LONGER NARRATIVE POEMS

THE HAWTHORNE CLASSICS

LONGER NARRATIVE POEMS

EDITED BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

This volume is designed to continue the study of narrative poetry begun in the volume, in this series, on Ballads. As in that book, the effort is to bring out, by a comparison of different examples, the generic or typical quality, while not losing sight of the other element of importance, the characteristic or particular quality of each. The most noteworthy narrative poems of the nineteenth century chance to be sufficiently various in spirit and workmanship to illustrate many different forms of epic quality. One omission might be noted, that of the humorous tale. Without aspersion of "The Ingoldsby Legends," for instance, it seems as if such verse is so different in spirit from our selections, that little good would come from a juxtaposition which could hardly help giving a certain jar.

E. E. H., Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

Poetry may be lyric, in which the poet tells us of himself, expresses his own feelings and thoughts, or it may be narrative, in which he tells us about some other person. The general class of narrative poetry is sometimes called "epic," but as that word is also used specifically for the longer narrative poems (as, for example, the "Iliad," the "Shah Nameh," "Paradise Lost") the word does not seem quite appropriate to the shorter forms of narrative poetry. There are other kinds of poetry besides these, which need not be mentioned here: lyric and narrative poetry are most often met with, as is natural, for poets, like other people, generally wish to speak of themselves or somebody else.

The simplest kind of narrative poetry is the ballad, and the student may see in the volume on "Ballads and Ballad Poetry," what the original, popular ballad is, and how, as literature gets more and more developed, the ballad becomes, in the hands of a poet, either a literary ballad or a narrative poem of ballad spirit and quality. Of this last kind is especially Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel": it is a ballad lengthened out and elaborated. The long epic poems of half-civilized

nations, like the "Iliad" in Greek or "Beowulf" in Old English, have often been thought to have had for foundation some collection of ballads on the deeds of some hero. But these are not the only forms of narrative poetry. As literature develops, there soon appear tales in verse and longer narrative poems of all kinds. These are not ballads: they are not of the ballad character as a rule, of that combination of simplicity and passion that we recognize in the ballads of all nations. They are more elaborate: the story goes for less, but the poet's way of conceiving and telling the story goes for more.

Of such imaginative poems the nineteenth century is the great period in English literature. It is true that the poetry of the fourteenth and earlier centuries was almost entirely narrative, and that some of it was in the form of the tale or short story in verse. At the end of medieval literature in England comes Chaucer, who is yet to be surpassed as a story-teller and poet. But although there were not a few poets besides Chaucer, there were not even a few narrative poems in verse which are nearly as good as the "Canterbury Tales," and even if there had been, the language in which they were written would be so different from our own that we need hardly consider them. The next great poetical period is the Elizabethan, of which the chief power was dramatic: it was by no means without narrative poetry, but its chief strength lay

elsewhere. At the end of the seventeenth and during the eighteenth centuries there prevailed a school of poetry which had many fine characteristics, but of which the best examples were didactic, descriptive, elegiac, satiric, anything in fact but narrative. But with the latter half of the century came what is known as the Romantic movement. A passion for the old ballads, an enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, a love of nature, — these and other feelings inspired a number of poets, who at once poured forth, not only lyric poetry, but also all forms of narrative poetry from the ballad to the epic. Of all the great romantic group at the beginning of the century — Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Southey — only one was not largely, often chiefly, narrative in the turn of his genius, and that was Shelley. They all had stories to tell.[1] So also had the two great poets who followed them, Tennyson and Browning, and many of those only less great who were contemporary with them, as Mrs. Browning and Matthew Arnold.

We have therefore chosen our specimens of longer narrative entirely from the nineteenth century, but even in the nineteenth century alone the range of narrative poetry is so broad as to illustrate almost all forms and kinds. We have

[1] The remark needs qualification with respect to Wordsworth. With him the story was of course not in itself the main thing. Still a good proportion of his poems is narrative.

cases where the story, the incident, is almost everything, as in "Horatius," and where it is almost nothing, as in "The Eve of St. Agnes." We have poems of all the glamour and romance of old time, like "Sohrab and Rustum" or "Atalanta's Race," and poems of our own day, like "Enoch Arden" and "Lady Geraldine's Courtship." We have a great many different kinds of verse-forms, from the classic blank verse of "Michael" and the elaborate stanzas of "The Eve of St. Agnes," to the loose freedom of rhyme of "The Flight of the Duchess" or the freedom in rhythm of "Christabel." We have in fact a very great variety within a single kind of poetry.

When we turn to the poems to study them a little with a view to a finer, more critical enjoyment later, we must perceive, it would seem, first a general likeness and then the many differences, some in form and subject, and some of the manner of handling, which is apt to be the thing that gives us an idea of the character of the poet. These things are points of knowledge, certainly, and knowledge only of poetry is not the great thing — true enjoyment is the really important matter. But such knowledge as this may be made the foundation of enjoyment, because it is pretty sure to bring out in our reading things which we shall enjoy and which we might otherwise neglect.

What is the interesting thing in such narrative poems as we have here? If we look through our

selections, we shall say that it is that a poem like these presents us some phase or experience of human passion. It is not pure interest in the story, although some of these poems have interesting stories — "Horatius" most, perhaps, "Sohrab and Rustum" next, — stories which with any telling would hold our attention; but others have little special interest in the story, not only "Michael," which may lack interest for younger readers, but even "The Eve of St. Agnes." Compare this last with "Romeo and Juliet" if you would see what this same story might be. So "The Flight of the Duchess" has not much interest in the story, as a story merely. These two poems are interesting to us because each one is an intense phase of human passion. Each gives us a moment where the soul is keyed up (as we might say) to a pitch whereon it gives forth a harmony finer, rarer, more beautiful than that of everyday life. That is the main thing in each poem: that is something we always want to find in all such poems as these. The Duchess listens to the old gypsy woman and life opens out to her in wider vistas leading to broadening horizons. Porphyro and Madeline in one intense moment forget the luxuries at hand, forget even the dangers surrounding them, forget everything save the feeling that they are together and that forever. It is such a moment of elevation of spirit that a true narrative poem reaches gradually by

means of a story which must be told that we may appreciate the great poetical moment. We may not always appreciate at first the true passion which elevates perhaps some humble creature into a great soul, but really old Michael sitting on the stoneheap that was to have been a sheepfold felt as keenly and sincerely as Rustum as he sat mourning upon the deserted battle-field. And Enoch Arden, when he makes the sacrifice of his own happiness to that of his wife and family, is for that moment as noble as Horatius when he risks life to save the city that he loves. Bonnivard looking at the bird, Bertram seeing Lady Geraldine in the window, Christabel held spell-bound by the dark lady, Milanion as he catches Atalanta in her stumble at the goal, — these are figures in which life has attained a point above the common plane, breathes more freely a rarer air, and sees more widely.

We must appreciate such moments or we miss the truly poetic element in the poem. It is true that in each poem much is needed to bring us up to this moment ; we must understand a number of facts about it (as, for instance, all Enoch's relations with Annie and Philip) and we must also be emotionally prepared for full sympathy with the intense moment. But these are not the main thing; and if we get but these, interesting as they often may be in themselves, we do not get the whole.

Now some such thing as this is given us in almost all poetry. But in lyric poetry it is given to us simply, without the commixture of any story and without the help of any preparation. It exists to some degree in all narrative poetry, although in ballad poetry the emotional character is generally diffused throughout the poem and in the longer epic these poetic crises are repeated and sometimes, indeed generally, developed into some main climax. But the narrative poem of moderate length has space enough to prepare the reader fully for one main moment, either by facts or by circumstances, and practically for but one. In "Horatius" the noble deeds of the three Romans bring us to the moment when Horatius leaps into the Tiber. In "The Eve of St. Agnes" three or four imaginative descriptions — the chapel, the revel, the chamber — have aroused and stimulated our appreciation so that we are ready to respond to the full romantic feeling when Madeline awakes.

But while we appreciate the moment of poetic passion wherever we find it, — it is least in "Horatius" and "Atalanta's Race," most in "The Flight of the Duchess" and "Sohrab and Rustum," — let us not forget to appreciate also the particular quality which each poet gives us also. Browning and Matthew Arnold — how different the free running on of the easy verse which is quite able to rise to noble feeling wherever it is needful, and

the calm beauty of the classic narrative ; not to notice the especial character of each would surely be to lose much of what each poem has for us. The poet's general manner, his metrical powers, his imagination, his figured expression, — we want to get all that. There is an immense amount with each one that belongs to that one man and to him only, so that he is a favorite with us, or with somebody else, different from all others and for us better. Some of these things are pointed out in the notes, but an editor cannot do everything, and the best things in poetry are apt to come to one after much reading, in ways that even a professor of literature, or of pedagogy, cannot (at present) unravel.

HORATIUS

BY THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

A Lay made about the Year of the City CCCLX

I

Lars Porsena of Clusium
By the nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin [1]
Should suffer wrong no more.
By the nine Gods he swore it,
And named a trysting day,
And bade his messengers ride forth
East and west and south and north
To summon his array.

II

East and west and south and north
The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
Is on the march for Rome!

III

The horsemen and the footmen
Are pouring in amain
From many a stately market-place;
From many a fruitful plain;
From many a lonely hamlet,
Which, hid by beach and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest
Of purple Apennine;

IV

From lordly Volaterræ,[2]
Where scowls the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
For godlike kings of old;
From seagirt Populonia,
Whose sentinels descry
Sardinia's snowy mountain-tops
Fringing the southern sky;

V

From the proud mart of Pisæ,
Queen of the western waves,
Where ride Massilia's triremes
Heavy with fair-haired slaves;
From where sweet Clanis wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers;
From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers.

VI

Tall are the oaks whose acorns
Drop in dark Auser's rill;
Fat are the stags that champ the boughs
Of the Ciminian hill;
Beyond all streams Clitumnus
Is to the herdsman dear;
Best of all pools the fowler loves
The great Volsinian mere.

VII

But now no stroke of woodman
Is heard by Auser's rill;
No hunter tracks the stag's green path
Up the Ciminian hill;
Unwatched along Clitumnus
Grazes the milk-white steer;
Unharmed the water fowl may dip
In the Volsinian mere.

VIII

The harvests of Arretium,
This year, old men shall reap,
This year, young boys in Umbro
Shall plunge the struggling sheep;
And in the vats of Luna,
This year, the must shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
Whose sires have marched to Rome.

IX

There be thirty chosen prophets,
The wisest of the land,
Who always by Lars Porsena
Both morn and evening stand:
Evening and morn the Thirty
Have turned the verses o'er,
Traced from the right [3] on linen white
By mighty seers of yore.

X

And with one voice the Thirty
Have their glad answer given:
"Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
Go, forth, beloved of Heaven;
Go, and return in glory
To Clusium's royal dome;
And hang round Nurscia's altars
The golden shields [4] of Rome."

XI

And now hath every city
Sent up her tale of men;
The foot are fourscore thousand,
The horse are thousands ten:
Before the gates of Sutrium
Is met the great array.
A proud man was Lars Porsena
Upon the trysting day.

XII

For all the Etruscan armies
Were ranged beneath his eye,
And many a banished Roman,
And many a stout ally;
And with a mighty following
To join the muster came
The Tusculan Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name.

XIII

But by the yellow Tiber
Was tumult and affright:
From all the spacious champaign
To Rome men took their flight.
A mile around the city,
The throng stopped up the ways;
A fearful sight it was to see
Through two long nights and days.

XIV

For aged folk on crutches,
And women great with child,
And mothers sobbing over babes
That clung to them and smiled.
And sick men borne in litters
High on the necks of slaves,
And troops of sun-burned husbandmen
With reaping-hooks and staves,

XV

And droves of mules and asses
Laden with skins of wine,
And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of wagons
That creaked beneath the weight
Of corn-sacks and of household goods,
Choked every roaring gate.

XVI

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,
Could the wan burghers spy
The line of blazing villages
Red in the midnight sky.
The Fathers[5] of the City,
They sat all night and day,
For every hour some horseman came
With tidings of dismay.

XVII

To eastward and to westward
Have spread the Tuscan bands;
Nor house, nor fence, nor dovecote
In Crustumerium stands.
Verbenna down to Ostia
Hath wasted all the plain;
Astur hath stormed Janiculum,
And the stout guards are slain.

XVIII

I wis, in all the Senate,
There was no heart so bold,
But sore it ached and fast it beat,
When that ill news was told.
Forthwith up rose the Consul,[6]
Up rose the Fathers all;
In haste they girded up their gowns,
And hied them to the wall.

XIX

They held a council standing
Before the River-Gate;
Short time was there, ye well may guess,
For musing or debate.
Out spake the Consul roundly:
"The bridge must straight go down;
For, since Janiculum is lost,
Nought else can save the town."

XX

Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear;
"To arms! to arms! Sir Consul:
Lars Porsena is here!"
On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.

XXI

And nearer fast and nearer
Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war-note proud,[7]
The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears.

XXII

And plainly and more plainly,
Above that glimmering line,
Now might ye see the banners
Of twelve fair cities shine;
But the banner of proud Clusium
Was highest of them all,
The terror of the Umbrian,
The terror of the Gaul.

XXIII

And plainly and more plainly
Now might the burghers know,
By port and vest, by horse and crest,
Each warlike Lucumo.

There Cilnius of Arretium
On his fleet roan was seen;
And Astur of the fourfold shield,
Girt with the brand none else may wield,
Tolumnius with the belt of gold,
And dark Verbenna from the hold
By reedy Thrasymene.

XXIV

Fast by the royal standard,
O'erlooking all the war,
Lars Porsena of Clusium
Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name;
And by the left false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame.

XXV

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist.

XXVI

But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low,

And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe.
"Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?"

XXVII

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his gods,

XXVIII

"And for the tender mother
Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses
His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens
Who feed the eternal flame,
To save them from false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame?

XXIX

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;

I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

XXX

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian [8] proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian blood was he:
"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

XXXI

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
"As thou sayest, so let it be."
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

XXXII

Then none was for a party [9];
Then all were for the state;

Then the great man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great:
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold:
The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old.

XXXIII

Now Roman is to Roman
More hateful than a foe;
And the Tribunes [10] beard the high,
And the Fathers grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
In battle we wax cold:
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
In the brave days of old.

XXXIV

Now while the Three were tightening
Their harness on their backs,
The Consul was the foremost man
To take in hand an ax:
And Fathers mixed with Commons,
Seized hatchet, bar, and crow,
And smote upon the planks above,
And loosed the props below.

XXXV

Meanwhile the Tuscan army,
Right glorious to behold,

Came flashing back the noonday light,
Rank behind rank, like surges bright
Of a broad sea of gold.
Four hundred trumpets sounded
A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
Rolled slowly toward the bridge's head,
Where stood the dauntless Three.

