



POEMS

BY LANGDON ELWYN MITCHELL

[JOHN PHILIP VARLEY]

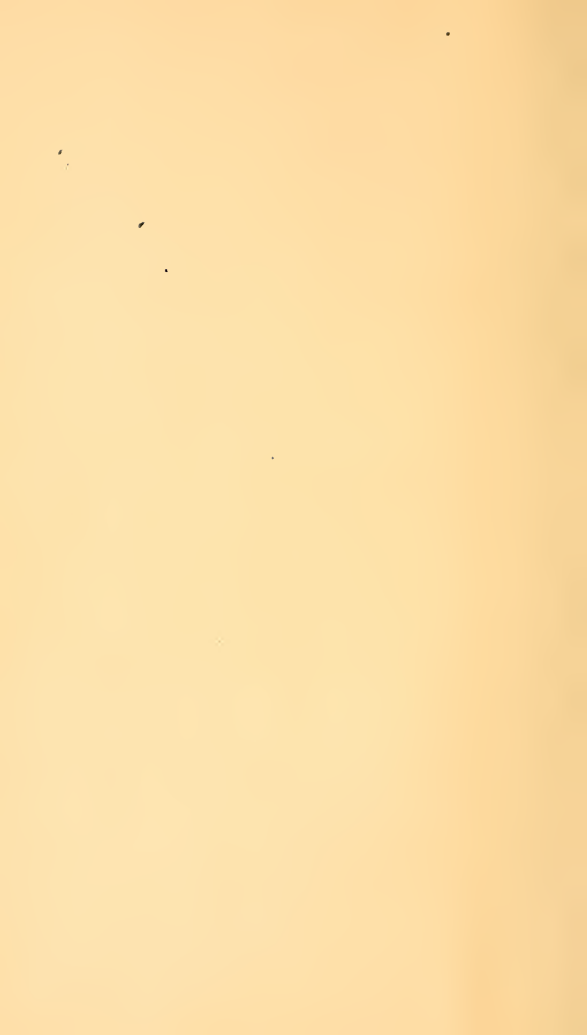


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POEMS

BY

LANGDON ELWYN MITCHELL

"JOHN PHILIP VARLEY"



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TO MY FATHER

The present hour,
The winds that blow, the thoughts that rise, the flower
That blossoms, Love now warm and good,
This hour of the world's time, and nature's mood, —
These be my strength, my stay !

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POEMS.



AT SEA.

As the first beams of morning faintly wooed
The maiden East, our ship with steady motion
Plunged through the vast and heaving solitude ;
Around her was the black expanse of ocean,
Above her was the blue — and fast she fled ;
A bright, perpetual fountain at her prow
Leaped from the brine ; like clouds her sails were
spread,
And bellied in the wind as white as snow.
Gunwale and deck were wet with morning dew ;
A smooth and oilèd calm behind us flowed,
A stream of quiet stretching to the blue ;
And easy as delight our proud ship rode
A sea, that like a lover round her threw
His arms, and clipt her in a blissful mood.

NEARING LAND.

THUS as we sped, the bright sun, o'er the sea
Drawing his host of clouds, passed down the west,

And sank with all his splendor silently ;
 But ere he fell from heaven, he seemed to rest
 His weakened majesty upon the flood
 Of the sustaining water, and, all fair,
 Looked back in light across the evening air,
 Changing dark ocean to his golden mood.
 He sank ; and his warm smile died fast away.
 Eve, lightless, fell ; the rapid waters seethed
 Ceaselessly by. Our good ship onward rushed ;
 Soft blew the breeze ; stars rose ; on high there
 flushed
 Faint, roseate light, and airs from heaven breathed ;
 And all night long we waited for the day.

SUNRISE IN NEW YORK HARBOR.

I.

THE sun rose softly through warm mists of spring,
 And from the unseen shore a caroling
 Of birds was borne ; it was the morning, fair
 And windless ; a deep calm, a tranquil air.
 And though the mist wrapt us from land and town,
 The smell of the ploughed fields from furrows brown
 And freshly turned, across the water blew
 A pleasant greeting ; till the white mist drew
 Aside, and, fleeting upward, passed away
 In the clear heaven ; and we saw the day,
 And earth, and that, behind us the dark sea,
 We lay in harbor where we wished to be,

II.

Then we, who had been absent from our Land
Too long, looked gratefully on the bare sand
And earth even of her shore ; and as our ship
Moved, eagerly we watched the green hills dip
And run behind us, till on the far right
Sloping they sank, and open to the sight
Left the broad bay ; and o'er the waters fair,
Breathing with mist, softly through the soft air,
Mysteriously shadowed in the dew,
The city swam all slowly into view.
But as we gazed, the sun from heaven wrought
Upon her beauty : — tower by tower she caught
The morning, till at last the harbor wide,
Green hills, still water, and on every side,
Distant and near, white sails and whiter steam
Dissolving as it breathed, flushed in the beam
And splendor of the day : — she seemed to be
A faery city on a faery sea ;
For every rosy wharf and rosier tower
Was imaged in the stream, and for that hour,
Throned on a shadow, she did seem to have
For her foundation neither earth nor wave,
But in the air to hang, on air to float,
Lying in calm, immortal and remote,
Light, tranquil and unvexed — as it might seem
Earth, sleeping, dreamed of beauty : — this the
Dream.

III.

The world is full of pleasure, full of peace,
Full of delight: the clouds in their increase
Are joy, in their departure joy; how good
Are all the motions of our human blood!
The vernal influence, the flowers of May
And fruit of fall: — all things that pass away
In birth, in being and in passing are
How dear to us! how infinitely fair
Love passing not away! and man's deep faith
Unshakable, and the sweet thought of death:
That happy change, the rising of the dew
To heavens it knows not of, that once it knew.
These are the world's delights, and with these then
There is a rare but kindred one: 't is when
After long exile we return again
To our loved country, to our blessèd Land,
The mother of our hearts, and as we stand
Hearing the speech that we have hungered for,
Know all is well, it is no foreign shore,
Passed are the endless fields of ocean's foam,
Passed the green, moving waste: — we are at home.

And such a mighty bliss it seemed to me,
And such a stepping into liberty,
Then, when I saw those hills, those woods, all clear;
And every moment as our ship drew near
And nearer, saw how gracious and how free
The city from her towers looked toward the sea;
And, straining o'er the waters to the strand,
Felt my heart leap toward my native Land!

TRUE CAPTIVITY.

THE wild hawk, silent in his cage,
Sits in no sacred hermitage.

His use of life and only prayer
Is swiftness in the light and air.

His psalm of praise, the cry that's flung
Far downward to his nestling young.

His busy joy, at even, late,
To scream and circle with his mate.

The captive lark will sing and throw
His voice where he may never go.

He hath the heaven that he sings ;
But my wild hawk hath only wings !

MY COMRADE.

CHANCELLORSVILLE.

I HAD a comrade that have none !
I buried him ere break of dawn ;
I scooped the earth up and I gave
His body to that shallow grave.

'T was yestermorn when we set forth,
As proud as if we were not earth ;

We had no heed, we were as gay
As suns in heaven, or flowers in May.

We met the foe, we fiercely fought;
But, oh, what blast of evil thought
Withered our Captain's heart? 'T was he,
Our chief, was conquered, and not we!

We must withdraw! All sick and sad,
We turned our faces and obeyed;
As sullenly we fought, 't was then
He fell—and did not rise again.

But when the battle's roar was done,
As towards the morn the mists begun
To creep o'er all, I found my way
Back to the hollow where he lay.

He lay all stiff and stark and cold;
His blood had damped the mossy mould;
And as I touched my brother's clay,
The dews of heaven upon it lay.

I scooped a grave, if grave it were,
To hide him from the sun and air;
And gave him one last kiss, and then
Shoved in the earth and leaves again.

I had a comrade that have none!
Dear as my life was he to me!
Would I were dead before the sun,
And would that I had died for thee!

IN MAY.

It is the May, the winter's gone,
The windflower's in the forest blown,
And all the brooks are filled with rain ;
And April's Star is come and gone ;
And if thou do not come again,
And if thou do not come again,
My heart that did like earth repine,
Hath now put forth her green in vain ;
So come again, and come again!

THE HOLY HOUR.

THIS hour to thee ! when as the sun
His course in the high heaven hath run,
And dew upon the earth doth fall,
And clouds their infant light recall,
 May I in heart and spirit be
 An hour with thee !

This hour be thine ! — As tender sweet
As to the heart returning feet
That timely come, and hands that bless,
And eyes that add their own caress,
 So tender and so timely be
 This hour to me !

Did they thus linger on their tree,
To dance upon the winds in vain,
Seeking an April smile to see
Where never smile might be again?

They fade upon forsaken boughs ;
They flicker in the frosty air
Like yellow light ; — and the wind blows,
And the cold pierces everywhere.

Better to fall at once, like thee,
All-withered with the withering year,
Than, lingering into scorn, to be
A laughter, when no love is here.

LEGEND.

ONCE as Peter, James, and John
With their Master journeyed on,
They found themselves upon a road
That showed no sign of man's abode.

Then as upon their way they sped,
The dew upon his forehead laid
Made James upturn his face, and say :
“ How peaceful is the close of day ! ”

And John, whose eyes were fixed above :
“ It is ; for 't is the birth of love ;

The heaven is gracious with the sun,
But glorified when day is done."

And Peter said: "The dew doth fall
Upon the desert-ground as well
As on the fruitful field; the light
Of sun and star through day and night,
Although our eyes should see no more,
Would shine as wondrous as before.
For loveliness is everywhere,
If we have eyes to see it there!"

Then, as they went along the road
That like a winding water flowed,
And plodded on and on, there fell
Into their nostrils an ill smell.
And presently a horse was seen
That dead this many a day had been.
His legs were stiff, his carcass blown,
His hide was shrunk from the bone.
The vultures long had left the prey,
And flapped upon the wind away.
And maggots now their liking did,
And in the carcass housed and hid.

Said James: "He doth the air pollute;
We must avoid the scurvy brute;
See how his legs stick out awry!
That staring socket was an eye."
"Behold the sum of life," said John,
"And all the same in horse or man;
— How his bones are gnawed and bare!"

And, "Paugh!" cried Peter, "all that's fair
Loses itself in this! see, how
His lips are stript as if to show
The inner vileness!"

Thus the three
Turned themselves off; but Jesus brooked
To stand awhile, and as he looked
Upon the carrion thing he said:
"Peter, although the brute is dead,
Yet, see! how very pure and white
His teeth are!" —

"Lord! they are most bright!"
Then Jesus smiled; — and all began
To plod upon their way again.

THE WEARY KING.

THERE was a King in days of old,
Whose heart in his great breast grew cold;
It could no longer weep or pray;
The King was weary of the day.

Upon his city by the sea
Sleep and the night all quietly
Had stolen down, when the moon's glow
Fell on the King's face, full of woe;
For from his noisy palace he
Stept forth; the golden revelry
In distance slumbering, as he passed

The gates, and gardens dim and vast,
And mounting up the stony way
Gained the green height. His city lay
Behind him now, — before, the dawn
Glimmered and grayed : the king passed on.

A herdsman 'neath a mossy mound
Slept upon the sunny ground.
His cloak and crook beside him lay ;
The King came by, all sad and gray.
He looked ; — and, lo, a rosy smile
Came on the herdsman's face, the while
The great King gazed, and thought, how deep
His happiness who smiles in sleep !

Long he mused. Then, at the last
He rose, and quietly he cast
His mantle from him, and his crown,
And laid them by the sleeper down.
His weary sceptre too, and all
That kingly was, he did let fall ;
And from the shepherd's side he took
The cloak, the wallet, and the crook.
And forth he fared — a shepherd, he !
Whose heart within his breast was free ;
For as he wandered or was still,
Beneath the rock, or by the rill,
And as he kept and called his sheep,
His kingly cares were laid to sleep.
His crook upon his aged knee,
He smiled in sunshine dreamily ;
And all day long his quiet face
Was like an evening in the place.

Thus, as all blissfully he went,
His old heart grew innocent ;
And his high face seemed to know,
Like clouds that into evening blow,
A long and lovely afterglow.

THE APPLE-TREE.

AN apple-tree, that grew beside a road,
Bore on a prosperous autumn such a load,
That an untender hand or blow would break
The laden boughs : “ If with my fruit I make
A recompense to those who on their way
Trudge from the sun-up to the set of day,
I shall be glad : — although each bough I bear
Should broken be.”

In a few days the tree
Was stript of all its burden, and the air
And sun pierced where they would ; passers might
see

Only a few half leafless branches left :
Of fruit and leaf alike it was bereft.
And as I passed beneath I heard it speak,
A fluttering wind of words and accents weak.

“ Alas ! alas ! I did not, could not guess
There was so keen an edge to the distress
That I must now endure : no leaves I bear,
But barrenness, no fruit now but despair.

14 *THE CHILD AND THE TWILIGHT*

Had I but known how bitter 't is to be
Thus destitute and naked, not in me
Would travelers have found delight ; — alas !
I did not dream that there was wretchedness
That was not to be borne ; but now I see
And know and feel myself that there may be.”

Next May I chanced that road ; — by grief not
 schooled,
Flattered by winds, or by the sunlight fooled,
The tree had blossomed. — Thought I : Trees, like
 men,
When they are robbed of gladness, scoff and swear
They will not err in doing good again ;
But gladness kisses them — and then they err !

THE CHILD AND THE TWILIGHT.

I WALKED into a little wood,
 And there upon my way,
I met a little, little man,
 A little man in gray.

