warm neck Evening kisses
Through the soft curls spite of all.

Ah, but rest in your still place there !
Stir not — turn not ! the warm pleasure
Coming, going in your face there,
And the rose (no richer treasure)

In your bosom, like my love there,
Just half secret and half seen ;
And the soft light from above there
Streaming o'er you where you lean,

With your fair head in the shadow
Of that grass-hat's glancing brim,
Like a daisy in a meadow
Which its own deep fringes dim.

O you laugh, — you cry "What folly !"
Yet you'd scarcely have me wise,
If I judge right, judging wholly
By the secret in your eyes.

But look down now, o'er the city
Sleeping soft among the hills, —
Our dear Florence ! That great Pitti
With its steady shadow fills

Half the town up : its unwinking
Cold white windows, as they glare
Down the long streets, set one thinking
Of the old dukes who lived there ;

And one pictures those strange men so ! —
Subtle brains, and iron thews !
There, the gardens of Lorenzo, —
The long cypress avenues

Creep up slow the stately hillside
Where the merry loungers are,
But far more I love this still side, —
The blue plain you see so far !

Where the shore of bright white villas
Leaves off faint : the purple breadths
Of the olives and the willows :
And the gold-rimmed mountain-widths :

All transfused in slumbrous glory
To one burning point — the sun !
But up here, — slow, cold, and hoary
Reach the olives, one by one :

And the land looks fresh : the yellow
Arbute-berries, here and there,
Growing slowly ripe and mellow
Through a flush of rosy hair.

For the Tramontana last week
Was about : 't is scarce three weeks

Since the snow lay, one white vast streak,
Upon those old purple peaks.

So to-day among the grasses
One may pick up tens and twelves
Of young olives, as one passes,
Blown about, and by themselves

Blackening sullen-ripe. The corn too
Grows each day from green to golden.
The large-eyed wind-flowers forlorn too
Blow among it, unbeholden :

Some white, some crimson, others
Purple blackening to the heart.
From the deep wheat-sea, which smothers
Their bright globes up, how they start !

And the small wild pinks from tender
Feather-grasses peep at us :
While above them burns, on slender
Stems, the red gladiolus :

And the grapes are green : this season
They 'll be round and sound and true,
If no after-blight should seize on
Those young bunches turning blue.

O that night of purple weather !
(Just before the moon had set)
You remember how together
We walked home ? — the grass was
wet —

The long grass in the Poderé —
With the balmy dew among it :
And that nightingale — the fairy
Song he sung — O how he sung it !

And the fig-trees had grown heavy
With the young figs white and woolly,
And the fire-flies, bevy on bevy
Of soft sparkles, pouring fully

Their warm life through trance on trances
Of thick citron-shades behind,
Rose, like swarms of loving fancies
Through some rich and pensive mind.

So we reached the loggia. Leaning
Faint, we sat there in the shade.
Neither spoke. The night's deep mean-
ing
Filled the silence up unsaid.

Hoarsely through the cypress alley
A civetta out of tune

Tried his voice by fits. The valley
Lay all dark below the moon.

Until into song you burst out, —
That old song I made for you
When we found our rose, — the first out
Last sweet Springtime in the dew.

Well ! . . . if things had gone less wildly —
Had I settled down before
There, in England — labored mildly —
And been patient — and learned more

Of how men should live in London —
Been less happy — or more wise —
Left no great works tried, and undone —
Never looked in your soft eyes —

I . . . but what's the use of thinking ?
There ! our nightingale begins —
Now a rising note — now sinking
Back in little broken rings

Of warm song that spread and eddy —
Now he picks up heart — and draws
His great music, slow and steady,
To a silver-centred pause !

SONG.

THE purple iris hangs his head
On his lean stalk, and so declines :
The spider spills his silver thread
Between the bells of columbines :
An altered light in flickering eyes
Draws dews through these dim eyes of
ours :
Death walks in yonder waning bowers,
And burns the blistering leaves.
Ah, well-a-day !
Blooms overblow :
Suns sink away :
Sweet things decay.

The drunken beetle, roused ere night,
Breaks blundering from the rotting
rose,
Flits through blue spidery aconite,
And hums, and comes, and goes :
His thick, bewildered song receives
A drowsy sense of grief like ours :
He hums and hums among the bowers,
And bangs about the leaves.
Ah, well-a-day !
Hearts overflow :
Joy flits away :
Sweet things decay.

Her yellow stars the jasmin drops
 In mildewed mosses one by one :
 The hollyhocks fall off their tops :
 The lotus-blooms ail white i' the sun :
 The freckled foxglove faints and grieves :
 The smooth-paced slumbrous slug de-
 vours

The gluey globes of gorgeous flowers,
 And smears the glistening leaves !

Ah, well-a-day !
 Life leaves us so.
 Love dare not stay.
 Sweet things decay.

From brazen sunflowers, orb and fringe,
 The burning burnish dulls and dies :
 Sad Autumn sets a sullen tinge
 Upon the scornful peonies :
 The dewy frog limps out, and heaves
 A speckled lump in speckled bowers :
 A reeking moisture, clings and lowers
 The lips of lapping leaves.
 Ah, well-a-day !
 Ere the cock crow,
 Life's charmed array
 Reels all away.

SEASIDE SONGS.

I.

Drop down below the orbéd sea,
 O lingering light in glowing skies,
 And bring my own true-love to me —
 My dear true-love across the sea —
 With tender-lighted eyes.

For now the gates of Night are flung
 Wide open her dark coasts among :
 And the happy stars crowd up, and up,
 Like bubbles that brighten, one by
 one,

To the dark wet brim of some glowing
 cup
 Filled full to the parting sun.

And moment after moment grows
 In grandeur up from deep to deep
 Of darkness, till the night hath
 clomb,

From star to star, heaven's highest
 dome,
 And, like a new thought born in sleep,
 The slumbrous glory glows, and glows :
 While, far below, a whisper goes

That heaves the happy sea :
 For o'er faint tracts of fragrance wide,
 A rapture pouring up the tide —
 A freshness through the heat — a sweet,
 Uncertain sound, like fairy feet —
 The west-wind blows my love to me.

Love-laden from the lighted west
 Thou comest, with thy soul opprest
 For joy of him : all up the dim,
 Delicious sea blow fearlessly,
 Warm wind, that art the tenderest
 Of all that breathe from south or west,
 Blow whispers of him up the sea :
 Upon my cheek, and on my breast,
 And on the lips which he hath prest,
 Blow all his kisses back to me !

Far off, the dark green rocks about,
 All night shines, faint and fair, the far
 light ;
 Far off, the lone, late fishers shout
 From boat to boat i' the listening star-
 light :

Far off, and fair, the sea lies bare,
 Leagues, leagues beyond the reach of
 rowing :
 Up creek and horn the smooth wave
 swells
 And falls asleep ; or, inland flowing,
 Twinkles among the silver shells,
 From sluice to sluice of shallow wells ;
 Or, down dark pools of purple glow-
 ing,

Sets some forlorn star trembling there
 In his own dim, dreamlike brilliancy.
 And I feel the dark sails growing
 Nearer, clearer, up the sea :
 And I catch the warm west blowing
 All my own love's sighs to me :
 On the deck I hear them singing
 Songs they sing in my own land :
 Lights are swinging : bells are ringing :
 On the deck I see him stand !

II.

The day is down into his bower :
 In languid lights his feet he steeps :
 The flushed sky darkens, low and lower,
 And closes on the glowing deeps.

In creeping curves of yellow foam
 Up shallow sands the waters slide :
 And warmly blow what whispers roam
 From isle to isle the lulled tide :

The boats are drawn : the nets drip
 bright :
 Dark casements gleam : old songs are
 sung :
 And out upon the verge of night
 Green lights from lonely rocks are hung.

O winds of eve that somewhere rove
 Where darkest sleeps the distant sea,
 Seek out where haply dreams my love,
 And whisper all her dreams to me !

THE SUMMER-TIME THAT WAS.

The swallow is not come yet ;
 The river-banks are brown ;
 The woodside walks are dumb yet,
 And dreary is the town.
 I miss a face from the window,
 A footstep from the grass ;
 I miss the boyhood of my heart,
 And the summer-time that was.

How shall I read the books I read,
 Or meet the men I met ?
 I thought to find her rose-tree dead,
 But it is growing yet.
 And the river winds among the flags,
 And the leaf lies on the grass.
 But I walk alone. My hopes are gone,
 And the summer-time that was.

ELAYNE LE BLANC.

O THAT sweet season on the April-verge
 Of womanhood ! When smiles are toucht
 with tears,
 And all the unsolaced summer seems to
 grieve
 With some blind want : when Eden-
 exiles feel
 Their Paradisal parentage, and search
 Even yet some fragrance through the
 thorny years
 From reachless gardens guarded by the
 sword.

Then those that brood above the fallen
 sun,
 Or lean from lonely casements to the
 moon,
 Turn round and miss the touching of a
 hand :
 Then sad thoughts seem to be more sweet
 than gay ones :

Then old songs have a sound as pitiful
 As dead friends' voices, sometimes heard
 in dreams :
 And all a-tiptoe for some great event,
 The Present waits, her finger at her lips,
 The while the pensive Past with meek
 pale palms,
 Crost (where a child should lie) on her
 cold breast,
 And wistful eyes forlorn, stands mutely
 by,
 Reproaching Life with some unuttered
 loss ;
 And the heart pines, a prisoned Danaë,
 Till some God comes, and makes the air
 all golden.

In such a mood as this, at such an hour
 As makes sad thoughts fall saddest on
 the soul,
 She, in her topmost bower all alone,
 High-up among the battlemented roofs,
 Leaned from the lattice, where the road
 runs by
 To Camelot, and in the bulrush beds
 The marsh river shrinks his stagnant
 horn.
 All round, along the spectral arras,
 gleamed
 (With faces pale against the dreary light,
 Forms of great Queens — the women of
 old times.

