



Destiny
AND OTHER
Poems *



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DESTINY

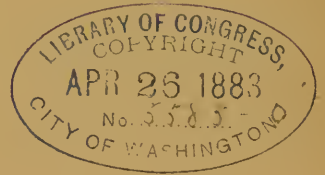
AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

M. J. SERRANO

33



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DESTINY.

A POEM IN FOUR CANTOS.


*Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡμᾶς χρεῖ, ὧ ἀνδρες διησταιί,
εὔελπιδας εἶναι πρὸς τὸν θάνατον, καὶ ἐν τῷ
τούτῳ διανοεῖσθαι ἀληθές, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ
ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν, ὅντε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτη-
σαντι.*

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
DESTINY	
CANTO FIRST	I
CANTO SECOND	24
CANTO THIRD	61
CANTO FOURTH	98
CYBELE	131
AUTUMN DAYS	138
DESPONDENCY	143
INVOCATION TO DEATH	146
FREEDOM AND LOVE	149
ODE TO VALOR	151
LINES	154
SERENADE (FROM THE SPANISH)	157
TO A MOTHER, ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG MARRIED DAUGHTER	159
DIRGE	164
CAPTIVITY	167
LINES TO AN EXOTIC PLANT	172
TO A HUSBAND	175
ASPIRATIONS	178
CONTENTMENT (A RIDDLE)	182
NATURE'S SECRET	185

DESTINY.

CANTO FIRST.

OFTLY blue the May-day sky
Roofs in bright serenity
Forest-aisles and hill-sides green,
And sunny vales that stretch between ;
And every living thing that takes
Its nourishment from Nature, wakes
To busy life : the insect brood
Break from their death-like solitude,
Each its appointed part to play
In Earth's bright, transient holiday ;
With living sap the young buds swell,
That flows in silence to each cell,
Responsive to the genial power
That forms the fruit and paints the flower ;

And every tint that greets the eye—
The soft blue of the tranquil sky ;
The silver of the morning dew ;
The young leaf's green ; the rosy hue
Of apple-blossoms, blent with white ;
The very sunbeam's golden light,
So fresh, so pure, and tender, seem
Of Youth and Paradise a dream.
O happy Season ! dedicate
To Hope, bright Opponent of Fate,
Still cast thy dear enchantments round
Young hearts for whom Life's goal is crowned
With sacred Love's immortal wreath,
Or Fame's, the Conqueror of Death.

Still breathe soft airs with magic fraught,
From some serener planet caught,
That in the soul harmonious strife
Stir, to ennoble human life—
To Earth thy heaven-caught charm transfuse ;
Feed with thy sunshine and thy dews
Each bud of promise that for me,
With fruitless bloom has crowned Life's tree.

To none shall Hope her fairy tale
More softly on the perfumed gale
Whisper, in strains that thrill the soul
Like voices, from Life's distant goal,
Than, silver-sweet she whispers now
To Clarence, who, with lifted brow
Bared to the breeze, and kindling eye
Fixed on the splendors of the sky,
Interprets to his bosom's friend,
In words of fire, with sighs that blend,
The charmed tones, that by his birth,
Proclaim him Lord of all the Earth ;
And calls him by the sacred name
Of Man, their heritage to claim :
" For us," he cries, " does Earth unfold
The mysteries her recesses hold ;
For us her secret treasures keep
Through countless ages silent sleep,
Until from out the sunless mine
Man's voice shall call them forth to shine ;
Their hidden virtues herb and stone
Shall yield to him ; his sway shall own
The elements ; his hand shall wrest

Her secrets from the unwilling breast
Of Protean Nature, held in chains,
Till, weary of each form she feigns,
Revealed in her true shape she stands,
Obedient to her Lord's commands,
Of future triumphs Prophetess,
In realms that shall his rule confess."

Here Ernest spoke : " And Clarence, all
The generations to whose call
For light to tread the obscure ways
Of Nature's labyrinthine maze
A deaf, cold ear she still hath turned—
What did they lack that we have earned,
Or by our birthright hold, that Fate
Should ope for us the magic Gate
Beyond whose charmèd threshold lie
Her glory and her mystery ?
No ! Man may catch some pregnant word,
In Nature's symphony half-heard—
Of all her treasures on some gem
May chance, but of her diadem
The wondrous splendor to behold,—

Herself through all her manifold
And ever-changing forms to trace,
Till bare she stand ; and face to face
Hold converse with her in the speech
Herself alone can fitly teach,—
This were to hold of Life and Death
The secrets—this immortal breath
To breathe ; and here it is not given
To Man to grasp the powers of Heaven.”

“ O Ernest ! seek not to destroy
Of life the glory and the joy,”
Clarence impetuous cried. “ How poor
A boon were Being—to endure
The sorrow, bitterness, and strife
Of Earth, with Death at last, had life
No higher aim than day by day,
To chase the fleeting hours away
In cares that perish with the hour.
No ! Man has here a nobler dower
Than petty interests of the earth,
That end where they have had their birth.
Nature, Interpreter of God,

Speaks from her secret haunts, untrod
By foot of man, and bids him climb
Upward, and scale the heights where Time
Has reared his barriers between
The Visible and the Unseen ;
She bids him see, in star or flower,
A symbol of Almighty Power,
Whose care no meanest thing disdains ;
Whose might the firmament sustains ;
Whose wisdom formed the wondrous plan,
The crown and end of which is Man."

" Shall Man," said Ernest, " dare to claim
Of God's most noble work the name,
While in blind folly he exceeds
The brute that in his service bleeds
While Hatred, Envy, Pride, maintain
The sway that Virtue seeks in vain
To hold within his breast? Shall he
Dare strive to pierce the mystery
Which shrouds the awful Hand that holds
The scales of Life and Death ; that moulds
Planets and suns, and in their course

Keeps them with undiminished force
From all Eternity ? The fire
That lights the stars, dare he aspire
With spiritual sight to grasp,
Whose widest vision scarce can clasp
The potency of one poor ray
Lost in the common light of day ?”

“ O Ernest ! they who from the Past
The glory of their names have cast,
A beacon-light throughout all Time
• To guide us to the heights sublime
Where Fame sits throned—heroes and saints
And giant minds, the elements
That brought into subjection—they
Make answer that our common clay
Is tempered with some spark Divine,
That still reveals its origin.
And yet, too well I know that here,
An exile from her native sphere,
The Soul forgets to plume her wings
Ofttimes, amidst the meaner things
Of this, her cage, content to take

Her ease, and fellowship to make
Enduring, with her transient mate,
Unmindful of her high estate.
And to the earnest soul alone
Will Science yield her starry throne,
And sceptre, tipped with living light,
To rule o'er men in Wisdom's right;
To him alone will Art reveal
Her Wonderland ; for him unseal
The urn that holds the draft divine
Of Inspiration's sacred wine.
For the sincere and earnest soul
Alone, will Liberty unroll
Her sacred banner, all ablaze
With stars that draw their kindling rays
From the Eternal Source of light,
That shall at last of Error's night
Consume the darkness, and disclose
The spring whence living Virtue flows—
The Soul, disdaining lower flights,
That, like the eagle, seeks the heights
Where purer air its life shall feed,
And wider, nobler prospects, freed

From earth-born mist that sluggish reigns,
And cold upon life's lower planes.
Then upward be our vision cast,
Onward and upward, till at last
From Truth's clear heights we may survey
The regions of Eternal Day.
And standing in that light serene,
Where clouds no longer intervene,
To mock the eye with hues unreal,
Behold Humanity's Ideal.
Then shall the Soul, her dross consumed
By those pure beams, stand forth, illumed,
Transfigured in the awful light
That vivifies the Infinite.
Oh! worthy then the sacred hope
To nourish, those who blindly grope
In darkness, by the hand to lead
To regions whose delights exceed
The pleasures of the Sense, as far
As the pure ray of some bright star
Excels the glowworm's feeble spark,
That fitful glimmers in the dark.
This hope be ours, O Friend! to free

From bondage blind Humanity.
The chains that Force imposed, at first,
And Cowardice and Sloth have nursed
In willing slavery, to break.
Some slumbering spark divine to wake
In souls th' impress Divine that bear
No longer, deathless souls should wear—
Souls to redeem, in bonds more vile,
Bound to their passions, that defile
God's chosen temple, and obscure
Of Truth's undying lamp the pure,
Clear light, with smoke of unclean fires,
At whose hot breath all Good expires—
Tyrants, content the slaves to be
Of Sin's debasing tyranny."

He paused : "The joy indeed were worth
All other joys this smiling Earth
The Eden of regenerate Man
To see," said Ernest. "Life's short span
Were nobly spent in shattering
The idols to whose worship cling
Mankind in blind idolatry ;

In teaching Man himself to free
From bonds of ignorance and sin ;
Through his own striving light to win ;
Lust of Dominion to forego ;
Some joyless life to enrich, although
His own be poorer for the gift ;
Some soul in suffering steeped, to lift
Again into the upper air ;
In charity and love to bear
The frailties common to our weak
And erring nature ; swift to seek
Faults in himself that late he sees
In others, but more swift in these
Than in himself absolves ; to be
True, just, and clement—destiny
Worthy our origin and end,
The allotment of our days to spend
In this most sacred task : but vain
The hope the extinction to attain
On Earth of Evil. In some star
Remote, whose portals shall unbar
The hand of Death, these dreams may find
Fulfilment ; but the chains that bind

The souls of men, each for himself must break ;
No outward force can stir to life the germ
That quickens not within ; nor wake
The seed to bloom before the appointed term.
Did our Divine Redeemer leave
Humanity confirmed in Good,
When for our sins His sacred blood
He chose upon the cross to give ?
Did even the Twelve His sacred voice who heard,
His Countenance Divine who looked upon,
To their high destiny by Him preferred
From all Mankind ; upon whose footsteps shone,
Of Supreme Love and Wisdom at their source,
The light divine—did these all keep their course
Straight in the narrow path ? O friend !
Shall our weak human words transcend
The Word Divine in soul-awakening power ?
Evil and Good—these are the potent dower
From whose opposing forces we must draw
Strength by the very effort to control
Death-bearing Evil to the Eternal Law
Of Good. In this must lie our sole
Hope of attaining Virtue ; and the strife

Each for himself must wage ; and each his life,
Not by the victory alone must count,
But by the combat also, in accord
With its true purpose spent. The Word
Omnipotent, that from the fount
Of uncreated Virtue called
The Heavens into being, and the Earth ;
And in their places Sun and Moon installed—
Could not this Force Omnipotent, at birth,
Virtue with life to every soul have given,
At once perfected, had He not designed
By Earth's stern discipline to fit for Heaven
And Immortality, our nature blind
And torpid, till, by throes of suffering rent,
The soul cast off her outworn shell,
The vital powers that in her dwell,
In barren darkness that had pent ?
Yes ; in His Image made, to Man He gave
Of His creative power a part ;
And placed, of Good and Evil in his heart
The germs, that he might choose. The slave
Or puppet of His Will He made him not,
But free to follow or to break the laws

Immutable of his being. Of his lot
He is himself the Shaper ; and the cause
Of Good or Evil to himself. Be sad,
Because of sin and suffering, no more,
Therefore, O Clarence ! nor aspire to pour
The treasure of thy young heart's blood, a glad
And willing sacrifice, upon
The altar of thy Faith ; for none,
But by the travail of his soul, can grow
In wisdom or in goodness ; and as each
Must pass through infancy, before he reach
The stature of a man, so, by a slow
And gradual growth must every Soul attain
Her natural height, through Sorrow and through
Pain,
Stern teachers, learning the eternal laws
That rule her being."

Here the pause
That followed, Clarence broke in tones
Of scorn : " My Soul," he cried, " disowns
The barren doctrine that would dry
The springs of kindly Charity
That hopeth all things, in the breast ;

Teaching the Soul to find her best
And highest wisdom in a faith
Whose selfish coldness carries death
To every gentle flower whose bloom
Might grace the sternness of our doom.
No! rather let me hope in vain
A thousand times, than once remain
Cold to a sorrow I might cure,
Or slow to aid. Let me endure
The pangs of confidence betrayed,
A thousand times, ere I be made,
Through prudence, false to the belief
I hold in Virtue, as our chief
And highest Good—the heritage
Of all: If disappointed Age
Must bring me, with her dear-bought lore,
This bitter lesson—oh! before
Her chilling breath destroy the fair
And fragrant buds that fill the air
Of Youth with ravishing delight,
Let me in Death's untimely night
Hide, with the rapture that they bring,
The hope and promise of my Spring."

“Nay, Clarence,” Ernest interposed,
“If in my words I have disclosed
Too little faith in this bright dream
That flatters Youth with transient gleam
Cast from Life’s glowing morning sky—
The Progress of Humanity,—
Think not my heart is therefore cold
To human hopes, or that I hold
A faith less firm than is thine own
In Virtue—but my heart has known
Too much of suffering to believe
In hopes that flatter to deceive.
To me hath Life her wisdom brought
Before its season,—wisdom fraught
With bitterness—without perfume,
Like every plant whose early bloom
Springs from a forced and sudden growth ;
And Wisdom is a plant that both
The frosts of Autumn and the heat
Of Summer needs to render sweet
The fruit it bears. And yet, though stern
Of mien my Guide, and hard to learn
The lesson she would teach, from snares

The path she treads is free ; she wears
No false, fair smiles that in their train
Bring Madness and Despair ; the pain
Her hand inflicts, beneficent,
Gives to the soul with health, content ;
And those who serve her she repays
With gems that shine not in the rays
Of treacherous smiles alone, but light
With inborn radiance the night
Of Misery:—contempt of all
The shafts of Fate, that harmless fall
On the strong soul in armor cased
Of Constancy, by no alloy
Whose sterling metal is debased
And weakened ; a sustaining joy
In hopes that bloom not, barren here,
But find fruition in a sphere
Of higher possibilities ;
Wisdom, the aspect of the skies
To trust not lightly, setting sail
For unknown regions, by the gale
Of fond Desire impelled, lest dark
The heavens growing, life's frail bark,

While sudden tempests round her wake,
Shipwreck in shallow waters make ;
Strength, born of suffering, to endure ;
Hatred of all things base ; a pure,
Unbribed devotion to the Good
And True ; content in solitude,
In whose charmed precincts only lie
The low, sweet tones that harmony
Of seeming discord make ;—are these
Less worth than glittering gems that please
The fancy, only while Youth dwells
In caverns dim, by magic spells
Held captive, but whose glamour glows
No more when Truth's clear beams disclose
The worthless cheat ? O Clarence ! trust
Him not who offers for the rust
And tarnish of the Lamp whose power
Gave to our Youth an affluent dower
Of precious gifts, its hours that lit
With joy, a shining counterfeit.
In vain, in vain we hope to call
Back from the Past the prodigal
Gay bloom of Spring to grace the dull

And barren days of Winter. Full
Of bitterness the years that cling
To faded glories of Life's spring
For all their wealth—whose stores contain
No garnered harvest of ripe grain
To nourish with sweet, wholesome food
The hours of rest and solitude.
Build therefore now no pleasure-house
Of fragrant flowers and blooming boughs,
Laden with promise fair, thine age
To shelter ; when the heritage
Of Youth is squandered—its perfume
Wasted on winds that rob its bloom,
Quenched its warm light, its music stilled,
Vanished the joys its hours that filled ;
The branches, withered then and dry,
Shall stand against the wintry sky,
Whose living roots within the earth
Hide not the promise of a birth
Of fairer bloom and richer store
Of fruit than crowned its bloom before.
Nor grieve that thus Youth's blossoms fade
For this their gracious bloom was made,

That Beauty's self with fostering care
Might guard the germ designed to bear
The fruit of Truth, who is with her
In essence one—the minister
Of Being each ; nor, reached her end,
That with the elements shall blend
Again the form that Beauty leaves,
To grace, transfused, the life Truth gives.
Clarence, are these the thoughts that fill
With gloom a cynic's breast ? Oh ! still
Its dear, inalienable dower
My soul preserves, with gracious power
Life's barren ways to clothe in fair,
Undying verdure—bloom more rare
Than earthly flowers that fade and die
Alike beneath the inclement sky
Of winter, and the sultry blaze
Of summer noons ; but I would raise
A barrier sure thy steps to keep
This side the edge of Fancy's steep
And treacherous flower-crowned precipice ;
Lest in the fathomless abyss
Of Doubt, one step unwary down

Should hurl thee headlong. I would crown
Friend of my soul, thy younger brow
With amaranthine bloom, whose glow
Fades not in wintry days ; whose root,
Undying, bears immortal fruit ;
Not like the prison-flowers, whose breath
My soul had steeped in living death,
Till by thy clear young voice recalled
Once more to Reason—disenthralled
From deadly spells, I woke again
To life, to memory—and to pain.”


“ Ernest ! heroic soul ! forgive
The thoughtless words that thus could grieve
Thy generous heart,” cried Clarence. “ Truth,
Not in the fever-glow of Youth,
But in the strength of riper years
Finds fittest championship. Not tears,
And passionate clamor can avail
To vanquish Evil ; but the pale
And lonely vigils given to Thought.
This has thy truer wisdom taught
My rash, short-sighted egoism.

