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P O E M S

BY

ROBERT BUCHANAN

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BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS

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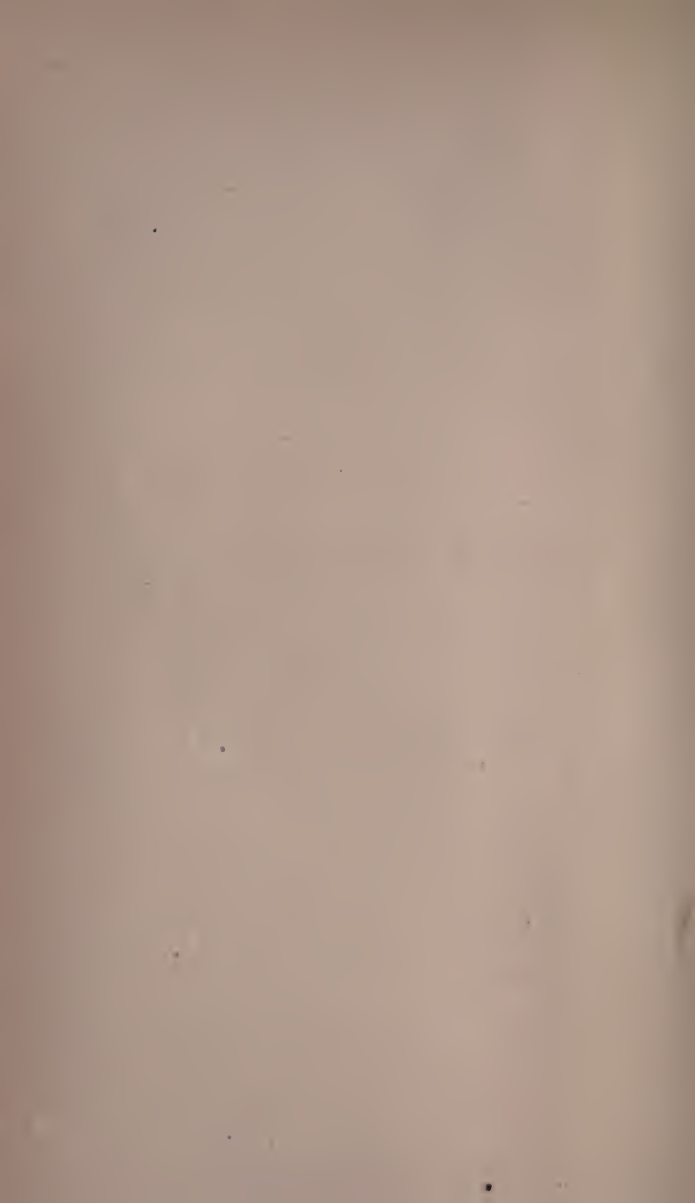
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UNDERTONES.

1

A

POET'S PROLOGUE.



TO DAVID IN HEAVEN.

“Quo diversus abis?”

“Quem Di diligunt, adolescens moritur.”

I.

LO! the slow moon roaming
Thro' fleecy mists of gloaming,
Furrowing with pearly edge the jewel-powder'd sky!
Lo, the bridge moss-laden,
Arch'd like foot of maiden,
And on the bridge, in silence, looking upward, you and I!
Lo, the pleasant season
Of reaping and of mowing —
The round still moon above, — beneath, the river dusk-
ily flowing!

2.

Violet-color'd shadows,
Blown from scented meadows,
Float o'er us to the pine-wood dark from yonder dim
corn-ridge;
The little river gushes
Thro' shady sedge and rushes,
And gray gnats murmur o'er the pools, beneath the
mossy bridge; —

And you and I stand darkly,
 O'er the keystone leaning,
 And watch the pale mesmeric moon, in the time of
 gleaners and gleaning.

3.

Do I dream, I wonder?
 As, sitting sadly under
 A lonely roof in London, thro' the grim square pane I
 gaze?
 Here of you I ponder,
 In a dream, and yonder
 The still streets seem to stir and breathe beneath the
 white moon's rays.
 By the vision cherish'd,
 By the battle bravéd,
 Do I but dream a hopeless dream, in the city that slew
 you, David?

4.

Is it fancy also,
 That the light which falls so
 faintly upon the stony street below me as I write,
 Near tall mountain passes
 Thro' churchyard weeds and grasses,
 Barely a mower's mile away from that small bridge,
 to-night?
 And, where you are lying, —
 Grass and flowers above you —
 Is mingled with your sleeping face, as calm as the
 hearts that love you?

5.

Poet gentle-hearted,
 Are you then departed,

And have you ceased to dream the dream we loved of
old so well?

Has the deeply cherish'd
Aspiration perish'd,

And are you happy, David, in that heaven where you
dwell?

Have you found the secret
We, so wildly, sought for,

And is your soul enswath'd, at last, in the singing robes
you fought for?

6.

In some heaven star-lighted,
Are you now united

Unto the poet-spirits that you loved, of English race?
Is Chatterton still dreaming?

And, to give it stately seeming,

Has the music of his last strong song passed into
Keats's face?

Is Wordsworth there? and Spenser?

Beyond the grave's black portals,

Can the grand eye of Milton *see* the glory he sang to
mortals?

7.

You at least could teach me,

Could your dear voice reach me,

Where I sit and copy out for men my soul's strange
speech,

Whether it be bootless,

Profitless, and fruitless,—

The weary aching upward strife to heights we cannot
reach,

The fame we seek in sorrow,
 The agony we forego not,
 The haunting singing sense that makes us climb —
 whither we know not.

8.

Must it last forever,
 The passionate endeavor,
 Ay, have ye, there in heaven, hearts to throb and still
 aspire?
 In the life you know now,
 Render'd white as snow now,
 Do fresher glory-heights arise, and beckon higher —
 higher?
 Are you dreaming, dreaming,
 Is your soul still roaming,
 Still gazing upward as we gazed, of old in the autumn
 gloaming?

9.

Lo, the book I hold here,
 In the city cold here!
 I hold it with a gentle hand and love it as I may;
 Lo, the weary moments!
 Lo, the icy comments!
 And lo, false Fortune's knife of gold swift-lifted up to
 slay!
 Has the strife no ending?
 Has the song no meaning?
 Linger I, idle as of old, while men are reaping or
 gleaning?

10.

Upward my face I turn to you,
 I long for you, I yearn to you,

The spectral vision trances me to utt'rance wild and
weak ;

It is not that I mourn you,

(To mourn you were to scorn you,

For you are one step nearer to the beauty singers seek.)

But I want, and cannot see you,

I seek and cannot find you,

And, see ! I touch the book of songs you tenderly left
behind you !

11.

Ay, me ! I bend above it,

With tearful eyes, and love it,

With tender hand I touch the leaves, but cannot find
you there !

Mine eyes are haunted only

By that gloaming sweetly lonely,

The shadows on the mossy bridge, the glamour in the air !

I touch the leaves, and only

See the glory they retain not, —

The moon that is a lamp to Hope, who glorifies what
we gain not !

12.

The aching and the yearning,

The hollow undiscerning,

Uplooking want I still retain, darken the leaves I
touch, —

Pale promise, with much sweetness

Solemnizing incompleteness,

But ah, you knew so little then, — and now you know
so much !

By the vision cherish'd,

By the battle bravéd,

Have you, in heaven, shamed the song, by a loftier mu-
sic, David ?

13.

I, who loved and knew you,
 In the city that slew you,
 Still hunger on, and thirst, and climb, proud-hearted
 and alone :
 Serpent-fears enfold me,
 Siren-visions hold me,
 And, like a wave, I gather strength, and gathering
 strength, I moan ;
 Yea, the pale moon beckons,
 Still I follow, aching,
 And gather strength, only to make a louder moan, in
 breaking !

14.

Tho' the world could turn from you,
 This, at least, I learn from you :
 Beauty and Truth, tho' never found, are worthy to be
 sought,
 The singer, upward-springing,
 Is grander than his singing,
 And tranquil self-sufficing joy illumines the dark of
 thought.
 This, at least, you teach me,
 In a revelation :
 That gods still snatch, as worthy death, the soul in its
 aspiration.

15.

And I think, as you thought,
 Poesy and Truth ought
 Never to lie silent in the singer's heart on earth ;
 Tho' they be discarded,
 Slighted, unrewarded, —

Tho', unto vulgar seeming, they appear of little
 worth,—
 Yet tender brother-singers,
 Young or not yet born to us,
 May seek there, for the singer's sake, that love which
 sweeteneth scorn to us !

16.

While I sit in silence,
 Comes from mile on mile hence,
 From English Keats's Roman grave, a voice that sweet-
 ens toil !
 Think you, no fond creatures
 Draw comfort from the features
 Of Chatterton, pale Phæthon, hurled down to sunless
 soil ?
 Scorch'd with sunlight lying,
 Eyes of sunlight hollow,
 But, see ! upon the lips a gleam of the chrism of
 Apollo !

17.

Noble thought produces
 Noble ends and uses,
 Noble hopes are part of Hope wherever she may be,
 Noble thought enhances
 Life and all its chances,
 And noble self is noble song,—all this I learn from
 thee !
 And I learn, moreover,
 'Mid the city's strife too,
 That such faint song as sweetens Death can sweeten
 the singer's life too !

18.

Lo, my Book! — I hold it
 In weary hands, and fold it
 Unto my heart, if only as a token I aspire ;
 And, by song's assistance,
 Unto your dim distance,
 My soul uplifted is on wings, and beckon'd higher,
 nigher.
 By the sweeter wisdom
 You return unspeaking,
 Though endless, hopeless, be the search, we exalt our
 souls in seeking.

19.

Higher, yet, and higher,
 Ever nigher, ever nigher,
 To the glory we conceive not, let us toil and strive and
 strain! —
 The agonizéd yearning,
 The imploring and the burning,
 Grown awfuller, intenser, at each vista we attain,
 And clearer, brighter, growing,
 Up the gulfs of heaven wander,
 Higher, higher yet, and higher, to the Mystery we
 ponder!

20.

Yea, higher yet, and higher,
 Ever nigher, ever nigher,
 While men grow small by stooping and the reaper piles
 the grain, —
 Can it then be bootless,
 Profitless and fruitless,

The weary aching upward search for what we never
gain?

Is there not awaiting
Rest and golden weather,

Where, passionately purified, the singers may meet
together?

21.

Up! higher yet, and higher,
Ever nigher, ever nigher,

Thro' voids that Milton and the rest beat still with
seraph-wings;

Out thro' the great gate creeping
Where God hath put his sleeping —

A dewy cloud detaining not the soul that soars and
sings,

Up! higher yet, and higher,
Fainting nor retreating,

Beyond the sun, beyond the stars, to the far bright
realm of meeting!

22.

O Mystery! O Passion!

To sit on earth, and fashion,

What floods of music visibled may fill that fancied
place!

To think, the least that singeth,

Aspireth and upspringeth,

May weep glad tears on Keats's breast and look in
Milton's face!

When human power and failure

Are equalized forever,

And the one great Light that haloes all is the passion-
ate bright endeavor!

23.

But ah, that pale moon roaming
Thro' fleecy mists of gloaming,
Furrowing with pearly edge the jewel-powder'd sky,
And ah, the days departed
With your friendship gentle-hearted,
And ah, the dream we dreamt that night, together, you
and I !
Is it fashion'd wisely,
To help us or to blind us,
That at each height we gain we turn, and behold a
heaven behind us ?

THE UNDERTONES.



Thou Fame ! who makest of the singer's Life,
Faint with the sweetness of its own desire,
A statue of Narcissus, still and fair
Forevermore, and bending evermore
Over its beauteous image mirroréd
In the swift current of our human days,
Eternally in act to clasp and kiss !
O Fame, teach thou this flesh and blood to love
Some beauteous counterpart, and while it bends,
Tremulously gazing on the image, blow
Thy trump aloud, and freeze it into stone !

THE UNDERTONES.



I.

PROTEUS;

OR, A PRELUDE.

I.

I INTO the living elements of things
I, Proteus, mingle, seeking strange disguise :
I track the Sun-god on an eagle's wings,
Or look at horror thro' a murderer's eyes,
In shape of hornéd beast my shadow glides
Among broad-leavéd flowers that blow 'neath Afric tides.

2.

Lo! I was stirring in the leaves that shaded
The Garden where the Man and Woman smiled :
I saw them later, raimentless, degraded,
The apple sour upon their tongues ; beguiled
By the sweet wildness of the Woman's tears,
I dropt in dew upon her lips, and stole
Under her heart, a stirring human Soul,
The blood within her tingling in mine ears ;
And as I lay, I heard a voice that cried
" Lo, Proteus, the unborn, shall wake to be
Heir of the Woman's sorrow, yet a guide

Conducting back to immortality —
 The spirit of the leaves of Paradise
 Shall lift him upward, to aspire and rise !”
 Then sudden, I was conscious that I lay
 Under a heaven that gleam'd afar away : —
 I heard the Man and Woman weeping,
 The green leaves rustling, and the Serpent creep-
 ing,
 The roar of beasts, the song of birds, the chime
 Of elements in sudden strife sublime,
 And overhead I saw the starry Tree,
 Eternity,
 Put forth the blossom Time.

3.

A wind of ancient prophecy swept down,
 And wither'd up my beauty — where I lay
 On Paris' bosom, in the Trojan town ;
 Troy vanish'd, and I wander'd far away, —
 Till, lying on a Virgin's breast, I gazed
 Thro' infant eyes, and saw, as in a dream,
 The great god Pan whom I had raised and praised,
 Float huge, unsinew'd, down a mighty stream,
 With leaves and lilies heap'd about his head,
 And a weird music hemming him around,
 While, dropping from his nerveless fingers dead,
 A brazen sceptre plunged with hollow sound :
 A trackless Ocean wrinkling tempest-wing'd
 Open'd its darkness for the clay unking'd :
 Moreover, as he floated on at rest,
 With lips that flutter'd still in act to speak,
 An eagle, swooping down upon his breast,
 Pick'd at his songless lips with golden beak.

4.

There was a sound of fear and lamentation,
 The forests wail'd, the stars and moon grew pale,
 The air grew cloudy with the desolation
 Of gods that fell from realmless thrones like hail ;
 But as I gazed, the great god Pan awaking,
 Lookt in the Infant's happy eyes and smiled,
 And smiling died ; and like a sunbeam breaking
 From greenwood olden, rose a presence mild
 In exhalation from the clay, and stole
 Around the Infant in an auriole —
 When, gladden'd by the glory of the child,
 Dawn gleam'd from pole to pole.

5.

And, lo ! a shape with pallid smile divine
 Wander'd in Palestine ;
 And Adam's might was stately in his eyes,
 And Eve's wan sweetness glimmer'd on his cheek,
 And when he open'd heavenly lips to speak,
 I heard, disturbing Pilate into sighs,
 The rustle of those leaves in Paradise !
 Then all was dark, the earth, and air, and sky,
 The sky was troubled and the earth was shaken,
 Beasts shriek'd, men shouted, and there came a cry, —
 “ My God, I am forsaken ! ”
 But even then, I smiled amid my tears,
 And saw in vision, down the future years,
 What time the cry still rung in heaven's dark dome,
 The likeness of his smile ineffable,
 Serenely dwell
 On Raphael, sunn'd by popes and kings at Rome,
 And Dante, singing in his Tuscan cell !

6.

But sudden, from the vapors of the north,
 Ice-bearded, snowy-visaged, Strength burst forth,
 Brandishing arms in death :
 'T was Ades, frightened from his seat in Hell
 By that pale smile of peace ineffable,
 That with a sunny life-producing breath,
 Wreathed summer round the foreheads of the Dead,
 And troubled Hell's weird silence into joy.
 And with a voice that rent the pole he said,
 "Lo, I am Thor, the mighty to destroy !"
 The accents ran to water on his mouth,
 The pole was kindled to a fiery glow,
 A breath of summer floated from the south
 And melted him like snow.

7.

Yea thus, thro' change on change,
 Haunted forever by the leafy sound
 That sigh'd the Woman and the Man around,
 I, Proteus, range.
 A weary quest, a power to climb and soar,
 Yet never quit life's bitterness and starkness,
A groping for God's hand amid the darkness,^x
 The day behind me and the night before,
 This is my task forevermore !
 I am the shadow of the inspiration
 Breath'd on the Man ; I am the sense alone,
 That, generation upon generation,
 Empowers the sinful Woman to atone
 By giving angels to the grave and weeping
 Because she knows not whither they are going ;
 I am the strife awake, the terror sleeping,
 The sorrow ever ebbing, ever flowing.

x "Groping blindly in the darkness,
 Touch God's right-hand in that darkness."
 Rawfellows - 'Hicamatha' 18

Mine are the mighty names of power and worth,
 The seekers of the vision that hath fled,
 I bear the Infant's smile about the earth,
 And put the Cross on the aspirant's head,
 I am the peace on holy men who die,
 I waft as sacrifice their fleeting breath, —
 I am the change that is not change, for I
 Am deathless, being DEATH.

8.

For, evermore I grow
 Wiser, with humbler power to feel and know ;
 For, in the end I, Proteus, shall cast
 All wondrous shapes aside but one alone,
 And stand (while round about me in the Vast
 Earth, Sun, Stars, Moon, as snow-flakes melt at last,)
 A Skeleton that, shadow'd by the Tree,
 Eternity,
 Holds in his hands the blossom Time full blown,
 And kneels before a Throne.

ADES, KING OF HELL.

I.

BENEATH the caves where sunless loam
 Grows dim and reddens into gold ;
 'Neath the fat earth-seams, where the cold
 Rains thicken to the flowery foam
 Fringing blue streams in summer zones ;
 Beneath the spheres where dead men's bones
 Change darkly thro' slow centuries to marl and glitter-
 ing stones ; —

2.

Orb'd in that rayless realm, alone,
 Far from the realm of sun and shower,
 A palpable god with godlike power,
 I, Ades, dwelt upon a throne ;
 Much darkness did my eyelids tire ;
 But thro' my veins the hid Sun's fire
 Communicated impulse, hope, thought, passion, and
 desire.

3.

Eternities of lonely reign,
 Full of faint dreams of day and night
 And the white glamour of starry light,
 Oppress'd my patience into pain ;
 Upward I sent a voice of prayer
 That made a horror in the air :
 And "Ades craves a queen, O Zeus !" shook heaven
 unaware.

4.

The gods stopt short in full carouse,
And listen'd. On the streams of Hell
The whole effulgent conclave fell
As in a glass. With soft-arch'd brows,
And wings of dewy-tinctured dye,
Moist Iris listen'd blushingly ;
And Heré sought the soul of Zeus with coldly eager
eye.

5.

Then the clear hyaline grew cold
And dim before the Father's face ;
Gray meditation clothed the place ;
And rising up Zeus cried, " Behold ! " —
And on Olumpos' crystal wall
A kingly phantom cloudy and tall,
Throned, sceptred, crown'd, was darkly apparition'd at
the call.

6.

" Behold him ! " Zeus the Father cried,
With voice that shook my throne forlorn :
Pale Hermes curl'd his lips in scorn,
And Iris drew her bow aside ;
Artemis paled and did not speak ;
Sheer fear flush'd Aphrodité's cheek ;
And only owl-eyed Pallas look'd with pitying smile and
meek.

7.

A weary night thro' earth and air
The shadow of my longing spread,
And not a goddess answeréd.

All nature darken'd at my prayer ;
 Which darkness earth and air did shroud,
 No star rain'd light, but, pàle and proud,
 With blue-edged sickle Artemis cut her slow path thro'
 cloud.

8.

And when the weary dark was done,
 Beyond my sphere of realm upsprang,
 With smile that beam'd and harp that sang,
 Apollo piloting the Sun ;
 And conscious of him shining o'er,
 I watch'd my black and watery floor
 Wherein the wondrous upper-world is mirror'd ever-
 more.

9.

When lo, there murmur'd on my brain,
 Like sound of distant waves, a sound
 That did my godlike sense confound
 And kiss'd my eyelids down in pain ;
 And far above I heard the beat
 Of musically falling feet,
 Hurl'd by the echoes of the earth down to my brazen
 seat.

10.

And I was 'ware that overhead
 Walk'd one whose very motion sent
 A sweet immortal wonderment
 Thro' the deep dwellings of the Dead,
 And flush'd the seams of cavern and mine
 To gleams of gold and diamond shine,
 And made the misty dews' shoot up to kiss her feet
 divine.

II.

By Zeus, the beat of those soft feet
Thrill'd to the very roots of Hell,
Troubling the mournful streams that fell
Like snakes from out my brazen seat :
Faint music reach'd me strange and slow,
My conscious Throne gleam'd pale as snow,
A beauteous vision vaguely fill'd the dusky glass
below. —

12.

When I beheld in that dark glass
The phantom of a lonely maid,
Who gather'd flowers in a green glade
Knee-deep in dewy meadow-grass,
And on a riverside. Behold,
The sun that robed her round with gold,
Mirror'd beneath me raylessly, loom'd white and round
and cold.

13.

Soft yellow hair that curl'd and clang
Throbb'd to her feet in softest showers,
And as she went she gather'd flowers,
And as she gather'd flowers she sang :
It floated down my sulphurous eaves,
That melody of flowers and leaves,
Of vineyards, gushing purple wines, and yellow slanted
sheaves.

14.

Darkling I mutter'd, "It were choice
Proudly to throne in solemn cheer
So fair a queen, and ever to hear
Such song from so divine a voice!"

And with the wish I upward breathed
 A mist of fire that swiftly seethed
 Thro' shuddering earth-seams overhead, and round her
 warm knees wreathed.

15.

Whereon the caves of precious stones
 Grew bright as moonlight thrown on death,
 And red gold brighten'd, and the breath
 Drew greenness moist from fleshless bones ;
 And every cave was murmuring :
 "O River, cease to flow and sing,
 And bear the tall bride on thy banks to the footstool
 of thy king !"

16.

Then writhed the roots of forest trees
 In tortuous fear, till tremblingly
 Green leaves quaked round her. A sharp cry
 Went upward from the Oreades ;
 Low murmurs woke in bower and cave,
 With diapason in the wave :
 The River eddied darkly round, obeying as a slave.

17.

Half stooping downward, while she held
 A flower in loosening fingers light ;
 The quick pink fading from the white
 Upon her cheek ; with eyes that welled
 Dark pansy thoughts from veins that dart
 Like restless snakes round the honeyed heart,
 And balmy breath that mildly blew her rose-red lips
 apart, —

18.

She listen'd — stately, yet dismay'd ;
And dimly conscious of some change
That made the whispering place seem strange
And awful, far from human aid ;
And as the moaning Stream grew near,
And whirl'd unto her with eddies clear,
She saw my shadow in his waves and shrank away in
fear.

19.

“ Small River, flowing with summer sound,
Strong River, solemn Ades' slave,
Flow unto her with gentle wave,
And make an isle, and hem her round.”
The River, sad with gentle worth,
Felt backward to that cave of earth,
Where, troubled with my crimson eyes, he shudder'd
into birth.

20.

Him saw she trembling ; but unseen,
Under long sedges lily-strew'd,
Round creeping roots of underwood,
Low down beneath the grasses green
Whereon she waited wondering-eyed,
My servant slid with stealthy tide : —
Then like a fountain bubbled up and foam'd on either
side.

21.

And shrinking back she gazed in fear
On his wild hair, and lo, an isle —
Around whose brim waves rose the while
She cried, “ O mother Ceres, hear ! ”

Then sprang she wildly to and fro,
 Wilder than rain and white as snow.
 "O honor'd River, grasp thy prize, and to the footstool
 flow!"

22.

One swift sunbeam with sickly flare
 On white arms waving high did gleam,
 What time she shriek'd, and the strong Stream
 Leapt up and grasp'd her by the hair.
 And all was dark. With wild heads bow'd
 The forests murmur'd, and black cloud
 Split spumy on the mountain-tops with fire and portent
 loud!

23.

Then all was still as the Abyss,
 Save for the dark and bubbling water.
 And the far voice. "Bear Ceres' daughter
 Unto the kingly feet of Dis!"
 Wherefore I rose upon my throne,
 And smote my kingdom's roof of stone;
 Earth moan'd to her deep fiery roots — Hell answer'd
 with a groan.

24.

When swiftly waving sulphurous wings
 The Darkness brooded down in fear
 To listen. I, afar, could hear
 The coming River's murmurings;
 My god-like eyes with flash of flame
 Peer'd up the chasm. As if in shame
 Of his slave-deed, darkly and slow, my trembling ser-
 vant came.

25.

The gentleness of summer light,
This Stream, my honor'd slave, possessed :
The blue flowers mirror'd in his breast,
And the meek lamps that sweeten night,
Had made his heart too mild to bear
With other than a gentle care,
And slow and solemn pace, a load so violet-eyed and
fair !

26.

Him saw I, as, thro' looming rocks,
He glimmer'd like a serpent gray
Whose moist coils hiss ; then, far away,
Lo the dim gleam of golden locks,
Lo a far gleam of glinting gold,
Floating in many a throbbing fold,
What time soft ripples panted dark on queenly eyelids
cold.

27.

Silently, with obeisance meet,
In gentle arms escorting well
The partner of eternal Hell,
Thus flow'd, not halting, to my feet
The gracious River with his load :
Her with dark arm-sweep he bestow'd
On my great footstool — then again, with sharp shriek,
upward flow'd.

28.

So fair, so fair, so strangely fair,
Dark from the waters lay my love ;
And lo, I, Ades, stoop'd above,
And shuddering touch'd the yellow hair

That made my beaded eyeballs close —
 Awful as sunshine. Cold as snows,
 Pale-faced, dank-lidded, proud, she lay in wonderful
 repose.

29.

And all the lesser Thrones that rise
 Around me, shook. With murmurous breath,
 Their Kings shook off eternal death,
 And with a million fiery eyes
 Glared red above, below, around,
 And saw me stooping fiery-crown'd ;
 And the white faces of the damn'd arose without a
 sound.

30.

As if an awful sunbeam, rife
 With living glory, pierced the gloom,
 Bringing to spirits blind with doom
 The summers of forgotten life, —
 Those pallid faces, mad and stern,
 Rose up in foam, and each in turn
 Roll'd downward, as a white wave breaks, and seem'd
 to plead and yearn.

31.

What time this horror loom'd beyond,
 Her soul was troubled into sighs :
 Stooping, throned, crown'd, I touch'd her eyes
 With dim and ceremonial wand ;
 And looking up, she saw and knew
 An awful love which did subdue
 Itself to her bright comeliness and gave her greeting
 due !

32.

“Welcome!” — The rocks and chasms and caves,
 The million thrones and their black kings,
 The very snakes and creeping things,
 The very damn'd within the waves,
 Groan'd “welcome”; and she heard — with light
 Fingers that writhed in tresses bright, —
 But when I touch'd her to the soul, she slowly rose her
 height.

33.

While shadows of a reign eterne
 Quench'd the fine glint in her yellow hair,
 She rose erect more hugely fair,
 And, dark'ning to queenhood stern,
 She gazed into mine eyes and thence
 Drew black and subtle inference,
 Subliming the black godhead there with sunnier, sweeter
 sense.

34.

Low at her feet, huge Cerberus
 Crouch'd groaning, but with royal look
 She stooping silenced him, and took
 The throne sublime and perilous
 That rose to hold her and upstream'd
 Vaporous fire: the dark void scream'd,
 The pale Eumenides made moan, with eyes and teeth
 that gleam'd.

35.

Behold, she sits beside me now,
 A weighty sorrow in her mien,
 Yet gracious to her woes — a queen;
 The sunny locks about her brow

Shadow'd to godhead solemn, meet ;
 Throned, queen'd ; but round about her feet,
 Sweeten'd by gentle grass and flowers, the brackish
 waves grow sweet.

36.

And surely, when the mirror dun
 Beneath me mirrors yellowing leaves,
 And reapers binding golden sheaves,
 And vineyards purple in the sun,
 When fulness fills the plenteous year
 Of the bright upper-world, I hear
 The voice among the harvest-fields that mourns a
 daughter dear.

37.

“Lo, Ceres mourns the bride of Dis,”
 The old Earth moans, and rocks and hills,
 “Persephoné” ; sad radiance fills
 The dripping horn of Artemis,
 Silverly shaken in the sky ;
 And a great frost-wind rushing by —
 “Ceres will rob the eyes of Hell when seed-time draw-
 eth nigh.”

38.

And in the seed-time after snow,
 Down the long caves, in soft distress,
 Dry corn-blades tangled in her dress,
 The weary goddess wanders slow —
 The million eyes of Hell are bent
 On my strange queen in wonderment, —
 The ghost of Iris gleams across my waters impotent !

39.

And the sweet Bow bends mild and bland
O'er rainy meadows near the light,
When fading far along the night
They wander upward hand-in-hand ;
And like a phantom I remain,
Chain'd to a throne in lonely reign,
Till, sweet with greenness, moonlight-kiss'd, she wan-
ders back again.

40.

But when afar thro' rifts of gold
And caverns steep'd in fog complete,
I hear the beat of her soft feet,
My kingdom totters as of old ;
And, conscious of her sweeter worth,
Her godhead of serenèr birth,
Hell, breathing fire thro' flowers and leaves, feels to
the upper-earth.

III.

P A N .

IT is not well, ye gods, it is not well !
 Yea, hear me grumble — rouse, ye sleepers, rouse
 Upon thick-carpeted Olumpus' top —
 Nor, faintly hearing, murmur in your sloth,
 " 'T is but the voice of Pan the malcontent !"
 Shake the sleek sunshine from ambrosial locks,
 Vouchsafe a sleepy glance at the far earth
 That underneath ye wrinkles dim with cloud,
 And smile, and sleep again !

ME, when at first
 The deep Vast murmur'd, and Eternity
 Gave forth a hollow sound while from its voids
 Ye blossom'd thick as flowers, and by the light
 Beheld yourselves eternal and divine, —
 ME, underneath the darkness visible
 And calm as ocean when the cold Moon smooths
 The palpitating waves without a sound, —
 Me, ye saw sleeping in a dream, white-hair'd,
 Low-lidded, gentle, aged, and like the shade
 Of the eternal self-unconsciousness
 Out of whose law YE had awaken'd — gods
 Fair-statured, self-apparent, marvellous,
 Dove-eyed, and inconceivably divine.

Over the ledges of high mountains, thro'
 The fulgent streams of dawn, soft-pillow'd

On downy clouds that swam in reddening streaks
 Like milk wherein a crimson wine-drop melts,
 And far beyond the dark of vague low lands,
 Uprose Apollo, shaking from his locks
 Ambrosial dews, and making as he rose
 A murmur such as west winds weave in June.
 Wherefore the darkness in whose depth I sat
 Wonder'd: thro' newly-woven boughs, the light
 Crept onward to mine eyelids unaware,
 And fluttering o'er my wrinkled length of limb
 Like tremulous butterflies above a snake,
 Disturb'd me, — and I stirr'd, and open'd eyes,
 Then lifted up my eyes to see the light,
 And saw the light, and, seeing not myself,
 Smiled!

Thereupon, ye gods, the woods and lawns
 Grew populously glad with living things.
 A rod of stone beneath my heel grew bright,
 Writhing to life, and hissing drew swift coils
 O'er the upspringing grass; above my head
 A birch unbound her silver-shimmering hair,
 Brightening to the notes of numerous birds;
 And far dim mountains hollow'd out themselves
 To give forth streams, till down the mountain-sides
 The loosen'd streams ran flowing. Then a voice
 Came from the darkness as it roll'd away
 Under Apollo's sunshine-sandall'd foot,
 And the vague voice shriek'd "Pan!" and woods and
 streams

Sky-kissing mountains and the courteous vales,
 Cried "Pan!" and earth's reverberating roots
 Gave forth an answer, "Pan!" and stooping down
 His fiery eyes to scorch me from my trance,
 Unto the ravishment of his soft lyre

“Pan!” sang Apollo: when the wide world heard,
 Brightening brightlier, till thro’ murmurous leaves
 Pale wood-nymphs peep’d around me whispering
 “Pan!”

And sweeter faces floated in the stream
 That gurgled to my ankle, whispering “Pan!”
 And, clinging to the azure gown of air
 That floated earthward dropping scented dews,
 A hundred lesser spirits panted “Pan!”
 And, far along an opening forest-glade,
 Beating a green lawn with alternate feet,
 “Pan!” cried the satyrs leaping. Then all sounds
 Were hush’d for coming of a sweeter sound;
 And rising up, with outstretch’d arms, I, Pan,
 Look’d eastward, saw, and knew myself a god.

It was not well, ye gods, it was not well!
 Star-guiders, cloud-compellers — ye who stretch
 Ambrosia-dripping limbs, great-statured, bright,
 Silken and fair-proportion’d, in a place
 Thick-carpeted with grass as soft as sleep;
 Who with mild glorious eyes of liquid depth
 Subdue to perfect peace and calm eterne
 The mists and vapors of the nether-world,
 That curl up dimly from the nether-world
 And make a roseate mist wherein ye lie
 Soft-lidded, broad-foreheaded, stretch’d supine
 In awful contemplations — ye great gods,
 Who meditate your souls and find them fair —
 Ye heirs of odorous rest — it was not well! —
 For, with Apollo sheer above, I, Pan,
 In whom a gracious godhead lived and moved,
 Rose, glorious-hearted, and look’d down; and lo,
 Goat-legs, goat-thighs, goat-feet, uncouth and rude,

And, higher, the breast and bowels of a beast,
 Huge thews and twisted sinews swoll'n like cords,
 And thick integument of bark-brown skin —
 A hideous apparition masculine !
 But in my veins a new and natural youth,
 In my great veins a music as of boughs
 When the cool aspen-fingers of the Rain
 Feel for the eyelids of the earth in spring,
 In every vein quick life ; within my soul
 The meekness of some sweet eternity
 Forgot ; and in mine eyes soft violet-thoughts
 That widen'd in the eyeball to the light,
 And peep'd, and trembled chilly back to the soul
 Like leaves of violets closing.

By my lawns,
 My honey-flowing rivers, by my woods
 Grape-growing, by my mountains down whose sides
 The slow flocks thread like silver streams at eve,
 By the deep comfort in the eyes of Zeus
 When the soft murmur of my peaceful dales
 Blows like a gust of perfume on his cheek,
 There where he reigns, cloud-shrouded — by meek lives
 That smooth themselves like wings of doves and brood
 Over immortal themes for love of me —
 I swear it was not well.

Ay, ay, ye smile ; —
 Ye hear me, garrulous, and turn again
 To contemplation of the slothful clouds
 That curtain ye for sweetness. Hear me, gods !
 Not the ineffable stars that interlace
 The azure panoply of Zeus himself,
 Have surer sweetness than my hyacinths
 When they grow blue in gazing on blue heaven,

Than the white lilies of my rivers when
 In leafy spring Selené's silver horn
 Spills paleness, peace, and fragrance. — And for these,
 For all the sensible or senseless things
 Which swell the sounds and sights of earth and air,
 I snatch some glory which of right belongs
 To ye whom I revile : ay, and for these,
 For all the sensible or senseless things
 Which swell the sounds and sights of earth and air,
 I will snatch fresher glory, fresher joy,
 Robbing your rights in heaven day by day,
 Till from my dispensation ye remove
 Darkness, and drought that parches thirsty skins,
 The stinging alchemy of frost, the agues
 That rack me in the season of wet winds —
 Till, bit by bit, my bestial nether-man
 Peels off like bark, my green old age shoots up
 Godhead apparent, and I know myself
 Fair — as becomes a god !

Ay, I shall do !

Not I alone am something garrulous, gods !
 But the broad-bosom'd earth, whose countless young
 Moan " Pan ! " most piteously when ye frown
 In tempests, or when Thunder, waving wings,
 Groans crouching from your lightning spears, and then
 Springs at your lofty silence with a shriek !
 Not I alone, low horror masculine,
 But earthquake-shaken hills, the dewy dales,
 Blue rivers as they flow, and boughs of trees,
 Yea, monsters, and the purblind race of men,
 Grow garrulous of your higher glory, gods ;
 Yearning unto it moan my name aloud,
 Climbing unto it shriek or whisper " Pan ! "
 Till from the far-off verdurous depths, from deep

Impenetrable woods whose wondrous roots
Blacken to coal or redden into gold,
I, stirring in this ancient dream of mine,
Make answer — and they hear.

In Arcady

I, sick of mine own envy, hollow'd out
A valley, green and deep ; then pouring forth
From the great hollow of my hand a stream
Sweeter than honey, bade it wander on
In blue and oily lapse to the far sea.
Upon its banks grew flowers as thick as grass,
Gum-dropping poplars and the purple vine,
Slim willows dusty like the thighs of bees,
And, further, stalks of corn and wheat and flax,
And, even further, on the mountain sides
White sheep and new-yea'd lambs, and in the midst
Mild-featured shepherds piping. Was not this
An image of your grander ease, O gods ?
A faint sweet picture of your bliss, O gods ?
They thank'd me, those sweet shepherds, with the smoke
Of crimson sacrifice of lambkins slain,
Rich spices, succulent herbs that savor meats ;
And when they came upon me ere aware,
Walk'd sudden on my presence where I piped
By rivers lorn my mournful ditties old,
Cried "Pan !" and worshipp'd. Yet it was not well,
Ye gods, it was not well, that I, who gave
The harvest to these men, and with my breath
Thicken'd the wool upon the backs of sheep,
I, Pan, should in these purblind mortal forms
Witness a loveliness more gently fair,
Nearer to your dim loveliness, O gods !
Than my immortal wood-pervading self, —
Carelessly blown on by the rosy Hours,

Who breathe quick breath and smile before they die - -
Goat-footed, horn'd, a monster — yet a god.

By wanton Aphrodité's velvet limbs,
I swear, ye amorous gods, it was not well! —
Down the long vale of Arcady I chased
A wood-nymph, unapparell'd and white-limb'd,
From gleaming shoulder unto foot a curve
Delicious, like the bow of Artemis :
A gleam of dewy moonlight on her limbs ;
Within her veins a motion as of waves
Moon-led and silver-crested to the moon ;
And in her heart a sweetness such as fills
Uplooking maidens when the virgin orb
Witches warm bosoms into snows, and gives
The colorable chastity of flowers
To the tumultuous senses curl'd within.
Her, after summer noon, what time her foot
Startled with moonlight motion milk-blue stalks
Of hyacinths in a dim forest glade, —
Her saw I, and, uplifting eager arms,
I rush'd around her as a rush of boughs,
My touch thrill'd thro' her, she beheld my face,
And like a gnat it stung her, and she fled.

Down the green glade, along the verdurous shade,
She screaming fled and I pursued behind :
By Zeus, it was as though the forest moved
Behind her, following ; and with shooting boughs,
And bristling arms and stems, and murmurous leaves,
It eddied after her — my underwood
Of bramble and the yellow-blossom'd furze
Flung its thick growth around her waist, my trees
Dropt thorns before her, and my growing grass

Put forth its green and sappy oils and slid
 Under her feet ; until, with streaming hair
 Like ravell'd sunshine torn 'mid scars and cliffs,
 Pale, breathless, and long-throated like a swan,
 With tongue that panted 'tween the foamy lips
 As the red arrow in a tulip's cup,
 She, coming swiftly on the river-side,
 Into the circle of a sedgy pool
 Plunged knee-deep, shrieking. Then I, thrusting arms
 To grasp her, touch'd her with hot hands that clung
 Like burrs to the soft skin ; while, writhing down
 Even as a fountain lessens gurglingly,
 She cried to Artemis, " Artemis, Artemis,
 Sweet goddess, Artemis, aid me, Artemis !"
 And o'er the laurels on the river-side,
 Dark and low-fluttering, Daphne's hidden soul
 Breathed fearful hoar-frost, echoing " Artemis " ;
 When lo, above the sandy sunset rose
 The silver sickle of the green-gown'd witch,
 Which flicker'd thrice into a pallid orb,
 And thrice flash'd white across the forest leaves,
 And — lo, the change ye wot of : melting limbs
 Black'ning to oozy sap of reeds, white hands
 Waving aloft and putting forth green shoots,
 The faint breath-bubbles circling in a pool,
 Last, the sharp voice's murmur dying away
 In the low lapping of the rippling pool,
 The melancholy motion of the pool,
 And the faint undertone of whispering reeds.

By Latmos and its shepherd, was it well ?
 By smooth-chin'd Syrinx, was it well, O gods ?
 Yet mark. What time the pallid sickle wax'd
 Blue-edged and luminous o'er the black'ning west,

I, looming hideous in the smooth pool, stooped
 And pluck'd seven wondrous pipes of brittle reeds
 Wherein the wood-nymph's soul still flutter'd faint ;
 And these seven pipes I shaped to one, wherein
 I, Pan, with ancient and dejected head
 Nodding above its image in the pool,
 And large limbs stretch'd their length on shadowy
 banks,
 Did breathe such weird and awful ravishment,
 Such symmetry of sadness and sweet sound,
 Such murmurs of deep boughs and hollow cells,
 That neither bright Apollo's hair-strung lute,
 Nor Heré's queenly tongue when her red lips
 Flutter to intercession of love-thoughts
 Throned in the counsel-keeping eyes of Zeus,
 Nor airs from heaven, blow sweetlier. Hear me, gods !
 Behind her veil of azure, Artemis
 Turn'd pale and listen'd ; mountains, woods, and
 streams,
 And every mute and living thing therein,
 Marvell'd, and hush'd themselves to hear the end —
 Yea, far away, the fringe of the green sea
 Caught the faint sound and with a deeper moan
 Rounded the pebbles on the shadowy shore.
 Whence, in the season of the pensive eve,
 The earth plumes down her weary, weary wings ;
 The Hours, each frozen in his mazy dance,
 Look scared upon the stars and seem to stand
 Stone-still, like chisell'd angels mocking Time ;
 And woods and streams and mountains, beasts and birds,
 And serious hearts of purblind men, are hush'd ;
 While music sweeter far than any dream
 Floats from the far-off silence, where I sit
 Wondrously wov'n about with forest boughs —

Through which the moon peeps faintly, on whose leaves
 The unseen stars sprinkle a diamond dew —
 And shadow'd in some water that not flows,
 But, pausing, spreads dark waves as smooth as oil
 To listen !

Am I over-garrulous, gods ?

Thou pale-faced witch, green-kirtled, — thou whose light
 Troubles the beardless shepherd where he sleeps
 On Latmos, — am I over-garrulous ?

Nay, then, pale huntress of my groves, I swear

The lily and the primrose 'neath thy heel

Savor as fair as thee, as pure as thee,

Drinking the lucid glamour of thy speed ;

And on the cheeks of marriageable maids

Dwelleth a pallor enviably sweet,

Sweet as thy sweetest self, yet robb'd from thee.

Snow-bosom'd lady, art thou proud ? — Then hark . . .

When last in the cool quiet of the night

Thou glimmeredst dimly down with thy white nymphs,

And brush'd these dewy lawns with buskin'd foot,

I, Pan the scorn'd, into an oak-tree crept,

And holding between thumb and finger — thus —

A tiny acorn, dropt it cunningly

In the small nest beneath thy snow-heap'd breasts,

And thou didst pause in tumult, cried aloud,

Then redden'd like a rose from breast to brow,

Sharp-crimson like a rose from breast to brow,

And trembled, aspen-hearted, timorous

As new-yeand lambs, and with a young doe's cry

Startled amazed from thine own tremulous shade

Faint-mirror'd in the dark and dewy lawn !

Ha, turn your mild grand eyes, O gods, and hear !
 Why do I murmur darkly, do ye ask ?

What do I seek for, yearn for? — Why, not much.
 I would be milky-limb'd and straight and tall
 And pleasant-featured, like Apollo there!
 I would be lithe and fair as Hermes is;
 And, with that glittering sheath of god-like form,
 Trust me, could find for it a wit as keen
 As that which long ago did prick and pain
 The thin skin of the Sun-god. I would be
 Grand and fine-statured as becomes a god,
 A sight divine conceived harmoniously,
 A stately incarnation of my sweet
 Pipings in lonely places. There 's the worm!

Ay, ay, 'the mood is on me, — I am aged,
 White-bearded, and my very lifted hands
 Shake garrulously, — and ye hear, and smile.
 By the faint undertone of this blind Earth,
 Swooning towards the pathway of the Sun
 With flowery pulses, leafy veins, whene'er
 She hears in intercession of new births
 My voice miraculous melancholy old, —
 I swear not I alone, a sensible god,
 Shall keep these misproportions, worse than beast's;
 While woods and streams, and all that dwell therein,
 And merest flowers, and the starr'd coils of snakes,
 Yea, purblind mortal men, inhale from heaven
 Such dews as give them heavenly seemliness,
 Communicably lovely as the shapes
 That doze on high Olumpos.

Is it well?