She felt their frowns upon her, and their
 smiles,
 And seemed to hear their garments rus-
 tling near.

Her lute lay idle her love-books among :
 And, at her feet, flung by, the broidered
 scarf,
 And velvet mantle. On the verge of
 night

She saw a bird float by, and wished for
 wings :
 She heard the hoarse frogs quarrel in the
 marsh :

And now and then, with drowsy song
 and oar,
 Some dim barge sliding slow from bridge
 to bridge,

Down the white river past, and far
 behind
 Left a new silence. Then she fell to
 muse

Unto what end she came into this earth
 Whose reachless beauty made her heart
 so sad,

As one that loves, but hopes not, inly ails

In gazing on some fair unloving face.
Anon, there dropt down a great gulf of
sky
A star she knew; and as she looked at
it,
Down-drawn through her intensity of
gaze,
One angry ray fell tangled in her tears,
And dashed its blinding brightness in
her eyes.
She turned, and caught her lute, and
pensively
Rippled a random music down the
strings,
And sang . . .

All night the moonbeams bathe the
the sword.
There's not an eye to-night in Joyous-
Gard
That is not dreaming something sweet.
I wake
Because it is more sweet to dream awake:
Dreaming I see thy face upon the lake.
I am come up from far, love, to behold
thee,
That hast waited for me so bravely and
well
Thy sweet life long (for the Fairies had
told thee
I am the Knight that shall loosen the
spell),
And to-morrow morn mine arms shall
infolde thee:
And to-morrow night . . . ah, who can
tell?

As the spirit of some dark lake
Pines at nightfall, wild-awake,
For the approaching consummation
Of a great moon he divines
Coming to her coronation
Of the dazzling stars and signs,
So my heart, my heart,
Darkly (ah, and tremblingly!)
Waits in mystic expectation
(From its wild source far apart)
Until it be filled with thee, —
With the full-orbed light of thee, —
O beloved as thou art!
With the soft sad smile that flashes
Underneath thy long dark lashes;
And thy floating raven hair
From its wreathed pearls let slip;
And thy breath, like balmy air;
And thy warm wet rosy lip,

With my first kiss lingering there;
Its sweet secret unrevealed, —
Sealed by me, to me unsealed;
And . . . but, ah! she lies asleep
In yon gray stone castle-keep,
On her lids the happy tear;
And alone I linger here;
And to-morrow morn the fight;
And . . . ah, me! to-morrow night!

Here she brake, trembling, off; and on
the lute,
Yet vibrating through its melodious
nerves,
A great tear plashed and tinkled. For
a while
She sat and mused; and, heavily, drop
by drop,
Her tears fell down; then through them
a slow smile
Stole, full of April-sweetness; and she
sang —
— It was a sort of ballad of the sea:
A song of weather-beaten mariners,
Gray-headed men that had survived all
winds
And held a perilous sport among the
waves,
Who yet sang on with hearts as bold as
when
They cleared their native harbor with a
shout,
And lifted golden anchors in the sun.

Merrily, merrily drove our barks, —
Merrily up from the morning beach!
And the brine broke under the prows in
sparks;
For a spirit sat high at the helm of each.
We sailed all day; and, when day was
done,
Steered after the wake of the sunken
sun,
For we meant to follow him out of reach
Till the golden dawn was again begun.
With lifted oars, with shout and song,
Merry mariners all were we!
Every heart beat stout and strong.
Through all the world you would not
see,
Though you should journey wide and
long,
A comelier company.
And where, the echoing creeks among,
Merrily, steadily,
From bay to bay our barks did fall,

You might hear us singing, one and all,
A song of the mighty sea.
But, just at twilight, down the rocks
Dim forms trooped fast, and clearer
grew:
For out upon the sea-sand came
The island-people, whom we knew,
And called us: — girls with glowing
looks;
And sunburnt boys that tend the herd
Far up the vale; gray elders too
With silver beards: — their cries we
heard:
They called us, each one by his name.

"Could ye not wait a little while,"
We heard them sing, "for all our sakes?
A little while, in this old isle,"
They sung, "among the silver lakes?
For here," they sung, "from horn to
horn
Of flowery bays the land is fair:
The hillside glows with grapes: the
corn
Grows golden in the vale down there.
Our maids are sad for you," they sung:
"Against the field no sickle falls:
Upon the trees our harps are hung:
Our doors are void: and in the stalls
The little foxes nest; among
The herd-roved hills no shepherd calls:
Your brethren mourn for you," they
sung.
"Here weep your wives: here passed
your lives
Among the vines, when you were young:
Here dwell your sires: your household
fires
Grow cold. Return! return!" they
sung.

Then each one saw his kinsman stand
Upon the shore, and wave his hand:
And each grew sad. But still we sung
Our ocean-chorus bold and clear;
And still upon our oars we hung,
And held our course with steadfast cheer.
"For we are bound for distant shores,"
We cried, and faster swept our oars:
"We pine to see the faces there
Of men whose deeds we heard long since,
Who haunt our dreams: gray heroes:
kings
Whose fame the wandering minstrel
sings:
And maidens, too, more fair than ours,
With deeper eyes and softer hair,

Like hers that left her island bowers
To wed the sullen Cornish Prince
Who keeps his court upon the hill
By the gray coasts of Tyntagill,
And each, before he dies, must gain
Some fairy-land across the main."

But still "return, beloved, return!"
The simple island-people sung:
And still each mariner's heart did burn,
As each his kinsman could discern,
Those dim green rocks among.

"O'er you the rough sea-blasts will
blow,"
They sung, "while here the skies are
fair:
Our paths are through the fields we
know:
And yours you know not where."

But we waved our hands . . . "farewell!
farewell!"
We cried . . . "our white sails flap the
mast:
Our course is set: our oars are wet:
One day," we cried, "is nearly past:
One day at sea! Farewell! farewell!
No more with you we now may dwell!"

And the next day we were driving free
(With never a sail in sight)
Over the face of the mighty sea,
And we counted the stars next night
Rise over us by two and three
With melancholy light:
A grave-eyed, earnest company, —
And all round the salt foam white!

With this, she ceased, and sighed . . .
"though I were far,
I know yon moated iris would not shed
His purple crown: yon clover-field would
ripple
As merry in the waving wind as now:
As soft the Spring down this bare hill
would steal,
And in the vale below fling all her
flowers:
Each year the wet primroses star the
woods:
And violets muffle the sharp rivulets:
Round this lone casement's solitary panes
The wandering ivy move and mount each
year:
Each year the red wheat gleam near river-
banks:

While, ah, with each my memory from
the hearts
Of men would fade, and from their lips
my name.
O which were best — the wide, the windy
sea,
With golden gleams of undiscovered
lands,
Odors, and murmurs — or the placid Port,
From wanton winds, from scornful waves
secure,
Under the old, green, happy hills of
home?"
She sat forlorn, and pondered. Night
was near,
And, marshalling o'er the hills her dewy
camps,
Came down the outposts of the sentinel
stars.
All in the owlet light she sat forlorn.
Now hostel, hall, and grange, that eve
were crammed:
The town being choked to bursting of
the gates:
For there the King yet lay with all his
Earls,
And the Round Table, numbering all
save one.
On many a curving terrace which o'er-
hung
The long gray river, swan-like, through
the green
Of quaintest yews, moved, pacing state-
ly by,
The lovely ladies of King Arthur's court.
Sighing, she eyed them from that lonely
keep.
The Dragon-banners o'er the turrets
drooped,
The heavy twilight hanging in their folds.
And now and then, from posterns in the
wall
The Knights stole, lingering for some
last Good-night,
Whispered or sighed through closing
lattices;
Or paused with reverence of bending
plumes,
And lips on jewelled fingers gayly prest.
The silver cressets shone from pane to
pane:
And tapers flitted by with fitting forms:
Clanged the dark streets with clash of
iron heels:

Or fell a sound of coits in clattering
courts,
And drowsy horse-boys singing in the
straw.
These noises floated upward. And
within,
From the great Hall, forever and anon,
Brake gusts of revel; snatches of wild
song,
And laughter; where her sire among his
men
Caroused between the twilight and the
dark.
The silence round about her where she
sat,
Vext in itself, grew sadder for the sound.
She closed her eyes: before them seemed
to float
A dream of lighted revels, — dance and
song
In Guenver's palace: gorgeous tourna-
ments;
And rows of glittering eyes about the
Queen
(Like stars in galaxies around the moon),
That sparkled recognition down below,
Where rode the Knights amont with lance
and plume;
And each his lady's sleeve upon his helm:
Murmuring . . . "none ride for me. Am
I not fair,
Whom men call the White Flower of
Astolat?"
Far, far without, the wild gray marish
spread,
A heron startled from the pools, and
flapped
The water from his wings, and skirred
away.
The last long limit of the dying light
Dropped, all on fire, behind an iron
cloud:
And, here and there, through some wild
chasm of blue,
Tumbled a star. The mist upon the
fens
Thickened. A billowy opal grew i' the
crofts,
Fed on the land, and sucked into itself
Paling and park, close cove and bush-
less down,
Changing the world for Fairies.
Then the moon
In the low east, unprisoned from black
bars

Of stagnant fog (a white light, wrought
to the full,
Summed in a perfect orb) rose suddenly
up
Upon the silence with a great surprise,
And took the inert landscape unawares.
White, white, the snaky river: dark the
banks:
And dark the folding distance, where
her eyes
Were wildly turned, as though the whole
world lay
In that far blackness over Carlyel.
There she espied Sir Launcelot, as he rode
His coal-black courser downward from
afar,
For all his armor glittered as he went,
And showed like silver: and his mighty
shield,
By dint of knightly combat hackt and
worn,
Looked like some cracked and frozen
moon that hangs
By night o'er Baltic headlands all alone.