Thou only to receive the chrism
Art worthy, consecrate to stand
At Truth's pure altar, and with hand
Unspotted, offer sacrifice
Acceptable ; thou hast the price
Of wisdom paid ; for that thy breast
Some sorrow harbors, unconfest,
Long have I known, and fain some balm
To give thy troubled spirit calm
I would have sought, but that in vain
Would Friendship soothe unuttered Pain."

"Nay, Clarence," Ernest gently said,
"Though from a secret wound has bled
My spirit long, and Life for me
Has rent too soon her mystery
Of sunlit mists, whose depths enfold
In Youth our Future, when of mould
More large and noble all things seem,
Yet calm my soul the fatal Dream,
That once my senses captive held,
Has left by Reason's light dispelled.
But, that no thought to thee unknown,

The pulses of my heart may stir,
And thine not thrill in unison,
This fatal Dream, the harbinger,
In radiant guise, of darkened days,
Now shalt thou hear, and on my Past
The light of thy clear Reason cast,
While I retrace its secret ways.”

CANTO SECOND.

“HEN first amid the solitudes
Where Nature yet keeps unprofaned
Primeval state, thy voice unchained
With magic spell, from deadly words
Of hate and anguish, my sick soul.
Her sorrow was no common dole,
But utter wreck of Joy and Hope,
That cast her naked on Life's strand,
In darkness and dismay to grope
For safety with weak, nerveless hand ;
Bleeding and helpless on the rock
She lay, of Misery, when thy grasp
Caught her from the returning shock
Of storm-lashed waves, with friendly clasp,
And held her from the abyss profound,
Where lay engulfed, of Happiness
The lifeless form, with flowers yet crowned,
That still retained the warm impress

Of kisses from Life's sources fed.
I thought my heart within me dead
Lay then, by Fate's sharp arrow slain
With Happiness ; but undying Pain,
A sleepless vulture, gnaws the heart
To joys divine that would aspire
On Earth, from Heaven immortal fire
Seeking to bring, with fatal art.
Yet shall unconquerable Will,
With calm endurance, vanquish Fate,
And Virtue in the soul distil
Strength, in defeat that keeps her state.
Thus then my soul awaits the hour,
Nor eager, nor reluctant, fraught
With solemn and enduring power—
The weight of her Eternal Lot ;
Calm in this trust—that He who gave
The soul her aspirations high,
Meant not to hide within the grave
Her dreams of Immortality ;
Nor deems it of import supreme
That from Life's bark some freight be cast
That stays her progress in the stream

Her sail is spread on, so at last
She reach her port, secure the Pearl
Of Price, her aim and guerdon, won
From treacherous quicksands and the whirl
Of angry waters. But as one
Who, spent with toil, the boon of rest
From labor wins at last, so I,
The peace that now crowns victory,
From long and bitter conflict wrest.
Peace that the garden of my life
A wild and barren waste has left ;
Of every bud in that fierce strife,
And every opening flower bereft.
Never may blossom more unfold
Of earthly bloom its loveliness ;
With soul-transporting charm the cold
And darkened days of life to bless,
Since Love, the sun whose kindling glow
Transfused its vital warmth to all
Its beams illumed, has sunk below
Earth's dim horizon, in the pall
Of darkness shrouded, such as hides
From the wrecked mariner the sky

And stormy waters, while on high
His course no friendly pole-star guides."

"O Ernest!" Clarence cried, "can dull
And sordid natures find in Love
Life's crown, while thou, whose soul is full
Of richest gifts his grace to move,
Hast found him to thy offerings mute
And cold? to his best attribute
Untrue? Nay, rather thou hast been
Unwilling at his shrine to pour
Libations; and from out thy store
To offer sacrifice; this sin
His wrath upon thy head has drawn.
But, as at times the fairest dawn
Succeeds the darkest night, so now
Shall Love appeased, thy days endow
With light and peace that come at last
When dark, tempestuous hours are past."

"Thou hast but ill interpreted
My nature, Clarence, if thus weak,
And thus inconstant," Ernest said,

“Thou thinkest me—again to seek
The happiness that once in vain
I courted ; or to soothe the pain
Of love insulted, mocked, betrayed,
The fatal stake for which I played
Withholding—all that makes life dear,—
Joy, Hope, and Peace. No ! too sincere
The homage I have freely given
To Love, in other joys than his,
Of Life the glory and the bliss
To seek—such bliss as reigns in Heaven.
Life still indeed holds such content
As springs from duties coldly done,
But Love’s celestial ravishment
Once vanished, is forever gone.
Oh ! when my soul had thought she found
Her mate, no monarch of the earth
Ruled our kingdom of such worth
As that of which Love’s hand had crowned
Her sovereign absolute—a brief
And blissful madness, yet divine,
That sacred still within her shrine,
Amidst the Doubt and Unbelief

Of later days, may leave serene,
The pure Ideal of a free
Harmonious bond—the unity
Of two true souls—that might have been.”

He paused, and both were silent ; each
Busy with thoughts too deep for speech—
Such thoughts as by the magic stirred,
That lies in some half-uttered word,
Over the vista of the Past
A gleam of truer insight cast ;
And with prophetic power embrace,
Freed from the bonds of Time and Space,
The possibilities that lie
Hid formless in Futurity.
At length the silence Clarence broke,
In voice that trembled as he spoke,
With mingled feelings : “ Oh, my friend !
Well do I know the pangs that rend
Thy spirit ; for I too have felt
The power of Love. I too have dwelt
In those enchanted halls where fair
Ethereal spirits minister.

And Destiny such bitterness
As thine, for me may hold in store ;
For never in the ear to pour
Of her I love, my love's excess,
Yet have I dared ; nor in her soul
Know if some chord responsive thrill
To mine ; for ever when the goal
Of all my hopes seemed nearest, still
Some cloud, vague, formless, would arise,
To veil the lustre of her face,
And leave me hidden from the grace
And glory of her starry eyes,
In chill and barren darkness, mute,
And faint of heart. And oh ! should Fate
At last with ruthless hand uproot
Love's flower, whose fibres penetrate
To its profoundest depths my heart,
Ernest, too well, too well I feel
From Life the glory would depart,
And all the raptures that reveal
In Margaret's voice, in Margaret's glance,
A gleam of heavenly radiance,
Of heavenly harmony a strain,

That tell my spirit not in vain
Were aspirations given her here
That find not their fulfilment, yet
In exile some remembrance dear
Keep of her home, lest she forget
Her lofty destiny, and lose
Content her birthright—willing choose
Her fellow in the senseless clod—
Her end, her origin, her God ! ”

On Ernest's ear unheeded fell
These words, for through his soul had passed
With Margaret's name a sword. At last
He cried, with pallid lips that tell
Of anguish yet unconquered—strife
Yet unsubdued :—“ Clarence, thy life
Her love will blight ! Oh ! trust her not !
The name is fatal ! From my breast
Would that forever I might blot
That word accursed, abhorred, imprest
In characters of fire there.
Margaret ! this name the siren bore,
That lured me to the treacherous shore

Where Happiness went down, with fair
Angelic seeming. Let it be
Henceforth with curses only named,
Or kept unspoken ; enemy
To Constancy and Truth proclaimed,
Or held too faithless but by lips
Forsworn and perjured, to be breathed.
Her name, my life who has bequeathed
A memory that makes eclipse
Forever of its brightness." Here
He paused ; then with a deep-drawn sigh
Resumed : " Forgive me. Why should I
Cloud thy young life with shadows thrown
From the chill darkness of my Past ?
If bitterness my heart hath known,
Shall its remembrance overcast
Therefore thy morning sky with gloom ?
Oh ! rather let me in the bloom
And radiance of thy being sit ;
And catch some reflex of the light
That glorifies thy life with bright
Enchantments—splendors such as lit
Earth once for me."

“O Ernest ! cease,”

Clarence in fervent accents said,
“To call from out its grave the dead
And buried Past. Rob not of Peace,
Its sad and sacred privilege,
Death, the Consoler of all Woe.
Let Lethe’s cool, dark waters flow
Over thy spirit, and assuage
This soul-consuming grief. Behold !
How fair is Earth ! Oh ! yield not thus,
Weakly to Fate, oblivious
Of all Life offers to the bold
And earnest seeker. This warm air,
Breathing soft odors ; yon blue sky,
And all it bends o’er, bright and fair,—
These have no part in misery.
Awake ! awake from evil dreams ;
Earth calls on all to take their part
In life, who live. Make of thy heart
No more a grave. Let requiems
For buried hopes no longer fill
Thine ear, and make inaudible
To thy dulled sense the tones that rise

In ceaseless clamor to the skies,
From the great heart that ever beats
Unpausing, of Humanity.
O Ernest ! shall the sorrows be
Unheeded by us, and the joys of men,
Because, within our narrow ken
They lie not, nor our pulses stir
With sympathies that minister
To selfish happiness or grief—
The pangs or pleasures of one brief,
Swift moment of Eternity.
What ! shall the Earth in darkness lie,
Hid by a hand in anguish pressed
Over hot weary eyes for rest,
When the bright sun dispels the gloom
Of night? Is Happiness the end
Of Life, or noble toil, O friend !
That thou should'st bury in the tomb
Of Happiness thy heart? With sweet,
Unselfish throb shall it not beat
For others still ; and freely give
Its wealth uncounted to retrieve
The wrongs and sufferings that make

Of brothers enemies? Oh, take,
Ernest, among the ranks again
Thy place, victorious over Pain
And weakness—worthy of the wreath
Of Valor faithful unto Death.”

“ Clarence, from life hast thou not said
For thee the glory would depart,
Should Fate uproot within thy heart
The budding hopes that there have spread
Their roots; and shall I, who have seen
The garden of my life laid waste—
Wide to the winds its beauty cast,
Blossom and seed—of all its green
And fragrant life no vestige left,—
Shall I, of Hope’s sweet balm bereft,
Plant flowers on the grave of Love,
To bind with garlands my wan brow,
And in Life’s march triumphal move,
To echoes of his dirge, with slow
And weary step? Take thou the sword;
Better it fits thy untired hand,
And battle for the Right. The word

Shout to the people, of command,
With fresh, young voice whose ringing tones
Unpitied on the ear of Night
Have never died away in groans
Heart-rung of anguish infinite.
The souls of men do thou inspire,
Clarence, with kindling glance, whose fire
Was never quenched in tears; but make
No vain endeavor to awake
Within my breast amidst the cold
Dead ashes of the Past, the old,
Long-vanished fire and glow of Youth.
No ardent homage now to Truth,
As erst, can my dulled spirit yield,
But as its source is, frigid. Sealed
To all glad outer influences,
The well-spring of my being flows
Darkly, nor in its course bestows
A brighter green on herbs or trees
That on its borders grow. In vain
Would autumn's sun recall again
To life and bloom the withered rose
Whose petals touched by early frost,

Their summer glory once have lost ;
His beams their ruin but disclose.
Such is my life—a withered flower,
That still hangs drooping on its stem,
Though never more may freshening shower
With crystal drops its leaves begem ;
Or vitalizing beam illumine
Its pallid hues. Gone are the bloom
And softness that its beauty made,
And strength alike. Then let it fade
And fall unnoted, since no more
May sun or shower, its bloom restore.”

“ Yet in the rose, such fragrance lives,”
Said Clarence, “ as, though gone its bloom,
To autumn days a part still gives
Of summer’s loveliness—perfume.
That sweetens dark and dreary hours,—
The soul of summer’s vanished flowers.
And so, thy life its fragrance still,
Ernest, shall breathe around, though lost
Its bloom and brightness, at the chill,
Untimely touch of Sorrow’s frost.

Or rather shall a second spring,
O friend ! within thy soul awake
Life's sleeping forces, that shall bring
New bloom, new loveliness, to make
Fruitful again in hopes the year.
A higher lot, a nobler sphere
Than perishable things the soul
Claims as her birthright, though her goal
Be hidden from her by the dust
And windings of her toilsome way.
Though the young bloom of spring decay,
In the ripe harvest-time we trust
Untroubled ; and when leafless stand
The trees, and rigid in her cold,
White shroud lies stretched the silent land,
By Nature's own wise lore consoled,
Still we await in steadfast faith,
A resurrection from this death.
And shall the soul, while here on earth
She still abides, less vital prove
Than senseless matter, at the birth,
Exhausted, of the Flower of Love,
Worthless, if by the fruit mature

It be not followed. Shall one Spring
To her be given for blossoming,
Whose fruit immortal shall endure
For all Eternity? A plant,
Rather, of tropic growth, she bears
Blossom and fruit at once, and shares
Of Earth the fettered habitant,
Communion still with skies benign,
That in her being some divine,
Undying element transfuse,
Whose voice her earthly mould subdues
To such fair fruitfulness, as here,
In this, her low and narrow sphere,
Gives confirmation of her high,
Glad hope of Immortality.
Ernest, Life's voyage, thou hast said,
It matters not if rough or smooth,
So that its end the pearl of Truth
Triumphant crown; but from its bed
In depths unfathomed, canst thou win
This priceless treasure, if within
The abyss thou plunge not? Canst thou glide,
Passive, the sport of wind and tide,

And to the haven bear at last
The meed of toil and peril passed ?
Action ! the primal Law of Earth—
The law that still a fairer birth
Evolves from Death,—whose vital power,
Displayed alike in star or flower,
Keeps from corruption and decay
The Universe ;—this law divine
Matter and spirit must obey
Alike, or must alike decline
From primal worth. Then break the spell
That holds thee captive to a Dream,
And live for others ; for too well,
Ernest, I know thy heart to deem
That, by the ruthless hand, and rude,
of Fate once rifled, Love again
Will e'er come back, o'er hopes to brood,
Within that nest that still remain.
If Love divine himself, indeed,
And not some traitor in Love's guise,
Thy heart had sheltered."

“Nay, the meed

Due to the willing sacrifice

Made for Love's sake, my heart now claims
By no false title," Ernest said ;
" Not on the altar have I laid,
Of a false deity, in flames
Kindled at earthly fires to die,
The glowing dreams by young Romance
Inspired—the bright inheritance
Of Youth,—its aspirations high,
With all the dear delights that move
The soul to rapture. Judge if Love,
When thou hast heard me to the end,
Himself the sacred fire bestowed,
That on his hallowed altar glowed
With splendors that the light transcend
Of sun or star ; for still divine
May be the altar, and the shrine,
Clarence, though they who worship be
Unworthy of the deity.
And Margaret seemed, of all who yield
To Love their homage, fairest, best ;
Fair as as the flower that holds concealed
Within its white and stainless breast
The fatal poison he inhales,

Who presses to his lips its bloom,
Entranced ; and blind the beauty hails,
That lures him, treacherous, to his doom.
Yes ; fair as that delusive glow
On poison and corruption fed,
Semblance of life, where life has fled,
That on his path, with friendly show
Shining in darkness, leads astray
The wanderer on his homeward way.
O Clarence ! when in dreams again
The starry radiance of her eyes
My soul illumines, a glad surprise
My pulses thrills, that swift in pain
Dissolving, tells me of this wound
Beyond the hope of cure profound,
The anguish shall my bosom rend,
Till pain and life together end."

He paused ; and leaning on his hand
His pallid brow, awhile remained
In attitude of hopeless grief,
Too deep to find in words relief,—
Prey to a force beyond control,
The fever that consumed his soul.

Then,

“ Clarence, now at last,” he said,
“ Thy friend thou knowest ; now at last
The mask of stoicism is cast
Aside, and bare before thee laid
The quivering breast that Memory keeps
Transfixed with talons sharp, her prey,
Deep burying there her beak, and sleeps,
Pitiless, nor by night nor day.
How vividly my soul recalls
The fatal hour when first, a guest
Within her father’s stately halls,
I saw the loveliness imprest
In fadeless hues upon my heart.
Amidst the throng I stood apart,
Plunged in sad revery, as oft
Was then my wont, when clear and soft
As melody of woodland bird,
Upon my troubled senses stole
Strains, that of harmonies my soul
In some lost state of bliss had heard,
The echo seemed. Then silence came,
Followed by such applause as claim

Sweet accents in a tongue unknown,
From those who listen. I alone,
A stranger there, no fitting word
Could find to utter ; for, at rest
Till then, some chord within my breast,
By that sweet voice unconscious stirred,
Her irreversible decree
Told me that Fate had spoken—free
Henceforward from the fatal spell
Thrown round me then, to live no more.
While still I vainly sought to quell
This tumult, through the open door
Her father led me to the place
Where, radiant in youthful grace,
A queen amidst the court she stood,
Who paid her homage.