Ye who compel the very clouds to forms
 Beauteous and purely beauteous, ere my rain
 Rends their white vestments into flowers to make
 My peaceful vales look lovely, — gods, great gods,

I ask ye, is it well? — Ye answer not.
But Earth has answer'd, and all things that grow,
All things that live, all things that feel or see
The interchanges of the sun and moon;
And with a yearning palpable and dumb,
Yet conscious of some glory yet unborn,
Of unfulfilléd mysteries, I, Pan,
Prophecy.

In the time to come, — in years
Across whose vast I wearily impel
These ancient, blear'd, and humble-lidded eyes, —
Some law more strong than I, yet part of me,
Some power more piteous, yet a part of me,
Shall hurl ye from Olumpos to the depths,
And bruise ye back to that great darkness whence
Ye blossom'd thick as flowers; while I — I, Pan —
The ancient haunting shadow of dim earths,
Shall slough this form of beast, this wrinkled length,
Yea, cast it from my feet as one who shakes
A worthless garment off; and lo, beneath,
Mild-featured manhood, manhood eminent,
Subdued into the glory of a god,
Sheer harmony of body and of soul,
Wondrous, and inconceivably divine.

Wherefore, ye gods, with this my prophecy
I sadden those sweet sounds I pipe unseen.
From dimly lonely places float the sounds
To haunt the regions of the homeless air,
Whatever changeful season ye vouchsafe
To all broad worlds which, hearing, whisper, "Pan!"
And thence they reach the hearts of lonely men,
Who wearily bear the burden and are pain'd
To utterance of fond prophetic song,

Who singing smile, because the song is sweet,
Who die, because they cannot sing the end.

It is my care to keep the graves of such
Thick-strewn and deep with grass and precious flowers
Such as ye slumber on ; and to those graves,
In sable vestments, ever comes the ghost
Of my forgot and dumb eternity,
Mnemosyne ; but what she broods on there
I know not, nor can any wholly know,
Mortal or god. The seasons come and go,
In their due season perish rocks and trees,
In their due season are the streams drain'd dry ;
Earth dumbly changes, and those lonely men,
Less blind than purblind mortals, sing and die ;
But still, with hooded and dejected head,
Above those graves ponders Mnemosyne ;
While I remain to pipe my ditties old,
And my new prophecy, in ancient woods
And by the margins of unfortunate pools, —
My wondrous music dying afar away
Upon the fringes of the setting sun.

IV.

THE NAIAD.

I.

DIAN white-arm'd has given me this cool shrine,
 Deep in the bosom of a wood of pine :
 The silver-sparkling showers
 That hive me in, the flowers
 That prink my fountain's brim, are hers and mine ;
 And when the days are mild and fair,
 And grass is springing, buds are blowing,
 Sweet it is, 'mid waters flowing,
 Here to sit, and know no care,
 'Mid the waters flowing, flowing, flowing,
 Combing my yellow, yellow hair.

2.

The ounce and panther down the mountain-side
 Creep thro' dark greenness in the eventide ;
 And at the fountain's brink
 Casting great shades they drink,
 Gazing upon me, tame and sapphire-eyed ;
 For, awed by my pale face, whose light
 Gleameth thro' sedge and lilies yellow.
 They, lapping at my fountain mellow,
 Harm not the lamb that in affright
 Throws in the pool so mellow, mellow, mellow,
 Its shadow small and dusky-white.

3.

Oft do the fauns and satyrs, flusht with play,
 Come to my coolness in the hot noon-day.
 Nay, once indeed, I vow
 By Dian's truthful brow,
 The great god Pan himself did pass this way,
 And, all in festal oak-leaves clad,
 His limbs among these lilies throwing,
 Watch'd the silver waters flowing,
 Listen'd to their music glad,
 Saw and heard them flowing, flowing, flowing,
 And ah! his face was worn and sad!

4.

Mild joys around like silvery waters fall;
 But it is sweetest, sweetest far of all,
 In the calm 'summer night,
 When the tree-tops look white,-
 To be exhaled in dew at Dian's call,
 Among my sister-clouds to move
 Over the darkness earth-bedimming,
 Milky-robed thro' heaven swimming,
 Floating round the stars above,
 Swimming proudly, swimming, proudly swimming,
 And waiting on the Moon I love.

5.

So tenderly I keep this cool green shrine,
 Deep in the bosom of a wood of pine;
 Faithful thro' shade and sun,
 That service due and done
 May haply earn for me a place divine
 Among the white-robed deities

That thread thro' starry paths, attending
 My sweet Lady, calmly wending
 Thro' the silence of the skies,
 Changing in hues of beauty never ending,
 Drinking the light of Dian's eyes.



V.

THE SATYR.

I.

THE trunk of this tree,
 Dusky-leaved, shaggy-rooted,
 Is a pillow well suited
 To a hybrid like me,
 Goat-bearded, goat-footed ;
 For the boughs of the glade
 Meet above me, and throw
 A cool pleasant shade
 On the greenness below ;
 Dusky and brown'd
 Close the leaves all around ;
 And yet, all the while,
 Thro' the boughs I can see
 A star, with a smile,
 Looking at me.

2.

Full length I lie,
 On this mossy tree-knot,

With face to the sky,
 The vast blue I see not ;
 And I start in surprise
 From my dim half-dream,
 With the moist white gleam
 Of the star in mine eyes :
 So strange does it seem
 That the star should beam
 From her crystal throne
 On this forest nook
 Of all others, and look
 Upon me alone :
 Ay, that yonder divine
 Soft face
 Should shine
 On this one place ;
 And, when things so fair
 Fill the earth and air,
 Should choose to be,
 Night after night,
 The especial light .
 Of a monster like me !

3.

Why, all day long,
 I run about
 With a madcap throng,
 And laugh and shout.
 Silenus grips
 My ears, and strides
 On my shaggy hips, .
 And up and down
 In an ivy crown
 Tipsily rides ;

And when in a doze
 His eyelids close,
 Off he tumbles, and I
 Can his wine-skin steal,
 I drink — and feel
 The grass roll — sea-high
 Then with shouts and yells,
 Down mossy dells,
 I stagger after
 The wood-nymphs fleet,
 Who with mocking laughter
 And smiles retreat ;
 And just as I clasp
 A yielding waist,
 With a cry embraced,
 — Gush ! it melts from my grasp
 Into water cool,
 And — bubble ! trouble !
 Seeing double !
 I stumble and gasp
 In some icy pool !

4.

All suborn me,
 Flout me, scorn me !
 Drunken joys
 And cares are mine,
 Romp and noise,
 And the dregs of wine ;
 And whene'er in the night
 Diana glides by
 The spot where I lie,
 With her maids green-dight,
 I must turn my back

In a rude affright,
 And blindly fly
 From her shining track ;
 Or if only I hear
 Her bright footfall near,
 Fall with face to the grass,
 Not breathing for fear
 Till I feel her pass.

5.

I am —
 I know not what :
 Neither what I am,
 Nor what I am not —
 I seem to have rollick'd,
 And frolick'd,
 In this wood for aye,
 With a beast's delight
 Romping all day,
 Dreaming all night !
 Yet I seem
 To remember awaking
 Just here, and aching
 With the last forsaking
 Tender gleam
 Of a droll strange dream. —
 When I lay at mine ease,
 With a sense at my heart
 Of being a part
 Of the grass and trees
 And the scented earth,
 And of drinking the bright
 Subdued sunlight
 With a leafy mirth :

Then behold, I could see
 A wood-nymph peeping
Out of her tree,
 And closer creeping,
Timorously
Looking at me !
And still, so still,
I lay until
 She trembled close to me,
 Soft as a rose to me,
And I leapt with a thrill
 And a shout, and threw
Arms around her, and press'd her,
Kiss'd her, caréss'd her, —
 Ere she scream'd, and flew.

6.

Then I was 'ware
 Of a power I had —
To drink the air,
 Laugh and shout,
 Run about,
 And be consciously glad —
So I follow'd the maiden
 'Neath shady eaves,
Thro' groves deep-laden
 With fruit and leaves,
Till, drawing near
To a brooklet clear,
I shuddering fled
 From the monstrous shape
There mirroréd —
Which seem'd to espy me,

And grin and gape,
 And leap up high
 In the air with a cry,
 And fly me !

7.

Whence I seem to have slowly
 Grown conscious of being
 A thing wild, unholy,
 And foul to the seeing. —
 But ere I knew aught
 Of others like me,
 I would lie, fancy-fraught,
 In the greenness of thought,
 Beneath a green tree ;
 And seem to be deep
 In the scented earth-shade
 'Neath the grass of the glade,
 In a strange half-sleep :
 When the wind seem'd to move me,
 The cool rain to kiss,
 The sunlight to love me,
 The stars in their bliss
 To tingle above me ;
 And I crept thro' deep bowers
 That were sparkling with showers
 And sprouting for pleasure,
 And I quicken'd the flowers
 To a joy without measure —
 Till my sense seem'd consuming
 With warmth, and, upspringing,
 I saw the flowers blooming,
 And heard the birds singing !

8.

Wherever I range,
Thro' the greenery,
That vision strange,
Whatsoever it be,
Is a part of me
Which suffers not change. —
The changes of earth,
Water, air, ever-stirring,
Disturb me, conferring
My sadness or mirth :
Wheresoever I run,
I drink strength from the sun ;
The wind stirs my veins
With the leaves of the wood,
The dews and the rains
Mingle into my blood.
I stop short
In my sport,
Panting, and cower,
While the blue skies darken
With a sunny shower ;
And I lie and hearken,
In a balmy pain
To the tinkling clatter,
Pitter, patter,
Of the rain
On the leaves close to me,
And sweet thrills pass
Thro' and thro' me,
Till I tingle like grass.
When lightning with noise
Tears the wood's green ceiling,

When the black sky's voice
 Is terribly pealing,
 I hide me, hide me, hide me,
 With wild averted face,
 In some terror-stricken place,
 While flowers and trees beside me,
 And every streamlet near,
 Darken, whirl, and wonder,
 Above, around, and under,
 And murmur back the thunder
 In a palpitating fear !

9.

Ay ; and when the earth turns
 A soft bosom of balm
 To the darkness that yearns
 Above it, and grows
 To dark, dewy, and calm
 Repose, —
 I, apart from rude riot,
 Partake of the quiet
 The night is bequeathing,
 Lie, unseen and unheard,
 In the greenness just stirr'd
 By its own soft breathing —
 And my heart then thrills
 With a strange sensation
 Like the purl of rills
 Down moonlit hills
 That loom afar,
 With a sweet sensation
 Like the palpitation
 Of yonder star !

10.

Thro' yonder bough
Her white ray twinkles ;
And on my brow
She silently sprinkles
A dewy rain,
That lulls my brain
To a dream of being
Under the ground,
Blind to seeing,
Deaf to sound,
Drinking a dew
That drops from afar,
And feeling unto
The sweet pulse of a star,
Who is beckoning me
Though I cannot see !
And of suddenly blooming
Up into the air,
And, swooning, assuming
The shape I wear !
While all fair things
Fly night and day from me,
Wave bright wings,
And glimmer away from me !

11.

— She shines above me,
And heareth not,
Though she smiles on this spot
And seems to love me.
Here I lie aloof,
Goat-footed, knock-kneed,
A monster, indeed,

From horns to hoof;
 And the star burns clearly
 With pearl-white gleam —
 Have I merely
 Dream'd a dream?

12.

— Did she hear me, I wonder? —
 She trembles upon
 Her throne — and is gone!
 The boughs darken under,
 Then thrill, and are stirr'd
 By the notes of a bird.
 The green grass brightens
 With pearly dew,
 And the whole wood whitens
 As the dawn creeps thro'. —
 “Hoho!” — that shout
 Flung the echoes about
 The boughs, like balls!
 Who calls? —
 'T is the noisy rout
 Of my fellows upspringing
 From sleep and dreaming,
 To the birds' shrill singing,
 The day's soft beaming:
 And they madly go
 To and fro,
 Though o' nights they are dumb.
 Hoho! hoho!
 I come! I come!
 Hark! — to the cry
 They reply:
 “Ha, there, ha!”

"Hurrah!" — "hurrah!"
 And starting afraid
 At the cries,
 In the depths of the glade
 Echo replies —
 "Ho, there!" — "ho, there!" —
 By the stream below there
 The answer dies.



VI.

VENUS ON THE SUN-CAR.

I.

TELL me, thou many-finger'd Frost,
 Coming and going like a ghost
 In leafless woods forsaken —
 O Frost, that o'er him lying low
 Drawest the garment of the snow
 From silver cloud-wings shaken,
 And round bare boughs with strange device
 Twinest fantastic leaves of ice —
 When will Adon waken?
 Lo, dawn by dawn I rise afar
 Beside Apollo in his car,
 And, far below us wreathing,
 Thy fogs and mists are dusky curl'd
 Round the white slumber of the world,
 Like to its own deep breathing;
 But crimson thro' the mist our light

Foameth and freezeth, till by night
 Snow-bosom'd hills we'fade on —
 The pallid god, at my desire,
 Gives unto thee a breath of fire
 To reach the lips of Adon.

2.

Tell me, thou bare and wintry World,
 Wherein the wingéd flowers are curl'd
 Like pygmy spirits dozing —
 O World, within whose lap he lies,
 With thy quick earth upon his eyes,
 In dim unseen reposing,
 Husht underneath the wind and storm,
 Still rosy-lipt in darkness warm —
 Are Adon's eyes unclosing?
 Lo, dawn by dawn I rise afar
 Beside Apollo in his car,
 Thro' voids of azure soaring,
 And gazing down on regions dead,
 With golden hair dishevelléd,
 And claspéd hands imploring.
 Wonderful creatures of the light
 Hover above thee, hanging bright
 Faint pictures glen and glade on :
 The pallid god, at my desire,
 Hideth in glimmering snows his fire,
 To reach the sleep of Adon.

3.

Tell me, thou spirit of the Sun,
 Radiant-lock'd and awful one,
 Strong, constant, unforsaking —
 Sun, by whose shadier side I sit,

And search thy face, and question it,
 Conferring light and taking —
 Whose fiery westward motion throws
 The shadow-hours on his repose, —
 Is my Adon waking?
 Lo, dawn by dawn I rise afar
 Beside thee in thy flaming car,
 Thou ever-constant comer!
 And flashing on the clouds that break
 Around our path thy sunbeams make
 A phantom of the summer.
 O breathe upon the Moon, that she
 May use her magic witchery
 When snowy hills we fade on,
 That, in the dark, when thou art gone,
 She speed the resurrection,
 And stir the sleep of Adon!

4

Tell me, O silver-wingéd Moon,
 That glidest to melodious tune
 Ice-sparkling skies on skies up, —
 O Moon, that to the sunset gray,
 Drinking faint light that fades away,
 Liftest immortal eyes up,
 And walking on, art thro' the night
 Troubled to pain by that strange light, —
 When will Adon rise up?
 Lo, dawn by dawn I rise afar
 Beside Apollo in his car,
 Imploring sign or token;
 But night by night such pale peace beams
 Upon his slumber, that it seems
 Too beauteous to be broken!

O gentle goddess, be not cold —
 But, some dim dawn, may we behold
 New glory hill and glade on,
 The leaves and flowers alive to bliss,
 And, somewhat pale with thy last kiss,
 The smiling face of Adon !



VII.

SELENE THE MOON.

I.

I HIDE myself in the cloud that flies
 From the west and drops on the hill's gray shoulder,
 And I gleam thro' the cloud with my panther-eyes,
 While the stars turn paler, the dews grow colder ;
 I veil my naked glory in mist,
 Quivering downward and dewily glistening,
 Till his sleep is as pale as my lips unkist,
 And I tremble above him, panting and listening.
 As white as a star, as cold as a stone,
 Dim as my light in a sleeping lake,
 With his head on his arm he lieth alone.
 And I sigh "Awake !
 Wake, Endymion, wake and see !"
 And he stirs in his sleep for the love of me ;
 But on his eyelids my breath I shake :
 "Endymion, Endymion !
 Awaken, awaken !"
 And the yellow grass stirs with the mystic moan,
 And the tall pines groan,

And Echo sighs in her grot forsaken
The name of Endymion !

2.

A foamy dew from the Ocean old,
Whence I rise with shadows behind me flying,
Drops from my sandals and glittereth cold
On the long spear-grass where my love is lying ;
My face is dim with departed suns,
And my eyes are dark from the depths of ocean,
A starry shudder throughout me runs,
And my pale cloud stirs with a radiant motion,
When the darkness wherein he slumbers alone
Ebbs back from my brightness, as black waves break
From my shining ankle with shuddering tone ;
And I sigh "Awake !
Wake, Endymion, wake and hear !"
And he stirs in his sleep with a dreamy fear,
And his thin lips part for my sweet sake :
"Endymion, Endymion !
Awaken, awaken !"
And the skies are moved, and a shadow is blown
From the Thunderer's throne,
And the spell of a voice from Olumpus shaken
Echoes "Endymion !"

3.

Then under his lids like a balmy rain
I put pale dreams of my heavenly glory ; —
And he sees me lead with a silver chain
The tamed Sea-Tempest white-tooth'd and hoary ;
And he sees me fading thro' forests dark
Where the leopard and lion avoid me in wonder,
Or ploughing the sky in a pearly bark,

While the earth is dumb with my beauty under !
 Then he brightens and yearns where he lies alone,
 And his heart grows dumb with a yearning ache,
 And the thin lips part with a wondering moan,
 As I sigh "Awake !
 Wake, Endymion, wake and see
 All things grow bright for the love of me,
 With a love that grows gentle for thy sweet sake !
 Endymion, Endymion !
 Awaken, awaken !"
 And my glory grows paler, the deep woods groan,
 And the waves intone,
 Ay, all things whereon my glory is shaken
 Murmur "Endymion !"

4

Aï! The black earth brightens, the Sea creeps near
 When I swim from the sunset's shadowy portal ;
 But he will not see, and he will not hear,
 Though to hear and see were to be immortal :
 Pale as a star and cold as a stone,
 Dim as my ghost in a sleeping lake,
 In an icy vision he lieth alone,
 And I sigh "Awake !
 Wake, Endymion, wake and be
 Divine, divine, for the love of me !"
 And my odorous breath on his lids I shake :-
 "Endymion, Endymion !
 Awaken, awaken !"
 But Zeus sitteth cold on his cloud-shrouded throne,
 And heareth my moan,
 And his stern lips form not the hope-forsaken
 Name of Endymion.

VIII.

IRIS THE RAINBOW.

I.

'MID the cloud-enshrouded haze
Of Olumpos I arise,
With the full and rainy gaze
Of Apollo in mine eyes ;
But I shade my dazzled glance
With my dripping pinions white
Where the sunlight sparkles dance
In a many-tinctured light :
My foot upon the woof
Of a fleecy cloudlet small,
I glimmer thro' the roof
Of the paven banquet-hall,
And a soft pink radiance dips
Thro' the floating mists divine,
Touching eyes and cheeks and lips
Of the mild-eyed gods supine,
And the pinky odor rolls
Round their foreheads, while I stain,
With a blush like wine, the bowls
Of foam-crusted porcelain :
Till the whole calm place has caught
A deep gleam of rosy fire —
When I darken to the thought
In the eyes of Zeus the Sire.

2.

Then Zeus, arising, stoops
 O'er the ledges of the skies,
 Looking downward, thro' the loops
 Of the starry tapestries,
 On the evident dark plain
 Speck'd with wood and hill and stream,
 On the wrinkled tawny main
 Where the ships, like snow-flakes, gleam ;
 And with finger without swerve,
 Swiftly lifted, swiftly whirl'd,
 He draws a magic curve
 O'er the cirrus of the world ;
 When with waving wings display'd,
 On the Sun-god's threshold bright
 I upleap, and seem to fade
 In a humid flash of light ;
 But I plunge thro' vapors dim
 To the dark low-lying land,
 And I tremble, float, and swim,
 On the strange curve of the Hand :
 From my wings, that drip, drip, drip,
 With cool rains, shoot jets of fire,
 As across green capes I slip
 With the thought of Zeus the Sire.

3.

Thence, with drooping wings bedew'd,
 Folded close about my form,
 I alight with feet unview'd
 On the ledges of the storm ;
 For a moment, cloud-enroll'd,
 Mid the murm'rous rain I stand,
 And with meteor eyes behold
 Vapory ocean, misty land ;

Till the thought of Zeus outsprings
 From my ripe mouth with a sigh,
 And unto my lips it clings
 Like a shining butterfly ;
 When I brighten, gleam, and glow
 And my glittering wings unfurl,
 And the melting colors flow
 To my foot of dusky pearl ;
 And the ocean mile on mile
 Gleams thro' capes and straits and bays,
 And the vales and mountains smile,
 And the leaves are wet with rays, —
 While I wave the humid Bow
 Of my wings with flash of fire,
 And the Tempest, crouch'd below,
 Knows the thought of Zeus the Sire.



IX.

ORPHEUS THE MUSICIAN.

I SAT of old beside a stream new-born
 From loamy loins of mountains cold,
 And it was garrulous of dreams forlorn
 And visions old :

Wherefore the legends of the woods and caves
 With that faint melody were blended ;
 And as the stream slid down to ocean-waves,
 I comprehended.

Into a dreary silence dim and deep
I sank with drowsy sighs and nods :
Then sang — my blue eyes dark and wise from sleep —
The birth of gods. —

A gleaming shoulder cut the stream, and lo !
I saw the glistening Naiad rise :
She floated, like a lily white as snow,
With half-closed eyes.

And suddenly, thronging the boughs around,
Came forest faces strange and glad,
That droopt moist underlips and drank the sound
Divinely sad.

Far dawn the glade, where heavy shadows slept,
Stole, purple-stainéd by the vine,
Silenus, — thro' whose blood my music crept
Like wondrous wine :

Tiptoe, like one who fears to break a spell,
He came, with eyeballs blank as glass —
Not drawing breath till, at my feet, he fell
Prone on the grass.

Then, leaning forkéd chin upon his hand,
He listen'd, dead to tipsy strife,
And lo ! his face grew smooth and soft and bland
With purer life. .

Goat-footed fauns and satyrs one by one,
With limbs upon the greensward thrown,
Gather'd, and darken'd round me in the sun,
Like shapes of stone :

Between the sunset and the green hillside
 Quaint pygmy spirits linger'd bright,
Till heaven's white eyes swam dewy, opening wide
 To the delight, —

While sunlight redden'd, dying, and below
 All heark'd — like shapes upon a cup,
By skiéd Heré, in the ambrosial glow,
 Held rosily up.

Then twilight duskly gloam'd upon the place,
 Full of sweet odor and cool shade,
But music made a lamp of every face
 In the forest-glade :

Till swiftly swam, in showers of pearly beams,
 Selené to her azure arc,
Scattering silence, light, and dewy dreams
 On eyelids dark.

The music sadden'd, and the greenwood stirr'd,
 The moonlight clothed us in its veil,
As stooping down the dove-eyed goddess heard,
 Smiled, and grew pale :

For as they listen'd, satyrs, nymphs, and fauns
 Conceived their immortality —
Yea, the weird spirits of the woods and lawns,
 Gross, vile, to see —

Whence her pure light disturb'd them, and they strove
 To shake away the sweet strange charm ;
But the light brighten'd, shaken from above
 With pearly arm.

They could not fly, they could not cry nor speak,
It held them like a hand of strength, —
They hid their faces, wild, abash'd, and weak,
And writhed full length.

The Naiad lifted up her dewy chin,
And knew, and saw the light with love,
Made peaceful by a purity akin
To hers above.

And countless beauteous spirits of the shade
Knew their own souls and felt no fear ;
While Echo, nestling in her thyme-cave, made
An answer clear.

Till, when I ceased to sing, the satyr-crew
Rush'd back to riot and carouse ;
Self-fearful faces blushingly withdrew
Into leafy boughs ;

Lastly, Silenus to his knees upcrept,
Rubb'd eyelids swollen like the vine,
Stared blankly round him, vow'd that he had slept,
And bawl'd for wine.

X.

POLYPHEME'S PASSION.

HO, Silenus! — no one here!
 The kitchen empty, the flocks in stalls,
 The red fire flickering over the walls,
 And — a young kid spitted — dainty cheer!
 Ho, Silenus! — tipsy old reveller,
 Soft-zone-unloosener, bright-hair-disheveller,
 Where art thou hiding, you tipsy old hound you,
 With thy beard of a goat and thine eyes of a lamb!

SILENUS.

Ho, Cyclops!

POLYPHEME.

He mocks me! Where are you, confound you?

SILENUS.

Patience, sweet master, here I am! —

POLYPHEME.

Rise! or with my great fist I'll put an end to thee;
 The dregs of my great flagon have been warming thee —
 Thou'rt drunk, sow-ears. I find there's no reforming
 thee,
 Tho' six round moons I've tried to be a friend to thee.
 Once more divinely warming those old veins,
 Chirping like grasshoppers at every pore,

Foaming as warm as milk among thy brains,
 Gushing like sunshine in thine heart's dry core,
 Runs the pink nectar of my vines. It stains,
 Flowing from that bald head, this grassy floor —
 Too sweet for earth to drink, unmeet for thee,
 Fit only to be quaffed by gods like me!

SILENUS.

Cyclops!

POLYPHEME.

Jump up, then, quickly. Nay, no more.
 Follow me to this rocky eminence,
 Cool-cushion'd with the yellow moss, from whence
 We can at ease behold
 The cloud-stain'd greenness of the ocean sleek,
 Rounding its glassy waves into the creek,
 Speckled with sparkling jewels manifold,
 And, far away, one melting patch of gold.
 Now, sit! — Nay, nearer, higher — here, above
 My shoulder. Turn thy face to mine, Silenus!
 Fear not: — being fill'd with the sweet milk of Venus,
 Thou 'rt a fit counsellor for one in love;
 And, as I'm in a talking humor, why —
 Suppose we chat a little at our leisure.

SILENUS.

With pleasure!
 The subject?

POLYPHEME.

One alone beneath the sky,
 Old man, is worthy of the conversation
 And serious consideration
 Of such a god as I!
 Now, guess the name of that sweet thing?

SILENUS.

With ease.

Bacchus, the god to whom these aged knees
 Bend gloriously impotent so often,
 And in whose luscious pool
 I dip hot mouth and eyes, and soak and soften
 The yoke of thy strong rule.

POLYPHEME.

A thing a thousand times more beautiful!

SILENUS.

I know no thing more beautiful than he
 When, dripping odors cool,
 Deep-purpled, like a honey-bosom'd flower
 For which the red mouth buzzes like a bee,
 He bursts from thy deep caverns gushingly,
 And throws his pleasure round him in a shower,
 And sparkles, sparkles, like the eyes that see,
 In sunshine, murmuring for very glee
 And bursting foamy bubbles until sour
 Lips tremble into moist anticipation
 Of his rich exultation!

POLYPHEME.

Has little Bacchus, whom ye praise so, power
 To unnerve these mighty limbs, make this one Eye
 Rain impotent tears, hurl this gigantic bulk
 Down on its stubborn knees — nay, make me skulk
 And fume and fret, and simper oaths, and sigh,
 Like tiny mortal milking-maids who sulk
 In dairies, frothing yellow like their cream?
 Could Bacchus, once let loose to fight and fly,
 Do all these things to sinewy Polypheme?

SILENUS.

Assuredly !

POLYPHEME.

By this right hand, you lie!—
 I am a god, great-statured, strong, and born
 Out of Poseidon's nery loins divine !
 I laugh the wrath of Zeus himself to scorn ;
 And when I rise erect on Ætna's horn
 My shadow on the faint sea-hyaline
 Falls like a cloud wherein the winds drop still
 And white-wing'd ships move slowly without will.
 Shall bulk so wondrous and so grand as mine
 Yield to the miserable god of wine ?

SILENUS.

Certainly not.

POLYPHEME.

Never !— by Pallas' spear,
 At whose sharp touch the plump god leaps and flies,
 While startled Revel shrieks with haggard eyes !
 Never, by Hermes, whom the drunken fear,
 But whose quick fingers pilfer not the wise !

SILENUS.

Whom shall we praise, O Cyclops ?

POLYPHEME.

Thou shalt hear—
 Tell me, didst thou ever see a,—
 Ever hear a, ever hear a,—
 Either far away or near, a—
 Nymph so sweet as Galatea ?

SILENUS.

Never !

POLYPHEME.

'T is false, old man ! she is not fair ;—
 Those weeds that under ocean rot at ease
 Into dark dreams o' the flowery earth, and there
 Put purples in the sea-nymph's sunny hair
 Are fairer : she is changeable as these.
 She is as wanton as the perfumed fays
 That dimple on the windless sea, and dally,
 Musically,
 With the puff'd sails of ships becalm'd for days.

SILENUS.

True, Cyclops, she is fickle ; and by her
 Whose amorous breath blew the Greek host to Troy,
 I have seen fairer !

POLYPHEME.

Dotard ! Driveller !

Not her the false Idalian shepherd-boy,
 With silken string, like a tame heifer, led —
 Nay, not lush Aphroditè, whose blue eyne,
 Pink-lidded, smiled on their unhallow'd bed —
 Is half so fair, so precious, so divine,
 As Galatea !

SILENUS.

Exactly what I said.

POLYPHEME.

Her voice hath gentle sweetness, borrow'd
 From soft tide-lispings on the pebbly sand,

'T is like the brooding doves in junipers ;
 White as a shell of ocean is her hand,
 Wherein, like ocean sound, the pink blood stirs !
 Her hair excels the fruitage of the beech
 Wherein the sun runs liquid gleam on gleam ;
 Her breasts are like two foamy bowls of cream,
 A red strawberry in the midst of each ;
 And the soft gold-down on her silken chin
 Is like the under-side of a ripe peach —
 A dimple dipping honeyly therein !

SILENUS.

Her eyes —

POLYPHEME.

Profane them not ! — For their sweet fire is
 Wondrous and various as the Bow
 Drawn over rainy ledges dripping low
 By many-color'd Iris —
 From whose bright end, plunged the dark waters under,
 Woven with the tapestries of her sea cave,
 And dying hue by hue on the green wave,
 They may have drunk a portion of their wonder.
 But oh, what tongue can tell
 Their glory inexpressible ?
 You seem to see the music of the ocean
 Folded within them, as within a shell,
 And gently stirring with a violet motion,
 Until it drops unto the lips, and there
 Flutters in perfumed accents on the air !
 Nor this alone. They change as the sea changes,
 In hues as various as the ringdove's dyes :
 Whatsoever sweet and strange it
 Flashes across them with a quick surprise.

Now, in their troubled orbs rise multiform
 Wild pictures of sky-tempest and sea-storm ;
 And her wild eyes droop brightly on her breast
 Till it is troubled like a thing distress ;
 But in their softest mood
 You watch the pale soul tremulously brood
 On those bright orbs whose fire the dark sea cools,
 And there it trembles, as the moonlight flows
 On seas just stirr'd by their own deep repose
 And throbbing, throbbing, into silver pools !

SILENUS.

O eloquent Cyclops, pause, and breathe a space ! —
 Few eyes save thine, few eyes of earth, have plainly
 Seen this immortal Galatea's face ;
 For she thou lovest is of that fair race
 Whom mortal vision dreams of, but seeks vainly —
 For they comb and they comb
 Their yellow locks,
 Under the foam,
 Among the weedy rocks !
 And they sing unseen
 In their sea-caves green,
 And gaze at the white sun overhead
 Whose pale ray saddens their dripping curls,
 Or the moon that glimm'ring in ocean's bed
 Leaves her motion forever in pools of pearls !

POLYPHEME.

Chirrup not, wine-sponge ! — Am not I a god ?
 Cannot this eye peer to Olumpus' helm ?
 Does not the great sea, trembling at my nod,
 Hush itself humbly around this my realm ?

SILENUS.

It does, O Cyclops !

POLYPHEME.

Save, of course, when I
Hurl rocks and trees down on the shuddering ships,
And, while I loom above the waves, my lips
Roar terrible defiance at the sky.

SILENUS.

Precisely.

POLYPHEME.

Ask not, then, the when and how ;
But turn thine ancient gaze
On the broad wonder of my brow,
Thence drop it, in a natural amaze,
Down the steep mountain to my sinewy feet,
Round which the lambs, as small as snow-flakes, bleat ;
Now, tell me — am I fair ?

SILENUS.

Most fair !

POLYPHEME.

Thy fears
Lie to my strength a hollow lie, Silenus !

SILENUS.

By all the love that there exists between us,
By doves that perch on Bacchus' vine-wreath'd ears,
I swear thou art most beautiful !

POLYPHEME.

Again :

Have those blurr'd eyeballs noticed that of late
 Mine air has grown more solemn, more sedate,
 More bountiful to those I hold in chain
 To watch my flocks, and more compassionate ;
 As if I struggled underneath the weight
 Of some indefinite pain ?
 That I have learn'd to tremble and to blush,
 To droop this eyelid modestly, to flush
 All over at the tiniest whispering sound,
 To pick small dainty steps upon the ground
 As if I saw and seeing fear'd to crush
 Some crawling insect or the crimson-crown'd
 Small daisy-flower that, whensoever I pass,
 Shuts up its little leaves upon the grass
 And thinks the shadowy eve has stolen down !

SILENUS.

Cyclops ! — These things I saw, but fear'd to question ;
 Nay, with a blush I own it — do not frown ! —
 I set thy trouble down as indigestion.
 For neither unmilk'd kids, nor lambs stall-fed,
 Nor sucking-swine with pippins in their teeth,
 Nor ox-thighs with green herbs engarlanded,
 Nor foamy curds wherein hot apples seethe,
 Nay, not the parsley-flavor'd tongues of sheep,
 Could tempt o' late thy dainty appetite ;
 But lying on the mountain out of sight
 Of melancholy thou hast drunken deep ;
 While down among the yellow pastures moaning
 With lambs new-yeand, where thy cool streamlets run,
 We saw thee loom above us, mighty one !
 And heard thee, like the monstrous seas intoning,
 Melodiously groaning !

POLYPHEME.

Ay me ! ay me !

SILENUS.

Be calm, sweet Polypheme !
The eagle poised o'er yonder cropping lamb
Flew scared, at that big cry.

POLYPHEME.

Ay me ! I am
Lost, swallow'd up, absorbed into a dream !
Thro' the swift current of my frame gigantic
Eddies a frantic
Consuming fire. I am not what I seem.
For Galatea I refuse all food,
For Galatea I grow weak and wild
And petulant-featured as a sickly child ;
For Galatea I, in desperate mood,
Seek out green places in this solitude,
And close my eyes, and think I am a curl
Tingling, tingling, lightly
Against the snow-heap'd bosom swelling whitely !

SILENUS.

One should not break his heart for any girl.

POLYPHEME.

Ay me ! I close my eyes in a sweet woe,
And dream that I am little, fair, and sweet,
For a small goddess's embraces meet,
Nor huge, nor rough. It was not always so !
Of old, Silenus, this great awful Me
Was swoll'n with glory at the contemplation
Of its enormity in yonder sea ;
I revell'd in the roar and consternation,

When, grasping rocks with frantic acclamation,
 Round this frowning, Ætna-crowning head I whirl'd
 them,
 Tremendously, stupendously, and hurl'd them
 On the passing fleets below ;
 And from under came the thunder of vessels crush'd
 asunder,
 And the shriek, faint and weak, of the mortals in their
 wonder,
 And the sea rolled underneath, and the winds began to
 blow,
 And above the desolation, drunk with rage, I took my
 station,
 With my waving arms expanded and my crimson eye
 aglow,
 And to earth's reverberation,
 Roar'd "Ho! ho! ho!"

SILENUS.

Cyclops ! sweet Cyclops!—

POLYPHEME.

Fear not !

I am as weak as the eagle's callow young ;
 Yet listen, mild old man, and interfere not.
 One summer-day, when earth and heaven rung
 With thunders, and the hissing lightning stung
 With forkéd meteor tongue
 The green smooth living ocean till it shriek'd —
 I stood aloft on Ætna's horn and wreak'd
 My cruel humor with a monstrous glee :
 When lo! from out the rainy void did flit
 Bright Iris, and with tremulous foot alit
 On this my mountain, touching even me

With her faint glory : for a moment, she
Paused shudd'ring high above me : then with fleet
Footstep slid downward till she reach'd my feet ;
And there, with many-tinctured wings serene,
She waved the seas to silence, and, beguiled
By her mild message, the dark ocean smiled —
A palpitating lapse of oily green,
With silvery glimmers here and there between
The shadows of the clouds that, dewy and mild,
Parted and flutter'd : — when, with radiant head
Plunging among the bulbous mists, she fled.
But, as the vapors fleam'd away, behold !
I saw far down upon the brown sea-strand
A nymph who held aloft in pearly hand
A white-tooth'd comb, and comb'd her locks of gold
Over a dank and shipwreck'd sailor-lad, —
On whose damp eyelids a faint radiance lay,
Robb'd from some little homestead far away,
Some silent hearth that wearily would wait,
For that faint smile which left it desolate,
And hush itself and watch and yearn and pray.
Oh ! tenderly she comb'd her locks of gold,
Over that gently-sleeping sailor-lad,
Stretch'd 'mid the purple dulse and rockweed cold ;
And all the while she sang a ditty sad,
To deep division of the wave that roll'd
Up to her feet, like a huge snake that springs
At two bright butterflies with golden wings :

Marinere, O Marinere,
Waken, waken !
Sleep-o'ertaken,
Look upon me, with no fear,
Look, and see, and hear :

Underneath the white-tooth'd waves,
 Sleep your comrades in their caves ;
 Coral grottoes are their bed,
 Purple plants stir overhead,
 All around black weeds are twined,
 Frozen still without a wind ;
 And the sea-nymphs in distress
 Pluck dark flowers all odorless,
 Growing deep in caverns clear,
 Gently to bestrew their bier.
 Under the sea
 They sleep — ah me !
 They have slept for many a year.

Marinere, O Marinere,
 Wake not, wake not,
 Slumber break not,
 Close your eyelids with no fear,
 Do not see, nor hear !
 Far above the silence deep,
 Where your gentle comrades sleep,
 Rolls the sea and foams the storm,
 Horrors thicken, terrors swarm,
 And the sea-nymphs, lightning-led,
 Flash about white-garmented ;
 But below the Storm-god's frown,
 Sleep the shipwreck'd fathoms down —
 Ocean-flowers are on the bier,
 Foam-bells hang in every ear !
 Under the sea
 They sleep — ah me !
 They shall sleep for many a year.

SILENUS.

That was the song she sang ?

POLYPHEME.

It was. But ill

These tender accents fill
 This rocky breast, whose distant roar
 Frightens those white waves seaward from the shore.
 For they trembled, tinkling, twining,
 For melodious combining,
 While her yellow locks fell shining
 To her knees,
 While the Storm with bright eyes glistening,
 Thro' its cloud-veil looking at her,
 Delay'd breathlessly and listening
 On the ledges of the seas :
 And in the sun she sat her,
 While her voice went pitter-patter,
 Pitter-patter, like the clatter
 Of bright rain on boughs of trees !
 Then ho ! with my great stride,
 Down the steep mountain side,
 I sprang unto her, with mine arms extended !
 Her bright locks gleam'd afraid,
 Like a sunbeam trapt in shade,
 In my deep shadow, and the music ended :
 And she rose erect to fly,
 Panting, moaning, and her cry
 Met the lifted cry of Ocean, and they blended !
 While earth reel'd under,
 Downward I bore,
 With step of thunder,
 On to the shore ;
 And in shrieking amaze,
 With eyes fasten'd in fear —
 Like a star's firm gaze
 When a cloud draws near —

On the horror that came
With an eye of flame,
She leapt to the water,
 All weebegone ;
And her bright locks shone
And tript and distraught her,
But the water caught her
 And push'd her on !
From billow to billow,
 With wild locks streaming
 And tangling oft ;
From billow to billow,
 Dark-green, or gleaming
 Like doves' wings soft,
From billow to billow,
Panting and screaming,
With white hands beaming
 And waving aloft !
Then, coming hideous
 On to the tide,
I spurn'd the perfidious
 Foam aside,
And follow'd her, dashing
 Thro' storm sublime,
Flashing, crashing,
Splashing-splashing
 On the seaweed's slippery slime !
The billows clomb up,
With flash of foam up,
 My loins and thighs ;
Till they gleam'd and fleam'd,
With clangor and anger,
And around me upstream'd
 With their wild white eyes !

Till panting, choking,
Dripping and soaking,
With nostrils smoking,
I halted, spitting,
 Spurting, chin-deep,
And saw her sitting
Where gulls were flitting
 Far out on the deep ;
And all around her with gentle motion
One smooth soft part of the murmurous ocean
 Had gone to sleep !
Then waving her hands,
 And shaking her locks,
To the ocean sands,
 To the purple rocks
Under the foam,
 To the sea-caves brown,
She sank to her home,
 Down ! down ! down ! down !
And the sea grew black
In her shining track,
 And the waters green
Darken'd afar ;
 And the one thing seen
Was the steadfast star
Of my round Eye red,
 Rolling immense
 With a pain intense
In my rocky head,
Mid the white foam wreathing
Around wind-led,
And the great sea seething
Down to deep breathing,
Like a monster panting, on its sandy bed !

SILENUS.

Most musical Cyclops !

POLYPHEME.

Hush ! — Unto the beach .

I wearily strode, with great head bow'd, and dragg'd
 Foot-echoes after me ; and with no speech,
 On yonder shore, weedy and wet and cragg'd,
 I stood, and in an agony of pain
 Look'd out with widening eyeball on the main.
 Lo ! far away a white wind glided dim
 O'er the cloud-cover'd bright'ning ocean-rim,
 And violet shadows here and there were trail'd
 Over the waters : then behold the sun
 Flasht pale across the waste, and one by one,
 Like sea-gulls dripping rain, rose ships white-sail'd.
 All else was silence, save monotonous moan
 Of the broad-chested billows, till the warm
 Light kindled all things, and I loomed alone —
 The one huge cloud remaining of the storm ;
 And in the awfulness of that strange hour
 A change came over my big throbbing breast,
 And the soft picture of the calm had power
 To move my mountainous bulk with vague unrest!—

SILENUS.

Weep not, O Cyclops — lest thy tears should roll
 Down oceanward and brain the grazing sheep !

POLYPHEME.

Ay me, ay me, the passion in my soul !
 Ay me, her glory haunts me, and I weep !—
 O, I would give away the world to be
 As soft, as sweet, as fleecy-limb'd as she,

As tiny and as tender and as white
 As her mild loveliness !
 With two soft eyes such as mere men possess,
 Two pretty little dewy eyes, that might
 Interpret me aright !

SILENUS.

Amazement ! — Polypheme, whom vast Poseidon
 Spawn'd upon Thoosa in the salted brine,
 Thou who canst strangle fleets, and sit astride on
 Ætna and roar thine origin divine !
 Wrong not thyself, thy beauty, and thy sire !
 See ! where thy mighty shadow stretches wide
 Down the steep mountain-side,
 And see ! that eyeball of immortal fire !
 Had wanton Helen, Paris' love-sick toy,
 Beheld thee, Polypheme,
 Hill-haunting Echo had not found a theme
 In ruin and the ten years' war of Troy.

POLYPHEME.

And is it so ?

SILENUS.

By Ganymede bright-eyed,
 By — by —

POLYPHEME.

Enough — let us return. I stood,
 When she had flown, in meditative mood ;
 Then, raising up my resinous hands, I cried :
 " O thou from whose huge loins I darkling came,
 King of all ocean and its wondrous races,
 Return, return, the nymph to my embraces,
 Or, thro' thy lips ooze-dripping, name her name ! "

And o'er the sands did a low murmur creep,
 Whispering, 'Galatea;' and, deep-pain'd,
 I vaguely knew, like one who dreams in sleep,
 She was a goddess of the sacred deep,
 Not to be lightly woo'd or roughly gain'd.

SILENUS.

O pitiful! and you —

POLYPHEME.

In the dim birth

Of the strange love that stirs my hid blood's fountains,
 As unborn earthquakes trouble springs in mountains,
 I look'd abroad upon the fair green earth;
 And lo, all things that lived, all things that stirr'd,
 Unto the very daisy closing up
 In my great shade its crimson-tippéd cup,
 And the small lambs, and every little bird,
 Seem'd to abhor and dread, avoid and fear me;
 And in an agony of hate for all,
 I cried, "How can a thing so sweet, so small,
 So gentle, love me — or be happy near me?"
 Whereon I sadly clomb the cliffs and made
 A looking-glass of yonder ocean, where
 Startled by my long shade
 The silver-bellied fishes rose afraid;
 But with a lover's hand I smooth'd my hair
 To sleekness, parting it with care,
 And husht the rugged sorrow of my brow —
 Then, stooping softly o'er the dimpled mirror,
 I shaped my face to a sweet smile — as now!

SILENUS.

O agony! help, help, ye gods! O terror!
 Hide me!

POLYPHEME.

What ails thee? Ha!

SILENUS.

O Ocean's child —

Cyclops! My heart, with admiration rent,
Fainted and cried with its deep ravishment
Because you look'd so beauteous when you smiled!

POLYPHEME.

