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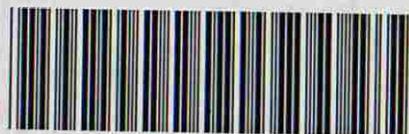
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OF  
OWEN MEREDITH (ROBERT, LORD LYTTON).

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OWEN MEREDITH  
(ROBERT, LORD LYTTON).

London, The Athenaeum Club, The W. & A. Clarendon Press, 1890.

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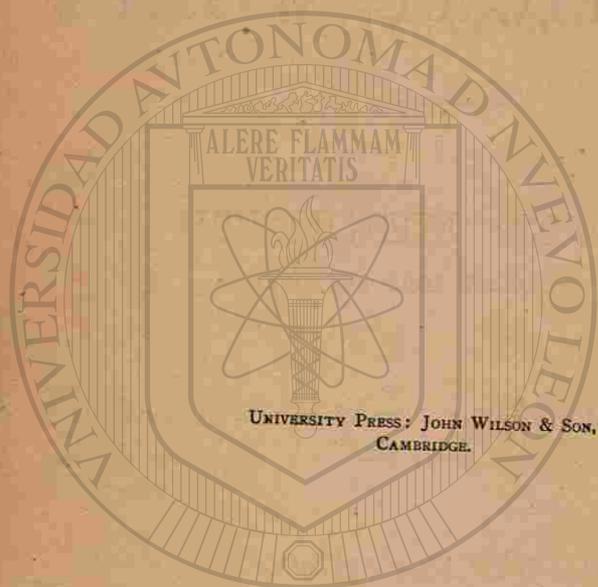
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## LUCILE.

## 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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## PART I.

## CANTO I.

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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 ?

ALFRED.  
Eh, where ?

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.

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I.

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"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,  
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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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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  
margent,

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, what'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  
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),  
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lady, and stood  
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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 indulgence was sought.  
All the world's foolish pride in that moment 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-reproachfully said,  
As he lifted her hand to his lips. 'T was a hand  
White, delicate, dimpled, warm, languid, and bland.  
The hand of a woman is often, in youth,  
Somewhat rough, somewhat red, somewhat 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 before.  
Less salient than once, less poetic, perchance,  
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 converse. 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 paralyzed 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 accustomed to change.  
He sought, with well-practised and delicate 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 analyze 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 discerned  
On her face an indefinite look of confusion.  
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 bitterly 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 garden. 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 himself. With dull tone  
Of importance, through cities of rose and carnation,  
Went the bee on his business from station 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 Frenchman) 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 ambush 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 . . .

LUIVOIS.

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.

Luvois 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 —

LUIVOIS.

Lucile!

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me —

LUIVOIS.

You do not reject?

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me the time to reflect.

LUIVOIS.

You ask me? —

LUCILE.

— The time to reflect.

LUIVOIS.

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  
feters!" —

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 slits 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  
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Ever blithe, ever bold, ever boon, he  
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An existence untroubled by envy or  
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But Bernard found, that day, neither  
song nor love-tale,

Nor adventure, nor laughter, nor legend  
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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  
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And wound through a region of green  
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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-  
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And the dew lingered fresh in the heavy  
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And Autumn's own flower, the saffron,  
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The red-berried brambles and thick sas-  
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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  
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And plays with the fancy, and baffles  
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And the cool star of eve, the Imperial  
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Takes command of a valley as fair to  
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That dominates all in a fable of old,  
Takes command of a valley as fair to  
behold

As aught in old fables; and, seen or  
unseen,

Dwells aloof over all, in the vast and  
serene

Sacred sky, where the footsteps of spirits are furl'd  
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.

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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."

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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  
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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  
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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  
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To the man whom men knew me, or  
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(Like the siren that under the deep  
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To the man whom men knew me, or  
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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 toyest 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,  
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

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?

Whether 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'er-thrown  
 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, discomfited, 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-phylacteried  
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-cheeked  
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 reluctant 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. ‘T is 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.

LUVVOIS.

Once more ! yet once more !

ALFRED.

What ?

LUVVOIS.

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 ?

LUVVOIS.

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 . . .

LUVVOIS.

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 !"

LUVVOIS.

Well ?

ALFRED.

How then, after that,  
 Can you and she meet as acquaintances ?

LUVVOIS.

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.

