

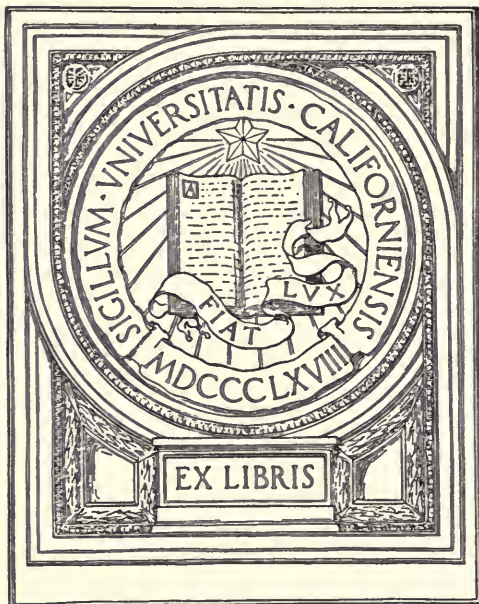
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ROBERT ERNEST COWAN



SONGS OF THE SOUL

BY

JOAQUIN MILLER

AUTHOR OF

"SONGS OF THE SIERRAS," "SONGS OF THE SUNDOWN SEAS,"

"SONGS OF ITALY," "SHADOWS OF SHASTA,"

"BUILDING THE CITY BEAUTIFUL," ETC., ETC.



LONDON

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1896

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SONGS OF THE SOUL

TO
MOTHER

Long years, lorn years apart, alone,
Despite man's rage or woman's ruth,
I kept my cloud-capped heights of stone
To watch for light, to toil for truth.

And oh, the voices I have heard!
Such visions when the morning grows —
A brother's soul in some sweet bird,
A sister's spirit in a rose.

And oh, the beauty I have found!
Such beauty, beauty everywhere;
The beauty creeping on the ground,
The beauty singing in the air.

The love in all, the good in all,
The God in all, in all that is;
But oh, I stumble to my fall,
To try to tell a tithe of this!

Poor falt'ring tongue! Each rambling tale,
Save here and there a ray of light,
Reads as some tavern of the vale,
Instead of God's house on some height.

But take these flowers; tears and toil
Have meshed them in most sad array;
Yet if some weed, some wood, some soil . . .
A tear may wash the moil away.

SAPPHO AND PHAON.

SONG FIRST.

“In the beginning, God —”

*When God's Spirit moved upon
The waters' face, and vapors curled
Like incense o'er deep-cradled dawn
That dared not yet the mobile world,—*

*When deep-cradled dawn uprose,
Ere the baby stars were born,
When the end of all repose
Came with that first wondrous morn,—*

*In the morning of the world
When light was — a giant born :
O that morning of the world,
That vast, first tumultuous morn !*

PART FIRST.

I.

WHAT is there in a dear dove's eyes,
Or voice of mated melodies,
That tells us ever of blue skies
And cease of deluge on Love's seas?
The dove looked down on Jordan's tide
Well pleased with Christ the Crucified;
The dove was hewn in Karnak stone
Before fair Jordan's banks were known.
The dove has such a patient look,
I read rest in her pretty eyes
As in the Holy Book.

I think if I should love some day —
And may I die when dear Love dies —
Why, I would sail Francisco's Bay
And seek to see some sea-dove's eyes:
To see her in her air-built nest,
Her wide, warm, restful wings at rest;
To see her rounded neck reach out,
Her eyes lean lovingly about;
And seeing this as love can see,
I then should know, and surely know,
That love sailed on with me.

II.

See once this boundless bay and live,
See once this beauteous bay and love,
See once this warm, bright bay and give
God thanks for olive branch and dove.
Then take Columbia's sapphire sea
And sail and sail the world with me.
Some isles, drowned in the drowning sun,
Ten thousand sea-doves voiced as one;
Lo! love's wings furled and wings unfurled;
Who sees not this warm, half-world sea,
Sees not, knows not the world.

How knocks he at the Golden Gate,
This lord of waters, strong and bold,
And fearful-voiced and fierce as fate,
And hoar and old, as Time is old;
Yet young as when God's finger lay
Against Night's forehead that first day,
And drove vast Darkness forth, and rent
The waters from the firmament.
Hear how he knocks and raves and loves!
He woos us through the Golden Gate
With all his soft sea-doves.

And on and on, up, down, and on,
The sea is oily grooves; the air
Is as your bride's sweet breath at dawn
When all your ardent youth is there.

And oh, the rest! and oh, the room!
And oh, the sensuous sea perfume!
 Yon new moon peering as we passed
 Has scarce escaped our topmost mast.
 A porpoise, wheeling restlessly,
Quick draws a bright, black, dripping blade,
 Then sheathes it in the sea.

Vast, half-world, wondrous sea of ours!
 Dread, unknown deep of all sea deeps!
What fragrance from thy strange sea-flowers
 Deep-gardened where God's silence keeps!
Thy song is silence, and thy face
Is God's face in His holy place.
 Thy billows swing sweet censer foam,
 Where stars hang His cathedral's dome.
 Such blue above, below such blue!
These burly winds so tall, they can
 Scarce walk between the two.

Such room of sea! Such room of sky!
 Such room to draw a soul-full breath!
Such room to live! Such room to die!
 Such room to roam in after death!
White room, with sapphire room set 'round,
And still beyond His room profound;
 Such room-bound boundlessness o'erhead
 As never has been writ or said
 Or seen, save by the favored few,

Where kings of thought play chess with stars
Across their board of blue.

* * * * *

III.

The proud ship wrapped her in the red
That hung from heaven, then the gray,
The soft dove-gray that shrouds the dead
And prostrate form of perfumed day.
Some noisy, pygmy creatures kept
The deck a spell, then, leaning, crept
Apart in silence and distrust,
Then down below in deep disgust.
An albatross,— a shadow cross
Hung at the head of buried day,—
At foot the albatross.

Then came a warm, soft, sultry breath —
A weary wind that wanted rest;
A wind as from some house of death
With flowers heaped; as from the breast
Of such sweet princess as had slept
Some thousand years embalmed, and kept,
In fearful Karnak's tomb-hewn hill,
Her perfume and spiced sweetness still,—
Such breath as bees droop down to meet,
And creep along lest it may melt
Their honey-laden feet.

The captain's trumpet smote the air!
Swift men, like spiders up a thread,
Swept suddenly. Then masts were bare
As when tall poplars' leaves are shed,
And ropes were clamped and stays were clewed.
'T was as when wrestlers, iron-thewed,
Gird tight their loins, take full breath,
And set firm face, as fronting death.
Three small brown birds, or gray, so small,
So ghostly still and swift they passed,
They scarce seemed birds at all.

Then quick, keen saber-cuts, like ice;
Then sudden hail, like battle-shot.
Then two last men crept down like mice,
And man, poor pygmy man, was not.
The great ship shivered, as with cold,
An instant staggered back, then bold
As Theodosia, to her waist
In waters, stood erect and faced
Black thunder; and she kept her way
And laughed red lightning from her face
As on some summer's day.

The black sea-horses rode in row;
Their white manes tossing to the night
But made the blackness blacker grow
From flashing, phosphorescent light.
And how like hurdle steeds they leapt!
The low moon burst; the black troop swept

Right through her hollow, on and on.
A wave-wet scimiter was drawn,
Flashed twice, flashed thrice triumphantly;
But still the steeds dashed on, dashed on,
And drowned her in the sea.

What headlong winds that lost their way
At sea, and wailed out for the shore!
How shook the orient doors of day
With all this mad, tumultuous roar!
Black clouds, shot through with stars of red;
Strange stars, storm-born and fire fed;
Lost stars that came, and went, and came;
Such stars as never yet had name.
The far sea-lions on their isles
Upheaved their huge heads terrified,
And moaned a thousand miles.

What fearful battle-field! What space
For light and darkness, flame and flood!
Lo! Light and Darkness, face to face,
In battle harness battling stood!
And how the surged sea burst upon
The granite gates of Oregon!
It tore, it tossed the seething spume,
And wailed for room! and room! and room!
It shook the crag-built eaglets' nest
Until they screamed from out their clouds,
Then rocked them back to rest.

How fiercely reckless raged the war!

Then suddenly no ghost of light,
Or even glint of storm-born star.

Just night, and black, torn bits of night;
Just night, and midnight's middle noon,
With all mad elements in tune;

Just night, and that continuous roar
Of wind, wind, night, and nothing more.

Then all the hollows of the main
Sank down so deep, it almost seemed
The sea was hewn in twain.

How deep the hollows of this deep!

How high, how trembling high the crest!
Ten thousand miles of surge and sweep
And length and breadth of billow's breast!

Up! up, as if against the skies!

Down! down, as if no more to rise!

The creaking wallow in the trough,
As if the world was breaking off.

The pygmies in their trough down there!
Deep in their trough they tried to pray—
To hide from God in prayer.

Then boomed Alaska's great, first gun
In battling ice and rattling hail;

Then Indus came, four winds in one!

Then came Japan in counter mail
Of mad cross winds; and Waterloo
Was but as some babe's tale unto.

The typhoon spun his toy in play
And whistled as a glad boy may
To see his top spin at his feet:
The captain on his bridge in ice,
His sailors mailed in sleet.

What unchained, unnamed noises, space!
What shoreless, boundless, rounded reach
Of room was here! Fit field, fit place
For three fierce emperors, where each
Came armed with elements that make
Or unmake seas and lands, that shake
The heavens' roof, that freeze or burn
The seas as they may please to turn.
And such black silence! Not a sound
Save whistling of that mad, glad boy
To see his top spin round.

Then swift, like some sulked Ajax, burst
Thewed Thunder from his battle-tent;
As if in pent-up, vengeful thirst
For blood, the veins of Earth were rent,
And sheeted crimson lay a wedge
Of blood below black Thunder's edge.
A pause. The typhoon turned, upwheeled,
And wrestled Death till heaven reeled.
Then Lightning reached a fiery rod,
And on Death's fearful forehead wrote
The autograph of God.

IV.

God's name and face — what need of more?
Morn came: calm came, and holy light,
And warm, sweet weather, leaning o'er,
Laid perfumes on the tomb of night.
The three wee birds came dimly back
And housed about the mast in black,
And all the tranquil sense of morn
Seemed as Dakota's fields of corn,
Save that some great soul-breaking sigh
Now sank the proud ship out of sight,
Now sent her to the sky.

V.

One strong, strange man had kept the deck—
One silent, seeing man, who knew
The pulse of Nature, and could reck
Her deepest heart-beats through and
through.
He knew the night, he loved the night.
When elements went forth to fight
His soul went with them without fear
To hear God's voice, so few will hear.
The swine had plunged them in the sea,
The swine down there, but up on deck
The captain, God and he.

VI.

And oh, such sea-shell tints of light
High o'er those wide sea-doors of dawn!
Sail, sail the world for that one sight,
Then satisfied, let time begone.
The ship rose up to meet that light,
Bright candles, tipped like tasseled corn,
The holy virgin, maiden morn,
Arrayed in woven gold and white.
Put by the harp — hush minstrelsy;
Nor bard or bird has yet been heard
To sing this scene, this sea.

VII.

Such light! such liquid, molten light!
Such mantling, healthful, heartfelt morn!
Such morning born of such mad night!
Such night as never had been born!
The man caught in his breath, his face
Was lifted up to light and space;
His hand dashed o'er his brow, as when
Deep thoughts submerge the souls of men;
And then he bowed, bowed mute, appalled
At memory of scenes, such scenes
As this swift morn recalled.

He sought the ship's prow, as men seek
The utmost limit for their feet,
To lean, look forth, to list nor speak,
Nor turn aside, nor yet retreat

One inch from this far vantage-ground,
 Till he had pierced the dread profound
 And proved it false. And yet he knew
 Deep in his heart that all was true;
 So like it was to that first dawn
 When God had said, "Let there be light,"
 And thus he spake right on:

"My soul was born ere light was born,
 When blackness was, as this black night.
 And then that morn, as this sweet morn!
 That sudden light, as this swift light!
 I had forgotten. Now, I know
 The travail of the world, the low,
 Dull creatures in the sea of slime
 That time committed unto time,
 As great men plant oaks patiently,
 Then turn in silence unto dust
 And wait the coming tree.

"That long, lorn blackness, seams of flame,
 Volcanoes bursting from the slime,
 Huge, shapeless monsters without name
 Slow shaping in the loom of time;
 Slow weaving as a weaver weaves;
 So like as when some good man leaves
 His acorns to the centuries
 And waits the stout ancestral trees.
 But ah, so piteous, memory
 Reels back, as sickened, from that scene—
 It breaks the heart of me!

“Volcanoes crying out for light!

The very slime found tongues of fire!
Huge monsters climbing in their might
O'er submerged monsters in the mire
That heaved their slimy mouths, and cried
And cried for light, and crying died.

How all that wailing through the air
But seems as some unbroken prayer,
One ceaseless prayer that long night
The world lay in the loom of time
And waited so for light!

“And I, amid those monsters there,

A grade above, or still below?
Nay, Time has never time to care,
And I can scarcely dare to know.

I but remember that one prayer;
Ten thousand wide mouths in the air,
Ten thousand monsters in their might,
All eyeless, looking up for light.
We prayed, we prayed as never man,
By sea or land, by deed or word,
Has prayed since light began.

“Great sea-cows laid their fins upon

Low-floating isles, as good priests lay
Two holy hands, at early dawn,
Upon the altar-cloth to pray.
Aye, ever so, with lifted head,
Poor, slime-born creatures and slime-bred,

We prayed. Our sealed-up eyes of night
 All lifting, lifting up for light.
 And I have paused to wonder, when
 This world will pray as we then prayed,
 What God may not give men!

“Hist! Once I saw,—What was I then?
 Ah, dim and devious the light
 Comes back, but I was not of men.
 And it is only such black night
 As this, that was of war and strife
 Of elements, can wake that life,
 That life in death, that black and cold
 And blind and loveless life of old.
 But hear! I saw — heed this and learn
 How old, how holy old is Love,
 However Time may turn:

“I saw, I saw, or somehow felt,
 A sea-cow mother nurse her young.
 I saw, and with thanksgiving knelt,
 To see her head, low, loving, hung
 Above her nursling. Then the light,
 The lovelight from those eyes of night!
 I say to you ’t was lovelight then
 That first lit up the eyes of men.
 I say to you lovelight was born
 Ere God laid hand to clay of man,
 Or ever that first morn.

“What though a monster slew her so,
The while she bowed and nursed her young?
She leaned her head to take the blow,
And dying, still the closer clung—
And dying gave her life to save
The helpless life she erstwhile gave,
And so sank back below the slime,
A torn shred in the loom of time.
The one thing more I needs must say,
That monster slew her and her young;
But Love he could not slay.”

SONG SECOND.

“ And God said, Let there be light.”

*Rise up! How brief this little day!
 We can but kindle some dim light
 Here in the darkened, wooded way
 Before the gathering of night.
 Come, let us kindle it. The dawn
 Shall find us tenting farther on.
 Come, let us kindle ere we go—
 We know not where; but this we know:
 Night cometh on, and man needs light.
 Come! camp-fire embers, ere we grope
 Yon gray archway of night.*

*Life is so brief, so very brief,
 So rounded in, we scarce can see
 The fruitage grown above the leaf
 And foliage of a single tree
 In all God's garden; yet we know
 That goodly fruits must grow and grow
 Beyond our vision. We but stand
 In some deep hollow of God's hand,
 Hear some sweet bird its little day,
 See cloud and sun a season pass,
 And then, sweet friend, away!*

*Clouds pass, they come again; and we,
Are we, then, less than these to God?*

*Oh, for the stout faith of a tree
That drops its small seeds to the sod,
Safe in the hollow of God's hand,
And knows that perish from the land*

*It shall not! Yea, this much we know,
That each, as best it can, shall grow
As God has fashioned, fair or plain,
To do its best in cloud or sun,
Or in His still, small rain.*

Oh, good to see is faith in God!

