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And out of olde bokes in good feith  
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THE SHORTER  
POEMS  
OF  
ROBERT BRIDGES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.



Just Published.

ACHILLES IN SCYROS.

*A STAGE PLAY.*

*Price Two Shillings.*

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THE SHORTER  
POEMS  
OF  
ROBERT BRIDGES

GEO BELL & SONS LONDON

189b

Oxford

HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

TO THE  
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BOOK I.

ERRATA.

p. 44, l. 16, *for empty read airy*

p. 80, l. 25, *for trees read the trees*

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I.

ELEGY.

CLEAR and gentle stream!  
Known and loved so long,  
That hast heard the song,  
And the idle dream  
Of my boyish day;  
While I once again  
Down thy margin stray,  
In the selfsame strain  
Still my voice is spent,  
With my old lament,  
And my idle dream,  
Clear and gentle stream!

Where my old seat was  
Here again I sit,  
Where the long boughs knit  
Over stream and grass  
A translucent eaves:  
Where back eddies play  
Shipwreck with the leaves,  
And the proud swans stray,  
Sailing one by one  
Out of stream and sun,  
And the fish lie cool  
In their chosen pool.

POEMS.

Many an afternoon  
Of the summer day  
Dreaming here I lay;  
And I know how soon,  
Idly at its hour,  
First the deep bell hums  
From the minster tower,  
And then evening comes,  
Creeping up the glade,  
With her lengthening shade,  
And the tardy boon,  
Of her brightening moon.

Clear and gentle stream!  
Ere again I go  
Where thou dost not flow,  
Well does it beseem  
Thee to hear again  
Once my youthful song,  
That familiar strain  
Silent now so long:  
Be as I content  
With my old lament,  
And my idle dream,  
Clear and gentle stream!

II.

ELEGY.

THE wood is bare: a river-mist is steeping  
The trees that winter's chill of life bereaves.  
Only their stiffened boughs break silence, weeping  
Over their fallen leaves:

That lie upon the dank earth brown and rotten,  
Miry and matted in the soaking wet :  
Forgotten with the spring, that is forgotten  
By them that can forget.

Yet it was here we walked when ferns were springing,  
And through the mossy bank shot bud and blade :—  
Here found in summer, when the birds were singing,  
A green and pleasant shade.

'Twas here we loved in sunnier days and greener ;  
And now, in this disconsolate decay,  
I come to see her where I most have seen her,  
And touch the happier day.

For on this path, at every turn and corner,  
The fancy of her figure on me falls :  
Yet walks she with the slow step of a mourner,  
Nor hears my voice that calls.

So through my heart there winds a track of feeling,  
A path of memory, that is all her own :  
Whereto her ghostly figure ever stealing  
Haunts the sad spot alone.

About her steps the trunks are bare, the branches  
Drip heavy tears upon her downcast head ;  
And bleed from unseen wounds no warm sun staunches,  
For the year's sun is dead.

And dead leaves wrap the fruits that summer planted :  
And birds that love the South have taken wing.  
The wanderer, loitering o'er the scene enchanted,  
Weeps, and despairs of spring.

---

## III.

POOR withered rose and dry,  
    Skeleton of a rose,  
Risen to testify  
    To love's sad close:

Treasured for love's sweet sake  
    That of joy past  
Thou might'st again awake  
    Memory at last.

Yet is thy perfume sweet;  
    Thy petals red  
Yet tell of summer heat,  
    And the gay bed:

Yet yet recall the glow  
    Of the gazing sun,  
When at thy bush we two  
    Joined hands in one.

But, rose, thou hast not seen,  
    Thou hast not wept  
The change that passed between,  
    Whilst thou hast slept.

To me thou seemest yet  
    The dead dream's thrall:  
While I live and forget  
    Dream, truth and all.

Thou art more fresh than I,  
    Rose, sweet and red:  
Salt on my pale cheeks lie  
    The tears I shed.

## IV.

THE cliff-top has a carpet  
Of lilac gold and green :  
The blue sky bounds the ocean,  
The white clouds scud between.

A flock of gulls are wheeling  
And wailing round my seat ;  
Above my head the heaven,  
The sea beneath my feet.

## THE OCEAN.

Were I a cloud I'd gather  
My skirts up in the air,  
And fly I well know whither,  
And rest I well know where.  
As pointed the star surely,  
The legend tells of old,  
Where the wise kings might offer  
Myrrh, frankincense, and gold ;  
Above the house I'd hover  
Where dwells my love, and wait  
Till haply I might spy her  
Throw back the garden-gate.  
There in the summer evening  
I would bedeck the moon ;  
I would float down, and screen her  
From the sun's rays at noon ;  
And if her flowers should languish,  
Or wither in the drought,  
Upon her tall white lilies  
I'd pour my heart's blood out :

So if she wore one only,  
 And shook not out the rain,  
 Were I a cloud, O cloudlet,  
 I had not lived in vain.

## A CLOUD.

But were I thou, O ocean,  
 I would not chafe and fret  
 As thou, because a limit  
 To thy desires is set.

I would be blue, and gentle,  
 Patient, and calm, and see  
 If my smiles might not tempt her,  
 My love, to come to me.

I'd make my depths transparent,  
 And still, that she should lean  
 O'er the boat's edge, to ponder  
 The sights that swam between.

I would command strange creatures,  
 Of bright hue and quick fin,  
 To stir the water near her,  
 And tempt her bare arm in.

I'd teach her spend the summer  
 With me: and I can tell,  
 That, were I thou, O ocean,  
 My love should love me well.

But on the mad cloud scudded,  
 The breeze it blew so stiff;  
 And the sad ocean bellowed,  
 And pounded at the cliff.



## V.

I HEARD a linnnet courting  
His lady in the spring;  
His mates were idly sporting,  
Nor stayed to hear him sing  
His song of love.—

I fear my speech distorting  
His tender love.

One phrase was all his pleading,  
He spoke of love and home:  
To her who gave him heeding  
He sang his question, 'Come.'—  
His gay sweet notes,  
So sadly marred in the reading!  
His tender notes!

And when he ceased, the hearer  
Re-echoed the refrain,  
And swiftly perching nearer,  
'Come, come,' she sang again.—  
Ah for their loves!  
Would that my verse spake clearer,  
Their tender loves!

Blest union of twin creatures  
Unmarred by sense of doubt:  
All summer's dry misfeatures  
Such springtide trust bars out;  
But of their loves  
Fall short our wiser natures:  
Their tender loves!

---

## VI.

DEAR lady, when thou frownest,  
 And my true love despisest,  
 And all thy vows disownest  
 That sealed my venture wisest;  
 I think thy pride's displeasure  
 Neglects a matchless treasure  
 Exceeding price and measure.  
 But when again thou smilest,  
 And love for love returnest,  
 And fear with joy beguilest,  
 And takest truth in earnest;  
 Then, though I sheer adore thee,  
 The sum of my love for thee  
 Seems poor, scant, and unworthy.

## VII.

I WILL not let thee go.  
 Ends all our month-long love in this?  
 Can it be summed up so,  
 Quit in a single kiss?  
 I will not let thee go.  
 I will not let thee go.  
 If thy words' breath could scare thy deeds,  
 As the soft south can blow  
 And toss the feathered seeds,  
 Then might I let thee go.  
 I will not let thee go.  
 Had not the great sun seen, I might;  
 Or were he reckoned slow  
 To bring the false to light,  
 Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.

The stars that crowd the summer skies  
Have watched us so below  
With all their million eyes,  
I dare not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.

Have we not chid the changeful moon,  
Now rising late, and now  
Because she set too soon,  
And shall I let thee go?

I will not let thee go.

Have not the young flowers been content,  
Plucked ere their buds could blow,  
To seal our sacrament?  
I cannot let thee go.

I will not let thee go.

I hold thee by too many bands:  
Thou sayest farewell, and lo!  
I have thee by the hands,  
And will not let thee go.

### VIII.

I FOUND to-day out walking  
The flower my love loves best.  
What when I stooped to pluck it,  
Could dare my hand arrest?

Was it a snake lay curling  
About the root's thick crown?  
Or did some hidden bramble  
Tear my hand reaching down?

There was no snake uncurling,  
And no thorn wounded me;

'Twas my heart checked me, sighing  
 She is beyond the sea.

## IX.

A POPPY grows upon the shore,  
 Bursts her twin cup in summer late:  
 Her leaves are glaucous green and hoar,  
 Her petals yellow, delicate.

Oft to her cousins turns her thought,  
 In wonder if they care that she  
 Is fed with spray for dew, and caught  
 By every gale that sweeps the sea.

She has no lovers like the red,  
 That dances with the noble corn:  
 Her blossoms on the waves are shed,  
 Where she stands shivering and forlorn.

## X.

SOMETIMES when my lady sits by me  
 My rapture's so great, that I tear  
 My mind from the thought that she's nigh me,  
 And strive to forget that she's there.  
 And sometimes when she is away  
 Her absence so sorely does try me,  
 That I shut to my eyes, and assay  
 To think she is there sitting by me.