I spoke to him : “ Good day ! good day ! ”
 He would not answer me ;
He wore a cloak of silver braid,
 As gray as gray could be.

And on the ground his cloak he spread,
 He hung it on the Tree ;

And here and there, till all the air
Was gray as gray could be.

“ Where is the path in this dark wood?
I cannot find my way ! ”
Never a word said the little man,
The little man in gray.

“ A light, green wood ! lend me a light,
That I may look and see ! ”
So quickly then a man in green
Stept from behind a tree.

A lantern in his hand he had,
And not a word said he ;
But he ran before to the green woods door,
And opened it wide for me.

Oh, little man, whoever you be
That wore the mantle gray —
The man in green has come to me,
And I'm out of your wood and away !

NIGHTFALL IN WINTER.

COLD is the air,
The woods are bare
And brown ; the herd
Stand in the yard.

The frost doth fall ;
And round the hill
The hares move slow ;
The homeward crow,
Alone and high,
Crosses the sky
All silently.
The quick streams freeze ;
The moving trees
Are still ; for now
No breeze will blow :
The wind has gone
With the day, down,
And clouds are come
Bearing the gloom.
The yellow grass
In the clear glass
Of the bright pool
Grows soft and dull.
The water's eye
That held the sky
Now glazes quite ;
And now the light
On the cold hill
Fadeth, until
The giant mass
Doth seem to pass
From near to far ;
The clouds obscure
The sky with gloom :
The night is come.

“WHO IS SHE THAT YOU LOVE?”

WHO is she that you love ?

Oh, I adore her !

How do you worship her ?

I bow before her.

What is she that you love ?

Her ways are honor.

Who worships her ?

Whoever looks upon her.

And is she fair, thy love ?

As skies a-clearing.

And stately is she ?

As the stars appearing.

And is she true, thy love ?

There is none truer.

And is she good, thy love ?

Go thou and view her !

And did she tell her love ?

She did dissemble.

How knew you that she loved ?

I saw her tremble.

And when she trembled, then ?

I knelt beside her.

And then ?

Why, then, — why then, sweet joy
betide her !

THE LITTLE EASTERN PRINCESS.

A LITTLE Lady in a story old,
Fragrant with all the East from Samarcand
To Bagdad or bright Fez, when she was told
She must not bathe in the moonlight, "By this
hand,"
She cried, "I will!" — Nor could a princess swear
By aught that under heaven was more fair,
Or sweeter kisses to her lover blew.
And this I think the little Lady knew.

I have forgotten now what blind or hid
Disaster was to follow if she did
According to her oath; — the point, however,
Was, if she bathed in any tranquil river,
She'd see what the Vizier himself had been
At earnest pains should not by her be seen,
Namely, her own sweet face; for from that one
Brief moment's vision — Destiny had spun
The threads so! — all things grew; and in the tale
Of destined harm there was a nightingale,
A jealous father, hareems, and a Fate
Ripening to fall, a soft and silken hate,
Rings of dark power, a latticed window high,
Whence roses rained, a lover, and a spy,
And sweets ungirdled in the secret night,
— A blare of trumpets and a sudden flight;

Then bloody payment; — and sad eyes like stars;
 And half a hundred whirling scimitars,
 With more — but as I say, I have forgot
 What followed, but what made it follow, not.

For that same night the Princess' little feet,
 Her slippers in her naughty hand, all fleet,
 Down the cool marble stairs, and o'er the lawn,
 And through an ivory gate, were slipped and gone.
 Thence 'neath green groves she walked, moon shadowed all,

Till scarcely now she heard the fountain's fall
 In the courtyard; — and, behold, the River's face,
 Dreamy and glittering! — a broad, bright space,
 Of balmy verge. The dark, cool waters drew
 About an Isle, where purple flag-flowers grew;
 Each purple flag-flower bowing on its stem,
 Whose purple images bowed back at them.
 High in the air soared pomegranate and palm;
 And all was ripeness and repose and calm.
 The princess gazed in soft, delicious mood,
 Until the coolness of the water wooed
 Her feet to venture daintily, — the sin
 Was pleasant and invited deeper in.
 And being deeper gone, she perceived, for
 The first time in her life, that rivers bore
 Bright stars; and were sky-deep, — a sudden terror
 Heaved in her bosom! — Had the dark, blue mirror
 Of waters rippled not, she, frankly, even
 Had feared to topple and fall into heaven!
 But seeing half a hundred stars below
 Pass into streams of light, and flash, and flow

On the dark wave, she plucked up heart ; and soon
 The fire-besprinkled motion calmed, the moon
 Burnished the undulant and easy wave,
 That ever smoother grew ; — still not quite brave, —
 Until she saw the heaven, the stars, and all
 The pomegranates, and palm majestic ;
 And, presently, discerned the pebbly shelf
 And bed of bottom sand ; — when, “ Oh,” she saw
 herself !

Her face — unknown to her ! — all fair, and full.
 Out leaped the thought ! “ By Eblis ! — beauti-
 ful ! —

Allah has given me beauty ; I must make
 A proper use of it for Allah’s sake.
 Ah, what a Loveliness I am ! ” — ’t was hence,
 And from that hour she lost all innocence
 Of her own power, — whereon she bathed, and
 dashed

Hither and thither, swam, and played and plashed.

She had great joy, indeed ! And so, as one
 Who has the whole of a harsh duty done,
 That is to say, with conscience quite at rest,
 Head-beneath-wing, and sleeping in her breast,
 Her homeward way she now began to measure,
 Rich in deceit and full of stolen pleasure ;
 Until she gained her palace, when the Tale
 Further relateth that a nightingale —
 But that’s nor here, nor there ! —

Only, when I
 Behold the young Moon bathing in the sky,

A naked splendor, — then I seem to be
Transported to that Tale : — voluptuously
The Lady walketh in her garden fair,
'Neath citron groves, and orange, and the air
Is perfumed with a languor, as she goes,
Swaying from side to side ; — the river flows
About her, and she sees her Image bright,
Soft-mirrored in the stream, and the warm depth of
 night,
With all the pleasures of her loveliness —

There is a languor comes with the excess
Of the moon's soft light ; — and sometimes even a
 saint,
Wand'ring 'mid Eastern fables, will grow faint.

THE COMFORT OF THE GRASS.

MADISON SQUARE, NEW YORK, 1890.

I.

THE night hath passed upon me wearily,
A heavy night of darkness, and is gone ;
Oh, let me raise my eyes to heaven and see
The rosy deep of full refreshing dawn.

For grief hath been my bed-fellow, and slept
No hour of these so many : — I have wept,
Till not alone my eyes are weary weeping,
But strong convulsion of unwilling grief
Hath numbed the very nerves of pain ; I feel
A languor in my veins, as if my blood
Had drunk of slumber and my grief were sleeping,
Never to wake again.

For now my mood
Is soft as summer air, — ah, if it would
But linger to the noon, I murmur low,
This sweet and temperate interval of calm,
So blessed and so delicious with the balm
And softness of late vanished tears ! I know
Not now if I am he, who hung in grief,
And withered in despair — as some pale leaf
Looks from below upon its former bough,
Where all night long it clung, but clings not now.

II.

Here are no green hillsides, no path to follow,
 No flock of sheep that out of some deep hollow
 Come bleating through the dew ; no river bright
 That girds a mountain with far-flashing light.
 But the great city with its mortal stir,
 And dull, continuous thunder ; — yet the air
 Is filled with glamour of the misty morn,
 And noises sweet, matutinal, are borne
 Comminglingly from far ; young light doth rest
 Yellow and winter-warm on grass and tree ;
 And the wide Square is still at this hour free
 Of all its loiterers ; soft is the sky,
 Gentle the air ! — Women and men pass by,
 Hasting to their day labor. — Lo, the grass
 Is quiet to the eye and ever new,
 And sparkles like a meadow deep in dew.

III.

Green countenance of earth, forever fair !
 Thou lovely smile of the maternal earth,
 When lying in the soft embrace of air
 She feeleth the young Spring abound in her,
 And laugheth in her bliss, and looketh forth
 Amongst the clouds ! — Bright crowner of the
 height,
 And dweller by the sea, strong Grass, where'er
 Thou comest, earth is sweet, as she is here,
 Made so by thee. Thou veil of happy light !
 Soft, sweet interposition 'twixt the dead
 And those who call themselves the quick ! — oh,
 might

The weary living, sick of life, be laid
Beneath thy dewiness, thy mist of green,
So sparkling and so pure and so serene !
Then might'st thou the lost good of Life restore ;
For never touch of the Beloved could be
More gentle, more assuaging, softer more,
Or fraught with deeper bliss, than thine to me.
To all thou bringest Peace, but to such eyes
As weary are, thy touch is paradise ;
And to such hearts as restlessly, forever
Seek after Peace — in vain, and find her never ! —
Nor yet from that perturbèd seeking cease,
Thou greenest light, thou art their whole of Peace.

LOSS.

I.

I WANDERED through the orchard and the wood,
And gathered flowers and blossoms, frail and fair,
Too-soon departing children of an hour
When April marries with a May-time mood.
Anemones that tremble in still air ;
And violets that Evening loves to brood
Dewily over ; hyacinths as fair
As heaven is ; — and those pale flowers the rude
And surly winds will never leave for May ;
With many another brightness, dear to me,
And dwelled upon, because like this bright day,
Like all that 's born of earth, and most may be
Stainless and pure, yet quickly fade away,
They feed one all-engrossing memory.

II.

I dreamed I came to my old nurse again,
And fell upon her neck, and wept my fill ;
For I had wandered far, bearing a pain
Which not all earth-wide wanderings may still :
The weight of absence that 's endured in vain ;
“ Dear nurse,” I cried, and, sobbing, bowed my head,
“ She will not ever, ever come again ! ”
“ My bairn, what gars ye greet sae ! Wha is dead ?
Ye 're in a waefu' dream ; ” — with that she led

Me to the very chamber that I feared ;
 But at the instant as the door we neared,
 My heart within me gave a cry, sleep fled ,
 And I awaked, and wept — whatever sears
 And wastes a life away; for, oh, they were not
 tears !

III.

I would that I could do such things for you
 As women gently use to those they love ;
 I would my longing spirit like a dew
 Could fall upon you and your cares remove.
 Martha and Mary thus their Lord did woo ;
 Nor should my cares be such thou couldst reprove ;
 But, like a sleep, thy weariness pursue
 And drop in benediction from above.
 Alas ! the dove of my solicitude
 Faints from her flight and must return to me ;
 This earth to her a weary solitude,
 A waste of waters without hope of thee.
 But dawn must rise on darkness ; — to the flood
 Of Time, how deep soe'er, an end shall be.

IV.

I heard at dewy morn two upland plover
 Grieving the air, a tremulous, wild crying ;
 And watched them as all eagerly they hover
 With quivering wings, and each to each replying.
 It was their nest was robbed, and they were flying
 Hither and thither sadly, to recover
 What was forever lost ; — and with them vying
 How oft my thoughts, as tender as a lover,
 Have wandered round that lonely house and place ;

And wild with grief have they not wasted there
The day and night in looking for one face,
And found it not ! — while I sat weary here,
And dared not tell them that their search must be
Into the shadow of Eternity.

V.

I had a friend, but she is gone from me ;
I had a heart, but find it changèd now ;
I had sweet thoughts, they could not sweeter be,
But looking on them since, they are not so.
A home was mine where I my heart could lay ;
It smiled upon me like a mother's face ;
But men have come and chased that smile away,
And were I there I should not know the place.
So sweetest shadows change. — Yet there 's a thing
Fairer than shadows are ; and as the Spring
To this cold world comes sweetly, so to me
The love which constant is unto my friend ;
It is a May of heart, and heavenly,
And blossoms into heaven without end.

VI.

As nigh a little group of flowers I knelt,
That closely grew and clustered all so thickly,
They shed a single shadow down, I felt
A change in them, I saw them alter quickly :
They lost their hue, and from them fled their
shadow !
And yet, 't was but the sun behind a cloud,
That wrought such sadness over all the meadow ;
And soon again he would his face unshroud.

— The hue and odor from my thoughts is gone
Since thou art vanished, and they wither now,
And want their fragrant life, and are all wan,
And wish with thee they might transplanted blow.
But if Death be such cloud, — no more ! — oh,
 then,
Let them blow here, hereafter blow again.

THE HIDDEN RIVER.

SOMETIMES in a great wind a lull occurs,
And in the lull the voice of the dark firs,
And of the other trees whose limbs are bare,
Is scarcely heard; yet, listen, and the air
Fills with a distant sound, distant and dull
And hoarse, and as the night grows yet more still,
It gathers volume:— from behind the hill,
A voice, as if deep Nature and the Night
Conspired in murmurs 'gainst the kingly light.

Fed with the thaw and gush of mountain snow,
Behind yon hill a hundred rivers flow
In one; swollen those waters; swift their flight;
And their deep roll it is, as through the night
They take their mighty course. I know not how,
But as those moon-lit, snow-fed currents flow
Into one power, it seems no more to be
A sound of rivers that confusedly
Murmur from many mouths, and by their verge
And bank, pine-shadowed, sweep with tranquil
surge.

— Mournful, the murmur of the unseen wave
Is like a spirit, risen from the grave,
And crying to the heart: How fleet thy years
The past how deeply lost! Beyond all tears

Buried in time, whose waves bear thee away
In their swift motion ; and thou bid'st them stay
In vain ! darkly they rush ! — fleet, fleet ! — in
vain !

Their errand is to the eternal main,
Of which thou art a breath.