*But better far is faith in good:
The one seems but a sign, a nod,
The one seems God's own flesh and blood.
How many names of God are sung!
But good is good in every tongue.*

*And this the light, the Holy Light
That leads thro' night and night and night;
Thro' nights named Death, that lie between
The days named Life, the ladder round
Unto the Infinite Unseen.*

PART SECOND.

I.

THE man stood silent, peering past
His utmost verge of memory.
What lay beyond, beyond that vast
Bewildering darkness and dead sea
Of noisome vapors and dread night?
No light! not any sense of light
Beyond that life when Love was born
On that first, far, dim rim of morn:
No light beyond that beast that clung
In darkness by the light of love
And died to save her young.

And yet we know life must have been
Before that dark, dread life of pain;
Life germs, love germs of gentle men,
So small, so still; as still, small rain.
But whence this life, this living soul,
This germ that grows a godlike whole?
I can but think of that sixth day
When God first set His hand to clay,
And did in His own image plan
A perfect form, a manly form,
A comely, godlike man.

II.

Did soul germs grow down in the deeps,
The while God's Spirit moved upon
The waters? High-built Lima keeps
A rose-path, like a ray of dawn;
And simple, pious peons say
Sweet Santa Rosa passed that way;
And so, because of her fair fame
And saintly face, these roses came.
Shall we not say, ere that first morn,
When God moved, garmented in mists,
Some sweet soul germs were born?

III.

The strange, strong man still kept the prow;
He saw, still saw before light was,
The dawn of love, the huge sea-cow,
The living slime, love's deathless laws.
He knew love lived, lived ere a blade
Of grass, or ever light was made;
And love was in him, of him, as
The light was on the sea of glass.
It made his heart great, and he grew
To look on God all unabashed;
To look lost eons through.

IV.

Illuming love! what talisman!
That Word which makes the world go 'round!

That Word which bore worlds in its plan!
 That Word which was the Word profound!
 That Word which was the great First Cause,
 Before light was, before sight was!
 I would not barter love for gold
 Enough to fill a tall ship's hold;
 Nay, not for great Victoria's worth—
 So great the sun sets not upon
 In all his round of earth.

I would not barter love for all
 The silver spilling from the moon;
 I would not barter love at all
 Though you should coin each afternoon
 Of gold for centuries to be,
 And count the coin all down as free
 As conqueror fresh home from wars,—
 Coin sunset bars, coin heaven-born stars,
 Coin all below, coin all above,
 Count all down at my feet, yet I—
 I would not barter love.

V.

The lone man started, stood as when
 A strong man hears, yet does not hear.
 He raised his hand, let fall, and then
 Quick arched his hand above his ear
 And leaned a little; yet no sound
 Broke through the vast, serene profound.

Man's soul first knew some telephone
In sense and language all its own.
The tall man heard, yet did not hear;
He saw and yet he did not see
A fair face near and dear.

Yet there, half hiding, crouching there
Against the capstan, coils on coils
Of rope, some snow still in her hair,
Like Time, too eager for his spoils,
Was such fair face raised to his face
As only dream of dreams give place;
Such shyness, boldness, seashell tint,
Such book as only God may print,
Such tender, timid, holy look
Of startled love and trust and hope,—
A gold-bound story-book.

And while the great ship rose and fell,
Or rocked or rounded with the sea,
He saw,—a little thing to tell,
An idle, silly thing, maybe,—
Where her right arm was bent to clasp
Her robe's fold in some closer clasp,
A little isle of melting snow
That round about and to and fro
And up and down kept eddying.
It told so much, that idle isle,
Yet such a little thing.

It told she, too, was of a race
 Born ere the baby stars were born;
 She, too, familiar with God's face,
 Knew folly but to shun and scorn;
 She, too, all night had sat to read
 By heaven's light, to hear, to heed
 The awful voice of God, to grow
 In thought, to see, to feel, to know
 The harmony of elements
 • That tear and toss the sea of seas
 To foam-built battle-tents.

He saw that drifting isle of snow,
 As some lorn miner sees bright gold
 Seamed deep in quartz, and joys to know
 That here lies hidden wealth untold.
 And now his head was lifted strong,
 As glad men lift the head in song.
 He knew she, too, had spent the night
 As he, in all that wild delight
 Of tuneful elements; she, too,
 He knew, was of that olden time
 Ere oldest stars were new.

VI.

Her soul's ancestral book bore date
 Beyond the peopling of the moon,
 Beyond the day when Saturn sate
 In royal cincture, and the boon

Of light and life bestowed on stars
 And satellites; when martial Mars
 Waxed red with battle rage, and shook
 The porch of heaven with a look;
 When polar ice-shafts propt gaunt earth,
 And slime was but the womb of time,
 That knew not yet of birth.

VII.

To be what thou wouldst truly be,
 Be bravely, truly, what thou art.
 The acorn houses the huge tree,
 And patient, silent bears its part,
 And bides the miracle of time.
 For miracle, and more sublime
 It is than all that has been writ,
 To see the great oak grow from it.
 But thus the soul grows, grows the heart,—
 To be what thou wouldst truly be,
 Be truly what thou art.

To be what thou wouldst truly be,
 Be true. God's finger sets each seed,
 Or when or where we may not see;
 But God shall nourish to its need
 Each one, if but it dares be true;
 To do what it is set to do.
 Thy proud soul's heraldry? 'Tis writ
 In every gentle action; it

Can never be contested. Time
 Dates thy brave soul's ancestral book
 From thy first deed sublime.

VIII.

Wouldst learn to love one little flower,
 Its perfume, perfect form and hue?
 Yea, wouldst thou have one perfect hour
 Of all the years that come to you?
 Then grow as God hath planted, grow
 A lordly oak or daisy low,
 As He hath set His garden; be
 Just what thou art, or grass or tree.
 Thy treasures up in heaven laid
 Await thy sure ascending soul,
 Life after life,—be not afraid!

IX.

Wouldst know the secrets of the soil?
 Wouldst have Earth bare her breast to you?
 Wouldst know the sweet rest of hard toil?
 Be true, be true, be ever true!
 Ah me, these self-made cuts of wrong
 That hew men down! Behold the strong
 And comely Adam bound with lies
 And banished from his paradise!
 The serpent on his belly still
 Eats dirt through all his piteous days,
 Do penance as he will.

Poor, heel-bruised, prostrate, tortuous snake!
 What soul crawls here upon the ground?
 God willed this soul at birth to take -
 The round of beauteous things, the round
 Of earth, the round of boundless skies.
 It lied, and lo! how low it lies!
 What quick, sleek tongue to lie with here!
 Wast thou a broker but last year?
 Wast known to fame, wast rich and proud?
 Didst live a lie that thou mightst die
 With pockets in thy shroud?

X.

Be still, be pitiful! that soul
 May yet be rich in peace as thine.
 Yea, as the shining ages roll
 That rich man's soul may rise and shine
 Beyond Orion; yet may reel
 The Pleiades with belts of steel
 That compass commerce in their reach;
 May learn and learn, and learning, teach,
 The while his soul grows grandly old,
 How nobler far to share a crust
 Than hoard car-loads of gold!

XI.

Oh, but to know; to surely know
 How strangely beautiful is light!

How just one gleam of light will glow
And grow more beautifully bright
Than all the gold that ever lay
Below the wide-arched Milky Way!
“Let there be light!” and lo! the burst
Of light in answer to the first
Command of high Jehovah’s voice!
Let there be light for man to-night,
That all men may rejoice.

XII.

The little isle of ice and snow
That in her gathered garment lay,
And dashed and drifted to and fro
Unhindered of her, went its way;
And then the warm winds of Japan
Were with them, and the silent man
Sat with her, saying, hearing naught,
Yet seeing, noting all; as one
Sees not, yet all day sees the sun.
He knew her silence, heeded well
Her dignity of idle hands
In this deep, tranquil spell.

XIII.

The true soul surely knows its own,
Deep down in this man’s heart he knew,
Somehow, somewhere along the zone
Of time, his soul should come unto

Its safe sea port, some pleasant land
 Of rest where she should reach a hand.
 He had not questioned God. His care
 Was to be worthy, fit to share
 The glory, peace, and perfect rest,
 Come how or when or where it comes,
 As God in time sees best.

Her face reached forward, not to him,
 But forward, upward, as for light;
 For light that lay a silver rim
 Of sea-lit whiteness more than white.
 The vast, full morning poured and spilled
 Its splendor down, and filled and filled
 And overfilled the heaped-up sea
 With silver molten suddenly.
 The night lay trenched in her meshed hair;
 The tint of sea-shells left the sea
 To make her more than fair.

What massed, what matchless midnight hair!
 Her wide, sweet, sultry, drooping mouth,
 As droops some flower when the air
 Blows odors from the ardent South—
 That Sapphic, sensate, bended bow
 Of deadly archery; as though
 Love's legions fortified there and sent
 Red arrows from his bow fell bent.
 Such apples! such sweet fruit concealed
 Of perfect womanhood make more
 Sweet pain than if revealed.

XIV.

How good a thing it is to house
Thy full heart treasures to that day
When thou shalt take her, and carouse
Thenceforth with her for aye and aye;
How good a thing to give the store
That thus the thousand years or more,
Poor, hungered, holy worshiper,
You kept for her, and only her!
How well with all thy wealth to wait
Or year, or thousand thousand years,
Her coming at love's gate!

XV.

The winds pressed warm from warm Japan
Upon her pulsing womanhood.
They fanned such fires in the man
His face shone glory where he stood.
In Persia's rose-fields, I have heard,
There sings a sad, sweet, one-winged bird;
Sings ever sad in lonely round
Until his one-winged mate is found;
And then, side laid to side, they rise
So swift, so strong, they even dare
The doorway of the skies.

XVI.

How rich was he! how richer she!
Such treasures up in heaven laid,

Where moth and rust may never be,
Nor thieves break in, or make afraid.
Such treasures, where the tranquil soul
Walks space, nor limit nor control
Can know, but journeys on and on
Beyond the golden gates of dawn;
Beyond the outmost round of Mars;
Where God's foot rocks the cradle of
His new-born baby stars.

XVII.

As one who comes upon a street,
Or sudden turn in pleasant path,
As one who suddenly may meet
Some scene, some sound, some sense that
hath
A memory of olden days,
Of days that long have gone their ways,
She caught her breath, caught quick and
fast
Her breath, as if her whole life passed
Before, and pendent to and fro
Swung in the air before her eyes;
And oh, her heart beat so!

How her heart beat! Three thousand years
Of weary, waiting womanhood,
Of folded hands, of falling tears,
Of lone soul-wending through dark wood;
But now at last to meet once more

Upon the bright, all-shining shore
Of earth, in life's resplendent dawn,
And he so fair to look upon!
Tall Phaon and the world aglow!
Tall Phaon, favored of the gods,
And oh, her heart beat so!

Her heart beat so, no word she spake;
She pressed her palms, she leaned her face,—
Her heart beat so, its beating brake
The cord that held her robe in place
About her wondrous, rounded throat,
And in the warm winds let it float
And fall upon her soft, round arm,
So warm it made the morning warm.
Then pink and pearl forsook her cheek,
And, "Phaon, I am Sappho, I —"
Nay, nay, she did not speak.

And was this Sappho, she who sang
When mournful Jeremiah wept?
When harps, as weeping willows hang,
Hung mute and all their music kept?
Aye, this was Sappho, she who knew
Such witchery of song as drew
The warlike world to hear her sing;
As moons draw mad seas following.
Aye, this was Sappho, Lesbos hill,
All had been hers, and Tempos vale,
And song sweet as to kill.

Her dark Greek eyes turned to the sea;
Lo, Phaon's ferry as of old!
He kept his boat's prow still, and he
Was stately, comely, strong, and bold
As when he ferried gods, and drew
Immortal youth from one who knew
His scorn of gold. The Lesbian shore
Lay yonder, and the rocky roar
Against the promontory told,
Told and retold her tale of love
That never can grow old.

Three thousand years! yet love was young
And fair as when Æolis knew
Her glory, and her great soul strung
The harp that still sweeps ages through.
Ionic dance or Doric war,
Or purpled dove or dulcet car,
Or unyoked-dove or close-yoked dove,
What meant it all but love and love?
And at the naming of Love's name
She raised her eyes, and lo! her doves!
Just as of old they came.

SONG THIRD.

“And God saw the light that it was good.”

*I heard a tale long, long ago,
 Where I had gone apart to pray
 By Shasta's pyramid of snow,
 That touches me unto this day.
 I know the fashion is to say
 An Arab tale, an Orient lay;
 But when the grocer rings my gold
 On counter, flung from greasy hold,
 He cares not from Acadian vale
 It comes, or savage mountain chine;—
 But this the Shastan tale:*

*Once in the olden, golden days
 When men and beasts companied, when
 All went in peace about their ways
 Nor God had hid His face from men
 Because man slew his brother beast
 To make his most unholy feast,
 A gray coyoté, monkish cowed,
 Upraised his face and wailed and howled
 The while he made his patient round;
 For lo! the red men all lay dead,
 Stark, frozen on the ground.*

*The very dogs had fled the storm,
A mother with her long, strong hair
Bound tight about her baby's form,
Lay frozen, all her body bare.
Her last shred held her babe in place;
Her last breath warmed her baby's face.
Then, as the good monk laid the snow
Above this mother loving so,
He heard God from the mount above
Speak through the clouds and loving say:
"Yea, all is dead but Love."*

*"So take up Love and cherish her,
And seek the white man with all speed,
And keep Love warm within thy fur;
For oh, he needeth love indeed.
Take all and give him freely, all
Of love you find, or great or small;
For he is very poor in this,
So poor he scarce knows what love is."
The gray monk took Love in his paws
And sped, a ghostly streak of gray,
To where the white man was.*

*But man uprose, enraged to see
A gaunt wolf track his new-hewn town.
He called his dogs, and angrily
He brought his flashing rifle down.
Then God said: "On his hearthstone lay
The seed of Love, and come away;*

*The seed of Love, 't is needed so,
 And pray that it may grow and grow."
 And so the gray monk crept at night
 And laid Love down, as God had said,
 A faint and feeble light.*

*So faint, indeed, the cold hearthstone
 It seemed would chill starved Love to death;
 And so the monk gave all his own
 And crouched and fanned it with his breath
 Until a red cock crowed for day.
 Then God said: "Rise up, come away."
 The beast obeyed, but yet looked back
 All day along his lonely track;
 For he had left his all in all,
 His own Love, for that famished Love
 Seemed so exceeding small.*

*And God said: "Look not back again."
 But ever, where a campfire burned,
 And he beheld strong, burly men
 At meat, he sat him down and turned
 His face to wail and wail and mourn
 The Love laid on that cold hearthstone.
 Then God was angered, and God said:
 "Be thou a beggar then; thy head
 Hath been a fool, but thy swift feet,
 Because they bore sweet Love, shall be
 The fleetest of all fleet."*

*And ever still about the camp,
By chine or plain, in heat or hail,
A homeless, hungry, hounded tramp,
The gaunt coyoté keeps his wail.
And ever as he wails he turns
His head, looks back and yearns and yearns
For lost Love, laid that wintry day
To warm a hearthstone far away.
Poor loveless, homeless beast, I keep
Your lost Love warm for you, and, too,
A cañon cool and deep.*

PART THIRD.

I.

AND they sailed on; the sea-doves sailed,
And Love sailed with them. And there lay
Such peace as never had prevailed
On earth since dear Love's natal day.
Great black-backed whales blew bows in clouds,
Wee sea-birds flitted through the shrouds.
A wide-winged, amber albatross
Blew by, and bore his shadow cross,
And seemed to hang it on the mast,
The while he followed far behind,
The great ship flew so fast.

She questioned her if Phaon knew,
If he could dream, or halfway guess
How she had tracked the ages through
And trained her soul to gentleness
Through many lives, through every part
To make her worthy his great heart.
Would Phaon turn and fly her still,
With that fierce, proud, imperious will,
And scorn her still, and still despise?
She shuddered, turned aside her face,
And lo, her sea-dove's eyes!

