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# LOW & ASPHODEL TREVELYAN

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Mallow and Asphodel





# Mallow and Asphodel

By R. C. Trevelyan  
*Robert Laverley*

“Νήπιοι, οὐδὲ ἴσασι ὅσῳ πλέον ἤμισυ παντός,  
οὐδ’ ὅσον ἐν μάλαχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλῳ μέγ’ ὄνειαρ.”

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## EPIMETHEUS

### I

WHEN the Titan wars were over, and those upstart mutineers,  
Friended by Prometheus' guile, had hurled the sky's coeval  
peers

Down to grim Tartarean bondage, last of all that vanquished  
band,

Haled before the seat of Zeus for judgment, fettered foot and  
hand,

Came the minstrel Epimetheus, foolish wizard, after-wise,  
With amaze and wonder staring in his simple innocent eyes.

They had found him sitting lonely by the far Atlantic shore,  
Floating songs of careless rapture o'er the sea's white-spuming  
floor ;

There they found the silly singer, whither he had slunk by  
night,

Stolen from the fray—ah, wherefore should the sweet-voiced  
minstrel fight ?

Thus they brought him, bound and wildered, lapsing ever  
and anon

Back into his foolish singing, while the Thunderer's limping  
son,

### B

Swart Hephæstus, called a sentence from the terrible lips of  
Zeus :

“Father, o’er this shiftless truant let a doom be shaken loose.  
Yet deal gently with him, Father, guilty found in other kind  
Than those lords of insurrection. Nought he knew what  
moved their mind ;

Scant his care if thou or Cronus reigned : he followed, as  
behoved,

Whither his brother giants bade him, chanting the sweet  
lays they loved.

How should deep forecasting treason ambush in those child-  
like eyes ?

Of the future nought he sees, in bygone knowledge only  
wise.

In the past his wits go ever rambling like a little child  
Hither thither seeking berries down the brambly wood-ways  
wild.

Yet since he must surely suffer joined in penance with his  
kin,

Then devise some milder bondage, portioned to his venial sin.  
Do not bid us clamp his body on some everlasting bed  
Hot with unimagined torment, lest, when thither he is led,  
From our grasp he sing our mallets with entreaty musical,  
And our hands heaved up for pity let the links and fetters  
fall.”

Thus the kind Hephæstus pleaded, while within the brain  
of Jove

To and fro the thoughts like shuttles plying swift a judg-  
ment wove,

Warp of wisdom, woof of justice, worthy of a king so wise.  
But the giant with a question in his wildered wandering eyes  
Gazed around, then rent the silence with a loud and bitter cry :

“Whither have they fallen—my brothers—fallen through  
the boundless sky ?

As I sat beside the ocean, I beheld them one by one  
Tumbling through the purple evening, right across the  
setting sun :

Far away they fell to Westward, and I knew not what was  
done ;

But the sea grew rough with horror, and the mountains  
quaked with dread,

And the sky grew dark, and reboant thunder laboured  
overhead ;

And I hid my face and cowering long I sat in doubt and fear,  
Till these strange ones came upon me, bound my hands and  
drew me here.

But I seek my pleasant brethren ; where they sojourn I  
would learn.

Have ye seen this mighty kindred ? Easy are they to discern :  
Tall and lovely are their bodies, beautiful their voice and  
strong,

When they call to one another, as the wind-chafed forest’s  
song,

Or the parle of lions calling o’er the hills from lair to lair.

Tell me, ye strange mocking faces, have ye seen them any-  
where ? ”

Thus he wailed and looked around him, while the Olympian  
corridors

Echoed with immortal laughter, as on sea-indented shores  
When with washing lapping laughter softly laughs a prisoned  
wave

To the answering roof above it of some deep-receding cave.  
Nay, e’en Zeus himself grew jocund, and his heart with  
mirth was warm :

From the lips that judge the world burst laughter like a  
thunder-storm,  
And the palm that darts the lightning smote the great eternal  
thigh ;  
With the shock the walls rang loudly, and within where  
peacefully  
Hidden in the secret cloisters of that many-chambered limb,  
Slept the infant Dionysus, safe from Hera's wicked whim,  
All the twenty silver nurses, seated on their golden stools  
Round the babe to watch and tend him, fashioned with the  
fire-god's tools,  
Shook their glittering limbs for terror when the long walls  
heaved and quaked,  
And the mighty Semelean infant, from his slumber waked,  
Turned about within his cradle, and addressed them ques-  
tioning :  
"Wherefore thus, my silver nurses, doth our house about  
us ring ?  
Wherefore rock the walls and tremble? Doth a brood of  
fancies vain  
Like a shoal of ocean fishes dartle through my father's brain,  
That he wags his legs for pleasure? Hath his roving  
amorous eye  
Found again some maid of beauty from its vantage in the  
sky ?  
Can it be his wits grow nimble with the kindling touch of  
wine ?  
Innocent as yet and sober hangs the grape upon the vine,  
Even as I within this cradle lying : but the day shall be  
When I must arise to quicken all its sleeping potency,  
And the universe shall drink, and to my godhead bow the  
knee."



Thus he spake, nor stayed an answer, but turned round, and  
to his dreams  
Passed once more, and lapt in sleep resumed his world-  
consoling schemes.  
But the pregnant brows of Zeus grew dark with magisterial  
gloom,  
And his lips now stern and cruel thus pronounced a righteous  
doom :  
“ Epimetheus, would'st thou question where thy pleasant  
brethren be ?  
They have parted on a journey—Wisdom's face they fain  
would see.  
Not in all their mighty legions holy Wisdom might be  
found :  
To the realms of fire to seek her they must travel under-  
ground.  
I beheld their fond migration setting forth, but much I doubt,  
Though they seek a thousand ages, whether they will seek  
her out.  
In my tender care and prudence I have bound thee foot and  
hand,  
Lest fraternal love should bid thee track the steps of that  
lost band.  
How should one of heart so peaceful, tempered simple as a  
child,  
Bear the subterranean horror of that venture stern and wild ?  
Therefore shall Hephæstus take thee deep within the North-  
land vast,  
Far beyond its forest girdle, there to bind thy body fast  
All along a craggy mountain, stretched supine as on a rack :  
Thou and thy tremendous warden, starkly fettered back  
to back,

Linkt with glacier chains together for a season, soon shall  
     be  
 Loving friends and sweet companions ; nay, so close your  
     amity,  
 That your beings shall commingle, and thy bones shall suffer  
     change,  
 Mystic mountain transformation, gradual petrification strange :  
 Into soil thy flesh shall crumble, on thy head tall pines shall  
     nod  
 All their feathery tops together when they hear the North-  
     wind's rod :  
 O'er thine eyes shall spring the oak-tree ; from beneath its  
     brow shall steal  
 Two bright streams of tears for token that thou still canst  
     know and feel :  
 Down thy cheek the larch shall muster, round thy chin the  
     birch shall grow,  
 Lifting up its trembling foliage o'er the willow-wood below.  
 By the voice of cataracts falling, cuckoos calling through  
     the air,  
 And the feet of brown bears shambling, reindeer rambling  
     here and there,  
 Many a time shall pleasant sleep be chased from off thy  
     wearied eyes,  
 As the slumbers of an infant teased away by summer flies.  
 Yet, for so would I chastise thee as a father might his child,  
 That by some sweet consolation thy keen pains may be  
     beguiled,  
 I will bid that singing Spirit harbour still within thy breast,  
 Filling all thy soul with music, as a dove that builds its  
     nest  
 High within a lofty tower fills a captive with delight.