Thou liest! — and (ay me) you shrunk in fear
As silly younglings shrink at something hateful;
Yet tremble not: — to a lorn lover's ear,
E'en flattery so base as thine is grateful.
Ay me, ay me — I am
A great sad mountain in whose depths doth roam
My small soul, wandering like a gentle lamb
That bleats from place to place and has no home;
But prison'd among rocks
Can just behold afar
A land where honey-flowing rivers are
And gentle shepherds with their gentle flocks:
For even so my timid soul looks round
On beauteous living things — that creep and seem,
To this vast Eye, like insects on the ground —
From whose companionship 't is shut and bound
Within this mountain of a Polypheme!

SILENUS.

Most melancholy Cyclops, be consoled!

POLYPHEME.

My heart is like those blubbery crimson blots
That float on the dank tide in oozy spots;

It is as mild as patient flocks in fold.
 I am as lonely as the snowy peak
 Of Dardonos, and, like an eagle, Love
 Stoops o'er me, helpless, from its eyrie above,
 And grasps that lamb, my Soul, within its beak.
 Nay, on the margin of the waters where
 She comes and goes like a swift gull, I sit
 Above these flocks, and rake my little wit
 To pipe upon the misty mountain air
 Ditties as tender as a shepherd man,
 Perch'd on a little hillock, half asleep,
 Surrounded by his silly stainless sheep,
 Pipes with mild pleasure and no definite plan
 In fields Arcadian. [*He sings.*

White is the little hand of Galatea,
 That combs her yellow locks with dainty care ;
 Bright is the fluttering hand of Galatea,
 When tangled, like a dove, in sunny hair.
 Sweet is Galatea — sweet is Galatea —
 Ay, so sweet !
 Complete is Galatea, from her feathery fingers fair
 To her small white mice of feet !
 The billows huge and hoar cease to rumble and to roar,
 When the white hands wave above them, like doves
 that shine and soar,
 And, as gentle, from the shore, I adore, and implore
 Galatea !
 Ho, that these limbs were meet for Galatea
 With soft pink kisses sweetly to enfold !
 Ho, had I two small eyes, that Galatea
 Might there my gentle gentle heart behold !
 Dear is Galatea — dear is Galatea —
 Ay, so dear !

No peer has Galatea, but her bosom is so cold
 And her eyes so full of fear!
 When the great seas wildly rise, there is terror in her
 eyes,
 And she trembles in sweet wonder, like a bird that
 storms surprise, —
 And before my tender cries, and my sighs, swiftly flies
 Galatea!

Under the white sea-storm sits Galatea,
 While overhead the sea-birds scream in flocks,
 In deep-green darkness sitteth Galatea,
 Combing out sunshine from her golden locks!
 Fair sits Galatea — fair sits Galatea —
 Ay, so fair!
 Ho, there sits Galatea, in the shade of purple rocks,
 Mid the fountain of her hair!
 Ho, would I were the waves, on whose crest the tempest
 raves,
 So might I still the tempest that my raging bulk out-
 braves,
 For the dark-green stillness laves, and enslaves, and
 encaves Galatea!

SILENUS.

Comfort, O Cyclops, comfort! There is sure
 Some remedy for such a wound as this:
 Red wine, I say again: the plump God's kiss
 Is sweeter far than honey, rich and pure.

POLYPHEME.

Alas, not he whose temples Artemis
 Bound with weird herbs and poison-snakes that hiss
 But sting not — wise Asclepius — could cure!

Forevermore, Silenus, when my brain
 Lies in a dream just conscious of its pain,
 And my full heart throbs tenderly and rockingly,
 Far out upon the bosom of the main
 She flashes up, green-kirtled, and laughs mockingly.
 Thrice has her smile enticed me to the chin
 Thro' the great waves that round me bite and bark,
 And gleam'd away and left me in the dark.
 Alas, that I must woo and never win!
 Alas, that I am foul while she is fair!
 Alas, that this red Eye, my only one,
 Like a brown lizard looking on the sun,
 Turns green in her bright mist of yellow hair!

SILENUS.

Majestic Cyclops! Heir of the huge Sea!
 God-like,—like those great heavens that oversheen us!
 One-eyed, like the bright Day! Wilt thou by me,
 Thy servant, be advised?

POLYPHEME.

Speak on, Silenus.

SILENUS.

Behold!—Beneath the many-tinctured west hid,
 Fades Phoibos crimson-crested,
 And the faint image of his parting light
 On the deep Sea broad-breasted
 Fades glassily; while down the mountain height
 Behind us, slides the purple shadow'd Night.
 Come in!—and from your cellar iced by springs
 Drag forth the god of wine,
 And listen to him as he chirps and sings
 His songs delicious, dulcet, and divine:

Throned in the brain, magnificently wise,
 And blowing warmly out thro' kindled eyes
 All vapors vapid, vain, and vague.
 Seek the god's counsel, Cyclops, I beseech thee ;
 'T is he alone, if once his magic reach thee,
 Can cure Love's panting heat or shivering ague.

POLYPHEME.

He cannot make me fair !

SILENUS.

Phoo ! — He will teach thee
 To lift thy dreamy gaze from the soft sod,
 And rise erect, big-hearted, self-reliant,
 On Ætna's horn, with leathern lungs defiant —
 No minnow-hearted grampus of a god !
 And — then in the quick flush and exultation
 Of that proud inspiration,
 Wine in his nostrils, Polypheme will be
 In Polypheme's own estimation
 A match for any girl on land or sea.
 Then, furiously, gloriously rash,
 Grasp Opportunity, that, passing by
 On the sheet-lightning with a moment's flash,
 Haunts us forever with its meteor eye ;
 And — grasp the thing thou pantest for in vain,
 Ay, hold her fast, and for a space intreat her —
 But, if she still be deaf to thy sad pain,
 Why, hearken to the mad god in thy brain,
 And make a meal of trouble — that is, eat her !

XI.

PENELOPE.

WHITHER, Ulysses, whither dost thou roam,
Roll'd round with wind-led waves that render dark
The smoothly-spinning circle of the sea?
Lo, Troy has fallen, fallen like a tower,
And the mild sunshine of degenerate days
Drops faintly on its ruins. One by one,
Swift as the sparkle of a star, the ships
Have dipt up moistly from the under-world,
And pluméd warriors, standing in their prows,
Stretching out arms to wives and little ones
That crowd with seaward faces on the beach,
Have flung their armor off and leapt and swam
Ere yet the homeward keels could graze the sand.
And these — the gaunt survivors of thy peers —
Have landed, shone upon by those they love,
And faded into happy happy homes ;
While I, the lonely woman, hugging close
The comfort of thine individual fame,
Still wait and yearn and wish towards the sea ;
And all the air is hollow of my joy :
The seasons come and go, the hour-glass runs,
The day and night come punctual as of old ;
But thy deep strength is in the solemn dawn,
And thy proud step is in the pluméd noon,
And thy grave voice is in the whispering eve ;
And all the while, amid this dream of thee,

In restless resolution oceanward,
I sit and ply my sedentary task,
And fear that I am lonelier than I know.

Yea, love, I am alone in all the world,
The past grows dark upon me where I wait,
With eyes that hunger seaward and a cheek
Grown like the sampler coarse-complexionéd.
For in the shadow of thy coming home
I sit and weave a weary housewife's web,
Pale as the silkworm in the cone ; all day
I sit and weave this weary housewife's web,
And in the night with fingers swift as frost
Unweave the weary labor of the day.
Behold how I am mock'd ! — Suspicion
Mumbles my name between his toothless gums ;
And while I ply my sedentary task,
They come to me, mere men of hollow clay,
Gross-mouth'd and stain'd with wine they come to me,
And whisper odious comfort, and upbraid
The love that follows thee where'er thou art,
That follows, and perchance, with thy moist cheek,
Dips on the watery bottom of the world.
They come, Ulysses, and they seek to rob
Thy glory of its weaker wearier half.
They tell me thou art dead ; nay, they have brought
To these cold ears that bend above the web
Whispers that thou, no wiser than thy peers,
Hast pluckt upon the windy plain of Troy
A flower thou shrinest in a distant land,
A chamber'd delicacy drowsy-eyed,
Pink-lidded, wanton, like the queen who witch'd
The fatal apple out of Paris' palm.

And I — and I — ah me, I rise my height,

In matron majesty that melts in tears,
And chide them from me with a tongue that long
Hath lost the trick of chiding : what avails ?
They heed me not, rude men, they heed me not ;
And he thou leftest here to guard me well,
He, the old man, is helpless, and his eyes
Are yellow with the money-minting lie
That thou art dead. O husband, what avails ?
They gather on me, till the sense grows cold
And huddles in upon the steadfast heart ;
And they have dragg'd a promise from my lips
To choose a murderer of my love for thee,
To choose at will from out the rest one man
To slay me with his kisses in the dark,
Whene'er the weary web at which I work
Be woven : so, all day, I weave the web ;
And in the night with fingers like a thief's
Unweave the silken sorrow of the day.

The years wear on. Telemachus, thy son,
Grows sweetly to the height of all thy hope :
More woman-like than thee, less strong of limb,
Yet worthy thee ; and likest thy grave mood,
When, in old time, among these fields, thine eye
Would kindle on a battle far away,
And thy proud nostrils, drinking the mild breath
Of tannéd haycocks and of slanted sheaves,
Swell suddenly, as if a trumpet spake.
Hast thou forgotten how of old he loved
To toy with thy great beard, and sport with thee,
And how, in thy strong grasp, he leapt and seem'd
A lambkin dandled in a lion's paw ?
But change hath come, Troy is an old wife's tale,
And sorrow stealeth early on thy son,

Whom sojourn with my weeping womanhood
 Hath taught too soon a young man's gentleness.
 Behold now, how his burning boy-face turns
 With impotent words beyond all blows of arm
 On those rude men that rack thy weary wife !
 Then turns to put his comfort on my cheek,
 While sorrow brightens round him — as the gray
 Of heaven melts to silver round a star !

Return, Ulysses, ere too late, too late :
 Return, immortal warrior, return :
 Return, return, and end the weary web !
 For day by day I look upon the sea
 And watch each ship that dippeth like a gull
 Across the long straight line afar away
 Where heaven and ocean meet ; and when the winds
 Swoop to the waves and lift them by the hair,
 And the long storm-roar gathers, on my knees
 I pray for thee. Lo, even now, the deep
 Is garrulous of thy vessel tempest-tost ;
 And on the treeless upland gray-eyed March,
 With blue and humid mantle backward blown,
 Plucks the first primrose in a blustering wind.
 The keels are wheel'd unto the ocean sand
 And eyes look outward for the homeward bound.
 And not a marinere, or man or boy,
 Scum'd and salt-blooded from the boisterous sea,
 Touches these shores, but straight I summon him,
 And bribe with meat and drink to tell good news,
 And question him of thee. But what avails ?
 Thou wanderest ; and my love sits all alone,
 Upon the threshold of an empty hall.

My very heart has grown a timid mouse,

Peeping out, fearful, when the house is still.
 Breathless I listen thro' the breathless dark,
 And hear the cock counting the leaden hours,
 And, in the pauses of his cry, the deep
 Swings on the flat sand with a hollow clang ;
 And, pale and burning-eyed, I fell asleep
 When, with wild hair, across the weary wave
 Stares the sick Dawn that brings thee not to me.

Ulysses, come ! Ere traitors leave the mark
 Of spread wine-dripping fingers on the smooth
 And decent shoulders that now stoop for thee !
 I am not young or happy as of old,
 When, awed by thy male strength, my face grew dark
 At thy grave footfall, with a serious joy,
 Or when, with blushing backward-looking face,
 I came a bride to thine inclement realm,
 Trembling and treading fearfully on flowers.
 I am not young and beauteous as of old ;
 And much I fear that when we meet thy face
 May startle darkly at the work of years,
 And turn to hide a disappointed pang,
 And then, with thy grave pride, subdue itself
 Into such pity as is love stone-dead.
 But thou, thou too, art old, dear lord — thy hair
 Is threaded with the silver foam — thy heart
 Is weary from the blows of cruel years ;
 And there is many a task thy wife can do
 To soothe thy sunset season and make calm
 Thy journey down the slow descent to Sleep.

Return, return, Ulysses, ere I die !
 Upon this desolate, desolate strand I wait,
 Wearily stooping o'er the weary web —

An alabaster woman, whose fix'd eyes
 Stare seaward, whether it be storm or calm.
 And ever, evermore, as in a dream,
 I see thee gazing hither from thy ship
 In sunset regions where the still seas rot,
 And stretching out great arms whose shadows fall
 Gigantic on the glassy purple sea ;
 And ever, evermore, thou comest slow,
 And evermore thy coming far away
 Aches on the burning heartstrings, — evermore
 Thou comest not, and I am tired and old.



XII.

S A P P H O :

O N T H E L E U C A D I A N R O C K .

I.

O SWEET, sweet, sweet !
 While the Moon, with her dove's eyes fair,
 And her beautiful yellow hair,
 And the Sea-Snake coiling round her silvery feet,
 Walk'd dumbly up above in the jewell'd air,
 Waving her luminous wings,
 To sit upon this crag above the sea
 Clasp'd close, so close, to thee,
 Pale with much yearning, while the murmurings
 Of the great waters seem'd to waft to me
 The name of Phaon,
 To whisper Phaon, Phaon,

Phaon, Phaon, Phaon, with deep intoning,
Hushfully, hushfully moaning!

2.

O bliss, bliss, bliss!
Though the Moon look'd pale in the sky,
On thy passionate heart to lie,
To cling to thy burning lips with kiss on kiss,
Faintly watching the butterfly stars swim by
In the track of that queenly Moon;
And in a dream, clasp'd close, so close, to thee,
To list and seem to be
A portion of the faint monotonous tune
Made for its mistress by the serpent sea,
That whisper'd Phaon,
Phaon, Phaon, Phaon,
Phaon, Phaon, Phaon, while Dian darkening
Stoop'd hushfully, hushfully harkening!

3.

O pain, pain, pain!
While the Moon, in a sky as clear
As of old, walks on, and I hear
Her palpitating foot on the living main,
While, under her feet, the green sea-snake creeps near
Hissing with scales that gleam,
To stand upon this crag beside the sea,
And dream, and dream, of thee —
With clench'd white hands, set teeth, and robes
that stream
Behind me in the wind, while audibly
The waves moan Phaon,
Shriek Phaon, Phaon, Phaon,
Phaon, Phaon, Phaon, with deep intoning,
Mournfully, mournfully moaning!

4.

O rest, rest, rest! —
 While the Moon with her virgin light
 Thro' eternities of night
 Dumbly paces on to the east from the west, —
 To mingle with the waves that under the height,
 Murmur along the shore,
 To mix my virgin love, my agony,
 Into the serpent sea
 That Dian seeks to silence evermore,
 To cling to those white skirts and moan of thee,
 O Phaon, Phaon,
 Restless for love of Phaon,
 Phaon, Phaon, Phaon, with ceaseless motion,
 Soothed by the soother of Ocean!



XIII.

THE SIREN.

AH, kiss me, Sweetest, while on yellow sand
 Murmurs the breaking billow,
 And smooth my silken ringlets with thy hand,
 And make my breast thy pillow;
 And clasp me, Dearest, close to lip and cheek
 And bosom softly sighing,
 While o'er the green sea, in one orange streak,
 The summer day is dying!
 Kiss, kiss, as one that presses to his mouth
 A vine-bunch bursting mellow,

In this lone islet of the sleepy south
 Fringed with smooth sands yellow :
 A twilight of fresh leaves endusks us round,
 Flowers at our feet are springing,
 And wave on wave breaks smoothly to the sound
 Of my sweet singing !

EUMOLPUS.

Is it the voice of mine own Soul I hear ?
 Or some white sybil of the spheréd ocean ?
 And are these living limbs that lie so near,
 Clinging around me with a serpent-motion ?
 Is this a tress of yellow yellow hair,
 Around my finger in a ring enfolden ?
 Whose face is this, so musically fair,
 That swoons upon my ken thro' vapors golden ?
 What sad song withers on the odorous air ?
 Where am I, where ?
 Where is my country and that vision olden ?

THE SIREN.

I sang thee hither in thy bark to land
 With deftly warbled measure,
 I wove a witch's spell with fluttering hand
 Till thou wert drunken, Dearest, with much pleasure.
 At hush of noon I had thee at my knee,
 And round thy finger pink I wound a curl,
 And singing smiled beneath with teeth of pearl,
 Of what had been, what was, and what should be
 Sang dying ditties three !
 And lo ! thy blood was ravish'd with the theme,
 And lo ! thy face was pale with drowsy dream,
 While stooping low, with rich lips tremulous,
 I kissed thee thus !—and thus !

EUMOLPUS.

Thy kisses trance me to a vision wan
 Of what hath been and nevermore will be.
 O little fishing-town Sicilian,
 I can behold thee sitting by the sea!
 O little red-tiled town where I was born!
 O days ere yet I sail'd from mortal ken!
 Why did I launch upon the deep forlorn,
 Nor fish in shallow pools with simple men?
 It was a charm; for while I rockt at ease
 Within our little bay,
 There came a melody across the seas
 From regions far away;
 And ah! I fell into a swooning sleep,
 And all the world had changed before I knew,—
 And I awoke upon a glassy deep
 With not a speck of land to break the view,
 And tho' I was alone, I did not weep,
 For I was singing too!
 I sang! I sang! and with mine oars kept time
 Unto the rude sweet rhyme,
 And went a-sailing on into the west
 Blown on by airs divine,
 Singing forever on a wild-eyed quest
 For that immortal minstrel feminine;
 And night and day went past, until I lost
 All count of time, yet still did melodize;
 And sun and stars beheld me from their skies;
 And ships swam by me, from whose decks storm-tost
 Rude seamen gazed with terror-glazéd eyes.
 And still I found not her for whom I sought,
 Yet smiled without annoy,
 To ply the easy oar, and take no thought,
 And sing, was such sweet joy!—

Then Tempest came, and to and from the sky
I rose and fell in that frail bark of mine,
While the snake Lightning, with its blank bright eye,
Writhed fierily in swift coils serpentine
Along the slippery brine ;
And there were days when dismal sobbing Rain
Made melancholy music for the brain,
And hours when I shriek'd out, and wept in woe
Prison'd about by chilly still affright,
While all around dropt hushéd flakes of Snow
Melting and mingling down blue chasms of night.
Yet evermore, I heard that voice sublime
Twining afar its weirdly woven song,
And ever, ever more, mine oars kept time,
And evermore I utteréd in song
My yearnings sad or merry, faint or strong.
Ah me ! my love for her afar away,
My yearning and my burning night and day !
In dreams alone, I met her in still lands,
And knelt in tears before her,
And could not sing, but only wring mine hands,
Adore her and implore her !
She glisten'd past me as a crane that sails
Above the meeting of the ocean-gales,
With waft of broad slow wing to regions new ;
And tho' I follow'd her from place to place,
She held her veil dew-spangled to her face,
And I could merely feel her eyes of blue
Steadfastly gazing thro' !
Wherefore my heart had broken quite, — but then
I would awake again, —
To see the oily water steep'd in rest,
While, glistening in many-color'd flakes,
Harming me not, lay brooding on its breast
Leviathan and all the ocean-snakes,

And on the straight faint streak afar the round
 Moist eye of morning lookt thro' dewy air,
 And all was still, a joyous calm profound, —
 And I would break the charm with happy sound
 To find the world so fair !
 And lo ! I drank the rain-drops and was glad,
 And smote the bird of ocean down and ate ;
 And ocean harm'd me not, and monsters sad
 That people ocean and the desolate
 Abysses spared me, — charméd by the song
 I warbled wildly as I went along.
 Yea day and night sped on, and I grew old
 Before I knew ; and lo !
 My hands were wither'd, on my bosom cold
 There droopt a beard of snow, —
 And raising hands I shriek'd, I cried a curse
 On that weird voice that twinéd me from home ;
 And echoes of the awful universe
 Answer'd me ; and the deep with lips of foam
 Mock'd me and spat upon me ; and the things
 That people ocean rose and threaten'd ill,
 Yea, also air-born harpies waving wings,
 Because I could not sing to charm them still.
 I was alone, the shadow of a man,
 Haunting the trackless waste of waves forlorn,
 Blown on by pitiless rains and vapors wan,
 Plaining for that small town Sicilian,
 Where, in the sweet beginning, I was born !

THE SIREN.

Ah, weep not, Dearest ! lean upon my breast,
 While sunset darkens stilly,
 And Dian poises o'er the slumberous west
 Her silver sickle chilly !

The eyes of heaven are opening, the leaves
 Fold silver-dewy round the closing roses,
 In lines of foam the breaking billow heaves,
 Each thing that gladdens and each thing that grieves
 Dip slow to dark reposes.

EUMOLPUS.

O voice that lured me on, I know thee now!
 O melancholy eyes, ye mildly beam!
 O kiss, thy touch is dewy on my brow!
 Sweet Spirit of my dream!

THE SIREN.

Name thy love, and I am she,
 Name thy woe, and look on me,
 Name the weary melody
 That led thee hither o'er the sea, —
 Then call to mind my ditties three
 Of what hath been, what is, and what shall be!

EUMOLPUS.

Ah woe! ah woe!
 I see thee and I clasp thee, and I know!
 Sing to me, Sweetest, while the shadows grow —
 Sing low! sing low!
 O, sweet were slumber now, at last, at last,
 For I am sick of wandering to and fro,
 And ah! my singing-days are nearly pass'd —
 Sing low! sing low! sing low!

THE SIREN.

Love with wet cheek, Joy with red lips apart,
 Hope with her blue eyes dim with looking long,
 Ambition with thin hand upon his heart —
 Of which shall be the song?

Of one, of one,
 Who loved till life was done,
 For life with him was loving, tho' she slew his love
 with wrong.
 Then, on a winter day,
 When all was lost and his young brow was gray,
 He knelt before an Altar piléd proud
 With bleachéd bones and fruits and garlands gay,
 And cried aloud : —
 “Have I brought Joy, and slain her at thy feet?
 Have I brought Peace, for thy cold kiss to kill,
 Have I brought Youth crownéd with wild-flowers sweet,
 With sandals dewy from a morning hill,
 For thy gray solemn eyes to fright and chill?
 Have I brought Scorn the pale and Hope the fleet,
 And First-Love in her lily winding-sheet?
 And art thou pitiless still?
 O Poesy, thou nymph of fire,
 Grandest of that fair quire
 Which in the dim beginning stoop'd and fell, —
 So beauteous yet so awful, standing tall
 Upon the mountain-tops where mortals dwell,
 Seeing strange visions of the end of all,
 And pallid from the white-heat glare of Hell!
 Is there no prophecy, far-seeing one,
 To seal upon these lips that yearn to sing?
 Can naught be gain'd again? can naught be won?
 Is there no utterance in this suffering,
 Is there no voice for any human thing?”
 Then, smiling in the impotence of pain,
 His sweet breath at the Altar did he yield, —
 While she he loved, afar across the main,
 Stoop'd down to break a weary people's chain,
 And crown a Hero on a battle-field!

EUMOLPUS.

Ah no! ah no!
 So sad a theme is too much woe!
 Sing to me sweetlier, since thou lovest me so —
 Sing low! sing low!

THE SIREN.

Sisters we, the siren three,
 Fame and Love and Poesy!
 In the solitude we sit,
 On the mountain-tops we flit,
 From the islands of the sea
 Luring man with melody;
 Sisters three we seem to him
 Floating over waters dim, —
 Sirens, sirens three are we —
 Fame and Love and Poesy!

EUMOLPUS.

Ah woe! ah woe!
 That is the song I heard so long ago!
 That is the song
 That lured me long:
 Those were the three I saw, with arms of snow
 And ringlets waving yellow, beckoning,
 While on the violet deep I floated slow,
 With little heart to sing;
 And lo! they faded as I leapt to land,
 And their weird music wither'd on the air,
 And I was lying drowsy on the sand
 Smiling and toying with thy yellow hair!

THE SIREN.

Sisters we, the sirens three,
 Fame and Love and Poesy,

Sitting singing in the sun,
 While the weary marinere
 Passes on or creeps in fear,—
 Sisters three, yet only one,
 When he cometh near!
 Charméd sight and charméd sound
 Hover quietly around,
 Mine are dusky bowers and deep,
 Closéd lids and balmy sleep,
 Kisses cool for fever'd cheeks and warmth for eyes that
 weep!

EUMOLPUS.

Sing low! sing low!
 Thou art more wondrous fair than mortals know.
 Bringest thou, Beautiful, or peace or woe?
 Close up each eyelid with a warm rich kiss,
 And let me listen while the sunlights go:
 I cannot bear a time so still as this,
 Unbroken by thy voice's fall and flow.
 Sing to me, Beautiful! Sing low, sing low, sing low!

THE SIREN.

Love with wet cheek, Joy with red lips apart,
 Hope with her blue eyes dim with looking long,
 Ambition with thin hand upon his heart—
 Of which shall be the song?
 Ah, woe! ah, woe!
 For Love is dead and wintry winds do blow.
 Yea, Love is dead; and by her funeral bier
 Ambition gnaws the lip and sheds no tear;
 And in the outer chamber Hope sits wild,
 Watching the faces in the fire and weeping;
 And at the threshold Joy the little child
 With rosy cheeks runs leaping,

And stops, — while in the misty distance creeping
 Down western hills the large red sun sinks slow —
 To see Death's footprints on the still white snow.
 Ah, Love has gone, and all the rest must go.
 Sing low! sing low! sing low!

EUMOLPUS.

It is a song that slays me. Sing no more.

THE SIREN.

Ah, Sweet, the song is o'er! —
 The ocean-hum is hush'd, 't is end of day,
 The long white foam fades faintly,
 The orange sunset dies into the gray
 Where star on star swims saintly.
 Hast thou not sung? and is not song enough?
 Hast thou not loved? and is not loving all?
 Art thou not weary of the wayfare rough,
 Or is there aught of life thou wouldst recall?
 Ah no, ah no!
 The life came sweetly — sweetly let it go!
 Mine are dusky bowers and deep,
 Closéd eyes and balmy sleep,
 Kisses cool for fever'd cheeks and warmth for eyes that
 weep!

EUMOLPUS.

Thou art the gentle witch that men call Death!
 Ah, Beauteous, I am weary, and would rest!

THE SIREN.

Lie very softly, Sweet, and let thy breath
 Fade calmly on my breast!
 Call me Love or call me Fame,
 Call me Death or Poesy,

Call me by whatever name
 Seemeth sweetest unto thee : —
 I anoint thee, I caress thee,
 With my dark reposes bless thee,
 I redeem thee, I possess thee !
 I can never more forsake thee !
 Slumber, slumber peacefully,
 Slumber calm and dream of me,
 Till I touch thee, and awake thee !

EUMOLPUS.

Diviner far than song divine can tell !
 Thine eyes are dim with dreams of that awaking !
 Yea, let me slumber, for my heart is breaking
 With too much love. Farewell ! farewell ! farewell !

THE SIREN.

Charmed sight and charmed sound
 Close the weary one around !
 Charmed dream of charmed sleep
 Make his waiting sweet and deep !
 Husht be all things ! Let the spell
 Dusky on his eyelids dwell !

EUMOLPUS.

Farewell ! farewell ! farewell !

THE SIREN.

O melancholy waters, softly flow !
 O Stars, shine softly, dropping dewy balm !
 O Moon walk on in sandals white as snow !
 O Winds, be calm, be calm !
 For he is tired with wandering to and fro,

Yea, weary with unrest to see and know.

O charméd sound

That hoverest around!

O voices of the Night! Sing low! sing low! sing low!



XIV.

A VOICE FROM ACADEME.

OVER this azure poplar glade
The sunshine, fainting high above,
Ebbs back from woolly clouds that move
Like browsing lambs and cast no shade;
And straight before me, faintly seen
Thro' emerald boughs that intervene,
The visible sun turns white and weaves
Long webs of silver thro' the leaves.
The grassy sward beneath my foot
Is soft as lips of lambs and beeves.
How cool those lilies at the root
Of yonder tree, that dimly dance
Thro' dews of their own radiance!

Yonder I see the river run,
Half in the shade, half in the sun;
And as I near its rushy brink
The sparkling minnows, where they lie
With silver bellies to the sky,
Flash from me in a shower and sink.
I stand in shadows cool and sweet,

But in the mirror at my feet
The heated azure heavens wink.

All round about this shaded spot,
Whither the sunshine cometh not,
Where all is beautiful repose —
I know the kindled landskip glows ;
And further, flutter golden showers
On proud Athenai white with towers,
And catching from the murmurous sea,
[Stain'd with deep shadows as of flowers
And dark'ning down to purple bowers
Tho' which the sword-fish darts in glee,]
A strife that cometh not to me.

For in this place of shade and sound,
Hid from the garish heat around,
I feel like one removed from strain
And fever of the happy brain —
Where thoughts thrill fiery into pain :
Like one who, in the pleasant shade
The peaceful pulseless dead have made,
Walking in silence, just perceives
The gaudy world from which he went
Subdue itself to his content,
Like that white globe beyond the leaves !

XV.

PYGMALION THE SCULPTOR.

“Materiem superabat opus.”

I. — SHADOW.

UPON the very morn I should have wed
 Jove put his silence in a mourning house ;
 And, coming fresh from feast, I saw her lie
 In stainless marriage samite, white and cold,
 With orange blossoms in her hair, and gleams
 Of the ungiven kisses of the bride
 Playing about the edges of her lips.

Then I, Pygmalion, kiss'd her as she slept,
 And drew my robe across my face whereon
 The midnight revel linger'd dark, and pray'd ;
 And the sore trouble hollow'd out my heart
 To hatred of a harsh unhallow'd youth
 As I glode forth. Next, day by day, my soul
 Grew conscious of itself and of its fief
 Within the shadow of her grave : therewith,
 Waken'd a thirst for silence such as dwells
Under the ribs of death^x : whence slowly grew
 Old instincts that had tranced me to tears
 In mine unsinew'd boyhood, sympathies
 Full of faint odors and of music faint
 Like buds of roses blowing ; — till I felt
 Her voice come down from heaven on my soul,

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x " — — — — — it was all ear,
 And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death :

And stir it as a wind that droppeth down
 Unseen, unfelt, unheard, until its breath
 Troubles the shadows in a sleeping lake.

And the voice said, "Pygmalion," and "Behold,"
 I answer'd, "I am here"; when thus the voice:
 "Put men behind thee — take thy tools, and choose
 A rock of marble white as is a star,
 Cleanse it and make it pure, and fashion it
 After mine image: heal thyself: from grief
 Comes glory, like a rainbow from a cloud.
 For surely life and death, which dwell apart
 In grosser human sense, conspire to make
 The breathless beauty and eternal joy
 Of sculptured shapes in stone. Wherefore thy life
 Shall purify itself and heal itself
 In the long toil of love made meek by tears."

I barr'd the entrance-door to this my tower
 Against the hungry world, I hid above
 The mastiff-murmur of the town, I pray'd
 In my pale chamber. Then I wrought, and chose
 A rock of marble white as is a star,
 And to her silent image fashion'd clay,
 And purified myself and heal'd myself
 In the long toil of love made meek by tears.

2.—THE MARBLE LIFE.

THE multitudinous light oppress'd me not,
 But smiled subdued, as a young mother smiles,
 As fearful lest the sunbeam of the smile
 Trouble the eyelids of the babe asleep.

As Ocean murmurs when the storm is past
And keeps the echoed thunders many days,
My solitude was troublous for a time :
Wherefore I should have harden'd ; but the clay
Grew to my touch, and brighten'd, and assumed
Fantastic images of natural things,
Which, melting as the fleecy vapors melt
Around the shining cestus of the moon,
Made promise of the special shape I loved.
Withdrawing back, I gazed. The unshaped stone
Took outline in the dusk, as rocks unhewn
Seen from afar thro' floating mountain mists
Gather strange forms and human lineaments.
And thus mine eye was filled with what I sought
As with a naked image, thus I grew
Self-credulous of the form the stone would wear,
And creeping close I strove to fashion clay
After the vision. Day and night, I drew
New comfort from my grief ; my tears became
As honey'd rain that makes the woodbine sweet,
Until my task assumed a precious strength
Wherewith I fortified mine inner ear
Against the pleadings of the popular tongue
That babbled at my door ; and when there dawn'd
A hand as pure as milk and cold as snow,
A small white hand, a little lady hand,
That peep'd out perfect from the changing mass,
And seem'd a portion of some perfect shape
Unfreed, imprison'd in the stone, — I wept
Warm tears of utter joy, and kiss'd the hand,
As sweet girl-mothers kiss the newly born,
Weak as a mother. Then I heard no more
The murmurous swarm beneath me, women and men ;
But, hoarded in my toil, I counted not

The coming and the going of the sun :
Save when I swoon'd to sleep before the stone,
And dream'd, and dreaming saw the perfect shape
Emblazon'd, like the rainbow in a stream,
On the transparent tapestry of sleep.

Ah me, the joy, the glory, and the dream,
When like a living wonder senseless stone
Smiles to the beating of a heart that hangs
Suspended in the tumult of the blood !
To the warm touch of my creating hand
The marble was as snow ; and like the snow
Whereon the molten sunshine gleams as blood,
It soften'd, glow'd, and changed. As one who stands
Beneath the cool and rustling dark to watch
The shadow of his silently beloved
Cross o'er the lighted cottage blind and feel
The brightness of the face he cannot see,
So stood I, trembling, while the shape unborn
Darken'd across the white and milky mass
And left the impress of its loveliness
To glorify and guide me. As I wrought
The Past came back upon me, like the ghost
Of the To-Come. Whate'er was pure and white,
Soft-shining with a snow-like chastity,
Came back from childhood, and from that dim land
Which lies behind the horizon of the sense,
Felt though forgotten ; vanishings divine
Of the strange vapors many-shaped and fair
Which moisten sunrise when the eye of heaven
Openeth dimly from the underworld :
Faint instincts of the helpless babe that smiles
At the sweet pictures in its mother's eyes
And lieth with a halo round its head

Of beauty uncompleted : memories
 Of young Love's vivid heaven-enthronéd light,
 By whose moist rays the pensive soul of youth
 Was troubled at the fountains, like a well
 Wherein the mirror'd motion of a star
 Lies dewy and deep ; — and, amid all, there dwelt
 A vaguer glory, deeper sense of power,
 Scarce conscious of itself yet ruling all,
 Like the hid heart which rocks the jaded blood,
 Brightens the cheek, throbs music to the brain,
 Yet dwells within the breast scarce recognized,
 Save when our pulses warn us and in fear
 We pause to listen. — Even so at times
 Those visions tranced me to a dumb dismay,
 And, sudden music thronging in mine ears,
 I hearken'd for that central loveliness
 Whose magic guided and created all.

\ Then languor balmier than the blood i' the veins
 When youth and maiden mingle and the moon
 Breathes on the odorous room wherein they lie
 Chamber'd as in a folded rose's leaves,
 Oppress'd me, and a lover's rapture fill'd
 My soul to swooning. / Lo, I kiss'd the stone,
 And toy'd with the cold hand, and look'd for light
 In the dim onward-looking marble eyes,
 And smooth'd the hair until it seem'd to grow
 Soft as the living ringlets tingling warm
 Against a heaving bosom. At her feet
 I knelt, and tingled to the finger-tips
 To gaze upon her breathless loveliness —
 Like one who, shuddering, gazes on a shrine
 From human eyes kept holy.

Then at last,

Fair-statured, noble, like an awful thing
 Frozen upon the very verge of life,
 And looking back along eternity
 With rayless eyes that keep the shadow Time,
 She rose before me in the milky stone,
 White-limb'd, immortal ; and I gazed and gazed
 Like one that sees a vision, and in awe
 Half hides his face, yet looks, and seems to dream.

3.—THE SIN.

BLUE night. I threw the lattice open wide,
 Drinking the odorous air ; and from my height
 I saw the watch-fires of the town and heard
 The gradual dying of the murmurous day.
 Then, as the twilight deepen'd, on her limbs
 The silver lances of the stars and moon
 Were shatter'd, and the shining fragments fell
 Like jewels at her feet. The Cyprian star
 Quiver'd to liquid emerald where it hung
 On the rib'd ledges of the darkening hills,
 Gazing upon her ; and, as in a dream,
 Methought the marble, underneath that look,
 Stirr'd — like a bank of stainless asphodels
 Kiss'd into tumult by a wind of light.

Whereat there swam upon me utterly
 A drowsy sense wherein my holy dream
 Was melted, as a pearl in wine : bright-eyed,
 Keen, haggard, passionate, with languid thrills
 Of insolent unrest, I watch'd the stone,
 And lo, I loved it : not as men love fame,

Not as the warrior loves his laurel wreath,
But with preclusion of a passionate joy
That threw me from the height whereon I stood
To grasp at Glory, and in impiousness
Of sweet communing with some living Soul
Chamber'd in that cold bosom. As I gazed
There was a buzz of revel in mine ears,
And tinkling fragments of a song of love,
Warbled by wantons over wine-cups, swam
Like bees within the brain. — Then I was shamed
By her pale beauty, and I scorn'd myself,
And standing at the lattice dark and cool
Watch'd the dim winds of twilight enter in,
And draw a veil about that loveliness
White, dim, and breathed on by the common air.

But, like a snake's moist eye, the dewy star
Of lovers drew me ; and I watch'd it grow
Large, soft, and tremulous ; and as I gazed
In fascinated impotence of heart,
I pray'd the lifeless silence might assume
A palpable life, and soften into flesh,
And be a beautiful and human joy
To crown my love withal ; and thrice the prayer
Blacken'd across my pale face with no word.
But thro' the woolly silver of a cloud
The cool star dripping emerald from the baths
Of Ocean brighten'd in upon my tower,
And touch'd the marble forehead with a gleam
Soft, green, and dewy ; and I said, " The prayer
Is heard ! "

The livelong night, the breathless night,
I waited in a darkness, in a dream,
Watching the snowy figure faintly seen,

And oft-times shuddering when I seem'd to see
 Life, like a taper burning in a scull,
 Gleam thro' the rayless eyes : yea, wearily
 I hearken'd thro' the dark and seem'd to hear
 The low warm billowing of a living breast,
 Or the slow motion of anointed limbs
 New-stirring into life ; and, shuddering,
 Fearing the thing I hoped for, awful eyed,
 On her cold breast I placed a hand as cold
 And sought a fluttering heart. — But all was still,
 And chill, and breathless ; and she gazed right on
 With rayless orbs, nor marvell'd at my touch :
 White, silent, pure, ineffable, a shape
 Rebuking human hope, a deathless thing,
 Sharing the wonder of the Sun who sends
 His long bright look thro' all futurity.

When Shame lay heavy on me, and I hid
 My face, and almost hated her, my work,
 Because she was so fair, so human fair,
 Yea not divinely fair as that pure face
 Which, when mine hour of loss and travail came,
 Haunted me, out of heaven. Then the Dawn
 Stared in upon her : when I open'd eyes,
 And saw the gradual Dawn encrimson her
 Like blood that blush'd within her, — and behold
 She trembled — and I shriek'd !

With haggard eyes,
 I gazed on her, my fame, my work, my love !
 Red sunrise mingled with the first bright flush
 Of palpable life — she trembled, stirr'd, and sigh'd —
 And the dim blankness of her stony eyes
 Melted to azure. Then, by slow degrees,
 She tingled with the warmth of living blood :

Her eyes were vacant of a seeing soul,
 But dewily the bosom rose and fell,
 The lips caught sunrise, parting, and the breath
 Fainted thro' pearly teeth.

I was as one

Who gazes on a goddess serpent-eyed,
 And cannot fly, and knows to look is death.
 O apparition of my work and wish !
 The weight of awe oppress'd me, and the air
 Swung as the Seas swing around drowning men.

4.—DEATH IN LIFE.

ABOUT her brow the marble hair had clung
 With wavy tresses, in a simple knot
 Bound up and braided ; but behold, her eyes
 Droop'd downward, as she wonder'd at herself,
 Then flush'd to see her naked loveliness,
 And trembled, stooping downward ; and the hair
 Unloosening fell, and brighten'd as it fell,
 Till gleaming ringlets tingled to the knees
 And cluster'd round about her where she stood
 As yellow leaves around a lily's bud,
 Making a fountain round her such as clips
 A Naiad in the sunshine, pouring down
 And throwing moving shadows o'er the floor
 Whereon she stood and brighten'd.

Wondering eyed,

With softly heaving breast and outstretch'd arms,
 Slow as an eyeless man who gropes his way,
 She thrust a curving foot and touch'd the ground,
 And stirr'd ; and, downcast-lidded, saw not me.
 Then as the foot descended with no sound,

The whole live blood grew pink within the veins
For joy of its own motion. Step by step,
She paced the chamber, groping till she gain'd
One sunlight-slip that thro' the curtain'd pane
Crept slant—a gleaming line on roof and floor ;
And there, in light, she pausing sunn'd herself
With half-closed eyes ; while flying gleams of gold
Sparkled like flies of fire among her hair,
And the live blood show'd brightlier, as wine
Gleams thro' a curd-white cup of porcelain.

There, stirring not, she paused and sunn'd herself,
With drooping eyelids that grew moist and warm,
What time, withdrawn into the further dark,
I watch'd her, nerveless, as a murderer stretch'd
Under a nightmare of the murder'd man.
And still she, downcast-lidded, saw me not ;
But gather'd glory while she sunn'd herself,
Drawing deep breath of gladness such as earth
Breathes dewily in the sunrise after rain.

Then pray'd I, lifting up my voice aloud :
“ O apparition of my work and wish !
Thou most divinely fair as she whose face
Haunted me, out of heaven ! Raise thine eyes !
Live, love, as thou and I have lived and loved !
Behold me — it is I — Pygmalion.
Speak, Psyche, with thy human eyes and lips,
Speak, to Pygmalion, with thy human soul ! ”

And still she, downcast-lidded, saw me not,
But gather'd glory as she sunn'd herself.
Yet listen'd murmuring inarticulate speech,
Listen'd with ear inclined and fluttering lids,
As one who lying on a bed of flowers

Hearkeneth to the distant fall of waves,
That cometh muffled in the drowsy hum
Of bees pavilion'd among roses'-leaves
Near to the ears that listen. So she stood
And listen'd to my voice, framing her lips
After the speech ; nay, when the sound had ceased,
She listen'd, with a shadow on her cheek —
Like the Soul's Music, when the Soul has fled,
Fading upon a dead Musician's face.

But, stooping in mine awe, with outstretch'd arms,
I crept to her ; nor stirr'd she, till my breath
Was warm upon her neck : then raised she eyes
Of dewy azure, ring in ring of blue
Less'ning in passionate orbs whereon my face
Fell white with yearning wonder ; when a cry
Tore her soft lips apart, the gleaming orbs
Widen'd to silvery terror, and she fled,
With yellow locks that shone and arms that waved,
And in the further darkness cower'd and moan'd,
Dumb as a ringdove that with fluttering wings
Watches an adder in the act to leap.

What follow'd was a strange and wondrous dream
Wherein, half conscious, wearily and long
I wooed away her fears with gentle words,
Smooth gestures, and sweet smiles, — with kindness
such
As calms the terror of a new-yea'n'd lamb,
So pure, it fears its shadow on the grass ;
And all the while thick pulses of my heart
Throng'd hot in ears and eyelids, — for my Soul
Seem'd swooning, deaden'd in the sense, like one
Who sinks in snows, and sleeps, and wakes no more.

Yet was I conscious of a hollow void,
 A yearning in the tumult of the blood,
 Her presence fill'd not, quell'd not ; and I search'd
 Her eyes for meanings that they harbor'd not,
 Her face for beauty that disturb'd it not.
 'T was Psyche's face, and yet 't was not her face,
 A face most fair, yet not so heavenly fair,
 As hers who, when my time of travail came,
 Haunted me, out of heaven. For its smile
 Brought no good news from realms beyond the sun,
 The lips framed heavenly nor human speech,
 And to the glorious windows of the eyes
 No Soul clomb up — to look upon the stars,
 And search the void for glimpses of the peaks
 Of that far land of morning whence it comes.

Then, further, I was conscious that my face
 Had lull'd her fears ; that close to me she came
 Tamer than beast, and toy'd with my great beard,
 And murmur'd sounds like prattled infants' speech,
 And yielding to my kisses kissed again.
 Whereat, in scorn of my pale Soul, I cried,
 " Here will I feast in honor of this night !"
 And spread the board with meats and bread and wine,
 And drew the curtain with a wave of arm
 Bidding the sunlight welcome : lastly, snatch'd
 A purple robe of richness from the wall,
 And flung it o'er her while she kiss'd and smiled,
 Girdling the waist with clasp and cord of gold.