## XI.

LONG are the hours the sun is above,  
 But when evening comes I go home to my love.

I'm away the daylight hours and more,  
Yet she comes not down to open the door.

She does not meet me upon the stair,—  
She sits in my chamber and waits for me there.

As I enter the room she does not move :  
I always walk straight up to my love ;

And she lets me take my wonted place  
At her side, and gaze in her dear face.

There as I sit, from her head thrown back  
Her hair falls straight in a shadow black.

Aching and hot as my tired eyes be,  
She is all that I wish to see.

And in my wearied and toil-dinned ear,  
She says all things that I wish to hear.

Dusky and duskier grows the room,  
Yet I see her best in the darker gloom.

When the winter eves are early and cold,  
The firelight hours are a dream of gold.

And so I sit here night by night,  
In rest and enjoyment of love's delight.

But a knock at the door, a step on the stair  
Will startle, alas, my love from her chair.

If a stranger comes she will not stay :  
At the first alarm she is off and away.

And he wonders, my guest, usurping her throne,  
That I sit so much by myself alone.

---

## XII.

WHO has not walked upon the shore,  
And who does not the morning know,  
The day the angry gale is o'er,  
The hour the wind has ceased to blow?

The horses of the strong south-west  
Are pastured round his tropic tent,  
Careless how long the ocean's breast  
Sob on and sigh for passion spent.

The frightened birds, that fled inland  
To house in rock and tower and tree,  
Are gathering on the peaceful strand,  
To tempt again the sunny sea ;

Whereon the timid ships steal out  
And laugh to find their foe asleep,  
That lately scattered them about,  
And drave them to the fold like sheep.

The snow-white clouds he northward chased  
Break into phalanx, line, and band:  
All one way to the south they haste,  
The south, their pleasant fatherland.

From distant hills their shadows creep,  
Arrive in turn and mount the lea,  
And flit across the downs, and leap  
Sheer off the cliff upon the sea ;

And sail and sail far out of sight.  
But still I watch their fleecy trains,  
That piling all the south with light,  
Dapple in France the fertile plains.

## XIII.

✓  
I MADE another song,  
In likeness of my love :  
And sang it all day long,  
Around, beneath, above ;  
I told my secret out,  
That none might be in doubt.

I sang it to the sky,  
That veiled his face to hear  
How far her azure eye  
Outdoes his splendid sphere ;  
But at her eyelids' name  
His white clouds fled for shame.

I told it to the trees,  
And to the flowers confest,  
And said not one of these  
Is like my lily drest ;  
Nor spathe nor petal dared  
Vie with her body bared.

I shouted to the sea,  
That set his waves a-prance ;  
Her floating hair is free,  
Free are her feet to dance ;  
And for thy wrath, I swear  
Her frown is more to fear.

And as in happy mood  
I walked and sang alone,  
At eve beside the wood  
I met my love, my own :  
And sang to her the song  
I had sung all day long.

## XIV.

## ELEGY

ON A LADY, WHOM GRIEF FOR THE DEATH OF HER  
BETROTHED KILLED.

ASSEMBLE, all ye maidens, at the door,  
 And all ye loves, assemble; far and wide  
 Proclaim the bridal, that proclaimed before  
 Has been deferred to this late eventide:  
     For on this night the bride,  
     The days of her betrothal over,  
     Leaves the parental hearth for evermore;  
 To-night the bride goes forth to meet her lover.  
 Reach down the wedding vesture, that has lain  
     Yet all unvisited, the silken gown:  
 Bring out the bracelets, and the golden chain  
     Her dearer friends provided: sere and brown  
     Bring out the festal crown,  
     And set it on her forehead lightly:  
 Though it be withered, twine no wreath again;  
 This only is the crown she can wear rightly.  
 Cloke her in ermine, for the night is cold,  
 And wrap her warmly, for the night is long,  
 In pious hands the flaming torches hold,  
 While her attendants, chosen from among  
     Her faithful virgin throng,  
     May lay her in her cedar litter,  
     Decking her coverlet with sprigs of gold,  
 Roses, and lilies white that best befit her.  
 Sound flute and tabor, that the bridal be  
 Not without music, nor with these alone;



But let the viol lead the melody,  
With lesser intervals, and plaintive moan  
    Of sinking semitone;  
And, all in choir, the virgin voices  
Rest not from singing in skilled harmony  
The song that aye the bridegroom's ear rejoices.

Let the priests go before, arrayed in white,  
And let the dark stoled minstrels follow slow,  
Next they that bear her, honoured on this night,  
And then the maidens, in a double row,

    Each singing soft and low,

    And each on high a torch upstaying:

Unto her lover lead her forth with light,  
With music, and with singing, and with praying.

'Twas at this sheltering hour he nightly came,  
And found her trusty window open wide,  
And knew the signal of the timorous flame,  
That long the restless curtain would not hide

    Her form that stood beside;

    As scarce she dared to be delighted,

Listening to that sweet tale, that is no shame  
To faithful lovers, that their hearts have plighted.

But now for many days the dewy grass  
Has shown no markings of his feet at morn:  
And watching she has seen no shadow pass  
The moonlit walk, and heard no music borne  
    Upon her ear forlorn.

    In vain has she looked out to greet him;

    He has not come, he will not come, alas!

So let us bear her out where she must meet him.

Now to the river bank the priests are come:  
The bark is ready to receive its freight:

Let some prepare her place therein, and some  
Embark the litter with its slender weight :

The rest stand by in state,

And sing her a safe passage over ;

While she is oared across to her new home,  
Into the arms of her expectant lover.

And thou, O lover, that art on the watch,  
Where, on the banks of the forgetful streams,  
The pale indifferent ghosts wander, and snatch  
The sweeter moments of their broken dreams,—

Thou, when the torchlight gleams,

When thou shalt see the slow procession,

And when thine ears the fitful music catch,

Rejoice! for thou art near to thy possession.

## XV.

### RONDEAU.

HIS poisoned shafts, that fresh he dips  
In juice of plants that no bee sips,  
He takes, and with his bow renown'd  
Goes out upon his hunting ground,  
Hanging his quiver at his hips.

He draws them one by one, and clips  
Their heads between his finger-tips,  
And looses with a twanging sound

His poisoned shafts.

But if a maiden with her lips  
Suck from the wound the blood that drips,  
And drink the poison from the wound,  
The simple remedy is found  
That of their deadly terror strips

His poisoned shafts.

## XVI.

## TRIOLET.

WHEN first we met we did not guess  
That Love would prove so hard a master ;  
Of more than common friendliness  
When first we met we did not guess.  
Who could foretell this sore distress,  
This irretrievable disaster  
When first we met?—We did not guess  
That Love would prove so hard a master.

## XVII.

## TRIOLET.

ALL women born are so perverse  
No man need boast their love possessing.  
If nought seem better, nothing's worse :  
All women born are so perverse.  
From Adam's wife, that proved a curse  
Though God had made her for a blessing,  
All women born are so perverse  
No man need boast their love possessing.

---



BOOK II.



I.

MUSE.

WILL Love again awake,  
That lies asleep so long?

POET.

O hush! ye tongues that shake  
The drowsy night with song.

MUSE.

It is a lady fair  
Whom once he deigned to praise,  
That at the door doth dare  
Her sad complaint to raise.

POET.

She must be fair of face,  
As bold of heart she seems,  
If she would match her grace  
With the delight of dreams.

MUSE.

Her beauty would surprise  
Gazers on Autumn eves,  
Who watched the broad moon rise  
Upon the scattered sheaves.

## POEMS.

POET.

O sweet must be the voice  
 He shall descend to hear,  
 Who doth in Heaven rejoice  
 His most enchanted ear.

MUSE.

The smile, that rests to play  
 Upon her lip, foretells  
 What musical array  
 Tricks her sweet syllables.

POET.

And yet her smiles have danced  
 In vain, if her discourse  
 Win not the soul entranced  
 In divine intercourse.

MUSE.

She will encounter all  
 This trial without shame,  
 Her eyes men Beauty call,  
 And Wisdom is her name.

POET.

Throw back the portals then,  
 Ye guards, your watch that keep,  
 Love will awake again  
 That lay so long asleep.

## II.

A PASSER BY.

WHITHER, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,  
 Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,  
 That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,  
 Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?



Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,  
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,  
Wilt thou glíde on the blue Pacific, or rest  
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling.

I there before thee, in the country so well thou  
knowest,

Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air:

I watch thee enter unerringly where thou goest,

And anchor queen of the strange shipping there,

Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts bare:

Nor is aught from the foaming reef to the snow-  
capped, grandest

Peak, that is over the feathery palms more fair

Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still thou  
standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhailed and nameless,

I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine

That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless,

Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.

But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is  
thine,

As thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding,

From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line

In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.