XXXVI

The Three stood calm and silent,
And looked upon the foes,
And a great shout of laughter
From all the vanguard rose :
And forth three chiefs came spurring
Before that deep array ;
To earth they sprang, their swords they drew,
And lifted high their shields, and flew
To win the narrow way ;

XXXVII

Aunus from green Tifernum,
Lord of the Hill of Vines ;
And Seius, whose eight hundred slaves
Sicken in Ilva's mines ;
And Picus, long to Clusium
Vassal in peace and war,
Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
From that gray crag where, girt with towers,

The fortress of Nequinum lowers
O'er the pale waves of Nar.

XXXVIII

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
Into the stream beneath :
Herminius struck at Seius,
And clove him to the teeth :
At Picus brave Horatius
Darted one fiery thrust ;
And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
Clashed in the bloody dust.

XXXIX

Then Ocnus of Falerii
Rushed on the Roman Three :
And Lausulus of Urgo,
The rover of the sea ;
And Aruns of Volsinium,
Who slew the great wild boar,
The great wild boar that had his den
Amidst the reeds of Cosa's fen,
And wasted fields, and slaughtered men,
Along Albinia's shore.

XL

Herminius smote down Aruns :
Lartius laid Ocnus low :
Right to the heart of Lausulus
Horatius sent a blow.

"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
No more, aghast and pale,
From Ostia's walls the crowd shall mark
The track of thy destroying bark.
No more Campania's hinds shall fly
To woods and caverns when they spy
Thy thrice-accursed sail."

XLI

But now no sound of laughter
Was heard among the foes.
A wild and wrathful clamor
From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' lengths from the entrance
Halted that deep array,
And for a space no man came forth
To win the narrow way.

XLII

But hark! the cry is Astur:
And lo! the ranks divide;
And the great Lord of Luna
Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
Which none but he can wield.

XLIII

He smiled on those bold Romans
A smile serene and high;

He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
And scorn was in his eye.
Quoth he, "The she-wolf's litter[11]
Stands savagely at bay:
But will ye dare to follow,
If Astur clears the way?"

XLIV

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
Right deftly turned the blow.
The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh:
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
To see the red blood flow.

XLV

He reeled, and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing-space;
Then, like a wild-cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

XLVI

And the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus
A thunder-smitten oak.
Far o'er the crashing forest
The giant arms lie spread,
And the pale augurs, muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

XLVII

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?"

XLVIII

But at his haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
Mingled of wrath, and shame, and dread,
Along that glittering van.
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race;
For all Etruria's noblest
Were round the fatal place.

XLIX

But all Etruria's noblest
Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
In the path the dauntless Three:
And, from the ghastly entrance
Where those bold Romans stood,
All shrank, like boys who unaware
Ranging the woods to start a hare
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood.

L

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack:
But those behind cried "Forward!"
And those before cried "Back!"
And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away.

LI

Yet one man for one moment
Stood out before the crowd;

Well known was he to all the Three,
And they gave him greeting loud,
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay, and turn away?
Here lies the road to Rome."

LII

Thrice looked he at the city;
Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
And thrice turned back in dread:
And, white with fear and hatred,
Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
The bravest Tuscans lay.

LIII

But meanwhile ax and lever
Have manfully been plied;
And now the bridge hangs tottering
Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
Back, ere the ruin fall!"

LIV

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
Herminius darted back:

And, as they passed, beneath their feet
They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

LV

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream.
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

LVI

And, like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard,
And tossed his tawny mane,
And burst the curb, and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And whirling down in fierce career,
Battlement, and plank, and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

LVII

Alone stood brave Horatius,
But constant still in mind;

Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
And the broad flood behind.
"Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

LVIII

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those carven ranks to see;
Nought spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus nought spake he;
But he saw on Palatinus [12]
The white porch of his home;
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

LIX

"O Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back,
Plunged headlong in the tide.

LX

No sound of joy or sorrow
Was heard from either bank;

But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
Stood gazing where he sank;
And when above the surges
They saw his crest appear,
All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.

LXI

But fiercely ran the current,
Swollen high by months of rain:
And fast his blood was flowing;
And he was sore in pain,
And heavy with his armor,
And spent with changing blows:
And oft they thought him sinking,
But still again he rose.

LXII

Never, I ween, did swimmer,
In such an evil case,
Struggle through such a raging flood
Safe to the landing-place:
But his limbs were borne up bravely
By the brave heart within,
And our good father Tiber
Bare bravely up his chin.

LXIII

"Curse on him!" quoth false Sextus;
"Will not the villain drown?
But for this stay, ere close of day
We should have sacked the town!"
"Heaven help him!" quoth Lars Porsena,
"And bring him safe to shore;
For such a gallant feat of arms
Was never seen before."

LXIV

And now he feels the bottom;
Now on dry earth he stands;
Now round him throng the Fathers
To press his gory hands;
And now, with shouts and clapping,
And noise of weeping loud,
He enters through the River-Gate,
Borne by the joyous crowd.

LXV

They gave him of the corn-land,
That was of public right,
As much as two strong oxen
Could plow from morn till night;
And they made a molten image,
And set it up on high,
And there it stands unto this day
To witness if I lie.

LXVI

It stands in the Comitium,[13]
Plain for all folk to see;
Horatius in his harness,
Halting upon one knee:
And underneath is written,
In letters all of gold,
How valiantly he kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

LXVII

And still his name sounds stirring
Unto the men of Rome,
As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
To charge the Volscian home;
And wives still pray to Juno
For boys with hearts as bold
As his who kept the bridge so well
In the brave days of old.

LXVIII

And in the nights of winter,
When the cold north winds blow,
And the long howling of the wolves
Is heard amidst the snow;
When round the lonely cottage
Roars loud the tempest's din,
And the good logs of Algidus
Roar louder yet within;

LXIX

When the oldest cask is opened,
And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle
Around the firebrands close;
When the girls are weaving baskets,
And the lads are shaping bows;

LXX

When the goodman mends his armor,
And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
Goes flashing through the loom;
With weeping and with laughter
Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

BY MATTHEW ARNOLD

And the first gray of morning filled the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.[1]
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hushed, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.
Through the black Tartar tents he passed, which stood
Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere;
Through the black tents[2] he passed, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink — the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.

The men of former times had crowned the top
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dulled; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said: —
"Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?"
But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:
"Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army marched;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone —

Rustum, my father; who I hoped should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day; but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall —
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumor of a common [3] fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk;
But of a single combat fame speaks clear."

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sighed, and said:

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine:
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press forever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
To seek out Rustum — seek him not through fight!
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab! carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,

When Rustum was in front of every fray;
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorred approaches of old age,
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go! — Thou wilt not? Yet my heart fore-
bodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though
lost
To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain; — but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?
Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."
So said he, and dropped Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;
And o'er his chilly limbs his woolen coat
He passed, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he set his sheepskin cap,
Black, glossy, curled, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And raised the curtain of his tent, and called
His herald to his side, and went abroad.
The sun by this had risen, and cleared the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade —

Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they streamed;
As when [4] some gray November morn the files,
In marching order spread, of long-necked cranes
Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian seaboard — so they streamed.
The Tartars of the Oxus,[5] the King's guard,
First, with black sheepskin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service owned;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;
These all filed out from camp into the plain.

And on the other side the Persians formed; —
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seemed,
The Ilyats of Khorassan, and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshaled battalions bright in burnished steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And checked his ranks, and fixed them where
they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:
"Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy —
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of traveling birds dead on the snow,

Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parched throats with sugared mulberries —
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows —
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.
And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel ; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King ;
These came and counseled, and then Gudurz said :
" Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart.
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."
So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and cried :
" Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said !
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."
He spake : and Peran-Wisa turned, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And crossed the camp which lay behind, and reached,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.

Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitched; the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camped around.
And Gudurz entered Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood before him, charged with food —
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark-green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And played with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he looked, and saw him stand,
And with a cry sprang up and dropped the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:
"Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."
But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said:
"Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion — and thou know'st his name —
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.[6]
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turned to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!"

He spoke; but Rustum answered with a smile:
"Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older; if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honors younger men,
And lets the aged molder in their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young —
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,[7]
And not that one slight helpless girl I have —
A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-haired Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armor up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword
no more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply:
"What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:
'Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'"

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:
"O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of naught would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was matched
In single fight with any mortal man."
He spoke, and frowned; and Gudurz turned, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy —
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and called
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So armed, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
Followed him like a faithful hound at heel —
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And reared him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,

Dight with a saddlecloth of broidered green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were worked
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
So followed, Rustum left his tents, and crossed
The camp, and to the Persian host appeared.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hailed; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands —
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab armed in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare —
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blackened fingers makes her fire —
At cockcrow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whitened window-panes —

And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
His spirited air, and wondered who he was.
For very young he seemed, tenderly reared;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound,
So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly reared.
And a deep pity entered Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckoned to him with his hand, and said:
"O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be governed! quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son[8] to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die!
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."
So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw

His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers, and he saw that head,
Streaked with its first gray hairs; — hope filled his soul,
And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
And clasped his hand within his own, and said:
"Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?"
But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turned away, and spake to his own soul:
"Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say: 'Rustum is here!'
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
'I challenged once, when the two armies camped
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me.'

And then he turned and sternly spake aloud:
"Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast called
By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or
yield!
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look upon Rustum's face and flee!
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were revealed,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this —
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke; and Sohrab answered, on his feet:
"Art thou so fierce? Thou will not fright me so!
I am no girl; to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young.
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.

And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know ;
Only the event will teach us in its hour."
He spoke, and Rustum answered not, but hurled
His spear ; down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,
That long has towered in the airy clouds,
Drops like a plummet ; Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash ; the spear
Hissed, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide ; — then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield ; sharp
rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turned the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield ; an unlopped trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough — like those which men in treeless
plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter time
Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs — so
huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.

And Rustum followed his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutched the sand ;
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand ;
But he looked on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :
"Thou strik'st too hard ! that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth ! not wroth am I ;
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum ; be it so !
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too —
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;
But never was my heart thus touched before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host,
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou

Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy
spear!
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"
He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had
risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
He left to lie, but had regained his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mailed right hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,
The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soiled
His stately crest, and dimmed his glittering arms.
His breast heaved, his lips foamed, and twice his
voice
Was choked with rage; at last these words broke
way:
"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curled minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to
dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valor; try thy feints
And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's
wiles."

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,[9]
And he too drew his sword; at once they rushed
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west; their shields
Dashed with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy wood-cutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees — such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hailed.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in heaven, and darked the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapped the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapped, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And laboring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but failed to reach the skin,

And Rustum plucked it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
And Rustum bowed his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, uttered a dreadful cry; —
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pained desert lion, who all day
Hath trailed the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand.
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it crossed his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quailed not, but rushed on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bowed
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in the hand the hilt remained alone.
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted: "Rustum!" — Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed: back he recoiled one step,
And scanned with blinking eyes the advancing form;
And then he stood bewildered, and he dropped

His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
He reeled, and, staggering back, sank to the ground;
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair; —
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent;
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go;
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:
"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I matched with ten such men as thee,
And I were that which till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm —
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,

Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall ; and thy spear transfixed an unarmed foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear :
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee ! "

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And followed her to find her where she fell
Far off ; — anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers — never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by —
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But, with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :
" What prate is this of fathers and revenge ?
The mighty Rustum never had a son."

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:
"Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?
Oh, could I live till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old king, her father, who grows gray
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honor, when the war is done.
But a dark rumor will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenseless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listened, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he called back names he knew;

For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all —
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
And so he deemed that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deemed he: yet he listened, plunged in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon; tears gathered in his eyes;
For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds — so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old king, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy, and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer time —
The castle and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
Of an unskillful gardener has been cut,

Mowing the garden grassplots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass — so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:
"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false — thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son; one child he had —
But one — a girl; who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us —
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."
But Sohrab answered him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die —
But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:
"Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
I tell thee, pricked upon this arm I bear
The seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore."
He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,
And his knees tottered, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,

That the hard iron corselet clanked aloud;
And to his heart he pressed the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:
"Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son."
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And showed a sign in faint vermilion points
Pricked; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift — at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands —
So delicately pricked the sign appeared
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin, which of old reared Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks;
Him that kind creature found and reared, and loved —
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
And himself scanned it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touched it with his hand, and said:
"How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"
He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
Speechless; and then he uttered one sharp cry:

"O boy — thy father!" — and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud passed before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawled to where he lay, and east
His arms about his neck, and kissed his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirched his hair, —
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutched his sword,
To draw it and forever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:
"Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day
The doom[10] which at my birth was written down
In heaven, and thou art heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurled me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father; let me feel that I have found!

Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say: 'My son!'
Quick! quick! for numbered are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away —
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in heaven that this should be."
So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kissed him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears rolled down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:
"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,
When first they brought thy master to this field!"
But Sohrab looked upon the horse, and said:
"Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,

My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuffed the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soaked with wine,
And said: 'O Ruksh! bear Rustum well,' — but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrowed face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewailed:
"Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:
"Desire not that, my father! thou must live.

For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age;
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come! thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!
Let me entreat for them; what have they done?
They followed me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-haired Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:
'Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!'
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:
"Fear not! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,

And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all that I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were called champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have —
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say: 'O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!'
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age,
And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:
"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,
Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day

When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave."

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said:
"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flowed with the stream; — all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soiled,
Like the soiled tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gathered, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye; his head drooped low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay —
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he opened them,
And fixed them feebly on his father's face;
Till now all strength was ebbed, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak

Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-reared
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of step
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side —
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darkened all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,[11]
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon; — he flowed
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parceled Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had

In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foiled circuitous wanderer — till at last
The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

ENOCH ARDEN

BY ALFRED TENNYSON

Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster; then a moldered church; and higher
A long street climbs to one tall-towered mill;
And high in heaven behind it a gray down [1]
With Danish barrows; and a hazel-wood,
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray, the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, played
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats up-drawn;
And built their castles of dissolving sand
To watch them overflowed, or following up
And flying the white breaker, daily left
The little footprint daily washed away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff:
In this the children played at keeping house.

Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,
While Annie still[2] was mistress; but at times
Enoch would hold possession for a week:
"This is my house and this my little wife."
"Mine too," said Philip, "turn and turn about:"
When, if they quarreled, Enoch stronger-made
Was master: then would Philip, his blue eyes
All flooded with the helpless wrath of tears,
Shriek out "I hate you, Enoch," and at this
The little wife would weep for company,
And pray them not to quarrel for her sake,
And say she would be little wife to both.

But when the dawn of rosy childhood past,
And the new warmth of life's ascending sun
Was felt by either, either fixed his heart
On that one girl; and Enoch spoke his love,
But Philip loved in silence; and the girl
Seemed kinder unto Philip than to him;
But she loved Enoch; though she knew it not,
And would if asked deny it. Enoch set
A purpose evermore before his eyes,
To hoard all savings to the uttermost,
To purchase his own boat, and make a home
For Annie: and so prospered that at last
A luckier or a bolder fisherman,
A carefuller in peril, did not breathe
For leagues along that breaker-beaten coast
Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a year
On board a merchantman, and made himself

Full sailor; and he thrice had plucked a life
From the dread sweep of the down-streaming seas:
And all men looked upon him favorably:
And ere he touched his one-and-twentieth May,
He purchased his own boat, and made a home
For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway up
The narrow street that clambered toward the mill.