Then sat we, side by side. She, queenly stoled,
 Amid the gleaming fountain of her hair,
 With liquid azure orbs and rosy lips
 Gorgeous with honey'd kisses ; I, like a man

Who loves fair eyes and knows they are a fiend's,
And in them sees a heav'n he knows is hell.
For, like a glorious feast, she ate and drank,
Staining her lips in crimson wine, and laugh'd
To feel the vinous bubbles froth and burst
In veins whose sparkling blood was meet to be
An angel's habitation. Cup on cup
I drain'd in fulness — careless as a god —
A haggard bearded head upon a breast
In tumult like a sun-kist bed of flowers.

But ere, suffused with light, the eyes of Heaven
Widen'd to gaze upon the white-arm'd Moon,
Stillter than stone we reign'd there, side by side.
Yea, like a lonely King whose Glory sits
Beside him, — impotent of life but fair, —
Brightly appareled I sat above
The tumult of the town, as on a throne,
Watching her wearily ; while far away
The sunset dark'd like dying eyes that shut
Under the waving of an angel's wing.

.5. — SHADOW.

THREE days and nights the vision dwelt with me,
Three days and nights we dozed in dreadful state,
Look'd piteously upon by sun and star ;
But the third night there pass'd a homeless sound
Across the city underneath my tower,
And lo ! there came a roll of muffled wheels,
A shrieking and a hurrying to and fro
Beneath, and I gazed forth. Then far below
I heard the people shriek, " A pestilence ! "

But, while they shriek'd, they carried forth their Dead,
And flung them out upon the common ways,
And moaning fled : while far across the hills
A dark and brazen sunset ribb'd with black
Glared, like the sullen eyeballs of the plague.

I turn'd to her, the partner of my height :
She, with bright eyeballs sick with wine, and hair
Gleaming in sunset, on a couch asleep.
And lo ! a horror lifted up my scalp,
The pulses plunged upon the heart, and fear
Froze my wide eyelids. Peacefully she lay
In purple stole array'd, one little hand
Bruising the downy cheek, the other still
Clutching the dripping goblet, and the light,
With gleams of crimson on the ruinous hair,
Spangling a blue-vein'd bosom whence the robe
Fell back in rifled folds ; but dreadful change
Grew pale and hideous on the waxen face,
And in her sleep she did not stir. nor dream.
Therefore, it seem'd, Death pluck'd me by the sleeve,
And, sweeping past, with lean forefinger touch'd
The sleeper's brow and smiled ; when, shrinking back,
I turn'd my face away, and saw afar
The brazen sullen sunset ribb'd with black
Glare on her, like the eyeballs of the plague.

O apparition of my work and wish !
Shrieking I fled, my robe across my face,
And left my glory and my woe behind,
And sped, thro' pathless woods, o'er moonlit peaks,
Toward sunrise ; — nor have halted since that hour, —
But wander far away, a homeless man,
Prophetic, orphan'd both of name and fame.

Nay, like a timid Phantom evermore
 I come and go with haggard warning eyes ;
 And some, that sit with lemans over wine,
 Or dally idly with the glorious hour,
 Turn cynic eyes away and smile aside ;
 And some are saved because they see me pass,
 And, shuddering, yet constant to their task,
 Look up for comfort to the silent stars.



XVI.

ANTONY IN ARMS.

LO, we are side by side ! — One dark arm furls
 Around me like a serpent warm and bare ;
 The other, lifted 'mid a gleam of pearls,
 Holds a full golden goblet in the air :
 Her face is shining through her cloudy curls
 With light that makes me drunken unaware,
 And with my chin upon my breast I smile
 Upon her, darkening inward all the while.

And thro' the chamber curtains, backward roll'd
 By spicy winds that fan my fever'd head,
 I see a sandy flat slope yellow as gold
 To the brown banks of Nilus wrinkling red
 In the slow sunset ; and mine eyes behold
 The West, low down beyond the river's bed,

Grow sullen, ribb'd with many a brazen bar,
Under the white smile of the Cyprian star.

A bitter Roman vision floateth black
Before me, in my dizzy brain's despite ;
The Roman armor brindles on my back,
My swelling nostrils drink the fumes of fight :
But then, she smiles upon me !— and I lack
The warrior will that frowns on lewd delight,
And, passionately proud and desolate,
I smile to answer to the joy I hate.

Joy coming uninvoked, asleep, awake,
Makes sunshine on the grave of buried powers ;
Ofttimes I wholly loathe her for the sake
Of manhood slipt away in easeful hours :
But from her lips mild words and kisses break,
Till I am like a ruin mock'd with flowers ;
I think of Honor's face — then turn to hers —
Dark, like the splendid shame that she confers.

Lo, how her dark arm holds me !— I am bound
By the soft touch of fingers light as leaves :
I drag my face aside, but at the sound
Of her low voice I turn — and she perceives
The cloud of Rome upon my face, and round
My neck she twines her odorous arms and grieves,
Shedding upon a heart as soft as they
Tears 't is a hero's task to kiss away !

And then she loosens from me, trembling still
Like a bright throbbing robe, and bids me "go !" —
When pearly tears her drooping eyelids fill,
And her swart beauty whitens into snow ;

And lost to use of life and hope and will,
I gaze upon her with a warrior's woe,
And turn, and watch her sidelong in annoy —
Then snatch her to me, flush'd with shame and joy!

Once more, O Rome! I would be son of thine —
This constant prayer my chain'd soul ever saith —
I thirst for honorable end — I pine
Not thus to kiss away my mortal breath.
But comfort such as this may not be mine —
I cannot even die a Roman death:
I seek a Roman's grave, a Roman's rest —
But, dying, I would die upon her breast!



XVII.

FINE WEATHER ON THE DIGENTIA.

HORATIUS COGITANDIBUS.

I.

FAVONIUS changes with sunny kisses
The spring's ice-fetters to bands of flowers,
And the delicate Graces, those thin-skin'd Misses,
Are beginning to dance with the rosy Hours;
The Dryades, feeling the breeze on their bosoms,
Thro' tuby branches are blowing out blossoms;
The naked Naiad of every pool,
Lest the sunshine should drive her to playing the fool,

Lies full length in the water and keeps herself cool ;
 Pan is piping afar, 'mid the trees,
 His ditty dies on the dying breeze,
 While a wood-nymph leaneth her head on his knees,
 In a dream, in a dream, with her wild eyes glistening,
 Her bosom throbbing, her whole soul listening !
 In fact, 't is the season of billing and cooing,
 Amorous flying and fond pursuing,
 Kissing, and pressing, and mischief-doing ;
 And pleasant it is to take one's tipple
 In the mild warm breath of the spicy South,
 And deftly to fasten one's lips to the mouth
 Of a flasket warmer than Venus' nipple !
 Pleasant, pleasant, at this the season
 When folly is reason and reason treason,
 When naught is so powerful near or far
 As the palpitating
 Titillating
 Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle of the Cyprian star !

2.

But what has a shaky quaky fellow,
 Full of the sunshine but over-mellow,
 To do with the beautiful Lesbian Queen,
 The pink-eyed precious with locks of yellow,
 The goddess of twenty and sweet eighteen,
 Whose double conquest o'er Pride and Spleen
 In the Greek King's bed put a viper green
 And darken'd the seas with the Grecian force ?
 Nothing, of course !
 Well, even I have of joy my measure
 And can welcome the new-born Adonis with pleasure ;
 For since at Philippi, worst of scrapes,
 I saved my skin for the good of the nation,

And made my pious asseveration
 To scorn ambition and cultivate grapes,
 I've found by a curious convolution
 Of physical ailments and heavenly stars,
 And of wisdom wean'd on the blood-milk of Mars,
 That my pluck is surpass'd by my elocution —
 And learnt, in fine,
 That rosy wine
 And sunshine agree with my constitution ! *(Bibit.)*

3.

Pleasant it is, I say, to sit here,
 Just in the sunshine without the threshold,
 And, with fond fingers and lips, caress old
 Bacchus' bottle, the sources of wit, here !
 Drowsily hum the honey-bees,
 Drowsily murmur the birds in the trees,
 Drowsily drops the spicy breeze,
 Drowsily I sit at mine ease.

4.

An idle life is the life for me, —
 Idleness spiced by philosophy !
 I care not a fig for the cares of business,
 Politics fill me with doubt and dizziness,
 Poms and triumphs are simply a bore to me,
 Crude ambition will come no more to me,
 I hate the vulgar popular cattle,
 And I modestly blush at the mention of battle.
 No ! — Here is my humble definition
 Of a perfectly happy and virtuous condition :
 A few fat acres aroundabout,
 To give one a sense of possession ; a few
 Servants to pour the sweet Massic out ;

Plenty to eat and nothing to do ;
 A feeling of cosy and proud virility ;
 A few stray pence ;—
 And the tiniest sense
 Of self-conserving responsibility !

5.

For, what is life ?— or, rather ask here,
 What is that fountain of music and motion
 We call the Soul ?— As I sit and bask here,
 I confess that I have n't the slightest notion.
 Yet Plato calls it eternal, telling
 How its original lofty dwelling
 Was among the stars, till, fairly repining
 At eternally turning a pivot and shining,
 Heaven it quitted
 To dwell unpitied
 In a fleshly mansion of wining and whining ;
 Aristotle, I don't know why,
 Believes that, born up above in the sky
 The moment that Body is born on the earth,
 'Tis married to Body that moment of birth ;
 Hippo and others, whose heads were a muddle,
 Affirm 'tis compounded of water—puddle !
 Fire, not a few, with Democritus, swear ;
 While others—chameleons—reduce it to Air ;
 Water and fire, cries Hippocrates !
 No, water and earth, cries Xenophanes !
 Earth and fire, cries Parmenides !
 Stop ! cries Empedocles,— all of these !
 Ennius follow'd Pythagoras, thinking
 The transmigration of spirits a truth ;—
 A doctrine I choose to apply in sooth
 To the spirit that lies in the wine I'm drinking ;

Speculation, muddle, trouble,
Some see obliquely, others double,
 While under their noses,
 Which smell not the roses,
Truth placidly bursts like a spangled bubble.

6.

Altogether, they puzzle me quite,
They all seem wrong and they all seem right.
The puzzle remains an unsatisfied question ;
 But Epicurus has flatly tried
 To prove that the Soul is closely allied
To wine, and sunshine, and good digestion.
For without any prosing, head-racking, or preaching,
That's the construction I put on his teaching !
'T is simple : the Soul and the Body are one,
Like the Sun itself and the light of the Sun,
Born to change with all other creations,
Homunculi, qualities, emanations,
To pass thro' wondrous and strange gradations ;
And if this be the case, our best resource
Is to make the most of our time, of course,
Nor grumble and question till hoary and hoarse.
And I slightly improve upon Epicurus,
Who shirk'd good living, as some assure us,
And assert, from experience long and rare,
That body and soul can be perfectly snug,
 With sunshine, fresh air,
 And no physical care,
In a garden that never requires to be dug.

7.

I, Quintus Horatius Flaccus, am learning
From the tuneful stars in my zenith turning,

From my bachelorhood, which is wide awake,
 That the sum of good is a life of ease,
 A friend or two, if the humor please,
 And not a tie it would pain you to break.
 Call me selfish, indolent, vain,
 But I don't and won't see the virtue of pain,
 Be it of body or be it of brain ;
 Philippi finish'd my education,
 For it taught me the doctrine of self-preservation.
 I hate the barking of Scylla's dogs,
 Round Charybdis your sailor may spin, but not I : —
 In short, I am one of those excellent hogs
 That grunt in the Grecian epicure's sty.
 Day by day, my delight has grown wider
 Since I learnt that wine is a natural good,
 And the stubborn donkey called Fortitude
 Has a knack of upsetting the bile of its rider.
 All creeds that vex one are mere vexation ;
 But I firmly believe, and no man dare doubt me,
 In Massia taken in moderation,
 And I like to dwell where no fools can flout me —
 Sans physical care,
 In the sunny air,
 And to sing — when I feel the fresh world about me !
(*Bibit.*)

Bear witness, Flower ! — One's sense perceives
 The rich sap lying within your leaves,
 Which lusciously swoon to a soft blood-red
 As the sunlight woos them from overhead !
 Now, here is a parallel worth inspection
 Of body and blood in perfect connection
 With what some call Soul, that obscure abstractior

Which I have proved to my satisfaction
To be body in lesser or greater perfection.
The perfect parts of the perfect flower
Were nourish'd by sunshine for many an hour,
Till the sunshine within them o'erflowing, — hence
The juice whose odorous quintessence,
Though sweetly expressing the parts and the whole,
Is simply a part of the whole, and still
Inseparate from the general will.
The Flower is the Body, the Scent is the Soul !
See ! I press a thorn in the milky stalk :
The small thing droops o'er the garden walk,
The soft leaves shiver, the sap runs dry,
And never more will the flower's mild eye
Drink the breath of the moon — it will linger, and die.
But the scent of the flower, some would cry, is the
sweeter ;

True, but the scent, every moment, grows less,
And, further observing, they would confess,
That the flower, as a flower, is the incompleter !

Well, between my fingers I sharply press
The delicate leaves, and thro' every vein
The perfect anatomy shrinks with pain,
And the flower with its odorous quintessence
Will never, 't is clear, be perfection again.

Bah ! I pluck it, I pluck it, and cast it hence,
As Death plucks humanity body and brain.
But the odor has not yet flown, you cry,
It sweetens the air, tho' the flower doth die !
Of course ; and the feelers and stem and leaves,
And the sap and the odor it interweaves,

No longer perfect and gastronomic,
Are in common resolving themselves, one perceives,
Back to first principles, — say atomic ;

And whatever destination your fine
 Hard-headed philosophers choose to assign
 To the several parts, they are reft of their power,
 And, so far as concerns its true functions — to scent
 The soft air, and look fair — and its first sweet intent,
 'T is clear that the whole is no longer a Flower.

9.

Take that bulky and truly delectable whole,
 The egotistic disciple of Bacchus,
 With small hare's-eyes and gray hairs on his poll,
 Myself — good Quintus Horatius Flaccus !
 There 's a Body ! There 's a Soul !
 Many a year, over Rome's dominions,
 Has he vaunted his Epicurean opinions ;
 He may be wrong, he may be right,
 So he roars his creed in no mad heroics, —
 Since down in the grave, where all creeds unite,
 Even Epicureans are changed to Stoics. *(Bibit.)*

10.

Humph, the grave ! — not the pleasantest prospect,
 affirms,
 This quiet old heart starting up with a beat —
 Well, 't is rather hard that a liquor so sweet
 Goes simply to flavor a meal for worms !
 After all, I 'm a sensible man,
 To render my span
 As happy and easeful as ever I can.
 To-morrow may mingle, who knows, who knows,
 The Life that is Dream with the Death that is Sleep,
 And the grass that covers my last repose
 May make a sward where the lambkins leap
 Round a mild-eyed mellifluous musical boy

Who pipes to his flock in a pastoral joy,
While the sun that is shining upon him there
Draws silver threads thro' his curly hair,
And Time with long shadows stalks past the spot,
And the Hours pass by, and he sees them not!
Instead of moping and idly rueing it,
Now, this is the pleasantest way of viewing it!—
To think, when all is over and done,
Of insensately feeling one's way to the sun,
Of being a part of the verdure that chases
The mild west-wind into shady places,
While one's liver, warming the roots of a tree,
Creeps upward and flutters delectably
In the leaves that tremble and sigh and sing,
And the breath bubbles up in a daisy ring,
And the heart, mingling strangely with rains and snows,
Bleeds up thro' the turf in the blood of a rose.

II.

Which reminds me, here, that the simile drawn
From the flower that is withering on the lawn,
May, by a stretch of the thought, apply
To the universe — ocean, earth, air, and sky ;
And dividing the whole into infinite less,
First principles, atomies numberless,
We find that the sum of the universe strange
Suffers continual mystical change ;
While the parts of the whole, tho' their compounds
range
Thro' all combinations from men down to daisies,
Are eternal, unchangeable, suffer no phases.
So that Death, to the dullest of heads so unsightly,
Is (here I improve Epicurus slightly)
Is but the period of dissolution

Into some untraceable constitution
 Of the several parts of the Body and Soul, —
 And a total extinction of Man as a whole.
 As to Time — mere abstraction! With even motion,
 Like waves that gathering foamy speech
 Grow duskily up on a moonlit beach,
 And seem to increase the huge bulk of the ocean,
 Hours roll upon hours in the measureless sea
 Of eternity :

Never ceasing, they seem increasing ;
 But the parts of the Infinite, changing never,
 Increase not, tho' changing, the Whole, the Forever.
 Time? Call it a compound, if you please,
 A divisible drop in eternal seas,
 An abstract figure, by which we men
 Try to count our sensations again and again,
 And then you will know, perceiving we must
 Nourish some compound with dust of dust,
 And seeing how short our sensations and powers,
 Why I am one,
 Who sits in the sun,
 Whose Time is no limited number of hours,
 But wine ever-present, in nectarine showers.

12.

O Mutability, dread abstraction,
 Let me be wise in the satisfaction
 Of my moderate needs in a half-inaction !
 While Propertius grows love-sick and weary and wan,
 While thou, Virgil, singest of arms and the man,
 While assassins on Cæsar sharpen their eyes,
 While Agrippa stands grimly on blood-stained decks,
 While Mæcenas flirts with the female sex,
 Teach me to sport and philosophize !

O Mutability, lasting ever,
Changing ever, yet changing never,
Teach me, O teach me, and make me wise!—
In the dreadful depth of thy eyeballs dumb,
Strange meanings flutter and pass to naught,
And beautiful images fade as they come,
Thro' an under-trouble of shady thought!

13.

Yonder, yonder, the River doth run,
From sun to shade, and from shade to sun,
Shaking the lilies to seed as it flows,
Under the willow-trees taking a doze,
And waking up in a flutter of fun!
Could you look at the leaves of yonder tree!
The wind is stirring them as the sun is stirring me!
The woolly clouds move quiet and slow,
In the pale blue calm of the tranquil skies,
And their shades that run on the grass below
Leave purple dreams in the violet's eyes!
The vine droops over my head with bright
Clusters of purple and green—the rose
Breaks her heart on the air—and the orange glows
Like golden lamps in an emerald night.*
While I sit, with the stain of the wine on my lip,
Shall nature and I part fellowship?
No, by Bacchus! This view from the threshold of home
Is as glad to the core, and as sorrow-despising,
As Aphrodité when fresh from the foam
That still on her bosom was falling and rising,
While the sunshine crept thro' her briny hair
And mingled itself with the shadows there,

* Golden lamps in a green night. — ANDREW MARVEL.

And her deepening eyes drank their azure from air,
And she blush'd a new beauty surpassingly fair !

14.

'T is absurd to tell me to ruffle a feather,
Because there may soon be a change of weather.
When the Dog-Star foams, I will lie in the shade,
And watch the white sun thro' an emerald glade ;
When winter murmurs with rain and storm,
I will watch my hearth smile to itself, and keep warm ;
And for Death, who having fulfilled his task

Leaves his deputy Silence in houses of mourning, —
Well, I hope he no troublesome questions will ask,

But knock me down, like an ox, without warning.
Like the world, I most solemnly promise devotion
To pleasure commingled of light, music, motion.
I like (as I said) to sit here in my mirth,
To be part of the joy of the sweet-smelling earth,
To feel the blood blush like a flower with its glee,
To sing like a bird, to be stirr'd like a tree,
Drowsily, drowsily, sit at mine ease,
While the odd rhymes buzz in my brain like bees,
And over my wine-cup to chirp and to nod,
Ay to sit — till I fall

Like that peach from the wall —
Self-sufficient, serene, happy-eyed, — like a God !

(*Bibit.*)

15.

Ay, crop the corn with the crooked sickle,
Sow harvest early and reap too late,
Prove Fortune friendly or false or fickle,
Blunder and bother with aching pate,
Attempting to conquer chance or fate,

Struggle, speculate, dig, and bleed,
Reap the whirlwind of Venus' seed,
O senseless, impotent human breed !
What avails ! what avails ! Were ye less intent
 On your raking and digging, perchance ye 'd behold
 The fleecy vapors above you roll'd
Round the dozing Deities dead to strife,
With their mild great eyes on each other bent
Exchanging a wisdom indifferent
To the native honors of death and life.
Sober truths of a pleasure divine
Keep them supine !
The grand lazy fellows have nothing to do
With the hubble and trouble of me or of you,
The stars break around them in silver foam,
And they calmly amuse themselves, sometimes, by steal-
 ing
A peep at us pygmies, with much the same feeling
With which, from the candor and quiet of home,
I glance at the strife of political Rome.
Serene, happy-eyed, self-sufficient, they rest
On the hill where the blue sky is leaning her breast :—
Jove seated supreme in the midst, at his side
 Apollo the Sun and Selene the Moon,
Juno half dozing, her foot of pride
On the neck of Venus the drowsy-eyed,
 And Pallas humming the spheric tune.

16.

Flash !
Lightning, I swear ! — there 's a tempest brewing !
Crash !
Thunder, too — swift-footed lightning pursuing !
The leaves are troubled, the winds drop dead,

The air grows ruminant overhead —
 Splash!
 That great round drop fell pat on my nose.
 Flash! crash! splash! —
 I must run for it, I suppose.
 O what a flashing and crashing and splashing,
 The earth is rocking, the skies are riven —
 Jove in a passion, in god-like fashion,
 Is breaking the crystal urns of heaven.



XVIII.

FINE WEATHER BY BAIÆ.

VIRGIL TO HORACE.

I.

SWEET is soft slumber, Horace, after toil,
 To him who holds the glebe and ploughs the fruit-
 ful soil,
 Sweet to salt-blooded mariners, on decks washed red
 with storm,
 Deep sleep wherein past tempest and green waves
 Make shadows multiform;

2.

Sweet 't is to Cæsar, when the red star, grown
 Swart with war's dust, doth fade, to loll upon a throne
 Dispensing gifts, while on his lips a crafty half-smile
 dies,
 And the soft whispers of approving Rome
 Fan his half-closéd eyes!

3.

Sweet to Tibullus, sick and out of tune,
What time his elegies like wolves howl at the moon,
Comes Pity loos'ning Delia's zone as breezes part a
cloud ;
And sweet to thee a wine-cup rough with sleep,
After the tawny crowd.

4.

And further, sweetly comes a scroll from thee
To Virgil where he dwells at Baiæ near the sea —
For, sick with servile snakes of state that twine round
Cæsar's foot,
He welcomes thy moist greeting and thy thought
Poetically put.

5.

Such alternation of unrest and rest,
All fitful peace and passion of the yearning breast,
Deepen the meanings flashing swift in Joy's pink-lidded
eyne,
And help the Hours to juggle with the fruits
Of easy creeds like thine.

6.

The time-glass runs, the seasons come and go,
After the rain, the flowers, after the flowers, the snow ;
This Hour is pale and olive-crown'd, that splash'd with
rebel-mud —
This, flusht to gaze on Cæsar's laurell'd brows,
That, drunk with Cæsar's blood !

7.

Shall merest mortal man with drowsy nod
Sit under purple vine and doze and ape the god ?

Wave down the everlasting strife of earth and air and
 sea ?

And, like a full-fed fruit that gorges light,
 Grow rotten on the tree ?

8.

Leave the grand mental war that mortals keep ?
 Eat the fat ears of corn, yet neither sow nor reap ?
 Loll in the sunshine, sipping sweets, what time the din
 of fights

Quenches the wind round Troy, and very gods
 Feel dizzy on their heights ?

9.

Nay, friend ! — For such a man each hour supplies
 Portents that mock his ease, affright his languid eyes :
 The very elements are leagued to goad him blood and
 brain,

The very Sun sows drouth within his throat
 Until it raves for rain !

10.

Methinks I see thee sitting in the sun,
 Whose kisses melt thy crusty wrinkles one by one :
 Thy lips droop darkly with a worm of thought, half sad,
 half wroth,

Which stirs the chrysalis mouth, then, ripe with wine,
 Bursts like a golden moth.

11.

Unfaith is with thee, Horace. Sun and wind
 Disturb the tranquil currents of thy heart and mind ;
 In midst of Joy, comes pygmy doubt, prick-pricking like
 a flea,

Till, wide awake, you rack your brains to prove
Your perfect joy to me.

12.

O better far, if Man would climb, to range
Thro' sun and thunder-storm tempestuous paths of
change,
To mingle with the motion huge of earth and air and
main,
And lastly, fall upon a bed of flowers
When wearied down by pain.

13.

Deep, deep within Man's elemental parts—
Earth, water, fire, and air that mix in human hearts,—
Subsists Unrest that seeketh Rest, and flashes into
gleams
That haunt the soul to action, and by night
Disturb our sleep with dreams.

14.

And thus we fashion with a piteous will
The gods in drowsy mildness seated on a hill,
The day before them evermore, the starry night be-
hind,—
Inheritors of the divine repose
We seek and cannot find.

15.

Woe, woe to him who craving that calm boon
Falleth to sleep on beds of poppy flowers too soon!
The elements shall hem him in and fright his shrieking
soul,
And, since he asks for light, Lightning itself
Shall scorch his eyes to coal!

16.

My Horace! — I am here beside the deep,
 Weaving at will this verse for Memory to keep :
 I share the sunshine with my friend, and like a lizard
 bask ;
 But I, friend, doubt this summer joy, — and you
 Shall answer what I ask. —

17.

Bluff March has blown his clarion out of tune,
 Gone is the blue-edged sickle of the April moon ;
 Faded hath fretful May behind a tremulous veil of
 rain, —
 But I would the boisterous season of the winds
 And snows were here again !

18.

For I am kneeling on the white sea-sand,
 Letting the cold soft waves creep up and kiss my hand ;
 A golden glare of sunshine fills the blue air at my back,
 And swims between the meadows and the skies,
 Leaving the meadows black.

19.

All is as still and beautiful as sleep :
 Nay, all *is* sleep — the quiet air, the azure deep ;
 The cool blue waves creep thro' my fingers with a silver
 gleam,
 As, lost in utter calm, I neither think
 Nor act, but only dream.

20.

This is the poetry of Heart's repose,
 For which my spirit yearn'd thro' drifting winds and
 snows —

Only the tingling coolness on my hand seems part akin
 To that bleak winter warring when the dream
 Of peace arose within.

21.

What time I dream'd of this, the winds, cast free,
 Swoop'd eagle-like and tore the white bowels of the
 sea ;
 The winter tempest moved above, and storm on storm
 did frown ;—
 I saw the awful Sea bound up in cloud
 And then torn hugely down.

22.

Within my blood arose the wild commotion,
 My soul was battling abroad with winds and ocean ;
 But in the centre of the wrath, all nature, sea and sky,
 Call'd out aloud for peace divine as this,
 And lo, I join'd the cry.

23.

And calm has come, and June is on the deep,
 The winds are nested, and the earth takes mellow
 sleep ;
 Yet, friend, my soul, though husht in awe, feels peace
 so still is pain,—
 And the monotonous yearning voice within
 Calls out for war again !

24.

For hark ! into my dream of golden ease
 Breaketh the hollow murmur of untroubled seas ;
 And behold, my blood awakens with a thrill and sinks
 and swells,

As when low breezes die and rise again
On beds of asphodels.

25.

Ay, now, when all is placid as a star,
My soul in incompleteness longs for active war ;
Amid its utter happiness, it sighs imperfectly
In answer to the beautiful unrest
Within the sleeping sea.

26.

Unsatisfied, I hunger on the land,
Only subdued by this bright water on my hand ;
The beating heart within my breast for louder utterance
yearns —
I listen, and the sympathetic sea
Its endless moan returns.

27.

Quiet, monotonous, breathless, almost drown'd,
Inaudibly audible, felt scarce heard, cometh the sound,
Monotonous, so monotonous, but oh ! so sweet, so
sweet,
When my hid heart is throbbing forth a voice,
And the two voices meet.

28.

The void within the calm for which I yearned
Until this moment was imperfectly discerned ;
But now I feel to the roots of life an inner melody,
That harmonizes my unquiet heart
With the unquiet sea.

29.

Hear I the crawling movements of the main?
Or hear I dim heart-echoes dying in the brain?
Is there but one impatient moan, and is it of the sea?
And, if two voices speak, which voice belongs
 To ocean, which to me?

30.

The sounds have mingled into some faint whole,
Inseparate, trembling o'er the fibres of my soul;
And the cool waves have a magic all my swooning blood
 to quell;
The sea glides thro' and thro' me, and my soul
 Keeps sea-sound like a shell.

31.

Ah, the monotonous music in my soul,
Enlarging like the waves, murmuring without control!—
Is it that changeful nature can rest not night nor day?
And is the music born of this lorn Man,
 Or Ocean,— Horace, say?

32.

Is there a climbing element in life
Which is at war with rest, alternates strife with strife,
Whereby we reach eternal seas upon whose shores
 unstirr'd
Ev'n Joy can sleep,— because no moan like this
 Within those waves is heard?

XIX.

THE SWAN-SONG OF APOLLO.

I.

O LYRE! O Lyre!
 Strung with celestial fire!
 Thou living soul of sound that answereth
 These fingers that have troubled thee so long,
 With passion, and with radiance, and with breath
 Of melancholy song, —
 Answer, answer, answer me,
 With thy withering melody!
 For the earth is old, and strange
 Mysteries are working change,
 And the Dead who slumber'd deep
 Startle troubled from their sleep,
 And the ancient gods divine,
 Pale and haggard o'er their wine,
 Fade in their ghastly banquet-halls, with large eyes fixed
 on mine!

2.

Ah me! ah me!
 The earth and air and sea,
 Are shaken; and the great pale gods sit still,
 The roseate mists around them roll away: —
 Lo! Hebe listens in the act to fill,
 And groweth wan and gray;
 On the banquet-table spread,
 Fruits and flowers grow sick and dead,

Pale pure mead in every cup
 Gleams to blood and withers up ;
 Aphrodité breathes a charm,
 Gripping Pallas' bronzed arm ;
 Zeus the Father clenches teeth,
 While his cloud-throne shakes beneath ;
 The passion-flower in Heré's hair melts in a snowy
 wreath !

3.

Ah, woe ! ah, woe !
 One climbeth from below, —
 A mortal shape with pallid smile divine,
 Bearing a heavy Cross and crown'd with thorn, —
 His brow is moist with blood, his strange sweet eyne
 Look piteous and forlorn :
 Hark, O hark ! his cold foot-fall
 Breaks upon the banquet-hall !
 God and goddess start to hear,
 Earth, air, ocean, moan in fear ;
 Shadows of the Cross and Him
 Dark the banquet-table dim,
 Silent sit the gods divine,
 Old and haggard over wine,
 And slowly to thy song they fade, with large eyes fixed
 on mine !

4.

O Lyre ! O Lyre !
 Thy strings of golden fire
 Fade to their fading, and the hand is chill
 That touches thee ; the great bright brow grows
 gray —
 I faint, I wither, while that conclave still
 Dies wearily away !

Ah, the prophecy of old
Sung by us to smilers cold!—
God and goddess pale and die,
Chilly cold against the sky,
There is change and all is done,
Strange look Moon and Stars and Sun!
God and goddess fade, and see!
All their large eyes look at me!
While woe! ah, woe! in dying song, I fade, I fade, with
thee!

POET'S EPILOGUE.



TO MARY ON EARTH.

“*Simplex munditiis!*”

I.

SO! now the task is ended; and to-night,
Sick, impotent, no longer soul-sustain'd,
Withdrawing eyes from that ideal height
Where, in low undertones, those Spirits plain'd,
Each full of special glory unattain'd, —
I turn on you, Sweet-Heart, my weary sight. —
Shut out the darkness, shutting in the light:
So! now the task is ended. What is gain'd?

2.

First, sit beside me. Place your hand in mine.
From deepest fountain of your veins the while
Call up your Soul; and briefly let it shine
In those gray eyes with mildness feminine.
Yes, smile, Dear! — you are truest when you smile.

3.

My heart to-night is calm as peaceful dreams. —
Afar away the wind is shrill, the culver
Blows up and down the moors with windy gleams,
The birch unlooseneth her locks of silver
And shakes them softly on the mountain streams,

And o'er the grave that holds my David's dust
 The Moon uplifts her empty dripping horn :
 Thither my fancies turn, but turn in trust,
 Not wholly sadly, faithful though forlorn.
 For you, too, love him, mourn his life's quick fleeting ;
 We think of him in common. Is it so ? —
 Your little hand has answer'd, and I know
 His name makes music in your heart's soft beating ;
 And —— well, 't is something gain'd for him and me —
 Him, in his heaven, and me, in this low spot,
 Something his eyes will see, and joy to see —
 That you, too, love him, though you knew him not.

4.

Yet this is bitter. We were boy and boy,
 Hand link'd in hand we dreamt of power and fame,
 We shared each other's sorrow, pride, and joy,
 To one wild tune our swift blood went and came,
 Eyes drank each other's hope with flash of flame.
 Then, side by side, we clomb the hill of life,
 We ranged thro' mist and mist, thro' storm and strife ;
 But then, —— it is so bitter, now, to feel
 That his pale Soul to mine was so akin,
 Firm-fix'd on goals we each set forth to win,
 So twinly conscious of the sweet Ideal,
 So wedded (God forgive me if I sin !)
 That neither he, my friend, nor I could steal
 One glimpse of heaven's divinities — alone,
 And flushing seek his brother, and reveal
 Some hope, some joy, some beauty, else unknown ;
 Nor, bringing down his sunlight from the Sun,
 Call sudden up, to light his fellow's face,
 A smile as proud, as glad, as that I trace
 In your dear eyes, now, when my work is done.

5.

Love gains in giving. What had I to give
 Whereof his Poet-Soul was not possess?
 What gleams of stars he knew not, fugitive
 As lightning-flashes, could I manifest?
 What music fainting in a clearer air?
 What lights of sunrise from beyond the grave?
 What pride in knowledge that he could not share? —
 Ay, Mary, it is bitter, for I swear
 He took with him, to heav'n, no wealth I gave.

6.

No, Love, it is not bitter! Thoughts like those
 Were sin these songs I sing you must adjust.
 Not bitter, ah, not bitter! — God is just;
 And, seeing our one-knowledge, just God chose,
 By one swift stroke, to part us. Far above
 The measure of my hope, my pride, my love,
 Above our seasons, suns and rains and snows, —
 He, like an exhalation, thus arose
 Hearing in a diviner atmosphere
 Music we only see, when, dewy and dim,
 The stars thro' gulfs of azure darkness swim,
 Music I seem to see, but cannot hear.
 But evermore, my Poet, on his height,
 Fills up my Soul with sweetness to the brim,
 Rains influence, and warning, and delight;
 And *now*, I smile for pride and joy in him!

7.

I said, Love gains by giving. And to know
 That I, who could not glorify my Friend,
 Soul of my Soul, although I loved him so,
 Have power and strength and privilege to lend

Glimpses of heav'n to Thee, of hope, of bliss !
 Power to go heavenward, pluck flowers and blend
 Their hues in wreaths I give you with a kiss —
 You, Love, who climb not up the heights at all !
 To think, to think, I never could upcall
 On his dead face so proud a smile as this !

8.

Most just is God : who bids me not be sad
 For his dear sake whose name is dear to thee,
 Who bids me proudly climb and sometimes see
 With joy a glimpse of him in glory clad ;
 Who, further, bids your life be proud and glad,
 When I have climb'd and seen, for joy in me.
 My lowly-minded, gentle-hearted Love !
 I bring you down his gifts, and am sustain'd :
 You watch and pray — I climb — he stands above.
 So, now the task is ended, what is gain'd ?

9.

This knowledge. — Better in your arms to rest,
 Better to love you till my heart should break,
 Than pause to ask if he who would be blest
 Should love for more than his own loving's sake.
 So closer, closer still ; for (while afar,
 Mile upon mile toward the polar star,
 Now in the autumn time our Poet's dust
 Sucks back thro' grassy sods the flowers it thrust
 To feel the summer on the outer earth)
 I turn to you, and on your bosom fall.
 Love grows by giving. I have given my all.
 So, smile — to show you hold the gift of worth.

10.

Ay, all the thanks that I on earth can render
To him who sends me such good news from God,
Is, in due turn, to thy young life to tender
Hopes that denote, while blossoming in splendor,
Where an invisible Angel's foot hath trode.
So, Sweet-Heart, I have given unto thee,
Not only such pòor song as here I twine,
But Hope, Ambition, all of mine or me,
My flesh and blood, and more, my Soul divine.
Take all, take all! Ay, wind white arms about
My neck and from my Soul draw bliss for thine:
Smile, Sweet-Heart, and be happy — lest thou doubt
How much the gift I give thee makes thee mine!



IDYLS AND LEGENDS
OF INVERBURN.

P R E A M B L E .

To Inverburn, well loved, well memoried,
The pink of ancient Scottish villages !
When Spring, a herald bright apparelléd,
Stood on the mountain-tops and blew aloud
The clarion of the winds, ere pacing slow
On dewy foot into the dusky dells, —
To Inverburn, whose quiet catches not
The smoky rumor of a city's sin,
To Inverburn, by rail and road, I fled.

TO breathe the glory of the taintless air
With pleasurable pantings of the blood,
To wander over sweetly-smelling fields,
To lie upon the heathery slopes and dream,
To dream, to plan, to picture, — surely this
Were sweeter than to share the smoke with Higgs,
The callous cockney with the humorous vein,
In Babylonia ? Wherefore, for a time,
I vow'd to slough the chrysalis of the grub
Of Grub Street, and become a butterfly
Blown with no will thro' thyme and heather-bells
By the mild motion of the country air, —
And in the woods and meadows I might glean
Such consciousness of pastoral content,
As should compose the frenzy in the eyes
And cool the fever of the lips that thirst.

One night, I lay as restless as a slave
For whom the darkness glimmers, froths, and makes

A picture of a tawny mother's face
 Sunlit and looking westward 'neath the palm ;
 The next, beneath the shade of Arthur's Seat,
 I slept as rich a slumber as a maid
 Whose soul shuts softly like a rose's leaves
 To keep its dewy love-dream warm and sure ;
 Then, lastly, westward I was whirl'd by train,
 And lighting at a lonely halting-place —
 Whence far away I watch'd the city's smoke
 Float dim and spiral in the fading east —
 Walkt seven Scots miles by wood and stream and moor,
 And saw the sunset redden Inverburn.

Seven pleasant miles by wood and stream and moor,
 Seven miles along the country road that wound
 Uphill and downhill in a thin red line,
 Then from the forehead of a hill, behold —
 Lying below me, sparkling ruby-like, —
 The village ! — quaint old gables, roofs of thatch,
 A glimmering spire that peep'd above the firs,
 The sunset lingering orange-red on all,
 And nearer, tumbling thro' a mossy bridge,
 The river that I knew ! No wondrous peep
 Into the faery land of Oberon,
 Its bowers, its glowworm-lighted colonnades
 Where pygmy lovers wander two by two,
 Could weigh upon the city wanderer's heart
 With peace so pure as this ! Why, yonder stood,
 A fledgeling's downward flight beyond the spire,
 The gray old manse, endear'd by memories
 Of Jean the daughter of the minister ;
 And in the cottage with the painted sign,
 Hard by the bridge, how many a winter night
 Had I with politicians sapient-eyed

Discuss'd the county paper's latest news
And tipp'd Sandie's best! — And naught seem'd
changed!

The very gig before the smithy door,
The barefoot lassie with the milking pail
Pausing and looking backward from the bridge,
The last rook wavering homeward to the wood,
All seem'd a sunset-picture, every tint
Unchanged, since I had bade the place farewell.
My heart grew garrulous of olden times
And my face sadden'd, as I saunter'd down.
There came a rural music on my ears, —
The wagons in the lanes, the waterfall
With cool sound plunging in its wood-nest wild,
The rooks amid the windy rookery,
The shouts of children, and afar away
The crowing of a cock. Then o'er the bridge
I bent, above the river gushing down
Thro' mossy boulders, making underneath
Green-shaded pools where now and then a trout
Sank in the ripple of its own quick leap;
And like some olden and familiar tune,
Half humm'd aloud, half tinkling in the brain,
Troublously, faintly, came the buzz of looms.

And here I linger'd, nested in the shade
Of Peace that makes a music as she grows;
And when the vale had put its glory on
The bitter aspiration was subdued,
And Pleasure, tho' she wore a woodland crown,
Look'd at me with Ambition's serious eyes.
Amid the deep green woods of pine, whose boughs
Made a sea-music overhead, and caught
White flakes of sunlight on their highest leaves,

I foster'd solemn meditations ;
Stretch'd on the sloping river banks, fresh print'd
With gowans and the meek anemone,
I watch'd the bright king-fisher dart about,
His quick small shadow with an azure gleam
Startling the minnows in the pool beneath ;
Or out upon the moors, where far away
Across the waste the sportsman with his gun
Stood a dark speck across the sky, what time
The heath-hen flounder'd thro' the furze and fell,
I caught the solemn wind that wander'd down
With thunder-echoes heaved among the hills.
Nor lack'd I, in the balmy summer nights,
Or on the days of rain, such counterpoise
As books can give. The honey-linguaged Greek
Who gently piped the sweet bucolic lay,
The wit who raved of Lesbia's loosen'd zone
And loved divinely what was less than earth,
Were with me ; others, of a later date :
The eagle-eyed comedian divine ;
The English Homer, not the humpback'd one
Who sung Belinda's curl at Twickenham,
But Chapman, master of the solemn line ;
Moreover, those few singers who have lit
The beacon-lights of these our latter days —
Chief, young Hyperion, who setting soon
Sent his pale look along the future time,
And the tall figure on the hills, that stoopt
To see the daisy's shadow on the grass.

But Higgs was in my spirit now and then,
Pricking me like a thorn, the cynic Higgs,
The representative of all his race ;
And looking round upon the courteous vale,

I probed the wound and argued with my heart.
 "Fame," said I, "is a problem Poets solve
 By looking outward for the Beautiful:
 The one exists beyond us, in the skies,
 And in the legible gospel of the earth;
 The other is conferr'd, wherever Truth
 Demands it, from the living Poet's soul."
 And in mine inner ear methought I heard
 The mellow winy laugh I hated so.
 For "Sing your loudest," whisper'd Higgs; "devote
 Three precious summers (like a friend of mine)
 To learning how to paint a cabbage-rose;
 Plot, plan, devise, refine, burn midnight oil,
 Plod, labor: Who will thank you? Faith, not I.
 Your utmost: you can tell us nothing new."
 The scented sweetness of the placid vale
 Blew on my cheek, and help'd me in my need;
 Mild influences blew my gloomy mood
 Apart, as softest breezes part a cloud;
 And lark-like launch'd to ether by my joy,
 I sang for singing's sake — until at last,
 I listen'd for the voice of Fame, and found
 The viewless angel of the Beautiful
 Among the men and women, and the scenes,
 Or fair or true, which I, a latter bard,
 Paint in the songs that follow.

Higgs survives,

Higgism is, has been, and still will be;
 Nathless I sang, nathless I sing. May God,
 Even with the purity of mine own intent,
 Even with the impulse heavenward that remains
 When much I loved so well is God's again,
 Hallow my singing. Blow, thou balmy Spring,

Thy softest kisses on the wood-nest wild
Where I am lying ! tip my tongue, O Spring,
With honey, that the heart of men may hear !
Fly to the city, Spirit of the Spring,
Breathe softly on the lids of those who read,
And make a gentle picture of the scene
Wherein these shapes and shadows come and go :
The clachan with its humming sound of looms,
The small green valley ridged with heathery slopes,
The stream whose soft blue arm encircles all,
And far away, the northern mountain-tops,
Hued like the azure of the dew-berrie,
And mingling with the regions of the Rain.

IDYLS AND LEGENDS OF INVERBURN.



WILLIE BAIRD.

A WINTER IDYL.

“An old man’s tale, a tale for men gray-hair’d,
Who wear, thro’ second childhood, to the Lord.”

’T IS two-and-thirty summers since I came
To school the village lads of Inverburn.

My father was a shepherd old and poor,
Who, dwelling ’mong the clouds on norland hills,
His tartan plaidie on, and by his side
His sheep-dog running, redden’d with the winds
That whistle saltly south from Polar seas :
I follow’d in his footsteps when a boy,
And knew by heart the mountains round our home ;
But when I went to Edinglass, to learn
At college there, I look’d about the place,
And heard the murmur of the busy streets
Around me, in a dream ; — and only saw
The clouds that snow around the mountain-tops,
The mists that chase the phantom of the moon
In lonely mountain tarns, — and heard the while,
Not footsteps sounding hollow to and fro,
But winds sough-soughing thro’ the woods of pine.
Time pass’d ; and day by day those sights and sounds
Grew fainter, — till they troubled me no more.

O Willie, Willie, are you sleeping sound?
 And can you feel the stone that I have placed
 Yonder above you? Are you dead, my doo?
 Or did you see the shining Hand that parts
 The clouds above, and becks the bonnie birds,
 Until they wing away, and human eyes,
 That watch them till they vanish in the blue,
 Droop and grow tearful? Ay, I ken, I ken,
 I'm talking folly, but I loved the child!
 He was the bravest scholar in the school!
 He came to teach the very dominie—
Me, with my lyart locks and sleepy heart!

