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AD ASTRA

AD ASTRA

BY

CHARLES WHITWORTH WYNNE

'The night of sorrow now is turn'd to day'

SHAKESPEARE

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
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1900

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*Thou shalt love the Lord thy
God with all thy heart, and
with all thy soul, and with
all thy mind.*

*This is the first and great
commandment.*

*And the second is like unto
it, Thou shalt love thy neigh-
bour as thyself.*

*On these two commandments
hang all the law and the pro-
phets.*

MATT. xxii. 37-40.

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1900

TO
AN UNKNOWN GODDESS

AD ASTRA

I

THE leaves are falling fast, and Winter drear
 Steals on apace with fingers numb and cold,
With marble touch his hoary hand doth sear
 The very heart-strings of the poor and old—
 The little songsters in the leafy wold
Are quiet now, no more to charm the sky
With rapture of a love that cannot die.

II

All things must die, all things must have an end
 That tell of a beginning and a birth,
All things must die, and soon or late must lend
 Their little pile of dust to swell the earth,
 But Love came with us in our baby mirth,
Love grew beside us, taught us how to smile,
And Love will guide us thro' Death's dark defile.

A

III

And what is Love?—Hath ever man defined?—

So small a word, and yet so wonderful!

The sweetest of the mysteries enshrined

Within the temple of the human soul—

A power no force can fetter, Time control,

Whose mystic arms encircle land and sea,

Lighting the great deeps of Eternity.

IV

Love is an union sweet of eyes and heart,

Each bound in willing service to the other,

No sooner doth the eye its joy impart

Than tears give answer for its silent brother—

Bright jewell'd founts, in which we fain would

smother

The weakness and the rapture of our love,

Forgetful that the gift is from above!

Yet Love is sweetest when the sweets are tears—
 The soft unfolding of the bud in Spring,
 The glittering pageantry that Summer rears,
 And Autumn's deep and sober colouring
 Are dearer to the heart round which they cling,
 Because their loveliness must pass away,
 Because their beauty is but for a day.

And so we nourish in our breasts the sting
 Of joys that are too exquisite to last,
 We like to keep the heart a-sorrowing,
 And with sad tears bemoan the happy past,
 Regardless that the hours are fleeting fast—
 And that To-day, in which we rage and fret,
 To-morrow will be part of our regret!

VII

So in the change of days, when Winter hoar
Doth wrestle with his brother for the crown,
When all the elements are waging war,
And Autumn dirges are around us blown,
What wonder if the heart should feel adown
Amid the tempest and its bitter mirth,
The mocking winds that desolate the earth!

VIII

Can Nature still the craving of the Soul?
Can Nature soothe the anguish of the mind?
Can Nature teach us firm and sweet control?
Can Nature bring us nearer to our kind?
In part she may—if in her face we find
The smile, long sought for 'mid a million loves,
That doth exalt the mind o'er which it moves—

That answering smile that seems to set at rest
 Long days of anguish and dread nights of pain—
 At last to lay one's head against her breast
 And feel security from storm and strain,
 To be enfolden like a child again!—
 The Peace that broods upon the giant deep
 When the unruly winds are hush'd to sleep.

But one must suffer first to feel her fair!
 Nature was ever yet a second love—
 Heart-broken, and in bondage of despair,
 Her beauty dawns upon us as we rove
 Too weak those first fond memories to reprove—
 Gradually, yet by how slow degrees,
 She lures us to her own most gentle knees.

XI

Ah, lightning interchange of soul and sense !
Divine communion with a kindred frame—
When spirit voices speak from out the immense
Unfathomable Silence whence we came,
And Man's immortal destiny proclaim—
What time we breathe a far serener air
And reach at joys that are beyond our sphere.

XII

She weaves around us widening sympathies,
A heart to measure all her variant moods—
If we but love her for herself, we rise
To higher levels in her solitudes—
Amid the stillness of the fragrant woods
We may forgive the pettiness, the wrong,
The cowardly spite of many an evil tongue.

XIII

But that which most of all she doth instil
And teaches with a mother's zealous care,
Is thankfulness of heart, and joyous fill
Of Worship, Adoration, Praise, and Prayer,
The glorious liberty of light and air !
Of Life, pulsating thro' a thousand forms,
Of bird, and beast, and flower, and creeping worms.

XIV

But have we never found her friendship vain,
Ere yet the struggling will has been resign'd ?—
Her cold indifference to mortal pain,
The sympathy which is so hard to find !
Perchance her mood is captiously inclined—
She smiles, she seems to mock us in our sorrow,
And just as lightly will she weep to-morrow.

When Life seems hopeless and the Future void,
 The contrast is too great for us to bear,
 Nature in all her children is o'erjoy'd,
 Whilst we are sinking from a deep despair—
 What does the universal Mother care?—
 Like some proud dame, whom social pleasures crown,
 Forgets her offspring in her latest gown.

Nature is like a woman greatly loved
 With all the outward glamour of Romance,
 So long as all her charms are to be proved
 She holds the soul in an ecstatic trance,
 Her beauty gave the death-wound at a glance!
 Yet, when we look behind those lustrous eyes,
 We find scant echo to our deepening sighs.

XVII

Our Love it was that gave the mystic grace,
And robed her in the splendour of the sun!
Our Love it was that carved upon her face
The witching lines by which we were undone!
The halo of the midnight for her throne!
But soon or late our Love must wake, and then—
Love unrequited makes us faithless men!

XVIII

And she looks on with cold indifference
Behind the granite of her rugged brows,
Our little loves to her are but pretence,
And pass as lightly as all lover's vows—
She cloaks herself in her eternal snows,
A stately Presence, with an icy mien,
And bold his heart who crowns her deathless Queen!

Love, at the highest, asks for no reward,
 For perfect Love rejects such recompense,
 So that of his own fires he may keep guard,
 Of other longing makes he no pretence,
 His altars breathe of myrrh and frankincense,
 And in the joy of this high sacrifice
 His only true and finite pleasure lies.

So that our love for Nature is not vain,
 But doth return to enrich our hearts the more,
 Whate'er we give she gives us back again
 With something added from her boundless store—
 With larger knowledge of ourselves we pore
 Upon the book her wondrous grace makes known,
 And find a kindness in her sternest frown.

She teaches us to look for sympathy

 Within the lives of those whose toil we share,
And she can heighten Love's affinity

 With bonds the sweetest that the stars declare—

 Whom she hath join'd no evil tongues can scare,
Their friendship grows with each revolving moon,
And silent Death o'ertakes them all too soon.

* * * * *

O beauteous World of Wonder and Romance,
 Thou dost reveal some heaven-born mystery !
 Some moments of our lives thou dost enhance
 As sacred symbols of Eternity !
 We feel so conscious of our part in thee,
 The spirit leaps towards her native skies,
 Doubt and Despair fall from her as she flies.

'Tis the sublime in Nature we most love,
 But all the gentler aspects of her state
 A Woman's finer fancy for us wove—
 She first in us soft pity did create,
 And tenderness for all things, small or great—
 'Tis thro' her love that we have learnt to share
 A world of bright perceptions, sweet and rare.

The age of Chivalry can never die
 So long as Woman holds to her domain—
 She is the loveliest thing beneath the sky,
 And wields a power that Man can ne'er attain—
 Then never let her of her lot complain !
 She so can sweeten, in her time and place,
 That with her rests the future of the race.

And nowhere is her presence so supreme
 As in the halls Nature has deck'd for her,
 'Mid mountain scenery and forest gleam
 She stands confest the Queen of all things there—
 How delicately fashion'd, and how fair !
 With gentle lustre beaming from her eye
 She fills with radiance earth, and sea, and sky.

XXVI

For Love and Nature are so close allied,
That one, without the other, seems less fair—
If thou wouldst learn to love, look on thy bride
When moonlight steeps her lips and lustrous hair,
And Ocean's old romance is in thine ear,
Or from the shadow of some piny steep
When the great sun dies out upon the deep.

XXVII

For what is Nature with no comrade by
To share the fulness of the heart's excess?
To show, with sympathy of hand or eye,
That joy is doubled by a like impress?—
Belovèd Fellowship! that grows not less
By daily intercourse with things divine,
The worship of twin souls at Nature's shrine.

* * * * *

O Nature, lovely charmer, gentle bride!

