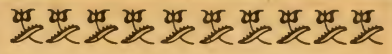


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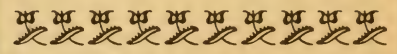
AUSTIN DOBSON

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PROVERBS IN  
PORCELAIN

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Mdcccix





To

Amy + Alice Smith

from

James Brennan

Christmas Day - 1916 -













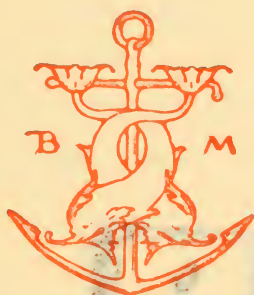


PROVERBS IN PORCELAIN  
AND OTHER POEMS





PROVERBS IN PORCELAIN  
AND OTHER POEMS BY  
AUSTIN DOBSON



PORTLAND MAINE  
THOMAS B MOSHER  
MDCCCXCIX

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PROVERBS IN PORCELAIN

*“Rien en relief”*







## PROLOGUE

**A**SSUME that we are friends. Assume  
A common taste for old costume,—  
Old pictures, — books. Then dream us sitting—  
Us two — in some soft-lighted room.

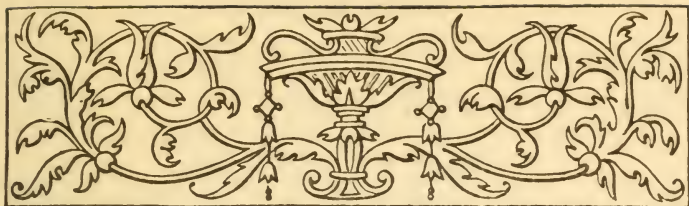
Outside, the wind ; — the “ ways are mire.”  
We, with our faces toward the fire,  
Finished the feast not full but fitting,  
Watch the light-leaping flames aspire.

Silent at first, in time we glow ;  
Discuss “ eclectics,” high and low ;  
Inspect engravings, ’twixt us passing  
The fancies of Detroy, Moreau ;

“ Reveils” and “ Couchers,” “ Balls” and “ Fêtes ;”  
Anon we glide to “ crocks” and plates,  
Grow eloquent on glaze and classing,  
And half-pathetic over “ states.”

Then I produce my Prize, in truth ; —  
Six groups in Sèvres, fresh as Youth,  
And rare as Love. You pause, you wonder,  
(Pretend to doubt the marks, forsooth !)

*And so we fall to why and how  
The fragile figures smile and bow ;  
Divine, at length, the fable under . . .  
Thus grew the " Scenes " that follow now.*



## THE BALLAD À-LA-MODE

*“Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre”*

SCENE — *A Boudoir Louis-Quinze, painted with Cupids shooting at Butterflies.*

THE COUNTESS    THE BARON (*her cousin and suitor*)

THE COUNTESS (*looking up from her work*)



BARON, you doze.

THE BARON (*closing his book*)

I, Madame? No.

I wait your order — Stay or Go.

THE COUNTESS

Which means, I think, that Go or Stay  
Affects you nothing, either way.

THE BARON

Excuse me, — by your favour graced,  
My inclinations are effaced.

THE COUNTESS

Or much the same. How keen you grow !  
You must be reading Marivaux.

THE BARON

Nay, — 'twas a song of Sainte-Aulaire.

THE COUNTESS

Then read me one. We 've time to spare :  
If I can catch the clock-face there,  
'Tis barely eight.

THE BARON

What shall it be, —  
A tale of woe, or perfidy ?

THE COUNTESS

Not woes, I beg. I doubt your woes :  
But perfidy, of course, one knows.

THE BARON (*reads*)

“ ‘ Ah, Phillis ! cruel Phillis !  
( I heard a Shepherd say, )  
You hold me with your Eyes, and yet  
You bid me — Go my Way ! ’ ”

“ ‘Ah, Colin! foolish Colin!  
(The Maiden answered so,  
If that be All, the Ill is small,  
I close them — You may go!’

“ But when her Eyes she opened,  
(Although the Sun it shone,  
She found the Shepherd had not stirred —  
‘Because the Light was gone!’

“ Ah, Cupid! wanton Cupid!  
’Twas ever thus your Way:  
When Maids would bid you ply your Wings,  
You find Excuse to stay!”

### THE COUNTESS

Famous! He earned whate’er he got: —  
But there’s some sequel, is there not?

### THE BARON (*turning the page*)

I think not.— No. Unless ’tis this:  
My fate is far more hard than his; —  
In fact, *your* Eyes —

### THE COUNTESS

Now, that’s a breach!  
Your bond is — not to make a speech.  
And we must start — so call Justine.

I know exactly what you mean! —  
Give me your arm —

THE BARON

If, in return,  
Countess, I could your hand but earn!

THE COUNTESS

I thought as much. This comes, you see,  
Of sentiment, and Arcady,  
Where vows are hung on every tree. . . .

THE BARON (*offering his arm, with a low  
bow*)

And no one dreams — of PERFIDY.