II.

Then days of rest and restful nights;
And love kept tryst as true love will,
The prow their trysting-place. Delights
Of silence, simply sitting still,—
Of asking nothing, saying naught;
For all that love had ever sought
Sailed with them; words or deeds had been
Impertinence, a selfish sin.
And oh, to know how sweet a thing
Is silence on those restful seas
When Love's dove folds her wing!

The great sea slept. In vast repose
His pillowed head half-hidden lay,
Half-drowned in dread Alaskan snows
That stretch to where no man may say.
His huge arms tossed to left, to right,
Where black woods, banked like bits of night,
As sleeping giants toss their arms
At night about their fearful forms
A slim canoe, a night-bird's call,
Some gray sea-doves, just these and Love,
And Love indeed was all!

III.

Far, far away such cradled Isles
As Jason dreamed and Argos sought

Surge up from endless watery miles!
 And thou, the pale high priest of thought,
 The everlasting thronèd king
 Of fair Samoa! Shall I bring
 Sweet sandal-wood? Or shall I lay
 Rich wreaths of California's bay
 From sobbing maidens? Stevenson,
 Sleep well. Thy work is done; well done!
 So bravely, bravely done!

And Molokia's lord of love
 And tenderness, and piteous tears
 For stricken man! Go forth, O dove!
 With olive branch, and still the fears
 Of those he meekly died to save.
 They shall not perish. From that grave
 Shall grow such healing! such as He
 Gave stricken men by holy Galilee.
 Great ocean cradle, cradle, keep
 These two, the chosen of thy heart,
 Rocked in sweet, baby sleep.

IV.

Fair land of flowers, land of flame,
 Of sun-born seas, of sea-born clime,
 Of clouds low shepherded and tame
 As white pet sheep at shearing time,
 Of great, white, generous, high-born rain,
 Of rainbows builded not in vain —

Of rainbows builded for the feet
Of love to pass dry-shod and fleet
From isle to isle, when smell of musk
'Mid twilight is, and one lone star
Sits in the brow of dusk.

Oh, dying, sad-voiced, sea-born maid,
And plundered, dying, still sing on.
Thy breast against the thorn is laid —
Sing on, sing on, sweet dying swan.
How pitiful! And so despoiled
By those you fed, for whom you toiled!
Aloha! Hail you, and farewell,
Far echo of some lost sea-shell!
Some song that lost its way at sea,
Some sea-lost notes of nature, lost,
And crying, came to me

Dusk maid, adieu! One sea-shell less!
Sad sea-shell silenced and forgot.
O Rachel in the wilderness,
Wail on! Your children they are not.
And they who took them, they who laid
Hard hand, shall they not feel afraid?
Shall they who in the name of God
Robbed and enslaved escape His rod?
Give me some after-world afar
From these hard men, for well I know
Hell must be where they are.

V.

Lo! suddenly the lone ship burst
 Upon an uncompleted world,
 A world so dazzling white, man durst
 Not face the flashing search-light hurled
 From heaven's snow-built battlements
 And high-heaved camp of cloud-wreathed tents.
 And boom! boom! boom! from sea or shore
 Came one long, deep, continuous roar,
 As if God wrought; as if the days,
 The first six pregnant mother morns,
 Had not quite gone their way.

What word is fitting but the Word
 Here in this vast world-fashioning?
 What tongue can name the nameless Lord?
 What hand lay hand on anything?
 Come, let us coin new words of might
 And massiveness to name this light,
 This largeness, largeness everywhere!
 White rivers hanging in the air,
 Ice-tied through all eternity!
 Nay, peace! It were profane to say:
 We dare but hear and see.

Be silent! Hear the strokes resound!
 'T is God's hand rounding down the earth!
 Take off thy shoes, 't is holy ground,—
 Behold! a continent has birth!

The skies bow down, Madonna's blue
 Enfolds the sea in sapphire. You
 May lift, a little spell, your eyes
 And feast them on the ice-propped skies,
 And feast but for a little space:
 Then let thy face fall grateful down
 And let thy soul say grace.

VI.

At anchor so, and all night through,
 The two before God's temple kept.
 He spake: "I know yon peak, I knew
 A deep ice-cavern there. I slept
 With hairy men, or monsters slew,
 Or led down misty seas my crew
 Of cruel savages and slaves,
 And slew who dared the distant waves,
 And once a strange, strong ship — and *she*,
 I bore her to yon cave of ice,—
 And Love companioned me.

VII.

"Two scenes of all scenes from the first
 Have come to me on this great sea:
 The one when light from heaven burst,
 The one when sweet Love came to me.
 And of the two, or best or worst.
 I ever hold this second first.

Bear with me. Yonder citadel
Of ice tells all my tongue can tell:
My thirst for love, my pain, my pride,
My soul's warm youth the while she lived,
Its old age when she died.

“I know not if she loved or no.
I only asked to serve and love;
To love and serve, and ever so
My love grew as grows light above,—
Grew from gray dawn to gold midday,
And swept the wild world in its sway.
The stars came down, so close they came,
I called them, named them with her name,
The kind moon came,— came once so near,
That in the hollow of her arm
I leaned my lifted spear.

“And yet, somehow, for all the stars,
And all the silver of the moon,
She looked from out her icy bars
As longing for some sultry noon.
As longing for some warmer kind,
Some far south sunland left behind.
Then I went down to sea. I sailed
Thro' seas where monstrous things prevailed,
Such slimy, shapeless, hungered things!
Red griffins, wide-winged, bat-like wings,
Red griffins, black or fire-fed,
That ate my fever-stricken men
Ere yet they were quite dead.

' I could not find her love for her,
Or land, or fit thing for her touch,
And I came back, sad worshiper,
And watched and longed and loved so
much!

I watched huge monsters climb and pass
Reflected in great walls, like glass;
Dark, draggled, hairy, fearful forms
Upblown by ever-battling storms,
And streaming still with slime and spray;
So huge from out their sultry seas,
Like storm-torn islands they.

"Then even these she ceased to note,
She ceased at last to look on me,
But, baring to the sun her throat,
She looked and looked incessantly
Away against the south, away
Against the sun the livelong day.
At last I saw her watch a swan
Surge tow'rd the north, surge on and on.
I saw her smile, her first, faint smile;
Then burst a new-born thought, and I,
I nursed that all the while.

VIII.

"I somehow dreamed, or guessed, or knew,
That somewhere in the dear earth's heart
Was warmth and tenderness and true
Delight, and all love's nobler part.

I tried to think, aye, thought and thought;
In all the strange fruits that I brought
 For her delight I could but find
 The sweetness deep within the rind.
 All beasts, all birds, some better part
Of central being deepest housed;
 And earth must have a heart.

“I watched the wide-winged birds that blew
 Continually against the bleak
And ice-built north, and surely knew
 The long, lorn croak, the reaching beak,
Led not to ruin evermore;
For they came back, came swooping o'er
 Each spring, with clouds of younger ones,
 So dense, they dimmed the summer suns.
 And so I knew somehow, somewhere,
Beyond earth's ice-bared, star-tipt peaks
 They found a softer air.

“And too, I heard strange stories, held
 In mem'ries of my hairy men,
Vague, dim traditions, dim with eld,
 Of other lands and ages when
Nor ices were, nor anything;
 But ever one warm, restful spring
 Of radiant sunlight: stories told
 By dauntless men of giant mold,
 Who kept their cavern's icy mouth
Ice-locked, and hungered where they sat,
 With sad eyes tow'rd the south:

“ Tales of a time ere hate began,
Of herds of reindeer, wild beasts tamed,
When man walked forth in love with man,
Walked naked, and was not ashamed;
Of how a brother beast he slew,
Then night, and all sad sorrows knew;
How tame beasts were no longer tame;
How God drew His great sword of flame
And drove man naked to the snow,
Till, pitying, He made of skins
A coat, and clothed him so.

“ And, true or not true, still the same,
I saw continually at night
That far, bright, flashing sword of flame,
Misnamed the Borealis light;
I saw my men, in coats of skin
As God had clothed them, felt the sin
And suffering of that first death
Each day in every icy breath.
Then why should I still disbelieve
These tales of fairer lands than mine,
And let my lady grieve?

IX.

“ Yea, I would find that land for her!
Then dogs, and sleds, and swift reindeer;
Huge, hairy men all mailed in fur,
Who knew not yet the name of fear,

Nor knew fatigue, nor aught that ever
To this day has balked endeavor.

And we swept forth, while wide, swift wings
Still sought the Pole in endless strings.

I left her sitting looking south,
Still leaning, looking to the sun,—

My kisses on her mouth!

X.

“ Far toward the north, so tall, so far,
One tallest ice shaft starward stood—

Stood as it were itself a star,

Scarce fallen from its sisterhood.

Tip-top the glowing apex there

Upread a huge white polar bear.

He pushed his swart nose up and out,

And walked the North Star round about,

Below the Great Bear of the main,

The upper main, as if his mate,

Chained with a star-linked chain.

XI.

“And we pushed on, up, on, and on,

Until, as in the world of dreams,

We found the very doors of dawn

With warm sun bursting through the seams.

We brake them through, then down, far down,

Until, as in some park-set town,

We found lost Eden. Very rare
The fruit, and all the perfumed air
So sweet, we sat us down to feed
And rest, without a thought or care, .
Or ever other need.

“For all earth’s pretty birds were here;
And women fair, and very fair;
Sweet song was in the atmosphere,
Nor effort was, nor noise, nor care.
As cocoons from their silken house
Wing forth and in the sun carouse,
My men let fall their housings and
Passed on and on, far down the land
Of purple grapes and poppy bloom.
Such warm, sweet land, such peaceful land!
Just peace and sweet perfume!

“And I pushed down ere I returned
To climb the deep world’s walls of snow,
And saw where earth’s heart beat and burned,
An hundred sultry leagues below;
Saw deep seas set with deep-sea isles
Of waving verdure; miles on miles
Of rising sea-birds with their broods,
In all their noisy, happy moods!
Aye, then I knew earth has a heart,
That Nature wastes nor space or place,
But husbands every part.

XII.

“ My reindeer fretted: I turned back
For her, the heart of me, my soul!
Ah, then, how swift, how white my track!
All Paradise beneath the Pole
Were but a mockery till she
Should share its dreamful sweets with me. . . .
I know not well what next befell,
Save that white heaven grew black hell.
She sat with sad face to the south,
Still sat, sat still; but she was dead —
My kisses on her mouth.

XIII.

“ What else to do but droop and die?
But dying, how my poor soul yearned
To fly as swift south birds may fly —
To pass that way her eyes had turned,
The dear days she had sat with me,
And search and search eternity!
And, do you know, I surely know
That God has given us to go
The way we will in life or death —
To go, to grow, or good or ill,
As one may draw a breath?”

SONG FOURTH.

“ And God saw everything that He had made,
and, behold, it was very good.”

*Says Plato, “ Once in Greece the gods
Plucked grapes, pressed wine, and reveled deep
And drowsed below their poppy-pods,
And lay full length the hills asleep.
Then, waking, one said, ‘ Overmuch
We toil : come, let us rise and touch
Red clay, and shape it into man,
That he may build as we shall plan !’
And so they shaped man, all complete,
Self-procreative, satisfied ;
Two heads, four hands, four feet.*

*“ And then the gods slept, heedless, long ;
But waking suddenly one day,
They heard their valley ring with song
And saw man reveling as they.
Enraged, they drew their swords and said,
‘ Bow down ! bend down !’ — but man replied
Defiant, fearless, everywhere
His four fists shaking in the air.
The gods descending cleft in twain
Each man ; then wiped their swords on grapes ;
And let confusion reign.*

" *And such confusion! each half ran,
 Ran here, ran there; or weep or laugh
 Or what he would, each helpless man
 Ran hunting for his other half.
 And from that day, thenceforth the grapes
 Bore blood and flame, and restless shapes
 Of hewn-down, helpless halves of men,
 Ran searching ever; crazed, as when
 First hewn in twain, they grasped, let go,
 Then grasped again; but rarely found
 That lost half once loved so."*

*Now, right or wrong, or false or true,
 'Tis Plato's tale of bitter sweet;
 But I know well and well know you
 The quest keeps on at fever heat.
 Let Love, then, wisely sit and wait!
 The world is round; sit by the gate,
 Like blind Belisarius: being blind,
 Love should not search; Love shall not find
 By searching. Brass is so like gold,
 How shall this blind Love know new brass
 From pure soft gold of old?*

PART FOURTH.

I.

NAY, turn not to the past for light;
Nay, teach not Pagan tale for truth.
Behind lie heathen gods and night,
Before lift high, white lights and youth.
Sweet Orpheus looked back, and lo,
Hell met his eyes and endless woe!
Lot's wife looked back, and for this fell
To something even worse than hell.
Let us have faith, sail, seek and find
The new world and the new world's ways:
Blind Homer led the blind!

II.

Come, let us kindle Faith in light!
Yon eagle climbing to the sun
Keeps not the straightest course in sight,
But room and reach of wing and run
Of rounding circle all are his,
Till he at last bathes in the light
Of worlds that look far down on this
Arena's battle for the right.
The stoutest sail that braves the breeze,
The bravest battle ship that rides,
Rides rounding up the seas.

Come, let us kindle faith in man!
 What though yon eagle where he swings
 May moult a feather in God's plan
 Of broader, stronger, better wings!
 Why, let the moulted feathers lie
 As thick as leaves upon the lawn,
 These be but proof we cleave the sky
 And still round on and on and on.
 Fear not for moulting feathers; nay,
 But rather fear when all is fair
 And care is far away.

Come, let us kindle faith in God!
 He made, He keeps, He still can keep.
 The storm obeys His burning rod;
 The storm brought Christ to walk the deep.
 Trust God to round His own at will;
 Trust God to keep His own for aye—
 Or strife or strike, or well or ill;
 An eagle climbing up the sky—
 A meteor down from heaven hurled—
 Trust God to round, reform, or rock
 His new-born, noisy world.

III.

How full the great, full-hearted seas
 That lave high, white Alaska's feet!
 How densely green the dense green trees!
 How sweet the smell of wood! how sweet!

What sense of high, white newness where
This new world breathes the new, blue air
That never breath of man or breath
Of mortal thing considereth!
And ah, the Borealis light!
The angel with his flaming sword
And never sense of night!

IV.

Are these the walls of Paradise—
Yon peaks the gates that few may pass?
Lo, everlasting silence lies
Along their gleaming ways of glass!
Just silence and that sword of flame;
Just silence and Jehovah's name,
Where all is new, unnamed, and white!
Come, let us read where angels write—
"In the beginning God"—aye, these
The waters where God's Spirit moved;
These, these, the very seas!

Just one deep, wave-washed chariot wheel:
Such sunset on that fair first day!
An unsheathed sword of flame and steel;
Then battle flashes; then dismay,
And mad confusion of all hues
That earth and heaven could infuse,
Till all hues softly fused and blent
In orange worlds of wonderment:

Then dying day, in kingly ire,
 Struck back with one last blow, and smote
 The world with molten fire.

So fell God's first day, proudly, dead
 In battle harness where he fought.
 But falling, still high o'er his head
 There flashed the sword in crimson wrought,
 Till came his kingly foeman, Dusk,
 In garments moist with smell of musk.
 The bent moon moved down heaven's steeps
 Low-bowed, as when a woman weeps;
 Bowed low, half-veiled in widowhood:
 Then stars tiptoed the peaks in gold
 And burned brown sandal-wood.

Fit death of Day; fit burial rite
 When "The beginning" was! I lay
 This leaflet with the musky night
 Upon his tomb. Come, come away;
 For Phaon talks and Sappho turns
 To where the light of heaven burns
 To love light, and she leans to hear
 With something more than mortal ear.
 The while the ship has pushed her prow
 So close against the fir-set shore
 You breathe the spicy bough.

V.

