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TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE



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1882

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1882

MAIN

TO MY BEST FRIEND

THEODORE WATTS

I DEDICATE IN THIS BOOK

THE BEST I HAVE TO GIVE HIM



*Spring speaks again, and all our woods are stirred,  
And all our wide glad wastes aflower around,  
That twice have heard keen April's clarion sound  
Since here we first together saw and heard  
Spring's light reverberate and reiterate word  
Shine forth and speak in season. Life stands crowned  
Here with the best one thing it ever found,  
As of my soul's best birthdays dawns the third.*

*There is a friend that as the wise man saith  
Cleaves closer than a brother: nor to me  
Hath time not shown, through days like waves at  
strife,  
This truth more sure than all things else but death,  
This pearl most perfect found in all the sea  
That washes toward your feet these waifs of life.*



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TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE



PRELUDE.

*TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.*

LOVE, that is first and last of all things made,  
The light that has the living world for shade,  
The spirit that for temporal veil has on  
The souls of all men woven in unison,  
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought  
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,  
And always through new act and passion new  
Shines the divine same body and beauty through,  
The body spiritual of fire and light  
That is to worldly noon as noon to night ;  
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man  
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began ;  
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime ;  
Love, that is blood within the veins of time ;  
That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,  
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,  
And with the pulse and motion of his breath  
Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and  
death,

The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live  
Through day and night of things alternative,  
Through silence and through sound of stress and  
    strife,  
And ebb and flow of dying death and life ;  
Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,  
Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears,  
That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings ;  
Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things ;  
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,  
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down ;  
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head  
The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike  
    dead ;  
Love, that if once his own hands make his grave  
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save ;  
Love, that for very life shall not be sold,  
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold ;  
So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,  
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell ;  
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,  
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven ;  
Love that is fire within thee and light above,  
And lives by grace of nothing but of love ;  
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire  
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire ;  
Through many and lovely days and much delight  
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

Yea, but what then? albeit all this were thus,  
And soul smote soul and left it ruinous,

And love led love as eyeless men lead men,  
Through chance by chance to deathward—Ah, what  
then?

Hath love not likewise led them further yet,  
Out through the years where memories rise and set,  
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,  
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail  
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,  
Each with the blush of its own special bloom  
On the fair face of its own coloured light,  
Distinguishable in all the host of night,  
Divisible from all the radiant rest  
And separable in splendour? Hath the best  
Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,  
A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love  
Made for all these their sweet particular air  
To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,  
Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,  
Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?  
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead  
Their musical soft memories, and kept red  
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,  
The sunsets of their stories in his skies,  
The blush of their dead blood in lips that speak  
Of their dead lives, and in the listener's cheek  
That trembles with the kindling pity lit  
In gracious hearts for some sweet fever-fit,  
A fiery pity enkindled of pure thought  
By tales that make their honey out of nought,

The faithless faith that lives without belief  
Its light life through, the griefless ghost of grief?  
Yea, as warm night refashions the sere blood  
In storm-struck petal or in sun-struck bud,  
With tender hours and tempering dew to cure  
The hunger and thirst of day's distemperature  
And ravin of the dry discolouring hours,  
Hath he not bid relumè their flameless flowers  
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,  
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,  
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,  
And the sweet shining signs of women's names  
That mark the months out and the weeks anew  
He moves in changeless change of seasons through  
To fill the days up of his dateless year  
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenevere?  
For first of all the sphery signs whereby  
Love severs light from darkness, and most high,  
In the white front of January there glows  
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose :  
And gold-eyed as the shore-flower shelterless  
Whereon the sharp-breathed sea blows bitterness,  
A storm-star that the seafarers of love  
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,  
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp  
The lamplike star of Hero for a lamp ;  
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies  
With mouth of gold, and morning in his eyes ;  
And in clear March across the rough blue sea  
The signal sapphire of Alcyone



Makes bright the blown brows of the wind-foot year ;  
And shining like a sunbeam-smitten tear  
Full ere it fall, the fair next sign in sight  
Burns opal-wise with April-coloured light  
When air is quick with song and rain and flame,  
My birth-month star that in love's heaven hath name  
Iseult, a light of blossom and beam and shower,  
My singing sign that makes the song-tree flower ;  
Next like a pale and burning pearl beyond  
The rose-white sphere of flower-named Rosamond  
Signs the sweet head of Maytime ; and for June  
Flares like an angered and storm-reddening moon  
Her signal sphere, whose Carthaginian pyre  
Shadowed her traitor's flying sail with fire ;  
Next, glittering as the wine-bright jacinth-stone,  
A star south-risen that first to music shone,  
The keen girl-star of golden Juliet bears  
Light northward to the month whose forehead wears  
Her name for flower upon it, and his trees  
Mix their deep English song with Veronese ;  
And like an awful sovereign chrysolite  
Burning, the supreme fire that blinds the night,  
The hot gold head of Venus kissed by Mars,  
A sun-flower among small sphered flowers of stars,  
The light of Cleopatra fills and burns  
The hollow of heaven whence ardent August yearns ;  
And fixed and shining as the sister-shed  
Sweet tears for Phaethon disorbed and dead,  
The pale bright autumn's amber-coloured sphere,  
That through September sees the saddening year

As love sees change through sorrow, hath to name  
 Francesca's ; and the star that watches flame  
 The embers of the harvest overgone  
 Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,  
 Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs  
 A blood-bright ruby ; last save one light shines  
 An eastern wonder of spherly chrysopras,  
 The star that made men mad, Angelica's ;  
 And latest named and lordliest, with a sound  
 Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,  
 Last love-light and last love-song of the year's,  
 Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenevere's.  
 These are the signs wherethrough the year sees move,  
 Full of the sun, the sun-god which is love,  
 A fiery body blood-red from the heart  
 Outward, with fire-white wings made wide apart,  
 That close not and unclose not, but upright  
 Steered without wind by their own light and might  
 Sweep through the flameless fire of air that rings  
 From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and  
     wings  
 And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme  
 Through spaces out of space and timeless time.

So shine above dead chance and conquered change  
 The spherèd signs, and leave without their range  
 Doubt and desire, and hope with fear for wife,  
 Pale pains, and pleasures long worn out of life.  
 Yea, even the shadows of them spiritless,  
 Through the dim door of sleep that seem to press,

Forms without form, a piteous people and blind  
Men and no men, whose lamentable kind  
The shadow of death and shadow of life compel  
Through semblances of heaven and false-faced hell,  
Through dreams of light and dreams of darkness tost  
On waves innavigable, are these so lost?  
Shapes that wax pale and shift in swift strange wise,  
Void faces with unspeculative eyes,  
Dim things that gaze and glare, dead mouths that  
    move,  
Featureless heads discrowned of hate and love,  
Mockeries and masks of motion and mute breath,  
Leavings of life, the superflux of death—  
If these things and no more than these things be  
Left when man ends or changes, who can see?  
Or who can say with what more subtle sense  
Their subtler natures taste in air less dense  
A life less thick and palpable than ours,  
Warmed with faint fires and sweetened with dead  
    flowers  
And measured by low music? how time fares  
In that wan time-forgotten world of theirs,  
Their pale poor world too deep for sun or star  
To live in, where the eyes of Helen are,  
And hers who made as God's own eyes to shine  
The eyes that met them of the Florentine,  
Wherein the godhead thence transfigured lit  
All time for all men with the shadow of it?  
Ah, and these too felt on them as God's grace  
The pity and glory of this man's breathing face ;

For these too, these my lovers, these my twain,  
Saw Dante, saw God visible by pain,  
With lips that thundered and with feet that trod  
Before men's eyes incognisable God ;  
Saw love and wrath and light and night and fire  
Live with one life and at one mouth respire,  
And in one golden sound their whole soul heard  
Sounding, one sweet immitigable word.

They have the night, who had like us the day ;  
We, whom day binds, shall have the night as they.  
We, from the fetters of the light unbound,  
Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound.  
All gifts but one the jealous God may keep  
From our soul's longing, one he cannot—sleep.  
This, though he grudge all other grace to prayer,  
This grace his closed hand cannot choose but spare.  
This, though his ear be sealed to all that live,  
Be it lightly given or lothly, God must give.  
We, as the men whose name on earth is none,  
We too shall surely pass out of the sun ;  
Out of the sound and eyeless light of things,  
Wide as the stretch of life's time-wandering wings,  
Wide as the naked world and shadowless,  
And long-lived as the world's own weariness.  
Us too, when all the fires of time are cold,  
The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.  
Us too, when all the tears of time are dry,  
The night shall lighten from her tearless eye.  
Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,  
But the large bewildered eye of night

Hath sense and speculation ; and the sheer  
Limitless length of lifeless life and clear,  
The timeless space wherein the brief worlds move  
Clothed with light life and fruitful with light love,  
With hopes that threaten, and with fears that cease,  
Past fear and hope, hath in it only peace.

Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,  
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,  
These lives made out of loves that long since were,  
Lives wrought as ours of earth and burning air,  
Fugitive flame, and water of secret springs,  
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,  
Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save  
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave.  
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give  
Out of my life to make their dead life live  
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath  
Between dead lips forgotten even of death ?  
So many and many of old have given my twain !  
Love and live song and honey-hearted pain,  
Whose root is sweetness and whose fruit is sweet,  
So many and with such joy have tracked their feet,  
What should I do to follow ? yet I too,  
I have the heart to follow, many or few  
Be the feet gone before me ; for the way,  
Rose-red with remnant roses of the day  
Westward, and eastward white with stars that break,  
Between the green and foam is fair to take  
For any sail the sea-wind steers for me  
From morning into morning, sea to sea.



I.

*THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW.*

ABOUT the middle music of the spring  
Came from the castled shore of Ireland's king  
A fair ship stoutly sailing, eastward bound  
And south by Wales and all its wonders round  
To the loud rocks and ringing reaches home  
That take the wild wrath of the Cornish foam,  
Past Lyonesse unswallowed of the tides  
And high Carlion that now the steep sea hides  
To the wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays  
Of sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days.  
Above the stem a gilded swallow shone,  
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering  
stone  
As flying sunward oversea, to bear  
Green summer with it through the singing air.  
And on the deck between the rowers at dawn,  
As the bright sail with brightening wind was drawn,  
Sat with full face against the strengthening light  
Iseult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.

Her gaze was glad past love's own singing of,  
And her face lovely past desire of love.]  
Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,  
And a more golden sunrise was her hair.  
The very veil of her bright flesh was made  
As of light woven and moonbeam-coloured shade  
More fine than moonbeams ; white her eyelids shone  
As snow sun-stricken that endures the sun,  
And through their curled and coloured clouds of deep  
Luminous lashes thick as dreams in sleep  
Shone as the sea's depth swallowing up the sky's  
The springs of unimaginable eyes.  
As the wave's subtler emerald is pierced through  
With the utmost heaven's inextricable blue,  
And both are woven and molten in one sleight  
Of amorous colour and implicated light  
Under the golden guard and gaze of noon,  
So glowed their awless amorous plenilune,  
Azure and gold and ardent grey, made strange  
With fiery difference and deep interchange  
Inexplicable of glories multiform ;  
Now as the sullen sapphire swells toward storm  
Foamless, their bitter beauty grew acold,  
And now afire with ardour of fine gold.  
Her flower-soft lips were meek and passionate,  
For love upon them like a shadow sate  
Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things,  
A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings  
That knew not what man's love or life should be,  
Nor had it sight nor heart to hope or see



What thing should come, but childlike satisfied  
Watched out its virgin vigil in soft pride  
And un-kissed expectation ; and the glad  
Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had  
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood  
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud.  
Between the small round breasts a white way led  
Heavenward, and from slight foot to slender head  
The whole fair body flower-like swayed and shone  
Moving, and what her light hand leant upon  
Grew blossom-scented : her warm arms began  
To round and ripen for delight of man  
That they should clasp and circle : her fresh hands,  
Like regent lilies of reflowering lands  
Whose vassal firstlings, crown and star and plume,  
Bow down to the empire of that sovereign bloom,  
Shone sceptreless, and from her face there went  
A silent light as of a God content ;  
Save when, more swift and keen than love or shame,  
Some flash of blood, light as the laugh of flame,  
Broke it with sudden beam and shining speech,  
As dream by dream shot through her eyes, and each  
Outshone the last that lightened, and not one  
Showed her such things as should be borne and done.  
Though hard against her shone the sunlike face  
That in all change and wreck of time and place  
Should be the star of her sweet living soul.  
Nor had love made it as his written scroll  
For evil will and good to read in yet ;  
But smooth and mighty, without scar or fret,

Fresh and high-lifted was the helmless brow  
 As the oak-tree flower that tops the topmost bough,  
 Ere it drop off before the perfect leaf ;  
 And nothing save his name he had of grief,  
 The name his mother, dying as he was born,  
 Made out of sorrow in very sorrow's scorn,  
 And set it on him smiling in her sight,  
 Tristram ; who now, clothed with sweet youth and  
     might,  
 As a glad witness wore that bitter name,  
 The second symbol of the world for fame.  
 Famous and full of fortune was his youth  
 Ere the beard's bloom had left his cheek unsmooth,  
 And in his face a lordship of strong joy  
 And height of heart no chance could curb or cloy  
 Lightened, and all that warmed them at his eyes  
 Loved them as larks that kindle as they rise  
 Toward light they turn to music love the blue strong  
     skies.

So like the morning through the morning moved  
 Tristram, a light to look on and be loved.  
 Song sprang between his lips and hands, and shone  
 Singing, and strengthened and sank down thereon  
 As a bird settles to the second flight,  
 Then from beneath his harping hands with might  
 Leapt, and made way and had its fill and died,  
 And all whose hearts were fed upon it sighed  
 Silent, and in them all the fire of tears  
 Burned as wine drunken not with lips but ears.  
 And gazing on his fervent hands that made  
 The might of music all their souls obeyed

With trembling strong subservience of delight,  
Full many a maid that had him once in sight  
Thought in the secret rapture of her heart  
In how dark onset had these hands borne part  
How oft, and were so young and sweet of skill ;  
And those red lips whereon the song burned still,  
What words and cries of battle had they flung  
Athwart the swing and shriek of swords, so young ;  
And eyes as glad as summer, what strange youth  
Fed them so full of happy heart and truth,  
That had seen sway from side to sundering side  
The steel flow of that terrible springtide  
That the moon rules not, but the fire and light  
Of men's hearts mixed in the mid mirth of fight.  
Therefore the joy and love of him they had  
Made thought more amorous in them and more glad  
For his fame's sake remembered, and his youth  
Gave his fame flowerlike fragrance and soft growth  
As of a rose requickening, when he stood  
Fair in their eye, a flower of faultless blood.  
And that sad queen to whom his life was death,  
A rose plucked forth of summer in mid breath,  
A star fall'n out of season in mid throe  
Of that life's joy that makes the star's life glow,  
Made their love sadder toward him and more strong.  
And in mid change of time and fight and song  
Chance cast him westward on the low sweet strand  
Where songs are sung of the old green Irish land,  
And the sky loves it, and the sea loves best,  
And as a bird is taken to man's breast

The sweet-souled land where sorrow sweetest sings  
Is wrapt round with them as with hands and wings  
And taken to the sea's heart as a flower.  
There in the luck and light of his good hour  
Came to the king's court like a noteless man  
Tristram, and while some half a season ran  
Abode before him harping in his hall,  
And taught sweet craft of new things musical  
To the dear maiden mouth and innocent hands  
That for his sake are famous in all lands.  
Yet was not love between them, for their fate  
Lay wrapt in its appointed hour at wait,  
And had no flower to show yet, and no sting.  
But once being vexed with some past wound the king  
Bade give him comfort of sweet baths, and then  
Should Iseult watch him as his handmaiden,  
For his more honour in men's sight, and ease  
The hurts he had with holy remedies  
Made by her mother's magic in strange hours  
Out of live roots and life-compelling flowers.  
And finding by the wound's shape in his side  
This was the knight by whom their strength had died  
And all their might in one man overthrown  
Had left their shame in sight of all men shown,  
She would have slain him swordless with his sword ;  
Yet seemed he to her so great and fair a lord  
She heaved up hand and smote not ; then said he,  
Laughing—' What comfort shall this dead man be,  
Damsel ? what hurt is for my blood to heal ?  
But set your hand not near the toothèd steel

Lest the fang strike it.'—'Yea, the fang,' she said,  
'Should it not sting the very serpent dead  
That stung mine uncle? for his slayer art thou,  
And half my mother's heart is bloodless now  
Through thee, that mad'st the veins of all her kin  
Bleed in his wounds whose veins through thee ran thin.'  
Yet thought she how their hot chief's violent heart  
Had flung the fierce word forth upon their part  
Which bade to battle the best knight that stood  
On Arthur's, and so dying of his wild mood  
Had set upon his conqueror's flesh the seal  
Of his mishallowed and anointed steel,  
Whereof the venom and enchanted might  
Made the sign burn here branded in her sight.  
These things she stood recasting, and her soul  
Subsiding till its wound of wrath were whole  
Grew smooth again, as thought still softening stole  
Through all its tempered passion ; nor might hate  
Keep high the fire against him lit of late ;  
But softly from his smiling sight she passed.  
And peace thereafter made between them fast  
Made peace between two kingdoms, when he went  
Home with hands reconciled and heart content,  
To bring fair truce 'twixt Cornwall's wild bright strand  
And the long wrangling wars of that loud land.  
And when full peace was struck betwixt them twain  
Forth must he fare by those green straits again,  
And bring back Iseult for a plighted bride  
And set to reign at Mark his uncle's side.

So now with feast made and all triumphs done  
They sailed between the moonfall and the sun  
Under the spent stars eastward ; but the queen  
Out of wise heart and subtle love had seen  
Such things as might be, dark as in a glass,  
And lest some doom of these should come to pass  
Bethought her with her secret soul alone  
To work some charm for marriage unison  
And strike the heart of Iseult to her lord  
With power compulsive more than stroke of sword.  
Therefore with marvellous herbs and spells she  
wrought

To win the very wonder of her thought,  
And brewed it with her secret hands and blest  
And drew and gave out of her secret breast  
To one her chosen and Iseult's handmaiden,  
Brangwain, and bade her hide from sight of men  
This marvel covered in a golden cup,  
So covering in her heart the counsel up  
As in the gold the wondrous wine lay close ;  
And when the last shout with the last cup rose  
About the bride and bridegroom bound to bed,  
Then should this one word of her will be said  
To her new-married maiden child, that she  
Should drink with Mark this draught in unity,  
And no lip touch it for her sake but theirs :  
For with long love and consecrating prayers  
The wine was hallowed for their mouths to pledge ;  
And if a drop fell from the beaker's edge

That drop should Iseult hold as dear as blood  
Shed from her mother's heart to do her good.  
And having drunk they twain should be one heart  
Who were one flesh till fleshly death should part—  
Death, who parts all. So Brangwain swore, and kept  
The hid thing by her while she waked or slept.  
And now they sat to see the sun again  
Whose light of eye had looked on no such twain  
Since Galahault in the rose-time of the year  
Brought Launcelot first to sight of Guenevere.

And Tristram caught her changing eyes and said :  
'As this day raises daylight from the dead  
Might not this face the life of a dead man ?'

And Iseult, gazing where the sea was wan  
Out of the sun's way, said : 'I pray you not  
Praise me, but tell me there in Camelot,  
Saving the queen, who hath most name of fair ?  
I would I were a man and dwelling there,  
That I might win me better praise than yours,  
Even such as you have ; for your praise endures,  
That with great deeds ye wring from mouths of men,  
But ours—for shame, where is it ? Tell me then,  
Since woman may not wear a better here,  
Who of this praise hath most save Guenevere ?'

And Tristram, lightening with a laugh held in—  
'Surely a little praise is this to win,  
A poor praise and a little ! but of these  
Hapless, whom love serves only with bowed knees,  
Of such poor women fairer face hath none  
That lifts her eyes alive against the sun

Than Arthur's sister, whom the north seas call  
 Mistress of isles ; so yet majestic  
 Above the crowns on younger heads she moves,  
 Outlightening with her eyes our late-born loves.'

' Ah,' said Iseult, ' is she more tall than I?  
 Look, I am tall ;' and struck the mast hard by,  
 With utmost upward reach of her bright hand ;  
 ' And look, fair lord, now, when I rise and stand,  
 How high with feet unlifted I can touch  
 Standing straight up ; could this queen do thus much?  
 Nay, over tall she must be then, like me ;  
 Less fair than lesser women. May this be,  
 That still she stands the second stateliest there,  
 So more than many so much younger fair,  
 She, born when yet the king your lord was not,  
 And has the third knight after Launcelot  
 And after you to serve her ? nay, sir, then  
 God made her for a godlike sign to men.'

' Ay,' Tristram answered, ' for a sign, a sign—  
 Would God it were not ! for no planets shine  
 With half such fearful forecast of men's fate  
 As a fair face so more unfortunate.'

Then with a smile that lit not on her brows  
 But moved upon her red mouth tremulous  
 Light as a sea-bird's motion oversea,  
 ' Yea,' quoth Iseult, ' the happier hap for me,  
 With no such face to bring men no such fate.  
 Yet her might all we women born too late  
 Praise for good hap, who so enskied above  
 Not more in age excels us than man's love.'



There came a glooming light on Tristram's face  
Answering : ' God keep you better in his grace  
Than to sit down beside her in men's sight.  
For if men be not blind whom God gives light  
And lie not in whose lips he bids truth live,  
Great grief shall she be given, and greater give,  
For Merlin witnessed of her years ago  
That she should work woe and should suffer woe  
Beyond the race of women : and in truth  
Her face, a spell that knows nor age nor youth,  
Like youth being soft, and subtler-eyed than age,  
With lips that mock the doom her eyes presage,  
Hath on it such a light of cloud and fire,  
With charm and change of keen or dim desire,  
And over all a fearless look of fear  
Hung like a veil across its changing cheer,  
Made up of fierce foreknowledge and sharp scorn,  
That it were better she had not been born.  
For not love's self can help a face which hath  
Such insubmissive anguish of wan wrath,  
Blind prescience and self-contemptuous hate  
Of her own soul and heavy-footed fate,  
Writ broad upon its beauty : none the less  
Its fire of bright and burning bitterness  
Takes with as quick a flame the sense of men  
As any sunbeam, nor is quenched again  
With any drop of dewfall ; yea, I think  
No herb of force or blood-compelling drink  
Would heal a heart that ever it made hot.  
Ay, and men too that greatly love her not,

Seeing the great love of her and Lamoracke,  
 Make no great marvel, nor look strangely back  
 When with his gaze about her she goes by  
 Pale as a breathless and star-quickenning sky  
 Between moonrise and sunset, and moves out  
 Clothed with the passion of his eyes about  
 As night with all her stars, yet night is black ;  
 And she, clothed warm with love of Lamoracke,  
 Girt with his worship as with girdling gold,  
 Seems all at heart anhungered and acold,  
 Seems sad at heart and loveless of the light,  
 As night, star-clothed or naked, is but night.'

And with her sweet eyes sunken, and the mirth  
 Dead in their look as earth lies dead in earth  
 That reigned on earth and triumphed, Iseult said :  
 'Is it her shame of something done and dead  
 Or fear of something to be born and done  
 That so in her soul's eye puts out the sun?'

And Tristram answered : 'Surely, as I think,  
 This gives her soul such bitterness to drink,  
 The sin born blind, the sightless sin unknown,  
 Wrought when the summer in her blood was blown,  
 But scarce aflower, and spring first flushed her will  
 With bloom of dreams no fruitage should fulfil,  
 When out of vision and desire was wrought  
 The sudden sin that from the living thought  
 Leaps a live deed and dies not : then there came  
 On that blind sin swift eyesight like a flame  
 Touching the dark to death, and made her mad  
 With helpless knowledge that too late forbade

What was before the bidding ; and she knew  
How sore a life dead love should lead her through  
To what sure end how fearful ; and though yet  
Nor with her blood nor tears her way be wet  
And she look bravely with set face on fate,  
Yet she knows well the serpent hour at wait  
Somewhere to sting and spare not ; ay, and he,  
Arthur'——

‘The king,’ quoth Iseult suddenly,  
‘Doth the king too live so in sight of fear?  
They say sin touches not a man so near  
As shame a woman ; yet he too should be  
Part of the penance, being more deep than she  
Set in the sin.’

‘Nay,’ Tristram said, ‘for thus  
It fell by wicked hap and hazardous,  
That wittingly he sinned no more than youth  
May sin and be assoiled of God and truth,  
Repenting ; since in his first year of reign  
As he stood splendid with his foemen slain  
And light of new-blown battles, flushed and hot  
With hope and life, came greeting from King Lot  
Out of his wind-worn islands oversea,  
And homage to my king and fealty  
Of those north seas wherein the strange shapes swim,  
As from his man ; and Arthur greeted him  
As his good lord and courteously, and bade  
To his high feast ; who coming with him had  
This Queen Morgause of Orkney, his fair wife,  
In the green middle Maytime of her life,

And scarce in April was our king's as then,  
 And goodliest was he of all flowering men,  
 And of what graft as yet himself knew not ;  
 But cold as rains in autumn was King Lot  
 And grey-grown out of season : so there sprang  
 Swift love between them, and all spring through sang  
 Light in their joyous hearing ; for none knew  
 The bitter bond of blood between them two,  
 Twain fathers but one mother, till too late  
 The sacred mouth of Merlin set forth fate  
 And brake the secret seal on Arthur's birth,  
 And showed his ruin and his rule on earth  
 Inextricable, and light on lives to be.

For surely, though time slay us, yet shall we  
 Have such high name and lordship of good days  
 As shall sustain us living, and men's praise  
 Shall burn a beacon lit above us dead.

And of the king how shall not this be said  
 When any of us from any mouth has praise,  
 That such were men in only this king's days,  
 In Arthur's? yea, come shine or shade, no less  
 His name shall be one name with knightliness,  
 His fame one light with sunlight. Yet in sooth  
 His age shall bear the burdens of his youth  
 And bleed from his own bloodshed ; for indeed  
 Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,  
 And of the child between them shall be born  
 Destruction : so shall God not suffer scorn,  
 Nor in men's souls and lives his law lie dead.'

And as one moved and marvelling Iseult said :

‘Great pity it is and strange it seems to me  
God could not do them so much right as we,  
Who slay not men for witless evil done ;  
And these the noblest under God’s glad sun  
For sin they knew not he that knew shall slay,  
And smite blind men for stumbling in fair day.  
What good is it to God that such should die ?  
Shall the sun’s light grow sunnier in the sky  
Because their light of spirit is clean put out ?’

And sighing, she looked from wave to cloud about,  
And even with that the full-grown feet of day  
Sprang upright on the quivering water-way,  
And his face burned against her meeting face  
Most like a lover’s thrilled with great love’s grace  
Whose glance takes fire and gives ; the quick sea  
shone

And shivered like spread wings of angels blown  
By the sun’s breath before him ; and a low  
Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow  
As into rainfall of sea-roses shed  
Leaf by wild leaf on that green garden-bed  
Which tempests till and sea-winds turn and plough :  
For rosy and fiery round the running prow  
Fluttered the flakes and feathers of the spray,  
And bloomed like blossoms cast by God away  
To waste on the ardent water ; swift the moon  
Withered to westward as a face in swoon  
Death-stricken by glad tidings : and the height  
Throbbled and the centre quivered with delight

And the depth quailed with passion as of love,  
 Till like the heart of some new-mated dove  
 Air, light, and wave seemed full of burning rest,  
 With motion as of one God's beating breast.

And her heart sprang in Iseult, and she drew  
 With all her spirit and life the sunrise through,  
 And through her lips the keen triumphant air  
 Sea-scented, sweeter than land-roses were,  
 And through her eyes the whole rejoicing east  
 Sun-satisfied, and all the heaven at feast  
 Spread for the morning ; and the imperious mirth  
 Of wind and light that moved upon the earth,  
 Making the spring, and all the fruitful might  
 And strong regeneration of delight  
 That swells the seedling leaf and sapling man,  
 Since the first life in the first world began  
 To burn and burgeon through void limbs and veins,  
 And the first love with sharp sweet procreant pains  
 To pierce and bring forth roses ; yea, she felt  
 Through her own soul the sovereign morning melt,  
 And all the sacred passion of the sun ;  
 And as the young clouds flamed and were undone  
 About him coming, touched and burnt away  
 In rosy ruin and yellow spoil of day,  
 The sweet veil of her body and corporal sense  
 Felt the dawn also cleave it, and incense  
 With light from inward and with effluent heat  
 The kindling soul through fleshly hands and feet.  
 And as the august great blossom of the dawn  
 Burst, and the full sun scarce from sea withdrawn

Seemed on the fiery water a flower afloat,  
So as a fire the mighty morning smote  
Throughout her, and incensed with the influent hour  
Her whole soul's one great mystical red flower  
Burst, and the bud of her sweet spirit broke  
Rose-fashion, and the strong spring at a stroke  
Thrilled, and was cloven, and from the full sheath  
came

The whole rose of the woman red as flame :  
And all her Mayday blood as from a swoon  
Flushed, and May rose up in her and was June.  
So for a space her heart as heavenward burned :  
Then with half summer in her eyes she turned,  
And on her lips was April yet, and smiled,  
As though the spirit and sense unreconciled  
Shrank laughing back, and would not ere its hour  
Let life put forth the irrevocable flower.

And the soft speech between them grew again  
With questionings and records of what men  
Rose mightiest, and what names for love or fight  
Shone starriest overhead of queen or knight.  
There Tristram spake of many a noble thing,  
High feast and storm of tournay round the king,  
Strange quest by perilous lands of marsh and brake  
And circling woods branch-knotted like a snake  
And places pale with sins that they had seen  
Where was no life of red fruit or of green  
But all was as a dead face wan and dun ;  
And bowers of evil builders whence the sun

Turns silent, and the moon holds hardly light  
Above them through the sick and star-crossed night ;  
And of their hands through whom such holds lay  
waste,  
And all their strengths dishevelled and defaced  
Fell ruinous, and were not from north to south :  
And of the might of Merlin's ancient mouth,  
The son of no man's loins, begot by doom  
In speechless sleep out of a spotless womb ;  
For sleeping among graves where none had rest  
And ominous houses of dead bones unblest  
Among the grey grass rough as old rent hair  
And wicked herbage whitening like despair  
And blown upon with blasts of dolorous breath  
From gaunt rare gaps and hollow doors of death,  
A maid unspotted, senseless of the spell,  
Felt not about her breathe some thing of hell  
Whose child and hers was Merlin ; and to him  
Great light from God gave sight of all things dim  
And wisdom of all wondrous things, to say  
What root should bear what fruit of night or day,  
And sovereign speech and counsel higher than man ;  
Wherefore his youth like age was wise and wan,  
And his age sorrowful and fain to sleep ;  
Yet should sleep never, neither laugh nor weep,  
Till in some depth of deep sweet land or sea  
The heavenly hands of holier Nimue,  
That was the nurse of Launcelot, and most sweet  
Of all that move with magical soft feet



Among us, being of lovelier blood and breath,  
Should shut him in with sleep as kind as death :  
For she could pass between the quick and dead :  
And of her love toward Pelleas, for whose head  
Love-wounded and world-wearied she had won  
A place beyond all pain in Avalon ;  
And of the fire that wasted afterward  
The loveless eyes and bosom of Ettarde,  
In whose false love his faultless heart had burned ;  
And now being rapt from her, her lost heart yearned  
To seek him, and passed hungering out of life :  
And after all the thunder-hours of strife  
That roared between King Claudas and King Ban  
How Nimue's mighty nursling waxed to man,  
And how from his first field such grace he got  
That all men's hearts bowed bown to Launcelot,  
And how the high prince Galahault held him dear  
And led him even to love of Guenevere  
And to that kiss which made break forth as fire  
The laugh that was the flower of his desire,  
The laugh that lightened at her lips for bliss  
To win from Love so great a lover's kiss :  
And of the toil of Balen all his days  
To reap but thorns for fruit and tears for praise,  
Whose hap was evil as his heart was good,  
And all his works and ways by wold and wood  
Led through much pain to one last labouring day  
When blood for tears washed grief with life away :  
And of the kin of Arthur, and their might ;  
The misborn head of Mordred, sad as night,

With cold waste cheeks and eyes as keen as pain,  
 And the close angry lips of Agravaine ;  
 And gracious Gawain, scattering words as flowers,  
 The kindest head of worldly paramours ;  
 And the fair hand of Gareth, found in fight  
 Strong as a sea-beast's tusches and as white ;  
 And of the king's self, glorious yet and glad  
 For all the toil and doubt of doom he had,  
 Clothed with men's loves and full of kingly days.

Then Iseult said : ' Let each knight have his praise  
 And each good man good witness of his worth ;  
 But when men laud the second name on earth,  
 Whom would they praise to have no worldly peer  
 Save him whose love makes glorious Guenevere ? '

' Nay,' Tristram said, ' such man as he is none.'

' What,' said she, ' there is none such under sun  
 Of all the large earth's living ? yet I deemed  
 Men spake of one—but maybe men that dreamed,  
 Fools and tongue-stricken, witless, babblers' breed—  
 That for all high things was his peer indeed  
 Save this one highest, to be so loved and love.'

And Tristram : ' Little wit had these thereof ;  
 For there is none such in the world as this.'

' Ay, upon land,' quoth Iseult, ' none such is,  
 I doubt not, nor where fighting folk may be ;  
 But were there none such between sky and sea,  
 The world's whole worth were poorer than I wist.'

And Tristram took her flower-white hand and kissed,  
 Laughing ; and through his fair face as in shame  
 The light blood lightened. ' Hear they no such name ? '

She said ; and he, ' If there be such a word,  
I wot the queen's poor harper hath not heard.'  
Then, as the fuller-feathered hours grew long,  
He hop to speed their warm slow feet with song.

' Love, is it morning risen or night deceased  
That makes the mirth of this triumphant east ?  
Is it bliss given or bitterness put by  
That makes most glad men's hearts at love's high feast ?  
Grief smiles, joy weeps, that day should live and die.

' Is it with soul's thirst or with body's drouth  
That summer yearns out sunward to the south,  
With all the flowers that when thy birth drew nigh  
Were molten in one rose to make thy mouth ?  
O love, what care though day should live and die ?

' Is the sun glad of all the love on earth,  
The spirit and sense and work of things and worth ?  
Is the moon sad because the month must fly  
And bring her death that can but bring back birth ?  
For all these things as day must live and die.

' Love, is it day that makes thee thy delight  
Or thou that seest day made out of thy light ?  
Love, as the sun and sea are thou and I,  
Sea without sun dark, sun without sea bright ;  
The sun is one though day should live and die.

' O which is elder, night or light, who knows ?  
And life or love, which first of these twain grows ?  
For life is born of love to wail and cry,  
And love is born of life to heal his woes,  
And light of night, that day should live and die.

' O sun of heaven above the worldly sea,  
O very love, what light is this of thee !  
My sea of soul is deep as thou art high,  
But all thy light is shed through all of me,  
As love's through love, while day shall live and die.'

‘Nay,’ said Iseult, ‘your song is hard to read.’

‘Ay?’ said he : ‘or too light a song to heed,  
Too slight to follow, it may be? Who shall sing  
Of love but as a churl before a king  
If by love’s worth men rate his worthiness?  
Yet as the poor churl’s worth to sing is less,  
Surely the more shall be the great king’s grace  
To show for churlish love a kindlier face.’

‘No churl,’ she said, ‘but one in soothsayer’s wise  
Who tells but truths that help no more than lies.  
I have heard men sing of love a simpler way  
Than these wrought riddles made of night and day,  
Like jewelled reins whereon the rhyme-bells hang.’

And Tristram smiled and changed his song and sang.

‘The breath between my lips of lips not mine,  
Like spirit in sense that makes pure sense divine,  
Is as life in them from the living sky  
That entering fills my heart with blood of thine  
And thee with me, while day shall live and die.

‘Thy soul is shed into me with thy breath,  
And in my heart each heartbeat of thee saith  
How in thy life the lifesprings of me lie,  
Even one life to be gathered of one death  
In me and thee, though day may live and die.

‘Ah, who knows now if in my veins it be  
My blood that feels life sweet, or blood of thee,  
And this thine eyesight kindled in mine eye  
That shows me in thy flesh the soul of me,  
For thine made mine, while day may live and die?’

‘Ah, who knows yet if one be twain or one,  
And sunlight separable again from sun,  
And I from thee with all my lifesprings dry,  
And thou from me with all thine heartbeats done,  
Dead separate souls while day shall live and die?’

‘ I see my soul within thine eyes, and hear  
My spirit in all thy pulses thrill with fear,  
And in my lips the passion of thee sigh,  
And music of me made in mine own ear ;  
Am I not thou while day shall live and die ?

‘ Art thou not I as I thy love am thou ?  
So let all things pass from us ; we are now,  
For all that was and will be, who knows why ?  
And all that is and is not, who knows how ?  
Who knows ? God knows why day should live and die.’