TO —.

As, in lone fairy-lands, up some rich
shelf
Of golden sand the wild wave moaning-
ly
Heaps its unvalued sea-wealth, weed and
gem,
Then creeps back slow into the salt sad
sea:
So from my life's new searched deeps to
thee,
Beloved, I cast these weed-flowers.
Smile on them.
More than they mean I know not to ex-
press.
So I shrink back into my old sad self,
Far from all words where love lies fath-
omless.

QUEEN GUENEVERE.

THENCE, up the sea-green floor, among
the stems
Of mighty columns whose unmeasured
shades
From aisle to aisle, unheeded in the sun,
Moved without sound, I, following all
alone

A strange desire that drew me like a
hand,
Came unawares upon the Queen. She sat
In a great silence, which her beauty
filled
Full to the heart of it, on a black chair
Mailed all about with sullen gems, and
crusts
Of sultry blazonry. Her face was bowed,
A pause of slumbrous beauty, o'er the
light
Of some delicious thought new-risen
above
The deeps of passion. Round her state-
ly head
A single circlet of the red gold fine
Burned free, from which, on either side
streamed down
Twilights of her soft hair, from neck to
foot.
Green was her kirtle as the emeralde is,
And stiff from hem to hem with seams
of stones
Beyond all value; which, from left to
right
Disparting, half revealed the snowy gleam
Of a white robe of spotless samite pure.
And from the soft repression of her zone,
Which like a light hand on a lute string
pressed
Harmony from its touch, flowed warmly
back
The bounteous outlines of a glowing
grace,
Nor yet outflowed sweet laws of loveli-
ness.
Then did I feel as one who, much per-
plexed,
Led by strange legends and the light of
stars
Over long regions of the midnight sand
Beyond the red tract of the Pyramids,
Is suddenly drawn to look upon the sky
From sense of unfamiliar light, and sees,
Revealed against the constellated cope
The great cross of the South.
The chamber round
Was dropt with arras green; and I
could hear,
In courts far off, a minstrel praising May,
Who sang . . . *Si douce, si douce est la
Margarete!*
To a faint lute. Upon the window-sill,
Hard by a latoun bowl that blazed i' the
sun

Perched a strange fowl, a Falcon Peregrine;
With all his feathers puffed for pride, and all
His courage glittering outward in his eye;
For he had flown from far, athwart strange lands,
And o'er the light of many a setting sun,
Lured by his love (such sovereignty of old
Had Beauty in all coasts of Christendom!)
To look into the great eyes of the Queen.

ALERE FLAMMAN
THE NEGLECTED HEART.

THIS heart, you would not have,
I laid up in a grave
Of song: with love enwound it;
And set sweet fancies blowing round it.
Then I to others gave it;
Because you would not have it.
"See you keep it well," I said;
"This heart's sleeping—is not dead;
But will wake some future day;
See you keep it while you may."

All great Sorrows in the world,—
Some with crowns upon their heads,
And in regal purple furred;
Some with rosaries and beads;
Some with lips of scorning, curled
At false Fortune; some, in weeds
Of mourning and of widowhood,
Standing tearful and apart,—
Each one in his several mood,
Came to take my heart.

Then in holy ground they set it:
With melodious weepings wet it:
And revered it as they found it,
With wild fancies blowing round it.

And this heart (you would not have)
Being not dead, though in the grave,
Worked miracles and marvels strange,
And healed many maladies:
Giving sight to sealed-up eyes,
And legs to lame men sick for change.

The fame of it grew great and greater.
Then said you, "Ah, what's the matter?
How hath this heart I would not take,
This weak heart a child might break—
This poor, foolish heart of his—
Since won worship such as this?"

You bethought you then . . . "Ah me
What if this heart, I did not choose
To retain, hath found the key
Of the kingdom? and I lose
A great power? Me he gave it:
Mine the right, and I will have it."

Ah, too late! For crowds exclaimed,
"Ours it is: and hath been claimed.
Moreover, where it lies, the spot
Is holy ground: so enter not.
None but men of mournful mind,—
Men to darkened days resigned;
Equal scorn of Saint and Devil;
Poor and outcast; halt and blind;
Exiles from Life's golden revel;
Gnawing at the bitter rind
Of old griefs; or else, confined
In proud cares, to serve and grind,—
May enter: whom this heart shall cure.
But go thou by: thou art not poor:
Nor defrauded of thy lot:
Bless thyself: but enter not!"

APPEARANCES.

WELL, you have learned to smile.
And no one looks for traces
Of tears about your eyes.
Your face is like most faces.
And who will ask, meanwhile,
If your face your heart belies?

Are you happy? You look so.
Well, I wish you what you seem.
Happy persons sleep so light!
In your sleep you never dream?
But who would care to know
What dreams you dreamed last night?

HOW THE SONG WAS MADE.

I SAT low down, at midnight, in a vale
Mysterious with the silence of blue
pines:
White-cloven by a snaky river-tail,
Uncoiled from tangled wefts of silver
twines.

Out of a crumbling castle, on a spike
Of splintered rock, a mile of change-
less shade

Gorged half the landscape. Down a
dismal dike
Of black hills the sluiced moonbeams
streamed, and stayed.

The world lay like a poet in a swoon,
When God is on him, filled with
heaven, all through,—
A dim face full of dreams turned to the
moon,
With mild lips moist in melancholy
dew.

I plucked blue mugwort, livid mandrakes,
balls
Of blossomed nightshade, heads of
hemlock, long
White grasses, grown in oozy intervals
Of marsh, to make ingredients for a
song:

A song of mourning to embalm the
Past,—
The corpse-cold Past,—that it should
not decay;
But in dark vaults of memory, to the
last,
Endure unchanged: for in some future
day

I will bring my new love to look at it
(Laying aside her gay robes for a mo-
ment)
That, seeing what love came to, she may
sit
Silent awhile, and muse, but make no
comment.

RETROSPECTIONS.

TO-NIGHT she will dance at the palace,
With the diamonds in her hair:
And the Prince will praise her beauty—
The loveliest lady there!

But tones, at times, in the music
Will bring back forgotten things:
And her heart will fail her sometimes,
When her beauty is praised at the
King's.

There sits in his silent chamber
A stern and sorrowful man:
But a strange sweet dream comes to him,
While the lamp is burning wau,

Of a sunset among the vineyards
In a lone and lovely land,
And a maiden standing near him,
With fresh wild-flowers in her hand.

THY VOICE ACROSS MY SPIRIT
FALLS.

THY voice across my spirit falls
Like some spent sea-wind through dim
halls
Of ocean-kings, left bare and wide
(Green floors o'er which the sea-weed
crawls!)
Where once, long since, in festal pride
Some Chief, who roved and ruled the tide,
Among his brethren reigned and died.

I dare not meet thine eyes; for so,
In gazing there, I seem once more
To lapse away through days of yore
To homes where laugh and song is o'er,
Whose inmates each went long ago—

Like some lost soul, that keeps the sem-
blance
On its brow of ancient grace
Not all faded, wandering back
To silent chambers, in the track
Of the twilight, from the Place
Of retributive Remembrance.
Ah, turn aside those eyes again!
Their light has less of joy than pain.
We are not now what we were then.

THE RUINED PALACE.

BROKEN are the Palace windows:
Rotting is the Palace floor.
The damp wind lifts the arras,
And swings the creaking door;
But it only startles the white owl
From his perch on a monarch's throne,
And the rat that was gnawing the harp-
strings
A Queen once played upon.

Dare you linger here at midnight
Alone, when the wind is about,
And the bat, and the newt, and the viper,
And the creeping things come out?
Beware of these ghostly chambers!
Search not what my heart hath been,
Lest you find a phantom sitting
Where once there sat a Queen.

A VISION OF VIRGINS.

I HAD a vision of the night.

It seemed
There was a long red tract of barren land,
Blockt in by black hills, where a half-
moon dreamed
Of morn, and whitened.
Drifts of dry brown sand,
This way and that, were heapt below :
and flats
Of water:—glaring shallows, where
strange bats
Came and went, and moths flickered.
To the right,
A dusty road that crept along the waste
Like a white snake: and, farther up, I
traced
The shadow of a great house, far in sight:
A hundred casements all ablaze with
light:
And forms that flit athwart them as in
haste:
And a slow music, such as sometimes
kings
Command at mighty revels, softly sent
From viol, and flute, and tabor, and the
strings
Of many a sweet and slumbrous instru-
ment
That wound into the mute heart of the
night
Out of that distance.
Then I could perceive
A glory pouring through an open door,
And in the light five women. I believe
They wore white vestments, all of them.
They were
Quite calm; and each still face unearth-
ly fair,
Unearthly quiet. So like statues all,
Waiting they stood without that lighted
hall;
And in their hands, like a blue star,
they held
Each one a silver lamp.
Then I beheld
A shadow in the doorway. And One
came
Crowned for a feast. I could not see the
Face.
The Form was not all human. As the
flame
Streamed over it, a presence took the
place
With awe.

He, turning, took them by the hand,
And led them each up the white stairway,
and
The door closed.

At that moment the moon dipped
Behind a rag of purple vapor, ript
Off a great cloud, some dead wind, ere it
spent
Its last breath, had blown open, and so
rent
You saw behind blue pools of light, and
there
A wild star swimming in the lurid air.
The dream was darkened. And a sense
of loss
Fell like a nightmare on the land: be-
cause
The moon yet lingered in her cloud-
eclipse.
Then, in the dark, swelled sullenly across
The waste a wail of women.

Her blue lips
The moon drew up out of the cloud.
Again
I had a vision on that midnight plain.

