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P42
1869



M/1/18/0

PHANTASMAGORIA



PHANTASMAGORIA

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

LEWIS CARROLL.

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1869.

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OXFORD:

BY T. COMBE, M.A., E. B. GARDNER, E. P. HALL, AND H. LATHAM, M.A.,

PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

[Of the following poems, *Phantasmagoria*, *A Valentine*, *A Double Acrostic*, *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, *Lines*, *Stanzas for Music*, and *Christmas Greetings*, are here printed for the first time. The others have all appeared before in magazines and other periodicals, with the exception of *The Elections to the Hebdomadal Council*, which was published by itself.

The decorations on the cover represent the *Crab Nebula* in *Taurus* and *Donati's Comet*, two distinguished members of the Celestial Phantasmagoria.]



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PART I.

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PHANTASMAGORIA.

CANTO I.

The Crystng.

ONE wintry night, at half-past nine,
Cold, tired, and cross, and muddy,
I had come home, too late to dine,
And supper, with cigars and wine,
Was waiting in the study.

There was a strangeness in the room,
And something thin and wavy
Was standing near me in the gloom—
I took it for the carpet-broom
Left by that careless slavey.

But presently the thing began

To shudder and to sneeze :

On which I said "Come, come, my man,

That's a most inconsiderate plan—

Less noise there, if you please !"

"I've caught a cold," the thing replies,

"Out there upon the landing—"

I turned to look in some surprise,

And there, before my very eyes,

A little ghost was standing !

He trembled when he caught my eye,

And got behind a chair :

"How came you here," I said, "and why ?

I never saw a thing so shy.

Come out ! Don't shiver there !"

He said "I'd gladly tell you how,
And also tell you why,
But" (here he gave a little bow)
"You're in so bad a temper now,
You'd think it all a lie.

"And as to being in a fright,
Allow me to remark
That ghosts have just as good a right,
In every way, to fear the light,
As men to fear the dark."

"No plea," said I, "can well excuse
Such cowardice in you:
For ghosts can visit when they choose,
Whereas we humans can't refuse
To *grant* the interview."

He said "A flutter of alarm

Is not unnatural, is it?

I really feared you meant some harm,

But now I see that you are calm,

Let me explain my visit.

"The last ghost left you on the third—

Since then you've not been haunted:

But, as he never sent us word,

'Twas quite by accident we heard

That any one was wanted.

"A Spectre has first choice, by right,

In filling up a vacancy;

Then Phantom, Goblin, Elf, and Sprite—

If all these fail them, they invite

The nicest Ghoul that they can see.

“The Spectres said the place was low,
And that you kept bad wine :
So, as a Phantom had to go,
And I was first, of course, you know,
I couldn't well decline.”

“No doubt,” said I, “they settled who
Was fittest to be sent :
Yet still to choose a brat like you
To haunt a man of forty-two,
Was no great compliment.”

“I'm not so young, Sir,” he replied,
“As you might think—the fact is,
In caverns by the water side,
And other places that I've tried,
I've had a lot of practice.”

“But I have never taken yet
A strict domestic part,
And in my flurry I forget
The Five Good Rules of Etiquette
We have to know by heart.”

My sympathies were warming fast
Towards the little fellow ;
He was so *very* much aghast
At having found a man at last,
And looked so scared and yellow.

“At least,” I said, “I’m glad to find
A ghost is not a *dumb* thing—
But pray sit down—you’ll feel inclined
(If, like myself, you have not dined)
To take a snack of something :

“(Though, certainly, you don’t appear
A thing to offer *food* to);
And then I shall be glad to hear
(If you will say them loud and clear)
The rules that you allude to.”

“Thanks! You shall hear them by and by—

This *is* a piece of luck!”

“What may I offer you?” said I.

“Well, since you *are* so kind, I’ll try

A little bit of duck.

“*One* slice! And may I ask you for

A little drop more gravy?”

I sat and looked at him in awe,

For certainly I never saw

A thing so white and wavy.

And still he seemed to grow more white,
More vapoury, and wavier—
Seen in the dim and flickering light,
As he proceeded to recite
His 'Maxims of Behaviour.'

CANTO II.

Hys Fybe Rules.

“ My First—but don’t suppose,” he said,

“ I’m setting you a riddle—

Is—if your Victim be in bed,

Don’t touch the curtain at his head,

But take it in the middle,

“ And wave it slowly to and fro,

As if the wind was at it ;

And in a minute’s time or so

He’ll be awake—and this you’ll know

By hearing him say ‘ *Drat it !* ’

“(And here you must on no pretence

Make the first observation :

Wait for the Victim to commence—

No ghost of any common sense

Begins a conversation.)

“If he should say ‘*How came you here?*’

(The way that *you* began, Sir),

In such a case your course is clear—

‘*Just as you please, my little dear!*’

Or any other answer.

“But if the wretch says nothing more,

You’d best perhaps curtail your

Exertions—go and shake the door,

And then, if he begins to snore,

You’ll know the thing’s a failure.

“By day, if he should be alone—
At home or on a walk—
You merely give a hollow groan,
To indicate the kind of tone
In which you mean to talk.

“But if you find him with his friends,
The thing is rather harder:
In such a case success depends
On picking up some candle-ends,
Or butter, in the larder.

“With this you make a kind of slide
(It answers best with suet),
On which you must contrive to glide,
And swing yourself from side to side—
One soon learns how to do it.

“The Second tells us what is right

In ceremonious calls :

First burn a blue or crimson light,

(A thing I quite forgot to-night,)

Then scratch the door or walls.”

I said “You’ll visit *here* no more,

If you attempt the Guy :

I’ll have no bonfires on *my* floor—

And, as for scratching at the door,

I’d like to see you try!”

“The Third was written to protect

The interests of the Victim,

And tells us, as I recollect,

To treat him with a grave respect,

And not to contradict him.”

“That’s plain,” said I, “as Tare and Tret,

To any comprehension :

I only wish *some* ghosts I’ve met

Would not so *constantly* forget

The maxim that you mention.”

“Perhaps,” he said, “*you* first transgressed

The laws of hospitality :

You’ll mostly come off second-best

When you omit to treat your guest

With proper cordiality.

“If you address a ghost as ‘thing,’

Or strike him with a hatchet,

He is permitted by the king

To drop all *formal* parleying—

And then you’re *sure* to catch it!

“The Fourth prohibits trespassing
Where other ghosts are quartered:
And those convicted of the thing
(Unless when pardoned by the king)
Must instantly be slaughtered.”

I said “That rule appears to me
Wanting in common sense—”
“‘To slaughter’ does not mean,” said he,
“‘To kill’ with us, and that, you see,
Makes a *great* difference.