And Iseult mused and spake no word, but sought  
Through all the hushed ways of her tongueless thought  
What face or covered likeness of a face  
In what veiled hour or dream-determined place  
She seeing might take for love’s face, and believe  
This was the spirit to whom all spirits cleave.  
For that sweet wonder of the twain made one  
And each one twain, incorporate sun with sun,  
Star with star molten, soul with soul imbued,  
And all the soul’s works, all their multitude,  
Made one thought and one vision and one song,  
Love—this thing, this, laid hand on her so strong  
She could not choose but yearn till she should see.  
So went she musing down her thoughts ; but he,  
Sweet-hearted as a bird that takes the sun  
With clear strong eyes, and feels the glad god run  
Bright through his blood and wide rejoicing wings,  
And opens all himself to heaven and sings,  
Made her mind light and full of noble mirth  
With words and songs the gladdest grown on earth,

Till she was blithe and high of heart as he.  
So swam the Swallow through the springing sea.

And while they sat at speech as at a feast,  
Came a light wind fast hardening forth of the east  
And blackening till its might had marred the skies ;  
And the sea thrilled as with heart-sundering sighs  
One after one drawn, with each breath it drew,  
And the green hardened into iron blue,  
And the soft light went out of all its face.

Then Tristram girt him for an oarsman's place  
And took his oar and smote, and toiled with might  
In the east wind's full face and the strong sea's spite  
Labouring ; and all the rowers rowed hard, but he  
More mightily than any wearier three.

And Iseult watched him rowing with sinless eyes  
That loved him but in holy girlish wise  
For noble joy in his fair manliness  
And trust and tender wonder ; none the less  
She thought if God had given her grace to be  
Man, and make war on danger of earth and sea,  
Even such a man she would be ; for his stroke  
Was mightiest as the mightier water broke,  
And in sheer measure like strong music drave  
Clean through the wet weight of the wallowing wave,  
And as a tune before a great king played  
For triumph was the tune their strong strokes made,  
And sped the ship through with smooth strife of oars  
Over the mid sea's grey foam-paven floors,  
For all the loud breach of the waves at will.  
So for an hour they fought the storm out still,

And the shorn foam spun from the blades, and high  
The keel sprang from the wave-ridge, and the sky  
Glared at them for a breath's space through the rain ;  
Then the bows with a sharp shock plunged again  
Down, and the sea clashed on them, and so rose  
The bright stem like one panting from swift blows,  
And as a swimmer's joyous beaten head  
Rears itself laughing, so in that sharp stead  
The light ship lifted her long quivering bows  
As might the man his buffeted strong brows  
Out of the wave-breach ; for with one stroke yet  
Went all men's oars together, strongly set  
As to loud music, and with hearts uplift  
They smote their strong way through the drench and  
drift.

Till the keen hour had chafed itself to death  
And the east wind fell fitfully, breath by breath,  
Tired ; and across the thin and slackening rain  
Sprang the face southward of the sun again.  
Then all they rested and were eased at heart ;  
And Iseult rose up where she sat apart,  
And with her sweet soul deepening her deep eyes  
Cast the furs from her and subtle embroideries  
That wrapped her from the storming rain and spray,  
And shining like all April in one day,  
Hair, face, and throat dashed with the straying  
showers,  
She stood the first of all the whole world's flowers,  
And laughed on Tristram with her eyes, and said,  
' I too have heart then, I was not afraid.'

And answering some light courteous word of grace  
 He saw her clear face lighten on his face  
 Unwittingly, with unenamoured eyes,  
 For the last time. A live man in such wise  
 Looks in the deadly face of his fixed hour  
 And laughs with lips wherein he hath no power  
 To keep the life yet some five minutes' space.  
 So Tristram looked on Iseult face to face  
 And knew not, and she knew not. The last time—  
 The last that should be told in any rhyme  
 Heard anywhere on mouths of singing men  
 That ever should sing praise of them again ;  
 The last hour of their hurtless hearts at rest,  
 The last that peace should touch them breast to  
 breast,

The last that sorrow far from them should sit,  
 This last was with them, and they knew not it.

For Tristram being athirst with toil now spake,  
 Saying, ' Iseult, for all dear love's labour's sake  
 Give me to drink, and give me for a pledge  
 The touch of four lips on the beaker's edge.'  
 And Iseult sought and would not wake Brangwain  
 Who slept as one half dead with fear and pain,  
 Being tender-natured ; so with hushed light feet  
 Went Iseult round her, with soft looks and sweet  
 Pitying her pain ; so sweet a spirited thing  
 She was, and daughter of a kindly king.  
 And spying what strange bright secret charge was  
 kept  
 Fast in that maid's white bosom while she slept,



She sought and drew the gold cup forth and smiled  
Marvelling, with such light wonder as a child  
That hears of glad sad life in magic lands ;  
And bare it back to Tristram with pure hands  
Holding the love-draught that should be for flame  
To burn out of them fear and faith and shame,  
And lighten all their life up in men's sight,  
And make them sad for ever. Then the knight  
Bowed toward her and craved whence had she this  
    strange thing

That might be spoil of some dim Asian king,  
By starlight stolen from some waste place of sands,  
And a maid bore it here in harmless hands.  
And Iseult, laughing—' Other lords that be  
Feast, and their men feast after them ; but we,  
Our men must keep the best wine back to feast  
Till they be full and we of all men least  
Feed after them and fain to fare so well :  
So with mine handmaid and your squire it fell  
That hid this bright thing from us in a wile :'  
And with light lips yet full of their swift smile  
And hands that wist not though they dug a grave,  
Undid the hasps of gold, and drank, and gave,  
And he drank after, a deep glad kingly draught :  
And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed  
Death ; if it be death so to drink, and fare  
As men who change and are what these twain were.  
And shuddering with eyes full of fear and fire  
And heart-stung with a serpentine desire

He turned and saw the terror in her eyes  
That yearned upon him shining in such wise  
As a star midway in the midnight fixed.

    Their Galahault was the cup, and she that mixed ;  
Nor other hand there needed, nor sweet speech  
To lure their lips together ; each on each  
Hung with strange eyes and hovered as a bird  
Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a word ;  
Their heads neared, and their hands were drawn in  
    one,

And they saw dark, though still the unshen sun  
Far through fine rain shot fire into the south ;  
And their four lips became one burning mouth.

## II

*THE QUEEN'S PLEASANCE.*

OUT of the night arose the second day,  
 And saw the ship's bows break the shoreward spray.  
 As the sun's boat of gold and fire began  
 To sail the sea of heaven unsailed of man,  
 And the soft waves of sacred air to break  
 Round the prow launched into the morning's lake,  
 They saw the sign of their sea-travel done.

Ah, was not something seen of yester-sun,  
 When the sweet light that lightened all the skies  
 Saw nothing fairer than one maiden's eyes,  
 That whatsoever in all time's years may be  
 To-day's sun nor to-morrow's sun shall see?  
 Not while she lives, not when she comes to die  
 Shall she look sunward with that sinless eye.

Yet fairer now than song may show them stand  
 Tristram and Iseult, hand in amorous hand,  
 Soul-satisfied, their eyes made great and bright  
 With all the love of all the livelong night ;  
 With all its hours yet singing in their ears

No mortal music made of thoughts and tears,  
But such a song, past conscience of man's thought,  
As hearing he grows god and knows it not.  
Nought else they saw nor heard but what the night  
Had left for seal upon their sense and sight,  
Sound of past pulses beating, fire of amorous light.  
Enough, and overmuch, and never yet  
Enough, though love still hungering feed and fret,  
To fill the cup of night which dawn must overset.  
For still their eyes were dimmer than with tears  
And dizzier from diviner sounds their ears  
Than though from choral thunders of the quiring  
spheres.

They heard not how the landward waters rang,  
Nor saw where high into the morning sprang,  
Riven from the shore and bastioned with the sea,  
Toward summits where the north wind's nest might be,  
A wave-walled palace with its eastern gate  
Full of the sunrise now and wide at wait,  
And on the mighty-moulded stairs that clomb  
Sheer from the fierce lip of the lapping foam  
The knights of Mark that stood before the wall.  
So with loud joy and storm of festival  
They brought the bride in up the towery way  
That rose against the rising front of day,  
Stair based on stair, between the rocks unhewn,  
To those strange halls wherethrough the tidal tune  
Rang loud or lower from soft or strengthening sea,  
Tower shouldering tower, to windward and to lee,

With change of floors and stories, flight on flight,  
That clomb and curled up to the crowning height  
Whence men might see wide east and west in one  
And on one sea waned moon and mounting sun.  
And severed from the sea-rock's base, where stand  
Some worn walls yet, they saw the broken strand,  
The beachless cliff that in the sheer sea dips,  
The sleepless shore inexorable to ships,  
And the straight causeway's bare gaunt spine between  
The sea-spanned walls and naked mainland's green.

On the mid stairs, between the light and dark,  
Before the main tower's portal stood King Mark,  
Crowned : and his face was as the face of one  
Long time athirst and hungering for the sun  
In barren thrall of bitter bonds, who now  
Thinks here to feel its blessing on his brow.  
A swart lean man, but kinglike, still of guise,  
With black streaked beard and cold unquiet eyes,  
Close-mouthed, gaunt-cheeked, wan as a morning  
moon,  
Though hardly time on his worn hair had strewn  
The thin first ashes from a sparing hand :  
Yet little fire there burnt upon the brand,  
And way-worn seemed he with life's wayfaring.  
So between shade and sunlight stood the king,  
And his face changed nor yearned not toward his bride ;  
But fixed between mild hope and patient pride  
Abode what gift of rare or lesser worth  
This day might bring to all his days on earth.

But at the glory of her when she came  
His heart endured not : very fear and shame  
Smote him, to take her by the hand and kiss,  
Till both were molten in the burning bliss,  
And with a thin flame flushing his cold face  
He led her silent to the bridal place.  
There were they wed and hallowed of the priest ;  
And all the loud time of the marriage feast  
One thought within three hearts was as a fire,  
Where craft and faith took counsel with desire.  
For when the feast had made a glorious end  
They gave the new queen for her maids to tend  
At dawn of bride-night, and thereafter bring  
With marriage music to the bridegroom king.  
Then by device of craft between them laid  
To him went Brangwain delicately, and prayed  
That this thing even for love's sake might not be,  
But without sound or light or eye to see  
She might come in to bride-bed : and he laughed,  
As one that wist not well of wise love's craft,  
And bade all bridal things be as she would.  
Yet of his gentleness he gat not good ;  
For clothed and covered with the nuptial dark  
Soft like a bride came Brangwain to King Mark,  
And to the queen came Tristram ; and the night  
Fled, and ere danger of detective light  
From the king sleeping Brangwain slid away,  
And where had lain her handmaid Iseult lay.  
And the king waking saw beside his head  
That face yet passion-coloured, amorous red

From lips not his, and all that strange hair shed  
Across the tissued pillows, fold on fold,  
Innumerable, incomparable, all gold,  
To fire men's eyes with wonder, and with love  
Men's hearts ; so shone its flowering crown above  
The brows enwound with that imperial wreath,  
And framed with fragrant radiance round the face  
beneath.

And the king marvelled, seeing with sudden start  
Her very glory, and said out of his heart ;  
'What have I done of good for God to bless  
That all this he should give me, tress on tress,  
All this great wealth and wondrous ? Was it this  
That in mine arms I had all night to kiss,  
And mix with me this beauty ? this that seems  
More fair than heaven doth in some tired saint's  
dreams,

Being part of that same heaven ? yea, more, for he,  
Though loved of God so, yet but seems to see,  
But to me sinful such great grace is given  
That in mine hands I hold this part of heaven  
Not to mine eyes lent merely. Doth God make  
Such things so godlike for man's mortal sake ?  
Have I not sinned, that in this fleshly life  
Have made of her a mere man's very wife ?'

So the king mused and murmured ; and she heard  
The faint sound trembling of each breathless word  
And laughed into the covering of her hair.

And many a day for many a month as fair  
Slid over them like music ; and as bright  
Burned with love's offerings many a secret night.

And many a dawn to many a fiery noon  
Blew prelude, when the horn's heart-kindling tune  
Lit the live woods with sovereign sound of mirth  
Before the mightiest huntsman hailed on earth  
Lord of its lordliest pleasure, where he rode  
Hard by her rein whose peerless presence glowed  
Not as that white queen's of the virgin hunt  
Once, whose crown-crescent braves the night-wind's  
brunt,

But with the sun for frontlet of a queenlier front.  
For where the flashing of her face was turned  
As lightning was the fiery light that burned  
From eyes and brows enkindled more with speed  
And rapture of the rushing of her steed  
Than once with only beauty ; and her mouth  
Was as a rose athirst that pants for drouth  
Even while it laughs for pleasure of desire,  
And all her heart was as a leaping fire.  
Yet once more joy they took of woodland ways  
Than came of all those flushed and fiery days  
When the loud air was mad with life and sound,  
Through many a dense green mile, of horn and hound  
Before the king's hunt going along the wind,  
And ere the timely leaves were changed or thinned,  
Even in mid maze of summer. For the knight  
Forth was once ridden toward some frontier fight  
Against the lewd folk of the Christless lands  
That warred with wild and intermittent hands  
Against the king's north border ; and there came  
A knight unchristened yet of unknown name,



Swart Palamede, upon a secret quest,  
To high Tintagel, and abode as guest  
In likeness of a minstrel with the king.  
Nor was there man could sound so sweet a string,  
Save Tristram only, of all held best on earth.  
And one loud eve, being full of wine and mirth,  
Ere sunset left the walls and waters dark,  
To that strange minstrel strongly swore King Mark,  
By all that makes a knight's faith firm and strong,  
That he for guerdon of his harp and song  
Might crave and have his liking. Straight there came  
Up the swart cheek a flash of swarthier flame,  
And the deep eyes fulfilled of glittering night  
Laughed out in lightnings of triumphant light  
As the grim harper spake : ' O king, I crave  
No gift of man that king may give to slave,  
But this thy crowned queen only, this thy wife,  
Whom yet unseen I loved, and set my life  
On this poor chance to compass, even as here,  
Being fairer famed than all save Guenevere.'  
Then as the noise of seaward storm that mocks  
With roaring laughter from reverberate rocks  
The cry from ships near shipwreck, harsh and high  
Rose all the wrath and wonder in one cry  
Through all the long roof's hollow depth and length  
That hearts of strong men kindled in their strength  
May speak in laughter lion-like, and cease,  
Being wearied : only two men held their peace  
And each glared hard on other : but King Mark  
Spake first of these : ' Man, though thy craft be dark

And thy mind evil that begat this thing,  
Yet stands the word once plighted of a king  
Fast : and albeit less evil it were for me  
To give my life up than my wife, or be  
A landless man crowned only with a curse,  
Yet this in God's and all men's sight were worse,  
To live soul-shamed, a man of broken troth,  
Abhorred of men as I abhor mine oath  
Which yet I may forswear not.' And he bowed  
His head, and wept : and all men wept aloud,  
Save one, that heard him weeping : but the queen  
Wept not : and statelier yet than eyes had seen  
That ever looked upon her queenly state  
She rose, and in her eyes her heart was great  
And full of wrath seen manifest and scorn  
More strong than anguish to go thence forlorn  
Of all men's comfort and her natural right.  
And they went forth into the dawn of night.  
Long by wild ways and clouded light they rode,  
Silent ; and fear less keen at heart abode  
With Iseult than with Palamede : for awe  
Constrained him, and the might of love's high law,  
That can make lewd men loyal ; and his heart  
Yearned on her, if perchance with amorous art  
And soothfast skill of very love he might  
For courtesy find favour in her sight  
And comfort of her mercies : for he wist  
More grace might come of that sweet mouth unknissed  
Than joy for violence done it, that should make  
His name abhorred for shame's disloyal sake.

And in the stormy starlight clouds were thinned  
And thickened by short gusts of changing wind  
That panted like a sick man's fitful breath:  
And like a moan of lions hurt to death  
Came the sea's hollow noise along the night.  
But ere its gloom from aught but foam had light  
They halted, being aweary : and the knight  
As reverently forbore her where she lay  
As one that watched his sister's sleep till day.  
Nor durst he kiss or touch her hand or hair  
For love and shamefast pity, seeing how fair  
She slept, and fenceless from the fitful air.  
And shame at heart stung nigh to death desire,  
But grief at heart burned in him like a fire  
For hers and his own sorrowing sake, that had  
Such grace for guerdon as makes glad men sad,  
To have their will and want it. And the day  
Sprang : and afar along the wild waste way  
They heard the pulse and press of hurrying horse-  
hoofs play :

And like the rushing of a ravenous flame  
Whose wings make tempest of the darkness, came  
Upon them headlong as in thunder borne  
Forth of the darkness of the labouring morn  
Tristram: and up forthright upon his steed  
Leapt, as one blithe of battle, Palamede,  
And mightily with shock of horse and man  
They lashed together : and fair that fight began  
As fair came up that sunrise : to and fro,  
With knees nigh staggered and stout heads bent low

From each quick shock of spears on either side,  
Reeled the strong steeds heavily, haggard-eyed  
And heartened high with passion of their pride  
As sheer the stout spears shocked again, and flew  
Sharp-splintering : then, his sword as each knight drew,  
They flashed and foined full royally, so long  
That but to see so fair a strife and strong  
A man might well have given out of his life  
One year's void space forlorn of love or strife.  
As when a bright north-easter, great of heart,  
Scattering the strengths of squadrons, hurls apart  
Ship from ship labouring violently, in such toil  
As earns but ruin—with even so strong recoil  
Back were the steeds hurled from the spear-shock, fain  
And foiled of triumph : then with tightened rein  
And stroke of spur, inveterate, either knight  
Bore in again upon his foe with might,  
Heart-hungry for the hot-mouthed feast of fight  
And all athirst of mastery : but full soon  
The jarring notes of that tempestuous tune  
Fell, and its mighty music made of hands  
Contending, clamorous through the loud waste lands,  
Broke at once off ; and shattered from his steed  
Fell, as a mainmast ruining, Palamede,  
Stunned : and those lovers left him where he lay,  
And lightly through green lawns they rode away.

There was a bower beyond man's eye more fair  
Than ever summer dews and sunniest air  
Fed full with rest and radiance till the boughs  
Had wrought a roof as for a holier house

Than aught save love might breathe in ; fairer far  
Than keeps the sweet light back of moon and star  
From high kings' chambers: there might love and sleep  
Divide for joy the darkling hours, and keep  
With amorous alternation of sweet strife  
The soft and secret ways of death and life  
Made smooth for pleasure's feet to rest and run  
Even from the moondawn to the kindling sun,  
Made bright for passion's feet to run and rest  
Between the midnight's and the morning's breast,  
Where hardly though her happy head lie down  
It may forget the hour that wove its crown ;  
Where hardly though her joyous limbs be laid  
They may forget the mirth that midnight made.  
And thither, ere sweet night had slain sweet day,  
Iseult and Tristram took their wandering way,  
And rested, and refreshed their hearts with cheer  
In hunters' fashion of the woods ; and here  
More sweet it seemed, while this might be, to dwell  
And take of all world's weariness farewell  
Than reign of all world's lordship queen and king.  
Nor here would time for three moons' changes bring  
Sorrow nor thought of sorrow ; but sweet earth  
Fostered them like her babes of eldest birth,  
Reared warm in pathless woods and cherished well.  
And the sun sprang above the sea and fell,  
And the stars rose and sank upon the sea ;  
And outlaw-like, in forest wise and free,  
The rising and the setting of their lights  
Found those twain dwelling all those days and nights.

And under change of sun and star and moon  
Flourished and fell the chaplets woven of June,  
And fair through fervours of the deepening sky  
Panted and passed the hours that lit July,  
And each day blessed them out of heaven above,  
And each night crowned them with the crown of love.  
Nor till the might of August overhead  
Weighed on the world was yet one roseleaf shed  
Of all their joy's warm coronal, nor aught  
Touched them in passing ever with a thought  
That ever this might end on any day  
Or any night not love them where they lay ;  
But like a babbling tale of barren breath  
Seemed all report and rumour held of death,  
And a false bruit the legend tear-impearled  
That such a thing as change was in the world.  
And each bright song upon his lips that came,  
Mocking the powers of change and death by name,  
Blasphemed their bitter godhead, and defied  
Time, though clothed round with ruin as kings with  
pride,  
To blot the glad life out of love : and she  
Drank lightly deep of his philosophy  
In that warm wine of amorous words which is  
Sweet with all truths of all philosophies.  
For well he wist all subtle ways of song,  
And in his soul the secret eye was strong  
That burns in meditation, till bright words  
Break flamelike forth as notes from fledgeling birds

That feel the soul speak through them of the spring.  
So fared they night and day as queen and king  
Crowned of a kingdom wide as day and night.  
Nor ever cloudlet swept or swam in sight  
Across the darkling depths of their delight  
Whose stars no skill might number, nor man's art  
Sound the deep stories of its heavenly heart.  
Till, even for wonder that such life should live,  
Desires and dreams of what death's self might give  
Would touch with tears and laughter and wild speech  
The lips and eyes of passion, fain to reach,  
Beyond all bourne of time or trembling sense,  
The verge of love's last possible eminence.  
Out of the heaven that storm nor shadow mars,  
Deep from the starry depth beyond the stars,  
A yearning ardour without scope or name  
Fell on them, and the bright night's breath of flame  
Shot fire into their kisses ; and like fire  
The lit dews lightened on the leaves, as higher  
Night's heart beat on toward midnight. Far and fain  
Somewhiles the soft rush of rejoicing rain  
Solaced the darkness, and from steep to steep  
Of heaven they saw the sweet sheet lightning leap  
And laugh its heart out in a thousand smiles,  
When the clear sea for miles on glimmering miles  
Burned as though dawn were strewn abroad astray,  
Or, showering out of heaven, all heaven's array  
Had paven instead the waters : fain and far  
Somewhiles the burning love of star for star

Spake words that love might wellnigh seem to hear  
 In such deep hours as turn delight to fear  
 Sweet as delight's self ever. So they lay  
 + Tranced once, nor watched along the fiery bay  
 The shine of summer darkness palpitate and play.  
 She had nor sight nor voice ; her swooning eyes  
 Knew not if night or light were in the skies ;  
 Across her beauty sheer the moondawn shed  
 Its light as on a thing as white and dead ;  
 Only with stress of soft fierce hands she prest  
 Between the throbbing blossoms of her breast  
 His ardent face, and through his hair her breath  
 Went quivering as when life is hard on death ;  
 And with strong trembling fingers she strained fast  
 His head into her bosom ; till at last,  
 Satiated with sweetness of that burning bed,  
 His eyes afire with tears, he raised his head  
 And laughed into her lips ; and all his heart  
 Filled hers ; then face from face fell, and apart  
 Each hung on each with panting lips, and felt  
 + Sense into sense and spirit in spirit melt.

'Hast thou no sword ? I would not live till day ;  
 O love, this night and we must pass away,  
 It must die soon, and let not us die late.'

'Take then my sword and slay me ; nay, but wait  
 Till day be risen ; what, wouldst thou think to die  
 Before the light take hold upon the sky ?'

'Yea, love ; for how shall we have twice, being  
 twain,

This very night of love's most rapturous reign ?



Live thou and have thy day, and year by year  
Be great, but what shall I be? Slay me here;  
Let me die not when love lies dead, but now  
Strike through my heart : nay, sweet, what heart hast  
thou ?

Is it so much I ask thee, and spend my breath  
In asking? nay, thou knowest it is but death.  
Hadst thou true heart to love me, thou wouldst give  
This : but for hate's sake thou wilt let me live.'

Here he caught up her lips with his, and made  
The wild prayer silent in her heart that prayed,  
And strained her to him till all her faint breath sank  
And her bright light limbs palpitated and shrank  
And rose and fluctuated as flowers in rain  
That bends them and they tremble and rise again  
And heave and straighten and quiver all through with  
bliss

And turn afresh their mouths up for a kiss,  
Amorous, athirst of that sweet influent love ;  
So, hungering toward his hovering lips above,  
Her red-rose mouth yearned silent, and her eyes  
Closed, and flashed after, as through June's darkest  
skies

The divine heartbeats of the deep live light  
Make open and shut the gates of the outer night.

Long lay they still, subdued with love, nor knew  
If cloud or light changed colour as it grew,  
If star or moon beheld them ; if above  
The heaven of night waxed fiery with their love,

Or earth beneath were moved at heart and root  
To burn as they, to burn and bring forth fruit  
Unseasonable for love's sake ; if tall trees  
Bowed, and close flowers yearned open, and the breeze  
Failed and fell silent as a flame that fails :  
And all that hour unheard the nightingales  
Clamoured, and all the woodland soul was stirred,  
And depth and height were one great song unheard,  
As though the world caught music and took fire  
From the instant heart alone of their desire.

So sped their night of nights between them : so,  
For all fears past and shadows, shine and snow,  
That one pure hour all-golden where they lay  
Made their life perfect and their darkness day.  
And warmer waved its harvest yet to reap,  
Till in the lovely fight of love and sleep  
At length had sleep the mastery ; and the dark  
Was lit with soft live gleams they might not mark,  
Fleet butterflies, each like a dead flower's ghost,  
White, blue, and sere leaf-coloured ; but the most  
White as the sparkle of snow-flowers in the sun  
Ere with his breath they lie at noon undone  
Whose kiss devours their tender beauty, and leaves  
But raindrops on the grass and sere thin leaves  
That were engraven with trceries of the snow  
Flowerwise ere any flower of earth's would blow ;  
So swift they sprang and sank, so sweet and light  
They swam the deep dim breathless air of night.  
Now on her rose-white amorous breast half bare,  
Now on her slumberous love-dishevelled hair,

The white wings lit and vanished, and afresh  
Lit soft as snow lights on her snow-soft flesh,  
On hand or throat or shoulder ; and she stirred  
Sleeping, and spake some tremulous bright word,  
And laughed upon some dream too sweet for truth,  
Yet not so sweet as very love and youth  
That there had charmed her eyes to sleep at last.  
Nor woke they till the perfect night was past,  
And the soft sea thrilled with blind hope of light.  
But ere the dusk had well the sun in sight  
He turned and kissed her eyes awake and said,  
Seeing earth and water neither quick nor dead  
And twilight hungering toward the day to be,  
'As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee.'  
And even as rays with cloudlets in the skies  
Confused in brief love's bright contentious wise,  
Sleep strove with sense rekindling in her eyes ;  
And as the flush of birth scarce overcame  
The pale pure pearl of unborn light with flame  
Soft as may touch the rose's heart with shame  
To break not all reluctant out of bud,  
Stole up her sleeping cheek her waking blood ;  
And with the lovely laugh of love that takes  
The whole soul prisoner ere the whole sense wakes,  
Her lips for love's sake bade love's will be done.  
And all the sea lay subject to the sun.



## III.

*TRISTRAM IN BRITTANY.*

“As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee ;”  
As men that shall be swallowed of the sea  
Love the sea’s lovely beauty ; as the night  
That wanes before it loves the young sweet light,  
And dies of loving ; as the worn-out noon  
Loves twilight, and as twilight loves the moon  
That on its grave a silver seal shall set—  
We have loved and slain each other, and love yet.  
Slain ; for we live not surely, being in twain :  
In her I lived, and in me she is slain,  
Who loved me that I brought her to her doom,  
Who loved her that her love might be my tomb.  
As all the streams on earth and all fresh springs  
And sweetest waters, every brook that sings,  
Each fountain where the young year dips its wings  
First, and the first-fledged branches of it wave,  
Even with one heart’s love seek one bitter grave.  
From hills that first see bared the morning’s breast  
And heights the sun last yearns to from the west,

All tend but toward the sea, all born most high  
Strive downward, passing all things joyous by,  
Seek to it and cast their lives in it and die.  
So strive all lives for death which all lives win ;  
So sought her soul to my soul, and therein  
Was poured and perished : O my love, and mine  
Sought to thee and died of thee and died as thine.  
As the dawn loves the sunlight that must cease  
Ere dawn again may rise and pass in peace ;  
Must die that she being dead may live again,  
To be by his new rising nearly slain.  
So rolls the great wheel of the great world round,  
And no change in it and no fault is found,  
And no true life of perdurable breath,  
And surely no irrevocable death.  
Day after day night comes that day may break,  
And day comes back for night's reiterate sake.  
Each into each dies, each of each is born :  
Day past is night, shall night past not be morn ?  
Out of this moonless and faint-hearted night  
That love yet lives in, shall there not be light ?  
Light strong as love, that love may live in yet ?  
Alas, but how shall foolish hope forget  
How all these loving things that kill and die  
Meet not but for a breath's space and pass by ?  
Night is kissed once of dawn and dies, and day  
But touches twilight and is rapt away.  
So may my love and her love meet once more,  
And meeting be divided as of yore.

Yea, surely as the day-star loves the sun  
And when he hath risen is utterly undone,  
So is my love of her and hers of me—  
And its most sweetness bitter as the sea.  
Would God yet dawn might see the sun and die !'

Three years had looked on earth and passed it by  
Since Tristram looked on Iseult, when he stood  
So communing with dreams of evil and good,  
And let all sad thoughts through his spirit sweep  
As leaves through air or tears through eyes that weep  
Or snowflakes through dark weather : and his soul,  
That had seen all those sightless seasons roll  
One after one, wave over weary wave,  
Was in him as a corpse is in its grave.  
Yet, for his heart was mighty, and his might  
Through all the world as a great sound and light,  
The mood was rare upon him ; save that here  
In the low sundawn of the lightning year  
With all last year's toil and its triumph done  
He could not choose but yearn for that set sun  
Which at this season saw the firstborn kiss  
That made his lady's mouth one fire with his.  
Yet his great heart being greater than his grief  
Kept all the summer of his strength in leaf  
And all the rose of his sweet spirit in flower ;  
Still his soul fed upon the sovereign hour  
That had been or that should be ; and once more  
He looked through drifted sea and drifting shore  
That crumbled in the wave-breach, and again  
Spake sad and deep within himself : ' What pain

Should make a man's soul wholly break and die,  
Sapped as weak sand by water? How shall I  
Be less than all less things are that endure  
And strive and yield when time is? Nay, full sure  
All these and we are parts of one same end ;  
And if through fire or water we twain tend  
To that sure life where both must be made one,  
If one we be, what matter? Thou, O sun,  
The face of God, if God thou be not—nay,  
What but God should I think thee, what should say,  
Seeing thee risen, but very God?—should I,  
I fool, rebuke thee sovereign in thy sky,  
The clouds dead round thee and the air alive,  
The winds that lighten and the waves that strive  
Toward this shore as to that beneath thy breath,  
Because in me my thoughts bear all towards death?  
O sun, that when we are dead wilt rise as bright,  
Air deepening up toward heaven, and nameless light,  
And heaven immeasurable, and faint clouds blown  
Between us and the lowest aerial zone  
And each least skirt of their imperial state—  
Forgive us that we held ourselves so great !  
What should I do to curse you? I indeed  
Am a thing meaner than this least wild seed  
That my foot bruises and I know not—yet  
Would not be mean enough for worms to fret  
Before their time and mine was.

‘ Ah, and ye  
Light washing weeds, blind waifs of dull blind sea, .



Do ye so thirst and hunger and aspire,  
 Are ye so moved with such long strong desire  
 In the ebb and flow of your sad life, and strive  
 Still toward some end ye shall not see alive—  
 But at high noon ye know it by light and heat  
 Some half-hour, till ye feel the fresh tide beat  
 Up round you, and at night's most bitter noon  
 The ripples leave you naked to the moon?  
 And this dim dusty heather that I tread,  
 These half-born blossoms, born at once and dead,  
 Sere brown as funeral cloths, and purple as pall,  
 What if some life and grief be in them all?

‘Ay, what of these? but, O strong sun! O sea!  
 I bid not you, divine things! comfort me,  
 I stand not up to match you in your sight—  
 Who hath said ye have mercy toward us, ye who have  
 might?

And though ye had mercy, I think I would not pray  
 That ye should change your counsel or your way  
 To make our life less bitter: if such power  
 Be given the stars on one deciduous hour,  
 And such might be in planets to destroy  
 Grief and rebuild, and break and build up joy,  
 What man would stretch forth hand on them to make  
 Fate mutable, God foolish, for his sake?  
 For if in life or death be aught of trust,  
 And if some unseen just God or unjust  
 Put soul into the body of natural things  
 And in time's pauseless feet and worldwide wings

Some spirit of impulse and some sense of will  
That steers them through the seas of good and ill  
To some incognizable and actual end,  
Be it just or unjust, foe to man or friend,  
How should we make the stable spirit to swerve,  
How teach the strong soul of the world to serve,  
The imperious will in time and sense in space  
That gives man life turn back to give man place—  
The conscious law lose conscience of its way,  
The rule and reason fail from night and day,  
The streams flow back toward whence the springs  
    began,  
That less of thirst might sear the lips of man?  
Let that which is be, and sure strengths stand sure,  
And evil or good and death or life endure,  
Not alterable and rootless, but indeed  
A very stem born of a very seed  
That brings forth fruit in season: how should this  
Die that was sown, and that not be which is,  
And the old fruit change that came of the ancient  
    root,  
And he that planted bid it not bear fruit,  
And he that watered smite his vine with drouth  
Because its grapes are bitter in our mouth,  
And he that kindled quench the sun with night  
Because its beams are fire against our sight,  
And he that tuned untune the sounding spheres  
Because their song is thunder in our ears?  
How should the skies change and the stars, and time  
Break the large concord of the years that chime,

Answering, as wave to wave beneath the moon  
That draws them shoreward, mar the whole tide's tune  
For the instant foam's sake on one turning wave—  
For man's sake that is grass upon a grave?  
How should the law that knows not soon or late,  
For whom no time nor space is—how should fate,  
That is not good nor evil, wise nor mad,  
Nor just nor unjust, neither glad nor sad—  
How should the one thing that hath being, the one  
That moves not as the stars move or the sun  
Or any shadow or shape that lives or dies  
In likeness of dead earth or living skies,  
But its own darkness and its proper light  
Clothe it with other names than day or night,  
And its own soul of strength and spirit of breath  
Feed it with other powers than life or death—  
How should it turn from its great way to give  
Man that must die a clearer space to live?  
Why should the waters of the sea be cleft,  
The hills be molten to his right and left,  
That he from deep to deep might pass dry-shod,  
Or look between the viewless heights on God?  
Hath he such eyes as, when the shadows flee,  
The sun looks out with to salute the sea?  
Is his hand bounteous as the morning's hand?  
Or where the night stands hath he feet to stand?  
Will the storm cry not when he bids it cease?  
Is it his voice that saith to the east wind, Peace?  
Is his breath mightier than the west wind's breath?  
Doth his heart know the things of life and death?

Can his face bring forth sunshine and give rain,  
Or his weak will that dies and lives again  
Make one thing certain or bind one thing fast,  
That as he willed it shall be at the last?  
How should the storms of heaven and kindled lights  
And all the depths of things and topless heights  
And air and earth and fire and water change  
Their likeness, and the natural world grow strange,  
And all the limits of their life undone  
Lose count of time and conscience of the sun,  
And that fall under which was fixed above,  
That man might have a larger hour for love?'

So musing with close lips and lifted eyes  
That smiled with self-contempt to live so wise,  
With silent heart so hungry now so long,  
So late grown clear, so miserably made strong,  
About the wolds a banished man he went,  
The brown wolds bare and sad as banishment,  
By wastes of fruitless flowerage, and grey downs  
That felt the sea-wind shake their wild-flower crowns  
As though fierce hands would pluck from some grey  
head

The spoils of majesty despised and dead,  
And fill with crying and comfortless strange sound  
Their hollow sides and heights of herbless ground.  
Yet as he went fresh courage on him came,  
Till dawn rose too within him as a flame,  
The heart of the ancient hills and his were one ;  
The winds took counsel with him, and the sun

Spake comfort ; in his ears the shout of birds  
Was as the sound of clear sweet-spirited words,  
The noise of streams as laughter from above  
Of the old wild lands, and as a cry of love  
Spring's trumpet-blast blown over moor and lea :  
The skies were red as love is, and the sea  
Was as the floor of heaven for love to tread.  
So went he as with light about his head,  
And in the joyous travail of the year  
Grew April-hearted ; since nor grief nor fear  
Can master so a young man's blood so long  
That it shall move not to the mounting song  
Of that sweet hour when earth replumes her wings  
And with fair face and heart set heavenward sings  
As an awakened angel unaware  
That feels his sleep fall from him, and his hair  
By some new breath of wind and music stirred,  
Till like the sole song of one heavenly bird  
Sounds all the singing of the host of heaven,  
And all the glories of the sovereign Seven  
Are as one face of one incorporate light.  
And as that host of singers in God's sight  
Might draw toward one that slumbered, and arouse  
The lips requickened and rekindling brows,  
So seemed the earthly host of all things born  
In sight of spring and eyeshot of the morn,  
All births of land or waifs of wind and sea,  
To draw toward him that sorrowed, and set free  
From presage and remembrance of all pains  
The life that leapt and lightened in his veins.

So with no sense abashed nor sunless look,  
But with exalted eyes and heart, he took  
His part of sun or storm-wind, and was glad,  
For all things lost, of these good things he had.

