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LOVE'S WAY AND OTHER POEMS

LOVE'S WAY

And Other Poems

BY

MARTIN SWIFT



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1897



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PROEM

*SWEET is the hour ; the bush of evening lies
Upon the lovely vale ; the river's plaint
No answering sighs repeat,
Save when a wandering zephyr faint
Amid the tufted pines replies,
Or when the humming-bird her supper sweet
Seeks in the woodbine of my rustic porch.
Already from the mountains there descends
A cooler atmosphere, a hint of dew ;
Soon will the sun's far-flaming torch,
That brands with such a sanguinary hue
Yon fairy flock of clouds, be hid from sight ;
Now, ere sweet Mother Night
Her wand of slumber waves, and every flower
Bows its fair head, behold ! my wingèd friends,
The merry swallows, at their wonted hour,
With cheerful cries their mazy games pursue.*

*Ye twittering rompers, that from infancy
I still have loved ; ye chevy-chasing crew,
In orange clad and blue,
That prattle at your pretty play
With such a winsome glee,
A boon I beg of you.*

Proem

*Lend me your names awhile, I pray !
For I in verse my very heart have bared,
Have told the story of my love, and dared
To praise my lady by her own sweet name.
Were it not shame
That all the world should peer into my nest ?
Beneath your frolic hood, in sooth,
My features harsh and form uncouth
May well remain unguessed.*

*Nay, do not scorn the jest,
Nor deem the fair disguise unfit !
I too, O swallows, am an April bird,
And I across the sea in Spring did flit.
Like yours, my heart at Winter's close
By strange desires is ever stirred ;
The season of the opening rose
Pipes to my spirit many a dance ;
And though across my broadening brow
Dull Time has driven his plough,
A child's caress, a maiden's glance,
The soft emotions of my prime renew.
Wrinkles and eld I still forget,
My boyhood's heart I cherish yet ;
Kinship I claim, O birds of Spring, with you !*

1896.

LOVE'S WAY

A STORY IN SONGS



“Inveniam aut faciam viam”



Love's Way and Other Poems



LOVE'S WAY

I

O MOUNTAIN brook, that, plunging o'er the
steep,
 Makest in greenwood a melodious moan,
Still with perpetual kisses delving deep
 A smoothèd furrow in a heart of stone ;
This message murmur in my lady's ear,
 That, steel her bosom howsoe'er she may,
 My love shall persevere,
And find or fashion a victorious way.

And ye, O maples, at whose mossy feet
 My prayer was uttered, and my hope deferred,
Hide it among your echoes, and repeat
 In balmy whispers every burning word !
Besiege her heart with all your babbling leaves,
 Shriek down the midnight, in the gloaming sigh !
 Till to my vacant eaves,
Pierced with love's arrow, the dear wanderer fly.

II

Love's Way and Other Poems

II

Night of the harvest moon,
Magical night of amethystine skies,
Odorous, wooing, deep-eyed, passionate night,
Bland and bewitching hours !

Sighs of the delicate breeze,
Languorous, dreamy, rhythmic, undulant sighs,
Chorus of insect-voices, music of wings,
Murmur of waters afar !

Floating snatches of song,
Tender and thrilling, eloquent, liquid song,
Piercing and wild, rich with emotion sweet,
Sinking to soar anew !

I to your soft appeal,
I to your charms and witching flatteries fond,
Hinting of love, throbbing, alive with love,
Answer a mute Amen.

Love's Way

Yearning and desolate heart,
Heart of the sea-devoured, unfruitful springs,
Brooding, inactive heart, awake, awake !
For thee is hope, for thee

The silvery bugles call,
Swells the white sail, the silver-wingèd shaft
Flashes to theeward, and the star of love
Glowing in the balmy night,
The melting, amorous night !

Love's Way and Other Poems

III

O not so primrose-pale as thou
My Lilian's cheek, proud Moon, may be,
Nor doth she 'tire so bright a brow,
Nor move with such a majesty.

But when her glance encounters mine,
And o'er her brown and bonny face
The blushes run like ruddy wine —
A fig for all thy ghostly grace!

Love's Way

IV

Parting, a doubtful smile she flashed,
Not wholly storm, nor sunshine clear,
Then, half in mirth and half abashed,
She pinned these "daisies" here.

Not the "wee, modest" flowers that grace
The twinkling sward of English fields,
But sturdier sisters, of the race
Our climate yields.

What word is theirs, I marvel much ;
The rose I know, the heliotrope,
But these — 't is certain, at their touch
My bosom thrills with hope !

So, mountains, guard my lady well !
And when I come again — who knows ? —
With happier sighs my heart may swell
Under the rose.

Love's Way and Other Poems

v

Ah ! those enchanted mountains
And wild mysterious dells,
Where still with Dusk and Silence
A haunting witchery dwells !

Goblins nor ghouls o'erlooked me,
Nor elves nor pygmy trolls,
Nor, 'mid the red storm looming,
The phantom crew at bowls,

But every bush was vocal
With tongues of prophecy ;
The moonbeams fell a-dancing
To maddest minstrelsy ;

And soon a lovely lady
(Or Cupid in disguise)
Did pierce me through the bosom
With sweetly-slaying eyes.

Love's Way

VI

All in the limpid moonshine,
 In serried ranks arrayed,
Our mimic hosts were marshalled ;
 The "royal game" we played.

But skill in arms forsook me ;
 My king was a coward loon,
And, like the Egyptian faint-heart,
 My queen deserted soon.

To you though I surrendered,
 'T was with a god I strove,
Who bore upon his breastplate
 The conquering rose of Love.

Love's Way and Other Poems

vii

Ha, treachery, treachery !
This cozening message here
Hath sinister meanings plain to see ;
A plot, a plot I fear !

There 's a mist upon my eyes,
Like the gloom that follows the flash ;
And a fresh surmise each moment plies
On my heart a barbèd lash.

And it 's oh for one free glance
In my true-love's trusting face !
And oh to borrow the seraph's lance
And rout the liars apace !

To her side I 'll hie me straight ;
Let calumny do its worst !
I 'll cleave the knot of my tangled fate,
Be the issue blest or curst !

Love's Way

VIII

I muse on the deck at midnight,
In vain I strive to sleep ;
Almost I 'd be a maiden,
To hide my face and weep.

By farm and hamlet gliding,
We plough a silvery path ;
Thor moans in fitful slumber,
The wildfire leaps in wrath.

What 's yon ? A blood-red spectre
That grins in a fiery shroud ?
Or is it the old moon peering
From under a fold of cloud ?

My soul with a shapeless terror
Is grappling in the gloom,
And o'er my heart is creeping
The coldness of a tomb.

Love's Way and Other Poems

IX

The weary night is over,
The lingering journey done ;
Hard by, the hostel windows
Are winking in the sun.

What witch's broth is brewing
Beneath yon rustic roof ?
What poisoned threads commingle
For me their warp and woof ?

Well ! for the web, I 'll rend it,
And spill the cursed bree !
Fair truth shall be my banner,
And love, my panoply.

Blow, breezes of the morning,
And fill my veins with fire !
Hurrah for Love, the hero,
And down with every liar !

The orioles and the catbirds
Their silver bugles blow ;
" Speed ! speed ! " meseems they bid me,
And on in haste I go.

Love's Way

Yet, ah ! perchance 't is fated
My coming falls too late !
— Thro' all the world I'll seek her,
And strive, and hope, and wait !

Look, look ! a blue robe fluttering,
A slender form I see !
Nay, fly not thus, my dearest !
In peace I come to thee.

Love's Way and Other Poems

x

My Love has fled, I know not whither,
And, ah, my heart is like a stone!
The beauty of the world went with her,
Its light is flown.

Old age has nipt me, out of season ;
Alike to me are ill and good ;
I reckon no more of troth or treason,
Poison or food.

Tho' Earth were smit with sudden thunder
And high as Ophiucus hurled,
Nought should I show of dread or wonder ;
Lost is my world.

My Love has fled, I know not whither,
And, ah, my heart is like a stone !
The gladness of the world went with her,
The grace is flown.

No more sweet Poesy doth move me,
Nor Music with her melting charm ;
Nor smiles of little ones that love me
Nor kisses warm.

Love's Way

There lives no sweetness in the blossom ;
The glory of the moon has fled ;
The bloom forsakes the morning's bosom,
And Pan is dead.

The birds a malediction twitter ;
The winds in fiendish mockery call ;
The fountain of my life runs bitter,
Wormwood and gall.

My Love has fled, I know not whither,
And, ah, my heart is like a stone !
The music of the world went with her,
The charm is flown.

What mortal prize is worth the winning ?
New there is nought below the sun,
Where toil and sorrow, strife and sinning
Are never done.

For as the spark that, helpless ranging,
Drifts upward from the furnace-glow,
So man is born, by doom unchanging,
To certain woe.

Love's Way and Other Poems

And Love, that feigns with gentle fingers
A balm upon his hurts to pour,
Plants in his breast a wound that lingers
Till life is o'er.

Love's Way

XI

A dull desire oppressed me
To view the spray-fed pool
Of our dear Vallombrosa,
And drink its fragrance cool.

O blossom-white the water
Flashed in its downward spring,
And "Phœbe!" on the branches
Some bird began to sing.

There came a prick-eared squirrel
And eyed me curiously,
Squirrel, my heart is broken,
But what is that to thee?

Love's Way and Other Poems

XII

My heart is full of sorrow,
From tears I hardly keep,
And scarce ere break of morning
I snatch an hour of sleep.

And like a dog forsaken,
That still forlornly roves,
In every stranger seeking
The master that he loves,

So at each passing rustle
I think, "If this were she!"
But nevermore my darling
Bends her blue eyes on me.

Love's Way

XIII

The summer sun is gleaming fair,
But in my veins the winter dwells,
A frost no genial ray dispels,
Its name despair.

Night hath no gloom like apathy ;
No silence like the hush that falls
When through the heart's deserted halls
Hope's echoes die.

For Hope a sweeter song did know
Than ever Philomel could sing,
And brighter than the morns of spring
Her torch's glow.

But now for her the bell be tolled ;
Dead, dead she lies upon her bier!
Yet, sooth, I cannot shed a tear ;
All 's dull and cold !

Love's Way and Other Poems

XIV

Smoothly the river winds
Thro' the tall arches, and along the vale
That, curtained o'er by silken skies,
In soft siesta lies ;
But where the long rays touch the waters pale,
The severed shores a girdle binds
Of brilliants all aglow.
Around me on the slope the stately trees
Nod with a slumberous iteration slow
Their heavy heads, whose leafy locks are stirred
By some high-hovering breeze ;
The squirrel chatters, and a passing hum
Of happy voices now and then is heard,
And stealing echoes come
Of song or plashing oar.

This were in truth a lovely scene
For one whose mood should match yon smiling sky's ;
But I with altered eyes
Gaze evermore ;
Low in my soul the storm-clouds brood,
And yonder orb serene
And crystal-shining flood

Love's Way

Mock my unrest with their tranquillity.
And still my inward eye
Seeks the white hostel at the mountain's base,
And o'er and o'er, in sombre fantasy
Of that unhappy day
When last I saw my darling's face,
The tragic scenes I play.
Again the long suspense, the gnawing pain ;
And oft a golden glimpse, a flying grace,
Thrills me in vain.
Once more with that false friend I interchange
The few fierce words that in a moment sever
The ties of old affection, and estrange
Our souls forever.
And now am I indeed alone !
Of all the kindly spirits that abide
In mortal mould, there is not one
In whom I can at full confide ;
No eye whereof I should not ask in vain
The tender tear that sweetens pain.

The summons came at last,
And with a throbbing heart I past
Into my lady's presence. Worn and wan
She seemed, and underneath her patient eyes
The elvish cares with nightly round had made
A cloven ring of shade ;

Love's Way and Other Poems

Yet bravely she began,
And with mild looks, as when the murderer Death
Comes in sweet Sleep's disguise
And stays the rhythmic breath,
She bade me seek her love no more,
Nor vainly to pursue
Her person to the nameless hiding-place
Where she would rest a space ;
E'en then the waiting steeds were at the door,
And so — adieu!