## THE METAMORPHOSIS

*“ On s'enrichit quand on dort ”*

SCENE — *A high stone Seat in an-Alley of clipped  
Lime-trees.*

THE ABBÉ TIRILI    MONSIEUR L'ÉTOILE

THE ABBÉ (*writing*)

“ THIS *shepherdess Dorine adored —*”  
What rhyme is next? *Implored?*  
*— ignored?*

*Poured? — soared? — afford?* That facile  
Dunce,

L'Étoile, would cap the line at once.

'Twill come in time. Meanwhile, suppose  
We take a meditative doze.

*(Sleeps. By-and-by his paper falls)*

M. L'ÉTOILE (*approaching from the back*)

Some one before me. What! 'tis you,  
Monsieur the Scholar? Sleeping too!

*(Picks up the fluttering paper)*

More “ *Tales,*” of course. One can't refuse  
To chase so fugitive a Muse!

Verses are public, too, that fly  
“*Cum privilegio*” — Zephyri!

(*Reads*)

“Clitander and Dorine.” Insane!

He fancies he’s a La Fontaine!

“*In early Days, the Gods, we find,  
Paid casual Visits to Mankind; —  
At least, authentic Records say so  
In Publius Ovidius Naso.*”

(Three names for one. This passes all.

’Tis “*furiously*” classical!)

“*No doubt their Purpose oft would be  
Some ‘Nodus dignus Vindice;’*

‘*On dit,*’ not less, *these earthward Tours  
Were mostly matters of Amours.*

*And Woe to him whose luckless Flame  
Impeded that Olympic Game;*

*Ere he could say an ‘Ave’ o’er,*

*They changed him — like a Louis-d’or.”*

(“*Aves,*” and current coinage! O! —

O shade of Nicolas Boileau!)

“*Bird, Beast, or River he became:*

*With Women it was much the same.*

*In Ovid Case to Case succeeds;*

*But Names the Reader never reads.”*

(That is, Monsieur the Abbé feels

His quantities are out at heels!)

“*Suffices that, for this our Tale,*



*There dwelt in a Thessalian Vale,  
Of Tales like this the frequent Scene,  
A Shepherdess, by name Dorine.  
Trim Waist, ripe Lips, bright Eyes, had she ;—  
In short, — the whole Artillery.  
Her Beauty made some local Stir ;—  
Men marked it. So did Jupiter.  
This Shepherdess Dorine adored. . . .”*  
*Implored, ignored, and soared, and poured—*  
(He's scrawled them here!) We'll sum in  
brief

His fable on his second leaf.

( *Writes* )

There, they shall know who 'twas that wrote :—  
“ L'Étoile's *is but a mock-bird's note.*”

[*Exit*

THE ABBÉ (*waking*)

*Implored's* the word, I think. But where,—  
Where is my paper? Ah! 'tis there!  
Eh! what?

( *Reads* )

THE METAMORPHOSIS

( Not in *Ovid* )

“ *The Shepherdess Dorine adored  
The Shepherd-Boy Clitander ;*

*But Jove himself, Olympus' Lord,  
The Shepherdess Dorine adored.  
Our Abbé's Aid the Pair Implored ;—  
And changed to Goose and Gander,  
The Shepherdess Dorine adored  
The Shepherd-Boy Clitander !''*

L'Étoile, — by all the Muses !

*Peste !*

He's off, post-haste, to tell the rest.  
No matter. Laugh, Sir Dunce, to-day ;  
Next time 'twill be *my* turn to play.

## THE SONG OUT OF SEASON

“*Point de culte sans mystère*”

SCENE — *A Corridor in a Château, with Busts and Venice chandeliers.*

MONSIEUR L'ÉTOILE            TWO VOICES

M. L'ÉTOILE (*carrying a Rose*)

**T**HIS is the place. Mutine said here.  
“Through the Mancini room, and near  
The fifth Venetian chandelier. . . .”  
The fifth? — She knew there were but four; —  
Still, here's the *busto* of the Moor.

(*Humming*)

*Tra-la, tra-la!* If Bijou wake,  
He'll bark, no doubt, and spoil my shake!  
I'll tap, I think. One can't mistake;  
This surely is the door.

(*Sings softly*)

“*When Jove, the Skies' Director,  
First saw you sleep of yore,  
He cried aloud for Nectar,  
'The Nectar quickly pour,—  
The Nectar, Hebe, pour!'*”

( No sound. I'll tap once more.)

( *Sings again* )

“ *Then came the Sire Apollo,  
He passed you where you lay ;  
'Come, Dian, rise and follow  
The dappled Hart to slay,—  
The rapid Hart to slay.' ”*

( *A rustling within* )

( Coquette ! She heard before.)

( *Sings again* )

“ *And urchin Cupid after  
Beside the Pillow curled,  
He whispered you with Laughter,  
'Awake and witch the World,—  
O Venus, witch the World !' ”*

( Now comes the last. 'Tis scarcely worse,  
I think, than Monsieur l'Abbé's verse.)

“ *So waken, waken, waken,  
O You, whom we adore ;  
Where Gods can be mistaken,  
Mere Mortals must be more,—  
Poor Mortals must be more ! ”*

( That merits an *encore*.)