Five women: and the beauty of despair
Upon their faces: locks of wild wet hair,
Clammy with anguish, wandered low
and loose

O'er their bare breasts, that seemed too
filled with trouble
To feel the damp crawl of the midnight
dews

That trickled down them. One was
bent half double,
A dismayed heap, that hung o'er the last
spark

Of a lamp slowly dying. As she blew
The dull light redder, and the dry wick
flew

In crumbling sparkles all about the dark,
I saw a light of horror in her eyes;
A wild light on her flushed cheek; a wild
white

On her dry lips; an agony of surprise
Fearfully fair.

The lamp dropped. From my sight
She fell into the dark.

Beside her, sat
One without motion: and her stern face
flat
Against the dark sky.

One, as still as death,
Hollowed her hands about her lamp, for
fear

Some motion of the midnight, or her
breath,
Should fan out the last flicker. Rosy-
clear
The light oozed, through her fingers, o'er
her face.
There was a ruined beauty hovering there
Over deep pain, and, dasht with lurid
grace
A waning bloom.

The light grew dim and blear:
And she, too, slowly darkened in her
place.

Another, with her white hands hotly
lockt

About her damp knees, muttering mad-
ness, rocked

Forward and backward. But at last
she stopped,

And her dark head upon her bosom
dropped
Motionless.

Then one rose up with a cry
To the great moon; and stretched a
wrathful arm

Of wild expostulation to the sky,
Murmuring, "These earth-lamps fail us!
and what harm?"

Does not the moon shine? Let us rise
and haste

To meet the Bridegroom yonder o'er the
waste!

For now I seem to catch once more the
tone

Of viols on the night. 'T were better
done,

At worst, to perish near the golden gate,
And fall in sight of glory one by one,

Than here all night upon the wild, to
wait

Uncertain ills. Away! the hour is late!"

Again the moon dipped.

I could see no more.
Not the least gleam of light did heaven
afford.

At last, I heard a knocking on a door,
And some one crying, "Open to us,
Lord!"

There was an awful pause.
I heard my heart

Beat.

Then a Voice—"I know you not.
Depart."

I caught, within, a glimpse of glory.
And

The door closed.

Still in darkness dreamed the land.
I could not see those women. Not a
breath!

Darkness, and awe: a darkness more
than death.

The darkness took them. * * * * *

LEOLINE.

IN the molten-golden moonlight,
In the deep grass warm and dry,
We watched the fire-fly rise and swim
In floating sparkles by.
All night the hearts of nightingales,
Song-steeping, slumbrous leaves,
Flowed to us in the shadow there
Below the cottage-eaves.

We sang our songs together
Till the stars shook in the skies.
We spoke—we spoke of common things,
Yet the tears were in our eyes.
And my hand,—I know it trembled
To each light warm touch of thine.
But we were friends, and only friends,
My sweet friend, Leoline!

How large the white moon looked, Dear!
There has not ever been
Since those old nights the same great
light

In the moons which I have seen.
I often wonder, when I think,
If you have thought so too,
And the moonlight has grown dimmer,
Dear,
Than it used to be to you.

And sometimes, when the warm west-
wind

Comes faint across the sea,
It seems that you have breathed on it,
So sweet it comes to me:

And sometimes, when the long light
waned

In one deep crimson line,
I muse, "and does she watch it too,
Far off, sweet Leoline?"

And often, leaning all day long
My head upon my hands,
My heart aches for the vanished time
In the far fair foreign lands:

Thinking sadly — "Is she happy?
Has she tears for those old hours?
And the cottage in the starlight?
And the songs among the flowers?"

One night we sat below the porch,
And out in that warm air,
A fire-fly, like a dying star,
Fell tangled in her hair;
But I kissed him lightly off again,
And he glittered up the vine,
And died into the darkness
For the love of Leoline!

Between two songs of Petrarch
I've a purple rose-leaf prest,
More sweet than common rose-leaves,
For it once lay in her breast.
When she gave me that her eyes were wet,
The rose was full of dew.
The rose is withered long ago:
The page is blistered too.

There's a blue flower in my garden,
The bee loves more than all:
The bee and I, we love it both,
Though it is frail and small.
She loved it too, — long, long ago!
Her love was less than mine.
Still we are friends, but only friends,
My lost love, Leoline!

SPRING AND WINTER.

THE world buds every year:
But the heart just once, and when
The blossom falls off sere
No new blossom comes again.
Ah, the rose goes with the wind:
But the thorns remain behind.

Was it well in him, if he
Felt not love, to speak of love so?
If he still unmoved must be,
Was it nobly sought to move so?
— Pluck the flower, and yet not wear it—
Spurn, despise it, yet not spare it?

Need he say that I was fair,
With such meaning in his tone,
Just to speak of one whose hair
Had the same tinge as my own?
Pluck my life up, root and bloom,
Just to plant it on her tomb?

And she'd scarce so fair a face
(So he used to say) as mine:
And her form had far less grace:
And her brow was far less fine:
But 't was just that he loved then
More than he can love again.

Why, if Beauty could not bind him,
Need he praise me, speaking low:
Use my face just to remind him
How no face could please him now?
Why, if loving could not move him,
Did he teach me still to love him?

And he said my eyes were bright,
But his own, he said, were dim:
And my hand, he said, was white,
But what was that to him?
"For," he said, "in gazing at you,
I seem gazing at a statue."

"Yes!" he said, "he had grown wise
now:
He had suffered much of yore:
But a fair face to his eyes now,
Was a fair face, and no more.
Yet the anguish and the bliss,
And the dream too, had been his."

Then, why talk of "lost romances"
Being "sick of sentiment!"
And what meant those tones and glances
If real love was never meant?
Why, if his own youth were withered,
Must mine also have been gathered?

Why those words a thought too tender
For the commonplaces spoken?
Looks whose meaning seemed to render
Help to words when speech came broken?
Why so late in July moonlight
Just to say what's said by noonlight?

And why praise my youth for gladness,
Keeping something in his smile
Which turned all my youth to sadness,
He still smiling all the while?
Since, when so my youth was over
He said — "Seek some younger lover!"

"For the world buds once a year,
But the heart just once," he said.
True! . . . so now that Spring is here
All my flowers, like his, are dead.
And the rose drops in the wind.
But the thorns remain behind.

KING HERMANDIAZ.

THEN, standing by the shore, I saw the
moon
Change hue, and dwindle in the west, as
when
Warm looks fade inward out of dying
eyes,
And the dim sea began to moan.

I knew
My hour had come, and to the bark I
went.
Still were the stately decks, and hung
with silk
Of stoled crimson: at the mast-head
burned
A steadfast fire with influence like a
star,
And underneath a couch of gold. I
loosed
The dripping chain. There was not any
wind:

But all at once the magic sails began
To belly and heave, and like a bat that
wakes
And flits by night, beneath her swarthy
wings
The black ship rocked and moved. I
heard anon
A humming in the cordage and a sound
Like bees in summer, and the bark went
on,

And on, and on, until at last the world
Was rolled away and folded out of sight,
And I was all alone on the great sea.
There a deep awe fell on my spirit. My
wound
Began to bite. I, gazing round, beheld
A lady sitting silent at the helm,
A woman white as death, and fair as
dreams.

I would have asked her "Whither do we
sail?"
And "how?" but that my fear clung at
my heart,
And held me still. She, answering my
doubt,
Said slowly, "To the Isle of Avalon."

And straightway we were nigh a strand
all gold,
That glittered in the moon between the
dusk
Of hanging bowers made rich with
blooms and balm,
From which faint gusts came to me;
and I heard

A sound of lutes among the vales, and
songs
And voices faint like voices through a
dream
That said or seemed to say, "Hail, Her-
mandiaz!"

SONG.

In the warm, black mill-pool winking,
The first doubtful star shines blue:
And alone here I lie thinking
O such happy thoughts of you!

Up the porch the roses clamber,
And the flowers we sowed last June;
And the casement of your chamber
Shines between them to the moon.

Look out, Love! fling wide the lattice:
Wind the red rose in your hair,
And the little white clematis
Which I plucked for you to wear:

Or come down, and let me hear you
Singing in the scented grass,
Through tall cowslips nodding near you,
Just to touch you as you pass.

For, where you pass, the air
With warm hints of love grows wise:
You — the dew on your dim hair,
And the smile in your soft eyes!

From the hayfield comes your brother;
There your sisters stand together,
Singing clear to one another
Through the dark blue summer weather,

And the maid the latch is clinking,
As she lets her lover through:
But alone, Love, I lie thinking
O such tender thoughts of you!

THE SWALLOW.

O SWALLOW chirping in the sparkling
eaves,
Why hast thou left far south thy fairy
homes,
To build between these drenched April-
leaves,
And sing me songs of Spring before it
comes?

Too soon thou singest! Yon black
stubborn thorn
Bursts not a bud: the sneaping wind
drifts on.
She that once flung thee crumbs, and in
the morn
Sang from the lattice where thou
sing'st, is gone.
Here is no Spring. Thy flight yet fur-
ther follow.
Fly off, vain swallow!

Thou com'st to mock me with remem-
bered things.
I love thee not, O bird for me too
gay.
That which I want thou hast, — the gift
of wings:
Grief — which I have — thou hast not.
Fly away!
What hath my roof for thee? My cold
dark roof,
Beneath whose weeping thatch thine
eggs will freeze!
Summer will halt not here, so keep
aloof.
Others are gone; go thou. In those
wet trees
I see no Spring, though thou still singest
of it.
Fare hence, false prophet!

CONTRABAND.

A HEAP of low, dark, rocky coast,
Where the blue-black sea sleeps smooth
and even:
And the sun, just over the reefs at
most,
In the amber part of a pale blue
heaven:

A village asleep below the pines,
Hid up the gray shore from the low
slow sun:
And a maiden that lingers among the
vines,
With her feet in the dews, and her
locks undone:

The half-moon melting out of the
sky;
And, just to be seen still, a star here,
a star there,

Faint, high up in the heart of the heaven;
so high
And so faint, you can scarcely be sure
that they are there.