O well I mind the day his mother brought
 Her tiny trembling tot with yellow hair,
 Her tiny poor-clad tot six summers old,
 And left him seated lonely on a form
 Before my desk. He neither wept nor gloom'd;
 But waited silently, with shoeless feet
 Swinging above the floor; in wonder eyed
 The maps upon the walls, the big blackboard,
 The slates and books and copies, and my own
 Gray hose and clumpy boots; last, fixing gaze
 Upon a monster spider's web that fill'd
 One corner of the whitewash'd ceiling, watch'd
 The speckled traitor jump and jink about,
 Till he forgot my unfamiliar eyes,
 Weary and strange and old. "Come here, my bairn!"
 And timid as a lamb he seedled up.
 "What do they call ye?" "Willie," coo'd the wean,
 Up-peeping slyly, scraping with his feet.
 I put my hand upon his yellow hair,
 And cheer'd him kindly. Then I bade him lift
 The small black bell that stands behind the door

And ring the shouting laddies from their play.
 "Run, Willie!" And he ran, and eyed the bell,
 Stoop'd o'er it, seem'd afraid that it would bite,
 Then grasp'd it firm, and as it jingled gave
 A timid cry — next laugh'd to hear the sound —
 And ran full merry to the door and rang,
 And rang, and rang, while lights of music lit
 His pallid cheek, till, shouting, panting hard,
 In ran the big rough laddies from their play.

Then rapping sharply on the desk I drove
 The laddies to their seats, and beckon'd up
 The stranger — smiling, bade him seat himself
 And hearken to the rest. Two weary hours
 Buzz-buzz, boom-boom, went on the noise of school,
 While Willie sat and listen'd open-mouth'd ;
 Till school was over, and the big and small
 Flew home in flocks. But Willie stay'd behind.
 I beckon'd to the mannock with a smile,
 And took him on my knee and crack'd and talk'd.

First, he was timid ; next, grew bashful ; next,
 He warm'd and told me stories of his home,
 His father, mother, sisters, brothers, all ;
 And how, when strong and big, he meant to buy
 A gig to drive his father to the kirk ;
 And how he long'd to be a dominie :
 Such simple prattle as I plainly see
 You smile at. But to little children God
 Has given wisdom and mysterious power
 Which beat the mathematics. *Quærerere*
Verum in sylvis Academi, Sir,
 Is meet for men who can afford to dwell
 Forever in a garden, reading books

Of morals and the logic. Good and well !
 Give me such tiny truths as only bloom
 Like red-tipt gowans at the hallanstone,
 Or kindle softly, flashing bright at times,
 In fuffing cottage fires !

The laddie still

Was seated on my knee, when at the door
 We heard a scrape-scape-scraping : Willie prick'd
 His ears and listen'd, then he clapt his hands —
 “Hey ! Donald, Donald, Donald !” [See ! the rogue
 Looks up and blinks his eyes — he knows his name !]
 “Hey, Donald, Donald !” Willie cried. At that
 I saw beneath me, at the door, a dog —
 The very collie dozing at your feet,
 His nose between his paws, his eyes half closed.
 At sight of Willie, with a joyful bark
 He leapt and gamboll'd, eying me the while
 In queer suspicion ; and the mannock peep'd
 Into my face, while patting Donald's back —
 “It's Donald ! he has come to take me home !”

An old man's tale, a tale for men gray-hair'd,
 Who wear, thro' second childhood, to the grave !
 I'll hasten on. Thenceforward Willie came
 Daily to school, and daily to the door
 Came Donald trotting ; and they homeward went
 Together — Willie walking slow but sure,
 And Donald trotting sagely by his side.
 [Ay, Donald, he is dead ! be still, old man !]

What link existed, human or divine,
 Between the tiny tot six summers old,
 And yonder life of mine upon the hills

Among the mists and storms ? 'T is strange, 't is
strange !

But when I look'd on Willie's face, it seem'd
That I had known it in some beauteous life
That I had left behind me in the north.
This fancy grew and grēw, till oft I sat —
The buzzing school around me — and would seem
To be among the mists, the tracks of rain,
Nearing the hueless silence of the snow.
Slowly and surely I began to feel
That I was all alone in all the world,
And that my mother and my father slept
Far, far away, in some forgotten kirk —
Remember'd but in dreams. Alone at nights,
I read my Bible more and Euclid less.
For, mind you, like my betters, I had been
Half scoffer, half believer ; on the whole,
I thought the life beyond a useless dream,
Best left alone, and shut my eyes to themes
That puzzled mathematics. But at last,
When Willie Baird and I grew friends, and thoughts
Came to me from beyond my father's grave,
I found 't was pleasant late at e'en to read
My Bible — haply, only just to pick
Some easy chapter for my pet to learn —
Yet night by night my soul was guided on
Like a blind man some angel hand convoys.

I cannot frame in speech the thoughts that fill'd
This gray old brow, the feelings dim and warm
That soothed the throbbings of this weary heart !
But when I placed my hand on Willie's head,
Warm sunshine tingled from the yellow hair
Thro' trembling fingers to my blood within ;

And when I look'd in Willie's stainless eyes
 I saw the empty ether floating gray
 O'er shadowy mountains murmuring low with winds ;
 And often when, in his old-fashion'd way,
 He question'd me, I seem'd to hear a voice
 From far away, that mingled with the cries
 Haunting the regions where the round red sun
 Is all alone with God among the snow.

Who made the stars ? and if within his hand
 He caught and held one, would his fingers burn ?
 If I, the gray-hair'd dominie, was dug
 From out a cabbage garden such as he
 Was found in ? if, when bigger, he would wear
 Gray homespun hose and clumsy boots like mine,
 And have a house to dwell in all alone ?
 Thus would he question, seated on my knee,
 While Donald (wheesht, old man !) stretch'd lyart limbs
 Under my chair, contented. .Open-mouth'd
 He hearken'd to the tales I loved to tell
 About Sir William Wallace and the Bruce,
 And the sweet lady on the Scottish throne,
 Whose crown was colder than a band of ice,
 Yet seem'd a sunny crown whene'er she smiled ;
 With many tales of genii, giants, dwarfs,
 And little folk that play at jing-a-ring
 On beds of harebells 'neath the silver moon ;
 Stories and rhymes and songs of Wonder-land :
 How Tammis Ercildoune in Elfland dwelt,
 How Galloway's mermaid comb'd her golden hair,
 How Tammis Thumb stuck in the spider's web,
 And fought and fought, a needle for his sword,
 Dyeing his weapon in the crimson blood
 Of the foul traitor with the poison'd fangs !

And when we read the Holy Book, the child
Would think and think o'er parts he loved the best ;
The draught of fish, the Child that sat so wise
In the great Temple, Herod's cruel law
To slay the weans, or — oftēnest of all —
The crucifixion of the Good Kind Man
Who loved the weans and was a wean himself.
He speir'd of death ; and were the sleepers cold
Down in the dark wet earth ? and was it God
That put the grass and flowers in the kirk-yard ?
What kind of dwelling-place was heaven above ?
And was it full of flowers ? and were there schools
And dominies there ? and was it far away ?
Then, with a look that made your eyes grow dim,
Clasping his wee white hands round Donald's neck,
“ Do doggies gang to heaven ? ” he would ask ;
“ Would Donald gang ? ” and keek'd in Donald's face
While Donald blink'd with meditative gaze,
As if he knew full brawly what we said,
And ponder'd o'er it, wiser far than we.
But how I answer'd, how explain'd these themes
I know not. Oft I could not speak at all.
Yet every question made me think of things
Forgotten, puzzled so, and when I strove
To reason puzzled me so much the more,
That, flinging logic to the winds, I went
Straight onward to the mark in Willie's way,
Took most for granted, laid down premises
Of Faith, imagined, gave my wit the reins,
And oft on nights at e'en, to my surprise,
Felt palpably an angel's glowing face
Glimmering down upon me, while mine eyes
Dimm'd their old orbs with tears that came unbid
To bear the glory of the light they saw.

So summer pass'd. Yon chestnut at the door
 Scatter'd its burnish'd leaves and made a sound
 Of wind among its branches. Every day
 Came Willie, seldom going home again
 Till near the sunset: wet or dry he came:
 Oft in the rainy weather carrying
 A big umbrella, under which he walk'd —
 A little fairy in a parachute,
 Blown hither, thither, at the wind's wild will.
 Pleased was my heart to see his pallid cheeks
 Were gathering rosy-posies, that his eyes
 Were softer and less sad. Then, with a gust,
 Old Winter tumbled shrieking from the hills,
 His white hair blowing in the wind.

The house

Where Willie's mother lives is scarce a mile
 From yonder hallan, if you take a cut
 Before you reach the village, crossing o'er
 Green meadows till you reach the road again;
 But he who thither goes along the road
 Loses a reaper's mile. The summer long
 Wee Willie came and went across the fields:
 He loved the smell of flowers and grass, the sight
 Of cows and sheep, the changing stalks of wheat,
 And he was weak and small. When winter came,
 Still caring not a straw for wind or rain
 Came Willie and the collie; till by night
 Down fell the snow, and fell three nights and days,
 Then ceased. The ground was white and ankle-deep;
 The window of the school was threaded o'er
 With flowers of hueless ice — Frost's unseen hands
 Prick'd you from head to foot with tinging heat;
 The shouting urchins, yonder on the green,

Play'd snowballs. In the school a cheery fire
Was kindled every day, and every day
When Willie came he had the warmest seat,
And every day old Donald, punctual, came
To join us, after labor, in the lowe.

Three days and nights the snow had mistily fall'n.
It lay long miles along the country-side,
White, awful, silent. In the keen cold air
There was a hush, a sleepless silentness,
And mid it all, upraising eyes, you felt
God's breath upon your face ; and in your blood,
Though you were cold to touch, was flaming fire,
Such as within the bowels of the earth
Burnt at the bones of ice, and wreath'd them round
With grass ungrown.

One day in school I saw,
Through threaded window-panes, soft, snowy flakes
Swim with unquiet motion, mistily, slowly,
At intervals ; but when the boys were gone,
And in ran Donald with a dripping nose,
The air was clear and gray as glass. An hour
Sat Willie, Donald, and myself around
The murmuring fire, and then with tender hand
I wrapt a comforter round Willie's throat,
Button'd his coat around him close and warm,
And off he ran with Donald, happy-eyed
And merry, leaving fairy prints of feet
Behind him on the snow. I watch'd them fade
Round the white curve, and, turning with a sigh,
Came in to sort the room and smoke a pipe
Before the fire. Here, dreamingly and alone,
I sat and smoked, and in the fire saw clear

The norland mountains, white and cold with snow
 That crumbled silently, and moved, and changed, —
 When suddenly the air grew sick and dark,
 And from the distance came a hollow sound,
 A murmur like the moan of far-off seas.

I started to my feet, look'd out, and knew
 The winter wind was whistling from the clouds
 To lash the snow-clothed plain, and to myself
 I prophesied a storm before the night.
 Then with an icy pain, an eldritch gleam,
 I thought of Willie ; but I cheer'd my heart,
 "He 's home, and with his mother, long ere this !"
 While thus I stood the hollow murmur grew
 Deeper, the wold grew darker, and the snow
 Rush'd downward, whirling in a shadowy mist.
 I walk'd to yonder door and open'd it.
 Whirr ! the wind swung it from me with a clang,
 And in upon me with an iron-like crash
 Swoop'd in the drift. With pinch'd sharp face I gazed
 Out on the storm ! Dark, dark was all ! A mist,
 A blinding, whirling mist, of chilly snow,
 The falling and the driven ; for the wind
 Swept round and round in clouds upon the earth,
 And birm'd the deathly drift aloft with moans,
 Till all was swooning darkness. Far above
 A voice was shrieking, like a human cry.

I closed the door, and turn'd me to the fire,
 With something on my heart — a load — a sense
 Of an impending pain. Down the broad lum
 Came melting flakes that hiss'd upon the coal ;
 Under my eyelids blew the blinding smoke,
 And for a time I sat like one bewitch'd,

Still as a stone. The lonely room grew dark,
 The flickering fire threw phantoms of the snow
 Along the floor and on the walls around ;
 The melancholy ticking of the clock
 Was like the beating of my heart. But, hush !
 Above the moaning of the wind I heard
 A sudden scraping at the door ; my heart
 Stood still and listen'd ; and with that there rose
 An awsome howl, shrill as a dying screech,
 And scrape-scape-scape, the sound beyond the door !
 I could not think — I could not breathe — a dark,
 Awful foreboding gript me like a hand,
 As opening the door I gazed straight out,
 Saw nothing, till I felt against my knees
 Something that moved and heard a moaning sound —
 Then, panting, moaning, o'er the threshold leapt
 Donald the dog, alone, and white with snow.

Down, Donald ! down, old man ! Sir, look at him !
 I swear he knows the meaning of my words,
 And tho' he cannot speak, his heart is full !
 See now ! see now ! he puts his cold black nose
 Into my palm and whines ! he knows, he knows !
 Would speak, and cannot, but he minds that night !

The terror of my heart seem'd choking me :
 Dumbly I stared and wildly at the dog,
 Who gazed into my face and whined and moan'd,
 Leap'd at the door, then touched me with his paws,
 And lastly, gript my coat between his teeth,
 And pull'd and pull'd — whiles growling, whining
 whiles —
 Till fairly madden'd, in bewilder'd fear,

I let him drag me through the banging door
 Out to the whirling storm. Bareheaded, wild,
 The wind and snow-drift beating on my face
 Blowing me hither, thither, with the dog,
 I dash'd along the road. What follow'd seem'd
 An eerie, eerie dream!—a world of snow,
 A sky of wind, a whirling howling mist
 Which swam around with hundred sickly eyes ;
 And Donald dragging, dragging, beaten, bruised,
 Leading me on to something that I fear'd —
 An awful something, and I knew not what!
 On, on, and farther on, and still the snow
 Whirling, the tempest moaning! Then I mind
 Of groping, groping in the shadowy light,
 And Donald by me burrowing with his nose
 And whining. Next a darkness, blank and deep!
 But then I mind of tearing thro' the storm,
 Stumbling and tripping, blind and deaf and dumb,
 And holding to my heart an icy load
 I clutch'd with freezing fingers. Far away —
 It seem'd long miles on miles away — I saw
 A yellow light — unto that light I tore —
 And last, remember opening a door
 And falling, dazzled by a blinding gleam
 Of human faces and a flaming fire,
 And with a crash of voices in my ears
 Fading away into a world of snow.

When I awaken'd to myself, I lay
 In my own bed at home. I started up
 As from an evil dream and look'd around,
 And to my side came one, a neighbor's wife,
 Mother to two young lads I taught in school.
 With hollow, hollow voice I question'd her,

And soon knew all : how a long night had pass'd
Since, with a lifeless laddie in my arms,
I stumbled horror-stricken, swooning, wild
Into a ploughman's cottage : at my side,
My coat between his teeth, a dog ; and how
Senseless and cold I fell. Thence, when the storm
Had pass'd away, they bore me to my home.
I listen'd dumbly, catching at the sense ;
But when the woman mention'd Willie's name,
And I was fear'd to phrase the thought that rose,
She saw the question in my tearless eyes
And told me — he was dead.

'T would weary you
To tell the thoughts, the fancies, and the dreams
That weigh'd upon me, ere I rose in bed,
But little harm'd, and sent the wife away,
Rose, slowly drest, took up my staff and went
To Willie's mother's cottage. As I walk'd
Though all the air was calm and cold and still,
The blowing wind and dazzled snow were yet
Around about. I was bewilder'd like !
Ere I had time to think I found myself
Beside a truckle bed, and at my side
A weeping woman. And I clench'd my hands,
And look'd on Willie, who had gone to sleep.

In death-gown white lay Willie fast asleep,
His blue eyes closed, his tiny fingers clench'd,
His lips apart a wee as if he breathed,
His yellow hair kaim'd back, and on his face
A smile — yet not a smile — a dim pale light
Such as the Snow keeps in its own soft wings.
Ay, he had gone to sleep, and he was sound !

And by the bed lay Donald watching still,
And when I look'd he whined, but did not move.

I turn'd in silence, with my nails stuck deep
In my clench'd palms ; but in my heart of hearts
I pray'd to God. In Willie's mother's face
There was a cold and silent bitterness —
I saw it plain, but saw it in a dream,
And cared not. So I went my way, as grim
As one who holds his breath to slay himself.
What follow'd that is vague as was the rest :
A winter day, a landscape hush'd in snow,
A weary wind, a horrid whiteness borne
On a man's shoulder, shapes in black, o'er all
The solemn clanging of an iron bell,
And lastly me and Donald standing both
Beside a tiny mound of fresh-heap'd earth,
And while around the snow began to fall
Mistily, softly, thro' the icy air,
Looking at one another, dumb and cold.

And Willie's dead! — that's all I comprehend —
Ay, bonnie Willie Baird has gone before :
The school, the tempest, and the eerie pain,
Seem but a dream, — and I am weary like.
I begg'd old Donald hard — they gave him me —
And we have lived together in this house
Long years with no companions. There's no need
Of speech between us. Here we dumbly bide,
But know each other's sorrow, — and we both
Feel weary. When the nights are long and cold,
And snow is falling as it falleth now,
And wintry winds are moaning, here I dream
Of Willie and the unfamiliar life

I left behind me on the norland hills !
“ Do doggies gang to heaven ? ” Willie ask'd ;
And ah ! what Solomon of modern days
Can answer that ? Yet here at nights I sit,
Reading the Book, with Donald at my side ;
And stooping, with the Book upon my knee,
I sometimes gaze in Donald's patient eyes —
So sad, so human, though he cannot speak —
And think he knows that Willie is at peace,
Far far away beyond the norland hills,
Beyond the silence of the untrodden snow.



LORD RONALD'S WIFE.

I.

LAST night I toss'd upon my bed,
Because I knew that she was dead :
The curtains were white, the pane was blue,
The moon peep'd through,
And its eye was red —
“ I would that my love were awake ! ” I said.

II.

Then I rose and the silver censer lit,
And over the rushes lightly stept,
Crept to the door and open'd it,
And enter'd the room where my lady slept ;
And the censer threw a glamour gray
Over the bed on which she lay,
And sparkled on her golden hair,

Smiled on her lip and melted there,
 And I shudder'd because she look'd so fair ;—
 For the curtains were white, and the pane was blue,
 And the moon look'd through,
 And its eye was red :
 " I will hold her hand, and think," I said.

III.

And at first I could not think at all,
 Because her hand was so thin and cold ;
 The gray light flicker'd along the wall,
 And I seem'd to be growing old ;
 I look'd in her face and could not weep,
 I hated the sound of mine own deep breath,
 Lest it should startle her from the sleep
 That seem'd too sweet and mild for death.
 I heard the far-off clock intone
 So slowly, so slowly —
 Afar across the courts of stone,
 The black hound shook his chain with a moan,
 As the village clock chimed slowly, slowly,
 slowly.
 I pray'd that she might rise in bed,
 And smile and say one little word,
 " I long to see her eyes ! " I said . . .
 I should have shriek'd if she had stirr'd.

IV.

I never sinn'd against thee, Sweet !
 And yet last night, when none could see . .
 I know not . . but from head to feet,
 I seem'd one scar of infamy :
 Perhaps because the fingers light
 I held had grown so worn and white,

Perhaps because you look'd so fair,
With the thin gray light on your golden hair.

V.

You were warm, and I was cold,
Yet you loved me, little one, I knew —
I could not trifle — I was old —
I was wiser, carefuller, than you ;
I liked my horse, I liked my hound,
I liked to hear the trumpet sound,
Over my wine I liked to chat,
But soberly, for I had mind :
You wanted that, and only that,
You were as light as is the wind.
At times, I know, it fretted me —
I chid thee mildly now and then —
No fault of mine — no blame to thee —
Women are women, men are men.
At first you smiled to see me frown,
And laughing leapt upon my knee,
And kiss'd the chiding shadow down,
And smooth'd my great beard merrily ;
But then a change came o'er you, Sweet !
You walk'd about with pensive head ;
You tried to read, and as you read
Patted your small impatient feet : —
" She is wiser now ! " I smiling said . .
And ere I doubted — you were dead.

VI.

All this came back upon my brain
While I sat alone at your white bedside,
And I remember'd in my pain
Those words you spoke before you died —

For around my neck your arms you flung,
 And smiled so sweet though death was near —
 “I was so foolish and so young !
 And yet I loved thee ! — kiss me, dear !”
 I put aside your golden hair,
 And kiss'd you, and you went to sleep ;
 And when I saw that death was there,
 My grief was cold, I could not weep ;
 And late last night, when you were dead,
 I did not weep beside your bed,
 For the curtains were white, and the pane was blue,
 And the moon look'd through,
 And its eye was red —
 “How coldly she lies !” I said.

VII.

Then loud, so loud, before I knew,
 The gray and black cock scream'd and crew,
 And I heard the far-off bells intone
 So slowly, so slowly,
 The black hound bark'd, and I rose with a groan,
 As the village bells chimed slowly, slowly,
 slowly.
 I dropp'd the hand so cold and thin,
 I gazed, and your face seem'd still and wise,
 And I saw the damp dull dawn stare in
 Like a dim drown'd face with oozy eyes ;
 And I open'd the lattice quietly,
 And the cold wet air came in on me,
 And I pluck'd two roses with fingers chill
 From the roses that grew at your window-sill,
 I pluck'd two roses, a white and a red,
 Stole again to the side of your bed,
 Raised the edge of your winding fold.

Drop'd the roses upon your breast,
Cover'd them up in the balmy cold,
That none might know — and there they rest !
And out at the castle-gate I crept
Into the woods, and then . . I wept !
But to-day they carried you from here,
And I follow'd your coffin with tearless cheek —
They knew not about the roses, dear ! —
I would not have them think me weak.

VIII.

And I am weary on my bed
Because I know you are cold and dead ;
And I see you lie in darkness, Sweet !
With the roses under your winding-sheet ;
The days and nights are dreary and cold,
And I am foolish, and weak, and old.

POET ANDREW.

O Loom, that loud art murmuring
 What doth he hear thee say or sing?
 Thou hummest o'er the dead one's songs,
 He cannot choose but hark,
 His heart with tearful rapture throngs,
 But all his face grows dark.

O cottage Fire, that burnest bright,
 What pictures sees he in thy light?
 A city's smoke, a white, white face,
 Phantoms that fade and die,
 And last, the lonely burial-place
 On the windy hill hard by.

'T IS near a year since Andrew went to sleep —
 A winter and a summer. Yonder bed
 Is where the boy was born, and where he died,
 And yonder o'er the lowland is his grave:
 The nook of grass and gowans where in thought
 I found you standing at the set o' sun . .
 The Lord content us — 't is a weary world.

These five-and-twenty years I 've wrought and
 wrought
 In this same dwelling ; — hearken ! you can hear
 The looms that whuzzle-whazzle ben the house,
 Where Jean and Mysie, lassies in their teens,
 And Jamie, and a neighbor's son beside,
 Work late and early. Andrew who is dead
 Was our first-born ; and when he crying came,
 With beaded een and pale old-farrant face,

Out of the darkness, Mysie and mysel'
Were young and heartsome ; and his smile, be sure,
Made daily toil the sweeter. Hey, his kiss
Put honey in the very porridge-pot !
His smile strung threads of sunshine on the loom !
And when he hung around his mother's neck,
He deck'd her out in jewels and in gold
That even ladies envied ! . . . Weel ! . . . in time
Came other children, newer gems and gold,
And Andrew quitted Mysie's breast for mine.
So years roll'd on, like bobbins on a loom ;
And Mysie and mysel' had work to do,
And Andrew took his turn among the rest,
No sweeter, dearer ; till, one Sabbath day,
When Andrew was a curly-pated tot
Of sunny summers six, I had a crack
With Mister Mucklewraith the Minister,
Who put his kindly hand on Andrew's head,
Call'd him a clever wean, a bonnie wean,
Clever at learning, while the mannikin
Blush'd red as any rose, and peeping up
Went twinkle-twinkle with his round black een ;
And then, while Andrew laugh'd and ran awa',
The Minister went deeper in his praise,
And prophesied he would become in time
A man of mark. This set me thinking, sir,
And watching, — and the mannock puzzled me.

Would sit for hours upon a stool and draw
Droll faces on the slate, while other lads
Were shouting at their play ; dumbly would lie
Beside the Lintock, sailing, piloting,
Navies of docken-leaves a summer day ;
Had learn'd the hymns of Dóctor Watts by heart,

And as for old Scots songs, could lilt them a' —
 From Yarrow Braes to Bonnie Bessie Lee —
 And where he learn'd them, only Heaven knew ;
 And oft, altho' he feared to sleep his lane,
 Would cowie at the threshold in a storm
 To watch the lightning, — as a birdie sits,
 With fluttering fearsome heart and dripping wings,
 Among the branches. Once, I mind it weel,
 In came he, running, with a bloody nose,
 Part tears, part pleasure, to his fluttering heart
 Holding a callow mavis golden-bill'd,
 The thin white film of death across its een,
 And told us, sobbing, how a neighbor's son
 Harried the birdie's nest, and how by chance
 He came upon the thief beside the burn
 Throwing the birdies in to see them swim,
 And how he fought him, till he yielded up
 This one, the one remaining of the nest ; —
 And " O the birdie's dying ! " sobb'd he sore,
 " The bonnie birdie's dying ! " — till it died ;
 And Andrew dug a grave behind the house,
 Buried his dead, and cover'd it with earth,
 And cut, to mark the grave, a grassy turf
 Where blew a bunch of gowans. After that,
 I thought and thought, and thick as bees the thoughts
 Buzz'd to the whuzzle-whazzling of the loom —
 I could make naething of the mannikin !
 But by and by, when Hope was making hay,
 And web-work rose, I settled it and said
 To the good wife, "'T is plain that yonder lad
 Will never take to weaving — and at school
 They say he beats the rest at all his tasks
 Save figures only : I have settled it :
 Andrew shall be a minister — a pride

And comfort to us, Mysie, in our age :
 He shall to college in a year or twa
 (If fortune smiles as now) at Edinglass."
 You guess the wife open'd her een, cried "Foosh!"
 And call'd the plan a silly senseless dream,
 A hopeless, useless castle in the air ;
 But ere the night was out, I talk'd her o'er,
 And here she sat, her hands upon her knees,
 Glow'ring and heark'ning, as I conjured up,
 Amid the fog and reek of Edinglass
 Life's peaceful gloaming and a godly fame.
 So it was broach'd, and after many cracks
 With Mister Mucklewraith, we plann'd it a',
 And day by day we laid a penny by
 To give the lad when he should quit the bield.

And years wore on ; and year on year was cheer'd
 By thoughts of Andrew, drest in decent black,
 Throned in a Pulpit, preaching out the Word,
 A house his own, and all the country-side
 To touch their bonnets to him. Weel, the lad
 Grew up among us, and at seventeen
 His hands were genty white, and he was tall,
 And slim, and narrow-shoulder'd : pale of face,
 Silent, and bashful. Then we first began
 To feel how muckle more he knew than we,
 To eye his knowledge in a kind of fear,
 As folk might look upon a crouching beast,
 Bonnie, but like enough to rise and bite.
 Up came the cloud between us silly folk
 And the young lad that sat among his Books
 Amid the silence of the night ; and oft
 It pain'd us sore to fancy he would learn
 Enough to make him look with shame and scorn

On this old dwelling. 'T was his *manner*, sir !
 He seldom lookt his father in the face,
 And when he walkt about the dwelling, seem'd
 Like one superior ; dumbly he would steal
 To the burnside, or into Lintlin Woods,
 With some new-farrant book, — and when I peep'd,
 Behold a book of jingling-jangling rhyme,
 Fine-written nothings on a printed page ;
 And, press'd between the leaves, a flower perchance,
 Anemone or blue Forget-me-not,
 Pluckt in the grassy loanin'. Then I peep'd
 Into his drawer, among his papers there,
 And found — you guess ? — a heap of idle rhymes,
 Big-sounding, like the worthless printed book :
 Some in old copies scribbled, some on scraps
 Of writing paper, others finely writ
 With spirls and flourishes on big white sheets.
 I clench'd my teeth, and groan'd. The beauteous
 dream

Of the good Preacher in his braw black dress,
 With house and income snug, began to fade
 Before the picture of a drunken loon
 Bawling out songs beneath the moon and stars, —
 Of poet Willie Clay, who wrote a book
 About King Robert Bruce, and aye got fu',
 And scatter'd stars in verse, and aye got fu',
 Wept the world's sins, and then got fu' again, —
 Of Ferguson, the feckless limb o' law, —
 And Robin Burns, who gauged the whiskey-casks
 And brake the seventh commandment. So at once
 I up and said to Andrew, " You 're a fool !
 You waste your time in silly senseless verse,
 Lame as your own conceit : take heed ! take heed !
 Or, like your betters, come to grief erelong ! "

But Andrew flusht and never spake a word,
Yet eyed me sidelong with his beaded een,
And turn'd awa', and, as he turn'd, his look —
Half scorn, half sorrow — stang me. After that,
I felt he never heeded word of ours,
And tho' we tried to teach him common sense
He idled as he pleased; and many a year,
After I spake him first, that look of his
Came dark between us, and I held my tongue,
And felt he scorn'd me for the poetry's sake.
This coldness grew and grew, until at last
We sat whole nights before the fire and spoke
No word to one another. One fine day,
Says Mister Mucklewraith to me, says he,
"So! you've a Poet in your house!" and smiled;
"A Poet? God forbid!" I cried; and then
It all came out: how Andrew slyly sent
Verse to the paper; how they printed it
In Poets' Corner; how the printed verse
Had ca't a girdle in the callant's head;
How Mistress Mucklewraith they thought half daft
Had cut the verses out and pasted them
In albums, and had praised them to her friends.
I said but little; for my schemes and dreams
Were tumbling down like castles in the air,
And all my heart seem'd hardening to stone.
But after that, in secret stealth, I bought
The papers, hunted out the printed verse,
And read it like a thief; thought some were good,
And others foolish havers, and in most
Saw naething, neither common sense nor sound —
Words pottle-bellied, meaningless, and strange,
That strutted up and down the printed page,
Like Bailies made to bluster and look big.

'T was useless grumbling. All my silent looks
 Were lost, all Mysie's flyting fell on ears
 Choke-full of other counsel ; but we talk'd
 In bed o' nights, and Mysie wept, and I
 Felt stubborn, wrothful, wrong'd. It was to be !
 But mind you, though we mourn'd, we ne'er forsook
 The college scheme. Our sorrow, as we saw
 Our Andrew growing cold to homely ways,
 And scornful of the bield, but strengthen'd more
 Our wholesome wish to educate the lad,
 And do our duty by him, and help him on
 With our rough hands — the Lord would do the rest,
 The Lord would mend or mar him. So at last,
 New-clad from top to toe in homespun cloth,
 With books and linen in a muckle trunk,
 He went his way to college ; and we sat,
 Mysie and me, in weary darkness here ;
 For tho' the younger bairns were still about,
 It seem'd our hearts had gone to Edinglass
 With Andrew, and were choking in the reek .
 Of Edinglass town.

It was a grewsome fight,
 Both for oursel's at home, and for the boy,
 That student life at college. Hard it was
 To scrape the fees together, but beside,
 The lad was young and needed meat and drink.
 We sent him meal and bannocks by the train,
 And country cheeses ; and with this and that,
 Though sorely push'd, he throve, though now and then
 With empty wame : spinning the siller out
 By teaching grammar in a school at night.
 Whiles he came home : weary old-farrant face
 Pale from the midnight candle ; bringing home

Good news of college. Then we shook awa'
 The old sad load, began to build again
 Our airy castles, and were hopeful Time
 Would heal our wounds. But, sir, they plagued me
 still —

Some of his ways! When here, he spent his time
 In yonder chamber, or about the woods,
 And by the waterside, — and with him books
 Of poetry, as of old. Myself could get
 But little of his company or tongue ;
 And when we talkt, atweel, a kind of frost, —
 My consciousness of silly ignorance,
 And worse, my knowledge that the lad himself
 Felt sorely, keenly, all my ignorant shame,
 Made talk a torture out of which we crept
 With burning faces. Could you understand
 One who was wild as if he found a mine
 Of golden guineas, when he noticed first
 The soft green streaks in a snowdrop's inner leaves?
 And once again, the moonlight glimmering
 Thro' watery transparent stalks of flax?
 A flower's a flower! . . . But Andrew snooved about,
 Aye finding wonders, mighty mysteries,
 In things that ilka learless cottar kenn'd.
 Now, 't was the falling snow or murmuring rain ;
 Now, 't was the laverock singing in the sun,
 And dropping slowly to the callow young ;
 Now, an old tune he heard his mother lilt ;
 And aye those trifles made his pallid face
 Flush brighter, and his een flash keener far,
 Then when he heard of yonder storm in France,
 Or a King's death, or, if the like had been,
 A city's downfall.

He was born with love
 For things both great and small ; yet seem'd to prize
 The small things best. To me, it seem'd indeed
 The callant cared for nothing for itsel',
 But for some special quality it had
 To set him thinking, thinking, or bestow
 A tearful sense he took for luxury.
 He loved us in his silent fashion weel ;
 But in our feckless ignorance we knew
 'T was when the humor seized him — with a sense
 Of some queer power we had to waken up
 The poetry — ay, and help him in his rhyme !
 A kind of patronizing tenderness,
 A pitying pleasure in our Scottish speech
 And homely ways, a love that made him note
 Both ways and speech with the same curious joy
 As fill'd him when he watch'd the birds and flowers.

He was as sore a puzzle to us then
 As he had been before. It puzzled us,
 How a big lad, down-cheek'd, almost a man,
 Could pass his time in silly childish joys . . .
 Until at last, a hasty letter came
 From Andrew, telling he had broke awa'
 From college, pack'd his things, and taken train
 To London city, where he hoped (he said)
 To make both fortune and a noble fame
 Thro' a grand poem, carried in his trunk ;
 How, after struggling on with bitter heart,
 He could no longer bear to fight his way
 Among the common scholars ; and the end
 Bade us be hopeful, trusting God, and sure
 The light of this old home would guide him still
 Amid the reek of evil.

Sae it was !

We twa were less amazed than you may guess,
 Though we had hoped, and fear'd, and hoped, sae long !
 But it was hard to bear — hard, hard to bear !
 Our castle in the clouds was gone for good ;
 And as for Andrew — other lads had ta'en
 The same mad path, and learn'd the bitter task
 Of poortith, cold, and tears. She grat. I sat
 In silence, looking on the fuffing fire,
 Where streets and ghaistly faces came and went,
 And London city crumbled down to crush
 Our Andrew ; and my heart was sick and cold.
 Erelong, the news across the country-side
 Speak quickly, like the crowing of a cock
 From farm to farm — the women talkt it o'er
 On doorsteps, o'er the garden rails ; the men
 Got fu' upon it at the public-house,
 And whisper'd it among the fields at work.
 A cry was quickly raised from house to house,
 That all the blame was mine, and canker'd een
 Lookt cold upon me, as upon a kind
 Of upstart. “ Fie on pride ! ” the whisper said,
 The fault was Andrew's less than those who taught
 His heart to look in scorn on honest work, —
 Shame on them ! — but the lad, poor lad, would learn !
 O sir, the thought of this spoil'd many a web
 In yonder — tingling, tingling, in my ears,
 Until I fairly threw my gloom aside,
 Smiled like a man whose heart is light and young,
 And with a future-kenning happy look
 Threw up my chin, and bade them wait and see . .
 But, night by night, these een lookt Londonways,
 And saw my laddie wandering all alone
 'Mid darkness, fog, and reek, growing afar

To dark proportions and gigantic shape —
 Just as the figure of a sheep-herd looms,
 Awful and silent, thro' a mountain mist.

Ye aiblins ken the rest. At first, there came
 Proud letters, swiftly writ, telling how folk
 Now roundly call'd him "Poet," holding out
 Bright pictures, which we smiled at wearily —
 As people smile at pictures in a book,
 Untrue but bonnie. Then the letters ceased,
 There came a silence cold and still as frost, —
 We sat and hearken'd to our beating hearts,
 And pray'd as we had never pray'd before.
 Then lastly, on the silence broke the news
 That Andrew, far awa', was sick to death,
 And, weary, weary of the noisy streets,
 With aching head and weary hopeless heart,
 Was coming home from mist and fog and noise
 To grassy lowlands and the caller air.

'T was strange, 't was strange! — but this, the weary
 end
 Of all our bonnie biggins in the clouds,
 Came like a tearful comfort. Love sprang up
 Out of the ashes of the household fire,
 Where Hope was fluttering like the loose white film;
 And Andrew, our own boy, seem'd nearer now
 To this old dwelling and our aching hearts
 Than he had ever been since he became
 Wise with book-learning. With an eager pain,
 I met him at the train and brought him home;
 And when we met that sunny day in hairst,
 The ice that long had sunder'd us had thaw'd,
 We met in silence, and our een were dim.

Och, I can see that look of his this night!
 Part pain, part tenderness, — a weary look
 Yearning for comfort such as God the Lord
 Puts into parents' een. I brought him here.
 Gently we set him here beside the fire,
 And spake few words, and hush'd the noisy house;
 Then eyed his hollow cheeks and lustrous een,
 His clammy hueless brow and faded hands,
 Blue vein'd and white like lily-flowers. The wife
 Forgot the sickness of his face, and moved
 With light and happy footstep but and ben,
 As though she welcomed to a merry feast
 A happy guest. In time, out came the truth:
 Andrew was dying: in his lungs the dust
 Of cities stole unseen, and hot as fire
 Burnt — like a deil's red een that gazed at Death.
 Too late for doctor's skill, tho' doctor's skill
 We had in plenty; but the ill had ta'en
 Too sure a grip. Andrew was dying, dying:
 The beauteous dream had melted like a mist
 The sunlight feeds on: a' remaining now
 Was Andrew, bare and barren of his pride,
 Stark of conceit, a weel-belovéd child,
 Helpless to help himsel', and dearer thus,
 As when his yaumer* — like the corn-craik's cry
 Heard in a field of wheat at dead o' night —
 Brake on the hearkening darkness of the bield.

And as he nearer grew to God the Lord,
 Nearer and dearer ilka day he grew
 To Mysie and mysel' — our own to love,
 The world's no longer. For the first last time,
 We twa, the lad and I, could sit and crack

* *Yaumer*, a child's cry.

With open hearts — free-spoken, at our ease ;
 I seem'd to know as muckle then as he,
 Because I was sae sad.

Thus grief, sae deep
 It flow'd without a murmur, brought the balm
 Which blunts the edge of worldly sense and makes
 Old people weans again. In this sad time,
 We never troubled at his childish ways ;
 We seem'd to share his pleasure when he sat
 List'ning to birds upon the eaves ; we felt
 Small wonder when we found him weeping o'er
 His old torn books of pencill'd thoughts and verse ;
 And if, outbye, I saw a bonnie flower,
 I pluckt it carefully and bore it home
 To my sick boy. To me, it somehow seem'd
 His care for lovely earthly things had changed, —
 Changed from the curious love it once had been,
 Grown larger, bigger, holier, peacefuller ;
 And though he never lost the luxury
 Of loving beauteous things for poetry's sake,
 His heart was God the Lord's, and he was calm.
 Death came to lengthen out his solemn thoughts
 Like shadows to the sunset. So no more
 We wonder'd. What is folly in a lad
 Healthy and heartsome, one with work to do,
 Befits the freedom of a dying man. . .
 Mother, who chided loud the idle lad
 Of old, now sat her sadly by his side,
 And read from out the Bible soft and low,
 Or lilted lowly, keeking in his face,
 The old Scots songs that made his een so dim.
 I went about my daily work as one
 Who waits to hear a knocking at the door,

Ere Death creeps in and shadows those that watch ;
 And seated here at e'en i' the ingleside,
 I watch'd the pictures in the fire and smoked
 My pipe in silence ; for my head was fu'
 Of many rhymes the lad had made of old
 (Rhymes I had read in secret, as I said),
 No one of which I minded till they came
 Unsummon'd, buzzing-buzzing in my ears
 Like bees among the leaves.

The end drew near.

Came Winter moaning, and the Doctor said
 That Andrew couldna live to see the Spring ;
 And day by day, while frost was hard at work,
 The lad grew weaker, paler, and the blood
 Came redder from the lung. One Sabbath day —
 The last of winter, for the caller air
 Was drawing sweetness from the barks of trees —
 When down the lane, I saw to my surprise
 A snowdrop blooming underneath a birk,
 And gladly pluckt the flower to carry home
 To Andrew. Ere I reach'd the bield, the air
 Was thick wi' snow, and ben in yonder room
 I found him, Mysie seated at his side,
 Drawn to the window in the old arm-chair,
 Gazing wi' lustrous een and sickly cheek
 Out on the shower, that waver'd softly down
 In glistening siller glamour. Saying naught,
 Into his hand I put the year's first flower,
 And turn'd awa' to hide my face ; and he . .
 . . He smiled . . and at the smile, I knew not why,
 It swam upon us, in a frosty pain,
 The end was come at last, at last, and Death
 Was creeping ben, his shadow on our hearts.

We gazed on Andrew, call'd him by his name,
 And touch'd him softly . . and he lay awhile,
 His een upon the snow, in a dark dream,
 Yet neither heard nor saw ; but suddenly,
 He shook awa' the vision wi' a smile,
 Raised lustrous een, still smiling, to the sky,
 Next upon us, then dropt them to the flower
 That trembled in his hand, and murmur'd low,
 Like one that gladly murmurs to himsel', —
 “ Out of the Snow, the Snowdrop, — out of Death
 Comes Life ” ; then closed his eyes and made a moan,
 And never spake another word again.

. . And you think weel of Andrew's book ? You think
 That folk will love him, for the poetry's sake,
 Many a year to come ? We take it kind
 You speak so weel of Andrew ! — As for me,
 I can make naething of the printed book ;
 I am no scholar, sir, as I have said,
 And Mysie there can just read print a wee.
 Ay ! we are feckless, ignorant of the world !
 And though 't were joy to have our boy again
 And place him far above our lowly house,
 We like to think of Andrew as he was
 When, dumb and wee, he hung his gold and gems
 Round Mysie's neck ; or — as he is this night —
 Lying asleep, his face to heaven, — asleep,
 Near to our hearts as when he was a bairn,
 Without the poetry and human pride
 That came between us, to our grief, langsyne.

WHITE LILY OF WEARDALE-HEAD.

A NIGHT-PIECE.

THE ELVES.

ALL day the sunshine loves to dwell
Upon the pool of Weardale Well ;
But when the sunbeams shine no more
The Monk stalks down the moonlit dell :
His robe is black, his hair is hoar,
He sits him down by Weardale Well ;
He hears the water moan below,
He sees a face as white as snow,
His nightly penance there is done,
And he shall never see the sun.

THE MONK.

Hear them, old Anatomy !
Down the glade I see them flee —
White-robed Elfins, three times three !

THE ELVES.

Night by night, in pale moonlight,
The Monk shall tell his story o'er,
And the grinning Gnome with teeth of white
Hearkeneth laughing evermore ;
His nightly penance thus is done —
And he shall never see the sun !

THE GNOME.

Ever new and ever old,
Comrade, be thy story told,
While the face as white as snow
Sighs upon the pool below.

THE MONK.

“I love the sunshine,” said
White Lily of Weardale-head.

And underneath the greenwood tree,
She wander'd free, she wander'd bold ;
The merry sun smiled bright to see,
And turn'd her yellow hair to gold :
Then the bee, and the moth, and the butterfly,
Hunting for sweets in the wood-bowers fair,
Rose from the blooms as she wander'd by,
And play'd in the light of her shining hair.
She sat her down by Weardale Well,
And her gleaming ringlets rustled and fell,
Clothing her round with a golden glow,
And her shadow was light for the pool below ;
Then the yellow adder fold in fold
Writhed from his lair in the grass and roll'd
With glittering scales in a curl o' the gold :
She stroked his head with her finger light,
And he gazed with still and glistening eye ;
And she laugh'd and clapt her hands of white,
And overhead the sun went by
Thro' the azure gulfs of a cloudless sky :
“All things that love the sun, love me,
And O but the sun is sweet to see,
And I love to look on the sun,” said she.

But the Abbess gray of Lintlin Brae
Hated to look on the light of day ;
She mumbled prayers, she counted beads,
She whipt and whipt her shoulders bare,
She slept on a bed of straw and reeds,
And wore a serk of horse's hair.
By candlelight she sat and read,
And heard a song from far-away,
She cross'd herself and raised her head, —
“ Who sings so loud ? ” said the Abbess gray.
I, who sat both early and late
A shadow black at the Abbey gate :
“ Mater sacra, it is one
Who wanders evermore in the sun,
A little maiden of Weardale-head,
Whose father and mother have long been dead,
But she loves to wander in greenwood bowers,
Singing and plucking the forest flowers.”
The Abbess frown'd, half quick, half dead,
“ There is a sin ! ” the Abbess said.