But, ah, the anguish old
Of that black hour
With griping clutches cold
Renews upon my soul its power !
Again the ache, the sting, the smart,
As when, my breast with tortures riven,
By some wild impulse driven,
Her hand I laid upon my beating heart.
And then the angel Pity for a space
Troubled the fountains of her eyes ;
But soon she set her face,
And with a stern resolve her bosom steeled ;
Without, the maples glimmered fair,
And from the slender branches pealed
The songbirds' melodies ;
But in my soul the dews were dried, and care

Love's Way

Swept it of blossoms bare.
And thus in vain would you,
Far-floating azure, field, and rippling flood,
With such a tender and a dreamy grace
Woo the sad poet, singer of wold and wood,
And bound in beauty's fetters from his birth,
To praise your loveliness anew ;
Ye lure him not in any mood,
For gone with one belovèd face
Is all the goodliness of Earth.
Your ordered music hath for him
A jangled note, a grating jar,
As though a moan from hell should mar
The symphonies of seraphim,
Or some pure-gleaming star
Should howl a ribald hymn.
Ay me ! my gentle dove is flown,
My one ewe lamb forever lost !
Ah! would to heaven our paths had never crost !
For then I ne'er had known
This hopeless yearning, this untamed regret,
Whose preying tooth's perpetual fret
Wearies the frame, and saps the spirit's might
More than laborious years in leaden flight.
Ay, and the haunting visions that delude
My heart with glimpses falsely fair
End in a disenchantment rude,

Love's Way and Other Poems

A wakening ill to bear.
Sweet, prithee cease thy whisperings, late and soon!
Mock me no more with footfalls light as air,
Nor 'twixt the lattices of cloudy bars
Peer with the peering stars,
And from the fillet of the crescent moon
Release the waves of thine ambrosial hair!

Not everywhere the storm-clouds lower,
E'en in fate's darkest hour ;
Somewhere from out the gloom a feeble ray,
Some iris faint amid the falling rain,
Breeds hope again.
And I remember how, that woful day,
At my approach the slanderers twain
Were stricken dumb ; she knows, she knows,
That I was treacherously belied ;
That her, and her alone I love ;
Nor can she 'scape the memory of my woes,
Though in the forest's heart she hide,
Or by the furthest ocean rove.

But, O ye winds that viewless run,
And all-beholding sun,
Have ye not spied my wandering bird
On hill or spreading sea ?
Dreams she at all of me,

Love's Way

And is her gentle spirit stirred
With pity for the pangs herself might heal ?
Haply she looks on ocean's agony,
And hears forever in its mournful cry
A stricken heart's appeal ?
Ah, speak to her, wild waters, and complain
In melancholy strain
Of unrequited love, and faith belied !
Of Hope's hot fever, and Despair's chill clutch,
Of young delights that in the blossom died,
And charming melodies to moanings changed,
And sister souls estranged !
And if her heart ye cannot this way touch,
Fling at her feet upon the ashen sands
The corse of some true lover, who hath died
Victim of woman's pride
And of a fate ill starred,
With hollow cheek and pale,
And tragic mouth, and fond outreaching hands
By cruel bruises marred
From rocks no softer than a maiden's heart !
And bid her try if any subtlest art
Can evermore avail
To mirror in those dull and filmy eyes
The blue, accusing skies.

Love's Way and Other Poems

xv

My Love in the church is kneeling,
But aright she cannot pray ;
Twin tears from her eyes are stealing,
And her soul is far away.

To the sill a small bird flutters,
And sings as his heart would break ;
“ Sweet ! Sweet ! ” is the song he utters,
“ I am dying for thy sake ! ”

Love's Way

XVI

Me all pronounce unhappy,
And rightly they divine ;
But, matched with your still sorrow,
An easy part is mine.

Brief time have I for brooding ;
Ten thousand petty cares
In kindly toil distract me ;
The day glides unawares.

But in some lonely chamber
Fate's harshness you deplore,
With Love, the houseless angel,
Still wailing at the door.

My gift among its pages
One crimson blossom keeps ;
And Pity, soft Cassandra,
Looks out afar, and weeps.

Love's Way and Other Poems

XVII

What ails thee, O thou melancholy Wind,
That through yon company of noble trees,
Like to a spirit that hath loved and sinned,
On rapid wing thou roamest, ill at ease,
Forever wailing to the quiet stars
With such a poignant, such a homeless cry
As fiends in agony
Shriek thro' the grating of hell's prison-bars ?

Rising and falling in a weary wave,
Like mirthless melodies from frenzy wrung,
Whose mounting peal is hopeless as the grave,
Whose cadence, mournful as the plaintive tongue
Of Dives, uttering his unceasing cry
For one dear drop of cooling water blest,
While upon Abraham's breast
Sleek Lazarus closes a contented eye.

Is it compassion for our doomèd clan
That breathes a coronach so piteous-wild ?
Dost know the griefs that gnaw the soul of man,
The sobs that swell the bosom of a child ?

Love's Way

The bitterness of censure undeserved,
 The weariness of uncongenial toil,
 The petty cares that foil
Ambition for sublime endeavors nerved ?

The envenomed arrows of Ingratitude,
 And sly Suspicion with her searching blade,
Friendship's decay, and Love's awakening rude,
 And Faith's illusions that untimely fade ?

The worthless meeds to human efforts given ;
 The waves of unbelief that whelm the soul ;
 The funeral clouds that roll
Athwart the very face of God in heaven ?

Or dread Remorse, who with a mocking leer
 Of our unhallowed lives reveals the scroll,
And laughs to scorn the unavailing tear,
 And rends the raiment from the rotting soul,
Until in bitter shame for Death we cry
 To thrust us headlong, like the swine possest,
 Down to the lake unblest,
And hide our vileness from the Pure One's eye ?

These have I suffered all, and still to me
 Death proffers not her pleasant anodyne ;
And unto these a grislier enemy
 Succeeds, a devil dumb, to every sign

Love's Way and Other Poems

Of sacred sorcery insensible ;
 For fasting and for prayers he budges not,
 Nor heeds he any jot
The silvery clamor of the sweetest bell.

Ay, for the lady of my love is fled,
 And my poor heart is famished with denial,
And Sleep, the pitiful, forsakes my bed,
 And Hope the siren ceases to beguile ;
And gentle Memory to a Fury turns,
 Grinning from out the caverns of the past ;
 And thou too, savage blast,
Dost mock the grief that for compassion yearns.

Give o'er, I pray, those witch's litanies,
 And as from Saul the harping of a swain
Charmed the fell mood with artless melodies,
 So murmur thou for me a simple strain
Of changes few but sweet, whose tender flow
 May give this dull and sullen discontent
 In tears a natural vent,
As kisses of the Spring dissolve the snow.

And, singing, waft on dewy wings to me,
 Across the furrows of the tossing foam,
Faint odors from the fields I long to see,
 And breathèd memories of my boyhood's home !

Love's Way

Mute messages from unseen violets,
And of green woods the salutation bland;
Till with her witching wand
Her spell upon my soul sweet slumber sets.

Love's Way and Other Poems

XVIII

I dreamed I had a heartache ;
 (And that 's no dream, alack !)
And I sought me out a surgeon,
 A right mellifluous quack.

An opiate fume he proffered ;
 My lungs I quickly filled,
And all my fevered ravings
 In slumber's arms were stilled.

There came a gracious presence ;
 My darling's form it wore ;
" Welcome, dear sprite ! " it whispered,
 " To our Elysian shore ! "

Just then the surgeon roused me ;
 My heart in his hand he had ;
" See, here 's the suffering organ !
 A big one, too, egad !

" With sores 't was fairly riddled ;
 (This bowl is for the blood) :
To lose a heart like that, sir,
 Will work a world of good.

Love's Way

“No one will spy the difference ;
 (Five dollars is the fee) :
A heartless man, believe me,
 Is no such rarity.”

While in my pouch I'm fumbling,
 With a sudden start I wake ;
And still within my bosom
 I feel that bitter ache !

Love's Way and Other Poems

XIX

Now in the square the fountains play,
In Sunday suits of silver dight ;
The weeping-willow's tresses light
Enjoy their weekly bath of spray,

And, book in hand, a modish throng,
To church the godly folk repair ;
The priest begins his printed prayer,
The choir strikes up a venal song.

The steeples flaunt in highest place
The gilded cross of Constantine ;
And through the belfry's fretwork fine
I see Mephisto's grinning face.

Love's Way

xx

My heart is like a palace
In a time of strife o'erthrown,
By withered shallows glooming
Silent, and void, and lone.

Column and frieze and portal
Are strewn in sordid heaps ;
The bower is a den of spiders ;
On the hearth the lizard sleeps.

In a coign of the cloven terrace
A form of marble stands ;
'T is Niobe, stark wildered,
Groping with childless hands.

Silence, and ever silence !
Save when at morn is heard,
From roofless walls re-echoing,
The moan of a mateless bird.

Love's Way and Other Poems

xxi

Gay with her flags, our vessel
 Furrows the watery floor ;
Blue-bright the inlet sparkles,
 Green gleams the shaven shore.

Fond lovers, laughing maidens,
 Glide past, a festal throng ;
The minstrel band is playing
 A slow and plaintive song.

Hard by, a sea-bird hovers,
 Gray-suited like a dove ;
Ah ! where is she, my darling,
 Who tortures me with love ?

Shadows and fleeting phantoms !
 The ship and the grassy shore,
The happy maids and the minstrels,
 And I with my heartache sore.

Love's Way

XXII

Twin spires in the moonlight gleaming
Like Polyphemian glaives,
How sharply fall your shadows
Athwart the peaceful graves !

And would that I were lying
Far down in the sweet, cool sod,
A sword-thrust in my bosom,
And a tear in the eye of God !

Love's Way and Other Poems

XXIII

There dwells a damnèd spirit
By the Phlegethonian stream,
Like a statue dumbly gazing
Where dull the waters gleam.

For at intervals of ages
An image faint he spies
Of the beautiful blue-eyed seraph
He loved in the happy skies.

Love's Way

XXIV

Ah, God, I care not
Whate'er my fate ;
My heart is hardened,
And I can wait.

For o'er the waters
Of deepest grief
Death brings to mortals
Her olive-leaf.

But of her sweet life
The symbols be
The stars of midnight,
The slumbering sea!

Smiles be her guerdon,
Tho' I take scorns !
Give her the roses,
Be mine the thorns !

Love's Way and Other Poems

xxv

Sweet from her hands a gift of flowers there came,
Pond-lilies, breathing of her own dear name,
Crowns of ice about a heart of flame.

And ne'er did shipwrecked sailor on his raft,
For whom a succoring sail kind breezes waft,
Laugh with so blithe a shout as then I laught.

“ She loves me ! ” to the foolish flowers I cried ;
“ Dearly she loves me, wheresoe'er she hide ;
And soon with lilies I shall crown my bride ! ”

Love's Way

XXVI

My flowers if she shall wear to-night,
Sweet roses, red and white,
Whose clans for immemorial years
Have been Love's messengers,
You chalices of ruby-red
Wherein Love's heart hath bled,
Or you, that from his weeping eyes
Have lost your Tyrian dyes, —
My flowers if she shall wear to-night
Upon her bosom white,
Then, minstrels all, your tenderest lay
On flute and viol play,
And with soft spells her mind entrance !
That so, by happy chance,
Into the citadel, though blind,
Young Love his way may find,
My flowers if she shall wear to-night,
My roses red and white.

Love's Way and Other Poems

XXVII

Tap, tap ! the signal sounded,
And the plaintive strings began
That most melodious utterance
Of the yearning soul of man,

That soars, a mystic fountain
Of mingled fire and snow,
Where Death with Love lies prisoned,—
The "Ave" of Charles Gounod.

And my heart, that like a wild bird
Had fluttered the evening long,
Sprang up on its wounded pinions,
Upborne by the spirit of song.

And I told anew the story
Of all my bosom's pain,
In a last appeal for the promise
I had striven so sore to gain.

Up, up with the springing rainbow
The fountain of melody soared,
Then, soft as the moonbeams descending,
The refluent murmurs poured.