Not always thus

The voice of gathered, multitudinous,
Far-rushing waters ! Rather like delight
And mystery in the soft, summer night ;
The touch of music that is now no more ; —
Like words soft-uttered from that other shore,
While we on this stand listening silently ;
Dark shadow flows between ; no form may be
Discerned ; and all is still. “ Where art thou
now ? ”

We cry, “ Is Death eternal ? Where art thou ? ”

And from that unseen shore, a spirit saith,
“ Be not beguiled ! behold, there is no death :
For the dead live and are.”

Far, far away,

The river rolls its waters to the day,
And to the ocean. From the dawn a breeze
Floats down, and mingles with the leafless trees,
Motion and sound ; and the same spirit stirs
And murmurs in the darkness of the firs.

THE MOMENT.

'Tis autumn now ; — the wood upon the hill
Is a rich yellow in the soft blue sky ;
The corn-fields glisten, the warm air is still ;
And the few clouds are feathery and high.
Far off a little breeze comes lingeringly
Along the woods-edge and spills lightly down
Leaf after leaf : they fall innumera-
bly ;
And like some golden and ripe fruit they lie
On the green grass, and fill the furrow brown.
How silent 't is ! — 'T is the serenest air,
The calmest day ! — The current of the year
Flows scarcely now ; Nature herself bereaves
Gently of life ; from under fallen leaves
Peers the young grass. —

And my deep heart within,
Like a calm lake reflects the golden scene
Distinct in all its glory, e'en to where
The distant hills loom up in the warm air,
Melting in silvery haze.

How sweet, how good
It is to be reborn into this mood
Of natural ending : to be satisfied
With the world's age, and ebb of its great tide.

Too often do we fall from such content ;
 Estranged from our own nature, wryed and bent,
 As saplings in the forest by the snow,
 Heavily fallen, and which never grow
 Erect again ; — Life falls on us e'en so !
 And wrenched at heart too rudely, we become
 Like those whose spirits, feeding on the gloom
 And bitterness of things, see naught to please
 Where others find a blessedness or ease ;
 Whom nothing satisfies : nor love, nor mirth ;
 Not clouds, and not the sun's bright looking forth ;
 Not Life ! — forever sliding into change ;
 Not death ! — for death's unnatural and strange.
 Not with the stillness, and not with the stream
 Are such content : — they feed upon a Dream,
 And waking from it hunger ceaselessly ;
 Their heaven a desire, eternity
 Of vain desire !

So may it never be
 Unto my soul and blood ! — The present hour,
 The winds that blow, the thoughts that rise, the
 flower
 That blossoms, Love now warm and good,
 This hour of the world's time, and nature's mood,
 These be my strength, my stay !

Ah, blue and fair
 Is yonder heaven, mild and sweet the air.
 And tenderly the spirit dies away
 In life from earth, in light from the blue day.
 Nor was she holier that other earth,

Our mother, bringing all things to their birth,
Than this sweet failing hour, the calm, the rest,
And earth retaking all things to her breast.

For holy though the influx, the green leaf!
The full tide! yet, holy the great relief!
The vast security, blissful and strange,
The mighty throe, the universal change;
Holy the swift departure! —

Even as now

The year departs, so Man, so all things flow
Into the gulf of change, and calmly cease
Upon the bosom of eternal Peace.

FROM A CITY WINDOW.

I HEAR the feet
Below
In the dark street ;
They hurry and shuffle by,
And go, on errands bitter or sweet,
Whither I cannot know.

A bird troubles the night
From the green plane—
And in my breast again
Vague memories of delight
Arise from the spirit's night,
And pass into it again.

And the hurrying, restless feet
Below,
On errands I cannot know,
Like a great tide ebb and flow.

BENEDICTION.

SLEEP, darling, sleep !
Some eyes in slumber weep ;
I pray, not thine !
Thy slumbers be more deep
Than mine !

Smile, then, thrice dear !
For I shall have no fear,
If thy sleep smile :
Heaven then to earth draws near
Awhile.

Slumber and rest !
If Love can bless, oh blessed
Thy slumbers be !
And lead thee, dear, at last,
To me.

AT CHILD'S PLAY IN THE WOODS.

WE sought a forest, 'neath whose pleasant shade,
We who are older, and grown up, and wiser
Than any mortal ever was ! — we played
That we were children playing ; — so much nicer
Than now we are ! You were an Indian maid,
My daughter, whom I loved — in moderation !
And you were gay, but I was dark and dread,
And wrapt in fur and sombre meditation.
You built a fire of twigs ; — how grave I looked,
Smoking a green bough ! — you fetched dew, for
water,
And smiled at me, so sweetly ! — while I smoked ;
And when you smiled, I smiled and said : “ My
daughter,
Your sweet face is most dear to me,” — and then,
You blew your fire, I puffed my pipe again.

AN APRIL FLOWER.

How pale the shadows of the leafless trees !
 A branched, pale, blue light on the deep snow,
 That wavers gently, as the winter breeze
 Sways the light boughs above it to and fro.

'Tis true, the buds are yet unswelled with Spring,
 In whose fresh shadows, soon, the birds will sing ;
 Those birds, too true, are flown long time away ;
 And the cold woods and meadows are all gray.
 There seems in truth, no hope ; — the brooks run by
 And glitter coldly to a cold, blue sky.

Yet I assure myself, with softest words,
 The forests will unfold their green ; the birds
 Will from the South return : that these things,
 though
 They seem to be a legend, are not so !
 And thus I wait, patiently as I can,
 A winter-weary, spring-desiring man,
 Breathing expectancy. —

Hard lot ! — but, oh,

How soon this age and heaviness of snow
 Will dance like Youth itself upon the hills,
 Flashing and falling down the noisy rills,
 When from the sun's warm bosom the young Spring
 Steps smilingly, and shakes her glittering
 And wreathèd locks, that myriad leaves may dress
 With modest green her warm, bright nakedness !

Far harder lot it is to wait till Love
Return from whence she's gone; — to know the
dove

Will be here, ere she may — the swallows even!
It was but yesterday when full of heaven,
— Of thoughts of love, I mean, — I found a place
Where was a new-born flower; I bent my face
Down to it, and I swear to you, the thing
Had a warm breath, as 't were a tiny Spring;
And when I lay beside it on the grass,
And kissed where was its breath, it came to pass
I seemed to be beside her, far removèd!
And kissed with closèd eyes my one-belovèd!

DESIRE.

Now the Spring, like a green flood,
Flows again o'er field and wood,
O'er plain and forest, and the sea,
Wilt thou not, then, joyously,
My belovèd, come to me?

The wild swan seeks her watery nest;
The happy clouds blow from the west;
The sweet rain falls, and slumbrously
Earth lies in calm of cloud and sea,
And wilt thou, too, not come to me,
To rest and slumber joyously!

LIKENESSES.

I LOVE you, dear, and since you ask,
And put me to the happy task
Of searching out similitudes, to say
Like this or that, — as if it were a “play,”
That children played, — why, let’s be children, too,
Playing at this : — And so I’ll say to you,
I love you like the day, for day is bright,
And heaven is in the day, and ’t is all light,
And in the light we live! — “Oh, but,” you cry,
“My likenesses must be less large, less high!
The game’s too loose if I throw down a day,
Or night, and bid that count!” Why, then, I’ll
say,

Like the fresh brooks that in the forest flow,
Or vernal breezes that above them blow ;
Or like perchance the quick, light-leaping fawn,
Or the young flowers o’er which her feet have gone ;
Or like — of all things, like the early Spring,
When she puts laughter into everything,
And to glad hearts the great world seems to be
Shook with a kind of leafy gayety.
For, truth! I love you like all things that are
Of the world’s spirit born, in earth or air
Whatever’s lovely, fleetest cloud, or foam,
Or flower, or spring of flowers, or thought of home,

Or welcome home, or laughter, or delight,
 Or dawn, or liberty, or day, or night!
 Like sleep long absent! like — oh, like the hand
 Of friendship after calumny!

Command

You my thoughts further? — they shall find
 New likenesses as easy as the wind
 A space for its wide marches, for I love
 Thee and this world! But, see! — as children sail
 The tiniest shells upon some river, fill
 Their fancied sails with breath, and all the while
 Speak of their “ventures,” and without a smile
 Direct this barque to Cadiz, and that one
 To some rich Indian port, — so have we done
 With this most foolish game!

And even as children run
 Beside their current, and are caught and whirled
 Down the swift stream, that Spirit of the World,
 Love, with whom now I fondly thought to play
 In words, has caught and whirled my heart away
 To dangerous depths! — For there’s no thought
 may give

The sense of how much in our love we live,
 How much I live in thine, or with what soul
 I cherish thee!

“ Ah, but I must control
 My love, and play the game out!”

Know, then, I

Love you as men may love a victory
 Which they have nobly won; of which they’re gay,
 And proud most happily! — and, in such mood and
 way,

Like glory and like music and like war
 I love you, — oh, like all of these, and more
 Than life I love thee, and with such a fire
 As breathes the south-wind when she brings desire
 To all the world!

Into what foolishness
 Have you betrayed my great love, to express
 Itself in such poor likenesses!

The springs
 Of all my joy well up in thee;
 And all my journeyings
 Are to or from thee; and the thoughts I have
 Forever circle round about thy love,
 As bees in Spring about my lindens do,
 When all day long they murmur.

And yet you,
 I feel, think now my game is poorly played.
 Similitudes are faint, nay more, they 're dead;
 And our slight play at these has such a base
 Of earnest as shall make me rather say
 These likenesses — nothing so poor as they! —
 Are but themselves as straws or feathers, cast
 Lightly upon a wind: how strong the blast,
 How mighty, and in what direction blown,
 Their lightness tells you.

On my deep Love thrown,
 How speedingly and swift they 're fled and gone!
 Upon that blessed stream they flee from me
 Fast, fast! and hasten, hasten, dear, to thee!

THE OLD TOWN BY THE SEA.

THERE is an old town by the sea,
That lies alone and quietly.
Behind, the sand-dunes bleak and gray
Stretch to the low hills away ;
Before, the ripple laps and calls,
Running along the weedy walls ;
Like crescents pale, on either side,
The silver sands receive the tide ;
And from the winding streets you see
The great, green waters of the sea.

The wind blows coldly from the north,
On winter dawns, when in the gray,
Dim light the fisher-folk set forth,
And in their dories ride away.
All day a golden sunlight sleeps
On the gray town ; and hour by hour
The sea its calm reflection keeps,
All golden as a golden flower.

When coldly sets the sun, the town
Nestles in soft shadow down ;
And flocking in across the main,
The fishermen come home again.

And through the dusk, up to the town,
The bronzed, gray-bearded faces go ;

The lights are lit ; and to and fro
Groups move along the street, and men
And women talk in twilight air ;
And the town is noisy, — while, all fair,
And golden through the evening gray,
Far out, the great and unknown ships
Sail, and sail, and pass away.

The lights go out ; the town is still ;
And all night long the ocean's swell
Is soft and full ; and a gray mist
Falls slowly down,
And steals away the silent town
Out of the world ; and naught may tell
That the town lives, — only the swell
Of the waters, the long, quiet swell.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

THE wind roars through the night ;
Gusts of the wind and sudden flaws
Shake the casement ; and hark !
Far from above
Forests contending in air
War, and the vale below,
Swollen in all its streams,
Murmurs, — a voice of floods
Answering the voices of air.

And still the great wind bandies the answers
Back and forth, and with loud, continuous roar
Rushes unseen through the wide darkness.
Still as a thought of quietness and love,
Still as a thought, this little candle burns.
Its constant spire with a rich, yellow light
Fills my chamber, and by its magic light
I read a wondrous story, from a book
Swarthy and dark, — dark, swarthy as a face
Of Syrian shepherd on the desert hills
Feeding his flock at noon ; — and the book wakens
From its dry sleep, and tells me a wondrous story :
How Mary the mother
Came to the inn, — perchance on such a night !
And how the inn was full ; and in a manger
She made her bed, sadly and fearfully ;
And from the windows of the inn the light
Looked insolently out. How none cared for them,
For her the humble, for him a carpenter, —
None, save a little maid who came to them
Bearing them food from the inn, and a shepherd
lad
Who laid the soft and fleecy cloak he wore
Down in the manger ; and how the little group,
With but a single lantern, in the dark stable
Was gathered, where the hay was freshly mown, —
This too I read, — and rustled and smelled sweet.
And how her voice so gentle was, the while
She lay in pain, and the great oxen lowed,
And the sheep huddled in the dark ; and the rain
— Even as now ! — fell softly on the roof,
Innumera- bly plashing, soft and low,

The while the watch-dog barked.
 Then how she bore
 Her little child, sore travailing in the night,
 In darkness travailing while the night was long.
 And how when He was born, and lapped about
 By loving hands, the fragrant breath of the kine
 Filled Mary's sense, and she woke to that cry,
 The gentle plaining of a new-born thing,
 Soft as the murmur of a hidden brook,
 Hidden in grass, and scarcely murmuring.

Then, even as I read,
 One of the herd in the winter-yard below
 Lowed softly in a lull of the storm ; a dog
 Bayed, and was still ; and from afar a cock
 Crew lustily thrice.

And again I sought the volume,
 And would have read, and could not, for a mist
 That rose before me ; for the words of the volume,
 All the printed words, became like clouds,
 Mistily gathered, and they wreathed, and wreath-
 ing,

Rose in the air, and hung ; — then, like a cloud
 Through which the blue looks out, they opened, and
 showed me

The picture of the story, and on that picture
 Rested and fed my gaze : the stall and manger,
 In the dim light ; the lantern in the hand
 Of the lad who held it, painting the great rafters ;
 The mother pale as the last cloud of even,
 And the boy, rosy as the morning light,
 Lying upon her bosom, as a bright star

Hid or half-hidden in a summer cloud ;
His tiny hand
Touching, clasping her breast, and her young eyes
Down-looking.