I fear thy reign will soon be at an end—

Man's ravage hems thee in on every side,

Before his step thy beauteous form must bend!

No more for us shall rural vales extend

In widening prospect 'neath the unsullied sky,

Until in dreamy tracts of blue they die.

Oh, I could weep for those who follow after,

To think what our dear England may become!

Where Nature reigns shall flow discordant laughter,

And village shouts where nightingales are dumb!—

No more for us the beetle's drowsy hum

Shall break the stillness of the Summer night,

And to the scents of eve add new delight.

No more,—yet have we not divine amends
 Within the mighty progress of the mind?
 Woman, no more the slave for meaner ends,
 But as companion to the soul design'd!
 Her influence breathing, like a gentle wind,
 Health, and a quiet calm to stormy seas—
 Peace after tempest, and from turmoil ease.

And Man, to what achievements doth he move!
 Who shall foretell his boundless destiny!
 Out of the earth what untold treasure-trove!
 What realms await him in the trackless sky!
 The storèd lightnings at his bidding fly,
 The circuits of the World their bounds decrease
 Before the smile of universal Peace.

XXXII

Tho' factory smoke and noise of whirring looms
Obscure his perfect vision for awhile,
The time will come when these will be but tombs
Or reminiscences of early toil—
His latter days shall yield him richer spoil,
Bought with a lesser strain of eye and nerve,
And Nature's giant forces him subserve.

XXXIII

Then Cities shall arise, both sweet and fair,
In purer regions of the untrammell'd sky,
No murky fumes pollute the healing air,
And sunny streets in widening prospect lie,
Of sickness and disease shall no man die !
A happy race, in happier climes, shall prove
The blessedness that comes of Peace and Love.

Then let the Future bring us what it may,
It cannot so the Mind deteriorate
That it would let her sceptre pass away,
And Nature's beauty be determinate—
She, who hath taught us more of our poor state
Than all the sages since the World began,
And hath reveal'd to us God's love to man.

* * * * *

O Nature, tho' thy beauty never wanes,
 And every hour sets forth some new device
 To captivate Man's heart, and hold in chains
 His fond imagination—still thou art ice
 To his affection, like a maid's caprice !
 But never, like a maid, to give thy love,
 And all the stings of doubt at last remove.

In Love's great heights and depths thou canst not
 share—
 Love's widening coil of reciprocity !
 In that brief moment when two lives declare
 That Life is richer than all dreams can be,
 What time the mellow'd fruit falls from the tree—
 To reap the harvest of the heart's desire
 In one all-perfect joy, too soon to expire !

XXXVII

‘ O little hands and feet ! O heart of mine !
Why dost thou tarry in thy father’s hall ?
Why dost thou linger in that home of thine,
And dost not know I love thee all in all ?
Hast never heard thy lover’s plaintive call ?
What, tho’ mine eyes have never own’d thee fair,
Thy heart is mine, and Beauty dwelleth there !—

XXXVIII

‘ Beauty and Truth !—yes, all the good in me
Is but the mirror of thy perfect heart !
The knowledge that thy soul is purity,
The hope that some day I shall prove a part
Of that sweet paradise, and hold the chart
To all the shores and indents of thy soul,
The master pilot, taught by self-control.

‘O Lady mine, I seek thee thro’ the World,
In every forest depth I feel thee stir,
In flush of sunsets, or in clouds upcurl’d,
In every pulse of breath upon the air—
For thee Dame Nature doth her magic wear,
The tender flowers their yearly grace renew,
The little birds are singing in the blue.

‘O thou, who somewhere braidest billowy gold,
And look’st upon thyself with lowly eyes,
When in thy glass thy dawning charms unfold
At morn and eve their maiden mysteries,
As half unconscious where their sweetness lies,
Like some white, fragrant lily of the wood,
That never knew how graciously she stood!

‘ Judge from thy heart how much I long for thee !

Here all seems trouble, turmoil, and despair—

Man is more cruel than cold Death can be,

Which robs the eye of all it deem’d so fair !

Beneath the shadow of thy sheltering hair

My weary spirit fain would find its rest,

Pillow’d upon the surge of thy soft breast.

‘ What hope have I till Love shall come my way ?

O whither should my weary footsteps bend ?—

How few there are to whom a man may say

All that he feels, as fellow unto friend !

How little doth the outward mask portend !

“ Give unto all men of the best thou hast ”—

I gave—and scorn remembrance of the past.

XLIII

‘ Yet who is there that doth not boast of friends ?
That hath not in his heart some memory stored ?
E’en tho’ experience points to where it ends,
And but a breath can make the name abhorr’d !
E’en tho’ the parting cuts us like a sword,
We fain would love again, and be undone—
Is it not sweet to sit at Sorrow’s throne ?

XLIV

‘ And oft, at evening, passing thro’ the town,
Ere yet the ruddy lights their lantern’d play
Had half begun, when every little frown
Is sweetly mirror’d in the dying day,
And maidens’ eyes with that fair light of May
Are crystal-clear, as to their homes repair
The dainty purchasers of dainty fare,

‘ How have I sigh’d, to think of my return !—

No eye will light with kindlier fire for me,
No heart will bide my coming, till it burn

At every sound of Love’s expectancy,
No ear alert Love’s messenger to be,
Only the same old, drear, deserted room,
The same continuous watching thro’ the gloom.

‘ And shall I cry for ever, and in vain ?

The night-winds mock me with their hollow sighs,
And daylight greets me in my bitter pain—

Still, still, thou art unknown !—my tearful eyes
Are weary waiting for thy soft replies—
On every hand I see that Love is fair,
And every sight increaseth my despair !

XLVII

‘ I listen to the firelight’s fitful tale,
I sit and dream of thee as wife, as friend—
A friend to whom I whisper secrets frail,
And love—love without reason, sense, or end—
Love at thy knees, love at thy lap’s sweet bend,
Where I may look into thy face, and feel
How far thou art above me as I kneel !

XLVIII

‘ How I could love, if loved in like degree !
Life seems to hold no richer harvest here—
To sail beyond the sunsets, and to see
Those Western Isles, that all have deem’d so fair,
To breathe awhile in that diviner air,
And feel, like those old Gods of ancient time,
Existence mellow’d to a joy sublime.

'O Love ! that sitt'st upon thy deathless throne,
Controlling all by thine Omnipotence—
O Heart ! that deem'st thou canst not love, since none
Can give thee back thy heart's full recompense—
O Love for Love ! divinest Affluence !—
To read thy longing in another's eyes,
And the new Dawn in sumptuous splendour rise !'

* * * * *

'One have I met—most precious memory !—
 For whose dear friendship not in vain I sued—
 Hath not her patient spirit been to me
 A fine example of sweet fortitude,
 Of sorrow most heroically withstood ?
 And taught me more of Reverence and sweet Faith
 With every intake of her gentle breath ?

'The tender, wistful smile of One, whose life
 Was barren of the hope that makes life fair,
 The struggle of a soul, whose inward strife
 Seem'd hourly more than its frail shell could bear—
 O what a treasury of love was there !—
 A richer mine man never found on earth,
 Yet stored for one unconscious of its worth.

LII

‘So now I wait, if haply I may find
Another, who shall some resemblance bear
To Her, who all unconsciously did bind
Me to herself with many a silken snare—
Have I not seen her smile when none was near?—
Those sorrowing lips, what could they tell of love!—
They told of depths I would have died to prove!

LIII

‘Until I meet her, life seems valueless,
And Fame a glimmering marsh-light at the most,
Unless her little hands were by to bless,
Glory to me were but an idle boast,
Who, without her, should count my life as lost!
For what are all the things that men desire
Compared to Love, that knows no high or higher?

'Is there in all this world that perfect flower,
 Wherein my soul might fold its wings and rest?
 Heart-weariness doth hold me every hour,
 I cannot still the tumult of my breast!
 Yet in the silence stands thy love confest,
 I feel thy winnowing wings about my soul,
 I dare not go beyond their sweet control.

'No outward sign I ask of Love's awaking,
 No doubt or question come from me to thee!
 When once our eyes have met, all else forsaking,
 Not Death itself shall set our spirits free!
 For each one hope, one language, there will be—
 Our souls shall meet in silence, and none hear
 The swift response that maketh all things clear.

