

This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific *fact*: we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us, as round the veriest spectre, is Eternity; and to Eternity minutes are as years and æons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith, as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified souls? And again, do not we squeak and gibber (in our discordant, screech-owlsh debates and recriminations); and glide bodeful and feeble and fearful; or uproar (*poltern*), and revel in our mad Dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning-air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon: does the steel Host, that yelled in fierce battle-shouts, at Issus and Arbela, remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed Goblins must? Napoleon too, and his Moscow Retreats and Austerlitz Campaigns! Was it all other than the veriest Spectre-hunt; which has now, with its howling tumult that made Night hideous, flitted away?—Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand million walking the Earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once. . . .

Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious Mankind thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some foot-print of us is stamped in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

"We are such stuff  
As Dreams are made of, and our little Life  
Is rounded with a sleep!"

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE DAYS THAT ARE NO MORE.

[From *The Princess*.]

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy autumn fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more. . . .

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;  
O death in life, the days that are no more.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

[From *Morte D'Arthur*.]

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:  
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfills himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?  
I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
But now farewell: I am going a long way  
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—  
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)  
To the island-valley of Avilion;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies  
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns,  
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,  
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail  
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan  
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,  
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood  
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere  
 Revolving many memories, till the hull  
 Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,  
 And on the mere the wailing died away.

## BUGLE SONG.

[From *The Princess*.]

The splendour falls on castle walls  
 And snowy summits old in story:  
 The long light shakes across the lakes  
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,  
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:  
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
 They faint on hill or field or river:  
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
 And grow for ever and for ever.  
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

## BREAK, BREAK, BREAK.

Break, break, break  
 On thy cold gray stones, O sea!  
 And I would that my tongue could utter  
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,  
 That he shouts with his sister at play!  
 O well for the sailor lad,  
 That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on  
 To their haven under the hill;  
 But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
 And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break  
 At the foot of thy crags, O sea!  
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
 Will never come back to me.

## PEACE OR WAR?

[From *Maud*.]

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,  
 When the poor are hovelled and hustled together, each sex, like swine,  
 When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;  
 Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges the wine.

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,  
 Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,  
 While chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,  
 And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life.

And Sleep must lie down armed, for the villainous centre-bits  
 Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights,  
 While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as he sits  
 To pestle a poisoned poison behind his crimson lights.

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,  
 And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,  
 Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land and by sea,  
 War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones.

## STANZAS FROM IN MEMORIAM.

I envy not in any moods  
 The captive void of noble rage,  
 The linnet born within the cage,  
 That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes  
 His license in the fields of time,  
 Unfettered by the sense of crime,  
 To whom a conscience never wakes;

## FROM CHAUCER TO TENNYSON.

Nor, what may count itself as blest,  
The heart that never plighted troth,  
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;  
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;  
I feel it when I sorrow most;  
'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.

## SONG FROM MAUD.

Come into the garden, Maud,  
For the black bat, night, has flown;  
Come into the garden, Maud,  
I am here at the gate alone;  
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,  
And the musk of the roses blown.

For a breeze of morning moves,  
And the planet of Love is on high,  
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves  
On a bed of daffodil sky,  
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,  
To faint in his light, and to die.

All night have the roses heard  
The flute, violin, bassoon;  
All night has the casement jessamine stirred  
To the dancers dancing in tune;  
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,  
And a hush with the setting moon.

I said to the lily, "There is but one  
With whom she has heart to be gay.  
When will the dancers leave her alone?  
She is weary of dance and play."  
Now half to the setting moon are gone,  
And half to the rising day;  
Low on the sand and loud on the stone  
The last wheel echoes away.

## ALFRED TENNYSON.

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes  
In babble and revel and wine.  
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those  
For one that will never be thine?  
But mine, but mine," so I swore to the rose,  
"For ever and ever mine."

## ROBERT BROWNING.

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:  
A mile or so away  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming-day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused, "My plans  
That soar, to earth may fall,  
Let once my army-leader Lannes  
Waver at yonder wall"—  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
You hardly could suspect—  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace  
We've got you Ratisbon!  
The Marshal's in the market-place,  
And you'll be there anon

To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
Where I, to heart's desire,  
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans  
Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes;  
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
"I'm killed, sire!" And his chief beside,  
Smiling the boy fell dead.

#### THE LOST LEADER.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat—  
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
Lost all the others, she lets us devote;  
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
So much was theirs who so little allowed:  
How all our copper had gone for his service!  
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!  
We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,  
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
Shakspeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley were with us—they watch from their graves!  
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering—not through his presence;  
Songs may inspirit us—not from his lyre;  
Deeds will be done, while he boasts his quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:  
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
One more devil's triumph and sorrow for angels,  
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!  
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!

There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain,  
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad confident morning again!  
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,  
Menace our heart ere we master his own;  
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

#### MEETING AT NIGHT.

The gray sea and the long black land,  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain the cove with pushing prow  
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;  
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,  
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

#### WORK AND WORTH.

[From *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.]

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work" must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
 Into a narrow act,  
     Fancies that broke through language and escaped;  
 All I could never be,  
 All men ignored in me,  
     This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

## HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD.

O, to be in England  
 Now that April's there,  
 And whoever wakes in England  
 Sees, some morning, unaware,  
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf  
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
 In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,  
 And the white throat builds, and all the swallows!  
 Hark where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
 Blossoms and dew-drops—at the bent spray's edge—  
 That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over.  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
 The first fine careless rapture!  
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
 The buttercups, the little children's dower,  
 Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

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