“*So waken, waken, waken !  
O YOU, whom we adore !*”

(*An energetic VOICE*)

'Tis thou, Antoine? Ah, Addle-pate !  
Ah, Thief of Valet, always late !  
Have I not told thee half-past eight  
A thousand times !

(*Great agitation*)

But wait, — but wait, —

M. L'ÉTOILE (*stupefied*)

Just Skies ! What hideous roar ! —  
What lungs ! The infamous Soubrette !  
This is a turn I sha'n't forget : —  
To make me sing my *chansonnette*  
Before old Jourdain's door !

(*Retiring slowly*)

And yet, and yet, — it can't be she.  
They prompted her. Who can it be ?

(*A second VOICE*)

IT WAS THE ABBÉ TI—RI—LI !

(*In a mocking falsetto*)

“*Where Gods can be mistaken,  
Mere Poets must be more, —  
BAD POETS must be more.*”

## THE CAP THAT FITS

“ *Qui sème épines n’aïlle déchaux* ”

SCENE — *A Salon with blue and white Panels.  
Outside, Persons pass and re-pass upon a  
Terrace.*

HORTENSE

ARMANDE

MONSIEUR LOYAL

HORTENSE (*behind her fan*)

**N**OT young, I think.

ARMANDE (*raising her eye-glass*)

And faded, too! —  
*Quite* faded! Monsieur, what say you?

M. LOYAL

Nay, — I defer to you. In truth,  
To me she seems all grace and youth.

HORTENSE

Graceful? You think it? What, with hands  
That hang like this (*with a gesture*).

ARMANDE

And how she stands!

M. LOYAL

Nay, — I am wrong again. I thought  
Her air delightfully untaught !

HORTENSE

But you amuse me —

M. LOYAL

Still her dress, —  
Her dress at least, you *must* confess —

ARMANDE

Is odious simply ! Jacotot  
Did not supply that lace, I know ;  
And where, I ask, has mortal seen  
A hat unfeathered !

HORTENSE

Edged with green ! !

M. LOYAL

The words remind me. Let me say  
A Fable that I heard to-day.  
Have I permission ?

BOTH (*with enthusiasm*)

Monsieur, pray !

M. LOYAL

“ *Myrtille* (lest a Scandal rise  
The Lady's Name I thus disguise),  
Dying of Ennui, once decided —  
Much on Resource herself she prided —  
To choose a Hat. Forthwith she flies  
On that momentous Enterprise.  
Whether to *Petit* or *Legros*,  
I know not: only this I know; —  
Head-dresses then, of any Fashion,  
Bore Names of Quality or Passion.  
*Myrtille* tried them, almost all:  
'Prudence,' she felt, was somewhat small;  
'Retirement' seemed the Eyes to hide;  
'Content' at once, she cast aside.  
'Simplicity,' — 'twas out of Place;  
'Devotion,' for an older Face;  
Briefly, Selection smaller grew,  
'Vexatious!' odious! — none would do!  
Then, on a sudden, she espied  
One that she thought she had not tried:  
Becoming, rather, — 'edged with green,' —  
Roses in yellow, Thorns between.  
'Quick! Bring me that!' 'Tis brought. 'Complete,  
Divine, Enchanting, Tasteful, Neat,'  
In all the Tones. 'And this you call——?'  
'“ILL-NATURE,” Madame. It fits all.' ”



HORTENSE

A thousand thanks ! So naïvely turned !

ARMANDE

So useful too . . . to those concerned !

'Tis yours ?

M. LOYAL

Ah no, — some cynic wit's ;  
And called ( I think ) —

( *Placing his hat upon his breast* )

“The Cap that Fits.”

# THE SECRETS OF THE HEART

*“Le cœur mène où il va”*

SCENE — *A Chalet covered with Honeysuckle.*

NINETTE

NINON

NINETTE

**T**HIS way —

NINON

No, this way,—

NINETTE

This way, then.

*(They enter the Chalet)*

You are as changing, Child, — as Men.

NINON

But are they? Is it true, I mean?  
Who said it?

NINETTE

Sister Séraphine.

She was so pious and so good,  
With such sad eyes beneath her hood,

And such poor little feet, — all bare !  
Her name was Eugénie la Fère.  
She used to tell us, — moonlight nights, —  
When I was at the Carmelites.

NINON

Ah, then it must be right. And yet,  
Suppose for once — suppose, Ninette —

NINETTE

But what?

NINON

Suppose it were not so?  
Suppose there *were* true men, you know !

NINETTE

And then?

NINON

Why, if that could occur,  
What kind of man should you prefer?

NINETTE

What looks, you mean?

NINON

Looks, voice and all.

NINETTE

Well, as to that, he must be tall,  
Or say, not “tall,” — of middle size ;

And next, he must have laughing eyes,  
And a hook-nose, — with, underneath,  
O! what a row of sparkling teeth!

NINON (*touching her cheeks suspiciously*)

Has he a scar on this side?

NINETTE

Hush!

Some one is coming. No; a thrush:  
I see it swinging there.

NINON

Go on.

NINETTE

Then he must fence, (ah, look, 'tis gone!)  
And dance like Monseigneur, and sing  
"Love was a Shepherd:" — everything  
That men do. Tell me yours, Ninon.