‘ Here I bring,
Margaret,’ he said, in tones subdued
By some remembered suffering,
‘ The son of one who, in our youth,
Was dear to me—whose memory still
Is dear and honored ; and who will,
For his own merits, to us both

Be dear.' He paused. A sudden glance
Illumining her countenance,
Told me that here was no still lake,
Reflecting in its tranquil breast
The changing clouds—content to take
Its motion from without, or rest.
But, clear and strong, a mountain stream,
Deriving from its native source,
With being, freedom, depth, and force ;
Yet idly that at times to dream
In some green, fairy-peopled dell
Could linger, of the summer moon,
The splendor of some golden noon,
Or sunset, yielding to the spell.

“ ‘ Oft have I heard my father speak
Of his profoundest grief,’ she said
Gently, ‘ save one ’ ; while in her cheek
The rose-tint deepened, as she laid
Her slender hand in mine ; ‘ and still
The shadow lingers, dark and chill,
Cast by the eclipse of Friendship’s star
Over his days.’ Here her voice took

A softer accent, and a look
She turned upon him, such as are
By pitying angels cast on those
Who, from the crimes and errors free
That desecrate Humanity,
Share of Humanity the woes.
Then—‘ But young leaves shall clothe again
The tree with verdure, in whose shade
The weary heart from toil and pain
Finds rest awhile, and strength,’ she said,
And turned her clear, dark eyes on me.

“ ‘ Young leaves again shall clothe the tree,’
Her father said, and gently sighed ;
‘ But other hearts than mine shall hide
Beneath its shade their joy or woe.
The rudely-broken dream can know
No second being, though kind sleep
Return, and wrap the soul in deep
And calm repose ; so once dispelled
The bright illusions that have held
In thrall the spirit, never more
Can Time their magic hues restore.’

“ He ceased ; and, for his soul to dwell
Seemed in the Past, nor she nor I
Would break the silence here that fell,
Till he resumed : ‘ The glowing sky
Of morning not less, fair and bright,
Our senses charms, though clouds and night
Obscure at last its gorgeous hues ;
Then ere Life’s rose its freshness lose,
Let Youth its fleeting sweets inhale ;
Dispense the blooming heritage
With lavish hand, each passing gale
That makes less fragrant ; leave to age
Its wisdom, of unwilling toil
The fruit—harsh product of a soil
Watered by tears ; and Pleasure’s draught
Drain, that while sparkling must be quaffed.’

“ Thus did the hand of Fate, in words
Whose bitterness I knew not then,
The prelude in prophetic chords,
Strike of Despair and endless Pain.
O Clarence ! never may thy soul
The cold and barren wisdom learn

That robs of Fancy's glow the goal
Toward which thy eager steps may turn
In trustful hope, unflinching.
Oh ! rather weakly, blindly cling
To aught thy heart that satisfies,
Than, with a fatal knowledge wise,
The joy and bloom of Life beneath,
Discern the nothingness of Death.
But let me end. The sacred fire
At contact of two kindred souls
That springs to being, and controls
Our human destinies to higher,
Nobler ends than selfish toil
Can reach, unguided by its light,—
This sacred fire, its glow awhile
Diffused throughout my life, in bright
And fruitful bloom her nakedness
That clad with power beneficent ;
Then, in my breast its ardor pent,
Consuming with its fierce excess
My being, in thick, blinding smoke,
And flames, and lava-torrents broke,
That swift in blackened ruins laid

The beauty that itself had made,
With every flower of paler hue,
Beneath the sky of Youth that grew."

With pensive mien had Clarence heard
These words, with secret power that stirred
To pain the fibres of his heart,
Whose bitterness, if sprung alone
From Ernest's grief, or if his own,
Held there, remote and vague, some part,
He knew not ; nor, as Ernest paused
A moment, if the sigh his breast
That moved, by pity most were caused,
Or by forebodings dim.

"The rest,
If aught remains, what boots to tell,"
Ernest resumed : "if I too well
Or she too coldly loved, to keep,
Of heart and soul in unison,
Our mutual pulses ; or if one
More skilled than I the chords to sweep
Of woman's nature, sounds more sweet
Drew cunning from that instrument,

That made, with needful discords blent,
Of Life a harmony complete.
Enough that, ere the crescent moon
That lit that cloudless night of June
Three times renewed her growth since first
Upon my sight the glory burst,
With darkened vision that has left
My soul forever—from the skies,
Distilling balm, of Paradise,
Alone my steps I turned, bereft
Of Love's sweet immortality."

"O Ernest! Love can never die,
When once to being he has sprung,"
Said Clarence, "but keeps fresh and young
The soul forever, by his grace
Once hallowed. In thy heart his place,
Beneath the guise of hatred, still
He holds secure, nor can thy Will
Deny him right of shelter there.
Too lightly has thy soul Despair
Seized as her portion. Haply now,
In anguish no less deep than thine,

Her trust betrayed, thy broken vow,
Love's rudely-violated shrine
Forsaken, she thou lovest, mourns."

"My soul the love," said Ernest, "scorns,
That room for aught leaves in the heart,
That is not of itself a part ;
The love that can in aught find scope,
That is not the Beloved, for hope,
Desire, or fear ; that calmly claims
Its rights ; a willing sacrifice
Itself that gives not, but the price
Proportioned to its worth, that names.
Such love was hers—too weak to bear
A breath of vitalizing air.
What matter if so poor a thing
Still to existence feebly cling,
Or if the oblivion and the peace
It share, with Death's dull nothingness."

"Not so," said Clarence, "if aright
My judgment speak ; thy hand has thrown,
Ernest, the charm-dispelling stone

In Love's calm lake, the infinite,
Clear depths that mirrored, of the skies.
Some careless word, some haughty look
Thy soul impatient could not brook—
Her peace and thine the sacrifice."

Here Ernest quickly raised his head,
With reddened cheek and kindling glance,
Then while upon his countenance
The flush died out, he slowly said:
"Ay, looks and words the heart that pierce
And move the brain to madness. Hear,
Clarence, before thou judge, the fierce
And cruel pangs that could unsphere
My soul from her fixed orbit. Long
I bore in silence every wrong—
Kind glances on another cast—
Blushes when he approached—for me
The daily tortures Jealousy
Prepares for those who love. At last
The fatal hour unbidden came,
That kindled with swift wings to flame
The fires that smouldered in my breast.

Within her father's halls a guest
Again I stood—resolved to know,
This night, henceforth if bliss or woe
My portion were. I sought her where,
With downcast eyes and absent air,
Plucking the petals of a rose,
Apart she stood in shadow. Foes,
When they encounter, as we stood,
Confronting each the other, stand,
Silent and stern. 'A last demand
Upon your grace, this solitude
Unwonted,' bitterly I said,
'Now gives me room to make.' Her head
She turned aside—for in her eyes
A startled glance of quick surprise
Some thought she would conceal, betrayed
A movement of disdain she made
Then, in my breast the passionate
Deep sense of wrong that turned to hate
And blindly, recklessly I spoke
Cold, cruel words, and taunts that broke
Unconscious from my tortured breast.
'The pangs of self-reproach, at least,

The heart you outrage, would you spare.’
In scornful accents she replied
Calmly ; but vivid blushes dyed
Her cheek the while : ‘ Let us defer
What further converse you would hold
With me, till woman’s weakness, bold
In the support that weakness claims
From manhood’s strength, dare vindicate
My woman’s dignity—too late,
Indeed, to shun a bond it shames
My soul that gladly it has worn.’
O Clarence ! if the pangs have torn,
Of anguish, shame, remorse, despair,
Thy heart at once with ruthless power,
The tortures that my soul that hour
Endured, may find some reflex there.
I caught her hand—‘ Margaret, forget
Wild words,’ I cried, ‘ that only prove
The depth and fervor of my love.
Oh ! shall thy heart, compassionate
To every meanest thing that lives,
Its sternness all reserve for me ?
If to thy pity misery,

As once, the surest title gives,
Ah ! then indeed I need not fear,
Secure in wretchedness. Oh ! speak ;
Shall anguish sue in vain ?' Her cheek,
Even as I spoke, grew pale ; her hand
Trembled in mine, as, in the door,
Turning, I saw my rival stand.
I know not if my features bore
Some deadly token of despair
And madness, that the minister
Proclaimed me of Remorse and Woe,
But Margaret's lips were white, as ' Go !
Traitor,' I cried, and flung away
With scorn the hand in mine that lay.
' Go ! weave your spells for baser souls
Than mine, content the cup to drink
Whose treacherous delight consoles
In bondage those who willing sink
Below their manhood's high estate.'
At this a glance of scorn and hate
I fixed on him who stood between
My peace and me ; his face was pale ;
He would have spoken, but with mien

Haughty, yet sad, 'A thing so frail,
Said Margaret, 'as the love that dies,
Its root when Passion's ardor dries,
I know not why my soul should grieve
To lose ; yet, Ernest, this believe—
You do me wrong.' A gentler glance
Then on my foe she turned, and said
'Forget, I pray you, the ill chance
Of this discussion that has made
A stranger witness.' Silently
He bent his head, and turned away.
She would have followed. 'Margaret, stay!
I cried ; 'of this assurance be
Your actions proof ; this symbol wear
Of Love to-night upon your breast,
If still indeed my image there
Survives ' ; and in her hand I placed
A rose plucked from a tree that grew
Beside us. 'Symbol meet,' she said,
'Of Love on Summer fancies bred,
That fades when noonday heat the dew
Has drunk of morning. Thus I cast
Such love away ' ; and flung aside,

My love, rejected, scorned, denied,
Lay dead, a memory of the Past."

"And could'st thou, Ernest, had she done
Thy bidding, love so lightly won,
Esteem?" said Clarence; "nay, the fruit
Of over-ripeness from the tree
That drops, we prize not, though it be
Of aspect fair. The chords are mute,
Within the soul that deepest lie,
To Love, less dear that holds its high
Ideal than itself. O friend!
Be of good cheer; not yet the end
Has come of Joy; not cast aside
Thy love, but, cherished in her heart
It lives, by Sorrow justified,
That proves it of her life a part.
Friendship, endowed with vision clear,
Her burden, Ernest, bids thy soul
Cast off, and gird her loins, the goal
To reach; though hidden, that lies near."

"O Clarence! pause before you break

The spell," said Ernest, "that in thrall
My soul has held ; nor, thoughtless, wake
To seeming life the ghosts of all
The buried hopes the Earth that made
A Garden of Delight—to fade,
A phantom-train, into the gloom
Again of darkness and the tomb."

"Behold !" said Clarence ; "look on high,
Where, trembling through the violet sky,
The Star of Love her beams serene
Has rained on us till now unseen ;
Ernest ! to thee be this fair star,
Of Love and Peace the Harbinger."
And in the glance that Ernest turned
Above, was quenched the fitful glow
Of Passion, in whose stead now burned
The light of Reason ; and his brow
The impress of recovered strength
And calmness bore. "Clarence," at length
He said, "thy hand the healing balm
Has poured into my soul, that sick
Lay unto death. The holy calm

Of Peace shall banish dreams that thick
With spectres peopled my dark days.
I thought to guard in untried ways
Thy steps from pitfalls ; but, more wise
Thy Faith, than Unbelief, the guise
That takes of Wisdom, thou my bark
Hast drawn to safety, circling near
The whirlpool of Despair ; nor fear
Again that on the waters dark
Of Doubt she shall unfurl her sail.
No ! Clarence ; in this tranquil vale,
The abode of Friendship, where my soul,
In darkness groping, came to seek
A trusted hand to guide her weak
And trembling steps, by Faith made whole,
She stands erect, restored to sight.
And as of yonder star the bright,
Pure rays the twilight gild, so Truth,
That draws from urns of fadeless Youth
Her light, shall, shining from afar,
In darkness be her guiding-star.”

And homeward, as the twilight fell,

They turned their steps : in unison
Their hearts with Nature ; one by one,
In Eve's soft gloom grew visible
The stars ; repose and silence reigned
Around ; yet, as the fruit, contained
Within the blossom, sleeps unseen,
Save by the spiritual sense,
So, by the soul, a life intense
Was felt in that repose serene.

CANTO THIRD.

IN the soft and fragrant gloom
Of a rose-embowered room,
Clarence stood at close of day,
His bosom yielding to the sway
Of hopes he vainly sought to hide
From her who, silent, stood beside
The window, gazing absently
At the slowly-darkening sky,—
A dark-robed figure, slender, tall,
Whose presence breathed a charm around,
That soul and senses held in thrall,
Nameless and subtle, as profound.
If in the coils of her dark hair
It lay ; or in her regal air ;
Or in the magic of her smile ;
Or in her voice that could beguile
The soul from sadness, in its hour
Of bitterness, with gracious power ;

Or in the lustre of her face,
Serene and pure ; or in the grace
That like the soul of Harmony
Informed each gesture ; or, if, free
From earthly trace, it shone, a light
From Heaven, within the infinite
And holy calm of her clear eyes,
Why seek to know ; enough that where
She came, as Summer brings blue skies
Benign, and tepid, odorous air,
She brought a sense of sweetness, blent
With airs serener, vaguely felt,
From some diviner element,
Wherein her purer spirit dwelt.
But over all a shadow lay,
As sometimes o'er the fairest day
A tender melancholy broods,
That spoke of desert solitudes
Within her being, doomed to lie
Blasted and bare beneath Life's sky—
Rocks from whence no sweet waters sprung ;
Groves in whose gloomy shade no song
Of bird proclaimed to Heaven the joy

Of Being, dulled by no alloy
Of dark forebodings ; or the thrill
Of bitter memories, sadder still.
And now, as Clarence sought in vain
The passion that his voice betrayed
To hide, a vague, unwonted pain
Cast o'er her face a deeper shade.
More keen the pangs her breast that wrung,
To see a grief she could not heal,
Than any from the suffering sprung,
Of woes her heart alone might feel.
And fain, before the burning words
Found utterance, his lips that paled,
To silence would she bring the chords
Whose tones his secret soul unveiled.
Some dim reflection of this thought
Upon her face, the eye that caught
Of Clarence, cast o'er his bright dream,
Of Truth a chilling, daylight gleam.
A sickening sense of hopeless pain
Awhile the powers of heart and brain
Benumbed ; in dull oblivion sank
The glowing pictures that had graced

Existence, by Love's magic traced,
And left the page of Life a blank.
But 'midst the chaos of his soul,
Some instinct of his nature, still
That o'er his being held control,
Inspired with strength his fainting Will
To keep her state ; that if, indeed,
By Fate this misery were decreed,
His heart might 'round her dying throes,
Of Silence wrap the mantle, strong,
If not to bear, to hide the woes
With anguish that her fibres wrung.
And no discordant tone betrayed,
Though, low his accents, as he spoke,
That Fate had dealt his breast a stroke
His life a blighted thing that made
Henceforth, that flower nor fruit could yield
Of earthly growth again. The light
Within his eyes that had revealed
The hopes that lit his soul, the night
Had quenched, indeed, of Misery ;
And pale his brow ; yet calm and free
From shadows that might tell of dark,
Despairing thoughts.

“ My fragile bark,
Margaret,” he said, “ too near the shore
Has drifted, where the breakers roar
That menace shipwreck ; and while clear
From Reason’s swiftly darkening sphere,
Some ray yet shines, her course to guide
Through stormy waves, though wind and tide
Onward with fatal power impel,
Back must I turn ; and so, farewell !”

“ Nay, Clarence, let the sacred name
Of Friendship first,” said Margaret, “ claim
Its rights. Before the light, whose ray,
Serene and pure, my lonely way
Illumed awhile, is quenched again
In darkness, let it penetrate
With vital power, the abyss where Pain
With undisputed sway, her state
Has kept. The pangs she cannot cure,
Let Friendship teach this grief-wrung breast
With resignation to endure ;
And if not Happiness, find rest.
Long have I borne the bitterness

Of hidden grief ; long has my heart,
With Misery's elaborate art
That spun from her own wretchedness
Her shroud, in darkness lain. Behold,
O friend ! her tomb, where, dead and cold,
She lies, with this poor, withered rose,"
Here from its shrine a casket rare
She took, and Clarence bade uncloset
The sacred urn. With reverent care,
While Margaret bowed her head, he raised
The lid, and, pale and silent, gazed
Within, with memories of dead
And vanished joys, forever fled,
Where his last hope extinguished lay.
But as he gazed, a sudden ray
Of sacred joy from some pure spring,
Eternal and divine, its life
That took, his face, transfiguring
Its sorrow, lit ; so, when the strife
Of warring elements has ceased,
At some fierce tempest's close, though still
The sullen clouds hang dark and chill,
Obscuring heaven, far in the west

A gleam breaks forth, awhile the scene
That gilds with radiance serene
And cold till Night the dusky veil
Draw, of Oblivion, and shroud
In its soft folds alike the pale,
Clear sunlight, and the storm-rent cloud.
“So dead and cold, that when from Heaven,”
Margaret resumed, “the summons came
For him, upon my heart whose claim
Was first and strongest, who had given
My life its earliest joys, no thrill
Responsive there of pain it woke ;
Like some poor lute, by one rude stroke
Whose chords are shattered ; and no skill
Can move them more, of joy or grief
To breathe the accents—sweet as brief,
Alas ! the charmèd melody
To Ernest’s careless touch it gave.”