Then, on a golden autumn eventide,
The younger people making holiday,
With bag and sack and basket, great and small,
Went nutting to the hazels. Philip stayed
(His father lying sick and needing him)
An hour behind; but as he climbed the hill,
Just where the prone[3] edge of the wood began
To feather toward the hollow, saw the pair,
Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,
His large gray eyes and weather-beaten face
All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,
That burned as on an altar. Philip looked,
And in their eyes and faces read his doom;
Then, as their faces drew together, groaned,
And slipped aside, and like a wounded life
Crept down into the hollows of the wood;
There, while the rest were loud in merrymaking,
Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and passed
Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang the bells,
And merrily ran the years, seven happy years,

Seven happy years of health and competence,
And mutual love and honorable toil;
With children; first a daughter. In him woke,
With his first babe's first cry, the noble wish
To save all earnings to the uttermost,
And give his child a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or hers; a wish renewed,
When two years after came a boy to be
The rosy idol of her solitudes,
While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,
Or often journeying landward; for in truth
Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean-spoil
In ocean-smelling osier,[4] and his face,
Rough-reddened with a thousand winter gales,
Not only to the market-cross were known,
But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,
And peacock yew-tree of the lonely Hall,[5]
Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering.

Then came a change, as all things human change.
Ten miles to northward of the narrow port
Opened a larger haven: thither used
Enoch at times to go by land or sea;
And once when there, and clambering on a mast
In harbor, by mischance he slipped and fell:
A limb was broken when they lifted him;
And while he lay recovering there, his wife
Bore him another son, a sickly one:
Another hand crept too across his trade

Taking her bread and theirs and on him fell,
Although a grave and staid God-fearing man,[6]
Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom.
He seemed, as in a nightmare of the night,
To see his children leading evermore
Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,
And her he loved, a beggar: then he prayed
"Save them from this, whatever comes to me."
And while he prayed, the master of that ship
Enoch had served in, hearing his mischance,
Came, for he knew the man and valued him,
Reporting of his vessel China-bound,
And wanting yet a boatswain. Would he go?
There yet were many weeks before she sailed,
Sailed from this port. Would Enoch have the
place?
And Enoch all at once assented to it,
Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.

So now that shadow of mischance appeared
No graver than as when some little cloud
Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
And isles a light in the offing:[7] yet the wife —
When he was gone — the children — what to do?
Then Enoch lay long-pondering on his plans;
To sell the boat — and yet he loved her well —
How many a rough sea had he weathered in her!
He knew her, as a horseman knows his horse —
And yet to sell her — then with what she brought
Buy goods and stores — set Annie forth in trade

With all that seamen needed or their wives —
So might she keep the house while he was gone.
Should he not trade himself out yonder? go
This voyage more than once? yea twice or thrice —
As oft as needed — last, returning rich,
Become the master of a larger craft,
With fuller profits lead an easier life,
Have all his pretty young ones educated,
And pass his days in peace among his own.

Thus Enoch in his heart determined all:
Then moving homeward came on Annie pale,
Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-born.
Forward she started with a happy cry,
And laid the feeble infant in his arms;
Whom Enoch took, and handled all his limbs,
Appraised his weight and fondled fatherlike,
But had no heart to break his purposes
To Annie, till the morrow, when he spoke.

Then first since Enoch's golden ring had girt
Her finger, Annie fought against his will:
Yet not with brawling opposition she,
But manifold entreaties, many a tear,
Many a sad kiss by day by night renewed
(Sure that all evil would come out of it)
Besought him, supplicating, if he cared
For her or his dear children, not to go.
He not for his own self caring, but her,
Her and her children, let her plead in vain;
So grieving held his will, and bore it through.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-friend,
Bought Annie goods and stores, and set his hand
To fit their little streetward sitting-room
With shelf and corner for the goods and stores.
So all day long till Enoch's last at home,
Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer and ax,
Auger and saw, while Annie seemed to hear
Her own death-scaffold raising, shrilled and rang,
Till this was ended, and his careful hand, —
The space was narrow, — having ordered all
Almost as neat and close as Nature packs
Her blossom or her seedling, paused; and he,
Who needs would work for Annie to the last,
Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of farewell
Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's fears,
Save, as his Annie's, were a laughter to him.
Yet Enoch as a brave, God-fearing man
Bowed himself down, and in that mystery
Where God-in-man is one with man-in-God,
Prayed for a blessing on his wife and babes
Whatever came to him: and then he said
"Annie, this voyage by the grace of God
Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.
Keep a clean hearth and a clean fire for me,
For I'll be back, my girl, before you know it."
Then lightly rocking baby's cradle "and he,
This pretty, puny, weakly little one, —
Nay[8] — for I love him all the better for it —

God bless him, he shall sit upon my knees
And I will tell him tales of foreign parts,
And make him merry, when I come home again.
Come, Annie, come, cheer up before I go."

Him running on thus hopefully she heard,
And almost hoped herself; but when he turned
The current of his talk to graver things,
In sailor fashion roughly sermonizing
On providence and trust in Heaven, she heard,
Heard and not heard him; as the village girl,
Who sets her pitcher underneath the spring,
Musing on him that used to fill it for her,
Hears and not hears, and lets it overflow.

At length she spoke "O Enoch, you are wise;
And yet for all your wisdom well know I
That I shall look upon your face no more."

"Well then," said Enoch, "I shall look on yours.
Annie, the ship I sail in passes here
(He named the day); get you a seaman's glass,
Spy out my face, and laugh at all your fears."

But when the last of those last moments came,
"Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,
Look to the babes, and till I come again
Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.
And fear no more for me: or if you fear

Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds.
Is He not yonder in those uttermost
Parts of the morning? if I flee to these
Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,
The sea is His; He made it."[9]

Enoch rose,
Cast his strong arms about his drooping wife,
And kissed his wonder-stricken little ones;
But for the third, the sickly one, who slept
After a night of feverous wakefulness,
When Annie would have raised him Enoch said
"Wake him not; let him sleep; how should the child
Remember this?" and kissed him in his cot.
But Annie from her baby's forehead clipt
A tiny curl, and gave it: this he kept
Through all his future; but now hastily caught
His bundle, waved his hand, and went his way.

She, when the day that Enoch mentioned came,
Borrowed a glass, but all in vain: perhaps
She could not fix the glass to suit her eye;
Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous;
She saw him not: and while he stood on deck
Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail
She watched it and departed weeping for him;
Then, though she mourned his absence as his grave,

Set her sad will no less to chime with his,
But throve not in her trade, not being bred
To barter, nor compensating the want
By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,
Nor asking overmuch and taking less,
And still foreboding "What would Enoch say?"
For more than once, in days of difficulty
And pressure, had she sold her wares for less
Than what she gave in buying what she sold:
She failed and saddened knowing it; and thus,
Expectant of that news which never came,
Gained for her own a scanty sustenance,
And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born and grew
Yet sicklier, though the mother cared for it
With all a mother's care: nevertheless,
Whether her business often called her from it,
Or through the want of what it needed most,
Or means to pay the voice [10] who best could tell
What most it needed — howsoe'er it was,
After a lingering, — ere she was aware, —
Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,
The little innocent soul flitted away.[11]

In that same week when Annie buried it,
Philip's true heart, which hungered for her peace,
(Since Enoch left he had not looked upon her),
Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.
"Surely," said Philip, "I may see her now,

May be some little comfort;" therefore went,
Past through the solitary room in front,
Paused for a moment at an inner door,
Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,
Entered; but Annie, seated with her grief,
Fresh from the burial of her little one,
Cared not to look on any human face,
But turned her own toward the wall and wept.
Then Philip standing up said falteringly
"Annie, I want to ask a favor of you."

He spoke; the passion in her moaned reply
"Favor from one so sad and so forlorn
As I am!" half abashed him; yet unasked,
His bashfulness and tenderness at war,
He set himself beside her, saying to her:

"I came to speak to you of what he wished,
Enoch, your husband: I have ever said
You chose the best among us — a strong man:
For where he fixed his heart he set his hand
To do the thing he willed and bore it through.
And wherefore did he go this weary way,
And leave you lonely? not to see the world —
For pleasure? — nay, but for the wherewithal
To give his babes a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or yours: that was his wish.
And if he come again, vexed will he be
To find the precious morning hours were lost.
And it would vex him even in his grave,

If he could know his babes were running wild
Like colts about the waste. So, Annie, now —
Have we not known each other all our lives?
I do beseech you by the love you bear
Him and his children not to say me nay —
For, if you will, when Enoch comes again
Why then he shall repay me — if you will,
Annie — for I am rich and well-to-do.
Now let me put the boy and girl to school:
This is the favor that I came to ask."

Then Annie with her brows against the wall
Answered "I cannot look you in the face;
I seem so foolish and so broken down.
When you came in my sorrow broke me down;
And now I think your kindness breaks me down;
But Enoch lives; that is borne in on me:
He will repay you: money can be repaid;
Not kindness such as yours."

And Philip asked
"Then you will let me, Annie?"

There she turned.
She rose, and fixed her swimming eyes upon him,
And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,
Then calling down a blessing on his head
Caught at his hand, and wrung it passionately,
And past into the little garth beyond.
So lifted up in spirit he moved away.

Then Philip put the boy and girl to school,
And bought them needful books, and every way,
Like one who does his duty by his own,
Made himself theirs; and though for Annie's sake,
Fearing the lazy gossip of the port,[12]
He oft denied his heart his dearest wish,
And seldom crossed her threshold, yet he sent
Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and fruit,
The late and early roses from his wall,
Or conies from the down, and now and then,
With some pretext of fineness in the meal
To save the offense of charitable, flour
From his tall mill that whistled on the waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's mind:
Scarce could the woman when he came upon her,
Out of full heart and boundless gratitude
Light on a broken word to thank him with.
But Philip was her children's all-in-all;
From distant corners of the street they ran
To greet his hearty welcome heartily;
Lords of his house and of his mill were they;
Worried his passive ear with petty wrongs
Or pleasures, hung upon him, played with him
And called him Father Philip. Philip gained
As Enoch lost; for Enoch seemed to them
Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
Faint as a figure seen in early dawn
Down at the far end of an avenue,
Going we know not where[13]: and so ten years,

Since Enoch left his hearth and native land,
Fled forward, and no news of Enoch came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children longed
To go with others, nutting to the wood,
And Annie would go with them; then they begged
For Father Philip (as they called him) too:
Him, like the working bee in blossom-dust,
Blanched with his mill, they found; and saying to
him
"Come with us, Father Philip" he denied;
But when the children plucked at him to go,
He laughed, and yielded readily to their wish,
For was not Annie with them? and they went.

But after scaling half the weary down,
Just where the prone edge of the wood began
To feather toward the hollow, all her force
Failed her; and sighing, "Let me rest," she said:
So Philip rested with her well-content;
While all the younger ones with jubilant cries
Broke from their elders, and tumultuously
Down through the whitening hazels made a plunge
To the bottom, and dispersed, and bent or broke
The lithe reluctant boughs to tear away
Their tawny clusters, crying to each other
And calling, here and there, about the wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot
Her presence, and remembered one dark hour

Here in this wood, when like a wounded life
He crept into the shadow : at last he said,
Lifting his honest forehead, " Listen, Annie,
How merry they are down yonder in the wood.
Tired, Annie? " for she did not speak a word.
" Tired? " but her face had fall'n upon her hands;
At which, as with a kind of anger in him,
" The ship was lost," he said, " the ship was lost!
No more of that! why should you kill yourself
And make them orphans quite? " And Annie said
" I thought not of it : but — I know not why —
Their voices make me feel so solitary."

Then Philip coming somewhat closer spoke.
" Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,
And it has been upon my mind so long,
That though I know not when it first came there,
I know that it will out at last. O Annie,
It is beyond all hope, against all chance,
That he who left you ten long years ago
Should still be living ; well then — let me speak :
I grieve to see you poor and wanting help :
I cannot help you as I wish to do
Unless — they say that women are so quick —
Perhaps you know what I would have you know —
I wish you for my wife. I fain would prove
A father to your children : I do think
They love me as a father : I am sure
That I love them as if they were mine own ;

And I believe, if you were fast my wife,
That after all these sad uncertain years,
We might be still as happy as God grants
To any of his creatures. Think upon it:
For I am well-to-do —no kin, no care,
No burthen, save my care for you and yours:
And we have known each other all our lives,
And I have loved you longer than you know."

Then answered Annie; tenderly she spoke:
"You have been as God's good angel in our house.
God bless you for it, God reward you for it,
Philip, with something happier than myself.
Can one love twice? can you be ever loved
As Enoch was? what is it that you ask?"
"I am content," he answered, "to be loved
A little after Enoch." "O" she cried,
Scared as it were, "dear Philip, wait a while:
If Enoch comes — but Enoch will not come —
Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
Surely I shall be wiser in a year:
O wait a little!" Philip sadly said
"Annie, as I have waited all my life
I well may wait a little." "Nay" she cried
"I am bound: you have my promise —in a year:
Will you not bide your year as I bide mine?"
And Philip answered "I will bide my year."

Here both were mute, till Philip glancing up
Beheld the dead flame of the fallen day

Pass from the Danish barrow overhead ;
Then fearing night and chill for Annie, rose
And sent his voice beneath him through the wood.
Up came the children laden with their spoil ;
Then all descended to the port, and there
At Annie's door he paused and gave his hand,
Saying gently "Annie, when I spoke to you,
That was your hour of weakness. I was wrong,
I am always bound to you, but you are free."
Then Annie weeping answered "I am bound."

She spoke ; and in one moment as it were,
While yet she went about her household ways,
Even as she dwelt upon his latest words,
That he had loved her longer than she knew,
That autumn into autumn flashed again,
And there he stood once more before her face,
Claiming her promise. "Is it a year?" she asked.
"Yes, if the nuts" he said "be ripe again ;
Come out and see." But she — she put him off —
So much to look to — such a change — a month —
Give her a month — she knew that she was bound —
A month — no more. Then Philip with his eyes
Full of that lifelong hunger, and his voice
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,
"Take your own time, Annie, take your own time."
And Annie could have wept for pity of him ;
And yet she held him on delayingly
With many a scarce-believable excuse,

Trying his truth and his long-sufferance,
Till half another year had slipped away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,
Abhorrent of a calculation crossed,[14]
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.
Some thought that Philip did but trifle with her;
Some that she but held him off to draw him on;
And others laughed at her and Philip too,
As simple folk that knew not their own minds,
And one, in whom all evil fancies clung
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly
Would hint at worse in either. Her own son
Was silent, though he often looked his wish;
But evermore the daughter pressed upon her
To wed the man so dear to all of them
And lift the household out of poverty;
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew
Careworn and wan; and all these things fell on her
Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep, but earnestly
Prayed for a sign "My Enoch is he gone?"
Then compassed round by the blind wall of night
Brooked not the expectant terror of her heart,
Started from bed, and struck herself a light,
Then desperately seized the holy Book,
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,[15]
Suddenly put her finger on the text,

"Under the palm-tree." That was nothing to
her:
No meaning there: she closed the Book and slept:
When lo! her Enoch sitting on a height,
Under a palm-tree, over him the Sun:
"He is gone," she thought, "he is happy, he is
singing
Hosanna in the highest: yonder shines
The Sun of Righteousness, and these be palms
Whereof the happy people strowing cried
'Hosanna in the highest!'" Here she woke,
Resolved, sent for him and said wildly to him
"There is no reason why we should not wed."
"Then for God's sake," he answered, "both our
sakes,
So you will wed me, let it be at once."