LVI

'Thou Star! that shone upon me from a height
 As wide and boundless as the spacious Heaven,
 Filling my lonely soul with thy pure light,
 And that effulgence not to mortals given—
 Bright beacon to my bark! in tempest driven
 Too near the perilous quicksands of Despair,
 Which else had founder'd in the midnight bare—

LVII

'Be thou the guide and compass of my way!
 Let thy true needle point me to the sky,
 Where shines the light of never-ending day,
 And passion's surges roll unheeded by—
 Dwell thou within my bosom till I die!
 Purge and refine each grosser image there,
 And make my heart a habitation fair.

LVIII

‘Come to me, O my soul’s diviner soul!

 Come breathe upon me all thy softer airs—

Sweet woman, loved beyond my heart’s control!—

 That I may tell thee all my secret fears,

 And in thy bosom rest my load of cares—

To feel thee sharer of my heart and brain,

And to my dearer self myself explain.

LIX

‘For thou alone canst fully understand—

 Made one with me in all things—how I fare,

And with a touch of thy soft woman’s hand

 Can lighten half the burden that I bear,

 Thy gentle fingers can disfranchise care,

Whilst, in the mirror of thine own pure mind,

A nobler likeness of myself I find—

LX

‘ A better, purer self, that will not fail
For want of human sympathy and love,
A higher, nobler self, that will not rail
At all things that Adversity must prove,
Believing that our trials are from above,
Enduring each as for the common good,
And bravely battling down each wilful mood.

LXI

‘ And so, dear heart, for thee I sit and pine,
And many a day goes idly, vacant by,
Which should have woven in it “ Mine” and “ Thine,”
Which should complete the life for which we sigh !
For what were all the bliss beneath the sky,
If we should never meet, or never know
The greatest gift that Godhead may bestow ?

'Tis with the evening that I feel thy want,
For with the light my sun of life goes down—
How cold the Moon's pale fire ! how grim and gaunt
The leafless trees amid their forest moan !
How wofully the wind sweeps by alone !
And I—tho' Love is round me everywhere—
Have no sweet Love to comfort my despair !'

* * * * *

LXIII

‘ I will away, into the light of day !

For morn is peeping o’er the hills afar,

I will away, and somewhere will I pray

For strength and guidance, that I may not mar

The life that still is left—my evil Star

Hath set—another day dawns bright and clear,

And brighter for the clouds that hung so near.

LXIV

‘ Awake, my Love, the morn is newly drest !

Awake, and meet thy lover on the lea !

How cold and drear, till thou dost leave thy rest !

How bright the sunshine that awakes with thee !

For when thou go’st abroad ’tis told to me—

The very winds are richer for thy sighs,

As from thy lips they take their sweet supplies.’

LXV

Such is the cry of Youth, before it learns
 That not for Love alone was man design'd,
Till painfully at last the Man discerns
 That Youth was to Love's deeper meaning blind,
 For passion oft betrays the youthful mind,
And like the spangle of a lesser star
Dazzles, where Love glows steadfast from afar !

LXVI

O Woman, with what soul-alluring charms
 Thou dost constrain the eye to worship thee
How can we fight against those beauteous arms
 How wrestle with so sweet a destiny?
 And yet, if man had only strength to see,
Thy love is but the mirage of a dream,
That mocks him with the magic of its gleam !

LXVII

When will he learn to look at thee aright,
Not make of thee an idol for a day?
To place thee on a far serener height,
Where spirit doth not mix itself with clay?
Thy Beauty then will meet a purer ray,
And in the light of never-ending Love
The perfect joy of one true union prove.

LXVIII

O Soul, that ever whispereth of thy wants,
In God alone canst thou be satisfied!
I know how much the earth-born nature pants
For Love, that never woman yet supplied,
For Love, that is to mortal years denied!—
Are there not moments that reveal to thee
The measure of thine own infinity?

How vain, how short, the best of mortal's love !

Yet fixity in Love the spirit craves !

Unless your trust in God knows no remove,

Your life is but a sleep on summer waves—

Rough winds will toss you to their ocean caves,

Thro' which the bellowing sea with thundrous roar

Doth break the chilly silence evermore.

Unto the naked Heavens I cry aloud,

'O Father, give me back my Childhood's Faith—

That Faith which sought Thee in the brightening

cloud,

And deem'd it but the mirror of Thy breath—

O give me that assurance, which in Death

Men have, whom lifelong fears and doubts assail'd,

Yet at the last Thy glorious Light have hail'd.

‘ Oh, when this passionate heart hath ceased to beat,
 Then only may I feel myself secure !
 I am not fit to lay me at Thy feet,
 How canst Thou all my frailty endure ?—
 O Lord, unless I felt Thy pardon sure,
 Mine own unworthiness might bid me pause,
 Ere I could ask forgiveness in my cause.

‘ In sole reliance on Thy saving grace,
 The blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin,
 I supplicate Thy mercy in this place—
 Here, at Thine altar, seek I peace within—
 Lord, now in me Thy earnest work begin !
 O grant me true repentance of the past,
 And Faith, that shall not doubt Thee at the last.

‘O give me Love—strong, perfect, undefiled !
A heart to answer to my own heart’s need,
An eye that is not by new sights beguiled,
But calm and steadfast, reverencing its creed,
A soul that is from sensual slavery freed—
Or, if I may no earthly union prove,
Console me with Thy grace, Thy peace, Thy love.’

* * * * *

LXXIV

In Nature's solitudes we learn to feel

How great a debt of happiness we owe

To those who live our lives, and share our weal—

To see a friend in many a seeming foe!—

For those, who on themselves their love bestow,

Find soon or late that love, like hoarded gold,

Is greater weight than one poor mind may hold.

LXXV

We cannot live without our fellow-men—

Men are gregarious as the flocks that roam—

Then wherefore sulk, as some lone denizen,

Away from those who share our natural home?

Nay, rather let us to Man's service come!

For we are not our own, but one another's,

Our happiness and pain involve our brothers'.

LXXVI

And some there are—poor, self-deluded souls!—

Who stoically endure the worst of bonds,
Believing that so far as each controls
His bent for pleasure, so the soul expands,
Such is the creed Philosophy commands!
But those who bow to such a stubborn God,
May find It break them with an iron rod!

LXXVII

Self is the basis of Philosophy—

To make the Will invulnerably whole,
To glory in one's own divinity,
That perfect Ego that defies control!
And if, at times, there seems a higher goal,
Then that Intelligence, which made the Will,
Its own great purpose may at last fulfil.

LXXVIII

These are thy first-fruits, O Philosophy !—

To be above the pains of mortal men,

To let no fear disturb that Faculty

Which ruleth all that is, and that hath been—

To be impervious to Pleasure then ?

The riddle of the Sphinx is hard to find,

If hope and fear and joy are left behind !

LXXIX

Only to hearts devoid of human feeling,

Only to natures cold as thy cold creed,

Can thy trite truths, Philosophy, bring healing,

Can thy poor Faith bind up the wounds that
bleed !—

The soul is dead that is from suffering freed—

Philosophy would blunt the edge of pain,

Yet is more pitiless than wintry rain.

LXXX

And so Philosophy did but appeal
 To natures unimpassion'd as her creed—
The froward heart of man could never feel
 In her a friend to serve him at his need,
 Who only spoke to minds from passion freed—
She never had thro' grief and rage endured,
And at the last safe harbourage procured.

LXXXI

Philosophy should teach men Discipline,
 But Discipline is of far more account
Than speculation upon things divine,
 For this alone can teach men to surmount
 The thorny steps of Life, the soul's great want—
Habit has greater power to restrain,
Than all the precepts of a virtuous brain.

LXXXII

Why was the Gospel, then, so long delay'd?

Why was the knowledge of the Truth denied?

Where was God's loving-kindness, where His aid

In those dark æons of adulterous pride,

That He—a God!—could still in Heaven abide,

Whilst Sorrow walk'd the earth in league with Death,

And Sin gave forth its pestilential breath?

LXXXIII

We rate our little lives beyond their worth—

Time hath not taught us how to bend the knee!

What claim hath any man of mortal birth

That he should be from pain and sorrow free?

What right hath Man to Immortality?

Salvation is a favour, not a right,

No man is justified in God's clear sight.