Here Clarence took her hand with grave,
Sad tenderness. “Though not for me,
Margaret,” he said, “the joys divine
From Love’s celestial source that spring,

Yet let the happiness be mine,
To them I love those joys to bring
And though no flower my hand shall cull,
Whose seeds I plant, with gracious bloom
Thy future days that beautiful
And sweet shall make, if on my tomb,
When life, with all its joy and pain
And hope, is done, a wreath thou lay,
Of simple blossoms, not in vain,
For me, in Love's warm, vital ray
Their tender bloom shall they unfold ;
A lingering fragrance round my cold
And still repose their sweets shall shed ;
And oh ! if o'er my lowly bed,
Margaret, thou sometimes drop the tear
Of Friendship, not in vain the dear,
Bright dream my unawakened soul
With nobler longings that endowed,
Than she had known before." He bowed
His head, and sought to gain control
Over his grief at this. " Forgive
This selfish sorrow," he resumed,
" Dear friend ; the fire that has consumed

The altar, while the gifts survive
Untouched, to Love that I had raised,
Awhile has left me blind and dazed.
Darkness my soul must therefore seek,
And kind repose, before her weak
And troubled vision see aright.
Yet shall one ray of sacred light
Illume that darkness—oh ! more dear,
Reflected from the cloudless heaven
Of thy calm days, than aught that here
Fate could of brighter joys have given
My life, unsanctified by thee.”
Again he paused ; then calmly said :
“ Let me at least the herald be
To thee, of Happiness ; not dead
The sacred fire its glow that cast
Over thy swiftly-shadowed Past.
Quenchless, the ashes cold beneath
Of Hope’s fair fabric, by its own
Fierce strength in ruins laid, the breath
Of vitalizing airs has blown
To clearer light its flame ; and now
With warmth and light it shall endow

Thy being, cold and dark too long.
Margaret, to bear this joy be strong—
Ernest thy love than life more dear
Still holds ; with anguish torn his heart
Nor happiness, nor rest apart
From thee has known, and— he is near.”

The swift blood mounting to her face,
As Clarence spoke, a moment dyed
Margaret's pale cheeks, then every trace
Of color, with its ebbing tide
Slowly departed ; to her breast,
Closing her eyes, her hand she pressed,
And would have fallen, but Clarence caught
Her lifeless form. A moment there—
A moment with the anguish fraught
And bliss of years, he held her fair,
Pale face upon his heart, beneath
That wildly beat ; her fragrant breath
A moment on his cheek he felt ;
Then on a low couch reverently
He placed her, and beside her knelt,
Unconscious still. “ Margaret, for thee

Life means no longer suffering,
Regret, and soul-consuming strife,"
He gently said ; " then oh ! to life
Return ; and joy that it shall bring
At last to thy long-sorrowing soul."
To her pale cheek the color stole
Softly, while Clarence spoke ; her eyes
Unclosing, slowly to his face
She raised them ; of her glad surprise
Remorse and pain usurped the place ;
And, " Clarence, oh ! forgive," she said,
Forgive the pangs that I have made
Thy heart to suffer—all too poor
My worth to recompense thy love.
Let Friendship to thy life restore
Its vanished brightness, and approve
Her sacred power—not less divine
Than that of Love himself ; and when,
Dear friend, thy soul attains again
Her pure and lofty calm, some bright
And joyous life more blest than mine,
That never of the dreary night
Of Grief has felt the shadow chill—

Some fair young life unconscious still
Of Misery, shall 'round thee shed
Its sweet and gracious influence ;
And Love, when troubled dreams are fled,
The crown at last, and recompense
Of days from darkness won shall be.”
Clarence arose—“ To me more dear,
Margaret,” he said, “ the memory
Of Love that in its sepulchre
Now lies, than, clad in living bloom,
Earth's fairest vision of Delight.
Nor fear that, of the sacred light
That burns within that silent tomb,
The pallid ray shall gleam for ill,
Across my cold and empty days.
No ; to the eye invisible
Of Sense, those spiritual rays,
Of higher things the images,
In transitory glimpses caught,
Shall fix upon my soul ; and these
Companionship shall bear me, fraught
With sweetness and content ; not all
Unhappy therefore is my lot,

Dear friend, nor let a shadow fall
O'er thine, more blest that it is not."
"O Clarence! noble, generous soul!"
Said Margaret, slowly as he raised
His eyes, and on the horizon gazed,
Where softly, deepening shadows stole,
Blending in one the earth and sky—
Clarence, beside thy pure and high
Ideal, how ignoble seems—
How poor and mean the life in dreams
Of Happiness its powers that wastes!
Oh! to the soul like thine, that tastes
Of springs eternal, of what worth
The shallow waters of our Earth,
That, when a little while the sun
Of Happiness has shone upon
Their clear and sparkling breast, exhale
Their life upon the passing gale;
Or haply deeper, stagnant, breathe
Around, insidious, pain and death!"

A flush suffused, as Margaret spoke,
The face of Clarence. "Nay," he said

Sadly, while from his bosom broke
A sigh ; “ my spirit too has fed
At earthly sources, and if now
She turns to purer springs, no need
She therefore claims ; to disallow,
Were vain, the pangs by Fate decreed.”
He paused ; then slowly said : “ Farewell !
Too long the shadow of my grief
Has kept from thee the sunshine brief
That brightens Earth ; too long the spell
Has held thee captive, round thy young
And blameless life that Misery flung.
Margaret, that fatal spell to break—
From Fate to wrest, for thy dear sake,
Her secrets, that thy life may be
Henceforth from every shadow free,—
Be this my portion ; not in vain
Then shall my life have borne this pain
And bitterness ; nor breathe a sigh
For me, in Love’s sweet harmony
Discord to make ; not all unblest
My lot, while Happiness thy breast
Her dwelling make ; her steps to guide

To thee, by ways too long untried,
Be now my task ; once more, farewell ! ”

His face, as Clarence spoke the knell
Of Hope, grew paler ; but no sign
Of strife, the storm that raged within
His soul, betrayed ; he calmly held
The hand of Margaret in his own
A moment, while her bosom swelled
With silent anguish—and was gone.
Then, in her hands as Margaret bowed
Her face,—“ O Life ! ” she cried aloud,
In bitterness, “ hast thou no draught,
Indeed, of Joy, that may be quaffed,
Nor leave upon the lips, when past
Its sweetness, Sorrow’s bitter taste ?
O noble heart ! the sacrifice
To Fate, must thou, by lingering fires
Consumed, with all thy high desires
Unsatisfied, for me the price
Too costly pay, of happiness ? ”
In vain the weight that seemed to oppress
Her spirit, would she cast away,

But, powerless, yielded to its sway.
Through all the fibres of her soul
A penetrating sadness stole,
Sapping its strength ; too faint to fall,
Tears slowly gathered in her eyes,
Dimming her sight ; and life, and all
Life's joys seemed phantom mockeries.
Thus, while she drifted down the stream
Of Feeling, Thought, as in a dream
By Will unguided, on her ear
The sound that fell, of footsteps near,
Within her heart an echo woke,
That drew, as by the magic stroke
Of some enchanter's wand, her soul
From sorrow's unopposed control.
Swiftly life's languid current flowed
Again, again her bosom glowed
With Hope's undying fire, and all
Her being to Youth's natural,
Sweet impulses toward happiness
Blindly she yielded ; the embrace
In which, close-clasped on Ernest's breast
She lay, in one short moment, held,

The bliss divine of perfect rest,
And all Love's magic power, revealed.

“Margaret! Belovèd! thy dear head
Do I indeed upon my heart
Hold once again?” in tones, he said,
With passion tremulous; “to part
On earth no more again, has Fate
My footsteps led to thee at last,
Through thorny ways, compassionate
For once to Misery? The Past,
Oh! dare I hope, has left no sting
Within thy soul, with subtle power
Thy life to poison at its spring,
And rob the Future of its dower
Of Hope and sweet expectance? Speak!
O Margaret! bid me not despair.
Alas! the roses on thy cheek
Have died, and left the lilies there
Alone—accusers mute that plead
For him, reluctant they condemn.
Ah! sweet, my pardon do I read
Aright within thine eyes? No dream

Of some lost state is Happiness?
No phantom that allures us on
With smiles deceitful, and is gone,
Even while her form we seem to press
Close to our hearts? Oh! tell me thou,
If warm and breathing, here on Earth
She dwells, a guest of heavenly birth,
With sacred halo round her brow
That lingers still, of light divine;
Oh! tell me if the hope be mine,
Her hand in friendly clasp to take,
My guide to joys immortal. Make,
O Margaret! make the assurance sweet
Of bliss, with one dear word complete,—
Say that, unworthy though I be,
Some place thy heart still keeps for me.”

“ Ah! Ernest, in my heart too deep
Is traced thine image, ever there
To be effaced; or empire share
In it with aught,” said Margaret; “keep,
Belovèd, this assurance; this
Has been thy crime—to doubt my love.”

“And let these altered features prove,”
Ernest replied, “of slighted bliss
That I have paid the penalty.”
“Thou, too, hast suffered then,” a sigh
Her voice commoving, Margaret said,
And with caressing gesture laid
Her hand upon his cheek. His face
A sudden pallor overspread,
Then the returning blood a red,
Deep flush left there, in his embrace
As closer to his heart he caught
Again her form. “Oh! cheaply bought
By years of misery,” he cried,
“This happiness. Beneath the wide,
O’erarching vault of Heaven lives
No creature in this hour more blest,
By aught its care or wisdom gives,
Than I, its dearest treasure pressed
Thus to my heart. My pearl! my flower!
Henceforth shall all my life atone
For every pang thy heart has known;
Henceforth the care of every hour
Shall be thy happiness. But, sweet,

This little hand is cold ; come, rest,
He said, as to his lips he pressed
Her hand, and drew her to a seat,
Where, pillowed on his breast her head,
Silence a while they kept. At last,
Breaking the spell around them cast
By Love's sweet magic, of the Dead
With reverent tenderness they spoke,
And of the bitter Past, that woke
Within their hearts a pang again
Of anguish and unconquered pain,—
A pang that drew a keener force,
In Ernest's bosom, from remorse,
As Margaret told him how, by Death
And Absence solitary left,
She came, to find, of Joy bereft,
A haven of repose beneath
The roof her mother in the days
Of girlhood that had sheltered ; still
That sheltered in the peaceful ways
Of life, remote from storms that kill
The tender bloom of Being, her,
The friend and sister, who the dear

Companion of those days had been.
Here in this calm and peaceful scene
She thought to nurse her grief, nor more,
A dweller on the busy shore
Of Life, to pleasure's perfumed gale,
Or Hope's fresh breeze the storm-rent sail
To unfurl again, of her frail bark ;
No more again to dare the dark
And stormy flood that holds within
Its depths the gem whose light serene
Gilds the repose from conflict won.
Then Ernest told how here he came,
His hopes destroyed, his peace undone,
A balm to seek in Friendship's name
To soothe the anguish of his soul.
He came a pilgrim to the goal,
Within whose shadow, poppy-crowned,
In dreamless sleep Oblivion lies.
And lo ! her brow with roses bound,
Love's radiance in her starry eyes,
There Happiness to greet him stood.
Now by her soft, sweet accents wooed,
To heights divine his spirit soared,

On Hope's swift pinions borne. The Word
Supreme Creation's mysteries
Unlocking, through his soul in far,
Reverberating cadences,
Faint echoed, that from star to star,
Through space, in this transcendent hour
Of sacred Love's all-conquering power,
Soaring, a something more divine
Exulting owned, than all those bright
And glorious orbs with light that shine,
That, quenched, shall sleep in endless night
A something, to the Power that made
Those wonders, that proclaimed her kin—
That incorruptible, within
His being, when the splendors fade
That light this Universe, shall live,
And Time and Space themselves survive.
Oh ! could the sacred rapture last,
Thus that exalts the soul above
Her mortal state—could we but cast
Aside the bonds that make of Love
The slave of selfishness, then Earth
Might bear a nobler race, whose worth

Were equal to their Destiny ;
Then might Humanity her high
And glorious end attain ; then Truth
Should languish in her chains no more,
A captive Queen ; the soul might soar
Then to unconquered heights ; and Youth
Might realize her dreams. Alas !
For us, too swift the moments pass,
To mortal vision that disclose
A fleeting glimpse of Heaven ; the fire
Divine, that Earth transfigures, glows
More bright, the sooner to expire ;
And all the splendors that in gleams
Of Inspiration we behold,
When we awaken from our dreams,
Leave but their ashes, dead and cold.

In speech by Hope interpreted,
While spoke the Future, swift away
The moments sped ; the tranquil day
A tranquil evening in its stead
Had left, by moonbeams softly lit,
Whose silvery lustre lent a pale,

Pure splendor to the scene. The veil
From mortal sight the Infinite
That hides, with all her myriad forms
And modes of Being—sleeping germs
Of worlds yet tenantless—extinct
And outworn worlds, with all that lies
Of Nature's wondrous mysteries
Of Life, between, together linked
In one unbroken chain, by Force
Creative, that the Universe
Harmonious guides unseen,—the veil
Between the worlds of Soul and Sense
Seemed in the solemn moonlight, pale
And softly bright, to grow less dense ;
And dimly shone to mortal view,
Of Life mysterious glimpses through.
The thought of Death, in that sweet hour
Of peaceful influence, lost its power
To chill the ardent soul ; a sleep
It seemed, beneficent and deep,
That separates, of two busy days
The activity ; and Pain and Strife—
Sin, and the misery of Life—

Seemed, in the moon's pure, pallid rays,
More shadowy and unreal. High,
Calm thoughts of Immortality
Filled in that hour the soul, content,
Upon the Force Omnipotent,
To rest her hopes, that called her forth
From Nothingness, and made the Earth,
Fruitful and fair, her dwelling-place,—
Recipient of unearned grace.
But not for Ernest, though his soul,
Unconscious felt the sweet control
Of Nature's holy calm, the close
Of Day was fraught with such repose,
As with the pensive charm it lends
The hour, a subtle sadness blends ;
One thought alone filled heart and brain—
He loved, and was beloved again.
Nor did he note the sigh suppressed,
Ere breathed, that gently stirred the breast
Of Margaret, as, with brow serene,
Though pale, and sad, yet tranquil mien,
Before her mind arose the form
Of Clarence, like some slender palm,

That tossed and beaten by the storm,
Stands yet erect, nor mars the calm
Of Nature's fair aspect when past
The tempest, till its slow decay,
And bare and withered boughs at last
Its secret, cureless wound betray.
For well she knew that when the roots
That, hidden, deep and wide have struck,
Are wrenched by some convulsive shock,
And loosened from the earth, no fruits
Can crown the tree's fair promise—dead
Amidst the activity it stands,
Of Nature, and by sunshine fed
In vain, no more with bloom expands.
These troubled thoughts upon her brow
A shadow cast, as, "Margaret, now,"
Said Ernest, "Earth can hold no ill
For me henceforth ; for Death shall still
United keep us when his dart
Our hearts shall pierce together. One,
One ill incurable alone
My soul could know—from thee to part."
In Margaret's breast the vague, dumb pain

That pity and remorse awoke,
She sought to hide from him in vain,
In tender accents as he spoke,
His eyes upon her fixed ; too well
Her heart the fatal knowledge proved,
That not alone to be beloved,
And love again, can break the spell
Over our human destinies
That hangs for ill ; so subtly these
Are linked together, each still gives
Again the impulse it receives,
In ceaseless change ; as waves that take
Their swell in northern tempests, break
On tropic islands ; or, as sound
Once wakened, to its furthest bound
Through space reverberates. The shade
Upon her countenance betrayed
At last to Ernest that some grief
That found not in his love relief,
On Margaret's heart lay heavy ; " Speak,
Belovèd, have I lost indeed,"
He cried, " of Love the glorious meed,
Through senseless folly, blind and weak ? "

“Nay, Ernest,” Margaret answered, “take
This rose, that, treasured for thy sake,
The witness of my tears has been,
And read, its faded bloom within,
What life has held for me of fair
Or bright, since first, the emblem there,
Of Love, within its tomb it lay,
Though blighted, fragrant in decay.”

Like waves with mighty force that roll,
Each footprint sweeping from the shore,
The Past came surging o'er his soul,
As Margaret spoke, with deepening roar,
From Memory's caverns, in its course
Effacing all the glowing hues
That Love and Hope around diffuse,
Beneath the tide of vain remorse.