So these were wed and merrily rang the bells,
Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.
A footstep seemed to fall beside her path,
She knew not whence; a whisper on her ear,
She knew not what; nor loved she to be left
Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
What ailed her then, that ere she entered, often
Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,
Fearing to enter: Philip thought he knew:
Such doubts and fears were common to her state.
Being with child: but when her child was born,
Then her new child was as her self renewed,

Then the new mother came about her heart,
Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,
And that mysterious instinct wholly died.

And where was Enoch? prosperously sailed
The ship *Good Fortune*, though at setting forth
The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward, shook
And almost overwhelmed her, yet unvexed
She slipped across the summer of the world,
Then after a long tumble about the Cape
And frequent interchange of foul and fair,
She passing through the summer world again,
The breath of heaven came continually
And sent her sweetly by the golden isles,
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and bought
Quaint monsters for the market of those times,
A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.

Less lucky her home-voyage: at first indeed
Through many a fair sea-circle, day by day,
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-head
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her bows:
Then followed calms, and then winds variable,
Then baffling, a long course of them; and last
Storm, such as drove her under moonless heavens
Till hard upon the cry of "breakers" came
The crash of ruin, and the loss of all
But Enoch and two others. Half the night,

Buoyed upon floating tackle and broken spars,
These drifted, stranding on an isle at morn
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing roots;
Nor save for pity was it hard to take
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.[16]
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge
They built, and thatched with leaves of palm, a hut,
Half hut, half native cavern. So the three,
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than boy,
Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and wreck,
Lay lingering out a five-years' death-in-life.
They could not leave him. After he was gone,
The two remaining found a fallen stem;
And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,
Fire-hollowing this in Indian fashion,[17] fell
Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.
In those two deaths he read God's warning "wait."

The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,

The luster of the long convolvuluses
That coiled around the stately stems, and ran
Even to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world,
All these he saw; but what he fain had seen
He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
The moving whisper of huge trees that branched
And blossomed in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,[18]
As down the shore he ranged, or all day long
Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A ship-wrecked sailor, waiting for a sail:
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in heaven.
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise — but no sail.

There often as he watched or seemed to watch,
So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
A phantom made of many phantoms moved
Before him haunting him, or he himself

Moved haunting people, things and places, known
Far in a darker isle beyond the line;
The babes, their babble, Annie, the small house,
The climbing street, the mill, the leafy lanes.
The peacock yew-tree and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colored seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his ears,
Though faintly, merrily — far and far away —
He heard the pealing of his parish bells; [19]
Then, though he knew not wherefore, started up
Shuddering, and when the beauteous hateful isle
Returned upon him, had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being everywhere
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head
The sunny and rainy seasons came and went
Year after year. His hopes to see his own,
And pace the sacred old familiar fields
Not yet had perished, when his lonely doom
Came suddenly to an end. Another ship
(She wanted water) blown by baffling winds,
Like the *Good Fortune*, from her destined course,
Stayed by this isle, not knowing where she lay:
For since the mate had seen at early dawn

Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle
The silent water slipping from the hills,
They sent a crew that landing burst away
In search of stream or fount, and filled the shores
With clamor. Downward from his mountain gorge
Stepped the long-haired, long-bearded solitary,
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely clad,
Muttering and mumbling, idiot-like it seemed,
With inarticulate rage, and making signs
They knew not what: and yet he led the way
To where the rivulets of sweet water ran;
And ever as he mingled with the crew,
And heard them talking, his long-bounden tongue
Was loosened, till he made them understand;
Whom, when their casks were filled they took aboard
And there the tale he uttered brokenly,
Scarce-credited at first but more and more,
Amazed and melted all who listened to it:
And clothes they gave him and free passage home;
But oft he worked among the rest and shook
His isolation from him. None of these
Came from his country, or could answer him,
If questioned, aught of what he cared to know.
And dull the voyage was with long delays,
The vessel scarce sea-worthy; but evermore
His fancy fled before the lazy wind
Returning, till beneath a clouded moon
He like a lover down through all his blood

Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-breath
Of England, blown across her ghostly wall : [20]
And that same morning officers and men
Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,
Pitying the lonely man, and gave him it :
Then moving up the coast they landed him,
Even in that harbor whence he sailed before.

There Enoch spoke no word to any one,
But homeward — home — what home? had he a home?
His home, he walked. Bright was that afternoon,
Sunny but chill; till drawn through either chasm,
Where either haven opened on the deeps,
Rolled a sea-haze and whelmed the world in gray;
Cut off the length of highway on before,
And left but narrow breadth to left and right
Of withered holt or tilth or pasturage.
On the nigh-naked tree the robin piped
Disconsolate, and through the dripping haze
The dead weight of the dead leaf bore it down :
Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the gloom ;
Last, as it seemed, a great mist-blotted light
Flared on him, and he came upon the place.

Then down the long street having slowly stolen,
His heart foreshadowing all calamity,
His eyes upon the stones, he reached the home
Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes
In those far-off seven happy years were born ;

But finding neither light nor murmur there,
(A bill of sale gleamed through the drizzle) crept
Still downward thinking "dead or dead to me!"

Down to the pool and narrow wharf he went,
Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,
A front of timber-crossed antiquity,
So propped, worm-eaten, ruinously old,
He thought it must have gone; but he was gone
Who kept it; and his widow Miriam Lane,
With daily-dwindling profits held the house;
A haunt of brawling seamen once, but now
Stiller, with yet a bed for wandering men.
There Enoch rested silent many days.

But Miriam Lane was good and garrulous,
Nor let him be, but often breaking in,
Told him, with other annals of the port,
Not knowing — Enoch was so brown, so bowed,
So broken — all the story of his house.
His baby's death, her growing poverty,
How Philip put her little ones to school,
And kept them in it, his long wooing her,
Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth
Of Philip's child: and o'er his countenance
No shadow passed, nor motion: any one,
Regarding, well had deemed he felt the tale
Less than the teller: only when she closed
"Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost"
He, shaking his gray head pathetically,

Repeated muttering "cast away and lost;"
Again in deeper inward whispers "lost!"

But Enoch yearned to see her face again;
"If I might look on her sweet face again
And know that she is happy." So the thought
Haunted and harassed him, and drove him forth,
At evening, when the dull November day
Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.
There he sat down gazing on all below;
There did a thousand memories roll upon him,
Unspeakable for sadness. By and by
The ruddy square of comfortable light,
Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's house,
Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures
The bird of passage, till he madly strikes
Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the street,
The latest house to landward; but behind,
With one small gate that opened on the waste,
Flourished a little garden square and walled:
And in it throve an ancient evergreen,
A yew-tree, and all round it ran a walk
Of shingle, and a walk divided it:
But Enoch shunned the middle walk and stole
Up by the wall, behind the yew; and thence
That which he better might have shunned, if griefs
Like his have worse or better, Enoch saw.

For cups and silver on the burnished board
Sparkled and shone; so genial was the hearth:
And on the right hand of the hearth he saw
Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,
Stout, rosy, with his babe across his knees;
And o'er her second father stooped a girl,
A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
Fair-haired and tall, and from her lifted hand
Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
To tempt the babe, who reared his creasy arms,
Caught at and ever missed it, and they laughed;
And on the left hand of the hearth he saw
The mother glancing often toward her babe,
But turning now and then to speak with him,
Her son, who stood beside her tall and strong,
And saying that which pleased him, for he smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life beheld
His wife his wife no more, and saw the babe
Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
And all the warmth, the peace, the happiness,
And his own children tall and beautiful,
And him, that other, reigning in his place,
Lord of his rights and of his children's love, —
Then he, though Miriam Lane had told him all,
Because things seen are mightier than things heard,
Staggered and shook, holding the branch, and feared
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot,
And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be found,
Crept to the gate, and opened it, and closed,
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt but that his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into the wet earth, and prayed.

"Too hard to bear! why did they take me thence?
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou
That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.
My children too! must I not speak to these?
They know me not. I should betray myself.
Never: no father's kiss for me — the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son."

There speech and thought and nature failed a little,
And he lay tranced; but when he rose and paced
Back toward his solitary home again,

All down the long and narrow street he went
Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As though it were the burthen of a song,
"Not to tell her, never to let her know."

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul. "This miller's wife"
He said to Miriam "that you spoke about,
Has she no fear that her first husband lives?"
"Ay, ay, poor soul" said Miriam, "fear enow!
If you could tell her you had seen him dead,
Why, that would be her comfort;" and he thought
"After the Lord has called me she shall know:
I wait his time," and Enoch set himself,
Scorning an alms, to work whereby to live.
Almost to all things could he turn his hand.
Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought
To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or helped
At lading and unlading the tall barks,
That brought the stinted commerce of those days;
Thus earned a scanty living for himself:
Yet since he did but labor for himself,
Work without hope, there was not life in it
Whereby the man could live; and as the year
Rolled itself round again to meet the day
When Enoch had returned, a languor came

Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually
Weakening the man, till he could do no more,
But kept the house, his chair, and last his bed.
And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully.
For sure no gladlier does the stranded wreck
See through the gray skirts of a lifting squall
The boat that bears the hope of life approach
To save the life despaired of, then he saw
Death dawning on him, and the close of all.

For through that dawning gleamed a kindlier hope
On Enoch thinking "after I am gone,
Then may she learn I loved her to the last."
He called aloud for Miriam Lane and said
"Woman, I have a secret — only swear,
Before I tell you — swear upon the book
Not to reveal it, till you see me dead."
"Dead," clamored the good woman, "hear him talk!
I warrant, man, that we shall bring you round."
"Swear" added Enoch sternly "on the book."
And on the book, half-frighted, Miriam swore.
Then Enoch rolling his gray eyes upon her,
"Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?"
"Know him?" she said "I knew him far away.
Ay, ay, I mind him coming down the street;
Held his head high, and cared for no man, he."
Slowly and sadly Enoch answered her;
"His head is low, and no man cares for him.

I think I have not three more days to live;
I am the man." At which the woman gave
A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.
"You Arden, you! nay, — sure he was a foot
Higher than you be." Enoch said again
"My God has bowed me down to what I am;
My grief and solitude have broken me;
Nevertheless, know you that I am he
Who married — but that name has twice been
changed —
I married her who married Philip Ray.
Sit, listen." Then he told her of his voyage,
His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back,
His gazing in on Annie, his resolve,
And how he kept it. As the woman heard,
Fast flowed the current of her easy tears,
While in her heart she yearned incessantly
To rush abroad all round the little haven,
Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes;
But awed and promise-bounden she forbore,
Saying only "See your bairns before you go!
Eh, let me fetch 'em, Arden," and arose
Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung
A moment on her words, but then replied:

"Woman, disturb me not now at the last,
But let me hold my purpose till I die.
Sit down again; mark me and understand,
While I have power to speak. I charge you now,
When you shall see her, tell her that I died

Blessing her, praying for her, loving her;
Save for the bar between us, loving her
As when she laid her head beside my own.
And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw
So like her mother, that my latest breath
Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.
And tell my son that I died blessing him.
And say to Philip that I blessed him too:
He never meant us anything but good.
But if my children care to see me dead,
Who hardly knew me living, let them come,
I am their father; but she must not come,
For my dead face would vex her after-life.
And now there is but one of all my blood
Who will embrace me in the world-to-be:
This hair is his: she cut it off and gave it,
And I have borne it with me all these years,
And thought to bear it with me to my grave;
But now my mind is changed, for I shall see him,
My babe in bliss: wherefore when I am gone,
Take, give her this, for it may comfort her:
It will moreover be a token to her,
That I am he."

He ceased; and Miriam Lane
Made such a voluble answer promising all,
That once again he rolled his eyes upon her
Repeating all he wished, and once again
She promised.

Then the third night after this,
While Enoch slumbered motionless and pale,

And Miriam watched and dozed at intervals,
There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms abroad
Crying with a loud voice "A sail! a sail!
I am saved;" and so fell back and spoke no more.

So passed the strong heroic soul away.
And when they buried him the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

CHRISTABEL

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,
Tu-whit! — Tu-whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls not overloud;
Some say she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray,
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
Dreams that made her moan and leap
As on her bed she lay in sleep;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the soul of her lover that's far away.
She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe;
She kneels beneath the huge oak-tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady Christabel!
It moaned as near as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell. —
On the other side it seems to be
Of the huge, broad-breasted old oak-tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek —
There is not wind enough to twirl

The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Dressed in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone;
The neck that made the white robe wan,
Her stately neck and arms were bare,
Her blue-veined feet unsandaled were,
And wildly glittered here and there,
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she —
Beautiful exceedingly!

"Mary mother, save me now!"
(Said Christabel), "and who art thou?"

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet: —
"Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!"
Said Christabel, "How camest thou here?"

And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet: —

"My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced ywis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return in haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell —
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand" (thus ended she),
"And help a wretched maid to flee."

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand
And comforted fair Geraldine:

"O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be and were not fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blessed,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
"All our household are at rest,
The hall is silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side;
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"
"Alas, alas!" said Geraldine,
"I cannot speak for weariness."
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court; right glad they were.

Outside her kennel the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel,
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch;
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye.
And nothing else saw she thereby,

Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
"O softly tread," said Christabel,
"My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And, jealous of the listening air,
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
And still as death with stifled breath!
And now have reached the chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without in light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chains
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"
Christabel answered — "Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the gray-haired friar tell,
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with altered voice, said she —
"Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee."
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?

Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she,
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine —
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."
Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue —
"Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride —

Dear lady ! it hath 'wildered you !"
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, " 'Tis over now ! "

Again the wild-flower wine she drank :
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright :
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrie.

And thus the lofty lady spake —
" All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel !
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself : for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, " So let it be ! "
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close ;
So halfway from the bed she rose,

And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropped to her feet, and full in view,
Behold her bosom and half her side —
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs.
Ah! what a stricken lot was hers!
Deep from within she seems halfway
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the maiden's side! —
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah well-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
"In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;

But vainly thou warrest
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady surpassingly fair;
And did'st bring her home with thee, in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

BY JOHN KEATS

I

St. Agnes' Eve — Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl,[1] for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold;
Numb were the Beadsman's[2] fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead on each side seem to freeze,
Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flattered[3] to tears this aged man and poor;
But no — already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their head the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.[4]

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,

And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As,[5] supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by — she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired, not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere;
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:

The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport,
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwinked with faery fancy, all amort,[6]
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed[7] from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen,
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss — in sooth such things have been.

X

He ventures in: let no buzzed whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords[8]
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland :
He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, " Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place :
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race !