Yea, thou shalt forget thy pain, the parching noon and chilly  
night,  
When thy songs creep back to nestle murmuring by thy  
worn heart's side,  
And melodiously ascending softly through thy throat they  
glide  
One by one between thy lips, as in succession glide the bees  
Through their city gates to morning business over heather  
leas.  
And the wandering winds of heaven that have shuddered in  
their flight  
O'er the mouths of red volcanoes shooting far into the night  
Tongues of flame, and with pollution of hot hail and  
sulphurous breath  
Staining all their liquid air-streams, each pure cloud and  
vapour wreath,  
When they pass the singing mountain, visiting its wondrous  
mouth,  
As with snowy feet they hasten on their journey toward the  
South,  
Long shall linger round to listen, charmed through all their  
eddies cold,  
All their fierce tempestuous whirlwinds, loading every frozen  
fold  
Of their gusty robes with music, ere they go their boisterous  
ways  
Scattering over land and ocean storm-blown snatches of thy  
lays.  
Shackled thus through countless ages, thou shalt gather in  
by night  
Wisdom from the freezing moonbeams and instruction from  
the light

Of the stars in silver session ; and when dawn with rosy hand  
 Draws away their robes of darkness from the wakened sea  
 and land,  
 Helios shall teach thee prudence, into thine unsheltered eyes  
 Laughing with fierce fiery glances, till thy withered heart  
 grow wise,  
 And thy kindred be forgotten : then once more thy voice  
 may fling  
 Rapture through the ancient halls, till all their cloisters  
 sweetly ring,  
 And the Olympian peers grow hushed and stay their jocund  
 revelling.”  
 Thus the king dealt forth his righteous judgments o’er that  
 innocent head :  
 Heavy hands were laid upon him ; from that presence was  
 he led  
 Far away to watch for ages fettered on his icy bed.

## II

APOLLO, DISGUISED AS AN INFANT, INSTRUCTS DÆDALUS  
 HOW EPIMETHEUS MAY BE FOUND

On Calymne’s rocky sea-board Dædalus had lighted down,  
 Flying o’er the wrinkled ocean from the towers of Minos  
 town.  
 Weary-winged and sick with anguish on a stone he sat and  
 wept,  
 While the waves with jocund laughter round about him  
 washed and leapt.

But he heeded not their mocking ; still he heard that bitter  
knell—

“Father, father ! see, I perish ! Reach thy hand ! Ah,  
fare thee well !”

Saw again the glittering pinions flutter idle overhead,  
Saw the boy's hands stretched toward him, saw his face as  
down he sped,

Till he plunged within the cloudrack o'er the misty ocean  
spread.

When he raised his eyes, beside him lo ! a fisher's cabin  
stood,

Built of stones and wattled reeds : its gaping holes were  
stopped with mud.

At the door a crone was sitting, mending nets upon the sand ;  
On the floor a babe was playing, moulding shapes with  
infant hand—

Deftly like a master workman kneading out of pliant clay  
Mimic forms of God and Goddess ranged in reverent array  
Round him in a circle, mocking those brave sessions when  
the Gods

Parley round the throne of Zeus in large Olympian periods.  
Then the hero stepping lightly to that withered woman's side  
Spake a word in heavy trouble : “Ancient mother, worn  
and tried

By the spite of years and sorrows, give me now an answer  
true.

I have travelled hither winging on a journey strange and new  
Through the windy streets of heaven, fleeing from the  
grievous wrath

Of the cruel tyrant Minos ; not alone I started forth :  
Close behind my son was speeding. As two ducks rise  
through the air

With their long necks stretching forward toward another  
reedy lair ;  
Startled by a fowler's footsteps from their pools upon the  
moor,  
So we voyaged on together ; but alone I reached the shore.  
Down he dived beneath the vapours—Icarus ! My son,  
my son !  
Couldst thou not have heard my warning ? All my life  
with thee is gone :  
Thine was all the gathered wisdom of my art, which I had  
thought  
Thou shouldst lead to large perfection, by Apollo's precept  
taught.  
All my house with thee is perished, all my toils and hopes  
are nought.  
Through the mists I dropped to seek him, hovered o'er the  
water's face  
To and fro with vain endeavour, wandering round from  
place to place ;  
Saw no sight but dolphins gambolling, fishes leaping from  
the waves,  
Heard no sound but sea-gulls crying, cormorants screeching  
from their caves ;  
Sought one hour, and then a second ; could not find him  
anywhere ;  
But the third I journeyed landward, weeping, laden with  
despair.  
Mother, say, as thou wast sitting at thy task beside the shore  
Hast thou seen a sudden splendour flashing down on ocean's  
floor,  
As the lightning falls from heaven ? Didst thou mark a  
swimmer bold

Striving shoreward through the waves, or did their restless  
arms enfold

Nought but some poor lifeless body hither thither tossed  
and rolled? ”

Thus the ancient dame made answer : “What is this that  
thou dost ask ?

I must stoop my weary eyes for ever o’er my homely task ;  
I have no time to send them wandering on the waves or  
through the skies ;

I have no care if men like lightning fall from heaven, or  
heroes rise

From the waves like Aphrodite : yet sometimes I see them  
come,

But their limbs are stiff with swimming, and their swollen  
lips are dumb :

To the land they never win, but ’neath the breakers find a  
tomb.

Stranger, wouldst thou gather counsel from a wrinkled  
woman’s lips ?

Suffer not thy hero heart to scorn the timbered might of  
ships.

Doth adventure bid thee cross the perilous seas from shore  
to shore,

Tempt not strange forbidden paths, nor strive against our  
nature’s law.

Leave the wet waves for the fishes, to the lion leave his lair,  
For the immortal Gods Olympus, for the birds the bound-  
less air.

Nor shalt thou disdain thy mother Earth, who gave thee life  
and health ;

She can yield thee bread in plenty, fruit and wine and  
golden wealth,

Women fair as Aphrodite ; and when thou weariest of all  
these,  
On her loamy breast thy tired limbs shall find their endless  
ease.”

When the hero heard this answer, silent turned he from the  
door,  
But the infant stayed him, speaking from his play upon the  
floor :

“In the dim Cimmerian highlands, where man’s feet may  
never come,  
Where the boisterous congregations of the winds are never  
dumb ;  
By sheer mountain cliffs in frozen isolation girdled round,  
Lies the wizard Epimetheus fast in silver fetters bound.  
Till his stubborn heart grow loyal, and his brethren be  
forgot,  
Never shall they from his limbs unwind their crawling icy  
knot.  
On his ancient head is springing many a tall snow-loaded  
pine,  
Nodding all their tops together when they hear the tempest  
whine ;  
O’er his eyes the oak-trees darken, down his cheek the  
larches grow ;  
Round his chin the birches quiver o’er the willow-wood  
below.  
O’er his face great bears go ambling, deer go rambling here  
and there,  
All around are cuckoos calling, cataracts brawling through  
the air.  
Wouldst thou know the doubtful sequel of thy son’s aerial  
wrack ?



Spread thy wings upon the South-wind, leap upon its gusty  
back,  
Ride across the broad Ægean, by that easy pilot led,  
Leave behind the racing billows gambolling over Helle  
dead,  
Travel o'er the cruel Euxine, on thy left hand skirt its  
shore,  
Till thou see a mighty river spreading out a golden floor  
Far inland towards the sunset. Here thy wings shall change  
their flight ;  
They must strain and labour onward to the West, till  
welcome night  
Bids them sink to earth for shelter in some warm thick-  
foliated nest,  
As the tired dove at evening seeks her lofty wind-rocked  
rest.  
Three slow days the gliding highway of the stream shall be  
thy guide ;  
But the fourth noon, looking downward, wandering on the  
riverside  
Thou shalt see a giant elk, and antlered lord of many leas  
Straying on in quiet pasture of the grass beneath the trees.  
Stoop from heaven like an eagle ; alight astride upon his  
back,  
Quickly draw thy sword and thrust it through his velvet-  
coated neck ;  
On the green grass spill his life, then build of stones an  
altar there ;  
Lay upon the wood thy victim ; to the Delian breathe a  
prayer  
That his gracious power may lead thee to the wizard's  
mountain lair.