I found her singing a ditty wild,
Her gleaming locks around her roll'd ;
I seized her while she sang and smiled,
And dragg'd her along by the hair of gold :
The moth and butterfly, fluttering,
Follow'd me on to Lintlin Brae,
The adder leapt at my heart to sting,
But with sandall'd heel I thrust it away ;
And the bee dropt down ere I was 'ware
On the hand that gript the yellow hair,
And stang me deep, and I curs'd aloud,
And the sun went in behind a cloud !

THE ELVES.

Nightly be his penance done !
He shall never see the sun !

THE MONK.

The cell was deep, the cell was cold,
It quench'd the light of her hair of gold ;
One little loop alone was there,
 One little eye-hole letting in
 A slender ray of light as thin
As a tress of yellow hair.

“O for the sunshine !” said
White Lily of Weardale-head ;
And in the dark she lay,
 Reaching her fingers small
To feel the little ray
 That glimmer'd down the wall.

And while she linger'd white as snow
She heard a fluttering faint and low ;
And stealing thro' the looplet thin
The moth and butterfly crept in —
With golden shadows as they flew
 They waver'd up and down in air,
Then dropping slowly ere she knew,
 Fell on her eyes and rested there :
And O she slept with balmy sighs,
 Dreaming a dream of golden day,
The shining insects on her eyes,
 Their shadows on her cheeks, she lay ;
And while she smiled on pleasant lands,
 On the happy sky and wood and stream,
I, creeping in with outstretch'd hands,
 Murder'd the things that brought the dream.

She woke and stretch'd her hands and smiled,
Then gazed around with sunless eyes,
Her white face gloom'd, her heart went wild,
She sank with tears and sighs.
"O for the sunshine!" said
White Lily of Weardale-head.

And while she lay with cries and tears,
There came a humming in her ears ;
And stealing through the looplet thin
The yellow honey-bee crept in,
And hover'd round with summer sound
Round and around the gloomy cell ;
Then softly on her lips he fell,
And moisten'd them with honey found
Among the flowers by Weardale Well ;
And O she smiled and sang a song,
And closed her eyelids in the shade,
And thought she singing walkt among
The lily-blooms in the greenwood glade.
I heard the song and downward crept,
And enter'd cold and black as sin,
And slew, although she raved and wept,
The bee that brought the honey in :
"O for the sunshine!" said
White Lily of Weardale-head.

And while she lay as white as snow
She heard a hissing sad and low ;
And writhing through the looplet thin
The little yellow snake crept in :
His golden coils cast shadows dim,
With glistening eye he writhed and crept,
And while she smiled to welcome him,
Into her breast he stole, and slept ;

And O his coils fell warm and sweet
 Upon her heart and husht its beat,
 And softest thrills of pleasure deep
 Ran through her, though she could not sleep,
 But lay with closéd eyes awake,
 Her little hand upon the snake —
 “ All things that love the sun, love me,
 And O but the sun is sweet to see !
 And I long to look on the sun,” said she.

Then down, on sandall'd foot, I crept,
 To kill the snake that heal'd the pang,
 But up, with waving arms, she leapt,
 And out across the threshold sprang,
 And up the shadowy Abbey stairs,
 Past the gray Abbess at her prayers,
 Through the black court with leap and run,
 Out at the gate, and into the sun !
 There for a space she halted, blind
 With joy to feel the light again,
 But heard my rushing foot behind,
 And sped along the Abbey lane ;
 The sunshine made her strong and fleet,
 As on she fled by field and fold,
 Her shining locks fell to her feet
 In ring on ring of living gold ;
 But the sun went in behind a cloud,
 As I gript her by the shining locks,
 I gript them tight, I laught aloud,
 The echoes rang through woods and rocks ;
 Moaning she droopt, then up she sprang,
 The adder leapt at my heart and stang,
 And like a flash o' the light she fell
 Into the depths of Weardale Well.

The adder stang' with fatal fang,
Around I whirl'd and shriek'd and sprang,
Then fell and struggled, clenching teeth ;
Then to the oozy grass I clang,
And gazed upon the pool beneath ;
The white death-film was on mine eye,
Yet look'd I down in agony ;
And as I look'd in throes of death,
In shining bubbles rose her breath
And burst in little rings of light ;
And upward came a moaning sound ;
But suddenly the sun shone bright,
And all the place was gold around,
And to the surface, calm and dead,
Uprose White Lily of Weardale-head ;
Her golden hair around her blown
Made gentle radiance of its own ;
Her face was turn'd to the summer sky
With smile that seem'd to live and speak,
The golden moth and butterfly,
With glowing shadows, on her cheek ;
And lying on her lips apart
The honey-bee with wings of gold,
And sleeping softly on her heart
The yellow adder fold in fold ;
And as I closed mine eyes to die,
Overhead the sun went by
Through the azure gulfs of a cloudless sky !

THE ELVES.

All day the sunshine loves to dwell
Upon the sleep of Weardale Well ;
All day there is a gentle sound,
And little insects pause and sing,

The butterfly and moth float round,
 The bee drops down with humming wing,
 And all the pool lies clear and cold,
 Yet glittering like hair of gold.
 All day the Monk in hollow shell
 Lies dumb among the Abbey-tombs,
 While, in the grass and honey-blooms,
 The adder basks by Weardale Well ;
 But the adder stings his heart by night :
 His tale is told, his penance done,
 His eyes are dark, they long for light,
 Yet they shall never see the sun !



THE ENGLISH HUSWIFE'S GOSSIP.

A ploughman's English wife, bright-eyed, sharp-speech'd,
 Plump as a pillow, fresh as clothes new-bleach'd :
 The firelight dancing ruddy on her cheeks,
 Irons Tom's Sunday linen as she speaks.

AT three-and-forty, simple as a child,
 Soft as a sheep, yet curious as a daw,
 Wise, cunning, in a fashion of his own,
 Queer, watchful, strange, a puzzle to us all : —
 That 's John !

My husband's brother — seven years
 Younger than Tom. When we were wed and one,
 John came to dwell with Tom and me for good,
 And now has dwelt beside us twenty years,

But now, at forty-three, is breaking fast,
 Grows weaker, brain and body, every day.
 At times he works, and earns his meat and drink,
 At times is sick, and lies and moans in bed,
 Beside the noisy clishmaclavering
 He makes when he is glad. A natural!
 Man-bodied, but in many things a child;
 Unfinish'd somewhere — where, the Lord knows best
 Who made and guards him; wiser, craftier,
 Than Tom, or any other man I know,
 In tiny things few men perceive at all;
 No fool at cooking, clever at his work,
 Thoughtful when Tom is senseless and unkind,
 Kind with a grace that sweetens silentness, —
 But weak where other working-men are strong,
 And strong where they are weak. An angry word
 From one he loves, — and off he creeps in pain —
 Perhaps to ease his tender heart in tears.
 But easy-sadden'd, sir, is easy-pleas'd!
 Give him the babe to nurse, he sits him down,
 Smiles like a woman, and is glad at heart.

Crazed? There 's the question! Mister Muckle-
 wraith,
 Your friend — and John's as well — will answer "No!"
 And often has he scolded when I seem'd
 To answer "Yea." Of late the weary limbs
 Have tried the weary brain, that every day
 Grows feebler, duller; yet the Minister
 Still stands his friend and helps him as he can.
 "Tender of heart," says Mister Mucklewraith,
 "Tender of heart, goodwife, is wise of head:
 If John is weak, his heart is to be blamed;
 And can the erring heart of mortal be

O'er gentle?" "Hey, 't is little use to talk!
The Minister is soft at heart as he!

Talk of the . . . John! and home again so soon?
The children are at school, the dinner o'er,
Tom still is busy working at the plough.
Weary? — then sit you down and rest awhile.
John fears all strangers — is ashamed to speak —
But stares and counts his fingers o'er as now,
Yet — trust him! — when you vanish he will tell
The color of your hair, your hat, your clothes,
The number of the buttons on your coat —
Eh, John? — he laughs — as sly as sly can be!

Now, run to Tom — as quickly as you can —
Say he is wanted by the gentleman
[Tom knows the name] from Mister Mucklewraith's.

Off, like an arrow from a bow, you see!
That 's nothing! John would run until he dropt
For me, and need no thanking but a smile,
Would work and work his fingers to the bone,
Do aught I asked, without or in the house, —
And just because I cheer him merrily
And speak him kindly. Tom he little likes,
And would not budge a single step to serve,
For Tom is rough, and says I humor him,
And mocks him for his silly childish ways.
And Tom has reason to be wroth at times!
But yesterday John sat him on a stool,
And ripp'd the bellows up, to find from where
The wind came: slowly did it bit by bit,
As sage as Solomon, and when 't was done
Just scratch'd his head, still puzzled, creeping off

To some still corner in the lowland, there
To think the puzzle out in place alone.
There is his weakness — curiosity !
Those watchful, prying, curious eyes of his,
That like a cat's see better in the dark,
Are ne'er at rest ; his hands and eyes and ears
Are eager getting knowledge, — when 't is got
Lord knoweth in what corner of his head
He hides it, but it ne'er sees light again !

Oft he reminds me of a painter lad
Who came to Inverburn a summer since,
Went poking everywhere with pallid face,
Thought, painted, wander'd in the woods alone,
Work'd a long morning at a leaf or flower,
And got the name of clever. John and he
Made friends — a thing I never could make out ;
But, bless my life ! it seem'd to me the lad
Was just a John who had learnt to read, to write, and
paint !

He buys a coat : what does he first, but count
The pockets and the buttons one by one —
A mighty calculation sagely summ'd ;
Our eldest daughter goes to Edinglass,
Brings home a box — John eyes the box with greed,
And next, we catch him in the lassie's room,
The box wide open, John upon the floor,
And in his hand a bonnet, eyed and eyed,
Turn'd o'er and o'er, examined bit by bit,
Like something wondrous as a tumbled star ;
Our youngest has a gift — a box of toys,
A penny trumpet — not a wink for John
Till he has seen the whole, or by and by

He gives the child a sixpence for the toy,
 And creeps away and cuts it up to bits
 In wonder and in joy. It makes me cry
 For fun to watch his pranks, the natural!
 But think not, sir, that he was ever so: —
 Nay! twenty years ago but few could tell
 That he was simpler than the rest of men —
 His step was firm, he kept his head erect,
 Could hold his tongue, because he knew full well
 That he was simpler-headed than the rest. —
Now, when his wits have gone so fast asleep,
 He thinks he is the wisest man of men!
 Yet, sir, his heart is kindly to the core,
 Tho' sensitive to touch as fly-trap flowers:
 He loves them best that seem to think him wise,
 Consult him, notice him, and those that mock
 His tenderness he never will forgive.
 Money he saves to buy the children gifts —
 Clothes, toys, whate'er he fancies like to please —
 And many of his ways so tender are,
 So gentle and so good, it fires my blood
 To see him vex'd and troubled. Just as a child!
 He weeps in silence, if a little ill;
 A cold, a headache — he is going to die;
 But then, beside, he can be trusted, sir!
 (Ye cannot say the like of many men!)
 Tell him a secret, — torture, death itself,
 Would fail to make him whisper and betray.

Nay, sit you down — and smoke? Ay, smoke your
fill:

Both John and father like their cutty-pipe;
 Tom will be here as fast as he can come;
 And I can crack and talk as well as work.

John, simple as he is, has had his cares :
 They came upon him in his younger days
 When he was tougher-headed, and I think
 They help'd to make him silly as he is :
 Time that has stolen all his little wits,
 By just a change of chances, might have made
 Our John another man and strengthen'd him.
 The current gave a swirl, and caught the straw,
 And John was doom'd to be a natural !
 Oft when he sits and smokes his pipe and thinks,
 Ye know by his downcast eyes and quivering lips
 His heart is aching ; but he ne'er complains
 Of *that* — the sorest thought he has to bear.
 We know he thinks of Jessie Glover then ;
 But let him be, till o'er his head the cloud
 Passes and leaves a meekness and a hush
 Upon the heart it shadow'd. Jessie, sir ? —
 She was a neighbor's daughter in her teens,
 A bold and forward huzzie, tho' her face
 Was pretty in its way : a jet-black eye,
 Red cheeks, black eyebrows, and a comely shape
 The petticoat and short-gown suited well.
 In here she came and stood and talk'd for hours
 [Her tongue was like a bell upon a sheep —
 Her very motion seem'd to make it jing]
 And, ere I guess'd it, John and she were friends.
 She pierced the silly with her jet-black eye,
 Humor'd him ever, seem'd to think him wise,
 Was serious, gentle, kindly, to his face,
 And, ere I guess'd, so flatter'd his conceit
 That, tho' his lips were silent at her side,
 He grew a mighty man behind her back,
 Held up his head in gladness and in pride,
 And seem'd to have an errand in the world.

At first I laugh'd and banter'd with the rest —
 “How 's Jessie, John?” and “Name the happy day” ;
 And “Have ye spoken to the minister?”
 Thinking it just a joke ; and when the lass
 Would sit by John, her arm about his neck,
 Holding his hand in hers, and humor him,
 Yet laugh her fill behind the silly's back,
 I let it pass. I little liked her ways —
 I guess'd her heart was tough as cobbler's wax —
 Yet what of that ? — 'T was but a piece of fun.

A piece of fun ! — 'T was serious work to John !
 The hussy lured him with her wicked eyes,
 And danced about him, ever on the watch,
 Like pussie yonder playing with a mouse.
 I saw but little of them, never dream'd
 They met unknown to me ; but by and by
 The country-side was ringing with the talk
 That John and she went walking thro' the fields,
 Sat underneath the slanted harvest sheaves
 Watching the motion of the honeyed moon,
 Met late and early — courted night and day —
 John earnest as you please, and Jess for fun.
 I held my peace awhile, and used my eyes !
 New bows and ribbons upon Jessie's back,
 Cheap brooches, and a bonnet once or twice,
 Proved that the piece of fun paid Jessie well,
 And showed why John no longer spent his pence
 In presents to the boys. I saw it all,
 But, pitying John, afraid to give him pain,
 I spake to Jessie, sharply bade her heed,
 Cried “shame” upon her, for her heartlessness.
 The hussy laugh'd and coolly went her way,
 And after that came hither nevermore

To talk and clatter. But the cruel sport
Went on, I found. One day, to my surprise,
Up came a wagon to the cottage door,
John walking by the side, and while I stared
He quickly carried to the kitchen here,
A table, chairs, a wooden stool, a broom,
Two monster saucepans, and a washing tub,
And last, a roll of blankets and of sheets.
The wagon went away, here linger'd John
Among the things, and blushing red says he,
"I bought them all at Farmer Simpson's sale —
Ye'll keep them till I need them for myself!"
And then walk'd out. Long time I stood and stared,
Puzzled, amazed; but by and by I saw
The meaning of it all. Alas for John!
The droll beginning of a stock in trade
For marriage stood before me. Jessie's eyes
And lying tongue had made him fairly crazed,
And ta'en the little wits he had to spare.
With flushing face, set teeth, away I ran
To Jessie — found her washing at a tub,
Half guilt, half soap-suds — and I told her all;
And for a while she could not speak a word
For laughter. "Shame upon ye, shame, shame, shame!
Thus to misuse the lad who loves ye so!
Mind, Jessie Glover, folks with scanty brains
Have hearts that can be broken!" Still she laugh'd!
While tears of mirth ran down her crimson cheeks
And mingled with the frothy suds of soap;
But trust me, sir, I went not home again
Till Jessie's parents knew her wickedness;
And last, I wrung a promise from her lips
From that day forth to trouble John no more,
To let him know her fondness was a joke,

Pass by him in the street without a word,
 And, though perhaps his gentle heart might ache,
 Shake him as one would shake a drunken man
 Until his sleepy wits awoke again.

I watch'd that Jessie Glover kept her word.

That night, when John was seated here alone,
 Smoking his pipe, and dreaming as I guess'd
 Of Jessie Glover and a wedding ring,
 I stole behind him silently and placed
 My hand upon his shoulder: when he saw
 The shadow on my face, he trembled, flush'd,
 And knew that I was sad. I sank my voice,
 And gently as I could I spake my mind,
 Spake like a mother, told him he was wrong,
 That Jessie only was befooling him
 And laugh'd his love to scorn behind his back,
 And last, to soothe his pain, I rail'd at her,
 Hoping to make him angry. Here he sat,
 And let his pipe go out, and hung his head,
 And never answer'd back a single word.
 'T was hard, 't was hard, to make him understand!
 He could not, would not! All his heart was wrapt
 In Jessie Glover; and at twenty-three
 A full-grown notion thrusts its roots so deep,
 'T is hard indeed to drag it up without
 Tearing the heart as well. Without a word
 He crept away to bed. Next morn, his eyes
 Were red with weeping — but 't was plain to see
 He thought I wrong'd both Jessie and himself.

That morning Jessie pass'd him on the road:
 He ran to speak — she toss'd her head and laugh'd —
 And sneering pass'd him by. All day he wrought

In silence at the plough — ne'er had he borne
A pang so quietly. At gloaming hour
Home came he, weary : here was I alone :
Stubborn as stone he turn'd his head away,
Sat on his stool before the fire and smoked ;
Then while he smoked I saw his eyes were wet :
" John ! " and I placed my hand upon his arm.
He turn'd, seem'd choking, tried in vain to speak,
Then fairly hid his face and wept aloud, —
But never wept again.

The days pass'd on.

I held my tongue, and left the rest to time,
And warn'd both father and the boys. My heart
Was sore for John ! He was so dumb and sad,
Never complaining as he did of old,
And toiling late and early. By and by,
" Maggie, " says he, as quiet as a lamb,
" Ye 'll keep the things I bought at Simpson's sale —
I do not need them now ! " and tried to smile,
But could not. Well, I thank'd him cheerily,
Nor seem'd to see his heart was aching so :
Then after that the boys got pence from John, —
The smaller playthings, and the bigger clothes :
He eased his heart by spending as of old
His money on the like.

Well may you cry

Shame, shame on Jessie ! Heartless, graceless lass !
I could have whipt her shoulders with a staff ! —
But Him above had sorer tasks in store.
Erelong the village, like a peal of bells,
Rang out the tale that Jessie was a thief,
Had gone to Innis Farm to work a week,

And stolen Maggie Fleming's watch and chain —
 They found them in her trunk, with scores of things
 From poorer houses. Woe to Jessie then
 If Farmer Fleming had unkindly been,
 Nor spared her for her sickly father's sake !
 The punishment was spared — she kept the shame !
 The scandal rose, with jingling-jangling din,
 And chattering lassies, wives, and mothers join'd.
 At first she saw not that the sin was guess'd ;
 But slowly, one by one, her lassie friends,
 Her very bosom-gossips, shook her off :
 She heard the din, she blush'd and hid her face,
 Shrinking away and trembling as with cold,
 Like Eve within the garden when her mouth
 Was bitter with the apple of the Tree.

One night, when John returned from work and took
 His seat upon the stool beside the fire,
 I saw he knew the truth. For he was changed !
 His look was dark, his voice was loud, his eyes
 Had lost their meekness ; when we spoke to him,
 He flush'd and answer'd sharply. He had heard
 The tale of Jessie's shame and wickedness, —
 What thought he of it all ? Believe me, sir,
 He was a riddle still : in many things
 So peevish and so simple, but in one —
 His silly dream of Jessie Glover's face —
 So manly and so dumb, — with power to hide
 His sorrow in his heart and turn away
 Like one that shuts his eyes when men pass by
 But looks on Him. 'T was natural to think
 John would have taken angry spiteful joy
 In Jessie's fall, — for he was ever slow
 Forgetting and forgiving injuries ;

But no ! his voice was dumb, his eyes were fierce,
Yet chiefly when they mention'd Jess in scorn,
He seem'd confused and would not understand,
Perplexed as when he breaks the children's toys.

Now, bold as Jessie was, she could not bear
The shame her sin had brought her, and whene'er
We met she tingled to the finger-tips ;
And soon she fled away to Edinglass
To hide among the smoke. It came to pass,
The Sabbath after she had flitted off,
That Mister Mucklewraith (God bless him !) preach'd
One of those gentle sermons low and sad
Wherewith he gathers wheat for Him he serves :
The text, Let him who is sinless cast the first
Stone at the sinner ; and we knew he preach'd
Of Jessie Glover. Hey ! to hear him talk
Ye would have sworn that Jessie was a saint,
An injured thing for folk to pet and coax !
But tho' ye know 't was folly, springing up
Out of a heart so kindly to the core,
Your eyes were dim with tears while hearkenings —
He spake so low and sadly. John was there.

And early down the stairs came John next day
Drest in his Sabbath clothes. " I 'm going away,"
He whispers, " for a day or maybe two —
Don't be afraid if I 'm away at night,
And do not speak to Tom " ; and off he ran
Ere I could question. When the evening came,
No sign of John ! Night pass'd, and not a sign !
Tom sought him far and near without avail.
The next night came, and we were sitting here
Weary and pensive, listening, listening,

To every step that pass'd, when in stept John,
 And sat beside the fire, and when we ask'd
 Where he had been, he snapt us short and crept
 Away to bed.

But by and by, I heard
 The truth from John himself, — a truth indeed
 That was and is a puzzle, will remain
 A puzzle to the end. And can ye guess
 Where John had been? Away in Edinglass,
 At Jessie Glover's side, holding her hand
 And looking in her eyes!

“Jessie!” he said;
 And while she stared stood scraping with his shoes,
 And humm'd and haw'd and stammer'd out a speech,
 Whose sense, made clear and shorten'd, came to this:
 The country folk that call'd her cruel names
 And mock'd her so, had done the same by him!
 He did not give a straw for what they said!
 He did not give a straw, and why should she?
 And tho' she laugh'd before, perchance when folk
 Miscall'd her, frighten'd her from home and friends,
 She 'd turn to simple John and marry him?
 For he had money, seven pound and more,
 And yonder in his home, to stock a house,
 He had the things he bought at Simpson's sale;
 John Thomson paid him well, and he could work,
 And, if she dried her eyes and married him,
 Who cared for Tom and Maggie, and the folk
 That thought them crazed? . . . John, then and now
 ashamed,
 Said that she flung her arms about his neck,
 And wept as if her heart was like to break,

And told him sadly that it could not be.
 He scratch'd his head, and stared, and answer'd
 naught —
 His stock of words was done, but last, he forced
 His money in the weeping woman's hand,
 And hasten'd home as fast as he could run.

He minds it still ! it haunts him night and day !
 Ay, silly tho' he be, he keeps the thought
 Of Jess still hidden in his heart ; and now,
 Wearing away like snow-drift in the sun,
 If e'er he chance to see, on nights at home,
 One of the things he bought at Simpson's sale
 (I keep them still, tho' they are worn and old),
 His eyes gleam up, then glisten, — then are dark.



THE FAËRY FOSTER-MOTHER.

I.

BRIGHT Eyes, Light Eyes ! Daughter of a Fay !
 I had not been a married wife a twelvemonth and
 a day,
 I had not nurst my little one a month upon my knee,
 When down among the blue-bell banks rose elfins three
 times three,
 They gript me by the raven hair, I could not cry for
 fear,
 They put a hempen rope around my waist and dragg'd
 me here,
 They made me sit and give thee suck as mortal mothers
 can,

Bright Eyes, Light Eyes! strange and weak and wan!

II.

Dim Face, Grim Face! lie ye there so still?
 Thy red red lips are at my breast, and thou may'st suck
 thy fill;
 But know ye, tho' I hold thee firm, and rock thee to and
 fro,
 'T is not to soothe thee into sleep, but just to still my
 woe?
 And know ye, when I lean so calm against the wall of
 stone,
 'T is when I shut my eyes and try to think thou art
 mine own?
 And know ye, tho' my milk be here, my heart is far
 away,
 Dim Face, Grim Face! Daughter of a Fay!

III.

Gold Hair, Cold Hair! Daughter to a King!
 Wrapt in bands of snow-white silk with jewels glittering,
 Tiny slippers of the gold upon thy feet so thin,
 Silver cradle velvet-lined for thee to slumber in,
 Pygmy pages, crimson-hair'd, to serve thee on their
 knees,
 To bring thee toys and greenwood flowers and honey
 bags of bees, —
 I was but a peasant lass, my babe had but the milk,
 Gold-Hair, Cold Hair! raimented in silk!

IV.

Pale Thing, Frail Thing! dumb and weak and thin,
 Altho' thou ne'er dost utter sigh thou 'rt shadow'd with
 a sin;

Thy minnie scorns to suckle thee, thy minnie is an elf,
Upon a bed of rose's-leaves she lies and fans herself;
And though my heart is aching so for one afar from me,
I often look into thy face and drop a tear for thee,
And I am but a peasant born, a lowly cotter's wife,
Pale Thing, Frail Thing! sucking at my life!

v.

Weak Thing, Meek Thing! take no blame from me,
Altho' my babe may fade for lack of what I give to
thee;
For though thou art a stranger thing, and though thou
art my woe,
To feel thee sucking at my breast is all the joy I know,
It soothes me tho' afar away I hear my daughter call,
My heart were broken if I felt no little lips at all!
If I had none to tend at all, to be its nurse and slave,
Weak Thing, Meek Thing! I should shriek and rave!

vi.

Bright Eyes, Light Eyes! lying on my knee!
If soon I be not taken back unto mine own countree,
To feel my own babe's little lips, as I am feeling thine,
To smooth the golden threads of hair, to see the blue
eyes shine, —
I'll lean my head against the wall and close my weary
eyes,
And think my own babe draws the milk with balmy
pants and sighs,
And smile and bless my little one and sweetly pass
away,
Bright Eyes, Light Eyes! Daughter of a Fay!

THE TWO BABES.

Hugh Baird his name : a farmer well to do,
 Who wars against the godly-worldly crew,
 Six days works hard and keeps his name from spot,
 But on the seventh likes his dinner hot,
 One hand imaginary guineas seeks
 Deep in the pockets of his tartan breeks,
 The other grips his gill, at which he sips
 With cordial smiles and smackings of the lips ;
 Meanwhile, within the sound of Sabbath bells,
 He tells this tale, and tipples as he tells.

I.

HERE 'S health and better fortune ! . . Houch, 't is
 strong ! —
 But Sandie's whiskey is a drink for kings.

That minnow of a man is Matthew Bell,
 Who holds as high a head at kirk or fair
 As stout Sir Walter, Laird of Wimplepen.
 The Lord preserve us ! — did you mark the look
 The Saint vouchsafed the sinners as he pass'd,
 [The *bona fide* sinners, let me say !]
 Grown grim as Patience shivering in her sark,
 To see them frightening Truth, the nymph of wells,
 From water with a splash of whiskey neat,
 And 'tween the hours of kirk on Sabbath day
 Chatting in Sandie's parlor ? That's the note
 The bantam crows ! From here to John o' Groat's
 Find me a mannikin who knows so much
 About the Book of Books, or half so much

About that mighty work, the Ledger. Rich?
 Ay, — as his fields of golden-tassell'd wheat!
 Out of his hundred acres year by year
 He reaps a bonnetful of yellow gold,
 And lives on yonder hill, where silent Hairst
 Is lying like an angel yellow-hair'd.

Langsyne, a child was born to Matthew Bell —
 As sweet a child as ever Howdie holds
 For sceptre, when she queens it in a house,
 And takes the goodman's easy-chair, and makes
 The sinner tremble at his own fireside ;
 And, when the lass was tall enough to touch
 Grim Matthew's watch-chain with her golden curls,
 Her mother died, — whom country tattle said
 The farmer's dismal pictures of the Pit
 Had frighten'd up to heaven ere her time.
 But Maggie — as they named her — lived and grew,
 And, Sabbath-mad as Matthew ever was,
 He lack'd the power to cloud her infant smiles,
 And later, I believe he lack'd the heart, —
 When o'er her mother's grave she laugh'd and play'd,
 Or, seated on her gloomy father's knee,
 Look'd her young sunshine on his sunless eyes.

Thought Matthew most of Maggie's golden hair,
 Or of his golden wheat and golden wealth?
 And did he dream of one whose gleaming locks
 Wound round the worms beneath the grass and flowers?
 And did he fashion, as a father will,
 Pictures of Maggie in her bridal dress,
 With a grand tocher and a holy ring?
 None knew, none knew; but bonnie Maggie Bell
 Grew like a lily in the gloom — a maid

Slim, pale as any lily, when the shades
 Of sixteen summers wash'd with twilight dew
 The glow-worms in her hair, and dark'd her eyes
 From blue to deeper blue — as shades of clouds
 Pass windily o'er the grass and leave their tints
 Under the lids of pansies wet with rain.

Hey, poetry! — the whiskey is to blame.

The holy house of Farmer Matthew kept
 John Calvin's Sabbath all the gloomy week ;
 And morn and night poor Maggie's head was dinn'd
 With Scripture phrases, and the puzzling texts
 Interpreted by Mammon on his knees.
 To sing, or dance, as other maidens use,
 To read a paper or a fairy tale,
 To eye her image in the looking-glass,
 Was stark damnation, prompted by the Deil.
 Weary was Maggie's lot! Her yellow hair
 Was fasten'd up beneath a frowsy net,
 And hid beneath a bonnet strange to see
 For shape and fashion ; and her dress was mean
 From head to foot, with no fine-color'd bows
 Such as the purest-hearted lassies love.
 This grew and grew to such a pitch at last
 That when the lass in secret saved a pound,
 And bought herself a bonnet fit to wear,
 Her father threw the same upon the fire,
 And grumbled "Vanity," and glower'd and gloom'd,
 While Maggie wept. Then all her maiden friends
 Christen'd her *Quaker Maggie!* and she mourn'd
 In secret that the world miscall'd her so :
 Till in her heart she hated Sabbath-day,
 And preaching, and the very Book itself,

As things that made her life a life of scorn.
 What wonder if she look'd with jealous eyes
 At lovely ribbons in another's cap?
 Thought far far less of what the preacher said
 Than of the giggling smiles the lassies cast
 At her old wear, from every pew around?
 And when her father question'd of the text,
 Knew just as much about it as a child
 Who pastes his nose against a sweetie-shop
 Knows of the moon? This kind of thing in time
 Made Maggie slightly sour in temper, dull
 And peevish as a school-boy in the sulks,
 Till, one fine day, the Farmer went his way
 And brought another wife to rule the roast.

O, holy, holy, as the Pope's big Toe,
 Was Mistress Bell the second! Half a yard
 Taller than Matthew, — and a widow, Sir!
 She was a woman of an ancient house,
 And stoop'd, they said, to Matthew's ploughman blood.
 Sir, she was tall and lean as Highland firs,
 Sharp-featured like an ancient Virtue vex'd
 With influenza and a constant hoast,
 Nose like a glowing cinder, sharp-cut mouth
 Drawn in and out with thin and oily cheeps,
 And small hen's eyes, whose twinkle seem'd to say,
 "O, am I not — confess it — am I not
 A credit to Creation?" Day and night
 Her cry was, "Vanity, O vanity!" —
 And aye she hurl'd the vengeance of the skies
 At comely hizzies dimpling in their teens.

You guess that when she came to Matthew's house,
 And cast her gaze on beauteous Maggie Bell,

She loved the maid no better than a bat
Loves sunshine. There was scolding, there were
tears ;

This thing was wrong in Maggie, that thing wrong ;
And Maggie mourn'd, and could not teach her lips
To call the gray mare "mother" ; and for *him*,
Grim Matthew, haply now and then a thrill
Of fellow-feeling made his cankerous heart
Pity his child a wee, but, bless my life !
It was as much as his old ears were worth
To cross the Clishmaclaver he had wed.
So Maggie Bell began to use her tongue,
To answer back, returning scold for scold,
To utter words that bit like adders' mouths ;
But mind you, she was sorely vex'd and tried.

Though mortals wrangle, still the sunshine falls ;
The earth grows fruitful and the seasons change,
While mortals come and go. Around the farm
The land was spreading on from fence to fence,
Acre on acre, golden rood on rood,
And aye the money rang in Matthew's pouch ;
For spite of all those pious ways of his,
And spite his married troubles in the house,
The canny farmer ne'er forsook the toil
Of making and increasing. Nay, my friend !
O'er-clever was the loon for poor half crops
And business neglected ! Year by year,
His bank-books and his ledgers fatter grew
Like o'er-fed leeches ; year by year he throve ;
And year by year, the farm that yonder lies,
With slated room and whiten'd doors and walls,
Stood up upon the hill 'mid harvest home
Hid like a pearl in lady's yellow hair.

Ere Maggie Bell had enter'd on her teens,
One Robin Anderson, a long-limb'd lad,
With pocket empty as a last year's nest,
Came lounging to the farm and seeking work ;
And Matthew set the stranger 'mong the wheat,
Gave him a reaping hook and bade him shear,
And ere the sunset made above the hills
A mimic picture of the hairst, the lad
Had earned a strong man's hire. Matthew was pleased ;
Said little ; but he gave the boy a bed
Out in the byre, and there the stranger slept
Alone among the kine. A clever lad !
He wrought and shore, and earn'd both pence and praise,
Strong as a stallion, modest as a mouse ;
But hark you, when the Sabbath day came round,
And Matthew cast his eyes around the kirk,
Whom should he spy, a sheep among the flock,
But Robin ! . . . and the laddie's looks were cast
Full modest on his book, his jet-black hair
Was neatly comb'd behind his rabbit-ears,
His poor old clothes were patch'd and cleanly brush'd,
And butter soft seem'd melting in his mouth, —
And when he met his master's canker'd gaze,
He blush'd like any maid and seem'd ashamed.

A clever lad was Robin Anderson !
A clever, clever lad with fox's eyes !
A clever, clever lad in lambkin's gear !
Kirk over, Matthew took him by the arm,
And, with a grim inquisitorial look,
Question'd the trembling lad upon the text, —
And scarce a word the Preacher dropt that day
But Robin had by heart. Then Matthew Bell
Was hugely pleased to see the lad so good —

So grand a worker with the reaping-hook,
 And such a pattern at his prayers beside :
 " Keep on, my lad," he said, " as you begin ;
 You 'll be a wealthy man, before you die
 And go to glory." After that, to kirk
 Went Robin, néver missing night or morn.
 Next, later on, one Sabbath night, the lad
 Came stumping to the kitchen, in his hand
 An old torn Bible, and, with hums and haws,
 And mighty fear of giving some offence,
 Would have the Farmer open and expound
 A text that puzzled sore. Now, nothing pleased
 Old Matthew better than the like of this —
 A chance of showing off the Grace of God,
 And his own Scripture learning, both at once.
 He smiled and took the Book, put on his specs,
 And read, and as he read expounded all,
 With godly-worldly comment of his own,
 Till Robin stared in awe, and saw it plain,
 And thank'd his teacher with a hungry look,
 And with a sigh that seem'd to rend his heart
 Wish'd he were half as holy, half as good,
 Or half as learn'd, as Matthew. After that,
 He came on other errands ben the house,
 Hearken'd to Matthew like a hungry sheep,
 And grew so pious, holy, and so good,
 That when the wheat was shorn and strain'd and put
 With golden glitter in the bank in town,
 Old Matthew paid the crowd of reapers off,
 But kept the creeshie Robin Anderson
 To do a laborer's work about the farm.

A clever chiel was Robin Anderson !
 He never spake bad words, ne'er tasted drink,

Nor brake the seventh commandment ; he was deep
In knowledge both of figures and the Book ;
He taught himself to read and write and sum
While sinners were at play. So day by day
He throve and throve in Matthew Bell's esteem,
And rose and rose ; till, when the house was storm'd
By Mistress Bell the second, he arranged
His cards so well, and seem'd so mild and meek,
And play'd so well on the gray mare's conceit —
Seeming to think her, not a saint alone,
But a braw woman with a beauteous face —
That Mistress Bell was won to like the man
And tuck him under her maternal wing.
To make the story short, this clever chiel,
By dint of bowing, praying, laboring,
Throve in the holy household, and so well,
That Matthew later made him overseer
O'er all the fields, and ascertain'd in time
The head and hand of Robin Anderson
Were needful to his life as meat and drink.

Meantime, poor Maggie ? Year by year the lass
Had waited wearily and work'd and wept,
Seeing her mother's pitying eyes look down
Among the other stars that lit the sky ;
And aye she moan'd, " O mother, art thou there ?
And may I come to meet thee, minnie mine ? "
But spite of tears, and anger whose blue flame
Burns out the sweetness of a comely face
Sooner than tears, and spite of weary pain,
Maggie was bonnie, bonnie, bonnie ! — grew
From bonnier to bonnier year by year !
Against her will, and in her heart's despite,
Health loved her so that like an ivy's arm

It clung about her, would forsake her not,
 Giving and taking beauty. She was pale,
 But 't was the pallor of a lily flower
 Full-blooming, not the pallor of disease.
 The passionate appeals made day and night
 To one who shone above, put in her eyes
 Fresh-color'd gleams of heaven's own violet hue ;
 And aye the sunshine sparkling in her hair
 Tangled itself like ears of golden wheat ;
 And aye the tears she shed so often weigh'd
 Like dew-drops on a lily's stem, and gave
 Her gentle head a drooping grace more sweet
 Than ruddy-featured boldness. Sombre gear,
 Old-fashion'd raiment, and the like, but served
 To make this beauty plainer, as the night
 Shows off the modest moon. All scorn, all arts
 To hide her beauteousness and humble her,
 Were lost on Maggie Bell ! — Darkly they fell,
 Coldly and gloomily, as murmuring rain
 Tumbles on beds of flowers ; — and 'mid it all
 The flowers lift up their heads and vainly try
 To shake the drops away, and as they toyte
 They sparkle with a thousand diamond pearls,
 Looking the lovelier for the load they bear !

So time wore slowly on, till Maggie Bell
 Was sweet and twenty. Half the country side
 Went wild about her face, the other half
 Went wild about her dowry. What of that ?
 Old Matthew's canker'd eyes were looking high,
 Seeking a man of godliness and wealth
 To wed his child and multiply his fame ;
 And Mistress Bell would have no idle loons
 Come hanging round the farm — 't was neither right,

Nor safe, nor delicate ; and, as it seem'd,
The maid herself cared little for the sport,
The juggling of the eyes and lips and mouth,
Which long ago unpetticoated Eve
First taught to breekless Adam Gardener.

Strange she should take to Robin Anderson ; —
Yet so she did, though Matthew guess'd it not,
And no suspicion of the friendship struck
The Clishmaclaver. Many a kindly turn
Sly Robin did for Maggie ; many a time
He screen'd her from the storm ! — I knew him well,
And, just when Maggie's beauty was full-blown,
I noticed that a change came over him :
He went to kirk no less, but it was plain
His thoughts were troublesome and ill at ease ;
Often when spoken to, he started, blush'd,
Seem'd shamed like one detected in a theft ;
In kirk, forgot to look upon the book,
And glinted nervously aroundabout.
This puzzled me ; — but Robin Anderson
Was softer hearted than he wish'd to seem —
Had kindness beneath his sombre gear —
Would smile and place his finger on his lips
If now and then I mock'd his creeshie ways —
And, what was more, was passionate, I knew,
In certain sad and fleshly vanities,
Like other men, from Adam down to me.

At last, the lily-flower on Maggie's cheek
Grew sickly, and an icy glitter struck
The sweetness from her eyes ; she answer'd back,
To them that chid her, with an angry tongue ;
And hollow, hollow, up and down the house,

With mixtie-maxtie echoes plump'd the foot
 That once had fall'n as soft as flakes of snow.
 Her father watch'd her with his yellow eye ;
 The Clishmaclaver shrugg'd her thin old back
 And sneer'd and mutter'd, daring not to speak
 Out loudly, for the lassie's fiend was up ;
 And Robin Anderson, with oily grace,
 Strove hard to make the sunder'd house agree,
 But vainly. By and by 't was plain to see
 That Maggie wander'd in a kind of mist,
 Confused and lost, for when you spake, and loud,
 She listen'd dreamily like one who hears
 The hollow chiming of a far-off bell ;
 And now the maiden who, though sorely tried,
 Had aye a pattern been of cleanly ways,
 Was heedless of the judgment of the world
 As nettles running ragged in a lane.

This could not last for long. Came harvest-time,
 And reapers flock'd with hooks to Matthew's farm ;
 And round the farm, around, above, below,
 The fields rose thick and yellow with the grain ;
 And o'er the fields the buzzing, murmur sped ;
 And o'er the fields the shadows of the clouds
 Pass'd dark, in patches, in their own soft wind.
 Ne'er had the moon's moist horn been fill'd so high
 With ripeness, gold, and fragrance. So the heart
 Of Matthew crow'd, as loud as any cock.
 But on the Sabbath day, the first of hairst,
 The Farmer and his wife sat ben the house
 With Robin Overseer, and crack'd and talk'd
 Of holy matters spiced with thoughts of gain,
 Till time for prayers ; and when the time was come,
 And all the house was summon'd, Matthew cried,

“Where ’s Maggie?” — but no Maggie heard the cry;
And Mistress Bell went flyting thro’ the farm,
From room to room; while from the house the call
For Maggie pass’d into the fields and byres:
But Maggie came not; at the last upran
A cotter’s lass, barefooted, pale to see,
Who cried with many a stammer, many a pause,
“O mem! O Mistress Bell! O Mister Bell!
You ’re looking oot for Maggie, are you no’?
But Maggie’s gane!” “Gone!” screech’d the quire,
“gone where?”

“O mem, to Edinglass,” the lassie cried.
“I met her down the lawlan all her lane,
And she was greeting sair, and when I look’d
She stay’d and tellt me a’, and bade me gie
This message to her faither: ‘Tell him, Meg,
Says she, ‘I ’m gaun awa’,’ says she, ‘for gude,
Ne’er to return, but that I pray the Lord
May ne’er be hard wi’ him as him wi’ me,
Nor bring him to as sair a shamefu’ end’;
And then wi’ pale, pale face she slipt awa’,
Afore I kenn’d her meaning, and was gane!”

Sir, so it was. There was a wild to-do,
Old Matthew glared and gloom’d like one gone wild,
The Clishmaclaver fainted. Far and near
The reapers search’d and search’d, along the roads,
And down the village; but they sought in vain.
Yet Maggie reach’d not Edinglass that night,
Nor the next night, nor many a night to come;
For as she ran beneath the moon, a swoon
Struck her like blinding moonshine, and her limbs
Just served to bear her to a cotter’s door,
And there, with clenching teeth and hands, she fell.

The cotter's wife, who knew her, bare her in ;
 And there she lay ; and ere the pallid dawn
 Stared in upon her with its dead man's eyes,
 There came the fitful crying of a child,
 And Maggie, white and shuddering, shriek'd to hear.

Such news spreads quickly. Ere the day was done,
 Poor Maggie's shame was common whisper'd talk
 O'er all the country-side — at cottage hearths,
 And in the harvest fields. The black news came
 To Matthew, where he wrought with hook himself
 (So eager was he for the harvest gain)
 Among the reapers ; and he call'd a curse
 On Maggie and her child, clenching his fists
 To scream his godly thunder ; lastly cried
 To Robin Anderson, whose eyes droop'd down :
 "Go to the lassie — go — and go at once —
 And tell her, if she cross my path again,
 I draw my fist across her shameless face
 And tread her under foot ; and tell her, too,
 That, day or night, be't sawing or be't hairst,
 My prayers will call a curse upon her head !"
 And Robin strode away without a word,
 As grim and gloomy as a thunder-cloud ;
 And ere an hour came back into the field,
 And told his master he had done his will.
 "What said she ?" ask'd the Farmer, frowning fierce,
 And ground his heel upon the stubbly soil.
 "Naught !" answer'd Robin, short, — and turn'd away,
 Biting his lips and scowling on the ground,
 And wrought in silence till the sun was set.

II.

O bitter, bitter was the Farmer's heart,
And all his pleasure of the Hairst was sour'd !
But when the Clishmaclaver, giving tongue,
Began that night to rail on Maggie's shame,
Grim Matthew sharply bade her hold her peace,
Nor mention Maggie more ; and Mistress Bell,
Knowing the man was fierce to have his way,
Stopt short and lookt as sour as buttermilk.
Then all was dreary silence in the house ;
And Matthew took the Book, put on his specs,
And tried to read, but aye the specs grew dim
With moisture from his eyes ; till, with a cry,
Almost a curse, he closed the Book and rush'd
Forth to the outer darkness. Who could sound
The Farmer's thoughts ? and were they something sad
And did pale Conscience put her mourning on ?
I know not ; but for long and weary hours
He wander'd out among the wheat ; near dawn
Saw the moist stars that loosen'd one by one
From Night's gray robe like jewels from a dress ;
And at the break of day return'd — with eyes
Crimson, and not thro' weeping, with his cheeks
As pale as frost upon a cold gray pane,
But cats'-claws at the edges of the lips
To show a selfish fiend was uppermost.