XII

" Get hence ! get hence ! there's dwarfish Hildebrand ;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land :
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs — Alas me ! flit !
Flit like a ghost away." — " Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough ; here in this arm-chair sit,
And tell me how " — " Good Saints ! not here, not here :
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

XIII

He followed through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume ;

And as she muttered "Well-a — well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood [9] may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

XIV

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve —
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,[10]
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro! — St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook [11]
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot : then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start :
"A cruel man and impious thou art :
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, Go ! I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

XVII

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro : "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face :
Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than wolves and bears."

XVIII

"Ah ! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,

Were never missed." Thus plaining, doth she
bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro,
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous
debt.[12]

XX

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour
frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the
dead." [13]

XXI

So saying she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
The dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her, with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed and fled.

XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or woe betide!

But to her heart her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings ;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules[14] on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together pressed,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seemed a splendid angel, newly dressed,
Save wings, for heaven : — Porphyro grew faint :
She knelt so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

XXVI

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees,
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one,
Loosens her fragrant bodice: by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed.
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day,
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain,
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray.[15]
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,

And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness[16]
And over the hushed carpet, silent, stepped,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo! — how
fast she slept.

XXIX

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet: —
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone: —
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon,
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez, and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

XXXI

These delicates he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright

Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light. —
"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

XXXII

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains: — 'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mused awhile, entoiled in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute, —
Tumultuous, — and, in chords that tenderest be,
He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called "La belle dame sans mercy:" [17]
Close to her ear touching the melody; —
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
He ceased — she panted quick — and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep;
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

XXXV

"Ah, Porphyro!" she said, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose

Blendeth its odor with the violet, —
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine. —
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing —
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

XXXVIII

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blessed?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil-dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim, — saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

"Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:

Arise — arise ! the morning is at hand : —
The bloated wassailers will never heed : —
Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see, —
Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears ;
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found,
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras,[18] rich with horsemen, hawk, and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar ;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall !
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side :
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide : —
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans ;

XLII

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe.
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform:
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

BY LORD BYRON

I

My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears ;
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are banned and barred — forbidden fare ;
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death ;
That father perished at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake ;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place ;
We were seven — who now are one,
Six in youth, and one in age,
Finished as they had begun,
Proud of Persecution's rage ;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have sealed,
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied ;

Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mold
In Chillon's[1] dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and gray,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp:
And in each pillar there is a ring,
And in each ring there is a chain;
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away,
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years — I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother drooped and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III

They chained us each to a column stone,
And we were three — yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace,

We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light[2]
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together — yet apart,
Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,
'Twas still some solace, in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
A grating sound — not full and free,
As they of yore were wont to be:
It might be fancy — but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do — and did my best —
And each did well in his degree.
The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him — with eyes as blue as heaven,
For him my soul was sorely moved;
And truly might it be distressed
To see such bird in such a nest;

For he was beautiful as day —
(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free) —
A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for nought but others' ills,
And then they flowed like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorred to view below.

V

The other[3] was as pure of mind,
But formed to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perished in the foremost rank
With joy: — but not in chains to pine:
His spirit withered with their clank,
I saw it silently decline —
And so perchance in sooth did mine:
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,
Had followed there the deer and wolf;
To him his dungeon was a gulf,
And fettered feet the worst of ills.

VI

Lake Leman[4] lies by Chillon's walls :
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow ;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
Which round about the wave enthralls :
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made — and like a living grave
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
We heard it ripple night and day ;
Sounding o'er our heads it knocked ;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky ;
And then the very rock hath rocked,
And I have felt it shake, unshocked,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food ;
It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare,
And for the like had little care :
The milk drawn from the mountain goat

Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captive's tears
Have moistened many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow-men
Like brutes within an iron den ;
But what were these to us or him ?
These wasted not his heart or limb ;
My brother's soul was of that mold
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side ;
But why delay the truth ? — he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head
Nor reach his dying hand — nor dead,
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died — and they unlocked his chain,
And scooped for him a shallow grave
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begged them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine — it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer —
They coldly laughed — and laid him there :
The flat and turfless earth above
The being we so much did love ;
His empty chain above it lent,
Such murder's fitting monument !

VIII

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherished since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be
Less wretched now, and one day free ;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired —
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood : —
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread ;
But these were horrors [5] — this was woe
Unmixed with such — but sure and slow ;
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender — kind,
And grieved for those he left behind ; [6]
With all the while a cheek whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb,

Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray ;
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright ;
And not a word of murmur — not
A groan o'er his untimely lot, —
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence — lost
In this last loss, of all the most ;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less :
I listened, but I could not hear —
I called, for I was wild with fear ;
I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonished ;
I called, and thought I heard a sound —
I burst my chain with one strong bound,
And rushed to him : — I found him not,
I only stirr'd in this black spot,
I only lived — *I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew ;
The last — the sole — the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath —
My brothers — both had ceased to breathe :
I took that hand which lay so still,

Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive —
A frantic feeling when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
I know not why
I could not die,
I had no earthly hope — but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death.

IX

What next befell me then and there
I know not well — I never knew —
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling — none —
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;
For all was blank, and bleak, and gray;
It was not night — it was not day —
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness — without a place;
There were no stars — no earth — no time —
No check — no change — no good — no crime —
But silence and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!

X

A light broke in upon my brain, —
It was the carol of a bird ; [7]
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery ;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track ;
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly [8] round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perched, as fond and tame,
And tamer than upon the tree ;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me !
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more :
It seemed like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And, cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,

Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in winged guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For — Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile —
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 'twas mortal — well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone, —
Lone — as the corse within its shroud,
Lone — as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate,
My keepers grew compassionate;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was: — my broken chain
With links unfastened did remain,
And it was liberty to stride [9]
Along my cell from side to side,

And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part ;
And round the pillars one by one,
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod ;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crushed heart fell blind and sick.

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all
Who loved me in a human shape ;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me :
No child — no sire — no kin had I,
No partner in my misery ;
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had [10] made me mad ;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barred windows, and to bend
Once more upon the mountains high [11]
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII

I saw them — and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame ;

I saw their thousand years of snow
On high — their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow ;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channeled rock and broken bush ;
I saw the white-walled distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down ;
And then there was a little isle,[12]
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view ;
A small green isle, it seemed no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all ;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly ;
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled — and would fain
I had not left my recent chain ;
And, when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load ;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save, —

And yet my glance, too much oppressed,
Had almost need of such a rest.

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count — I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise
And clear them of their dreary mote ;
At last men came to set me free ; [13]
I asked not why, and recked not where ;
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learned to love despair.
And thus when they appeared at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage — and all my own !
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home :
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watched them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they ?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill — yet, strange to tell !
In quiet had we learned to dwell —
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are : — even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

A Poet writes to his Friend. PLACE — *A Room in Wycombe Hall.* TIME — *Late in the evening.*

Dear my friend and fellow-student, I would lean
my spirit o'er you !
Down the purple of this chamber tears should
scarcely run at will,
I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow
my head before you :
You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces
are too still.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter, — she is proud
and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes
the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely
eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened
in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles
by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten
and command,

And the palpitating engines[1] snort in steam across
her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure
of the land.

There are none of England's daughters who can
show a prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in
her disdain.
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of
English peasants ;
What was *I* that I should love her, save for com-
petence to pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her
casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought
of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to
my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in
wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps
their door-ways ;
She has blest their little children, as a priest or
queen were she :
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the
poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she
used to smile on *me*.

She has voters in the Commons,[2] she has lovers in the palace,
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine ;
Oft the Prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice :
Oh, and what was *I* to love her ? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her : I was born to poet-uses,
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses ;
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables, — though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.[3]

And they praised me in her presence ; — "Will your book appear this summer ? "
Then returning to each other — "Yes, our plans are for the moors."

Then with whisper dropped behind me — "There
he is! the latest comer.
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she
endures.

"Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted
though by nature,
And we make a point of asking him, — of being
very kind —
You may speak, he does not hear you! and besides,
he writes no satire, —
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the
natural sting behind."

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there
among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorn-
ing scorched my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced,
over-rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner
nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and
regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear
before them all —
"Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that able
to confer it
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to
Wycombe Hall?"

Here she paused ; she had been paler at the first
word of her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed some-
what, as for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly
— "I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy
of my claim.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it — not because I
am a woman,"
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so,
overflowed her mouth)
"But because my woods in Sussex have some purple
shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his
youth.

"I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly
speeches —
Sir, I scarce should dare — but only where God
asked the thrushes first :
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of
my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, — for the
human world, at worst."

Then she smiled around right childly,[4] then she
gazed around right queenly,
And I bowed — I could not answer ; alternated
light and gloom —

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady
eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately
from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them
still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up
the wind.
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's
arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me
mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the
numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with
gliding feet;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feel-
ing,[5] softly freighted
All the air about the windows with elastic laugh-
ters sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out
on the terrace
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with grad-
ual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning
by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings
at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument
and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in
the dark ;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a
moonlight-ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the
hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with
her silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the con-
verse and the jest,
Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through
the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure
voice o'er-float the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed
and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost
them in the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left
beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the
laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bare-
headed, with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to
her throat,

And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float, —

With a bunch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow [6] in betwixt her and the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly ; her lips have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the cheek ;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep behind.
Spake she unto all and unto me — "Behold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

"But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

"The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint :
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping, (Lough[7] the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush ! — a fancy quaint.

"Mark how heavy white her eyelids ! not a dream between them lingers ;
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek :
While the right hand, — with the symbol-rose held slack within the fingers, —
Has fallen backward in the basin — yet this Silence will not speak !

"That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies more high and low.

Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honor by denying outward show."[8]

"Nay, your Silence," said I, "truly, holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken:
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly,
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

"Let the poets dream such dreaming! madam, in these British islands
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds.
Soon we shall have naught but symbol: and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image — in another case, the weed's."

"Not so quickly," she retorted, — "I confess, where'er you go, you
Find for things, names — shows for actions, and pure gold for honor clear:
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads dryly, and sit down with Silence here."

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half
in indignation ;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while
her lovers deemed her fair :
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-
lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing — and both
bathed in sunny air !

With the trees round, not so distant but you
heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and
outward move,
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-
heart to be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much
light above.[9]

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And thus, morn-
ing after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her
feet.
Why, her greyhound followed also ! dogs — we
both were dogs for scorning —
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path
lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows
and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days
passed along,

Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the
fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan
in a song.

Aye, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate
down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us and its shadow
cast before,
And the river running under, and across it from
the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt
the air it bore, —

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud
the poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more vari-
ous of our own;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle
interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets — here's the book, the
leaf is folded down!

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's sol-
emn-thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted
reverie, —
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," [10] which,
if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem
of my making:
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their
worth,
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which
you are speaking,
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through
which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the
silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beat-
ings at the breast,
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of
woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god — a naiad tired of
rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know
which is divinest,
For her looks sing too — she modulates her gest-
ures on the tune,
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song;
and when the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem
to swell them on.

Then we talked — oh, how we talked! her voice,
so cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing — of the soul! a music
without bars:

While the leafy sounds of woodlands humming
round where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet, as skies about
the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if
she always thought them ;
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on
branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way
besought them,
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in
the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth — and often
she speaks lightly,
Has grace in being gay which even mournful souls
approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is
understruck so rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers
above.

And she talked on — *we* talked, rather ! upon all
things, substance, shadow,
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the
reapers in the corn,
Of the little children from the schools, seen wind-
ing through the meadow,
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept
poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters — books are men of
higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future
times to hear ;
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly
into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of " progress," as it trod from
sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said, —
" The Age culls simples, [11]
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the
glory of the stars.
We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well
shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder
of our cars.

" For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking,
self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster, — ' O the wondrous,
wondrous age ! '
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as
our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pil-
grimage.

" Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's
deep resources
But the child's most gradual learning to walk up-
right without bane ?

When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestical white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the mane?[12]

"If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our tether, no new spirit-power comprising,
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death."

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her, loved her certes
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands;
As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the virtues,
In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely; thought no idiot Hope was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sate alone:
Out, alas! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on grazing,
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand
had many suitors ;
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did
the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they can-
not press their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly
enslaves.

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner
chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant
thought serene,
For I had been reading Camöens, that poem you
remember
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest
ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from
it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its
own,
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would
overcome it,
Springs up freely from his claspings and goes
swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur; it grew deep as it
grew longer,
Speakers using earnest language — "Lady Geral-
dine, you *would!*"

And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in
accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its
rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice ; it was an earl's, of soul
that matched his station,
Soul completed into lordship, might and right read
on his brow :
Very finely courteous ; far too proud to doubt his
domination
Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by
a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue
eyes of less expression
Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of
other men,
As steel, arrows ; unelastic lips which seem to
taste possession
And be cautious lest the common air should injure
or distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright, — aye, and
standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art and
letters too ;
Just a good man made a proud man, — as the
sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb
and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could
not help the hearkening :
In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning
heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran
on all sides darkening,
And scorched, weighed like melted metal round
my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's
sake, for wealth, position,
For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be
done —
And she interrupted gently, "Nay, my lord, the old
tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than
mine is, should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly, — and
in his he either drew it
Or attempted — for with gravity and instance she
replied,
"Nay indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we
had best eschew it
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy
to decide."

What he said again I know not ; it is likely that
his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she an-
swered in slow scorn,

"And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I
marry, shall be noble,
Aye, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think
how he was born."

There, I maddened! her words stung me. Life
swept through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-
statured in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apoca-
lyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height[13] dilates you, and despair
sublimes to power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a
flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-
drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the
skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew
what spirits can.

I was mad, inspired — say either! (anguish work-
eth inspiration)
Was a man or beast — perhaps so, for the tiger
roars when speared;
And I walked on, step by step along the level of
my passion —
Oh, my soul! and passed the doorway to her face,
and never feared.

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep
proved my coming,
But for *her* — she half arose, then sate, grew scar-
let and grew pale.
Oh, she trembled ! 'tis so always with a worldly
man or woman
In the presence of true spirits ; what else *can* they
do but quail ?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its
forest-brothers
Far too strong for it ; then drooping, bowed her
face upon her hands ;
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of
her and others :
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike,
with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted
though leaf-verdant,
Trod them down with words of shaming, — all the
purple and the gold,
All the "landed stakes" and lordships, all that
spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honor because chancing
not to hold.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I
love you, madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of
yours have trod :

And this age shows, to my thinking, still more
infidels to Adam
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

"Yet, O God," I said, "O grave," I said, "O
mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and
corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments
of heart-closing;
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies
defiled.

"Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or
wealth — *that* needs no learning.
That comes quickly, quick as sin does, aye, and cul-
minates to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay
above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's
kindling breath within.

"What right have you, madam, gazing in your
palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others
must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your
fingers, to vow gayly
You will wed no man that's only good to God, and
nothing more?