“In fact we’re simply cut up small,
(Ghosts soon unite anew;)
The process scarcely hurts at all,
Not more than when *you*’re what you call
‘Cut up’ by a Review.

“The Fifth is one you may prefer
That I should quote entire—
The king must be addressed as ‘Sir’:
This, from a simple courtier,
Is all the laws require:

“*But should you wish to do the thing*
With out-and-out politeness,
Accost him as ‘My Goblin-King,’
And always use, in answering,
The phrase ‘Your Royal Whiteness!’

“I’m getting rather hoarse, I fear,
After so much reciting;
So, if you don’t object, my dear,
We’ll try a glass of bitter beer—
I think it looks inviting.”

CANTO III.

Scarmoges.

“And did you really walk,” said I,
 “On such a wretched night?
I always fancied ghosts could fly—
If not exactly in the sky,
 Yet at a fairish height.”

“It’s very well,” he said, “for kings
 To fly above the earth:
But Phantoms often find that wings,
Like many other pleasant things,
 Cost more than they are worth.

“Spectres of course are rich, and so
 Can buy them from the Elves:
But *we* prefer to keep below—
They’re stupid company, you know,
 For any but themselves.

“For, though they claim to be exempt
 From pride, they treat a Phantom
As something quite beneath contempt,
(Just as no turkey ever dreamt
 Of noticing a bantam).”

“They seem too proud,” said I, “to go
 To houses such as mine—
Pray how did they contrive to know
So quickly that ‘the place was low,’
 And that I ‘kept bad wine’?”

“ Inspector Kobold called on you—”

The little ghost began :

Here I broke in ; “ Inspector who ?

Inspecting ghosts is something new :

Explain yourself, my man !”

“ His name is Kobold,” said my guest,

“ One of the Spectre order :

You ’ll very often see him dressed

In a yellow gown, a crimson vest,

And a night-cap with a border.

“ He tried the Brocken business first,

But caught a sort of chill ;

So came to England to be nursed,

And here it took the form of *thirst*,

Which he complains of still.

“ The remedy, *he says*, is port,
 (Which he compares to nectar,)
And, as the inns where it is bought
Have always been his chief resort,
 We call him the ‘*Inn-Spectre.*’ ”

I bear as well as any man
 The washiest of witticisms;
And nothing could be sweeter than
My temper, till the ghost began
 Some most provoking criticisms.

“ Cooks need not be indulged in waste,
 Yet still you’d better teach them
Dishes should have *some sort* of taste—
Pray, why are all the cruets placed
 Where nobody can reach them?

“That man of yours will never earn
His living as a waiter—
Is that queer *thing* supposed to burn?
(It’s far too dismal a concern
To call a Moderator.)

“The duck was tender, but the peas
Were very much too old:
And just remember, if you please,
The *next* time you have toasted cheese,
Don’t let them send it cold.

“You’d find the bread improved, I think,
By getting better flour:
And have you anything to drink
That looks a *little* less like ink,
And isn’t *quite* so sour?”

Then, peering round with curious eyes,
He muttered "Goodness gracious!"
And so went on to criticise—
"Your room's an inconvenient size;
It's neither snug nor spacious.

"That narrow window, I expect,
Serves but to let the dusk in—"
I cried "But please to recollect
'Twas fashioned by an architect
Who pinned his faith on Ruskin!"

"I don't care who he was, Sir, or
On whom he pinned his faith!
Constructed by whatever law,
So poor a job I never saw,
As I'm a living Wraith!

“What a re-markable cigar!

How much are they a dozen?”

I growled “No matter what they are!

You’re getting as familiar

As if you were my cousin!

“Now that’s a thing *I will not stand,*

And so I tell you flat—”

“Aha!” said he. “We’re getting grand!”

(Taking a bottle in his hand,)

“I’ll soon arrange for *that!*”

And here he took a careful aim,

And gaily cried “Here goes!”

I tried to dodge it as it came,

But somehow caught it, all the same,

Exactly on my nose.

And I remember nothing more
That I can clearly fix,
Till I was sitting on the floor,
Repeating "Two and three are four,
But *three and two* are six."

What really passed I never learned,
Nor guessed: I only know
That, when at last my sense returned,
The lamp, neglected, dimly burned—
The fire was getting low—

Through driving mists I seemed to see
A form of sheet and bone—
And found that he was telling me
The whole of his biography
In a familiar tone.

CANTO IV.

His Nourture.

“ Oh, when I was a little ghost,
A merry time had we!
Each seated on his favourite post,
We chumped and chawed the buttered toast
They gave us for our tea.”

“ That story is in print!” I cried.
“ Don’t say it’s not, because
It’s known as well as Bradshaw’s Guide!”
(The ghost uneasily replied
He hardly thought it was.)

“It’s not in Nursery Rhymes? And yet

I almost think it is—

‘Three little ghostesses’ were set

‘On postesses,’ you know, and ate

Their ‘buttered toastesses.’

“I have the book, so if you doubt it—”

I turned to search the shelf—

“Don’t stir!” he cried. “We’ll do without it:

I now remember all about it;

I wrote the thing myself.

“It came out in a ‘Monthly,’ or

At least my agent said it did:

Some literary swell, who saw

It, thought it seemed adapted for

The magazine he edited.

“ My father was a Brownie, Sir ;
 My mother was a Fairy.
The notion had occurred to her,
The children would be happier,
 If they were taught to vary.

“ The notion soon became a craze ;
 And when it once began, she
Brought us all out in different ways—
One was a Pixy, two were Fays,
 Another was a Banshee ;

“ The Fetch and Kelpie went to school,
 And gave a lot of trouble ;
Next came a Poltergeist and Ghoul,
And then two Trolls (which broke the rule),
 A Goblin, and a Double—

“ (If that’s a snuff-box on the shelf,”

He added with a yawn,

“ I’ll take a pinch)—next came an Elf,

And then a Phantom (that’s myself),

And last, a Leprechaun.

“ One day, some Spectres chanced to call,

Dressed in the usual white :

I stood and watched them in the hall,

And couldn’t make them out at all,

They seemed so strange a sight :

“ I wondered what on earth they were,

That looked all head and sack ;

But mother told me not to stare,

And then she twitched me by the hair,

And punched me in the back.

“ Since then I’ve often wished that I
 Had been a Spectre born :
But what’s the use ?” (He heaved a sigh.)
“ *They* are the ghost-nobility,
 And look on *us* with scorn.

“ My phantom-life was soon begun :
 When I was barely six,
I went out with an older one—
And just at first I thought it fun,
 And went at it like bricks.