And all the while,
Outside the sheeted rain,
The driving mists, gusts of the rain, and flaws,
And a mighty, uncontrollable spirit of wind
Rushing through the wide darkness,
With loud, continuous roar.

A TALE.

“The fallen blood of martyrs is in vain,
If ours be not as free to fall again.”

THERE lies a village on a northern hill:
Behind it the Green Mountains rise and fill
The air with their dark forests; but before,
The meadowy hills, like waves without a shore,
In gentle undulations fall away
To the horizon; — they are sweet with hay
For many a mile in summer; but 't was now
Chill March; upon those hills the heavy snow,
Beneath the pine and o'er the river, lay,
All blue and cold under the cold, blue day.

It was the world of Winter, still and white.
The sun upon the snow struck dazzling light
Into the air, till the high mountains shore
His beams as he declined and day was slowly o'er.
As then his intercepted light forsook
The village roofs with their blue, quiet smoke,
It dwelled last on an elm, whose spreading boughs
Hung leaflessly above an old, gray house,
Low-roofed, and lawned about, that on the road,
Perhaps a stone's throw from the village, stood
Looking with all its windows to the east.

It seemed a silent place ; its walls had ceased
Long time to echo noisy laughter, for
Its happy children were gone forth ; — the war,
Calling all men, — the ploughman from his plough,
The shepherd from his flock, and those that sow
From the rolled field, — thus calling without ruth
To noble hearts, bore them from their first youth,
And from that home beneath New England skies,
And from the calm light of their mother's eyes.

She sent them, saying, “ Other women give
Alms to the poor ; I bid my sons to live,
Or die, if need be, for their land.” And they,
As if the war's stern face were bright and gay,
Hopeful as sunrise, or as if, indeed,
The hand of lady waved them to her need
Of light and courteous kind, — so, to that call,
Their country's, gallantly they hastened all ;
Leaving their mother in the home which seemed
To miss its voices ; — and she missed them ;
 dreamed

Hourly of them ; spoke of them hourly ; lived
But in their thought ; but yet not vainly grieved.
“ Weak women chide at loss and absence, then
When 't is such absence makes their babies men.”
She would not ; 't was indeed pleasure to bear
Male children, love them, teach them with such
 care,

Infinity of care ! — but to confer
Manhood upon the world, as seemed to her,
That was the nobler office ; and well worth
The toils of motherhood to send men forth,

And watch them on their way ; and thus at last
To be repaid with honor for the past.
In this first absent time her youngest son,
Still but a boy, was her companion.
For though his eager heart conceived no matter
Softer than cannons, balls, squadron, petard, and
clatter
Of bayonets, cavalry reveille, and all
The rest that makes war seem a musical
And gorgeous game, still was he judged too young
To front the hardships that his brothers flung
Their lives into, and so was chained at home ;
Angrily dreaming of the Rebel drum,
And chiding his youth's backward stay.

This lad

His mother loved above the rest ; — she showed
Justly no favor to him, more than she
To all accorded ; but since in his free
And happy mind, and his quick, eager eyes,
She seemed to see his father in him rise,
Living again, he grew to be more dear ;
More hope she nursed for him, a tenderer fear
Suffered.

Her husband was long dead ; the loss
Of fortune treading on his death, her cross
Was heavy, and its shadow coldly lay
On her best years : — in whose dark, easeless way,
The worst of woman's life, its widowhood,
Loneliness, labor, with long servitude,
— And to a bitter master, poverty, —

Became her lot. But whether sufferingly
Endured, or boldly faced, those painful days
Of man's neglect had rather seemed to raise
Her nature to its height than to depress
Her spirit, or abate, or make that less
In vigor and in pride. Perchance she brought
From such harsh teaching time a bolder thought,
A freer view of life, more love of good
As knowledge of it, and a rectitude
Of stricter aim. Perchance, too, those dark years,
Difficult poverty, and concealèd tears
Of passionate chagrin, sowed in her will
And wish, ambition for her sons; for still
Through all their nurture ran this thought, — the
scope

Of all her actions, and her heaven of hope,
And fruit to come of labor: her sons must be
First of the first; and most ambitiously
Her mother spirit dwelled on their advance.
But the grave beauty of her countenance
Took from the harshness of those years no trace.
It was a gentle and a lovely face.
Some look of conscious power and dignity
There was, but mixed with beauty; for the glow
Of her proud youth and easy motion, too,
With pleasure of a stately courtesy
Now mingled, she retained; seeming to be
In all, a serene presence, to whom time,
Not grief, had brought a full and equal calm.

Cheerless and cold, the long-expected morn
Rose now, and smiled away her youngest born,

And with a proud farewell she bade him go.
 Forth then he fared ; smiling, assured, aglow
 With hope ; his easy spirits all as light
 And eager in their motion as a flight
 Of swallows o'er the home he left.

The strain

Of mighty struggles, marches made in vain,
 Circuit, and countermarch, assault, and strife
 Of bayonet to bayonet, — all the life
 Of tent and field he knew : from that remembered
 hour

When first he gazed against the Rebel power,
 Drawn in the mists that o'er the fatal steep
 Of Fredericksburg hung softly ; and saw leap
 For the first time the cannon's flash, and then
 Heard the faint cheer afar ; — and with his men
 Marched through the cold and sweeping mist, all
 gay,

With mantling cheek and throbbing heart, that gray
 And slaughterous morn, wintry and white and chill,
 Climbing in vain the thrice-embattled hill.

His was a fearless nature, light and free.
 He lacked no ardor, and in buoyancy
 Of hope he flung himself into grim fight,
 As if it were relief to him, delight
 That gave his senses ease ; — and gallantly he
 fought !

Nor ever was by dangerous chance more sought
 Than himself seeking that ; — so rose in rank : the
 game

Of war was dear : he looked to honor, fame,
And power at last. But the campaign at end,
And Winter fall'n, his rank was not his friend ;
Nor yet the life of camps, which wore away
His resolution ; and thus day by day
The duties of his office were ill done ;
And this or that put off, to be begun
Another, more propitious time : — his men
Suffered in his neglect ; it was in vain
He chid himself ; till in the next year's course
It chanced, through his own negligence, his force
Was, one day, unprepared ; and as the smoke
And flame and fury of the fight awoke, —
Involved, half-clad, surprised, — they feebly broke,
And fled : — the dusk of dawn covered their flight.
The angry day scarce reddened into night
Ere he received stern reprimand : — he felt
His rosy expectations pale and melt,
Like evening clouds in twilight, fast away.
Night counseled him but ill ; the following day,
He rode at danger rashly, eager to win
Opinion lost ; but, by himself, hemmed in,
And overpowered, though fighting still with all
Of courage, he was captured ; and, the fall
Of fortune's dice being such, lay in the drouth
Of liberty, sealed up in the warm South,
A captive, wounded : — unknown where ; no word
Came from him, till by chance his brothers heard
From escaped prisoners that he lived, though pent
With thousands, suffering every human want,
But no more heard, and so were free to take
The easy way of hope, for hope's sweet sake.

It was of springs that fourth and fatal last :
 Rebellion like a cloud her shadow cast
 On the cold North, and frowned still on advance ;
 And like a thunderous cloud her countenance
 Grew dark and darker, on the horizon far
 Seen gathering slow her majesties of war.
 Courage with Youth was met, and all in vain
 Hope with despair was mingled, to sustain
 Her falling cause ; the framework of whose power
 Trembled, as deep in time matured her final hour.
 And though, in pride, she yet undauntedly
 Beheld that force, her fall which was to be,
 In wintry, still beleaguerment, all wide,
 Hemming her angers now on every side,
 Yet was her last hour near.

The vernal air

Is soft in far Virginia, the day fair
 In early March, and 'neath such fair, soft day,
 That army of so long endurance lay,
 And waited till the southern breezes blew
 The flowers about the hills. For, then, they knew
 The husbandman would turn the glebe again,
 And the rich labor of the year begin,
 Timely and sweet to those in peace at home ;
 And to their arms labor of war would come,
 Ploughing in blood, for peace : — such hope they
 had
 — High hopes, that made a thousand bosoms
 glad! —

That he who held the plough in his strong hand
 Would drive a furrow through th' unwilling soil,

Sharing to right and left whatever band
Opposed, and make an ending of their toil.
And, looking from their cordon and vast line
Of their redoubts, they saw the March sun shine
On bayonet and banner, as he rose
On fortified Petersburg ; and, at day's close,
They heard the drum's long, distant roll, the call
Of the proud bugle wildly float and fall,
And rise again, all clear, where to and fro
They half might see the Rebel pickets go.
So front to front the opposèd armies lay.

Now to the Northern camp there chanced one day
To come a train of prisoners, set free
After long sojourn in captivity,
And in exchange brought North ; — a rumor blew
Before them to those brothers, — one which drew
Their hearts after it, for they heard that he,
Their youngest fellow, was released and free,
And might be now with these : — they seemed to see
At once their brother's face ! and hasting out,
With anxious eyes they peered into that rout
Of ragged, weak, and miserable men :
But among these for one pale face in vain
They sought ; — slow vanished 'neath dark firs the
train,
Straggling away. — They watched the last pass by,
The suffering last, beneath the low, gray sky.

After that day their eyes would often dim
When they looked down, for then they thought of
him,

And that he lay in earth ; — since, now, indeed,
So long his prison-time, they durst not feed
Their hopes of his release. His mother lived
Still in such thought ; saw him alive, conceived
No picture of his death ; — but they looked not
To see his face or learn his burial spot.

Yet even as hope failed in them, the lad
Himself was free. — He, with three others, had
Escaped, and found, after a weary while,
The Federal lines, — had seen their banners smile
Protection on them, as all unconfined
They rippled proudly in the Northern wind.
Once safe within this camp, he gave a name
Not his ; — for to the men who with him came
He was unknown. — The post that he had made
Was a remote one ; thus the plan he laid
Was easy to mature. — At twilight hour
Of a March day, and after a warm shower
Of rain had fallen, and the mists arose
Among the gray woods, — at such misty close
Of day, there chanced a skirmish of videttes, and he,
Being at hand, resolved, was suddenly,
Amid the dusk, the shouts, the mist, the smoke
And the confusion, lost : — when morning broke,
They looked to find him ; when they found him not,
Supposed him prisoner, — deemed it a hard lot
Indeed ! — and so dismissed him from their thought.

He had deserted. — In the woods he lay
During the light, but at each dusk of day
Set out, and northward pressed, until he found

Himself in safety, on such Northern ground
As could not know him ; — thence toward that one
 place,
Where he would be, his home, he turned his face.

In that far home it was decline of day,
Rosy, remote ; the vale in shadow lay ;
It was the calm of eve ; afar the flocks
Went, bleatingly, among the rills and rocks
Of the new-melting fields ; men's voices fell
Pleasantly on the ear, and all seemed safe and well.
'T was even at this hour their mother went
To pray ; and standing in her window, bent
Uncertain thoughts to that firm prayer, that she
Breathed morn and eve for her land's liberty,
And her sons' honor, and their safe return ;
And for his special guard whose death to mourn
Rather she feared ; — for so long had he passed
Into the shadow of captivity,
He seemed in that obscureness sunk and lost,
As seamen are engulfed in some dark sea.

In the still thought that follows prayer, a breeze
From day-warmed meadows passed among the trees,
And bore to her the sound of those far floods,
Like voices, talking in the vernal woods.
The sound and the soft air together brought
Into her heart a full and happy thought :
Of Winter ending, of the Spring begun,
Of the fresh brooks, and the all-fathering sun,
And earth maternal ; of the quick release
Of nature ; of war ended, and firm peace.

The dream was fair, but like a bubble broke,
 Passing away ; and sadly, so, she spoke :
 “ The bluebird soon will brood, the willow bud,
 Hanging in tassel ; this old earth will be
 Pregnant once more ; but I, that have no bud,
 No brood, save absent, and no pregnancy
 Save of sad fear, — a fear that suddenly
 Leaps in my bosom like a living thing !
 Oh, I that am long past my bearing time,
 And that impatiently await my sons,
 Can take no pleasure in such interval,
 And reckon not if it be the Winter now,
 Or Fall, or Spring, or of what time it be,
 Save that it still is absent from my sons !
 — But absent most from him, my best of sons,
 And the least happy, the least fortunate,
 The most distressed, most pitiable one !
 — Thou Rock and Refuge, refuge, shelter him,
 Who, lying on the still-cold earth, must sleep
 Betwixt the stony ground and Thee, uncovered,
 Thy frost his covering ! — oh, softly fall,
 On his great weariness, a gentle rain
 Of rest and slumber ! — and Thy patience bring,
 Then, Lord, to me, who am impatient still,
 That I may wait Thy blessed times and Thee.”

A star rose in the south, and, shining clear,
 Trembled and glittered through earth's atmosphere ;
 And gazing toward that fire she guessed that
 where
 Its noon of glory hung, the risen star
 Looked on her son, imprisoned, hid away

Among the Southern hills ; — and, perhaps, there
the day
Sets with a softer light : —

“ Whence April comes,
Thither do my thoughts go, and there they stay ;
And my eyes follow them, for all the day
They seek that low horizon of the south ;
And every bird that from the south doth come,
And every little breeze that blows from thence,
Should be a messenger, to bear me news
Of whom I long to hear, and bears me none.”