Love's Way

And a tear beneath her lashes
Like a dewdrop gleamed and fell ;
And as wax her heart grew tender
In the grasp of a heavenly spell.

Like a pall the silence followed ;
But the audience one and all
Broke out with a cheer that startled
The frescoes upon the wall.

And the leader, the vain little fellow,
Like a comic marionette,
Spun about, grimacing and bowing
In a demi-pirouette.

And I cried, " Ah, let us hear thee,
Sweet music, once again,
And down will topple the ramparts !
I shall plead no more in vain ! "

Wild hope ! yet her glance confirmed it,
If its meaning I guessed aright ;
And I smote my palms like a madman,
And shouted with all my might.

Love's Way and Other Poems

Grotesque as a South-Sea idol,
The leader coquettishly smiled
Like a maiden of twoscore summers
By a flattering boy beguiled.

One livelong terrible moment
My fate in the balance hung ;
Then, hurrah ! with a gracious gesture
His baton the hero swung !

Up, up with the leap of the rainbow
The fountain of melody sprang,
Then, soft as the shadows descending,
The plaintive cadence rang.

Down to her sheaf of roses
The tears were falling fast,
And the windows of heaven were opened,
And the sweet words whispered at last !

Blessed be Superstition,
And thou, Saint Vanity !
And dear to my heart is the anthem
That won my Own for me !

Love's Way

Give me to hear that music
When in death's embrace I lie,
And forth as a bird from its prison
With a song my soul shall fly!

Love's Way and Other Poems

XXVIII

Ah, gracious morn ! methinks each living creature
Hath fellowship in happiness with me ;
That Lilian's " Yes " hath filled the heart of Nature
With pure felicity.

Low to the rose the nightingale has hymned it,
The bees have buzzed it in the bluebell's ear ;
Fair on the sward the sunny rays have limned it,
Fair on the dimpling mere.

More softly sighs the wind among the rushes ;
Whistles the bobolink a sprightlier tune ;
The sunset with a rosier crimson flushes,
With mellower fire the moon.

And friendlier faces by the wayside meet me ;
Blither each voice, warmer each clasping hand ;
Pastimes my duties are ; dull volumes greet me
With poet-phrases bland.

Fancies, forsooth ! in mine own heart the change is ;
No longer lies the veil upon my brow ;
'Tis joy that wins us friends, despair estranges ;
World ! we are comrades now !

Love's Way

XXIX

O Hymen, what a tempest
He brings upon his head,
Who under love's compulsion
Craves wickedly to wed!

'T is true I've won the fortress,
But harder fights remain,
For there's a hold of dragons
And dowagers to gain.

The kinsfolk and the gossips
Wag all their noddles wise,
And every withered virgin
Shuts fast her prudish eyes.

Tom thinks my features Jewish ;
Jack hints a wife abroad ;
"He's poor as Job," cries Mabel ;
"He needs a nurse," quoth Maud.

They meet in their committees,
Their protocols to draw ;
Methinks my suit resembles
Too much a suit at law.

Love's Way and Other Poems

And spies they set upon me
 To scan my way of life ;
O, cry you mercy, gentles !
 I do but ask a wife.

Like bees when danger threatens
 The empress of the hive,
They swarm in angry thousands ;
 Well if I 'scape alive !

Deliver me, dear Hymen,
 From all the buzzing crew !
Marriage, I trow, is hanging,
 Since 't is a crime to woo.

Love's Way

xxx

Victoria ! they are vanquished,
The doubters every one !
Now speed the marriage morning,
Thou laggard autumn sun !

No more with tedious warnings
And boding hints unkind
The cousinhood of scorners
Can vex my darling's mind.

They harried and perplexed her,
Poor patient soul ! until
The hours of night she numbered
In prophecies of ill.

And, ah ! the piteous letter
That yestermorn I had !
Fond sighs with moans commingling,
And merry notes with sad !

Forth to her home I hurried,
With generous ire aflame ;
Fresh from her household labors
In plain attire she came.

Love's Way and Other Poems

Nought cared I for her vesture ;
I clasped her in my arms,
And with kind words and kisses
I soothed her vague alarms.

And then and there she promised —
So manfully I strove —
Before the snows of winter
To crown my waiting love.

Ah, happy hour ! and happier
The melting eventide,
When forth between the lindens
I rode, my Love beside !

The rosy fire that, floating
Adown the vista green,
Soft bloom and fairy lightness
Gave to the rustic scene,

Seemed the sublime expression
Of our transcendent mood,
The breath and effluent ardor
Of bliss and gratitude.

Love's Way

Then farewell in the gloaming,
 Soon, soon to meet anew,
With many a parting after,
 But nevermore Adieu !

Now speed the marriage morning,
 Thou tardy-moving sun !
The doubters all are silenced,
 The battlefield is won !

Love's Way and Other Poems

XXXI

Of old, they tell us, unto mortal kind
The gods descended, shapes unearthly fair ;
Yea, and for boys did Love herself unbind
Her breasts, her shining hair.

And stars have sprung from heaven for very love
Of sister stars in Ocean's mirror cold ;
And each wan wave to the wan moon above
Is knit with threads of gold.

I well believe it, for myself did see
As, parting loath, one backward glance I sped,
How like a nesting dove to me, to me,
Sweet Lilian fled !

Love's Way

xxxii

A hush is on the woods, and the wide sea
Lies voiceless as the heavens ; yon snowy cloud
Sleeps like a sail becalmed, and lily-browed
From star to star the round moon silently
Floats like a flower. Love, what a harmony
Silence with motion makes ! how rude and loud
Were hum of insect here, or chirp of bird,
Or softest lute beneath a lattice heard !

Love's Way and Other Poems

XXXIII

A picture in my memory comes and goes,
Limned in a friendly contest, one of three
With "Silence" for a subject. Gracefully
Above a marble sill a climbing rose
Bends backwards, touching with a cheek that glows
With life's own royal color — can it be? —
A human skull, type of mortality,
That grins in mockery of death's repose.
Silence? ah, no! far deeper lies the thought!
The infinite and eternal tenderness
Of yearning Nature speaks in that caress:
Love's dower is beauty; Love despises nought;
And unto us, my Own! there comes unsought
The grace of pity, the desire to bless.

Love's Way

xxxiv

One happy kiss, my own, my dearest !
The simple rite is over now,
And thou the golden symbol wearest
Of our sweet vow.

Along the aisle there falls a splendor,
The bridal kiss of heaven to earth ;
And organ-music, blithely tender,
Breathes hallowed mirth.

So come, with that fine radiance o'er thee,
Come, floating light on music's wave,
With love beside and life before thee,
Joyous and brave !

The thronging thoughts I fain would utter,
Ere I the fitting word can find,
Like startled birds, arise and flutter
Adown the wind.

But thou, my darling, well discernest
The happy ferment in my breast, —
The gladness grave, the jest-in-earnest,
The triumph blest.

Love's Way and Other Poems

The season o'er of foam and riot,
This torrent of my love shall grow
A mighty river, deep and quiet
In ceaseless flow.

Then come, with splendor streaming o'er thee,
And listening to the song of life,
With love beside and bliss before thee,
My own — my wife !

Love's Way

xxxv

Who will may praise the wildwood's peace,
The odor of the morning meads,
The sheaf, the haycock, and the fleece,
Babble of brooks, and rustling reeds.

But me the city's charms engage,
The ready smile, the answering eye,
The stately street, the lively stage,
The humming hours that swiftly fly.

But most of all I love the town
Because in yonder far-seen room
Sweet Lilian in her simple gown
Bends like a flower above her loom.

Love's Way and Other Poems

xxxvi

Soon fades the violet, soon the rose,
And soon the leaves lie sere ;
But O my love she smiles on me
Sweetly the livelong year !

Her oriel soon the swallow quits,
The thrush forbears her song ;
But O my love she decks for me
Her nest the glad year long !

Love's Way

XXXVII

O gathered in a golden hour,
And more than all thy sisters blest,
One eve 't is thine to bloom, sweet flower,
On Lilian's breast !

There dream of sapphire nights in June,
How by a stream the nightingale
Sings ever, while the Persian moon
Floats proudly pale.

O gathered in a happy hour,
Though never bee thy nectar sip,
Sweet Lilian to thy cheek, dear flower,
Shall press her lip.

Love's Way and Other Poems

XXXVIII

Fair gleam the hills, and fair
The stippled floods ;
Spring strews her firstlings everywhere,
And bathes in misty green the woods.

Ah me ! 't is ill to stray,
Lacking my Sweet !
But soon she wearies by the way,
So loath she fares on mortal feet !

Love's Way

XXXIX

Woods have I sung, and many a gliding stream ;
Smiles and bright eyes have been my verse's theme ;
 But evermore of these my lute is fain, —
Roses, and music, and yon moonlight's gleam.

Yet, were I blind as old Mæonides,
Deaf as the grave, and racked with fell disease,
 Come thou but near, Sweet, and I shall not lack
Moon, and fair flowers, and softest melodies.

For out of thee a charmèd influence goes,
And sheds a rarer dew upon the rose,
 Lends to sweet music a diviner spell,
And o'er the wave a lovelier silver throws.

Love's Way and Other Poems

XL

In vain her lineaments I trace,
The flower-like poise, the shapely head,
The pencilled brow's peculiar grace,
The blossom-blush of softest red ;
The feathery fronds of crisping hair,
The peachlike chin, the fairy nose,
The throat so delicately fair,
The eyes where all the Loves repose :

Her loveliness doth still surpass
Painter's ideal and poet's hymn ;
The sweet reflection in her glass
Hath charms the artist cannot limn.
Look, where her pictured image glows !
How fair it seems ! 't is very she !
Hither she comes, the perfect rose,
And shames the feeble travesty.

Fair is the shrine, but ah, how fair
The spirit that abides within !
Love's masterpiece, pure fire and air,
Composed all human hearts to win ;

Love's Way

So wooingly the artsman wrought,
So finely touched the tempered foam,
That Beauty's very soul he caught,
And fixt it in a mortal home.

With no divided heart she views
The friends that in her smile delight ;
Her eager soul doth quickly choose
And clasp its own in scorn's despite.
Toiling for these, her spirit plies
Its lash upon her fragile frame,
Till reft of all her strength she lies,
Pale as the flower that wears her name.

Her manners have a simple grace,
The natural garb of love and truth,
That lends a charm to commonplace,
And decks the trite with airs of youth ;
Sincere she is, but all discreet,
Hinting reproof with such an art,
Her censure seems a tribute sweet,
Her silence pierces like a dart.

In pastime or in toil she hath
A child's delight, an unspoiled zest,
Tripping along the thorny path
As though stern duty were a jest ;

Love's Way and Other Poems

There lives a sunshine in her looks
That puts the brood of cares to flight,
And with a sound of singing brooks
Her happy laughter gushes bright.

Unsought the love of all she gains :
At sight of her the infant crows,
The withered crone forgets her pains,
The hound puts up a friendly nose.
For she in her effect is one
With all of Nature's gentler powers,—
The influence of the setting sun,
The quickening charm of summer showers.

If she to all the world be such,
So winning-sweet, so kindly-wise,
With me that love her best, how much
Doth she abound in sympathies !
Here cease, my song ; it were not meet
The heart's dear secrets to reveal ;
E'en so the gentian hides her sweet,
The happy birds their nests conceal.

Love's Way

XLI

Thy blush is on the brow of the young day ;
Thy glance the gleaming waters counterfeit ;
Thy kiss is wafted o'er the mellowing hay,
And, lo ! thy smile along the waves of wheat !
Of thee the bluebird sings upon the spray,
Of thee he sings, and all his songs are sweet.

All gracious deeds of antique chivalry
Mind me of thee ; some lively touch I find
In all that moves to noble tears, of thee,
In all that simple is, or leal, or kind ;
Music to me thou art, and poesy,
And aspiration thou, and peace of mind.

Love's Way and Other Poems

XLII

Sweet, here it lies, the story of my heart,
Rudely rehearsed, belying my intent ;
Love is no courtier, apt in compliment,
And polishing a phrase with nicest art ;
Like a poor player mumbling o'er his part,
He halts and stumbles in his argument ;
His wistful eyes alone are eloquent,
Looking the thing his lips would fain impart.
For Love is of the skies ; our speech to him
Seems the dull jargon of a barbarous land :
But on still eves, or in the moonshine dim,
When soul to soul puts forth a stealing hand,
Love breathes to love, and love doth understand
A music wordless as an angel's hymn.