### III.

#### LATE SPRING EVENING.

I SAW the Virgin-mother clad in green,

Walking the sprinkled meadows at sundown;

While yet the moon's cold flame was hung between

The day and night, above the dusky town:

I saw her brighter than the Western gold,  
Whereto she faced in splendour to behold.  
Her dress was greener than the tenderest leaf  
That trembled in the sunset glare aglow:  
Herself more delicate than is the brief,  
Pink apple-blossom, that May showers lay low,  
And more delicious than 's the earliest streak  
The blushing rose shows of her crimson cheek.  
As if to match the sight that so did please,  
A music entered, making passion fain:  
Three nightingales sat singing in the trees,  
And praised the Goddess for the fallen rain;  
Which yet their unseen motions did arouse,  
Or parting Zephyrs shook out from the boughs.  
And o'er the treetops, scattered in mid air,  
The exhausted clouds, laden with crimson light  
Floated, or seemed to sleep; and, highest there,  
One planet broke the lingering ranks of night;  
Daring day's company, so he might spy  
The Virgin-queen once with his watchful eye.  
And when I saw her, then I worshipped her,  
And said,—O bounteous Spring, O beauteous Spring,  
Mother of all my years, thou who dost stir  
My heart to adore thee and my tongue to sing,  
Flower of my fruit, of my heart's blood the fire,  
Of all my satisfaction the desire!  
How art thou every year more beautiful,  
Younger for all the winters thou hast cast:  
And I, for all my love grows, grow more dull,  
Decaying with each season overpast!  
In vain to teach him love must man employ thee,  
The more he learns the less he can enjoy thee.

## IV.

## WOOING.

I KNOW not how I came,  
New on my knightly journey,  
To win the fairest dame  
That graced my maiden tourney.

Chivalry's lovely prize  
With all men's gaze upon her,  
Why did she free her eyes  
On me, to do me honour?

Ah! ne'er had I my mind  
With such high hope delighted,  
Had she not first inclined,  
And with her eyes invited.

But never doubt I knew,  
Having their glance to cheer me,  
Until the day joy grew  
Too great, too sure, too near me.

When hope a fear became,  
And passion, grown too tender,  
Now trembled at the shame  
Of a despised surrender;

And where my love at first  
Saw kindness in her smiling,  
I read her pride, and cursed  
The arts of her beguiling.

Till winning less than won,  
And liker wooed than wooing,  
Too late I turned undone  
Away from my undoing;

And stood beside the door,  
 Whereto she followed, making  
 My hard leave-taking more  
 Hard by her sweet leave-taking.

Her speech would have betrayed  
 Her thought, had mine been colder :  
 Her eyes distress had made  
 A lesser lover bolder.

But no ! Fond heart, distrust,  
 Cried Wisdom, and consider :  
 Go free, since go thou must,  
 And so farewell I bid her.

And brisk upon my way  
 I smote the stroke to sever,  
 And should have lost that day  
 My life's delight for ever ;

But when I saw her start  
 And turn aside and tremble ;—  
 Ah ! she was true, her heart  
 I knew did not dissemble.

## V.

THERE is a hill beside the silver Thames,  
 Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine :  
 And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems  
 Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.  
 Straight trees in every place  
 Their thick tops interlace,  
 And pendant branches trail their foliage fine  
 Upon his watery face.

Swift from the sweltering pasturage he flows :  
His stream, alert to seek the pleasant shade,  
Pictures his gentle purpose, as he goes  
Straight to the caverned pool his toil has made.  
    His winter floods lay bare  
    The stout roots in the air :  
His summer streams are cool, when they have played  
    Among their fibrous hair.

A rushy island guards the sacred bower,  
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace  
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,  
Robbing the golden market of the bees :  
    And laden barges float  
    By banks of myosote ;  
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys  
    Delay the loitering boat.

And on this side the island, where the pool  
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass  
The water-weeds, that net the fishes cool,  
And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass ;  
    Where spreading crowfoot mars  
    The drowning nenuphars,  
Waving the tassels of her silken grass  
    Below her silver stars.

But in the purple pool there nothing grows,  
Not the white water-lily spoked with gold ;  
Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows  
On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold :  
    Yet should her roots but try  
    Within these deeps to lie,  
Not her long reaching stalk could ever hold  
    Her waxen head so high.

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook  
 Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree  
 Leaning his rod, reads in some pleasant book,  
 Forgetting soon his pride of fishery ;  
     And dreams, or falls asleep,  
     While curious fishes peep  
 About his nibbled bait, or scornfully  
     Dart off and rise and leap.

And sometimes a slow figure 'neath the trees,  
 In ancient-fashioned smock, with tottering care,  
 Upon a staff propping his weary knees,  
 May by the pathway of the forest fare :  
     As from a buried day  
     Across the mind will stray  
 Some perishing mute shadow,—and unaware  
     He passeth on his way.

Else, he that wishes solitude is safe,  
 Whether he bathe at morning in the stream :  
 Or lead his love there when the hot hours chafe  
 The meadows, busy with a blurring steam ;  
     Or watch, as fades the light,  
     The gibbous moon grow bright,  
 Until her magic rays dance in a dream,  
     And glorify the night.

Where is this bower beside the silver Thames ?  
 O pool and flowery thickets, hear my vow !  
 O trees of freshest foliage and straight stems,  
 No sharer of my secret I allow :  
     Lest ere I come the while  
     Strange feet your shades defile ;  
 Or lest the burly oarsman turn his prow  
     Within your guardian isle.

## VI.

## A WATER-PARTY.

LET us, as by this verdant bank we float,  
Search down the marge to find some shady pool;  
Where we may rest awhile and moor our boat,  
And bathe our tired limbs in the water's cool.

Beneath the noonday sun,  
Swiftly, O river, run!

Here is a mirror for Narcissus, see!  
I cannot sound it, plumbing with my oar.  
Lay the stern in beneath this bowering tree!  
Now, stepping on this stump, we are ashore.

Guard, Hamadryades,  
Our clothes laid by your trees!

How the birds warble in the woods! I pick  
The waxen lilies, diving to the root.  
But swim not far in the stream, the weeds grow  
thick,

And hot on the bare head the sunbeams shoot.

Until our sport be done,  
O merry birds sing on!

If but to-night the sky be clear, the moon  
Will serve us well, for she is near the full.  
We shall row safely home; only too soon,—  
So pleasant 'tis, whether we float or pull.

To guide us through the night,  
O summer moon, shine bright!

---

## VII.

## THE DOWNS.

O BOLD majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely;  
O still solitude, only matched in the skies :  
    Perilous in steep places,  
    Soft in the level races,  
Where sweeping in phantom silence the cloudland flies ;  
With lovely undulation of fall and rise ;  
    Entrenched with thickets thorned,  
By delicate miniature dainty flowers adorned !  
I climb your crown, and lo ! a sight surprising  
Of sea in front uprising, steep and wide :  
    And scattered ships ascending  
    To heaven, lost in the blending  
Of distant blues, where water and sky divide,  
Urging their engines against wind and tide,  
    And all so small and slow  
They seem to be wearily pointing the way they would  
    go.  
The accumulated murmur of soft plashing,  
Of waves on rocks dashing, and searching the sands  
    Takes my ear, in the veering  
    Baffled wind, as rearing  
Upright at the cliff, to the gullies and rifts he stands ;  
And his conquering surges scour out over the lands ;  
    While again at the foot of the downs  
He masses his strength to recover the topmost crowns.

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## VIII.

## SPRING.

## ODE I.

## INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY.

AGAIN with pleasant green  
Has Spring renewed the wood,  
And where the bare trunks stood  
Are leafy arbours seen ;  
And back on budding boughs  
Come birds, to court and pair,  
Whose rival amorous vows  
Amaze the scented air.

The freshets are unbound,  
And leaping from the hill,  
Their mossy banks refill  
With streams of light and sound :  
And scattered down the meads,  
From hour to hour unfold  
A thousand buds and beads  
In stars and cups of gold.

Now hear, and see, and note,  
The farms are all astir,  
And every labourer  
Has doffed his winter coat ;  
And how with specks of white  
They dot the brown hillside,  
Or jaunt and sing outright  
As by their teams they stride.

They sing to feel the Sun  
Regain his wanton strength ;  
To know the year at length  
Rewards their labour done ;  
To see the rootless stake  
They set bare in the ground,  
Burst into leaf, and shake  
Its grateful scent around.

Ah now an evil lot  
Is his, who toils for gain,  
Where crowded chimneys stain  
The heavens his choice forgot ;  
'Tis on the blighted trees  
That deck his garden dim,  
And in the tainted breeze,  
That sweet spring comes to him.

Far sooner I would choose  
The life of brutes that bask,  
Than set myself a task,  
Which inborn powers refuse :  
And rather far enjoy  
The body, than invent  
A duty, to destroy  
The ease which nature sent ;

And country life I praise,  
And lead, because I find  
The philosophic mind  
Can take no middle ways ;  
She will not leave her love  
To mix with men, her art  
Is all to strive above  
The crowd, or stand apart.

Thrice happy he, the rare  
Prometheus, who can play  
With hidden things, and lay  
New realms of nature bare;  
Whose venturous step has trod  
Hell underfoot, and won  
A crown from man and God  
For all that he has done.—

That highest gift of all,  
Since crabbèd fate did flood  
My heart with sluggish blood,  
I look not mine to call;  
But, like a truant freed,  
Fly to the woods, and claim  
A pleasure for the deed  
Of my inglorious name:

And am content, denied  
The best, in choosing right;  
For Nature can delight  
Fancies unoccupied  
With ecstasies so sweet  
As none can even guess,  
Who walk not with the feet  
Of joy in idleness.