From the flame shall rise a murmur, from the altar leap a  
    song,  
With the smoke and sparks above thee tiny wings shall flash  
    and throng,  
Mounting fast in countless hundreds, swarming up between  
    the trees,  
And those leafy vaults shall echo with the floating hum of  
    bees.  
Do not stand in foolish wonder gaping ; lift thy wings in  
    flight ;  
Thou must follow where they lead thee : never let them  
    from thy sight.  
All day long with steady pinions press behind their humming  
    host.  
Nor when Night shall dusk the paths of heaven shall their  
    track be lost ;  
But their wings' melodious rumour sweetly shall instruct  
    thine ear,  
Lapsing on with myriad silver glances through the moon-  
    light clear.  
On a sudden notes of distant music from a mouth unseen  
Shall come fainting down the valleys, o'er the mountain  
    pastures green,  
Like the sound of lowing cattle borne from land upon the  
    breeze  
To poor sailors drifting lost and wildered over misty seas.  
Thou shalt know the wizard's singing, thou shalt thrill to  
    hear the voice  
That has soothed the Titans' fury and made their lordly  
    hearts rejoice.  
Stir thy lagging wings, leap forward for thy fallen son's dear  
    sake ;

Leave behind the patient bees to labour onward in thy wake.  
Tall and taller rise the mountains, loud and louder swells  
the song,

Till beneath thee lo ! the giant, paying for an ancient wrong  
Grievous penance, on a ridge of craggy rocks stretched out  
along.

Lighting on his wrinkled visage, fold thy tired wings to rest,  
That with faithful flight have borne thee to the haven of  
thy quest.

In his mind's memorial chambers all the secret past lies  
stored ;

Yet his jealous sullen humour loves not to lay bare his hoard.  
Therefore, wouldst thou win thine answer, weave thy words  
with threads of guile ;

Wise and crafty be thy dealings ; baffle wile with subtler  
wile :

For the myriad years have taught him prudence with their  
crawling pangs ;

Glaciers have devoured his simple child-like heart with  
freezing fangs ;

Thirsty Helios with scorching lips has drunk his innocence ;  
And though still the singing Spirit sweetly haunts within  
his sense,

'Twixt his songs he mutters curses on Jove's stern omni-  
potence.

Thus his soul has grown malignant, ever on evil food it feeds,  
Lapt in magic meditation, wicked dreams of wizard deeds."  
So the infant gave his counsel ; then to mould his beau-  
teous toys

Turned again, and wreathed in smiles resumed his inter-  
rupted joys.

In a muse the hero muttered, " How may holy wisdom thrive

On the lips of new-born infants? How can baby hands  
contrive  
Graceful forms of God and Goddess, fair beyond the art of  
man?  
Sure in the ambush of those limbs there lurks some power  
Olympian.”  
When he raised his eyes again the babe had vanished from  
the floor  
With his works, and thus the wrinkled wife addressed him  
from the door:  
“Wherefore thus with eyes agaze on empty nothing dost  
thou stand?  
What is that thy pale lips mutter? Wouldst thou count  
the countless sand?  
Would thy reckless heart discover what fresh folly may be  
done?  
Pluck the planets from their courses, steal his shining from  
the sun,  
Through the chambers of the heavens on thy mad wings  
float and run,  
To sweep the bright clouds from its corners: easy are such  
light feats for thee:  
But thy treasure dropped and drowned in ocean shalt thou  
never see.”  
Like the sound of twittering sparrows died her words within  
his mind.  
Still he mused, and ever musing, turned him round, and on  
the wind  
Spread his wings; then fast away, away it bore his headlong  
flight  
Northward o’er the seas, and snatched him from that  
wondering woman’s sight.

## III

## A SONG OF EPIMETHEUS

YET once more ye winds, swift wandering shepherds of the  
vaporious skies,  
Ye bright flocks of clouds, ye mountains crowned in shining  
helms of ice,  
Monarchs of the earth, give hearing, while again I lift my  
voice,  
That hath oft beguiled and soothed you with the enchant-  
ment of strange joys,  
Caught you by your misty purple fleeces, stayed your gusty  
feet,  
Pierced the sunless caves of granite where your hot hearts  
pant and beat.  
Often have ye heard me flinging joyance on the morning air,  
Golden tales of magic cadence 'neath the stars, though keen  
despair  
Gnawed within ; but now no more thus sweetly may I find  
relief ;  
I have nought to sing but bitter dirges, wailing winged with  
grief ;  
For my soul is sick and faint as some great city by the seas,  
Mother of a thousand ships, grown rich on old adulteries  
With far merchant isles and kingdoms, when her foemen  
gather round,  
Bind a mole across her harbours, raise against her gates a  
mound :  
In her streets where once the jovial chapman gossiped in his  
stall

And 'neath the tread of merry-makers e'en the stones grew  
musical,  
Lie the lean and wasted dead—and who shall give them  
burial?  
In the wealthy merchant's garden, 'twixt the lily and the  
rose,  
Down the paths for twilight lovers green, secure the thistle  
blows ;  
None shall come to root it up, save haply when the hasty  
spade  
Breaks the turf, and ever there again some muffled face is  
laid.  
And her mighty men in silence slink like foxes to the walls,  
And her princes sit forlorn and tremble in their feasting-  
halls.  
Thus my heart is faint and famished: hope at last hath  
flown away,  
Hope that ever nestled near it, murmuring of the happy  
day  
When with glad victorious faces, bright with battle in the  
skies,  
They should come, my Titan kindred, haling in triumphant  
wise  
Him the foul usurping tyrant, forced to bend on servile  
knee,  
To unbind my crystal chains with backward spells and set  
me free.  
Lift thy voice in lamentation! Weep aloud, O mother  
Earth!  
Broken are they, snared and taken, fallen from their pride  
and mirth,  
Thy delight, thy glorious Titans, children of an elder birth.

Tall and comely were their bodies, and their hands were  
swift and strong ;

Yet our Empire is no more, our ancient glory hath suffered  
wrong :

Yet they came, the foul usurpers, lords of craft and mis-  
creant wile,

And our rightful strength lay vanquished, trodden 'neath  
the feet of guile

One by one the tyrants bound them, as a labourer binds a  
sheaf :

(Lift thy voice in lamentation, shake thy hills with grief :)

Yea they bore them down and thrust them deep within thy  
sunless caves.

Far above their tombs yet plays the flashing frolic of thy  
waves ;

Far above the Spring thy lover with voluptuous winds and  
showers

Dallies with thy mighty shoulders robed in nuptial leaves  
and flowers.

Many children, bright and lovely, thou shalt bear him as of  
yore,

But thy first and dearest offspring shall behold thy joy no  
more.

(Let thy waves foam out their grief upon the desolate  
shore.)

Where is Crius ? Where is Themis ? Rhea, queen of  
golden hair ?

(Joy and hope are taken from thee ; publish thy despair :)

Where is old imperial Cronos ? gentle Thea, where, oh  
where ?