“ I’ve haunted dungeons, castles, towers—
 Wherever I was sent :
I’ve often sat and howled for hours,
Drenched to the skin with driving showers,
 Upon a battlement.

“It’s quite old-fashioned now to groan

When you begin to speak:

This is the newest thing in tone—”

And here, (it chilled me to the bone,)

He gave an *awful* squeak.

“Perhaps,” he added, “to *your* ear

That sounds an easy thing?

Try it yourself, my little dear!

It took *me* something like a year,

With constant practising.

“And when you’ve learned to squeak, my man,

And caught the double sob,

You’re pretty much where you began—

Just try and gibber if you can!

That’s something *like* a job!

“*I’ve* tried it, and can only say
I’m sure you couldn’t do it, e-
ven if you practised night and day,
Unless you have a turn that way,
And natural ingenuity.

“Shakspeare I think it is who treats
Of ghosts, in days of old,
Who ‘gibbered in the Roman streets,’
Dressed, if you recollect, in sheets—
They must have found it cold.

“I’ve often spent ten pounds on stuff,
In dressing as a Double,
But, though it answers as a puff,
It never has effect enough
To make it worth the trouble.

“ Long bills soon quenched the little thirst

I had for being funny—

The setting-up is always worst:

Such heaps of things you want at first,

One must be made of money!

“ For instance, take a haunted tower,

With skull, cross-bones, and sheet;

Blue lights to burn (say) two an hour,

Condensing lens of extra power,

And set of chains, complete:

“ What with the things you have to hire—

The fitting on the robe—

And testing all the coloured fire—

The outfit of itself would tire

The patience of a Job!

“ And then they’re so fastidious,
The Haunted-House Committee :
I’ve often known them make a fuss
Because a ghost was French, or Russ,
Or even from the City!

“ Some dialects are objected to—
For one, the *Irish* brogue is :
And then, for all you have to do,
One pound a week they offer you,
And find yourself in Bogies!”

CANTO V.

Byckermant.

“Don’t they consult the ‘Victims,’ though?”

I said. “They should, by rights,
Give them a chance—because, you know,
The tastes of people differ so,
Especially in Sprites.”

The Phantom shook his head and smiled:

“Consult them? Not a bit!
'Twould be a job to drive one wild,
To satisfy one single child—
There’d be no end to it!”

“Of course you can’t leave *children* free,”

Said I, “to pick and choose :
But, in the case of men like me,
I think ‘Mine Host’ might fairly be
Allowed to state his views.”

He said “It really wouldn’t pay—

Folk are so full of fancies.
We visit for a single day,
And whether then we go, or stay,
Depends on circumstances.

“And, though we don’t consult ‘Mine Host’

Before the thing’s arranged,
Still, if the tenant quits his post,
Or is not a well-mannered ghost,
Then you can have him changed.

“But if the host’s a man like you—

I mean a man of sense;

And if the house is not too new—”

“Why, what has *that*,” said I, “to do

With ghosts’ convenience?”

“A new house does not suit, you know—

It’s such a job to trim it:

But, after twenty years or so,

The wainscotings begin to go,

So twenty is the limit.”

‘To trim’ was not a phrase I could

Remember having heard:

“Perhaps,” I said, “you’ll be so good

As tell me what is understood

Exactly by that word?”

“It means the loosening all the doors,”

The ghost replied, and laughed:

“It means the drilling holes by scores

In all the skirting-boards and floors,

To make a thorough draught.

“You’ll sometimes find that one or two

Are all you really need

To let the wind come whistling through—

But *here* there’ll be a lot to do!”

I faintly gasped “Indeed!”

“If I’d been rather later, I’ll

Be bound,” I added, trying

(Most unsuccessfully) to smile,

“You’d have been busy all this while,

Trimming and beautifying?”

“ Why, no,” said he ; “ perhaps I should
Have stayed another minute—
But still no ghost, that’s any good,
Without an introduction would
Have ventured to begin it.

“ The proper thing, as you were late,
Was certainly to go :
But, with the roads in such a state,
I got the Knight-Mayor’s leave to wait
For half an hour or so.”

“ Who’s the Knight-Mayor ? ” I cried. Instead
Of answering my question,
“ Well ! If you don’t know *that*,” he said,
“ Either you never go to bed,
Or you’ve a grand digestion !

“He goes about and sits on folk

That eat too much at night :

His duties are ‘to pinch, and poke,

And squeeze them till they nearly choke.’”

(I said “It serves them right!”)

“And folk that stuff on things like these—”

He muttered, “eggs and bacon—

Lobster—and duck—and toasted cheese—

If they don’t get an awful squeeze,

I’m very much mistaken !

“He is immensely fat, and so

Well suits the occupation :

In point of fact, if you must know,

We used to call him, years ago,

‘*The Mayor and Corporation*’!

“The day he was elected Mayor
I *know* that every Sprite meant
To vote for *me*, but did not dare—
He was so frantic with despair
And furious with excitement.

“When it was over, for a whim,
He ran to tell the king ;
And, being the reverse of slim,
A two-mile trot was not for him
A very easy thing.

“So, to reward him for his run,
(As it was baking hot,
And he was over twenty stone,)
The king proceeded, half in fun,
To knight him on the spot.”

“ ’Twas a great liberty to take !”

(I fired up like a rocket.)

“ He did it just for punning’s sake—

‘ The man,’ says Johnson, ‘ that would make
A pun, would pick a pocket !’ ”

“ A man,” said he, “ is not a king.”

I argued for a while,

And did my best to prove the thing—

The Phantom merely listening

With a contemptuous smile.

At last, when, breath and patience spent,

I had recourse to smoking—

“ Your *aim*,” he said, “ is excellent :

But—when you call it *argument*—

Of course you’re only joking ?”

Stung by his cold and snaky eye,
I roused myself at length
To say "At least I do defy
The veriest sceptic to deny
That union is strength!"

"That's true enough," said he, "yet stay—"
I listened in all meekness—
"Union is strength, I'm bound to say;
In fact, the thing's as clear as day;
But *onions*—are a weakness."

CANTO VI.

Dyscomfytur.