And the spring loved him surely, being from birth  
One made out of the better part of earth,  
A man born as at sunrise ; one that saw  
Not without reverence and sweet sense of awe  
But wholly without fear or fitful breath  
The face of life watched by the face of death ;  
And living took his fill of rest and strife,  
Of love and change, and fruit and seed of life,  
And when his time to live in light was done  
With unbent head would pass out of the sun :  
A spirit as morning, fair and clear and strong,  
Whose thought and work were as one harp and song  
Heard through the world as in a strange king's hall  
Some great guest's voice that sings of festival.  
So seemed all things to love him, and his heart  
In all their joy of life to take such part,  
That with the live earth and the living sea  
He was as one that communed mutually  
With naked heart to heart of friend to friend :  
And the star deepening at the sunset's end,  
And the moon fallen before the gate of day  
As one sore wearied with vain length of way,  
And the winds wandering, and the streams and skies,  
As faces of his fellows in his eyes.  
Nor lacked there love where he was evermore  
Of man and woman, friend of sea or shore,

Not measurable with weight of graven gold,  
Free as the sun's gift of the world to hold  
Given each day back to man's reconquering sight  
That loses but its lordship for a night.  
And now that after many a season spent  
In barren ways and works of banishment,  
Toil of strange fights and many a fruitless field,  
Ventures of quest and vigils under shield,  
He came back to the strait of sundering sea  
That parts green Cornwall from grey Brittany,  
Where dwelt the high king's daughter of the lands,  
Iseult, named alway from her fair white hands,  
She looked on him and loved him ; but being young  
Made shamefastness a seal upon her tongue,  
And on her heart, that none might hear its cry,  
Set the sweet signet of humility.  
Yet when he came a stranger in her sight,  
A banished man and weary, no such knight  
As when the Swallow dipped her bows in foam  
Steered singing that imperial Iseult home,  
This maiden with her sinless sixteen years  
Full of sweet thoughts and hopes that played at fears  
Cast her eyes on him but in courteous wise,  
And lo, the man's face burned upon her eyes  
As though she had turned them on the naked sun :  
And through her limbs she felt sweet passion run  
As fire that flowed down from her face, and beat  
Soft through stirred veins on even to her hands and  
feet

As all her body were one heart on flame,  
Athrob with love and wonder and sweet shame.  
And when he spake there sounded in her ears  
As 'twere a song out of the graves of years  
Heard, and again forgotten, and again  
Remembered with a rapturous pulse of pain.  
But as the maiden mountain snow sublime  
Takes the first sense of April's trembling time  
Soft on a brow that burns not though it blush  
To feel the sunrise hardly half aflush,  
So took her soul the sense of change, nor thought  
That more than maiden love was more than nought.  
Her eyes went hardly after him, her cheek  
Grew scarce a goodlier flower to hear him speak,  
Her bright mouth no more trembled than a rose  
May for the least wind's breathless sake that blows  
Too soft to sue save for a sister's kiss,  
And if she sighed in sleep she knew not this.  
Yet in her heart hovered the thoughts of things  
Past, that with lighter or with heavier wings  
Beat round about her memory, till it burned  
With grief that brightened and with hope that yearned,  
Seeing him so great and sad, nor knowing what fate  
Had bowed and crowned a head so sad and great.  
Nor might she guess but little, first or last,  
Though all her heart so hung upon his past,  
Of what so bowed him for what sorrow's sake :  
For scarce of aught at any time he spake  
That from his own land oversea had sent  
His lordly life to barren banishment.



Yet still or soft or keen remembrance clung  
Close round her of the least word from his tongue  
That fell by chance of courtesy, to greet  
With grace of tender thanks her pity, sweet  
As running streams to men's way-wearied feet.  
And when between strange words her name would fall  
Suddenly straightway to that lure's recall  
Back would his heart bound as the falconer's bird  
And tremble and bow down before the word.  
'Iseult'—and all the cloudlike world grew flame,  
And all his heart flashed lightning at her name;  
'Iseult'—and all the wan waste weary skies  
Shone as his queen's own love-enkindled eyes.  
And seeing the bright blood in his face leap up  
As red wine mantling in a royal cup  
To hear the sudden sweetness of the sound  
Ring, but ere well his heart had time to bound  
His cheek would change, and grief bow down his  
    head,  
'Haply,' the girl's heart, though she spake not, said,  
'This name of mine was worn of one long dead,  
Some sister that he loved : ' and therewithal  
Would pity bring her heart more deep in thrall.  
But once, when winds about the world made mirth,  
And March held revel hard on April's birth  
Till air and sea were jubilant as earth,  
Delight and doubt in sense and soul began,  
And yearning of the maiden toward the man,  
Harping on high before her : for his word  
Was fire that kindled in her heart that heard,

And alway through the rhymes reverberate came  
 The virginal soft burden of her name.  
 And ere the full song failed upon her ear  
 Joy strove within her till it cast out fear,  
 And all her heart was as his harp, and rang  
 Swift music, made of hope whose birthnote sprang  
 Bright in the blood that kindled as he sang.

‘ Stars know not how we call them, nor may flowers  
 Know by what happy name the hovering hours  
 Baptize their new-born heads with dew and flame :  
 And Love, adored of all time as of ours,  
 Iseult, knew nought for ages of his name.

‘ With many tongues men called on him, but he  
 Wist not which word of all might worthiest be  
 To sound for ever in his ear the same,  
 Till heart of man might hear and soul might see,  
 Iseult, the radiance ringing from thy name.

‘ By many names men called him, as the night  
 By many a name calls many a starry light,  
 Her several sovereigns of dividual fame ;  
 But day by one name only calls aright,  
 Iseult, the sun that bids men praise his name.

‘ In many a name of man his name soared high  
 And song shone round it soaring, till the sky  
 Rang rapture, and the world’s fast-founded frame  
 Trembled with sense of triumph, even as I,  
 Iseult, with sense of worship at thy name.

‘ In many a name of woman smiled his power  
 Incarnate, as all summer in a flower,  
 Till winter bring forgetfulness or shame :  
 But thine, the keystone of his topless tower,  
 Iseult, is one with Love’s own lordliest name.

‘Iseult my love, Iseult my queen twice crowned,  
In thee my death, in thee my life lies bound :  
Names are there yet that all men’s hearts acclaim,  
But Love’s own heart rings answer to the sound,  
Iseult, that bids it bow before thy name.’

There ceased his voice yearning upon the word,  
Struck with strong passion dumb : but she that heard  
Quailed to the heart, and trembled ere her eyes  
Durst let the loving light within them rise,  
And yearn on his for answer : yet at last,  
Albeit not all her fear was overpast,  
Hope, kindling even the frost of fear apace  
With sweet fleet bloom and breath of gradual grace,  
Flushed in the changing roses of her face.  
And ere the strife took truce of white with red,  
Or joy for soft shame’s sake durst lift up head,  
Something she would and would not fain have said,  
And wist not what the fluttering word would be,  
But rose and reached forth to him her hand : and he,  
Heart-stricken, bowed his head and dropped his knee,  
And on her fragrant hand his lips were fire ;  
And their two hearts were as one trembling lyre  
Touched by the keen wind’s kiss with brief desire  
And music shuddering at its own delight.  
So dawned the moonrise of their marriage night.



## IV.

*THE MAIDEN MARRIAGE.*

SPRING watched her last moon burn and fade with  
 May

While the days deepened toward a bridal day.  
 And on her snowbright hand the ring was set  
 While in the maiden's ear the song's word yet  
 Hovered, that hailed as love's own queen by name  
 Iseult : and in her heart the word was flame ;  
 A pulse of light, a breath of tender fire,  
 Too dear for doubt, too driftless for desire.  
 Between her father's hand and brother's led  
 From hall to shrine, from shrine to marriage-bed,  
 She saw not how by hap at home-coming  
 Fell from her new lord's hand a royal ring,  
 Whereon he looked, and felt the pulse astart  
 Speak passion in his faith-forsaken heart.  
 For this was given him of the hand wherein  
 That heart's pledge lay for ever : so the sin  
 That should be done if truly he should take  
 This maid to wife for strange love's faithless sake

Struck all his mounting spirit abashed, and fear  
Fell cold for shame's sake on his changing cheer.  
Yea, shame's own fire that burned upon his brow  
To bear the brand there of a broken vow  
Was frozen again for very fear thereof  
That wrung his heart with keener pangs than love.  
And all things rose upon him, all things past  
Ere last they parted, cloven in twain at last,  
Iseult from Tristram, Tristram from the queen ;  
And how men found them in the wild woods green  
Sleeping, but sundered by the sword between,  
Dividing breast from amorous breast a span,  
But scarce in heart the woman from the man  
As far as hope from joy or sleep from truth,  
And Mark that saw them held for sacred sooth  
These were no fleshly lovers, by that sign  
That severed them, still slumbering ; so divine  
He deemed it : how at waking they beheld  
The king's folk round the king, and uncompelled  
Were fain to follow and fare among them home  
Back to the towers washed round with rolling foam  
And storied halls wherethrough sea-music rang :  
And how report thereafter swelled and sprang,  
A full-mouthed serpent, hissing in men's ears  
Word of their loves : and one of all his peers  
That most he trusted, being his kinsman born,  
A man base-moulded for the stamp of scorn,  
Whose heart with hate was keen and cold and dark,  
Gave note by midnight whisper to King Mark

Where he might take them sleeping ; how ere day  
Had seen the grim next morning all away  
Fast bound they brought him down a weary way  
With forty knights about him, and their chief  
That traitor who for trust had given him grief,  
To the old hoar chapel, like a strait stone tomb  
Sheer on the sea-rocks, there to take his doom :  
How, seeing he needs must die, he bade them yet  
Bethink them if they durst for shame forget  
What deeds for Cornwall had he done, and wrought  
For all their sake what rescue, when he fought  
Against the fierce foul Irish foe that came  
To take of them for tribute in their shame  
Three hundred heads of children ; whom in fight  
His hand redeeming slew Moraunt the knight  
That none durst lift his eyes against, not one  
Had heart but he, who now had help of none,  
To take the battle ; whence great shame it were  
To knighthood, yea, foul shame on all men there,  
To see him die so shamefully : nor durst  
One man look up, nor one make answer first,  
Save even the very traitor, who defied  
And would have slain him naked in his pride,  
But he, that saw the sword plucked forth to slay,  
Looked on his hands, and wrenched their bonds  
away,  
Haling those twain that he went bound between  
Suddenly to him, and kindling in his mien  
Shone lion-fashion forth with eyes alight,

And lion-wise leapt on that kinsman knight  
And wrung forth of his felon hands with might  
The sword that should have slain him weaponless  
And smote him sheer down : then came all the press  
All raging in upon him ; but he wrought  
So well for his deliverance as they fought  
That ten strong knights rejoicingly he slew,  
And took no wound, nor wearied : then the crew  
Waxed greater, and their cry on him ; but he  
Had won the chapel now above the sea  
That chafed right under : then the heart in him  
Sprang, seeing the low cliff clear to leap, and swim  
Right out by the old blithe way the sea-mew takes  
Across the bounding billow-belt that breaks  
For ever, but the loud bright chain it makes  
To bind the bridal bosom of the land  
Time shall unlink not ever, till his hand  
Fall by its own last blow dead : thence again  
Might he win forth into the green great main  
Far on beyond, and there yield up his breath  
At least, with God's will, by no shameful death,  
Or haply save himself, and come anew  
Some long day later, ere sweet life were through.  
And as the sea-gull hovers high, and turns  
With eyes wherein the keen heart glittering yearns  
Down toward the sweet green sea whereon the broad  
    noon burns,  
And suddenly, soul-stricken with delight,  
Drops, and the glad wave gladdens, and the light  
Sees wing and wave confuse their fluttering white,



So Tristram one brief breathing-space apart  
Hung, and gazed down ; then with exulting heart  
Plunged : and the fleet foam round a joyous head  
Flashed, that shot under, and ere a shaft had sped  
Rose again radiant, a rejoicing star,  
And high along the water-ways afar  
Triumphed : and all they deemed he needs must die ;  
But Gouvernayle his squire, that watched hard by,  
Sought where perchance a man might win ashore,  
Striving, with strong limbs labouring long and sore,  
And there abode an hour : till as from fight  
Crowned with hard conquest won by mastering might,  
Hardly, but happier for the imperious toil,  
Swam the knight in forth of the close waves' coil,  
Sea-satiate, bruised with buffets of the brine,  
Laughing, and flushed as one afire with wine :  
All this came hard upon him in a breath ;  
And how he marvelled in his heart that death  
Should be no bitterer than it seemed to be  
There, in the strenuous impulse of the sea  
Borne as to battle deathward : and at last  
How all his after seasons overpast  
Had brought him darkling to this dark sweet hour,  
Where his foot faltered nigh the bridal bower.  
And harder seemed the passage now to pass,  
Though smoother-seeming than the still sea's glass,  
More fit for very manhood's heart to fear,  
Than all straits past of peril. Hardly here  
Might aught of all things hearten him save one,  
Faith : and as men's eyes quail before the sun

So quailed his heart before the star whose light  
Put out the torches of his bridal night,  
So quailed and shrank with sense of faith's keen star  
That burned as fire beheld by night afar  
Deep in the darkness of his dreams ; for all  
The bride-house now seemed hung with heavier pall  
Than clothes the house of mourning. Yet at last,  
Soul-sick with trembling at the heart, he passed  
Into the sweet light of the maiden bower  
Where lay the lonely lily-featured flower  
That, lying within his hand to gather, yet  
Might not be gathered of it. Fierce regret  
And bitter loyalty strove hard at strife  
With amorous pity toward the tender wife  
That wife indeed might never be, to wear  
The very crown of wedlock ; never bear  
Children, to watch and worship her white hair  
When time should change, with hand more soft than  
snow,  
The fashion of its glory ; never know  
The loveliness of laughing love that lives  
On little lips of children : all that gives  
Glory and grace and reverence and delight  
To wedded woman by her bridal right,  
All praise and pride that flowers too fair to fall,  
Love that should give had stripped her of them all  
And left her bare for ever. So his thought  
Consumed him, as a fire within that wrought  
Visibly, ravening till its wrath were spent :  
So pale he stood, so bowed and passion-rent,  
Before the blithe-faced bride-folk, ere he went

Within the chamber, heavy-eyed : and there  
Gleamed the white hands and glowed the glimmering  
hair  
That might but move his memory more of one more  
fair,  
More fair than all this beauty : but in sooth  
So fair she too shone in her flower of youth  
That scarcely might man's heart hold fast its truth,  
Though strong, who gazed upon her : for her eyes  
Were emerald-soft as evening-coloured skies,  
And a smile in them like the light therein  
Slept, or shone out in joy that knew not sin,  
Clear as a child's own laughter : and her mouth,  
Albeit no rose full-hearted from the south  
And passion-coloured for the perfect kiss  
That signs the soul for love and stamps it his,  
Was soft and bright as any bud new-blown ;  
And through her cheek the gentler lifebloom shone  
Of mild wild roses nigh the northward sea.  
So in her bride-bed lay the bride : and he  
Drew nigh, and all the high sad heart in him  
Yearned on her, seeing the twilight meek and dim  
Through all the soft alcove tremblingly lit  
With hovering silver, as a heart in it  
Beating, that burned from one deep lamp above,  
Fainter than fire of torches, as the love  
Within him fainter than a bridegroom's fire,  
No marriage-torch red with the heart's desire,  
But silver-soft, a flameless light that glowed  
Starlike along night's dark and starry road

Wherein his soul was traveller. And he sighed,  
Seeing, and with eyes set sadly toward his bride  
Laid him down by her, and spake not : but within  
His heart spake, saying how sore should be the sin  
To break toward her, that of all womankind  
Was faithfullest, faith plighted, or unbind  
The bond first linked between them when they drank  
The love-draught : and his quick blood sprang and  
sank,

Remembering in the pulse of all his veins  
That red swift rapture, all its fiery pains  
And all its fierier pleasures : and he spake  
Aloud, one burning word for love's keen sake—  
'Iseult ;' and full of love and lovelier fear  
A virgin voice gave answer—'I am here.'  
And a pang rent his heart at root : but still,  
For spirit and flesh were vassals to his will,  
Strong faith held mastery on them : and the breath  
Felt on his face did not his will to death,  
Nor glance nor lute-like voice nor flower-soft touch  
Might so prevail upon it overmuch  
That constancy might less prevail than they,  
For all he looked and loved her as she lay  
Smiling ; and soft as bird alights on bough  
He kissed her maiden mouth and blameless brow,  
Once, and again his heart within him sighed :  
But all his young blood's yearning toward his bride,  
How hard soe'er it held his life awake  
For passion, and sweet nature's unforbidden sake,  
And will that strove unwillingly with will it might not  
break,

Fell silent as a wind abashed, whose breath  
Dies out of heaven, suddenly done to death,  
When in between them on the dumb dusk air  
Floated the bright shade of a face more fair  
Than hers that hard beside him shrank and smiled  
And wist of all no more than might a child.  
So had she all her heart's will, all she would,  
For love's sake that sufficed her, glad and good,  
All night safe sleeping in her maidenhood.



v.

*ISEULT AT TINTAGEL.*

BUT that same night in Cornwall oversea  
Couched at Queen Iseult's hand, against her knee,  
With keen kind eyes that read her whole heart's pain  
Fast at wide watch lay Tristram's hound Hodain,  
The goodliest and the mightiest born on earth,  
That many a forest day of fiery mirth  
Had plied his craft before them ; and the queen  
Cherished him, even for those dim years between,  
More than of old in those bright months far flown  
When ere a blast of Tristram's horn was blown  
Each morning as the woods rekindled, ere  
Day gat full empire of the glimmering air,  
Delight of dawn would quicken him, and fire  
Spring and pant in his breath with bright desire  
To be among the dewy ways on quest :  
But now perforce at restless-hearted rest  
He chafed through days more barren than the sand,  
Soothed hardly but soothed only with her hand,  
Though fain to fawn thereon and follow, still  
With all his heart and all his loving will

Desiring one divided from his sight,  
For whose lost sake dawn was as dawn of night  
And noon as night's noon in his eyes was dark.  
But in the halls far under sat King Mark,  
Feasting, and full of cheer, with heart uplift,  
As on the night that harper gat his gift :  
And music revelled on the fitful air,  
And songs came floated up the festal stair,  
And muffled roar of wassail, where the king  
Took heart from wine-cups and the quiring string  
Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran  
Strong as with lifeblood of a kinglier man.  
But the queen shut from sound her wearied ears,  
Shut her sad eyes from sense of aught save tears,  
And wrung her hair with soft fierce hands, and  
prayed :

‘ O God, God born of woman, of a maid,  
Christ, once in flesh of thine own fashion clad ;  
O very love, so glad in heaven and sad  
On earth for earth's sake alway ; since thou art  
Pure only, I only impure of spirit and heart,  
Since thou for sin's sake and the bitter doom  
Didst as a veil put on a virgin's womb,  
I that am none, and cannot hear or see  
Or shadow or likeness or a sound of thee  
Far off, albeit with man's own speech and face  
Thou shine yet and thou speak yet, showing forth  
grace—

Ah me ! grace only shed on souls that are  
Lit and led forth of shadow by thy star—



Alas ! to these men only grace, to these,  
 Lord, whom thy love draws Godward, to thy knees —  
 I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,  
 Who love thee not, to love me? seeing how weak,  
 Lord, all this little love I bear thee is,  
 And how much is my strong love more than this,  
 My love that I love man with, that I bear  
 Him sinning through me sinning? wilt thou care,  
 God, for this love, if love be any, alas,  
 In me to give thee, though long since there was,  
 How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,  
 That now am unclean till the day I die—  
 Haply by burning, harlot-fashion, made  
 A horror in all hearts of wife and maid,  
 Hateful, not knowing if ever in these mine eyes  
 Shone any light of thine in any wise  
 Or this were love at all that I bore thee?’

And the night spake, and thundered on the sea,  
 Ravening aloud for ruin of lives : and all  
 The bastions of the main cliff's northward wall  
 Rang response out from all their deepening length,  
 As the east wind girded up his godlike strength  
 And hurled in hard against that high-towered hold  
 The fleeces of the flock that knows no fold,  
 The rent white shreds of shattering storm : but she  
 Heard not nor heeded wind or storming sea,  
 Knew not if night were mild or mad with wind.

‘ Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,  
 Though cheek wither, brow fade, and bosom wane,  
 Shall I change also from this heart again

To maidenhood of heart and holiness?  
 Shall I more love thee, Lord, or love him less—  
 Ah miserable ! though spirit and heart be rent,  
 Shall I repent, Lord God? shall I repent?  
 Nay, though thou slay me ! for herein I am blest,  
 That as I loved him yet I love him best—  
 More than mine own soul or thy love or thee,  
 Though thy love save and my love save not me.  
 Blest am I beyond women even herein,  
 That beyond all born women is my sin,  
 And perfect my transgression : that above  
 All offerings of all others is my love,  
 Who have chosen it only, and put away for this  
 Thee, and my soul's hope, Saviour, of the kiss  
 Wherewith thy lips make welcome all thine own  
 When in them life and death are overthrown ;  
 The sinless lips that seal the death of sin,  
 The kiss wherewith their dumb lips touched begin  
 Singing in heaven.

‘ Where we shall never, love,  
 Never stand up nor sing ! for God above  
 Knows us, how too much more than God to me  
 Thy sweet love is, my poor love is to thee !  
 Dear, dost thou see now, dost thou hear to-night,  
 Sleeping, my waste wild speech, my face worn white,  
 —Speech once heard soft by thee, face once kissed  
 red !—

In such a dream as when men see their dead  
 And know not if they know if dead these be?  
 Ah love, are thy days my days, and to thee

Are all nights like as my nights? does the sun  
Grieve thee? art thou soul-sick till day be done,  
And weary till day rises? is thine heart  
Full of dead things as mine is? Nay, thou art  
Man, with man's strength and praise and pride of life,  
No bondwoman, no queen, no loveless wife  
That would be shamed albeit she had not sinned.'

And swordlike was the sound of the iron wind,  
And as a breaking battle was the sea.

'Nay, Lord, I pray thee let him love not me,  
Love me not any more, nor like me die,  
And be no more than such a thing as I.  
Turn his heart from me, lest my love too lose  
Thee as I lose thee, and his fair soul refuse  
For my sake thy fair heaven, and as I fell  
Fall, and be mixed with my soul and with hell.  
Let me die rather, and only; let me be  
Hated of him so he be loved of thee,  
Lord: for I would not have him with me there  
Out of thy light and love in the unlit air,  
Out of thy sight in the unseen hell where I  
Go gladly, going alone, so thou on high  
Lift up his soul and love him—Ah, Lord, Lord,  
Shalt thou love as I love him? she that poured  
From the alabaster broken at thy feet  
An ointment very precious, not so sweet  
As that poured likewise forth before thee then  
From the rehallowed heart of Magdalen,  
From a heart broken, yearning like the dove,  
An ointment very precious which is love—

Couldst thou being holy and God, and sinful she-  
 Love her indeed as surely she loved thee?  
 Nay, but if not, then as we sinners can  
 Let us love still in the old sad wise of man.  
 For with less love than my love, having had  
 Mine, though God love him he shall not be glad.  
 And with such love as my love, I wot well,  
 He shall not lie disconsolate in hell :  
 Sad only as souls for utter love's sake be  
 Here, and a little sad, perchance, for me—  
 Me happy, me more glad than God above,  
 In the utmost hell whose fires consume not love !  
 For in the waste ways emptied of the sun  
 He would say—" Dear, thy place is void, and one  
 Weeps among angels for thee, with his face  
 Veiled, saying, *O sister, how thy chosen place  
 Stands desolate, that God made fair for thee !  
 Is heaven not sweeter, and we thy brethren, we  
 Fairer than love on earth and life in hell ?*"  
 And I—with me were all things then not well ?  
 Should I not answer—" O love, be well content ;  
 Look on me, and behold if I repent."  
 This were more to me than an angel's wings.  
 Yea, many men pray God for many things,  
 But I pray that this only thing may be.'

And as a full field charging was the sea,  
 And as the cry of slain men was the wind.  
 ' Yea, since I surely loved him, and he sinned  
 Surely, though not as my sin his be black,  
 God, give him to me—God, God, give him back !

For now how should we live in twain or die?  
I am he indeed, thou knowest, and he is I.  
Not man and woman several as we were,  
But one thing with one life and death to bear.  
How should one love his own soul overmuch?  
And time is long since last I felt the touch,  
The sweet touch of my lover, hand and breath,  
In such delight as puts delight to death,  
Burn my soul through, till spirit and soul and sense,  
In the sharp grasp of the hour, with violence  
Died, and again through pangs of violent birth  
Lived, and laughed out with refluent might of mirth;  
Laughed each on other and shuddered into one,  
As a cloud shuddering dies into the sun.  
Ah, sense is that or spirit, soul or flesh,  
That only love lulls or awakes afresh?  
Ah, sweet is that or bitter, evil or good,  
That very love allays not as he would?  
Nay, truth is this or vanity, that gives  
No love assurance when love dies or lives?  
This that my spirit is wrung withal, and yet  
No surelier knows if haply thine forget,  
Thou that my spirit is wrung for, nor can say  
Love is not in thee dead as yesterday?  
Dost thou feel, thou, this heartbeat whence my heart  
Would send thee word what life is mine apart,  
And know by keen response what life is thine?  
Dost thou not hear one cry of all of mine?  
O Tristram's heart, have I no part in thee?'  
And all her soul was as the breaking sea,

And all her heart anhungered as the wind.

‘Dost thou repent thee of the sin we sinned?  
 Dost thou repent thee of the days and nights  
 That kindled and that quenched for us their lights,  
 The months that feasted us with all their hours,  
 The ways that breathed of us in all their flowers,  
 The dells that sang of us with all their doves?  
 Dost thou repent thee of the wildwood loves?  
 Is thine heart changed, and hallowed? art thou  
     grown

God’s, and not mine? Yet, though my heart make  
     moan,

Fain would my soul give thanks for thine, if thou  
 Be saved—yea, fain praise God, and knows not how.  
 How should it know thanksgiving? nay, or learn  
 Aught of the love wherewith thine own should burn,  
 God’s, that should cast out as an evil thing  
 Mine? yea, what hand of prayer have I to cling,  
 What heart to prophesy, what spirit of sight  
 To strain insensual eyes toward increate light,  
 Who look but back on life wherein I sinned?’

And all their past came wailing in the wind,  
 And all their future thundered in the sea.

‘But if my soul might touch the time to be,  
 If hand might handle now or eye behold  
 My life and death ordained me from of old,  
 Life palpable, compact of blood and breath,  
 Visible, present, naked, very death,  
 Should I desire to know before the day  
 These that I know not, nor is man that may?’

For haply, seeing, my heart would break for fear,  
And my soul timeless cast its load off here,  
Its load of life too bitter, love too sweet,  
And fall down shamed and naked at thy feet,  
God, who wouldst take no pity of it, nor give  
One hour back, one of all its hours to live  
Clothed with my mortal body, that once more,  
Once, on this reach of barren beaten shore,  
This stormy strand of life, ere sail were set,  
Had haply felt love's arms about it yet—  
Yea, ere death's bark put off to seaward, might  
With many a grief have bought me one delight  
That then should know me never. Ah, what years  
Would I endure not, filled up full with tears,  
Bitter like blood and dark as dread of death,  
To win one amorous hour of mingling breath,  
One fire-eyed hour and sunnier than the sun,  
For all these nights and days like nights but one?  
One hour of heaven born once, a stormless birth,  
For all these windy weary hours of earth?  
One, but one hour from birth of joy to death,  
For all these hungering hours of feverish breath?  
And I should lose this, having died and sinned.'

And as man's anguish clamouring cried the wind,  
And as God's anger answering rang the sea.

'And yet what life—Lord God, what life for me  
Has thy strong wrath made ready? Dost thou think  
How lips whose thirst hath only tears to drink  
Grow grey for grief untimely? Dost thou know,  
O happy God, how men wax weary of woe—

Yea, for their wrong's sake that thine hand hath done  
 Come even to hate thy semblance in the sun?  
 Turn back from dawn and noon and all thy light  
 To make their souls one with the soul of night?  
 Christ, if thou hear yet or have eyes to see,  
 Thou that hadst pity, and hast no pity on me,  
 Know'st thou no more, as in this life's sharp span,  
 What pain thou hadst on earth, what pain hath man?  
 Hast thou no care, that all we suffer yet?  
 What help is ours of thee if thou forget?  
 What profit have we though thy blood were given,  
 If we that sin bleed and be not forgiven?  
 Not love but hate, thou bitter God and strange,  
 Whose heart as man's heart hath grown cold with  
     change,

Not love but hate thou showest us that have sinned.'

And like a world's cry shuddering was the wind,  
 And like a God's voice threatening was the sea.

'Nay, Lord, for thou wast gracious; nay, in thee  
 No change can come with time or varying fate,  
 No tongue bid thine be less compassionate,  
 No sterner eye rebuke for mercy thine,  
 No sin put out thy pity—no, not mine.

Thou knowest us, Lord, thou knowest us, all we are,  
 He, and the soul that hath his soul for star:

Thou knowest as I know, Lord, how much more  
     worth

Than all souls clad and clasped about with earth,  
 But most of all, God, how much more than I,  
 Is this man's soul that surely shall not die.



What righteousness, what judgment, Lord most  
high,  
Were this, to bend a brow of doom as grim  
As threats me, me the adulterous wife, on him?  
There lies none other nightly by his side :  
He hath not sought, he shall not seek a bride.  
Far as God sunders earth from heaven above,  
So far was my love born beneath his love.  
I loved him as the sea-wind loves the sea,  
To rend and ruin it only and waste : but he,  
As the sea loves a sea-bird loved he me,  
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,  
And bounteously beneath me spread forth spring,  
A springtide space whereon to float or fly,  
A world of happy water, whence the sky  
Glowed goodlier, lightening from so glad a glass,  
Than with its own light only. Now, alas !  
Cloud hath come down and clothed it round with  
storm,  
And gusts and fits of eddying winds deform  
The feature of its glory. Yet be thou,  
God, merciful : nay, show but justice now,  
And let the sin in him that scarce was his  
Stand expiated with exile : and be this  
The price for him, the atonement this, that I  
With all the sin upon me live, and die  
With all thy wrath on me that most have sinned.'  
And like man's heart relenting sighed the wind,  
And as God's wrath subsiding sank the sea.  
' But if such grace be possible—if it be

Not sin more strange than all sins past, and worse  
Evil, that cries upon thee for a curse,  
To pray such prayers from such a heart, do thou  
Hear, and make wide thine hearing toward me now ;  
Let not my soul and his for ever dwell  
Sundered : though doom keep always heaven and hell  
Irreconcilable, infinitely apart,  
Keep not in twain for ever heart and heart  
That once, albeit by not thy law, were one ;  
Let this be not thy will, that this be done.  
Let all else, all thou wilt of evil, be,  
But no doom, none, dividing him and me.'

By this was heaven stirred eastward, and there came  
Up the rough ripple a labouring light like flame ;  
And dawn, sore trembling still and grey with fear,  
Looked hardly forth, a face of heavier cheer  
Than one which grief or dread yet half enshrouds,  
Wild-eyed and wan, across the cleaving clouds.  
And Iseult, worn with watch long held on pain,  
Turned, and her eye lit on the hound Hodain,  
And all her heart went out in tears : and he  
Laid his kind head along her bended knee,  
Till round his neck her arms went hard, and all  
The night past from her as a chain might fall :  
But yet the heart within her, half undone,  
Wailed, and was loth to let her see the sun.

And ere full day brought heaven and earth to flower,  
Far thence, a maiden in a marriage bower,  
That moment, hard by Tristram, oversea,  
Woke with glad eyes Iseult of Brittany.

## VI.

*F O Y O U S G A R D .*

A LITTLE time, O Love, a little light,  
 A little hour for ease before the night.  
 Sweet Love, that art so bitter ; foolish Love,  
 Whom wise men know for wiser, and thy dove  
 More subtle than the serpent ; for thy sake  
 These pray thee for a little beam to break,  
 A little grace to help them, lest men think  
 Thy servants have but hours like tears to drink.  
 O Love, a little comfort, lest they fear  
 To serve as these have served thee who stand here.

For these are thine, thy servants these, that stand  
 Here nigh the limit of the wild north land,  
 At margin of the grey great eastern sea,  
 Dense-islanded with peaks and reefs, that see  
 No life but of the fleet wings fair and free  
 Which cleave the mist and sunlight all day long  
 With sleepless flight and cries more glad than song.  
 Strange ways of life have led them hither, here  
 To win fleet respite from desire and fear,

With armistice from sorrow ; strange and sweet  
Ways trodden by forlorn and casual feet  
Till kindlier chance woke toward them kindly will  
In happier hearts of lovers, and their ill  
Found rest, as healing surely might it not,  
By gift and kingly grace of Launcelot  
At gracious bidding given of Guenevere.  
For in the trembling twilight of this year  
Ere April sprang from hope to certitude  
Two hearts of friends fast linked had fallen at feud  
As they rode forth on hawking, by the sign  
Which gave his new bride's brother Ganhardine  
To know the truth of Tristram's dealing, how  
Faith kept of him against his marriage vow  
Kept virginal his bride-bed night and morn ;  
Whereat, as wroth his blood should suffer scorn,  
Came Ganhardine to Tristram, saying, ' Behold,  
We have loved thee, and for love we have shown of old  
Scorn hast thou shown us : wherefore is thy bride  
Not thine indeed, a stranger at thy side,  
'Contemned? what evil hath she done, to be  
Mocked with mouth-marriage and despised of thee,  
'Shamed, set at nought, rejected?' But there came  
On Tristram's brow and eye the shadow and flame  
'Confused of wrath and wonder, ere he spake,  
Saying, ' Hath she bid thee for thy sister's sake  
Plead with me, who believed of her in heart  
More nobly than to deem such piteous part  
Should find so fair a player? or whence hast thou  
Of us this knowledge?' ' Nay,' said he, ' but now,

Riding beneath these whitethorns overhead,  
 There fell a flower into her girdlestead  
 Which laughing she shook out, and smiling said—  
 “Lo, what large leave the wind hath given this stray,  
 To lie more near my heart than till this day  
 Aught ever since my mother lulled me lay  
 Or even my lord came ever ;” whence I wot  
 We are all thy scorn, a race regarded not  
 Nor held as worth communion of thine own,  
 Except in her be found some fault alone  
 To blemish our alliance.’ Then replied  
 Tristram, ‘Nor blame nor scorn may touch my bride,  
 Albeit unknown of love she live, and be  
 Worth a man worthier than her love thought me.  
 Faith only, faith withheld me, faith forbade  
 The blameless grace wherewith love’s grace makes  
 glad

All lives linked else in wedlock ; not that less  
 I loved the sweet light of her loveliness,  
 But that my love toward faith was more : and thou,  
 Albeit thine heart be keen against me now,  
 Couldst thou behold my very lady, then  
 No more of thee than of all other men  
 Should this my faith be held a faithless fault.’  
 And ere that day their hawking came to halt  
 Being sore of him entreated for a sign,  
 He sware to bring his brother Ganhardine  
 To sight of that strange Iseult : and thereon  
 Forth soon for Cornwall are these brethren gone,

Even to that royal pleasance where the hunt  
Rang ever of old with Tristram's horn in front  
Blithe as the queen's horse bounded at his side:  
And first of all her dames forth pranced in pride  
That day before them, with a ringing rein  
All golden-glad, the king's false bride Brangwain,  
The queen's true handmaid ever : and on her  
Glancing, ' Be called for all time truth-teller,  
O Tristram, of all true men's tongues alive,'  
Quoth Ganhardine ; ' for may my soul so thrive  
As yet mine eye drank never sight like this.'  
' Ay?' Tristram said, ' and she thou look'st on is  
So great in grace of goodliness, that thou  
Hast less thought left of wrath against me now,  
Seeing but my lady's handmaid? Nay, behold ;  
See'st thou no light more golden than of gold  
Shine where she moves in midst of all, above  
All, past all price or praise or prayer of love?  
Lo, this is she.' But as one mazed with wine  
Stood, stunned in spirit and stricken, Ganhardine,  
And gazed out hard against them : and his heart  
As with a sword was cloven, and rent apart  
As with strong fangs of fire ; and scarce he spake,  
Saying how his life for even a handmaid's sake  
Was made a flame within him. And the knight  
Bade him, being known of none that stood in sight,  
Bear to Brangwain his ring, that she unseen  
Might give in token privily to the queen  
And send swift word where under moon or sun  
They twain might yet be no more twain but one.

And that same night, under the stars that rolled  
Over their warm deep wildwood nights of old  
Whose hours for grains of sand shed sparks of fire,  
Such way was made anew for their desire  
By secret wile of sickness feigned, to keep  
The king far off her vigils or her sleep,  
That in the queen's pavilion midway set  
By glimmering moondawn were those lovers met,  
And Ganhardine of Brangwain gat him grace.  
And in some passionate soft interspace  
Between two swells of passion, when their lips  
Breathed, and made room for such brief speech as  
slips

From tongues athirst with draughts of amorous wine  
That leaves them thirstier than the salt sea's brine,  
Was counsel taken how to fly, and where  
Find covert from the wild world's ravening air  
That hunts with storm the feet of nights and days  
Through strange thwart lines of life and flowerless  
ways.