Then leave your joyless ways,  
My friend, my joys to see.  
The day you come shall be  
The choice of chosen days:  
You shall be lost, and learn  
New being, and forget  
The world, till your return  
Shall bring your first regret.

## IX.

## SPRING.

## ODE II.

## REPLY.

BEHOLD! the radiant Spring,  
In splendour decked anew,  
Down from her heaven of blue  
Returns on sunlit wing:  
The zephyrs of her train  
In fleecy clouds disport,  
And birds to greet her reign  
Summon their silvan court.

And here in street and square  
The prisoned trees contest  
Her favour with the best,  
To robe themselves full fair:  
And forth their buds provoke,  
Forgetting winter brown,  
And all the mire and smoke  
That wrapped the dingy town.

Now he that loves indeed  
His pleasure must awake,  
Lest any pleasure take  
Its flight, and he not heed;  
For of his few short years  
Another now invites  
His hungry soul, and cheers  
His life with new delights.

And who loves Nature more  
Than he, whose painful art  
Has taught and skilled his heart  
To read her skill and lore?  
Whose spirit leaps more high,  
Plucking the pale primrose,  
Than his whose feet must fly  
The pasture where it grows?

One long in city pent  
Forgets, or must complain:  
But think not I can stain  
My heaven with discontent;  
Nor wallow with that sad,  
Backsliding herd, who cry  
That Truth must make man bad,  
And pleasure is a lie.

Rather while Reason lives  
To mark me from the beast,  
I'll teach her serve at least  
To heal the wound she gives:  
Nor need she strain her powers  
Beyond a common flight,  
To make the passing hours  
Happy from morn till night.

Since health our toil rewards,  
And strength is labour's prize,  
I hate not, nor despise  
The work my lot accords;  
Nor fret with fears unkind  
The tender joys, that bless  
My hard-won peace of mind,  
In hours of idleness.

Then what charm company  
Can give, know I,—if wine  
Go round, or throats combine  
To set dumb music free.  
Or deep in wintertide  
When winds without make moan,  
I love my own fireside  
Not least when most alone.

Then oft I turn the page  
In which our country's name,  
Spoiling the Greek of fame,  
Shall sound in every age:  
Or some Terentian play  
Renew, whose excellent  
Adjusted folds betray  
How once Menander went.

Or if grave study suit  
The yet unwearied brain,  
Plato can teach again,  
And Socrates dispute;  
Till fancy in a dream  
Confront their souls with mine,  
Crowning the mind supreme,  
And her delights divine.

While pleasure yet can be  
Pleasant, and fancy sweet,  
I bid all care retreat,  
From my philosophy;  
Which, when I come to try  
Your simpler life, will find,  
I doubt not, joys to vie  
With those I leave behind.

## X.

## ELEGY.

## AMONG THE TOMBS.

SAD, sombre place, beneath whose antique yews  
I come, unquiet sorrows to control;  
Amid thy silent mossgrown graves to muse  
With my neglected solitary soul;  
And to poetic sadness care confide,  
Trusting sweet Melancholy for my guide:  
They will not ask why in thy shades I stray,  
Among the tombs finding my rare delight,  
Beneath the sun at indolent noonday,  
Or in the windy moon-enchanted night,  
Who have once reined in their steeds at any shrine,  
And given them water from the well divine.—

The orchards are all ripened, and the sun  
Spots the deserted gleanings with decay;  
The seeds are perfected: his work is done,  
And Autumn lingers but to outsmile the May;  
Bidding his tinted leaves glide, bidding clear  
Unto clear skies the birds applaud the year.

Lo, here I sit, and to the world I call,  
The world my solemn fancy leaves behind,  
Come! pass within the inviolable wall,  
Come pride, come pleasure, come distracted mind;  
Within the fated refuge, hither, turn,  
And learn your wisdom ere 'tis late to learn.

Come with me now, and taste the fount of tears;  
For many eyes have sanctified this spot,  
Where grief's unbroken lineage endears  
The charm untimely Folly injures not,

And slays the intruding thoughts, that overleap  
The simple fence its holiness doth keep.

Read the worn names of the forgotten dead,  
Their pompous legends will no smile awake;  
Even the vainglorious title o'er the head  
Wins its pride pardon for its sorrow's sake;  
And carven Loves scorn not their dusty prize,  
Though fallen so far from tender sympathies.

Here where a mother laid her only son,  
Here where a lover left his bride, below  
The treasured names their own are added on  
To those whom they have followed long ago:  
Sealing the record of the tears they shed,  
That 'where their treasure there their hearts are fled.'

Grandfather, father, son, and then again  
Child, grandchild, and great grandchild laid beneath,  
Numbered in turn among the sons of men,  
And gathered each one in his turn to death:  
While he that occupies their house and name  
To-day,—to-morrow too their grave shall claim.

And where are all their spirits? Ah! could we tell  
The manner of our being when we die,  
And see beyond the scene we know so well  
The country that so much obscured doth lie!  
With brightest visions our fond hopes repair,  
Or crown our melancholy with despair;

From death, still death, still would a comfort come:  
Since of this world the essential joy must fall  
In all distributed, in each thing some,  
In nothing all, and all complete in all;  
Till pleasure, ageing to her full increase,  
Puts on perfection, and is throned in peace.



Yea, sweetest peace, unsought-for, undesired,  
Loathed and misnamed, 'tis thee I worship here :  
Though in most black habiliments attired,  
Thou art sweet peace, and thee I cannot fear.  
Nay, were my last hope quenched, I here would sit  
And praise the annihilation of the pit.

Nor quickly disenchanted will my feet  
Back to the busy town return, but yet  
Linger, ere I my loving friends would greet,  
Or touch their hands, or share without regret  
The warmth of that kind hearth, whose sacred ties  
Only shall dim with tears my dying eyes.

## XI.

## DEJECTION.

WHEREFORE to-night so full of care,  
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,  
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare  
Painful escapes of fitful life ?  
Shaping the doom that may befall  
By precedent of terror past :  
By love dishonoured, and the call  
Of friendship slighted at the last ?  
By treasured names, the little store  
That memory out of wreck could save  
Of loving hearts, that gone before  
Call their old comrade to the grave ?

O soul be patient : thou shalt find  
A little matter mend all this ;  
Some strain of music to thy mind,  
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow  
 Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste  
 Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow  
 Half sad for sweetness run to waste.

O happy life ! I hear thee sing,  
 O rare delight of mortal stuff !  
 I praise my days for all they bring,  
 Yet are they only not enough.

## XII.

## MORNING HYMN.

O GOLDEN Sun, whose ray  
 My path illumineth :  
 Light of the circling day,  
 Whose night is birth and death :  
 That dost not stint the prime  
 Of wise and strong, nor stay  
 The changeful ordering time,  
 That brings their sure decay.  
 Though thou, the central sphere,  
 Dost seem to turn around  
 Thy creature world, and near  
 As father fond art found ;  
 Thereon, as from above  
 To shine, and make rejoice  
 With beauty, life, and love,  
 The garden of thy choice.  
 To dress the jocund Spring  
 With bounteous promise gay  
 Of hotter months, that bring  
 The full perfected day ;

To touch with richest gold  
The ripe fruit, ere it fall ;  
And smile through cloud and cold  
On Winter's funeral.

Now with resplendent flood  
Gladden my waking eyes,  
And stir my slothful blood  
To joyous enterprise.

Arise, arise, as when  
At first God said LIGHT BE !  
That He might make us men  
With eyes His light to see.

Scatter the clouds that hide  
The face of heaven, and show  
Where sweet Peace doth abide,  
Where Truth and Beauty grow.

Awaken, cheer, adorn,  
Invite, inspire, assure  
The joys that praise thy morn,  
The toil thy noons mature :

And soothe the eve of day,  
That darkens back to death ;  
O golden Sun, whose ray  
Our path illumineth !

## XIII.

I HAVE loved flowers that fade,  
Within whose magic tents  
Rich hues have marriage made  
With sweet unmemoried scents :

A honeymoon delight,—  
A joy of love at sight,  
That ages in an hour:—  
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs, that die  
Before their charm is writ  
Along a liquid sky  
Trembling to welcome it.  
Notes, that with pulse of fire  
Proclaim the spirit's desire,  
Then die, and are nowhere:—  
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,  
And wither as a bloom:  
Fear not a flowery death,  
Dread not an empty tomb!  
Fly with delight, fly hence!  
'Twas thine love's tender sense  
To feast, now on thy bier  
Beauty shall shed a tear.

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BOOK III.



I.

O MY vague desires!  
 Ye lambent flames of the soul, her offspring fires:  
 That are my soul herself in pangs sublime  
 Rising and flying to heaven before her time:

What doth tempt you forth  
 To drown in the south or shiver in the frosty north?  
 What seek ye or find ye in your random flying,  
 Ever soaring aloft, soaring and dying?