"Why, what right have you, made fair by that
same God, the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely
spirit face
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile
were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common
words to grace,

"What right *can* you have, God's other works to
scorn, despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly — not as *noble*
men, forsooth, —
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to
assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness
of your mouth?

"Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit
were less earthly,[14]
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver
string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say —
Behold me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a
king.

"As it is — your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel
this stain upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, tossed with passion, scorned
by me and you again,

Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief
and your dishonor,
To my endless desolation, and your impotent dis-
dain!"

More mad words like these — mere madness!
friend, I need not write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in
showers of tears.
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why, a beast
had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the
shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrat-
ing with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her
face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered? She
looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said —
"Bertram!" — It was all.

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if
even with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen
up and said,
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have
given you a full hearing:
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting some-
what less, instead!" —

I had borne it: but that "Bertram" — why, it
lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot
judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion: I seemed
drowning in a vapor;
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn
made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward
flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms
of abstract truth,
By a logic agonizing through unseemly demon-
stration,
And by youth's own anguish turning grimly gray
the hairs of youth, —

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I
spake wisely
I spake basely — using truth, if what I spake in-
deed was true,
To avenge wrong on a woman — *her*, who sate
there weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such
deeds as I could do! —

By such wrong and woe exhausted — what I suf-
fered and occasioned, —
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning
in his eyes,

And then dashing at a church's cold and passive
wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and
blindly drops and dies —

So I fell, struck down before her — do you blame
me, friend, for weakness?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me! — fell be-
fore her like a stone;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its
roaring wheels of blackness:
When the light came I was lying in this chamber
and alone.

Oh, of course she charged her lackeys to bear out
the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not
beyond the gate;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not
to pardon
Such a man as I; 'twere something to be level to
her hate.

But for me — you now are conscious why, my
friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm
of life undone.
I shall leave her house at dawn; I would to-night,
if I were better —
And I charge my soul to hold my body strength-
ened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last gazes,
No weak moanings, (one word only, left in writing for her hands,)
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief —I am abstemious.
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Phemius:
Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die *till then.*

CONCLUSION

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every leaf.
Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, aye, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'Tis a dream —a dream of mercies!

'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses,[16]
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone?
Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning torrid
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?"

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows,
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise forever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he — "Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or doubt —

There, the brows of mild repression — there, the lips of silent passion,
Curved like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace;
With her two white hands extended as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

Said he, "Wake me by no gesture, — sound of breath, or stir of vesture!
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching — hush, no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly: —
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one as *I*?"

Said he — "I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness
Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through this dream of THEE!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks."

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her,
And she whispered low in triumph — "It shall be as I have sworn.
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble — noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born."

ATALANTA'S RACE

BY WILLIAM MORRIS

ARGUMENT

Atalanta, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her should die unrevenged; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who, outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.

Through thick Arcadian woods[1] a hunter went,
Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day;
But since his horn-tipped bow but seldom bent,
Now at the noontide naught had happed to slay,
Within a vale he called his hounds away,
Hearkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech trees' ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush could hear,
And all the day-long noises of the wood,
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year
His hounds' feet pattering as they drew anear,
And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung.

Then smiling did he turn to leave the place,
But with his first step some new fleeting thought
A shadow cast across his sun-burnt face;
I think the golden net that April brought
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught;
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done;
Whereon one farewell, backward look he cast,
Then, turning round to see what place was won,
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun,
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown
Beheld the gleaming of King Schœneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side
The folk were busy on the teeming land,
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried,
Or midst the newly-blossomed vines did stand,
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand
Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear,
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

Merry it was: about him sung the birds,
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road,
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds

Now for the barefoot milking-maidens lowed;
While from the freshness of his blue abode,
Glad his death-bearing arrows to forget,
The broad sun blazed, nor scattered plagues[2] as yet.

Through such fair things unto the gates he came,
And found them open, as though peace were there;
Wherethrough, unquestioned of his race or name,
He entered, and along the streets 'gan fare,
Which at the first of folk were well-nigh bare;
But pressing on, and going more hastily,
Men hurrying too he 'gan at last to see.

Following the last of these, he still pressed on,
Until an open space he came unto,
Where wreaths of fame had oft been lost and won,
For feats of strength folk there were wont to do.
And now our hunter looked for something new,
Because the whole wide space was bare, and stilled
The high seats were, with eager people filled.

There with the others to a seat he gat,
Whence he beheld a broidered canopy,
'Neath which in fair array King Schœneus sat
Upon his throne with councilors thereby;
And underneath his well-wrought seat and high,
He saw a golden image of the sun,
A silver image of the Fleet-foot One.[3]

A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind
Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
Made ready even now his horn to wind,
By whom a huge man held a sword, entwined
With yellow flowers ; these stood a little space
From off the altar, nigh the starting place.

And there two runners did the sign abide
Foot set to foot, — a young man slim and fair,
Crisp-haired, well knit, with firm limbs often tried
In places where no man his strength may spare ;
Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
A golden circlet of renown he wore,
And in his hand an olive garland bore.

But on this day with whom shall he contend ?
A maid stood by him like Diana clad
When in the woods she lists her bow to bend,
Too fair for one to look on and be glad,
Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had,
If he must still behold her from afar ;
Too fair to let the world live free from war.

She seemed all earthly matters to forget ;
Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,
Her wide gray eyes upon the goal were set
Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near,
But her foe trembled as a man in fear,
Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's
clang
Just as the setting sun made eventide.
Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang,
And swiftly were they running side by side;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last,
And round about it still abreast they passed.

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When halfway to the starting-point they were,
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near
Unto the very end of all his fear;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel.
And bliss unhoped for o'er his heart 'gan steal.

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard
His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamor laid asleep,
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled,
Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep;
No glance lit up her clear gray eyes and deep,

Though some divine thought softened all her face
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously,
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence he her eyes could see;
And, changed like one who knows his time must be
But short and bitter, without any word
He knelt before the bearer of the sword;

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade,
Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
Was silence now, and midst of it the maid
Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace,
And he to hers upturned his sad white face;
Nor did his eyes behold another sight
Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

So was the pageant ended, and all folk
Talking of this and that familiar thing
In little groups from that sad concourse broke,
For now the shrill bats were upon the wing,
And soon dark night would slay the evening,
And in dark gardens sang the nightingale
Her little-heeded, oft-repeated tale.

And with the last of all the hunter went,
Who, wondering at the strange sight he had seen
Prayed an old man to tell him what it meant,
Both why the vanquished man so slain had been,

And if the maiden were an earthly queen,
Or rather what much more she seemed to be,
No sharer in the world's mortality.

"Stranger," said he, "I pray she soon may die
Whose lovely youth has slain so many an one!
King Schœneus' daughter is she verily,
Who when her eyes first looked upon the sun
Was fain to end her life but new begun,
For he had vowed to leave but men alone
Sprung from his loins when he from earth was gone.

"Therefore he bade one leave her in the wood,
And let wild things deal with her as they might,
But this being done, some cruel god thought good
To save her beauty in the world's despite:
Folk say that her, so delicate and white
As now she is, a rough root-grubbing bear
Amidst her shapeless cubs at first did rear.

"In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,
And to their rude abode the youngling brought,
And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse,
Who grown a woman, of no kingdom thought,
But armed and swift, 'mid beasts destruction wrought,
Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings to slay
To whom her body seemed an easy prey.

"So to this city, led by fate, she came
Whom known by signs, whereof I cannot tell,

King Schœneus for his child at last did claim,
Nor otherwhere since that day doth she dwell
Sending too many a noble soul to hell —
What! thine eyes glisten! what then, thinkest thou
Her shining head unto the yoke to bow?

"Listen, my son, and love some other maid
For she the saffron gown[4] will never wear,
And on no flower-strewn couch shall she be laid,
Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's ear:
Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear,
Yea, rather, if thou lovest him utterly,
Thou still may'st woo her ere thou com'st to die,

"Like him that on this day thou sawest lie dead;
For, fearing as I deem the sea-born one,
The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed
As in the course her swift feet can outrun,
But whoso fails herein, his days are done:
He came the nighest that was slain to-day,
Although with him I deem she did but play.

"Behold, such mercy Atalanta gives
To those that long to win her loveliness;
Be wise! be sure that many a maid there lives
Gentler than she, of beauty little less,
Whose swimming eyes thy loving words shall bless,
When in some garden, knee set close to knee,
Thou sing'st the song that love may teach to thee."

So to the hunter spake that ancient man,
And left him for his own home presently:
But he turned round, and through the moonlight wan
Reached the thick wood, and there 'twixt tree and tree
Distraught he passed the long night feverishly,
'Twixt sleep and waking, and at dawn arose
To wage hot war against his speechless foes.

There to the hart's flank seemed his shaft to grow,
As panting down the broad green glades he flew,
There by his horn the Dryads well might know
His thrust against the bear's heart had been true,
And there Adonis' bane his javelin slew,
But still in vain through rough and smooth he went,
For none the more his restlessness was spent.

So wandering, he to Argive cities[5] came,
And in the lists with valiant men he stood,
And by great deeds he won him praise and fame,
And heaps of wealth for little-valued blood;
But none of all these things, or life, seemed good
Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happed when but a month had gone
Since he had left King Schœneus' city old,
In hunting-gear again, again alone
The forest-bordered meads did he behold,

Where still 'mid thoughts of August's quivering
gold
Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
Of faint October's purple-foaming must.

And once again he passed the peaceful gate,
While to his beating heart his lips did lie,
That owning not victorious love and fate,
Said, half aloud, "And here too must I try,
To win of alien men the mastery,
And gather for my head fresh meed of fame
And cast new glory on my father's name."

In spite of that, how beat his heart, when first
Folk said to him, "And art thou come to see
That which still makes our city's name accurst
Among all mothers for its cruelty?
Then know indeed that fate is good to thee
Because to-morrow a new luckless one
Against the whitefoot maid is pledged to run."

So on the morrow with no curious eyes
As once he did, that piteous sight he saw,
Nor did that wonder in his heart arise
As toward the goal the conquering maid 'gan draw,
Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe,
Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
For fear or wonder there to have a part.

But O, how long the night was ere it went!
How long it was before the dawn begun

Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
That not in darkness should the world be done!
And then, and then, how long before the sun
Bade silently the toilers of the earth
Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth!

And long it seemed that in the market-place
He stood and saw the chaffering folk go by,
Ere from the ivory throne King Schœneus' face
Looked down upon the murmur royally,
But then came trembling that the time was nigh
When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
And jeering voices must salute his name.

But as the throng he pierced to gain the throne,
His alien face distraught and anxious told
What hopeless errand he was bound upon,
And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
His godlike limbs; nay, and one woman old
As he went by must pluck him by the sleeve
And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

For sidling up she said, "Canst thou live twice,
Fair son? canst thou have joyful youth again,
That thus thou goest to the sacrifice
Thyself the victim? nay then, all in vain
Thy mother bore her longing and her pain,
And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

"O, fool, thou knowest not the compact then
That with the threeformed goddess[6] she has made

To keep her from the loving lips of men,
And in no saffron gown to be arrayed,
And therewithal with glory to be paid,
And love of her the moonlit river sees
White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees.

"Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
To give thee her who on the earth may be
The fairest stirrer up to death and fights,
To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights
The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume
Come back, nor give thy beauty to the tomb."

How should he listen to her earnest speech?
Words, such as he not once or twice had said
Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
The firm abode of that sad hardihead —
He turned about, and through the marketstead
Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

Then said the King, "Stranger, what dost thou here?
Have any of my folk done ill to thee?
Or art thou of the forest men in fear?
Or art thou of the sad fraternity
Who still will strive my daughter's mates to be,
Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss
The lonely maid the friend of Artemis?"

"O King," he said, "thou sayest the word indeed;
Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
And know that I am called Milanion,
Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son:
So fear not that to thy old name, O King,
Much loss or shame my victory will bring."

"Nay, Prince," said Schœneus, "welcome to this land
Thou wert indeed, if thou wert here to try
Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand.
Nor would we grudge thee well-won mastery.
But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
And at my door lay down the luckless head,
Swelling the band of the unhappy dead,

"Whose curses even now my heart doth fear?
Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,
And what a bitter thing is death anear.
O Son! be wise, and hearken unto me,
And if no other can be dear to thee,
At least as now, yet is the world full wide,
And bliss in seeming hopeless hearts may hide:

"But if thou losest life, then all is lost."
"Nay, King," Milanion said, "thy words are vain.
Doubt not that I have counted well the cost.
But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain

Fulfilled delight, or death to end my pain?
Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
And all my doubts at rest forever lay."

"Nay," said King Schœneus, "thus it shall not be,
But rather shalt thou let a month go by,
And weary with thy prayers for victory
What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die:
And with my goodwill wouldst thou have the maid
For of the equal gods I grow afraid.

"And until then, O Prince, be thou my guest,
And all these troublous things awhile forget."
"Nay," said he, "couldst thou give my soul good rest,
And on mine head a sleepy garland set,
Then had I 'scaped the meshes of the net,
Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word;
But now, make sharp thy fearful heading sword.

"Yet will I do what son of man may do,
And promise all the gods may most desire,
That to myself I may at least be true;
And on that day my heart and limbs so tire,
With utmost strain and measureless desire,
That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep."

He went with that, nor anywhere would bide,
But unto Argos restlessly did wend;
And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
Because the leech has said his life must end,
Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend,
And took his way unto the restless sea,
For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

Upon the shore of Argolis there stands
A temple to the goddess that he sought,
That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands,
Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought,
Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought,
No groaning press torments the close-clipped murk,
Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work.

Pass through a close, set thick with myrtle-trees,
Through the brass doors that guard the holy place,
And entering, hear the washing of the seas
That twice a day rise high above the base,
And with the southwest urging them, embrace
The marble feet of her that standeth there
That shrink not, naked though they be and fair.

Small is the fane through which the seawind sings
About Queen Venus' well-wrought image white.
But hung around are many precious things,
The gifts of those who, longing for delight,

Have hung them there within the goddess' sight,
And in return have taken at her hands
The living treasures of the Grecian lands.

And thither now has come Milanion,
And showed unto the priests' wide-open eyes
Gifts fairer than all those that there have shone,
Silk cloths, inwrought with Indian fantasies,
And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
Above the deeds of foolish living things,
And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

And now before the Sea-born One[7] he stands,
By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft,
And while the incense trickles from his hands,
And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hang aloft,
Thus doth he pray to her: "O Thou, who oft
Hast holpen man and maid in their distress,
Despise me not for this my wretchedness!

"O goddess, among us who dwell below,
Kings and great men, great for a little while,
Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile;
Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
A vain device of him who set thee here,
An empty dream of some artificer?

"O, great one, some men love, and are ashamed;
Some men are weary of the bonds of love;
Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,

That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
And 'mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
Alas! O goddess, if thou slayest me
What new immortal can I serve but thee?