LXXXIV

Thro' long and patient years the soil was fed
In which the Seed of Life was to be sown,
By true nobility of nature led,
The greatest minds the ancient world had known
The Pagan creeds had severally outgrown—
Had come so near to Christ, it seem'd as tho'
They heralded the Saviour's birth below.

LXXXV

To those bright Intellects of Greece and Rome,
Whose fearless gaze was fix'd upon the sky,
Who look'd to Heaven as Man's eternal home,
And Death but as a friend that lingereth nigh
To ease the throbbing brain, the tortured cry—
We owe the first conception of our God,
'Twas they prepared the path that Jesus trod.

And, if their hope and teaching were in vain—

Oh, not in vain their brave and earnest Faith!

A Faith that might the noblest life sustain,

In all except that last dread hour of Death—

For what assurance hung upon their breath?—

They follow'd where the star of Morning lured,

No personal Saviour had their faith secured.

* * * * *

LXXXVII

What is this cry of universal pain,
Whose volleying echoes wake the slumbrous years,
That seems to paralyse the human brain,
And daunt the strongest heart with unknown fears?—
God is more vengeful, more remote from tears,
Than any of the race that owe Him breath!—
Shall Disobedience merit instant death?

LXXXVIII

We judge from our own standpoint—that of sin!
As sinners we can feel for those who err,
And our rewards and punishments begin
From Laws, which from self-interest we confer,
Whose all-sufficiency is to deter—
We disregard the criminal intent,
And merely punish what we can't prevent.

But God!—can evil live within His sight?

What can He think of sin, Who knew not sin?

And shall we bound Him by our sense of right,

And then appeal to that Small Voice within,

Whence all our thoughts of Holiness begin?—

Not of ourselves may we inherit Heaven,

But only thro' His grace, so freely given.

Doth God take pleasure in a sinner's death?—

'Why will ye die, O House of Israel?'

The sword of vengeance still is in its sheath,

Oh, wherefore will ye 'gainst His Laws rebel?—

Turn ye! Turn ye! the Land in which ye dwell

Is sister unto Sodom! Pride and Lust

Shall level all her palaces in dust.

'The soul that sinneth, it shall die!'—Forewarn'd
 They had but the avenging sword to fear!—
 God's Justice never yet hath been suborn'd,
 It is to all men as the daylight clear,
 ' But if the wicked will his ways forswear
 And keep My statutes, he shall surely live '—
 What greater promise could Jehovah give?

Why to the Jews?—Why to the Jews alone
 The glorious privilege of righting wrong?
 Why should they be peculiarly His own,
 Whose Fatherhood is over every tongue?
 Why should His Righteousness to them belong?
 Why was the Light not equally diffused,
 So had God's justice never been accused?

If we would fathom His august decree,
 And so determine His divine intent—
 O that the mind of man should wish to see
 Into that Great, Primæval Element,
 The Spirit force by which our lives are blent !—
 Why should we doubt, and why should we despair,
 Because we cannot reason all things clear ?—

Are not our lives girt round with mysteries,
 That mock the shadowy substance of our years ?
 And shall we find our answer in the skies,
 That shift as lightly as a maiden's tears ?
 In Faith alone may we abate our fears—
 A firm belief that He, Who made the soul,
 The mystery of our being doth control !—

Yet even here there seems no need to doubt
 The justice and the wisdom of God's choice,
 His Kingdom was not built up from without,
 But from within must come the still Small Voice!—
 No trampling legions bade the World rejoice,
 'Jehovah hath prevail'd o'er all His foes!'
 No Babylon amid the desert rose!

Peace and goodwill towards men He came to teach,
 A universal brotherhood in Christ!
 To point the time when Law shall heal the breach
 Of every war-worn, old antagonist,
 Of Law that shall for ever co-exist
 With God, and our conceptions of the right,
 As ruled in presence of the Eternal Light!

XCVII

With how much greater force His message came
From that small band, who lived the life He taught,
As man with man the stubborn will to tame,
Nerved by His strenuous zeal, His noble thought!
Till from such close communion they were wrought
Into fit instruments to work His will,
And in men's hearts the Christian's Hope instil.

XCVIII

For how might He reveal Himself to men
In all the semblance of a perfect life,
As living comrade, with the strength of ten,
Fighting His passions down with ceaseless strife,
Fearless to war with sin wherever rife,
Unless to those who shared His daily toil,
The future tillers of the stubborn soil?

The natural order of development
Is from the unit to the family,
The family to the State, and so God sent
His message to the Jews, that they might be
A unit that should spread from sea to sea,
A unit that should evermore expand
Until His Truth should light on every land.

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So seems there reason for His special choice,
That, out of all the World, one race alone
Should first interpret that mysterious Voice,
The darkness of the ages to dethrone !
And in selection was God's justice shown—
To Abraham, for Faith and Righteousness,
Was given the covenant which we possess.

Yet were not these—the Chosen Seed—exempt
 From that same stern, inexorable law
 Of Death for Sin!—how often did they tempt
 God's anger, and upon their children draw
 The fearful retribution He foresaw,
 Who by the mouth of Prophet, Priest, and King
 Had turn'd them from their vain imagining!

Forewarn'd, they had their fate before their eyes—
 Freewill to choose Jehovah for their King,
 To make of self a loving sacrifice,
 And give Him of their heart's best offering,
 Or still to heathenish transgressions cling—
 To set up idols of insensate lust,
 And drag their generations in the dust.

Like children, seizing first the glittering bait,
 They snatch'd at Pleasure as she caught the eye,
 Choosing the certain death that must await
 Those who give rein to sensual vanity,
 Till, wearied out with their Idolatry,
 God scatter'd them the heathen hosts among,
 That they might learn thro' suffering whence they
 sprung.

Just as, in later times, Imperial Rome,
 Whose robust manhood held the World in fee,
 When luxury and vice besieged the home,
 Gave up her strength to shameless harlotry—
 Till the Barbaric sword alone could free
 A Nation so debauch'd with lust and wine
 As scarce to recognise her ancient line.

What is more bitter than Ingratitude,
 No brackish draught in desert waste distill'd?—
 The more we thirst, the more it doth intrude
 Its bright, illusive mirage, soft and mild,
 We cannot realise ourselves beguiled,
 But as the Truth dawns slowly on the mind,
 Ah, then, how bitter is the cup we find!

And who—if not the Jews—have proved ingrate?
 No race was ever born 'neath kindlier stars,
 No brighter destiny, no happier fate,
 Jehovah's sword to guide them in their wars!—
 When Man's ingratitude thy spirit sears,
 Think of the Christ, His anguish on the Cross,
 And those for whom He suffer'd such a loss!

CVII

Doth it not seem as tho' His life were vain,
Since they for whom His Gospel was proclaim'd
In scornful incredulity remain?—
And those, whom 'heirs of righteousness' He named,
The very men by whom He was defamed!—
For if The Christ be not the Son of God,
Then no Messiah comes of David's blood!

CVIII

Their racial doom is stamp'd upon the face—
No Time, nor Place, those features can disguise.
They bear, within the eyes, the shifty trace
Of those whom Terror never wholly flies!
Condemn'd to find a home 'neath alien skies,
Wanderers upon the face of God's fair earth,
And cursed, like Cain, with murder from their birth.

O will they ever find a Home at last?

And will God gather them, from East and West?

For nigh two thousand years borne down the blast

Of pitiless retribution, sin deprest!—

If only they would turn them from their Quest,

And recognise in Christ great David's Son,

In Whom the Future and the Past are one!

* * * * *

Yet we, of all men, should His Truth declare,
 We, whose mighty heritage, the Main,
 And that great Faith our Fathers did revere
 And kept inviolate thro' storm and strain,
 Their liberty of Conscience to maintain,
 Have made this Isle the cradle of a race
 That shall unite the World in bonds of Peace!—

That self-reliant child, America,
 Mother of teeming millions yet to be!
 Lo, now her gallant standards float afar,
 Redressing wrong, dethroning tyranny!—
 What human eye her greatness can foresee?—
 Her mighty voice adown the wind is borne,
 'Freedom shall be the keynote of the Dawn!'

CXII

Canada, thou loyal and loving one !

Daughter so near to thine own Mother's heart
That, when the foreign menace shook her throne,
Thy hand was on the sword-hilt ! swift to part
From its protecting sheath, and share the smart
Of common danger in defence of Home,
Long silent to the roll of hostile drum.