Joy, the joy of flight!  
 They hide in the sun, they flare and dance in the  
 night;  
 Gone up, gone out of sight: and ever again  
 Follow fresh tongues of fire, fresh pangs of pain.

Ah! they burn my soul,  
 The fires, devour my soul that once was whole:  
 She is scattered in fiery phantoms day by day,  
 But whither, whither? ay whither? away, away?

Could I but control  
 These vague desires, these leaping flames of the soul:  
 Could I but quench the fire; ah! could I stay  
 My soul that flieth, alas, and dieth away!

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## II.

## LONDON SNOW.

WHEN men were all asleep the snow came flying,  
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,  
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,  
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town ;  
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing ;  
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down :

Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing ;  
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,  
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven  
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,  
Its clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven ;

And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness  
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare :  
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness ;

The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air ;  
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,  
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,  
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze  
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snow-  
balling ;

Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees ;  
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,  
' O look at the trees ! ' they cried, ' O look at the trees ! '

With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,  
Following along the white deserted way,  
A country company long dispersed asunder :

When now already the sun, in pale display



Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below  
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of thé day.

For now doors open, and war is waged with the  
snow ;

And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,  
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go :

But even for them awhile no cares encumber  
Their minds diverted ; the daily word unspoken,  
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber  
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the  
charm they have broken.

### III.

#### THE VOICE OF NATURE.

I STAND on the cliff and watch the veiled sun paling  
A silver field afar in the mournful sea,  
The scourge of the surf, and plaintive gulls sailing  
At ease on the gale that smites the shuddering lea :  
Whose smile severe and chaste

June never hath stirred to vanity, nor age defaced.  
In lofty thought strive, O spirit, for ever :  
In courage and strength pursue thine own endeavour.

Ah ! if it were only for thee, thou restless ocean  
Of waves that follow and roar, the sweep of the  
tides ;

Wer't only for thee, impetuous wind, whose motion  
Precipitate all o'errides, and turns, nor abides :  
For you sad birds and fair,

Or only for thee, bleak cliff, erect in the air ;  
Then well could I read wisdom in every feature,  
O well should I understand the voice of Nature.

But far away, I think, in the Thames valley,  
 The silent river glides by flowery banks:  
 And birds sing sweetly in branches that arch an alley  
 Of cloistered trees, moss-grown in their ancient  
 ranks:

Where if a light air stray,  
 'Tis laden with hum of bees and scent of may.  
 Love and peace be thine, O spirit, for ever:  
 Serve thy sweet desire: despise endeavour.

And if it were only for thee, entrancèd river,  
 That scarce dost rock the lily on her airy stem,  
 Or stir a wave to murmur, or a rush to quiver;  
 Wer't but for the woods, and summer asleep in  
 them:

For you my bowers green,  
 My hedges of rose and woodbine, with walks be-  
 tween,  
 Then well could I read wisdom in every feature,  
 O well should I understand the voice of Nature.

## IV.

## ON A DEAD CHILD.

PERFECT little body, without fault or stain on thee,  
 With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!  
 Though cold and stark and bare,  
 The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain  
 on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer  
 To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be  
 Thy father's pride;—ah, he  
 Must gather his faith together, and his strength make  
 stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,  
 Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond;  
     Startling my fancy fond  
 With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds it:  
 But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heartbreaking  
     and stiff;

    Yet feels to my hand as if  
 'Twas still thy 'will, thy pleasure and trust that  
     enfolds it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—  
 Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—  
     Propping thy wise, sad head,

Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! doth the change content thee?—Death,  
     whither hath he taken thee?

To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of  
     this?

    The vision of which I miss,  
 Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee  
     and awaken 'thee?

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us

    To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,  
     Unwilling, alone we embark,

And the things we have seen and have known and  
     have heard of, fail us.

## V.

## THE PHILOSOPHER TO HIS MISTRESS.

BECAUSE thou canst not see,  
Because thou canst not know  
The black and hopeless woe  
That hath encompassed me:  
Because, should I confess  
The thought of my despair,  
My words would wound thee less  
Than swords can hurt the air:

Because with thee I seem  
As one invited near  
To taste the faery cheer  
Of spirits in a dream;  
Of whom he knoweth nought  
Save that they vie to make  
All motion, voice and thought  
A pleasure for his sake:

Therefore more sweet and strange  
Has been the mystery  
Of thy long love to me,  
That doth not quit, nor change,  
Nor tax my solemn heart,  
That kisseth in a gloom,  
Knowing not who thou art  
That givest, nor to whom.

Therefore the tender touch  
Is more; more dear the smile:  
And thy light words beguile  
My wisdom overmuch:

And O with swiftness fly  
 The fancies of my song  
 To happy worlds, where I  
 Still in thy love belong.

## VI.

## SONG.

HASTE on, my joys! your treasure lies  
 In swift, unceasing flight.  
 O haste: for while your beauty flies  
 I seize your full delight.  
 Lo! I have seen the scented flower,  
 Whose tender stems I cull,  
 For her brief date and meted hour  
 Appear more beautiful.  
 O youth, O strength, O most divine  
 For that so short ye prove;  
 Were but your rare gifts longer mine,  
 Ye scarce would win my love.  
 Nay, life itself the heart would spurn,  
 Did once the days restore  
 The days, that once enjoyed return,  
 Return—ah! nevermore.

## VII.

## INDOLENCE.

WE left the city when the summer day  
 Had verged already on its hot decline,  
 And charmèd Indolence in languor lay  
 In her gay gardens, 'neath her towers divine:  
 'Farewell,' we said, 'dear city of youth and dream!'  
 And in our boat we stepped and took the stream.

All through that idle afternoon we strayed  
Upon our proposed travel well begun,  
As loitering by the woodland's dreamy shade,  
Past shallow islets floating in the sun,  
Or searching down the banks for rarer flowers  
We lingered out the pleasurable hours.

Till when that loveliest came, which mowers home  
Turns from their longest labour, as we steered  
Along a straitened channel flecked with foam,  
We lost our landscape wide, and slowly neared  
An ancient bridge, that like a blind wall lay  
Low on its buried vaults to block the way.

Then soon the narrow tunnels broader showed,  
Where with its arches three it sucked the mass  
Of water, that in swirl thereunder flowed,  
Or stood piled at the piers waiting to pass;  
And pulling for the middle span, we drew  
The tender blades aboard and floated through.

But past the bridge what change we found below!  
The stream, that all day long had laughed and played  
Betwixt the happy shires, ran dark and slow,  
And with its easy flood no murmur made:  
And weeds spread on its surface, and about  
The stagnant margin reared their stout heads out.

Upon the left high elms, with giant wood  
Skirting the water-meadows, interwove  
Their slumbrous crowns, o'ershadowing where they  
stood  
The floor and heavy pillars of the grove:  
And in the shade, through reeds and sedges dank,  
A footpath led along the moated bank.

Across, all down the right, an old brick wall,  
Above and o'er the channel, red did lean ;  
Here buttressed up, and bulging there to fall,  
Tufted with grass and plants and lichen green ;  
And crumbling to the flood, which at its base  
Slid gently nor disturbed its mirrored face.

Sheer on the wall the houses rose, their backs  
All windowless, neglected and awry,  
With tottering coins, and crooked chimney stacks ;  
And here and there an unused door, set high  
Above the fragments of its mouldering stair,  
With rail and broken step led out on air.

Beyond, deserted wharfs and vacant sheds,  
With empty boats and barges moored along,  
And rafts half sunken, fringed with weedy shreds,  
And sodden beams, once soaked to season strong.  
No sight of man, nor sight of life, no stroke,  
No voice the somnolence and silence broke.

Then I who rowed leant on my oar, whose drip  
Fell without sparkle, and I rowed no more ;  
And he that steered moved neither hand nor lip,  
But turned his wondering eye from shore to shore ;  
And our trim boat let her swift motion die,  
Between the dim reflections floating by.

### VIII.

I PRAISE the tender flower,  
That on a mournful day  
Bloomed in my garden bower  
And made the winter gay.  
Its loveliness contented  
My heart tormented.

I praise the gentle maid  
 Whose happy voice and smile  
 To confidence betrayed  
 My doleful heart awhile:  
 And gave my spirit deploring  
 Fresh wings for soaring.

The maid for very fear  
 Of love I durst not tell:  
 The rose could never hear,  
 Though I bespake her well:  
 So in my song I bind them  
 For all to find them.

## IX.

A WINTER'S night with the snow about:  
 'Twas silent within and cold without:  
 Both father and mother to bed were gone:  
 The son sat yet by the fire alone.

He gazed on the fire, and dreamed again  
 Of one that was now no more among men:  
 As still he sat and never aware  
 How close was the spirit beside his chair.

Nay, sad were his thoughts, for he wept and said  
 Ah, woe for the dead! ah, woe for the dead!  
 How heavy the earth lies now on her breast,  
 The lips that I kissed, and the hand I pressed.