Then said Iseult : ' Lo, now the chance is here  
Foreshown me late by word of Guenevere,  
To give me comfort of thy rumoured wrong,  
My traitor Tristram, when report was strong  
Of me forsaken and thine heart estranged :  
Nor should her sweet soul toward me yet be changed  
Nor all her love lie barren, if mine hand  
Crave harvest of it from the flowering land.  
See therefore if this counsel please thee not,  
That we take horse in haste for Camelot

And seek that friendship of her plighted troth  
 Which love shall be full fain to lend, nor loth  
 Shall my love be to take it.' So next night  
 The multitudinous stars laughed round their flight,  
 Fulfilling far with laughter made of light  
 The encircling deeps of heaven : and in brief space  
 At Camelot their long love gat them grace  
 Of those fair twain whose heads men's praise im-  
     pearled

As love's two lordliest lovers in the world :  
 And thence as guests for harbourage past they forth  
 To win this noblest hold of all the north.  
 Far by wild ways and many days they rode,  
 Till clear across June's kingliest sunset glowed  
 The great round girth of goodly wall that showed  
 Where for one clear sweet season's length should be  
 Their place of strength to rest in, fain and free,  
 By the utmost margin of the loud lōne sea.

And now, O Love, what comfort? God most  
     high,  
 Whose life is as a flower's to live and die,  
 Whose light is everlasting : Lord, whose breath  
 Speaks music through the deathless lips of death  
 Whereto time's heart rings answer : Bard, whom time  
 Hears, and is vanquished with a wandering rhyme  
 That once thy lips made fragrant : Seer, whose sooth  
 Joy knows not well, but sorrow knows for truth,  
 Being priestess of thy soothsayings : Love, what grace  
 Shall these twain find at last before thy face?



This many a year they have served thee, and  
deserved,

If ever man might yet of all that served,  
Since the first heartbeat bade the first man's knee  
Bend, and his mouth take music, praising thee,  
Some comfort ; and some honey indeed of thine  
Thou hast mixed for these with life's most bitter wine  
Commending to their passionate lips a draught  
No deadlier than thy chosen of old have quaffed  
And blessed thine hand, their cupbearer's : for not  
On all men comes the grace that seals their lot  
As holier in thy sight, for all these feuds  
That rend it, than the light-souled multitude's,  
Nor thwarted of thine hand nor blessed ; but these  
Shall see no twilight, Love, nor fade at ease,  
Grey-grown and careless of desired delight,  
But lie down tired and sleep before the night.  
These shall not live till time or change may chill  
Or doubt divide or shame subdue their will,  
Or fear or slow repentance work them wrong,  
Or love die first : these shall not live so long.  
Death shall not take them drained of dear true life  
Already, sick or stagnant from the strife,  
Quenched : not with dry-drawn veins and lingering  
breath  
Shall these through crumbling hours crouch down to  
death.  
Swift, with one strong clean leap, ere life's pulse tire,  
Most like the leap of lions or of fire,

Sheer death shall bound upon them : one pang past,  
 The first keen sense of him shall be their last,  
 Their last shall be no sense of any fear,  
 More than their life had sense of anguish here.

Weeks and light months had fled at swallow's  
 speed

Since here their first hour sowed for them the seed  
 Of many sweet as rest or hope could be ;  
 Since on the blown beach of a glad new sea  
 Wherein strange rocks like fighting men stand scarred  
 They saw the strength and help of Joyous Gard.  
 Within the full deep glorious tower that stands  
 Between the wild sea and the broad wild lands  
 Love led and gave them quiet : and they drew  
 Life like a God's life in each wind that blew,  
 And took their rest, and triumphed. Day by day  
 The mighty moorlands and the sea-walls grey,  
 The brown bright waters of green fells that sing  
 One song to rocks and flowers and birds on wing,  
 Beheld the joy and glory that they had,  
 Passing, and how the whole world made them glad,  
 And their great love was mixed with all things great,  
 As life being lovely, and yet being strong like fate.  
 For when the sun sprang on the sudden sea  
 Their eyes sprang eastward, and the day to be  
 Was lit in them untimely : such delight  
 They took yet of the clear cold breath and light  
 That goes before the morning, and such grace  
 Was deathless in them through their whole life's  
 space

As dies in many with their dawn that dies  
 And leaves in pulseless hearts and flameless eyes  
 No light to lighten and no tear to weep  
 For youth's high joy that time has cast on sleep.  
 Yea, this old grace and height of joy they had,  
 To lose no jot of all that made them glad  
 And filled their springs of spirit with such fire  
 That all delight fed in them all desire ;  
 And no whit less than in their first keen prime  
 The spring's breath blew through all their summer  
     time,  
 And in their skies would sunlike Love confuse  
 Clear April colours with hot August hues,  
 And in their hearts one light of sun and moon  
 Reigned, and the morning died not of the noon :  
 Such might of life was in them, and so high  
 Their heart of love rose higher than fate could fly.  
 And many a large delight of hawk and hound  
 The great glad land that knows no bourne or bound,  
 Save the wind's own and the outer sea-bank's, gave  
 Their days for comfort ; many a long blithe wave  
 Buoyed their blithe bark between the bare bald rocks,  
 Deep, steep, and still, save for the swift free flocks  
 Unshepherded, uncompassed, unconfined,  
 That when blown foam keeps all the loud air blind  
 Mix with the wind's their triumph, and partake  
 'The joy of blasts that ravin, waves that break,  
 All round and all below their mustering wings,  
 A clanging cloud that round the cliff's edge clings

On each bleak bluff breaking the strenuous tides  
That rings reverberate mirth when storm bestrides  
The subject night in thunder : many a noon  
They took the moorland's or the bright sea's boon  
With all their hearts into their spirit of sense,  
Rejoicing, where the sudden dells grew dense  
With sharp thick flight of hillside birds, or where  
On some strait rock's ledge in the intense mute air  
Erect against the cliff's sheer sunlit white  
Blue as the clear north heaven, clothed warm with  
light,

Stood neck to bended neck and wing to wing  
With heads fast hidden under, close as cling  
Flowers on one flowering almond-branch in spring,  
Three herons deep asleep against the sun,  
Each with one bright foot downward poised, and one  
Wing-hidden hard by the bright head, and all  
Still as fair shapes fixed on some wondrous wall  
Of minster-aisle or cloister-close or hall  
To take even time's eye prisoner with delight.  
Or, satisfied with joy of sound and sight,  
They sat and communed of things past : what state  
King Arthur, yet unwarred upon by fate,  
Held high in hall at Camelot, like one  
Whose lordly life was as the mounting sun  
That climbs and pauses on the point of noon,  
Sovereign : how royal rang the tourney's tune  
Through Tristram's three days' triumph, spear to  
spear,

When Iseult shone enthroned by Guenevere,

Rose against rose, the highest adored on earth,  
Imperial : yet with subtle notes of mirth  
Would she bemock her praises, and bemoan  
Her glory by that splendour overthrown  
Which lightened from her sister's eyes elate ;  
Saying how by night a little light seems great,  
But less than least of all things, very nought,  
When dawn undoes the web that darkness wrought ;  
How like a tower of ivory well designed  
By subtlest hand subserving subtlest mind,  
Ivory with flower of rose incarnadined  
And kindling with some God therein revealed,  
A light for grief to look on and be healed,  
Stood Guenevere : and all beholding her  
Were heartstruck even as earth at midsummer  
With burning wonder, hardly to be borne.  
So was that amorous glorious lady born,  
A fiery memory for all storied years :  
Nor might men call her sisters crowned her peers,  
Her sister queens, put all by her to scorn :  
She had such eyes as are not made to mourn ;  
But in her own a gleaming ghost of tears  
Shone, and their glance was slower than Guenevere's,  
And fitfuller with fancies grown of grief ;  
Shamed as a Mayflower shames an autumn leaf  
Full well she wist it could not choose but be  
If in that other's eyeshot standing she  
Should lift her looks up ever : wherewithal  
Like fires whose light fills heaven with festival

Flamed her eyes full on Tristram's ; and he laughed,  
 Answering, ' What wile of sweet child-hearted craft  
 That children forge for children, to beguile  
 Eyes known of them not witless of the wile  
 But fain to seem for sport's sake self-deceived,  
 Wilt thou find out now not to be believed ?  
 Or how shall I trust more than ouphe or elf  
 Thy truth to me-ward, who beliest thyself ? '  
 ' Nor elf nor ouphe or aught of airier kind,'  
 Quoth she, ' though made of moonbeams moist and  
 blind,

Is light if weighed with man's winged weightless mind.  
 Though thou keep somewise troth with me, God wot,  
 When thou didst wed, I doubt, thou thoughtest not  
 So charily to keep it.' ' Nay,' said he,  
 ' Yet am not I rebukable by thee  
 As Launcelot, erring, held me ere he wist  
 No mouth save thine of mine was ever kissed  
 Save as a sister's only, since we twain  
 Drank first the draught assigned our lips to drain  
 That Fate and Love with darkling hands commixt  
 Poured, and no power to part them came betwixt,  
 But either's will, howbeit they seem at strife,  
 Was toward us one, as death itself and life  
 Are one sole doom toward all men, nor may one  
 Behold not darkness, who beholds the sun.'

' Ah, then,' she said, ' what word is this men hear  
 Of Merlin, how some doom too strange to fear  
 Was cast but late about him oversea,  
 Sweet recreant, in thy bridal Brittany ?

Is not his life sealed fast on him with sleep,  
 By witchcraft of his own and love's, to keep  
 Till earth be fire and ashes ?'

‘ Surely,’ said

Her lover, ‘ not as one alive or dead  
 The great good wizard, well beloved and well  
 Predestinate of heaven that casts out hell  
 For guerdon gentler far than all men's fate,  
 Exempt alone of all predestinate,  
 Takes his strange rest at heart of slumberland,  
 More deep asleep in green Broceliande  
 Than shipwrecked sleepers in the soft green sea  
 Beneath the weight of wandering waves : but he  
 Hath for those roofing waters overhead  
 Above him always all the summer spread  
 Or all the winter wailing : or the sweet  
 Late leaves marked red with autumn's burning feet,  
 Or withered with his weeping, round the seer  
 Rain, and he sees not, nor may heed or hear  
 The witness of the winter : but in spring  
 He hears above him all the winds on wing  
 Through the blue dawn between the brightening  
     boughs,  
 And on shut eyes and slumber-smitten brows  
 Feels ambient change in the air and strengthening  
     sun,  
 And knows the soul that was his soul at one  
 With the ardent world's, and in the spirit of earth  
 His spirit of life reborn to mightier birth  
 And mixed with things of elder life than ours ;  
 With cries of birds, and kindling lamps of flowers,

And sweep and song of winds, and fruitful light  
 Of sunbeams, and the far faint breath of night,  
 And waves and woods at morning : and in all,  
 Soft as at noon the slow sea's rise and fall,  
 He hears in spirit a song that none but he  
 Hears from the mystic mouth of Nimue  
 Shed like a consecration ; and his heart,  
 Hearing, is made for love's sake as a part  
 Of that far singing, and the life thereof  
 Part of that life that feeds the world with love :  
 Yea, heart in heart is molten, hers and his,  
 Into the world's heart and the soul that is  
 Beyond or sense or vision ; and their breath  
 Stirs the soft springs of deathless life and death,  
 Death that bears life, and change that brings forth  
 seed

Of life to death and death to life indeed,  
 As blood recircling through the unsounded veins  
 Of earth and heaven with all their joys and pains.  
 Ah, that when love shall laugh no more nor weep  
 We too, we too might hear that song and sleep !'

'Yea,' said Iseult, 'some joy it were to be  
 Lost in the sun's light and the all-girdling sea,  
 Mixed with the winds and woodlands, and to bear  
 Part in the large life of the quickening air,  
 And the sweet earth's, our mother : yet to pass  
 More fleet than mirrored faces from the glass  
 Out of all pain and all delight, so far  
 That love should seem but as the furthest star  
 Sunk deep in trembling heaven, scarce seen or known,



As a dead moon forgotten, once that shone  
 Where now the sun shines—nay, not all things yet,  
 Not all things always, dying, would I forget.'

And Tristram answered amorously, and said :  
 ' O heart that here art mine, O heavenliest head  
 That ever took men's worship here, which art  
 Mine, how shall death put out the fire at heart,  
 Quench in men's eyes the head's remembered light  
 That time shall set but higher in more men's sight ?  
 Think thou not much to die one earthly day,  
 Being made not in their mould who pass away  
 Nor who shall pass for ever.'

' Ah,' she said,

' What shall it profit me, being praised and dead ?  
 What profit have the flowers of all men's praise ?  
 What pleasure of our pleasure have the days  
 That pour on us delight of life and mirth ?  
 What fruit of all our joy on earth has earth ?  
 Nor am I—nay, my lover, am I one  
 To take such part in heaven's enkindling sun  
 And in the inviolate air and sacred sea  
 As clothes with grace that wondrous Nimue ?  
 For all her works are bounties, all her deeds  
 Blessings ; her days are scrolls wherein love reads  
 The record of his mercies ; heaven above  
 Hath not more heavenly holiness of love  
 Than earth beneath, wherever pass or pause  
 Her feet that move not save by love's own laws,  
 In gentleness of godlike wayfaring  
 To heal men's hearts as earth is healed by spring

Of all such woes as winter : what am I,  
 Love, that have strength but to desire and die,  
 That have but grace to love and do thee wrong,  
 What am I that my name should live so long,  
 Save as the star that crossed thy star-struck lot,  
 With hers whose light was life to Launcelot?  
 Life gave she him, and strength, and fame to be  
 For ever : I, what gift can I give thee?  
 Peril and sleepless watches, fearful breath  
 Of dread more bitter for my sake than death  
 When death came nigh to call me by my name,  
 Exile, rebuke, remorse, and—O, not shame.  
 Shame only, this I gave thee not, whom none  
 May give that worst thing ever—no, not one.  
 Of all that hate, all hateful hearts that see  
 Darkness for light and hate where love should be,  
 None for my shame's sake may speak shame of thee.'

And Tristram answering ere he kissed her smiled :  
 'O very woman, god at once and child,  
 What ails thee to desire of me once more  
 The assurance that thou hadst in heart before?  
 For all this wild sweet waste of sweet vain breath,  
 Thou knowest I know thou hast given me life, not  
 death.

The shadow of death, informed with shows of strife,  
 Was ere I won thee all I had of life.  
 Light war, light love, light living, dreams in sleep,  
 Joy slight and light, not glad enough to weep,  
 Filled up my foolish days with sound and shine,  
 Vision and gleam from strange men's cast on mine,  
 Reverberate light from eyes presaging thine

That shed but shadowy moonlight where thy face  
Now sheds forth sunshine in the deep same place,  
The deep live heart half dead and shallower then  
Than summer fords which thwart not wandering men.  
For how should I, signed sorrow's from my birth,  
Kiss dumb the loud red laughing lips of mirth?  
Or how, sealed thine to be, love less than heaven on earth?  
My heart in me was held at restless rest,  
Presageful of some prize beyond its quest,  
Prophetic still with promise, fain to find the best.  
For one was fond and one was blithe and one  
Fairer than all save twain whose peers are none ;  
For third on earth is none that heaven hath seen  
To stand with Guenevere beside my queen.  
Not Nimue, girt with blessing as a guard :  
Not the soft lures and laughters of Ettarde :  
Not she, that splendour girdled round with gloom,  
Crowned as with iron darkness of the tomb,  
And clothed with clouding conscience of a monstrous  
doom,  
Whose blind incestuous love brought forth a fire  
To burn her ere it burn its darkling sire,  
Her mother's son; King Arthur : yet but late  
We saw pass by that fair live shadow of fate,  
The queen Morgause of Orkney, like a dream  
That scares the night when moon and starry beam  
Sicken and swoon before some sorcerer's eyes  
Whose wordless charms defile the saintly skies,  
Bright still with fire and pulse of blood and breath,  
Whom her own sons have doomed for shame to death.'

'Death — yea,' quoth she, ' there is not said or heard  
 So oft aloud on earth so sure a word.  
 Death, and again death, and for each that saith  
 Ten tongues chime answer to the sound of death.  
 Good end God send us ever—so men pray.  
 But I—this end God send me, would I say,  
 To die not of division and a heart  
 Rent or with sword of severance cloven apart,  
 But only when thou diest and only where thou art,  
 O thou my soul and spirit and breath to me,  
 O light, life, love! yea, let this only be,  
 That dying I may praise God who gave me thee,  
 Let hap what will thereafter.'

So that day

They communed, even till even was worn away,  
 Nor aught they said seemed strange or sad to say,  
 But sweet as night's dim dawn to weariness.  
 Nor loved they life or love for death's sake less,  
 Nor feared they death for love's or life's sake more.  
 And on the sounding soft funereal shore  
 They, watching till the day should wholly die,  
 Saw the far sea sweep to the far grey sky,  
 Saw the long sands sweep to the long grey sea.  
 And night made one sweet mist of moor and lea,  
 And only far off shore the foam gave light.  
 And life in them sank silent as the night.

## VII.

*THE WIFE'S VIGIL.*

BUT all that year in Brittany forlorn,  
 More sick at heart with wrath than fear of scorn  
 And less in love with love than grief, and less  
 With grief than pride of spirit and bitterness,  
 Till all the sweet life of her blood was changed  
 And all her soul from all her past estranged  
 And all her will with all itself at strife  
 And all her mind at war with all her life,  
 Dwelt the white-handed Iseult, maid and wife,  
 A mourner that for mourning robes had on  
 Anger and doubt and hate of things foregone.  
 For that sweet spirit of old which made her sweet  
 Was parched with blasts of thought as flowers with  
     heat  
 And withered as with wind of evil will ;  
 Though slower than frosts or fires consume or kill  
 That bleak black wind vexed all her spirit still.  
 As ripples reddening in the roughening breath  
 Of the eager east when dawn does night to death,

So rose and stirred and kindled in her thought  
Fierce barren fluctuant fires that lit not aught,  
But scorched her soul with yearning keen as hate  
And dreams that left her wrath disconsolate.  
When change came first on that first heaven where all  
Life's hours were flowers that dawn's light hand let fall,  
The sun that smote her dewy cloud of days  
Wrought from its showery folds his rainbow's rays,  
For love the red, for hope the gentle green,  
But yellow jealousy glared pale between.  
Ere yet the sky grew heavier, and her head  
Bent flowerwise, chill with change and fancies fled,  
She saw but love arch all her heaven across with red,  
A burning bloom that seeméd to breathe and beat  
And waver only as flame with rapturous heat  
Wavers ; and all the world therewith smelt sweet,  
As incense kindling from the rose-red flame :  
And when that full flush waned, and love became  
Scarce fainter, though his fading horoscope  
From certitude of sight receded, hope  
Held yet her April-coloured light aloft  
As though to lure back love, a lamp sublime and soft.  
But soon that light paled as a leaf grows pale  
And fluttered leaf-like in the gathering gale  
And melted even as dew-flakes, whose brief sheen  
The sun that gave despoils of glittering green ;  
Till harder shone 'twixt hope and love grown cold  
A sallow light like withering autumn's gold,  
The pale strong flame of jealous thought, that glows  
More deep than hope's green bloom or love's  
enkindled rose :

As though the sunflower's faint fierce disk absorbed  
The spirit and heart of starrier flowers disorbed.

That same full hour of twilight's doors unbarred  
To let bright night behold in Joyous Gard  
The glad grave eyes of lovers far away  
Watch with sweet thoughts of death the death of day  
Saw lonelier by the narrower opening sea

Sit fixed at watch Iseult of Brittany.

As darkness from deep valleys void and bleak  
Climbs till it clothe with night the sunniest peak  
Where only of all a mystic mountain-land  
Day seems to cling yet with a trembling hand  
And yielding heart reluctant to recede,  
So, till her soul was clothed with night indeed,  
Rose the slow cloud of envious will within  
And hardening hate that held itself no sin,  
Veiled heads of vision, eyes of evil gleam,  
Dim thought on thought, and darkling dream on dream.

Far off she saw in spirit, and seeing abhorred,  
The likeness wrought on darkness of her lord  
Shine, and the imperial semblance at his side  
Whose shadow from her seat cast down the bride,  
Whose power and ghostly presence thrust her forth :  
Beside that unknown other sea far north  
She saw them, clearer than in present sight  
Rose on her eyes the starry shadow of night ;  
And on her heart that heaved with gathering fate  
Rose red with storm the starless shadow of hate ;  
And eyes and heart made one saw surge and swell  
The fires of sunset like the fires of hell.

As though God's wrath would burn up sin with shame,  
The incensed red gold of deepening heaven grew  
flame :

The sweet green spaces of the soft low sky  
Faded, as fields that withering wind leaves dry :  
The sea's was like a doomsman's blasting breath  
From lips afoam with ravenous lust of death.  
A night like desolation, sombre-starred,  
Above the great walled girth of Joyous Gard  
Spread forth its wide sad strength of shadow and  
gloom

Wherein those twain were compassed round with doom :  
Hell from beneath called on them, and she heard  
Reverberate judgment in the wild wind's word  
Cry, till the sole sound of their names that rang  
Clove all the sea-mist with a clarion's clang,  
And clouds to clouds and flames to clustering flames  
Beat back the dark noise of the direful names.  
Fear and strong exultation caught her breath,  
And triumph like the bitterness of death,  
And rapture like the rage of hate allayed  
With ruin and ravin that its might hath made ;  
And her heart swelled and strained itself to hear  
What may be heard of no man's hungering ear,  
And as a soil that cleaves in twain for drouth  
Thirsted for judgment given of God's own mouth  
Against them, till the strength of dark desire  
Was in her as a flame of hell's own fire.  
Nor seemed the wrath which held her spirit in stress  
Aught else or worse than passionate holiness,



Nor the ardent hate which called on judgment's rod  
More hateful than the righteousness of God.

' How long, till thou do justice, and my wrong  
Stand expiate? O long-suffering judge, how long?

Shalt thou not put him in mine hand one day

Whom I so loved, to spare not but to slay?

Shalt thou not cast her down for me to tread,

Me, on the pale pride of her humbled head?

Do I not well, being angry? doth not hell

Require them? yea, thou knowest that I do well.

Is not thy seal there set of bloodred light

For witness on the brows of day and night?

Who shall unseal it? what shall melt away

Thy signet from the doors of night and day?

No man, nor strength of any spirit above,

Nor prayer, nor ardours of adulterous love.

Thou art God, the strong lord over body and soul :

Hast thou not in the terrors of thy scroll

All names of all men written as with fire?

Thine only breath bids time and space respire :

And are not all things evil in them done

More clear in thine eyes than in ours the sun?

Hast thou not sight stretched wide enough to see

These that offend it, these at once and me?

Is thine arm shortened or thine hand struck down

As palsied? have thy brows not strength to frown?

Are thine eyes blind with film of withering age?

Burns not thine heart with righteousness of rage

Yet, and the royal rancour toward thy foes

Retributive of ruin? Time should close,

Thou said'st, and earth fade as a leaf grows grey,  
Ere one word said of thine should pass away.  
Was this then not thy word, thou God most high,  
That sin shall surely bring forth death and die,  
Seeing how these twain live and have joy of life,  
His harlot and the man that made me wife  
For is it I, perchance, I that have sinned?  
Me, peradventure, should thy wasting wind  
Smite, and thy sun blast, and thy storms devour  
Me with keen fangs of lightning? should thy power  
Put forth on me the weight of its awakening hour?  
Shall I that bear this burden bear that weight  
Of judgment? is my sin against thee great,  
If all my heart against them burn with all its hate?  
Thine, and not mine, should hate be? nay, but me  
They have spoiled and scoffed at, who can touch not  
thee.

Me, me, the fullness of their joy drains dry,  
Their fruitfulness makes barren : thou, not I,  
Lord, is it, whom their wrongdoing clothes with shame,  
That all who speak shoot tongues out at thy name  
As all who hear mock mine? Make me thy sword  
At least, if even thou too be wronged, O Lord,  
At all of these that wrong me : make mine hand  
As lightning, or my tongue a fiery brand,  
To burn or smite them with thy wrath : behold,  
I have nought on earth save thee for hope or hold,  
Fail me not thou : I have nought but this to crave,  
Make me thy mean to give them to the grave,

Thy sign that all men seeing may speak thee just,  
Thy word which turns the strengths of sin to dust,  
Thy blast which burns up towers and thrones with fire.  
Lord, is this gift, this grace that I require,  
So great a gift, Lord, for thy grace to give  
And bid me bear thy part retributive?  
That I whom scorn makes mouths at, I might be  
Thy witness if loud sin may mock at thee?  
For lo, my life is as a barren ear  
Plucked from the sheaf : dark days drive past me here  
Downtrodden, while joy's reapers pile their sheaves,  
A thing more vile than autumn's weariest leaves,  
For these the sun filled once with sap of life.  
O thou my lord that hadst me to thy wife,  
Dost thou not fear at all, remembering me,  
The love that bowed my whole soul down to thee?  
Is this so wholly nought for man to dread,  
Man, whose life walks between the quick and dead,  
Naked, and warred about with wind and sea,  
That one should love and hate as I do thee?  
That one should live in all the world his foe  
So mortal as the hate that loves him so?  
Nought, is it nought, O husband, O my knight,  
O strong man and indomitable in fight,  
That one more weak than foam-bells on the sea  
Should have in heart such thoughts as I of thee?  
Thou art bound about with stately strengths for bands :  
What strength shall keep thee from my strengthless  
hands?

Thou art girt about with goodly guards and great :  
What fosse may fence thee round as deep as hate ?  
Thou art wise : will wisdom teach thee fear of me ?  
Thou art great of heart : shall this deliver thee ?  
What wall so massive, or what tower so high,  
Shall be thy surety that thou shouldst not die,  
If that which comes against thee be but I ?  
Who shall rise up of power to take thy part,  
What skill find strength to save, what strength find art,  
If that which wars against thee be my heart ?  
Not iron, nor the might of force afield,  
Nor edge of sword, nor sheltering weight of shield,  
Nor all thy fame since all thy praise began,  
Nor all the love and laud thou hast of man,  
Nor, though his noiseless hours with wool be shod,  
Shall God's love keep thee from the wrath of God.  
O son of sorrows, hast thou said at heart,  
Haply, God loves thee, God shall take thy part,  
Who hath all these years endured thee, since thy birth  
From sorrow's womb bade sin be born on earth ?  
So long he hath cast his buckler over thee,  
Shall he not surely guard thee even from me ?  
Yea, but if yet he give thee while I live  
Into mine hands as he shall surely give,  
Ere death at last bring darkness on thy face,  
Call then on him, call not on me for grace,  
Cast not away one prayer, one suppliant breath,  
On me that commune all this while with death.  
For I that was not and that was thy wife  
Desire not but one hour of all thy life

Wherein to triumph till that hour be past ;  
But this mine hour I look for is thy last.'

So mused she till the fire in sea and sky  
Sank, and the northwest wind spake harsh on high,  
And like the sea's heart waxed her heart that heard,  
Strong, dark, and bitter, till the keen wind's word  
Seemed of her own soul spoken, and the breath  
All round her not of darkness, but of death.



## VIII.

*THE LAST PILGRIMAGE.*

ENOUGH of ease, O Love, enough of light,  
 Enough of rest before the shadow of night.  
 Strong Love, whom death finds feebler ; kingly Love,  
 Whom time discrowns in season, seeing thy dove  
 Spell-stricken by the serpent ; for thy sake  
 These that saw light see night's dawn only break,  
 Night's cup filled up with slumber, whence men think  
 The draught more dread than thine was dire to drink.  
 O Love, thy day sets darkling : hope and fear  
 Fall from thee standing stern as death stands here.

For what have these to do with fear or hope  
 On whom the gates of outer darkness ope,  
 On whom the door of life's desire is barred ?  
 Past like a cloud, their days in Joyous Gard  
 Gleam like a cloud the westering sun stains red  
 Till all the blood of day's blithe heart be bled  
 And all night's heart requickened ; in their eyes  
 So flame and fade those far memorial skies,  
 So shines the moorland, so revives the sea,  
 Whereon they gazing mused of things to be

And wist not more of them than waters know  
What wind with next day's change of tide shall blow.  
Dark roll the deepening days whose waves divide  
Unseasonably, with storm-struck change of tide,  
Tristram from Iseult : nor may sorrow say  
If better wind shall blow than yesterday  
With next day risen or any day to come.  
For ere the songs of summer's death fell dumb,  
And autumn bade the imperial moorlands change  
Their purples, and the bracken's bloom grow strange  
As hope's green blossom touched with time's harsh  
rust,  
Was all their joy of life shaken to dust,  
And all its fire made ashes : by the strand  
Where late they strayed and communed hand from  
hand  
For the last time fell separate, eyes of eyes  
Took for the last time leave, and saw the skies  
Dark with their deep division. The last time—  
The last that ever love's rekindling rhyme  
Should keep for them life's days and nights in tune  
With refluence of the morning and the moon  
Alternative in music, and make one  
The secrets of the stardawn and the sun  
For these twain souls ere darkness held them fast ;  
The last before the labour marked for last  
And toil of utmost knighthood, till the wage  
Of rest might crown his crowning pilgrimage  
Whereon forth faring must he take farewell,  
With spear for staff and sword for scallop-shell



And scrip wherein close memory hoarded yet  
Things holier held than death might well forget ;  
The last time ere the travel were begun  
Whose goal is un beholden of the sun,  
The last wherewith love's eyes might yet be lit,  
Came, and they could but dream they knew not it.

For Tristram parting from her wist at heart  
How well she wist they might not choose but part,  
And he pass forth a pilgrim, when there came  
A sound of summons in the high king's name  
For succour toward his vassal Triamour,  
King in wild Wales, now spoiled of all his power,  
As Tristram's father ere his fair son's birth,  
By one the strongest of the sons of earth,  
Urgan, an iron bulk of giant mould :  
And Iseult in Tintagel as of old  
Sat crowned with state and sorrow : for her lord  
At Arthur's hand required her back restored,  
And willingly compelled against her will  
She yielded, saying within her own soul still  
Some season yet of soft or stormier breath  
Should haply give her life again or death:  
For now nor quick nor dead nor bright nor dark  
Were all her nights and days wherein King Mark  
Held haggard watch upon her, and his eyes  
Were cloudier than the gradual wintering skies  
That closed about the wan wild land and sea.  
And bitter toward him waxed her heart : but he  
Was rent in twain betwixt harsh love and hate  
With pain and passion half compassionate

That yearned and laboured to be quit of shame,  
And could not : and his life grew smouldering flame,  
And hers a cloud full-charged with storm and shower,  
Though touched with trembling gleams of fire's bright  
flower

That flashed and faded on its fitful verge,  
As hope would strive with darkness and emerge  
And sink, a swimmer strangled by the swallowing  
surge.

But Tristram by dense hills and deepening vales  
Rode through the wild glad wastes of glorious Wales,  
High-hearted with desire of happy fight  
And strong in soul with merrier sense of might  
Than since the fair first years that hailed him knight :  
For all his will was toward the war, so long  
Had love repressed and wrought his glory wrong,  
So far the triumph and so fair the praise  
Seemed now that kindled all his April days.  
And here in bright blown autumn, while his life  
Was summer's yet for strength toward love or strife,  
Blithe waxed his hope toward battle, and high desire  
To pluck once more as out of circling fire  
Fame, the broad flower whose breath makes death  
more sweet  
Than roses crushed by love's receding feet.  
But all the lovely land wherein he went  
The blast of ruin and ravenous war had rent ;  
And black with fire the fields where homesteads were,  
And foul with festering dead the high soft air,

And loud with wail of women many a stream  
Whose own live song was like love's deepening dream,  
Spake all against the spoiler : wherefore still  
Wrath waxed with pity, quickening all his will,  
In Tristram's heart for every league he rode  
Through the aching land so broad a curse bestrode  
With so supreme a shadow : till one dawn,  
Above the green bloom of a gleaming lawn,  
High on the strait steep windy bridge that spanned  
A glen's deep mouth, he saw that shadow stand  
Visible, sword on thigh and mace in hand  
Vast as the mid bulk of a roof-tree's beam.  
So, sheer above the wild wolf-haunted stream,  
Dire as the face disfeatured of a dream,  
Rose Urgan : and his eyes were night and flame ;  
But like the fiery dawn were his that came  
Against him, lit with more sublime desire  
Than lifts toward heaven the leaping heart of fire :  
And strong in vantage of his perilous place  
The huge high presence, red as earth's first race,  
Reared like a reed the might up of his mace,  
And smote : but lightly Tristram swerved, and drove  
Right in on him, whose void stroke only clove  
Air, and fell wide, thundering athwart : and he  
Sent forth a stormier cry than wind or sea  
When midnight takes the tempest for her lord ;  
And all the glen's throat seemed as hell's that roared ;  
But high like heaven's light over hell shone Tristram's  
sword,

Falling, and bright as storm shows God's bare brand  
Flashed as it shore sheer off the huge right hand  
Whose strength was as the shadow of death on all that  
land.

And like the trunk of some grim tree sawn through  
Reeled Urgan, as his left hand grasped and drew  
A steel by sorcerers tempered : and anew  
Raged the red wind of fluctuant fight, till all  
The cliffs were thrilled as by the clangorous call  
Of storm's blown trumpets from the core of night,  
Charging : and even as with the storm-wind's might  
On Tristram's helm that sword crashed : and the knight  
Fell, and his arms clashed, and a wide cry brake  
From those far off that heard it, for his sake  
Soul-stricken : and that bulk of monstrous birth  
Sent forth again a cry more dire for mirth :  
But ere the sunbright arms were soiled of earth  
They flashed again, re-risen : and swift and loud  
Rang the strokes out as from a circling cloud,  
So dense the dust wrought over them its drifted  
shroud.

Strong strokes, within the mist their battle made,  
Each hailed on other through the shifting shade  
That clung about them hurtling as the swift fight  
swayed :

And each between the jointed corslet saw  
Break forth his foe's bright blood at each grim flaw  
Steel made in hammered iron : till again  
The fiend put forth his might more strong for pain  
And cleft the great knight's glittering shield in twain,

Laughing for very wrath and thirst to kill,  
A beast's broad laugh of blind and wolfish will,  
And smote again ere Tristram's lips drew breath  
Panting, and swept as by the sense of death,  
That surely should have touched and sealed them fast  
Save that the sheer stroke shrilled aside, and passed  
Frustrate : but answering Tristram smote anew,  
And thrust the brute breast as with lightning through  
Clean with one cleaving stroke of perfect might :  
And violently the vast bulk leapt upright,  
And plunged over the bridge, and fell : and all  
The cliffs reverberate from his monstrous fall  
Rang : and the land by Tristram's grace was free.  
So with high laud and honour thence went he,  
And southward set his sail again, and passed  
The lone land's ending, first beheld and last  
Of eyes that look on England from the sea :  
And his heart mourned within him, knowing how she  
Whose heart with his was fatefully made fast  
Sat now fast bound, as though some charm were cast  
About her, such a brief space eastward thence,  
And yet might soul not break the bonds of sense  
And bring her to him in very life and breath  
More than had this been even the sea of death  
That washed between them, and its wide sweet light  
The dim strait's darkness of the narrowing night  
That shuts about men dying whose souls put forth  
To pierce its passage through : but south and north  
Alike for him were other than they were :  
For all the northward coast shone smooth and fair,

And off its iron cliffs the keen-edged air  
Blew summer, kindling from her mute bright mouth ;  
But winter breathed out of the murmuring south,  
Where, pale with wrathful watch on passing ships,  
The lone wife lay in wait with wan dumb lips.  
Yet, sailing where the shoreward ripple curled  
Of the most wild sweet waves in all the world,  
His soul took comfort even for joy to see  
The strong deep joy of living sun and sea,  
The large deep love of living sea and land,  
As past the lonely lion-guarded strand  
Where that huge warder lifts his couchant sides,  
Asleep, above the sleepless lapse of tides,  
The light sail swept, and past the unsounded caves  
Unsearchable, wherein the pulse of waves  
Throbs through perpetual darkness to and fro,  
And the blind night swims heavily below  
While heavily the strong noon broods above,  
Even to the very bay whence very Love,  
Strong daughter of the giant gods who wrought  
Sun, earth, and sea out of their procreant thought,  
Most meetly might have risen, and most divine  
Beheld and heard things round her sound and shine  
From floors of foam and gold to walls of serpentine.  
For splendid as the limbs of that supreme  
Incarnate beauty through men's visions gleam,  
Whereof all fairest things are even but shadow or  
dream,  
And lovely like as Love's own heavenliest face,

Gleams there and glows the presence and the grace  
Even of the mother of all, in perfect pride of place.  
For otherwhere beneath our world-wide sky  
There may not be beheld of men that die  
Aught else like this that dies not, nor may stress  
Of ages that bow down men's works make less  
The exultant awe that clothes with power its loveliness.  
For who sets eye thereon soever knows  
How since these rocks and waves first rolled and rose  
The marvel of their many-coloured might  
Hath borne this record sensible to sight,  
The witness and the symbol of their own delight,  
The gospel graven of life's most heavenly law,  
Joy, brooding on its own still soul with awe,  
A sense of godlike rest in godlike strife,  
The sovereign conscience of the spirit of life.  
Nor otherwhere on strand or mountain tower  
Hath such fair beauty shining forth in flower  
Put on the imperial robe of such imperious power.  
For all the radiant rocks from depth to height  
Burn with vast bloom of glories blossom-bright  
As though the sun's own hand had thrilled them  
    through with light  
And stained them through with splendour : yet from  
    thence  
Such awe strikes rapture through the spirit of sense  
From all the inaccessible sea-wall's girth,  
That exultation, bright at heart as mirth,  
Bows deeper down before the beauty of earth

Than fear may bow down ever : nor shall one  
Who meets at Alpine dawn the mounting sun  
On heights too high for many a wing to climb  
Be touched with sense of aught seen more sublime  
Than here smiles high and sweet in face of heaven  
and time.