CXIII

The Cape, too, with her argosies of gold,
Her lion-hearted hunters, North and South—
Lo, what a destiny she doth unfold !
E'en now she lifts the chalice to the mouth—
Thro' storm and peril and sad days of drouth
Her gallant sons have weather'd, proud to be
A branch of that same dear ancestral tree.

CXIV

Australia, daughter most remote from Home,
Yet ever dear to thy fond Parent's heart!
O wherefore didst thou at such distance roam?—
Thou wert most bravely won, that thou shouldst part
From all thy kith and kin, anew to start
In that vast Continent beyond our day,
And from the desert thy rich tribute pay!

CXV

And last, that ancient Empire whence we sprung—
Children of iron nerve, foredoom'd to power!—
Imperial India! who hath ever sung
Thy meed of greatness, thy magnetic dower,
Bright land of tamarisk and lotus-flower!
Thy ivory palaces, thy jewell'd thrones,
And all the splendour of thy magic dawns?

'The world-wide empire promised to the Jews—
 Thro' lack of Faith and Disobedience lost—
 Doth it not seem as tho' His Love renews
 A second promise to the Anglian Host,
 They who have treasured Purity the most,
 To colonise, and civilise the World,
 And see the standard of the Cross unfurl'd?

For, if we be not of the lost Ten Tribes,
 At least we have procured them harbourage—
 A shelter from the flouts, the sneers, the gibes
 Of malice that befits not this fair age!—
 Turn where you will each blood-stain'd, guilty page,
 The foreign hatred ever doth abide,
 The Jew is menaced still from every side.

Are there not signs that still God loveth them?—

Whate'er they touch turns golden in their hands,
And stone by stone the New Jerusalem
Is rising 'mid the waste of other lands,
For as their Wealth, so too their Power expands—
From East to West the sky is all aflame
With dawning greatness of the Jewish name!

* * * * *

CXIX

If to the Jews Christ's mission was in vain,
 How much more wonderful the Gentiles' faith!
Why should the Gentiles reap the bearded grain,
 The Jews alone incur God's righteous wrath?
 Have we not both offended unto death?—
Must Loyalty to Creed pronounce their doom,
Who hold that The Messiah is to come?

CXX

O God, if all our thoughts of Thee are vain,
 How vain and foolish do they sometimes seem!
Life holds so much of bitterness and pain,
 How can we know Thy power is all-supreme?
 Our Faith—how doth it soothe us!—like a stream
That murmurs gently of the light and dew,
Wherein we may not bathe and life renew.

‘I have no Faith’—how pitiful the cry!

Or, ‘Daily doth my Faith grow less and less’—

On every breeze is borne the pained sigh

Of one who dare not all his heart confess—

O shield us from the storm, the strain, the stress!

Come to us in this Age of greed and gain,

And ’stablish in our hearts Thy perfect reign.

And other fears there are—as who shall stand

In faint remembrance thro’ the lapse of Time?

We are but units, in an unit land,

With scarce the substance of a passing chime,

And shall the Great Unseen, with power sublime,

Review the outcome of our little day?

And is He ever near us when we pray?

CXXIII

And what of all the millions that have been,
 Long laid to rest with their devout desire?
The myriad myriads on this verge of green,
 Still looking upwards to the central fire?
 The multitudes the Future shall inspire?—
Our utter insignificance of being
Makes us despair of all beyond our seeing!

CXXIV

Our minds are finite—can we measure His?
 Judge of Infinity by finite laws?—
The little that we know obscures our bliss,
 We cannot face the Great Primæval Cause!
 Our narrow orb of sight its light withdraws,
Yet in the boundless spaces of the sky
What worlds undreamt of may go wheeling by!

CXXV

The thousand questions that come surging in,
And thunder like the waves upon the beach,
The haven that we ever strive to win,
And yet, despite our striving, never reach,
The doubts that in due season fall to each,
And never leave us but with sullen dread
That all Life's beauty is for ever dead.

CXXVI

And where at last do all our questions end?
And are they not as foolish as we deem
A child's first questions of his earliest friend?
More foolish! for what folly must it seem
To question where is no responsive gleam,
No sympathetic parent to expound
The mysteries which in our lives abound?

* * * * *

CXXVII

O breaking hearts ! O smiles that fain would hide
Your anguish from the prying eyes of Morn !
The bitter tears that Beauty's cheeks have dyed,
Only to vanish with the Day new-born !
The biting wounds the cruel gyves have worn !
O who would be so fetter'd, so distraught,
But for the Crown of Life thro' Victory bought ?

CXXVIII

And would you tear it from their aching sight,
And tell them there is nought beyond the veil ?
That human misery is but a blight
That falls haphazard where the roses trail ?
That all their fortitude at length must fail,
Since there is none to call to at their need,
And man has now outgrown the Christian creed ?

Must Woman's sweet Devotion also pass,
 Her tender trust in all things pure and true?
 And with it half the joy she did amass
 Whilst Faith and Love the Day's bright curtain
 drew?—
 No more the mystic bond, the love 'twixt two,
 For once her sacredness is laid aside,
 Her virtue will but rest upon her pride.

O little lives, brought thro' the starry gloom,
 Fragrant as early flowers of Paradise!
 O little Innocents, whose tender bloom
 Is soft as that which on the violet lies!
 Who would not rescue you from sin and vice?
 Too oft transmitted thro' ancestral veins,
 Too soon to bind the infant mind in chains!

Heredity ! thy awful laws reveal
 The fearful criminality of sin—
 The secret faults which man would fain conceal,
 With all the host of ills they usher in,
 Now show their hydra-headed origin—
 O what an obligation so to live,
 That health and strength are in our power to give !

Attribute not thy sorrow to the Lord !
 If not to fault or folly of thine own,
 The vices of thine ancestors afford
 Sufficient cause to break and drag thee down,
 Disease and death by man's own hand are sown—
 Indifference to the natural laws of health,
 Or self-indulgence born of idle wealth.

CXXXIII

How can we judge of evil, when we see
That all things work thro' evil up to good?
And shall we judge that a calamity
Which is but an incentive to the blood.
To bravely battle with the swelling flood?—
Had ancient Nilus his full tribute paid,
Egyptian Art and Science had been stay'd!

CXXXIV

So that misfortune often is a spur
To goad man to his highest, and that wrong
Which seem'd to cast upon his life a blur,
Is but a favour granted to the strong,
That should the joy of victory prolong—
The finer metal must be purged with fire,
If perfect purity it would acquire.

Behold the savage with his simple wants—

Content, if in the sunshine he may bask !

The torpor of indifference him enchants,

And drowsy negligence of any task

Save that of blinking at the stars—the mask

Of the wide globe puzzles his childish brain,

And so a thousand years he will remain.

* * * * *

CXXXVI

What man is there that hath a sickly child,
That doth not love it more than all the rest?
Thus is our grief for sorrow reconciled,
And larger love exalts the parent's breast—
The little sufferer is of all most blest
For love and sympathy are dearer far
Than all the joys that other children share.

CXXXVII

So every sorrow hides a central joy,
And with all suffering and pain'd under-song
There is a leavening mixture of alloy,
That more than compensates the seeming wrong,
For to all such far other joys belong—
A keener sensibility to bliss,
A finer insight into all that is.

CXXXVIII

So Pain and Sorrow also have their part
 In the great scheme of universal good,
Without them how refine the human heart,
 Too soon elated unless these withstood?
 So lightly do we flit from mood to mood,
We seldom see the sorrow of the thing,
Until the Angel Pity droops her wing.

CXXXIX

And Sorrow is not only to refine,
 For Love leaps up with tenfold sympathy,
To mitigate the suffering and the sin
 That are a part of the divine decree,
 In that foreshadowing of the life to be—
Where Pity hath become an Angel grace,
And Sorrow shows once more a smiling face.

And these are warnings also of their kind,
That every time we sin we cast abroad
Seeds, that the ever-fructifying wind
Will bring to ripeness by some other road,
Increasing sorrow, and the human load—
O who would sin, if first he did review
The pity of the thing he fain would do?

* * * * *

CXLI

Destroy not our old Faith ! lest the poor

Rise in their wrath, and slay thee with their hands—

Why should they battle on, why seek to endure

The thousand slights put on by thy demands,

Unless beyond the gloom God's Heaven expands?—

Where every man shall meet with his reward,

And their long-suffering voice at last be heard.