Some red men by the low, white beach;
Camp fires, belts of dense, black fir:
She leaning as if she would reach
To him the very soul of her.
The red flames cast a silhouette
Against the snow, above the jet
Black, narrow night of fragrant fir,
And, as of old, he looked on her,
Lim'd out against a glacier peak,
With strong arms crossed on his proud breast;
The while she felt him speak:

“How glad was I to walk with Death
Far down his dim, still, trackless lands,
Where wind nor wave nor any breath
Broke ripples o'er the somber sands.
I walked with Death as eagerly
As ever I had sailed this sea.
Then on and on I searched, I sought,
Yet all my seeking came to naught.
I sailed by pleasant, peopled isles
Of song and summer time; I sailed
Ten thousand weary miles!

“I heard a song! She had been sad,
So sad and ever drooping she;
How could she, then, in song be glad
The while I searched? It could not be.

And yet that voice! so like it seemed
I questioned if I heard or dreamed.

She smiled on me. This made me scorn
My very self; for I was born
To loyalty. I would be true
Unto my love, my soul, my self,
Whatever death might do.

“I fled her face, her proud, fair face,
Her songs that won a world to her.
Had she sat songless in her place,
Sat with no single worshiper,
Sat with bowed head, sad-voiced, alone,
I might have known! I might have known!
But how could I, the savage, know
This sun, contrasting with that snow,
Would waken her great soul to song
That still thrills all the ages through?
I blindly did such wrong!

“Again I fled. I ferried gods;
Yet, pining still, I came to pine
Where drowsy Lesbos Bacchus nods
And drowned my soul in Cyprian wine.
Drowned! drowned my poor, sad soul so deep,
I sank to where damned serpents creep!
Then slowly upward; round by round
I toiled, regained this vantage-ground.
And now, at last, I claim mine own,

As some long-banished king comes back
To battle for his throne."

VI.

I do not say that thus he spake
By word of mouth, by human speech;
The sun in one swift flash will take
A photograph of space and reach
The realm of stars. A soul like his
Is like unto the sun in this:
Her soul the plate placed to receive
The swift impressions, to believe,
To doubt no more than you might doubt
The wondrous midnight world of stars
That dawn has blotted out.

VII.

And Phaon loved her; he who knew
The North Pole and the South, and named
The stars for her, strode forth and slew
Black, hairy monsters no man tamed;
And all before fair Greece was born,
Or Lesbos yet knew night or morn.
No marvel that she knew him when
He came, the chiefest of all men.
No marvel that she loved and died,
And left such marbled bits of song—
Proud, broken Phidian pride.

VIII.

Oh, but for that one further sense
 For man that man shall yet possess!
 That sense that puts aside pretense
 And sees the truth, that scorns to guess
 Or grope, or play at blindman's buff,
 But knows rough diamonds in the rough!
 Oh, well for man when man shall see,
 As see he must man's destiny!
 Oh, well when man shall know his mate,
 One-winged and desolate, lives on
 And bravely dares to wait!

IX.

Full morning found them, and the land
 Received them, and the chapel gray;
 Some Indian huts on either hand,
 A smell of pine, a flash of spray,—
 White, frozen rivers of the sky
 Hung down the glacial steeps hard by;
 Far ice-peaks flashed with sudden light,
 As if they would illumine the rite,
 As if they knew his story well,
 As if they knew that form, that face,
 And all that time could tell.

X.

They passed dusk chieftains two by two,
 With totem gods and stroud and shell.

They slowly passed, and passing through,
He bought of all — he knew them well.
And one, a bent old man and blind,
He put his hands about, and kind
And strange words whispered in his ear,
So kind, his dull soul could but hear.
And hear he surely did, for he,
With full hands, lifted up his face
And smiled right pleasantly.

How near, how far, how fierce, how tame!
The polar bear, the olive branch;
The dying exile, Christ's sweet name—
Vast silence! Then the avalanche!
How much this little church to them—
Alaska and Jerusalem!
The pair passed in, the silent pair
Fell down before the altar there,
The Greek before the gray Greek cross,
And Phaon at her side at last,
For all her weary loss.

The bearded priest came, and he laid
His two hands forth and slowly spake
Strange, solemn words, and slowly prayed
And blessed them there, for Jesus' sake.
Then slowly they arose and passed,
Still silent, voiceless to the last.
They passed: her eyes were to his eyes,
But his were lifted to the skies,

As looking, looking, that lorn night,
Before the birth of God's first-born
As praying still for Light.

XI.

So Phaon knew and Sappho knew
Nor night nor sadness any more
How new the old world, ever new,
When white Love walks the shining shore!
They found his long-lost Eden, found
Her old, sweet songs; such dulcet sound
Of harmonies as soothe the ear
When Love and only Love can hear.
They found lost Eden; lilies lay
Along their path, whichever land
They journeyed from that day.

XII.

They never died. Great loves live on.
You need not die and dare the skies
In forms that poor creeds hinge upon
To pass the gates of Paradise.
I know not if that sword of flame
Still lights the North, and leads the same
As when he passed the gates of old.
I know not if they braved the bold,
Defiant walls that fronted them
Where awful Saint Elias broods,
Wrapped in God's garment-hem.

I only know they found the lost,
 The long-lost Eden, found all fair
 Where naught had been but hail and frost;
 As Love finds Eden anywhere.
 And wouldst thou, too, live on and on?
 Then walk with Nature till the dawn.
 Aye, make thy soul worth saving — save
 Thy soul from darkness and the grave.
 Love God not overmuch, but love
 God's world which He called very good;
 Then lo, Love's white sea-dove!

XIII.

I know not where lies Eden-land;
 I only know 't is like unto
 God's kingdom, ever right at hand —
 Ever right here in reach of you.
 Put forth thy hand, or great or small,
 In storm or sun, by sea or wood,
 And say, as God hath said of all,
 Behold, it all is very good.
 Farewell, fair Sappho, Phaon, Love!
 I leave you in your paradise,
 And seek mine own sea-dove.

* * * *

XIV.

Yon great chained sea-ship chafes to be
Once more unleashed without the Gate
On proud Columbia's boundless sea,
And I chafe with her, for I hate
The rust of rest, the dull repose,
The fawning breath of baffled foes,
Whose blame through all my bitter days
I have endured; spare me their praise!
I go, as I have lived, alone;
Alone, as all must go at last
Who sail the vast Unknown.

XV.

Could I but teach man to believe —
Could I but make small men to grow,
To break frail spider-webs that weave
About their thews and bind them low;
Could I but sing one song and slay
Grim Doubt; I then could go my way
In tranquil silence, glad, serene,
And satisfied, from off the scene.
But ah, this disbelief, this doubt,
This doubt of God, this doubt of good,—
The damned spot will not out!

XVI.

Grew once a rose within my room
Of perfect hue, of perfect health;

Of such perfection and perfume,
 It filled my poor house with its wealth.
 Then came the pessimist who knew
 Not good or grace, but overthrew
 My rose, and in the broken pot
 Nosed fast for slugs within the rot.
 He found, found with exulting pride,
 Deep in the loam, a worm, a slug:
 The while my rose-tree died.

* * * * *

XVII.

Yea, ye did hurt me. Joy in this.
 It is your right at last to know,
 Since pain is all your world of bliss,
 That ye did, hounding, hurt me so;
 But mute as bayed stag on his steeps,
 Who keeps his haunts, and, bleeding, keeps
 His breast turned watching where they come,
 Kept I defiant, and as dumb.
 But comfort ye; your work was done
 With devils' cunning, like the mole
 That lets the life-sap run.

And my revenge? My vengeance is
 That I have made one rugged spot
 The fairer; that I fashioned this
 While envy, hate, and falsehood shot

Rank poison; that I leave to those
 Who shot, for arrows, each a rose;
 Aye, labyrinths of rose and wold,
 Acacias garmented in gold,
 Bright fountains, where birds come to drink;
 Such clouds of cunning, pretty birds,
 And tame as you can think.

XVIII.

Come here when I am far away,
 Fond lovers of this lovely land,
 And sit quite still and do not say,
 Turn right or left, or lift a hand,
 But sit beneath my kindly trees
 And gaze far out yon sea of seas:—
 These trees, these very stones, could tell
 How long I loved them, and how well—
 And maybe I shall come and sit
 Beside you; sit so silently
 You will not reck of it.

XIX.

The old desire of far, new lands,
 The thirst to learn, to still front storms,
 To bend my knees, to lift my hands
 To God in all His thousand forms—
 These lure and lead as pleasantly
 As old songs sung anew at sea.
 But, ancient lands or ocean deeps,
 I will my ashes to my steeps—

I will my steeps, green cross, red rose,
To those who love the beautiful—
Come, learn to be of those.

XX.

The sun has draped his couch in red;
Night takes the warm world in his arms
And turns to their espousal bed
To breathe the perfume of her charms:
The great sea calls, and I descend
As to the call of some sweet friend.
I go, not hating any man,
But loving Earth as only can
A lover suckled at her breast
Of beauty from his babyhood,
And roam to truly rest.

XXI.

God is not far; man is not far
From Heaven's porch, where pæans roll.
Man yet shall speak from star to star
In silent language of the soul;
Yon star-strewn skies be but a town,
With angels passing up and down.
"I leave my peace with you." Lo! these,
His seven wounds, the Pleiades
Pierce Heaven's porch. But resting there
The new moon rocks the Child Christ in
Her silver rocking-chair.

SUNSET AND DAWN IN SAN
DIEGO.

*My city sits amid her palms;
The perfume of her twilight breath
Is something as the sacred balms
That bound sweet Jesus after death;
Such soft, warm twilight sense as lies
Against the gates of Paradise.*

*Such prayerful palms, with palms upreached,
As if this faith were incense smoke,
My city sits, a sermon preached,
A lily with a soul of oak.
But oh, the twilight! and the grace
Of twilight on her lifted face!*

*I love you, twilight,— love with love
So loyal, loving, fond that I,
When folding these poor hands to die,
Shall pray God lead me not above,*

*But leave me, twilight, sad and true,
To walk this lonesome world with you.*

*Yea, God knows I have walked with night;
I have not seen, I have not known
Such light as beats upon His throne.
I know I could not bear such light;
Therefore, I beg, sad sister true,
To share your shadow-world with you.*

*I love you, love you, maid of night,
Your perfumed breath, your dreamful eyes,
Your holy silences, your sighs
Of mateless longing; your delight
When night says, Hang on yon moon's horn
Your russet gown, and rest till morn.*

THE sun is dying; space and room,
Serenity, vast sense of rest,
Lie bosomed in the orange west
Of orient waters. Hear the boom
Of long, strong billows; wave on wave,
Like funeral guns above his grave.

Now night folds all; no sign or word;
But still that rocking of the deep—

Sweet mother, rock the world to sleep:
 Still rock and rock; as I have heard
 Some mother gently rock and rock
 The while she folds the little frock.

* * * * *

Broad mesa, brown, bare mountains, brown,
 Bowed sky of brown, that erst was blue;
 Dark, earth-brown curtains coming down —
 Earth-brown, that all hues melt into;
 Brown twilight, born of light and shade;
 Of night that came, of light that passed. . . .
 How like some lorn, majestic maid
 That wares not whither way at last!

Now perfumed Night, sad-faced and far,
 Walks up the world in somber brown.
 Now suddenly a loosened star
 Lets all her golden hair fall down —
 And Night is dead Day's coffin-lid,
 With cords of gold shot through his pall. . . .
 I hear the chorus, katydid;
 A katydid, and that is all.

Some star-tipt candles foot and head;
 Some perfumes of the perfumed sea;
 And now above the confined dead
 Dusk draws great curtains lovingly;
 While far o'er all, so dreamful far,
 God's Southern Cross by faith is seen

Tipt by one single blazing star,
 With spaces infinite between.

* * * * *

Come, love His twilight, the perfume
 Of God's great trailing garment's hem;
 The sense of rest, the sense of room,
 The garnered goodness of the day,
 The twelve plucked hours of His tree,
 When all the world has gone its way
 And left perfection quite to me
 And Him who, loving, fashioned them.

I know not why that wealth and pride
 Win not my heart or woo my tale.
 I only know I know them not;
 I only know to cast my lot
 Where God walks noiselessly with night
 And patient nature; my delight
 The wild rose of the mountain side,
 The lowly lily of the vale:

To live not asking, just to live;
 To live not begging, just to be;
 To breathe God's presence in the dusk
 That drives out loud, assertive light—
 To never ask, but ever give;
 To love my noiseless mother, Night;
 Her vast hair moist with smell of musk—
 Ah, this indeed were wealth to me!

* * * * *

A hermit's path, a mountain's perch,
A sandaled monk, a dying man —
A far-off, low, adobe church,
So far, its spire seems but a span
Below the hermit's orange-trees
That cap the clouds above the seas.

A low-voiced dove!

The dying Don

Put back the cross and sat dark-browed
And sullen, as a dove flew out
The bough, and circling round about,
Was bathed and gathered in a cloud,
That, like some ship, sailed on and on.

But let the gray monk tell the tale;
And tell it just as told to me.
This Don was chiefest of the vale
That banks by San Diego's sea,
And who so just, so generous,
As he who now lay dying thus?

But wrong, such shameless Saxon wrong,
Had crushed his heart, had made him hate
The sight, the very sound, of man.
He loved the lonely wood-dove's song;
He loved it as his living mate.
And lo! the good monk laid a ban
And penance of continual prayer —
But list, the living, dying there!

For now the end was, and he lay
As day lies banked against the night —
As lies some bark at close of day
To wait the dew-born breath of night;
To wait the ebb of tide, to wait
The lone plunge through the Golden Gate:

From land-locked bay to boundless sea —
From dusk through narrow straits of night,
Dim time to bright eternity —
To everlasting walks of light.
Some like as when you turn and blow
Your candle out and groping go.

But now the monk reproved the man,
The proud old Don, who never spake
One single prayer for his soul's sake,
But, scorning, died beneath the ban.

I.

“ You fled my flock, and sought this steep
And stony, star-lit, lonely height,
Where weird and unnamed creatures keep
To hold strange thought with things of night
Long, long ago. But now at last
Your life sinks surely to the past.
Lay hold, lay hold, the cross I bring,
Where all God's goodly creatures cling.

“Yea! You are good. Dark-browed and low
Beneath your shaggy brows you look
On me, as you would read a book:
And darker still your dark brows grow
As I lift up the cross to pray,
And plead with you to walk its way.

“Yea, you are good! There is not one,
From Tia Juana to the reach
And bound of gray Pacific Beach,
From Coronado’s palm-set isle
And palm-hung pathways, mile on mile,
But speaks you, Señor, good and true.
But oh, my silent, dying son!
The cross alone can speak for you
When all is said and all is done.

“Come! Turn your dim, dear eyes to me;
Have faith and help me plant this cross
Beyond where blackest billows toss,
As you would plant some pleasant tree,
Some fruitful orange-tree, and know
That it shall surely grow and grow,
As your own orange-trees have grown,
And be, as they, your very own.

“You smile at last, and pleasantly:
You love your laden orange-trees
Set high above your silver seas
With your own honest hand; each tree

A date, a day, a part, indeed,
Of your own life, and walk, and creed.

“You love your steeps, your star-set blue:
You watch yon billows flash, and toss,
And leap, and curve, in merry rout,
You love to hear them laugh and shout—
Men say you hear them talk to you;
Men say you sit and look and look,
As one who reads some holy book—
My son, wouldst look upon the cross?”

“Come, see me plant amid your trees
My cross, that you may see and know
’T will surely grow, and grow, and grow,
As grows some trusted little seed;
As grows some secret, small good deed;
The while you gaze upon your seas. . . .
Sweet Christ, now let it grow, and bear
Fair fruit, as your own fruit is fair.

“Aye! ever from the first I knew,
And marked its flavor, freshness, hue,
The gold of sunset and the gold
Of morn, in each rich orange rolled.

“I mind me now, ’t was long since, friend,
When first I climbed your path alone,
A savage path of brush and stone,
And rattling serpents without end.