Leaning upon the broad and open sill,
And gazing t'ward the light of the hid sun,
As thus she breathed her longings, twilight fell.
The gathering darkness and the quiet hour
Had hushed day-noises, and their work was done
Who labored in the day ; the laborer
Was gone unto his home ; the fields were still,
And empty ; all was quietness, until
A step upon the snow outside was heard,
A coming step ; and presently a word
In question from the lawn below ; — a man
Stood darkly there, and motioned silence ; then
Entered the house ; and who or what was he,
This shadow, motioning silence ? — what might be
His errand ? As she wondered, thus, her door
Opened and shut behind this figure, more
Than whose dark outline she saw not ; — nor could
She guess it was her dearest son who stood
Before her.

Of broken beauty, fallen light. She read
The troublous writing of his countenance
Clearly ; but what its meaning ? what the sense
Of that confusion ?

Questioning him, he
Told her of his escape, and northward way ;
The stubborn hardship, hunger ; sleep by day,
And weary stumblings through the fearful night,
Until the goal was reached, and the releasing light
Of day was his : — then, suddenly, as though
'T were an expected part of this : To know
Further she must not seek ; — let him be not denied
In such request ; — the world was safe and wide
For others, not for him ! — a hiding-place
Was what he sought, a refuge for a space
Of days, with secrecy, — till time should show
A fairer face for him ; — 't was wisdom so to do !
— As for his paleness and the rest, she knew
War was a suffering game.

His secrecy,
His haggard looks, and seeming scarce to be
Himself, filled her with dread. — She hastily
Demanded to know all : Why fear the light
Of open words ? Was knowledge not her right ?
And what had he to hide away ? or why
Fear her ? what danger ? and what secrecy ?
Secrecy ! — Let him speak !

So the lad told her then
His secret : — he had deserted ; ay, 't was done !

And 't was well done ; — nothing be said ! A crime
 It was ? So let it be ! Chance of the time
 Had made it so, no more ! His duty was to go
 Back to his brothers, to the army ? So
 He would not do ! None knew him free, or that
 He was not buried ; — he had for his part
 Determined he would not again be one
 To suffer as the rest did : he was done
 With service, though death chanced from it.

She heard,

As one hears through a dream a waking word,
 All that he said ; — and so this boy, this man,
 This voice, this shadow, this pale face, so wan
 In the warmth even, was her son ! — 'T was he
 Whom she had nursed, — brought up to treachery !
 — She heard him now asking her to forgive,
 And slowly she began again to live,
 And to come back to life. — A gentleman
 And do this thing ! — Had he no honor, then ?
 Back to her heart the blood began to pour,
 And it beat quick and high, as he replied
 That he was done with honor, with false pride ;
 A crust of bread was what he asked her for,
 A roof to sleep under ! — and asked no more !
 She bade him then to tell her all ; — that she
 Might tread the path he had ; that she might see
 As with his eyes : holding herself in check,
 She spoke so, for her thoughts began to break
 Stormily in her ; but the lad, as one
 Who's weary of his life beneath the sun,
 Answered, “ I've told you all. — What shall I say

More than I have?" — And so 't was rubbed away,
 His love of country, like a surface gloss,
 By touch of opposition; — and it was
 Thus with ambition, honor, duty! all
 The worth of life had he let die, let fall;
 Where had he buried these? — for where they lay
 Himself was buried, and her heart would stay.
 The words leaped from him, even as if his heart
 Had been plucked by her words in its most wounded
 part.

“Ambition, duty, my desire of honor,
 Lie where my health does; and my hopes, I left them
 In that bright, sunny hell, that prison-pen,
 That field of desperate patience, bloody spot!
 Where my friends languish now, where my thoughts
 are,
 Of which, whether I will or no, I think,
 By day, by night, and being free of it,
 Horrible dreams imprison me again,
 And free, — I am not free!”

“I rather would
 That you were in that prisoning place again
 Than free, having deserted!”

Hearing her
 Labor in breath, and in the lighter air,
 Seeing her face of horror, as she spoke,
 He answered gently, with a gentler look:
 “Say what you will, mother, of my desertion;
 If it be crime or not, yet this thing's sure:

It hard to be as brave as other men.
For to make light of death,
To run the chance of death, to laugh at it,
When the blood's hot is easy ;
Courage is common, and the worst men fight
As women love : it is their native thing."

"If you've embraced the dangers of your duty,
And met them, rather than were met by them ;
If you've so borne yourself against your foe,
If you have fought
As women love, — which is most passionately !
Proudly ! without recall ! — why, then, my boy,
You cannot have deserted, as you say."

The lad smiled bitterly, threw out his hand,
And fluttered it all lightly, even as if
He stood upon some sea-opposing cliff,
Looking below, and saw upon the sand
And beach of ocean a great army flow
With music by ; and with his hand would show
How gorgeously and wide they swept the plain
below.

"Ah, cannons' thunder, pennons, and bright lances
And bayonets that catch the morning on them,
And look like the sun's children, this is war
To women, — bugle and drum, the naked sword !
And, o'er the sweat and darkness of their toil
Who labor in these bloody fields of war,
Honor, forever rising like a sun,
Gilding the best " —

His voice broke sharply, as
 He raised his glance to where, so might it seem,
 This sun of honor rose, and with proud beam
 Gilded those happier !

“ Were war but this,
 And did advancement shine upon desert,
 Not erringly, like heaven’s equal beams,
 That blind and seeing eyes receive alike,
 Then war might be as you imagine it,
 — And then my tale had had a different ending !

“ No, mother, war is dull ; war ’t is to wait,
 And still to wait, impatiently to wait,
 And to be kept
 Forever to the post of duty tied,
 Locked in the prison of a dull routine,
 And married to delay, to long delay !
 War is a stillness, a dull stream of quiet,
 A stagnant hell ; and when the heart is hot,
 And full of motion and fire, then — then to have
 A thousand thousand little routine acts,
 A hundred thousand punctual things to do,
 Impudent, teasing, little flies of things,
 To brush away by doing ; and to be wounded
 In some close, sudden skirmish of the night,
 Where no reprisal’s possible, — that’s war !
 And war it is to be a prisoner
 For eight, long, savage months as I, — that, too,
 Was war ; and I was sick in prison, — that,
 That, too, was war ; and all my sufferings,
 Famine, disaster, insult, wounds, disease,
 And that heartsickness that defers its hope

Even beyond the grave, — all these were war !
 And war is glorious — or so you say ;
 Glory almost a God — or 't is to you ! ”

“ If what you say is so, and these things are
 The very nature, the true fact of war
 And face of duty, always thus, — why, then,
 A woman's life is made up of such things ;
 Is even such a struggle, such a war ;
 As full of petty hardship ; and not less
 It is the stream of a perpetual quiet ;
 And with a thousand punctual things to do,
 Impudent, teasing, petty flies of things !
 — And when its crown of motherhood is come,
 It is a kind of patient suffering ;
 Unhonored, unpreferred ; — inglorious,
 Save for the glory that our sons reflect
 By their bright deeds ! — and since we too are
 soldiers,
 Our life is often an imprisonment ;
 The prison, idleness ; — and when 't is busy,
 It is with babyhood, a little thing,
 Even as you were ! — and for hope deferred, —
 Heaven knows, I hoped ! — you have deferred my
 hope,
 Oh, even beyond the grave !

“ Say, you have not,
 Or will not ; that you lied ! — say — what you will !
 Rather than what you have !
 Why are you silent ? Speak to me and tell me,
 You have some other reason, cogent more

Than those you give me, which persuaded you
 To this dishonor? — What, no reason? — none?
 Let me not think you've none! Oh, you have
 made me

The mother of more shame than I will bear!
 Where was your pride? or pride or patience out,
 Where was your love? — for you owe love to me!
 If that held not, the love I had to you,
 Which was the very pressure of my heart,
 Its natural motion. Oh, could that great love,
 That strength of all my heart, not buoy you up?
 Not hold you to yourself? not bind you round?
 So that you could not err, wildly, as now,
 Tossed by a wind, rent from your honor, blown
 Hither and thither by a fickle wind,
 And made a wreck of? — Oh, indeed I think
 My love was little to you, yours to me
 Nothing, or else such loves had held you firm!"

He answered, gently: — "As for love, and love,
 My love to you has no more suffered change
 Than yours to me. — When, often, on the ground
 I lay, and looked upon the stars of heaven,
 And thought that they were high, — but yet more
 high,
 More out of my low reach, more distant far,
 Preferment, like a very planet, shone,
 Near to my hope, but very far from me!
 A golden glory that I could not pluck,
 Though I should reach forever, — then, why, then
 Almost I could have wept to be with you;
 Cried like a little child, because the fruit

Of all my hopes and fears was hung too high ;
And wished to be with you for comfort's sake.
Nor only then have wanted you, but oft
Upon my prison-bed, — the hot, bare sand !
Sick, I have counted o'er my thoughts of you,
Wanting yourself, and wished that I might see you,
Might look upon your face that was the sun
Of all my hopes ! ”

“ That sun is clouded from you,
And your dishonor is the cloud through which
It cannot pierce to you ! — You speak, my son,
Of love, and constancy in filial love.
I do not know if you are constant in it,
Or constant to yourself in anything ;
But to desert, with whatsoever cause,
Or with whatever color of excuse,
Is to desert your country, and yourself
And manhood, and your honor, and your race,
And my opinion and my love of you.
I do not know how you have dared so far !
Or thought that I could favor you so much
As to forget my country's other sons !
Seek not your help from me ! — May your salvation
Drop from some other hand !
For not so much of water or of bread
Will I give to you as a sparrow might
Feed to her little young, — her innocent young !
Ah, happy mother, she ! — and Heaven, hearing,
If I were brave indeed, as I am not,
And did I cling to justice, as I do not,
I would not shelter you, — not look on you !

But since the God that gives us to be just
 Is merciful, I will be that soft thing ;
 Though I grieve Valor by it, I will say
 To none that you are here — to none ! — oh, may
 None ask me if you are ! — Merciful Heaven !
 Your father ! — should I die, and meet your father,
 As I have hoped to do, ay, face to face,
 What shall I say to him ? — Alas ! your crime
 Has made me fear my death, which I desired ! ”

“ The Heaven that you hope for may forgive you ;
 Pray, mother, that it do ! for I will not.
 Farewell ! — A happy meeting with my father !
 And tell him of your mercy to his son.
 As for desire of death, desire of it
 Greater than mine you cannot have : short pain,
 And ending of great weariness ! ”

He turned

And left her.

It was now full night,
 And he was weary, and his head was light
 And giddy with grief and hunger ; his heart spent
 Of all its force : if death was imminent,
 And capture close, so be it ! — He must have
 Sleep first, — without delay ! — sleep, though the
 grave
 Gaped for his hour of waking ! In a shed,
 Stuffed with oat-straw, and like a thing half dead,
 His body threw itself, and slept away
 The night, and morning, till the noon of day.
 Waked from this happy death, he could scarce see
 If it were day or night ; he could scarce hear

A sound, save the straw rustling treacherously ;
Till, as he listened, in suspense, all near
In the warm dark he heard the oxen low,
And regular breathing of the quiet herd,
And guessed that it was past the morning's glow ;
For, far away, there was a little bird
Singing, on some high tree, — he knew not where ;
Save that it sung in the sweet, open air,
At liberty, and for the gentle sake
Of love, as if its little heart would break !
So, in obscurity and pain, he lay,
Suspicious, and in fear, while through the day
His thoughts came to him : — “ Ah, his mother's
heart

Played in such justice but a little part !
How without mercy ! — Could a woman be
So harsh to her own son ? 'T was strange that she
Who held him in especial love should yet
So far her nature and that love forget
As thus to be his death, — for 't was no less ! ”
And so he communed still with his own bitterness :
“ I asked for honor once, and then received
No jot of what I asked ; — I asked for justice :
It was not given me ; — for mercy now,
And am denied even that ! — Say I have erred,
And should have practiced patience, should have
been

The thing I will not, — shall my mother judge me ?
Is man my judge ? He must be then my peer,
Fellow in grief, a sufferer in kind,
And in degree of kind, — which cannot be !
Or may not easily. — Justice is lies !

Alas, our life is bitterness, and we
Resent the gall of it, as if we were
Children of milk and honey !

“ We ourselves
Are to ourselves justice and mercy both ;
And if we thirst for these, — as well we may
In this dry world, this world of bitter thirsts,
This unjust, sad, depriving world, — if we
Thirst here for heaven or for heavenly justice,
Or any good of earth, our soul 's the cup,
The fountain and the source that these flow from ;
Else they flow not at all ! Or if they do,
Are riled, and muddy ; — ay, even as the cup
To which I set my lips is full of grief,
And hath a bitter taste, and bitterly
I drink, perforce, by need, not wishing it.
Oh, I have now drunk up
So much of anguish it hath made me heavy !
And if I have done well, or ill, or what
Or how have done, I know not, and care little.
I am too miserably suffering
To know more of it than a drunkard may
Of the wide heaven, — when, waked from his dull
stupor,
He rubs his eyes, and looks on heaven's vault,
Thick-sown with stars, and wonders at their light,
And knows not what they are ; and looks again,
And wonders at himself ! Even so am I ! I reel
Drunkenly forth, and look on life, and know
I know not what it is ! — know not, nor care.”

So darkly passed his day. He durst not seek
For sustenance till night ; though he was weak
And plagued with hunger.

Since the hour he crept
To his poor rest, his mother had not slept,
Or her heart ceased from torture ; till, about
The sunset hour of calm, she walked without,
Not guessing that her son was lying near.
The heaven, still luminous, cast down its clear,
Blue light ; and as she walked toward the wood,
She noticed on the snow large drops of blood, —
One here, one there, another of them yon ;
They flecked those footprints, that went, waver-
ing, on
To a little shed, there ceasing. — She stood still,
And on them looked : — the bright drops worked
their will
On her ; — for she guessed from whose heart they
fled.