And one of that small, black, raking
craft;
Two swivel guns on a round deck
handy;
And a great sloop sail with the wind
abaft;
And four brown thieves round a cask
of brandy.

That's my life, as I left it last.
And what it may be henceforth I know
not.
But all that I keep of the merry Past
Are trifles like these, which I care to
show not: —

A leathern flask, and a necklace of
pearl;
These rusty pistols, this tattered chart,
Friend,
And the soft dark half of a raven curl;
And, at evening, the thought of a
true, true heart, Friend.

EVENING.

ALREADY evening! In the duskiest
nook
Of yon dusk corner, under the Death's-
head,
Between the alembecs, thrust this
legended,
And iron-bound, and melancholy book,
For I will read no longer. The loud brook
Shelves his sharp light up shallow
banks thin-spread;
The slumbrous west grows slowly red,
and red:
Up from the ripened corn her silver hook
The moon is lifting: and deliciously
Along the warm blue hills the day de-
clines:
The first star brightens while she
waits for me,
And round her swelling heart the zone
grows tight:
Musing, half-sad, in her soft hair she
twines
The white rose, whispering "he will
come to-night!"

ADON.

I WILL not weep for Adon!
I will not waste my breath to draw thick
sighs
For Spring's dead greenness. All the
orient skies
Are hushed, and breathing out a bright
surprise
Round morning's marshalling star: Rise,
Eos, rise!
Day's dazzling spears are up: the
faint stars fade on
The white hills, — cold, like Adon!

O'er crag, and spar, and splinter
Break down, and roll the amber mist,
stern light.
The black pines dream of dawn. The
skirts of night
Are ravelled in the East. And planted
bright
In heaven, the roots of ice shine, sharp
and white,
In frozen ray, and spar, and spike, and
splinter.
Within me and without, all's Winter.

Why should I weep for Adon?
Am I, because the sweet Past is no more,
Dead, as the leaves upon the graves of
yore?
I will breathe boldly, though the air be
froe
With freezing fire. Life still beats at
the core
Of the world's heart, though Death
his awe hath laid on
This dumb white corpse of Adon.

THE PROPHET.

WHEN the East lightens with strange
hints of morn,
The first tinge of the growing glory takes
The cold crown of some hushed high alp
forlorn,
While yet o'er vales below the dark is
spread.
Even so the dawning Age, in silence,
breaks,
O solitary soul, on thy still head:
And we, that watch below with reverent
fear,
Seeing thee crowned, do know that day
is near.

WEALTH.

Was it not enough to dream the day to
death
Grandly? and finely feed on faint per-
fumes?
Between the heavy lilacs draw thick
breath,
While the noon hummed from glowing
citron-glooms?

Or walk with Morning in these dewy
bowers,
'Mid sheaved lilies, and the moth-loved
lips
Of purple asters, bearded flat sunflowers,
And milk-white crumpled pinks with
blood 't the tips?

But I must also, gazing upon thee,
Pine with delicious pain, and subtle
smart,
Till I felt heavy immortality,
Laden with looks of thine, weigh on
my heart!

WANT.

You swore you loved me all last June:
And now December's come and gone.
The Summer went with you — too soon.
The Winter goes — alone.

Next Spring the leaves will all be green:
But love like ours, once turned to pain,
Can be no more what it hath been,
Though roses bloom again.

Return, return the unvalued wealth
I gave! which scarcely profits you —
The heart's lost youth — the soul's lost
health —
In vain! . . . false friend, adieu!

A BIRD AT SUNSET.

WILD bird, that wingest wide the glim-
mering moors,
Whither, by belts of yellowing woods
away?

With pausing sunset thy wild heart al-
lures
Deep into dying day?

Would that my heart, on wings like
thine, could pass
Where stars their light in rosy regions
lose,

A happy shadow o'er the warm brown
grass,
Falling with falling dews!

Hast thou, like me, some true-love of
thine own,
In fairy lands beyond the utmost seas;
Who there, unsolaced, yearns for thee
alone,
And sings to silent trees?

O tell that woodbird that the Summer
grieves,
And the suns darken and the days
grow cold;
And, tell her, love will fade with fading
leaves,
And cease in common mould.

Fly from the winter of the world to her!
Fly, happy bird! I follow in thy
flight,
Till thou art lost o'er yonder fringe of fir
In baths of crimson light.

My love is dying far away from me.
She sits and saddens in the fading
west.

For her I mourn all day, and pine to be
At night upon her breast.

IN TRAVEL.

Now our white sail flutters down:
Now it broadly takes the breeze:
Now the wharves upon the town,
Lessening, leave us by degrees.
Blithely blows the morning, shaking
On your cheek the loosened curls:
Round our prow the cleft wave, breaking,
Tumbles off in heaped pearls,
Which in forks of foam unite,
And run seething out to sea,
Where o'er gleams of briny light,
Dip the dancing gulls in glee.
Now the mountain serpentine
Ships out many a snaky line
Down the dark blue ocean-spine.

From the boatside, while we pass,
I can see, as in a glass,
Pirates on the flat sea-sand,
Carousing ere they put from land;
And the purple-pointed crests
Of hills whereon the morning rests
Whose ethereal vivid peaks
Glimmer in the lucid creeks.
Now these wind away; and now
Hamlets up the mountain-brow
Peep and peer from roof to roof;
And gray castle-walls aloof
O'er wide vineyards just in grape,
From whose serfs old Barons held
Tax and toll in feudal eld,
Creep out of the uncoiling cape.
Now the long low layer of mist
A slow trouble rolls and lifts,
With a broken billowy motion,
From the rocks and from the rifts,
Laying bare, just here and there,
Black stone-pines, at morn dew-kist
By salt winds from bound to bound
Of the great sea freshening round;
Wattled folds on bleak brown downs
Sloping high o'er sleepy towns;
Lengths of shore and breadths of ocean.

Love, lean here upon my shoulder,
And look yonder, love, with me:
Now I think that I can see
In the merry market-places
Sudden warmths of sunny faces:
Many a lovely laughing maiden
Bearing on her loose dark locks
Rich fruit-baskets heavy-laden,
In and out among the rocks,
Knowing not that we behold her.
Now, love, tell me, can you hear,
Growing nearer, and more near,
Sound of song, and splash of oar,
From wild bays, and inlets hoar,
While above yon isles afar
Ghostlike sinks last night's last star?

CHANGES.

WHOM first we love, you know, we sel-
dom wed.
Time rules us all. And Life, indeed,
is not
The thing we planned it out ere hope
was dead.
And then, we women cannot choose
our lot.

Much must be borne which it is hard to
bear:

Much given away which it were sweet
to keep.

God help us all! who need, indeed, His
care.

And yet, I know, the Shepherd loves
His sheep.

My little boy begins to babble now
Upon my knee his earliest infant
prayer.

He has his father's eager eyes, I know.
And, they say too, his mother's sun-
ny hair.

But when he sleeps and smiles upon my
knee,
And I can feel his light breath come
and go,

I think of one (Heaven help and pity
me!)

Who loved me, and whom I loved,
long ago.

Who might have been . . . ah, what I
dare not think!

We all are changed. God judges for
us best.

God help us do our duty, and not shrink,
And trust in heaven humbly for the
rest.

But blame us women not, if some appear
Too cold at times; and some too gay
and light.

Some griefs gnaw deep. Some woes are
hard to bear.

Who knows the Past? and who can
judge us right?

Ah, were we judged by what we might
have been,

And not by what we are, too apt to
fall!

My little child—he sleeps and smiles
between

These thoughts and me. In heaven
we shall know all!

JUDICIUM PARIDIS.

I SAID, when young, "Beauty's the su-
preme joy.

Her I will choose, and in all forms
will face her;

Eye to eye, lip to lip, and so embrace
her

With my whole heart." I said this
being a boy.

"First, I will seek her,—naked, or clad
only

In her own godhead, as I know of
yore

Great bards beheld her." So by sea
and shore

I sought her, and among the mountains
lonely.

"There be great sunsets in the wondrous
West;

And marvel in the orbings of the moon;
And glory in the jubilees of June;

And power in the deep ocean. For the
rest,

"Green-glaring glaciers; purple clouds
of pine

White walls of ever-roaring cataracts;
Blue thunder drifting over thirsty
tracts;

The homes of eagles; these, too, are di-
vine,

"And terror shall not daunt me—so it be
Beautiful—or in storm or in eclipse:

Rocking pink shells, or wrecking
freighted ships,

I shall not shrink to find her in the sea.

"Next, I will seek her—in all shapes
of wood,

Or brass, or marble; or in colors clad;
And sensuous lines, to make my spirit
glad.

And she shall change her dress with
every mood.

"Rose-latticed casements, lone in summer
lands—

Some witch's bower: pale sailors on
the marge

Of magic seas, in an enchanted barge
Stranded, at sunset, upon jewelled sands:

"White nymphs among the lilies: shep-
herd kings:

And pink-hooved Fawns: and mooned
Endymions;

From every channel through which
Beauty runs

To fertilize the world with lovely things.

"I will draw freely, and be satisfied.
Also, all legends of her apparition
To men, in earliest times, in each condition,
I will inscribe on portraits of my bride.

"Then, that no single sense of her be wanting,
Music; and all voluptuous combinations
Of sound, with their melodious palpitations
To charm the ear, the cells of fancy haunting.

"And in her courts my life shall be outrolled
As one unfurls some gorgeous tapestry,
Wrought o'er with old Olympian heraldry,
All purple-woven stiff with blazing gold.

"And I will choose no sight for tears to flow:
I will not look at sorrow: I will see
Nothing less fair and full of majesty
Than young Apollo leaning on his bow.