For here the flower of fire, the soft hoar bloom  
Of springtide olive-woods, the warm green gloom  
Of clouded seas that swell and sound with dawn of  
doom,

The keen thwart lightning and the wan grey light  
Of stormy sunrise crossed and vexed with night,  
Flash, loom, and laugh with divers hues in one  
From all the curved cliff's face, till day be done,  
Against the sea's face and the gazing sun.

And whensoever a strong wave, high in hope,  
Sweeps up some smooth slant breadth of stone aslope,  
That glowed with duskier fire of hues less bright,  
Swift as it sweeps back springs to sudden sight  
The splendour of the moist rock's fervent light,  
Fresh as from dew of birth when time was born  
Out of the world-conceiving womb of morn.

All its quenched flames and darkling hues divine  
Leap into lustrous life and laugh and shine  
And darken into swift and dim decline

For one brief breath's space till the next wave run  
Right up, and ripple down again, undone,  
And leave it to be kissed and kindled of the sun.  
And all these things, bright as they shone before  
Man first set foot on earth or sail from shore,



Rose not less radiant than the sun sees now  
When the autumn sea was cloven of Tristram's prow,  
And strong in sorrow and hope and woful will  
That hope might move not nor might sorrow kill  
He held his way back toward the wild sad shore  
Whence he should come to look on these no more,  
Nor ever, save with sunless eyes shut fast,  
Sail home to sleep in home-born earth at last.

And all these things fled fleet as light or breath  
Past, and his heart waxed cold and dull as death,  
Or swelled but as the tides of sorrow swell,  
To sink with sullen sense of slow farewell.  
So surely seemed the silence even to sigh  
Assurance of inveterate prophecy,  
'Thou shalt not come again home hither ere thou die.'  
And the wind mourned and triumphed, and the sea  
Wailed and took heart and trembled ; nor might he  
Hear more of comfort in their speech, or see  
More certitude in all the waste world's range  
Than the only certitude of death and change.  
And as the sense and semblance fluctuated  
Of all things heard and seen alive or dead  
That smote far off upon his ears or eyes  
Or memory mixed with forecasts fain to rise  
And fancies faint as ghostliest prophecies,  
So seemed his own soul, changefully forlorn,  
To shrink and triumph and mount up and mourn.  
Yet all its fitful waters, clothed with night,  
Lost heart not wholly, lacked not wholly light,  
Seeing over life and death one star in sight

Where evening's gates as fair as morning's ope,  
Whose name was memory, but whose flame was hope.  
For all the tides of thought that rose and sank  
Felt its fair strength wherefrom strong sorrow shrank  
A mightier trust than time could change or cloy,  
More strong than sorrow, more secure than joy.  
So came he, nor content nor all unblest,  
Back to the grey old land of Merlin's rest.

But ere six paces forth on shore he trod  
Before him stood a knight with feet unshod,  
And kneeling called upon him, as on God  
Might sick men call for pity, praying aloud  
With hands held up and head made bare and bowed ;  
' Tristram, for God's love and thine own dear fame,  
I Tristram that am one with thee in name  
And one in heart with all that praise thee—I,  
Most woful man of all that may not die  
For heartbreak and the heavier scourge of shame,  
By all thy glory done our woful name  
Beseech thee, called of all men gentlest knight,  
Be now not slow to do my sorrows right.  
I charge thee for thy fame's sake through this land,  
I pray thee by thine own wife's fair white hand,  
Have pity of me whose love is borne away  
By one that makes of poor men's lives his prey,  
A felon masked with knighthood : at his side  
Seven brethren hath he night or day to ride  
With seven knights more that wait on all his will :  
And here at hand, ere yet one day fulfil  
Its flight through light and darkness, shall they fare  
Forth, and my bride among them, whom they bear

Through these wild lands his prisoner ; and if now  
I lose her, and my prayer be vain, and thou  
Less fain to serve love's servants than of yore,  
Then surely shall I see her face no more.  
But if thou wilt, for love's sake of the bride  
Who lay most loved of women at thy side,  
Strike with me, straight then hence behoves us ride  
And rest between the moorside and the sea  
Where we may smite them passing : but for me  
Poor stranger, me not worthy scarce to touch  
Thy kind strong hand, how shouldst thou do so much ?  
For now lone left this long time waits thy wife  
And lacks her lord and light of wedded life  
Whilst thou far off art famous : yet thy fame,  
If thou take pity on me that bear thy name  
Unworthily, but by that name implore  
Thy grace, how shall not even thy fame grow more ?  
But be thy will as God's among us done,  
Who art far in fame above us as the sun :  
Yet only of him have all men help and grace.'

And all the lordly light of Tristram's face  
Was softened as the sun's in kindly spring.  
'Nay, then may God send me as evil a thing  
When I give ear not to such prayers,' he said,  
'And make my place among the nameless dead  
When I put back one hour the time to smite  
And do the unrighteous griefs of good men right.  
Behold, I will not enter in nor rest  
Here in mine own halls till this piteous quest  
Find end ere noon to-morrow : but do thou,  
Whose sister's face I may not look on now,

Go, Ganhardine, with tiding of the vow  
That bids me turn aside for one day's strife  
Or live dishonoured all my days of life,  
And greet for me in brother's wise my wife,  
And crave her pardon that for knighthood's sake  
And womanhood's, whose bands may no man break  
And keep the bands of bounden honour fast,  
I seek not her till two nights yet be past  
And this my quest accomplished, so God please  
By me to give this young man's anguish ease  
And on his wrongdoer's head his wrong requite.'

And Tristram with that woful thankful knight  
Rode by the seaside moorland wastes away  
Between the quickening night and darkening day  
Ere half the gathering stars had heart to shine.  
And lightly toward his sister Ganhardine  
Sped, where she sat and gazed alone afar  
Above the grey sea for the sunset star,  
And lightly kissed her hand and lightly spake  
His tiding of that quest for knighthood's sake.  
And the white-handed Iseult, bowing her head,  
Gleamed on him with a glance athwart, and said ;  
'As God's on earth and far above the sun,  
So toward his handmaid be my lord's will done.'  
And doubts too dim to question or divine  
Touched as with shade the spirit of Ganhardine,  
Hearing ; and scarce for half a doubtful breath  
His bright light heart held half a thought of death  
And knew not whence this darkling thought might be,  
But surely not his sister's work : for she

Was ever sweet and good as summer air,  
And soft as dew when all the night is fair,  
And gracious as the golden maiden moon  
When darkness craves her blessing : so full soon  
His mind was light again as leaping waves,  
Nor dreamed that hers was like a field of graves  
Where no man's foot dares swerve to left or right,  
Nor ear dares hearken, nor dares eye take sight  
Of aught that moves and murmurs there at night.

But by the sea-banks where at morn their foes  
Might find them, lay those knightly name-fellows,  
One sick with grief of heart and sleepless, one  
With heart of hope triumphant as the sun  
Dreaming asleep of love and fame and fight :  
But sleep at last wrapped warm the wan young knight ;  
And Tristram with the first pale windy light  
Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear  
Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,  
A noise of waking waters : for till dawn  
The sea was silent as a mountain lawn  
When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,  
And summer takes her fill ere autumn come  
Of life more soft than slumber : but ere day  
Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,  
Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took  
With its wide wings the waters as they shook,  
And hurled them huddling on ahead, and cast  
The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,  
Blown from the heart of morning : and with joy  
Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy

That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea  
For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,  
Up sprang the might of Tristram ; and his soul  
Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole  
As a young child's with rapture of the hour  
That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,  
And all the bright blood in his veins beat time  
To the wind's clarion and the water's chime  
That called him and he followed it and stood  
On the sand's verge before the grey great flood  
Where the white hurtling heads of waves that met  
Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.  
And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet  
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,  
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,  
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight  
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free  
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea  
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride  
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,  
Home to his place with passion : and the heart  
Trembled for joy within the man whose part  
Was here not least in living ; and his mind  
Was rapt abroad beyond man's meaner kind  
And pierced with love of all things and with mirth  
Moved to make one with heaven and heavenlike earth  
And with the light live water. So awhile  
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,  
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight  
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night

And died before the darkness, like a song  
With harps between and trumpets blown along  
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,  
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away  
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour  
And all the world about to break in flower  
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun ;  
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,  
As earth from her bright body casts off night,  
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight  
And stood between the sea's edge and the sea  
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he  
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of Troy ;  
So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy,  
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire  
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre  
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,  
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,  
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,  
The flower of all men : scarce less bright than he,  
If any of all men latter-born might stand,  
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.  
Not long : but with a cry of love that rang  
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,  
As toward a mother's where his head might rest  
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast  
That none may gird nor measure : and his heart  
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,  
But triumphed in him silent : no man's voice,  
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,

Can set that glory forth which fills with fire  
The body and soul that have their whole desire  
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free  
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.  
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,  
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat  
Full to the sea-breach, and against the tide  
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made wide  
To take the bright breast of the wave to his  
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss  
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled  
And pure as at the daydawn of the world.  
And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea  
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,  
Heart-stung with exultation of desire :  
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,  
As all the sea's life toward the sun : and still  
Delight within him waxed with quickening will  
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame  
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became  
A note of rapture in the tune of life,  
Live music mild and keen as sleep and strife :  
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure  
Of deeper depth and purity more pure  
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,  
And all the rippling green grew royal gold  
Between him and the far sun's rising rim.  
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,  
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth :  
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,



But the life kindled of a fiery birth  
And passion of a new-begotten son  
Between the live sea and the living sun.  
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced  
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste  
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross  
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss  
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence  
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense ;  
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade  
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad  
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,  
And back with light reluctant heart he bore  
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore ;  
Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,  
And donned his arms again, and felt the might  
In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised  
God for such life as that whereon he gazed,  
And wist not surely its joy was even as fleet  
As that which laughed and lapsed against his feet,  
The bright thin grey foam-blossom, glad and hoar,  
That flings its flower along the flowerless shore  
On sand or shingle, and still with sweet strange snows,  
As where one great white storm-dishevelled rose  
May rain her wild leaves on a windy land,  
Strews for long leagues the sounding slope of strand,  
And flower on flower falls flashing, and anew  
A fresh light leaps up whence the last flash flew,  
And casts its brief glad gleam of life away  
To fade not flowerwise but as drops the day

Storm-smitten, when at once the dark devours  
Heaven and the sea and earth with all their flowers ;  
No star in heaven, on earth no rose to see,  
But the white blown brief blossoms of the sea,  
That make her green gloom starrier than the sky,  
Dance yet before the tempest's tune, and die.  
And all these things he glanced upon, and knew  
How fair they shone, from earth's least flake of dew  
To stretch of seas and imminence of skies,  
Unwittingly, with unpresageful eyes,  
For the last time. The world's half heavenly face,  
The music of the silence of the place,  
The confluence and the reflue of the sea,  
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea,  
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,  
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,  
That faded as he turned again and went,  
Fulfilled by strenuous joy with strong content,  
To take his last delight of labour done  
That yet should be beholden of the sun  
Or ever give man comfort of his hand.

Beside a wood's edge in the broken land  
An hour at wait the twain together stood,  
Till swift between the moorside and the wood  
Flashed the spears forward of the coming train ;  
And seeing beside the strong chief spoiler's rein  
His wan love riding prisoner in the crew,  
Forth with a cry the young man leapt, and flew  
Right on that felon sudden as a flame ;  
And hard at hand the mightier Tristram came,

Bright as the sun and terrible as fire :  
And there had sword and spear their soul's desire,  
And blood that quenched the spear's thirst as it poured  
Slaked royally the hunger of the sword,  
Till the fierce heart of steel could scarce fulfil  
Its greed and ravin of insatiate will.  
For three the fiery spear of Tristram drove  
Down ere a point of theirs his harness clove  
Or its own sheer mid shaft splintered in twain ;  
And his heart bounded in him, and was fain  
As fire or wind that takes its fill by night  
Of tempest and of triumph : so the knight  
Rejoiced and ranged among them, great of hand,  
Till seven lay slain upon the heathery sand  
Or in the dense breadth of the woodside fern.  
Nor did his heart not mightier in him burn  
Seeing at his hand that young knight fallen, and high  
The red sword reared again that bade him die.  
But on the slayer exulting like the flame  
Whose foot foreshines the thunder Tristram came  
Raging, for piteous wrath had made him fire ;  
And as a lion's look his face was dire  
That flashed against his foeman ere the sword  
Lightened, and wrought the heart's will of its lord,  
And clove through casque and crown the wrongdoer's  
head.  
And right and left about their dark chief dead  
Hurtled and hurled those felons to and fro,  
Till as a storm-wind scatters leaves and snow

His right hand ravening scattered them ; but one  
That fled with sidelong glance athwart the sun  
Shot, and the shaft flew sure, and smote aright,  
Full in the wound's print of his great first fight  
When at his young strength's peril he made free  
Cornwall, and slew beside its bordering sea  
The fair land's foe, who yielding up his breath  
Yet left him wounded nigh to dark slow death.  
And hardly with long toil thence he won home  
Between the grey moor and the glimmering foam,  
And halting fared through his own gate, and fell,  
Thirsting : for as the sleepless fire of hell  
The fire within him of his wound again  
Burned, and his face was dark as death for pain,  
And blind the blithe light of his eyes : but they  
Within that watched and wist not of the fray  
Came forth and cried aloud on him for woe.  
And scarce aloud his thanks fell faint and slow  
As men reared up the strong man fallen and bore  
Down the deep hall that looked along the shore,  
And laid him soft abed, and sought in vain  
If herb or hand of leech might heal his pain.  
And the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard  
All, and drew nigh, and spake no wifely word,  
But gazed upon him doubtfully, with eyes  
Clouded ; and he in kindly knightly wise  
Spake with scant breath, and smiling : ' Surely this  
Is penance for discourteous lips to kiss  
And feel the brand burn through them, here to lie  
And lack the strength here to do more than sigh

And hope not hence for pardon.' Then she bowed  
Her head, still silent as a stooping cloud,  
And laid her lips against his face ; and he  
Felt sink a shadow across him as the sea  
Might feel a cloud stoop toward it : and his heart  
Darkened as one that wastes by sorcerous art  
And knows not whence it withers : and he turned  
Back from her emerald eyes his own, and yearned  
All night for eyes all golden : and the dark  
Hung sleepless round him till the loud first lark  
Rang record forth once more of darkness done,  
And all things born took comfort from the sun.



## IX.

*THE SAILING OF THE SWAN.*

FATE, that was born ere spirit and flesh were made,  
The fire that fills man's life with light and shade ;  
The power beyond all godhead which puts on  
All forms of multitudinous unison,  
A raiment of eternal change inwrought  
With shapes and hues more subtly spun than thought,  
Where all things old bear fruit of all things new  
And one deep chord throbs all the music through,  
The chord of change unchanging, shadow and light  
Inseparable as reverberate day from night ;  
Fate, that of all things save the soul of man  
Is lord and God since body and soul began ;  
Fate, that keeps all the tune of things in chime ;  
Fate, that breathes power upon the lips of time ;  
That smites and soothes with heavy and healing hand  
All joys and sorrows born in life's dim land,  
Till joy be found a shadow and sorrow a breath  
And life no discord in the tune with death,  
But all things fain alike to die and live  
In pulse and lapse of tides alternative,

Through silence and through sound of peace and strife,  
Till birth and death be one in sight of life ;  
Fate, heard and seen of no man's eyes or ears,  
To no man shown through light of smiles or tears,  
And moved of no man's prayer to fold its wings ;  
Fate, that is night and light on worldly things ;  
Fate, that is fire to burn and sea to drown,  
Strength to build up and thunder to cast down ;  
Fate, shield and screen for each man's lifelong head,  
And sword at last or dart that strikes it dead ;  
Fate, higher than heaven and deeper than the grave,  
That saves and spares not, spares and doth not save ;  
Fate, that in gods' wise is not bought and sold  
For prayer or price of penitence or gold ;  
Whose law shall live when life bids earth farewell,  
Whose justice hath for shadows heaven and hell ;  
Whose judgment into no god's hand is given,  
Nor is its doom not more than hell or heaven :  
Fate, that is pure of love and clean of hate,  
Being equal-eyed as nought may be but fate ;  
Through many and weary days of foiled desire  
Leads life to rest where tears no more take fire ;  
Through many and weary dreams of quenched delight  
Leads life through death past sense of day and night.

Nor shall they feel or fear, whose date is done,  
Aught that made once more dark the living sun  
And bitterer in their breathing lips the breath  
Than the dark dawn and bitter dust of death.  
For all the light, with fragrance as of flowers,  
That clothes the lithe live limbs of separate hours,



More sweet to savour and more clear to sight  
Dawns on the soul death's undivided night.  
No vigils has that perfect night to keep,  
No fever-fits of vision shake that sleep.  
Nor if they wake, and any place there be  
Wherein the soul may feel her wings beat free  
Through air too clear and still for sound or strife ;  
If life were haply death, and death be life ;  
If love with yet some lovelier laugh revive,  
And song relume the light it bore alive,  
And friendship, found of all earth's gifts most good,  
Stand perfect in perpetual brotherhood ;  
If aught indeed at all of all this be,  
Though none might say nor any man might see,  
Might he that sees the shade thereof not say  
This dream were trustier than the truth of day.  
Nor haply may not hope, with heart more clear,  
Burn deathward, and the doubtful soul take cheer,  
Seeing through the channelled darkness yearn a star  
Whose eyebeams are not as the morning's are,  
Transient, and subjugate of lordlier light,  
But all unconquerable by noon or night,  
Being kindled only of life's own inmost fire,  
Truth, stablished and made sure by strong desire,  
Fountain of all things living, source and seed,  
Force that perforce transfigures dream to deed,  
God that begets on time, the body of death,  
Eternity : nor may man's darkening breath,  
Albeit it stain, disfigure or destroy  
The glass wherein the soul sees life and joy

Only, with strength renewed and spirit of youth,  
And brighter than the sun's the body of Truth  
Eternal, unimaginable of man,  
Whose very face not Thought's own eyes may scan,  
But see far off his radiant feet at least,  
Trampling the head of Fear, the false high priest,  
Whose broken chalice foams with blood no more,  
And prostrate on that high priest's chancel floor,  
Bruised, overthrown, blind, maimed, with bloodless rod,  
The miscreation of his miscreant God.  
That sovereign shadow cast of souls that dwell  
In darkness and the prison-house of hell  
Whose walls are built of deadly dread, and bound  
The gates thereof with dreams as iron round,  
And all the bars therein and stanchions wrought  
Of shadow forged like steel and tempered thought  
And words like swords and thunder-clouded creeds  
And faiths more dire than sin's most direful deeds :  
That shade accursed and worshipped, which hath made  
The soul of man that brought it forth a shade  
Black as the womb of darkness, void and vain,  
A throne for fear, a pasturage for pain,  
Impotent, abject, clothed upon with lies,  
A foul blind fume of words and prayers that rise,  
Aghast and harsh, abhorrent and abhorred,  
Fierce as its God, blood-saturate as its Lord ;  
With loves and mercies on its lips that hiss  
Comfort, and kill compassion with a kiss,  
And strike the world black with their blasting breath ;  
That ghost whose core of life is very death

And all its light of heaven a shadow of hell,  
Fades, falls, wanes, withers by none other spell  
But theirs whose eyes and ears have seen and heard  
Not the face naked, not the perfect word,  
But the bright sound and feature felt from far  
Of life which feeds the spirit and the star,  
Thrills the live light of all the suns that roll,  
And stirs the still sealed springs of every soul.

Three dim days through, three slumberless nights  
long,  
Perplexed at dawn, oppressed at evensong,  
The strong man's soul now sealed indeed with pain,  
And all its springs half dried with drought, had lain  
Prisoner within the fleshly dungeon-dress  
Sore chafed and wasted with its weariness.  
And fain it would have found the star, and fain  
Made this funereal prison-house of pain  
A watch-tower whence its eyes might sweep, and see  
If any place for any hope might be  
Beyond the hells and heavens of sleep and strife,  
Or any light at all of any life  
Beyond the dense false darkness woven above,  
And could not, lacking grace to look on love.  
And in the third night's dying hour he spake,  
Seeing scarce the seals that bound the dayspring  
break

And scarce the daystar burn above the sea :  
'O Ganhardine, my brother true to me,  
I charge thee by those nights and days we knew  
No great while since in England, by the dew

That bathed those nights with blessing, and the fire  
That thrilled those days as music thrills a lyre,  
Do now for me perchance the last good deed  
That ever love may crave or life may need  
Ere love lay life in ashes : take to thee  
My ship that shows aloft against the sea  
Carved on her stem the semblance of a swan,  
And ere the waves at even again wax wan  
Pass, if it may be, to my lady's land,  
And give this ring into her secret hand,  
And bid her think how hard on death I lie,  
And fain would look upon her face and die.  
But as a merchant's laden be the bark  
With royal ware for fraughtage, that King Mark  
May take for toll thereof some costly thing ;  
And when this gift finds grace before the king,  
Choose forth a cup, and put therein my ring  
Where sureliest only of one it may be seen,  
And bid her handmaid bear it to the queen  
For earnest of thine homage : then shall she  
Fear, and take counsel privily with thee,  
To know what errand there is thine from me  
And what my need in secret of her sight.  
But make thee two sails, one like sea-foam white  
To spread for signal if thou bring her back,  
And if she come not see the sail be black,  
That I may know or ever thou take land  
If these my lips may die upon her hand  
Or hers may never more be mixed with mine.'

And his heart quailed for grief in Ganhardine,

Hearing ; and all his brother bade he swore  
Surely to do, and straight fare forth from shore.  
But the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard  
All, and her heart waxed hot, and every word  
Thereon seemed graven and printed in her thought  
As lines with fire and molten iron wrought.  
And hard within her heavy heart she cursed  
Both, and her life was turned to fiery thirst,  
And all her soul was hunger, and its breath  
Of hope and life a blast of raging death.  
For only in hope of evil was her life.  
So bitter burned within the unchilded wife  
A virgin lust for vengeance, and such hate  
Wrought in her now the fervent work of fate.

Then with a south-west wind the Swan set forth,  
And over wintering waters bore to north,  
And round the wild land's windy westward end  
Up the blown channel bade her bright way bend  
East on toward high Tintagel : where at dark  
Landing, fair welcome found they of King Mark,  
And Ganhardine with Brangwain as of old  
Spake, and she took the cup of chiselled gold  
Wherein lay secret Tristram's trothplight ring,  
And bare it un beholden of the king  
Even to her lady's hand, which hardly took  
A gift whereon a queen's eyes well might look,  
With grace forlorn of weary gentleness.  
But, seeing, her life leapt in her, keen to guess  
The secret of the symbol : and her face  
Flashed bright with blood whence all its grief-worn  
grace

Took fire and kindled to the quivering hair.  
 And in the dark soft hour of starriest air  
 Thrilled through with sense of midnight, when the  
     world

Feels the wide wings of sleep about it furled,  
 Down stole the queen, deep-muffled to her wan  
 Mute restless lips, and came where yet the Swan  
 Swung fast at anchor : whence by starlight she  
 Hoised snowbright sails, and took the glimmering sea.

But all the long night long more keen and sore  
 His wound's grief waxed in Tristram evermore,  
 And heavier always hung his heart asway  
 Between dim fear and clouded hope of day.  
 And still with face and heart at silent strife  
 Beside him watched the maiden called his wife,  
 Patient, and spake not save when scarce he spake,  
 Murmuring with sense distraught and spirit awake  
 Speech bitterer than the words thereof were sweet :  
 And hatred thrilled her to the hands and feet,  
 Listening : for alway back reiterate came  
 The passionate faint burden of her name.  
 Nor ever through the labouring lips astir  
 Came any word of any thought of her.  
 But the soul wandering struggled and clung hard  
 Only to dreams of joy in Joyous Gard  
 Or wildwood nights beside the Cornish strand,  
 Or Merlin's holier sleep here hard at hand  
 Wrapped round with deep soft spells in dim  
     Broceliande.

And with such thirst as joy's drained wine-cup leaves

When fear to hope as hope to memory cleaves  
His soul desired the dewy sense of leaves,  
The soft green smell of thickets drenched with dawn,  
The faint slot kindling on the fiery lawn  
As day's first hour made keen the spirit again  
That lured and spurred on quest his hound Hodain,  
The breeze, the bloom, the splendour and the sound,  
That stung like fire the hunter and the hound,  
The pulse of wind, the passion of the sea,  
The rapture of the woodland : then would he  
Sigh, and as one that fain would all be dead  
Heavily turn his heavy-laden head  
Back, and close eyes for comfort, finding none.  
And fain he would have died or seen the sun,  
Being sick at heart of darkness : yet afresh  
Began the long strong strife of spirit and flesh  
And branching pangs of thought whose branches  
bear

The bloodred fruit whose core is black, despair.  
And the wind slackened and again grew great,  
Palpitant as men's pulses palpitate  
Between the flowing and ebbing tides of fate  
That wash their lifelong waifs of weal and woe  
Through night and light and twilight to and fro.  
Now as a pulse of hope its heartbeat throbbed,  
Now like one stricken shrank and sank and sobbed,  
Then, yearning as with child of death, put forth  
A wail that filled the night up south and north  
With woful sound of waters : and he said,  
' So might the wind wail if the world were dead

And its wings wandered over nought but sea.  
 I would I knew she would not come to me,  
 For surely she will come not : then should I,  
 Once knowing I shall not look upon her, die.  
 I knew not life could so long breathe such breath  
 As I do. Nay, what grief were this, if death,  
 The sole sure friend of whom the whole world saith  
 He lies not, nor hath ever this been said,  
 That death would heal not grief—if death were dead  
 And all ways closed whence grief might pass with life !

Then softly spake his watching virgin wife  
 Out of her heart, deep down below her breath :  
 ‘ Fear not but death shall come—and after death  
 Judgment.’ And he that heard not answered her,  
 Saying—‘ Ah, but one there was, if truth not err,  
 For true men’s trustful tongues have said it—one  
 Whom these mine eyes knew living while the sun  
 Looked yet upon him, and mine own ears heard  
 The deep sweet sound once of his godlike word—  
 Who sleeps and dies not, but with soft live breath  
 Takes always all the deep delight of death,  
 Through love’s gift of a woman : but for me  
 Love’s hand is not the hand of Nimue,  
 Love’s word no still smooth murmur of the dove,  
 No kiss of peace for me the kiss of love.  
 Nor, whatsoe’er thy life’s love ever give,  
 Dear, shall it ever bid me sleep or live ;  
 Nor from thy brows and lips and living breast  
 As his from Nimue’s shall my soul take rest ;  
 Not rest but unrest hath our long love given—  
 Unrest on earth that wins not rest in heaven.



What rest may we take ever? what have we  
Had ever more of peace than has the sea?  
Has not our life been as a wind that blows  
Through lonelier lands than rear the wild white rose  
That each year sees requickened, but for us  
Time once and twice hath here or there done thus  
And left the next year following empty and bare?  
What rose hath our last year's rose left for heir,  
What wine our last year's vintage? and to me  
More were one fleet forbidden sense of thee,  
One perfume of thy present grace, one thought  
Made truth one hour, ere all mine hours be nought,  
One very word, breath, look, sign, touch of hand,  
Than all the green leaves in Broceliande  
Full of sweet sound, full of sweet wind and sun;  
O God, thou knowest I would no more but one,  
I would no more but once more ere I die  
Find thus much mercy. Nay, but then were I  
Happier than he whom there thy grace hath found,  
For thine it must be, this that wraps him round,  
Thine only, albeit a fiend's force gave him birth,  
Thine that has given him heritage on earth  
Of slumber-sweet eternity to keep  
Fast in soft hold of everliving sleep.  
Happier were I, more sinful man, than he,  
Whom one love-worthier then than Nimue  
Should with a breath make blest among the dead.'

And the wan wedded maiden answering said,  
Soft as hate speaks within itself apart:  
'Surely ye shall not, ye that rent mine heart,

Being one in sin, in punishment be twain.'

And the great knight that heard not spake again  
 And sighed, but sweet thought of sweet things gone by  
 Kindled with fire of joy the very sigh  
 And touched it through with rapture : ' Ay, this were  
 How much more than the sun and sunbright air,  
 How much more than the springtide, how much more  
 Than sweet strong sea-wind quickening wave and  
 shore

With one divine pulse of continuous breath,  
 If she might kiss me with the kiss of death,  
 And make the light of life by death's look dim !'

And the white wedded virgin answered him,  
 Inwardly, wan with hurt no herb makes whole :  
 ' Yea surely, ye whose sin hath slain my soul,  
 Surely your own souls shall have peace in death  
 And pass with benediction in their breath  
 And blessing given of mine their sin hath slain.'

And Tristram with sore yearning spake again,  
 Saying : ' Yea, might this thing once be, how should I,  
 With all my soul made one thanksgiving, die,  
 And pass before what judgment-seat may be,  
 And cry, " Lord, now do all thou wilt with me,  
 Take all thy fill of justice, work thy will ;  
 Though all thy heart of wrath have all its fill,  
 My heart of suffering shall endure, and say,  
*For that thou gavest me living yesterday  
 I bless thee though thou curse me.*" Ay, and well  
 Might one cast down into the gulf of hell,

Remembering this, take heart and thank his fate—  
That God, whose doom now scourges him with hate,  
Once, in the wild and whirling world above,  
Bade mercy kiss his dying lips with love.  
But if this come not, then he doth me wrong.  
For what hath love done, all this long life long,  
That death should trample down his poor last prayer  
Who prays not for forgiveness? Though love were  
Sin dark as hate, have we not here that sinned  
Suffered? has that been less than wintry wind  
Wherewith our love lies blasted? O mine own,  
O mine and no man's yet save mine alone,  
Iseult! what ails thee that I lack so long  
All of thee, all things thine for which I long?  
For more than watersprings to shadeless sands,  
More to me were the comfort of her hands  
Touched once, and more than rays that set and rise  
The glittering arrows of her glorious eyes,  
More to my sense than fire to dead cold air  
The wind and light and odour of her hair,  
More to my soul than summer's to the south  
The mute clear music of her amorous mouth,  
And to my heart's heart more than heaven's great rest  
The fullness of the fragrance of her breast.  
Iseult, Iseult, what grace hath life to give  
More than we twain have had of life, and live?  
Iseult, Iseult, what grace may death not keep  
As sweet for us to win of death, and sleep?  
Come therefore, let us twain pass hence and try  
If it be better not to live but die,

With love for lamp to light us out of life.'

And on that word his wedded maiden wife,  
 Pale as the moon in star-forsaken skies  
 Ere the sun fill them, rose with set strange eyes  
 And gazed on him that saw not : and her heart  
 Heaved as a man's death-smitten with a dart  
 That smites him sleeping, warm and full of life :  
 So toward her lord that was not looked his wife,  
 His wife that was not : and her heart within  
 Burnt bitter like an aftertaste of sin  
 To one whose memory drinks and loathes the lee  
 Of shame or sorrow deeper than the sea :  
 And no fear touched him of her eyes above  
 And ears that hoarded each poor word whence love  
 Made sweet the broken music of his breath.  
 'Iseult, my life that wast and art my death,  
 My life in life that hast been, and that art  
 Death in my death, sole wound that cleaves mine heart,  
 Mine heart that else, how spent soe'er, were whole,  
 Breath of my spirit and anguish of my soul,  
 How can this be that hence thou canst not hear,  
 Being but by space divided? One is here,  
 But one of twain I looked at once to see ;  
 Shall death keep time and thou not keep with me?'

And the white married maiden laughed at heart,  
 Hearing, and scarce with lips at all apart  
 Spake, and as fire between them was her breath ;  
 'Yea, now thou liest not : yea, for I am death.'

By this might eyes that watched without behold  
 Deep in the gulfs of aching air acold

The roses of the dawning heaven that strew  
The low soft sun's way ere his power shine through  
And burn them up with fire : but far to west  
Had sunk the dead moon on the live sea's breast,  
Slain as with bitter fear to see the sun :  
And eastward was a strong bright wind begun  
Between the clouds and waters : and he said,  
Seeing hardly through dark dawn her doubtful head,  
'Iseult?' and like a death-bell faint and clear  
The virgin voice rang answer—'I am here.'  
And his heart sprang, and sank again : and she  
Spake, saying, 'What would my knightly lord with me?'  
And Tristram : 'Hath my lady watched all night  
Beside me, and I knew not? God requite  
Her love for comfort shown a man nigh dead.'

'Yea, God shall surely guerdon it,' she said,  
'Who hath kept me all my days through to this hour.'

And Tristram : 'God alone hath grace and power  
To pay such grace toward one unworthier shown  
Than ever durst, save only of God alone,  
Crave pardon yet and comfort, as I would  
Crave now for charity if my heart were good,  
But as a coward's it fails me, even for shame.'

Then seemed her face a pale funereal flame  
That burns down slow by midnight, as she said :  
'Speak, and albeit thy bidding spake me dead,  
God's love renounce me if it were not done.'

And Tristram : 'When the sea-line takes the sun  
That now should be not far off sight from far,  
Look if there come not with the morning star

My ship bound hither from the northward back,  
And if the sail be white thereof or black.'

And knowing the soothfast sense of his desire  
So sore the heart within her raged like fire  
She could not wring forth of her lips a word,  
But bowing made sign how humbly had she heard.  
And the sign given made light his heart ; and she  
Set her face hard against the yearning sea  
Now all athirst with trembling trust of hope  
To see the sudden gates of sunrise ope ;  
But thirstier yearned the heart whose fiery gate  
Lay wide that vengeance might come in to hate.  
And Tristram lay at thankful rest, and thought  
Now surely life nor death could grieve him aught,  
Since past was now life's anguish as a breath,  
And surely past the bitterness of death.  
For seeing he had found at these her hands this grace,  
It could not be but yet some breathing-space  
Might leave him life to look again on love's own face.  
'Since if for death's sake,' in his heart he said,  
'Even she take pity upon me quick or dead,  
How shall not even from God's hand be compassion  
shed ?

For night bears dawn, how weak soe'er and wan,  
And sweet ere death, men fable, sings the swan.  
So seems the Swan my signal from the sea  
To sound a song that sweetens death to me  
Clasped round about with radiance from above  
Of dawn, and closer clasped on earth by love.

Shall all things brighten, and this my sign be dark ?'

And high from heaven suddenly rang the lark,  
Triumphant ; and the far first refluent ray  
Filled all the hollow darkness full with day.  
And on the deep sky's verge a fluctuant light  
Gleamed, grew, shone, strengthened into perfect sight,  
As bowed and dipped and rose again the sail's clear  
white.

And swift and steadfast as a sea-mew's wing  
It neared before the wind, as fain to bring  
Comfort, and shorten yet its narrowing track.  
And she that saw looked hardly toward him back,  
Saying, ' Ay, the ship comes surely ; but her sail is  
black.'

And fain he would have sprung upright, and seen,  
And spoken : but strong death struck sheer between,  
And darkness closed as iron round his head :  
And smitten through the heart lay Tristram dead.

And scarce the word had flown abroad, and wail  
Risen, ere to shoreward came the snowbright sail,  
And lightly forth leapt Ganhardine on land,  
And led from ship with swift and reverent hand  
Iseult : and round them up from all the crowd  
Broke the great wail for Tristram out aloud.  
And ere her ear might hear her heart had heard,  
Nor sought she sign for witness of the word ;  
But came and stood above him newly dead,  
And felt his death upon her : and her head  
Bowed, as to reach the spring that slakes all drouth ;  
And their four lips became one silent mouth.