"Think then, will it bring honor to thy head
If folk say, 'Everything aside he cast
And to all fame and honor was he dead,
And to his one hope now is dead at last,
Since all unholpen he is gone and past:
Ah, the gods love not man, for certainly,
He to his helper did not cease to cry.'

"Nay, but thou wilt help; they who died before
Not single-hearted as I deem came here,
Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear,
Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
Dreaded of men and winners of renown.

"O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
O set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where naught but rocks and I can see her face,
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track —
The golden age, the golden age come back!

"O fairest, hear me now who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain,

But live and love and be thy servant still ;
Ah, give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
An easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee !

" But none the less, this place will I not leave
Until I needs must go my death to meet,
Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
That in great joy we twain may one day greet
Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet,
Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words,
Victorious o'er our servants and our lords."

Then from the altar back a pace he drew,
But from the Queen turned not his face away,
But 'gainst a pillar leaned, until the blue
That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
Was turned to ruddy gold and changing gray,
And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

And there he stood when all the sun was down,
Nor had he moved, when the dim golden light,
Like the far luster of a godlike town,
Had left the world to seeming hopeless night,
Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
And lighted up the white Queen's changeless smile.

Naught noted he the shallow flowing sea
As step by step it set the wrack a-swim,
The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn,
And naught the doubled stillness of the fane
When they were gone and all was hushed again.

But when the waves had touched the marble base,
And steps the fish swim over twice a day,
The dawn beheld him sunken in his place
Upon the floor ; and sleeping there he lay,
Not heeding aught the little jets of spray
The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast,
For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head,
Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
Had gained once more their blue and green and red,
He rose as one some well-known sign doth call
When war upon the city's gates doth fall,
And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,
He 'gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round ; not for the sea-gull's cry
That wheeled above the temple in his flight,
Not for the fresh south wind that lovingly

Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,
But some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight
Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,
And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky,
Not sun or moon, for all the world was gray,
But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh,
Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay
As toward the temple still it took its way,
And still grew greater, till Milanion
Saw naught for dazzling light that round him shone.

But as he staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odors breathed around,
For languid happiness he bowed his head,
And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
Nor wished for aught, nor any dream he found
To give him reason for that happiness,
Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss.

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
Through happy tears the goddess face to face
With that faint image of Divinity,
Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
Until that morn so gladdened all the place ;

Then he, unwitting cried aloud her name
And covered up his eyes for fear and shame.

But through the stillness he her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said, "Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear,
I am not hard to those who love me well;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

"See, by my feet three golden apples lie —
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,
Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

"And note, that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longings strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swiftfoot maid
By sight of these amid her glory stayed.

"For bearing these within a scrip with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place

Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
And when she turns aside make on apace,
And if again she heads thee in the race
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide.

"Farewell, and when has come the happy time
That she Diana's raiment must unbind
And all the world seems blessed with Saturn's clime[8]
And thou with eager arms about her twined
Beholdest first her gray eyes growing kind,
Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
Forget the Helper of unhappy men."

Milanion raised his head at this last word
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her Godhead was he feared;
Too late he looked, for nothing could he see
But the white image glimmering doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and gray,
And those three apples on the steps that lay.

These then he caught up quivering with delight,
Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream,
And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longing, still did deem
He could not sleep; but yet the first sunbeam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then leaving the fair place where this befell
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men 'gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

Now has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race,
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

But yet — what change is this that holds the maid?
Does she indeed see in his glittering eye
More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade,
Some happy hope of help and victory?
The others seemed to say, "We come to die,
Look down upon us for a little while,
That dead, we may bethink us of thy smile."

But he — what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,
E'en if to death he bows a willing head;
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze,
And even as she casts adown her eyes
Redden to note his eager glance of praise,
And wish that she were clad in other guise?
Why must the memory to her heart arise
Of things unnoticed when they first were heard,
Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name,
And this vain pity never felt before,
This sudden languor, this contempt of fame,
This tender sorrow for the time past o'er,
These doubts that grow each minute more and more?
Why does she tremble as the time grows near,
And weak defeat and woeful victory fear?

But while she seemed to hear her beating heart,
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out
And forth they sprang; and she must play her part.
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though slackening once, she turned her head about,
But then she cried aloud and faster fled
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand;

Then trembling she her feet together drew
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy ; some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man,
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And mindful of her glory waxing cold,
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden
fruit.

Note too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize,
And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had well-nigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit,
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid,
But she ran on awhile, then as afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay,
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning place.

Short was the way unto such winged feet,
Quickly she gained upon him till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet
And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfill,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
Once more, an unblest woeful victory —
And yet — and yet — why does her breath begin
To fail her, and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is? why do her gray eyes grow dim?
Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find
Else must she fall, indeed, and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined,
Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

Shatter the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
And did a deed forever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk, make no delay,
Open King Schœneus' well-filled treasury,
Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguents brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow,
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

BY ROBERT BROWNING

I

You're my friend :
I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

II

Ours is a great wild country : [1]
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've passed the corn-field country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before, —
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mold and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
— And the whole is our Duke's country.

III

I was born the day this present Duke was —
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was —
(When I was happy and young, not old!)
I in the kennel,[2] he in the bower:
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed

The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side: "
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
— They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh, for a noble falcon-lanner

To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin
— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet, — we shall not quarrel.[3]

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who :[4]
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ;
Full of his travel, struck at himself,
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?
— Not he ![5] For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,

And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it ;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out :
And chief in the chase his neck he periled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;
— They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire !

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent,[6] at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes

Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
In truth, she was not hard to please !
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;[7]
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired —
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and gray bird on the field was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke :
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand, — as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,

The Duke stepped rather aside than forward
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray ; [8]
For such things must begin some one day.

VII

In a day or two she was well again :
As who should say, " You labor in vain !
This is all a jest against God, who meant
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad will I be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
— For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one ! [9]
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.

There was already this man at his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, [10] at most,
To meet his eye with the other trophies.
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule — (but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, childlike, parcel out praise or blame.
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike
him !
So found the Duke, and his mother like him :
The lady hardly got a rebuff —
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin ; [11]

And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite me,
But I shall find in my power to right me!"
Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled, —
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions.
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated —

To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup —
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose ;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh, the Duke's tailor he had a hot time on't !

XI

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided
Had not the Duchess some share in the business ?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction

That he had discovered the lady's function ;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
" When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
And with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
Let her preside at the disemboweling."
Now, my friend, if you have so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing ?
— I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate, —
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,

Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting, —
Was conduct ever more affronting ?
With all the ceremony settled —
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled, —
No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
And when she persisted nevertheless, —
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant ;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance ?
And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,
Stood for awhile in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and lawful ;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,

As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince
tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once !
What meant she ? — Who was she ? — Her duty
and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at
once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation —
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers
ran on !
Well, somehow or other it ended at last,
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase — oh, such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered ;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an ax chops a log —
Like so much wool for color and bulkiness ;

And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun plowed the fog up and drove it asunder,
This way and that, from the valley under ;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march ?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us,[12] I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth — not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,

They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it —
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's forefoot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,
They keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;
But the sand — they pinch and pound it like otters;
Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters!
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.

And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gypsy then above ground;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding.
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
— A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-
end, —
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt

For the purse of sleek pine-marten pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe, —
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning:
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning; [13]
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned [14]
From out of the throng: and while I drew near
He told the crone — as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery —
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits
tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfill,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.[15]
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gypsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,

And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change
meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry.
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken.
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden, and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you

'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
— Jacynth, forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By — was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber? — and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen — the Gypsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent:
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees,
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil

— Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or like bell-clappers.
I said, "Is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you —
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
— Life's pure fire, received without shrinking,[16]
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
— Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving;
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened.
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped

From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world.
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand ;
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gypsy said : —

" And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain.
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark [17]
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of thine
I make them recognize the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen

Still through the mixture shall be seen.
For so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest —
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure.
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain-tomb, —
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part,
And the prize falls on its finder's heart:
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve!
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw

To step with into light and joy;
Not a power of life but we employ
To satisfy thy nature's want.
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree —
Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done;
Though each apart were never so weak,
Ye vainly through the world should seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right:
So, to approach at least that end,
And blend, — as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee, —
As climbing plant or propping tree,
Shall some one deck thee over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well:
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true.
Let them say what thou shalt do!

Only be sure thy daily life,
In its peace or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved;
We pursue thy whole career,
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear, —
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
We are beside thee in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, angry — but indifferent, no!
Whether it be thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters[18] meet
In the crowded city's horrible street;
Or thou step alone through the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So, at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage;
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind?
Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse

The first fresh with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul!
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then — "

Ay, then indeed something would happen!
But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
— More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion, —
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap —
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,

I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement, round to the portal, —
Another minute and I had entered, —
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centered
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;

Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad, for her service,
To dance on hot plowshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it :
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me, —
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gypsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
— Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me, —
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me

With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom, — mark, her bosom —
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,[19] — that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward, — I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake, —
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then, — and then, — to cut short, — this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster, —
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded, — and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?[20]
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness

— But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away !
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me — and no doubt makes you — sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humor,
It ought to have stopped ; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on :
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder :
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery ;
So, they made no search and small inquiry :
And when fresh Gypsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,

And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it !
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favor you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse ;
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You're my friend —
What a thing friendship is, world without end ?
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky sirup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or to stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.

I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it :
And now it is made — why, my heart's blood, that
went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ven-
tricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do :
I must see this fellow his sad life through —
He is our Duke, after all, [21]
And I, he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with :
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no time to blow up and get done with;
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke
rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue
crust,
Then I shall scrape together my earnings ;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,

And our children all went the way of the roses;
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old —
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?[22]
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gypsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with — as if by accident —

" You never knew then, how it all ended,
What fortune good or bad attended
The little lady your Queen befriended ? "
— And when that's told me, what's remaining ?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner !
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau : [23]
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
— So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson [24] the wood-knight.
Turn myself round and bid the world good-night ;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen,)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen.

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,[1]
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle ; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen, but they
Who journey hither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude ;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones !
And to that place a story appertains,
Which, though it be ungarnished with events,
Is not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys,[2] men
Whom I already loved ; — not verily

For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the Forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his Shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock

Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm — that drives
The traveler to a shelter — summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him and left him on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green Valleys and the Streams and Rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.[3]
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; the hills, which he so oft
Had climbed with vigorous steps; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts,
The certainty of honorable gain,
Those fields, those hills — what could they less? — had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely Matron, old —
Though younger than himself full twenty years.

She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form, this large for spinning wool,
That small for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old, — in Shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only son
With two brave Sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then
Their labor did not cease; unless when all
Turned to their cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round their basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when
their meal
Was ended, LUKE (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
Did with a huge projection overbrow
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a Lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when LUKE had reached his eighteenth year
There by the light of this old lamp they sat,
Father and Son, while late into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This Light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their Cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, North and South,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the Lake;[4]
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all

Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING
STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This Son of his old age was yet more dear —
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Blind spirit, which is in the blood of all —
Than that a child more than all other gifts,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His Heart and his Heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Had work by his own door, or when he sat
With sheep before him on his Shepherd's stool,
Beneath that large old Oak, which near their door

Stood, — and, from its enormous breadth of shade
Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING[5] TREE, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the Boy grew up
A healthy lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect Shepherd's Staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipped
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the Urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though naught was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations — things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth
year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple Household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his Brother's Son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means, —
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had pressed upon him, — and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.

As soon as he had gathered so much strength
That he could look his trouble in the face,
It seemed that his sole refuge was to sell
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil Man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him — but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies, and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another Kinsman — he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade — and Luke to him shall go,

And with his Kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
May come again to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?" At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a Parish-boy — at the Church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with peddler's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the Lad
Went up to London, found a Master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty Boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas: where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and moneys to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a Chapel floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed: — "Well, Isabel! this scheme,
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
We have enough — I wish indeed that I
Were younger, — but this hope is a good hope.
— Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best

Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."
Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless[6] morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the two last nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember — do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their Kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do

His utmost for the welfare of the Boy ;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over ; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round ;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
" He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep Valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold ; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the Streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked ;
And soon as had they reached the place he stopped
And thus the old man spake to him : — " My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me : with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life has been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories ; 'twill do thee good

When thou art from me, even if I should speak
Of things thou canst not know of. — After thou
First camest into the world — as oft befalls
To new-born infants — thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune ;
When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed
month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains ; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke : among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart ; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, " Nay, do not take it so — I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
— Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father : and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands ; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.

Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mold.
I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived.
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burdened when they came to me,
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
— It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go." At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the Stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone —
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands,
Nay, Boy, be of good hope; — we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale; — do thou thy part;
I will do mine. — I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do

All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face. — Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes. — It should be so — Yes — yes —
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
To leave me, Luke ; thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love : when thou art gone
What will be left to us ! — But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested ; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment ; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee : amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
Mayst bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well —
When thou returnest, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here : a covenant
'Twill be between us — But, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here ; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him ; to his heart
He pressed his son, he kissed him and wept ;

And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell : — with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face ;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing : and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on : and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts ; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty ; and, at length
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses : ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love ;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart :
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up toward the sun,
And listened to the wind ; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his Sheep,
And for the land his small inheritance.
And to that hollow Dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man — and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, with that his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of his sheep-fold wrought
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR

Is gone — the plowshare has been through the
ground
On which it stood; great changes have been
wrought
In all the neighborhood: — yet the Oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

NOTES

HORATIUS

It was the theory of Niebuhr that the history of early Rome was preserved to later generations in ballad poetry, not unlike the poems on "The Hunting of the Cheviot" and "The Battle of Otterburn" in "Ballads and Ballad Poetry." Macaulay wrote "The Lays of Ancient Rome" to reproduce, in a way, what these poems might have been. Hence he notes the time that the poem is supposed to have been written, rather more than a century after the events which it tells of.

1. Tarquinius Superbus, or "the Proud," was the seventh king of Rome. He was expelled by the people, and Rome became a republic. Tarquin sought aid of Lars Porsena, the head of a confederation of cities in Etruria.

2. The towns here mentioned were almost all in northern Italy.

3. The Etruscan writing, like the Hebrew, ran from right to left.

4. Certain shields preserved at Rome, which were supposed to have fallen from heaven.

5. The Senators.

6. The Consul was one of the two chief executive officers at Rome.

7. Notice the effect caused by repeating the rhyming lines, and compare with xxxv, xlix, and any others you can find.

8. The Romans were divided into three main divisions, or tribes, the Ramnes, the Tities, the Luceres, which were further subdivided into families.

9. The presumed writer evidently lived in the midst of party quarrels.

10. The Tribunes were officers appointed to guard the rights of the people.

11. Romulus, the founder of Rome, had, according to the legend, been suckled by a she-wolf.

12. Palatinus was one of the seven hills of Rome.

13. A part of the Forum.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

This poem is written as though it were a part of a longer epic poem, let us say the national epic of Persia, in which Rustum, the national hero of Persia, was a chief figure. The story of Sohrab and Rustum was that when Sohrab was born, his mother sent word to Rustum, who was away on an adventure, that their child was a girl (p. 48). Rustum was displeased, continued his adventure, and did not return. Sohrab, then, was brought up without knowledge of his father, among the Tartars. He became a famous warrior, and took part in the Tartar invasion of Persia, always seeking for his father, of whom his mother had told him.