“ Yea, years ago, when blood and life
Ran swift, and your sweet, faithful wife—
What! tears at last; hot, piteous tears
That through your bony fingers creep
The while you bend your face, and weep
As if your heart of hearts would break—
As if these tears were your heart’s blood,
A pent-up, sudden, bursting flood—
Look on the cross, for Jesus’ sake.”

II.

’T was night, and still it seemed not night.
Yet, far down in the cañon deep,
Where night had housed all day, to keep
Companion with the wolf, you might
Have hewn a statue out of night.

The shrill coyote loosed his tongue
Deep in the dark arroyo’s bed;
And bat and owl above his head
From out their gloomy caverns swung:
A swoop of wings, a cat-like call,
A crackle of sharp chaparral!

Then sudden, fitful winds sprang out,
And swept the mesa like a broom;
Wild, saucy winds, that sang of room!
That leapt the cañon with a shout
From dusty throats, audaciously

And headlong tore into the sea,
As tore the swine with lifted snout.

Some birds came, went, then came again
From out the hermit's wood-hung hill;
Came swift, and arrow-like, and still,
As you have seen birds, when the rain —
The great, big, high-born rain, leapt white
And sudden from a cloud like night.

And then a dove, dear, nunlike dove,
With eyes all tenderness, with eyes
So loving, longing, full of love,
That when she reached her slender throat
And sang one low, soft, sweetest note,
Just one, so faint, so far, so near,
You could have wept with joy to hear.

The old man, as if he had slept,
Raised quick his head, then bowed and wept
For joy, to hear once more her voice.
With childish joy he did rejoice
As one will joy to surely learn
His dear, dead love is living still;
As one will joy to know, in turn,
He too is loved with love to kill.

He put a hand forth, let it fall
And feebly close; and that was all.
And then he turned his tearful eyes
To meet the priest's, and spake this wise: —

Now mind, I say, not one more word
That livelong night of nights was heard
By monk or man, from dusk till dawn;
And yet that man spake on and on.

Why, know you not, soul speaks to soul?
I say the use of words shall pass.
Words are but fragments of the glass;
But silence is the perfect whole.

And thus the old man, bowed and wan,
And broken in his body, spake —
Spake youthful, ardent, on and on,
As dear love speaks for dear love's sake.

“You spake of her, my wife; behold!
Behold my faithful, constant love!
Nay, nay, you shall not doubt my dove,
Perched there above your cross of gold!

“Yea, you have books, I know, to tell
Of far, fair heaven; but no hell
To her had been so terrible
As all sweet heaven, with its gold
And jasper gates, and great white throne,
Had she been banished hence alone.

“I say, not God himself could keep,
Beyond the stars, beneath the deep,
Or mid the stars, or mid the sea,

Her soul from my soul one brief day,
But she would find some pretty way
To come and still companion me.

“And say, where bide your souls, good priest?
Lies heaven west, lies heaven east?
Let us be frank, let us be fair;
Where is your heaven, good priest, where?”

“Is there not room, is there not place
In all those boundless realms of space?
Is there not room in this sweet air,
Room mid my trees, room anywhere,
For souls that love us thus so well,
And love so well this beauteous world,
But that they must be headlong hurled
Down, down, to undiscovered hell?”

“Good priest, we questioned not one word
Of all the holy things we heard
Down in your pleasant town of palms
Long, long ago — sweet chants, sweet psalms,
Sweet incense, and the solemn rite
Above the dear, believing dead.
Nor do I question here to-night
One gentle word you may have said.
I would not doubt, for one brief hour,
Your word, your creed, your priestly power.

“Let those who will, seek realms above,
Remote from all that heart can love,

In their ignoble dread of hell.
Give all, good priest, in charity;
Give heaven to all, if this may be,
And count it well, and very well.

“But I—I could not leave this spot
Where she is waiting by my side.
Forgive me, priest; it is not pride;
There is no God where she is not!

“You did not know her well. Her creed
Was yours; my faith it was the same.
My faith was fair, my lands were broad.
Far down where yonder palm-trees rise
We two together worshiped God
From childhood. And we grew in deed,
Devout in heart as well as name,
And loved our palm-set paradise.

“We loved, we loved all things on earth,
However mean or miserable.
We knew no thing that had not worth,
And learned to know no need of hell.

“Indeed, good priest, so much, indeed,
We found to do, we saw to love,
We did not always look above
As is commanded in your creed,
But kept in heart one chiefest care,
To make this fair world still more fair.

“’T was then that meek, pale Saxon came;
With souless gray and greedy eyes,
A snake’s eyes, cunning, cold, and wise,
And I — I could not fight, or fly
His crafty wiles, at all; and I —
Enough, enough! I signed my name.

“It was not loss of pleasure, place,
Broad lands, or the serene delight
Of doing good, that made long night
O’er all the sunlight of her face.

“But there be little things that feed
A woman’s sweetness, day by day,
That strong men miss not, do not need,
But, shorn of all, can go their way
To battle, and but stronger grow,
As grow great waves that gather so.

“She missed the music, missed the song,
The pleasant speech of courteous men,
Who came and went, a comely throng,
Before her open window, when
The sea sang with us, and we two
Had heartfelt homage, warm and true.

“She missed the restfulness, the rest
Of dulcet silence, the delight
Of singing silence, when the town
Put on its twilight robes of brown;

When twilight wrapped herself in night
And couched against the curtained west.

“ But not one murmur, not one word
From her sweet baby lips was heard.
She only knew I could not bear
To see sweet San Diego town,
Her palm-set lanes, her pleasant square,
Her people passing up and down,
Without black hate, and deadly hate
For him who housed within our gate.

“ How pale she grew, how piteous pale
The while I wrought, and ceaseless wrought
To keep my soul from bitter thought,
And build me high above the vale.
Ah me! my selfish, Spanish pride!
Enough of pride, enough of hate,
Enough of her sad, piteous fate:
She died: right here she sank and died.

“ She died, and with her latest breath
Did promise to return to me,
As turns a dove unto her tree
To find her mate at night and rest;
Died, clinging close unto my breast;
Died, saying she would surely rise
So soon as God had loosed her eyes
From the strange wonderment of death.

“How beautiful is death! and how
Surpassing good, and true, and fair!
How just is death, how gently just,
To lay his sword against the thread
Of life when life is surely dead
And loose the sweet soul from the dust!
I laid her in my lorn despair
Beneath that dove, that orange-bough—
How strange your cross should stand just there!

“And then I waited hours and days:
Those bitter days, they were as years.
My soul groped through the darkest ways;
I scarce could see God’s face for tears.

* * * * *

“I clutched my knife, and I crept down,
A wolf, to San Diego town.
On, on, mid mine own palms once more,
Keen knife in hand, I crept that night.
I passed the gate; then fled in fright;
Black crape hung fluttered from the door!

“I climbed back here, with heart of stone:
I heard next morn one sweetest tone;
Looked up, and lo! there on that bough
She perched, as she sits perching now.

* * * * *

“I heard the bells peal from my height,
Peal pompously, peal piously;
Saw sable hearse, in plumes of night,
With not one thought of hate in me.

“I watched the long train winding by,
A mournful, melancholy lie—
A sable, solemn, mourning mile—
And only pitied him the while.
For she, she sang that whole day through:
Sad-voiced, as if she pitied, too.

“They said, ‘His work is done, and well.’
They laid his body in his tomb
Of massive splendor. It lies there
In all its stolen pomp and gloom—
But list! his soul—his soul is where?
In hell! In hell! But where is hell?

“Hear me but this. Year after year
She trained my eye, she trained my ear;
No book to blind my eyes, or ought
To prate of hell, where hell is not.
I came to know at last, and well,
Such things as never book can tell.

“And where was that poor, dismal soul
Ye priests had sent to Paradise?
I heard the long years roll and roll,
As rolls the sea. My once dimmed eyes

Grew keen as long, sharp shafts of light.
With eager eyes and reaching face
I searched the stars night after night:
That dismal soul was not in space!

“Meanwhile my green trees grew and grew;
And, sad or glad, this much I knew,
It were no sin to make more fair
One spot on earth, to toil and share
With man, or beast, or bird; while she
Still sang her soft, sweet melody.

“One day, a perfumed day in white —
Such restful, fresh, and friendlike day,—
Fair Mexico a mirage lay
Far-lifted in a sea of light—
Soft purple light, so far away.
I turned yon pleasant pathway down,
And sauntered leisurely toward town.

“I heard my dear love call and coo,
And knew that she was happy, too,
In her sad, sweet, and patient pain
Of waiting till I came again.

“Aye, I was glad, quite glad at last:
Not glad as I had been when she
Walked with me by yon palm-set sea,
But sadly and serenely glad:
As though 't were twilight like, as though
You knew, and yet you did not know,

That sadness, most supremely sad
 Should lay upon you like a pall,
 And would not, could not pass away
 Till midnight through the perfect day
 Dawns sudden on you, and the call
 Of birds awakens you to morn—
 A babe new-born; a soul new-born.

“Good priest, what are the birds for? Priest,
 Build ye your heaven west or east?
 Above, below, or anywhere?
 I only ask, I only say
 She sits there, waiting for the day,
 The fair, full day, to guide me there.

* * * * *

“What, he? That creature? Ah, quite true!
 I wander much, I weary you:
 I beg your pardon, gentle priest.
 Returning up the stone-strewn steep,
 Down in yon jungle, dank and deep,
 Where toads and venomed reptiles creep,
 There, there, I saw that hideous beast!

“Aye, there! right there, beside my road,
 Close coiled behind a monstrous toad,
 A huge, flat-bellied reptile hid!
 His tongue leapt red as flame; his eyes,
 His eyes were burning hells of lies—
 His head was like a coffin’s lid:

“Saint George! Saint George! I gasped for
breath.

The beast, tight coiled, swift at me sprang
High in the air, and, rattling, sang
His hateful, hissing song of death!

“My eyes met his. He shrank, he fell,
Fell sullenly and slow. The swell
Of braided, brassy neck forgot
Its poise, and every venomed spot
Lost luster, and the coffin head
Cowed level with the toad, and lay
Low, quivering with hate and dread:
The while I kept my upward way.

“What! Should have killed him? Nay, good
priest.

I know not what or where’s your hell.
But be it west or be it east,
His hell is there! and that is well!

“Nay, do not, do not question me;
I could not tell you why I know;
I only know that this is so,
As sure as God is equity.

“Good priest, forgive me, and good-by.
The stars slow gather to their fold.
I see God’s garment’s hem of gold
Against the far, faint morning sky.

“Good, holy priest, your God is where?
You come to me with book and creed;
I cannot read your book; I read
Yon boundless, open book of air.
What time, or way, or place I look,
I see God in His garden walk;
I hear Him through the thunders talk,
As once He talked, with burning tongue,
To Moses, when the world was young;
And, priest, what more is in your book?”

“Behold! the Holy Grail is found,
Found in each poppy’s cup of gold;
And God walks with us as of old.
Behold! the burning bush still burns
For man, whichever way he turns;
And all God’s earth is holy ground.

“And — and — good priest, bend low your head,
The sands are crumbling where I tread,
Beside the shoreless, soundless sea.
Good priest, you came to pray, you said;
And now, what would you have of me?”

The good priest sudden raised his head,
Then bowed it low and gently said:
“Your blessing, son, despite the ban.”
He fell before the dying man;
And when he raised his face from prayer,
Sweet Dawn, and two sweet doves were there.

A SONG OF THE SOUNDLESS RIVER.

PART I.

*Rhyme on, rhyme on, in reedy flow,
O river, rhymers ever sweet!
The story of thy land is meet;
The stars stand listening to know.*

*Rhyme on, O river of the earth!
Gray father of the dreadful seas,
Rhyme on! the world upon its knees
Invokes thy songs, thy wealth, thy worth.*

*Rhyme on! the reed is at thy mouth,
O kingly minstrel, mighty stream!
Thy Crescent City, like a dream,
Hangs in the heaven of my South.*

*Rhyme on, rhyme on! these broken strings
Sing sweetest in this warm south wind;
I sit thy willow banks and bind
A broken harp that fitful sings.*

I.

AND where is my silent, sweet blossom-sown
town?

And where is her glory, and what has she done?
By her Mexican seas in the path of the sun,
Sit you down; in her crescent of seas, sit you
down.

Aye, glory enough by her Mexican seas!
Aye, story enough in that battle-torn town,
Hidden down in her crescent of seas, hidden
down
In her mantle and sheen of magnolia-white trees.

But mine is the story of souls; of a soul
That bartered God's limitless kingdom for
gold,—
Sold stars and all space for a thing he did hold
In his palm for a day; and then hid with the
mole.

Sad soul of a rose-land, of moss-mantled oak —
Gray, Druid-old oaks; and the moss that sways
And swings in the wind is the battle-smoke
Of duelists dead, in her storied days.
Sad soul of a love-land, of church-bells and chimes;
A love-land of altars and orange-flowers;
And that is the reason for all these rhymes,—
These church-bells are ringing through all the
hours!

This sun-land of churches, of priests at prayer,
White nuns, that are white as the far north
snow;

They go where duty may bid them go,—
They dare when the angel of death is there.

This land has ladies so fair, so fair,
In their Creole quarter, with great black eyes —
So fair that the Mayor must keep them there
Lest troubles, like troubles of Troy, arise.

This sun-land has ladies, with eyes held down,
Held down, because if they lifted them,
Why, you would be lost in that old French town,
Though even you held to God's garment hem.

This love-land has ladies so fair, so fair,
That they bend their eyes to the holy book,
Lest you should forget yourself, your prayer,
And never more cease to look and to look.

And these are the ladies that no men see,
And this is the reason men see them not.
Better their modest, sweet mystery —
Better by far than red battle-shot.

And so, in this curious old town of tiles,
The proud French quarter of days long gone,
In castles of Spain and tumble-down piles,
These wonderful ladies live on and on.

I sit in the church where they come and go;
I dream of glory that has long since gone;
Of the low raised high, of the high brought low
As in battle-torn days of Napoleon.

These grass-plaited places, so rich, so poor!
One quaint old church at the edge of the town
Has white tombs laid to the very church-door —
White leaves in the story of life turned down.

White leaves in the story of life are these,
The low white slabs in the long, strong grass,
Where glory has emptied her hourglass,
And dreams with the dreamers beneath the trees.

I dream with the dreamers beneath the sod,
Where souls pass by to the great white throne;
I count each tomb as a mute milestone
For weary, sweet souls on their way to God.

I sit all day by the vast, strong stream,
Mid low white slabs in the long, strong grass,
Where time has forgotten for aye to pass,
To dream, and ever to dream and to dream.

This quaint old church, with its dead to the door,
By the cypress swamp at the edge of the town,
So restful it seems that you want to sit down
And rest you, and rest you for evermore.

And one white stone is a lowliest tomb
That has crept up close to the crumbling door,—
Some penitent soul, as imploring room
Close under the cross that is leaning o'er.

'T is a low white slab, and 't is nameless, too,—
Her untold story, why, who should know?
Yet God, I reckon, can read right through
That nameless stone to the bosom below.

Aye, the roses know, and they pity her, too;
They bend their heads in the sun or rain,
And they read, and they read, and then read
again,
As children reading strange pictures through.

Why, surely her sleep it should be profound;
For oh, the apples of gold above!
And oh, the blossoms of bridal love!
And oh, the roses that gather around!

The sleep of a night or a thousand morns —
Why, what is the difference here, to-day?
Sleeping and sleeping the years away,
With all earth's roses and none of its thorns.

Magnolias white, roses white and red —
The palm-tree here and the cypress there:
Sit down by the palm at the feet of the dead,
And hear a penitent's midnight prayer.

II.

The old churchyard is still as death;
 A stranger passes to and fro,
 As if to church — he does not go;
 The dead night does not draw a breath.

A lone sweet lady prays within.
 The stranger passes by the door —
 Will he not pray? Is he so poor
 He has no prayer for his sin?

Is he so poor? Why, two strong hands
 Are full and heavy, as with gold;
 They clasp as clasp two iron bands
 About two bags with eager hold.