The spirit he saw not, he could not hear  
 The comforting words she spake in his ear:  
 His heart in the grave with her mouldering clay  
 No welcome gave—and she fled away.



## X.

My bed and pillow are cold,  
 My heart is faint with dread,  
 The air hath an odour of mould,  
 I dream I lie with the dead:

I cannot move,  
 O come to me, love,  
 Or else I am dead.

The feet I hear on the floor  
 Tread heavily overhead:  
 O Love, come down to the door,  
 Come, Love, come, ere I be dead:

Make shine thy light,  
 O Love, in the night;  
 Or else I am dead.

## XI.

O THOU unfaithful, still as ever dearest,  
 That in thy beauty to my eyes appearest,  
 In fancy rising now to re-awaken

My love unshaken ;

All thou 'st forgotten, but no change can free thee,  
 No hate unmake thee ; as thou wert I see thee,  
 And am contented, eye from fond eye meeting  
 Its ample greeting.

O thou my star of stars, among things wholly  
 Devoted, sacred, dim and melancholy,  
 The only joy of all the joys I cherished

That hast not perished,

Why now on others squand'rest thou the treasure,  
 That to be jealous of is still my pleasure:

As still I dream 'tis me whom thou invitest,  
 Me thou delightest ?

But day by day my joy hath feebler being,  
 The fading picture tires my painful seeing,  
 And faery fancy leaves her habitation  
 To desolation.

Of two things open left for lovers parted  
 'Twas thine to scorn the past and go lighthearted :  
 But I would ever dream I still possess it,  
 And thus caress it.

## XII.

THOU didst delight my eyes :  
 Yet who am I ? nor first  
 Nor last nor best, that durst  
 Once dream of thee for prize ;  
 Nor this the only time  
 Thou shalt set love to rhyme.

Thou didst delight my ear :  
 Ah ! little praise ; thy voice  
 Makes other hearts rejoice,  
 Makes all ears glad that hear ;  
 And short my joy : but yet,  
 O song, do not forget.

For what wert thou to me ?  
 How shall I say ? The moon,  
 That poured her midnight noon  
 Upon his wrecking sea ;—  
 A sail, that for a day  
 Has cheered the castaway.

## XIII.

Joy, sweetest lifeborn joy, where dost thou dwell?  
 Upon the formless moments of our being  
 Flitting, to mock the ear that heareth well,  
 To escape the trainèd eye that strains in seeing,  
 Dost thou fly with us whither we are fleeing;  
 Or home in our creations, to withstand  
 Blackwingèd death, that slays the making hand?

The making mind, that must untimely perish  
 Amidst its work which time may not destroy,  
 The beauteous forms which man shall love to cherish,  
 The glorious songs that combat earth's annoy?  
 Thou dost dwell here, I know, divinest Joy:  
 But they who build thy towers fair and strong,  
 Of all that toil, feel most of care and wrong.

Sense is so tender, O and hope so high,  
 That common pleasures mock their hope and sense;  
 And swifter than doth lightning from the sky  
 The ecstasy they pine for flashes hence,  
 Leaving the darkness and the woe immense,  
 Wherewith it seems no thread of life was woven,  
 Nor doth the track remain where once 'twas cloven.

And heaven and all the stable elements  
 That guard God's purpose mock us, though the mind  
 Be spent in searching: for his old intents  
 We see were never for our joy designed:  
 They shine as doth the bright sun on the blind,  
 Or like his pensioned stars, that hymn above  
 His praise, but not toward us, that God is Love.

For who so well hath wooed the maiden hours  
 As quite to have won the worth of their rich show,

To rob the night of mystery, or the flowers  
Of their sweet delicacy ere they go?  
Nay, even the dear occasion when we know,  
We miss the joy, and on the gliding day  
The special glories float and pass away.

Only life's common plod: still to repair  
The body and the thing which perisheth:  
The soil, the smutch, the toil and ache and wear,  
The grinding enginry of blood and breath,  
Pain's random darts, the heartless spade of death;  
All is but grief, and heavily we call  
On the last terror for the end of all.

Then comes the happy moment: not a stir  
In any tree, no portent in the sky:  
The morn doth neither hasten nor defer,  
The morrow hath no name to call it by,  
But life and joy are one,—we know not why,—  
As though our very blood long breathless lain  
Had tasted of the breath of God again.

And having tasted it I speak of it,  
And praise him thinking how I trembled then  
When his touch strengthened me, as now I sit  
In wonder, reaching out beyond my ken,  
Reaching to turn the day back, and my pen  
Urging to tell a tale which told would seem  
The witless phantasy of them that dream.

But O most blessèd truth, for truth thou art,  
Abide thou with me till my life shall end.  
Divinity hath surely touched my heart;  
I have possessed more joy than earth can lend:  
I may attain what time shall never spend.  
Only let not my duller days destroy  
The memory of thy witness and my joy.

## XIV.

THE full moon from her cloudless skies  
 Turneth her face, I think, on me;  
 And from the hour when she doth rise  
 Till when she sets, none else will see.

One only other ray she hath,  
 That makes an angle close with mine,  
 And glancing down its happy path  
 Upon another spot doth shine.

But that ray too is sent to me,  
 For where it lights there dwells my heart:  
 And if I were where I would be,  
 Both rays would shine, love, where thou art.

## XV.

AWAKE, my heart, to be loved, awake, awake!  
 The darkness silvers away, the morn doth break,  
 It leaps in the sky: unrisen lustres slake  
 The o'ertaken moon. Awake, O heart, awake!

She too that loveth awaketh and hopes for thee:  
 Her eyes already have sped the shades that flee,  
 Already they watch the path thy feet shall take:  
 Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

And if thou tarry from her,—if this could be,—  
 She cometh herself, O heart, to be loved, to thee;  
 For thee would unashamed herself forsake:  
 Awake to be loved, my heart, awake, awake!

Awake, the land is scattered with light, and see,  
 Uncanopied sleep is flying from field and tree:  
 And blossoming boughs of April in laughter shake;  
 Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake awake!

Lo all things wake and tarry and look for thee :  
 She looketh and saith, 'O sun now bring him to me.  
 Come more adored, O adored, for his coming's sake,  
 And awake my heart to be loved : awake, awake !'

## XVI.

## SONG.

I LOVE my lady's eyes  
 Above the beauties rare  
 She most is wont to prize,  
 Above her sunny hair,  
 And all that face to face  
 Her glass repeats of grace.

For those are still the same  
 To her and all that see :  
 But oh ! her eyes will flame  
 When they do look on me :  
 And so above the rest  
 I love her eyes the best.

Now say [*Say, O say! saith the music*]

Who likes my song?—

I knew you by your eyes,  
 That rest on nothing long,  
 And have forgot surprise ;  
 And stray [*Stray, O stray! saith the music*]  
 as mine will stray,  
 The while my love's away.

## XVII.

SINCE thou, O fondest and truest,  
 Hast loved me best and longest,

And now with trust the strongest  
The joy of my heart renewest ;

Since thou art dearer and dearer  
While other hearts grow colder,  
And ever, as love is older,  
More lovingly drawest nearer :

Since now I see in the measure  
Of all my giving and taking,  
Thou wert my hand in the making,  
The sense and soul of my pleasure ;  
The good I have ne'er repaid thee  
In heaven I pray be recorded,  
And all thy love rewarded  
By God, thy master that made thee.

## XVIII.

THE evening darkens over.  
After a day so bright  
The windcapt waves discover  
That wild will be the night.  
There's sound of distant thunder.

The latest sea-birds hover  
Along the cliff's sheer height ;  
As in the memory wander  
Last flutterings of delight,  
White wings lost on the white.

There's not a ship in sight ;  
And as the sun goes under  
Thick clouds conspire to cover  
The moon that should rise yonder.  
Thou art alone, fond lover.

## XIX.

✓  
O YOUTH whose hope is high,  
Who dost to Truth aspire,  
Whether thou live or die,  
O look not back nor tire.

Thou that art bold to fly  
Through tempest, flood and fire,  
Nor dost not shrink to try  
Thy heart in torments dire:

If thou canst Death defy,  
If thy Faith is entire,  
Press onward, for thine eye  
Shall see thy heart's desire.

Beauty and love are nigh,  
And with their deathless quire  
Soon shall thine eager cry  
Be numbered and expire.





BOOK IV.



I.

I LOVE all beauteous things,  
I seek and adore them ;  
God hath no better praise,  
And man in his hasty days  
Is honoured for them.

I too will something make  
And joy in the making ;  
Altho' to-morrow it seem  
Like the empty words of a dream  
Remembered on waking.

II.

My spirit sang all day  
O my joy.  
Nothing my tongue could say,  
Only My joy!

My heart an echo caught—  
O my joy—  
And spake, Tell me thy thought,  
Hide not thy joy.

My eyes gan peer around,—  
O my joy—  
What beauty hast thou found ?  
Shew us thy joy.

My jealous ears grew whist;—  
     O my joy—  
 Music from heaven is 't,  
     Sent for our joy?  
 She also came and heard;  
     O my joy,  
 What, said she, is this word?  
     What is thy joy?  
 And I replied, O see,  
     O my joy,  
 'Tis thee, I cried, 'tis thee:  
     Thou art my joy.