Under what tremendous mountain, in what mine of  
Tartarus

Dost thou fret thy writhing anguish, O my sire Iapetus ?  
 O'er what seas of flame and horror ruleth old Oceanus ?  
 Never shall I hear your laughter, never watch your kingly  
     style  
 As ye gather clamouring homeward, streaming up in joyous  
     file  
 Through the illustrious gates of heaven from your journeys  
     to and fro  
 'Mid the tribes of happy mortals on the populous earth below.  
 Yet though hope be dead for ever, though my lot be  
     desolate,  
 Though afflicted and abased I moan beneath the oppressor's  
     hate,  
 I will not bate my proud resolve, nor shall my just defiance  
     cease,  
 Nor with cringing humiliation will I sue a traitor's peace—  
 Never, O my woeful brethren, shall my mighty love be cold,  
 Till dark Chaos shall resume its anarch empire as of old,  
 Till the victor with the vanquished to one common wrack  
     are hurled,  
 And remorseless Time strews forth the scattered ashes of  
     the world.

## IV

## DÆDALUS QUESTIONS EPIMETHEUS

EPIMETHEUS ! Epimetheus ! waken, and unseal thine ear !  
 Keeper of the keys of knowledge, mighty wizard, hear, oh  
     hear !  
 I am Dædalus, the craftsman ; regal is the birth I claim



From the house of proud Erechtheus, but a deed of blood  
and shame  
Brought me wage of woeful exile : with my son I found  
retreat  
In the land of ninety cities, in the ancient isle of Crete.  
There with Minos long we harboured : there our pleasant  
days we sold,  
All the cunning of our hands for foolish wealth of princely  
gold,  
Till our very bread was bitter, and the smoke curled hate-  
fully  
From the roofs of Cnosos' city, mounting up the alien sky.  
And with tears of tribulation oft our labouring hands were  
wet,  
For our souls remembered Athens and its noble people yet.  
In my thought a counsel gathered, round my heart a hope  
grew strong,  
Well in secret I reflected, pondered and considered long.  
Then I took our golden wages, in my pots I cast them  
swift,  
And I fashioned golden armour from the tyrant's molten gift.  
For my son and me I wrought it, toiling through the silent  
night,  
And I set around its borders scrolls of curious delight ;  
In the midst fair chased adornment, figured wealth of old-  
world tales,  
Mystic legends borne from wanton Egypt on rich Tyrian  
sails.  
In a chest I stowed it close, then turned me to my task  
anew.  
I devised a feathered witchcraft, wondrous wings of divers  
hue,

Like the lustrous vans of Iris glistering through a summer  
shower,  
Stronger than the wings of Harpies, pinions of mysterious  
power,  
That should bear us over land and ocean with swift, easy toil,  
Homeward to the rock of Athens, sheathèd in our golden  
spoil.  
Now we donned our arms, and now with magic seal of  
yellow wax  
From the sacred hives of Ceres bound the wings upon our  
backs.  
Closely cloaked like midnight thieves we stole in silence  
from the town.  
When the morning broke we stood from dizzy headland  
gazing down  
Over unawakened ocean muffled in its vaporous gown.  
From the cliff we leapt exultant, launched upon our perilous  
flight,  
Floating o'er the cloudy purple billows down the streaming  
light.  
Long we journeyed bold and jocund, chaunting ever and  
anon  
Pæans to the glorious Loxion, throned within the mounting  
sun.  
Now we soon without mischance had crossed the surging sea  
of mist,  
And the very stones of Athens soon our joyful lips had  
kissed :  
But the boy waxed vain and wanton ; now he gambolled  
overhead,  
Now he shot before me far, then checked his race and  
boasting said :

“Father, why with course so lowly skim we through this  
nether air ?  
Look, look up ! behold Apollo throned in radiant godhead  
there !  
Surely we are more than mortal ! O my father, let us  
rise  
Through his vast empyreal realm to parley with him in the  
skies.  
Though all golden be his garments flashing with the glance  
of fire,  
Yet ye too in shining gold are glorious, and our souls aspire  
Whired aloft to things divine on furious chariots of desire.”  
Breathing forth mad-mouthed presumption upward through  
the sky he leapt,  
Heeding not my cries of warning. Yet a little while he  
kept  
Far above his ardent progress, glittering like a mimic sun,  
Till in fiery wrath down looked the god on that vain-  
gorious one  
And beneath his glance the softening wax dissolved its  
magic bands.  
With a wail he tumbled past me, stretching forth poor  
helpless hands,  
Vanishing within the shroud that o’er the misty sea expands.  
Through the clouds I dropped to seek him, hovered o’er  
the water’s face  
To ad fro with vain endeavour, wandering round from  
place to place ;  
Saw no sight but dolphins gambolling, fishes leaping from  
the waves,  
Hear no sound but sea-gulls crying, cormorants screeching  
from their caves ;

Sought one hour, and yet a second, could not find him any-  
where ;  
But the third I journeyed landward, weeping, laden with  
despair.  
Tell me thou who knowest all things ; grudge not now thy  
wizard lore ;  
Did his weary feet rejoicing feel at length some friendly  
shore ?  
Doth he live—my child ? Or did the whirlpool own  
beneath the waves  
Snatch him in his golden armour to Poseidon's festal caves ?  
Or if the billows in their arms have borne his body to the  
land,  
Tossed it up upon the rocks, or gently laid it on the sand,  
In what pool or yellow shallow, where the hungry fishes  
keep—  
Stranded on what rugged reef now lies he couch'd for  
endless sleep ?  
For I fain would take him up and kiss once more that  
woeful head  
Ere with many tears I lay him down within some belvèd  
bed,  
So his wandering soul may pass to bliss among the tranquil  
dead.

## ARCHILOCHUS

ARCHILOCHUS, SERVING AS A HIRELING SPEARMAN, MUSES  
AND REMEMBERS NEOBOULE, THE DAUGHTER OF  
LYCAMBES OF PAROS

WHEN down beneath the waves the great sun goes,  
And leaves me leaning on my spear, a-cold,  
Watching from some beleaguered rampart old  
The scattered fires where sleep a thousand foes ;  
While one by one the staid rapt stars come in,  
Till all the silver folk together met,  
And on their thrones in ancient order set,  
Wait ready for their revel to begin ;  
Oh, then I cast an envious eye above,  
And those bright sessions palely contemplate,  
Gazing on Cassiopeia in her state—  
Andromeda for whom knight Perseus strove :  
But when I look on Ariadne's crown,  
Whom Theseus left forlorn on Dia's isle  
To mingle with the waves her moan awhile  
Till flushed Iacchus from his car leapt down,  
Then, then, grown dim with sudden tears, my sight

Explores those brave celestial halls no more ;  
 My thoughts fly back to Paros' rock-bound shore,  
 Where dwells my Love with sorrow day and night.  
 Now forth I step a God's heroic child  
 Schooled up to valiance in wise Cheiron's cave,  
 And swear in her dear cause e'en Death to brave :  
 Now from the sky caught down by passion wild  
 I dazzle her in Phœbus' golden mail ;  
 Or very Jove in azure mantle fold  
 All her white frailty round, then bid behold  
 If now the jealous stars become not pale.

#### ARCHILOCHUS ON A LEMNIAN TRIREME

LONG from the stern I watched the lines of light  
 That under certain nether stars lay traced,  
 And toward our ship converged from every side  
 Of the sea's vast calm circle : Night, it seemed,  
 With silver chains had bound us where we lay.  
 Rude clamour from the lower deck proclaimed  
 Our dastard generals—how they revelled yet  
 To drown day's shame ; while ever and again  
 A song too tuneful for male soldier throats  
 Broke through harsh laughter's tipsy rise and fall,  
 Escaping on the night like some scared bird  
 That leaves its high nest in a cavern's roof  
 When wearied robbers enter in.

A star

Slid down the sky.