So came their hour on them that were in life  
Tristram and Iseult : so from love and strife  
The stroke of love's own hand felt last and best  
Gave them deliverance to perpetual rest.  
So, crownless of the wreaths that life had wound,  
They slept, with flower of tenderer comfort crowned :  
From bondage and the fear of time set free,  
And all the yoke of space on earth and sea  
Cast as a curb for ever : nor might now  
Fear and desire bid soar their souls or bow,  
Lift up their hearts or break them : doubt nor grief  
More now might move them, dread nor disbelief  
Touch them with shadowy cold or fiery sting,  
Nor sleepless languor with its weary wing,  
Nor harsh estrangement, born of time's vain breath,  
Nor change, a darkness deeper far than death.  
And round the sleep that fell around them then  
Earth lies not wrapped, nor records wrought of men  
Rise up for timeless token : but their sleep  
Hath round it like a raiment all the deep ;  
No change or gleam or gloom of sun and rain,  
But all time long the might of all the main  
Spread round them as round earth soft heaven is  
spread,  
And peace more strong than death round all the dead.



For death is of an hour, and after death  
Peace : nor for aught that fear or fancy saith,  
Nor even for very love's own sake, shall strife  
Perplex again that perfect peace with life.  
And if, as men that mourn may deem or dream,  
Rest haply here than there might sweeter seem,  
And sleep, that lays one hand on all, more good  
By some sweet grave's grace given of wold or wood  
Or clear high glen or sunbright wind-worn down  
Than where life thunders through the trampling town  
With daylong feet and nightlong overhead,  
What grave may cast such grace round any dead,  
What so sublime sweet sepulchre may be  
For all that life leaves mortal, as the sea?  
And these, rapt forth perforce from earthly ground,  
These twain the deep sea guards, and girdles round  
Their sleep more deep than any sea's gulf lies,  
'Though changeless with the change in shifting skies,  
Nor mutable with seasons : for the grave  
That held them once, being weaker than a wave,  
The waves long since have buried : though their tomb  
Was royal that by ruth's relenting doom  
Men gave them in Tintagel : for the word  
Took wing which thrilled all piteous hearts that heard  
The word wherethrough their lifelong lot stood shown,  
And when the long sealed springs of fate were known,  
The blind bright innocence of lips that quaffed  
Love, and the marvel of the mastering draught,

And all the fraughtage of the fateful bark,  
Loud like a child upon them wept King Mark,  
Seeing round the sword's hilt which long since had  
fought

For Cornwall's love a scroll of writing wrought,  
A scripture writ of Tristram's hand, wherein  
Lay bare the sinless source of all their sin,  
No choice of will, but chance and sorcerous art,  
With prayer of him for pardon : and his heart  
Was molten in him, wailing as he kissed  
Each with the kiss of kinship—' Had I wist,  
Ye had never sinned nor died thus, nor had I  
Borne in this doom that bade you sin and die  
So sore a part of sorrow.' And the king  
Built for their tomb a chapel bright like spring  
With flower-soft wealth of branching tracery made  
Fair as the frondage each fleet year sees fade,  
That should not fall till many a year were done.  
There slept they wedded under moon and sun  
And change of stars : and through the casements came  
Midnight and noon girt round with shadow and flame  
To illumine their grave or veil it : till at last  
On these things too was doom as darkness cast :  
For the strong sea hath swallowed wall and tower,  
And where their limbs were laid in woful hour  
For many a fathom gleams and moves and moans  
The tide that sweeps above their confined bones  
In the wrecked chancel by the shivered shrine :  
Nor where they sleep shall moon or sunlight shine

Nor man look down for ever : none shall say,  
Here once, or here, Tristram and Iseult lay :  
But peace they have that none may gain who live,  
And rest about them that no love can give,  
And over them, while death and life shall be,  
The light and sound and darkness of the sea.



## ATHENS :

## AN ODE.

ERE from under earth again like fire the violet  
     kindle, [Str. I.  
     Ere the holy buds and hoar on olive-branches  
     bloom,  
 Ere the crescent of the last pale month of winter  
     dwindle,  
     Shrink, and fall as falls a dead leaf on the dead  
     month's tomb,  
 Round the hills whose heights the first-born olive-  
     blossom brightened,  
     Round the city brow-bound once with violets like  
     a bride,  
 Up from under earth again a light that long since  
     lightened  
     Breaks, whence all the world took comfort as all  
     time takes pride.  
 Pride have all men in their fathers that were free  
     before them,  
     In the warriors that begat us free-born pride have  
     we :

But the fathers of their spirits, how may men adore  
them,

With what rapture may we praise, who bade our  
souls be free?

Sons of Athens born in spirit and truth are all born  
free men ;

Most of all, we, nurtured where the north wind  
holds his reign :

Children all we sea-folk of the Salaminian seamen,  
Sons of them that beat back Persia they that beat  
back Spain.

Since the songs of Greece fell silent, none like ours  
have risen ;

Since the sails of Greece fell slack, no ships have  
sailed like ours ;

How should we lament not, if her spirit sit in prison?  
How should we rejoice not, if her wreaths renew  
their flowers?

All the world is sweeter, if the Athenian violet  
quicken :

All the world is brighter, if the Athenian sun  
return :

All things foul on earth wax fainter, by that sun's  
light stricken :

All ill growths are withered, where those fragrant  
flower-lights burn.

All the wandering waves of seas with all their warring  
waters

Roll the record on for ever of the sea-fight there,

When the capes were battle's lists, and all the straits  
were slaughter's,  
And the myriad Medes as foam-flakes on the  
scattering air.

Ours the lightning was that cleared the north and lit  
the nations,

But the light that gave the whole world light of old  
was she :

Ours an age or twain, but hers are endless genera-  
tions :

All the world is hers at heart, and most of all are  
we.

Ye that bear the name about you of her glory, [*Ant.* 1.

Men that wear the sign of Greeks upon you  
sealed,

Yours is yet the choice to write yourselves in story  
Sons of them that fought the Marathonian field.

Slaves of no man were ye, said your warrior poet,  
Neither subject unto man as underlings :

Yours is now the season here wherein to show it,  
If the seed ye be of them that knew not kings.

If ye be not, swords nor words alike found brittle

From the dust of death to raise you shall prevail :

Subject swords and dead men's words may stead you  
little,

If their old king-hating heart within you fail.

If your spirit of old, and not your bonds, be broken,

If the kingless heart be molten in your breasts,

By what signs and wonders, by what word or token,  
 Shall ye drive the vultures from your eagles' nests?  
 All the gains of tyrants Freedom counts for losses ;  
 Nought of all the work done holds she worth the  
 work,

When the slaves whose faith is set on crowns and  
 crosses

Drive the Cossack bear against the tiger Turk.  
 Neither cross nor crown nor crescent shall ye bow to,  
 Nought of Araby nor Jewry, priest nor king :  
 As your watchword was of old, so be it now too :  
 As from lips long stilled, from yours let healing  
 spring.

Through the fights of old, your battle-cry was healing,  
 And the Saviour that ye called on was the Sun :  
 Dawn by dawn behold in heaven your God, revealing  
 Light from darkness as when Marathon was won.  
 Gods were yours yet strange to Turk or Galilean,  
 Light and Wisdom only then as gods adored :  
 Pallas was your shield, your comforter was Pæan,  
 From your bright world's navel spake the Sun your  
 Lord.

Though the names be lost, and changed the signs  
 of Light and Wisdom be, [*Ep.* 1.  
 By these only shall men conquer, by these only be set  
 free :

When the whole world's eye was Athens, these were  
 yours, and theirs were ye.



Light was given you of your wisdom, light ye gave the world again :

As the sun whose godhead lightened on her soul was Hellas then :

Yea, the least of all her children as the chosen of other men.

Change your hearts not with your garments, nor your faith with creeds that change :

Truth was yours, the truth which time and chance transform not nor estrange :

Purer truth nor higher abides not in the reach of time's whole range.

Gods are they in all men's memories and for all time's periods,

They that hurled the host back seaward which had scourged the sea with rods :

Gods for us are all your fathers, even the least of these as gods.

In the dark of days the thought of them is with us, strong to save,

They that had no lord, and made the Great King lesser than a slave ;

They that rolled all Asia back on Asia, broken like a wave.

No man's men were they, no master's and no God's but these their own :

Gods not loved in vain nor served amiss, nor all yet overthrown :

Love of country, Freedom, Wisdom, Light, and none save these alone.

King by king came up against them, sire and son,  
and turned to flee :  
Host on host roared westward, mightier each than  
each, if more might be :  
Field to field made answer, clamorous like as wave to  
wave at sea.  
Strife to strife responded, loud as rocks to clangorous  
rocks respond  
Where the deep rings wreck to seamen held in tem-  
pest's thrall and bond,  
Till when war's bright work was perfect peace as  
radiant rose beyond :  
Peace made bright with fruit of battle, stronger made  
for storm gone down,  
With the flower of song held heavenward for the  
violet of her crown  
Woven about the fragrant forehead of the fostress  
maiden's town.  
Gods arose alive on earth from under stroke of human  
hands :  
As the hands that wrought them, these are dead, and  
mixed with time's dead sands :  
But the godhead of supernal song, though these now  
stand not, stands.  
Pallas is not, Phœbus breathes no more in breathing  
brass or gold :  
Clytæmnestra towers, Cassandra wails, for ever :  
Time is bold,  
But nor heart nor hand hath he to unwrite the scrip-  
tures writ of old.

Dead the great chryselephantine God, as dew last evening shed :

Dust of earth or foam of ocean is the symbol of his head :

Earth and ocean shall be shadows when Prometheus shall be dead.

Fame around her warriors living rang through Greece and lightened, [Str. 2.

Moving equal with their stature, stately with their strength :

Thebes and Lacedæmon at their breathing presence brightened,

Sense or sound of them filled all the live land's breadth and length.

All the lesser tribes put on the pure Athenian fashion, One Hellenic heart was from the mountains to the sea :

Sparta's bitter self grew sweet with high half-human passion,

And her dry thorns flushed aflower in strait Thermopylæ.

Fruitless yet the flowers had fallen, and all the deeds died fruitless,

Save that tongues of after men, the children of her peace,

Took the tale up of her glories, transient else and rootless,

And in ears and hearts of all men left the praise of Greece.

Fair the war-time was when still, as beacon answering  
beacon,  
Sea to land flashed fight, and thundered note of  
wrath or cheer ;  
But the strength of noonday night hath power to  
waste and weaken,  
Nor may light be passed from hand to hand of  
year to year  
If the dying deed be saved not, ere it die for ever,  
By the hands and lips of men more wise than years  
are strong ;  
If the soul of man take heed not that the deed die  
never,  
Clothed about with purple and gold of story,  
crowned with song.  
Still the burning heart of boy and man alike rejoices,  
Hearing words which made it seem of old for all  
who sang  
That their heaven of heavens waxed happier when  
from free men's voices  
*Well-beloved Harmodius and Aristogeiton* rang.  
Never fell such fragrance from the flower-month's  
rose-red kirtle  
As from chaplets on the bright friends' brows who  
slew their lord :  
Greener grew the leaf and balmier blew the flower of  
myrtle  
When its blossom sheathed the sheer tyrannicidal  
sword.

None so glorious garland crowned the feast Panathe-  
næan

As this wreath too frail to fetter fast the Cyprian  
dove :

None so fiery song sprang sunwards annual as the  
pæan

Praising perfect love of friends and perfect country's  
love.

Higher than highest of all those heavens wherefrom  
the starry [Ant. 2.

Song of Homer shone above the rolling fight,  
Gleams like spring's green bloom on boughs all gaunt  
and gnarry

Soft live splendour as of flowers of foam in flight,  
Glowa a glory of mild-winged maidens upward mount-  
ing

Sheer through air made shrill with strokes of smooth  
swift wings

Round the rocks beyond foct's reach, past eyesight's  
counting,

Up the cleft where iron wind of winter rings

Round a God fast clenched in iron jaws of fetters,

Him who culled for man the fruitful flower of fire,

Bared the darkling scriptures writ in dazzling letters,

Taught the truth of dreams deceiving men's desire,

Gave their water-wandering chariot-seats of ocean

Wings, and bade the rage of war-steeds champ the  
rein,

Showed the symbols of the wild birds' wheeling  
motion,

Waged for man's sake war with God and all his  
train.

Earth, whose name was also Righteousness, a mother

Many-named and single-natured, gave him breath  
Whence God's wrath could wring but this word and  
none other—

*He may smite me, yet he shall not do to death.*

Him the tongue that sang triumphant while tormented  
Sang as loud the sevenfold storm that roared ere-  
while

Round the towers of Thebes till wrath might rest  
contented:

Sang the flight from smooth soft-sanded banks of  
Nile,

When like mateless doves that fly from snare or  
tether

Came the suppliants landwards trembling as they  
trod,

And the prayer took wing from all their tongues  
together—

*King of kings, most holy of holies, blessed God.*

But what mouth may chant again, what heart may  
know it,

All the rapture that all hearts of men put on  
When of Salamis the time-transcending poet  
Sang, whose hand had chased the Mede at Marathon?

Darker dawned the song with stormier wings above  
the watch-fire spread [Ep. 2.

Whence from Ida toward the hill of Hermes leapt the  
light that said

Troy was fallen, a torch funereal for the king's tri-  
umphal head.

Dire indeed the birth of Leda's womb that had God's  
self to sire

Bloomed, a flower of love that stung the soul with  
fangs that gnaw like fire :

But the twin-born human-fathered sister-flower bore  
fruit more dire.

Scarce the cry that called on airy heaven and all swift  
winds on wing,

Wells of river-heads, and countless laugh of waves  
past reckoning,

Earth which brought forth all, and the orbèd sun that  
looks on everything,

Scarce that cry fills yet men's hearts more full of  
heart-devouring dread

Than the murderous word said mocking, how the  
child whose blood he shed

Might clasp fast and kiss her father where the dead  
salute the dead.

But the latter note of anguish from the lips that  
mocked her lord,

When her son's hand bared against the breast that  
suckled him his sword,

How might man endure, O Æschylus, to hear it and  
record?

How might man endure, being mortal yet, O thou  
most highest, to hear?  
How record, being born of woman? Surely not thy  
Furies near,  
Surely this beheld, this only, blasted hearts to death  
with fear.  
Not the hissing hair, nor flakes of blood that oozed  
from eyes of fire,  
Nor the snort of savage sleep that snuffed the hunger-  
ing heart's desire  
Where the hunted prey found hardly space and har-  
bour to respire ;  
She whose likeness called them—'Sleep ye, ho?  
what need of you that sleep?'  
(Ah, what need indeed, where she was, of all shapes  
that night may keep  
Hidden dark as death and deeper than men's dreams  
of hell are deep?)  
She the murderess of her husband, she the huntress  
of her son,  
More than ye was she, the shadow that no God with-  
stands but one,  
Wisdom equal-eyed and stronger and more splendid  
than the sun.  
Yea, no God may stand betwixt us and the shadows  
of our deeds,  
Nor the light of dreams that lighten darkness, nor the  
prayer that pleads,  
But the wisdom equal-souled with heaven, the light  
alone that leads.



Light whose law bids home those childless children  
of eternal night,  
Soothed and reconciled and mastered and transmuted  
in men's sight  
Who behold their own souls, clothed with darkness  
once, now clothed with light.  
King of kings and father crowned of all our fathers  
crowned of yore,  
Lord of all the lords of song, whose head all heads  
bow down before,  
Glory be to thee from all thy sons in all tongues ever-  
more.

Rose and vine and olive and deep ivy-bloom en-  
twining [Str. 3.  
Close the goodliest grave that e'er they closest  
might entwine  
Keep the wind from wasting and the sun from too  
strong shining  
Where the sound and light of sweetest songs still  
float and shine.  
Here the music seems to illumine the shade, the light  
to whisper  
Song, the flowers to put not odours only forth, but  
words  
Sweeter far than fragrance : here the wandering  
wreaths twine crisper  
Far, and louder far exults the note of all wild  
birds.

Thoughts that change us, joys that crown and sorrows  
that enthrone us,  
Passions that enrobe us with a clearer air than ours,  
Move and breathe as living things beheld round white  
Colonus,  
Audibler than melodies and visibler than flowers.  
Love, in fight unconquered, Love, with spoils of great  
men laden,  
Never sang so sweet from throat of woman or of  
dove :  
Love, whose bed by night is in the soft cheeks of a  
maiden,  
And his march is over seas, and low roofs lack not  
Love ;  
Nor may one of all that live, ephemeral or eternal,  
Fly nor hide from Love ; but whoso clasps him  
fast goes mad.  
Never since the first-born year with flowers first-born  
grew vernal  
Such a song made listening hearts of lovers glad or  
sad.  
Never sounded note so radiant at the rayless portal  
Opening wide on the all-concealing lowland of the  
dead  
As the music mingling, when her doomsday marked  
her mortal,  
From her own and old men's voices round the  
bride's way shed,  
Round the grave her bride-house, hewn for endless  
habitation,

Where, shut out from sunshine, with no bridegroom  
 by, she slept ;  
 But beloved of all her dark and fateful generation,  
 But with all time's tears and praise besprinkled and  
 bewept :  
 Well-beloved of outcast father and self-slaughtered  
 mother,  
 Born, yet unpolluted, of their blind incestuous  
 bed ;  
 Best-beloved of him for whose dead sake she died,  
 her brother,  
 Hallowing by her own life's gift her own born  
 brother's head :

Not with wine or oil nor any less libation      [*Ant.* 3.  
 Hallowed, nor made sweet with humbler perfume's  
 breath ;

Not with only these redeemed from desecration,  
 But with blood and spirit of life poured forth to  
 death ;

Blood unspotted, spirit unsullied, life devoted,  
 Sister too supreme to make the bride's hope good,  
 Daughter too divine as woman to be noted,  
 Spouse of only death in mateless maidenhood.  
 Yea, in her was all the prayer fulfilled, the saying  
 All accomplished—*Would that fate would let me  
 wear*

*Hallowed innocence of words and all deeds, weighing  
 Well the laws thereof, begot on holier air,*

*Far on high sublimely stablished, whereof only  
 Heaven is father ; nor did birth of mortal mould  
 Bring them forth, nor shall oblivion lull to lonely  
 Slumber. Great in these is God, and grows not old.*

Therefore even that inner darkness where she  
 perished

Surely seems as holy and lovely, seen aright,  
 As desirable and as dearly to be cherished,  
 As the haunt closed in with laurels from the light,  
 Deep inwound with olive and wild vine inwoven,  
 Where a godhead known and unknown makes men  
 pale,

But the darkness of the twilight noon is cloven  
 Still with shrill sweet moan of many a nightingale.  
 Closer clustering there they make sweet noise to-  
 gether,

Where the fearful gods look gentler than our fear,  
 And the grove thronged through with birds of holiest  
 feather

Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of dark things  
 near.

There her father, called upon with signs of wonder,  
 Passed with tenderest words away by ways un-  
 known,

Not by sea-storm stricken down, nor touched of  
 thunder,

To the dark benign deep underworld, alone.

Third of three that ruled in Athens, kings with  
sceptral song for staff, [Ep. 3.  
Gladdest heart that God gave ever milk and wine of  
thought to quaff,  
Clearest eye that lightened ever to the broad lip's  
lordliest laugh,  
Praise be thine as theirs whose tragic brows the loftier  
leaf engirds  
For the live and lyric lightning of thy honey-hearted  
words,  
Soft like sunny dewy wings of clouds and bright as  
crying of birds;  
Full of all sweet rays and notes that make of earth  
and air and sea  
One great light and sound of laughter from one great  
God's heart, to be  
Sign and semblance of the gladness of man's life  
where men breathe free.  
With no Loxian sound obscure God uttered once, and  
all time heard,  
All the soul of Athens, all the soul of England, in  
that word :  
Rome arose the second child of freedom : northward  
rose the third.  
Ere her Boreal dawn came kindling seas afoam and  
fields of snow,  
Yet again, while Europe groaned and grovelled, shone  
like suns aglow  
Doria splendid over Genoa, Venice bright with Dan-  
dolo.

Dead was Hellas, but Ausonia by the light of dead  
men's deeds

Rose and walked awhile alive, though mocked as  
whom the fen-fire leads

By the creed-wrought faith of faithless souls that  
mock their doubts with creeds.

Dead are these, and man is risen again : and haply  
now the Three

Yet coequal and triune may stand in story, marked as  
free

By the token of the washing of the waters of the sea.  
Athens first of all earth's kindred many-tongued and  
many-kinned

Had the sea to friend and comfort, and for kinsman  
had the wind :

She that bare Columbus next : then she that made  
her spoil of Ind.

She that hears not what man's rage but only what the  
sea-wind saith :

She that turned Spain's ships to cloud-wrack at the  
blasting of her breath,

By her strengths of strong-souled children and of  
strong winds done to death.

North and south the Great King's galleons went in  
Persian wise : and here

She, with Æschylean music on her lips that laughed  
back fear,

In the face of Time's grey godhead shook the splen-  
dour of her spear.

Fair as Athens then with foot upon her foeman's  
front, and strong  
Even as Athens for redemption of the world from  
sovereign wrong,  
Like as Athens crowned she stood before the sun  
with crowning song.  
All the world is theirs with whom is freedom : first of  
all the free,  
Blest are they whom song has crowned and clothed  
with blessing : these as we,  
These alone have part in spirit with the sun that  
crowns the sea.

*April, 1881.*





*THE STATUE OF VICTOR HUGO.*

## I.

SINCE in Athens God stood plain for adoration,  
 Since the sun beheld his likeness reared in stone,  
 Since the bronze or gold of human consecration  
 Gave to Greece her guardian's form and feature  
 shown,  
 Never hand of sculptor, never heart of nation,  
 Found so glorious aim in all these ages flown  
 As is theirs who rear for all time's acclamation  
 Here the likeness of our mightiest and their own.

## 2.

Theirs and ours and all men's living who behold him  
 Crowned with garlands multiform and manifold;  
 Praise and thanksgiving of all mankind enfold him  
 Who for all men casts abroad his gifts of gold.  
 With the gods of song have all men's tongues enrolled  
 him,  
 With the helpful gods have all men's hearts en-  
 rolled :

Ours he is who love him, ours whose hearts' hearts  
 hold him  
 Fast as his the trust that hearts like his may hold.

## 3.

He, the heart most high, the spirit on earth most  
 blameless,  
 Takes in charge all spirits, holds all hearts in trust :  
 As the sea-wind's on the sea his ways are tameless,  
 As the laws that steer the world his works are just.  
 All most noble feel him nobler, all most shameless  
 Feel his wrath and scorn make pale their pride and  
 lust :  
 All most poor and lowliest, all whose wrongs were  
 nameless,  
 Feel his word of comfort raise them from the dust.

## 4.

Pride of place and lust of empire bloody-fruited  
 Knew the blasting of his breath on leaf and fruit :  
 Now the hand that smote the death-tree now dis-  
 rooted  
 Plants the refuge-tree that has man's hope for root.  
 Ah, but we by whom his darkness was saluted,  
 How shall now all we that see his day salute ?  
 How should love not seem by love's own speech con-  
 futed,  
 Song before the sovereign singer not be mute ?

5.

With what worship, by what blessing, in what measure,  
    May we sing of him, salute him, or adore,  
With what hymn for praise, what thanksgiving for  
    pleasure,  
    Who had given us more than heaven, and gives us  
    more ?  
Heaven's whole treasury, filled up full with night's  
    whole treasure,  
    Holds not so divine or deep a starry store  
As the soul supreme that deals forth worlds at leisure  
    Clothed with light and darkness, dense with flower  
    and ore.

6.

Song had touched the bourn : fresh verses overflow it,  
    Loud and radiant, waves on waves on waves that  
    throng ;  
Still the tide grows, and the sea-mark still below it  
    Sinks and shifts and rises, changed and swept along.  
Rose it like a rock ? the waters overthrow it,  
    And another stands beyond them sheer and strong :  
Goal by goal pays down its prize, and yields its poet  
    Tribute claimed of triumph, palm achieved of song.

7.

Since his hand that holds the keys of fear and wonder  
    Opened on the high priest's dreaming eyes a door

Whence the lights of heaven and hell above and  
 under  
 Shone, and smote the face that men bow down  
 before,<sup>1</sup>  
 Thrice again one singer's note had cloven in sunder  
 Night, who blows again not one blast now but four,  
 And the fourfold heaven is kindled with his thunder,  
 And the stars about his forehead are fourscore.

## 8.

From the deep soul's depths where alway love  
 abounded  
 First had risen a song with healing on its wings  
 Whence the dews of mercy raining balms unbounded  
 Shed their last compassion even on sceptred things.<sup>1</sup>  
 Even on heads that like a curse the crown surrounded  
 Fell his crowning pity, soft as cleansing springs ;  
 And the sweet last note his wrath relenting sounded  
 Bade men's hearts be melted not for slaves but  
 kings.

## 9.

Next, that faith might strengthen fear and love  
 embolden,  
 On the creeds of priests a scourge of sunbeams  
 fell :  
 And its flash made bare the deeps of heaven, beholden  
 Not of men that cry, Lord, Lord, from church or  
 cell.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *La Pitié Suprême.* 1879.<sup>2</sup> *Religions et Religion.* 1880.

Hope as young as dawn from night obscure and olden  
Rose again, such power abides in truth's one spell :  
Night, if dawn it be that touches her, grows golden ;  
Tears, if such as angels weep, extinguish hell.

10.

Through the blind loud mills of barren blear-eyed  
learning  
Where in dust and darkness children's foreheads  
bow,  
While men's labour, vain as wind or water turning  
Wheels and sails of dreams, makes life a leafless  
bough,  
Fell the light of scorn and pity touched with yearning,  
Next, from words that shone as heaven's own kind-  
ling brow.<sup>1</sup>  
Stars were these as watch-fires on the world's waste  
burning,  
Stars that fade not in the fourfold sunrise now.<sup>2</sup>

11.

Now the voice that faints not till all wrongs be wroken  
Sounds as might the sun's song from the morning's  
breast,  
All the seals of silence sealed of night are broken,  
All the winds that bear the fourfold word are blest.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Anc.* 1880.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.* I. *Le Livre satirique.*  
II. *Le Livre dramatique.* III. *Le Livre lyrique.* IV. *Le*  
*Livre épique.* 1881.

All the keen fierce east flames forth one fiery token ;  
 All the north is loud with life that knows not rest,  
 All the south with song as though the stars had  
     spoken ;  
 All the judgment-fire of sunset scathes the west.

## 12.

Sound of pæan, roll of chanted panegyric,  
     Though by Pindar's mouth song's trumpet spake  
     forth praise,  
 March of warrior songs in Pythian mood or Pyrrhic,  
     Though the blast were blown by lips of ancient  
     days,  
 Ring not clearer than the clarion of satiric  
     Song whose breath sweeps bare the plague-infected  
     ways  
 Till the world be pure as heaven is for the lyric  
     Sun to rise up clothed with radiant sounds as rays.

## 13.

Clear across the cloud-rack fluctuant and erratic  
     As the strong star smiles that lets no mourner  
     mourn,  
 Hymned alike from lips of Lesbian choirs or Attic  
     Once at evensong and morning newly born,  
 Clear and sure above the changes of dramatic  
     Tide and current, soft with love and keen with  
     scorn,  
 Smiles the strong sweet soul of maidenhood, ecstatic  
     And inviolate as the red glad mouth of morn.

14.

Pure and passionate as dawn, whose apparition  
Thrills with fire from heaven the wheels of hours  
that whirl,  
Rose and passed her radiance in serene transition  
From his eyes who sought a grain and found a  
pearl.  
But the food by cunning hope for vain fruition  
Lightly stolen away from keeping of a churl  
Left the bitterness of death and hope's perdition  
On the lip that scorn was wont for shame to curl.<sup>1</sup>

15.

Over waves that darken round the wave-worn rover  
Rang his clarion higher than winds cried round  
the ship,  
Rose a pageant of set suns and storms blown over,  
Hands that held life's guerdons fast or let them  
slip.  
But no tongue may tell, no thanksgiving discover,  
Half the heaven of blessing, soft with clouds that  
drip,  
Keen with beams that kindle, dear as love to lover,  
Opening by the spell's strength on his lyric lip.

<sup>1</sup> *Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus.* I. *Margarita, comédie.*  
II. *Esca, drame.*

## 16.

By that spell the soul transfigured and dilated  
     Puts forth wings that widen, breathes a brightening  
         air,  
 Feeds on light and drinks of music, whence elated  
     All her sense grows godlike, seeing all depths  
         made bare,  
 All the mists wherein before she sat belated  
     Shrink, till now the sunlight knows not if they  
         were ;  
 All this earth transformed is Eden recreated,  
     With the breath of heaven remurmuring in her  
         hair.

## 17.

Sweeter far than aught of sweet that April nurses  
     Deep in dew-dropt woodland folded fast and furled  
 Breathes the fragrant song whose burning dawn  
         disperses  
     Darkness, like the surge of armies backward hurled,  
 Even as though the touch of spring's own hand, that  
         pierces  
     Earth with life's delight, had hidden in the  
         impearled  
 Golden bells and buds and petals of his verses  
     All the breath of all the flowers in all the world.



18.

But the soul therein, the light that our souls follow,  
Fires and fills the song with more of prophet's  
pride,  
More of life than all the gulfs of death may swallow,  
More of flame than all the might of night may hide.  
Though the whole dark age were loud and void and  
hollow,  
Strength of trust were here, and help for all souls  
tried,  
And a token from the flight of that strange swallow<sup>1</sup>  
Whose migration still is toward the wintry side.

19.

Never came such token for divine solution  
From the oraculous live darkness whence of yore  
Ancient faith sought word of help and retribution,  
Truth to lighten doubt, a sign to go before.  
Never so baptismal waters of ablution  
Bathed the brows of exile on so stern a shore,  
Where the lightnings of the sea of revolution  
Flashed across them ere its thunders yet might  
roar.

<sup>1</sup> Je suis une hirondelle étrange, car j'émigre  
Du côté de l'hiver.

## 20.

By the lightning's light of present revelation  
 Shown, with epic thunder as from skies that frown,  
 Clothed in darkness as of darkling expiation,  
 Rose a vision of dead stars and suns gone down,  
 Whence of old fierce fire devoured the star-struck  
 nation,  
 Till its wrath and woe lit red the raging town,  
 Now made glorious with his statue's crowning station,  
 Where may never gleam again a viler crown.

## 21.

King, with time for throne and all the years for pages,  
 He shall reign though all thrones else be over-  
 hurled,  
 Served of souls that have his living words for wages,  
 Crowned of heaven each dawn that leaves his brows  
 imperaled ;  
 Girt about with robes unrent of storm that rages,  
 Robes not wrought with hands, from no loom's  
 weft unfurled ;  
 All the praise of all earth's tongues in all earth's ages,  
 All the love of all men's hearts in all the world.

## 22.

Yet what hand shall carve the soul or cast the spirit,  
 Mould the face of fame, bid glory's feature glow?  
 Who bequeath for eyes of ages hence to inherit  
 Him, the Master, whom love knows not if it know?

Scarcely perfect praise of men man's work might  
    merit,  
Scarcely bid such aim to perfect stature grow,  
Were his hand the hand of Phidias who shall rear it,  
And his soul the very soul of Angelo.

23.

Michael, awful angel of the world's last session,  
    Once on earth, like him, with fire of suffering tried,  
Thine it were, if man's it were, without transgression,  
    Thine alone, to take this toil upon thy pride.  
Thine, whose heart was great against the world's  
    oppression,  
    Even as his whose word is lamp and staff and  
    guide :  
Advocate for man, untired of intercession,  
    Pleads his voice for slaves whose lords his voice  
    defied.

24.

Earth, with all the kings and thralls on earth, below it,  
    Heaven alone, with all the worlds in heaven, above,  
Let his likeness rise for suns and stars to know it,  
    High for men to worship, plain for men to love :  
Brow that braved the tides which fain would overflow  
    it,  
    Lip that gave the challenge, hand that flung the  
    glove ;  
Comforter and prophet, Paraclete and poet,  
    Soul whose emblems are an eagle and a dove.

25.

Sun, that hast not seen a loftier head wax hoary,  
Earth, which hast not shown the sun a nobler birth,  
Time, that hast not on thy scroll defiled and gory  
One man's name writ brighter in its whole wide  
girth,  
Witness, till the final years fulfil their story,  
Till the stars break off the music of their mirth,  
What among the sons of men was this man's glory,  
What the vesture of his soul revealed on earth.

SONNETS



*HOPE AND FEAR.*

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,  
     With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,  
     Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer  
 Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope  
 Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,  
     And makes for joy the very darkness dear  
     That gives her wide wings play ; nor dreams that fear  
 At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.  
 Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,  
 May truth first purge her eyesight to discern  
     What once being known leaves time no power to appal ;  
 Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn  
     The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—  
     ' Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.'

*AFTER SUNSET.*

‘Si quis piorum Manibus locus.’

## I.

STRAIGHT from the sun's grave in the deep clear west  
 A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life : and I,  
 Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky  
 Takes life renewed, and all night's godlike breast  
 Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest  
 By growth and change of ardours felt on high,  
 Make onward, till the last flame fall and die  
 And all the world by night's broad hand lie blest.  
 Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,  
 Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath  
 Blows more of benediction than the morn,  
 So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith  
 That half our heart of life there lies forlorn  
 May light or breath at least of hope be born.



## II.

The wind was soft before the sunset fled :

Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day  
Is lowered along a red funereal way

Down to the dark that knows not white from red,  
A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,  
Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray

Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from grey,  
Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead.

From far beyond the sunset, far above,

Full toward the starry soundless east it blows

Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,

Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove ;

Till more and more as darkness grows and glows  
Silence and night seem likest life and love.

## III.

If light of life outlive the set of sun  
That men call death and end of all things, then  
How should not that which life held best for men  
And proved most precious, though it seem undone  
By force of death and woful victory won,  
Be first and surest of revival, when  
Death shall bow down to life arisen again?  
So shall the soul seen be the self-same one  
That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes  
As love shall doubt not then to recognise,  
And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time past  
Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense  
None other than we knew, for evidence  
That love's last mortal word was not his last.

*A STUDY FROM MEMORY.*

IF that be yet a living soul which here  
Seemed brighter for the growth of numbered springs  
And clothed by Time and Pain with goodlier things  
Each year it saw fulfilled a fresh fleet year,  
Death can have changed not aught that made it dear ;  
Half humorous goodness, grave-eyed mirth on wings  
Bright-balanced, blither-voiced than quiring strings ;  
Most radiant patience, crowned with conquering cheer ;  
A spirit inviolable that smiled and sang  
By might of nature and heroic need  
More sweet and strong than loftiest dream or deed ;  
A song that shone, a light whence music rang  
High as the sunniest heights of kindest thought ;  
All these must be, or all she was be nought.

*TO DR. JOHN BROWN.*

BEYOND the north wind lay the land of old  
 Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed and fed  
 With joy's bright raiment and with love's sweet bread,  
 The whitest flock of earth's maternal fold.  
 None there might wear about his brows enrolled  
 A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,  
 Whose lovesome love of children and the dead  
 All men give thanks for : I far off behold  
 A dear dead hand that links us, and a light  
 The blithest and benigneſt of the night,  
 The night of death's sweet ſleep, wherein may be  
 A ſtar to ſhow your ſpirit in preſent ſight  
 Some happier iſland in the Elyſian ſea  
 Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.

*March 1882.*

*TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.*

THE larks are loud above our leagues of whin  
 Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold  
 With odour like the colour : all the wold  
 Is only light and song and wind wherein  
 These twain are blent in one with shining din.  
 And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,  
 Dear old fast friend whose honours grow not old,  
 Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.  
 Though all but we from life be now gone forth  
 Of that bright household in our joyous north  
 Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,  
 First met your hand ; yet under life's clear dome,  
 Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,  
 Shines no less bright his full-sheaved harvest-home.

*April 20, 1882.*

*A DEATH ON EASTER DAY.*

THE strong spring sun rejoicingly may rise,  
 Rise and make revel, as of old men said,  
 Like dancing hearts of lovers newly wed :  
 A light more bright than ever bathed the skies  
 Departs for all time out of all men's eyes.

The crowns that girt last night a living head  
 Shine only now, though deathless, on the dead :  
 Art that mocks death, and Song that never dies.  
 Albeit the bright sweet mothlike wings be furled,  
 Hope sees, past all division and defection,  
 And higher than swims the mist of human breath,  
 The soul most radiant once in all the world  
 Requicken'd to regenerate resurrection  
 Out of the likeness of the shadow of death.

*April 1882.*

*ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE  
AND GEORGE ELIOT.*

Two souls diverse out of our human sight  
 Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder :  
 The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,  
 Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might  
 Of darkness and magnificence of night ;  
 And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,  
 Searching if light or no light were thereunder,  
 And found in love of loving-kindness light.  
 Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire  
 Still following Righteousness with deep desire  
 Shone sole and stern before her and above,  
 Sure stars and sole to steer by ; but more sweet  
 Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,  
 The light of little children, and their love.

*AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S  
REMINISCENCES.*

## I.

THREE men lived yet when this dead man was young  
Whose names and words endure for ever : one  
Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the sun,  
And his wings weakened, and his angel's tongue  
Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,  
But like the strain half uttered earth hears none,  
Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done :  
One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung  
Between the mountains hallowed by his love  
And the sky stainless as his soul above :  
And one the sweetest heart that ever spake  
The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.  
These deathless names by this dead snake defiled  
Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.