NINON

Shall I? Then mine has black, black hair . . .  
I mean he *should* have; then an air  
Half sad, half noble; features thin;  
A little *royale* on the chin;  
And such a pale, high brow. And then,  
He is a prince of gentlemen; —

He, too, can ride and fence and write  
Sonnets and madrigals, yet fight  
No worse for that —

NINETTE

I know your man.

NINON

And I know yours. But you 'll not tell,—  
Swear it!

NINETTE

I swear upon this fan,—  
My Grandmother's!

NINON

And I, I swear  
On this old turquoise *reliquaire*,—  
My great, — *great* Grandmother's! !—

( *After a pause* )

Ninette!

I feel *so* sad.

NINETTE

I too. But why?

NINON

Alas, I know not!

NINETTE ( *with a sigh* )

Nor do I.

“GOOD-NIGHT, BABETTE!”

“*Si vieillesse pouvait ! —*”

SCENE — *A small neat Room. In a high Voltaire Chair sits a white-haired old Gentleman.*

MONSIEUR VIEUXBOIS

BABETTE

M. VIEUXBOIS (*turning querulously*)

**D**AY of my life ! Where *can* she get ?  
Babette ! I say ! Babette ! — Babette !

BABETTE (*entering hurriedly*)

Coming, M'sieu' ! If M'sieu' speaks  
So loud, he won't be well for weeks !

M. VIEUXBOIS

Where have you been ?

BABETTE

Why, M'sieu' knows : —  
April ! . . . Ville d'Avray ! . . . Ma'am'selle Rose

M. VIEUXBOIS

Ah ! I am old, — and I forget.  
Was the place growing green, Babette ?

## BABETTE

But of a greenness ! — yes, M'sieu' !  
And then the sky so blue ! — so blue !  
And when I dropped my *immortelle*,  
How the birds sang !

( *Lifting her apron to her eyes* )

This poor Ma'am'selle !

## M. VIEUXBOIS

You're a good girl, Babette, but she,—  
She was an Angel, verily.  
Sometimes I think I see her yet  
Stand smiling by the cabinet ;  
And once, I know, she peeped and laughed  
Betwixt the curtains . . .

Where's the draught ?

( *She gives him a cup* )

Now I shall sleep, I think, Babette ; —  
Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

## BABETTE ( *sings* )

“ *Once at the Angelus*  
    ( *Ere I was dead* ),  
*Angels all glorious*  
    *Came to my Bed ;*  
*Angels in blue and white*  
    *Crowned on the Head.* ”

M. VIEUXBOIS (*drowsily*)

“She was an Angel” . . . “Once she laughed” . . .  
What, was I dreaming?

Where’s the draught?

BABETTE (*showing the empty cup*)

The draught, M’sieu’?

M. VIEUXBOIS

How I forget!

I am so old! But sing, Babette!

BABETTE (*sings*)

“*One was the Friend I left  
Stark in the Snow;  
One was the Wife that died  
Long, — long ago;  
One was the Love I lost . . .  
How could she know?*”

M. VIEUXBOIS (*murmuring*)

Ah, Paul! . . . old Paul! . . . Eulalie too!  
And Rose . . . And O! “the sky so blue!”

BABETTE (*sings*)

“*One had my Mother’s eyes,  
Wistful and mild;*



*One had my Father's face;  
One was a Child:  
All of them bent to me,—  
Bent down and smiled!"*

(He is asleep!)

M. VIEUXBOIS (*almost inaudibly*)

"How I forget!"

"I am so old!" . . . "Good-night, Babette!"

## EPILOGUE

**H**EIGHO! *how chill the evenings get!*  
Good-night, Ninon! — good-night, Ninette!  
*Your little Play is played and finished; —*  
*Go back, then, to your Cabinet!*

Loyal, L'Étoile! *no more to-day!*  
*Alas! they heed not what we say:*  
*They smile with ardour undiminished;*  
*But we, — we are not always gay!*





OTHER POEMS







## POT-POURRI

“ *Si jeunesse savait ? —* ”



PLUNGE my hand among the leaves :  
( An alien touch but dust perceives,

Nought else supposes ; )

For me those fragrant ruins raise  
Clear memory of the vanished days

When they were roses.

“ If youth but knew ! ” Ah, “ if,” in truth ? —

I can recall with what gay youth,

To what light chorus,

Unsobered yet by time or change,

We roamed the many-gabled Grange,

All life before us ;

Braved the old clock-tower’s dust and damp,

To catch the dim Arthurian camp

In misty distance ;

Peered at the still-room's sacred stores,  
Or rapped at walls for sliding doors  
Of feigned existence.

What need had we for thoughts or cares !  
The hot sun parched the old parterres  
And "flowerful closes ;"  
We roused the rooks with rounds and glees,  
Played hide-and-seek behind the trees,—  
Then plucked these roses.