"And I will let things come and go:
nor range
For knowledge: but from moments pluck delight,
The while the great days ope and shut
in light,
And wax and wane about me, rich with change.

"Some cup of dim hills, where a white moon lies,
Dropt out of weary skies without a breath,
In a great pool: a slumbrous vale beneath:
And blue damps prickling into white fire-flies:

"Some sunset vision of an Oread, less
Than half an hour ere moonrise caught asleep
With a flushed cheek, among crushed violets deep,—
A warm half-glimpse of milk-white nakedness,

"On sumptuous summer eves: shall wake for me
Rapture from all the various stops of life:

Making it like some charmed Arcadian life
Filled by a wood-god with his ecstasy."

These things I said while I was yet a boy,
And the world showed as between dream and waking
A man may see the face he loves. So, breaking
Silence, I cried . . . "Thou art the supreme Joy!"

My spirit, as a lark hid near the sun,
Carolled at morning. But ere she had dropt
Half down the rainbow-colored years that propped
Her gold cloud up, and broadly, one by one
The world's great harvest-lands broke on her eye,
She changed her tone, . . . "What is it I may keep?
For look here, how the merry reapers reap:
Even children glean: and each puts something by.

"The pomps of morning pass: when evening comes,
What is retained of these which I may show?
If for the hills I leave the fields below
I fear to die an exile from men's homes.

"Though here I see the orient pageants pass,
I am not richer than the merest hind
That toils below, all day, among his kind,
And clinks at eve glad horns in the dry grass."

Then, pondering long, at length I made confession.
"I have erred much, rejecting all that man did:
For all my pains I shall go empty-handed:
And Beauty, of its nature foils possession."

Thereafter, I said . . . "Knowledge is most fair.
Surely to know is better than to see.

To see is loss: to know is gain: and we
Grow old. I will store thriftily, with care."

In which mood I endured for many years,
Valuing all things for their further uses:
And seeking knowledge at all open sluices:
Though oft the stream turned brackish with my tears.

Yet not the less, for years in this same mood
I rested: nor from any object turned
That had its secret to be spelled and learned,
Murmuring ever, "Knowledge is most good."

Unto which end I shunned the revelling
And ignorant crowd, that eat the fruits and die:
And called out Plato from his century
To be my helpmate: and made Homer sing.

Until the awful Past in gathered heaps
Weighed on my brain, and sunk into my soul,
And saddened through my nature, till the whole
Of life was darkened downward to the deeps.

And, wave on wave, the melancholy ages
Crept o'er my spirit: and the years displaced
The landmarks of the days: life waned, effaced
From action by the sorrows of the sages:

And my identity became at last
The record of those others: or, if more,
A hollow shell the sea sung in: a shore
Of footprints which the waves washed from it fast.

And all was as a dream whence, holding breath,
It seemed, at times, just possible to break
By some wild nervous effort, with a shriek,
Into the real world of life and death.

But that thought saved me. Through the dark I screamed
Against the darkness, and the darkness broke,
And broke that nightmare: back to life I woke,
Though weary with the dream which I had dreamed.

O life! life! life! With laughter and with tears
I tried myself: I knew that I had need
Of pain to prove that this was life indeed,
With its warm privilege of hopes and fears.

O Love of man made Life of man, that saves!
O man, that standest looking on the light:
That standest on the forces of the night:
That standest up between the stars and graves!

O man! by man's dread privilege of pain,
Dare not to scorn thine own soul nor thy brother's:
Though thou be more or less than all the others.
Man's life is all too sad for man's disdain.

The smiles of seraphs are less awful far
Than are the tears of this humanity,
That sound, in dropping, through Eternity,
Heard in God's ear beyond the furthest star.

If that be true, — the hereditary hate
Of Love's lost Rebel, since the worlds began, —
The very Fiend, in hating, honors Man:
Flattering with Devil-homage Man's estate.

If two Eternities, at strife for us,
Around each human soul wage silent war,
Dare we disdain ourselves, though fall'n we are,
With Hell and Heaven looking on us thus!

Whom God hath loved, whom Devils dare not scorn,
 Despise not thou, — the meanest human creature.
 Climb, if thou canst, the heights of thine own nature,
 And look toward Paradise where each was born.

So I spread sackcloth on my former pride:
 And sat down, clothed and covered up with shame:
 And cried to God to take away my blame
 Among my brethren: and to these I cried

To come between my crime and my despair,
 That they might help my heart up, when God sent
 Upon my soul its proper punishment,
 Lest that should be too great for me to bear.

And so I made my choice: and learned to live
 Again, and worship, as my spirit yearned:
 So much had been admired — so much been learned —
 So much been given me — O, how much to give!

Here is the choice, and now the time, O chooser!
 Endless the consequence though brief the choice.
 Echoes are waked down ages by thy voice:
 Speak: and be thou the gainer or the loser.

And I bethought me long . . . "Though garners split,
 If none but thou be fed art thou more full?"
 For surely Knowledge and the Beautiful
 Are human; must have love, or die for it!

To Give is better than to Know or See:
 And both are means: and neither is the end:
 Knowing and seeing, if none call thee friend,
 Beauty and knowledge have done naught for thee.

Though I at Aphrodite all day long
 Gaze until sunset with a thirsty eye,
 I shall not drain her boundless beauty dry
 By that wild gaze: nor do her fair face wrong.

For who gives, giving, doth win back his gift:
 And knowledge by division grows to more:
 Who hides the Master's talent shall die poor,
 And starve at last of his own thankless thrift.

I did this for another: and, behold!
 My work hath blood in it: but thine hath none:
 Done for thyself, it dies in being done:
 To what thou buyest thou thyself art sold.

Give thyself utterly away. Be lost.
 Choose some one, something: not thyself, thine own:
 Thou canst not perish: but, thrice greater grown, —
 Thy gain the greatest where thy loss was most, —

Thou in another shalt thyself new-find.
 The single globule, lost in the wide sea,
 Becomes an ocean. Each identity
 Is greatest in the greatness of its kind.

Who serves for gain, a slave, by thankless pelf
 Is paid: who gives himself is priceless, free.
 I give myself, a man, to God: lo, He
 Renders me back a saint unto myself!

NIGHT.

COME to me, not as once thou camest,
 Night!
 With light and splendor up the gorgeous West;
 Easing the heart's rich sense of thee with sighs
 Sobbed out of all emotion on Love's breast;
 While the dark world waned wavering into rest,
 Half seen athwart the dim delicious light
 Of languid eyes:

But softly, soberly; and dark — more dark!
 Till my life's shadow lose itself in thine.
 Athwart the light of slowly-gathering tears,
 That come between me and the starlight, shine
 From distant melancholy deeps divine,
 While day slips downward through a rosy arc
 To other spheres.

SONG.

Flow, freshly flow,
 Dark stream, below!
 While stars grow light above:
 By willowy banks, through lonely downs,
 Past terraced walls in silent towns,
 And bear me to my love!

Still, as we go,
 Blow, gently blow,
 Warm wind, and blithely move
 These dreamy sails, that slowly glide, —
 A shadow on the shining tide
 That bears me to my love.

Fade, sweetly fade
 In dewy shade
 On lonely grange and grove,
 O lingering day! and bring the night
 Through all her milk-white mazes bright
 That tremble o'er my love.

The sunset wanes
 From twinkling panes.
 Dim, misty myriads move
 Down glimmering streets. One light I see —
 One happy light, that shines for me,
 And lights me to my love!

FORBEARANCE.

CALL me not, Love, unthankful or unkind,
 That I have left my heart with thee,
 and fled.
 I were not worth that wealth which I resigned,
 Had I not chosen poverty instead.

Grant me but solitude! I dare not swerve
 From my soul's law, — a slave, though serving thee.
 I but forbear more grandly to deserve:
 The free gift only cometh of the free.

HELIOS HYPERIONIDES.

HELIOS all day long his allotted labor pursues;
 No rest to his passionate heart and his panting horses given,
 From the moment when roseate-fingered Eos kindles the dews
 And spurns the salt sea-floors, ascending silvery the heaven,
 Until from the hand of Eos Hesperos, trembling, receives
 His fragrant lamp, and faint in the twilight hangs it up.
 Then the over-wearied son of Hyperion lightly leaves
 His dusty chariot, and softly slips into his golden cup:
 And to holy Ethiopia, under the ocean-stream,
 Back from the sunken retreats of the sweet Hesperides,
 Leaving his unloved labor, leaving his unyoked team,
 He sails to his much-loved wife; and stretches his limbs at ease
 In a laurelled lawn divine, on a bed of beaten gold,
 Where he pleasantly sleeps, forgetting his travel by lands and seas,
 Till again the clear-eyed Eos comes with a finger cold,
 And again, from his white wife severed, Hyperionides
 Leaps into his flaming chariot, angrily gathers the reins,
 Headlong flings his course through Uranos, much in wrath,
 And over the seas and mountains, over the rivers and plains,
 Chafed at heart, tumultuous, pushes his burning path.

ELISABETTA SIRANI.

1665.