No orator is Love ; how trivial seems
The mother's converse with her baby dear,
How blank of meaning to a stranger's ear,
Like elvish Latin overheard in dreams :
Yet fair the feeling that behind it gleams,
And to the infant's comprehension clear
As instinct ; listen how in birdlike screams
He laughs responsive to the voice of cheer !

Love's Way

Love is a hero, modest, valiant, wise,
In large unconsciousness winning his way ;
The timid he provokes to bold emprise,
And gives to womanhood a courage gay :
Fate he contemns, and cynic Time defies,
And for a kiss will cast his life away.

THE VISION OF GALILEO

THE VISION OF GALILEO

WHAT noise aroused me then? No human speech
It seemed ; no cry of beast or frightened bird,
No flute's or gittern's note, — nay, 't was the wind
Fluttering the arras, or perchance the flame
Licking the frothy sap. The night is chill,
And for awhile the fever in my veins
Hath left me : I am old, and surely too
My time of death is nigh; these eyes, that oft
Have marked the mighty galleons of the skies
Gliding in silence, to the pilot's helm
So true, their courses of a million leagues
Myself might calculate — these eyes, I say,
Are sightless now ; a blind old man am I.
Yet never was the inward faculty
So clear as now ; methinks I can descry,
As with an optic tube, the world of time,
Both vanished and to come. Thus let me grope
To yonder window ; fancy there will prove,

Love's Way and Other Poems

By memory's aid, more potent to restore
Vision decayed. Fair to the north, I know,
Dear Florence lies, her Duomo looming vast
Amid a sheaf of spires, and Arno's flood
Wound like a silken zone about her waist.
The silent world of stars above her floats,
Breathing of purity and peace, a heaven
Unfeigned of pope or priest. I too have been
A soldier of the truth, and peace to me
Most welcome is and sweet.

That sound again!

What should it bode? Woe's me! 't is piercing
chill!

My blood flows thicker, and an icy hand
Gripes at my heart! My sable mantle — so!
And now a cordial — ah! the genial warmth
Returns, and courage with his trump and flag
Drives out the lurking dread!

There spake the coward!

There Galileo told his infamy!
Vainly in words a valiant fight I wage,
Womanwise, flinging my satiric darts
That sting but cannot wound; the testing hour
That proves the pith and manhood of the soul
Still sees me craven; like a puling maid

The Vision of Galileo

Frighted with chimney-corner tales, I flinch
At every sound, a timorous fantasy
Painting the void with horrors. A mere hint
Of torture 't was — a harmless thunderbolt
At random tossed — that pierced my brittle shell
Of simulated courage, and betrayed
The crawling soul within. How fair a chance
Was then forever lost ! the issue plain
'Twixt old opinion and the living truth,
Reason the final judge, her Yea or Nay
Involving many a tangled consequence
Importing much ! a hero's part was mine,
Had but a hero's heart, a hero's faith,
Unto the high occasion's majesty
Exalted this dull nature ! what a stroke
Was mine to deal ! how had I overcome
The tyrant and the persecutor then,
Confuting with a nobler element
The undiscerning flame ! The proverb still
Carries a double sting : " To each his own ! "

The hero's well-wooded opportunity
Becomes the craven's pitiful excuse ;
To each the fortune of an hour extends
Renown immortal or undying shame.
The field I lost another shall retrieve,

Love's Way and Other Poems

Another shall embrace the destiny
I slighted, and achieve the deeds I dreamed,
While in a grave inglorious I repose,
Bemoaned by gentle hearts in many a sigh
Ambiguous of compassion or disdain.
Out on me for a faint-heart ! yet, in sooth,
'T was a rude ordeal for a sterner soul
Than our Italia breeds. E'en now, methinks,
I see around me that malignant band,
Whose loveless eyes and lips of cruel curve
Told of a life divorced from human ties,
Of wifeless and unnatural hearts — how cold,
How keen and crafty was their silent gaze !
Their mocking formula, " Be merciful
And shed no drop of blood," resounded harsh
Upon my fancy's ear ; I froze with dread,
Remembering Bruno, for a jesting book
Doomed to the torturing flames — and then I fell,
Denying with apostate insolence
A truth firm-fixèd as the sun in heaven !
Too late is my remorse ; the door is shut :
That subtle essence of the human soul
Which, like the fine aroma of a flower,
Steals gratefully upon the charmèd sense
Of those that love us, hath in me become

The Vision of Galileo

The effluvium of a corse ; corruption lays
Its leper-mark upon my heart and brain.
And rightly am I shunned, — a hypocrite
So shameless, and withal so little skilled,
As roundly to deny the plain, true sense
And palpable intent my teachings bore !
Vile perjury, no abjuration 't was,
And vain as vile ! the dullest-witted friar
Might smell a subterfuge, did one affirm,
“ The sum of two and two resembles four,
And the conclusion squares with every proof ;
But I disown the specious fallacy : ”
E'en such in its effect my plea appeared.
But when, in St. Maria's ancient fane,
I rose from kneeling, — damned unspeakably,
But shriven and reconciled, — across my brain
Glittered and pealed a thunderbolt of thought —
Nay, sure I spake it not — “ And still it moves ! ”
Ay, still it moves ! not all the lying oaths
By caitiffs ta'en and bigotry devised,
Not all the Popes that ever gathered pence
In Peter's chair, emptying at one discharge
Their arsenal of curses, can prevail
To arrest the march of this revolving orb,
Or stay the chariot-wheels of conquering Time !

Love's Way and Other Poems

Truth bides her hour ; her triumph is assured ;
Opinion, like a rude inconstant breeze,
Ruffles her even surface, and distorts
The forms her limpid element reflects ;
But ever to her breast the wave returns.
That knowledge be my consolation still !

Perish, ye vain regrets ! what need is mine
Of consolation ? venial was the sin,
If sin it were ; the supple-fingered vine
Is void of thorns, nor can the osier boast
The toughness of the storm-defying yew.
Who can escape the imperious destiny
Of nature ? who remould in finer clay
The form and features of the inborn soul ?
Adjust the horoscope of character
To fairer issues ? from his blood expel
The ancestral elements, the human fire ?
The pygmy shall become a Hercules
By stress of thought, the swarthy Moor grow fair,
Ere such endeavor thrive. I mind me now
There was a prelate once — a countryman
Of my sweet English poet — who, to save
A frail and withered life, abjured his creed,
Shunning the fiery trial — worse fault in him,

The Vision of Galileo

Who had not scrupled in his day of power
To invoke the same fell proof. If such a man —
A Father of his church, pious and pure —
Failed at the pinch, my conscience may repose
Upon a dreamless pillow. They that list
May crave the martyr's crown ; not mine the glow
Fanatic, ripening in the brain of fools
Visions of John the Dreamer's Paradise :
This genial earth is heaven enow for me.
Truly the light is sweet, and beautiful
The blue Italian sky ; dear is the sun,
The benediction of the morning's kiss,
The rainbow, and the pleasant thrill of spring.
The golden aisles of New Jerusalem
No fairer gleam, than on a summer night
The starry streets ; no fabled sea of glass
Outshines imperial Como's hyaline
Moon-gilded, nor the amethystine flood
That washes Capri's horns ; the woods and rills
In verdant Vallombrosa murmur soft
As angels' vespers ; and the Alpine snows
Match the white raiment of the seraphim.
Ah ! why did I forsake the Muse of song
For her of science ? why the charming lute
Forego, to grasp the compass and the scales ?

Love's Way and Other Poems

Unhappy choice ! my genius was equipped
For art and love, the service and the praise
Of gracious Beauty ; what had I to do
With planetary motions, or the swing
Of Pisa's massy lamp ? Ah happy hours
With dear Marina in the cypress walk,
Or by the fountain of the marble nymph,
She singing softly with her golden voice
A madrigal of love, my lute and I
Making sweet music ! the enchanted birds
Listening, forgot their carols, and the leaves
Fluttered from off the roses to her lap.
She with a starry chaplet on her brows
Of odorous jasmine, like a queen appeared
Of old romance, the arbitress acclaimed
Of song or tourney, and herself a prize
For noblest paladins : port, features, all
Beseemed a lady born. Ay, she was then
A sumptuous creature ! tresses of the hue
Beloved of Titian, bronze with gold agleam,
All Venice in her mien, and from her eyes
Blue beams enkindling love ! No marriage bond
Held us in leash ; the freeborn heart of man
Mislikes compulsion, and in many a shower
Scatters its love, liberal as air and sun :

The Vision of Galileo

So seeming-boundless is our little world,
So rich in loveliness, in varied grace
Of womanhood so lavish, that in sooth
A single choice were churlish. Yet we clave
Together, bound by many a tender link
Of common memories, and I know not what
Of subtle kinship overswaying birth,
Year after year ; nor unto us the boon
Was lacking, though unconsecrate our loves,
Of children, and the soft unconscious charm
Of innocence and sweet sincerity
In baby looks abiding.

Hark ! ah Heaven !

It is the passing-bell, the selfsame note
That from the convent clanged the abhorrèd news
Of my dear daughter's — nay, beshrew the word !
Speak it I cannot, such a swelling fills
This aged throat : my own, my darling maid,
Thy father lacks thee, groping still in vain
For thy sweet presence, and from darkened eyes
Raining unhappy tears ; how aimless now,
Desolate and weary is the old man's life !
The flattery of thine affection fond
Wooed me to patience, and my fevered ire
How tenderly allayed ! nigh thee or far,

Love's Way and Other Poems

I felt thy spirit's influence, a caress
Of trusting innocence ; upon the page
Of love's fair Book of Hours thy letter glows
In softest hues : " The other sisters here
Have each a patron saint, — some holy man
Whose picture hangs within her cell ; to him
She tells her joys and griefs. None such I keep ;
My father dear is counsellor for me."'
Alas ! I am a sinful man, O Lord !
Faithless to my true self, and false to thee !
The good I knew and willed not, finding still
In thy forbearance opportunity
For fresh offendings : God, be merciful
To me a sinner ! Well hath blindness come
Upon me ; 't is the symbol and the brand
Of sin like mine against the living light,
And for the lusting eye punishment meet.
Vice is its own dread executioner ;
Within ourselves the Nemesis abides
We fain would shun ; her poison she doth brew
From our polluted blood, and on our hearts
Doth whet her cruel blade. Swoln to a gale,
The zephyrs of a thousand amorous hours
Howl me to scorn ; the baby-fingers light
Of soft Indulgence grasp me by the gorge

The Vision of Galileo

In murderous embrace. Degenerate beast,
Unable as unworthy to defend
The immortal truth ! give testimony now
That God is just !

A sudden gleam dispels
The inner darkness ; clear and passing fair
The vision of the future lies unrolled
Even to the verge of Time's deputed sway !
Lo, it is very good ! from grace to grace
The mind of man, emerging to the light,
Grows to its noble prime ; the social moulds
Wherein our common clay is rudely poured
Are broken one by one : king, soldier, priest,
World-rulers of this darkness, long dismissed
Into the grave of all chimeras, pose
The delving antiquary. Hate and fear,
Like robber wolves relentlessly pursued,
Flee the abodes of men ; the jealousies
Of nations, tempered to a generous glow
Of friendly emulation, ply the arts
Of use and beauty ; childhood, merit, age
Alone are privileged ; the traveller finds
In all his wanderings but a single code,
And jurisdictions that embrace the world ;
Freedom is king, and brotherhood is law.