## III.

THE upper skies are palest blue  
 Mottled with pearl and fretted snow:  
 With tattered fleece of inky hue  
 Close overhead the stormclouds go.  
 Their shadows fly along the hill  
 And o'er the crest mount one by one:  
 The whitened planking of the mill  
 Is now in shade and now in sun.

## IV.

THE clouds have left the sky,  
 The wind hath left the sea,  
 The half-moon up on high  
 Shrinketh her face of dree.  
 She lightens on the comb  
 Of leaden waves, that roar  
 And thrust their hurried foam  
 Up on the dusky shore.

Behind the western bars  
 The shrouded day retreats,  
 And unperceived the stars  
 Steal to their sovran seats.

And whiter grows the foam,  
 The small moon lightens more ;  
 And as I turn me home,  
 My shadow walks before.

## V.

LAST WEEK OF FEBRUARY, 1890.

HARK to the merry birds, hark how they sing !  
 Although 'tis not yet spring

And keen the air ;

Hale Winter, half resigning ere he go,

Doth to his heiress shew

His kingdom fair.

In patient russet is his forest spread,

All bright with bramble red,

With beechen moss

And holly sheen : the oak silver and stark

Sunneth his aged bark

And wrinkled boss.

But neath the ruin of the withered brake

Primroses now awake

From nursing shades :

The crumpled carpet of the dry leaves brown

Avails not to keep down

The hyacinth blades.

The hazel hath put forth his tassels ruffed ;

The willow's flossy tuft

Hath slipped him free :

The rose amid her ransacked orange hips  
 Braggeth the tender tips  
 Of bowers to be.

A black rook stirs the branches here and there,  
 Foraging to repair  
 His broken home :  
 And hark, on the ash boughs ! Never thrush did sing  
 Louder in praise of spring,  
 When spring is come.

## VI.

APRIL, 1885.

WANTON with long delay the gay spring leaping  
 cometh ;  
 The blackthorn starreth now his bough on the eve  
 of May :  
 All day in the sweet box-tree the bee for pleasure  
 hummeth :  
 The cuckoo sends afloat his note on the air all day.  
 Now dewy nights again and rain in gentle shower  
 At root of tree and flower have quenched the winter's  
 drouth.  
 On high the hot sun smiles, and banks of cloud uptower  
 In bulging heads that crowd for miles the dazzlin  
 south.

## VII.

GÁY Róbin is seen no more :  
 He is gone with the snow,  
 For winter is o'er  
 And Robin will go.  
 In need he was fed, and now he is fled

Away to his secret nest.  
 No more will he stand  
 Begging for crumbs,  
 No longer he comes  
 Beseeching our hand  
 And showing his breast  
 At window and door ;  
 Gay Robin is seen no more.

Blithe Robin is heard no more :  
 He gave us his song  
 When summer was o'er  
 And winter was long :  
 He sang for his bread and now he is fled  
 Away to his secret nest.  
 And there in the green  
 Early and late  
 Alone to his mate  
 He pipeth unseen  
 And swelleth his breast.  
 For us it is o'er,  
 Blithe Robin is heard no more.

### VIII.

SPRING goeth all in white,  
 Crowned with milk-white may :  
 In fleecy flocks of light  
 O'er heaven the white clouds stray :

White butterflies in the air ;  
 White daisies prank the ground :  
 The cherry and hoary pear  
 Scatter their snow around.



## IX.

My eyes for beauty pine,  
 My soul for Goddës grace :  
 No other care nor hope is mine,  
 To heaven I turn my face.  
 One splendour thence is shed  
 From all the stars above :  
 'Tis namèd when God's name is said,  
 'Tis Love, 'tis heavenly Love.  
 And every gentle heart,  
 That burns with true desire,  
 Is lit from eyes that mirror part  
 Of that celestial fire.

## X.

O LOVE, my muse, how was't for me  
 Among the best to dare,  
 In thy high courts that bowed the knee  
 With sacrifice and prayer ?  
 Their mighty offerings at thy shrine  
 Shamed me, who nothing bore :  
 Their suits were mockeries of mine,  
 I sued for so much more.  
 Full many I met that crowned with bay  
 In triumph home returned,  
 And many a master on the way  
 Proud of the prize I scorned.  
 I wished no garland on my head  
 Nor treasure in my hand ;  
 My gift the longing that me led,  
 My prayer thy high command,



My love, my muse; and when I spake  
 Thou mad'st me thine that day,  
 And more than hundred hearts could take  
 Gav'st me to bear away.

## XI.

LOVE on my heart from heaven fell,  
 Soft as the dew on flowers of spring,  
 Sweet as the hidden drops that swell  
 Their honey-throated chaliceing.

Now never from him do I part,  
 Hosanna evermore I cry:  
 I taste his savour in my heart,  
 And bid all praise him as do I.

Without him noughtsoever is,  
 Nor was afore, nor e'er shall be:  
 Nor any other joy than his  
 Wish I for mine to comfort me.

## XII.

THE hill pines were sighing,  
 O'ercast and chill was the day:  
 A mist in the valley lying  
 Blotted the pleasant May.

But deep in the glen's bosom  
 Summer slept in the fire  
 Of the odorous gorse-blossom  
 And the hot scent of the brier.

A ribald cuckoo clamoured,  
 And out of the copse the stroke  
 Of the iron axe that hammered  
 The iron heart of the oak.

Anon a sound appalling,  
 As a hundred years of pride  
 Crashed, in the silence falling:  
 And the shadowy pine-trees sighed.

## XIII.

## THE WINDMILL.

THE green corn waving in the dale,  
 The ripe grass waving on the hill:  
 I lean across the paddock pale  
 And gaze upon the giddy mill.

Its hurtling sails a mighty sweep  
 Cut thro' the air: with rushing sound  
 Each strikes in fury down the steep,  
 Rattles, and whirls in chase around.

Beside his sacks the miller stands  
 On high within the open door:  
 A book and pencil in his hands,  
 His grist and meal he reckoneth o'er.

His tireless merry slave the wind  
 Is busy with his work to-day:  
 From whencesoe'er he comes to grind;  
 He hath a will and knows the way.

He gives the creaking sails a spin,  
 The circling millstones faster flee,  
 The shuddering timbers groan within,  
 And down the shoots the meal runs free.

The miller giveth him no thanks,  
 And doth not much his work o'erlook:  
 He stands beside the sacks, and ranks  
 The figures in his dusty book.

## XIV.

WHEN June is come, then all the day  
I'll sit with my love in the scented hay:  
And watch the sunshot palaces high,  
That the white clouds build in the breezy sky.

She singeth, and I do make her a song,  
And read sweet poems the whole day long:  
Unseen as we lie in our haybuilt home.  
O life is delight when June is come.

## XV.

THE pinks along my garden walks  
Have all shot forth their summer stalks,  
Thronging their buds 'mong tulips hot,  
    And blue forget-me-not.

Their dazzling snows forth-bursting soon  
Will lade the idle breath of June:  
And waken thro' the fragrant night  
    To steal the pale moonlight.

The nightingale at end of May  
Lingers each year for their display;  
Till when he sees their blossoms blown,  
    He knows the spring is flown.

June's birth they greet, and when their bloom  
Dislustres, withering on his tomb,  
Then summer hath a shortening day;  
    And steps slow to decay.

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## XVI.

FIRE of heaven, whose starry arrow  
 Pierces the veil of timeless night :  
 Molten spheres, whose tempests narrow  
 Their floods to a beam of gentle light :  
 To charm with a moon-ray quenched from fire  
 The land of delight, the land of desire !

Smile of love, a flower planted,  
 Sprung in the garden of joy that art :  
 Eyes that shine with a glow enchanted,  
 Whose spreading fires encircle my heart,  
 And warm with a noon-ray drenched in fire  
 My land of delight, my land of desire !

## XVII.

✓  
 THE idle life I lead  
 Is like a pleasant sleep,  
 Wherein I rest and heed  
 The dreams that by me sweep.

And still of all my dreams  
 In turn so swiftly past,  
 Each in its fancy seems  
 A nobler than the last.

And every eve I say,  
 Noting my step in bliss,  
 That I have known no day  
 In all my life like this.

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## XVIII.

ANGEL spirits of sleep,  
 White-robed, with silver hair,  
 In your meadows fair,  
 Where the willows weep,  
 And the sad moonbeam  
 On the gliding stream  
 Writes her scattered dream:

    Angel spirits of sleep,  
 Dancing to the weir  
 In the hollow roar  
 Of its waters deep;  
 Know ye how men say  
 That ye haunt no more  
 Isle and grassy shore  
 With your moonlit play;  
 That ye dance not here,  
 White-robed spirits of sleep,  
 All the summer night  
 Threading dances light?

## XIX.

## ANNIVERSARY

WHAT is sweeter than new-mown hay,  
 Fresher than winds o'er sea that blow,  
 Innocent above children's play,  
 Fairer and purer than winter snow,  
 Frolic as are the morns of May?

—If it should be what best I know !