A lordly rioter

Climbed stumbling up the steps ; and as he reeled  
Across the poop, his pampered hair left night  
Fragrant with perfume, and his maniac words  
Came whirling wild : “ Tethys, my bride, I come !  
In thy wet arms enfold me. Ah ! I burn !  
Fierce through thy lover’s veins flows fire enough  
To warm thy cold heart, though its chilly blood  
Stream universal as the infinite sea.  
Oh quench my hot limbs in thy kind embrace—  
One long, cool nuptial kiss ! ”—Then down he leapt.  
At his mad drunken mouth the sea rushed in.  
Small ripples washed the hull, then sank to rest.

THE SADNESS OF NEOBOULE, WHEN THE SPRING RE-  
TURNING DOES NOT BRING ARCHILOCHUS WITH IT

THROUGH the garden it wandered stealthily :  
In at my window it came,  
And I knew that Spring was its name,  
Spring that comes a wind from the West,  
The wind which all things love the best,  
Laden with gifts for all so wealthily.  
Their leaves it gives to the trees,  
To the meadows flowers,  
To the flowers it sends the bees,  
Raiseth the glow-worm lily bowers ;  
And on heart of beast and bird it sheddeth love in showers.  
In at the window it came,  
And I knew that Spring was its name.

Then I thought : " It is well ;  
 He will soon be here ;  
 His sword will he sell,  
 He will barter his spear,  
 And leave the great fenced town at the dawn of the year.  
 He will tarry no more ;  
 His ship will be fleet ;  
 I shall hear the quick beat  
 Of his foot on the floor ;  
 I shall tremble with joy to behold his face in the door.  
 He shall breathe in my ear  
 As he kisses my brow,  
 ' My love, I am here ;  
 I have kept my vow :  
 The flower of our joy may unfold ; our winter is over now.' "

But the days flew by, and he came not ; the flowers from  
 the meadows were peeping.  
 I sat by my mother and span : my task was wet with  
 weeping.  
 Down from my hands my spindle dropped ;  
 Close to her feet its rolling stopped.  
 " Why are thy hands so faint and weak ?  
 What secret trouble hath paled thy cheek ?  
 Hath thy heart's sweet innocence been waylaid  
 By Love that hath lurked, like a snake in the shade,  
 Ambushed close with waiting wings  
 Under the flowers of thy maiden Springs ? "

The days flew by, and he came not ; the Summer was there  
 in his glory.  
 Out to the woods I went ; to their trees I told my story.



I asked them wherefore my Love delayed,  
By what cruel blast could his sail be stayed :  
As it played with their darling leaves had the wind  
Left at parting a rumour behind ?  
But I doubt if my question could reach or impress  
The trance of their somnolent consciousness ;  
For their drowsy boughs did nought but sigh  
As they stirred in the weak wind fitfully,  
And their moss-grown multitudes I deem  
Were lapped in the bliss of summer dream.

Then I asked the lizard why,  
And the lizard made reply :  
“ Go ask of the bee ;  
He is vagrant and free—  
A wandering merchant and traveller he.  
We lizards have business in hand ;  
A sweet theft have I planned :  
While the bee is abroad  
Adding wealth to his hoard,  
We must enter his home  
By its narrow, low door,  
And rifle his comb  
From the roof to the floor.

Then I ran to find the bee,  
Searched through all his blue-bell lea,  
Found him swinging in a cup,  
Drinking all its sweetness up.  
Without turning from his task,  
“ Child,” he answered, “ wait and ask  
These idle flowers when I am gone :

They will tell thee all anon.  
I am busy, they have leisure.  
What have all their tribes to do  
But stand and guard their yellow treasure  
In their cups of red and blue,  
Till I hurry buzzing back  
To take what else my bags may lack ?  
They will tell thee all with pleasure."

So I stooped to ask the flowers,  
That spend their happy hours  
Lending tiny blossom ears  
To the wandering gossip breeze,  
That tells of all it does and hears  
On lands and seas.  
I asked them could they tell me,  
Could their scented petals spell me  
Some blown rumour from the ocean,  
Some faint-recollected notion  
Of what the winds might say ;  
But they said : " Nay !—  
We know what thou wouldst know ;  
But his fate we may not show."  
Then I wept bright tears upon them  
And fancied I had won them  
All their secrets to unfold ;  
And many things they told,  
Deeds done beneath the trees,  
Bright loves of birds and bees—  
But of him no word.  
So I turned in grief away,  
And left their prattle gay ;

But still they murmured on,  
Though their questioner was gone :  
To their merriment no truce,  
For their babbling tongues were loose,  
And by wakened memories  
Of sweet woodland histories  
Their fragrant hearts were stirred.

## ORPHEUS

It was a vale girt in by magic hills,  
Watched round about by giant cedar-trees ;  
A land made musical by shallow rills,  
Birds in the boughs, and underneath the bees.  
How I came there I know not, such dark ills  
Had whelmed my soul with grievous memories ;  
But when I came to that enchanted spot  
I know that all my sorrow was forgot.

I strayed at will along the winding ways,  
And watched the many various forest things  
That in those green glooms passed their cloistered days,  
Insects that plied on freaked and mottled wings  
Between the flowers, deer on the lawns agraze  
Or necks astrain toward luscious clusterings ;  
All day I watched them from the shadowy bowers  
Beneath whose leaves I hid my happy hours.

And seeing that so long my heart had known  
No thought of living creature, beast or man,  
Save of one vanished phantom shape alone,  
My lost Eurydice, what wonder then

If, when oblivion o'er my pain was thrown,  
A luxury of pensive pleasure ran  
Through all my senses—pleasure with still stealth  
To watch and love that sylvan commonwealth.

But when at length the evening made more dim  
The twilight 'neath those boughs for ever pent,  
I rose and, careless, took a wayward whim  
To set my feet against a steep ascent  
That soon had lifted me above the brim  
Of that wide leafy sea. Panting I leant  
Upon a rock that crowned that forest isle  
To watch reluctant day's last sumptuous smile.

The daisied turf spread out its carpet green  
Around grey scattered stones. No tree was there  
Save one old almond: like an aged queen  
Who gems her locks and loads with jewels rare  
Each withered hand, e'en so this tree was seen  
To lift aloft into the purple air  
Its ancient branches with their new-born dress  
Of blossoms crowding white and numberless.

I wondered much what thought's caprice had planned  
To set within this wild secluded spot  
This mother of sweet flowers—what perished hand  
Had planted here to flourish, fall, and rot  
These fragrant generations all unscanned  
By lovers' eyes, forsaken and forgot  
Save by the vagrant forest bee alone,  
Who ravished their stored sweetness, and was gone.

And, as I mused, I saw out of the West,  
Coming to meet me 'neath that flowery tree,  
Her sweet authentic image, dimly dressed  
In the same robes wherein she last did flee  
Back to the houses of eternal rest—  
The twice-lost spirit of Eurydice.  
Around her fell the blooms as she did go,  
Starring her mantle and her hair like snow.

Weeping I spake: "Ah, wherefore hast thou come  
To move the memories of forgotten grief?  
Even now, while 'mid the trees I made my home,  
I had become like a glad careless leaf  
That soon must drop and find its mouldy tomb.  
Wast thou so jealous of one hour's relief?  
Or was no comfort there where thou hast been—  
No joy, dear soul, among those meadows green?"

"Else wherefore from thy peace beneath the sun  
Hast thou returned to visit my despair?  
Too long I tarry here: my hour is run."  
Thus to my moan she answered: "Nought dwells there  
Save holy, tranquil bliss. But I have won  
Respite from lonely joy, brief leave to share  
One piteous hour's fond parley. Then give heed,  
And from my speech take solace for thy need.

"Oft in thy songs hath Love's sad tale been told,  
How even as with the beasts in field and den,  
Insects upon the leaf or in the mould,  
So is it ever with this world of men—

Born in the Spring, in Summer 'tis grown cold ;  
The leaves fall, and it faints and fades, and then  
Comes wintry Death and takes tired Love away,  
And covers it for ever in the clay.