Love's Way and Other Poems

Yea, and the simple creatures, "brute" miscalled,
Our humbler fellows, the fair boon receive
Of wardship to the race; the gentler time
Knows nought of aliens to the commonweal.
Fostered with kindly and judicious care
For mutual benefit, all creatures own
The primacy and righteous rule of man,
Gratefully striving, and with life content.
Unto the lavish household of the world
Thrift comes as mistress, with inventive Art
For handmaid; the prolific earth supplies
For all the human breed an ample store,
By husbandry compelled; the expedients rude
Whereby the intervals of time and space
Were spanned of yore, to fresh devices yield,
And one by one the blind material walls
Become transparent as the viewless air.
In lyric strains alone language endures,
Spirit with spirit interchanging speech
Wordlessly eloquent; the latent powers
Of Nature, wisely guided or subdued,
Subserve the needs, lighten the toils of men,
Or minister to that diviner sense
Of beauty which is one with poesy,
Thrilling the tender hearts of man and maid

The Vision of Galileo

With gladness, that in artless melodies
Warbles unconsciously of love's delight.
No funeral pomp, no panoply of woe,
No rain of tears vexes the happy dead ;
From life to life they go, with summer flowers
Encinctured, and with songs of parting sped :
Through all the world service is happiness,
Obedience a blithe instinct ; earnest cheer
Ennobles trivial toil, and hallowing moods
Touch with sublimity familiar things,
Until with childhood's unobscured gaze
Man apprehends a present realm divine !

How beautiful upon the mountains gleam
The twinkling feet, the choral song resounds !
Reveal, O lovely vision, the degrees
Of man's ascent, while with a rapt regard
I view the worldwide, ever-changing scene.
Now, now I trace the gradual upward path !
The truth it is, the truth shall make us free !
Ay, still it moves ! a child, a child is born —
Yea, in the blessed year that now is young —
A Galileo, but with fairer hap
And firmer heart — who of the mighty world
Unveils the workings, the pulsations marks

Love's Way and Other Poems

Of rhythmic order infinite, sublime ;
Nor he alone, — a glorious company
Of Truth's apostles, each from hand to hand
Passing the torch, protect and multiply
The far-illuming rays, to every age
Revealing forces and relations new,
And slaying with a shaft of light serene
Some cockatrice of superstition's brood.
Still, still it moves ! the universal reign
Of sequent order, the unaltering laws
Of being and of action, so divulged
And preached with Nature for a witness, thrust
The fear-begotten idol from his throne
That now usurps the majesty of heaven.
The perfect beauty, but in part revealed,
Shames with a mild harmonious loveliness
The dizened form, the meretricious bloom
And simpering sleekness of the types impure
By undiscerning adoration feigned.
To fair Philosophy the grace was given, —
Unheeding the vain babblings and assaults
Of that fell science of sonorous name
Falsely so called, and out of ignorance blown,
Whose doctors, bisson leaders of the blind,
Persuade with tongues of fire, keen to devour

The Vision of Galileo

Critic with rival, — to the reasoned art
Whose minister am I, the honor fell
To overthrow the unrighteous tyranny
Of hoar tradition, and the human dross
First to dissever from the ore divine
Of oracles revered, and fables old.
And still it moves ! with Science hand in hand
Goes gentle Faith, her shining eyes unveiled,
Seeking the causes, tracing to the source
Each fact of nature, testing every throb
Of primal instinct — fearless of the new,
Since truth is ever one, a crystal globe
Complete and fractureless — like Science bold,
Yet with a touch more reverent, and a sense
To subtler harmonies alive, and thrilled
By footfalls of mysterious presences
In solitary hours, — till, with a heart
Leaping ecstatic, she divines and shares
The illuminant and all-informing thought
Whereof the world is the embodied word
And visible symbol.

Paths for plodding souls,
Wings for the free ! the universal truth
Lies round us and above, an airy sea
Pervious to spirit-pinions, to respire

Love's Way and Other Poems

Pure and delicious as the rock-fed spring.
Come to the waters, ho ! ye thirsty ones !
Drink freely and rejoice ! merge in the whole
Your single selves, each from the living source
New life receiving ! Deeper than ye deem
Your nature hath its roots ; within you lies
The mystic realm of God, the garden fair
Where in the silence of unvexèd eve
His footsteps come and go, vague music making
As of the forest or the breathing sea.
Put off the shoe, the robe of self lay by,
For here is holy ground ; here unto you
The Eternal speaks, in spirit-moving tones
Tenderly solemn, winning from within
A sweet response ; the dew of loving tears
Arises, and of prayer the fragrance pure,
And o'er the waters of emotion's deep
Steals with a happy hush the peace divine.
Heed, ever heed, O brother yet unborn,
The light that is within, the deathless word !
Not on Samaria's nor on Zion's hill
Do thou the all-embracing soul adore,
But in thy spirit's Bethel, wide and lone,
For there the weary pilgrim, Faith, receives
A tranquil certitude, with glory tinged,

The Vision of Galileo

Of something worthy of her sacred awe,
An everlasting Right ; thy God and thou,
The Real with the Real face to face,
No mediator, no hierophant,
No prophet need : the spirit *is* the truth :
“ The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and heart.”
Far from the crowded fane thy footsteps be,
Where, at a season set, the priest repeats
His well-remembered part ; how seldom there —
Though with a studied eloquence invoked,
And hymned with many a mellow-toned Amen —
The wind, that bloweth where it listeth, comes
The sleeping life to quicken ! Unrehearsed
The welcome of the heavenly Friend should be,
Sincere and fresh, as when in virgin hearts
The flame of happy love spontaneous leaps,
And soft unuttered music ushers in
Of each to each the rapturous approach.
Honor the wise, revere the living voice
From old religions calling ; not in vain
Great sages, and the goodly fellowship
Of prophets labored, nor the saints obscure
Who, like the noteless dwellers of the deep,
Dying, have reared an island of delight
Amid the infinite of Ocean's round :

Love's Way and Other Poems

Yet in thy heart an oracle abides,
A harp that vibrates to the breath of God,
Whose lightest whisper is a law for thee,
Though saint and prophet in sublime appeal
Should cry, "Lo here! the kingdom is at hand!"
To universal nature still we bring
The masterwork of art, with our own eyes —
Not with a false and borrowed faculty —
Comparing, judging of the true and fair ;
Not otherwise the spiritual sense
Bears witness of the good, for every man
According to his gift.

Arise and shine !

The light, the light is come ! to gloom ensues
The cold uncertain lustre of the moon,
Morn with her veiling vapors follows fast,
And last the full, the glowing loveliness
Of Day in all her glory ! Man unfolds
The shining pinions of a type mature,
Leaving the worm behind ; sweet sympathy
For all that lives, a kinship of the heart
Declared in kindly deeds innumerable,
And melting, like the ice of summer seas,
All fleshly barriers of the Me and Thee,
Utters for him the *Fiat Lux* anew.

The Vision of Galileo

No more the sense of man's infirmity
Oppresses the free spirit : shame and sin
He feels not, nor perceives ; the passions all
To impotence have shrunken, save alone
The exquisite and palpitating joy
That thrills him, as in harmony with life
He plies his function, and the bliss fulfils
Of him whose nature in perfection works
To perfect ends, a pure and conscious flower.

The vision pales, and my perceptive mind,
Oppressed with growing splendor, waxes faint,
And age her chilling lethargy renews.
Again, again that phantom sound I hear,
But not with dread ; I know thee now, O Death,
Dear angel of deliverance, who in ruth
My soul dost waken from her mortal sleep !
My little task, wherein I wrought so ill,
Is all accomplished ; Spirit of holy Truth,
Now lettest thou thy servant part in peace !

May, 1897.

HERACLES UPON ŒTA

HERACLES UPON CETA

SILENCE upon the mountain's head forlorn
Clung like a shroud ; no breeze the poplar's plumes
Ruffled, and as in bronze the russet oak
Stood carven stiff ; the river, through the vale
Gliding circuitous, a sickle seemed
With flashing blade intolerably bright ;
High up, a white and solitary cloud
Hung like an eagle poised. On the tall elm
The turtle hushed her moan ; the stilted crane
Drowsed at his post the livelong afternoon ;
And priestlike on his crag the ibex knelt.
It was the hour of utmost heat, that brings
A stealing torpor, grateful to the sense,
In which the self is lost, and form and mind,
Fancies and memories, present and remote,
In sweet confusion mingle undiscerned.

Midway the mountain-side a shaft of rock
Soared like the tomb of some forgotten king, —
Titan, or Demigod, or Cyclops huge, —

Love's Way and Other Poems

And flung a span of shade. There, on a mound
Of thymy turf, fit floor for Dryads' dance,
And strewn with saffron like a bridal bed,
A funeral pile, couch unbeloved of men,
Brooded, and ever from its crest there came
A cry that smote the heavens :

“ I burn, I burn !

Ay me, I burn ! a black and bitter spume
Sullies my lips, and with a briny sweat
My bosom reeks ; a leprous tetter trails
Its fibres o'er me like a poisonous vine ;
And ever at mine ears a rending cry
Rings hideously, as when I heard afar
The man-fed mares of Thracian Diomed
With shrieks devouring their unnatural meat !
Hear me, ye gods, and give me of your showers
That smite the fruitless furrows of the sea
To drink one mighty draught ! I burn, I burn !

“ This is a woman's work ; a woman's hand
Hath wrought this wreck upon me, such as ne'er
Monster infuriate, nor giant armed
Could compass in the fray ; but who of men
Can 'scape the meshes of a woman's web,
Or loose her slimy coils ? Gods ! it is foul

Heracles upon Œta

That mine own wife, the partner of my bed,
My children's mother and my best-beloved,
Should with soft speeches and dissembled gifts
Betray me to my death ! and for what cause ?
For none, I swear it ! but her sordid soul,
Jealous of every slave, in each new face
Fearing a rival, — or, it well may chance,
Craving with fickle and unhallowed fire
Some sleeker love, some darling of the maids, —
Wins thus its noisome vent ; but would to God
That I might pinch the apple in her throat
And help her to a couch beside yon slave
Who nevermore shall spread her cursed lures !
How like an egg the villain's brain-pan brast !
So sharp and swift the unsleeping Fury smites !

“Why am I hunted thus from clime to clime,
Doomed like a slave to tasks of thankless toil,
Yet grudged the very roof that every slave
Shares with his lord ? How sweet it were, methinks,
To dwell a herdsman under eaves of straw,
Olives and bread my fare, my only lore
The homely science of the flail and forge ?
Some nut-brown girl of Argos or of Thebes
Should bear me babes, whom at the first faint star

Love's Way and Other Poems

She to the fold with nightly song might bring
Tottering to meet and kiss and lead me home,
More proud than victor after foughten field.
So sweet it were ! but not by any stream
Bosomed in sedges, blithe with chirp and hum,
Stands any home for me ; for if by chance
I choose a field and water with my sweat
Its furrows for the harvest, lo, the voice
Of Hera hissing through my dreams, ‘ Begone ! ’
So o’er the world I wander, seeking peace
In vain, in vain ! and labors like a god’s
Are thrust upon me, tasks without a term,
Without a wage ; and every child of mine —
Ay, all the rosy prattlers, one by one —
These hands, ah wretched me ! a ruthless fate
Dooms, woe the day ! to butcher and to rend
In that blind fury and insensate rage
Wherewith the hatred of the Queen of heaven
Afflicts me ; fie that ever I was born !
This ’t is to be the bastard of a god,
The unhappy seed of an adulterous sire
Who sits above the thunder, and defies
The retribution that himself ordains !
He lechers, and the vengeance lights on me ;
The Furies fawn upon him, and the Fates

Heracles upon Æta

His courtiers are ; great Nemesis herself
Holds out her hand obsequious for her hire
And smiles upon his crimes ; his wrong is right :
I, I must suffer ! I must bear the blame !
'T is I am ever scourged, he goes unscathed !
He laughs that I may weep !

“ Now, by the Styx,
I will not howl alone ! You thronèd gods,
To whom the world is but a spinning top
Ye love to lash, and groans of mortal men
Rare sport for vacant hours, — look to yourselves !
I come among your banquets breathing doom !
I that have launched mine arrows at the sun
And weighed the world ; I that have pierced a path
Into the bowels of hell, and dragged to day
The monster of the pit, with both his tongues
Lolled like a lapdog's, and his blood-balled eyes
Blinking for fear, — ay, mangled as I am,
Flayed to the ribs, foul as a rotten fig,
Shedding my joints as doth a crab her claws,
And spent with groaning, — I will scale your walls
And storm your starry heights, and hurl you prone
Down to the Phlegethonian waves, to sink
Forever, clogged with curses of mankind !
Have at you, then ! — I burn, I burn, I burn !