As one who strives a hill to climb,
 Who never climbed before:
Who finds it, in a little time,
Grow every moment less sublime,
 And votes the thing a bore:

Yet, having once begun to try,
 Dares not desert his quest,
But, climbing, ever keeps his eye
On one small hut against the sky,
 Wherein he hopes to rest:

Who climbs till nerve and force be spent,

With many a puff and pant :

Who still, as rises the ascent,

In language grows more violent,

Although in breath more scant :

Who, climbing, gains at length the place

That crowns the upward track ;

And, entering with unsteady pace,

Receives a buffet in the face

That lands him on his back :

And feels himself, like one in sleep,

Glide swiftly down again,

A helpless weight, from steep to steep,

Till, with a headlong giddy sweep,

He pitch into the plain—

So I, that had resolved to bring
 Conviction to a ghost,
And found it quite a different thing
From any human arguing,
 Yet dared not quit my post:

But, keeping still the end in view
 To which I hoped to come,
I strove to prove the matter true
By putting everything I knew
 Into an axiom:

Commencing every single phrase
 With 'therefore' or 'because,'
I blindly reeled, a hundred ways,
About the syllogistic maze,
 Unconscious where I was.

Quoth he "That's regular clap-trap—

Don't bluster any more.

Now *do* be cool and take a nap!

You're such a peppery old chap

As never was before!

"You're like a man I used to meet,

Who got one day so furious

In arguing, the simple heat

Scorched both his slippers off his feet!"

I said "*That's very curious!*"

"Well, it *is* curious, I agree,

And sounds perhaps like fibs:

But still it's true as true can be—

As sure as your name's Tibbs," said he.

I said "My name's *not* Tibbs."

“*Not* Tibbs!” he cried—his tone became

A shade or two less hearty—

“Why, no,” said I: “my proper name

Is Tibbets—” “Tibbets?” “Aye, the same.”

“Why, then YOU'RE NOT THE PARTY!”

With that he struck the board a blow

That shivered half the glasses ;

“Why couldn't you have told me so

Three quarters of an hour ago?

You king of all the asses !

“To walk four miles through mud and rain,

To spend the night in smoking,

And then to find that it's in vain—

And I've to do it all again—

It's really *too* provoking !

“Don’t talk!” he cried, as I began

To mutter some excuse.

“Who can have patience with a man

That’s got no more discretion than

An idiotic goose?

“To keep me waiting here, instead

Of telling me at once

That this was not the house!” he said.

“There, that’ll do—be off to bed!

Don’t gape like that, you dunce!”

“It’s very fine to throw the blame

On *me* in such a fashion!

Why didn’t you enquire my name

The very minute that you came?”

I answered in a passion.

“Of course it worries you a bit

To come so far on foot—

But how was *I* to blame for it?”

“Well, well!” said he, “I must admit

That isn’t badly put.

“And certainly you’ve given me

The best of wine and victual—

Excuse my violence,” said he,

“But accidents like this, you see,

They put one out a little.

“’Twas *my* fault after all, I find—

Shake hands, old Turnip-top!”

The name was hardly to my mind,

But, as no doubt he meant it kind,

I let the matter drop.

“Good-night, old Turnip-top, good-night!

When I am gone, perhaps
They'll send you some inferior Sprite,
Who'll keep you in a constant fright
And spoil your soundest naps.

“Tell him you'll stand no sort of trick;

Then, if he leers and chuckles,
You just be handy with a stick,
(Mind that it's pretty hard and thick,)
And rap him on the knuckles!

“Then carelessly remark ‘Old coon!

Perhaps you're not aware
That, if you don't behave, you'll soon
Be chuckling to another tune—

And so you'd best take care!

“ That’s the right way to cure a Sprite
Of such-like goings-on—
But, gracious me! It’s nearly light!
Good-night, old Turnip-top, good-night!”
A nod, and he was gone.

CANTO VII.

Sad Soubenance.

“What’s this?” I pondered. “Have I slept?

Or can I have been drinking?”

But soon a gentler feeling crept

Upon me, and I sat and wept

An hour or so, like winking.

Then, as my tears could never bring

My favourite phantom back,

It seemed to me the proper thing

To mix another glass, and sing

The following Coronach.

Coronach.

'And art thou gone, beloved ghost?

Best of familiars !

Nay then, farewell, my duckling roast,

Farewell, farewell, my tea and toast,

My meerschaum and cigars !

'The hues of life are dull and gray,

The sweets of life insipid,

When thou, my charmer, art away—

Old brick, or rather, let me say,

Old parallelepiped !'

Instead of singing verse the third,

I ceased ; abruptly, rather—

But, after such a splendid word,

I felt that it would be absurd

To try it any farther.

“No need for Bones to hurry so!”

Thought I. “In fact, I doubt
If it was worth his while to go—
And who is Tibbs, I’d like to know,
To make such work about?”

“If Tibbs is anything like me,

It’s *possible*,” I said,

“He won’t be over-pleased to be
Dropped in upon at half-past three,
After he’s snug in bed.

“And if Bones plagues him anyhow—

Squeaking and all the rest of it,
As he was doing here just now—
I prophesy there’ll be a row,
And Tibbs will have the best of it!”

So with a yawn I went my way
 To seek the welcome downy,
And slept, and dreamed till break of day
Of Poltergeist and Fetch and Fay
 And Leprechaun and Brownie!

And never since, by sea or land,
 On mountain or on plain,
'Mid Arctic snow, or Afric sand—
Not even 'in the Strand, the Strand!
 Has Bones appeared again.

A Quaker friend accosted me—
 Tall, stiff, as any column—
“Thee'rt out of sorts, I fear,” said he;
“Verily I am grieved to see
 Thee go'st so grave and solemn.”

“*The ghost’s* not grave,” I said, “but gay ;

Not solemn, but convivial :

I’m ‘*out of spirits,*’ you should say,

Not ‘*out of sorts*’—” he turned away,

Thinking the answer trivial.

For years I’ve not been visited

By any kind of Sprite ;

Yet still they echo in my head,

Those parting words, so kindly said,

“Old Turnip-top, good-night !”

A VALENTINE.

[To a friend at Radley College, who had complained
'that I was glad enough to see him when he came, but did
not seem to miss him if he stayed away.']

AND cannot pleasures, while they last,
Be actual, unless, when past,
They leave us shuddering and aghast,
 With anguish smarting?
And cannot friends be fond and fast,
 And yet bear parting?

And must I then, at Friendship's call,
Calmly resign the little all
(Trifling, I grant, it is, and small)
 I have of gladness,
And lend my being to the thrall
 Of gloom and sadness?

And think you that I should be dumb,
And full 'dolorum omnium,'
Excepting when *you* choose to come
 And share my dinner?

At other times be sour and glum,
 And daily thinner?

Must he then only live to weep,
Who'd prove his friendship true and deep,
By day a lonely shadow creep,
 At night rest badly,
Oft muttering in his broken sleep
 The name of Radley?

The lover, if, for certain days,
His fair one be denied his gaze,
Sinks not in grief and wild amaze,
 But, wiser wooer,
He spends the time in writing lays,
 And posts them to her.