1. The geography may be made out on a good map of Western Asia. The Oxus and the Jaxartes, the Caspian and the Aral Seas, Bokhara and Khorassan, Samarcand and Cabul, may be readily identified. The names give us the idea of a vast land, but dimly known to us, where heroic deeds of arms took place long since.

2. Note the greater simplicity on the part of the Tartars. The Persians were a more settled, civilized, and luxurious people.

3. A fight in which every one is engaged. So a line or two below.

4. This rather elaborate simile is characteristic of the classic poetry which Arnold admired. Several others will

be noted in this poem, each a clear, sharp picture, often beautiful in itself. In distinction one must notice some metaphors which are different. For instance —

> "For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
> Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate."

Here the feeling is perhaps stronger, for the speaker mingles himself in his figure, but the picture is not so clear-cut.

5. The following passage is also of classic character. The detailed description of the Tartar and the Persian hosts and the suggestive use of geographical names are noteworthy.

6. This was of course the cause of all the evil that followed. Whether we are to lay the blame on Sohrab's mother, who had feared that her son would be taken from her to Persia, or on Rustum, may be doubtful. Certainly it does not rest on Sohrab himself.

7. This is the poet's irony. Rustum says something of which he cannot know the full significance. So again, in Rustum's first speech to Sohrab, and in Sohrab's words after Rustum's first attack.

8. Here, had the actors known the truth, all might have been well. But they were ignorant, and fate brings about the catastrophe.

9. One will notice how the account of the battle grows and gains in intensity until the great moment, and then turns to sudden calm.

10. It is an Eastern tale, and Fate, therefore, is the ruling power. Fate calls in human action to carry out its plans and avails herself of human weakness, as the fears of Sohrab's mother and the pride of Rustum. She blinds the eyes that come near seeing the truth, as twice or thrice in the poem, and in the end all is accomplished according to her decrees.

11. The end of the poem is very beautiful. Leaving the sorrows of humanity, the poet takes a type from nature, and follows in his mind the noble river which flows on

through every obstacle and delay, until it reaches its peaceful home in the great sea.

ENOCH ARDEN

This poem was one of the first of Tennyson's longer narrative poems. It became at once popular and has remained so, although general taste at present finds more in the poems of King Arthur's knighthood, which came mostly later. But although the characters and scenery of "Enoch Arden" are less romantic than those of "The Idylls of the King," the character of the poems is almost exactly the same; there is the same close observation of nature and human nature, the same skill in general narrative and specific description.

1. A hill; the *barrows* are the mounds over ancient graves, of which many remain, memorials of the Danish occupation of England.

2. Always.

3. Sloping.

4. Willow-basket.

5. The Hall was the seat of some great family. The gates were guarded by stone lions, and within the yew trees were cut in patterns.

6. We must remember the serious gravity of Enoch's character.

7. Makes an island of. The *offing* is seaman's phrase for off at a distance at sea.

8. As if Annie had protested that the words were harsh.

9. Enoch has the Puritan familiarity with the Bible—here Psalms 139 and 95.

10. A little roundabout for paying the doctor.

11. The rhythm of the line answers singularly well to the thought; there is harmony of rhythm, though here not melody.

12. The idle talk of people who know nothing about

a matter and mean nothing, but have nothing better to do at the moment than to talk of their neighbors.

13. A very curious figure. If one try to realize it, it will be found exact.

14. They were displeased to find that things were not turning out according to their suppositions.

15. The idea of determining the will of God by what seems to the human mind chance has been common at all times, although nowadays only among the uneducated. The reader may remember the casting of lots at the beginning of "Silas Marner." In Annie's case, if there were any meaning in the coincidence, she misinterpreted it, not remembering that palms were actual trees and common in that part of the world in which Enoch had been last heard of.

16. *I.e.* so utterly ignorant of man that a man caused no alarm.

17. Making a canoe of it.

18. The rhythm echoes the thought.

19. Like Annie, he has a presentiment of truth, but does not know what it means.

20. The white cliffs seem ghostly in the moonlight.

CHRISTABEL

The first part of "Christabel" was written in 1797, but was not published till 1816. Even then only this one part and a portion of a second were published, out of the four of which the poem was to have consisted. Hence the poem has no completeness of conception, and we value it really, not so much for the story, the idea, as for the imaginative manner. We should be glad, of course, to have all, but as it is, we get a romantic, a poetic, thrill from what we have. It should not, however, be read by those who must know "how the story turns out." It was one of the first of the great romantic poems of modern English literature, earlier

than any others in our book, and its influence has been great. In two directions it is not difficult to see how significant it was: its feeling for the Middle Ages we meet again in "The Eve of St. Agnes"; its touch of nature and of life in "Michael." In reading the poem, however, we want something more than an understanding of its historical position; we want to appreciate the intensity of the imagination which seemed in these few hundred lines to give a sublimation, a quintessence, of the romantic spirit. That is not so easy now, for since Coleridge many poets have handled the material that stirred his thoughts, and feudal castles and midnight forests have become a little commonplace. But nobody has felt these things just as Coleridge did; there is a sincerity and genuineness about his work that gives it rather a peculiar character in our minds, a sort of distinction, making picture and verse linger there long after the rhymes of many whose romance was belated or secondhand have passed out of our thoughts.

The meter of the poem may cause difficulty; it was somewhat of an innovation in its own day. The irregularity of the rhymes will cause no trouble, but the irregular number of syllables may not be at once understood. It was Coleridge's idea to have a like number of accents (four) in each line, and to have the number of syllables vary according to his convenience or idea. Thus

> "'Tis the mid'dle of night' by the cas'tle clock'—"
> "Tu'-whit'—Tu'-whoo'—"
> "Six'teen short' howls not' over loud'—"

These lines, though they look very different, are all of the same accentual value, and if the poem be read chiefly with respect to the accent, the varying number of syllables will be found to give a pleasant, and often very harmonious, effect.

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

The story is told in a series of scenes intensely realized.

1. The owl generally seems so plump and comfortable.

2. The Beadsman was one who offered prayers for those who had given him alms, a prayers-man.

> "Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,
> And I will be thy beadsman."
> — *Two Gentlemen of Verona, I, i, 18.*

3. It aroused for the instant happy feelings which brought tears to his eyes.

4. The last line of a Spenserian stanza is called an Alexandrine. This poem has many which are very beautiful; this one and the last lines of stanzas xv, xxiv, xxx, xl, are especially fine.

5. For instance.

6. Dead, an old expression borrowed from the French. Keats found it in the Elizabethan poets, whom he read with delight.

7. Concealed by the projecting buttress.

8. There is a feud between the families: see stanzas xi, xii. Porphyro's visit is something like that of Romeo to Juliet.

9. The nuns who spun the wool of the lambs dedicated at the feast of St. Agnes, and afterwards shorn.

10. A witch's sieve would hold water: one of the witches in "Macbeth" proposed to use one for a voyage to Aleppo.

11. Keats meant *restrain* or *control*. The word is never used in just that sense; it used, among other things, to mean to *digest, manage*.

12. Merlin was the wizard councilor of King Arthur. What was his monstrous debt? Perhaps Keats had in mind the story of Vivien afterward told by Tennyson in "The Idylls of the King."

13. Instead of rising on the Day of Judgment.

14. The heraldic name for red, the color of love.

15. Dead outwardly, but full of life within.

16. That reasonless fear when there is no one at hand to be afraid of.

17. The name is that of a poem by Alain Chartier. Keats afterward wrote a ballad with the same name which may be found in "Ballads and Ballad Poetry," p. 121.

18. The tapestries on the wall, with figured embroidery.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

François de Bonnivard, a champion of the political and religious liberty of Geneva, was imprisoned in the Castle of Chillon by the Duke of Savoy, from 1530 to 1536. On his release he found Geneva a republic and lived to a good old age as an honored citizen. Byron knew little of his actual story when he wrote the poem, but his poetical spirit leaped up in sympathy with one who had suffered for the cause of liberty.

1. The Castle of Chillon stands on the shore of the Lake of Geneva, at the eastern end. It is in part very ancient, and is very conspicuous from the lake.

2. Byron may have had in mind the blue reflections of the waves of the lake, which is said to be noticeable in the dungeon.

3. The contrast between the two types of character in the brothers is noteworthy. Both are free spirits, but one is active and the other passive. Neither has the grim endurance of the Prisoner himself.

4. From Lemannus, the Latin name for the Lake of Geneva.

5. And shocked the mind so that it could not appreciate them, as it could this long-drawn suffering.

6. There was, of course, but one, but the Prisoner was not thinking much of himself.

7. The influence of nature, — so much of it as he could get in so miserable a place.

8. For an instant he had quite forgotten his walls, did not even see them.

9. The dungeon of Bonnivard shows the traces worn in the stone floor of his constant walk.

10. Would have.

11. The mountain chain that rises to Mont Blanc.

12. Byron himself notices one single island in the Lake of Geneva, small and with three trees.

13. In reality the Castle of Chillon was captured by the Bernese in the year 1536.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

This poem is called "A Romance of the Age," and there is a good deal in the poetic disposition of Bertram which was more akin to the first half of the nineteenth century than to the first half of the twentieth. It is of the same time as "Locksley Hall." We cannot precisely feel with either. Yet each has some beautiful poetry. This poem is chiefly notable, aside from the nobility of its temper, for not a few very exquisite expressions and figures, some of which are remarked in these notes.

1. Railroads were only just being built all over England, to the great profit of those who had land to sell, but to the destruction of much natural beauty and quiet. There is another mention of them on p. 150.

2. Presumably the House of Commons, which in 1845 still contained some members who were returned by family influence.

3. The salt was the old-time point at table which marked the difference between the well and lowly born.

4. In a childlike manner; but the word is uncommon.

5. An excellent touch.

6. A beautiful picture.

7. Lough, an English sculptor, one of Mrs. Browning's friends.

8. The conversation suggests the idea of inward and outward worth which is at the bottom of the poem.

9. A fancy, but a pretty one.

10. Browning's early poems were published as a series called "Bells and Pomegranates."

11. *I.e.* stoops to the ground.

12. The idea is as good to-day as sixty years ago.

13. Makes one see clearly and speak truly, like the Pythia or priestess of Apollo at Delphi, who uttered the oracles.

14. If he were not so much of a man as to feel anger and false shame.

15. He was right; it was not manly to blackguard a woman in such a fashion.

16. Notice a change in the rhyming, perhaps in answer to an increase in the intensity of feeling.

ATALANTA'S RACE

William Morris has been called the greatest teller of tales in verse since Chaucer. Certain it is that he gives us the story in poetic form, in purer narrative, that is, with less addition in the way of ornament in thought, more for the story's own sake than is the case with most of the poems we have had to do with.

1. Arcadia was a part of the Peloponnesus or peninsula of Greece.

2. Apollo the sun-god was also the sender of pestilence, a not unnatural idea in a tropical climate.

3. Artemis, or Diana, the virgin goddess of the chase.

4. The wedding garment.

5. Argolis was the country next to Arcadia.

6. Artemis, Selene, Hecate, comprising the threefold attri-

butes of goddess of the chase, of the moon, and of enchantment.

7. Aphrodite, goddess of love.

8. The golden age, just mentioned, the age when Saturn was king, when there was nothing wrong in the world.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

This poem, like many of Browning's, is a story in the mouth of a story-teller. We have the man who tells the story as well as the story itself. Hence the abruptness at beginning, as though some one were talking; we are not told the circumstances, but have to make them out for ourselves.

1. The scene of the poem was in Eastern Europe, Transylvania perhaps, so that the description looks off and away to the Black Sea.

2. The huntsman's quarters where the hounds were kept.

3. One of the phrases that is explained by remembering that the poem is told by some one. Either beer or wine, he says, it doesn't matter.

4. She was perhaps a gypsy.

5. The Duke came to Paris in the midst of the Romantic enthusiasm for the Middle Ages.

6. Many girls in Europe are bred at convent schools.

7. She was glad to see that he loved animals as she did.

8. The first greeting gives a touch of what is coming. The fresh glad life of the Duchess feels instinctively shriveled at the lifeless stiffness of the formal Duke.

9. *I.e.* she would have done splendidly as the wife of a man who had needed a real companion and helper in work and life.

10. She had really a formal position.

11. She could not stand such a lack of vitality.

12. *I.e.* off in Eastern Europe. Gypsies are still not uncommon in Hungary, though not so often met with in Western Europe.

13. He thought the Duchess had so far had too simple and easy a time, and so sent the old gypsy to her, with a result which he could hardly have anticipated.

14. Cf. the second line of the poem.

15. The old woman had something in mind that the Duke did not imagine. To tell the truth, as soon appears, she was not merely the old hag he took her for.

16. Instead of adding to the Duchess's bothers, the old woman was showing her how to cast them off.

17. The kindred spark which will be found in all that great confraternity of those who know true life and are stiffened at the mere forms of it.

18. The haters, those who have not love at heart, or practically all those who are bent on carrying out their own interests without regard to any one else and so in opposition to them.

19. Of course money was no reward between such.

20. No use telling of the place after the Duchess had gone.

21. Family loyalty.

22. The old man's recollection of the Bible is not very exact.

23. The rough, straightforward, and simple do not get on in this world, he thinks. To tell the truth, they do not, unless they are content with the rough, straightforward, and simple things of this world.

24. The Wood Knight, twin brother of Valentine, who had been lost in childhood and grown up among the rough wood creatures.

MICHAEL

This is not a hard poem to understand, but it is not an easy one to appreciate. We can read it without trouble, but when we try to gain the whole poetic character, it is not so simple. Such is, indeed, the case with all of Wordsworth's poetry. It may be a help to give a few words from a modern critic.

"And so he has much for those who value highly the concentrated presentment of passion, who appraise men and women by their susceptibility to it, and art and poetry as they afford the spectacle of it. Breaking from time to time into the pensive spectacle of their daily toil, their occupations near to nature, come those great elementary feelings, lifting and solemnizing their language and giving it a natural music. The great distinguishing passion came to Michael by the sheepfold, to Ruth by the wayside, adding these humble children of the furrow to the true aristocracy of passionate souls. . . . A sort of biblical depth and solemnity hangs over this strange new, passionate, pastoral world of which he first raised the image, and the reflection of which some of our best modern fiction has caught from him."

— WALTER PATER: *Essay on Wordsworth.*

1. A glen or narrow valley.

2. In 1799 Wordsworth moved to the Lake country in northern England, and devoted himself to the pastoral life about him, both of nature and of man.

3. There are who think that the sailor, the farmer, the hunter, men whose way of life brings them into necessary contact with nature, are indifferent to any but her most practical characteristics.

4. Grasmere, near which Wordsworth lived for several years and near which he lies buried.

5. The word used in the north of England for shearing.

6. Not in the usual sense, but meaning busy.