Love's Way and Other Poems

“ O fairest vale of all the sun beholds,
That 'twixt the paps of thine empurpled hills
Blushest with myriad roses like a maid !
Maidens thy guardians are, and unprofaned
Thy streams, fit mirrors of the unwedded moon
That fills yon cypress with a heart of fire.
Fain would I leave thee virgin, fain beguile
With gilded apples counterfeit of thine
The Argive lord ; in vain ! yet would that here,
Far from a most unnatural fatherland,
Forever in thine arms I might abide !
Here all things nod and sleep ; hither no foot
Comes red with war, nor aught of outland life
Save bees in quest of bloom, or birds astray ;
Here let me snatch, kind gods, a brief repose,
Pleased with the ghosts of old familiar griefs,
Like one that sleeps upon a summer shore,
Soothed by the murmur of the selfsame sea
That hurled him like a wrestler where he lies !

“ Will ye not, friends and kinsmen, who behold
My piteous plight, and hear these hollow groans,
Give o'er your weeping, and with pious hands
Prepare the flames for this my funeral pile
Whereon I tarry for the coming death ?

Heracles upon Ceta

What fear ye ? Think ye 't is a crime I ask ?
Ye will but hasten by a few brief hours
The inevitable stroke that hangs in air,
As on a spider's thread the drops of dew
Poise ere they fall ; and so this livelong pain
Shall be assuaged, and with my dying breath
I shall commend your virtue to the gods.
Will ye deny me this, ye pickthank slaves ?
Curs that have licked my trenchers, and have shared
My fireside and my straw ? Go, get you gone
Ere I can snatch in hand my cudgel here
And leap among you, as the spotted pard
Leaps from his coign upon the drinking deer !
Hence with a murrain while your skins are sound,
And prove the mettle of your heels anew !

“ They are all gone, and twilight from the vale
Steals upward ; here and there an issuing star
Peers coldly down upon my loneliness ;
Moaning, the wind awakes ; the belted bee
Spreads homeward wings. Ay me ! how many a time,
When the long labors of the day were done,
These wonted sights and seasonable sounds
Had power to soothe me, as a mother soothes
With simple tales a hundred times retold

Love's Way and Other Poems

Her fretful child ; but slumber so to me
Returns no more ; I lack the lullabies
Of comfortable Death, and round my couch
His drowsy wings. What is my fault, O Death,
That thou dost grudge to these o'erlabored limbs
The meed of sleep, which lightly thou dost give
To nurslings of an hour ? Dost thou not hear ?
Nay, I will call thee till the brazen stars
Clash like the cymbals of a startled camp
That hears upon its walls the midnight foe :
O Death, Death, Death ! O thou the thrice-implored,
O Death that smoothest every mortal brow,
Hast thou with Echo changed thy name and form,
And liest kissing of thy lover's leaves
By murmuring waters ? Art thou frightened, fool ?
I see thee where thou skulkest in the grove !
Come forth, or I will drag thee by the heels,
And clap an ass's nowl upon thy sconce
For choughs to gape on ! Nay ! 't was but the vine
Flashing his armor to the rising moon.
O wandering waves that wash a thousand shores,
O mountain pines, that ever to the breeze
Fling like the Furies your dishevelled locks,
O wind, that seekest over moss and moor
With many a starward whine thy master slain !

Heracles upon Cæta

Saw ye not Death among the household gods
By any hearth, or where he broods obscene
With vultures o'er the battle? Doth he dance
Among the marish-flags, a mocking fire,
Or sings he toothless to the snouted sharks,
A hoarse Arion with a lyre of lead?
Heaven send the old man safe! O Mother Earth,
Sweet motherling, behold me how I burn,
And hush me to thy cool and fragrant breast,
That I may sleep a little! Out, alas!
I may not call thee mother! child of thine
I was not born; I of celestial stock
A wild shoot am, though like a common weed
They bear me to the dunghill. Woe is me!
Earth casts me at Heaven's door, Heaven spurns me forth,
And Hell will none of me! disowned alike
Of gods and men and shades, 'twixt groan and groan
Cursing by turns the mocking smile of day,
The night's long scowl, — denied or life or death, —
I wait the issue, like a mote that whirls
'Twixt ebb and flow upon a circling wave!

“ Ay, this is Arcady; these dales and downs,
With mint and cytissus and saffron sweet,
Have known my footsteps in a happier time,

Love's Way and Other Poems

Ere fame and shame had found me. O'er yon crags
Waves the white birch that served me for a mark
When to the fringe of old Cyllene's beard
I chased the golden stag. On this same sward
We held our heyday revels ; nymph and faun
Footed it here, and here at harvest home
I busied the buxom lasses one and all,
What time the satyrs at their cups of mead
Cast burrs upon my beard. In yonder pool
Star-sitting like a lily of the lake,
I saw the blue-eyed nymph, mine earliest love,
Crowned all with rushes ; here we plighted faith ;
Here met we nightly, while the mimic moon
Sailed like a swan across the sparkling pool,
Making thereof a heaven ; about our feet
Acanthus crept, and ringed with rushy blades
Myrtle with oleander whispered low
Till morning bloomed, and Daphnis on the hills
Piped to his ewes — methinks I hear him now !
Ay, 't is the same old strain, which many a time
He proudly puffed at wedding or at wake ! —
Tush, I'll not weep ! What, Daphnis, mine old
friend !
Daphnis, what ho ! — Ah, gods, it was a dream !

Heracles upon Cæta

“ Ho, shepherd, shepherd, hush thy pipes awhile,
And let thy she-goats range ! know'st thou not me ?
I am that Heracles whose famous deeds
Thine Cætan woods have heard ; to such a pass
A woman's anger and a fate fulfilled
Have brought me ; but do thou, O kindly swain,
Kindle the fire beneath me, and consume
Me and mine agonies ! my folk and kin
Have left me thus, and fled ; thou therefore, friend, —
If that all shepherds have not hearts of stone ;
Nor learn among the ewes to hate their kind, —
Have pity on me and my mortal pain !
Lo, I a hero, I a son of Zeus,
I sue to thee ; nor shalt thou lack the praise
Of lands that lie remote, and after years,
Nor guerdon of the gods for pious deeds.

“ Well hast thou done, O shepherd ! thee the
thanks

Of one about to die shall all thy days
Haunt like a favoring bird. Now go thy way !
I am for Hades and its triple moat
Of stagnant streams, and languid flowerless meads,
Gray ghosts and sunless hours.

Love's Way and Other Poems

“How sweet and cool
Seem these mere mortal flames that gird me round,
To those envenomed fires I felt but now !
Why, this is Lydian luxury ! never yet
Did Persian loom for Omphale's attire
Prepare so soft a robe !

“Night falls apace ;
'T is very dark — I cannot see a star ;
Hark ! what a shriek was that among the pines !
I am afraid ! Gods ! how the mountain rocks !
As 'twere a skiff that o'er the Pontic waves
Fierce Auster hunts ! What prodigy is here ?
Play me not false, O eyes about to close !
Yon shine is not the sun's !

“Father ! 't is thou !
I hear, I hear thy thunder on the peaks !
And with a burst of light and sound arrive
Thronging perceptions, memories manifold,
A consciousness of power and quenchless life,
A faculty sublime, transcending all
That men call knowledge — I too have attained !
I, I too am a god !”

And far at sea
The steersman marvelled at a new-found star.

September, 1878.

Revised, 1881.

MOODS AND PHASES

NOCTURNE

LOVELY and pure is the night !
Slenderly curving, the moon,
Crescent, a tiny craft
On a shoreless ocean astray,
Pointing an ivory prow
At the pharos of yon bright star,
Glides like a beautiful bird
Over the blue serene.
The sleeping river below
Is touched with the calm of the skies,
And over its bosom the moon
Flings with a tremulous hand
A scarf of silvery gauze
Fine as the veil of a fay.
Sparsely scattered, the lights
From ships adrift or at rest
Gleam with a ruby ray ;
The creek in its basin lies
Tarnlike, laving with smooth,

Love's Way and Other Poems

Hazel waters, the base
Of the hill, that bathes its dome
In the delicate glow of the sky.
Beyond the river, the cliffs
In a crested rank superb
Stretch like the walls of the world ;
And, ah ! the enchanted gloom
Of the deep-stoled, mystical trees,
Rising in restful mass
Athwart the splendors of heaven,
And softly, fragrantly stirred
By the blossoming season's breath !

Ah, how fair is the world !
The cup of my bliss runs o'er,
And every pore of my frame
Is pierced with the charm of the night !
A sigh that is half a sob
From a swelling heart I send,
And a mingled mood is mine,
I or the wine of the rarest joy
Is made of the water of tears.
But soon the throe subsides,
And a new-born love appears,
And opens her yearning arms

Nocturne

To the sorrowful children of earth
(As the sky in its tender embrace
Enfolds the slumbering world),
Lifting, expanding my soul,
Until in her starward flight
She knocks at the portals of pearl,
Pleads for the franchise of heaven,
Claiming a sisterhood sweet
With the angels that see the Lord,
In right of the noble joy
Wherewith she is hallowed and crowned.

Ay, for heaven is a state,
And these fair bodies of ours,
Framed in the likeness of God,
Vessels meet may become
For motes of the glory divine.
Heaven, the heaven of our dreams,
Scarce were fairer, methinks,
Than many an Eden that blooms
Here on the earth we despise.
The music of hearts, not harps,
And the praise that is utter delight,
These are the jubilant strains,
These are the incense of heaven ;

Love's Way and Other Poems

And the secret that seraphs know,
The fountain of rapture pure,
Is to see with the eyes that beheld
The beauty of Earth new-born,
To hear with the ears that rejoiced
In the psalm of the morning stars
That watched by the cradle of Time,
Finding a harmony true
In the very discords of life,
As the myriad chorus moves,
Marshalled in order sublime,
With a rhythmical ebb and flow
To its close in the perfect chord
Struck by the fingers of God ;
To know as the happy birds
By an instinct sure and high,
To feel with the heart of a child
By the sweet divination of love
(Laying a trustful head
On the tender bosom of God),
That joy, that joy is our part !
Joy that speaks in the gleam
Of the infinite laughter of heaven,
Joy that leaps in the veins
Of earth in her deathless prime,

Nocturne

Joy in the pulse of the seas,
Joy in the dance of the stars, —
Joy is our being's end,
Whereto, as the bee to the bloom,
We tend with an impulse true.

Fade not, beautiful dream !
Cease not, poem of God !
Deeply, O deeply sink
Into my heart and life !
And you, ye lyric airs
From viewless heights that blow,
Making the world one harp
With tender gladness athrill,
Attune my being to yours !
Give me the secret sweet
Of your ineffable joy !
Dear one, listen awhile
With the finer sense of the soul,
The perfect organ of love !
Hearest thou, hearest thou not
The music, the music of heaven
Swell from this bosom to thine,
Breathing an exquisite bliss,
Sighing an infinite hope,

Love's Way and Other Poems

And merging in one clear strain
Feeling, perception, thought,
As the bloom and the fragrance blend
In the silent speech of the rose ?
Ah, how fair is the world !

SPUYTEN DUYVIL,
May, 1890.