Louise was one — light, glib Louise,  
So freshly freed from school decrees  
You scarce could stop her ;  
And Bell, the Beauty, unsurprised  
At fallen locks that scandalised  
Our dear "Miss Proper ;" —

Shy Ruth, all heart and tenderness,  
Who wept — like Chaucer's Prioress,  
When Dash was smitten ;  
Who blushed before the mildest men,  
Yet waxed a very Corday when  
You teased her kitten.

I loved them all. Bell first and best ;  
Louise the next — for days of jest  
Or madcap masking ;

And Ruth, I thought, — why, failing these,  
When my High-Mightiness should please,  
    She 'd come for asking.

. . . . .

Louise was grave when last we met ;  
Bell's beauty, like a sun, has set ;  
    And Ruth, Heaven bless her,  
Ruth that I wooed, — and wooed in vain,—  
Has gone where neither grief nor pain  
    Can now distress her.

TO Q. H. F.

SUGGESTED BY A CHAPTER IN SIR  
THEODORE MARTIN'S "HORACE"

("ANCIENT CLASSICS FOR ENGLISH  
READERS")

"HORATIUS FLACCUS, B.C. 8,"  
There's not a doubt about the date,—  
You're dead and buried :  
As you observed, the seasons roll ;  
And 'cross the Styx full many a soul  
Has Charon ferried,  
Since, mourned of men and Muses nine,  
They laid you on the Esquiline.

And that was centuries ago !  
You'd think we'd learned enough, I know,  
To help refine us,  
Since last you trod the Sacred Street,  
And tacked from mortal fear to meet  
The bore Crispinus ;  
Or, by your cold Digentia, set  
The web of winter birding-net.





And look, dyspeptic, brave, and kind,  
Comes dear Mæcenas, half behind  
    Terentia's skirting ;  
Here 's Pyrrha, "golden-haired" at will ;  
Prig Damasippus, preaching still ;  
    Asterie flirting,—  
Radiant, of course. We'll make her black,—  
Ask her when Gyges' ship comes back.

So with the rest. Who will may trace  
Behind the new each elder face  
    Defined as clearly ;  
Science proceeds, and man stands still ;  
Our "world" to-day's as good or ill,—  
    As cultured (nearly),—  
As yours was, Horace ! You alone,  
Unmatched, unmet, we have not known.

## THE CHILD-MUSICIAN

**H**E had played for his lordship's levee,  
He had played for her ladyship's whim,  
Till the poor little head was heavy,  
And the poor little brain would swim.

And the face grew peaked and eerie,  
And the large eyes strange and bright,  
And they said — too late — “He is weary!  
He shall rest for, at least, To-night!”

But at dawn, when the birds were waking,  
As they watched in the silent room,  
With the sound of a strained cord breaking,  
A something snapped in the gloom.

'Twas a string of his violoncello,  
And they heard him stir in his bed:—  
“Make room for a tired little fellow,  
Kind God!—” was the last that he said.

## THE PARADOX OF TIME

(A VARIATION ON RONSARD)

*“ Le temps s’en va, le temps s’en va, ma dame !  
Las ! le temps non : mais NOUS nous en allons ! ”*

**T**IME goes, you say? Ah no!  
Alas, Time stays, *we* go;  
Or else, were this not so,  
What need to chain the hours,  
For Youth were always ours?  
Time goes, you say? — ah no!

Ours is the eyes’ deceit  
Of men whose flying feet  
Lead through some landscape low;  
We pass, and think we see  
The earth’s fixed surface flee: —  
Alas, Time stays, — we go!

Once in the days of old,  
Your locks were curling gold,  
And mine had shamed the crow.  
Now, in the self-same stage,  
We’ve reached the silver age;  
Time goes, you say? — ah no!

Once, when my voice was strong,  
I filled the woods with song  
    To praise your "rose" and "snow;"  
My bird, that sang, is dead;  
Where are your roses fled?  
    Alas, Time stays, — we go!

See, in what traversed ways,  
What backward Fate delays  
    The hopes we used to know;  
Where are our old desires? —  
Ah, where those vanished fires?  
    Time goes, you say? — ah no!

How far, how far, O Sweet,  
The past behind our feet  
    Lies in the even-glow!  
Now, on the forward way,  
Let us fold hands, and pray;  
    Alas, Time stays, — *we* go!

## TO A GREEK GIRL

WITH breath of thyme and bees that hum,  
Across the years you seem to come,—  
Across the years with nymph-like head,  
And wind-blown brows unfilleted ;  
A girlish shape that slips the bud  
In lines of unspoiled symmetry ;  
A girlish shape that stirs the blood  
With pulse of Spring, Autonoë !

Where'er you pass, — where'er you go,  
I hear the pebbly rillet flow ;  
Where'er you go, — where'er you pass,  
There comes a gladness on the grass ;  
You bring blithe airs where'er you tread, —  
Blithe airs that blow from down and sea ;  
You wake in me a Pan not dead, —  
Not wholly dead ! — Autonoë !

How sweet with you on some green sod  
To wreathe the rustic garden-god ;  
How sweet beneath the chestnut's shade  
With you to weave a basket-braid ;  
To watch across the stricken chords  
Your rosy-twinkling fingers flee ;  
To woo you in soft woodland words,  
With woodland pipe, Autonoë !