“O Margaret ! let Oblivion
Forever shroud that fatal hour,”
He cried, “when yielding to the power
Of foes in darkness leagued, her throne
Reason awhile forsook. That crime,

That all too short to expiate
Were life, from off the scroll of Time
Let Love efface, compassionate
To madness by himself inspired.
Oh ! if my spirit had aspired
To joys less perfect, less divine,
Not now the bliss, the pain were mine,
That only on his worshippers
Devout and true, the god confers.
But o'er thy soul some shadow lies,
Belovèd, that its depths conceals ;
No longer in thy limpid eyes
The light its every thought reveals.
Some hidden grief lies cold between
Thy heart and mine. Alas ! too late,
With bitter mockery has Fate
Back to my arms restored, serene,
And fair of aspect still, indeed,
The form inanimate of Love ?
Oh ! must my heart the anguish prove,
The bitterest to the soul decreed,
Of lavishing endearments vain
On ears that hear not, lips again

That answer not, of Death the prey ?
Less bitter were it in the tomb
To hide his lifeless form away,
Than one by one, watch grace and bloom
And every fair delight depart,
O Margaret ! if indeed thy heart
Through loyalty to Love alone,
Now wears his bonds to fetters grown—
If Pity hath beguiled thy soul
Awhile from Reason's calm control,
And thy unselfish nature takes
For Happiness the sacrifice,
Accustomed, gladly that it makes,
Nor deems too high the costly price,
Forever though it leave thee poor,
That buys another's peace—oh ! blot
From Time this hour, and count it not
In the fair record of thy pure
And calm existence. Let me go,
And bear with me my cureless woe ;
Less wretched thus, than day by day
To see the blossoms fall away
From Love's fair tree, beneath the breath

Of chill indifference, till bare
It stands, yet nor the peace of Death
Nor Life's activity may share."

A glance reproachful, full of pain
And sadness, Margaret, as he ceased,
On Ernest cast. "My heart again,"
She gently said, "awhile released,
Too credulous, from Misery's sway,
Is ready on her joyless way
Lonely to wander ; in thy mind
Too wide suspicion's poison-weed
Has spread, to perish, nor behind,
Ernest, leave still its deadly seed.
Then, ere to growth untimely nursed
By Passion's heat, the bloom it kill
Of Love's first blossoming ; while still
The image of that Love, as erst,
Serene and steadfast, may survive,
A sacred Memory in my heart—
Let us in peace forever part,
Nor wait the death Distrust must give
At last to Love." As Margaret ceased,

The flush of anger that o'erspread
The face of Ernest, in his breast
Betrayed the tempest. "Rather dead,
Now in thy heart," he cried, "lies Love,
Thus calmly that thy words approve
A sentence that for me Despair
And Madness means. Yes, let thy fair
Smooth tongue to cold indifference
Transfer the speech of Reason. Bring,
And call on Heaven the vain pretence
To sanctify, thy offering—
The worthless plaything of a day—
Before Love's sacred shrine to lay.
Oh! had thy heart the bitterness
Of absence known, the anguish vain
Of hopeless love, not now again
Thus calm could'st thou the lot embrace.
Our parting that decrees—for me
Soon shall my suffering cease to be."
Then in dejection on the seat
He sank, from which in passion's heat
He had arisen. The deepening gloom
Of night, and silence, filled the room.

A moment Margaret paused ; then said,
In gentle accents, as she laid
Her hand upon his shoulder . . . “ Nay,
Ernest, within thy soul her sway
Let Reason hold again. Too well
Thou knowest that within my heart
Thy image shall forever dwell,
To think, though thou and Fate should part
Our destinies, that Fate or thou
From Memory’s power could free me now.”

The Moon behind a passing cloud
A moment that had veiled her light,
Here through the windows poured a flood
Of silver splendor, softly bright.
Touched by its glory, to his view
Disclosed, her face, as Margaret ceased,
That bore of pain the pallid hue.
Remorse and anguish in the breast
Of Ernest woke. “ O deadly draught ! ”
He cried, “ my eager lips that quaffed,
Has Nature for thy poison, then,
In all her stores no antidote ?

And shall the spirit drink in vain
Of healing waters, when the hot
And scathing breath of Jealousy
Has once passed over her? To be
The willing slave of that she scorns,
Must she descend? O Margaret! leave
To misery that too well she earns;
The soul that could from thee receive
Her crown of Love, yet counterfeit
Would prove its jewels. Fate has set
Her seal upon me; and mine eyes
With blindness hath she struck, the path
Heedless that I might tread, to Death
That leads, and madness. I the price
Alone must pay, nor drag thee down
To those unfathomed depths where lie
In wait Despair and Misery.
Farewell! forget that thou hast known
One in whose grasp the perfect Flower
Of Happiness a moment lay;
But, driven to madness by the power
Of fatal spells, who cast away
Its petals to the winds; yet kept,

Of sweets within its heart that slept,
The memory in his soul to make
Accurst existence for its sake."

"Ernest," said Margaret, as he ceased,
"Thy hand remorseless, all too late
A bond would sever, that has passed,
Alas ! beyond the power of Fate.
Go, then ; but bear within thy heart
The assurance that, from life with thee
The beauty and the joy depart,
To bloom no more on earth for me."

"Margaret !" cried Ernest, "oh ! forget
The madness that my soul has held
In fatal thrall. Here at thy feet
Let me for pardon sue, that sealed
With those kind drops that in thine eyes
Now stand, the Gates of Paradise
Again shall open for me. Speak !
To anguish doomed, and endless pain,
Belovèd, shall I sue in vain ?"


He paused ; a flush suffused her cheek,
As bending down, her lips to his
She pressed ; and softly said : “ Be this
The seal of pardon and of peace
Between us, Ernest ! so my love
Shall, justified, her power approve
To vanquish evil spells, thy soul
That held in their unblest control.”

“ Oh ! may my soul forever lose
'Twi't Good and Ill the grace to choose,”
Said Ernest, “ if this sacred hour
She e'er forget, or to the power
Of Darkness yield again. At last,
Margaret, believe that madness past
Forever from the soul by thee
Thus consecrated. Let me be,
Here and hereafter by the slow
And subtle fires of vain remorse
Consumed, if e'er thy spirit know
A pang in me that has its source.”

And Margaret, as on Ernest's breast

Her weary heart awhile found rest,
Her silent vows preferred to Heaven
That to his spirit might be given
Indeed the simple faith that seeks
No evil in the thing it loves ;
But gladly to the voice that speaks
Of Goodness lends an ear, that moves
The soul to sweet contentment. Fain
Would she believe her vows in vain
Were offered not ; yet when at last
Ernest was gone, and o'er her dreams
The sun of Happiness his beams
Softly diffused, some shadow cast
By clouds unseen, her soul with chill
Forbodings filled of coming ill.

CANTO FOURTH

PIRIT ! enthroned upon eternal heights
Who sittest, Virtue, clad in light serene
Thou offerest to mortals no delights,
In thy effulgent majesty unseen,
Save, when the veil by anguish rent, the soul
Stands bare in thy dread presence, and with calm
And tranquil mien thou pointest to the goal
Beneath thy feet ; thou offerest no balm
To heal her bleeding wounds, yet at thy shrine
She pours in glad libation the life-blood
Of her mortality ; for thou divine
Unchanging witness to the living God
Dost bear, when, spurning, of her high desires
Unworthy, Earth's best gifts, to Immortality
And all its glorious attributes, by thee
Foreshadowed dimly, proudly she aspires.
Thou, through heroic souls, from age to age
The sacred fire who hast kept alive,

With vital breath of Truth our heritage,
Kindle to nobler heat our spirits, that we strive
More earnestly the glorious heights to attain,
Whereon thou dwellest, though each footstep leave
Its trace in blood ; knowing the soul through Pain
Alone her consecration may receive
To thy pure service ; so were Earth of Right
The holy Temple, lit by thy transfiguring light.
The Summer sun declining shed
A softened splendor o'er the scene,
As Clarence with dejected head
Sat all unconscious of the green
And smiling landscape that around
Its fresh and glowing charms displayed ;
His steadfast gaze bent on the ground
In far abstraction that betrayed,
Though past the strife, the victory won,
Still in his soul that each desire
Laid on the altar, one by one,
Of Virtue, there in flames to expire,
Kindled by his own hand, had left
Its shade behind to haunt his dreams
And solitary hours, bereft

Forever of Hope's vital beams,
For never more the cheerful Dawn
Before whose splendors phantoms flee,
Might break upon his soul, withdrawn
Forever from her ministry.

No more ; yet therefore not all dark
For him Life's sky ; for in his breast
Glowed a divine and deathless spark,
Its light that o'er the shadowy West
Now cast, toward which his inward gaze
Was turned, with radiance cold and clear
Touching its gloom, till kindling rays
Of glory through the atmosphere
Spread softly, and his soul stretched forth
Her wings, to clasp the Infinite,
That in the anguish of this birth
Of nobler powers, to her sight
Grew dimly visible. Thus caught
His spirit to far heights of Thought,
Borne on the breeze the hollow sound
Of fiery hoofs that beat the ground,
Approaching swiftly, rudely broke
The spell that held him, and awoke

Within his breast a vague, wild fear
Of deadly peril, drawing near.
Peril to those he loved ; for him—
No more might Fate, with aspect grim
Affright his soul ; for Hope no more,
With syren voice to Pleasure's shore
Could lure him now ; and he who spreads
No sail, the storm-tost ocean dreads
No longer—bitter recompense
Of Pain, that from the flames intense
Alone, where Happiness expires,
Spring in the soul the deathless fires
To being, that for her illumine,
Serene, the darkness of the tomb.

Before his Thought could shape the Fear
Its shadow chill that o'er him cast—
Of Fate the phantom-harbinger—
The wild-eyed coursers, hurrying past
In aimless flight, with grasp of steel
Had Clarence caught ; and now he lay
Pale on the ground, insensible
To Ernest's accents that betray,

As over him he bends, such pain
As Reason seeks to soothe in vain.

Dumb witnesses of his despair,
With quivering nostrils now they stand,
And foam-fleck sides, all trembling there,
Who wrought this woe, though Ernest's hand
No longer holds the reins that hang
Loose on their necks, where when he sprang
To succor Clarence, as he fell,
He threw them ; in their gaze remorse
And helpless anguish seem to dwell,
In something that might take their source
Akin to our Humanity.

Passive they stand, while long in vain
The senses Ernest seeks to free
Of Clarence from the leaden chain
That holds them bound. At last a sigh,
Deep-drawn, and faint—a sightless gaze
That slowly in the awakening eye
Grows conscious with the dawning rays
Of Reason ; then a pallid smile,
Toward Ernest as he looks, the while

Whose heart stands still, and life in slow
And fluctuating tide to flow
Once more begins ; once more the bond
Of Nature joins in friendly clasp
Their souls, before the dim Beyond
Could Clarence, groping darkly, grasp.

“ O fatal hour ! when first thine eyes
The wretch beheld who in the guise
Of Friendship,” Ernest cried, “ the cause
Of suffering thus was doomed to be,
Clarence, in his despite to thee,
His savior—the eternal laws
Of Justice breaking, that ordain
To Evil the award of Pain,
To Virtue Happiness. O Fate !
To me who prodigal too late
Hast ever been, must all indeed
Who love me, then, receive the meed
Of those, beneath the deadly shade,
Who resting, of the Upas, breathe
Destruction unaware, betrayed
By its fair seeming to their death ! ”

“Nay, Ernest,” faintly with a smile
Said Clarence, “let not grief beguile
Thy Reason thus ; did Virtue lend
Her help, secure that in the end
Nor loss nor suffering could she know,
Like knights of old romance, with steel
Enchanted, fighting, every foe
Who conquered, sovereign balm to heal
Their wounds, the while they carried, where
Were then her merit ? Then her fair
Exterior were hypocrisy,
Her godlike speech were but a lie.
But call not by so high a name
As Virtue, Nature’s impulse blind
The help the meanest wretch should claim
Freely, to give him in whose mind
No thought untrue to me could live ;
Who freely, as I freely give
My life, his life would give for me—
That were to wrong Humanity.”

The pallid smile forsook his lips
At this ; he closed his eyes, and life

Again was lost in brief eclipse,
While in his breast a silent strife
Destruction waged with Nature—fierce
As silent, while the Universe
For Ernest on that moment hung
Of all Eternity. At last
From anguish Fate, to whom he clung
With wild despair, while through him passed
Her sword, to Ernest's bosom gave
A respite short ; and her decree
Uttered, from which no power can save,
A treacherous tranquillity
Now in her aspect takes the place
Of menace and of wrath ; the face
Of Clarence once again the light
Of life's returning glow illumines ;
And once again the day is bright
For Ernest Friendship that entombs.
Illusive brightness that, alas !
For him before the day is done
Is turned to darkness that shall pass
Away with no returning sun.
For now at last the fatal truth

His soul has grasped, that with the high
And glorious promise of his Youth
Crushed in the bud must Clarence die.
Die, while within his veins the tide
Of life flows strong, while in his soul
Youth's sacred fire burns clear to guide
His footsteps to the exalted goal
Of Manhood's dearest hope—to Man
The tidings of his worth to bear—
That all the noblest spirit can,
He by his Manhood too may dare
To teach the lowest wretch that lives—
That Nature to her children gives
Alike the sacred right to unfold
The glorious possibilities
Of their Humanity, untold,
Undreamed of yet—that to be wise
Is the prerogative of none,
Wisdom by toil who has not won
And suffering—that to be great
Is of the man, not of his state—
That Happiness eludes the grasp
Forever, that would rudely clasp

Her form ethereal, and bestows
On him alone her dewy rose,
Who with his sweat the niggard soil
Moistens through unremitting toil,
That others gather of the bloom
Tardy it bear, above his tomb
Forgotten, though it fill the air
With fragrance. On the souls of men
These sacred truths to engrave, that there
The high Ideal might attain
To clearness, of a nobler life,
He proudly hoped, and 'midst the strife
And sorrows of our lot might shine,
Foreshadowing dimly things Divine.
And now as some fair blossom, still
While in its heart the fruitful germ
Lies hid, whose bloom and sweetness fill
The air with promise, by some storm
Is rudely crushed, its barren bloom
Back to the elements again
Restoring ; so into the tomb
Must Clarence sink—the dreams in vain
That he had dreamed—the proud hopes nursed—

Swift to the elements dispersed,
Pale shades to haunt the air, nor take
Substance from him, Humanity
To help, her chains that she might break,
And claim her lofty destiny.

This thought to Ernest's anguish lent
A keener force his soul that rent,
As over Clarence where he lay
Pallid upon his couch, he hung,
While o'er the west the closing day
A gold and crimson splendor flung.
"Friend of my soul! O Clarence, thou,"
He cried, "who life to me hast given,
Am I then doomed to lose thee now,
Myself the cause? Is there in Heaven
No mercy to stretch forth a hand
And save me from the dread abyss
Upon whose fatal brink I stand?
Can then such misery be as this?
Oh! do our hearts for nothing count
In Nature's cruel plan? The groans
Wrung from our anguish, do they mount

To Heaven to return unheard,
And echo through the heart in tones
That pierce its fibres like a sword ? ”

“ Nay, Ernest,” Clarence gently said,
“ Let not thy spirit wildly thus
Struggle with Fate ; nor think for us
Alone the universe was made,
That Nature in her course must pause,
If her unchanging, sleepless laws
Show in their justice of how slight
And baseless value is the right
We claim to be her master. Power
Of knowledge is the priceless dower ;
And only when his right he proves
To win, for that herself he loves,
This royal bride, will she bestow
All that she has with generous hand
Upon her lover, and forego,
That proudly at her side he stand,
For him her solitary state.
But Ernest, these reflections grate
Now on thy soul I see. To part

From thee thou thinkest moves my heart
Too slightly. Yet not so ; but fain
Would I again, as once before,
Depriving of its sting the pain
That racks thy spirit, peace restore
And strength to thee ; that so the wound,
When Fate divides our lives, profound
Although it be, and leave a scar
Forever, fester not, thy days
To poison." Here he paused ; afar
Upon the fading light his gaze
He fixed. On Ernest then his eyes
Turning, a pity infinite
Within their depths, he said : " The night
Is drawing near, and from the skies
Darkness falls slow and silent, soon
To wrap in her soft folds the Earth.
But yonder see the crescent Moon
With tender radiance shine, the dearth
Of warmer light supplying ; so
Shall Memory with reflected beams
Cast o'er thy darkened sky a glow
Serene from Friendship's vanished dreams."

“ O Clarence ! torture not my soul
With these vain words that cannot stay
The surging waves that o’er her roll
Of anguish,” Ernest cried ; “ her sway
Must Reason to a stronger power
Yield in my breast. I only know
That Destiny has in this hour
Struck at my peace a fatal blow.”

At this a shadow overspread
The face of Clarence ; then he said :
“ Ernest, draw nearer ; lay thy hand
In mine, and let us converse hold,
Such as do friends, to some far land
When one departs, who then unfold,
Each to the other every thought
Within his breast that hidden lies ;
So face to face their spirits brought,
They dwell in the Eternities ;
Nor Time nor Space shall keep apart
Their souls henceforward. In thy heart
Shall I not then still live to keep
Thy spirit sweet companionship ?