VESPER SIGHS

OVER the western wave,
Nigh to his harbor, the sun
Furrows a fiery wake ;
And my heart, my heart is pierced
With the pang of a hopeless desire.
For I too, I would be gone
Over the wilds of the sea
To where, with her pale soft skies,
England, the green-robed nymph,
Rises from out the foam, —
England, that strews my verse
With lingering odors and hues
From her unforgotten fields,
Though with as wild a grace
The flowers of an alien clime
Woo me, nor woo me in vain.
And I dream of my childhood's home :
The cot with its gables three
Muffled from peak to base
In a rippling mantle of green,

Love's Way and Other Poems

And the garden, so quaint and small,
Where, fenced with a rampart of box,
Rustled a sisterhood prim,
Moss-rose, pansy, and pink,
Sweetwilliam and larkspur and stock,
Perking and fluttering proud
At the buss of the fumbling bee,
Brisk from his barrack of straw.
And the lilac bower I see,
Where under a fragrant roof
To pleasure our city guests
A rustic revel we made
With honey and clouted cream
Fit for a feast of the gods.
Yonder, a rounded cone,
Rises the sacred hill,
Witness in olden days
Of many a barbarous rite,
Now a benignant form
Loved of the bird and the bee,
Its ample bosom ablaze
With furze and "midsummer-men,"
And girt with a forest of pines ;
Beneath it the Goblin Combe
Stretches, an aisle of green,

Vesper Sighs

Sweet with its legend of love.
And many a far-off scene
Dear to my boyish heart —
Dingle and rivulet cool,
Cottage and castle and mill,
Forest and sounding sea —
Glow with the tender tints
Of Memory's pencil fond,
Loveliest of limners all.
Friendly faces, and forms
Of loyal companions old,
And many a vanished hour
That with iridescent bloom
Glittered its tiny course,
She summons from out of the past.
Fairest ever and first
My gentle cousin appears,
The star of my boyhood's dream ;
Raven-haired, and her eyes
Deeply, pensively blue
With the tint of the twilight heavens.
Dead, poor child ! for the news
Came with the moanings of March ;
Dead ! and I never took
From her lips a farewell kiss,

Love's Way and Other Poems

Quitting my native land.
Nay, not mine was the fault ;
But she wept, they told me — and now
I shall kiss her nevermore !
Ay, and the comfort poor
To me is forever denied
Of musing beside the grave
Where nigh to the river she sleeps
In the beautiful city of tombs,
Now in its loveliest garb
With the lilac all in bloom,
Laburnum and rosy may,
And the chestnuts tier on tier
Towering, pagodas of pearl
With chrysolite belted and crowned.
Well for her that she sleeps,
Free from the cumber and care
Of this blind and besotted world,
That barter a birthright of bliss,
Spending its labor in vain
For the things that are not bread,
Gathering its apples of dust,
Buying its bawbles with blood,
And quenching the spirit's ray
With the icy fingers of greed,

Vesper Sighs

Until we are fain to write
On the cross that fashion rears
Over the buried corse :
“ Here lieth the body ; the soul
Long since to its dust returned ;
But the body, the body is here ! ”
Ay me ! I am weary to-night !

See ! on the pale, pure sky
Lingers a smoothèd flush,
Rose and primrose and peach
Tenderly blending in turn
With the native azure of heaven ;
And the first faint flower of the night
Opens a golden eye
On the tired world below.
There 's a charm in such an hour
Like the charm of a perfect smile ;
And over my soul a hush
Steals, as of one that hears
From the harp of a seraph, “ Peace ! ”
In far-off sweetness fall.
Nature with various voice
Sighs to the spirit or sings,
But herself is ever the same.

Love's Way and Other Poems

She with a prying zeal
Ne'er vexes the fevered heart,
Proffering this potion or that ;
But for every mood of the soul
The same large quiet is hers,
The gravity sweet and serene,
The nameless, infinite grace.
She for her province rules
The land of silence and shade
That touches on either hand
The ploughlands and plains of the mind
And the heart's wild mountain home.
Whoso is fain to explore
Those trackless regions dim,
Hath glimpses and gleams remote
And a fleeting murmur finds
Of something that still eludes
The hempen meshes of speech :
Fine suggestions, and faint
Fugitive whispers he gleans
Of a world beyond his ken :
Ay, and he deems that he hears
On the shores of the ocean of time
The trailing garments of God,
The lone, the inscrutable one,

Vesper Sighs

Whom with a groping hand
Grossly and ill we trace,
Mocking with idols of clay
Monstrous, rigid, rude,
The fluid, the luminous force
That with flow unceasing pours
Thro' the veins of the boundless world.

So, at the coming sweet
Of Silence and holy Night,
Fresh from the heavens a dew
Into my soul descends,
And soft at the homeward hour
Patience and lovely Peace
Wing to their windows again.
Nature with various voice
Sighs to the spirit or sings,
And the just and the unjust both
May hearken the hymn of her seas,
Or bathe in the calm of her stars.
So to the heedless world
My "Pax Vobiscum" I give ;
And out of the deepening dusk
Around me a murmur breathes,
" And with thy spirit, Peace."

1890.

MEMENTO MORI

GARDENER, that through the vineyard of the world
Glidest with silent footfall, pruning oft
Blossom, or bough decayed, or fruit mature ;
Lyrist, who o'er the trembling hearts of men
Hast holy power, with Love and Pity still
According ; pious Death, I sing of thee.

A tender touch is thine, benignant sprite !
Thou over mouldering arch and ruin bare
Trailest a delicate broidery, leaf and vine,
And with soft snows upon a faded brow
Dost veil the paths that creeping cares have traced ;
For Death and Birth go ever hand in hand.

Forgive our foolish fantasies, that make
The loathèd skull, the hour-glass, and the scythe
Symbols of thee, sweet Maid ! who still dost go
With eyes o'erflowing, and a showery smile
As of a weaning mother pitiful,
Thy salutary stroke in love to deal.

Memento Mori

Thou art the spirit of undying youth !
Thou the boon elements dost blend afresh
In forms of riper beauty, varying still
The typal mould ; the universe to thee
Is workshop, and the sun thy pencil dyes ;
Thee the glad seasons in their order serve.

Thou slayest but to save ; thou treasurest well
Each leaf that falls, each dewdrop that exhales ;
Thy vats the vintage of the world contain,
And every clime a glowing harvest yields
To brim with vital juice the generous cup
That universal nature drinks of thee.

Memento Mori ! 'tis the sage's cry,
And round the dial the solemn legend runs.
Remember thee ? ay, as the maiden's heart
Her lover's tryst remembers ! nor do thou
Forget thy votary, but with voice and lute
Sing to me soon thy pleasant lullaby !

Sing Peace beside her cradle musing sweet,
And Kindness in the room of Avarice king ;
Sing Superstition's knell and Faith's return,
And whatso else of bright the dædal years
Weave for the garment of a happier time
Do thou in comfortable strains rehearse.

Love's Way and Other Poems

Then bid me follow, and I shall not flinch ;
Take me, O plastic spirit, bid me wear
What form thou deemest fit ; I shall not fear,
Sweet Nurse and Healer, to re clothe my soul
In such a robe as thy belovèd hands
Bring to the slumberer at break of day.

1889.

“DIANA’S BATH”

(*Kittatinny Mountains*)

HERE is a spot for meditation fit,
For meditation high, or pensive song;
And gracious is the hour. 'T were good to rest
Here in the shadow of the flickering leaves,
Whose airy fretwork tenderly enroofs
This temple of tall trees, this pillared apse
Wherethrough the merry sunshine here and there
Steals as it were on tiptoe, half afraid,
Yet flinging smiles; the silver-stepping brook
Runs dancing down its velvet-mantled stair
To leap the petty precipice beyond,
Forever babbling a brief, simple chime,
That with an iterant melody doth mock
The ballad-maker's art. How fine a net
The creases of the wimpling water weave
To catch the sunbeams! look, how large a shade
The water-spider casts! a leaf it seems,
Clovern of shape, and lightly touched with gold.

Love's Way and Other Poems

The bowlders that enclose this mimic pool
Are smoothed as by the mason ; 't is a spot
Well named by fancy ; ay, in such a bath
Fair Dian might have laved her slender form
What time the hunter viewed with eyes profane
The virgin purity revered of heaven.
Him she transformed and slew ; but we, more blind
Than Balaam's ass, in habit's visor barred,
Were all the mountain-side alive with nymphs,
We should not spy them ; great Apollo's self
Might play the shepherd for Admetus now
With no disguise but his divinity,
Nor e'er be noted. Heaven lies far away,
And Earth is all dishallowed ; the lone mount
No oracle affords ; the solemn sea
With all its voices calls to us in vain ;
Nor from the wilderness comes any cry
Prophetic, save of birds that shun the storm.
Nay, let the saints their shining aureoles wear,
Martyrs their palms, angels their lily plumes,
Or how shall we discern them ? What new sense
Need we to know such presences benign ?
Ah, 't is the false ideal obscures the true !
The self-imprisoned soul, to gloom inured,
Shrinks dazzled from the sunlight's purity.

“ *Diana's Bath* ”

The simple peasant girl I marked of late,
Whose eyes were like the heart of some blue flower
Darkling beneath its raven petals' fringe,
In some fair Grecian rite had fitly worn
Diana's robe and quiver ; but, O fie !
How coarse her accent ! how uncouth her mien !
Sweetness and innocence and candor, such
Mere vulgar virtues, graces of the child,
What note of deity do these reveal ?
Nature's a rudimentary phase, no more,
And artlessness is but imperfect art.

Blind, blind, alas, and ignorantly blind !
There's a divinity in common things
That still escapes us : out of childhood's eyes
The angel gazes, and the wild bird's nest
Hath something holy ; saints might emulate
The virtues of a dog. Ay, dust we are,
And unto dust we cleave ; our sordid lives,
Our pedant pride, our itching vanity,
And all the viler instincts we indulge,
Have marred the delicate spiritual sense
That we were born with, — deprivation sad !
No more in ours the hand of Nature steals
In childly wise ; the peace that haunts the stars

Love's Way and Other Poems

Our turbid bosoms can reflect no more ;
The multitudinous voices eloquent
That come we know not whence — from deeps
without
Calling to deeps within — unnoted swell ;
And all the beauty of the visible world
Seems to our eyes an undeciphered scroll.
Nor less to homely graces are we blind
That lie about our path ; simplicity
Delights us not ; we roam a hundred leagues
To scale a mountain-top, despising still
The mallows in the moor we cross at morn,
A feast of color for the painter's eye.
Ay, and the beautiful suffices not
Our critic souls : we crave the picturesque ;
Mortal ourselves, we seek a fleeting charm
In all that's fair ; some trick of light and shade,
Some touch of art-theatric there must be
To win our smiles ; poor misers, hungering still,
Fastidious in a self-made penury !

Sweet Mother Nature, lead us back to thee !
Teach us to take delight in simple things,
And wean us from our follies ; bid us know,
The happy laughter of a harmless child

“ *Diana's Bath* ”

Is worth a hero's winning ; bid us mark,
Hard by, the clear-cut shadow of the pine,
Fine as a fern's — the fern's own plummy shade,
That mocks the pine's — or yonder tiniest flower,
In blue and gold more delicately dight
Than Cleopatra in her Cydnian barge.
Here, in the narrow compass of a rood,
Lives more of beauty than on palace walls ;
The rhododendron and the hemlock sleep
Above their mirrored semblances ; the rock
Shines nacreous thro' the leaping wave ; the moss
Weaves all around its living tapestry ;
Nor lack we minstrelsy, — the brook's refrain
Mingled with sigh of breeze and song of bird.
The sweet dishevelment of woods and meads
Bewitches more than art ; O, thus to hear
The stirrings light, the inarticulate calls
That wake unutterable thoughts, — to mark
The piety of Nature, the repose,
The trusting joy, the patience infinite, —
How good it were for our unquiet souls !
But, all unconscious of our heritage,
We find but what we bring ; yon simpering maid
Sweeps my poor floweret with a careless glance,
Or slurs it with the selfsame epithet

Love's Way and Other Poems

A toothsome cate receives ; anon she 'll pause
Beside a tumbling forest rill, to scan
Her chronicle of modes. Ay, sirs, the age
Demands material values, present pay ;
We live by bread alone, and are content.
A fico for "unutterable thoughts !"
That thought alone has pith and profit in it
Which men may set down fair in black and white,
Trace to the source, its tendency define,
And label with a qualifying name.
Nor love we to be teased with glimpses faint
Of unfamiliar worlds, — ecstatic states,
Illusions, intuitions, what you will.
'T is we, that follow our good senses five,
We, we are normal ; we express the type ;
All else is morbid and fantastical.
So 't is our preference that prescribes the mode :
Music must be mimetic, Art assume
The apron of a craft, and Wisdom wear
The cap-and-bells of ribald flippancy.
Vanish, ye vague emotions, and avaunt,
Ye formless yearnings, infinite regrets !
Give us the fare of Bottom, as befits
These pates of ours ; your fabled honey-dew
Leave we to poets and their listeners fond.