LUVVOIS.

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.

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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 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 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?  
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 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 sparsely,  
 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.  
 Saving 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!

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 labour-  
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-stified, 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  
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-  
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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,  
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indeed, that just now  
The house, out of which with a gasp she  
had fled  
Half-stifled, seemed ready to sink on  
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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.  
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Was he startled and awed by the change  
which had passed  
O'er the once radiant face of his young  
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kindness?  
Had she been, then, O fool! in her in-  
nocent blindness  
The sport of transparent illusion? ah,  
folly!  
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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?  
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What was love, then? . . . not calm,  
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bined:  
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Led by doubt, through the darkness she  
wandered away.  
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With faint, meteoric, miraculous light,  
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infinite burned,  
And into the infinite ever returned.  
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Leaving traces behind them of tremulous  
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which  
The dark air with odors hung heavy and  
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Like a soul that grows faint with desire.  
'T was the place  
In which she so lately had sat, face to  
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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,

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  
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statesman's? — a name  
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brave meant,  
All it ends in, thrice better, Neera, it  
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Unregarded to sport with thine odorous  
hair,  
Untroubled to lie at thy feet in the  
shade  
And be loved, while the roses yet bloom  
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He found it deserted. The lamp dimly  
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As though half out of humor to find itself  
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Since Latona's bright childbed that bore  
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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

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 pay-  
ing 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 hope-  
lessly 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 pain-  
ful to hear,

The sobs of a man! Yet so far in his own  
Kindly thoughts was he plunged, he al-  
ready 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 cog-  
itations,

Of which not a gesture vouchsafed indi-  
cations.

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. Up-  
lifted, 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 self

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 to-  
gether. 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 exterior,  
Your heart has divined in me something superior  
To that which I seem; from my innermost 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-taken 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 trembling 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. Knowing scarce what he did,  
To her side through the chamber he silently 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 within it  
Lived and died with each tender tumultuous 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 reproaches 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 darkened 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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They remove not, until we have spoken.  
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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 innocent 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 dispute,  
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 perchance  
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 restore  
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 Aurean 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,  
 That the great moral combat between human life  
 And each human soul must be single. The strife  
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 Domes of empire, dowered with science and art,  
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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 armed 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,

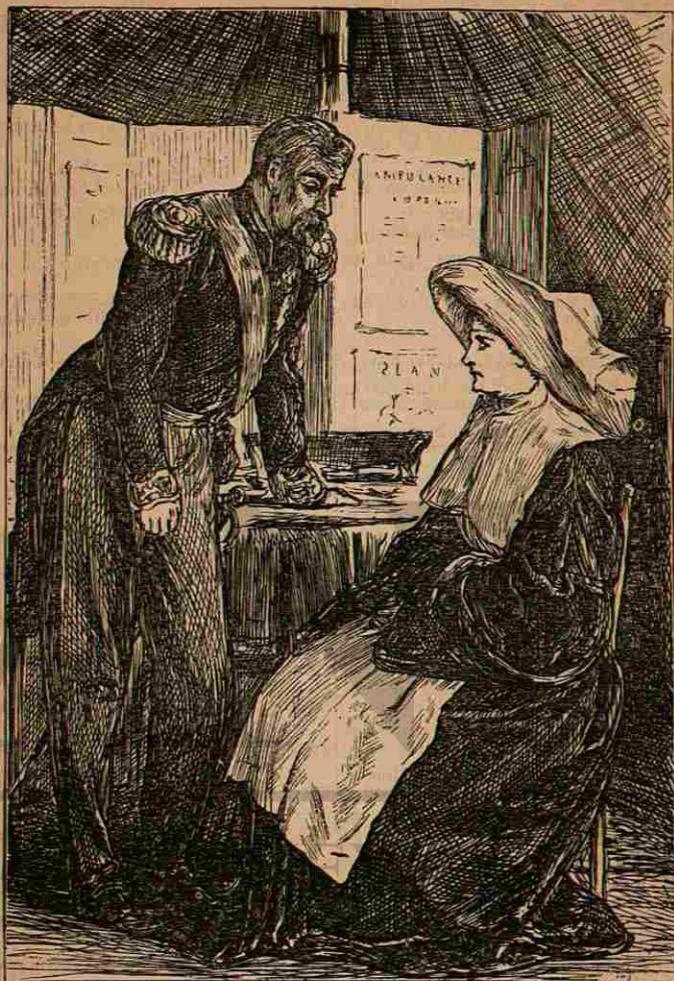
Constructing, within moves the brain of  
one man,

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, undefiled!  
 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 cherish?"