And if he be an Oxford Don,
Or 'Jonson's learned sock be on,'
A touching Valentine anon
 The post shall carry,
When thirteen days are come and gone
 Of February.

Farewell, dear friend, and when we meet
In desert waste or crowded street,
Perhaps before this week shall fleet,
 Perhaps to-morrow,
I trust to find *your* heart the seat
 Of wasting sorrow.

Feb. 13, 1860.

A SEA DIRGE.

THERE are certain things—as, a spider, a ghost,
The income-tax, gout, an umbrella for three—
That I hate; but the thing that I hate the most
Is a thing they call the Sea.

Pour some salt water over the floor—
Ugly I'm sure you'll allow it to be:
Suppose it extended a mile or more,
That's very like the Sea.

Beat a dog till he howls outright—
Cruel, but all very well for a spree:
Suppose that he did so day and night,
That would be like the Sea.

I had a vision of nursery-maids ;
Tens of thousands passed by me—
All leading children with wooden spades,
And this was by the Sea.

Who invented those spades of wood ?
Who was it cut them out of the tree ?
None, I think, but an idiot could—
Or one that loved the Sea.

It is pleasant and dreamy, no doubt, to float
With 'thoughts as boundless, and souls as free' !
But, suppose you are very unwell in the boat,
How do you like the Sea ?

“ But it makes the intellect clear and keen—”

Prove it ! Prove it ! How can it be ?

“ Why, what does 'B sharp' (in music) mean,

If not the 'natural C' ?”

What, keen? With such questions as 'When's high
tide?

Is shelling shrimps an improvement to tea?
Are donkeys adapted for Man to ride?

Such are our thoughts by the Sea.

There is an insect that people avoid
(Whence is derived the verb 'to flee');
Where have you been by it most annoyed?

In lodgings by the Sea.

If you like coffee with sand for dregs,
A decided hint of salt in your tea,
And a fishy taste in the very eggs—

By all means choose the Sea.

And if, with these dainties to drink and eat,
You prefer not a vestige of grass or tree,
And a chronic state of wet in your feet,

Then—I recommend the Sea.

For *I* have friends who dwell by the coast—

Pleasant friends they are to me!

It is when I am with them I wonder most

That any one likes the Sea.

They take me a walk : though tired and stiff,

To climb the heights I madly agree ;

And, after a tumble or so from the cliff,

They kindly suggest the Sea.

I try the rocks, and I think it cool

That they laugh with such an excess of glee,

As I heavily slip into every pool

That skirts the cold cold Sea.

Once I met a friend in the street,

With wife, and nurse, and children three—

Never again such a sight may I meet

As that party from the Sea!

Their looks were sullen, their steps were slow,

Convicted felons they seemed to be :

“Are you going to prison, dear friend?” “Oh no!

We’re returning—from the Sea!”

Ye Carpette Rynghte.

I habe a horse—a rynghte good horse—

He doe I envie those

Who scoure y^e plaine yn headie course,

Cyll suddaine on theire nose

They lyghte wyth unexpected force—

It ys—a horse of clothes.

I habe a saddel—“ Say’st thou soe?

Wyth styrrippes, Rynghte, to boote?”

I sayde not that—I answere “Noe”—

It lacketh such, I woot—

It ys a mutton-saddel, loe!

Parte of y^e fleecie brute.

I habe a bytte—a ryghte good bytte—

As schall bee seene yr tyme.

The jawe of horse yt wyll not fytt;e;

Its use ys more sublyme.

Fayre Syr, how deemest thou of yt?

It ys—thys bytte of rhyme.

HIAWATHA'S PHOTOGRAPHING.

[In these days of imitation, I can claim no sort of merit for this slight attempt at doing what is known to be so easy. Any one who knows what verse is, with the slightest ear for rhythm, can throw off a composition in the easy running metre of 'The Song of Hiawatha.' Having, then, distinctly stated that I challenge no attention, in the following little poem, to its merely verbal jingle, I must beg the candid reader, to confine his criticism, to its treatment of the subject.]

FROM his shoulder Hiawatha
Took the camera of rosewood,
Made of sliding, folding rosewood;
Neatly put it all together.
In its case it lay compactly,
Folded into nearly nothing;
But he opened out the hinges,
Pushed and pulled the joints and hinges,

Till it looked all squares and oblongs,
Like a complicated figure
In the second book of Euclid.

This he perched upon a tripod,
And the family in order
Sat before him for their pictures.
Mystic, awful was the process.

First, a piece of glass he coated
With Collodion, and plunged it
In a bath of Lunar Caustic
Carefully dissolved in water:
There he left it certain minutes.

Secondly, my Hiawatha
Made with cunning hand a mixture
Of the acid Pyro-gallic,
And of Glacial Acetic,
And of Alcohol and water:
This developed all the picture.

Finally, he fixed each picture

With a saturate solution
Of a certain salt of Soda—
Chemists call it Hyposulphite.
(Very difficult the name is
For a metre like the present,
But periphrasis has done it.)

All the family in order
Sat before him for their pictures.
Each in turn, as he was taken,
Volunteered his own suggestions,
His invaluable suggestions.

First the Governor, the Father:
He suggested velvet curtains
Looped about a massy pillar;
And the corner of a table,
Of a rosewood dining-table.
He would hold a scroll of something,
Hold it firmly in his left-hand;
He would keep his right-hand buried

(Like Napoleon) in his waistcoat ;
He would contemplate the distance
With a look of pensive meaning,
As of ducks that die in tempests.

Grand, heroic was the notion :
Yet the picture failed entirely :
Failed, because he moved a little,
Moved, because he couldn't help it.

Next, his better half took courage ;
She would have her picture taken ;
She came dressed beyond description,
Dressed in jewels and in satin
Far too gorgeous for an empress.
Gracefully she sat down sideways,
With a simper scarcely human,
Holding in her hand a nosegay
Rather larger than a cabbage.
All the while that she was taking,
Still the lady chattered, chattered,

Like a monkey in the forest.

"Am I sitting still?" she asked him.

"Is my face enough in profile?

Shall I hold the nosegay higher?

Will it come into the picture?"

And the picture failed completely.

Next the Son, the Stunning-Cantab :

He suggested curves of beauty,

Curves pervading all his figure,

Which the eye might follow onward,

Till they centered in the breast-pin,

Centered in the golden breast-pin.

He had learnt it all from Ruskin

(Author of 'The Stones of Venice,

'Seven Lamps of Architecture,

Modern Painters,' and some others);

And perhaps he had not fully

Understood his author's meaning;

But, whatever was the reason,

All was fruitless, as the picture
Ended in an utter failure.