JUST to begin, — and end! so much, — no more!
 To touch upon the very point at last

Where life should cling: to feel the
solid shore
Safe; where, the seething sea's strong
toil o'erpast,
Peace seemed appointed; then, with all
the store
Half-undivulged of the gleaned ocean
cast,
Like a discouraged wave's on the bleak
strand,
Where what appeared some temple
(whose glad Priest
To gather ocean's sparkling gift should
stand,
Bidding the wearied wave, from toil
releas't,
Sleep in the marble harbors bathed with
bland
And quiet sunshine, flowing from full
east
Among the laurels) proves the dull blind
rock's
Fantastic front, — to die, a disallowed,
Dasht purpose: which the scornful shore-
cliff mocks,
Even as it sinks; and all its wealth
bestowed
In vain, — mere food to feed, perchance,
stray flocks
Of the coarse sea-gull! weaving its
own shroud
Of idle foam, swift ceasing to be seen!
— Sad, sad, my father! . . . yet it
comes to this.
For I am dying. All that might have
been —
That must have been! . . . the days,
so hard to miss,
So sure to come! . . . eyes, lips, that
seemed to lean
In on me at my work, and almost
kiss
The curls bowed o'er it, . . . lost! O,
never doubt
I should have lived to know them all
again,
And from the crowd of praisers single
out
For special love those forms beheld so
plain
Beforehand. When my pictures, borne
about
Bologna, to the church doors, led their
train
Of kindling faces, turned, as by they go,
Up to these windows, — standing at
your side

Unseen, to see them, I (be sure!) should
know
And welcome back those eyes and lips,
descried
Long since in fancy: for I loved them so,
And so believed them! Think! . . .
Bologna's pride
My paintings! . . . Guido Reni's mantle
mine . . .
And I, the maiden artist, prized among
The masters, . . . ah, that dream was too
divine
For earth to realize! I die so young,
All this escapes me! God, the gift be
Thine,
Not man's then . . . better so! That
throbbing throng
Of human faces fades out fast. Even
yours,
Belovéd ones, the inexorable Fate
(For all our vowed affections!) scarce
endures
About me. Must I go, then, desolate
Out from among you? Nay, my work
insures
Fit guerdon somewhere, — though the
gift must wait!
Had I lived longer, life would sure have
set
Earth's gift of fame in safety. But I
die.
Death must make safe the heavenly guer-
don yet.
I trusted time for immortality, —
There was my error! Father, never let
Doubt of reward confuse my memory!
Besides, — I have done much: and what
is done
Is well done. All my heart conceived,
my hand
Made fast . . . mild martyr, saint, and
weeping nun,
And truncheoned prince, and warrior
with bold brand,
Yet keep my life upon them; — as the sun,
Though fallen below the limits of the
land,
Still sees on every form of purple cloud
His painted presence.

Flaring August's here,
September's coming! Summer's broid-
ered shroud
Is borne away in triumph by the year:
Red Autumn drops, from all his branches
bowed,
His careless wealth upon the costly bier.

We must be cheerful. Set the casement
wide.
One last look o'er the places I have
loved,
One last long look! . . . Bologna, O my
pride
Among thy palaced streets! The days
have moved
Pleasantly o'er us. What has been de-
nied
To our endeavor? Life goes unre-
proved.
To make the best of all things, is the best
Of all means to be happy. This I
know,
But cannot phrase it finely. The night's
rest
The day's toil sweetens. Flowers are
warmed by snow.
All's well God wills. Work out this
grief. Joy's zest
Itself is salted with a touch of woe.
There's nothing comes to us may not be
borne,
Except a too great happiness. But
this
Comes rarely. Though I know that you
will mourn
The little maiden helpmate you must
miss,
Thanks be to God, I leave you not for-
lorn.
There should be comfort in this dying
kiss.
Let Barbara keep my colors for herself.
I'm sorry that Lucia went away
In some unkindness. 'T was a cheerful
elf!
Send her my scarlet ribands, mother;
say
I thought of her. My palette's on the
shelf,
Surprised, no doubt, at such long holi-
day.
In the south window, on the easel, stands
My picture for the Empress Eleánore,
Still wanting some few touches, these
weak hands
Must leave to others. Yet there's
time before
The year ends. And the Empress' own
commands
You'll find in writing. Barbara's
brush is more
Like mine than Anna's; let her finish it.
O, . . . and there's 'Maso, our poor
fisherman!

You'll find my work done for him:
something fit
To hang among his nets: you liked
the plan
My fancy took to please our friend's dull
wit,
Scarce brighter than his old tin fish-
ing-can. . . .
St. Margaret, stately as a ship full sail,
Leading a dragon by an azure band;
The ribbon flutters gayly in the gale;
The monster follows the Saint's guid-
ing hand,
Wrinkled to one grim smile from head
to tail:
For in his horny hide his heart grows
bland.
— Where are you, dear ones? . . .

'T is the dull, faint chill,
Which soon will shrivel into burning
pain!
Dear brother, sisters, father, mother, —
still
Stand near me! While your faces
fixt remain
Within my sense, vague fears of unknown
ill
Are softly crowded out, . . . and yet,
't is vain!
Greet Giulio Banzi; greet Antonio; greet
Bartolomeo, kindly. When I'm gone,
And in the school-room, as of old, you
meet,
— Ah, yes! you'll miss a certain merry
tone,
A cheerful face, a smile that should com-
plete
The vague place in the household
picture grown
To an aspect so familiar, it seems strange
That aught should alter there. Mere
life, at least,
Could not have brought the shadow of a
change
Across it. Safely the warm years in-
creast
Among us. I have never sought to
range
From our small table at earth's general
feast,
To higher places: never loved but you,
Dear family of friends, except my
art:
Nor any form save those my pencil drew
E'er quivered in the quiet of my
heart.

I die a maiden to Madonna true,
And would have so continued. . .
There, the smart,
The pang, the faintness! . . .

Ever, as I lie
Here, with the Autumn sunset on my
face,
And heavy in my curls (whilst it, and I,
Together, slipping softly from the place
We played in, pensively prepare to die),
A low warm humming simmers in my
ears,
— Old Summer afternoons! faint frag-
ments rise
Out of my broken life . . . at times
appears
Madonna-like a moon in mellow skies:
The three Fates with the spindle and
the shears:
The Grand Duke Cosmo with the Desti-
nies:
St. Margaret with her dragon: fitful
cheers
Along the Via Urbana come and go:
Bologna with her towers! . . . Then
all grows dim,

And shapes itself anew, softly and slow,
To cloistered glooms through which
the silver hymn
Eludes the sensitive silence; whilst below
The southwest window, just one single,
slim,
And sleepy sunbeam, powders with waved
gold
A lane of gleamy mist along the gloom,
Whereby to find its way, through mani-
fold
Magnificence, to Guido Reni's tomb,
Which, set in steadfast splendor, I be-
hold.
And all the while, I scent the incense
fume,
Till dizzy grows the brain, and dark the
eye
Beneath the eyelid. When the end
is come,
There, by his tomb (our master's) let me
lie,
Somewhere, not too far off; beneath
the dome
Of our own Lady of the Rosary:
Safe, where old friends will pass; and
still near home!

LAST WORDS.

WILL, are you sitting and watching there yet? And I know, by a certain skill
That grows out of utter wakefulness, the night must be far spent, Will:
For, lying awake so many a night, I have learned at last to catch
From the crowing cock, and the clanging clock, and the sound of the beating watch,
A misty sense of the measureless march of Time, as he passes here,
Leaving my life behind him; and I know that the dawn is near.
But you have been watching three nights, Will, and you looked so wan to-night,
I thought, as I saw you sitting there, in the sad monotonous light
Of the moody night-lamp near you, that I could not choose but close
My lids as fast, and lie as still, as though I lay in a doze:
For, I thought, "He will deem I am dreaming, and then he may steal away,
And sleep a little: and this will be well." And truly, I dreamed, as I lay
Wide awake, but all as quiet, as though, the last office done,
They had streaked me out for the grave, Will, to which they will bear me anon.
Dreamed; for old things and places came dancing about my brain,
Like ghosts that dance in an empty house: and my thoughts went slipping again
By green back-ways forgotten to a stiller circle of time,
Where violets, faded forever, seemed blowing as once in their prime:
And I fancied that you and I, Will, were boys again as of old,
At dawn on the hill-top together, at eve in the field by the fold;
Till the thought of this was growing too wildly sweet to be borne,
And I oped my eyes, and turned me round, and there, in the light forlorn,
I find you sitting beside me. But the dawn is at hand, I know.
Sleep a little. I shall not die to-night. You may leave me. Go.

Eh! is it time for the drink? must you mix it? it does me no good.
But thanks, old friend, true friend! I would live for your sake, if I could.
Ay, there are some good things in life, that fall not away with the rest.
And, of all best things upon earth, I hold that a faithful friend is the best.
For woman, Will, is a thorny flower: it breaks, and we bleed and smart:
The blossom falls at the fairest, and the thorn runs into the heart.
And woman's love is a bitter fruit; and, however he bite it, or sip,
There's many a man has lived to curse the taste of that fruit on his lip.
But never was any man yet, as I ween, be he whosoever he may,
That has known what a true friend is, Will, and wished that knowledge away.
You were proud of my promise, faithful despite of my fall,
Sad when the world seemed over sweet, sweet when the world turned gall:
When I cloaked myself in the pride of praise from what God grieved to see,
You saw through the glittering lie of it all, and silently mourned for me:
When the world took back what the world had given, and scorn with praise
changed place,
I, from my sackcloth and ashes, looked up, and saw hope glow on your face:
Therefore, fair weather be yours, Will, whether it shines or pours,
And, if I can slip from out of my grave, my spirit will visit yours.

O woman eyes that have smiled and smiled, O woman lips that have kist
The life-blood out of my heart, why thus forever do you persist,
Pressing out of the dark all round, to bewilder my dying hours
With your ghostly sorceries brewed from the breath of your poison-flowers?
Still, though the idol be broken, I see at their ancient revels,
The riven altar around, come dancing the self-same devils.