Shall not my spirit still endure,
Ernest, a power to mould for thee
Existence with a touch as sure
As though beside thee bodily
I walked ; and shall thy hand not take
The work that here I leave undone,
A sacred trust that for my sake
Wilt thou fulfil ; with each new sun
That lights thee to thy task, the vow
Renewing that thou mak'st me now ? ”

“ O Clarence ! would that never more
For me might dawn again the light
That thy dear face cannot restore,”
Said Ernest, “ to my aching sight !
Would that my worthless life for thine
Now could I on the blood-stained shrine
Of Destiny lay down, or share
With thee Oblivion ! ”

“ O friend ! ”

Said Clarence, “ fearest thou then the end
Of all is this indeed ? that there,
In yon illimitable space

For me exists henceforth no place ;
That this mysterious, viewless Power
Within me, for one little hour
That has endowed with faculties
And form divine the atoms brought
Together by its force, when these,
Dispersed, but not destroyed, have sought
Again their source, for that thou see
Its course no more, shall cease to be ?
No, while the Universe shall last,
This Power within me that its vast
And mighty scheme aspires to grasp—
This Power, exulting that would clasp
The Infinite, from height to height
Soaring, in ever bolder flight,
Till all the secrets of the spheres
Before her open lie ; yet hears,
'Mid syren voices that allure,
Or deafening trumpet-tones, the still,
Small Voice that says : ' The Law fulfil,
For this is Life Eternal,'—sure
And steadfast is the trust I hold,
That while the Universe shall be,

This Power that claims Infinity
As her true portion—that would mould
Thus to her higher uses Earth—
That whatso'er it know of worth
Gives to her dwelling, shall not own
Obedience to a law less just
Than governs matter ; dust to dust
Returning, so, when from the zone
She vanish, of our mortal sight,
Shall spirit seek companionship
With spirit ; through what times of sleep
Or of eclipse she pass—what light
Her entrance on a higher stage
Shall guide, of Being, know I not ;
But this I know, as knew the sage
Of old, that whatso'er his lot,
To him who follows Virtue still,
In Life or Death can come no ill."

"Clarence !" cried Ernest, as he ceased,
His eyes fixed on the darkening sky,
In rapt abstraction, half-released
The while, his spirit seemed to be

From earthly bonds—"Oh ! with what words
Would'st thou console the anguish vain
That rends my soul—her deepest chords
Thus to unutterable pain,
Moving with gentle touch. Oh ! now
Indeed I know my wretchedness.
Now when thou teachest me to bow
To Destiny, thy power to bless
My life, in losing thee, I know.
Yet, fear not that I would forego
The sacred hope again to own
The bond that joins my life to thine.
No ! from the depths of the Unknown,
Clarence, thy soul a star shall shine
To guide me safely to the Land
No longer strange to me, since there
Shalt thou to give me welcome stand,
Who with thee half my life dost bear."

Again, as Ernest ceased, a shade
Of pain that o'er the features passed
Of Clarence, in his breast betrayed
The struggle ; though his soul had cast

Aside indeed the bonds to life
And all the joys of life that held
Her fettered still, not yet the strife
Had ceased, that now the strength revealed
To her of human sympathies.
The burden that he could not ease
For Ernest, of the grief that pressed
With crushing weight upon his breast,
Fell back on his own heart to lie,
Unyielding there until the hand
Of Death from every earthly band,
With power supreme his soul should free.
Yet soon had vanished every trace
Of strife and suffering from his face ;
And calm his accents, as he said,
The while with gentle touch he laid
On Ernest's hand his own. " So I,
To other realms when I depart,
With thee shall leave the nobler part,
Dear friend, of my Mortality ;
All the high hopes within my soul
That I had cherished—to unroll
The banner of the sacred rights

Of men on Freedom's glorious heights ;
Of Truth the champion, to throw down
The gauntlet in her cause, nor cease
The strife till Victory should crown
Her brow with garlands green of Peace,—
These hopes, that in the bud for me
Have fallen blighted from Life's tree,
For thee shall bloom and bear sweet fruit
To nourish men ; for deep their root
Lies in a generons soil ; and dews
From heaven, and sunshine shall infuse,
Fear not, into the sap that feeds
Their life, a vital power, the needs
Supplying of their growth. And one,
One other trust when I am gone,
Ernest, with thee I leave ; and now,
Already when upon my brow
The hand of Death lies cold, to thee
Must I unveil my soul, nor keep
One chamber there where thou shalt be
A stranger ; falling thus asleep
Before thee, I shall say : ' Good-night,'
Knowing that all is well ; nor fear

For thee nor me the morning light
From slumber that shall wake us. Hear
The secret, then, within my heart
That I have guarded ; and if thine,
Ernest, with keener pangs the dart
Of pain pierce therefore, yet benign
The wound, for that the poison there
Of treachery lurks not, it shall heal
Before the gangrene of Despair
To Joy alike insensible
And Grief can make it." Here he paused
A moment, then in accents low
Resumed : " If ever I have caused
Thee aught of ill, before I go,
First would I from thy love the boon
Claim, of forgiveness."

" Oh ! not thou,"

Cried Ernest, " in oblivion
Dost need to hide thy deeds, nor bow
The head in penitence. For me
The bitterness of vain remorse !
For me the grasp of Misery,
The soul that with resistless force

Drags to unfathomed depths. My love,—
O mockery ! that it should prove
Thus powerless—with all of worth
It owns, already have I given
To thee, vain gift ! and if, henceforth,
My spirit with this anguish riven,
Knows here no peace, so shall she know
The sooner Peace eternal.”

“ Nay,”

Said Clarence, “ do we tread the way
Of life, to gather flowers that grow
Beside us then, with tears and cries
Of pain the thorns and darkening skies
Like children greeting ? Sink not down
Despairing, Ernest, from thy crown
Of bloom that some few blossoms fall,
Though they be fair and fragrant ; all
The beauty is not therefore gone
From life ; still shines in heaven the sun ;
Still blows the morning breeze ; and still
Canst thou, alike through Good and Ill
Cling to one faithful hand.” Again
He paused ; again his brow with pain

Was clouded ; then he said : “ Of her
Whom here I leave, the minister,
When I am gone, of Peace to thee,
Now would I speak, dear friend. When first
The heights to which Humanity
May climb, a revelation burst
Upon my soul in Margaret, then
The hope divine those heights to attain,
Led by her hand, awhile I kept,
A secret treasure in my breast—
Nay, friend, look not so pale ; the rest
Is quickly told. This hope that slept
In darkness and in silence, soon,
Like some bright vision of the night,
Dispelled by daylight’s chilling light,
Again into Oblivion
Sank, to the truth when it awoke.”
A flush of shame, as Clarence spoke,
The face of Ernest overspread ;
Then every trace of color fled,
And left the pallor of despair
And unavailing anguish there.

“ For me, predestined to destroy,”

He cried, "for thee the light and joy
Of life—to whom blind Fate has given,
While thou with empty hands stood by
Silent, the choicest gift of Heaven,
Thou on the shrine of Destiny
Thy life hast laid, a sacrifice ;
For mine the inestimable price
Paid, of thy life that might atone
For many a wrong that Earth has known—
O Clarence ! tell me for this grief
Is there in Earth or Heaven relief ?"

"Nay, have I wrought thee, then, a wrong
So deep ?" said Clarence ; "so thy heart
Must find in this when I depart,
The medicine to make it strong
To bear its pain—that all of worth
That in me dwells, go not with me
From hence, but with my memory
Live in thy life, to better Earth."

"Oh ! fear not that the price in vain,
Clarence," cried Ernest, "hast thou paid ;

No ; while my spirit shall retain
Her consciousness, this hour shall fade
Never from Memory, nor the vow
Be broken that I make thee now.
Henceforth my days I dedicate
To this—the promise to redeem,
That Nature, when she formed thy great
And noble spirit gave—the Dream
That lived within thy soul to make
Reality for men in all
That in me lies, for thy dear sake.”

“ So, Ernest, shall I peaceful fall
Asleep,” said Clarence, “ when the night
Around me closes ; but before
My spirit leave of Earth the shore
Familiar, of the Infinite
Within the shadowy realm to dwell,
To Margaret would I bid farewell.”

Softly the door, ere Clarence ceased,
Was opened, and within the room
Stood Margaret ; slowly in the West

The light was fading, but the gloom
Grew, as she entered, less profound,
Lit by the Moon's pale beams that threw
A tender radiance around,
A deeper pallor to the hue
Of anguish lending in her face.

“ So,” Clarence softly said, “ this grace
Has Fate accorded me—to close
Mine eyes 'neath tranquil skies, a dawn
Serene that promise ; to repose
Sinking, as, when the day is gone,
The tired child lies down to rest,
His latest look of consciousness
Resting on all his heart holds best
And dearest.”

“ We the bitterness,
Not thou,” said Ernest, “ of this hour
Must taste.—Behold the price that Fate
Asks for the life her mocking power
That spares, to make it desolate,
And tell me, Margaret, if the pain
That rends my soul can ever know,

While Thought her empire holds, again
Assuagement. Tell me for this woe
Is there in this wide Universe
A cure ?”

“O Clarence ! if the force
Of anguish wring a selfish cry
Of suffering from the breast, forgive
Our weakness,” Margaret said ; “ too high
Thy spirit ever moved, to live
Amid our meaner cares, content ;
Nor soaring, seek her element,
There by the law immutable,
Called, of her Being ; but if we,
In fetters of the senses still
Who struggle, with dim vision see
Only the void thou leavest here—
That thee no more, a Presence dear
Shall we perceive, our steps beside ;
Forgetting that no walls divide
The world of spirit, like the sea
That flows around the world of Sense,
An ever-during Unity,
Descending with sweet influence

In gentle dews, our dull, cold clay
To soften, that the vital ray
Its torpid mass may penetrate—
If, Clarence, we resist the fate
Thy life that severs from our own,
Because our human hearts have grown
In living union to thy heart,
And so, from thine when torn apart,
They bleed with human anguish—thou,
O friend ! already on thy brow
Who wearest, of a Peace divine
The solemn splendors, canst behold
A sorrow that may not be thine,
Compassionate ; thy love can fold
Within its ample shelter all
Our weakness.”

Here a shadow light
Over the spirit seemed to fall,
Of Clarence, from the Infinite,
Veiling her from their gaze awhile.
Then from his lips the pallid smile
Fading, her hand, as Margaret knelt
Beside his couch, he took and said

Softly, " My soul a space has dwelt
Blindfold 'midst mysteries ; but led
Back by thy voice to earth again,
Margaret, the pangs of earthly pain
With those she loves must she endure.
But Love the wounds of Love shall cure,
And what remains shall dearer be
For what is gone. My Memory—
Oh ! let me bear with me this hope—
Shall give your lives a larger scope,
Dear friends, that reaching forth to clasp
Your friend, the Infinite shall grasp ;
Until, than all that real seems,
It grow more real ; and the Dreams
Of Youth, by Hope inspired, pale
Beside the splendors of the True,
The soul with strength that can renew,
In Life or Death that shall not fail."

He ceased, and silence filled the room,
Unbroken, for a peace profound
Nature, reposing, breathed around
Without. Silently through the gloom

The stars came forth ; her silver rays
Silent the tranquil Moon sent down
From Heaven's blue vault. Clarence, his gaze
Full of a peace in unison
With Nature's, fixing there, at last,—
“Ye worlds,” he said, “that in the vast
And unknown realms of Space reveal
To man a grandeur that the soul
Within her depths may vaguely feel,
Though human wisdom shall unroll
Never to human ken the page
Whereon is traced the lore no sage
May read with mortal sight, for me
Within your orbits do ye move,
In all your wondrous harmony,
Henceforward meaningless? Above
The grasp forever shall ye shine
Of our Humanity, aside
Casting the fetters that confine
Her soaring spirit, when the wide
And unexplored extent of Space
She enter, that her dwelling-place
Shall be henceforth? This glimpse alone

Of all your wonders shall the Mind
Catch, that illumes the narrow zone
Of earthly Being? Unconfined
By limitations that control
Her powers here, shall she not pierce
The secrets of the Universe
At last exultant ?”

Silence fell
As Clarence ceased, a space on those
Who watched beside his couch. The veil
Whose folds around the portals close,
That open to the Infinite,
Darkened his spirit to their sight
Again awhile. Then on his brow
A sudden glory shone of Peace
And Joy ineffable.

“ And now,
Not,” he resumed, “ in bitterness
Of soul, nor in despair, must be
Our parting ; for the hour has come
When we must say farewell. To thee,
Ernest, a light that shall illumine
The vista of the coming years,

The steadfast trust that ministers
Now to my peace I leave—the bond
That joins our lives to knit again
In closer union, when beyond
The boundaries of mortal ken
We meet once more. And thee my place,
Margaret, I leave to fill ; that here
Our Ernest still may know the grace
And power of Friendship—still the dear
And strong support of Friendship claim
In pain or weakness—sacred tie
Whose bond is freedom ; in whose name
Our lives to such sweet harmony
Might move, did we but own its sway,
As might from Chaos Order draw,
And, joyful, the Eternal Law
Herself that gives, the Soul obey.”

And silence fell upon them, deep
And solemn ; from their view had passed
His Presence, in their souls to keep
Alive the bond that with the vast,
Mysterious realm of the Unknown .

Unites the Visible—unheard
His voice henceforth, a deathless tone
Vibrating in their hearts, the Word
Divine that it might echo. So
The chasm our Being that divides
Here from the Infinite, where flow
Of Life and Death the ceaseless tides,
Was bridged for them ; and in some hour
Of ecstasy, their souls the power
Transcending, of our mortal state,
Beyond the bounds might penetrate
That close us in, and gleams discern
Of quenchless fires afar that burn,—
Light of an endless Day that pours
Her splendors on celestial shores.

CYBELE.

EARTH, for the evil dreams that haunt her
sleep,
Though weary, cannot rest ;
But counts, through long, long nights, of those who
weep,
The tears that chill her breast.

In vain by shores remote and desolate,
She seeks her hollow caves—
There, too, of mortal anguish penetrate
The sounds, through storm-lashed waves.

In vain she seeks the populous city, proud
Record of deathless names
And high achievements ; for above the loud
Glad Pæan that proclaims

Wide to the spheres the triumph of her sons,
 With god-like step who tread,
She hears the unheeded wail of little ones
 Who piteous cry for bread.

She hears through festal strains of Want the cry,
 Despair's expiring groan ;
When no fond breast save only hers is nigh,
 Dying to lean upon.

In vain the silence of her valleys green
 She seeks, where bland airs woo
To slumber ; and the skies a charm serene
 Shed, soft as falling dew.

In vain ; her sons their peaceful solitude
 Invade with impious rage ;
And sanguinary war in deadly feud,
 Brothers on brothers wage.

Her breast maternal, whence their nourishment—
 They drew, insane they tear
With sacrilegious hate, till stained and rent
 Her garments, wan and bare

Beneath high Heaven, the scorn of sister spheres,
She lies, and cannot veil
The shame and anguish from her radiant peers,
That brand her forehead pale.

Below the cold, white Moon the lurid fires
That on her altars burn,
Show ghastly as each short-lived flame expires,
Or kindles in its turn.

Unholy rites that desecrate the graves
Where sleep her hallowed Dead—
Base worship of a Sorceress by her slaves
In willing bondage led.

A Sorceress vile that takes of Happiness
The semblance—Shade divine
That lures in vain pursuit, and vanishes
The eager grasp within.

For where can Earth in all her wide domain
The heavenly visitant
A fit abiding-place prepare where stain
Of Sin is not, or Want?

A lesser goddess must the vows receive,
Unworthy of her pure,
Calm service, in whose worship joys shall live
The senses that allure.

A goddess in whose veins with ichor blent,
Flows warmly some red blood ;
Whose worshippers with no cold ravishment
In holy solitude

Approach her shrine, but press with eager foot,
The fellow-worshipper
That tramples in his path, in vain his suit
Who struggles to prefer.

Oh ! shall we stand on Fortune's heights, content
Beneath our feet to see
Brothers with hopeless toil and anguish rent,
Press on despairingly ?

Shall we, who breathe of her fair haunts, the air,
Stretch forth no hand to them
Who, reaching up from black gulfs of Despair,
Would touch her garment's hem ?

Would touch her hem in some forlorn, wild hope
That healed their misery,
On Life's far verge for Happiness some scope,
Or for Content might be.

Alas ! by zephyrs lulled, o'er beds that blow,
Of poppies in the sun,
Their crimson glories haughtily that show,
How can the feeble groan

Our senses reach, that wrung from wretchedness,
Upon the wind is borne,
To swell of Heaven the thunders, when through stress
Of heat her clouds are torn.

Children of one fond mother, oh ! no more
At Fortune's cruel shrine,
Let us with dark, unnatural rites adore,
Ready to pour the wine

With reckless hand, of crimson life-blood pressed
Beneath the iron heel
Of Selfishness in silken raiment dressed,
From hearts like ours that feel ;

From hearts of our Humanity that share
 The common heritage ;
That thrill with hope, that sicken with despair,
 That burn with love or rage.

Oh ! shall we barter for a gilded toy
 That custom tarnishes,
Of all Life's fleeting bliss the purest joy
 Our feeble grasp can seize—

To wipe away their tears from eyes that weep ;
 The bleeding wounds to bind
Of hearts with anguish torn ; the weak to keep
 From utter loss ; the blind

Of spiritual sight their vision to restore ;
 The joy and harmony
Divine of Nature in the ear to pour,
 That cold and deaf would be ?