“Such are those transient Loves that time may mar,  
Desire's sweet children of imperfect worth.  
But our great Love was not as others are :  
With bright increase of splendour from its birth  
It lightened all our darkness, like a star,  
Filling with joy this sullen-seeming earth :  
Nor when I from sweet life and thee was rent  
Might its proud beams endure diminishment.

“Through Hell's dark halls their path of fire they made,  
And mocked the cruel eyes of wondering Death :  
By their strong radiance vanquished and dismayed,  
To my spent limbs he yielded back my breath :  
And though my soul, by that fond look betrayed,  
Once more 'mid stranger shadows languisheth,  
Our Love's peculiar planet hath not set,  
But o'er thee hangs its mystic influence yet.

“Powers are there of such sovereign purity  
No chance can make their perfect glory less :  
Such is the changeful moon, the restless sea,  
The summer meadows in their shifting dress ;  
Such was our Love ; such suffer it to be.  
These change but alter not their loveliness :  
In them hath Beauty built her sacred shrine,  
And fills each phase with native grace divine.

“Therefore with vain unseasonable moan  
Wrong not the spirit of our beatitude ;  
But, in these woods abiding here alone,  
Sing to the heart of this green solitude  
Our happy tranquil story—here where none  
May violate thy rapture’s pensive mood.  
In our joy’s secret season who had part ?  
Or was it purchased in the world’s loud mart ?

“Ah, many songs thou madest for the sake  
Of that loud world. Then let this last be mine.  
What matter though the senseless air must take  
Its wasted beauty ? Do these brooks repine  
Because their gentle melodies awake  
No joy in any human heart but thine,  
Though still from year to year, in murmuring play  
With weed and stone, they sing upon their way ?

“Or shall this flowery tree with less delight,  
Or these pale spears of modest asphodel  
With weaker pride put forth on Spring’s young light  
Their opening blooms, when thou no more shalt dwell  
Within their wastes, their loving eremite ?  
For then thou shalt be with me—Ah, farewell !”  
So ’mid these stones I sit and sing, and wait,  
Even as she bade, the coming of my fate.



## THE PLAYMATES

BEND close, stoop nearer my sisters ; I deem my death is  
upon me ;

Scarce e'en so can my voice enter the doors of your ear—  
My voice that of old could leap so far from under the pine-  
tree,

To run through the Delphian dells and woods in a melody  
clear.

Oh ! the old pine with its song for us three singing beneath it !

What will the old pine care whether for three or for two ?

Neither shall ye two care overmuch, but sitting together

Tell the old legends again, sing the old melodies through.

Then shall ye rise, take hands and dance, while faint from  
the valley

Reaches the shepherd's song borne with the bleat of his  
sheep,

Till when weariness comes ye sink and rest on the verdure,

Gazing with pensive eyes o'er the Corinthian deep.

Ah ! would God I could stay, my soul in this beautiful body,

Loving ye twain and beloved, linger awhile and be gay !

Yet were I well content if now when the terrible Hermes

Draws through my mouth with his wand my spirit and  
takes it away,

If he should pause in the midst of the grim Plutonian  
    pathway,  
    Turn at the pleading prayer of the tremulous ghost at  
    his side,  
Back to the earth, and choose some delicate thing of the  
    pine-boughs,  
    Squirrel or sweet-voiced bird, taking its limbs as it died,  
Or, better than all, the cicala, that there in that peaceable  
    hostel,  
    Breaking its journey dark, my spirit awhile should abide.  
So would I sit in the boughs, and with dwarf eyes watch  
    you beneath me,  
    Through small insect ear drinking delight from your voice.  
But if your joy fell hushed at the thought of the silent sister,  
    How would the branches above chime with a musical noise,  
Till one should say to the other, "Dost hear how blithe  
    the cicala ?  
    Ne'er have we heard her discourse music so rich and divine ;  
Surely the gods have had pity, in lieu of her that was taken,  
    Setting to cheer our hearts a spirit of joy in the pine."

## JUNO'S PEACOCK

ONCE Juno's peacock sued to win the love  
Of Cytherea's youngest, whitest dove,  
The trustiest and most docile to the rein  
Of all the team that drew her airy wain.  
Well might she be the favourite of her Queen :  
Her soul was like her body, white and clean ;  
A nun to Venus' service dedicate,  
She had no thought of any feathered mate.  
Yet that proud courtier bird, her flaunting wooer,  
With foolish gallantries would still pursue her,  
Strutted and minced before her wondering eyes,  
And put to proof his daintiest fopperies.  
Venus would smile to see this gorgeous sir  
Behind her progress meekly squiring her.  
Oft poor suspicious Juno, when her lord  
Played the sly truant from their festal board,  
Wanting her diligent spy, would storm and rave  
Because this silly lackey, this fond slave,  
Came not at call to learn her jealous hest,  
Wandered away himself on amorous quest.  
But all his foolish courtship proved in vain :  
She had no thought to spend upon his pain.

Her pious mind was fixed on duties high.  
His proud-poised neck of lapis lazuli,  
His noble tail she deigned not to behold,  
Nor those brave flanks rich robed in burnished gold.  
So sick with fretful hope away he flew  
To a smooth lonely tank where he might view  
Inverted an old city's ruined gate  
'Mid rose-wreathed cypresses, and contemplate  
All his scorned charms, each sad neglected grace  
Mirrored beneath him in the well's calm face.  
Here perched upon the brink this bird of folly  
Sighed out a tempest of vain melancholy,  
Wrinkled and marred with tears of peevish woe  
His pool-reflected image seen below ;  
Then moralised on this inconstant theme,  
Saying, " Alas ! fair picture, that dost seem,  
By teardrops into trembling agues thrown,  
In more than faithful portraiture alone—  
Nay, with prophetic force to illustrate  
Thy bright original's malignant fate,  
Showing how swift defacement and misfeature  
At woe's mere touch wait on each mortal creature.  
Delivered up a spoil to quick decay,  
This pomp of plumage, this superb array,  
This splendid livery so brave and rare  
Shall strew the earth, plucked out by harsh Despair.  
Yet ne'er disgrace so hideous will I brook :  
Nay, while my charms yet wear their summer look,  
From their true-pictured image writ beneath  
I'll drink the solace of a noble death.  
For beauty scorned save this what remedy—  
Kissing itself, e'en with the kiss to die ? "

Thus our poor love-sick wretch bade sad farewell  
To his wronged beauty, then with purpose fell  
Stooped down his head toward the glassy tomb  
To dip his soul within the lake of gloom,  
When in the tranquil mirror lo he sees,  
Gliding between the spiring cypresses,  
Jove's puissant eagle, his dear gallant friend,  
Floating toward some tedious journey's end.  
His lazy wings scarce moved, he went so slow :  
The vesper sun lit up with tawny glow  
Of mellow gold their curve majestical,  
His noble breast, that antique ruin's wall,  
Those sombre trees, that scene of gloom fantastical.  
The peacock now, though still on death intent,  
Delayed the tragic act so sternly meant,  
And tempted to one sweet, last moment's pause,  
Cried, " Noble comrade, hither, and for cause !"  
Obedient to his call that mailed bird  
Lighted upon an ivied tower and heard  
The sad tale through with patient courtesy,  
Then turned his head, fixed on the sun his eye,  
And sagely thus took up his calm soliloquy :  
" Oh simpleness of lovers, aye to choose  
Death before life, and their true cure refuse !  
Why must they still reject the reasoned lore  
Of prudent love ? How oft must I deplore  
The needless climax of a broken heart  
For lack of some small aid from wholesome art ?  
Many the cunning ways, yet plain and apt  
To get by rote, whereby coy hearts are trapped,  
By which reluctant beauty may be wooed  
To quit its proudest, most unwilling mood.