CXLII

I cannot reconcile my faith in Man

With what I see beneath these homely skies—

The million prostrate, that the few may span

With their broad palms the wealth the land supplies,

'Mid luxury of a thousand selfish ties,

Forgetting those strong arms to which they owe

Immunity from toil and foreign foe.

CXLIII

Yet those broad acres that our Fathers loved,
The stately chase with all its woodland sheen,
The slender-footed deer, that whilom roved
Mid pasturage of brilliant English green,
The winding avenues, the distant scene,
And last the ancient Manor, ivy-crown'd,
Still breathing of a feudal peace profound,

CXLIV

And over all the bearing of the host,
That perfect blending of good sense and pride,
That ancient dignity, too often lost
By contact with the coarse and meaner side,
Where noble lineage is to gold allied!
Courteous and kind, with that attendant grace
That is the sure presentment of his race—

O who can look on these indifferently?

Rather than see such scenes and manners die,

Almost one were in love with tyranny,

Almost one could ignore the widow's cry,

The thousand breaking hearts beneath the sky!—

Perish the thought, which would my faith impair

That all men have in joy an equal share!

* * * * *

CXLVI

Interminable streets of London Town,
 'Teeming with myriads, myriads still to come!—
How dost thou set our poor vain natures down!
 How stultify our very thoughts of Home!
 For here, as in the desert, one might roam
Unnoticed, tho' a thousand pass us by,
Unloved, tho' many a loving heart be nigh.

CXLVII

Bewilder'd 'mid the rush, the whirl, the jar
 Of millions striving for the foremost place,
Man loses sight of his true guiding star,
 To live for the advancement of his race—
 The struggle for existence doth efface
The self-denying ordinance of life,
 Since he who would survive must live by strife!

CXLVIII

This is the greatest danger of the Hour,
Lest, thrown upon a too-tempestuous sea,
The individual may forget his power,
And in the mass merge his identity,
Oblivious of a higher destiny
That calls him to the fields of bright renown,
And shapes for him at last the Victor's crown.

CXLIX

Each hath his separate calling, each his sphere—
To each man comes the knowledge of his worth—
Then let him follow with a conscience clear
The path that Destiny mark'd out from birth,
Walking with fearless steps the bounteous Earth,
Pleased with whatever substance God hath given,
And living as beneath the eye of Heaven.

Virtue sits throned in every human heart,
 Tho' to our sight the outer man seem vile,
In each there is a temple set apart,
 Which neither thought nor passion can defile—
 Lose faith in Man?—It is the Devil's wile,
For he, who once hath lost his faith in Man,
Will ere long find his trust in Godhead vain!

* * * * *

Man's conquests over matter—do they move
 From God, or from his own determinate will?
 For what do his so-vast achievements prove
 But that all matter yields to mortal skill,
 Indomitable courage, scorn of ill?—
 How thro' repeated failures he may rise
 To heights beyond the heights he did emprise!

How else had the Egyptian Priesthood curb'd
 The mighty waters of the muddy Nile?
 How else had the Phœnician prows disturb'd
 The long, still dream of many a slumbering Isle,
 Lull'd by the gentle plash of waves erstwhile?
 Idolaters! what did their Gods reveal
 That their own perseverance did not steal?

CLIII

Consider too the progress Man hath made—
- And to what end are all his conquests moving?—
The mighty strides within the last decade,
 The growing stature of his genius proving,
 Undaunted by defeat and danger loving,—
If to himself he owes this deathless crown,
The sovereignty of God he will disown.

CLIV

And will he thus be wholly satisfied?
 Whence comes this craving for divine support?
The voice of Conscience will not be denied,
 However much the Intellect distort
 Impressions that the Higher Sense hath caught—
Man's nature cries aloud for moral calm,
And Conscience can alone supply the balm.

And, if the Mind be then the seat of Power,
 What doth its height of sovereignty control?
 What claims it for its spiritual dower?
 What mastery hath it o'er the human soul?
 Before this new-fledged Power we would extol,
 Let it resolve the bounds of Time and Space,
 And give to every World its own appointed place.

And so with greater knowledge reverence grows—
 He, who hath seen God's mystic fingers traced
 Upon the Hills and their eternal snows,
 Will last deny the Presence that hath placed
 This little Planet in the boundless waste—
 And what is all our striving and achieving,
 If here the soul its last bright web is weaving?

* * * * *

CLVII

Are not our sense-perceptions from without?
Then why still argue of the Voice within?
Doth not the creed of Nature make us doubt
The aspirations that the soul would win,
The heavenly source from whence our joys begin?
Was Conscience not evolved from out old Time,
An instinct born of punishment for crime?

CLVIII

Had not the ancient Greeks as fine a sense
Of true discernment betwixt Right and Wrong
An intellectual manhood as intense?
A soul that soar'd the highest Gods among?
Yet knew they not the song Isaiah sung!—
To them the Holy Spirit was not given
In that first sign and sacrament of Heaven.

CLIX

If thro' the whole creation Conscience reign,
 An instinct born and disciplined of dread—
In Man the slow result of grief and pain,
 Thro' æons upon æons perfected,
 Owning the mighty impress of the dead—
What of the still Small Voice we deem'd divine,
Whose sanction was Morality in fine !

CLX

O cursèd lure, to lead our feet astray !
 If we deny the God within the breast,
The God without is but a feeble stay !
 And where then may the wounded spirit rest
 If Conscience 'is to lower realms deprest?—
Conscience, whose final judgment all await,
Strong in whose strength Man may think scorn of
 Fate !

First, that it should pervade the brute creation—
 Is it not this that makes the Lion cower
 Before the eye of Man, and learn his station,
 Tho' greater far in strength and valorous power?
 Man's overlordship Conscience cannot lower,
 And, far from levelling all on Nature's plan,
 It differentiates the brute from Man!

Something there is in Man then that doth force
 E'en from the brute acknowledgment of God!
 That ever-living, intellectual Source
 That hath thro' him the whole wide world subdued,
 That makes him fear'd by all the forest brood,
 Since none may steadily his glance receive,
 Or meet the eye that can such terror give.

CLXIII

In His own image God created Man,
And over all things gave him godlike power,
A mind that may His own Creation scan,
With Conscience as his spiritual dower—
A gift that should preserve him, lest he lower
His nature to the beast which doth not change,
But thro' the ages walks the selfsame range.

CLXIV

This Living Voice within the human will
That would our utmost thoughts and actions frame,
This Spiritual Essence that doth fill
Our minds with mystery and our souls with flame,
Still whispering of the Presence whence it came—
Is it the child of God, or moral Law?
Which inference would the larger reason draw?

We, who are in the world, are of the world,
 And worldliness is ever our first care,
 Children of Fate! whom some strong Hand hath hurl'd
 Into the stellar silence from afar,
 And left us wondering of what world we are—
 Strive as we will to reach the Master Mind,
 Impenetrable mists before, behind!

And so before we judge of things divine
 We first must mortify our sinful flesh,
 Not to the body must our wills incline,
 But to the spirit bathed in love afresh!
 Children of Nature, taught by her to thresh
 The grain of life from out the husk of death,
 And in her solitudes find calmer faith.

* * * * *

CLXVII

Without a God, what hath man to desire ?
 Money ?—The vulgar tyrant of the crowd !—
Or, if to higher things he would aspire,
 With larger faculties and sense endow'd,
 His life to some ennobling purpose vow'd—
What is there in the far-off realms of Truth
That can repay him for his once-lost youth ?

CLXVIII

Shall we take Pleasure then as our sole guide,
 To snatch the sunbeams as they dance and rise ?—
A sweet philosophy that few will chide,
 Who please themselves, alone are truly wise !—
 The soul looks out at intervals and sighs
To think of what we are, and might have been,
Who look'd to Pleasure as a deathless Queen !

CLXIX

Another cries, 'O seize the fleeting hour,
For like the leaves our moments fall away,
Make happy whilst the God is in his bower,
And Youth and Love their rival charms display—
Life's golden harvest hath so brief a day!
O lose not for remote, imagined gain
The precious hours that still to thee remain!'