"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 murmured, "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 ancestral 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 wishing 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 Seraphine*  
 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.

XLII.

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  
'T 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;

<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;

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.

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.

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 lilyed  
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  
gropé 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 sapphrine  
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 you 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 unreachèd 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  
wring  
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,

Beloved 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.

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,  
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And end with something fine to say  
About the “allied banners.”  
‘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 hor-  
ribly 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 for-  
ever!  
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 with-  
in her, grown braver,  
Fills her glass to the brim, and pro-  
poses 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 sad-  
der 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 win-  
dow 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, lit-  
tered, 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, foot-  
ing it on;  
Some like imps, some like fairies; at  
cockcrow all starting,  
And speedily flitting from sight one  
by one.

And that wonderful night-flower, Mem-  
ory, 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.

Wreath 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 Necroman-  
cer — '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 dim-  
mer ;  
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 . . . "Remem-  
ber !"

TRANSLATIONS FROM PETER  
RONSDARD.

"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, 't is 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, uncrown 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 !

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Alone in high and glimmering air !  
And see, . . . those village spires, up-  
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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,  
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Those eyes of tender deep repose ;  
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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  
shrunk 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 Biographi-  
cal Dictionary, or any History of the Nether-  
lands.

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 Thanes.

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 cheats  
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.  
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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  
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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  
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And flowers return, — but not the  
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I live : the fire of life within me burns ;  
But all my life is dead. The land I  
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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 :  
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.  
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That wayward, restless, wistful life of  
yore ;  
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 Prom-  
 ist 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 cove-  
 nant  
 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 twi-  
 light 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 glim-  
 mering slope;  
 And disappointment hawks the hover-  
 ing 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 nursed 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 return,  
 After much wandering in the ways of men,  
 Weary but not outworn. Here, with her urn  
 Shall Memory come, and be my denizen.  
 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, unsubdued  
 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 Memory,

And Love, and Anger; as an infant frames  
 The initials of a language wherein he  
 In manhood must with men communicate.  
 And oft, the words were hard to understand,  
 Harder to utter; still the solemn hand  
 Would pause, and point, and wait, and move, and wait;

Till words grew into language. Language 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' unfriendliness;  
 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 wondrous 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  
furled;

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  
troubled 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 for-  
ests 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 re-  
nowned  
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 Hørsel 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 un-  
happy 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 heav-  
enly 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 inscru-  
table 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 re-  
nowned  
"The fairest," fleeing from her Cyprian  
isle,  
Swept to the northwards many a league,  
and lodged  
At length on Hørsel, 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 murder-  
ous spell,  
Calling on God. God to her rescue sends  
Voiced seraphims that lead the sinner  
forth  
From darkness unto day, from foul em-  
brace  
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 ghostly  
 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-veged 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  
 Incurred 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-wingéd bat round lonely  
towers  
Where, one by one, from darkening  
casements died  
The taper's shine; the howlet from the  
hills  
Whooped; and Elizabeth, alone with  
Night  
And Silence, and the Ghost of her slain  
youth,  
Lay lost among the ruins of that day.

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

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

Longwhile, still shuddering from the  
shock that jarred  
The bases of her being, piteous wreck  
Of ruined hopes, upon her couch she lay,  
Of life and time oblivious; all her mind,  
Locked in a rigid agony of grief,  
Clasping, convulsed, its unwept woe;  
her heart  
Writhing and riven; and her burthened  
brain  
Blind with the weight of tears that  
would not flow.  
But when, at last, the healing hand of  
Time  
Had wrought repair upon her shattered  
frame;  
And those unskilled physicians of the  
mind —  
Importunate, fond friends, a host of  
kin —  
Drew her perforce from solitude, she  
passed  
Back to the world, and walked its weary  
ways  
With dull mechanic motions, such as  
make  
A mockery of life. Yet gave she never,  
By weeping or by wailing, outward sign  
Of that great inward agony that she bore;  
For she was not of those whose sternest  
sorrow  
Outpours in plaints, or weeps itself in  
dew;  
Not passionate she, nor of the happy  
souls  
Whose grief comes tempered with the  
gift of tears.