Myself, trained up in Jove's own master school  
In the nice practice of each stablished rule,  
Tried and approved a perfect graduate,  
Each precept can rehearse and illustrate  
Theory with due example,—borrowed whence,  
Save from great Jove's august experience ?  
Therefore, good friend, take comfort and rejoice :  
Among my precepts pick thy wary choice.  
First the swan's way woo thou : with swan-like grace  
Die many a time before her cruel face ;  
And with each death sing sweetly, sing how Love  
Subdued of old the imperial heart of Jove,  
Until his fond Omnipotence put on  
The feathered ambush of a snow-white swan.  
Haply she'll wonder with a sweet surmise  
If Jove himself, lurking in fresh disguise,  
Worships his hundredth bride with all those painted eyes.  
Or thou mayst call to aid a tested power,  
And whelm her frailty in a golden shower.  
Whene'er in Venus' team she fares abroad,  
Of burnished feathers spoil thy downy hoard—  
Be thine too precious, from an aureole's breast  
Borrow bright plumes and softly line her nest.  
So was fair Danae won ; so oft have I  
Myself prevailed o'er coy perversity.  
But if, more masterful, thy generous passion,  
Scorning base means, would sue in nobler fashion,  
Rise to the mountain-top, thou valiant lover,  
And from that prospect gazing down discover,  
Creeping upon the earth some dangerous snake,  
Some wolf's or panther's whelp : for her dear sake  
Swoop down to battle from thy dizzy peak,

Bear off thy lifeless foe with claw and beak,  
And, breathing love and protestation sweet,  
Lay down thy prize before her coral feet,  
Though now their hue can scarce contend with thine,  
Which glorious victory doth incarnadine.  
'Twas in this gallant, military way,  
Bragging false triumph at pretended fray,  
Jove won Alcmena ; in this martial wise,  
Well suiting my courageous qualities,  
Myself I mostly use Love's flowers to cull.  
Yet many styles there be, named from the bull,  
From cloud, from fire—" Enough," the peacock cried,  
"How may I thank thee friend? Now had I died,  
Casting away my silly breath for nought,  
But for thy counsel. Fain would I be taught  
This brave, heroic style. Let cowards use  
Disguise and gold : the soldier's way I choose."  
"Come then !" the eagle cried. Away they sped.  
Their talons planted on a hill's bald head,  
Now gazing down they see the dwindled kine  
(Like ants that cross a path from mine to mine)  
Slow moving toward their stalls in thin-drawn straggling  
line ;  
And ambushed in the brake two lions they spy,  
That wait till the main herd hath sauntered by,  
Intent to pull the hindmost laggard down ;  
And far away toward a rock-built town  
They see the farmer's child who brings a lamb  
Up through the fields, led bleating from its dam  
To be their simple, rustic sacrifice  
To mighty Jove : they show like two small mice,  
One brown, one white, on a green carpet set.

“Friend,” quoth the eagle, “it is time to whet  
Upon the rocks thy claws that must to-day  
Snatch from these lions their proposèd prey.  
Or should thy soul disdain ignoble cattle,  
Then brave these regal thieves to generous battle.”  
Confused, the peacock wondered which were best,  
And thought perhaps he was too finely dressed ;  
In fighting lions shields and swords are worn ;  
Skirmishing, sadly might his train be torn.  
“Surely,” he answered, “it were hardly wise  
To rob earth’s monarchs of their lawful prize.  
Let us respect their rights, and rather choose  
To balk the kings of heaven of their dues.  
They are our lords : we servants have our rights,  
Our liberties, and lawful perquisites.  
That little lamb that to the altar wends  
Across the fields will better serve my ends,  
And be the daintier gift ; will seem moreover,  
On pretty cowslip fed and tender clover,  
Of sweeter worth than blood-gorged monster fell.  
Nay, it will prove a freight more portable.”  
Now forth they launched, and soon with upward stare  
Amazed the child beheld the mighty pair  
With broad majestic curves down-sweeping through the air.  
First came Jove’s orderly with graceful flight ;  
While far above his gaudy acolyte  
Mimicked his style and motions. Frayed she fled,  
Leaving her charge unleashed ; and overhead  
The eagle brought his wings to hovering pause,  
Till his slow friend arrived might thrust his claws  
Within his victim’s fleece. When that was done  
With much ado, the lamb began to run ;



Dismayed to feel itself so strangely backed,  
Away it frisked. However next to act  
This peacock could not tell, borne fast away  
Like a tall general hasting from the fray  
On milk-white steed,—nobly his purple vest  
Floats outs, and nobly nods his triple crest  
As he flies leaving on the corpse-strewn field,  
Cast in a myrtle-bush, his blameless shield.  
Some Thracian plucks it forth. Why should he fret?  
One every whit as good his gold can get.  
So on the lamb this sumptuous cavalier  
Was hurried to and fro in mad career,  
Helpless and scared, too ignorant and weak  
To lift in air or slay it with his beak.  
“Help, comrade, help!” he screeched, “haste and despatch  
This restive beast, against whose woolly thatch  
My untrained beak is proved a very toy,  
Weak as a wren’s.” “Friend, though I wish thee joy  
In thine affairs,” the eagle made reply,  
“Yet by Apollo’s all-beholding eye  
Sworn am I ne’er to worry, maim, or kill—  
Ne’er one small drop of blood to shed or spill  
(Nay, not so much as some slight gnat or flea  
Might drink) of aught in air, on land or sea  
To great or lesser godhead dedicate.  
Yet nought forbids me that I lift this freight,  
And to thy mistress’ door thy lamb and thee translate.”  
Now without further parley he descends  
And plants his feet behind his frightened friend’s,  
Who cannot now pluck forth from fleecy trap  
His tangled claws howe’er he tug and flap,  
But buckled to his gift through air must ride

Posting it willy-nilly to his bride.  
It chanced that Venus drove abroad that night  
Beneath her ranging sister's thrifty light  
On secret visit to each marble shrine,  
Cydonian, Gnidian, and Erycine ;  
So gliding home beneath the peeping dawn,  
Wondering she saw upon the daisied lawn,  
That, bushed with rose and myrtle, round about  
Her Paphian shrine spread its green carpet out,  
A tender lamb that wandered here and there  
Cropping the sacred flowers, nor seemed to care  
For that gay squire who, dozing on its back  
After his crazy vigil, swept the track  
Of its slow pasture, dragging in the trail  
The dew-drenched glories of his opulent tail.  
Smiling the queen drew rein, and thus addressed  
The leader of her team : " Oh trebly blest,  
My gentle dove, in this thy suitor brave !  
Who, not content thy costly love to crave  
With trivial common gifts, by force or sleight  
Must rob the farms of men for thy delight,  
And perched upon his gift watch out the long chill night."  
Hereat the drowsing peacock raised his head  
And gazed around abashed, discomfited :  
Crestfallen quite, he fain would fly away,  
But knows he cannot, struggle as he may :  
Therefore, resolved to wear a gallant face,  
Even in the very meshes of disgrace,  
Erects his poor wet tail's bedraggled plumes,  
And that proud style and dignity assumes  
Wherewith he holds in awe his cringing fellow-grooms.  
" Sweet lady ! " he began, " kind mistress mine !