“ *Diana's Bath* ”

Forbear this desultory, cynic strain,
And temper truth with love ! The passing hour
Is gracious, and the bird his noonday song
Begins among the branches ; what a burst
Of artless eloquence ! what hopes and thrills !
What innocent caprice, what elfin mirth !
Sing on, dear brother-bard ! thy mood and mine
Sweet Nature hushes to her breast alike,
And “ Ay, ay, ay ! ” she says, and “ By-and-by, ”
Like an indulgent mother. Softly droop
The shadowing forest plumes ; the wooing airs
Are soft as pity, and the brook repeats
Her few soft syllables. Let anger die,
Nor fret thyself because of godless men ;
'T is mildness wins the world, and love with love
Is aye requited ; usury nor thrift
Can e'er achieve so rich a recompense ;
Her own fair dower she is, the daughter dear
Of him we name divine. Like to the leaves,
The poet saith, like to the falling leaves
The sons of men appear ; but love with life
Hath bonds reciprocal ; from sires remote
The clasp of spirit-hands innumerable
Stretches, a palpitating chain, to thee :
Not the gray mountains, not the enduring stars

Love's Way and Other Poems

Outlive it, for its pulses are aglow
With fire celestial. Gentle be my speech
As yonder brooklet's flow : Children of men,
Orphans of heaven, my hapless brethren dear,
Who know not where your consolation lies !
Ah, listen to the voice, the voice within,
And heed no more the things that pass away !
Then from the silence will a song arise,
And visions of a loveliness unguessed
Shall visit you, lifting this mortal veil,
No transient influence breathing, but with rays
Of living light purging the spirit-sense
From grossness, till ye know yourselves indeed
Encompassed, like the prophet on his mount,
With shapes of beauty, brighter than the dawn.

1888.

Revised, 1896.

EPHEMERA

“THE LAST TOKEN”

(*Gabriel Max*)

SHE recks not of the many-mouthèd rage
That roars around the Coliseum's walls ;
Lightly she pauses, though behind her crawls
The long lithe tiger, issuing from his cage,
And though yon loathlier couple, drunk with gore,
Are tumbling in their maudlin amity
Beside her on the spotted stones — for, see,
There lies her lover's rose upon the floor !
She sees him, doubt it not ! her pure sweet eyes
Beam into his that ache with heavy tears,
And there they rest ; a faint fair smile she wears,
Grave as a babe's, and innocently wise.
Art thou a man, O lover ? One swift leap,
And seek with her the unawakening sleep !

August 20, 1876.

“ FAR ABOVE RUBIES ”

ALL that we dream of gracious or divine
In woman hath its type ; each holy sprite,
Poet, or seer, or saintly eremite,
Resembles woman ; all that doth refine
The arts, the manners, to her sway benign
Owes high allegiance ; all things fair and right
Her weakness champions in the world's despite :
Where woman is, no home but hath a shrine ;
How oft, alas, profaned ! Men crucify
Her gentle spirit, and to shame betray
Her innocence with a kiss ; her agony
And sweat of blood the winds that ever stray
Forever witness ; and her bitter cry
Goes up to heaven for vengeance, night and day.

Sept. 1, 1885.

Independence Day

INDEPENDENCE DAY

(A Tribute and a Plea)

LAND of the prairies, land of rolling meres
That counterfeit the immeasurable main,
Ontario, and Cayuga, and Champlain,
Huron, Oneida, and a score their peers ;
Not mine a home where Mariposa rears
Her tree-towers, nor amid some storied plain
In Marion's country or in Paul Revere's,
'Neath Texan mulberries, or the pines of Maine :
Yet would I strike an alien harp for thee,
Among thy loyal sons, this holiday ;
Freemen are all compatriots, as the sea
Speaks the same tongue from Gades to Cathay,
And for yon banner of the brave and free
A Hampden bled, a Milton tuned the lay.

July, 1876.

RHADAMANTHUS

PREPARE to weep, ye lovely ladies all !
Of Rhadamanthus and his fate I sing,
If that my grief the piteous tale permits,
Nor mars mine utterance ; joy in woe recalled
Gives e'er the keenest pang. Fairest was he
Of all the silken race that Beauty loves ;
For he of right Maltesian stock was bred,
Witness his hazel orbs and coat of gray ;
He was a very perfect, gentle cat.
Patience was his, in cruel suffering proved ;
For once, a kitling tender, at the heels
Of his fond mistress following unperceived,
A grievous wound by sad mischance he took,
And, but that Yama bears a feeling heart
And loves to listen to a woman's prayer,
Young had he perished ; yet for some sweet moons
We knew him ours. He with swift sidelong leap
And frolic tail recurvate, still would greet
Stranger and friend alike ; how soft his song !

Rhadamanthus

How quaint his gambols ! how he loved to chase
Shadow, or fringed robe, or bounding ball !
A hundred wiles he had, and ne'er a fault.
But O the heavy change, now he is gone,
And whither gone who knows ? whether the bird
Of Jove hath rapt him to the immortal seats ;
Or elfin Puck to fair Titania's car
Hath bound him with Arachnean cordage taut,
Whereon the dew-bells ring a silvery chime ;
Or stretched before the fierce Tartarean blaze
At Pluto's awful queen he blinks content,
Forgetful of all sublunary loves,
Bides hidden. He by many a female tear
Lamented roams, and as Alcides once
With " Hylas ! Hylas ! " plied the mocking maid
That haunts the hills, so Pussy's mistress now
To unresponsive walls his name repeats
In vain, in vain ! no more with muffled nose
He takes his rest ; no more with sinuous grace
His tail pursues ; no more with eager paw
And proffered kiss he begs his matin meal.
Woe's me for Rhadamanthus ! heu ! och hone !

1883.

TO BABY BAYARD

DEAR BABY :

Proud to know you, sir !
When strangers from the skies
Come to this inn, — the “Mother’s Arms,” —
Their company we prize ;
The franchise of the world I bring,
And if you ’ll kindly lend
A listening ear or two, I ’ll read
A brief address I ’ve penned.

’T is a queer place you are visiting,
This plaguy planet, Earth,
Where pleasure ’s hand-in-glove with pain,
And grief succeeds to mirth ;
A land of toothaches, duns, and bores,
Love’s pangs, and law’s delay —
(Your grandpapa ’s in court, or I
Should have the deuce to pay).

To Baby Bayard

See "Hamlet" for the whole black list ;

But — on the credit side —

Fair fame and fortune you may win,

If you can catch the tide ;

If not, the voyage of your life

In shallows will be spent ;

Or so, at least, old Shacon says, —

Bakespeare, of course, I meant.

Yet stay with us, my pretty friend !

We'll make it worth your while ;

A thousand times a day you'll see

The loveliest mother-smile,

And that, my dear, I promise you,

Of all that earth can show,

Is the divinest, finest thing !

I think you hardly know

That you have lost your angel-friends

And strayed from heaven so far ;

And half I deem you may be right,

And heaven is — where you are ;

For love is all around you, boy,

And looks with blessing bright,

And songs that murmur tenderly

An ever-new delight.

Love's Way and Other Poems

And you shall wear the softest robes,
By loving hands designed ;
But " Persian tires " forswear, my boy !
A destiny unkind
Flannels and tweeds for you intends,
A hat, — the " stovepipe " called,
Fatal to curls, — although you seem
Congenitally bald.

But not the cowl the monk doth make,
Nor gilded spurs the knight,
And vows of chivalry are ta'en
By many a simple wight ;
So, boy, be worthy of your name,
Frank, manly, and sincere,
A lover true, a loyal friend,
" Without reproach or fear."

1891.

A Rogue's Epitaph

A ROGUE'S EPITAPH

(*From the French of Scarron*)

To dance and sing he had been taught
Who lies below ; full tall was he ;
Rhymes could he make, — but that is naught, —
And could recite them fluently.
He had a goodly pedigree
With names of gallant warriors fraught,
And, had he such experience sought,
He too had faced his enemy.
Right learnedly he talked of war,
Of land and sea, of sky and star,
Of codes, the churchly and the lay ;
Certes, good store of things he knew
In their effects and causes too.
Was he an honest man ? — Oh, nay !

Feb. 26, 1893.

THE FLIGHT OF TIME

(From the French of Scarron)

YE stately monuments of human pride,
Sepulchres, pyramids, whose fabrics grand
Bear witness how great Nature is defied
By Art's unceasing toil and cunning hand ;
Old palaces, by Roman genius planned,
Whereon their all of skill the builders plied ;
Thou Coliseum, where so oft a band
Of ruthless fools in mutual slaughter vied !
Injurious Time hath done you quite away,
Or levelled half your honors with the clay ;
There is no mortar that he cannot melt.
Hence, if your marble hard his force hath felt,
Though in two years this wretched coat of mine
Is out at elbows — let me not repine !

Feb. 26, 1893.

Epitaph : Catherine de Médicis

EPITAPH : CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS

(From the French)

ANGEL she was and fiend who lies below ;
Much did she win of praise and much of scorn.
Three kings, three civil wars, of her were born ;
She builded castles, and laid cities low ;
She did sustain and overturn the State ;
Concord she brought and many a fierce debate ;
Good laws and ill decrees to her we owe :
Let 's pray that heaven and hell may be her fate.

May, 1893.

FROM THE FRENCH OF MADAME
DE STAËL

“ MY Life ! ” you say : “ My Soul ! ” more pleases
me ;

From you I crave a less ephemeral name.

Fleeting is life ; a breath may quench its flame :
Love shares the spirit's immortality.

October, 1891.

HIDE-AND-SEEK

(After Cberbuliez)

OF old, in fields and woodland ways
(Ah, happy unforgotten days !),
By hazel copse or pasture sleek
We used to play at hide-and-seeK,
Of old, in fields and woodland ways.
Do you remember, Angelique ?
Ah, happy unforgotten days !

Of old, in fields and woodland ways
A-playing thus at hide-and-seeK,
So well we foiled the searcher's gaze
That nevermore, dear Angelique,
(Ah, happy unforgotten days !)
Whether in fields or woodland ways
To your sweet side I pierce the maze !

1887.

On a Blank Page of Thackeray

ON A BLANK PAGE OF THACKERAY

WHAT 's here ? a rabble rout of young and old,
From far climes gathered, and a vanished age ?
A motley microcosm of sot and sage,
Marquis and merry-andrew, saint and scold,
Where frieze and cloth-of-gold,
Steenkirk and stock, *bas bleus* and white cockade,
Mingle in multicolored masquerade.

Those Apollonian limbs, that crest of hair
Bespeak the ambrosial Chawles, companion good
Of beauty's car ; My Lord of Castlewood
Reels home with Costigan, Silenian pair ;
While 'Trix upon the stair
Flings as she turns a Parthian glance, and shows
To Foker *fil*s an inch of scarlet hose.

What, Becky, stitching for young Rawdon still ?
And look ! our cheery Begum, arm-in-arm
With him of Boggley Wollah ! o'er " Mes Larmes "

Love's Way and Other Poems

Matilda sighs ; the effervescent Phil
 Trolls " Luther " with a will ;
And on the Little Sister's loving breast
Sweet Fanny Bolton sobs herself to rest.

Lo Esmond, virgin still of dread or blame,
 Forever luckless and forever leal !
 How like a lily in a helm of steel
Doth modesty accord with knightly fame !
 And " Adsum ! " to his name
The Colonel answers ; never heart did beat
More true than thine, O simple soul and sweet.

We come and go like shadows on a dial ;
 These, whom the spells of Art about us call,
 Alone endure ; the very festival
We keep to-day, but marks another mile
 Tow'rd the last parting stile :
But Helen's glance and Desdemona's tears
Span with perpetual sheen the rushing years.

Nay, dear, but these are shadows ; thou and I
 Breathe vital air ; though art be long, and life
 Brief as the blossom, love like ours, my wife,
Runs with the cycle of eternity !
 The stars in yonder sky

On a Blank Page of Thackeray

Like lamps are quenched — Love out of Love still
grows,
Sown with all winds, the imperishable rose !

February 9, 1883.

(L's birthday.)

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