Next to him the eldest daughter:
She suggested very little;
Only asked if he would take her
With her look of 'passive beauty.'

Her idea of passive beauty
Was a squinting of the left-eye,
Was a drooping of the right-eye,
Was a smile that went up sideways
To the corner of the nostrils.

Hiawatha, when she asked him,
Took no notice of the question,
Looked as if he hadn't heard it;
But, when pointedly appealed to,
Smiled in his peculiar manner,
Coughed and said it 'didn't matter,'
Bit his lip and changed the subject.

Nor in this was he mistaken,

As the picture failed completely.

So in turn the other sisters.

Last, the youngest son was taken:

Very rough and thick his hair was,

Very round and red his face was,

Very dusty was his jacket,

Very fidgetty his manner.

And his overbearing sisters

Called him names he disapproved of:

Called him Johnny, 'Daddy's Darling,'

Called him Jacky, 'Scrubby School-boy.'

And, so awful was the picture,

In comparison the others

Might be thought to have succeeded,

To have partially succeeded.

Finally my Hiawatha

Tumbled all the tribe together,

('Grouped' is not the right expression,)

And, as 'happy chance would have it,

Did at last obtain a picture
Where the faces all succeeded :
Each came out a perfect likeness.

Then they joined and all abused it,
Unrestrainedly abused it,
As 'the worst and ugliest picture
They could possibly have dreamed of.
Giving one such strange expressions!
Sulkiness, conceit, and meanness!
Really any one would take us
(Any one that did not know us)
For the most unpleasant people!
(Hiawatha seemed to think so,
Seemed to think it not unlikely.)
All together rang their voices,
Angry, loud, discordant voices,
As of dogs that howl in concert,
As of cats that wail in chorus.

But my Hiawatha's patience,

His politeness, and his patience,
Unaccountably had vanished,
And he left that happy party.
Neither did he leave them slowly,
With that calm deliberation,
That intense deliberation
Which photographers aspire to:
But he left them in a hurry,
Left them in a mighty hurry,
Vowing that he would not stand it.

Hurriedly he packed his boxes,
Hurriedly the porter trundled
On a barrow all his boxes;
Hurriedly he took his ticket,
Hurriedly the train received him:
Thus departed Hiawatha.

THE LANG COORTIN'.

THE ladye she stood at her lattice high,
Wi' her doggie at her feet;
Thorough the lattice she can spy
The passers in the street.

“There's one that standeth at the door,
And tirlith at the pin:
Now speak and say, my popinjay,*
If I sall let him in.”

Then up and spake the popinjay
That flew abune her head:
“Gae let him in that tirls the pin,
He cometh thee to wed.”

* *Popinjay*. This bird appears to have been a regular domestic institution with our forefathers (see the ‘Minstrelsy of the Border’), and to have volunteered advice and moral reflections on all possible occasions—much after the fashion of the Chorus in Greek Tragedy.

O when he cam' the parlour in,
A woeful man was he!
“And dinna ye ken your lover again,
Sae well that loveth thee?”

“And how wad I ken ye loved me, Sir,
That have been sae lang away?
And how wad I ken ye loved me, Sir?
Ye never telled me sae!”

Said—“ladye dear,” and the salt salt tear
Cam' rinnin' doon his cheek,
“I have sent thee tokens of my love
This many and many a week.

“O didna ye get the rings, ladye,
The rings o' the gowd sae fine?
I wist that I have sent to thee
Four score, four score and nine.”

“They cam’ to me,” said that fair ladye,

“Wow, they were flimsie things!”

Said—“that chain o’ gowd, my doggie to houd,

It is made o’ thae self-same rings.”

“And didna ye get the locks, the locks,

The locks o’ my ain black hair,

Whilk I sent by post, whilk I sent by box,

Whilk I sent by the carrier?”

“They cam’ to me,” said that fair ladye,

“And I prithee send nae mair!”

Said—“that cushion sae red, for my doggie’s head,

It is stuffed wi’ thae locks o’ hair.”

“And didna ye get the letter, ladye,

Tied wi’ a silken string,

Whilk I sent to thee frae the far countrie,

A message of love to bring?”

“It cam’ to me frae the far countrie

Wi’ its silken string and a’;

But it wasna prepaid,” said that high-born maid,

“Sae I gar’d them tak’ it awa’.”

“O ever alack that ye sent it back,

It was written sae clerkly and well!

Now the message it brought, and the boon that it
sought,

I must even say it mysel’.”

Then up and spake the popinjay,

Sae wisely counselled he:

“Now say it in the proper way,

Gae doon upon thy knee!”

The lover he turned baith red and pale,

Gaed doon upon his knee:

“O ladye, hear the waesome tale

I have to tell to thee!

“For five lang years, and five lang years,
I coorted thee by looks;
By nods and winks, by smiles and tears,
As I had read in books.

“For ten lang years, O weary hours!
I coorted thee by signs;
By sending game, by sending flowers,
By sending Valentines.

“For five lang years, and five lang years,
I have dwelt in the far countrie,
In hopes thy mind might be inclined
Mair tenderly to me.

“Now thirty years are gane and past,
I am come frae a foreign land:
I am come to tell thee my love at last;
O ladye, gie me thy hand!”

The ladye she turned not pale nor red,

But she smiled a pitiful smile :

“ Sic' a coortin' as yours, my man,” she said,

“ Takes a lang and a weary while !”

And out and laughed the popinjay,

A laugh of bitter scorn :

“ A coortin' done in sic' a way,

It ought not to be borne !”

Wi' that the doggie barked aloud,

And up and doon he ran,

And tugged and strained his chain o' gowd,

All for to bite the man.

“ O hush thee, gentle popinjay !

O hush thee, doggie dear !

There is a thing I fain wad say,

It needeth he should hear !”

Aye louder screamed that ladye fair
 To still her doggie's bark ;
Ever the lover shouted mair
 To make that ladye hark :

Shrill and more shrill the popinjay
 Kept up his angry squall :
I trow the doggie's voice that day
 Was louder than them all !

The serving-men and serving-maids
 Sat by the kitchen fire :
They heard sic' a din the parlour within
 As made them much admire.

Out spake the boy in buttons,
 (I ween he wasna thin,)
“Now wha will tae the parlour gae,
 And stay this deadlie din?”

And they have taen a kerchief,
Casted their keivils * in,
For wha should tae the parlour gae,
And stay that deadlie din.

When on that boy the kevil fell
To stay the fearsome noise,
“Gae in,” they cried, “whate’er betide,
Thou prince of button-boys!”

Syne, he has taen a supple cane
To beat that dog sae fat:
The doggie yowled, the doggie howled
The louder aye for that.