Well doth the gracious Queen of Love divine  
 The purpose of my gallant industry,  
 And wherefore 'neath the shrewd nocturnal sky  
 I kept cold vigil. It was love's decree,  
 Yea, Lady, 'twas my headlong love of thee  
 That sent me to the peopled haunts of man  
 (Scorning the dulcet fashion of the swan,  
 Or mean seductive gold), to snatch away  
 This lusty lamb which at thy feet I lay,  
 Proof of my prowess and Love's scorching dart  
 That makes a cinder of my amorous heart.  
 Behold, 'tis thine, whether to slay outright,  
 Or spare to be thy fleecy favourite.  
 But if, being found too cumbersome, my gift  
 Be doomed to death, then will I make some shift  
 Before thy very eyes to spill its life,  
 Or call some priest with sacrificial knife  
 In proper formal wise—nay, that were best :  
 For, Lady, sure it were a sorry jest  
 That in thy sight my gaudy plumes should reek  
 With brutal slaughter, and that I should speak  
 My tender passion's plaint through grim sanguineous  
 beak."

"Soft you awhile, fair Sir !" broke in the dove.

"I entertain no question of your love :

It needed not that you should so forsake

Your courtly ways, your carpet style, and take

Fierce lessons in some brigand vulture's school,

To prove you were a coxcomb and a fool.

*That* long ago we knew. How couldst thou deem

So strange a gift of price in my esteem ?

Out of my sight convey thyself and it,

Lest Juno miss her henchman ; for 'tis fit  
Great queens should go well lackeyed. Hence ! and take  
This counsel with thee which my mother spake :  
The fort, she said, of maiden modesty  
Is like an island town that, built on high,  
Looks ever down upon the busy ships  
Coming and going through her harbour's lips.  
Let but a fleet come steering from afar  
On stranger sails equipped for boisterous war,  
A massive chain is drawn across the port,  
The towers are manned ; for foes now care they nought,  
Howe'er the scolding trumpets threat and snarl  
Demanding entrance with rude saucy parle.  
But if the vessel of their sovereign prince  
Approach from distant voyage, he will convince  
(Unfurling but his flag's bright heraldry)  
The jealous burghers that their lord is nigh.  
Down to the quays the merry people throng ;  
Toward the banquet-hall with dance and song  
Beneath the pealing bells they lead their king along.  
'Tis thus alone true gentleness is won,  
By the heart's destined sovereign, or by none.  
Lay in thy silly wits this lesson, and begone."  
Alas ! poor wretch, befooled, disconsolate !  
What now can he devise to vindicate  
Affronted dignity and injured pride ?  
He cannot jet and strut, his feet are tied.  
Escape he cannot from his desperate plight  
Rising majestic in offended flight.  
There must he stay derided and bemocked.  
He cannot curse ; his mouth with shame is locked.  
But Venus from her chariot with a smile

Stepped down toward the weeping wretch, and while  
Her twinkling fingers wrestled with the fleece,  
"Enough," she said, "now get thee gone in peace.  
Jest ne'er was fraught with quainter merriment :  
So take our thanks for sport most excellent.  
On, Doves ! 'tis late.—Yet we accept this lamb,  
For e'en of bootless fool's-love Queen I am."

## FOR A FAN

### I

PROUD mayst thou be, gay lady of this fan,  
Waving with dainty fingers to and fro  
The pictured silk where those great regents glow.  
See how each gallant, blithe Olympian  
Presses in wonder rising from the feast  
Around the horned and bearded infant Pan.  
Hermes has dropped the hare-skin wrap, and lo!  
Holds him aloft on one hand poised, to show  
His wondrous child, strange blend of god and beast.  
But most young roguish Bacchus takes delight  
To see a squire so droll, and—oh the shame!—  
Snatches from Ganymede a brim-full bowl,  
To drench that baby throat with liquid flame.  
Soon will the pretty snub-nose dance and roll  
Upon his goatish legs, then in sad plight,  
Across Jove's table from his father's hand  
Totter and topple, laugh, and try to stand.

## II

Behold, all ye who trifle with this fan,  
The piteous plight of poor Omnipotence.  
Alas for Io's hapless innocence—  
Sweet Io, whom the fond Olympian,  
Disguising godhead in false mask of man,  
Has wooed to ruin! Alas for those immense  
Brave cloud-compelling hands, reduced to fence  
His love with vapours thin as best they can!  
"Shame on the God! Poor half-hid thing!" ye cry.  
Nay, for yon cruel queen reserve your blame,  
Whose jealous eye distrusts that tell-tale mist:  
For she brings home to Zeus his every shame,  
And pities never a woman he has kissed,  
Deeming it bliss enough next Pride to lie.

TROJAN CAPTIVES GRINDING CORN IN THE  
PALACE OF MENELAUS

I

GRIND, grind ! heavy quern !  
Why so stubborn ? Why so slow ?  
Though with all my strength I turn,  
Yet no faster wilt thou go.  
Soon will sink the holy Pleiads.  
One by one to sleep are gone  
All the six who ground beside me :  
I am left alone.  
For my task is still to finish ;  
Weak I am with toil  
Grinding meal for dainty Helen,  
Her for whom Troy bowed unto the soil—  
Weaker than a fainting lily  
In a festal basket borne,  
'Mid her flaunting garden-sisters  
Lying withered and forlorn.

Yet I too was once a dainty lady  
In the chamber of my princely husband :



Helen then was nought but Priam's daughter,  
Ate the self-same bread as we, seemed only  
Than us more fair.

Oh ! the marble palaces of Priam !  
How beneath their roofs we took our pleasure,  
Delicately dressed in gold and silver—  
Said that we should go like queens for ever  
In raiment rare.

At the quern I sit and ponder—  
Send my thoughts abroad to wander :  
Would they might for ever roam !  
Foolish thoughts ! ah why, alack !  
Must they needs come posting back  
To their dreary home ?  
Here they must be clothed in black.  
Why, when they had learnt to flee  
From this world of rueful things,  
Could they not have kept their wings ?  
Foolish thoughts, what could you lack ?  
You were clad like queens and kings  
There where you should be.

## II

Why dost thou stoop thy head over thy grinding ?  
Surely it is not heavy still  
With somnolence or grieving ?  
The morning yet is young, and at the quern  
We have but toiled one hour.

And how canst thou be sad? Have we not all been singing  
Our songs in turn,  
Because we know that singing scares away  
Sad thoughts and haunting grief?  
Take up the song: 'tis thine. In song, they say,  
Even the dungeoned Titans find relief.

Neither for sorrow nor for weariness  
Over the mill I bow my head:  
But I would listen to the plaintive song  
Sung by the barley grains between the stones.  
They say that once upon ten thousand stalks  
Within a vale they grew, and they remember  
How the oaks and willows round their field  
Could show no leaves more fresh and green than theirs:  
But they were happy then, and proud delight  
They took to see each other turn to gold,  
And feel themselves fast growing up so high  
That soon they thought to overpeer the trees:  
And so they told the trees  
Nodding all their rustling heads together,  
Whene'er the wind passed by:  
And the trees answered nought, but sighed and laughed  
With all their leaves, for they had seen before  
The fate of many and many a yellow field:  
Moreover, with their stature grew their pride  
Until in dream they seemed about to thrust  
Their bearded heads through the high roof of Night,  
And wed their gold unto the silver stars:  
Nevertheless one day the reapers came,  
And boys behind, who stooping filled their arms  
And to the binders gave the nodding sheaves;

While with shrill song and chatter they outdid  
The blithe cicala sitting music-mad  
Within the leaves aloft.  
And on the threshing-floor what pain was theirs,  
When of their golden armour they were stripped,  
They say that we know well.  
Now they have come between the crushing stones,  
Yet are not sad, for they have heard us sing  
Fair Helen's fame, and each fond grain has hope  
That it by chance may come  
Between the lips of one so beautiful.  
But wherefore do you weep? Had then my singing power  
To touch the hidden springs of woe?  
I have but sung the fate of yellow corn;  
And yet you weep as though  
Of our own piteous tale had been my song.

THE END





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