In vain, — in vain ! The years divide :  
Where Thamis rolls a murky tide,  
I sit and fill my painful reams,  
And see you only in my dreams ; —  
A vision, like Alcestis, brought  
From under-lands of Memory, —  
A dream of Form in days of Thought, —  
A dream, — a dream, Autonoë !

## FOR A COPY OF THEOCRITUS

O SINGER of the field and fold,  
THEOCRITUS! Pan's pipe was thine,—  
Thine was the happier Age of Gold.

For thee the scent of new-turned mould,  
The bee-hives, and the murmuring pine,  
O Singer of the field and fold!

Thou sang'st the simple feasts of old,—  
The beechen bowl made glad with wine . . .  
Thine was the happier Age of Gold.

Thou bad'st the rustic loves be told,—  
Thou bad'st the tuneful reeds combine,  
O Singer of the field and fold!

And round thee, ever-laughing, rolled  
The blithe and blue Sicilian brine . . .  
Thine was the happier Age of Gold.

Alas for us! Our songs are cold;  
Our Northern suns too sadly shine:—  
O Singer of the field and fold,  
Thine was the happier Age of Gold!



## THE CRADLE

**H**OW steadfastly she'd worked at it!  
How lovingly had drest  
With all her would-be-mother's wit  
That little rosy nest!

How longingly she'd hung on it! —  
It sometimes seemed, she said,  
There lay beneath its coverlet  
A little sleeping head.

He came at last, the tiny guest,  
Ere bleak December fled;  
That rosy nest he never prest . . .  
Her coffin was his bed.

## A FLOWER SONG OF ANGIOLA

**D**OWN where the garden grows,  
Gay as a banner,  
Spake to her mate the Rose  
After this manner :—  
“We are the first of flowers,  
Plain-land or hilly,  
All reds and whites are ours,  
Are they not, Lily?”

Then to the flowers I spake,—  
“Watch ye my Lady  
Gone to the leafy brake,  
Silent and shady ;  
When I am near to her,  
Lily, she knows ;  
How I am dear to her,  
Look to it, Rose.”

Straightway the Blue-bell stooped,  
Paler for pride,  
Down where the Violet drooped,  
Shy, at her side :—  
“Sweetheart, save me and you,  
Where has the summer kist  
Flowers of as fair a hue,—  
Turkis or Amethyst?”

Therewith I laughed aloud,  
Spake on this wise,  
“ O little flowers so proud,  
Have ye seen eyes  
Change through the blue in them,—  
Change till the mere  
Loving that grew in them  
Turned to a tear?

“ Flowers, ye are bright of hue,  
Delicate, sweet ;  
Flowers, and the sight of you  
Lightens men’s feet ;  
Yea, but her worth to me,  
Flowerets, even,  
Sweetening the earth to me,  
Sweeteneth heaven.

“ This, then, O Flowers, I sing ;  
God, when He made ye,  
Made yet a fairer thing  
Making my Lady ; —  
Fashioned her tenderly,  
Giving all weal to her ; —  
Girdle ye slenderly,  
Go to her, kneel to her,—

“ Saying, ‘ He sendeth us,  
He the most dutiful,

Meetly he endeth us,  
Maiden most beautiful!  
Let us get rest of you,  
Sweet, in your breast; —  
Die, being prest of you,  
Die, being blest.’”

## A SONG OF ANGIOLA IN HEAVEN

“ *Vale, unica!* ”

**F**LOWERS, — that have died upon my Sweet,  
Lulled by the rhythmic dancing beat  
Of her young bosom under you, —  
Now will I show you such a thing  
As never, through thick buds of Spring,  
Betwixt the daylight and the dew,  
The Bird whose being no man knows —  
The voice that waketh all night through —  
Tells to the Rose.

For lo, — a garden-place I found,  
Well filled of leaves, and stilled of sound,  
Well flowered, with red fruit marvellous ;  
And 'twixt the shining trunks would flit  
Tall knights and silken maids, or sit  
With faces bent and amorous ; —  
There, in the heart thereof, and crowned  
With woodbine and amaracus,  
My Love I found.

Alone she walked, — ah, well I wis,  
My heart leapt up for joy of this ! —  
Then when I called to her her name, —  
The name, that like a pleasant thing

Men's lips remember, murmuring,  
At once across the sward she came,—  
Full fain she seemed, my own dear maid,  
And askèd ever as she came,  
“Where hast thou stayed?”

“Where hast thou stayed?” — she asked as though  
The long years were an hour ago ;  
But I spake not, nor answerèd,  
For, looking in her eyes, I saw,  
A light not lit of mortal law ;  
And in her clear cheek's changeless red,  
And sweet, unshaken speaking found  
That in this place the Hours were dead,  
And Time was bound.

“This is well done,” — she said, — “in thee,  
O Love, that thou art come to me,  
To this green garden glorious ;  
Now truly shall our life be sped  
In joyance and all goodlihed,  
For here all things are fair to us,  
And none with burden is oppressed,  
And none is poor or piteous,—  
For here is Rest.