No longer like a plague-struck ship, let Earth
 Through Space pursue her way ;
Where wild Delirium, or reckless Mirth,
 Or Fear holds ghastly sway ;

That rudder broken, chart and compass lost,
Shrouds and look-out unmanned,
Drifts aimlessly, unheeding, billow-tossed,
Where looms the distant Land.

Oh ! for a swift-winged current of clear air
To sweep away the clouds,
Whose gloom the Universe divinely fair
From our dim vision shrouds ;

That looking forth beyond the bounds of Time
And Space our souls descry
Some reflex of the radiance sublime
That lights Eternity.

Whose rays the summits striking, of the heights
Her eagle-flight where Thought
Exulting takes, with such supreme delights
May stir the soul, as fraught

With vital power, her sleeping forces wake
To Action, heralding
The Dawn, while yet afar it lingers when it break,
That endless Day shall bring.

AUTUMN DAYS.

Profitions de nos derniers beaux jours.

IN Nature's breast life's languid tide
No more by hopes or fears
Is stirred ; no power can turn aside
The end her bloom that nears.

Yet in her face her coming doom
No sign of death betrays ;
More brightly glows her dying bloom
The swifter it decays.

So we, of Life the Summer done,
With calmer pulse await
Whate'er may come with each new sun
Of good or evil fate.

And in decay, as Nature wears,
While skies are soft, a smile,
So too, while linger balmy airs,
Let us be glad awhile.

What though each breeze but lull to rest
The consciousness of pain,
Its life-blood from the torpid breast
With surer power to drain.

Better forget than wake to all
The bitterness of Fate—
Hopes cherished in the bud to fall
Or, mocking, bloom too late.

Better Oblivion than the sense
Of hopeless, helpless Ill—
Of life's best gift the incompetent
Our longing hearts to fill.

Better forever sleep than wake
To see the Goblin Fear
Each ghastly shape beside us take
In turn, Grief's harbinger.

Better forever sleep than know
In vain our waking toil,
Our strength, our skill, of Good the foe
To conquer or to foil.

Better forever sleep than feel,
As one who in his tomb
Waking, to Heaven makes vain appeal,
The horror of our doom.

To know that from our living death
But Death can set us free ;
That seeming to breathe vital breath
All is but mockery !

For what avail the dreams, while yet
Life holds her empire vain
Within us, that the forces set
In motion, of the brain ?

Our struggles, that exhaust the life
That they would fain preserve ;
Our fears, that in the deadly strife
Reason and strength unnerve ;

Can they less certain make the end ?
Less terrible our doom ?
Or to the ghastly horrors lend
Abatement, of the tomb ?

No ! better death than fear of death
Within the soul to bear—
Corruption's seed, with charnel breath
Poisoning the ambient air.

Then let us seek the only good
Life still has power to give—
A balm to soothe the restless blood,
Till we forget we live.

Why ask, in these calm Autumn days
The tranquil depths that lie
Around us veiled in golden haze
To pierce with curious eye ?

Unquestioning rather let us drink
Content, the cup of Peace,
That robs the brain of power to think,
And gives to pain surcease.


Let us, for that our days are few
And short, crown every hour
With flowers, whose cups of glowing hue
Hold drops of Lethean power.

What though no more the perfumed rose
Of June the senses thrill
With rapture from the balm that flows
Its petals that distil ;

Within its heart the poppy holds,
Though odorless, a boon
As dear as in its breast enfolds
The fragrant rose of June.

With poppies, then, among the **corn**
While still they redly glow,
Life's autumn days let us adorn,
Oblivion that bestow.

DESPONDENCY.

NOTHER morning dawns with baleful light
Slow on my sight ;
And my sad heart that found from gnawing grief
A respite brief,
Must wake once more, and its dull weight of pain
Take up again.

The golden Morning that to others brings
Hope on her wings,
Brings none to me ; the tranquil Evening's close
No sweet repose.
From all her countless orbs, no ray of light,
The starry Night.

In vain for me with myriad-sounding voice
Does Earth rejoice ;

And with her thousand tints of land and sky
Entrance the eye ;
The Pæan seems a dirge, the beauty all
A funeral pall.

And Earth herself one vast and lonely tomb ;
All that her womb
Yields, she devours, as did the god of old
His offspring. Gold
Gleams the abundant corn that smiling waves
O'er silent graves.

O fatal thought ! Endeavor that unnerves,
What purpose serves
At last life's best result ? Fame, Glory, seem
An idle dream
In Truth's cold dawn, whose greenest garlands bloom
To grace a tomb.

How swells the soul to-day with conquering Pride !
Fate seems defied ;
How works intent on each new scheme of gain,
The busy brain !

What fond illusions thrill the lover's breast,
His hopes contest !

To-morrow comes ; what honors now avail
When knocks the pale
Stern Messenger of Fate ? How dull and cold
The all-potent gold !
No more the breast can Love's divinest thrill
With rapturé fill.

So in his turn hath each the bitter draught
Of Sorrow quaffed ;
And each in turn, that cometh after me
So too shall see,
Of Earth's best gifts—Fame, Power, Happiness,
The nothingness !

INVOCATION TO DEATH.

ANGEL that at the gate
Of Life dost wait,
And in thy chill embraces dost receive
All souls that leave
This shadow-peopled fever-dream, to rest
At last on thy cold breast—

Come, friendly Death, and kind,
And round me wind
Thy cool, soft arms, that gently lulled to sleep,
No more I weep
Salt tears that well from my dull, heavy brain,
Yet lighten not its pain.

For Hope my breast has fled ;
Life's tangled thread
Its silken smoothness, and its soft, bright dye
Has lost for aye.
Then sever thou the bonds of Destiny,
Last of the Fatal Three !


Forlorn and tempest-tost,
I wander, lost
In the dark mazes of a pathless wood,
Whose solitude
No cheerful sound of bird or running stream
Makes glad ; nor gleam
Of pleasant sunlight falling through the leaves,
Its baleful gloom relieves.

But spectres pale and gaunt
My pathway haunt ;
From out whose eyeless sockets grim Despair
His stony stare
Fixes upon me, while like icy bands,
Their fleshless hands
Close round my shuddering heart, till horror-
chilled,
All sense save one is stilled—

A longing wild for peace ;
That so may cease
At last the booming of the hungry waves
From soundless caves
Of Darkness flowing, that relentless roll
Around my unresting soul.

Herald of Peace ! then come,
And bear me home,
Safe 'neath the shelter of thy dusky wing.
True Friend ! no King
Of Terrors thou, whose touch all ills can cure.
Steadfast and sure,
Amidst the broken idols of my Youth,
Lives this atoning Truth.

FREEDOM AND LOVE.

 H ! that my lips with sacred fire
Were touched, that I might speak the word
That, leaping from the impassioned lyre,
Should flash electric through love's chord ;

That this responsive to the voice
That greeting man proclaimed him free,
Thrilling through earth should bid rejoice
The great heart of Humanity !

Freedom and Love ! divinest gifts
By gracious Heaven on Man bestowed ;
To Heaven itself Love's magic lifts
The soul where Freedom's light hath glowed.

For he whose breast hath never felt
The rapture Liberty inspires—
Love's fire his soul shall never melt,
Its spirit in his grasp expires.

A nobler destiny is ours
Than despots of our slaves to make ;
And scorning Heaven's life-giving showers,
Our thirst at turbid waves to slake.

O brothers ! cast the bonds aside
That in a slavery blind and base
Have held our souls ; and deified,
No more let Self usurp Love's place.

From every clime, in every tongue
The greeting shout from man to man :
Freedom, full-armed, from Light hath sprung,
To end the strife that greed began.

And Love, divinely fair and bright,
Shall crown with Peace the new-born reign ;
Justice return to earth ; and Right,
Not Might, o'er men hold sway again.

ODE TO VALOR.



VALOR ! of the ancient world
Chief glory, to thy native skies
Returning, hopeless hast thou furled
Thy banner with averted eyes ;
Unwilling, scenes where Liberty
Once dwelt the abode of slaves to see.

Hast thou our race degenerate left
Forever to the pangs that tear
The coward soul of strength bereft
The evils of her state to bear ;
Besieging with vain clamor God
And man to ease her of her load ?

In affluence must our treasures lose
The power to move our hearts to joy ;
And in Life's cup shall Love diffuse
The poison Peace that shall destroy ?

More fatal to our happiness
Than what we lack, what we possess.

Shall Fear with iron sceptre rule
 The shadowy realm of the Unknown ;
And all the ambient air be full
 Of spectral shapes between the Sun
And our fair world, like clouds that come
To darken Day with baleful gloom ?

Unlike the martyrs, who, of old,
 Bore joyful witness to the Truth
With life, to all but Pleasure cold,
 Its golden hours shall generous Youth,
Gay butterflies with feverish haste
Chasing, in turn to crush them, waste.

And Age in narrow creeds confine
 The life that pushing toward the light,
In darkness feels the heat divine
 That draws it toward the Infinite ;
Nor dare to speak the living word
The soul in solitude has heard.

O Valor ! to our Earth return ;
Some drop from out thy chalice give
To men, that in our veins shall burn,
And living, we may truly live ;
Lord of himself and Destiny,
Who nothing fears, alone is free.

LINES.

(Suggested by Mrs. Browning's "De Profundis.")

THE dusky shades of gathering Night
Have drowned in darkness Day's warm
light ;
Her golden tresses' last faint gleam
Has sunk beneath the circling stream,
Investing Nature, like a pall,
And silence reigns o'er all.

O silent stream ! whose waters roll
Between my vexed and weary soul,
And those far regions of content,
Where ruleth Love omnipotent ;
And Hope, with folded wings, at last
Doth rest, her exile past.

Across thy waves that bring more near,
Whilst they divide, are wafted clear

The echoes of a Voice more deep
Than thunder-tones, that deafening leap
From cloud to cloud ; yet underlies,
 So sweet, all harmonies.

Eternal Wisdom, like a dove,
Broods over all things, moved by Love ;
And mindful of our human pain,
The devious pathway making plain,
Amidst the gloom of Sorrow's night
 Proclaims " Let there be light."

Methinks the very Dead rejoice,
Hearing within their graves that Voice ;
Some touch of human sympathy
Stirs in their hearts, that, cold and dry,
Forgotten in their shrouds, respond
 To Nature's deathless bond.

And angel-anthems, to the Throne
Like incense rising, catch a tone


More sweet and solemn as they fade
Into the awful silence made
By those dread accents, clear and still,
That Earth and Heaven fill.

And o'er my soul a Morning breaks,
Whose sudden splendor swift awakes
Each cheerful Thought and Purpose strong
Within my breast that slumbered long,
Waiting the voice that thus should say,
"Arise ! for it is day."

Arise ! the night is past. Behold,
My soul, those beams of living gold
That chase the shadows of the night,
Thy way to earnest action light ;
So thou at eve, thy labor done,
Mayest rest, the guerdon won.

SERENADE.

FROM THE SPANISH.

LEEP, sleep, Belovèd ; let thy dreams
To murmurs glide of silver streams,
Blent with soft strains of woodland bird,
And fairy music, faintly heard,
While in the silent night I keep
Lone vigil. Sleep, Belovèd, sleep.

Sleep, sleep, Belovèd ; let the light
From southern skies illumine the night
For thee, and Fairy-land transfuse
To thy bright dreams her magic hues ;
In gloom and darkness while I keep
Lone vigil. Sleep, Belovèd, sleep.

Sleep, sleep, Belovèd ; round thee bland
And tepid airs from Fairy-land

Breathe softly, bringing sweets from flowers
That deathless bloom in fairy bowers ;
 Forlorn and joyless, while I keep
 Lone vigil. Sleep, Belovèd sleep

Sleep, sleep, Belovèd ; angels take
The charge of friends, and happy make
Thy dreams, that they a foretaste be
Of day's most dear reality ;
 Friendless, forsaken, while I keep
 Lone vigil. Sleep, Belovèd, sleep.

Sleep, sleep, Belovèd ; let no sound
Disturb the peace that wraps thee round,
Of my sad heart's complaint ; but still
Let tranquil joys thy bosom fill ;
 Helpless and hopeless, while I keep
 Lone vigil. Sleep, Belovèd, sleep.

TO A MOTHER, ON THE DEATH OF A
YOUNG MARRIED DAUGHTER.

WHY dost thou weep? Because the lot
That all must share, is shared by thee,
And Grief, her face awhile forgot,
Returns to bear thee company?

So does the child, his task who learns
With tears, before the powers that dwell
In it for good his soul discerns,
Against the discipline rebel.

Yet from the cold dark clay of Earth
Nature ordains alone shall spring
Her flowers, and in the soul, its birth
Her bloom shall take from suffering.

Then shall we waste in anguish vain
The hours, for Nature's changeless law ?
Or plant some seed while sun and rain
Its bloom and fragrance thence may draw ?

Bloom, like the plant o'er Alpine snows
A rosy splendor soft that spreads,
That on bleak heights of Sorrow grows,
And o'er their bleakness beauty sheds.

Bloom, that, when fading fast away
The light of Earth, in darkness lie
Her valleys, brightening in the day
Beyond those heights, shall cheer the eye.

Is there no heart more bruised than thine
Into whose wounds thy hand may pour
A little balm ; and with the wine
Of Wisdom strengthen from thy store ?

No Ill whose shadow heavy lies
On some poor soul, thou mayest avert,
If thou canst turn away thine eyes
From gazing on a cureless hurt ?

Oh ! think not that with its own joy
The heart rejoices only. No ;
To taste of bliss without alloy
Is to assuage another's woe.

Why dost thou weep ? So high a price
On what she loses dost thou set ;
Or that from her this sacrifice
Fate too might ask, dost thou forget ?

More bitter are the pangs that rend
Thy soul, that thou the pain dost bear
Alone of parting ; and the end
Has easier made to her thy care ?

Not so was it with those, her reign
When Terror held, who saw nor wept,
Their loved die first, her sharpest pain
Content that Fate for them had kept.

Heroic souls, who could resign
Existence, holding it well-spent,
Of Truth that to the worth divine
Their blood its testimony lent.

Counting it as of lesser weight
That storms or sunshine rule the skies,
Than guided by Truth's needle, straight
That they might steer should storms arise.

And why should'st thou of meaner mold
Or lesser stature count thy soul,
That Happiness content she hold
The highest Good that crowns Life's goal?

Is there no voice her depths within,
That tells her not in Sorrow lie
The seeds of Death ; but that through Sin
Alone shall Loss eternal be?

That all the circle can embrace,
Narrow and dim, of mortal sight,
Is but a point in star-sown space
That reaches to the Infinite.

And, therefore, to thy mortal ken
A Presence though invisible,
Not less is she a denizen
With thee, of realms of Being still ;

Not less the Sun, in ways apart,
That lights to its remote confines
Of Space each habitant, athwart
The Orb eclipsed for thee, now shines.

And whatsoever be the fate
That waits on her in the Unknown,
With interests of eternal weight
That it must be in unison.

DIRGE.

STREW flowers on her bier ;
The fairest flower here
Lies withered, of them all ;
Ere opening, it could yield
The sweets that lay concealed
Within its calyx held in patient thrall.

A bud by rude winds broke—
At Fortune's cruel stroke
She shivered first, then sighed
At the unkind assault ;
Then pitying the fault,
She closed her eyes, and cast her pain aside.

So bring, though all their bloom
And delicate perfume
Unheeded by her be,

The flowers she loved so well,
And let them, silent, tell
 In Death 's cold shade, of Immortality.

The fragrant mignonette,
The blue-eyed violet,
 White roses, heliotrope
The lily of the vale,
The snow-drop, pure and pale,
 Tuberoses, and the Flower that speaks of Hope.

And humblest of them all,
With blood-tipped coronal,
 The gold-eyed daisy bring ;
To every flower that grew,
Her heart's fond faith was true,
 Then meet it is that round her now they cling.

Here where upon her breast
Folded, her pale hands rest,
 Place lilies, white and pure ;
The thoughts were pure as they,
Dove-like, that brooding lay
 Above the hopes that nestled there secure.

And on that placid brow
Whose light is veiled now,
 Shall rest the immortelle ;
Wreathed with the Fower of Thought,
And pale moss-rose buds fraught
 With sweetness ; with such friends she shall
 sleep well.

So ; all is done. Compose
Her limbs in still repose,
 Nor toil that breaks, nor strife ;
Then yield her to the clay,
And in her coffin lay
 The hopes, frail flowers, that clustered round
 her life.

CAPTIVITY.