## II.

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,  
Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,  
And for my love's sake, powerless as I am  
For love to praise thee, or like thee to make  
Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,  
Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.  
Things hatefullest thou hadst not heart to damn,  
Nor wouldst have set thine heel on this dead snake.  
Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,  
The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung  
Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.  
Forgive me, that with bitter words like his  
I mix the gentlest English name that is,  
The tenderest held of all that know not death.

*A LAST LOOK.*

SICK of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl  
 That hoots the sun risen where starlight sank,  
 With German garters crossed athwart thy frank  
 Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and scowl,  
 And boys responsive with reverberate howl  
 Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank  
 And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank  
 And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.  
 Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given  
 Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,  
 Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace.  
 Peace upon earth thou knewest not : now, being dead,  
 Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,  
 Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

*DICKENS.*

**C**HIEF in thy generation born of men  
 Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,  
 With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of morn  
 For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then  
 When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when  
 Reverence of age with love and labour worn,  
 Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,  
 Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen :  
 Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,  
 Higher even than here, though highest was here thy place,  
 Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine  
 With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne  
 And Fielding's kindest might and Goldsmith's grace ;  
 Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

*ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC  
POETS.*

I.

IF all the flowers of all the fields on earth  
 By wonder-working summer were made one,  
 Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,  
 Its treasure-house of leaves were not more worth  
 Than those wherefrom thy light of musing mirth  
 Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run  
 Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.  
 Beloved beyond all names of English birth,  
 More dear than mightier memories; gentlest name  
 That ever clothed itself with flower-sweet fame,  
 Or linked itself with loftiest names of old  
 By right and might of loving; I, that am  
 Less than the least of those within thy fold,  
 Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

## II.

So many a year had borne its own bright bees  
And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,  
John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived  
So well with craft of moulding melodies,  
Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease  
Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived  
Of summer music from the spring derived  
When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees.  
But thine was not the chance of every day :  
Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,  
And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,  
Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,  
When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey  
Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

*TO JOHN NICHOL.*

## I.

FRIEND of the dead, and friend of all my days  
Even since they cast off boyhood, I salute  
The song saluting friends whose songs are mute  
With full burnt-offerings of clear-spirited praise.  
That since our old young years our several ways  
Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit  
Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root  
We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,  
The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,  
Friendship—this only and duly might impel  
My song to salutation of your own ;  
More even than praise of one unseen of me  
And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,  
To mine by light and music only known.

## II.

But more than this what moves me most of all  
To leave not all unworded and unsped  
The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid  
Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should fall  
His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,  
The sign to friends on earth of that dear head  
Alive, which now long since untimely dead  
The wan grey waters covered for a pall.  
Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems  
Took never life more taintless of rebuke,  
More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,  
Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the Thames,  
And made the now more hallowed name of Luke  
Memorial to us of morning left behind.

*May 1881.*

*DYSTHANATOS.*

*Ad generem Cereris sine cæde et vulnere pauci  
Descendunt reges, aut siccâ morte tyranni.*

By no dry death another king goes down  
 The way of kings. Yet may no free man's voice,  
 For stern compassion and deep awe, rejoice  
 That one sign more is given against the crown,  
 That one more head those dark red waters drown  
 Which rise round thrones whose trembling equipoise  
 Is propped on sand and bloodshed and such toys  
 As human hearts that shrink at human frown.  
 The name writ red on Polish earth, the star  
 That was to outshine our England's in the far  
 East heaven of empire—where is one that saith  
 Proud words now, prophesying of this White Czar?  
 'In bloodless pangs few kings yield up their breath,  
 Few tyrants perish by no violent death.'

*March 14, 1881.*



*EUONYMOS.*

εὖ μὴν ἦ τιμὴν ἐδίδου νικηφόρος ἀλικῆ  
 ἐκ νίκης ὄνομ' ἔσχε φόβου κέαρ αἰὲν ἄθικτος.

A YEAR ago red wrath and keen despair  
 Spake, and the sole word from their darkness sent  
 Laid low the lord not all omnipotent  
 Who stood most like a god of all that were  
 As gods for pride of power, till fire and air  
 Made earth of all his godhead. Lightning rent  
 The heart of empire's lurid firmament,  
 And laid the mortal core of manhood bare.  
 But when the calm crowned head that all revere  
 For valour higher than that which casts out fear,  
 Since fear came near it never, comes near death,  
 Blind murder cowers before it, knowing that here  
 No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath  
 Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

*March 8, 1882.*

*ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF  
THE JEWS.*

O SON of man, by lying tongues adored,  
 By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod  
 In carnage deep as ever Christian trod  
 Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred  
 And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde,  
 Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,  
 Most murderous even of all that call thee God,  
 Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord;  
 Face loved of little children long ago,  
 Head hated of the priests and rulers then,  
 If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine  
 Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,  
 Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow  
 In death's worst hour the works of Christian men?

*Jan. 23, 1882.*

*BISMARCK AT CANOSSA.*

Not all disgraced, in that Italian town,  
 The imperial German covered beneath thine hand,  
 Alone indeed imperial Hildebrand,  
 And felt thy foot and Rome's, and felt her frown  
 And thine, more strong and sovereign than his crown,  
 Though iron forged its blood-encrusted band.  
 But now the princely wielder of his land,  
 For hatred's sake toward freedom, so bows down,  
 No strength is in the foot to spurn : its tread  
 Can bruise not now the proud submitted head :  
 But how much more abased, much lower brought low,  
 And more intolerably humiliated,  
 The neck submissive of the prosperous foe,  
 Than his whom scorn saw shuddering in the snow !

*December 31, 1881.*

*QUIA NOMINOR LEO.*

## I.

WHAT part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,  
 Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope  
 And compass of thine homicidal hope  
 The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast  
 Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,  
 From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,  
 All servile ; earth for footcloth of the pope,  
 And heaven for chancel-ceiling of the priest ;  
 Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,  
 Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,  
 And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell ;  
 Heaven laughs with all his light and might above  
 That earth has cast thee out of faith and love ;  
 Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

## II.

The light of life has faded from thy cause,  
 High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory :  
 Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,  
 But the red prey was rent out of thy paws  
 Long since : and they that dying brake down thy laws  
 Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory  
 Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary  
 High altars, waning with the world's applause.  
 This Italy was Dante's : Bruno died  
 Here : Campanella, too sublime for pride,  
 Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.  
 And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink  
 For thy sake downward? What art thou, to think  
 Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome ?

*January, 1882.*

*THE CHANNEL TUNNEL.*

NOT for less love, all glorious France, to thee,  
    'Sweet enemy' called in days long since at end,  
    Now found and hailed of England sweeter friend,  
Bright sister of our freedom now, being free ;  
Not for less love or faith in friendship we  
    Whose love burnt ever toward thee reprehend  
    The vile vain greed whose pursy dreams portend  
Between our shores suppression of the sea.  
Not by dull toil of blind mechanic art  
Shall these be linked for no man's force to part  
    Nor length of years and changes to divide,  
But union only of trust and loving heart  
    And perfect faith in freedom strong to abide  
    And spirit at one with spirit on either side.

*April 3, 1882.*

*SIR WILLIAM GOMM.*

## I.

AT threescore years and five aroused anew  
To rule in India, forth a soldier went  
On whose bright-fronted youth fierce war had spent  
Its iron stress of storm, till glory grew  
Full as the red sun waned on Waterloo.

Landing, he met the word from England sent  
Which bade him yield up rule : and he, content,  
Resigned it, as a mightier warrior's due ;  
And wrote as one rejoicing to record  
That ' from the first ' his royal heart was lord  
Of its own pride or pain ; that thought was none  
Therein save this, that in her perilous strait  
England, whose womb brings forth her sons so great,  
Should choose to serve her first her mightiest son.

## II.

Glory beyond all flight of warlike fame  
Go with the warrior's memory who preferred  
To praise of men whereby men's hearts are stirred,  
And acclamation of his own proud name  
With blare of trumpet-blasts and sound and flame  
Of pageant honour, and the titular word  
That only wins men worship of the herd,  
His country's sovereign good ; who overcame  
Pride, wrath, and hope of all high chance on earth,  
For this land's love that gave his great heart birth.  
O nursling of the sea-winds and the sea,  
Immortal England, goddess ocean-born,  
What shall thy children fear, what strengths not scorn,  
While children of such mould are born to thee ?



*EUTHANATOS.*

IN MEMORY OF MRS. THELLUSSON.

FORTH of our ways and woes,  
 Forth of the winds and snows,  
 A white soul soaring goes,  
     Winged like a dove :  
 So sweet, so pure, so clear,  
 So heavenly tempered here,  
 Love need not hope or fear her changed above :

Ere dawned her day to die,  
 So heavenly, that on high  
 Change could not glorify  
     Nor death refine her :  
 Pure gold of perfect love,  
 On earth like heaven's own dove,  
 She cannot wear, above, a smile diviner.

Her voice in heaven's own quire  
 Can sound no heavenlier lyre  
 Than here : no purer fire  
     Her soul can soar :  
 No sweeter stars her eyes  
 In unimagined skies  
 Beyond our sight can rise than here before.

Hardly long years had shed  
 Their shadows on her head :  
 Hardly we think her dead,  
     Who hardly thought her  
 Old : hardly can believe  
 The grief our hearts receive  
 And wonder while they grieve, as wrong were wrought  
     her.

But though strong grief be strong  
 No word or thought of wrong  
 May stain the trembling song,  
     Wring the bruised heart,  
 That sounds or sighs its faint  
 Low note of love, nor taint  
 Grief for so sweet a saint, when such depart.

A saint whose perfect soul,  
 With perfect love for goal,  
 Faith hardly might control,  
     Creeds might not harden :  
 A flower more splendid far  
 Than the most radiant star  
 Seen here of all that are in God's own garden.

Surely the stars we see  
 Rise and relapse as we,  
 And change and set, may be  
     But shadows too :  
 But spirits that man's lot  
 Could neither mar nor spot  
 Like these false lights are not, being heavenly true.

Not like these dying lights  
Of worlds whose glory smites  
The passage of the nights  
    Through heaven's blind prison :  
Not like their souls who see,  
If thought fly far and free,  
No heavenlier heaven to be for souls risen.

A soul wherein love shone  
Even like the sun, alone,  
With fervour of its own  
    And splendour fed,  
Made by no creeds less kind  
    Toward souls by none confined,  
Could Death's self quench or blind, Love's self were  
    dead.

*February 4, 1881.*

*FIRST AND LAST.*

UPON the borderlands of being,  
 Where life draws hardly breath  
 Between the lights and shadows fleeing  
 Fast as a word one saith,  
 Two flowers rejoice our eyesight, seeing  
 The dawns of birth and death.

Behind the babe his dawn is lying  
 Half risen with notes of mirth  
 From all the winds about it flying  
 Through new-born heaven and earth :  
 Before bright age his day for dying  
 Dawns equal-eyed with birth.

Equal the dews of even and dawn,  
 Equal the sun's eye seen  
 A hand's breadth risen and half withdrawn :  
 But no bright hour between  
 Brings aught so bright by stream or lawn  
 To noonday growths of green.

Which flower of life may smell the sweeter  
    To love's insensual sense,  
Which fragrance move with offering meeter  
    His soothed omnipotence,  
Being chosen as fairer or as fleeter,  
    Borne hither or borne hence,

Love's foiled omniscience knows not : this  
    Were more than all he knows  
With all his lore of bale and bliss,  
    The choice of rose and rose,  
One red as lips that touch with his,  
    One white as moonlit snows.

No hope is half so sweet and good,  
    No dream of saint or sage  
So fair as these are : no dark mood  
    But these might best assuage ;  
The sweet red rose of babyhood,  
    The white sweet rose of age.

*LINES ON THE DEATH OF  
EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY.*

LAST high star of the years whose thunder  
 Still men's listening remembrance hears,  
 Last light left of our fathers' years,  
 Watched with honour and hailed with wonder  
 Thee too then have the years borne under,  
 Thou too then hast regained thy peers.

Wings that warred with the winds of morning,  
 Storm-winds rocking the red great dawn,  
 Close at last, and a film is drawn  
 Over the eyes of the storm-bird, scorning  
 Now no longer the loud wind's warning,  
 Waves that threaten or waves that fawn.

Peers were none of thee left us living,  
 Peers of theirs we shall see no more.  
 Eight years over the full fourscore  
 Knew thee : now shalt thou sleep, forgiving  
 All griefs past of the wild world's giving,  
 Moored at last on the stormless shore.

Worldwide liberty's lifelong lover,  
Lover no less of the strength of song,  
Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong,  
Over thy dust that the dust shall cover  
Comes my song as a bird to hover,  
Borne of its will as of wings along.

Cherished of thee were this brief song's brothers  
Now that follows them, cherishing thee.  
Over the tides and the tideless sea  
Soft as a smile of the earth our mother's  
Flies it faster than all those others,  
First of the troop at thy tomb to be.

Memories of Greece and the mountain's hollow  
Guarded alone of thy loyal sword  
Hold thy name for our hearts in ward :  
Yet more fain are our hearts to follow  
One way now with the southward swallow  
Back to the grave of the man their lord.

Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing  
Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,  
Whose true heart it is now draws near?  
Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering  
Darkness and death with the news now nearing—  
Shelley, Trelawny rejoins thee here.

*ADIEUX À MARIE STUART.*

## I.

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought,  
 With hopes that rose and fell,  
 Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,  
 Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,  
 Have given you of my life,  
 Seeing your brave star burn high between  
 Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears  
 Long since fell still : so long  
 Hardly may hope to last in years  
 My song.

But still through strife of time and thought  
 Your light on me too fell :  
 Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,  
 Farewell.



II.

There beats no heart on either border  
    Wherethrough the north blasts blow  
But keeps your memory as a warder  
    His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder  
    Mine, for whose April age  
Blithe midsummer made banquet under  
    The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather  
    Strength to ring true :  
And air and trees and sun and heather  
    Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy  
    Or love or teen,  
These they forgot, remembering Mary  
    The Queen.

III.

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours  
    Whose sires brought forth for you  
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,  
    Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name  
    Who died for you this long  
Time past : shall this too fare the same,  
    My song ?

But surely, though it die or live,  
 Your face was worth  
 All that a man may think to give  
 On earth.

No darkness cast of years between  
 Can darken you :  
 Man's love will never bid my queen  
 Adieu.

## IV.

Love hangs like light about your name  
 As music round the shell :  
 No heart can take of you a tame  
 Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,  
 Ill gifts were yours for giving :  
 Love gat strange guerdons of my queen  
 When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,  
 The whole world's crowning jewel !  
 Was ever heart so deadly dear  
 So cruel ?

Yet none for you of all that bled  
 Grudged once one drop that fell :  
 Not one to life reluctant said  
 Farewell.

v.

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,  
Who mock with praise your name,  
To leave a head so rare and royal  
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,  
You had nor sense nor sting :  
In God's name, then, what plague befell us  
To fight for such a thing ?

'Some faults the gods will give,' to fetter  
Man's highest intent :  
But surely you were something better  
Than innocent !

No maid that strays with steps unwary  
Through snares unseen,  
But one to live and die for ; Mary,  
The Queen.

vi.

Forgive them all their praise, who blot  
Your fame with praise of you :  
Then love may say, and falter not,  
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive  
 Who did you much less wrong  
 Once : but resentment should not live  
 Too long.

They never saw your lip's bright bow,  
 Your swordbright eyes,  
 The bluest of heavenly things below  
 The skies.

Clear eyes that love's self finds most like  
 A swordblade's blue,  
 A swordblade's ever keen to strike,  
 Adieu.

## VII.

Though all things breathe or sound of fight  
 That yet make up your spell,  
 To bid you were to bid the light  
 Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being  
 A star whose race is run :  
 Farewell the soul says never, seeing  
 The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,  
 The song must say but so  
 That took your praise up twenty years  
 Ago.

*ADIEUX À MARIE STUART.* 243

More bright than stars or moons that vary,  
Sun kindling heaven and hell,  
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,  
Farewell.

*HERSE.*

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold  
     A child some sweet months old,  
 Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,  
     Smiling, with bated breath,  
 Hush ! for the holiest thing that lives is here,  
     And heaven's own heart how near !  
 How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,  
     Gaze on this verier one ?  
 Heart, hold thy peace ; eyes, be cast down for shame ;  
     Lips, breathe not yet its name.  
 In heaven they know what name to call it ; we,  
     How should we know ? For, see !  
 The adorable sweet living marvellous  
     Strange light that lightens us  
 Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,  
     Full in a babe's warm face !  
 All roses that the morning rears are nought,  
     All stars not worth a thought,  
 Set this one star against them, or suppose  
     As rival this one rose.  
 What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold  
     One least flushed roseleaf's fold

Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine  
    From each warm curve and line,  
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillumine  
    The dappled rose-red bloom  
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet  
    Clenched hands and curled-up feet,  
That on the roses of the dawn have trod  
    As they came down from God,  
And keep the flush and colour that the sky  
    Takes when the sun comes nigh,  
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace  
    Evoked on God's own face  
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,  
    He saw that it was good?  
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,  
    And mere men's love too vile  
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims  
    Read o'er the little limbs,  
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,  
    Rejoice, revere, adore,  
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,  
    Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.  
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,  
    Even to draw nigh its head,  
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise  
    Its mild miraculous eyes  
Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,  
    What may be said of men?  
What speech may name a new-born child? what word  
    Earth ever spake or heard?

The best men's tongue that ever glory knew  
    Called that a drop of dew  
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb  
    Came forth in blameless bloom.  
We have no word, as had those men most high,  
    To call a baby by.  
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—  
    A better word than these,  
A better sign it was than flower or gem  
    That love revealed to them :  
They knew that whence comes light or quickening  
    flame,  
    Thence only this thing came,  
And only might be likened of our love  
    To somewhat born above,  
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,  
    Only to dew's own birth.  
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,  
    Babe, when we gaze on you,  
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are  
    More bright than sun or star,  
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,  
    Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,  
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.  
    O child, what news from heaven ?



*TWINS.*

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO W. M. R. AND L. R.

APRIL, on whose wings  
 Ride all gracious things,  
 Like the star that brings  
     All things good to man,  
 Ere his light, that yet  
 Makes the month shine, set,  
 And fair May forget  
     Whence her birth began,

Brings, as heart would choose,  
 Sound of golden news,  
 Bright as kindling dews  
     When the dawn begins ;  
 Tidings clear as mirth,  
 Sweet as air and earth  
 Now that hail the birth,  
     Twice thus blest, of twins.

In the lovely land  
 Where with hand in hand  
 Lovers wedded stand  
     Other joys before

Made your mixed life sweet :  
Now, as Time sees meet,  
Three glad blossoms greet  
    Two glad blossoms more.

Fed with sun and dew,  
While your joys were new,  
First arose and grew  
    One bright olive-shoot :  
Then a fair and fine  
Slip of warm-haired pine  
Felt the sweet sun shine  
    On its leaf and fruit.

And it wore for mark  
Graven on the dark  
Beauty of its bark  
    That the noblest name  
Worn in song of old  
By the king whose bold  
Hand had fast in hold  
    All the flower of fame.

Then, with southern skies  
Flattered in her eyes,  
Which, in lovelier wise  
    Yet, reflect their blue  
Brightened more, being bright  
Here with life's delight,  
And with love's live light  
    Glorified anew,

Came, as fair as came  
One who bore her name  
(She that broke as flame  
    From the swan-shell white),  
Crowned with tender hair  
Only, but more fair  
Than all queens that were  
    Themes of oldworld fight,

Of your flowers the third  
Bud, or new-fledged bird  
In your hearts' nest heard  
    Murmuring like a dove  
Bright as those that drew  
Over waves where blew  
No loud wind the blue  
    Heaven-hued car of love.

Not the glorious grace  
Even of that one face  
Potent to displace  
    All the towers of Troy  
Surely shone more clear  
Once with childlike cheer  
Than this child's face here  
    Now with living joy.

After these again  
Here in April's train  
Breaks the bloom of twain  
    Blossoms in one birth

For a crown of May  
 On the front of day  
 When he takes his way  
     Over heaven and earth.

Half a heavenly thing  
 Given from heaven to Spring  
 By the sun her king,  
     Half a tender toy,  
 Seems a child of curl  
 Yet too soft to twirl ;  
 Seems the flower-sweet girl  
     By the flower-bright boy.

All the kind gods' grace,  
 All their love, embrace  
 Ever either face,  
     Ever brood above them :  
 All soft wings of hours  
 Screen them as with flowers  
 From all beams and showers :  
     All life's seasons love them.

When the dews of sleep  
 Falling lightliest keep  
 Eyes too close to peep  
     Forth and laugh off rest,  
 Joy from face to feet  
 Fill them, as is meet :  
 Life to them be sweet  
     As their mother's breast.

When those dews are dry,  
And in day's bright eye  
Looking full they lie  
    Bright as rose and pearl,  
All returns of joy  
Pure of time's alloy  
Bless the rose-red boy,  
    Guard the rose-white girl.

## POSTSCRIPT.

Friends, if I could take  
Half a note from Blake  
Or but one verse make  
    Of the Conqueror's mine,  
Better than my best  
Song above your nest  
I would sing : the quest  
    Now seems too divine

*April 28, 1881.*

*THE SALT OF THE EARTH.*

IF childhood were not in the world,  
But only men and women grown ;  
No baby-locks in tendrils curled,  
No baby-blossoms blown ;

Though men were stronger, women fairer,  
And nearer all delights in reach,  
And verse and music uttered rarer  
Tones of more godlike speech ;

Though the utmost life of life's best hours  
Found, as it cannot now find, words ;  
Though desert sands were sweet as flowers  
And flowers could sing like birds,

But children never heard them, never  
They felt a child's foot leap and run :  
This were a drearier star than ever  
Yet looked upon the sun.

*SEVEN YEARS OLD.*

## I.

SEVEN white roses on one tree,  
 Seven white loaves of blameless leaven,  
 Seven white sails on one soft sea,  
 Seven white swans on one lake's lee,  
 Seven white flowerlike stars in heaven,  
 All are types unmeet to be  
 For a birthday's crown of seven.

## II.

Not the radiance of the roses,  
 Not the blessing of the bread,  
 Not the breeze that ere day grows is  
 Fresh for sails and swans, and closes  
 Wings above the sun's grave spread,  
 When the starshine on the snows is  
 Sweet as sleep on sorrow shed,

## III.

Nothing sweetest, nothing best,  
 Holds so good and sweet a treasure

As the love wherewith once blest  
Joy grows holy, grief takes rest,  
    Life, half tired with hours to measure,  
Fills his eyes and lips and breast  
    With most light and breath of pleasure ;

## IV.

As the rapture unpolluted,  
    As the passion undefiled,  
By whose force all pains heart-rooted  
Are transfigured and transmuted,  
    Recompensed and reconciled,  
Through the imperial, undisputed,  
    Present godhead of a child.

## V.

Brown bright eyes and fair bright head,  
    Worth a worthier crown than this is,  
Worth a worthier song instead,  
Sweet grave wise round mouth, full fed  
    With the joy of love, whose bliss is  
More than mortal wine and bread,  
    Lips whose words are sweet as kisses,

## VI.

Little hands so glad of giving,  
    Little heart so glad of love,  
Little soul so glad of living,



While the strong swift hours are weaving  
Light with darkness woven above,  
Time for mirth and time for grieving,  
Plume of raven and plume of dove,

## VII.

I can give you but a word  
Warm with love therein for leaven,  
But a song that falls unheard  
Yet on ears of sense unstirred  
Yet by song so far from heaven,  
Whence you came the brightest bird,  
Seven years since, of seven times seven.

*EIGHT YEARS OLD.*

## I.

SUN, whom the faltering snow-cloud fears,  
 Rise, let the time of year be May,  
 Speak now the word that April hears,  
 Let March have all his royal way ;  
 Bid all spring raise in winter's ears  
 All tunes her children hear or play,  
 Because the crown of eight glad years  
 On one bright head is set to-day.

## II.

What matters cloud or sun to-day  
 To him who wears the wreath of years  
 So many, and all like flowers at play  
 With wind and sunshine, while his ears  
 Hear only song on every way ?  
 More sweet than spring triumphant hears  
 Ring through the revel-rout of May  
 Are these, the notes that winter fears.

## III.

Strong-hearted winter knows and fears  
The music made of love at play,  
Or haply loves the tune he hears  
From hearts fulfilled with flowering May,  
Whose molten music thaws his ears  
Late frozen, deaf but yesterday  
To sounds of dying and dawning years,  
Now quickened on his deathward way.

## IV.

For deathward now lies winter's way  
Down the green vestibule of years  
That each year brightens day by day  
With flower and shower till hope scarce fears  
And fear grows wholly hope of May.  
But we—the music in our ears  
Made of love's pulses as they play  
The heart alone that makes it hears.

## V.

The heart it is that plays and hears  
High salutation of to-day.  
Tongue falters, hand shrinks back, song fears  
Its own unworthiness to play  
Fit music for those eight sweet years,  
Or sing their blithe accomplished way.  
No song quite worth a young child's ears  
Broke ever even from birds in May.

## VI.

There beats not in the heart of May,  
When summer hopes and springtide fears,  
There falls not from the height of day,  
When sunlight speaks and silence hears,  
So sweet a psalm as children play  
And sing, each hour of all their years,  
Each moment of their lovely way,  
And know not how it thrills our ears.

## VII.

Ah child, what are we, that our ears  
Should hear you singing on your way,  
Should have this happiness? The years  
Whose hurrying wings about us play  
Are not like yours, whose flower-time fears  
Nought worse than sunlit showers in May,  
Being sinless as the spring, that hears  
Her own heart praise her every day.

## VIII.

Yet we too triumph in the day  
That bare, to entrance our eyes and ears,  
To lighten daylight, and to play  
Such notes as darkness knows and fears,  
The child whose face illumines our way,  
Whose voice lifts up the heart that hears,  
Whose hand is as the hand of May  
To bring us flowers from eight full years.

*COMPARISONS.*

CHILD, when they say that others  
 Have been or are like you,  
 Babes fit to be your brothers,  
 Sweet human drops of dew,  
 Bright fruit of mortal mothers,  
 What should one say or do?

We know the thought is treason,  
 We feel the dream absurd ;  
 A claim rebuked of reason,  
 That withers at a word :  
 For never shone the season  
 That bore so blithe a bird.

Some smiles may seem as merry,  
 Some glances gleam as wise,  
 From lips as like a cherry  
 And scarce less gracious eyes ;  
 Eyes browner than a berry,  
 Lips red as morning's rise.

But never yet rang laughter  
    So sweet in gladdened ears  
Through wall and floor and rafter  
    As all this household hears  
And rings response thereafter  
    Till cloudiest weather clears.

When those your chosen of all men,  
    Whose honey never cloys,  
Two lights whose smiles enthrall men,  
    Were called at your age boys,  
Those mighty men, while small men,  
    Could make no merrier noise.

Our Shakespeare, surely, daffed not  
    More lightly pain aside  
From radiant lips that quaffed not  
    Of forethought's tragic tide :  
Our Dickens, doubtless, laughed not  
    More loud with life's first pride.

The dawn were not more cheerless  
    With neither light nor dew  
Than we without the fearless  
    Clear laugh that thrills us through :  
If ever child stood peerless,  
    Love knows that child is you.

*WHAT IS DEATH?*

LOOKING on a page where stood  
Graven of old on old-world wood  
Death, and by the grave's edge grim,  
Pale, the young man facing him,  
Asked my well-beloved of me  
Once what strange thing this might be,  
    Gaunt and great of limb.

Death, I told him : and, surprise  
Deepening more his wildwood eyes  
(Like some sweet fleet thing's whose breath  
Speaks all spring though nought it saith),  
Up he turned his rosebright face  
Glorious with its seven years' grace,  
    Asking—What is death?

*A CHILD'S PITY.*

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,  
Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears :  
Yet sometime sweeter than their words or smiles  
Are even their tears.

To one for once a piteous tale was read,  
How, when the murderous mother crocodile  
Was slain, her fierce brood famished, and lay dead,  
Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed-beds on the vast grey slime  
Those monsters motherless and helpless lay,  
Perishing only for the parent's crime  
Whose seed were they.

Hours after, toward the dusk, our blithe small bird  
Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,  
Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,  
For pity weeping.

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,  
For the poor little crocodiles, he said.  
Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,  
A child's instead.



Feigned tears the false beasts shed for murderous  
ends,

We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles :  
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's  
Outshine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city  
Could match the heavenly heart in children here?  
The heart that hallowing all things with its pity  
Casts out all fear?

So lovely, so divine, so dear their laughter  
Seems to us, we know not what could be more  
dear :

But lovelier yet we see the sign thereafter  
Of such a tear.

With sense of love half laughing and half weeping  
We met your tears, our small sweet-spirited friend :  
Let your love have us in its heavenly keeping  
To life's last end.

*A CHILD'S LAUGHTER.*

ALL the bells of heaven may ring,  
 All the birds of heaven may sing,  
 All the wells on earth may spring,  
 All the winds on earth may bring  
     All sweet sounds together ;  
 Sweeter far than all things heard,  
 Hand of harper, tone of bird,  
 Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,  
 Welling water's winsome word,  
     Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none  
 Hearing ere its chime be done  
 Knows not well the sweetest one  
 Heard of man beneath the sun,  
     Hoped in heaven hereafter ;  
 Soft and strong and loud and light,  
 Very sound of very light  
 Heard from morning's rosiest height,  
 When the soul of all delight  
     Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled  
Never forth such notes, nor told  
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,  
As the radiant mouth of gold

Here that rings forth heaven.  
If the golden-crested wren  
Were a nightingale—why, then,  
Something seen and heard of men  
Might be half as sweet as when  
Laughs a child of seven.

*A CHILD'S THANKS.*

How low soe'er men rank us,  
 How high soe'er we win,  
 The children far above us  
 Dwell, and they deign to love us,  
 With lovelier love than ours,  
 And smiles more sweet than flowers ;  
 As though the sun should thank us  
 For letting light come in.

With too divine complaisance,  
 Whose grace misleads them thus,  
 Being gods, in heavenly blindness  
 They call our worship kindness,  
 Our pebble-gift a gem :  
 They think us good to them,  
 Whose glance, whose breath, whose presence,  
 Are gifts too good for us.

The poet high and hoary  
 Of meres that mountains bind  
 Felt his great heart more often  
 Yearn, and its proud strength soften

From stern to tenderer mood,  
At thought of gratitude  
Shown than of song or story  
He heard of hearts unkind.

But with what words for token  
And what adoring tears  
Of reverence risen to passion,  
In what glad prostrate fashion  
Of spirit and soul subdued,  
May man show gratitude  
For thanks of children spoken  
That hover in his ears?

The angels laugh, your brothers,  
Child, hearing you thank me,  
With eyes whence night grows sunny,  
And touch of lips like honey,  
And words like honey-dew :  
But how shall I thank you ?  
For gifts above all others  
What guerdon-gift may be ?

What wealth of words caressing,  
What choice of songs found best,  
Would seem not as derision,  
Found vain beside the vision  
And glory from above  
Shown in a child's heart's love ?  
His part in life is blessing ;  
Ours, only to be blest.

*A CHILD'S BATTLES.*

πῦξ ἀρετᾶν εὐρών.—PINDAR.

PRAISE of the knights of old  
 May sleep : their tale is told,  
     And no man cares :  
 The praise which fires our lips is  
 A knight's whose fame eclipses  
     All of theirs.

The ruddiest light in heaven  
 Blazed as his birth-star seven  
     Long years ago :  
 All glory crown that old year  
 Which brought our stout small soldier  
     With the snow !

Each baby born has one  
 Star, for his friends a sun,  
     The first of stars :  
 And we, the more we scan it,  
 The more grow sure your planet,  
     Child, was Mars.

For each one flower, perchance,  
Blooms as his cognizance :

    The snowdrop chill,  
The violet un beholden,  
For some : for you the golden  
    Daffodil.

Erect, a fighting flower,  
It breasts the breeziest hour  
    That ever blew,  
And bent or broke things brittle  
Or frail, unlike a little  
    Knight like you.

Its flower is firm and fresh  
And stout like sturdiest flesh  
    Of children : all  
The strenuous blast that parches  
Spring hurts it not till March is  
    Near his fall.

If winds that prate and fret  
Remark, rebuke, regret,  
    Lament, or blame  
The brave plant's martial passion,  
It keeps its own free fashion  
    All the same.

We that would fain seem wise  
Assume grave mouths and eyes  
    Whose looks reprove

*A CHILD'S BATTLES.*

Too much delight in battle :  
But your great heart our prattle  
    Cannot move.

We say, small children should  
Be placid, mildly good  
    And blandly meek :  
Whereat the broad smile rushes  
Full on your lips, and flushes  
    All your cheek.

If all the stars that are  
Laughed out, and every star  
    Could here be heard,  
Such peals of golden laughter  
We should not hear, as after  
    Such a word.

For all the storm saith, still,  
Stout stands the daffodil :  
    For all we say,  
Howe'er he look demurely,  
Our martialist will surely  
    Have his way.

We may not bind with bands  
Those large and liberal hands,  
    Nor stay from fight,  
Nor hold them back from giving :  
No lean mean laws of living  
    Bind a knight.



And always here of old  
Such gentle hearts and bold  
    Our land has bred :  
How durst her eye rest else on  
The glory shed from Nelson  
    Quick and dead ?

Shame were it, if but one  
Such once were born her son,  
    That one to have borne,  
And brought him ne'er a brother :  
His praise should bring his mother  
    Shame and scorn.

A child high-souled as he  
Whose manhood shook the sea  
    Smiles haply here :  
His face, where love lies basking,  
With bright shut mouth seems asking,  
    What is fear ?

The sunshine-coloured fists  
Beyond his dimpling wrists  
    Were never closed  
For saving or for sparing—  
For only deeds of daring  
    Predisposed.

Unclenched, the gracious hands  
Let slip their gifts like sands  
    Made rich with ore

*A CHILD'S BATTLES.*

That tongues of beggars ravish  
From small stout hands so lavish  
Of their store.

Sweet hardy kindly hands  
Like these were his that stands  
With heel on gorge  
Seen trampling down the dragon  
On sign or flask or flagon,  
Sweet Saint George.

Some tournament, perchance,  
Of hands that couch no lance,  
Might mark this spot  
Your lists, if here some pleasant  
Small Guenevere were present,  
Launcelot.

My brave bright flower, you need  
No foolish song, nor heed  
It more than spring  
The sighs of winter stricken  
Dead when your haunts requicken  
Here, my king.

Yet O, how hardly may  
The wheels of singing stay  
That whirl along  
Bright paths whence echo raises  
The phantom of your praises,  
Child, my song !

Beyond all other things  
That give my words fleet wings,  
    Fleet wings and strong,  
You set their jesses ringing  
Till hardly can I, singing,  
    Stint my song.

But all things better, friend,  
And worse must find an end :  
    And, right or wrong,  
'Tis time, lest rhyme should baffle,  
I doubt, to put a snaffle  
    On my song.

And never may your ear  
Aught harsher hear or fear,  
    Nor wolfish night  
Nor dog-toothed winter snarling  
Behind your steps, my darling,  
    My delight !

For all the gifts you give  
Me, dear, each day you live,  
    Of thanks above  
All thanks that could be spoken  
Take not my song in token,  
    Take my love.

*A CHILD'S FUTURE.*

WHAT will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be ?  
 Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea ?  
 Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is  
     stirred  
 Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise  
     are heard :  
 Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us  
     round,  
 Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound ;  
 Love may forsake us ; yet may not the spirit be  
     bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardour of joy  
 Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a  
     toy :  
 Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives  
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives :  
Death cannot slay her : she laughs upon death and  
forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar  
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star :  
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be  
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their  
sea :

Fear not at all ; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.



SONNETS  
ON  
ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS  
(1590-1650)





## I.

*CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.*

CROWNED, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,  
 Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star !  
 Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,  
 Most far off in the abysm of time, thy lyre  
 Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire  
 Where all ye sang together, all that are,  
 And all the starry songs behind thy car  
 Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

‘ If all the pens that ever poets held  
 Had fed the feeling of their masters’ thoughts,  
 And as with rush of hurtling chariots  
 The flight of all their spirits were impelled  
 Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,  
 Not yet might’st thou be praised enough of men.

## II.

*WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.*

NOT if men's tongues and angels' all in one  
 Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.  
 Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains,  
     yea, the sea,  
 What power is in them all to praise the sun?  
 His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.  
     Man, woman, child, praise God for him ; but he  
     Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.  
 He is ; and, being, beholds his work well done.  
 All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,  
 Are his : without him, day were night on earth.  
     Time knows not his from time's own period.  
 All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,  
 Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.  
     All stars are angels ; but the sun is God.

## III.

*BEN FONSEN.*

BROAD-BASED, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,  
 With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,  
 Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,  
 And many a crag full-faced against the storm,  
 The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm  
 Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine  
 Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine  
 From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,  
 High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights  
 Hold converse : and the herd of meaner things  
 Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft  
 When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed,  
 Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous wings.