Will he not pause and enter in,
 Put down his heavy load and rest,
 Put off his garmenting of sin,
 As some black mantle from his breast?

Ah me! the brave alone can pray.
 The church-door is as cannon's mouth
 For crime to face, or North or South,
 More dreaded than dread battle-day.

* * * * *

Now two men pace. They pace apart;
 And one with youth and truth is fair;

The fervid sun is in his heart,
The tawny South is in his hair.

Aye, two men pace — pace left and right,—
The lone sweet lady prays within;
Aye, two men pace; the silent night
Kneels down in prayer for some sin.

Lo! two men pace; and one is gray,
A blue-eyed man from snow-clad land,
With something heavy in each hand,—
With heavy feet, as feet of clay.

Aye, two men pace; and one is light
Of step, but still his brow is dark;
His eyes are as a kindled spark
That burns beneath the brow of night!

And still they pace. The stars are red,
The tombs are white as frosted snow;
The silence is as if the dead
Did pace in couples to and fro.

III.

The azure curtain of God's house
Draws back, and hangs star-pinned to space;
I hear the low, large moon arouse,
And slowly lift her languid face.

I see her shoulder up the east,
 Low-necked, and large as womanhood,—
 Low-necked, as for some ample feast
 Of gods, within yon orange-wood.

She spreads white palms, she whispers peace,—
 Sweet peace on earth forevermore;
 Sweet peace for two beneath the trees,
 Sweet peace for one within the door.

The bent stream, as God's scimitar,
 Flashed in the sun, sweeps on and on,
 Till sheathed, like some great sword new-
 drawn,
 In seas beneath the Carib's star.

The high moon climbs the sapphire hill,
 The lone sweet lady prays within;
 The crickets keep such clang and din —
 They are so loud, earth is so still!

And two men glare in silence there!
 The bitter, jealous hate of each
 Has grown too deep for deed or speech —
 The lone sweet lady keeps her prayer.

The vast moon high through heaven's field
 In circling chariot is rolled;
 The golden stars are spun and reeled,
 And woven into cloth of gold.

The white magnolia fills the night
With perfume, as the proud moon fills
The glad earth with her ample light
From out her awful sapphire hills.

White orange-blossoms fill the boughs
Above, about the old church-door;
They wait the bride, the bridal vows,—
They never hung so fair before.

The two men glare as dark as sin!
And yet all seems so fair, so white,
You would not reckon it was night,—
The while the lady prays within.

IV.

She prays so very long and late,—
The two men, weary, waiting there,—
The great magnolia at the gate
Bends drowsily above her prayer.

The cypress in his cloak of moss,
That watches on in silent gloom,
Has leaned and shaped a shadow-cross
Above the nameless, lowly tomb.

* * * * *

What can she pray for? What her sin?
 What folly of a maid so fair?
 What shadows bind the wondrous hair
 Of one who prays so long within? .

The palm-trees guard in regiment,
 Stand right and left without the gate;
 The myrtle-moss trees wait and wait;
 The tall magnolia leans intent.

The cypress-trees, on gnarled old knees,
 Far out the dank and marshy deep
 Where slimy monsters groan and creep,
 Kneel with her in their marshy seas.

What can her sin be? Who shall know?
 The night flies by,— a bird on wing;
 The men no longer to and fro
 Stride up and down, or anything.

For one, so weary and so old,
 Has hardly strength to stride or stir;
 He can but hold his bags of gold,—
 But hug his gold and wait for her.

The two stand still,— stand face to face.
 The moon slides on; the midnight air
 Is perfumed as a house of prayer;—
 The maiden keeps her holy place.

Two men! And one is gray, but one
 Scarce lifts a full-grown face as yet:
 With light foot on life's threshold set,—
 Is he the other's sun-born son?

And one is of the land of snow,
 And one is of the land of sun;
 A black-eyed, burning youth is one,
 But one has pulses cold and slow:

Aye, cold and slow from clime of snow
 Where Nature's bosom, icy bound,
 Holds all her forces, hard, profound,—
 Holds close where all the South lets go.

Blame not the sun, blame not the snows,—
 God's great schoolhouse for all is clime;
 The great school-teacher, Father Time,
 And each has borne as best he knows.

At last the elder speaks,— he cries,—
 He speaks as if his heart would break;
 He speaks out as a man that dies,—
 As dying for some lost love's sake:

“Come, take this bag of gold, and go!
 Come, take one bag! See, I have two!
 Oh, why stand silent, staring so,
 When I would share my gold with you?”

“Come, take this gold! See how I pray!
See how I bribe, and beg, and buy,—
Aye, buy! buy love, as you, too, may
Some day before you come to die.

“God! take this gold, I beg, I pray!
I beg as one who thirsting cries
For but one drop of drink, and dies
In some lone, loveless desert way.

“You hesitate? Still hesitate?
Stand silent still and mock my pain?
Still mock to see me wait and wait,
And wait her love, as earth waits rain?”

V.

O broken ship! O starless shore!
O black and everlasting night!
Where love comes never any more
To light man's way with heaven's light.

A godless man with bags of gold
I think a most unholy sight;
Ah, who so desolate at night,
Amid death's sleepers still and cold?

A godless man on holy ground
I think a most unholy sight.
I hear death trailing, like a hound,
Hard after him, and swift to bite.

VI.

The vast moon settles to the west;
Yet still two men beside that tomb.
And one would sit thereon to rest,—
Aye, rest below, if there were room.

VII.

What is this rest of death, sweet friend?
What is the rising up,— and where?
I say, death is a lengthened prayer,
A longer night, a larger end.

Hear you the lesson I once learned:
I died; I sailed a million miles
Through dreamful, flowery, restful isles,—
She was not there, and I returned.

I say the shores of death and sleep
Are one; that when we, wearied, come
To Lethe's waters, and lie dumb,
'T is death, not sleep, holds us to keep.

Yea, we lie dead for need of rest,
And so the soul drifts out and o'er
The vast still waters to the shore
Beyond, in pleasant, tranquil quest:

It sails straight on, forgetting pain,
 Past isles of peace, to perfect rest,—
 Now were it best abide, or best
 Return and take up life again?

And that is all of death there is,
 Believe me. If you find your love
 In that far land, then, like the dove,
 Pluck olive-boughs ere back to this.

But if you find your love not there;
 Or if your feet feel sure, and you
 Have still allotted work to do,—
 Why, then haste back to toil and care.

Death is no mystery. 'T is plain
 If death be mystery, then sleep
 Is mystery thrice strangely deep,—
 For oh, this coming back again!

Austerest ferryman of souls!
 I see the gleam of sapphire shores;
 I hear thy steady stroke of oars
 Above the wildest wave that rolls.

O Charon, keep thy sombre ships!
 We come, with neither myrrh nor balm,
 Nor silver piece in open palm,—
 Just lone, white silence on our lips.

VIII.

She prays so long! she prays so late!
What sin in all this flower-land
Against her supplicating hand
Could have in heaven any weight?

Prays she for her sweet self alone?
Prays she for some one far away,
Or some one near and dear to-day,
Or some poor lorn, lost soul unknown?

It seems to me a selfish thing
To pray forever for one's self;
It seems to me like heaping pelf
In heaven by hard reckoning.

Why, I would rather stoop and bear
My load of sin, and bear it well
And bravely down to burning hell,
Than pray and pray a selfish prayer!

IX.

The swift chameleon in the gloom —
This gray morn silence so profound! —
Forsakes its bough, glides to the ground,
Then up, and lies across the tomb.

It erst was green as olive-leaf;
It then grew gray as myrtle moss
The time it slid the tomb across;
And now 't is marble-white as grief.

The little creature's hues are gone;
Here in the pale and ghostly light
It lies so pale, so panting white,—
White as the tomb it lies upon.

The two still by that nameless tomb!
And both so still! You might have said,
These two men, they are also dead,
And only waiting here for room.

How still beneath the orange-bough!
How tall was one, how bowed was one!
The one was as a journey done,
The other as beginning now.

And one was young,—young with that youth
Eternal that belongs to truth;
And one was old,—old with the years
That follow fast on doubts and fears.

And yet the habit of command
Was his, in every stubborn part;
No common knave was he at heart,
Nor his the common coward's hand.

He looked the young man in the face,
So full of hate, so frank of hate;
The other, standing in his place,
Stared back as straight and hard as fate.

And now he sudden turned away,
And now he paced the path, and now
Came back beneath the orange-bough,
Pale-browed, with lips as cold as clay.

As mute as shadows on a wall,
As silent still, as dark as they,
Before that stranger, bent and gray,
The youth stood scornful, proud, and tall.

He stood a tall palmetto-tree
With Spanish daggers guarding it;
Nor deed, nor word, to him seemed fit
While she prayed on so silently.

He slew his rival with his eyes;
His eyes were daggers piercing deep,—
So deep that blood began to creep
From their deep wounds and drop wordwise.

His eyes so black, so bright, that they
Might raise the dead, the living slay,
If but the dead, the living bore
Such hearts as heroes had of yore.

Two deadly arrows barbed in black,
 And feathered, too, with raven's wing;
 Two arrows that could silent sting,
 And with a death-wound answer back.

How fierce he was! how deadly still
 In that mesmeric, hateful stare
 Turned on the pleading stranger there
 That drew to him, despite his will!

So like a bird down-fluttering,
 Down, down, beneath a snake's bright eyes,
 He stood, a fascinated thing,
 That hopeless, unresisting, dies.

He raised a hard hand as before,
 Reached out the gold, and offered it
 With hand that shook as ague-fit,—
 The while the youth but scorned the more.

“You will not touch it? In God's name,
 Who are you, and what are you, then?
 Come, take this gold, and be of men,—
 A human form with human aim.

“Yea, take this gold,— she must be mine!
 She shall be mine! I do not fear
 Your scowl, your scorn, your soul austere,
 The living, dead, or your dark sign.

“ I saw her as she entered there;
I saw her, and uncovered stood;
The perfume of her womanhood
Was holy incense on the air.

“ She left behind sweet sanctity,
Religion lay the way she went;
I cried I would repent, repent!
She passed on, all unheeding me.

“ Her soul is young, her eyes are bright
And gladsome, as mine own are dim;
But oh, I felt my senses swim
The time she passed me by to-night! —

“ The time she passed, nor raised her eyes
To hear me cry I would repent,
Nor turned her head to hear my cries,
But swifter went the way she went,—

“ Went swift as youth, for all these years!
And this the strangest thing appears,
That lady there seems just the same,—
Sweet Gladys — Ah! you know her name? .

“ You hear her name and start that I
Should name her dear name trembling so?
Why, boy, when I shall come to die
That name shall be the last I know.

“That name shall be the last sweet name
 My lips shall utter in this life!
 That name is brighter than bright flame,—
 That lady is mine own sweet wife!

“Ah, start and catch your burning breath!
 Ah, start and clutch you deadly knife!
 If this be death, then be it death,—
 But that loved lady is my wife!

“Yea, you are stunned! your face is white,
 That I should come confronting you,
 As comes a lorn ghost of the night
 From out the past, and to pursue.

“You thought me dead? You shake your head,
 You start back horrified to know
 That she is loved, that she is wed,
 That you have sinned in loving so.

“Yet what seems strange, that lady there,
 Housed in the holy house of prayer,
 Seems just the same for all her tears,—
 For all my absent twenty years.

“Yea, twenty years to-night, to-night,—
 Just twenty years this day, this hour,
 Since first I plucked that perfect flower,
 And not one witness of the rite.

“Nay, do not doubt,—I tell you true!
Her prayers, tears, her constancy
Are all for me, are all for me,—
And not one single thought for you!

“I knew, I knew she would be here
This night of nights to pray for me!
And how could I for twenty year
Know this same night so certainly?

“Ah me! some thoughts that we would drown
Stick closer than a brother to
The conscience, and pursue, pursue,
Like baying hound, to hunt us down.

“And, then, that date is history;
For on that night this shore was shelled,
And many a noble mansion felled,
With many a noble family.

“I wore the blue; I watched the flight
Of shells, like stars tossed through the air
To blow your hearth-stones — anywhere,
That wild, illuminated night.

“Nay, rage befits you not so well:
Why, you were but a babe at best;
Your cradle some sharp bursted shell
That tore, maybe, your mother's breast!

“Hear me! We came in honored war.
The risen world was on your track!
The whole North-land was at our back,
From Hudson’s bank to the North Star!

“And from the North to palm-set sea
The splendid fiery cyclone swept.
Your fathers fell, your mothers wept,
Their nude babes clinging to the knee.

“A wide and desolated track:
Behind, a path of ruin lay;
Before, some women by the way
Stood mutely gazing, clad in black.

“From silent women waiting there
White tears came down like still, small rain;
Their own sons of the battle-plain
Were now but viewless ghosts of air.

“Their own dear, daring boys in gray,—
They should not see them any more;
Our cruel drums kept telling o’er
The time their own sons went away.

“Through burning town, by bursting shell—
Yea, I remember well that night;
I led through orange-lanes of light,
As through some hot outpost of hell!

“That night of rainbow shot and shell
Sent from yon surging river’s breast
To waken me, no more to rest,—
That night I should remember well!

“That night, amid the maimed and dead,—
A night in history set down
By light of many a burning town,
And written all across in red,—

“Her father dead, her brothers dead,
Her home in flames,— what else could she
But fly all helpless here to me,
A fluttered dove, that night of dread?

“Short time, hot time had I to woo
Amid the red shells’ battle-chime;
But women rarely reckon time,
And perils waken love anew.

“Aye, then I wore a captain’s sword;
And, too, had oftentime before
Doffed cap at her dead father’s door,
And passed a lover’s pleasant word.

“And then — ah, I was comely then!
I bore no load upon my back,
I heard no hounds upon my track,
But stood the tallest of tall men.

“Her father’s and her mother’s shrine,
This church amid the orange-wood;
So near and so secure it stood,
It seemed to beckon as a sign.

“Its white cross seemed to beckon me:
My heart was strong, and it was mine
To throw myself upon my knee,
To beg to lead her to this shrine.

“She did consent. Through lanes of light
I led through that church-door that night—
Let fall your hand! Take back your face
And stand,—stand patient in your place!

“She loved me; and she loves me still.
Yea, she clung close to me that hour
As honey-bee to honey-flower,—
And still is mine, through good or ill.

“The priest stood there. He spake the prayer;
He made the holy, mystic sign.
And she was mine, was wholly mine,—
Is mine this moment, I can swear!

“Then days, then nights of vast delight,—
Then came a doubtful later day;
The faithful priest, now far away,
Watched with the dying in the fight:

“The priest amid the dying, dead,
Kept duty on the battle-field,—
That midnight marriage unrevealed
Kept strange thoughts running thro’ my head.

“At last a stray ball struck the priest:
This vestibule his chancel was;
And now none lived to speak her cause,
Record, or champion her the least.

“Hear me! I had been bred to hate
All priests, their mummeries and all.
Ah, it was fate,—ah, it was fate
That all things tempted to my fall!

“And then the dashing songs we sang
Those nights when rudely reveling,—
Such songs that only soldiers sing,—
Until the very tent-poles rang!

“What is the rhyme that rhymers say,
Of maidens born to be betrayed
By epaulettes and shining blade,
While soldiers love and ride away?

“And then my comrades spake her name
Half taunting, with a touch of shame;
Taught me to hold that lily-flower
As some light pastime of the hour.

“ And then the ruin in the land,
The death, dismay, the lawlessness!
Men gathered gold on every hand,—
Heaped gold: and why should I do less?

“ The cry for gold was in the air,—
For Creole gold, for precious things;
The sword kept prodding here and there
Through bolts and sacred fastenings.

“ ‘Get gold! get gold!’ This was the cry.
And I loved gold. What else could I
Or you, or any earnest one,
Born in this getting age, have done?

“ With this one lesson taught from youth,
And ever taught us, to get gold,—
To get and hold, and ever hold,—
What else could I have done, forsooth?

“ She, seeing how I sought for gold,—
This girl, my wife, one late night told
Of treasures hidden close at hand,
In her dead father’s mellow land;

“ Of gold she helped her brothers hide
Beneath a broad banana-tree
The day the two in battle died,
The night she dying fled to me.