So, through long weeks and many a  
weary moon,  
Silent and self-involved, without a sigh,  
She suffered. There, whence consolati-  
on comes,  
She sought it — at the foot of Jesu's  
cross,  
And on the bosom of the Virgin-spouse,  
And in communion with the blessed  
Saints.  
But chief for him she prayed whose  
grievous sin  
Had wrought her desolation; God be-  
sought

To touch the leprous soul and make it  
clean;  
And sued the Heavenly Pastor to recall  
The lost sheep, wandered from the pleas-  
ant ways,  
Back to the pasture of the paths of  
peace.  
So thrice a day, what time the blushing  
morn  
Crimsoned the orient sky, and when the  
sun  
Glared from mid-heaven or weltered in  
the west,  
Fervent she prayed; nor in the night  
forewent  
Her vigils; till at last from prayer she  
drew  
A calm into her soul, and in that calm  
Heard a low whisper — like the breeze  
that breaks  
The deep peace of the forest ere the  
chirp  
Of earliest bird salutes the advent Day —  
Thrill through her, herald of the dawn  
of Hope.

Then most she loved from forth her  
leafy tower  
Listless to watch the irrevocable clouds  
Roll on, and daylight waste itself away  
Along those dreaming woods, whence  
evermore  
She mused, "He will return"; and  
fondly wove  
Her webs of wistful fantasy till the moon  
Was high in heaven, and in its light  
she kneeled,  
A faded watcher through the weary  
night,  
A meek, sweet statue at the silver  
shrines,  
In deep, perpetual prayer for him she  
loved.  
And from the pitying Sisterhood of  
Saints  
Haply that prayer shall win an angel  
down  
To be his unseen minister, and draw  
A drowning conscience from the deeps  
of Hell.

Time put his sickle in among the days.  
Blithe Summer came, and into dimples  
danced  
The fair and fructifying Earth, anon  
Showering the gathered guerdon of her  
play

Into the lap of Autumn; Autumn stored  
The gift, piled ready to the palsied hand  
Of blind and begging Winter; and when  
he  
Closed his well-provendered days, Spring  
lightly came  
And scattered sweets upon his sullen  
grave.  
And twice the seasons passed, the sisters  
three  
Doing glad service for their hoary brother,  
And twice twelve moons had waxed and  
waned, and twice  
The weary world had pilgrimed round  
the sun,  
When from the outskirts of the land  
there came  
Rumor of footsore penitents from Rome  
Returning, jubilant of remitted sin.  
So chanced it, on a silent April eve  
The westering 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,  
Feadly to that pure passion, once betrayed,  
Wherewith I loved, and love her."

There his voice,  
Even as a wave that, touching on the shore  
To which it travelled, is shivered and diffused,  
Sank, scattered into spray of wasteful sighs,  
And back dissolved into the deeper grief.

To whom, Wolfram, "O answer by the faith  
In which mankind are kindred, art thou not  
From Rome, unhappiest?" "From Rome? ah me!"  
He muttered, "Rome is far off, very far,  
And weary is the way!" But undeterred  
Wolfram renewed, "And hast thou not beheld  
The face of Christ's High Vicar?" And again,  
"Pass on," he muttered, "what is that to thee?"  
Whereto, with sorrowful voice, Wolfram,  
"O all,  
And all in all to me that love my friend!"  
"My friend!" Tannhäuser laughed a bitter laugh  
Then sadder said, "What thou wouldst know, once known,  
Will cause thee to recall that wasted word  
And cancel all the kindness in thy thoughts;  
Yet shalt thou learn my misery, and learn  
The man so changed, whom once thou calledst 'friend,'  
That unto him the memory of himself  
Is as a stranger." Then, with eyes that swam  
True sorrow, Wolfram stretched his arms  
And sought  
To clasp Tannhäuser to him: but the other

Waved him away, and with a shout that sprang  
Fierce with self-scorn from misery's deepest depth,  
"Avaunt!" he cried, "the ground whereon I tread  
Is ground accurst!"