You guess the neighbors, both the rich and poor,
Were little loath to see so taken down
The Farmer's pride and Mistress Bell's conceit.
Clang, clang went Scandal, sounding like a chime

From cottage unto cottage, till the place
 Was jingling like a belfry out of tune.
 Then, with the cruel clangor in her ears,
 Poor Maggie clasp'd her child and fled away
 To Edinglass ; and in that cloud of life
 She faded like a brownie in a mist.
 The Clishmaclaver, though she made a fuss,
 Was strong in constitution, and her heart
 Not apt to break so easily : poor lamb,
 She bore her trouble like a saint in stone.
 But Matthew went about with mildew'd heart,
 Ne'er wept, and wrought as hard as any horse ;
 But he was absent, and his wandering eyes
 Dropt from your honest look to seek the ground ;
 His shoulders caught a trick of stooping — so !
 And when a lassie or a lad went wrong
 His voice was not so loud in stern rebuke,
 Among the gumlie Elders, as of old.

The pious reaper, Robin Anderson,
 Seem'd also burden'd with a bitter load ;
 Shame weigh'd upon him ; once or twice, when vext
 At trifles, he was plainly heard to swear ;
 And when the harvest store was gather'd in,
 He came as from a funeral. The nights
 Grew long and cold, and so the winter pass'd ;
 And in the middle winter came a cry
 Which swept as crimson fire on Matthew's face, —
 That Maggie lived in Edinglass the life
 Of thousands dead to dying. When the news
 One gusty gloaming reach'd the ingleside,
 The Farmer fairly fell on Robin's breast,
 And to the whistling of a winter wind
 Scream'd Maggie's mother's name and moan'd aloud.

But ere the azure eyes of May, suffused
With dewy rapture, open'd to behold
A rainbow sowing flowers upon the spot
Where winter buried lay, old Matthew Bell
Forgot his shame and sorrow in a joy
Just on the edge of finish, like a kiss
That hangs in honey on a dewy lip,
Melting in incompleteness. For the stars
Were smiling on the lap of Mistress Bell,
Who promised bravely to obey the text, —
“Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth!” —
In decent manner. So indeed it was!
When May with neck as white as curds and cream
Peeped blushing up 'mong roses white and red,
And when the laverock resting on her wrist
Went warbling up till it became a speck
Of sunshine (O the whiskey!), — round the neck
Of cankerous Mistress Bell there hung a babe,
As plump as ever cuddled mother's breast,
A tiny stumpie-stowsie clutch'd with pride.

O Matthew's heart was high! his aged lungs
Were rax'd like chanticleer's! and in his joy
He could have hugg'd the Howdie, had she been
Less notable for snappishness and sneesh!
Great bliss he felt to have a son and heir,
To keep his mem'ry holy in the land
And multiply the siller. One there was
In all the farm who seem'd to welcome not
The little one — the gladness and the hope.
'T was Robin Anderson. At twenty-eight,
Sly Robin was a man of pith and power,
Full six-feet high, with whiskers like a fox,
And eyes set deep 'neath mathematic brows.

And Robin ever loudly vow'd himself
 (Though I, for one, knew better, as I said)
 Above all corporal lusts and vanities :
 He marry? — nay! to buy a kiss in Kirk,
 Then strangle Freedom with an apron string,
 And waste his substance on a noisy pack
 Of tapsileeries ranged from big to small
 Like polisht pots within a public-house !

And when his joy was fullest, Robin came
 But little ben the farm ; and when in mirth
 They brought the chittering infant to his seat
 Beside the glowing kitchen fire, he gazed,
 And snigger'd out a feeble idiot smile,
 And with his great forefinger touch'd the child
 As one inspects a curious kind of fish,
 Seem'd half afraid 't would bite, and, sorely push'd,
 Confess'd 't was bonnie, with a long-drawn sigh,
 As if the bonnieness was sad to see.
 And ever after that, do all he could,
 And clever tho' he was to act a part,
 He never show'd a liking for the child ;
 Though what was stirring in his heart of hearts
 The Father knew, He who for gracious ends
 Decrees his children shall be fathers too.
 He better could have dealt with one full-grown
 Than with a fretful, feckless, restless thing
 He lack'd the art to handle. So at last
 He fairly threw aside the slippery sham,
 And kept away as if the child had been
 A biting cankerous cur. All this, be sure,
 Pleased Matthew little, and the mother less,
 And she grew high, and Matthew he grew stiff,
 And both grew colder as the year wore on.

This bother'd Robin sore. He spake few words,
Toil'd stoutly, late and early, went to work,
Blacken'd in sanctity to the finger-tips,
And often rode to Edinglass to spend
Whole day with country cousins, as he said.
But oft, when none were near him, Robin heard,
A weakly moaning voice among the wheat ;
A tearful sobbing, sobbing, fill'd his ear,
When mistily, sadly, fell the autumn rain ;
And in his soul the image of a child
Battled with fiends. I plainly saw the man
Hated himself, and some cold snake that shed
Its slime upon his heart ; and more than once
I made a guess, which after-days proved true.

Then once again came harvest, reapers reapt,
And all was rich and yellow with the grain.

O yellow, yellow waved the wealthy ears,
And yellow, yellow thro' the misty stalks
The sunshine drew its threads of liquid gold ;
Hairst nodded, nodded, with a deep-drawn breath,
The sun-tann'd reapers reapt, the golden showers
Fell like a garment rustling to the knees
Of beauty, and from fence to fence the shout
Of reapers ran, and in among the sheaves
Barefooted gleaners douk'd with brimming hands.
O yellow, yellow waved the wealthy ears !
But in a field half-reap'd, and brightly paved
With sparkling stubble, Robin work'd alone —
His color'd handkerchief about his loins,
And on his head a broad-brimm'd hat of straw.

When sunny Noon was steaming, from the house
Came Mistress Bell, and in her hands the babe,

And down among the harvest-home she walk'd
Raising the little one to see the fields,
The reapers reaping, and the sun above ;
And aye the mannock crow'd and waved his hands,
And blink'd his azure eyes against the sun,
And smiled and shone and leapt — for all the world,
Like a stray sunbeam flickering about
The mother's bosom. As the stars arranged,
Down to the very spot where Robin wrought,
Down-bending 'neath the yellow as she came,
Walk'd the goodwife — whom love, and joy, and pride
Of happy hairst, and fatness in the bud,
Made almost bonnie. In the neighboring field
Just then arose a clamor as of men
In loud and fierce contention ; half surprised,
Half curious, she placed the child with care
Upon a cosey heap of fallen wheat,
And hasten'd, fast as her old legs could run,
To gaze and question o'er the low green hedge.
As Fortune plann'd it, she had laid the bairn
Close to the spot where Robin bound the sheaves ;
And peeping underneath the sheaves of wheat
The child (too wee to harbor malice !) saw
The reaper, laugh'd, and blink'd its azure eyes,
Stretch'd out its plump pink arms and cried aloud,
And would have tumbled from its yellow bed
Had Anderson not thrown his tools aside
And ran to help it. “ Now,” the reaper thought,
“ I'll watch the child till Mistress Bell returns,
And this may help to heal the old offence ! ”
And while he thought, the mannikin lay still
Blinking full sage as if it knew the doubt
Of him, the gloomy man, whose hollow eyes
Lookt at it half afraid. With that the Lord

Bade His bright sunshine and His Harvest-home,
His merry sights and sounds, His happy light,
His peace and plenteousness of autumn gifts,
Mix with the smiling of the little child
And swim in vision on the reaper's heart.
A gush like mother's milk fill'd Robin's heart,
Warming that heart until it leapt for fun ;
And with the harvest dazzling on his eyes
The reaper laugh'd aloud and color'd red.
Still Mistress Bell stay'd cracking at the hedge
With one she knew, and part forgot her charge
And part was dimly conscious it was safe.
Was Robin daft, or drunk, or both at once ?
For with a wheaten straw of feathery end
He tickled, tantled, at the infant's throat,
And poked the honeyed dimples of its chin,
Until the child crow'd loud and kick'd and scream'd,
And flung its arms about, and jump'd for fun ;
Till, fairly madden'd with a reckless glee,
This holy man, this clever clever chiel,
This big-boned reaper, Robin Anderson,
Caught up the wean, and tost it in the air,
And rock'd it in his arms and tousled it,
And not a mother in her teens could be
More glad, more tender. In the midst of all,
Back came the mistress : Robin saw her not,
But laugh'd, and tost the wean, and tousled it ;
Till suddenly he turn'd and caught her eye :
"What, *Robin!*" — and the reaper held the babe
Between his hands, blushing with heat and shame,
And eyed his little load with sheepish look
As doubting whether he should hold it fast,
Or let it tumble, — scraping with his feet ;
Till, gasping, gaping, like a startled hen,

She took the infant, gave him one long gaze,
 And walkt away as stupefied and dumb
 As if the very Deil had stolen up
 And wrought a miracle beneath her nose!

Hey! Robin was as shamed as shamed could be,
 And bound the sheaves all day, with gloomy eyes
 That sought the ground. Then gloaming powder'd
 heaven

With stars that floated silver in the air,
 And 'neath the stars Hairst sighing fell to sleep
 With misty breath and audible golden wings,
 And all the weary reapers reap'd no more.
 Long time stay'd Robin in the dark without,
 Grumbling, delaying, shamed, afraid to meet
 The eyes of women in the farm within;
 But partly hunger moved and partly pride,
 And with a big defiant lounge he strode
 Into the kitchen, where the laborers,
 Women and men, with spoons of season'd wood,
 Were dipping at the smoking porridge-bowl.
 And there, between a strapping maiden's knees,
 Was Master Matthew Bell, the son and heir!
 No Mistress Bell was there; but when the child
 Saw Robin Anderson, he crow'd aloud,
 Kicking and laughing, tumbling on the knee,—
 And Robin, ere he knew, was at his side,
 Tickling and tousling him,—like one indeed
 That partly sported to defy the voice
 That said he could not sport, and casting round
 His quick defiant glances now and then,
 But with a secret honeyedness of heart.
 All stared—none spoke a word; but laughing eyes
 Sparkled, and looks of wonder pass'd about,

While Robin's frenzy brighten'd, grew and grew,
Till the wee treble and the big haw, haw!
Like a grand giant and a wee wee gnome,
Rang merry, merry, merry!

After that,
No better friends could dwell in Christendie
Than Robin and the wean; and, stranger still,
After that night the art of pleasing it,
And holding it, and hushing it in arms,
Seem'd dull no longer, but so easy now,
That Robin wonder'd how he came to deem
Such things so hard to learn. The bridge once pass'd,
Pons Asinorum, as I said at school,
Robin cared little what he did or said.
Beneath the very eyes of Mistress Bell
And Matthew he would sport the child, and feel
As little shame as any new-year'd lamb;
And Matthew and the Mistress they were pleased;
And the ice thaw'd, and so the time wore on
Till Hairst was shorn of every golden lock.

But ah! big Robin's heart was ill at ease:
The secret snake still nestled there, and soil'd
His very tongue with venom. Oftener,
He took his journeys into Edinglass;
At home, he only brighten'd when his friend
Was by to cheer him: then, and only then,
He sported; for on Sabbath he was first
At kirk, with gloomy face and soot-black gear.

But when the Hairst again had heavenward flown,
An angel leaving gentle gifts behind,
The child of Matthew's age fell sick, and all

Was silence in the farm. Then doctors came
 And whisper'd learnéd difference to the ticks
 Of learnéd watches ; and a yaumer weak
 Was heard throughout the night. Matthew was mad,
 And Mistress Bell all tears ; but none paid heed
 To Robin, — who would sit beside the fire,
 Glower at the coal, and heark with hungry ear
 To those that tiptoe stole about the house
 And whisper'd. Once, on silent shoeless feet,
 He crept into the little sleeping room,
 And saw the pale, pale babe on mother's lap :
 He look'd and could not speak — a scalding heat
 Grew in his throat — he stammer'd, blush'd, and stared ;
 But when he turn'd away his face was white
 With ghastly pain more terrible than tears.
 What felt he, thought he ? Is it fair to guess ?
 Perchance his thought was something like to this :
 “ If wedded, I had such another child
 As lies before me, and the child should die
 For lack of such a love as I could give,
 Would all the gold and silver in the world
 Wipe from my soul that piteous baby-face ?
 Would twenty thousand prayers, pray'd day and night,
 Drown in the hearing of the Lord my God
 The cry my babe had utter'd as it died ? ”

And when the little one was fall'n asleep,
 Drest in its Sabbath clothes of white to keep
 Eternities of Sabbath in the grave,
 Old Matthew, groaning, stump'd about the house,
 Sour Elder though he was ; and Mistress Bell
 Wept low and bitter, with an eldritch grief,
 To which the woman's quaint uncomely face
 Gave double solemnness ; — for aye she kiss'd

The frosty lips, and aye with tender care
Sorted the clothes upon the white, white limbs,
To make them look the sweeter, weeping sore.
But in the silent hush of noon, one crept
On tiptoe to the chamber where the child
Lay, tiny, breathless, — like a lily flower
Under the thinly dropping misty dews
Of gloaming, making where it lay in shade
A faint and glow-worm glamour of its own.

'T was Robin ; and he touch'd the tiny hands,
And look'd upon the baby face that Death
Had fill'd with shadows ancient as the leaves
That shaded Adam's garden ; and he gazed
As one fresh-landed after years at sea
Might gaze upon a flower reminding him
Of meadows where he gamboll'd when a boy.

He shed no tears. Around his eyes there swam
Two dewy rings, the mist of tears unshed,
And in a dream, he heark'd, and seem'd to hear
An infant cry from far away, and see
Two hands uplifted from beneath his knees
To draw him down and kiss him on the mouth ;
And so he crept away, unseen, unheard,
Hating the silence of the mourning house,
Longing to break the silence with a shriek.

Seven days the child had slumber'd under grass,
And now the snow was falling in a mist
And sowing snow-drops on the little grave,
When Robin rode away to Edinglass
On business of his own. Four days he stay'd ;
And Matthew, in his sorrow, scarce took heed.

•But standing at the threshold of the farm,
 One morning, Matthew saw a farmer's gig,
 Drawn by a piebald pony of his own,
 Come trotting up the road ; and in it sat
 A woman and a man. Up came the gig,
 And halted at the farm ; and with a cry
 Of wonder, even fear, the farmer saw
 That he who drove was Robin Anderson,
 And she that sat beside him — with a child
 Tuck'd softly underneath her Paisley shawl —
 His sinful daughter, Maggie. Both were pale,
 And dropt their eyes ; but Robin's teeth were set
 Together. Not a word could Matthew speak,
 But Robin help'd the lassie to the ground,
 And led her to the door ; and Matthew Bell
 Gave way, walk'd ben and backwards, stared and gasp'd,
 "What's this ? What's this ? And is it daft ye are ?
 And have you both forgotten ?" and his eyes
 Glitter'd on Maggie with a ghastly pain ;
 But Robin took him by the shoulder-blade,
 And push'd him ben the kitchen. "Wheesht a while !"
 Said Robin ; "wheesht a while, and hear me out :
 May Cloutie grip me, Matthew, I have been
 A hypocrite and villain, — both in kirk
 And here, as friend and servant, in the farm.
 'T was me brought Meg to sorrow and to shame —
 But here I stand — to take the shame myself —
 And Meg's my wife !" The Farmer stared and gasp'd,
 Clutch'd at the empty air with eager hand,
 And spoke not. "Father !" Maggie moan'd aloud ;
 At that he eyed her with a hungry look,
 As he would wither her, and answer'd naught.
 Then Robin said, "I take the shame myself, —
 And Meg's my honest wife ; and if your heart

Is shut against us both, the world is wide,
And we can go away, and we can work ;
But if you care or sorrow for the lamb
You late have laid beneath the kirkyard sod,
Forgive poor Maggie for the bairnie's sake : —
Come, here am I, to take the shame myself,
And Meg's my wife !” Then Maggie cried again,
“ Father !” — and as she spake drew back her shawl,
And show'd her child asleep upon her breast,
A picture of the other child asleep,
And as she spake, it waken'd, gave a cry,
And kick'd to run upon its rosy feet.

Then, some say Matthew thought him of a slip
Himself had made when he was warm and young ;
Some that he knew full well 't would cost him dear
To part with Robin ; others, that the wean,
When Maggie set him down, ran toddling o'er,
Peep'd in the Farmer's face, and laugh'd for fun,
Pull'd at his watch-chain boldly with a cry,
And did it all. But when the Farmer's wife
Came creeping to the kitchen, with a scream
Saw Maggie, lifted up her hands and groan'd,
Old Matthew sharply turn'd and cut her short,
And never looking at poor Maggie's face,
Bade Robin seat himself and talk it o'er.

That's all, sir ! — for a child might guess the rest ;
Matthew came round, and Mistress Bell was forced
To give a doubtful nod, — and all was done.
Robin had saved and scraped ; he bought a piece
Of Matthew's land, where Maggie and her boy
Were settled down for good. That tale was false
Of Maggie's evil life in Edinglass !

But, sir, it is a truth that Robin's heart,
 In spite of all the cunning of his head,
 Gushing the milk of human kindness up,
 Drown'd the wee deil, Hypocrisy, therein ;
 That Robin's comely wife and Mistress Bell
 Meet every Sabbath, dying to be friends,
 And quarrel every Sabbath day for good.
 But ah ! to see the dreadful change that years
 Have wrought in Robin ! He is well-to-do,
 Has other weans beside the elbow-slip, —
 That's nothing singular ! — But, sir, he's fat !
 He has been known to go to sleep in kirk !
 And oft, within this very parlor here,
 'T would give your heart a thrill to hear him sing
 " Corn Rigs," or " Tullochgorum !"

Such a change

Can stolen sweets and fleshly vanities,
 Children and women, work in holy men,
 E'en clever lads like Robin ! . . Well, I've done —
 No more, unless you wish to see me fu' :
 I've far to walk, — and 't is the Sabbath day.



THE GREEN GNOME.

A MELODY.

RING, sing ! ring, sing ! pleasant Sabbath bells !
 Chime, rhyme ! chime, rhyme ! thorough dales and
 dells !

Rhyme, ring ! chime, sing ! pleasant Sabbath bells !
 Chime, sing ! rhyme, ring ! over fields and fells !

And I gallop'd and I gallop'd on my palfrey white as
milk,
My robe was of the sea-green woof, my serk was of the
silk ;
My hair was golden yellow, and it floated to my shoe,
My eyes were like two harebells bathed in little drops
of dew ;
My palfrey, never stopping, made a music sweetly
blent
With the leaves of autumn dropping all around me as
I went ;
And I heard the bells, grown fainter, far behind me peal
and play,
Fainter, fainter, fainter, fainter, till they seem'd to die
away ;
And beside a silver runnel, on a little heap of sand,
I saw the green Gnome sitting, with his cheek upon his
hand ;
Then he started up to see me, and he ran with cry and
bound,
And drew me from my palfrey white, and set me on the
ground :
O crimson, crimson were his locks, his face was green
to see,
But he cried, "O light-hair'd lassie, you are bound to
marry me !"
He claspt me round the middle small, he kissed me on
the cheek,
He kissed me once, he kissed me twice — I could not
stir or speak ;
He kissed me twice, he kissed me thrice — but when
he kissed again,
I called aloud upon the name of Him who died for
men !

Ring, sing! ring, sing! pleasant Sabbath bells!
Chime, rhyme! chime, rhyme! thorough dales and
dells!

Rhyme, ring! chime, sing! pleasant Sabbath bells!
Chime, sing! rhyme, ring! over fields and fells!

O faintly, faintly, faintly, calling men and maids to pray,
So faintly, faintly, faintly rang the bells afar away;
And as I named the Blessed Name, as in our need we
can,

The ugly green green Gnome became a tall and comely
man!

His hands were white, his beard was gold, his eyes were
black as sloes,

His tunic was of scarlet woof, and silken were his hose;
A pensive light from Faëryland still linger'd on his
cheek,

His voice was like the running brook, when he began
to speak:

“O you have cast away the charm my step-dame put
on me,

Seven years I dwelt in Faëryland, and you have set me
free!

O I will mount thy palfrey white, and ride to kirk with
thee,

And by those little dewy eyes, we twain will wedded
be!”

Back we gallop'd, never stopping, he before and I
behind,

And the autumn leaves were dropping, red and yellow,
in the wind,

And the sun was shining clearer, and my heart was
high and proud,

As nearer, nearer, nearer, rang the kirk-bells sweet and
loud,

And we saw the kirk before us, as we trotted down the
fells,
And nearer, clearer, o'er us, rang the welcome of the
bells!

Ring, sing! ring, sing! pleasant Sabbath bells!
Chime, rhyme! chime, rhyme! thorough dales and
dells!

Rhyme, ring! chime, sing! pleasant Sabbath bells!
Chime, sing! rhyme, ring! over fields and fells!



HUGH SUTHERLAND'S PANSIES.

A FLOWER-PIECE.

The aged Minister of Inverburn,
A heart of honey under features stern,
Leans in the sunshine on the garden-pale,
Pensive, yet happy, as he tells this tale, —
And he who listens sees the garden lie
Blue as a little patch of fallen sky.

“THE lily minds me of a maiden brow,”
Hugh Sutherland would say; “the marigold
Is full and sunny like her yellow hair,
The full-blown rose her lips with honey tipt;
But if you seek a likeness to her eye,
Go to the pansy, friend, and find it there!”
“Ay, leeze me on the pansies!” Hugh would say, —
Hugh Sutherland, the weaver, — he who dwelt
Here in the whitewash'd cot you fancy so,
Who knew the learned names of all the flowers,

And recognized the lily, tho' its head
Rose in a ditch of dull Latinity!

Pansies? You praise the ones that grow to-day
Here in the garden: had you seen the place
When Sutherland was living! Here they grew,
From blue to deeper blue, in midst of each
A golden dazzle like a glimmering star,
Each broader, bigger than a silver crown;
While here the weaver sat, his labor done,
Watching his azure pets and rearing them,
Until they seem'd to know his step and touch,
And stir beneath his smile like living things!
The very sunshine loved them, and would lie
Here happy, coming early, lingering late,
Because they were so fair.

Hugh Sutherland

Was country-bred; I knew him from the time
When on a bed of pain he lost a limb,
And rose at last, a lame and sickly lad,
Apprenticed to the loom, — a peevish lad,
Mooning among the shadows by himself.
Among these shadows, with the privilege
Of one who loved his flock, I sought him out,
And gently as I could I won his heart;
And then, tho' he was young and I was old,
We soon grew friends. He told his griefs to me,
His joys, his troubles, and I help'd him on;
Yet sought in vain to drive away the cloud
Deep pain had left upon his sickly cheek,
And lure him from the shades that deepen'd it.
Then Heaven took the task upon itself
And sent an angel down among the flowers!

Almost before I knew the work was done,
I found him settled in this but and ben,
Where, with an eye that brighten'd, he had found
The sunshine loved his garden, and begun
To rear his pansies.

Sutherland was poor,
Rude, and untutor'd ; peevish, too, when first
The angel in his garden found him out ;
But pansy-growing made his heart within
Blow fresh and fragrant. When he came to share
This cottage with a brother of the craft,
Only some poor and sickly bunches bloom'd,
Vagrant, though fair, among the garden-plots ;
And idly, carelessly, he water'd these,
Spread them and train'd them, till they grew and grew
In size and beauty, and the angel thrust
Its bright arms upward thro' the bright'ning sod,
And clung around the sickly gardener's heart.
Then Sutherland grew calmer, and the cloud
Was fading from his face. Well, by and by,
The country people saw and praised the flowers,
And what at first had been an idle joy
Became a sober, serious work for fame.
Next, being won to send a bunch for show,
He won a prize, — a sixth or seventh rate ;
And slowly gath'ring courage, rested not
Till he had won the highest prize of all.
Here in the sunshine and the shade he toil'd
Early and late in joy, and, by and by,
Rose high in fame ; for not a botanist,
A lover of the flowers, poor man or rich,
Came to the village, but the people said,
“Go down the lane to Weaver Sutherland's,
And see his pansies !”

Thus the summers pass'd,

And Sutherland grew gentler, happier ;
 The angel God had sent him cling to him :
 There grew a rapturous sadness in his tone
 When he was gladdest, like the dewiness
 That moistens pansies when they bloom the best ;
 And in his face there dawn'd a gentle light
 Like that which softly clings about a flow'r,
 And makes you love it. Yet his heart was glad,
 More for the pansies' sakes than for his own :
 His eye was like a father's, moist and bright,
 When they were praised ; and, as I said, they seem'd
 To make themselves as beauteous as they could,
 Smiling to please him. Blessings on the flowers !
 They were his children ! Father never loved
 His little darlings more, or for their sakes
 Fretted so dumbly ! Father never bent
 More tenderly above his little ones,
 In the still watches of the night, when sleep
 Breathes balm upon their eyelids ! Night and day
 Poor Hugh was careful for the gentle things
 Whose presence brought a sunshine to the place
 Where sickness dwelt : this one was weak and small,
 And needed watching like a sickly child ;
 This one so beauteous, that it shamed its mates
 And made him angry with its beauteousness.
 " I cannot rest ! " cried Hughie with a smile,
 " I scarcely snatch a moment to myself,
 They plague me so ! " Part fun, part earnest, this :
 He loved the pansies better than he knew.
 Ev'n in the shadow of his weaving room
 They haunted him and brighten'd on his soul :
 Daily while busy working at the loom
 The humming-humming seem'd a melody

To which the pansies sweetly grew and grew, —
A leaf unrolling soft to every note,
A change of colors with the change of sound ;
And walking to the door to rest himself,
Still with the humming-humming in his ears,
He saw the flowers and heard a melody
They made in growing. Pleasure such as this,
So exquisite, so lonely, might have pass'd
Into the shadowy restlessness of yore ;
But wholesome human contact saved him here,
And kept him fresh and meek. The people came
To stir him with their praise, and he would show
The medals and the prizes he had got —
As proud and happy as a child who gains
A prize in school.

The angel still remain'd
In winter, when the garden-plots were bare,
And deep winds piloted the shriven snow :
He saw its gleaming in the cottage fire,
While, with a book of botany on his knee,
He sat and hunger'd for the breath of spring.
The angel of the flowers was with him still !
Here beds of roses sweeten'd all the page ;
Here lilies whiter than the falling snow
Crept gleaming softly from the printed lines ;
Here dewy violets sparkled till the book
Dazzled his eyes with rays of misty blue ;
And here, amid a page of Latin names,
All the sweet Scottish flowers together grew
With fragrance of the summer.

Hugh and I
Were still fast friends, and still I help'd him on ;

And often in the pleasant summer-time,
 The service over, on the Sabbath day,
 I join'd him in the garden, where we sat
 And chatted in the sun. But all at once
 It came upon me that the gardener's hand
 Had grown less diligent; for tho' 't was June
 The garden that had been the village pride
 Look'd but the shadow of its former self;
 And ere a week was out I saw in church
 Two samples fairer far than any blown
 In Hughie's garden, — blooming brighter far
 In sweeter soil. What wonder that a man,
 Loving the pansies as the weaver did —
 A skilful judge, moreover — should admire
 Sweet Mary Moffat's sparkling pansy-eyes?

The truth was out. The weaver play'd the game
 (I christen'd it in sport that very day)
 Of "Love among the Pansies!" As he spoke,
 Telling me all, I saw upon his face
 The peevish cloud that it had worn in youth;
 I cheer'd him as I could, and bade him hope:
 "You both are poor, but, Sutherland, God's flowers
 Are poor as well!" He brighten'd as I spoke,
 And answer'd, "It is settled! I have kept
 The secret till the last, lest 'nay' should come
 And spoil it all; but 'ay' has come instead,
 And all the help we wait for is your own!"

Even here, I think, his angel clung to him.
 The fairies of his garden haunted him
 With similes and sympathies that made
 His likes and dislikes, though he knew it not.
 Beauty he loved if it was meek and mild,

And like his pansies tender ev'n to tears ;
 And so he chose a maiden pure and low,
 Who, like his garden pets, had love to spare,
 Sunshine to cast upon his pallid cheek,
 And yet a tender clinging thing, too weak
 To bloom uncared for and unsmiled upon.

Soon Sutherland and she he loved were one, —
 And bonnily a moon of honey gleam'd
 At night among the flowers ! Amid the spring
 That follow'd, blossom'd with the other buds
 A tiny maiden with her mother's eyes.
 The little garden was itself again,
 The sunshine sparkled on the azure beds ;
 The angel Heaven had sent to save a soul
 Stole from the blooms and took an infant shape ;
 And wild with pleasure, seeing how the flowers
 Had given her their choicest lights and shades,
 The father bore his baby to the font
 And had her christen'd PANSY.

After that,
 Poor Hugh was happy as the days were long,
 Divided in his cares for all his pets,
 And proudest of the one he loved the best.
 The summer found him merry as a king,
 Dancing the little one upon his knee
 Here in the garden, while the plots around
 Gleam'd in the sun, and seem'd as glad as he.

But moons of honey wane, and summer suns
 Of wedlock set to bring the autumn in !
 Hugh Sutherland, with wife and child to feed,
 Wrought sore to gain his pittance in a world

His pansies made so fair. Came Poverty
 With haggard eyes to dwell within the house ;
 When first she saw the garden she was glad,
 And, seated on the threshold, smiled and span.
 But times grew harder, bread was scarce as gold,
 A shadow fell on Pansy and the flowers ;
 And when the strife was sorest, Hugh received
 An office — lighter work and higher pay —
 To take a foreman's place in Edinglass.
 'T was hard, 't was hard to leave the little place
 He loved so dearly ; but the weaver look'd
 At Mary, saw the sorrow in her face,
 And gave consent, — happy at heart to think
 His dear ones would not want. To Edinglass
 They went and settled. Thro' the winter hours
 Bravely the weaver toil'd ; his wife and child
 Were happy, he was heartsome, — tho' his taste
 Was grassy lowlands and the caller air.

The cottage here remain'd untenanted,
 The angel of the flowers forsook the place,
 The sunshine faded, and the pansies died.

Two summers pass'd ; and still in Edinglass
 The weaver toil'd, and ever when I went
 Into the city, to his house I hied, —
 A welcome guest. Now first, I saw a change
 Had come to Sutherland : for he was pale
 And peevish, had a venom on his tongue,
 And hung the under-lip like one that doubts.
 Part of the truth I heard, and part I saw, —
 But knew too late, when all the ill was done !
 At first, poor Hugh had shrunk from making friends,
 And pored among his books of botany,

And later, in the dull dark nights he sat,
A dismal book upon his knee, and read :
A book no longer full of leaves and flowers,
That glimmer'd on the soul's sweet consciousness,
Yet seem'd to fill the eye, — a dismal book, —
Big-sounding Latin, English dull and dark,
And not a breath of summer in it all.
The sunshine perish'd in the city's smoke,
The pansies grew no more to comfort him,
And he began to spend his nights with those
Who waste their substance in the public-house :
The flowers had lent a sparkle to his talk,
Which pleased the muddled wits of idle men ;
Sought after, treated, liked by one and all,
He took to drinking ; and at last lay down
Stupid and senseless on a rainy night,
And ere he waken'd caught the flaming fire,
Which gleams to white-heat on the face and burns
Clear crimson in the lungs.

But it was long,
Ere any knew poor Hughie's plight ; and, ere
He saw his danger, on the mother's breast
Lay Pansy withering, — tho' the dewy breath
Of spring was floating like a misty rain
Down from the mountains. Then the tiny flower
Folded its leaves in silence, and the sleep
That dwells in winter on the pansy-beds
Fell on the weaver's house. At that sad hour
I enter'd, scarcely welcomed with a word
Of greeting : by the hearth the woman sat
Weeping full sore, her apron o'er a face
Haggard with midnight watching, while the man
Cover'd his bloodshot eyes and cursed himself.

Then leaning o'er, my hand on his, I said :
 "She could not bear the smoke of cities, Hugh !
 God to His Garden has transplanted her,
 Where summer dwells forever and the air
 Is fresh and pure !" But Hughie did not speak ;
 I saw full plainly that he blamed himself ;
 And ere the day was out he bent above
 His little sleeping flower, and wept, and said :
 "Ay, sir ! she wither'd, wither'd like the rest,
 Neglected !" and I saw his heart was full.
 When Pansy slept beneath the churchyard grass
 Poor Hughie's angel had return'd to Heaven,
 And all his heart was dark. His ways grew strange,
 Peevish, and sullen ; often he would sit
 And drink alone ; the wife and he grew cold,
 And harsh to one another ; till at last
 A stern physician put an end to all,
 And told him he must die.

No bitter cry,
 No sound of wailing rose within the house
 After the Doctor spoke, but Mary mourn'd
 In silence, Hughie smoked his pipe and set
 His teeth together, at the ingleside.
 Days pass'd ; the only token of a change
 Was Hughie's face, — the peevish cloud of care
 Seem'd melting to a tender gentleness.
 After a time, the wife forgot her grief,
 Or could at times forget it, in the care
 Her husband's sickness brought. I went to them
 As often as I could, for Sutherland
 Was dear to me, and dearer for his sin:
 Weak as he was he did his best to toil,
 But it was weary work ! By slow degrees,

When May was breathing on the sickly bunch
Of mignonette upon the window-sill,
I saw his smile was softly wearing round
To what it used to be, when here he sat
Rearing his flowers ; altho' his brow at times
Grew cloudy, and he gnaw'd his under lip.
At last I found him seated by the hearth,
Trying to read : I led his mind to themes
Of old langsyne, and saw his eyes grow dim.
" O sir," he cried, " I cannot, cannot rest !
Something I long for, and I know not what,
Torments me night and day ! " I saw it all,
And sparkling with the brilliance of the thought,
Look'd in his eyes and caught his hand, and cried,
" Hugh, it 's the pansies ! Spring has come again,
The sunshine breathes its gold upon the air
And threads it through the petals of the flowers,
Yet here you linger in the dark ! " I ceased
And watch'd him. Then he trembled as he said,
" I see it now, for as I read the book
The lines and words, the Latin seem'd to bud,
And they peep'd thro'." He smiled, like one ashamed,
Adding in a low voice, " I long to see
The pansies ere I die ! "

What heart of stone
Could throb on coldly, sir, at words like those ?
Not mine, not mine ! Within a week poor Hugh
Had left the smoke of Edinglass behind,
And felt the wind that runs along the lanes,
Spreading a carpet of the grass and flowers
For June the sunny-hair'd to walk upon.
In the old cottage here he dwelt again :
The place was wilder than it once had been,

But buds were blowing green around about,
 And with the glad return of Sutherland
 The angel of the flowers came back again.
 The end was near, and Hugh was wearied out,
 And like a flower was closing up his leaves
 Under the dropping of the gloaming dews.

And daily, in the summer afternoon,
 I found him seated on the threshold there,
 Watching his flowers, and all the place, I thought,
 Brighten'd when he was nigh. Now first I talk'd
 Of heavenly hopes unto him, and I knew
 The angel help'd me. On the day he died
 The pain had put its shadow on his face,
 And words of doubt were on his tremulous lips.
 "Ah, Hughie, life is easy!" I exclaim'd,
 "Easier, better than we know ourselves :
 'T is pansy-growing on a mighty scale,
 And God above us is the gardener.
 The fairest win the prizes, that is just,
 But all the flowers are dear to God the Lord :
 The Gardener loves them all, He loves them all !"
 He saw the sunshine on the pansy-beds
 And brighten'd. Then by slow degrees he grew
 Cheerful and meek as dying man could be,
 And as I spoke there came from far-away
 The faint sweet melody of Sabbath bells.
 And "Hugh," I said, "if God the Gardener
 Neglected those he rears as you have done
 Your pansies and your Pansy, it were ill
 For we who blossom in His garden. Night
 And morning He is busy at His work.
 He smiles to give us sunshine, and we live :
 He stoops to pluck us softly, and our hearts

Tremble to see the darkness, knowing not
It is the shadow He, in stooping, casts.
He pluckt your Pansy so, and it was well.
But, Hugh, though some be beautiful and grand,
Sime sickly, like yourself, and mean and poor,
He loves them all, the Gardener loves them all !”
Then later, when no longer he could sit
Out on the threshold, and the end was near,
We set a plate of pansies by his bed
To cheer him. “He is coming near,” I said,
“Great is the garden, but the Gardener
Is coming to the corner where you bloom
So sickly !” And he smiled, and moan’d, “I hear !”
And sank upon his pillow wearily.
His hollow eyes no longer bore the light,
The darkness gather’d round him as I said,
“The Gardener is standing at your side,
His shade is on you and you cannot see :
O Lord, that lovest both the strong and weak,
Pluck him and wear him !” Even as I pray’d,
I felt the shadow there and hid my face ;
But when I look’d again the flower was pluck’d,
The shadow gone : the sunshine thro’ the blind
Gleam’d faintly, and the widow’d woman wept.

THE LEGEND OF THE STEPMOTHER.

I.

AS I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
 Under the grass as I lay so deep,
 As I lay asleep in my cotton serk
 Under the shade of Our Lady's kirk,
 I waken'd up in the dead of night,
 I waken'd up in my death-serk white,
 And I heard a cry from far away,
 And I knew the voice of my daughter May :
 " Mother, mother, come hither to me !
 Mother, mother, come hither and see !
 Mother, mother, mother dear,
 Another mother is sitting here :
 My body is bruised, and in pain I cry,
 On straw in the dark afraid I lie,
 I thirst and hunger for drink and meat,
 And mother, mother, to sleep were sweet !"
 I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
 And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep.

II.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
 Up I rose from my grave so deep !
 The earth was black, but overhead
 The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
 And I walk'd along all white and thin,

And lifted the latch and enter'd in,
And reach'd the chamber as dark as night,
And though it was dark my face was white :
“Mother, mother, I look on thee !
Mother, mother, you frighten me !
For your cheeks are thin and your hair is gray !”
But I smiled, and kiss'd her fears away,
I smooth'd her hair and I sang a song,
And on my knee I rock'd her long :
“O mother, mother, sing low to me ;
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see !”
I kiss'd her, but I could not weep,
And she went to sleep, she went to sleep.

III.

As we lay asleep, as we lay asleep,
My May and I, in our grave so deep,
As we lay asleep in the midnight mirk,
Under the shade of Our Lady's kirk,
I waken'd up in the dead of night,
Though May my daughter lay warm and white,
And I heard the cry of a little one,
And I knew 't was the voice of Hugh my son :
“Mother, mother, come hither to me !
Mother, mother, come hither and see !
Mother, mother, mother dear,
Another mother is sitting here :
My body is bruised and my heart is sad,
But I speak my mind and call them bad ;
I thirst and hunger night and day,
And were I strong I would fly away !”
I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep !

IV.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
 Up I rose from my grave so deep,
 The earth was black, but overhead
 The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
 And I walk'd along all white and thin,
 And lifted the latch and enter'd in.
 " Mother, mother, and art thou here ?
 I know your face, and I feel no fear ;
 Raise me, mother, and kiss my cheek,
 For oh I am weary and sore and weak."
 I smooth'd his hair with a mother's joy,
 And he laugh'd aloud, my own brave boy ;
 I raised and held him on my breast,
 Sang him a song, and bade him rest.
 " Mother, mother, sing low to me ;
 I am sleepy now and I cannot see !"
 I kiss'd him, and I could not weep,
 As he went to sleep, as he went to sleep.

V.

As I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
 With my girl and boy in my grave so deep,
 As I lay asleep, I awoke in fear,
 Awoke, but awoke not my children dear,
 And heard a cry so low and weak
 From a tiny voice that could not speak ;
 I heard the cry of a little one,
 My bairn that could neither talk nor run,
 My little, little one, uncaress'd,
 Starving for lack of the milk of the breast ;
 And I rose from sleep and enter'd in,
 And found my little one pinch'd and thin,
 And croon'd a song and hush'd its moan,

And put its lips to my white breastbone ;
And the red, red moon that lit the place
Went white to look at the little face,
And I kiss'd and kiss'd, and I could not weep,
As it went to sleep, as it went to sleep.

VI.

As it lay asleep, as it lay asleep,
I set it down in the darkness deep,
Smooth'd its limbs and laid it out,
And drew the curtains around about ;
Then into the dark, dark room I hied
Where he lay awake at the woman's side,
And though the chamber was black as night,
He saw my face, for it was so white ;
I gazed in his eyes, and he shriek'd in pain,
And I knew he would never sleep again,
And back to my grave went silently,
And soon my baby was brought to me ;
My son and daughter beside me rest,
My little baby is on my breast ;
Our bed is warm and our grave is deep,
But he cannot sleep, he cannot sleep !

THE WIDOW MYSIE.

AN IDYL OF LOVE AND WHISKEY.

Tom Love, a man "prepared for friend or foe,
Whisker'd, well-featured, tight from top to toe."

O WIDOW MYSIE, smiling, soft, and sweet !
O Mysie, buxom as a sheaf of wheat !
O Mysie, Widow Mysie, late Monroe,
Foul fall the traitor-face that served me so !
O Mysie Love, a second time a bride,
I pity him who tosses at your side, —
Who took, by honeyed smiles and speech misled,
A beauteous bush of brambles to his bed !

You saw her at the ploughing match, you ken,
Ogling the whiskey and the handsome men :
The smiling woman in the Paisley shawl,
Plump as a partridge, and as broad as tall,
With ribbons, bows, and jewels fair to see,
Bursting to blossom like an apple-tree,
And every ribbon, bow, and jewel fine
Perfumed like apple blossoms dipt in wine.
Ay, that was Mysie, — now two score and ten,
Now Madam Love of Bungo in the Glen !
Ay, that was Mysie, tho' her looks no more
Dazzle with beams of brightness as of yore ! —
The tiny imps that nested in her eyes,
Winning alike the wanton and the wise,
Have ta'en the flame that made my heart forlorn
Back to the nameless place where they were born.

O years roll on, and fair things fade and pine ! —
Twelve sowings since and I was twenty-nine :
With ploughman's coat on back, and plough in hand,
I wrought at Bungo on my father's land,
And all the neighbor-lassies, stale or fair,
Tried hard to net my father's son and heir.
My heart was lightsome, cares I had but few,
I climb'd the mountains, drank the mountain dew,
Could sit a mare as mettlesome as fire,
Could put the stone with any in the shire,
Had been to college, and had learn'd to dance,
Could blether thro' my nose like folks in France,
And stood erect, prepared for friend or foe,
Whisker'd, well-featured, tight from top to toe.

“A marriageable man, for every claim
Of lawful wedlock fitted,” you exclaim ?
But, sir, of all that men enjoy or treasure,
Wedlock, I fancied, was the driest pleasure.
True ; seated at some pretty peasant's side,
Under the slanted sheaves I loved to hide,
Lilting the burthen of a Scottish tune,
To sit, and kiss perchance, and watch the moon,
Pillow'd on breasts like beds of lilies white
Heaving and falling in the pale moonlight ;
But rather would have sat with crimson face
Upon the cutty-stool with Jean or Grace,
Than buy in kirk a partner with the power
To turn the mountain dew of Freedom sour.

I loved a comely face, as I have said,
But sharply watch'd the maids who wish'd to wed, —
I knew their arts, was not so cheaply won,
They loved my father's Siller, not his Son.

Still, laughing in my sleeve, I here and there
 Took liberties allow'd my father's heir,
 Stole kisses from the comeliest of the crew,
 And smiled upon the virgin nettles too.
 So might the game have daunder'd on till this,
 And lasted till my father went to bliss, —
 But Widow Mysie came, as sly as sin,
 And settled in the "William Wallace" Inn.

The Inn had gone to rack and loss complete
 Since Simpson drown'd himself in whiskey neat ;
 And poor Jock Watt who follow'd in his shoes,
 Back'd by the sourest, gumliest of shrews,
 (The whiskey vile, the water never hot,
 The very sugar sour'd by Mistress Watt,)
 Had found the gossips, grumbling, groaning, stray
 To Sandie Kirkson's, half a mile away.
 But hey ! at Widow Mysie's rosy face,
 A change came o'er the spirits of the place,
 The fire blazed high, the shining pewter smiled,
 The glasses glitter'd bright, the water boil'd,
 Grand was the whiskey, Highland born and fine,
 And Mysie, Widow Mysie, was divine !

O sweet was Widow Mysie, sweet and sleek !
 The peach's blush and down were on her cheek,
 And there were dimples in her tender chin
 For Cupids small to hunt for honey in ;
 Dark-glossy were her ringlets, each a prize,
 And wicked, wicked were her beaded eyes ;
 Plump was her figure, rounded and complete,
 And tender were her tiny tinkling feet !
 All this was nothing to the warmth and light
 That seem'd to hover o'er her day and night ;—

Where'er she moved, she seem'd to soothe and please
With honeyed murmurs as of honeyed bees ;
Her small plump hands on public missions flew
Like snow-white doves that flying crow and coo ;
Her feet fell patter, cheep, like little mice ;
Her breath was soft with sugar and with spice ;
And when her finger — so ! — your hand would press,
You tingled to the toes with loveliness,
While her dark eyes, with lessening zone in zone,
Flasht sunlight on the mirrors of your own,
Dazzling your spirit with a wicked sense
That seem'd more innocent than innocence !