“No formless Future blurs the sky ;  
Men mourn not here, with dull dead eye,  
By shrouded shapes of Yesterday ;

Betwixt the Coming and the Past  
The flawless life hangs fixen fast  
In one unwearying To-Day,  
That darkens not; for Sin is shriven,  
Death from the doors is thrust away,  
And here is Heaven."

At "Heaven" she ceased; — and lifted up  
Her fair head like a flower-cup,  
With rounded mouth, and eyes aglow;  
Then set I lips to hers, and felt,—  
Ah, God,— the hard pain fade and melt,  
And past things change to painted show;  
The song of quiring birds outbroke;  
The lit leaves laughed, — sky shook, and lo,  
I swooned, — and woke.

And now, O Flowers,  
— Ye that indeed are dead,—  
Now for all waiting hours,  
Well am I comforted;  
For of a surety, now, I see,  
That, without dim distress  
Of tears, or weariness,  
My Lady, verily, awaiteth me;  
So that until with Her I be,  
For my dear Lady's sake  
I am right fain to make

Out from my pain a pillow, and to take  
Grief for a golden garment unto me ;  
    Knowing that I, at last, shall stand  
    In that green garden-land,  
And, in the holding of my dear Love's hand,  
Forget the grieving and the misery.





Where the verse, like a piper a-Maying,  
    Comes playing,  
And the rhyme is as gay as a dancer,  
    In answer,—

It will last till men weary of pleasure  
    In measure !  
It will last till men weary of laughter . .  
    And after !

## THE PRODIGALS

“**P**RINCES!— and you, most valorous,  
Nobles and Barons of all degrees!  
Hearken awhile to the prayer of us,—  
Beggars that come from the over-seas!  
Nothing we ask or of gold or fees;  
Harry us not with the hounds we pray;  
Lo, — for the surcote’s hem we seize,—  
Give us — ah! give us — but Yesterday!”

“Dames most delicate, amorous!  
Damosels blithe as the belted bees!  
Hearken awhile to the prayer of us,—  
Beggars that come from the over-seas!  
Nothing we ask of the things that please;  
Weary are we, and worn, and gray;  
Lo, — for we clutch and we clasp your knees,—  
Give us — ah! give us — but Yesterday!”

“Damosels — Dames, be piteous!”  
(But the dames rode fast by the roadway trees.)  
“Hear us, O Knights magnanimous!”  
(But the knights pricked on in their panoplies.)  
Nothing they gat or of hope or ease,  
But only to beat on the breast and say:—  
“Life we drank to the dregs and lees;  
Give us — ah! give us — but Yesterday!”

ENVOY

YOUTH, take heed to the prayer of these !  
Many there be by the dusty way,—  
Many that cry to the rocks and seas  
“ Give us — ah ! give us — but Yesterday ! ”

ON A FAN THAT BELONGED TO  
THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR

CHICKEN-SKIN, delicate, white,  
Painted by Carlo Vanloo,  
Loves in a riot of light,  
Roses and vaporous blue ;  
Hark to the dainty *frou-frou* !  
Picture above, if you can,  
Eyes that could melt as the dew,—  
This was the Pompadour's fan !

See how they rise at the sight,  
Thronging the *Œil de Bœuf* through,  
Courtiers as butterflies bright,  
Beauties that Fragonard drew,  
*Talon-rouge*, *falbala*, *queue*,  
Cardinal, Duke, — to a man,  
Eager to sigh or to sue,—  
This was the Pompadour's fan !

Ah, but things more than polite  
Hung on this toy, *voyez-vous* !  
Matters of state and of might,  
Things that great ministers do ;  
Things that, maybe, overthrew  
Those in whose brains they began ;

Here was the sign and the cue,—  
This was the Pompadour's fan!

ENVOY

WHERE are the secrets it knew?  
Weavings of plot and of plan?  
— But where is the Pompadour, too?  
*This* was the Pompadour's *Fan!*

## THE BALLAD OF THE BARMECIDE

**T**O one in Eastern clime, — 'tis said, —  
There came a man at eve with "Lo!  
Friend, ere the day be dimmed and dead,  
Hast thou a mind to feast, and know  
Fair cates, and sweet wine's overflow?"  
To whom that other fain replied —  
"Lead on. Not backward I nor slow; —  
Where is thy feast, O Barmecide?"

Thereon the bidder passed and lead  
To where, apart from dust and glow,  
They found a board with napery spread,  
And gold, and glistening cups a-row.  
"Eat," quoth the host, yet naught did show.  
To whom his guest — "Thy board is wide;  
But barren is the cheer, I trow;  
Where is thy feast, O Barmecide?"

"Eat," quoth the man not less, and fed  
From meats unseen, and made as though  
He drank of wine both white and red.  
"Eat, — ere the day to darkness grow.  
Short space and scant the Fates bestow!"  
What time his guest him wondering eyed,  
Muttering in wrath his beard below —  
"Where is thy feast, O Barmecide?"

ENVOY

LIFE, — 'tis of thee they fable so.  
Thou bidd'st us eat, and still denied,  
Still fasting, from thy board we go : —  
“Where is *thy* feast, O Barmecide?”



## ARS VICTRIX

(IMITATED FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER)

YES; when the ways oppose —  
When the hard means rebel,  
Fairer the work out-grows,—  
More potent far the spell.