"Yet stand not so far off  
But what thine ears, if yet they will, may take  
The tale thy lips from mine have sought to learn;  
Then, sign thyself, and peaceful go thy ways."  
And Wolfram, for the grief that choked his voice,  
Could only murmur "Speak!" But for a while  
Tannhäuser to sad silence gave his heart;  
Then fetched back some far thought, sighing, and said: —

"O Wolfram, by the love of lovelier days  
Believe I am not so far fallen away  
From all I was while we might yet be friends,  
But what these words, haply my last, are true:  
True as my heart's deep woe what time I felt  
Cold on my brow tears wept, and wept in vain,  
For me, among the scorn of altered friends,  
Parting that day for Rome. Remember this:  
That when, in the after years to which I pass  
A by-word, and a mockery, and no more,  
Thou, honored still by honorable men,  
Shalt hear my name dishonored, thou may'st say,  
'Greatly he grieved for that great sin he sinned.'

"Ever, as up the windy Alpine way,  
We halting oft by cloudy convent doors,  
My fellow-pilgrims warmed themselves within,  
And ate and drank, and slept their sleep, all night,  
I, fasting, slept not; but in ice and snow  
Wept, aye remembering her that wept for me,  
And loathed the sin within me. When at length  
Our way lay under garden terraces

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

The sin that smouldered in my blood,  
how bred,  
And all the strangeness of it, then his face  
Was as the Judgment Angel's; and I hid  
My own; and, hidden from his eyes, I  
heard:

"Hast thou within the nets of Satan  
lain?  
Hast thou thy soul to her perdition  
pledged?  
Hast thou thy lip to Hell's Enchantress  
lent,  
To drain damnation from her reeking cup?  
Then know that sooner from the withered  
staff  
That in my hand I hold green leaves  
shall spring,  
Than from the brand in hell-fire scorched  
rebloom  
The blossoms of salvation.'

"The voice ceased,  
And, with it all things from my sense.  
I waked  
I know not when, but all the place was  
dark:  
Above me, and about me, and within  
Darkness: and from that hour by moon  
or sun  
Darkness unutterable as of death  
Where'er I walk. But death himself is  
near!

O, might I once more see her, unseen;  
unheard,  
Hear her once more; or know that she  
forgives  
Whom Heaven forgives not, nor his own  
lost peace;

I think that even among the nether fires  
And those dark fields of Doom to which  
I pass,  
Some blessing yet would haunt me."

Sorrowfully  
He rose among the tumbled rocks and  
leaned  
Against the dark. As one that many a  
year,

Sundered by savage seas unsociable  
From kin and country, in a desert isle  
Dwelling till half dishumanized, beholds  
Haply, one eve, a far-off sail go by,  
That brings old thoughts of home across  
his heart;  
And still the man who thinks—"They  
are all gone,  
Or changed, that loved me once, and I  
myself

No more the same"—watches the dwin-  
dling speck  
With weary eyes, nor shouts, nor waves  
a hand;  
But after, when the night is left alone,  
A sadness falls upon him, and he feels  
More solitary in his solitudes,  
And tears come starting fast; so, tear-  
ful, stood  
Tannhäuser, whilst his melancholy  
thoughts,  
From following up far off a waning hope,  
Back to himself came, one by one, more  
sad

Because of sadness troubled.  
Yet not long  
He rested thus; but murmured, "Now,  
farewell:  
I go to hide me darkly in the groves  
That she was wont to haunt; where  
some sweet chance  
Haply may yield me sight of her, and I  
May stoop, she passed away, to kiss the  
ground  
Made sacred by her passage ere I die."  
But him departing Wolfram held,  
"Vain! vain!

Thy footstep sways with fever, and thy  
mind  
Wavers within thy restless eyes. Lie  
here,  
O unrejected, in my arms, and rest!"

Now o'er the cumbrous hills began to  
creep  
A thin and watery light: a whisper went  
Vague through the vast and dusky-vol-  
umed woods,  
And, unaccompanied, from a drowsy copse  
Hard by a solitary chirp came cold,  
While, spent with inmost trouble, Tann-  
häuser leaned

His wan cheek pillowed upon Wol-  
fram's breast,  
Calm, as in death, with placid lids down  
locked.

And Wolfram prayed within his heart,  
"Ah, God!

Let him not die, not yet, not thus, with  
all  
The sin upon his spirit!" But while  
he prayed

Tannhäuser raised delirious looks, and  
sighed,

"Hearest thou not the happy songs  
they sing me?  
Seest thou not the lovely floating forms?