“ It seemed too good; I laughed to scorn
 Her trustful tale. She answered not;
 But meekly on the morrow morn
 These two great bags of bright gold brought.

“ And when she brought this gold to me,—
 Red Creole gold, rich, rare, and old,—
 When I at last had gold, sweet gold,
 I cried in very ecstasy.

“ Red gold! rich gold! two bags of gold!
 The two stout bags of gold she brought
 And gave, with scarce a second thought,—
 Why, her two hands could scarcely hold!

“ Now I had gold! two bags of gold!
 Two wings of gold, to fly, and fly
 The wide world’s girth; red gold to hold
 Against my heart for aye and aye!

“ My country’s lesson: ‘ Gold! get gold!’
 I learned it well in land of snow;
 And what can glow, so brightly glow,
 Long winter nights of northern cold?

“ Aye, now at last, at last I had
 The one thing, all fair things above,
 My land had taught me most to love!
 A miser now! and I grew mad.

“ With these two bags of gold my own,
I then began to plan that night
For flight, for far and sudden flight,—
For flight; and, too, for flight alone.

“ I feared! I feared! My heart grew cold,—
Some one might claim this gold of me!
I feared her,— I feared her purity —
Feared all things but my bags of gold.

“ I grew to hate her face, her creed,—
That face the fairest ever yet
That bowed o’er holy cross or bead,
Or yet was in God’s image set.

“ I fled,— nay, not so knavish low,
As you have fancied, did I fly;
I sought her at that shrine, and I
Told her full frankly I should go.

“ I stood a giant in my power,—
And did she question or dispute?
I stood a savage, selfish brute,—
She bowed her head, a lily-flower.

“ And when I sudden turned to go,
And told her I should come no more,
She bowed her head so low, so low,
Her vast black hair fell pouring o’er.

“ And that was all; her splendid face
Was mantled from me, and her night
Of hair half hid her from my sight,
As she fell moaning in her place.

“ And there, mid her dark night of hair,
She sobbed, low moaning through her tears,
That she would wait, wait all the years,—
Would wait and pray in her despair.

“ Nay, did not murmur, not deny,—
She did not cross me one sweet word!
I turned and fled; I thought I heard
A night-bird’s piercing low death-cry!”

PART II.

*How soft the moonlight of my South !
How sweet the South in soft moonlight !
I want to kiss her warm, sweet mouth
As she lies sleeping here to-night.*

*How still ! I do not hear a mouse.
I see some bursting buds appear ;
I hear God in His garden,— hear
Him trim some flowers for his house.*

*I hear some singing stars ; the mouth
Of my vast river sings and sings,
And pipes on reeds of pleasant things,—
Of splendid promise for his South :*

*His great South-woman, soon to rise
And tiptoe up and loose her hair ;
Tiptoe, and take from all the skies
God's stars and glorious moon to wear !*

I.

THE poet shall create or kill,
 Bid heroes live, bid braggarts die.
I look against a lurid sky,—
 My silent South lies proudly still.

The lurid light of burning lands
 Still climbs to God's house overhead;
Mute women wring white, withered hands;
 Their eyes are red, their skies are red.

And we still boast our bitter wars!
 Still burn and burn, and burning die.
But God's white finger spins the stars
 In calm dominion of the sky.

And not one ray of light the less
 Comes down to bid the grasses spring;
 No drop of dew nor anything
Shall fail for all our bitterness.

If man grows large, is God the less?
 The moon shall rise and set the same,
 The great sun spill his splendid flame,
And clothe the world in queenliness.

Yet from that very blood-soaked sod
 Some large-souled, seeing youth shall come
 Some day, and he shall not be dumb
Before the awful court of God.

II.

The weary moon had turned away,
The far North Star was turning pale
To hear the stranger's boastful tale
Of blood and flame that battle-day.

And yet again the two men glared,
Close face to face above that tomb;
Each seemed as jealous of the room
The other, eager waiting, shared.

Again the man began to say,—
As taking up some broken thread,
As talking to the patient dead,—
The Creole was as still as they:

“That night we burned yon grass-grown town,—
The grasses, vines are reaching up;
The ruins they are reaching down,
As sun-browned soldiers when they sup.

“I knew her,—knew her constancy.
She said this night of every year
She here would come, and kneeling here,
Would pray the livelong night for me.

“This praying seems a splendid thing!
It drives old Time the other way;
It makes him lose all reckoning
Of years that I have had to pay.

“This praying seems a splendid thing!
It makes me stronger as she prays —
But oh, those bitter, bitter days,
When I became a banished thing!

“I fled, took ship,—I fled as far
As far ships drive tow’rd the North Star:
For I did hate the South, the sun
That made me think what I had done.

“I could not see a fair palm-tree
In foreign land, in pleasant place,
But it would whisper of her face
And shake its keen, sharp blades at me

“Each black-eyed woman would recall
A lone church-door, a face, a name,
A coward’s flight, a soldier’s shame:
I fled from woman’s face, from all.

“I hugged my gold, my precious gold,
Within my strong, stout buckskin vest.
I wore my bags against my breast
So close I felt my heart grow cold.

“I did not like to see it now;
I did not spend one single piece;
I traveled, traveled without cease
As far as Russian ship could plow.

“And when my own scant hoard was gone,
 And I had reached the far North-land,
 I took my two stout bags in hand
 As one pursued, and journeyed on.

“Ah, I was weary! I grew gray;
 I felt the fast years slip and reel,
 As slip bright beads when maidens kneel
 At altars when outdoor is gay.

“At last I fell prone in the road,—
 Fell fainting with my cursèd load.
 A skin-clad Cossack helped me bear
 My bags, nor would one shilling share.

“He looked at me with proud disdain,—
 He looked at me as if he knew;
 His black eyes burned me thro’ and thro’;
 His scorn pierced like a deadly pain.

“He frightened me with honesty;
 He made me feel so small, so base,
 I fled, as if a fiend kept chase,—
 A fiend that claimed my company!

“I bore my load alone; I crept
 Far up the steep and icy way;
 And there, before a cross there lay
 A barefoot priest, who bowed and wept.

“I threw my gold right down and sped
Straight on. And oh, my heart was light!
A springtime bird in springtime flight
Flies scarce more happy than I fled.

“I felt somehow this monk would take
My gold, my load from off my back;
Would turn the fiend from off my track,
Would take my gold for sweet Christ’s sake!

“I fled; I did not look behind;
I fled, fled with the mountain wind.
At last, far down the mountain’s base
I found a pleasant resting-place.

“I rested there so long, so well,
More grateful than all tongues can tell
It was such pleasant thing to hear
That valley’s voices calm and clear.

“That valley veiled in mountain air,
With white goats on the hills at morn;
That valley green with seas of corn,
With cottage-islands here and there.

“I watched the mountain girls. The hay
They mowed was not more sweet than they;
They laid brown hands in my white hair;
They marveled at my face of care.

“ I tried to laugh; I could but weep.
I made these peasants one request,—
That I with them might toil or rest,
And with them sleep the long, last sleep.

“ I begged that I might battle there,
In that fair valley-land, for those
Who gave me cheer, when girt with foes,
And have a country loved as fair.

“ Where is that spot that poets name
Our country? name the hallowed land?
Where is that spot where man must stand
Or fall when girt with sword and flame?

“ Where is that one permitted spot?
Where is the one place man must fight?
Where rests the one God-given right
To fight, as ever patriots fought?

“ I say 't is in that holy house
Where God first set us down on earth;
Where mother welcomed us at birth,
And bared her breasts, a happy spouse.

“ The simple ploughboy from his field
Looks forth. He sees God's purple wall
Encircling him. High over all
The vast sun wheels his shining shield.

“This King, who makes earth what it is,—
King David bending to his toil!
O lord and master of the soil,
How envied in thy loyal bliss!

“Long live the land we loved in youth,—
That world with blue skies bent about,
Where never entered ugly doubt!
Long live the simple, homely truth!

“Can true hearts love some far snow-land,
Some bleak Alaska bought with gold?
God’s laws are old as love is old;
And Home is something near at hand.

“Yea, change yon river’s course; estrange
The seven sweet stars; make hate divide
The full moon from the flowing tide,—
But this old truth ye cannot change.

“I begged a land as begging bread;
I begged of these brave mountaineers
To share their sorrows, share their tears;
To weep as they wept with their dead.

“They did consent. The mountain town
Was mine to love, and valley lands.
That night the barefoot monk came down
And laid my two bags in my hands!

“ On! on! And oh, the load I bore!
Why, once I dreamed my soul was lead;
Dreamed once it was a body dead!
It made my cold, hard bosom sore.

“ I dragged that body forth and back —
O conscience, what a baying hound!
Nor frozen seas nor frosted ground
Can throw this bloodhound from his track.

“ In farthest Russia I lay down,
A dying man, at last to rest;
I felt such load upon my breast
As seamen feel, who, sinking, drown.

“ That night, all chill and desperate,
I sprang up, for I could not rest;
I tore the two bags from my breast,
And dashed them in the burning grate.

“ I then crept back into my bed;
I tried, I begged, I prayed to sleep;
But those red, restless coins would keep
Slow dropping, dropping, and blood-red.

“ I heard them clink, and clink, and clink,—
They turned, they talked within that grate.
They talked of her; they made me think
Of one who still did pray and wait.

“And when the bags burned crisp and black,
Two coins did start, roll to the floor,—
Roll out, roll on, and then roll back,
As if they needs must journey more.

“Ah, then I knew nor change nor space,
Nor all the drowning years that rolled
Could hide from me her haunting face,
Nor still that red-tongued, talking gold!

“Again I sprang forth from my bed!
I shook as in an ague fit;
I clutched that red gold, burning red,
I clutched as if to strangle it.

I clutched it up — you hear me, boy? —
I clutched it up with joyful tears!
I clutched it close, with such wild joy
I had not felt for years and years!

“Such joy! for I should now retrace
My steps, should see my land, her face;
Bring back her gold this battle day,
And see her, hear her, hear her pray!

“I brought it back — you hear me, boy? —
I clutch it, hold it, hold it now:
Red gold, bright gold that giveth joy
To all, and anywhere or how;

“That giveth joy to all but me,—
 To all but me, yet soon to all.
 It burns my hands, it burns! but she
 Shall ope my hands and let it fall.

“For oh, I have a willing hand
 To give these bags of gold; to see
 Her smile as once she smiled on me
 Here in this pleasant warm palm-land.”

He ceased, he thrust each hard-clenched fist,—
 He threw his gold hard forth again,
 As one impelled by some mad pain
 He would not or could not resist.

The Creole, scorning, turned away,
 As if he turned from that lost thief,—
 The one who died without belief
 That awful crucifixion day.

III.

Believe in man, nor turn away.
 Lo! man advances year by year;
 Time bears him upward, and his sphere
 Of life must broaden day by day.

Believe in man with large belief;
 The garnered grain each harvest-time
 Hath promise, roundness, and full prime
 For all the empty chaff and sheaf.

Believe in man with brave belief:
 Truth keeps the bottom of her well;
 And when the thief peeps down, the thief
 Peeps back at him perpetual.

Faint not that this or that man fell;
 For one that falls a thousand rise
 To lift white Progress to the skies:
 Truth keeps the bottom of her well.

Fear not for man, nor cease to delve
 For cool, sweet truth, with large belief.
 Lo! Christ himself chose only twelve,
 Yet one of these turned out a thief.

IV.

Down through the dark magnolia leaves,
 Where climbs the rose of Cherokee
 Against the orange-blossomed tree,
 A loom of morn-light weaves and weaves,—

A loom of morn-light, weaving clothes
 From snow-white rose of Cherokee,
 And bridal blooms of orange-tree,
 For fairy folk in fragrant rose.

Down through the mournful myrtle crape,
 Thro' moving moss, thro' ghostly gloom,
 A long, white morn-beam takes a shape
 Above a nameless, lowly tomb;

A long white finger through the gloom
 Of grasses gathered round about,—
 As God's white finger pointing out
 A name upon that nameless tomb.

V.

Her white face bowed in her black hair,
 The maiden prays so still within
 That you might hear a falling pin,—
 Aye, hear her white, unuttered prayer.

The moon has grown disconsolate,
 Has turned her down her walk of stars:
 Why, she is shutting up her bars,
 As maidens shut a lover's gate.

The moon has grown disconsolate;
 She will no longer watch and wait.
 But two men wait; and two men will
 Wait on till full morn, mute and still:

Still wait and walk among the trees,
 Quite careless if the moon may keep
 Her walk along her starry steep
 Or drown her in the Southern seas.

They know no moon, or set or rise
 Of sun, or anything to light
 The earth or skies, save her dark eyes,
 This praying, waking, watching night.

They move among the tombs apart,
 Their eyes turn ever to that door;
 They know the worn walks there by heart —
 They turn and walk them o'er and o'er.

They are not wide, these little walks
 For dead folk by this crescent town;
 They lie right close when they lie down,
 As if they kept up quiet talks.

VI.

The two men keep their paths apart;
 But more and more begins to stoop
 The man with gold, as droop and droop
 Tall plants with something at their heart.

Now once again, with eager zest,
 He offers gold with silent speech;
 The other will not walk in reach,
 But walks around, as round a pest.

His dark eyes sweep the scene around,
 His young face drinks the fragrant air,
 His dark eyes journey everywhere, —
 The other's cleave unto the ground.

It is a weary walk for him,
 For oh, he bears such weary load!
 He does not like that narrow road
 Between the dead — it is so dim:

It is so dark, that narrow place,
 Where graves lie thick, like yellow leaves:
 Give us the light of Christ and grace;
 Give light to garner in the sheaves.

Give light of love; for gold is cold,—
 Aye, gold is cruel as a crime;
 It gives no light at such sad time
 As when man's feet wax weak and old.

Aye, gold is heavy, hard, and cold!
 And have I said this thing before?
 Well, I will say it o'er and o'er,
 'Twere need be said ten thousand fold.

“Give us this day our daily bread,”—
 Get this of God; then all the rest
 Is housed in thine own earnest breast,
 If you but lift an honest head.

VII.

Oh, I have seen men, tall and fair,
 Stoop down their manhood with disgust,—
 Stoop down God's image to the dust,
 To get a load of gold to bear;

Have seen men selling day by day
 The glance of manhood that God gave:
 To sell God's image, as a slave
 Might sell some little pot of clay!

Behold! here in this green graveyard
A man with gold enough to fill
A coffin, as a miller's till;
And yet his path is hard, so hard!

His feet keep sinking in the sand,
And now so near an opened grave!
He seems to hear the solemn wave
Of dread oblivion at hand.

The sands, they grumble so, it seems
As if he walks some shelving brink;
He tries to stop, he tries to think,
He tries to make believe he dreams:

Why, he was free to leave the land,—
The silver moon was white as dawn;
Why, he has gold in either hand,
Had silver ways to walk upon.

And who should chide, or bid him stay?
Or taunt, or threat, or bid him fly?
"The world's for sale," I hear men say,
And yet this man had gold to buy.

Buy what? Buy rest? He could not rest!
Buy gentle sleep? He could not sleep,
Though all these graves were wide and deep
As their wide mouths with the request.

Buy Love, buy faith, buy snow-white truth?
 Buy moonlight, sunlight, present, past?
 Buy but one brimful cup of youth
 That true souls drink of to the last?

O God! 't was pitiful to see
 This miser so forlorn and old!
 O God! how poor a man may be
 With nothing in this world but gold!

VIII.

The broad magnolia's blooms were white;
 Her blooms were large, as if the moon
 Quite lost her way that dreamful night,
 And lodged to wait the afternoon.

Oh, vast white blossoms, breathing love!
 White bosom of my lady dead,
 In your white heaven overhead
 I look, and learn to look above.

IX.

The dew-wet roses wept; their eyes
 All dew, their breath as sweet as prayer.
 And as they wept, the dead down there
 Did feel their tears and hear their sighs.