O POET, then, forbear  
The loosely sandalled verse,  
Choose rather thou to wear  
The buskin — strait and terse ;

Leave to the tyro's hand  
The limp and shapeless style ;  
See that thy form demand  
The labour of the file.

SCULPTOR, do thou discard  
The yielding clay, — consign  
To Paros marble hard  
The beauty of thy line ; —

Model thy Satyr's face  
For bronze of Syracuse ;  
In the veined agate trace  
The profile of thy Muse.

PAINTER, that still must mix  
But transient tints anew,  
Thou in the furnace fix  
The firm enamel's hue ;

Let the smooth tile receive  
Thy dove-drawn Erycine ;  
Thy Sirens blue at eve  
Coiled in a wash of wine.

All passes. ART alone  
Enduring stays to us ;  
The Bust outlasts the throne,—  
The Coin, Tiberius ;

Even the gods must go ;  
Only the lofty Rhyme  
Not countless years o'erthrow,—  
Not long array of time.

Paint, chisel, then, or write ;  
But, that the work surpass,  
With the hard fashion fight,—  
With the resisting mass.

## THE DANCE OF DEATH

( AFTER HOLBEIN )

“ *Contra vim MORTIS*  
*Non est medicamen in hortis*”

HE is the despots' Despot. All must bide,  
Later or soon, the message of his might ;  
Princes and potentates their heads must hide,  
Touched by the awful sigil of his right ;  
Beside the Kaiser he at eve doth wait  
And pours a potion in his cup of state ;  
The stately Queen his bidding must obey ;  
No keen-eyed Cardinal shall him affray ;  
And to the Dame that wantoneth he saith —  
“ Let be, Sweet-heart, to junket and to play.”  
There is no King more terrible than Death.

The lusty Lord, rejoicing in his pride,  
He draweth down ; before the armèd Knight  
With jingling bridle-rein he still doth ride ;  
He crosseth the strong Captain in the fight ;  
The Burgher grave he beckons from debate ;  
He hales the Abbot by his shaven pate,  
Nor for the Abbess' wailing will delay ;

No bawling Mendicant shall say him nay ;  
E'en to the pyx the Priest he followeth,  
Nor can the Leech his chilling finger stay . .  
There is no King more terrible than Death.

All things must bow to him. And woe betide  
The Wine-bibber, — the Roisterer by night ;  
Him the feast-master, many bouts defied,  
Him 'twixt the pledging and the cup shall smite ;  
Woe to the Lender at usurious rate,  
The hard Rich Man, the hireling Advocate ;  
Woe to the Judge that selleth Law for pay ;  
Woe to the Thief that like a beast of prey  
With creeping tread the traveller harryeth : —  
These, in their sin, the sudden sword shall slay . .  
There is no King more terrible than Death.

He hath no pity, — nor will be denied.  
When the low hearth is garnishèd and bright,  
Grimly he flingeth the dim portal wide,  
And steals the Infant in the Mother's sight ;  
He hath no pity for the scorned of fate : —  
He spares not Lazarus lying at the gate,  
Nay, nor the Blind that stumbleth as he may ;  
Nay, the tired Ploughman, — at the sinking ray, —  
In the last furrow, — feels an icy breath,  
And knows a hand hath turned the team astray . .  
There is no King more terrible than Death.

He hath no pity. For the new-made Bride,  
Blithe with the promise of her life's delight,  
That wanders gladly by her Husband's side,  
He with the clatter of his drum doth fright ;  
He scares the Virgin at the convent grate ;  
The Maid half-won, the Lover passionate ;  
He hath no grace for weakness and decay :  
The tender Wife, the Widow bent and gray,  
The feeble Sire whose footstep faltereth,—  
All these he leadeth by the lonely way . .  
There is no King more terrible than Death.

#### ENVOY

YOUTH, for whose ear and monishing of late,  
I sang of Prodigals and lost estate,  
Have thou thy joy of living and be gay ;  
But know not less that there must come a day,—  
Aye, and perchance e'en now it hasteneth,—  
When thine own heart shall speak to thee and say,—  
There is no King more terrible than Death.

“ *WHEN FINIS COMES* ”

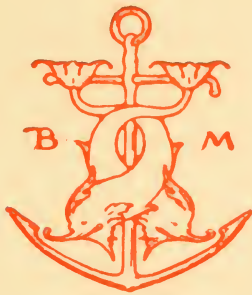
**W**HEN *Finis comes*, the *BOOK we close*,  
And somewhat sadly, *Fancy goes*,  
With backward step, from stage to stage  
Of that accomplished pilgrimage . . .  
*The thorn lies thicker than the rose !*

*There is so much that no one knows,—*  
*So much un-reached that none suppose ;*  
*What flaws ! what faults ! — on every page,*  
*When Finis comes.*

*Still, — they must pass ! The swift Tide flows.*  
*Though not for all the laurel grows,*  
*Perchance, in this be-slandered age,*  
*The worker, mainly, wins his wage ; —*  
*And Time will sweep both friends and foes*  
*When FINIS comes !*



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