## IV.

*BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.*

AN hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,  
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.  
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,  
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.  
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast  
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,  
Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased  
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.  
Across them and between, a quickening fire,  
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.  
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,  
Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth  
With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,  
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

## V.

*PHILIP MASSINGER.*

CLOUDS here and there arisen an hour past noon  
Chequered our English heaven with lengthening bars  
And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-cars  
Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,  
When the clear still warm concord of thy tune  
Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars  
Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,  
With full mild flame as of the mellowing moon.  
Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face  
High melancholy lights with loftier grace  
Than gilds the brows of revel : sad and wise,  
The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,  
Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,  
Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

## VI.

*JOHN FORD.*

HEW hard the marble from the mountain's heart  
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom  
Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,  
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start  
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art  
Carved night, and chiselled shadow : be the tomb  
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom  
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,  
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow  
His record of rebellion. Not the day  
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,  
Touching this marble : darkness, none knows how,  
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.  
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

## VII.

*JOHN WEBSTER.*

THUNDER : the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.

Night : east, west, south, and northward, very night.

Star upon struggling star strives into sight,

Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.

The very throne of night, her very crown,

A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.

Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height .

Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.

Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,

Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time

Shown in the spheral orbit of a glass

Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.

Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,

Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

## VIII.

*THOMAS DECKER.*

OUT of the depths of darkling life where sin  
    Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know  
    Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe ;  
Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din  
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in ;  
    What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,  
    Winds that blow healing in each note they blow,  
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin ?

O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,  
Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,  
    Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,  
Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'er more great,  
Than thine toward man was more compassionate,  
    Nor gave Christ praise from lips more sweet with pity.



## IX.

*THOMAS MIDDLETON.*

A WILD moon riding high from cloud to cloud,  
 That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,  
 Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath  
 With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud :  
 A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,  
 With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal wreath  
 And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath  
 Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed :  
 A game of close contentious crafts and creeds  
 Played till white England bring black Spain to shame :  
 A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds  
 High conscience lights for mother's love and fame :  
 Pure gipsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds :  
 Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

## X.

*THOMAS HEYWOOD.*

TOM, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,  
 What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright  
 Even yet the laughing and the weeping light  
 That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from?  
 Small care was thine to assail and overcome  
 Time and his child Oblivion: yet of right  
 Thy name has part with names of lordlier might  
 For English love and homely sense of home,  
 Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bayleaf young  
 And gives it place aloft among thy peers  
 Whence many a wreath once higher strong Time  
 has hurled:  
 And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's tongue—  
 'O good old man, how well in thee appears  
 The constant service of the antique world !'

## XI.

## GEORGE CHAPMAN.

HIGH priest of Homer, not elect in vain,  
 Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind  
 Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind  
 Slow through the labouring triumph of thy train :  
 Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,  
 Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,  
 Tormented and transmuted out of kind :  
 But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,  
 Like Tailor<sup>1</sup> smooth, like Fisher<sup>2</sup> swollen, and now  
 Grim Yarrington<sup>3</sup> scarce bloodier marked than thou,  
 Then bluff as Mayne's<sup>4</sup> or broad-mouthed Barry's<sup>5</sup> glee,  
 Proud still with hoar predominance of brow  
 And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,  
 Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

<sup>1</sup> Author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*.

<sup>2</sup> Author of *Fuimus Troes, or the True Trojans*.

<sup>3</sup> Author of *Two Tragedies in One*.

<sup>4</sup> Author of *The City Match*.

<sup>5</sup> Author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks*.

## XII.

*JOHN MARSTON.*

THE bitterness of death and bitterer scorn  
     Breathes from the broad-leafed aloe-plant whence thou  
     Wast fain to gather for thy bended brow  
 A chaplet by no gentler forehead worn.  
 Grief deep as hell, wrath hardly to be borne,  
     Ploughed up thy soul till round the furrowing plough  
     The strange black soil foamed, as a black beaked prow  
 Bids night-black waves foam where its track has torn.  
 Too faint the phrase for thee that only saith  
 Scorn bitterer than the bitterness of death  
     Pervades the sullen splendour of thy soul,  
 Where hate and pain make war on force and fraud  
 And all the strengths of tyrants ; whence unflawed  
     It keeps this noble heart of hatred whole.

## XIII.

*JOHN DAY.*

DAY was a full-blown flower in heaven, alive  
With murmuring joy of bees and birds aswarm,  
When in the skies of song yet flushed and warm  
With music where all passion seems to strive  
For utterance, all things bright and fierce to drive  
Struggling along the splendour of the storm,  
Day for an hour put off his fiery form,  
And golden murmurs from a golden hive  
Across the strong bright summer wind were heard,  
And laughter soft as smiles from girls at play  
And loud from lips of boys brow-bound with May.  
Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,  
When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,  
Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.

## XIV.

*JAMES SHIRLEY.*

THE dusk of day's decline was hard on dark  
When evening trembled round thy glowworm lamp  
That shone across her shades and dewy damp  
A small clear beacon whose benignant spark  
Was gracious yet for loiterers' eyes to mark,  
Though changed the watchword of our English camp  
Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion ramp,  
When thy steed's pace went ambling round Hyde Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee  
Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,  
The blithest throat that ever carolled love  
In music made of morning's merriest heart,  
Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above  
And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

## XV.

*THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN.*

SONS born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,  
 All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,  
 Bright from the broad light of his presence, hail !  
 Prince Randolph, nighest his throne of all his men,  
 Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him then  
 King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail :  
 Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,  
 Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen :  
 Marmion, whose verse keeps always keen and fine  
 The perfume of their Apollonian wine .  
 Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee  
 The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine :  
 Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he  
 Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see?

## XVI.

*ANONYMOUS PLAYS:**'ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM.'*

MOTHER whose womb brought forth our man of men,  
Mother of Shakespeare, whom all time acclaims  
Queen therefore, sovereign queen of English dames,  
Throned higher than sat thy sonless empress then,  
Was it thy son's young passion-guided pen  
Which drew, reflected from encircling flames,  
A figure marked by the earlier of thy names  
Wife, and from all her wedded kinswomen  
Marked by the sign of murderess? Pale and great,  
Great in her grief and sin, but in her death  
And anguish of her penitential breath  
Greater than all her sin or sin-born fate,  
She stands, the holocaust of dark desire,  
Clothed round with song for ever as with fire.



## XVII.

*ANONYMOUS PLAYS.*

YE too, dim watchfires of some darkling hour,  
 Whose fame forlorn time saves not nor proclaims  
 For ever, but forgetfulness defames  
 And darkness and the shadow of death devour,  
 Lift up ye too your light, put forth your power,  
 Let the far twilight feel your soft small flames  
 And smile, albeit night name not even their names,  
 Ghost by ghost passing, flower blown down on flower :  
 That sweet-tongued shadow, like a star's that passed  
 Singing, and light was from its darkness cast  
 To paint the face of Painting fair with praise : <sup>1</sup>  
 And that wherein forefigured smiles the pure  
 Fraternal face of Wordsworth's Elidure  
 Between two child-faced masks of merrier days. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Doctor Dodypol.*<sup>2</sup> *Nobody and Somebody.*

## XVIII.

*ANONYMOUS PLAYS.*

MORE yet and more, and yet we mark not all :  
 The Warning fain to bid fair women heed  
 Its hard brief note of deadly doom and deed ;<sup>1</sup>  
 The verse that strewed too thick with flowers the hall  
 Whence Nero watched his fiery festival ;<sup>2</sup>  
 That iron page wherein men's eyes who read  
 See, bruised and marred between two babes that bleed,  
 A mad red-handed husband's martyr fall ;<sup>3</sup>  
 The scene which crossed and streaked with mirth the strife  
 Of Henry with his sons and witchlike wife ;<sup>4</sup>  
 And that sweet pageant of the kindly fiend,  
 Who, seeing three friends in spirit and heart made one,  
 Crowned with good hap the true-love wiles he screened  
 In the pleached lanes of pleasant Edmonton.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Warning for Fair Women.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Tragedy of Nero.*

<sup>3</sup> *A Yorkshire Tragedy.*

<sup>4</sup> *Look about you.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Merry Devil of Edmonton.*

## XIX.

*THE MANY.*

## I.

GREENE, garlanded with February's few flowers,  
 Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage :  
 Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age  
 Took the mild chaplet woven of honoured hours :  
 Nash, laughing hard : Lodge, flushed from lyric bowers :  
 And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage  
 Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page  
 Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring showers :  
 Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves :  
 And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse  
 Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wildwood hearse :  
 Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,  
 Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse :  
 Live likewise ye : Time takes not you for slaves.

## XX.

*THE MANY.*

## II.

Haughton, whose mirth gave woman all her will :  
     Field, bright and loud with laughing flower and bird  
     And keen alternate notes of laud and gird :  
 Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill  
 Which tuned the passion of Parthenophil :  
     Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word :  
     Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred :  
 Turk Mason : Brewer, whose tongue drops honey still :  
 Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand :  
     Light Nabbes : lean Sharpham, rank and raw by turns,  
     But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns :  
 Soft Davenport, sad-robed, but blithe and bland :  
     Brome, gipsy-led across the woodland ferns :  
 Praise be with all, and place among our band.

## XXI.

*EPILOGUE.*

OUR mother, which wast twice, as history saith,  
 Found first among the nations : once, when she  
 Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee  
 Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare : once, when death  
 Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at Milton's breath :  
 More than thy place, then first among the free,  
 More than that sovereign lordship of the sea  
 Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth,  
 More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake  
 Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,  
 More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right hand,  
 This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong,  
 That thou wast head of all these streams of song,  
 And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.



A DARK MONTH.

‘La maison sans enfants!’—VICTOR HUGO.



## I.

A MONTH without sight of the sun  
 Rising or reigning or setting  
 Through days without use of the day,  
 Who calls it the month of May?  
 The sense of the name is undone  
 And the sound of it fit for forgetting.

We shall not feel if the sun rise,  
 We shall not care when it sets :  
 If a nightingale make night's air  
 As noontide, why should we care ?  
 Till a light of delight that is done rise,  
 Extinguishing grey regrets ;

Till a child's face lighten again  
 On the twilight of older faces ;  
 Till a child's voice fall as the dew  
 On furrows with heat parched through  
 And all but hopeless of grain,  
 Refreshing the desolate places—

Fall clear on the ears of us hearkening  
 And hungering for food of the sound

And thirsting for joy of his voice :  
Till the hearts in us hear and rejoice,  
And the thoughts of them doubting and  
darkening  
Rejoice with a glad thing found.

When the heart of our gladness is gone,  
What comfort is left with us after ?  
When the light of our eyes is away,  
What glory remains upon May,  
What blessing of song is thereon  
If we drink not the light of his laughter ?

No small sweet face with the daytime  
To welcome, warmer than noon !  
No sweet small voice as a bird's  
To bring us the day's first words !  
Mid May for us here is not Maytime :  
No summer begins with June.

A whole dead month in the dark,  
A dawn in the mists that o'ercome her  
Stifled and smothered and sad—  
Swift speed to it, barren and bad !  
And return to us, voice of the lark,  
And remain with us, sunlight of summer.

II.

ALAS, what right has the dawn to glimmer,  
What right has the wind to do aught but  
moan ?

All the day should be dimmer  
Because we are left alone.

Yestermorn like a sunbeam present  
Hither and thither a light step smiled,  
And made each place for us pleasant  
With the sense or the sight of a child.

But the leaves persist as before, and after  
Our parting the dull day still bears flowers ;  
And songs less bright than his laughter  
Deride us from birds in the bowers.

Birds, and blossoms, and sunlight only,  
As though such folly sufficed for spring !  
As though the house were not lonely  
For want of the child its king !

## III.

ASLEEP and afar to-night my darling  
Lies, and heeds not the night,  
If winds be stirring or storms be snarling ;  
For his sleep is its own sweet light.

I sit where he sat beside me quaffing  
The wine of story and song  
Poured forth of immortal cups, and laughing  
When mirth in the draught grew strong.

I broke the gold of the words, to melt it  
For hands but seven years old,  
And they caught the tale as a bird, and felt it  
More bright than visible gold.

And he drank down deep, with his eyes broad  
beaming,  
Here in this room where I am,  
The golden vintage of Shakespeare, gleaming  
In the silver vessels of Lamb.

Here by my hearth where he was I listen  
For the shade of the sound of a word,  
Athirst for the birdlike eyes to glisten,  
For the tongue to chirp like a bird.

At the blast of battle, how broad they brightened,  
Like fire in the spheres of stars,  
And clung to the pictured page, and lightened  
As keen as the heart of Mars !

At the touch of laughter, how swift it twittered  
The shrillest music on earth ;  
How the lithe limbs laughed and the whole child  
glittered  
With radiant riot of mirth !

Our Shakespeare now, as a man dumb-stricken,  
Stands silent there on the shelf :  
And my thoughts, that had song in the heart of them,  
sicken,  
And relish not Shakespeare's self.

And my mood grows moodier than Hamlet's even,  
And man delights not me,  
But only the face that morn and even  
My heart leapt only to see.

That my heart made merry within me seeing,  
And sang as his laugh kept time :  
But song finds now no pleasure in being,  
And love no reason in rhyme.

## IV.

MILD May-blossom and proud sweet bay-flower,  
What, for shame, would you have with us here?  
It is not the month of the May-flower  
This, but the fall of the year.

Flowers open only their lips in derision,  
Leaves are as fingers that point in scorn :  
The shows we see are a vision ;  
Spring is not verily born.

Yet boughs turn supple and buds grow sappy,  
As though the sun were indeed the sun :  
And all our woods are happy  
With all their birds save one.

But spring is over, but summer is over,  
But autumn is over, and winter stands  
With his feet sunk deep in the clover  
And cowslips cold in his hands.

His hoar grim head has a hawthorn bonnet,  
His gnarled gaunt hand has a gay green staff  
With new-blown rose-blossom on it :  
But his laugh is a dead man's laugh.

The laugh of spring that the heart seeks after,  
The hand that the whole world yearns to kiss,  
It rings not here in his laughter,  
The sign of it is not this.

There is not strength in it left to splinter  
Tall oaks, nor frost in his breath to sting :  
Yet it is but a breath as of winter,  
And it is not the hand of spring.

## V.

THIRTY-ONE pale maidens, clad  
All in mourning dresses,  
Pass, with lips and eyes more sad  
That it seems they should be glad,  
Heads discrowned of crowns they had,  
Grey for golden tresses.

Grey their girdles too for green,  
And their veils dishevelled :  
None would say, to see their mien,  
That the least of these had been  
Born no baser than a queen,  
Reared where flower-fays revelled.

Dreams that strive to seem awake,  
Ghosts that walk by daytime,  
Weary winds the way they take,  
Since, for one child's absent sake,  
May knows well, whate'er things make  
Sport, it is not Maytime.



VI.

A HAND at the door taps light  
As the hand of my heart's delight :  
    It is but a full-grown hand,  
Yet the stroke of it seems to start  
Hope like a bird in my heart,  
    Too feeble to soar or to stand.

To start light hope from her cover  
Is to raise but a kite for a plover  
    If her wings be not fledged to soar.  
Desire, but in dreams, cannot ope  
The door that was shut upon hope  
    When love went out at the door.

Well were it if vision could keep  
The lids of desire as in sleep  
    Fast locked, and over his eyes  
A dream with the dark soft key  
In her hand might hover, and be  
    Their keeper till morning rise ;

The morning that brings after many  
Days fled with no light upon any  
    The small face back which is gone ;  
When the loved little hands once more  
Shall struggle and strain at the door  
    They beat their summons upon.

## VII.

IF a soul for but seven days were cast out of heaven  
and its mirth,  
They would seem to her fears like as seventy years  
upon earth.

Even and morrow should seem to her sorrow as long  
As the passage of numberless ages in slumberless  
song.

Dawn, roused by the lark, would be surely as dark in  
her sight  
As her measureless measure of shadowless pleasure  
was bright.

Noon, gilt but with glory of gold, would be hoary  
and grey  
In her eyes that had gazed on the depths, unamazed  
with the day.

Night hardly would seem to make darker her dream  
never done,  
When it could but withhold what a man may behold  
of the sun.

For dreams would perplex, were the days that should  
vex her but seven,  
The sight of her vision, made dark with division from  
heaven.

Till the light on my lonely way lighten that only now  
gleams,  
I too am divided from heaven and derided of dreams.

## VIII

A TWILIGHT fire-fly may suggest  
How flames the fire that feeds the sun :  
' A crooked figure may attest  
In little space a million.'

But this faint-figured verse, that dresses  
With flowers the bones of one bare month,  
Of all it would say scarce expresses  
In crooked ways a millionth.

A fire-fly tenders to the father  
Of fires a tribute something worth :  
My verse, a shard-borne beetle rather,  
Drones over scarce-illumined earth.

Some inches round me though it brighten  
With light of music-making thought,  
The dark indeed it may not lighten,  
The silence moves not, hearing nought.

Only my heart is eased with hearing,  
Only mine eyes are soothed with seeing,  
A face brought nigh, a footfall nearing,  
Till hopes take form and dreams have being.

## IX.

As a poor man hungering stands with insatiate eyes  
and hands

Void of bread

Right in sight of men that feast while his famine with  
no least

Crumb is fed,

Here across the garden-wall can I hear strange chil-  
dren call,

Watch them play,

From the windowed seat above, whence the goodlier  
child I love

Is away.

Here the sights we saw together moved his fancy like  
a feather

To and fro,

Now to wonder, and thereafter to the sunny storm of  
laughter

Loud and low—

Sights engraven on storied pages where man's tale of  
seven swift ages

All was told—

Seen of eyes yet bright from heaven—for the lips that  
laughed were seven

Sweet years old.

## X.

WHY should May remember  
March, if March forget  
The days that began with December,  
The nights that a frost could fret ?

All their griefs are done with  
Now the bright months bless  
Fit souls to rejoice in the sun with,  
Fit heads for the wind's caress ;

Souls of children quickening  
With the whole world's mirth,  
Heads closelier than field-flowers thickening  
That crowd and illuminate earth,

Now that May's call musters  
Files of baby bands  
To marshal in joyfuller clusters  
Than the flowers that encumber their hands.

Yet morose November  
Found them no less gay,  
With nought to forget or remember  
Less bright than a branch of may.



All the seasons moving  
Move their minds alike  
Applauding, acclaiming, approving  
All hours of the year that strike.

So my heart may fret not,  
Wondering if my friend  
Remember me not or forget not  
Or ever the month find end.

Not that love sows lighter  
Seed in children sown,  
But that life being lit in them brighter  
Moves fleeter than even our own.

May nor yet September  
Binds their hearts, that yet  
Remember, forget, and remember,  
Forget, and recall, and forget.

## XI.

As light on a lake's face moving  
Between a cloud and a cloud  
Till night reclaim it, reproving  
The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices  
When soft it swims into sight  
Applauded of all the voices  
And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter  
Than ever a moondawn smiled,  
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,  
The song in the soul of a child ;

The song that the sweet soul singing  
Half listens, and hardly hears,  
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing  
And brighter than joy's own tears ;

The song that remembrance of pleasure  
Begins, and forgetfulness ends  
With a soft swift change in the measure  
That rings in remembrance of friends

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,  
So haply may gleam at whites  
A dream through the dear deep lashes  
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him  
May take for a moment part  
With angels around and above him,  
And I find place in his heart.

## XII.

CHILD, were you kinless and lonely—  
Dear, were you kin to me—  
My love were compassionate only  
Or such as it needs would be.

But eyes of father and mother  
Like sunlight shed on you shine :  
What need you have heed of another  
Such new strange love as is mine ?

It is not meet if unruly  
Hands take of the children's bread  
And cast it to dogs ; but truly  
The dogs after all would be fed.

On crumbs from the children's table  
That crumble, dropped from above,  
My heart feeds, fed with unstable  
Loose waifs of a child's light love.

Though love in your heart were brittle  
As glass that breaks with a touch,  
You haply would lend him a little  
Who surely would give you much.

XIII.

HERE is a rough  
Rude sketch of my friend,  
Faint-coloured enough  
And unworthily penned.

Fearlessly fair  
And triumphant he stands,  
And holds unaware  
Friends' hearts in his hands ;

Stalwart and straight  
As an oak that should bring  
Forth gallant and great  
Fresh roses in spring.

On the paths of his pleasure  
All graces that wait  
What metre shall measure,  
What rhyme shall relate ?

Each action, each motion,  
Each feature, each limb,  
Demands a devotion  
In honour of him :

Head that the hand  
Of a god might have blest,  
Laid lustrous and bland  
On the curve of its crest :

Mouth sweeter than cherries  
Keen eyes as of Mars,  
Browner than berries  
And brighter than stars.

Nor colour nor wordy  
Weak song can declare  
The stature how sturdy,  
How stalwart his air.

As a king in his bright  
Presence-chamber may be,  
So seems he in height—  
Twice higher than your knee.

As a warrior sedate  
With reserve of his power,  
So seems he in state—  
As tall as a flower :

As a rose overtowering  
The ranks of the rest  
That beneath it lie cowering,  
Less bright than their best.

And his hands are as sunny  
As ruddy ripe corn  
Or the browner-hued honey  
From heather-bells borne.

When summer sits proudest,  
Fulfilled with its mirth,  
And rapture is loudest  
In air and on earth,

The suns of all hours  
That have ripened the roots  
Bring forth not such flowers  
And beget not such fruits.

And well though I know it,  
As fain would I write,  
Child, never a poet  
Could praise you aright.

I bless you? the blessing  
Were less than a jest  
Too poor for expressing ;  
I come to be blest,

With humble and dutiful  
Heart, from above :  
Bless me, O my beautiful  
Innocent love !

*A DARK MONTH.*

This rhyme in your praise  
With a smile was begun ;  
But the goal of his ways  
Is uncovered to none,

Nor pervious till after  
The limit impend ;  
It is not in laughter  
These rhymes of you end.



XIV.

SPRING, and fall, and summer, and winter,  
Which may Earth love least of them all,  
Whose arms embrace as their signs imprint her,  
Summer, or winter, or spring, or fall ?

The clear-eyed spring with the wood-birds mating.  
The rose-red summer with eyes aglow,  
The yellow fall with serene eyes waiting,  
The wild-eyed winter with hair all snow ?

Spring's eyes are soft, but if frosts benumb her  
As winter's own will her shrewd breath sting :  
Storms may rend the raiment of summer,  
And fall grow bitter as harsh-lipped spring.

One sign for summer and winter guides me,  
One for spring, and the like for fall :  
Whichever from sight of my friend divides me,  
That is the worst ill season of all.

## XV.

WORSE than winter is spring  
If I come not to sight of my king :  
But then what a spring will it be  
When my king takes homage of me !

I send his grace from afar  
Homage, as though to a star ;  
As a shepherd whose flock takes flight  
May worship a star by night.

As a flock that a wolf is upon  
My songs take flight and are gone :  
No heart is in any to sing  
Aught but the praise of my king.

Fain would I once and again  
Sing deeds and passions of men :  
But ever a child's head gleams  
Between my work and my dreams.

Between my hand and my eyes  
The lines of a small face rise,  
And the lines I trace and retrace  
Are none but those of the face.

XVI.

TILL the tale of all this flock of days alike  
    All be done,  
Weary days of waiting till the month's hand strike  
    Thirty-one,  
Till the clock's hand of the month break off, and end  
    With the clock,  
Till the last and whitest sheep at last be penned  
    Of the flock,  
I their shepherd keep the count of night and day  
    With my song,  
Though my song be, like this month which once was  
    May,  
    All too long.

## XVII.

THE incarnate sun, a tall strong youth,  
On old Greek eyes in sculpture smiled :  
But trulier had it given the truth  
To shape him like a child.

No face full-grown of all our dearest  
So lightens all our darkness, none  
Most loved of all our hearts hold nearest  
So far outshines the sun,

As when with sly shy smiles that feign  
Doubt if the hour be clear, the time  
Fit to break off my work again  
Or sport of prose or rhyme,

My friend peers in on me with merry  
Wise face, and though the sky stay dim  
The very light of day, the very  
Sun's self comes in with him.

XVIII.

OUT of sight,  
    Out of mind !  
Could the light  
    Prove unkind ?

Can the sun  
    Quite forget  
What was done  
    Ere he set ?

Does the moon  
    When she wanes  
Leave no tune  
    That remains

In the void  
    Shell of night  
Overcloyed  
    With her light ?

Must the shore  
    At low tide  
Feel no more  
    Hope or pride,

No intense  
Joy to be,  
In the sense  
Of the sea—

In the pulses  
Of her shocks  
It repulses,  
When its rocks

Thrill and ring  
As with glee?  
Has my king  
Cast off me,

Whom no bird  
Flying south  
Brings one word  
From his mouth?

Not the ghost  
Of a word  
Riding post  
Have I heard,

Since the day  
When my king  
Took away  
With him spring,

And the cup  
Of each flower  
Shrivalled up  
That same hour,

With no light  
Left behind.  
Out of sight,  
Out of mind !

## XIX.

BECAUSE I adore you  
And fall  
On the knees of my spirit before you—  
After all,

You need not insult,  
My king,  
With neglect, though your spirit exult  
In the spring,

Even me, though not worth,  
God knows,  
One word of you sent me in mirth,  
Or one rose

Out of all in your garden  
That grow  
Where the frost and the wind never harden  
Flakes of snow,

Nor ever is rain  
At all,  
But the roses rejoice to remain  
Fair and tall—



The roses of love,  
More sweet  
Than blossoms that rain from above  
Round our feet,

When under high bowers  
We pass,  
Where the west wind freckles with flowers  
All the grass.

But a child's thoughts bear  
More bright  
Sweet visions by day, and more fair  
Dreams by night,

Than summer's whole treasure  
Can be :  
What am I that his thought should take pleasure,  
Then, in me ?

I am only my love's  
True lover,  
With a nestful of songs, like doves  
Under cover,

That I bring in my cap  
Fresh caught,  
To be laid on my small king's lap—  
Worth just nought.

Yet it haply may hap  
That he,  
When the mirth in his veins is as sap  
In a tree,

Will remember me too  
Some day  
Ere the transit be thoroughly through  
Of this May—

Or perchance, if such grace  
May be,  
Some night when I dream of his face,  
Dream of me.

Or if this be too high  
A hope  
For me to prefigure in my  
Horoscope,

He may dream of the place  
Where we  
Basked once in the light of his face,  
Who now see

Nought brighter, not one  
Thing bright,  
Than the stars and the moon and the sun,  
Day nor night.

XX.

DAY by darkling day,  
Overpassing, bears away  
Somewhat of the burden of this weary May.

Night by numbered night,  
Waning, brings more near in sight  
Hope that grows to vision of my heart's delight.

Nearer seems to burn  
In the dawn's rekindling urn  
Flame of fragrant incense, hailing his return.

Louder seems each bird  
In the brightening branches heard  
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

All the mists that swim  
Round the dawns that grow less dim  
Still wax brighter and more bright with hope of him.

All the suns that rise  
Bring that day more near our eyes  
When the sight of him shall clear our clouded skies.

All the winds that roam  
Fruitful fields or fruitless foam  
Blow the bright hour near that brings his bright  
face home.

XXI.

I HEAR of two far hence  
In a garden met,  
And the fragrance blown from thence  
Fades not yet.

The one is seven years old,  
And my friend is he :  
But the years of the other have told  
Eighty-three.

To hear these twain converse  
Or to see them greet  
Were sweeter than softest verse  
May be sweet.

The hoar old gardener there  
With an eye more mild  
Perchance than his mild white hair  
Meets the child.

I had rather hear the words  
That the twain exchange  
Than the songs of all the birds  
There that range,

Call, chirp, and twitter there  
Through the garden-beds  
Where the sun alike sees fair  
Those two heads,

And which may holier be  
Held in heaven of those  
Or more worth heart's thanks to see  
No man knows.

XXII.

OF such is the kingdom of heaven.  
No glory that ever was shed  
From the crowning star of the seven  
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken  
Of human or godlike tongue,  
Gave ever such godlike token  
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given  
To faithful or faithless eyes  
Showed ever beyond clouds riven  
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven  
And blood have defiled each creed :  
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,  
It must be heaven indeed.

## XXIII.

THE wind on the downs is bright  
As though from the sea :  
And morning and night  
Take comfort again with me.

He is nearer to-day,  
Each night to each morning saith,  
Whose return shall revive dead May  
With the balm of his breath.

The sunset says to the moon,  
He is nearer to-night  
Whose coming in June  
Is looked for more than the light.

Bird answers to bird,  
Hour passes the sign on to hour,  
And for joy of the bright news heard  
Flower murmurs to flower.



The ways that were glad of his feet  
In the woods that he knew  
Grow softer to meet  
The sense of his footfall anew.

He is near now as day,  
Says hope to the new-born light :  
He is near now as June is to May,  
Says love to the night.

## XXIV.

Good things I keep to console me  
For lack of the best of all,  
A child to command and control me,  
Bid come and remain at his call.

Sun, wind, and woodland and highland,  
Give all that ever they gave :  
But my world is a cultureless island,  
My spirit a masterless slave.

And friends are about me, and better  
At summons of no man stand :  
But I pine for the touch of a fetter,  
The curb of a strong king's hand.

Each hour of the day in her season  
Is mine to be served as I will :  
And for no more exquisite reason  
Are all served idly and ill.

By slavery my sense is corrupted,  
My soul not fit to be free :  
I would fain be controlled, interrupted,  
Compelled as a thrall may be.

For fault of spur and of bridle  
I tire of my stall to death :  
My sail flaps joyless and idle  
For want of a small child's breath.

## XXV.

WHITER and whiter  
The dark lines grow,  
And broader opens and brighter  
The sense of the text below.

Nightfall and morrow  
Bring nigher the boy  
Whom wanting we want not sorrow,  
Whom having we want no joy.

Clearer and clearer  
The sweet sense grows  
Of the word which hath summer for hearer,  
The word on the lips of the rose.

Duskily dwindles  
Each deathlike day,  
Till June rearing rekindles  
The depth of the darkness of May.

XXVI.

*'In his bright radiance and collateral light  
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.'*

STARS in heaven are many,  
Suns in heaven but one :  
Nor for man may any  
Star supplant the sun.

Many a child as joyous  
As our far-off king  
Meets as though to annoy us  
In the paths of spring.

Sure as spring gives warning,  
All things dance in tune :  
Sun on Easter morning,  
Cloud and windy moon,

Stars between the tossing  
Boughs of tuneful trees,  
Sails of ships recrossing  
Leagues of dancing seas ;

Best, in all this playtime,  
Best of all in tune,  
Girls more glad than Maytime,  
Boys more bright than June ;

Mixed with all those dances,  
Far through field and street  
Sing their silent glances,  
Ring their radiant feet.

Flowers wherewith May crowned us  
Fall ere June be crowned :  
Children blossom round us  
All the whole year round.

Is the garland worthless  
For one rose the less,  
And the feast made mirthless ?  
Love, at least, says yes.

Strange it were, with many  
Stars enkindling air,  
Should but one find any  
Welcome : strange it were,

Had one star alone won  
Praise for light from far :  
Nay, love needs his own one  
Bright particular star.

Hope and recollection  
Only lead him right  
In its bright reflection  
And collateral light.

Find as yet we may not  
Comfort in its sphere :  
Yet these days will weigh not  
When it warms us here ;

When full-orbed it rises,  
Now divined afar :  
None in all the skies is  
Half so good a star ;

None that seers importune  
Till a sign be won :  
Star of our good fortune,  
Rise and reign, our sun !

## XXVII.

I PASS by the small room now forlorn  
Where once each night as I passed I knew  
A child's bright sleep from even to morn  
Made sweet the whole night through.

As a soundless shell, as a songless nest,  
Seems now the room that was radiant then  
And fragrant with his happier rest  
Than that of slumbering men.

The day therein is less than the day,  
The night is indeed night now therein :  
Heavier the dark seems there to weigh,  
And slower the dawns begin.

As a nest fulfilled with birds, as a shell  
Fulfilled with breath of a god's own hymn,  
Again shall be this bare blank cell,  
Made sweet again with him.



## XXVIII.

SPRING darkens before us,  
A flame going down,  
With chant from the chorus  
Of days without crown—  
Cloud, rain, and sonorous  
Soft wind on the down.

She is wearier not of us  
Than we of the dream,  
That spring was to love us  
And joy was to gleam  
Through the shadows above us  
That shift as they stream.

Half dark and half hoary,  
Float far on the loud  
Mild wind, as a glory  
Half pale and half proud  
From the twilight of story,  
Her tresses of cloud ;

Like phantoms that glimmer  
Of glories of old  
With ever yet dimmer  
Pale circlets of gold  
As darkness grows grimmer  
And memory more cold.

Like hope growing clearer  
With wane of the moon,  
Shines toward us the nearer  
Gold frontlet of June,  
And a face with it dearer  
Than midsummer noon.

XXIX.

You send me your love in a letter,  
I send you my love in a song :  
Ah child, your gift is the better,  
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,  
No praise, were it wide as earth,  
Is worth so much as a little  
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us  
As they might angels above :  
Come back to us, child, if you love us,  
And bring us your love.

## XXX.

No time for books or for letters :  
What time should there be ?  
No room for tasks and their fetters :  
Full room to be free.

The wind and the sun and the Maytime  
Had never a guest  
More worthy the most that his playtime  
Could give of its best.

If rain should come on, peradventure,  
(But sunshine forbid !)  
Vain hope in us haply might venture  
To dream as it did.

But never may come, of all comers  
Least welcome, the rain,  
To mix with his servant the summer's  
Rose-garlanded train !

He would write, but his hours are as busy  
As bees in the sun,  
And the jubilant whirl of their dizzy  
Dance never is done.

The message is more than a letter,  
Let love understand,  
And the thought of his joys even better  
Than sight of his hand.

## XXXI.

WIND, high-souled, full-hearted  
South-west wind of the spring !  
Ere April and earth had parted,  
Skies, bright with thy forward wing,  
Grew dark in an hour with the shadow behind it, that  
bade not a bird dare sing.

Wind whose feet are sunny,  
Wind whose wings are cloud,  
With lips more sweet than honey  
Still, speak they low or loud,  
Rejoice now again in the strength of thine heart: let  
the depth of thy soul wax proud.

We hear thee singing or sighing,  
Just not given to sight,  
All but visibly flying  
Between the clouds and the light,  
And the light in our hearts is enkindled, the shadow  
therein of the clouds put to flight.

From the gift of thine hands we gather  
The core of the flowers therein,  
Keen glad heart of heather,  
Hot sweet heart of whin,  
Twin breaths in thy godlike breath close blended of  
wild spring's wildest of kin.

All but visibly beating  
We feel thy wings in the far  
Clear waste, and the plumes of them fleeting,  
Soft as swan's plumes are,  
And strong as a wild swan's pinions, and swift as the  
flash of the flight of a star.

As the flight of a planet enkindled  
Seems thy far soft flight  
Now May's reign has dwindled  
And the crescent of June takes light  
And the presence of summer is here, and the hope of  
a welcomer presence in sight.

Wind, sweet-souled, great-hearted  
Southwest wind on the wold !  
From us is a glory departed  
That now shall return as of old,  
Borne back on thy wings as an eagle's expanding, and  
crowned with the sundawn's gold.

There is not a flower but rejoices,  
There is not a leaf but has heard:  
All the fields find voices,  
All the woods are stirred:  
There is not a nest but is brighter because of the  
coming of one bright bird.

Out of dawn and morning,  
Noon and afternoon,  
The sun to the world gives warning  
Of news that brightens the moon ;  
And the stars all night exult with us, hearing of joy  
that shall come with June.



*SUNRISE.*

If the wind and the sunlight of April and August had  
mingled the past and hereafter  
In a single adorable season whose life were a rapture  
of love and of laughter,  
And the blithest of singers were back with a song ; if  
again from his tomb as from prison,  
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristophanes  
had arisen,  
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were also  
a god upon earth at his shoulders,  
And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at  
his lips, for a joy to beholders,  
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set  
to some adequate measure  
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores  
them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.  
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all  
of us here, and the season  
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and  
rejoicing a word without reason.

For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight  
as of jubilant voices,  
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather  
alive as a heart that rejoices.  
For the house that was childless awhile, and the light  
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,  
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with the  
light of his face is rekindled.  
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the  
sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,  
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them  
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,  
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted  
in June and by June were defrauded,  
And the summer that brought us not back the desire  
of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.  
For July came joyless among us, and August went  
out from us arid and sterile,  
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no  
more than a flower that the seasons imperil,  
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought  
which regret had not heart to remember,  
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and  
summer began in September.  
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's  
voice hither and thither :  
See, May in the garden again with a child's face  
cheering the woods ere they wither.  
June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the  
sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,

And August glows in a smile more sweet than the  
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.  
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun,  
and the noon with delight in him flushes,  
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as  
soft as the sleep that it hushes.  
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift  
of the sundawn's giving,  
And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds  
else in the world of the living,  
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in  
the world of our visions beholden,  
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that  
the light of a world without grief makes golden.  
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a  
likeness of heaven and its glory,  
What was it of old, or what is it and will be for ever,  
in song or in story,  
Or in shape or in colour of carven or painted resem-  
blance, adored of all ages,  
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures  
of old or the pages?  
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if  
they come not again shall be never :  
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of  
heaven and its promise for ever.







May, 1882.



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