Syne, he has taen a mutton-bane—
The doggie hushed his noise,
And followed doon the kitchen stair
That prince of button-boys!

* *Keivils*, lots. A method of deciding on a course of action, which was probably most popular with those who could not afford to keep a popinjay.

Then sadly spake that ladye fair,
 Wi' a frown upon her brow:
"O dearer to me is my sma' doggie
 Than a dozen sic' as thou!

"Nae use, nae use for sighs and tears:
 Nae use at all to fret:
Sin' ye've bided sae well for thirty years,
 Ye may bide a wee langer yet!"

Sadly, sadly he crossed the floor,
 And tirlèd at the pin:
Sadly gaed he through the door
 Where sadly he cam' in.

"O gin I had a popinjay,
 To fly abune my head,
To tell me what I ought to say,
 I had by now been wed.

“O gin I find anither ladye,”

He said with sighs and tears,

“I wist my coortin' sall not be

Anither thirty years.

“For gin I find a ladye gay,

Exactly to my taste,

I'll pop the question, aye or nay,

In twenty years at maist.”

MELANCHOLETTA.

WITH saddest music all day long
She soothed her secret sorrow:
At night she sighed. "I fear 'twas wrong
Such cheerful words to borrow;
Dearest, a sweeter, sadder song
I'll sing to thee to-morrow."

I thanked her, but I could not say
That I was glad to hear it:
I left the house at break of day,
And did not venture near it
Till time, I hoped, had worn away
Her grief, for nought could cheer it!

My dismal sister! Couldst thou know
The wretched home thou keepest!
Thy brother, drowned in daily woe,
Is thankful when thou sleepest;
For if I laugh, however low,
When thou'rt awake, thou weepest!

I took my sister t'other day
(Excuse the slang expression)
To Sadler's Wells to see the play,
In hopes the new impression
Might in her thoughts, from grave to gay,
Effect some slight digression.

I asked three friends of mine from town
To join us in our folly,
Whose mirth, I thought, might serve to drown
My sister's melancholy:
The lively Jones, the sportive Brown,
And Robinson the jolly.

I need not tell of soup and fish
In solemn silence swallowed,
The sobş that ushered in each dish
And its departure followed,
Nor yet my suicidal wish
To *be* the cheese I hollowed.

Some desperate attempts were made
To start a conversation ;
“Madam,” the lively Jones essayed,
“Which kind of recreation,
Hunting or fishing, have you made
Your special occupation?”

Her lips curved downwards instantly,
As if of india-rubber,
“Hounds *in full cry* I like,” said she,
(Oh how I longed to snub her!)
“Of fish, a whale’s the one for me,
It is so full of blubber !”

The night's performance was 'King John.'

"It's dull," she wept, "and so-so!"

Awhile I let her tears flow on,

She said "they soothed her woe so!"

At length the curtain rose upon

'Bombastes Furioso.'

In vain I roared; in vain I tried

To rouse her into laughter:

Her pensive glances wandered wide

From orchestra to rafter—

"*Tier upon tier!*" she said, and sighed;

And silence followed after.

THE THREE VOICES.

THE FIRST VOICE.

WITH hands tight clenched through matted hair,
He crouched in trance of dumb despair:
There came a breeze from out the air.

It passed athwart the glooming flat—
It fanned his forehead as he sat—
It lightly bore away his hat,

All to the feet of one who stood
Like maid enchanted in a wood,
Frowning as darkly as she could,

With huge umbrella, lank and brown,
Unerringly she pinned it down,
Right through the centre of the crown.

Then, with an aspect cold and grim,
Regardless of its battered rim,
She took it up and gave it him.

Awhile like one in dreams he stood,
Then faltered forth his gratitude,
In words just short of being rude :

For it had lost its shape and shine,
And it had cost him four-and-nine,
And he was going out to dine.

With grave indifference to his speech,
Fixing her eyes upon the beach,
She said "Each gives to more than each."

He could not answer yea or nay;
He faltered "Gifts may pass away."
Yet knew not what he meant to say.

"If that be so," she straight replied,
"Each heart with each doth coincide.
What boots it? For the world is wide."

And he, not wishing to appear
Less wise, said "This Material Sphere
Is but *Attributive Idea*."

But when she asked him "Wherefore so?"
He felt his very whiskers glow,
And frankly owned "I do not know."

While, like broad waves of golden grain,
Or sunlit hues on cloistered pane,
His colour came and went again.

Pitying his obvious distress,
Yet with a tinge of bitterness,
She said "The More exceeds the Less."

"A truth of such undoubted weight,"
He urged, "and so extreme in date,
It were superfluous to state."

Roused into sudden passion, she
In tone of cold malignity:
"To others, yes; but not to thee."

But when she saw him quail and quake,
And when he urged "For pity's sake!"
Once more in gentle tone she spake:

"Thought in the mind doth still abide;
That is by Intellect supplied,
And within that Idea doth hide.

“ And he, that yearns the truth to know,
Still further inwardly may go,
And find Idea from Notion flow.

“ And thus the chain, that sages sought,
Is to a glorious circle wrought,
For Notion hath its source in Thought.”

When he, with racked and whirling brain,
Feebly implored her to explain,
She simply said it all again.

Wrenched with an agony intense,
He spake, neglecting Sound and Sense,
And careless of all consequence :

“ Mind—I believe—is Essence—Ent—
Abstract—that is—an Accident—
Which we—that is to say—I meant—”

When, with quick breath and cheeks all flushed,
At length his speech was somewhat hushed,
She looked at him, and he was crushed.

It needed not her calm reply ;
She fixed him with a stony eye,
And he could neither fight nor fly,

While she dissected, word by word,
His speech, half guessed at and half heard,
As might a cat a little bird.

Then, having wholly overthrown
His views, and stripped them to the bone,
Proceeded to unfold her own.

So passed they on with even pace,
Yet gradually one might trace
A shadow growing on his face.

THE SECOND VOICE.

They walked beside the wave-worn beach,
Her tongue was very apt to teach,
And now and then he did beseech

She would abate her dulcet tone,
Because the talk was all her own,
And he was dull as any drone.

She urged "No cheese is made of chalk:"
And ceaseless flowed her dreary talk,
Tuned to the footfall of a walk.

Her voice was very full and rich,
And when at length she asked him "Which?"
It mounted to its highest pitch.

He a bewildered answer gave,
Drowned in the sullen moaning wave,
Lost in the echoes of the cave.

He answered her he knew not what ;
Like shaft from bow at random shot :
He spoke, but she regarded not.

She waited not for his reply,
But with a downward leaden eye
Went on as if he were not by.