The grass uprose, as if afraid
 Some stranger foot might press too near;
 Its every blade was like a spear,
 Its every spear a living blade.

The grass above that nameless tomb
 Stood all arrayed, as if afraid
 Some weary pilgrim, seeking room
 And rest, might lay where she was laid.

X.

'T was morn, and yet it was not morn;
 'T was morn in heaven, not on earth:
 A star was singing of a birth,—
 Just saying that a day was born.

The marsh hard by that bound the lake,—
 The great stork sea-lake, Ponchartrain,
 Shut off from sultry Cuban main,—
 Drew up its legs, as half-awake:

Drew long, thin legs, stork-legs that steep
 In slime where alligators creep,—
 Drew long green legs that stir the grass,
 As when the late lorn night winds pass.

Then from the marsh came croakings low;
 Then louder croaked some sea-marsh beast;
 Then, far away against the east,
 God's rose of morn began to grow.

From out the marsh against that east,
 A ghostly moss-swept cypress stood;
 With ragged arms, above the wood
 It rose, a God-forsaken beast.

It seemed so frightened where it rose!
 The moss-hung thing, it seemed to wave
 The worn-out garments of a grave,—
 To wave and wave its old grave-clothes.

Close, by, a cow rose up and lowed
 From out a palm-thatched milking-shed;
 A black boy on the river road
 Fled sudden, as the night had fled:

A nude black boy,— a bit of night
 That had been broken off and lost
 From flying night, the time it crossed
 The soundless river in its flight;

A bit of darkness, following
 The sable night on sable wing,—
 A bit of darkness, dumb with fear,
 Because that nameless tomb was near.

Then holy bells came pealing out;
 Then steamboats blew, then horses neighed;
 Then smoke from hamlets round about
 Crept out, as if no more afraid.

Then shrill cocks here, and shrill cocks there,
 Stretched glossy necks and filled the air;—
 How many cocks it takes to make
 A country morning well awake!

Then many boughs, with many birds,—
 Young boughs in green, old boughs in gray:
 These birds had very much to say,
 In their soft, sweet, familiar words.

And all seemed sudden glad; the gloom
 Forgot the church, forgot the tomb;
 And yet, like monks with cross and bead,
 The myrtles leaned to read and read.

And oh, the fragrance of the sod!
 And oh, the perfume of the air!
 The sweetness, sweetness everywhere,
 That rose like incense up to God!

* * * * *

I like a cow's breath in sweet spring;
 I like the breath of babes new-born;
 A maid's breath is a pleasant thing,—
 But oh, the breath of sudden morn!—

Of sudden morn, when every pore
 Of Mother Earth is pulsing fast
 With life, and life seems spilling o'er
 With love, with love too sweet to last:

Of sudden morn beneath the sun,
By God's great river wrapped in gray,
That for a space forgets to run,
And hides his face, as if to pray.

XI.

The black-eyed Creole kept his eyes
Turned to the door, as eyes might turn
To see the holy embers burn
Some sin away at sacrifice.

Full dawn! but yet he knew no dawn,
Nor song of bird, nor bird on wing,
Nor breath of rose, nor anything
Her fair face lifted not upon.

And yet he taller stood with morn;
His bright eyes, brighter than before,
Burned fast against that fastened door,
His proud lips lifting still with scorn,—

With lofty, silent scorn for one
Who all night long had plead and plead,
With none to witness but the dead
How he for gold must be undone.

O ye who feed a greed for gold,
And barter truth, and trade sweet youth
For cold, hard gold, behold, behold!
Behold this man! behold this truth!

Why, what is there in all God's plan
Of vast creation, high or low,
By sea or land, by sun or snow,
So mean, so miserly as man?

* * * * *

Lo, earth and heaven all let go
Their garnered riches, year by year!
The treasures of the trackless snow,
Ah, hast thou seen how very dear?

The wide earth gives, gives golden grain,
Gives fruits of gold, gives all, gives all!
Hold forth your hand, and these shall fall
In your full palm as free as rain.

Yea, earth is generous. The trees
Strip nude as birth-time without fear;
And their reward is year by year
To feel their fullness but increase.

The law of Nature is to give,
To give, to give! and to rejoice
In giving with a generous voice,
And so trust God and truly live.

* * * * *

But see this miser at the last,—
This man who loved, who worshiped gold,
Who grasped gold with such eager hold,
He fain must hold forever fast:

As if to hold what God lets go;
As if to hold, while all around
Lets go and drops upon the ground
All things as generous as snow.

Let go your hold! let go or die!
Let go, poor soul! Do not refuse
Till death comes by and shakes you loose,
And sends you shamed to hell for aye!

What if the sun should keep his gold?
The rich moon lock her silver up?
What if the gold-clad buttercup
Became such miser, mean and old?

Ah, me! the coffins are so true
In all accounts, the shrouds so thin,
That down there you might sew and sew,
Nor ever sew one pocket in.

And all that you can hold of lands
Down there, below the grass, down there,
Will only be that little share
You hold in your two dust-full hands.

XII.

She comes! she comes! The stony floor
Speaks out! And now the rusty door
At last has just one word this day,
With mute, religious lips, to say.

She comes! she comes! And lo, her face
Is upward, radiant, fair as prayer!
So pure here in this holy place,
Where holy peace is everywhere.

Her upraised face, her face of light
And loveliness, from duty done,
Is like a rising orient sun
That pushes back the brow of night.

* * * * *

How brave, how beautiful is truth!
Good deeds untold are like to this.
But fairest of all fair things is
A pious maiden in her youth:

A pious maiden as she stands
Just on the threshold of the years
That throb and pulse with hopes and fears,
And reaches God her helpless hands.

* * * * *

How fair is she! How fond is she!
 Her foot upon the threshold there.
 Her breath is as a blossomed tree,—
 This maiden mantled in her hair!

Her hair, her black, abundant hair,
 Where night inhabited, all night
 And all this day, will not take flight,
 But finds content and houses there.

Her hands are clasped, her two small hands:
 They hold the holy book of prayer
 Just as she steps the threshold there,
 Clasped downward where she silent stands.

XIII.

Once more she lifts her lowly face,
 And slowly lifts her large, dark eyes
 Of wonder, and in still surprise
 She looks full forward in her place.

She looks full forward on the air
 Above the tomb, and yet below
 The fruits of gold, the blooms of snow,
 As looking—looking anywhere.

She feels—she knows not what she feels;
 It is not terror, is not fear.
 But there is something that reveals
 A presence that is near and dear.

She does not let her eyes fall down,
They lift against the far profound:
Against the blue above the town
Two wide-winged vultures circle round.

Two brown birds swim above the sea,—
Her large eyes swim as dreamily,
And follow far, and follow high,
Two circling black specks in the sky.

One forward step,— the closing door
Creaks out, as frightened or in pain;
Her eyes are on the ground again —
Two men are standing close before.

“ My love,” sighs one, “ my life, my all ! ”
Her lifted foot across the sill
Sinks down,— and all things are so still
You hear the orange-blossoms fall.

But fear comes not where duty is,
And purity is peace and rest;
Her cross is close upon her breast,
Her two hands clasp hard hold of this.

Her two hands clasp cross, book, and she
Is strong in tranquil purity,—
Aye, strong as Samson when he laid
His two hands forth and bowed and prayed.

One at her left, one at her right,
 And she between, the steps upon,—
 I can but see that Syrian night,
 The women there at early dawn.

XIV.

The sky is like an opal sea,
 The air is like the breath of kine;
 But oh, her face is white, and she
 Leans faint to see a lifted sign,—

To see two hands lift up and wave,—
 To see a face so white with woe,
 So ghastly, hollow, white as though
 It had that moment left the grave.

Her sweet face at that ghostly sign,
 Her fair face in her weight of hair,
 Is like a white dove drowning there,—
 A white dove drowned in Tuscan wine.

He tries to stand, to stand erect;
 'T is gold, 't is gold that holds him down!
 And soul and body both must drown,—
 Two millstones tied about his neck.

Now once again his piteous face
 Is raised to her face reaching there.
 He prays such piteous silent prayer,
 As prays a dying man for grace.

It is not good to see him strain
 To lift his hands, to gasp, to try
 To speak. His parched lips are so dry
 Their sight is as a living pain.

I think that rich man down in hell
 Some like this old man with his gold,—
 To gasp and gasp perpetual,
 Like to this minute I have told.

XV.

At last the miser cries his pain,—
 A shrill, wild cry, as if a grave
 Just op'd its stony lips and gave
 One sentence forth, then closed again.

“’T was twenty years last night, last night!”
 His lips still moved, but not to speak;
 His outstretched hands, so trembling weak,
 Were beggar’s hands in sorry plight.

His face upturned to hers; his lips
 Kept talking on, but gave no sound;
 His feet were cloven to the ground;
 Like iron hooks his finger tips.

“Aye, twenty years,” she sadly sighed:
 “I promised mother every year,
 That I would pray for father here,
 As she had prayed, the night she died.

“To pray as she prayed, fervently,
 As she had promised she would pray
 The sad night that he turned away,
 For him, wherever he might be.”

Then she was still; then sudden she
 Let fall her eyes, and so outspake,
 As if her very heart would break,
 Her proud lips trembling piteously:

“And whether he comes soon or late
 To kneel beside this nameless grave,
 May God forgive my father’s hate
 As I forgive, as she forgave!”

He saw the stone; he understood,
 With that quick knowledge that will come
 Most quick when men are made most dumb
 With terror that stops still the blood.

And then a blindness slowly fell
 On soul and body; but his hands
 Held tight his bags, two iron bands,
 As if to bear them into hell.

He sank upon the nameless stone
 With oh! such sad, such piteous moan
 As never man might seek to know
 From man’s most unforgiving foe.

He sighed at last, so long, so deep,
As one's heart breaking in one's sleep,—
One long, last, weary, willing sigh,
As if it were a grace to die.

And then his hands, like loosened bands,
Hung down, hung down, on either side;
His hands hung down, hung open wide:
Wide, empty, hung the dead man's hands.

COLUMBUS.

BEHIND him lay the gray Azores,
 Behind the Gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
 Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said: "Now must we pray,
 For lo! the very stars are gone.
Brave Adm'r'l, speak; what shall I say?"
 " Why, say: 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"

" My men grow mutinous day by day;
 My men grow ghastly wan and weak."
The stout mate thought of home; a spray
 Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.
" What shall I say, brave Adm'r'l, say,
 If we sight naught but seas at dawn?"
" Why, you shall say at break of day:
 'Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!'"

They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,
 Until at last the blanched mate said:
" Why, now not even God would know
 Should I and all my men fall dead.

These very winds forget their way,
For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak, brave Adm'r'l; speak and say ——”
He said: “Sail on! sail on! and on!”

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:
“This mad sea shows its teeth to-night.
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!
Brave Adm'r'l, say but one good word;
What shall we do when hope is gone?”
The words leapt as a leaping sword:
“Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!”

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,
- And peered through darkness. Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! And then a speck —
A light! A light! A light! A light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: “On! sail on!”

MOTHER EGYPT.

DARK-BROWED, she broods with weary lids
Beside her Sphynx and Pyramids,
With low and never-lifted head.
If she be dead, respect the dead;
If she be weeping, let her weep;
If she be sleeping, let her sleep;
For lo, this woman named the stars!
 She suckled at her tawny dugs
Your Moses while you reeked in wars
 And prowled your woods, nude, painted thugs.

Then back, brave England; back in peace
To Christian isles of fat increase!
Go back! . Else bid your high priests take
Their great bronze Christs and cannon make;
Take down their cross from proud St. Paul's
And coin it into cannon-balls!
You tent not far from Nazareth.
 Your camp spreads where his child-feet
 strayed.
If Christ had seen this work of death!
 If Christ had seen these ships invade!

I think the patient Christ had said,
"Go back, brave men! Take up your dead;
Draw down your great ships to the seas:
Repass the gates of Hercules.
Go back to wife with babe at breast,
And leave lorn Egypt to her rest."
Is Christ then dead as Egypt is?

Ah, Mother Egypt, torn to twain!
There's something grimly wrong in this -
So like some gray, sad woman slain.

What would you have your mother do?
Hath she not done enough for you?
Go back! And when you learn to read,
Come read this obelisk. Her deed
Like yonder awful forehead is.
Disdainful silence. Like to this
What lessons have you raised in stone
To passing nations that shall stand?
Like years to hers will leave you lone
And level as yon yellow sand.

Saint George, your lions, whence are they?
From awful, silent Africa,
This Egypt is the lion's lair;
Beware, young Albion, beware!
I know the very Nile shall rise
To drive you from this sacrifice.
And if the seven plagues should come,
The red seas swallow sword and steed.
Lo! Christian lands stand mute and dumb
To see thy more than Moslem deed.

JAVA, 1883.

“And darkness was upon the face of the deep;
and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters.”

THE oceans roar; the mountains reel;
The world stands still, with bated breath.
Then burst of flame! and woe and weal
Lie drowned in darkness and in death.
Wild beasts in herds, strange, beauteous birds—
God's rainbow birds,— gone in a breath!

O God! is earth, then, incomplete —
The six days' labor still undone —
That she must melt beneath Thy feet
And her fair face forget the sun?
Must isles go down, and cities drown,
And good and evil be as one?

The great, warm heart of Mother Earth
Is broken o'er her Javan Isles.
Lo! ashes strew her ruined hearth
Along a thousand watery miles.
I hear her groan, I hear her moan,
All day above her drowning isles.

Tall ships are sailing silently
Above her buried isles to-day.
In marble halls beneath the sea
The sea-gods' children shout and play;
They mock and shout in merry rout
Where mortals dwelt but yesterday.

*My kingly kinsmen, kings of thought,
I hear your gathered symphonies,
Such nights as when the world is not,
And great stars chorus through my trees.*

*Such songs! such holy, silent songs,
As keep the Pleiades in place;
As thrill the shining angel throngs
When listening God leans His face.*

THE PASSING OF TENNYSON.

WE knew it, as God's prophets knew;
We knew it, as mute red men know,
When Mars leapt searching heaven through
With flaming torch, that he must go.
Then Browning, he who knew the stars,
Stood forth and faced insatiate Mars.

Then up from Cambridge rose and turned
Sweet Lowell from his Druid trees —
Turned where the great star blazed and burned,
As if his own soul might appease.
Yet on and on through all the stars
Still searched and searched insatiate Mars.

Then stanch Walt Whitman saw and knew;
Forgetful of his "Leaves of Grass,"
He heard his "Drum Taps," and God drew
His great soul through the shining pass,
Made light, made bright by burnished stars.
Made scintillant from flaming Mars.

Then soft-voiced Whittier was heard
To cease; was heard to sing no more;
As you have heard some sweetest bird
The more because its song is o'er.
Yet brighter up the street of stars
Still blazed and burned and beckoned Mars.

* * * * *

And then the king came; king of thought,
King David with his harp and crown. . . .
How wisely well the gods had wrought
That these had gone and sat them down
To wait and welcome mid the stars
All silent in the light of Mars.

All silent. . . . So, he lies in state. . . .
Our redwoods drip and drip with rain. . . .
Against our rock-locked Golden Gate
We hear the great, sad, sobbing main.
But silent all. . . . He passed the stars
That year the whole world turned to Mars.

NOTE.—It may be a bold thing to sing by one's own great sea-bank instead of abroad, as before; but I have faith in my own people, and believe the time has come to keep one's work at home. I hope to follow this soon with "Songs of the Sierras" and "Songs of the Sunlands," revised and complete.

The London and Boston plates of these books having been worn out, publication was suspended till such time as the revised works, with some additions, might be ready for the press. Meantime, while I was in Mexico, irresponsible parties in Chicago issued mutilated and unauthorized editions. It is due to all concerned to state that it is not only unlawful to handle all these Chicago poems as well as the editions published in Canada by some of the same parties, but they are an imposition on the reader, as many lines are left out, and also many lines inserted that are new to the author.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

The Hights, Oakland, Cal., 1896.



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*Joaquin Miller
Hights Oakland - Cal.*





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