Those precious drops, that seemed so gay and red,
Commanded her : — she heard.

The selfsame night
She bore her son both food and drink ; ere light
Of the next day the same.

There was a small
Square niche, where pigeons nested, in the wall ;
Therein she placed that which she brought to
him ;
But always with veiled face, and in the dim
Light, late or early, came and went,
All stolenly, and quiet, as one bent
On theft. But he well knew whose kindness laid

That meal for him each day ; — which while she did,
It seemed to her impiety, and crime
'Gainst valor she most loved.

But now, as time
Melted to sweeter Spring, over that house
The elm wove deeper umbrage with his boughs ;
The clouds above grew fairer and more fair,
And old men sunned their age in the warm air ;
While children down the village laughed and ran,
And chattered like sweet starlings in the sun.
And touched with softness of the coming May
There fell from heaven above a vernal day ;
One of those days when it is easier
To live, and when more heavenly thoughts occur,
Like births of the sweet sunshine ; as the flowers
Are born, who are first children of those hours.
Even thus the day to her a new hope brought,
A mercy, and a hope : — it was a thought,
Or image of desire ; her heart grew great
With it ; she could not pray, or drink, or eat,
Till wished-for evening came.

Anxiously then
He heard his mother call ; — she called again
That he should answer. Through a knotty flaw
In the unplanned board he looked, and dimly saw
His mother, as she stood there. A breeze blew
Out of the twilight ; the chaff rose and flew,
Whirlingly, round her feet ; swallows o'erhead
Soft-nestling in the night, together, made
Questioning little noises ; the new-milked herd

Low'd softly in the darkness of their yard ;
And water plashed, and fell.

“ 'T is I, my son.

I come to bid you leave this shameful place ;
And this dark life of hiding, and return
To where your brothers wait to welcome you.
They know not your escape ; — return to them,
To war, to service, to my love of you,
And more than all of these, to your high self !
This is my message ; — and I think you hear,
And that you will, refreshed as now you are,
And being yourself again, obey : — if thus,
Delay not, go ; linger not, go at once !
And Heaven and fortune look on you and bless you
With half the fervor that your mother does.”

Ere morning light she stood in the same place,
And called again : — the days of her distress
Were over, for no answer came ; her son
Was gone. He had, as she had wished him, done.
And following soon on that she heard from him,
That he was well ; his life was in the stream
Of new events ; that he had joined his men ;
The army was to march, — 't was war again.

So the first days of April passed, until
One blessed evening, when all was still,
The church-bells rang a sudden sweetness out
Upon the twilight air ; the hills about
Echoed that happiness : — great news had come ;
And in the village men and women, dumb

With joy, or violently weeping, broke
The glad news to each other ; strangers spoke
To strangers, — hands clasped hands ; — for it was
done :

Lee had surrendered, and the mighty sun
Of fierce Rebellion set ; dismay was o'er ;
It was the happy ending of long war ;
Heaven was returned : — to prisoned men, release ;
To the slave, freedom ; and to all men, peace.

Although a voice of triumph seemed to fill
The world, yet calm fell not on her, until
There came a message from her eldest son,
Telling her of his brother : — He had done
His whole of duty, — gallantly, too ; — the end
Was such as she, his mother, must commend :
It was a soldier's death, — who could not yield
His soul with better grace than on the field
Of final victory ; — 't was as he led
The way, with needless valor, that he paid
The last, great price ; — let not his mother weep :
He had a soldier's grave, a soldier's sleep.

She wept not when she heard that he was dead ;
But when she heard that his young spirit fled
Amidst the cannon's roar, and in the glance
Of arms, in gallant and sustained advance
'Gainst well-replenished lines, and that he slept
In honor where he fell, — 't was then she wept.

The day that followed that most bitter eve
Was Easter morning, when men must not grieve.

And as her loss in slumber seemed to weep,
 Her spirit communed with itself in sleep,
 And she beheld the light of dreams ; and knew
 Not where she was. What space was this, or
 who

Those shining ones ? So pure and so serene !
 What was yon city fair ? yon mountain green ?
 These women that were with her ? the dark air ?
 The agony, the open sepulchre ?
 And whence the smell of aloes and of myrrh ?
 Or napkin, lying by itself ? — and bright
 And fair, again, as morn, those men of light ?
 What was it that she sought so eagerly ?
 And horror-stricken feared that it might be
 Stolen away from her and buried ?

Now

Lapt in a lighter sleep she seemed to know
 Herself, and all her grief. And as she lay
 In twilight of such slumber, the new day
 Dawned slowly, and a fair and distant breeze
 Bore to her sleeping heart the happiness
 Of Easter bells ; the jubilant, glad noise
 Seemed to her in her sleep to be an angel's voice,
 Who stood before her, and spake to her there,
 To chase away her darkness, her despair :

“The night is done ; it is the pallid dawn ;
 And resurrected light doth spring again ;
 The darkness like a stone is rolled away,
 And from his Eastern charnel damp with dew,
 Scattering our fears before him, comes the day.

“Awaken thou ! awaken ! and thy sleep
 Be turned to joy ; there is no cause to weep.
 Arise ! the sun hath risen in his might ;
 Arise ! the earth ariseth in delight :
 A glory is gone o’er the Eastern plain,
 Sleep is no more : both sleep and death are vain.
 The Winter is no more, the Spring is blown ;
 It is the song of birds, the Winter’s gone.
 The dove hath come, it is the time of mirth,
 The resurrection of eternal earth.
 There is no weeping more ; soft is the air ;
 No prayer be said : — the universe is prayer !

“Arise ! the world’s salvation and thine own
 Hath risen ; He hath pushed aside the stone ;
 The place is open, and the cerements lie
 Like the white snows under a sunny sky.
 The Sun of Life hath shone on death abhorred,
 And ’t is the Resurrection — ’t is the Lord !”

Mother of the fresh dead, she rose and went
 Unto her eastern window, whence she sent
 Her soul in praise upon the morning air
 To Him from whom, in whom, all mornings are.

And as she cast her thoughts to heaven and looked
 Upon the glory of new day, she brooked
 Vain grief no more ; to her it seemed the dead,
 That on those bitter fields their blood had shed,
 Innumerable rose, and ’neath the day
 Passed, like a mighty wind, that blows away
 The cloud and vapor of the night ; and fair

And sinless morning followed on the air ;
They breathed upon the earth, and it was green,
And on the soul of man, it grew serene ;
They breathed upon the world, and strong and new
A nation rose, and shook the bloody dew,
The shadows from her locks, and looked abroad,
Bathed in the happy mercy of her God.

And as this thought of sacrifice upraised
Her spirit, and calmed, she knelt and duly praised :
“ Lord of our life, Giver of Life and Death,
I, that have lent my dear son unto Thee,
Weep for him not : I have no sorrow more :
My sorrow is with him, he is with Thee.”

CHANGE.

“ First Love, first youth, those tender things
Not had, but e'en themselves were wings ! ”

YE loves that visit me, I know not how
I can go back to where I was a child ;
The forest that I loved is leveled now,
The water that I drank from is defiled :
For men have come, and all wild things are fled ;
Far, far away the eagle and the fawn ;
The stealthy panther from his thickest shade
And the green snake have slipt away and gone.
And those who with me slept beneath the boughs,
And in the forests green and pillared house
Loitered, and loved ; who 'neath the pleasant dew
Of eventide held converse sweet and gay, —
Where are they gone ? — Frailty of life ! they, too,
Are vanished into change and slipt away.

THOUGHTS.

LET me not long be absent from my thoughts,
For they are sweeter than the flowers of May,
And more at peace than in green orchard spots
The voice of doves, soft-heard, from far away.
And fresher are they than the morning looks
When the rich forests yellow to their fall ;

And brighter are they than the leafless brooks,
In Autumn sunshine, and as magical.
But they from me have long divided been :
As woods that in the Winter want their green,
So have I stood, in e'en such barren trance !
'Neath newer suns those woods will green and
glance ;
But my dear thoughts will not return to me,
Till thou return'st, who art their sun and day :
For all my happy thoughts are sprung from thee,
And without thee they wither fast away.

THE AMULET.

INDIFFERENCE ; — at last
I learn to smile away
The sights and sounds of earth,
The night, the day.

Life needs a charm :
Since I am with her yet
I wile away her harm
With this sad amulet.

For it is sad this side the grave
To walk, as one astray,
Who yet doth neither care to have,
Nor to seek out a way.

But I can charm thy worst of things,
O restless Life! — regret,
False hope and hate and fear, —
With this sad amulet.

IN FOREIGN LANDS.

THREE things I lack in absence : first, to be
Where nature is, sleeping beneath the pine.
The second one, to have my friend with me,
To feel him near and know that he is mine.
For it is long since I my friend have seen,
And longer still since those first morning days
When we together lived, since happy when,
My soul and his have trodden diverse ways.
And last strange absence, my own heart is gone
Courting the favor of the world, and I
Must wait her late return, when wearily
She will come back and we again be one.
When thou return'st, my heart, let it be so,
— So sweet! — I shall forget that thou didst go!

TO AN ACTRESS,

ON HER IMPERSONATION OF MRS. ELVSTED, IN IBSEN'S PLAY,
HEDDA GABLER, LONDON, 1891.

THE play is over now, and of your pains
And pleasure in the part, say what remains?
The sense of something done, something well done;
The memory of happy work, begun
And ended happily. No more than this?
Why, can there be a more? Achievement is
The height of happiness, and memory
Of noble things, nobly achieved, should be
A kind of strength and state in which we move,
A flattery which 't is our right to love.
And you who have done much should know that
power,
Which is support and guard in the worst hour;
For our own acts desert us not, but give
Perpetual benedictions, work and live
In us forever, — as these should in you,
These many hours that now seem all so few!

But whatso'er your memory should be
Of much well done, and with that much this free
And noble portrait, what remains for me?

Time is the actor's canvas; — like a dawn
Your gentle hour is set in time, quite gone,

'T would seem! — For you 't is gone; for me, not
so!

I know a person whom I did not know;
I see her still, to me now more than you
A being and a life, — I know of few
Living that so much live! — What, then, was she,
Or who, who hath the right to almost more than be?

Large eyes and yellow hair, a hesitation
And trembling wish to please, a frank elation
At pleasure given; the pathetic smile,
Embarrassed with itself, and those eyes full
Of tears that will not stay where they are bid;
And sorrow patent most where it is hid:
My gentle Thea! — With her childish looks,
Her innocence of life, her uncut books,
— I'm sure they were uncut! excepting those
Grave essays that she cut for Lövborg's use,
And read to him; — Thea, affectionate,
And filled with pity, but too weak for fate,
Too circumscribed in folly, and too slight
To wrestle with her lot; — but loving much, —
This always and this most!

She showed as such,

When, — as he told her, it was over now,
Their work was ruined, that which he had writ
Inspired by her was lost; no shred of it
Remained, — 't was gone! — what of it? let it go!
And they must part, and she to fate must bow,
Be silent, break her heart in to that yoke
Of unaccustomed solitude, — she spoke:

" 'T will seem to me forever now as you
 Had killed a child : was it not my child, too ?
 A little child that drew its breath through me ;
 And now ! — I care not now where I may be !
 I go ; — the way is darkness. Should I stay,
 'T would in the end be the same darkened way.
 Oh, you have broken all my life ! — I see
 Before my eyes the years — a vacancy !
 Yes, you have killed our child ; — Lövborg, I go,
 Because you bid me — I — I loved you so ! "

These were the words she said : — the audience
 heard,
 Just as I write, the sentence, word for word ;
 But 't was not in the book, not in the part,
 But from the purer volume of your art.

In this dark picture, — can I call it less ?
 Where half to folly, half to viciousness
 Incline, composing the sad human day, —
 In this dark atmosphere, this sordid gray,
 Thea alone shed some faint beam of light,
 By which our moral eye might judge the night
 And shadow of the rest ; — true, faint enough !
 But with the grace that comes of human love
 And suffering unmerited. — Adieu,
 Adieu, to Thea and to Hedda too !

And when the next time you would breathe your
 power
 In some imagined form, and for an hour
 Image the same, oh, let it be some soul

Of dignity and worth, or good or ill,
A spirit, — human ! — but a spirit still :
Sinful or erring ! — but a soul that glows
With natural life ! — I tire of these and those,
The fools of virtue and that other clan,
The knowing vicious ; — are these all of man ?

PROLOGUE TO AN AMERICAN PLAY.

PRODUCED BEFORE AN ENGLISH AUDIENCE, LONDON, 1892.

WHEN travelers to their homes return, their kin
Gather about them :— “ Where then did you earn
This cut, that scar ? ” — Then gravely they ’ll begin :

“ It was beneath the line of Capricorn,
Where on a green oasis as I slept,
A savage like a serpent on me crept ;
But chance proved my salvation in the nick
Of the last moment, — chance most wonderful ! ”

Then comes his tale, — something too wonderful !

And on his audience’ faces grows the while,
As the tale grows, a disbelieving smile.
Our traveler notes it — “ Ah, indeed, ’t was so ! ”
And with a never-doubt-me face cries, “ Oh,
You must remember that across the sea,
In foreign lands and far from this dear shore,
Men, women, nay, the very breath of heaven,
Is of another nature. ”

And may I

With some such words unlock for you the way
That leads, I hope, to pleasure in our play.