O fair, and fairer far than fancy fashioned!  
O sweet the sweetness of the songs they  
sing!

*For thee, . . . they sing . . . the goddess  
waits: for thee*

*With braided blooms the balmy couch &  
strewn,*

*And loosed for thee . . . they sing . . .  
the golden zone.*

*Fragrant for thee the lighted spices fume  
With streaming incense sweet, and sweet  
for thee*

*The scattered rose, the myrtle crown, the  
cup,*

*The nectar-cup for thee! . . . they sing.*

*Return,*

*Though late, too long desired, . . . I hear  
them sing,*

*Delay no more delights too long delayed:  
Turn to thy rest; . . . they sing . . .  
the married doves*

*Murmur; the Fays soft-sparkling tapers  
tend;*

*The odors burn the purple bowers among;  
And Love for thee, and Beauty, waits!  
. . . they sing."*

"Ah me! ah madman!" Wolfram cried,  
"yet cram

Thy cheated ears, nor chase with credu-  
lous heart

The fair dissembling of that dream.  
For thee

Not roses now, but thorns; nor myrtle  
wreath,

But cypress rather and the graveyard  
flower

Befitting saddest brows; nor nectar  
poured,

But prayers and tears! For thee in  
yonder skies

An Angel strives with Sin and Death;  
for thee

Yet pleads a spirit purer than thine own:  
For she is gone! gone to the breast of  
God!

Thy Guardian Angel, while she walked  
the earth,

Thine 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'erflowed with hurrying feet; and came,  
 Dashed to the hip with travel, and dewed with haste,  
 A flying post, and in his hand he bore  
 A withered staff o'erflourished with green leaves;  
 Who, — followed by a crowd of youth and 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.  
PHOCIAN.  
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 captiv'd, 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  
 wish'd.  
 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 't 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 bridals, 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!  
'T is 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  
'T is 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  
hull, —  
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 quiv-  
ering 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 whis-  
pers 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 con-  
trol;  
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 Nysæan 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 doebt 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!

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!

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?

## 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.

PHOICIAN.  
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!

PHOICIAN.

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!

PHOICIAN.

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.

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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.  
Still some deed is left to do.

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.  
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Far from love in infancy:  
I have sought to slake my thirst

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fool, she haunts me still! No wonder!  
Not a bud on yon black bed,  
Not a 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 Runnymede from John?  
Who but we stand, towers of order,  
'Tixt 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.

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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

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Dark and strange. Yet now there  
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Something past me . . . Husband, hark!  
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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 vext. 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 declin-  
 ed.  
 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, unhehdden :

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 marshy 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  
wanes

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  
frost  
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 allures  
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 warmth 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 flusht cheek, among crusht 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 hu-  
man 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 Beauti-  
ful  
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's 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  
thrif.

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 thy-  
self, 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 thank-  
less 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 gor-  
geous 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-gather-  
ing tears,  
That come between me and the star-  
light, 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 un-  
kind,  
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, ascend-  
ing 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

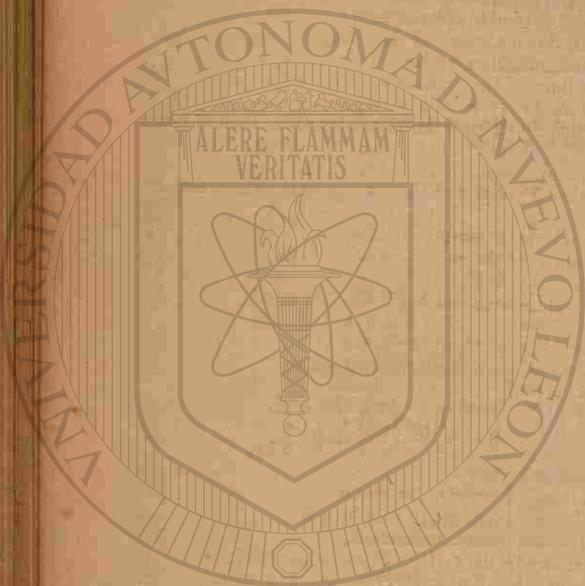
Of the One All-Perfect who, whether man fails in his work, or succeeds,  
 Builds surely, solemnly up from our broken days and deeds

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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