What is richer than thoughts that stray  
 From reading of poems that smoothly flow?  
 What is solemn like the delay

Of concords linked in a music slow  
 Dying thro' vaulted aisles away?  
 —If it should be what best I know!

What gives faith to me when I pray,  
 Setteth my heart with joy aglow,  
 Filleth my song with fancies gay,  
 Maketh the heaven to which I go,  
 The gladness of earth that lasteth for aye?  
 —If it should be what best I know!

But tell me thou—'twas on this day  
 That first we loved five years ago—  
 If 'tis a thing that I can say,  
 Though it must be what best we know.

## XX.

THE summer trees are tempest-torn,  
 The hills are wrapped in a mantle wide  
 Of folding rain by the mad wind borne  
 Across the country side.

His scourge of fury is lashing down  
 The delicate-rankèd golden corn,  
 That never more shall rear its crown  
 And curtsey to the morn.

There shews no care in heaven to save  
 Man's pitiful patience, or provide  
 A season for the season's slave,  
 Whose trust hath toiled and died.

So my proud spirit in me is sad,  
 A wreck of fairer fields to mourn,  
 The ruin of golden hopes she had,  
 My delicate-rankèd corn.

## XXI.

THE birds that sing on autumn eves  
Among the golden-tinted leaves,  
Are but the few that true remain  
Of budding May's rejoicing train.  
Like autumn flowers that brave the frost,  
And make their show when hope is lost,  
These 'mong the fruits and mellow scent  
Mourn not the high-sunned summer spent.  
Their notes thro' all the jocund spring  
Were mixed in merry musicking:  
They sang for love the whole day long,  
But now their love is all for song.  
Now each hath perfected his lay  
To praise the year that hastes away:  
They sit on boughs apart, and vie  
In single songs and rich reply:  
And oft as in the copse I hear  
These anthems of the dying year,  
The passions, once her peace that stole,  
With flattering love my heart console.

## XXII.

WHEN my love was away,  
Full three days were not sped,  
I caught my fancy astray  
Thinking if she were dead,  
And I alone, alone:  
It seemed in my misery  
In all the world was none  
Ever so lone as I.

I wept; but it did not shame  
 Nor comfort my heart: away  
 I rode as I might, and came  
 To my love at close of day.

The sight of her stilled my fears,  
 My fairest-hearted love:

And yet in her eyes were tears:  
 Which when I questioned of,

O now thou art come, she cried,  
 'Tis fled: but I thought to-day

I never could here abide,  
 If thou wert longer away.

### XXIII.

THE storm is over, the land hushes to rest:

The tyrannous wind, its strength fordone,

Is fallen back in the west

To couch with the sinking sun.

The last clouds fare

With fainting speed, and their thin streamers fly

In melting drifts of the sky.

Already the birds in the air

Appear again; the rooks return to their haunt,

And one by one,

Proclaiming aloud their care,

Renew their peaceful chant.

Torn and shattered trees their branches again reset,

They trim afresh the fair

Few green and golden leaves withheld from the storm,

And awhile will be handsome yet.

To-morrow's sun shall caress

Their remnant of loveliness:



In quiet days for a time  
 Sad Autumn lingering warm  
 Shall humour their faded prime.

But ah! the leaves of summer that lie on the ground!  
 What havoc! The laughing timbrels of June,  
 That curtained the birds' cradles, and screened their  
 song,

That sheltered the cooing doves at noon,  
 Of airy fans the delicate throng,—  
 Torn and scattered around:  
 Far out afield they lie,  
 In the watery furrows die,  
 In grassy pools of the flood they sink and drown,  
 Green-golden, orange, vermilion, golden and brown,  
 The high year's flaunting crown  
 Shattered and trampled down.

The day is done: the tired land looks for night:  
 She prays to the night to keep  
 In peace her nerves of delight:  
 While silver mist upstealeth silently,  
 And the broad cloud-driving moon in the clear sky  
 Lifts o'er the firs her shining shield,  
 And in her tranquil light  
 Sleep falls on forest and field.  
 Sée! sléep hath fallen: the trees are asleep:  
 The night is come. The land is wrapt in sleep.

## XXIV.

YE thrilled me once, ye mournful strains,  
 Ye anthems of plaintive woe,  
 My spirit was sad when I was young;  
 Ah sorrowful long-ago!

But since I have found the beauty of joy,  
I have done with proud dismay:  
For howsoe'er man hug his care  
The best of his art is gay.

And yet if voices of fancy's choir  
Again in mine ear awake  
Your old lament, 'tis dear to me still,  
Nor all for memory's sake:  
'Tis like the dirge of sorrow dead,  
Whose tears are wiped away;  
Or drops of the shower, when rain is o'er,  
That jewel the brightened day.

## XXV.

SAY who is this with silvered hair,  
So pale and worn and thin,  
Who passeth here, and passeth there,  
And looketh out and in?

That useth not our garb nor tongue,  
And knoweth things untold:  
Who teacheth pleasure to the young,  
And wisdom to the old?

No toil he maketh his by day,  
No home his own by night;  
But wheresoe'er he take his way,  
He killeth our delight.

Since he is come there's nothing wise  
Nor fair in man or child,  
Unless his deep divining eyes  
Have looked on it and smiled.

Whence came he hither all alone  
 Among our folk to spy?  
 There's nought that we can call our own,  
 Till he shall hap to die.  
 And I would dig his grave full deep  
 Beneath the churchyard yew,  
 Lest thence his wizard eyes might peep  
 To mark the things we do.

## XXVI.

CROWN Winter with green,  
 And give him good drink  
 To physic his spleen  
 Or ever he think.

His mouth to the bowl,  
 His feet to the fire ;  
 And let him, good soul,  
 No comfort desire.

So merry he be,  
 I bid him abide :  
 And merry be we  
 This good Yuletide.

## XXVII.

THE snow lies sprinkled on the beach,  
 And whitens all the marshy lea :  
 The sad gulls wail adown the gale,  
 The day is dark and black the sea.

Shorn of their crests the blighted waves  
 With driven foam the offing fleck :  
 The ebb is low and barely laves  
 The red rust of the giant wreck.

On such a stony, breaking beach  
 My childhood chanced and chose to be :  
 'Twas here I played, and musing made  
 My friend the melancholy sea.

He from his dim enchanted caves  
 With shuddering roar and onrush wild  
 Fell down in sacrificial waves  
 At feet of his exulting child.

Unto a spirit too light for fear  
 His wrath was mirth, his wail was glee :—  
 My heart is now too fixed to bow  
 Tho' all his tempests howl at me :

For to the gain life's summer saves,  
 My solemn joy's increasing store,  
 The tossing of his mournful waves  
 Makes sweetest music evermore.

## XXVIII.

My spirit kisseth thine,  
 My spirit embraceth thee :  
 I feel thy being twine  
 Her graces over me,

In the life-kindling fold  
 Of God's breath ; where on high,  
 In furthest space untold  
 Like a lost world I lie :

And o'er my dreaming plains  
 Lightens, most pale and fair,  
 A moon that never wanes ;  
 Or more, if I compare,

Like what the shepherd sees  
 On late mid-winter dawns,  
 When thro' the branchèd trees,  
 O'er the white-frosted lawns,

The huge unclouded sun,  
 Surprising the world whist,  
 Is all uprisen thereon,  
 Golden with melting mist.

## XXIX.

ARIEL, O,—my angel, my own,—  
 Whither away then art thou flown  
 Beyond my spirit's dominion?  
 That makest my heart run over with rhyme,  
 Renewing at will my youth for a time,  
 My servant, my pretty minion.

Now indeed I have cause to mourn,  
 Now thou returnest scorn for scorn:  
 Leave me not to my folly:  
 For when thou art with me is none so gay  
 As I, and none when thou'rt away  
 Was ever so melancholy.



## XXX.

## LAUS DEO.

LET praise devote thy work, and skill employ  
Thy whole mind, and thy heart be lost in joy.  
Well-doing bringeth pride, this constant thought  
Humility, that thy best done is nought.  
Man doeth nothing well, be it great or small,  
Save to praise God; but that hath savèd all:  
For God requires no more than thou hast done,  
And takes thy work to bless it for his own.



## NOTE.

*The poems contained in Book I are my final selection from a volume published in 1873. Those of Book II are from a pamphlet published in 1879. Some of all these are in places corrected. Book III is made up of poems from a pamphlet published in 1880; to which are added others of about the same date. Some of these have already appeared in a volume printed for me by my friend the Rev. C. H. Daniel, in 1884. No. 6 was written to a tune by Dr. Howard. No. 19 is a pretty close translation of a poem by Théophile Gautier, which is itself a translation from the English by Thomas Moore in The Epicurean. All the poems in Book IV are now printed for the first time. No. 9 is a translation from a madrigal by Michael Angelo, (No. VIII in Guasti). It is from my Comedy 'The Humours of the Court,' in which also No. 16 occurs. No. 11 is from a Sicilian nona rima stanza, the first poem in Trucchi's Poesie Italiane inedite.*

R. B.

YATTENDON, 1890.





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