CLXX

If thou wouldst ask that God should sanction sin,
And aid thy body in its full desire,
This trespass on thyself must war within,
And leave thy breast a ruin charr'd by fire,
And Love in ashes all too soon expire!—
Oh, think not God and Nature are at strife,
To rob thy soul of one sweet breath of life!—

CLXXI

Nor that thine own imagined good is best—
For, if there be no other Life but this,
Before thou dost thy better self divest
And stake thy happiness upon a kiss,
Or some such other indiscriminate bliss,
Be sure that when each coarser sense is fed,
Remorse shall ask no questions of thy dead!

CLXXII

For, if there be no Heaven nor Hell—but Here—
How much the greater need that Truth remain!
That we may make this Earth a heavenly sphere,
By lessèning its load of grief and pain,
And not with others leave the sting or stain—
'Tis not by jovial, self-indulgent sins
Man learns where his true happiness begins.

CLXXIII

O let no momentary joy enslave
The spirit which thou hast received pure!
The paths of pleasure flower but to the grave,
And few there are resist the fragrant lure—
O, not to selfish sins thyself inure!
'Follow thy pleasures with determined feet'—
Can Love and Lust in such commingling meet?

CLXXIV

O God, if in the spiritual mood
The soul rejoices in its purity,
When the soft tongue of passion fires the blood
How far off seems the Voice that speaks of Thee!
How mighty is the impulse that we flee!—
Why hast Thou made the face of Sin so sweet
That all our nature yearneth for defeat?

This is an Age of lethargy and vice !

With stimulants are all our senses fed—

The patient soul is made a sacrifice,

To pay for pleasures of the heart and head,

While soft narcotics numb with nervous dread—

No wonder that its spirit-sight is dimm'd,

And God the further off, Love's lamp half-trimm'd !

To lust is not to Love—Love scorneth Lust!—

How canst thou say 'I love!' and Love defile ?

For Love is reverent, tender of its trust,

And could not stoop to any thought of guile,

Love knows no wantonness, no Devil's wile!—

True Love is a perpetual sacrifice,

Whose smoke in heaven-ascending thoughts doth rise.

Two Roads present themselves to every man—

The one the Way of Christ, thro' blinding tears,

The other roof'd with many a flowery span,

And redolent of all that life endears—

In each the smoke of sacrifice appears,

Two victims are upon the altar laid,

And Soul or Body now must meet the blade.



CLXXVIII

The Atheist argues that the Christian creed
Is but the love of Self, in form disguised,
That could we analyse each noble deed
Some selfish motive ever were premised—
Is Virtue by such sophistry chastised?
Are not our greatest actions incomplete
Until we lay them at our Master's feet?

CLXXIX

'The infinite conceit, another cries,
Of Christian fellowship and faith in God!
Consider all the life beneath the skies,
The lives that to Futurity are owed,
The countless myriads now beneath the sod,
Then, looking on thyself, dost thou not feel
That thou art merely dust upon the Wheel?'

CLXXX

‘O would that God would write His meaning plain,
And not leave life a riddle, hardly guess’d!’
Such is the cry that all have voiced with pain,
That found an echo in old Khayyám’s breast—
Let no such fearful doubt disturb thy rest,
God’s meaning is writ large upon the skies,
And lo, on earth the same clear impress lies!

CLXXXI

And still another, ‘Only minds diseased
The morbid craving after God reveal,
That in proportion as we are released
From suffering, further from the Faith we steal’—
Can such perverseness from itself conceal
That robust health may lead the soul astray,
Since then the body’s wants alone have play?

But when the body is with sickness bow'd—

And who of mortal men is freed from pain?—

The spiritual nature cries aloud

For that strong Arm that can alone sustain,

Our old allegiance doth return again—

Happy the man, who needs no chastening Hand

The mystery of the Faith to understand !

And others, more defiant in their tone,

Have solved the riddle of the sorrowing earth—

'Sport for the Heavenly Huntsman,' sayeth one,

And yet another, 'But for Life and Death,'

And that the soul fades with the fleeting breath—

What answer is there unto such as these ?

What answer that can wholly set at ease ?

Have we not felt that nothing matters much?
 That we are creatures of that creature Chance?
 Yet, thinking so, how very near we touch
 The borderland of this great World's Romance,
 Where all that breathes His Glory doth enhance!
 Each life a link in the Eternal Chain,
 Unclasp'd by God, to close in Him again.

'Tis easier to believe than disbelieve,
 Altho' man's mind may never apprehend
 Infinite God, nor fixedly conceive
 A Time without beginning, without end,
 Nor where the stars in their bright courses wend—
 Enough the evidence to which he clings,
 The might and mystery of created things!

Who, that hath scaled the heights, knows not the hour
When from the altitude of some lone peak
He feels the deep immensity of Power,
The stilly silence in which God doth speak,
Himself—a very child in wisdom weak ?
O'er-borne at last, his self-reliance gone,
He kneels before the One Eternal Throne.

* * * * *

CLXXXVII

‘Seek and ye shall find,’—find rest and peace
 Within the bosom of the Saviour’s love,
And how immediate is the soul’s release
 Once it hath set its faith beyond remove,
 That faith which man may never wholly prove!—
How many learnèd seek the Lord in vain,
Whose Truth to babes and sucklings is made plain!—

CLXXXVIII

So plain that every child who runs may read,
 Because a child’s heart is like crystal pure—
The passions have not bow’d the golden head,
 Nor Doubt betray’d with its accursèd lure!—
 His confidence in man is still secure,
And faith in man leads up to faith in God,
Without it we disclaim His Fatherhood.

O why should God fling dust into men's eyes,
 And then arraign them for their lack of sight ?
 Why shroud the Faith in holy mysteries ?
 Are Parables consistent with the Light ?—
 The wise He would confound in their own wit,
 'E'en so, Father—for so it seemeth good,'
 The meek and lowly shall not be withstood.

Unless like little children ye believe,
 Ye shall not see the Kingdom of your God—
 So shall these heavenly mysteries deceive
 The unwearying intellects that daily plod
 To find God's purpose in His chastening rod—
 'Tis strange that He, Who gave the mind its power,
 Should humble it within the selfsame hour !

In spiritual Truths to be a child,
 And sit at the All-Father's feet, and learn
 That Satan, splendid Angel, was beguiled
 By pride of intellect his God to spurn,
 That all who diligently seek, and turn
 Their eyes from evil, shall not seek in vain—
 Than these, man hath no higher truths to gain.

The lower nature asketh for a sign,
 But Faith is of the heart, not of the eyes!
 Do we our confidence in man confine
 To what at best we vaguely may surmise?
 For who can pierce his bodily disguise?
 Instinctively in man we place our trust,
 And yet refuse to see that God is just—

That God, Who of His own immortal Soul
Gave us that Gift of Gifts—Eternal Love!
Our kinship is beyond our own control,
Our spirits to undying music move,
Our noblest thoughts and aspirations prove
That we are sons of God, children of Light,
And born to live for ever in His sight.

* * * * *

'Who art thou that repliest against God,'
 That questionest His great mercy to man?
 Shall He Who fashion'd man from out a sod
 Answer to thee whose life is but a span?
 And wouldst thou ask the Universal Plan?
 Thou, whose poor mind is finite, whose weak brain
 Not half of thy scant knowledge can retain!

But live the Christ-like life, and thou shalt know
 'Whether the doctrine be of God or not!'—
 What simpler answer could our Lord bestow?
 How doth it lighten our poor human lot!
 How soon are all our doubts and fears forgot!
 For God reveals Himself in many ways,
 Till Disbelief a Doubt of Doubt betrays.

CXCVI

His laws are built upon Eternal Truth—

Truth that is evermore inviolate !

'Tis but the fashion of misguided youth

Infinite Wisdom to interrogate,

Youth irreligious, unregenerate !

But with each Spring a deeper feeling flows,

Lights with the lily, reddens with the rose.

CXCVII

An old man's judgment in the face of Death

Is testimony worth a young man's ear,

When thro' the years there rings the cry of Faith,

'The Lord my refuge is, I have no fear'—

Doubt vanishes before the Morn of Cheer !

For at the last is clearer insight given,

And happy Peace, the olive-branch of Heaven.

CXCVIII

To love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
 This is the first commandment and the last !
The love of Christ alone can grace impart
 To triumph over all the sinful past,
 Illumining the soul in splendour vast !
Can so transform the nature of a man,
That all shall marvel whence the change began.