Sure one so beauteous and so sweet had graced
And cheer'd the scene, where'er by Fortune placed ;
But with a background of the pewter bright,
Whereon the fire cast gleams of rosy light,
With jingling glasses round her, and a scent
Of spice and lemon-peel where'er she went,
What wonder she should to the cronies seem
An angel in a cloud of toddy steam ?
What wonder, while I sipt my glass one day,
She, and the whiskey, stole my heart away ?

She was not loath ! — for, while her comely face
Shone full on other haunters of the place,
From me she turn'd her head and peep'd full sly
With just the corner of her roguish eye,
And blush'd so bright my toddy seem'd to glow
Beneath the rosy blush and sweeter grow ;
And once, at my request, she took a sip,
And honeyed all the liquor with her lip.
“Take heed ! for Widow Mysie's game is plain,”
The gossips cried, but warn'd me all in vain :

Like sugar melting at the toddy's kiss,
 My very caution was dissolved in bliss,
 Fear died forever with a mocking laugh,
 And Mysie's kisses made his epitaph.

Kisses? Ay, faith, they follow'd score on score,
 After the first I stole behind the door,
 And linger'd softly on these lips of mine
 Like Massic whiskey drunk by bards divine.
 But O the glow, the rapture, and the glee!
 That night she let me draw her on my knee,—
 When bliss thrill'd from her to my finger-tips,
 Then eddied wildly to my burning lips,
 From which she drank it back with kisses fain,
 Then blush'd and glow'd and breathed it back again,—
 Till, madden'd with the ecstasy divine,
 I clasp'd her close and craved her to be mine,
 And thrilling, panting, struggling up to fly,
 She breathed a spicy "Yes" with glistening eye,
 And while my veins grew bright, my heart went wild,
 Fell like a sunbeam on my heart, and smiled!

The deed thus done, I hied me home, you say,
 And rued my folly when I woke next day?
 Nay! all my business was to crave and cry
 That Heaven would haste the holy knot to tie,
 Though "Mysie lass," I said, "my gold and gear
 Are small, and will be small for many a year,
 Since father is but fifty years and three,
 And tough as cobbler's wax, though spare and wee!"
 "Ah, Tam," she sigh'd, "there's nothing there to rue,—
 The gold, the gear, that Mysie wants is you!"
 And brightly clad, with kisses thrilling through me,
 Clung like a branch of trembling blossoms to me.

I found my father making up his books,
 With yellow eyes and penny-hunting looks.
 "Father," I said, "I'm sick of single life,
 And will, if you are willing, take a wife."
 "Humph," snapt my father, "(six and four are ten,
 And ten are twenty.)—Marry? who? and when?"
 "Mistress Monroe," I said, "that keeps the inn."
 At that he shrugg'd his shoulders with a grin:
 "I guess'd as much! the tale has gone the round!
 Ye might have stay'd till I was underground!
 But please yourself, — I've nothing to refuse,
 Choose where you will, — you're old enough to choose;
 But mind," he added, blinking yellow eye,
 "I'll handle my own guineas till I die!
 Frankly I own, you might have chosen worse,
 Since you have little siller in your purse:
 The Inn is thriving, if report be true,
 And Widow Mysie has enough for two!"

"And if we wait till he has gone his way,
 Why, Mysie, I'll be bald, and you'll be gray,"
 I said to Mysie, laughing at her side.
 "O, let him keep his riches," she replied,
 "He's right! there's plenty here for you and I!
 May he live long; and happy may he die!"
 "O Mysie, you're an angel," I return'd,
 With eye that glisten'd dewily and yearn'd.
 Then running off she mix'd, with tender glee,
 A glass of comfort, — sat her on my knee.
 "Come, Tam!" she cried, "who cares a fig for wealth?
 Ay, let him keep it all, and here's his health!"
 And added, shining brightly on my breast,
 "Ah, Tam, the siller's worthless, — Love is best"

O Widow Mysie, wert thou first sincere,
 When tender accents trembled on mine ear,
 Like bees that o'er a flower will float and fleet,
 And ere they light make murmurs honey-sweet?
 Or was the light that render'd me unwise,
 Guile's — the sweet Quaker with the downcast eyes?
 O Widow Mysie, not at once are we
 Taught the false scripture of Hypocrisy;
 Even pink Selfishness has times, I know,
 When thro' his fat a patriot's feelings glow;
 Falsehood first learns her nature with a sigh,
 And puts on mourning for her first-born Lie.

Days pass'd; and I began, to my amaze,
 To see a colder light in Mysie's gaze;
 Once when, with arm about her softly wound,
 I snatch'd a kiss, she snapt and flusht and frown'd;
 But oftener her face a shadow wore,
 Such as had never darken'd it before;
 I spoke of this, I begg'd her to explain, —
 She tapt my cheek, and smiled, and mused again.
 But, in the middle of my love-alarm,
 The Leech's watch went "tick" at Bungo Farm;
 My father sicken'd, and his features cold
 Retain'd the hue, without the gleam, of gold.

Then Mysie soften'd, sadden'd, and would speak
 Of father's sickness with a dewy cheek;
 When to the Inn I wander'd, unto me,
 Lightly, as if she walk'd on wool, came she,
 And "Is he better?" "Is he changed at all?"
 And "Heaven help him!" tenderly would call.
 "So old, — so ill, — untended and alone!
 He is your father, Tom, and seems my own!"

And musing stood, one little hand of snow
Nestling and fluttering on my shoulder — so !
But father sicken'd on, and then one night,
When we were sitting in the ingle-light,
“O Tom,” she cried, “I have it ! — I should ne'er
Forgive myself for staying idly here,
While he, your father, lack'd in his distress
The love, the care, a daughter's hands possess :
He knows our troth, — he will not say me nay ;
But let me nurse him as a daughter may,
And he may live, for darker cases mend,
To bless us and to join us in the end !”
“But, Mysie — ” “Not a word, the thing is plann'd,”
She said, and stopt my mouth with warm white hand.
She went with gentle eyes that very night,
Stole to the chamber like a moonbeam white ;
My father scowl'd at first, but soon was won, —
The keep was carried, and the deed was done.

O Heaven ! in what strange Enchanter's den,
Learnt she the spells wherewith she conquer'd men ?
When to that chamber she had won her way,
The old man's cheek grew brighter every day ;
She smooth'd the pillows underneath his head,
She brought sweet music roundabout his bed,
She made the very mustard-blisters glow
With fire as soft as youthful lovers know,
The very physic bottles lost their gloom,
And seem'd like little fairies in the room,
The very physic, charm'd by her, grew fine,
Rhubarb was honey, castor-oil was wine.
Half darkly, dimly, yet with secret flame
That titillated up and down his frame,
The grim old man lay still, with hungry eye

Watching her thro' the room on tiptoe fly ;—
 * She turn'd her back, — his cheek grew dull and dim !
 She turn'd her face, — its sunshine fell on him !
 Better and better every day grew he,
 Colder and colder grew his nurse to me,
 Till up he leapt, with fresher life astir,
 And only sank again — to kneel to her.

“ Mysie ! ” I cried, with flushing face, too late
 Stung by the pois'nous things whose names I hate,
 Which in so many household fires flit free,
 The salamanders, Doubt and Jealousy, —
 “ Mysie ! ” — and then, in accents fierce and bold,
 Demanded why her looks had grown so cold ?
 She trembled, flush'd, a tear was in her eye,
 She dropt her gaze, and heaved a balmy sigh,
 Then spoke with tender pauses low and sad :
 Had I a heart ? I frankly own'd I had.
 Could I without a conscience-qualm behold
 My white-hair'd father, weak, untended, old,
 Who had so very short a time to live,
 Reft of the peace a woman's hands can give ?
 “ Mysie ! ” I shriek'd, with heart that seem'd to rend,
 With glaring eyes, and every hair on end.
 Claspng her little hands, “ O Tam,” she cried,
 “ But for my help your father would have died ;
 Bliss ! to have saved your filial heart that sorrow !
 But for my help, why, he may die to-morrow.
 Go, Tom ! — this weak warm heart I cannot trust
 To utter more — be generous ! be just !
 I long have felt — I say it in humility —
 A sort of — kind of — incompatibility !
 Go, Tam ! Be happy ! Bless you ! Wed another ! —
 Ah, I shall ever love you — as a mother ! ”

Sir, so it was. Stunn'd, thunder-stricken, wild,
 I raved, while father trembled, Mysie smiled ;
 O'er all the country-side the scandal rang,
 And ere I knew, the bells began to clang ;—
 And shutting eyes and stopping ears, as red
 As ricks on fire, I blushing turn'd and fled.
 Twelve years have pass'd since I escaped the net,
 And father, tough as leather, lingers yet,
 A gray mare rules, the laugh has come to me,
 I sport, and thank my stars that I am free !
 If Mysie likes her bargain ill or well,
 Only the Deil, who won it her, can tell ;
 But she, who could so well his arts pursue,
 May learn a trick to cheat her Teacher too.



THE MINISTER AND THE ELFIN.

I.

“O WHO among ye will win for me
 The soul of the Preacher of Woodilee ?
 For he prays, he preaches, he labors sore,
 He cheats me alike of rich and poor,
 And his cheek is pale with a thought divine,
 And I would, I would, that he were mine !”
 “O surely I will win for thee
 The Minister of Woodilee ;
 Round and around the elfin tree,
 Where we are fleeting in company,
 The Minister of Woodilee,
 Laughing aloud, shall dance with me !”

II.

The Minister rode in the white moonshine,
 His face was pale with his thought divine,
 And he saw beneath the greenwood tree
 As sweet a maiden as well could be :
 My hair of gold to my feet fell bright,
 My eyes were blue, and my brow was white,
 My limbs were fresh as the curds of lime
 Mingled with drops of the red red wine,
 And they shone thro' my dress o' the silk with gleam
 Like a lover's face thro' a thin light dream ;
 But the sickness of death was in mine ee,
 And my face was pallid and sad to see,
 And I moan'd aloud as he came near,
 And I heard him mutter a prayer in fear !

III.

But the Minister, when he look'd on me,
 Leapt down and set my head on his knee,
 Wet my lips with the running stream,
 And I open'd my eyes as in a dream,
 I open'd my eyes and look'd on him,
 And his head whirl'd round and his cheek grew dim,
 I kiss'd him twice, I kiss'd him thrice,
 Till he kiss'd again with lips of ice,
 Till he kiss'd again with lips of stone,
 And clasp'd me close to his cold breastbone ;
 And tho' his face was weary and sad,
 He laugh'd aloud and seem'd mad, seem'd mad.
 Then up to my feet I leapt in glee,
 And round and round and around went we,
 Under the moonlit greenwood tree.

IV.

He leapt on his steed and home rode he,
The Minister of Woodilee ;
And when at the door of the manse he rein'd,
With blood his lips were damp'd and stain'd,
And he pray'd a prayer for his shame and sin,
And dropt a tear as he enter'd in,
But the smile divine from his face had fled,
When he laid him down on his dying bed.

V.

“ O thanks, for thou hast won for me
The Minister of Woodilee,
Who nevermore, O nevermore,
Shall preach and pray and labor sore,
And cheat me alike of rich and poor,
For the smile divine no more wears he, —
Hasten and bring his soul to me ! ”

VI.

O, off I ran his soul to win,
And the gray gray manse I enter'd in,
And I saw him lying on his bed,
With salt and candle at his head ;
But when he turn'd him weary and weak,
A smile and a tear were on his cheek,
And he took my hand and kiss'd it thrice
Tho' his lips were clammy cold as ice.
“ O wherefore, wherefore kiss thou sae
One who has stolen thy life away ? ”
Then over his face sae pale with pain
The thought divine came back again,

And "I love thee more for the shame," he said,
 "I love thee more on my dying bed,
 And I cannot, cannot love thee less,
 Tho' my heart is wae for its wickedness ;
 I love thee better, I love thee best,
 Sweet Spirit that errest and wanderest ;
 Colder and colder my blood doth run,
 I pray for thee, pray for thee, little one !"
 Then I heard the bell for the dying toll,
 And I reach'd out hands to seize his soul,
 But I trembled and shriek'd to see as he died
 An angel in white at his bedside,
 And I fled away to the greenwood tree,
 Where the elves were fleeting in company,
 And I hate my immortality,
 And 't were better to be a man and dee !



THE LEGEND OF THE LITTLE FAY.

A MELODY.

THE LITTLE FAY.

YOU are the gray gray Troll,
 With the great green eyes,
 But I love you, gray gray Troll, —
 You are so wise !
 Tell me, this sweet morn,
 Tell me all you know, —
 Tell me, was I born ?
 Tell me, did I grow ?

Fell I from the blue,
Like a drop of rain,
Then, as violets do,
Blossom'd up again?
Why am I so frail?
Why am I so small?
Why am I so pale?
Why am I at all?
Tell me! — while I lie
On this lily-bed,
While the dragon-fly,
With his round red Eye,
Floats above my head.

THE TROLL.

When the summer day
Makes the greenwood gay
And the blue sky clear,
What do you do and say?
What do you see and hear?

THE LITTLE FAY.

When the summer day
Makes the greenwood gay
And the blue sky clear,
I roam wherever I may,
And I feel no fear;
I rise from my bed of an acorn-cup,
And shake the dew from my hair and eyes,
Then I stoop to a dew-drop and drink it up,
And it seems to strengthen my wings to rise;
Then I fly! I fly!
I rise up high,
High as the greenwood tree,
The humming-bee and the butterfly,

And the moth with its broad brown wings, go by,
 While down on the leaf of an oak I lie,
 Curl'd up where none can see !
 But I seem to hear strange voices call,
 Like the hum of a distant waterfall,
 Sighing and saddening me ;
 And still I lie and hearken there,
 Swinging and floating high in air,
 And the voices make me sad and pale,
 Till the sunbeams go,
 And the large green fly with his silken sail
 Floats by me slow,
 And the leaves grow dark and are lightly roll'd,
 The soft boughs flutter, the dews fall cold,
 And the shadows grow,
 Before I know !
 And down I fall to the side of the stream,
 And with palpitating silver gleam
 I see it flow,
 As the moon comes out above the place,
 And I stoop to drink, and smile to trace
 The water-kelpie's cold strange face
 Gleaming below.

THE TROLL.

When the night is blue,
 And the moon shines thro'
 The boughs of the greenwood tree,
 What do you say and do ?
 What do you hear and see ?

THE LITTLE FAY.

When the night is blue,
 And the moon shines thro'

The boughs of the greenwood tree,
Round my acorn-cup the dew
Sparkles silverlee !
And I lie so still, while up in the air
Open the little dewy eyes,
And the moon goes by with her yellow hair,
The kelpie hides his face and cries ;
And I lie ! I lie !
With little eye
That twinkles near the ground,
And the dismal bat goes screaming by,
And from far away comes the corn-craik's cry,
And I seem to hear a human sigh
And a human kiss's sound ;
And I know not why, but unaware
Fold little hands and pray a prayer,
And all things sigh around :
The moon grows white, the green leaves moan,
The brown moth flits with a weary drone,
The elfins cry as they flit and fleet,
And the small stars sadder seem ;
Then I pray the more, and my lips are sweet
With some sweet theme !
I press my lips together tight,
And pray till my face grows wan and white,
And the dim stars beam
As in a dream ;
And I pray, though I know not why I pray,
I pray, though I know not what I say,
And the moon-rays round me stream,
The greenwood shakes, the wild wind speaks,
A fiend slides by with bloodless cheeks,
The wild-hair'd kelpie waves arms and shrieks
With teeth that gleam !

THE TROLL.

Then why art thou so frail ?
 Why art thou so small ?
 Why art thou so pale ?
 Why art thou at all ?
 Shall I tell thee, little soul ?
 Shall I still thy cries ?

THE LITTLE FAY.

O tell me, gray gray Troll, —
 You are so wise !

THE TROLL.

With a soul love-laden,
 On a summer day,
 A mortal maiden
 Gave her heart away ;
 For the sun was glowing
 Under greenwood tree,
 The flowers were blowing,
 And the stream was flowing,
 And, coming, going,
 Humm'd the honey-bee ;
 And all sweet sounds and all sweet things,
 Whatever shines, whatever sings,
 From the bees whose horns were chiming
 In the pleasant forest bowers,
 To the little fairies rhyming
 In the sugar'd cells of flowers,
 Said, " Love him ! love him ! love him !"
 And she blush'd and sigh'd to hear,
 And murmur'd, " Yes, I love him !
 I cannot choose but love him !
 He is so dear !"

THE LITTLE FAY.

O see, thou gray Troll,
The stream whirls round and sighs !
Around thy brow, gray Troll,
Float moths and butterflies !
Afar strange echoes roll,
The kelpie starts and cries !
The great fly looks at me
With his round red eyes,
And the wasp and honey-bee
Above me fall and rise, —
O pause not, gray gray Troll, —
You are so wise !

THE TROLL.

With a soul love-laden,
On a summer night,
The mortal maiden
Lay pale and white ;
And the white moon, flying
O'er the boughs, could see
The maiden lying,
Sighing and dying,
Under greenwood tree ;
And her lover stoop'd in the pale moonshine,
And his eye was cold as the salt sea-brine,
And there came a sound
From underground,
And a voice that said : " She is mine ! she is mine ! "
Then the maiden, clinging
To her lover's side,
Kiss'd him softly,
And smiled and died.

But a gentle Fairy,
 Who saw it all,
 Turn'd the kiss she gave him
 To a Spirit small,
 To a gentle Spirit
 With a pale sad face,
 To a gentle Spirit
 To guard this place ;
 And the little Spirit,
 In sun and shade,
 Haunted the greenwood,
 And sigh'd and pray'd :
 Praying, praying,
 Upon this spot,
 It knew not wherefore,
 For it knew not what.
 And all sweet sounds and all sweet things,
 Whatever shines, whatever sings,
 From the bees whose hours were chiming
 In the pleasant forest-bowers,
 To the little fairies rhyming
 In the sugar'd cells of flowers,
 Have heard the Spirit praying
 And join'd its gentle cry,
 Have caught the Spirit's sorrow
 And pray'd they knew not why ;
 And all sweet sounds and all sweet things,
 Whatever shines, whatever sings,
 In the end shall follow
 The little Fay,
 As she floateth upward,
 And floating upward
 Shall sing and say :
 "When the sun was shining

On the summer day,
When the mortal maiden
Gave her heart away,
We whisper'd, whisper'd,
In the maiden's ear,
Saying, 'Love him ! love him !
And have no fear !'
And she said, ' I love him !
He is so dear ! ' ”
Then the Greater Spirit
On His throne shall hear.

THE LITTLE FAY.

You have told me why
I am frail and small !
You have told me why
I am here at all !
I pay thy wisdom
With kisses three, —
Stronger, longer,
My prayers shall be.
I love you, gray gray Troll, —
With the great green eyes,
I love you, gray gray Troll,
You are so wise.

VILLAGE VOICES.

I.

JANUARY WIND.

I.

THE wind, wife, the wind ; how it blows, how it
 blows ;
 It grips the latch, it shakes the house, it whistles, it
 screams, it crows,
 It dashes on the window-pane, then rushes off with a
 cry,
 Ye scarce can hear your own loud voice, it clatters so
 loud and high ;
 And far away upon the sea it floats with thunder-call,
 The wind, wife, the wind, wife ; the wind that did it all !

II.

The wind, wife, the wind ; how it blew, how it blew ;
 The very night our boy was born, it whistled, it scream'd,
 it crew ;
 And while you moan'd upon your bed, and your heart
 was dark with fright,
 I swear it mingled with the soul of the boy you bore
 that night ;
 It scarcely seems a winter since, and the wind is with
 us still, —
 The wind, wife ; the wind, wife ; the wind that blew us
 ill !

III.

The wind, wife, the wind ; how it blows, how it blows !
It changes, shifts, without a cause, it ceases, it comes
and goes ;
And David ever was the same, wayward, and wild, and
bold, —
For wilful lad will have his way, and the wind no hand
can hold ;
But ah ! the wind, the changeful wind, was more in the
blame than he ;
The wind, wife ; the wind, wife, that blew him out to
sea !

IV.

The wind, wife, the wind ; now 't is still, now 't is still ;
And as we sit I seem to feel the silence shiver and
thrill,
'T was thus the night he went away, and we sat in
silence here,
We listen'd to our beating hearts, and all was weary
and drear ;
We long'd to hear the wind again, and to hold our
David's hand, —
The wind, wife ; the wind, wife, that blew him out from
land !

V.

The wind, wife, the wind ; up again, up again !
It blew our David round the world, yet shriek'd at our
window-pane ;
And ever since that time, old wife, in rain, and in sun,
and in snow,
Whether I work or weary here, I hear it whistle and
blow,

It moans around, it groans around, it wanders with
scream and cry—

The wind, wife ; the wind, wife ; may it blow him home
to die !

II.

APRIL RAIN.

I.

SHOWERS, showers, naught but showers, and it wants a
week of May,

Flowers, flowers, summer flowers, are hid in the green
and the gray ;

Green buds and gray shoots cover their sparkling gear,
They stir beneath, they long to burst, for the May is so
near, so near, —

While I spin and I spin, and the fingers of the Rain
Fall patter, pitter, patter, on the pane.

II.

Showers, showers, silver showers, murmur and softly
sing,

Flowers, flowers, summer flowers, are swelling and
hearkening ;

It wants a week of May, when John and I will be one,
The flowers will burst, the birds will sing, as we walk
to church in the sun,

So patter goes my heart, in a kind of pleasant pain,
To the patter, pitter, patter of the Rain.

III.

SUMMER MOON.

I.

SUMMER Moon, O Summer Moon, across the west you
fly,
You gaze on half the earth at once with sweet and
steadfast eye ;
Summer Moon, O Summer Moon, were I aloft with
thee,
I know that I could look upon my boy who sails at sea.

II.

Summer Moon, O Summer Moon, you throw your silver
showers
Upon a glassy sea that lies round shores of fruit and
flowers,
The blue tide trembles on the shore, with murmuring
as of bees,
And the shadow of the ship lies dark near shades of
orange trees.

III.

Summer Moon, O Summer Moon, now wind and storm
have fled,
Your light creeps thro' a cabin-pane and lights a flaxen
head :
He tosses with his lips apart, lies smiling in your gleam,
For underneath his folded lids you put a gentle dream.

IV.

Summer Moon, O Summer Moon, his head is on his
 arm,
 He stirs with balmy breath and sees the moonlight on
 the Farm,
 He stirs and breathes his mother's name, he smiles and
 sees once more
 The Moon above, the fields below, the shadow at the
 door.

V.

Summer Moon, O Summer Moon, across the lift you go,
 Far south you gaze and see my Boy, where groves of
 orange grow!
 Summer Moon, O Summer Moon, you turn again to
 me,
 And seem to have the smile of him who sleeps upon the
 sea.

IV.

DECEMBER SNOW.

I.

THE cold, cold snow! the snow that lies so white!
 The moon and stars are hidden, there is neither warmth
 nor light:
 I wonder, wife, — I wonder, wife, — where Jeanie lies
 this night?

II.

'T is cold, cold, cold, since Jeanie went away,
 The world has changed, I sit and wait, and listen night
 and day,

The house is silent, silent, and my hair has grown so
gray :

'T is cold, cold, cold, wife, since Jeanie went away.

III.

And tick! tick! tick! the clock goes evermore,
It chills me, wife, — it seems to keep our child beyond
the door ;

I watch the firelight shadows as they float upon the
floor, *

And tick! tick! tick! wife, the clock goes evermore!

IV.

'T is cold, cold, cold! — 't were better she were dead,
Not that I heed the Minister, and the bitter things he
said, —

But to think my lassie cannot find a place to lay her
head :

'T is cold, cold, cold, wife, — better she were dead!

V.

The cold, cold snow! the snow that lies so white!
Beneath the snow her little one is hidden out of sight,
But up above, the wind blows keen, there's neither
warmth nor light,

I wonder, wife, — I wonder, wife, — where Jeanie lies
this night!

* " — — — — — That shadow
That lies floating on the floor."
Poe's 'Raven'.

NOTE.

THE preceding poems, both the Idyls and the Legends, are more or less dramatic, — in so far as the writer, in no instance save the “Preamble,” speaks in his own person. This leads to a variety of style, which may or may not be a recommendation. All the scenes are Scottish; but the speakers, with one exception, are educated men, who, although they sometimes have recourse to Scottish phrases and idioms, do not habitually employ the vernacular. The Weaver, who tells the tale of “Poet Andrew,” uses Scottish words liberally, but it has not always been thought necessary to represent his actual *pronunciation*. To print “auld” for “old,” “cauld” for “cold,” “o” for “of,” and the like, is to confuse, not vivify or verify, the text; and, indeed, the actual pronunciation is arbitrary and contradictory in the extreme. The author subjoins a brief glossary of the few words and phrases with which English readers can have any difficulty.

Aiblins, perhaps.

Bailie, a civic dignitary corresponding to the English alderman.

Bannock, a thick oaten cake.

Bield, small rustic building.

Biggin, ditto.

Birk, birch-tree.

Bonnet, a man’s cap.

Breeks, breeches.

Brawly, finely, excellently.

But and ben, the front and back rooms of a house of two apartments.

Callant, lad.

Caller, fresh, cool.

Chittering, chattering as with cold.

Clishmaclaver, a tedious, fidgety person.

Clotie, Satanus.

Corn-craik, the bird known in England as the land-rail.

Cowrie, to stoop down.

Crack, to talk.

Daft, mad, silly.

Dee, to die.

Deil, devil.

Dominie, schoolmaster.

Doo, dove.

Douk, to dip down, as a bather in water.

Een, eyes.

Eldritch, weird.

Eerie, dismal.
Fash, to trouble.
Feckless, silly.
Flyte, to scold.
Fu', full, used in the sense of being full of liquor, — intoxicated.
Gowan, daisy.
Gloaming, twilight.
Gumlie, gloomy.
Harrie, to rob.
Hallanstone, threshold-stone.
Hairst, harvest.
Howdie, midwife.
Ilka, each.
Ken, know.
Keek, to peep.
Kirk, church.
Lyart, speckled black and white.
Laverock, lark.
Learless, unlearned.
Lum, chimney.
Mannock, little man.

Minnie, mother.
Mixtie-maxtie, confusedly mixed.
Muckle, much.
Old-farrant, old-fashioned.
Poortith, poverty.
Reek, smoke.
Sark, *serk*, shirt.
Sough, a word expressing the sound of the wind through trees.
Speir, to ask, inquire.
Sneesh, snuff.
Sweetie-shop, sweetmeat-shop.
Tocher, dowry.
Toyte, to rock from side to side.
Unco, very.
Wame, stomach.
Wean, child.
Whiles, sometimes; *whiles*, *whiles* — sometimes, at others.
Whuzzle-whazzle, word expressing the sound of looms.



A LONDON IDYL.

I.

HEY, rain, rain, rain !
It patters down the glass and on the sill,
And splashes underneath, along the lane, —
Then gives a kind of scream, and lies quite still :
One likes to hear it, tho', when one is ill :
Rain, rain, rain, rain !
Hey, how it pours and pours !
Rain, rain, rain, rain ! —
A weary day for poor girls out-o'-doors !

II.

Ah, don't ! that kind of comfort makes me cry,
And, Parson, since I'm bad, I want to die.
The roaring of the street,
The tramp, tramp, tramp, of feet,
The sobbing, — sobbing of the weary Rain,
Have gone into the aching of my brain.
I'm lost and weak, and can no longer bear
To wander like a shadow here and there, —
As useless as a stone, — tired out, — and sick !
So that they put me down to slumber quick,
It does not matter where.
No one will miss me ; all will hurry by,
And never cast a thought on one so low ;
Fine gentles miss fine ladies when they go,
But folk care naught for such a thing as I.

III.

'T is bad, I know, to talk like that, — too bad !
 Joe, tho' he 's often hard, is strong and true —
 [Ah, Joe meant well !] and there 's the Baby too ! —
 But I 'm so tired and sad.
 I 'm glad it was a boy, sir, very glad.
 A man can fight along, can say his say,
 Is not look'd down upon, holds up his head,
 And at a push can always eārn his bread :
 Men have the best of it, in many a way.
 But ah ! 't is hard indeed for girls to keep
 Decent and honest, tramping in the town,
 Their best but bad, — made light of, — beaten down, —
 For ever wearying, wearying, for sleep.
 If they grow hard, go wrong, from bad to badder,
 Why, Parson dear, they 're happier being blind :
 They get no thanks for being good and kind, —
 The better that they are, they feel the sadder !

IV.

Nineteen ! nineteen !
 Only nineteen, and yet so old, so old ; —
 I feel like fifty, Parson, — I have been
 So wicked, I suppose, and life 's so cold !
 Ah, cruel are the wind and rain and snow,
 And I 've been out for years among them all :
 I scarce remember being weak and small
 Like Baby there, — it was so long ago.
 It does not seem that I was born, but woke
 One day in a dark room
 High up among the smoke,
 And trembled at the roaring of the gloom
 That hung around me [for you could not see
 The people from our window, — only stone, —

Deep walls, black pits, and lanes, — tho' drearily
 You heard the deep streets groan];
 And I was all alone, and looking out,
 And listening in a dream ;
 And far between the housetops was a gleam
 Of water winding silver-like about.
 That was the River. It look'd cool and deep,
 And as I watch'd, I felt it slipping past,
 As if it smoothly swept along in sleep,
 Gleaming and gliding fast ;
 And so I lean'd upon the sill and hearken'd
 To the strange hum, while all the roofs became
 Cover'd with thin sick flame,
 And with a dusky thrill the River darken'd ;
 Till coldly, coldly, on the roofs there lighten'd
 A pale sad silver light from heaven shed,
 And with a sweep that made me sick and frighten'd
 The yellow Moon roll'd up above my head ;
 And down below me groan'd the noise and trade,
 And O ! I felt alive, and was afraid,
 And cold, and hungry, shrieking out for bread.

v.

All that is like a dream ! It don't seem *true* ! —
 Father was dead and mother left, you see,
 To work for little brother Ned and me,
 And up among the roofs we grew and grew ;
 Lock'd in whole days high up, while mother char'd
 In people's houses ; only now and then
 We slip't away into the streets, and stared
 At the big crowds of women and of men.
 And I was six, but Ned was only three,
 And thin and weak and weary ; and one day,
 While mother was away,

He put his little head upon my knee,
 And went to sleep, and would not stir a limb,
 But look'd quite strange and old,
 For when I touch'd him, shook him, spoke to him,
 He smiled and grew so cold ;
 Then I was frighten'd and cried out, and none
 Could hear me, and I sat and nursed his head,
 Watching the smoky window while the Sun
 Peep'd in upon his face and made it red ;
 And I began to cry ; — till mother came,
 Knelt down and scream'd, and named the good GOD's
 name,
 And told me he was dead.
 Well, when she put his night-gown on, and weeping
 Put him among the rags upon his bed,
 I thought that brother Ned was only sleeping,
 And took his little hand and felt no fear ;
 But, when the place grew gray and cold and drear,
 And the round Moon came creeping, creeping, creeping,
 Over the roofs and put a silver shade
 All round the cold, cold bed where he was laid,
 I sobb'd and was afraid.

VI.

Ah, yes, it 's like a dream ! — for time pass'd by,
 And I went out into the smoky air,
 Fruit-selling, Parson, — trudging wet or dry, —
 Winter and summer, — weary, cold, and bare ;
 And when old mother laid her down to die,
 And parish buried her, I did not cry,
 And hardly seem'd to care ;
 I was too hungry and too dull ; beside,
 The roar o' streets had made me dry as dust :
 It took me all my time, howe'er I tried,

To keep my limbs alive and earn a crust ;
 I had no time for weeping,
 And when I was not out amid the roar,
 Or standing frozen at the play-house door,
 Why, I was coil'd upon my straw, and sleeping.
 Ah, pence were hard to gain !
 Some girls were pretty, too, but I was plain :
 Fine ladies never stopp'd and look'd and smiled,
 And gave me money for my face's sake.
That made me hard and angry when a child,
 But now it thrills my heart and makes it ache !
 The pretty ones, poor things, what could they do,
 Fighting and starving in the wicked town,
 But go from bad to badder, — down, down, down, —
 Being so poor and yet so pretty too ?
 Never could bear the like of that, — ah no !
 Better have starved outright than gone so low !
 For often late at night
 A face that I had known when mild and meek
 Pass'd by with fearful smile and painted cheek,
 Gleam'd in the gas, and faded out of sight.

VII.

But I 've no call to boast. I might have been
 As wicked, Parson dear, in my distress,
 But for your friend, — you know the one I mean ? —
 The tall pale lady in the mourning dress.
 Though we were cold at first, that wore away, —
 She was so mild and young,
 And had so soft a tongue,
 And eyes to sweeten what she loved to say.
 She never seem'd to scorn one, no, not she,
 And (what was best) she seemed as sad as me !
 Not one of those that make a girl feel base,

And call her names, and talk of her disgrace,
 And frighten one with thoughts of flaming Hell
 And fierce LORD GOD with black and angry brow,
 But soft and mild, and sensible as well,
 And O I loved her, and I love her now.
 She did me good for many and many a day, —
 More good than pence could ever do, I swear,
 For she was poor, with little pence to spare, —
 Learn'd me to read and quit low words, — and pray.
 And, Parson, tho' I never understood
 How such a life as mine was meant for good,
 And could not understand
 How one she said was wicked, ever could
 Go to your better land
 Among a troop so grand,
 I liked to hear her talk of such a place,
 And thought of all the angels she was best,
 Because her soft voice soothed me, and her face
 Made my words gentle, put my heart at rest.

VIII.

Ah! sir, 't was very lonesome. Night and day,
 Save when the sweet Miss came, I was alone ;
 Moved on and hunted thro' the streets of stone,
 And ev'n in dreams afraid to rest or stay.
 Then, other girls had lads to work and strive for,
 I envied them, and did not know 't was wrong,
 And often, very often, used to long
 For some one I could like and keep alive for.
 Marry? Not they!
 They can't afford to be so good, you know ;
 But many of them, tho' they step astray,
 Indeed don't mean to sin so much, or go
 Against what's decent. Only 't is their way.

And many might do worse than that, may be,
 If they had ne'er a one to fill a thought, —
 It sounds half wicked, but poor girls like me
 Must sin a little, to be good in aught.

IX.

So I was glad when I began to see
 That costermongering Joe had fancied me ;
 And when, one night, he took me to the play
 Over on Surrey side, and offer'd fair,
 That we should take a little room and share
 Our earnings, why, I could not answer "nay!"
 And that's a year ago ; and tho' I'm bad,
 I've been as true to Joe as girl could be ;
 I don't complain a bit of Joe, dear lad,
 Joe never, never meant but well ; and we
 Have had as fresh and fair a time, I think,
 As one could hope, since we are both so low :
 Joe likes me, never gave me push or blow,
 When sober : only, he was wild in drink.
 But then, we don't mind beating when a man
 Is angry, if he likes us and keeps straight,
 Works for his bread and does the best he can ; —
 'T is being left and slighted that we hate.

X.

And so the Baby's come, and I shall die !
 And tho' 't is hard to leave poor Baby here,
 Where folk will think him bad, and all's so drear,
 The great LORD GOD knows better far than I.
 Ah, don't ! — 't is kindly, but it pains me so !
 You say I'm wicked, and I want to go !
 "GOD's kingdom," Parson, dear ? Ah nay, ah nay !
 That must be like the country, — which I fear :

I saw the country once, one summer day,
And I would rather die in London here.

XI.

For I was sick of hunger, cold, and strife,
And took a sudden fancy in my head
To try the country, and to earn my bread
Out among fields, where, I had heard, one's life
Was easier and brighter. So, that day,
I took my basket up and stole away,
Early at morning. As I went along,
Trembling and loath to leave the busy place,
I felt that I was doing something wrong,
And fear'd to look policemen in the face.
And all was dim: the streets were gray and wet
After a rainy night: and all was still;
I held my shawl around me with a chill,
And dropt my eyes from every face I met;
Until the streets began to fade, the road
Grew fresh and clean and wide,
Fine houses where the gentlefolk abode,
And gardens full of flowers, on every side:
That made me walk the quicker, — on, on, on, —
As if I were asleep with half-shut eyes,
And all at once I saw to my surprise
The houses of the gentlefolk were gone,
And I was standing still,
Shading my face, upon a high green hill,
And the bright sun was blazing,
And all the blue above me seem'd to melt
To burning flashing gold, while I was gazing
On the great smoky cloud where I had dwelt.

XII.

I'll ne'er forget that day. All was so bright
 And strange. Upon the grass around my feet
 The rain had hung a million drops of light ;
 The air, too, was so clear and warm and sweet
 It seem'd a sin to breathe it. All around
 Were hills and fields and trees that trembled thro'
 A burning blazing fire of gold and blue,
 And there was not a sound,
 Save a bird singing, singing, and a kind
 Of sighing from the grass upon the ground.
 I turn'd away, like one grown deaf and blind.
 Then, with my heavy hand upon my chest,
 Because the bright air pain'd me, trembling, sighing,
 I stole into a dewy field to rest,
 And O the green green grass where I was lying
 Was fresh and living, — and the bird sang loud,
 Out of a golden cloud, —
 And I was looking up at him and crying !

XIII.

The hours they slipt away ; and by and by
 The sun grew red, big shadows fill'd the sky,
 The air grew damp with dew,
 And the dark night was coming down, I knew.
 Well, I was more afraid than ever then,
 And felt that I should die in such a place ; —
 So back to London town I turn'd my face,
 And crept into the great black streets again ;
 And when I breathed the smoke and heard the roar,
 Why, I was better, for in London here
 My heart was busy, and I felt no fear.
 I never saw the country any more.
 And I have stay'd in London well or ill,

I dared not stay out yonder if I could,
 For one feels dead, and all looks pure and good, —
 I could not bear a life so bright and still.
 All that I want is sleep,
 Under the flags and stones, so deep, so deep !
 GOD won't be hard on one so mean, but He
 Perhaps will let a tired girl slumber sound
 There in the deep cool darkness's underground ;
 And I shall waken up in time, may be,
 Better and stronger, not afraid to see
 The great still Light that folds Him round and round !

XIV.

See ! there 's a bit of sunshine thro' the pane, —
 How cool and moist it looks amid the rain !
 I like to hear the splashing of the drops
 On the house tops,
 And the loud humming of the folk that go
 Along the streets below !
 I like the smoke and roar, — I am so bad, —
 They make a low one hard and still her cares . . .
 There 's Joe ! I hear his foot upon the stairs ! —
 He must be wet, poor lad !
 He will be angry, like enough, to find
 Another little life to clothe and keep,
 But show him Baby, Parson, — speak him kind, —
 And tell him Doctor thinks I 'm going to sleep.
 A hard hard life is his, — he need be strong
 And rough, to earn his bread and get along ; —
 I think he will be sorry when I go,
 And leave the little one and him behind.
 I hope he 'll see another to his mind
 To keep him straight and tidy. Poor old Joe !

LANGLEY LANE.

A LOVE POEM.

I N all the land, range up, range down,
Is there ever a place so pleasant and sweet,
As Langley Lane in London town,
Just out of the bustle of square and street?
Little white cottages all in a row,
Gardens where bachelors'-buttons grow,
Swallows' nests in roof and wall,
And up above the still blue sky
Where the woolly white clouds go sailing by, —
I seem to be able to see it all!

For now, in summer, I take my chair,
And sit outside in the sun, and hear
The distant murmur of street and square,
And the swallows and sparrows chirping near;
And Fanny, who lives just over the way,
Comes running many a time each day
With her little hand's touch so warm and kind,
And I smile and talk, with the sun on my cheek,
And the little live hand seems to stir and speak, —
For Fanny is dumb and I am blind.

Fanny is sweet thirteen, and she
Has fine black ringlets and dark eyes clear,
And I am older by summers three, —
Why should we hold one another so dear?

Because she cannot utter a word,
 Nor hear the music of bee or bird,
 The water-cart's splash or the milkman's call!
 Because I have never seen the sky,
 Nor the little singers that hum and fly, —
 Yet know she is gazing upon them all!

For the sun is shining, the swallows fly,
 The bees and the blue-flies murmur low,
 And I hear the water-cart go by,
 With its cool splash-splash down the dusty row;
 And the little one close at my side perceives
 Mine eyes upraised to the cottage eaves,
 Where birds are chirping in summer shine,
 And I hear, though I cannot look, and she,
 Though she cannot hear, can the singers see, —
 And the little soft fingers flutter in mine!

Hath not the dear little hand a tongue,
 When it stirs on my palm for the love of me?
 Do I not know she is pretty and young?
 Hath not my soul an eye to see? —
 'T is pleasure to make one's bosom stir,
 To wonder how things appear to her,
 That I only hear as they pass around;
 And as long as we sit in the music and light,
She is happy to keep God's sight,
 And *I* am happy to keep God's sound.

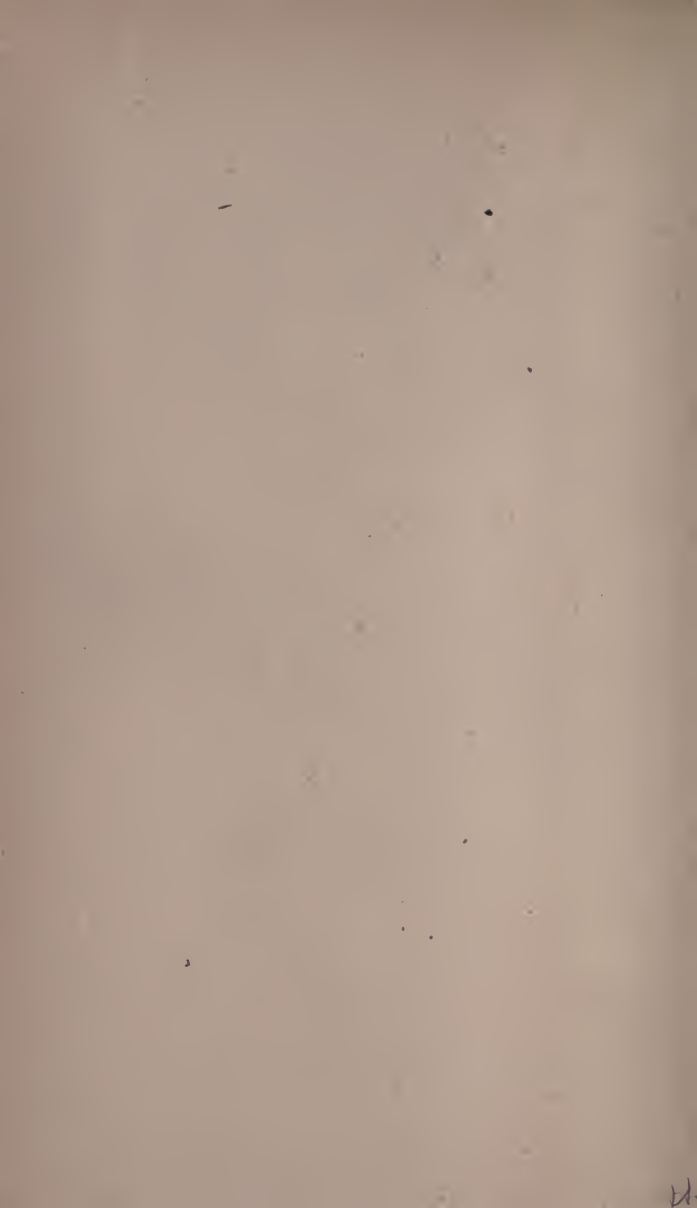
Why, I know her face, though I am blind, —
 I made it of music long ago:
 Strange large eyes and dark hair twined
 Round the pensive light of a brow of snow;
 And when I sit by my little one,

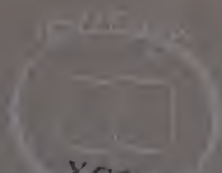
And hold her hand and talk in the sun,
And hear the music that haunts the place,
I know she is raising her eyes to me,
• And guessing how gentle my voice must be,
And *seeing* the music upon my face.

Though, if ever the Lord should grant me a prayer,
(I know the fancy is only vain,)
I should pray; just once, when the weather is fair,
To see little Fanny and Langley Lane;
Though Fanny, perhaps, would pray to hear
The voice of the friend that she holds so dear,
The song of the birds, the hum of the street,—
It is better to be as we have been,—
Each keeping up something, unheard, unseen,
To make God's heaven more strange and sweet!

Ah! life is pleasant in Langley Lane!
There is always something sweet to hear!
Chirping of birds or patter of rain!
And Fanny, my little one, always near!
And though I am weakly and can't live long,
And Fanny my darling is far from strong,
And though we can never married be,—
What then?—since we hold one another so dear,
For the sake of the pleasure one cannot hear,
And the pleasure that only one can see?

THE END.





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