WITHIN a lofty palace-tower,
Embosomed in a fragrant bower
Of roses, bright with morning dew,
Softening the sunlight, passing through,
A captive wildwood songster poured
A lay of such divine accord,
So dulcet soft and silver clear,
Unconsciously I paused to hear ;
And lingering in dreamy mood,
In that enchanted neighborhood,
Sweet on my soul the melody
Stole, a remembered pain to be—
A song from bitter sources fed,
That thus my heart interpreted :

“ Oh ! for the forest’s cool, green shade ;
The freedom of the forest glade ;

The old, familiar, forest trees,
All glad with sylvan melodies ;
Their mossy roots with wild flowers gay,
And many-tinted in the ray
That struggling through the leaves lit up
With splendor many a flower-cup ;
The rivulet, that, clear and bright,
Imprisoned held the noonday light
Or to the tranquil Summer Moon
Still carolling its cheerful tune,
Lulled in their safe and downy nest
Our young ones' calm, untroubled rest.

“ Oh ! for the broad and bright expanse
Of Nature's genial countenance ;
The fresh and fragrant forest air,
Of Life the spirit everywhere
That breathed, like all-pervading Love,
Diffusing joy around, above.

“ Oh ! for the sylvan Summer Dawn,
When friendly stars, that, one by one,

Weary with watching, closed their eyes,
Withdrew from the awakening skies,
In every grove while joyous song
To song responded, loud and long—
Each wild-wood songster's matin lay
To greet the coming of the Day.
Oh ! for the pleasant Summer rain
Gladdening the sultry woods again !
The ripe fruit hanging from the tree,
And berries wild, a banquet free
For Nature's careless children spread
From Nature's stores unlimited ;
Oh ! for the birds, the bees, the flowers,
The sharers of those happy hours."

He ceased, yet still the plaintive sound
Seemed lingering in the air around,
Diffusing through it a vague sense
Of Doubt, with saddening influence,
That dimmed, like clouds, the radiant day—
Clouds the sun could not drive away.
Poor captive ! Nature made in vain
His heritage, her wide domain ;

In vain his wings with power endowed
To pierce the heaven-ascending cloud ;
One grain of wheat from out the sheaf,
From boundless forests one poor leaf
Was counted bounty liberal
From him to whom he gave his all ;
His flight that might have sought the stars,
Curbed by his prison's gilded bars.

And yet his master held him dear,
Well pleased his sweet wild songs to hear ;
And often, doubtless, would requite
The efforts of his favorite
With fond caresses ; and should death
Untimely still his slender breath,
Perchance a silent tear would shed
On his lost songster's lowly bed—
The meed of freedom sacrificed
To please a thoughtless egoist.
Child of the woods ! the splendor rare
His eye that greeted everywhere,
To him seemed dull and faded, when
He thought of his own native glen.

For his own native haunts he pined,
And fellowship with his own kind ;
For Freedom, heritage of all
Who breathe the vital air, and call
Their common Father, Him who gave
Life both to tyrant and to slave.
Lacking this wealth he still was poor,
Rich in all else that could allure—
Alas ! no splendor can illumine
The darkness of the captive's doom.

LINES TO AN EXOTIC PLANT

POOOR exile from the sunny land
Where Nature's wise and friendly care
First made thy fragile leaves expand
Beneath the warm and vital air—

What adverse Fate thy tender bloom
Transferred to an ungenial soil,
Where paler suns thy days illumine,
And ruder airs thy sweets despoil?

Of all thy kindred thou most fair!
Recipient of a fatal grace—
In solitary pride to wear
The fleeting glories of thy race.

The parent flower whose life with thine
In sweet mysterious union blent,
That drew to feed thy bloom divine,
Its virtue from each element—

When southern airs with fragrance fraught,
Thy petals stir, do they respond
To tidings from far regions brought,
That wake the memory of that bond ?

Do dreams of that vanished time
Within thy calyx hover now,
And memories of thy natal clime
Thy cold existence still endow ?

Do memories alone remain,
Or in thy cup some atom lies,
Left by warm drops of tropic rain
That sprang to kiss thee from the skies ?

Inwoven with thy Being glows
The genial sunshine still that first
Thy folded petals bade uncloze,
And into perfect beauty burst ?

And when the pallid day is past
Of this cold hemisphere, do gleams
From southern constellations cast,
Revisit thee again in dreams ?

Do glowing noons and purple eves
In soft reflected splendors shine,
With shadows of broad tropic leaves,
Of palm and interlacing vine ?

Alas ! for thee the vine and palm
Shall bud no more ; no more be heard
By thee amid the airless calm
Of golden noons the humming-bird.

The glancing wings of butterflies,
With southern splendors lit, shall gleam
For thee no more ; thy native skies
With light eclipsed for thee, shall beam.

And thou a little while shalt bloom,
The glory of a hostile soil ;
Awhile shalt waste thy rich perfume
On winds that woo thee to despoil.

Then, chilled by Death's untimely frost,
For tropic skies no more shalt pine ;
But odor, grace, and beauty lost,
Content, thy barren state resign.

TO A HUSBAND.

GO, sordid soul ! the depths regain,
From whence an angel drew
With pitying hand thy steps in vain,
To thy base nature true.

Too long the whiteness of her robe
Thy touch impure has soiled ;
And sufferings, Life's rose that rob
Of bloom, its sweets despoiled.

A flower crushed beneath thy heel,
Fast withering she lies ;
Yet Death's pale hues alone reveal
Grief's sacred mysteries.

Leave her a little space to breathe
Earth's genial atmosphere ;
And round her pallid life to wreath
Late blossoms of the year ;

Her eyes, undimmed by tears, to raise
 Awhile to God's blue sky ;
And on His Universe to gaze,
 Moved by its harmony.

Have God and Nature given to thee
 Indeed the fatal right
A soul to rob of liberty,
 Whose being is infinite ?

To make of her instincts divine
 A mockery and a jest ;
And bid her pour her soul's rich wine
 To idols, at thy hest—

Her heart to make an instrument
 Whose living chords vibrate,
The echo of thy moods, content
 Passive thy touch to wait ?

Why have they given, if this be so,
 Her mind its vision sure ;
And kindled in her soul the glow
 Of aspirations pure ?

Why have they crowned her life with all
Its wealth of hidden bloom,
If, in an atmosphere must fall
Each bud, of barren gloom ?

Must she not meet her God alone,
And can she justify
By bondage, life's true work undone
Enough that she served thee ?

Take thou upon thy soul the debt
Of her eternal lot ;
Or loose her galling chains, while yet
Time's hand their stain may blot.

Go ! slave to thy base nature ; cast
Aside the flower whose bloom
And spring-time sweetness now are past,
Nor desecrate the tomb.

ASPIRATIONS.

GENTLE sprites who guard the race
Of Flowers, where Fancy loves to trace
In characters serenely bright,
Shadows of celestial light
Cast from Beauty infinite—
Ye who watch, where grasses wave,
In its temporary grave,
The little seed, that tooth of mouse
Attack it not in its dark house,
Till the hour predestined come,
To call it living from its tomb—
Ye who bear the tender plant
In meet proportion to each want,
Dew and sunshine, rain and shade,
And keep in tempests undismayed
Its heart, lest there the vital sap
Retreating, from the folds that wrap,
Force should fail it to expand,

And Being's end be unattained—
Ye who fan with drowsy wings
And dream-inviting murmurings,
At sultry noon the languid flower,
And turn aside with cunning power
The canker-worm that would invade
Its perfumed calyx, lest it fade
Untimely, ere the honey-bee
Have drunk the sweets that in it lie—
Ye who watch the rose turn pale
With ecstasy, the nightingale
To hear, his song of love that pours,
Divine, in Night's enchanted bowers—
Who from beneath sustain the fair,
Pure lily lest the damps impair
Its brightness, safe that it may float
On crystal streams, a fairy boat—
Oh! tell me, sprites, (if aught you feel
For mortal woe or mortal weal,)
If within the honey-cells
Where the soul of sweetness dwells,
Of Life the wondrous secret lies,
And its unguessed mysteries.


Bring in dreams some shadow caught
From the bright enchantments wrought
Where the elements combine
To frame a shape of Joy divine.
Let it mingle with the forms
Whose grace Youth's fading glow yet warms—
Creatures of celestial mold,
Chilled by contact with the cold,
Gray atmosphere of life at last,
That live in dreams when Youth is past.
Let the echo of the spells
That from out the crystal wells
Of Being draw the charm that brings
Soul and form to senseless things
Float in dreams, a magic sound,
Blent with strains of flower-crowned
Eolian harps that softly stir
The ravished spirit, harbinger
Of the raptures that await
Her entrance through the Jasper Gate.

Oh ! tell me, spirits, if ye know,
When Life's flame has ceased to glow,

In what region, cold and dark,
Lingers still the vital spark,
Till it re-assume the state
Of existence animate
In corporeal vesture clad,
Breathing once again the glad
And fragrant airs of upper day,
Again in death to fade away ;
Of Being still the endless chain
Pursuing—tell me if in vain.
Bring, oh ! bring some healing balm
That may give my spirit calm ;
Some drop from Wisdom's sacred urns
To assuage the thirst that burns
Within my soul, consuming there
Tranquillity and Pleasure fair.

CONTENTMENT.

A RIDDLE.

NE little gem for all my wealth I hold,
Encircled by no cunningly-wrought gold ;
As Nature had it so she gave it me ;
Yet eyes accustomed, since they saw the light,
On jewels rare to gaze with careless sight,
Oft pale with envy when my gem they see.

One Summer night serene, in primal years,
Ere Earth was furrowed by her children's tears,
It fell from Heaven, with a falling star ;
But long unnoticed lay, for in the blaze
Of Happiness, earth's brightest gem, its rays
Less brightly shone, than they had shone afar.

In later days, while mortals sought repose
In brief oblivion from thick-coming woes,
And caught some glimmer of its light in dreams,

The fairies holding, nightly revel, found,
Half-hidden in the dewy, grassy ground,
The Jewel, gleaming in the Moon's pale beams.

Thenceforth it glittered in their fairy wand,
And when some mortal maiden would despond,
Neglected sitting in her father's hall,
Some friendly fairy haply she beholds,
Her rags around her fall in silken folds,
And with her lover-Prince she leads the ball.

But long ago, neglected by our race,
The little people vanished into space ;
And where they went no mortal man may know ;
But first they sought the spot where they had found
This precious stone, and deep within the ground
They hid from mortal sight its magic glow.

A precious stone—it may have been the stone
Philosophers have sought for, but as none
Grew intimate with Nature, so she hid
Her treasure safely from them till beguiled
By flattering praises, one Spring morn she smiled,
And showed to me its hiding-place, unbid.

Since then I wear the jewel on my breast—
An amulet that ever brings me rest
 From soul-corroding cares and vain desires ;
As if, in its clear depths some hidden spell—
Some memory of its first home might dwell,
 And gazing there, to Heaven the soul aspires.

A jewel rare it is, yet not too rare
For daily use, and common daily wear,
 Since humblest things it never puts to shame ;
For straight a gold and purple splendor falls
Alike on palace-courts and cottage-walls,
 Beneath the roof where glows its living flame.

Now, whoso skilled in science or in art,
Can name my gem, and to the world impart
 The secret of the charms that in it lie,
Him shall I call the wisest among men
And richest, for he ne'er shall want again ;
 And to him I leave my jewel when I die.

NATURE'S SECRET.

MY soul is filled with longing
And with a vague unrest ;
It strives to grasp a shadow
That still eludes its quest.

Yet well I know to mortal
It is not given to taste
The nectar of the gods ; nor read
The mystic meaning traced

In characters forever
The same, though changing still,
On every leaf and blossom
Where Life's glad pulses thrill.

Ah ! could I but this Proteus
In slumber deep surprise,
And wile from him his secret,
Or read it in his eyes !

At times it seems to hover
In heaven's cloudless blue ;
Then nestles in a flower-cup,
Or in a drop of dew.

Oft in a strain of music
My soul hath caught a tone,
That could I but interpret,
Would make it all my own.

It flashes through the heavens
In characters of light ;
And peals in thunder from the clouds,
When the Tempest walks in might.

The south wind, that comes laden
With fragrance o'er the sea,
Whispers it to the flowers ;
They to the honey-bee.

The birds in dreams have caught it
From Dawn's mysterious light,
And with exultant carols
Ravish the ear of Night.

The Moon shall by its magic
Old Ocean ever lure,
And hold in bonds invisible
The giant still secure ;

While fain in low-voiced murmurs,
Or thunders loud and deep,
The secret he would utter
In dreams that haunts his sleep.

In Summer days the sunshine
Fills with it the calm air ;
And in the Summer sunset—
Ah ! then ' tis everywhere !

It rustles in the dry leaves
That shroud dead Summer's bloom ;
And like a phantom-face looks
From Night's tempestuous gloom.

It falls down with the snow-flake
From heaven silently ;
But sinks into Earth's bosom,
And so is lost to me.

And when the youth of Nature
Spring's magic spells renew
With elixirs compounded
Of fire and of dew—

Then, then my heart exulting
Takes wings and soaring seeks
The secret that in every pulse
Of joyous Being speaks.

But oh ! the syren music
That lureth me alway
With promises that, mocking,
My senses steal away,

Is the rippling of the streamlet
Whose waters, bright and clear,
With sparkling glances flatter,
And whisper "It is here."

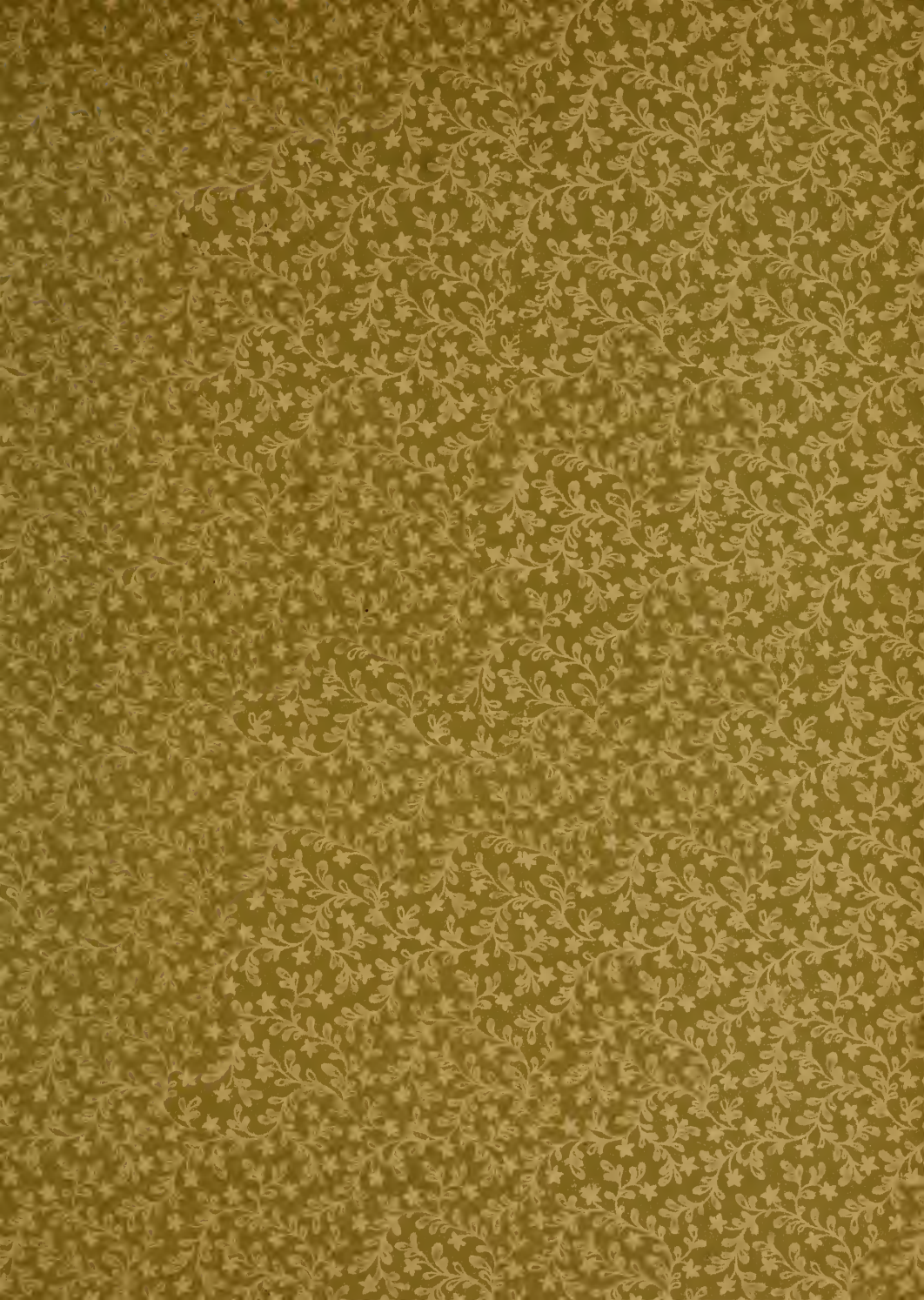
Ah ! could I but from Nature
Beguile her magic spell,
Then might my soul serenely
In sunshine ever dwell.

Upon those heights unclouded,
Where Thought alone is free—
The stars look down serenely,
And beckon silently.

[END.]







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