CXCIX

How beautiful the Christian Brotherhood !
 Bound by strict ties of true nobility
To render love, not in return for good,
 But to all such as use us spitefully—
 This is the badge of Christian Chivalry,
To be above returning blow for blow,
Magnanimous alike t'wards friend and foe.

His Life and Teaching cannot be in vain,
 Since no Philosophy the World hath seen
 Can heal and succour, lighten and sustain—
 Can help us to relinquish what hath been—
 Like that of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene,
 And in the lonely passage of the tomb
 What hand like His to guide us thro' the gloom ?

What man is there would be afraid to die
 If Christ should meet him in the way to-morrow,
 And tell him of the Shadow drawing nigh ?
 Dost think that he would look on Death with
 sorrow ?
 Nay, rather, would he not new comfort borrow
 To know that Christ doth live, hath power to save,
 That there is Victory even in the grave ?

CCII

And canst thou doubt that Christ doth surely live,
That Sun and Moon and Stars hold Him in awe?
Disorder never yet had power to give
The cosmic cycle, the Metonic law—
What other inference can our reason draw?
We feel the beat of His o'er-shadowing wings,
The harmony in all created things.

CCIII

Why should we fear to die, since Death must come?
For all things to their elements return—
Earth, air, fire, water, constitute our home,
In these alone ourselves we may discern!—
Is this a thing that any man should mourn?
The body mingles once again with flame,
The soul returns to God, from Whom it came.

If life be sweet despite of human tears,
And Earth and all her daughters passing fair,
What must it be within those heavenly spheres,
Where Christ the Bridegroom doth the feast
prepare?—
Where Happiness is without hint of care,
Where Pleasure is without alloy of pain,
Where Love is free from every earthly stain.

Yet even in this little World of ours,
Where all things point to ruin and decay,
Where Man is arrogant of his vain powers,
Where Beauty holds her court but for a day,
Where Lust and Vice their rival charms display,
How few there are would willingly resign
One single hour to share the Life divine !

A wise man makes provision for his death,
And doth insure against the stroke of Fate—
Yet, when the simple premium is Faith,
How few there are assure their future state!
'Tis easier to believe that God is great,
That Time and Space are bounded by His will,
Than that the Worlds some unknown law fulfil!

If, as a simple tribute to his Love,
A man will gladly danger face or death,
Esteeming life a gift too small to prove
His adoration for her maiden faith,
For that most sweet surrender of her breath—
What should we not for Christ's dear love endure,
Who for our sakes Salvation did procure?

Jesus should be to us a Light, a Guide,
A Friend so dear to us in joy or sorrow,
That always in His love we would abide,
And from His sympathy true succour borrow—
One Whom we look for on some bright To-morrow,
When pain and sickness shall have pass'd away,
And dawns for us, at last, the Eternal Day.



Highest and holiest unto the Lord!—

He, who hath put from his sight for ever

All that the body would fain have adored,

All that the soul from its Maker might sever,

All that might hold him from highest endeavour—

A eunuch in body, in heart, and soul,

Giving to God of the fruits of the whole.

The Church of a great People should command

The finest intellects, the noblest minds—

Whom God hath gifted with so rich a hand

Should yield the tribute which their genius finds,

Else may they learn that Knowledge only blinds

Those faculties to which they look'd for light,

And Wisdom fade before their darkling sight.

CCXI

In God's Great Church are many able speakers,
Born orators with eyes and tongue of flame,
Whose words now soft, now like the chiding breakers,
Give voice to thoughts that others cannot name,
Beneath their spell what high resolves we frame !
What clear conceptions of our Christian Duty,
The sanctity of life, its hallow'd beauty !

CCXII

She must supply the wants of the New Age,
In Her alone can sustenance be found !
The Centuries have turn'd a nobler page,
And man is treading upon higher ground—
O, on the heights may plenteous grace abound !
The Church of Christ may nevermore stand still,
If here Her glorious mission She fulfil.

O who can doubt Her civilising power,
Or the ennobling influence which She wields?—
Deprive Her of Her customary dower,
Blot out Her Light from all our English fields,
The virtuous lives Her bright example yields,
And in that day when Faith and Reverence go
Man may look out upon a world of woe!

* * * * *

CCXIV

What is the use of fighting over creeds,
When, 'mid the schisms that have rent the Church,
Our Faith is fall'n away, and none succeeds
To place it far above the vulgar perch
Of low ambitions, to redeem the search
For all that is most beautiful and true,
And in men's hearts the Christian's Hope renew ?

CCXV

What matters it, if Anglican and Greek
Have stigmatised the practices of Rome ?
The Gospel is not very far to seek
For points to bring their accusations home—
O would that all to one sane mind would come !
For all are branches of the Christian vine,
Embracing every land with tendrils fine.

The Church infallible?—Look to Her Past,
 There is the answer to Her high pretension!
 What hand like Hers hath strewn along the blast
 Such awful seeds of discord and dissension?
 Her doctrines! Her immaculate invention!
 Interpreting Christ's Message with the sword,
 Making His very Name a Name abhorr'd!

Authority?—Authority from Whom?—
 Is this the bar betwixt their Church and ours?—
 No apostolic licence from the tomb
 To preach or teach all that our Faith empowers,
 The thoughts that guide us thro' the silent
 hours?—
 Was ever Saint infallible alive?
 And shall his dogma then as truth survive?

CCXVIII

What tho' it be the vaunted boast of Rome
 That She alone retains the ancient Faith,
 That only in Her fold may man become
 Fit for the Resurrection after death—
 Heretical our vain, apostate breath !—
 Let Her remember in Her pride of days
 God's chosen people now are castaways.

CCXIX

Unity !—but under God, not man—
 No papal domination for the weak !—
 The arch of Heaven is not too large a span
 To gird the freedom that the soul would seek,
 The glorious silence in which God doth speak !—
 He, that is not against, is for the King,
 This is the Unity that Time will bring.

Catholic or Protestant—what matters it to God,
 So long as thou dost love with thy whole heart
 The same dear Christ, Whose stainless feet have trod
 The Land from which the Dayspring first did
 start?—

What is there in a name to keep apart
 Those whom Christ's loving spirit doth possess,
 Who openly the selfsame Faith profess?

In Catholicity there is a voice
 That speaks from out the venerable Past,
 Whose music still doth bid the World rejoice
 In One Great Church that shall prevail at last,
 And hold all creeds in One Communion vast—
 In that far time when perfect Love shall reign,
 And all men's hearts be knit in Christ again.

In all religions God hath sacrifice—

The pale Mohammedan with eyes etern

No earthly lure, no offering can entice—

Taught from his youth all childish pleas to spurn—

To disregard the Prophet's mandate stern,

That whether Duty take him far or near

'Tis his to kneel when strikes the hour of prayer.

Behold that sacred city of the East,

The sunrise gilding minaret and tower,

The myriad worshippers, the solemn feast,

When Ganges claims his customary dower

And man and maid their rich libations pour,

Scattering upon the river's ample breast

The flowers that the Deity loves best.

* * * * *

CCXXIV

Gather the Nations to Thee once again,
For not in Rome alone dost Thou abide !
Thy Church is Universal, and Thy Reign
O'er all the earth doth pour its golden tide,
An affluence of love from Thy dear side,
Foreshadowing the halcyon years of Peace
When the wild rivalries of man shall cease.

CCXXV

Arise, O Lord ! and let not man prevail,
Let not his arrogance go unreprieved,
Put him in fear that so he cannot fail
To know Thy promises are not removed,
Thou wilt not suffer harm to Thy Beloved—
O teach the Nations that they are but men,
Ere they presume upon Thy Truth again !

CCXXVI

The Lord shall be the God of the whole Earth !

Lo now His Light illumines every shore !

All sects and creeds acclaim the Saviour's birth,

And hail Him King of Kings for evermore !

The multitude of the Isles shall Him adore !

Till in the fulness of the perfect day

The night of doubt and discord pass away.

CCXXVII

Then diverse tongues shall in one language meet

That man may worship Him with one accord,

And Star to Star the endless song repeat,

'Glory and Honour to the Incarnate Lord !'

For Day and Night one tribute shall afford—

When Darkness stills the voices of the North,

The South its glorious song shall utter forth !

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