Lente currite, lente currite, noctis equi!
Linger a little, O Time, and let me be saved ere I die.
How many a night 'neath her window have I walked in the wind and rain,
Only to look at her shadow fleet over the lighted pane.
Alas! 't was the shadow that rested, 't was herself that fled, you see,
And now I am dying, I know it: — dying, and where is she!
Dancing divinely, perchance, or, over her soft harp strings,
Using the past to give pathos to the little new song that she sings.
Bitter? I dare not be bitter in the few last hours left to live.
Needing so much forgiveness, God grant me at least to forgive.
There can be no space for the ghost of her face down in the narrow room,
And the mole is blind, and the worm is mute, and there must be rest in the tomb.
And just one failure more or less to a life that seems to be
(Whilst I lie looking upon it, as a bird on the broken tree
She hovers about, ere making wing for a land of lovelier growth,
Brighter blossom, and purer air, somewhere far off in the south,)
Failure, crowning failure, failure from end to end,
Just one more or less, what matter, to the many no grief can mend?
Not to know vice is virtue, not fate, however men rave:
And, next to this I hold that man to be but a coward and slave
Who bears the plague-spot about him, and, knowing it, shrinks or fears
To brand it out, though the burning knife should hiss in his heart's hot tears.
But I have caught the contagion of a world that I never loved,
Pleased myself with approval of those that I never approved,
Paltered with pleasures that pleased not, and fame where no fame could be,
And how shall I look, do you think, Will, when the angels are looking on me?
Yet oh! the confident spirit once mine, to dare and to do!
Take the world into my hand, and shape it, and make it anew:
Gather all men in my purpose, men in their darkness and dearth,
Men in their meanness and misery, made of the dust of the earth,
Mould them afresh, and make out of them Man, with his spirit sublime,

Man, the great heir of Eternity, dragging the conquests of Time !
 Therefore I mingled among them, deeming the poet should hold
 All natures saved in his own, as the world in the ark was of old ;
 All natures saved in his own to be types of a nobler race,
 When the old world passeth away and the new world taketh his place.
 Triple fool in my folly ! purblind and impotent worm,
 Thinking to move the world, who could not myself stand firm !
 Cheat of a worn-out trick, as one that on shipboard roves
 Wherever the wind may blow, still deeming the continent moves !
 Blowing the frothy bubble of life's brittle purpose away ;
 Child, ever chasing the morrow, who now cannot ransom a day :
 Still I called Fame to lead onward, forgetting she follows behind
 Those who know whither they walk through the praise or dispraise of mankind.
 All my life (looking back on it) shows like the broken stair
 That winds round a ruined tower, and never will lead anywhere.
 Friend, lay your hand in my own, and swear to me, when you have seen
 My body borne out from the door, ere the grass on my grave shall be green,
 You will burn every book I have written. And so perish, one and all,
 Each trace of the struggle that failed with the life that I cannot recall.
 Dust and ashes, earth's dross, which the mattock may give to the mole !
 Something, though stained and defaced, survives, as I trust, with the soul.

Something? . . . Ay, something comes back to me . . . Think ! that I might have
 been . . . what ?

Almost, I fancy at times, what I meant to have been, and am not.
 Where was the fault ? Was it strength fell short ? And yet (I can speak of it now !)
 How my spirit sung like the resonant nerve of a warrior's battle-bow
 When the shaft has leapt from the string, what time, her first bright banner un-
 furled,

Song aimed her arrowy purpose in me sharp at the heart of the world.
 Was it the hand that faltered, unskilled ? or was it the eye that deceived ?
 However I reason it out, there remains a failure time has not retrieved.
 I said I would live in all lives that beat, and love in all loves that be :
 I would crown me lord of all passions ; and the passions were lords of me.
 I would compass every circle, I would enter at every door,
 In the starry spiral of science, and the labyrinth of lore,
 Only to follow the flying foot of love to his last retreat.

Fool ! that with man's all-imperfect would circumscribe God's all-complete !
 Arrogant error ! whereby I starved like the fool in the fable of old,
 Whom the gods destroyed by the gift he craved, turning all things to gold.
 Be wise : know what to leave unknown. The flowers bloom on the brink,
 But black death lurks at the bottom. Help men to enjoy, not to think,
 O poet to whom I give place ! cull the latest effect, leave the cause.
 Few that dive for the pearl of the deep but are crushed in the kraken's jaws.

While the harp of Arion is heard at eye over the glimmering ocean ;
 He floats in the foam, on the dolphin's back, gliding with gentle motion,
 Over the rolling water, under the light of the beaming star,
 And the nymphs, half asleep on the surface, sail moving his musical car.
 A little knowledge will turn youth gray. And I stood, chill in the sun,
 Naming you each of the roses ; blest by the beauty of none.

My song had an after-savor of the salt of many tears,
 Or it burned with a bitter foretaste of the end as it now appears :
 And the world that had paused to listen awhile, because the first notes were gay,
 Passed on its way with a sneer and a smile : " Has he nothing fresher to say ?
 This poet's mind was a weedy flower that presently comes to naught !"
 For the world was not so sad but what my song was sadder, it thought.
 Comfort me not. For if aught be worse than failure from over-stress

Of a life's prime purpose, it is to sit down content with a little success.
 Talk not of genius baffled. Genius is master of man.
 Genius does what it must, and talent does what it can.
 Blot out my name, that the spirits of Shakespeare and Milton and Burns
 Look not down on the praises of fools with a pity my soul yet spurns.
 And yet, had I only the trick of an aptitude shrewd of its kind,
 I should have lived longer, I think, more merry of heart and of mind.
 Surely I knew (who better ?) the innermost secret of each
 Bird, and beast, and flower. Failed I to give to them speech ?
 All the pale spirits of storm, that sail down streams of the wind,
 Cleaving the thunder-cloud, with wild hair blowing behind ;
 All the soft seraphs that float in the light of the crimson eve,
 When Hesper begins to glitter, and the heavy woodland to heave :
 All the white nymphs of the water that dwell 'mid the lilies alone ;
 And the buskined maids for the love of whom the hoary oak-trees groan ;
 They came to my call in the forest ; they crept to my feet from the river :
 They softly looked out of the sky when I sung, and their wings beat with breath-
 less endeavor

The blocks of the broken thunder piling their stormy lattices,
 Over the moaning mountain walls, and over the sobbing seas.
 So many more reproachful faces around my bed !

Voices moaning about me : " Ah ! couldst thou not heed what we said ?"
 Peace to the past ! it skills not now : these thoughts that vex it in vain
 Are but the dust of a broken purpose blowing about the brain

Which presently will be tenantless, when the wanton worms carouse,
 And the mole builds over my bones his little windowless house.

It is growing darker and stranger, Will, and colder, — dark and cold,
 Dark and cold ! Is the lamp gone out ? Give me thy hand to hold.
 No : 't is life's brief candle burning down. Tears ? tears, Will ! Why,
 This which we call dying is only ceasing to die.

It is but the giving over a game all lose. Fear life, not death.

The hard thing was to live, Will. To whatever bourn this breath

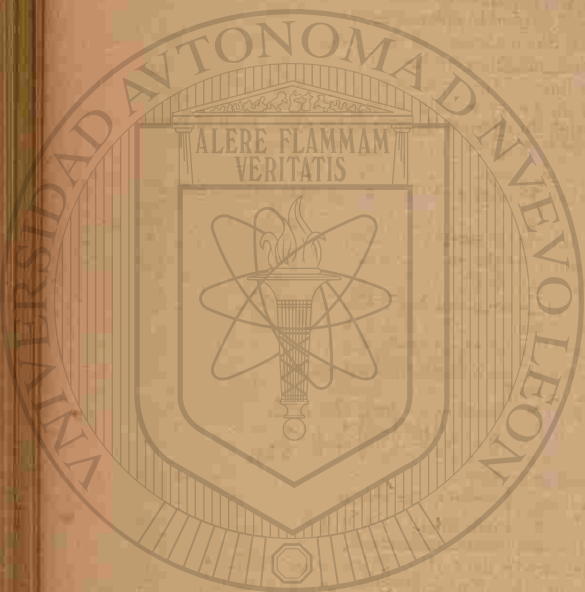
Is going, the way is easy now. With flowers and music, life,
 Like a pagan sacrifice, leads us along to this dark High Priest with the knife.
 I have been too peevish at mere mischance. For whether we build it, friend,
 Of brick or jasper, life's large base dwindles into this point at the end,
 A kind of nothing ! Who knows whether 't is fittest to weep or laugh
 At those thin curtains the spider spins o'er each dusty epitaph ?

I talk wildly. But this I know, that not even the best and first,
 When all is done, can claim by desert what even to the last and worst
 Of us weak workmen, God from the depth of his infinite mercy giveth.
 These bones shall rest in peace, for I know that my Redeemer liveth.
 Doubtful images come and go ; and I seem to be passing them by.
 Bubbles these be of the mind, which show that the stream is hurrying nigh

To the home of waters. Already I feel, in a sort of still sweet awe,
 The great main current of all that I am beginning to draw and draw
 Into perfect peace. I attain at last ! Life's a long, long reaching out
 Of the soul to something beyond her. Now comes the end of all doubt.
 The vanishing point in the picture ! I have uttered weak words to-night,
 And foolish. A thousand failures, what are these in the sight
 Of the One All-Perfect who, whether man fails in his work, or succeeds,
 Builds surely, solemnly up from our broken days and deeds
 The infinite purpose of time. We are but day-laborers all,
 Early or late, or first or last at the gate in the vineyard wall.

Lord ! if, in love, though fainting oft, I have tended thy gracious Vine,
 O, quench the thirst on these dying lips, Thou who pourest the wine !
 Hush ! I am in the way to study a long, long silence now.

I know at last what I cannot tell : I see what I may not show.
 Pray awhile for my soul. Then sleep. There is nothing in this to fear.
 I shall sleep into death. Night sleeps. The hoarse wolf howls not near,
 No dull owl beats the casement, and no rough-bearded star
 Stares on my mild departure from yon dark window bar.
 Nature takes no notice of those that are coming or going.
 To-morrow make ready my grave, Will. To-morrow new flowers will be blowing.



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