For in this land, far south, beneath the sun,
 Nature is quick and violent, and man
 Lives in his impulse more than here he can,
 And less reflectingly. — “Love ripens slow,”
 You say, “and anger has its word, the blow
 Comes after ;” — but with them the blow comes first.
 Love rushes to completion, as a flower
 That buds and bursts and blossoms in one hour.
 And man, though now it seem a fireside tale,
 Was there a slave, fed with the crumbs of mercy ;
 Naught lay between the wrath of cruelty
 And its poor object ; and the lightest breath
 Uttered 'gainst slavery was almost death
 To him who breathed it ; — for where men's houses
 Are built upon the avalanche, they live
 In whispers, and a fear lest some loud voice
 Shock their unfounded stillness into ruin.

But all this must seem,
 To you in England, here, a strange, dark dream ;
 A cloud far off, not threatening to your peace,
 Islanded here among your blessed seas.

Yet if you doubt my discourse, and betray
 Your doubt in smiles, I'll smooth those smiles away,
 Telling you that “indeed, across the sea,
 In foreign lands and far from this dear shore,
 Men, women, nay, the very breath of heaven,
 Is of another nature.”

And 'tis even
 This which you now shall see with your own eyes,
 If I may bow, and bid the curtain rise.

LOVE.

I.

A LITTLE rivulet flows down a dell,
A woody hollow where dark violets blow ;
And as it goes it tells a faery tale
To vernal grasses that above it grow.
And once, with parted lips and cheek aglow,
A girlish shadow on its waters fell ;
Its fleeting waters did not cease to flow,
But on the mirror of my mind a spell
Was wrought by Love, and Time forever stayed
In his swift course : the motion of his years
Eddies about that image quietly ;
And like a colored shadow 't is inlaid
In the clear spirit, ageless, with no tears,
No care, and beauteous as a cloud may be.

II.

I LOVED a fountain once, within a wood.
Around it stretched the forest dark and dim,
A pathless and perpetual solitude ;
Its silent waters glittered at the rim
They rippled out of, and went singing downward
Among the giant pines that arched them over,
While I pursued them on and ever onward,
For they forsook me like a fickle lover.
But with the Winter and the frost there fell

A sluggishness upon them, and they slept ;
And with the Spring they would not wake, but dull
And heavy as a dreamer's feet they crept
From stone to stone, and slumbering would run
And green and thicken 'neath the Summer sun.

III.

I SAW it not again till after-years
Had wrought their will on me ; and sought it then,
But with no more of pleasure than inheres
In looking with new eyes on an old scene.
It was quite clear again, and ran as sweetly
About my feet as any stream might run ;
And like a fawn fled through the forest fleetly,
And leaped in silence like a fleeing fawn.
But I went pacing onward through the wood,
A feeble shadow, wandering alone,
And brooding o'er an inward solitude.
I could not hear, or heard untouched its tone
Of greeting, till I vanished like a cloud
Above the darkness of my spirit bowed.

IV.

WHEN, lying in false warmth of sleep, we seem
Leafless no more, but hopeful, a green bough,
And flattered with the frailty of such dream,
We blossom into hope, and sweetly blow ;
What misery 't were, as that light slumber nears
Its bursting into air, while we 're with bliss
Laden as heavily as age with years,
To start, to tremble, to awake from this !
Or, standing where we stood upon a hill,

And looking on the home that once we loved,
To hear an alien voice of laughter fill
Its halls, and echo wildly, unproved !
This — but than these more wounding ! — 't is to be
In this changed world of time again with thee !

V.

YOU bid me show a gladness, to appear
That thing I am not now, nor cannot be.
Once, with the tardy opening of the year,
I sought and found a frail anemone ;
Unsheltered on a bank of moss it grew
And sunned itself, until a bitter dawn
Unkindly kissed its cheek with Winter dew,
And ere the day it withered and was gone.
The April warmth that wooed it from the earth
Had flattered with delight its life away : —
And in my heart like frailty had its birth,
As pining beauty, and as swift decay ;
For love is such a Winter-guilèd flower,
To blow ere time, and wither in an hour.

VI.

MY mood is like a frosty, backward Spring,
That fain would see the snowdrop, and fain hear
The Winter-silent larks' sweet caroling,
And the loud cuckoo usher in the year.
My days still brook the Winter, and the frost
Of so long absence doth depart with pain ;
And warm delights, like early sunshine lost,
Upon my frosty surface fall in vain.
More agèd than this earth I sometimes feel,

And more in prison than a prisoner bound ;
 More withered and more fallen than the pale
 And sodden leaves that lie on last year's ground ;
 And though I seek on every bough in grief,
 I find no token but a fallen leaf.

VII.

AN exile from a mountain's barren top
 Looks in the cloud below : upon this hand
 He sees his safety, — here he can command
 His life ; but under yon dark, other slope,
 There lies his heart, there would he be ! — Through
 rain

His weary glance he throws, and in the gloom
 And motion of thick mist he seeks in vain
 A faint and distant token of his home.
 Clouds move in clouds, and hang dividingly,
 And on his forehead weep a mournful dew ;
 He watcheth, and in still anxiety
 His hopes and fears their rival course pursue,
 Lest what he first have loved be fallen prone,
 And roof and rafter lie with grass o'ergrown.

VIII.

BUT as he makes his eager inquest there,
 The vapors rise, and scatter, and are broken ;
 And from the vale below the breezes bear
 A sound as if a distant word were spoken ;
 The plain of the green earth doth sparkle fair,
 And at his feet he sees his home, — how small !
 How like a picture in the glittering air !
 The grove, the grass, the slender waterfall.

Heaven smiles upon him there ; — his wish is won !
— And I, when I behold thy face, forget
The sea of danger and the Winter sun,
The wasting years and all the clouds that yet
Exile me from my hope, and only see
The paradise I forfeited in thee.

IX.

WHEN from his height the stricken eagle falls,
Beating the air with one vain, mighty wing,
And vexing the wide heaven with his calls,
Until at last the far-sunk forest spring
Upward to meet him in his fall ! — so swift
That body in its circling, sad descent !
Then doth upon the wind a bright rain drift,
Heavy and hot, and stains the innocent
And tender blade of grass ; while, like a bolt,
Helpless and hurtling through the branchèd roof,
He sinks forever in a vain revolt
Against his weakness ; — faint and far aloof
Runs the wild roe ; — and as the thunder blast
The monarch of the winds to earth is cast.

X.

THEN, with one outstretched pinion trailing prone,
Debased beneath the laurel he doth lie,
Silent and still ; returning roe and fawn
Startle when they behold that watchful eye.
He lies in grief : his power is from him gone,
And Nature, healing all things, heals not him.
Vain patience ! — for the splendor of the dawn
Shall gild his flight no more with pallid beam.

And what he there may suffer well I know,
 Who from the heaven of heavens have been cast
 down

To grovel on the earth, — a fatal blow !
 Whence with an upward glance I gaze upon
 The sun and sky, and know that now I must
 Cower on the earth and crawl about the dust.

XI.

I HAVE no heart, now more, but sick to death
 Of this disgustful life am I so grown,
 I hate what I should love, my own sad breath ;
 My heart within me seemeth scarce my own,
 So heavy 't is — oh, heavy as a stone !
 Heavy as sleep ! or as yon pendent bough
 Of the pine, thick-weighted with the Winter's
 snow ;

But that if winds are rudely 'gainst it blown,
 Will shatter, and fall to earth !

Where hope is none,

Patience is there a god : Time that doth bring
 Help to the helpless ; to the broken wing
 Healing ; to all who suffer 'neath the sun,
 At last, howe'er delayed, the great release,
 The final balm, the everlasting peace.

FALSE LOVE.

As leaves in Autumn withered are,
And strew themselves upon the air,
And by the winds are borne afar,
 As if they flattered were
To sail so high, and not to be
Bound fast on any bough or tree :

So were my loves when first I could
Forget how only unto thee
They grew and sweetly flourishèd,
 And less were part of me
Than blossoms of thy gentle mind,
That now are borne on every wind.

They scatter here and wander there,
And waste their freshness far away ;
They fill a cold and icy air,
 And with the Winter play ;
They yellow earth — and yet, and yet
Cannot their barèd bough forget.

PEACE.

WHEN lovers meet again,
Then obscure ways grow plain ;
Then crooked paths are straight
And the rough places smooth ;
Then weariness and weight
Have wings as wide as love.
For the night is as the day ;
Love smiles love's tears away ;
And all hard paths are plain
When lovers meet again.

When lovers kiss again,
The dry bough blossoms then ;
Then rolls away the stone ;
Earth's bitterness is balm ;
Light through the night is blown ;
Peace rocks the world in calm ;
And the ebbing tide is full ;
For two souls are one soul,
And obscure ways grow plain,
When lovers meet again.

DELIGHT.

DEEP in my heart there lay
Delight, asleep all day ;
Sweet, silent thoughts of thee.
But the night that awakeneth
The lily with her breath
Hath awakened those thoughts in me.

The eternal stars now wreathe
Their dance of light beneath
The night, and breathe their balm.
My deep heart is the skies
Whence holy thoughts arise,
Making a holy calm.

Ah, 'neath my quiet soul,
As 'neath heaven's moon at full,
Swell the deep tides of love ;
The unseen currents flow
To magic shores, winds blow,
The waters breathe and move.

Sleep to the night and me !
Divinest thoughts of thee
Throw on my soul from far
The spirit of their light,
As pure stars in the night
Look where still waters are.

Sleep to the night and me !
The stars look on the sea,
And the wave is filled with fire ;
And my soul is filled with thee,
My heart is faint in me,
And my breath is a desire.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT.

THE day, like one beloved, hath gently said
Farewell, and veils with dusk her cheeks' rich glow ;
Her rosy kisses from the clouds are fled,
And golden stars bathe in the lake below.
The waters breathe ; the mists arise and sweep
The world with wonder, and star-lit they move
Even like my thoughts to yon faint shore, where
 sleep
The lily and rose, where sleeps my restful love.
Sleep thou ! I wake : and all the world is well !
From hour to hour the ripple laps the stone
Of stately marble steps beneath the moon,
And her most mighty orb in heaven doth dwell.
The night is wide and warm, and my heart free ;
My eyes light and my breath quick with thoughts
 of thee.

TO A WRITER OF THE DAY,

ON HIS ALLOWING HIMSELF TO DISAPPOINT THE HOPES RAISED
BY HIS EARLIER WORK.

WHERE are you gone, my friend? I had a look,
No brief one, through the pages of your book,
But scarcely found you there; or found you not
As I should wish: — where are you in your thought?
We who have lived together know each other,
Once and for all as brother does a brother;
But the years flow: man with them; and “we fare
To different ports,” you say, “and each must dare
His different course.” Yet are we men, are friends,
Lovers of good, and servers of high ends
Accounted as we serve; — where are you gone,
Therefore, in life and verse? The rosy sun
Of your first morning thought, the dewy hour
Of youth, hath risen and passed into the power
And light of day; — what is that day, then? Will
The height and glory of its noon fulfill
Our liberal expectations?

Reading over

Your verses, (and I read them like a lover,
Prepared to worship without rhyme or reason,)
Yet, reading to adore, and at this season,
Too, when blossoms are abroad, and Poetry
Is in the air and to the mind all free,

And pleasant thoughts are welcomest, — for May
 Has smiled ungenerous and cold things away,
 And sweet ideas come dancing, as the blood
 Within us leaps and laughs for the world's good ;
 — Yet, though it be both May and youth, I found
 Somehow I was not satisfied. The sound
 Was musical, of course : your current flows
 Easily down ; your harshest poem goes
 Unhindered on its course ; but somehow, still,
 I had not touched you, had not got my fill,
 And, to be plain, felt cheated, and was cross.

And now, as I begin to pitch and toss
 The thing about my mind, I think I see
 How matters are with you :

You are not free :

Not free enough. I feel that you respect
 Some certain criticasters, and reject
 Them not with scorn ; who, having told you how
 Your business is with “ words,” have made it now,
 Perhaps, too late : — like others you are caught
 And tangled in their web, their mist of thought.
 And looser thinking, more at second-hand,
 With less of body, more like ropes of sand,
 More incoherent, dead and without hope,
 Has never yet been plausibly made up
 Into the likeness of true thing ! For I
 Have read these fellows, too, and candidly
 I will assure you that a dock, a thistle,
 Has more of nutriment ! — 'T were better whistle
 In sunshine half a day, enjoying it,

Than to benight one's brains with reading what is
writ

By all that barren tribe, who blindly dwell
In desert places hopeless ! and no well
Of life in all whose dry and withered nation,
Save one apt spring, — their fountain of quota-
tion.

For, as you 've heard, great critics are as rare
As those they most indebt, great poets, are.
And though 't would seem a harmless trade to suit
The time's demands to your just needs, and put
A dollar in your pocket, all by clatter
About a good thing, yet 't is no such matter,
Unless what 's said, is so ; — for those, no doubt,
Who have no better thing to be about,
It is a harmless calling ; but it goes
Deeper than that, — how deep no wisdom knows !
For these men deal with living things, with art,
With hope and youth, with energy of heart,
And with high aims, with truth and liberty ;
And there 's the spot they rub : — they take away
Men's freedom ; they create an atmosphere
Jaded and difficult, and far and near
There settles down a dust of pedant kind
Where their words fall, an influence to bind
And lock up every generous power, to do,
As now, in fact, I think they 've done to you.

For have you not perused these wise, and then
Thought of alliteration ; or how " rain "
Should rhyme with this, not that ; or how an " L,"

9

A dextrously placed dissyllable,
Or a rich " mood " of " M's," or what not more,
Contains the secret of " poetic lore ; " —
How poets use their consonants, and all
The rest that makes this life seem flat and dull,
The green world gray, and verse a horrid grief
Even to read, — to write it, past belief ?
Have you not added then, " At least I 'll be
Perfect in ' Form ' and ripe in ' Melody ; '
Whate'er my limbs of thought, the outside dress
Shall be a splendor ; I 'll be covetous
Of ' rich ' and ' perfumed ' words ; when sweet
thoughts fail,
I 'll weave a glittering, a melodious veil
Of phrases that shall seem like thought, but be,
Instead, pure beauty, pure delight " ? — Dear me !
How well I know all that ! And how I hate
The burden of the folly of that state
Of imbecile, blank mind ! — You should not think
In these men's bastard terms ; you should not drink
The cup of their damnation ; much less be
Seduced and drawn away from liberty,
From all good sense cut off, by doctrine such
As will not bear the light : — folly, that touch
Of clearer thinking kills ! Could I but scour
Your mind of such loose shadows ! — You 've the
power,
The imagination, and the heart to do
What these men falsely talk of ; and yet you
Are sterilized by them, enfeebled, made
Into a kind of eunuch, or a shade
Of what 's poetic.

Could but this be brought
 Into your ken, — that the technique is thought.
 Escape from “Style,” the notion men can use
 Words without thoughts ; so wrench and so abuse
 The innocent language to their ends that they
 Will seem to be respectful, honest, gay,
 Grave, or what else ; and all the glorious while
 The authors ’selves sit with the wise and smile :
 “ ’T is but a trick ; ’t is words ; it is a style ! ”

Your technique, then, is thought, just as I say.
 And if you ’ll write a poem, there ’s no way
 But first to think it clearly ; pin your mind
 Upon your thought ; fasten it there, and bind
 The thought into your heart : when your veins burn
 and flow

With love or hate, the thoughts to music go,
 Melt into music, and pour fully out
 In a rich flood ; — but to take thought about
 The “ music ” of your words, ’t is matter quite
 Beyond your conscious power ! For rhymes, they’re
 right

Or wrong according as they hear, not look
 When printed by a printer in a book !
 And their “ correctness ” may be measured best,
 And indeed only, by a certain test, —
 That, namely, for rebellions : which are so
 Until they have succeeded, when they go
 By quite another name. Forget not, too,
 That every English poet known to you,
 That is to say all of them, rhymed just as
 The spirit took them and their pleasure was,

And masters that they were, rhymed "falsely," so
As now no poetaster dares to do !

But I've more serious things to say, and am
But half concluded : whence is come your calm ?
This hothouse stillness ? this so much of ease ?
Eternity of zephyr ? — such fat peace !
This dancing, quick, inconstant, frivolous,
Light mind and thought ? — You polish and caress
A little set of words, plant one rare flower
And tend it every day and every hour
With needless, pretty care ; while that domain,
The full and fertile region of your brain,
Lies fallow, empty, dead ! Is it not so ?
Or wherein do I err ? — I would that you
Would till that sleeping soil, not let it lie.
You think I ask for politics ? — Not I !
I ask for nothing critical ; no scheme,
No theory of the universe ; no dream
Of sensual millenniums ; — you may be
Whatever thing you will, and yet please me,
So that you are yourself. I do not want
A poet to be modern, militant,
And moral ; conscious of himself, and filled
With sense of some grave message ; for what's
willed
Too powerfully is weak, and he may tell
A simple story, so he do it well.

But what I ask of you is that you be
Wholly yourself ; — you give me poetry
As if it were a little dew, which I

Could delicately sip, and satisfy
 My soul's thirst with it; — if you gave me seas
 Of such small talk in verse, they'd not appease
 The lust I have for something large and deep.
 Why, what's a nap when a man's dead with sleep?
 A single pea, served to perfection, 's food,
 But starving men want more: — and I, a flood,
 A storm of happy thoughts. — Poets should be
 At flood, in blossom, bearing, continually!
 Observe I do not ask you to be more
 Than Nature made you; I but bid you pour
 Yourself out with a liberal hand, and I
 Shall find enough in you to satisfy.

So then, at last, let me awake this sleep
 And languor of yourself; — it is too deep;
 And 't is too long!

Oh, I would have you look
 With judgment on your life, and not to brook
 The less in art, as not in truth; — forgive
 Much in you now I can, never that you less live.
 I may put by whatever choice of themes,
 But not this air of being by rich dreams
 Roofed over, and floored under, and walled in.
 As Eastern princes in a palanquin
 Luxuriously ride, by eunuchs round
 Held and supported, lifted from the ground,
 And softly borne, — so you, on the mild shoulders,
 Effeminate, of dreams! — Your spirit moulders;
 The freshness of your soul withers away
 As roses do that cannot find the day.

Oh, free yourself! — take up your life and share
The splendor of this day, the world's great air,
And this new land's delight: this land that we
Adore, this people, this great liberty
Of nations in new birth; — a happy shower
Of golden States, — a many-blossomed flower! —
Now grown a Commonwealth, whose strength and
state

And health are dangerous to all that hate
Freedom; and fatal to all those who'd be
Sunk in the dark of Time's abysmal sea,
Safe anchored in the past — safe dead! — that
none

Might longer make them fear a change beneath the
sun,

To fright them with new good. — But oh, to those
Whose blood within them leaps and laughs and
flows;

To all who proudly hope; to all who fain
With their right hands and with their heart and
brain

Would throne the right, and make the good to
reign;

To all who'd lift man up, and who, heart-free,
Haste toward the light, — this Land and State
should be

Dear as their life! — And to her sons should she
Be born again in love, since with her noblest blood
And her right hand of youth she smote the brood
Of her own loins, nested in servitude,
Shadowing the world's detraction with fair peace.
Dear mother of her sons, whose wealth is these,

Her more than gold, their valor, mercy, truth,
Her mighty age, immortal in their youth,
Dear light of hope, oh, needs she not to be
Forever saved into new liberty?
The fallen blood of martyrs is in vain
If ours be not as free to fall again!
But her salvation is a rigorous task,
Eternally accomplishing: — I ask
You, therefore, as one owing more than most
To her, who is your happiness and boast,
That you cast from you all that will not wake
Men's hearts from sensual sleep: — for her great
sake

Put by the velvet touch, the easy grace,
The fingers dreaming on the lyre, the face
Forgetful, listening to light melodies;
Cease thou thy toying with the hours, and cease
This riot of thy youth, this wantoning
With all the sap and spirit of thy Spring.
Not twice that verdure 's given thee; the Tree
Of Life not twice shall blossom; and to be
Young, 't is to be in heaven, 't is to be
Full of ambition, filled with hot desire,
Pregnant with life, and steeped in such a fire
As sets a world in hope! — Oh, could I say
That which I would, you could not say me nay.
But let your country plead with you; give heed
To her dumb call; sow the eternal seed
Of Truth, and Righteousness, and Love; — though
you
Shall be, as poets should, known to but few,
Yet your reward is great: it is to be

Sown in the hearts of men, to make men free ;
And in your thoughts to be your land's firm stay,
And her salvation in a falling day,
More than dread cannon, than bright thousands
 more :
For thoughts, like angels, wage eternal war.

DAVID.

I WAS a pebble in the valley brook,
Until the shepherd left his fleecy flocks ;

When that Philistine boar from covert broke,
And 'neath the eye of Israel shook his locks.

The waters ran and rippled o'er the sand,
And with a fleeting motion fast they flowed ;

Cold was my dwelling-place until that hand
Chose me to be a witness to his God.

Fair was the youth, and ruddy was his face !
Fair was the youth, his eyes like morning clear ;

And like a star his comely forehead was,
And comely was the darkness of his hair.

Dread was the form that 'gainst the chosen came !
His cuirass glistened, terribly he trod ;

Dreadful his form, his countenance was flame,
And haughty and uplifted was his head.

Dark as a hurrying cloud his host before
Gath ran, behind him as the tempest they ;

And far across the plain their sullen roar
Sounded the hope and horror of the fray.

But while Philistia's jeerings thundered loud,
The beauty of the Lord upon him grew ;

A little he his stately forehead bowed,
A little flushed and vermeilled in his hue.

Then straight against that glittering, sensual thing
His arm he raised, and mightily he cast :

I sped unseen, I left the leathern sling,
I broke the bone, and to his brain I passed.

He sank as waters sink upon the sea,
A mighty body, downward as the wave ;

He clashed like brass, he fell all drunkenly,
And with his proud feet did he spurn the grave.

Then from the gorgeous trunk his hated head,
His bestial face, was sundered and did fall ;

But like the wind Philistia's warriors fled,
Nor loitered on their way till Ekron's wall.

Dropt from his stony temples I remain,
While Jew and Gentile pass to their decay :

What shepherd now shall cast me forth, again
To smite the impotence of sensual clay !

THE JOURNEY.

“With joyful feet I journey on,
Singing the miles away.”

I.

UNREST.

Two lived together in one place,
And lived as one ; a gentle home
Where either welcomed either come
Happily back with fervent face.

One sweet and pure and wise, and one
Unsteady in the strength of youth ;
But both the servants of the truth,
Life's perfect May in both begun.

This is the house : — its roof above
The linden-loving, unseen bees
Murmur ; — it is a house of peace ;
In the green orchard cooes the dove.

The apples ripen on the bough,
Unplucked ; across the window-sill
Wild roses clamber where they will ;
The threshold is moss-covered now.

All seems to sleep : the shutters bowed,
The door made fast, the rooms within
All darkness, and outside the green,
Still lawn, and this deserted road.

All's quiet, yes ;— and quietly
I turn my steps away : for one
There is no rest beneath the sun ;
The other is at rest and free.

II.

THE JOURNEY BEGUN.

THE heavenly morn is calm and still,
The level waters gray ;
The sheep-bells tinkle on the hill
Faintly and far away.

The rising dew doth rosy glow
Through silent deeps of air ;
Night sleeps in yon dim vale below,
And man doth slumber there.

All, all is still : the earth, the air,
The sky as mute can be ;
The morning on the mountain side,
My quiet heart in me.

The sun looks up, and far away
The dark pines murmur low ;
And like the breathing of the day
A lightest breeze doth blow.

O happy earth! O blissful dawn!
Prosper to perfect day!
With joyful feet I journey on,
Singing the miles away.

III.

THE MILL.

THERE is a little, lonesome mill,
About it runs a lonely race;
Still and green is all the place,
The woods that hide it green and still.

And every eve above the mill
A little star comes out in the sky:
“Where is the miller and his boy?”
The reeds in the long race bend and sigh:

“The miller long since hath gone to the war,
The miller and his rosy son;
He left his mill to the evening star,
Till, with the morning, he return.”

IV.

AUTUMN.

THE hill is yellow, the sky is blue,
The Autumn woods wear all one hue,
A leafless gray, and the fields are bare;
The great fresh fields all ploughed and brown,
How motherly they look, each one
Lying so rich and silent in the sun,

Exposed like sun-burnt bosoms to the air!
And all about the Autumn swallows fly,
And chirp and twitter in the windy sky.

V.

WINTER.

THE Winter mists are on the hill;
The grass is withered, dry, and gray;
And the air is still
In the morning of the day.

Overhead the clouds are white
And slow; the frozen earth is dead;
Chilly and light
The first flakes from above are shed.

Ere the twilight they will be
Thick in air; — to-morrow's light
Shall look forth and see
The round world glittering cold and white.

VI.

THE RUINED HOUSE.

THE sky is bleak; a wintry breeze
Withers the grass down to its root;
The wayward rivulet doth freeze;
The river glances and is mute.

The moon is white as steel above;
The crystal flakelets of the dew

Cling to the bare weeds ; the trees move
And glitter when the loud winds blow.

And yonder on the bare hilltop
A house doth stand, alone and white ;
A high and solitary shape,
That blazes in the cold moonlight.

A ruined house ; — the woods below
Rock in the wind, and tree to tree
Roars ; but on high the cold winds blow
Through the keen brilliance silently.

At intervals a loud, rude cry
Lives, when the wind doth change his mood :
A shutter's flap — with no reply
But noon of night and solitude.

VII.

SPRING.

THE sky is clearing, the rain is gone,
In damp, dark nooks young flowers are blown ;
The brooks run noisily far away ;
From field and furrow, all brown and bare,
Earth breathes a spirit into the air ;
And in the green meadows the young lambs play.

The rain doth vanish o'er yonder hill ;
The forests glitter, the wind is still ;
The bright dew falls from the barèd bough ;

The wild bees murmur, the air is sweet,
The soft, green leaves unfold in the heat,
My heart is in heaven now !

VIII.

THE FINAL VOICE.

THROUGH this green vale
The waters ripple fleetly down ;
The light upon the pine grows pale
And high ; twilight falls soon.

How huge are grown
The hills, and darker each green side,
Now silent, save the tone
Of this all peaceful tide.

At the pine's feet
Dancingly the light ripple flees,
And sings, with voice as sweet
As love, its song of peace.

And from that height
A murmur falls, a voice that seems
The spirit of the night
When darkness sleeps and dreams ;

A voice that calls
The soul — bidding it slight the grave
And time and weakness — falls
And mingles with the wave.

IX.

THE JOURNEY ENDED.

THE sun sinks down the west ;
The swallow seeks her nest ;
The brook doth louder flow,
And I must homeward go.

Earth now to heaven draws nigh ;
The green and quiet sky
Is full of dew ; and hill,
Meadow, and wood are still.

The child is long at rest
Upon its mother's breast ;
The herd beneath the tree ;
My quiet heart in me.

I follow the green lane ;
I ope the gate again ;
I knock : — a voice serene
Saith, Enter, enter in !

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