Sound argument and grave defence,
Strange questions raised on "Why?" and "Whence?"
And weighted down with common sense.

"Shall Man be Man? And shall he miss
Of other thoughts no thought but this,
Harmonious dews of sober bliss?

“What boots it? Shall his fevered eye
Through towering nothingness descry
The grisly phantom hurry by?

“And hear dumb shrieks that fill the air;
See mouths that gape, and eyes that stare
And redden in the dusky glare?

“The meadows breathing amber light,
The darkness toppling from the height,
The feathery train of granite Night?

“Shall he, grown gray among his peers,
Through the thick curtain of his tears
Catch glimpses of his earlier years,

“And hear the sounds he knew of yore,
Old shufflings on the sanded floor,
Old knuckles tapping at the door?

“Yet still before him as he flies
One pallid form shall ever rise,
And, bodying forth in glassy eyes

“The vision of a vanished good,
Low peering through the tangled wood,
Shall freeze the current of his blood.”

Still from each fact, with skill uncouth
And savage rapture, like a tooth
She wrenched a slow reluctant truth.

Till, like some silent water-mill,
When summer suns have dried the rill,
She reached a full stop, and was still.

Dead calm succeeded to the fuss,
As when the loaded omnibus
Has reached the railway terminus;

When, for the tumult of the street,
Is heard the engine's stifled beat,
The velvet tread of porters' feet.

With glance that ever sought the ground,
She moved her lips without a sound,
And every now and then she frowned.

He gazed upon the sleeping sea,
And joyed in its tranquillity,
And in that silence dead, but she

To muse a little space did seem,
Then, like the echo of a dream,
Harped back upon her threadbare theme.

Still an attentive ear he lent,
But could not fathom what she meant:
She was not deep, nor eloquent.

He marked the ripple on the sand :
The even swaying of her hand
Was all that he could understand.

He left her, and he turned aside :
He sat and watched the coming tide
Across the shores so newly dried.

He wondered at the waters clear,
The breeze that whispered in his ear,
The billows heaving far and near ;

And why he had so long preferred
To hang upon her every word ;
“In truth,” he said, “it was absurd.”

THE THIRD VOICE.

Not long this transport held its place :
Within a little moment's space
Quick tears were raining down his face.

His heart stood still, aghast with fear ;
A wordless voice, nor far nor near,
He seemed to hear and not to hear.

“Tears kindle not the doubtful spark :
If so, why not? Of this remark
The bearings are profoundly dark.”

“Her speech,” he said, “hath caused this pain ;
Easier I count it to explain
The jargon of the howling main,

“Or, stretched beside some sedgy brook,
To con, with inexpressive look,
An unintelligible book.”

Low spake the voice within his head,
In words imagined more than said,
Soundless as ghost's intended tread:

“If thou art duller than before,
Why quittedst thou the voice of lore?
Why not endure, expecting more?”

“Rather than that,” he groaned aghast,
“I'd writhe in depths of cavern vast,
Some loathly vampire's rich repast.”

“'Twere hard,” it answered, “themes immense
To coop within the narrow fence
That rings *thy* scant intelligence.”

“Not so,” he urged, “nor once alone:
But there was that within her tone
Which chilled me to the very bone.

“Her style was anything but clear,
And most unpleasantly severe;
Her epithets were very queer.

“And yet, so grand were her replies,
I could not choose but deem her wise;
I did not dare to criticise;

“Nor did I leave her, till she went
So deep in tangled argument
That all my powers of thought were spent.”

A little whisper inly slid;
“Yet truth is truth: you know you did—”
A little wink beneath the lid.

And, sickened with excess of dread,
Prone to the dust he bent his head,
And lay like one three-quarters dead.

Forth went the whisper like a breeze;
Left him amid the wondering trees,
Left him by no means at his ease.

Once more he weltered in despair,
With hands, through denser-matted hair,
More tightly clenched than then they were.

When, bathed in dawn of living red,
Majestic frowned the mountain head,
"Tell me my fault," was all he said.

When, at high noon, the blazing sky
Scorched in his head each haggard eye,
Then keenest rose his weary cry.

And when at eve the unpitying sun
Smiled grimly on the solemn fun,
“Alack,” he sighed, “what *have* I done?”

But saddest, darkest was the sight,
When the cold grasp of leaden Night
Dashed him to earth, and held him tight.

Tortured, unaided, and alone,
Thunders were silence to his groan,
Bagpipes sweet music to its tone :

“What? Ever thus, in dismal round,
Shall Pain and Misery profound
Pursue me like a sleepless hound,

“With crimson-dashed and eager jaws,
Me, still in ignorance of the cause,
Unknowing what I brake of laws?”

The whisper to his ear did seem
Like echoed flow of silent stream,
Or shadow of forgotten dream ;

The whisper trembling in the wind :
“ Her fate with thine was intertwined,”
So spake it in his inner mind ;

“ Each orb'd on each a baleful star,
Each proved the other's blight and bar,
Each unto each were best, most far :

“ Yea, each to each was worse than foe,
Thou, a scared dullard, gibbering low,
And she, an avalanche of woe.”

A DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

[The Double Acrostic, a form of puzzle which has lately become fashionable, is constructed thus:—Two words are selected having the same number of letters: these are supposed to be written in two parallel columns, and a series of words is then found (their length is immaterial) such that the first column may consist of their initial letters, and the second of their final letters. For instance, if the column-words selected were ‘rose’ and ‘ring,’ we might

fill up thus:—

	r	i	v	e	r	
	o	b	i			
	s	e	v	e	n	
	e	g	g			

The two column-words, and the

horizontal words, are then described in a series of lines or verses, and the puzzle is complete.

The innumerable specimens of this form of puzzle already published are in every way (if we except the studied insipidity of the separate verses, and their total want of connexion one with another) to be commended. The following attempt, made at the request of some friends who had gone to a ball at an Oxford Commemoration, is printed in the hope of suggesting a possible improvement in the treatment of the subject.]

THERE was an ancient city, stricken down

With a strange frenzy, and for many a day

They paced from morn to eve the noisy town,

And danced the night away.

I asked the cause: the aged men grew sad—
 They pointed to a building gray and tall,
 And hoarsely answered "Step inside, my lad,
 And then you'll see it all."

Yet what are all such gaities to me
 Whose thoughts are full of indices and surds?

$$x^2 + 7x + 53$$

$$= \frac{11}{3}.$$

But something whispered "It will soon be done—
 Bands cannot always play, nor ladies smile:
 Endure with patience the distasteful fun
 For just a little while!"

A change came o'er my Vision—it was night:
 We clove a pathway through a frantic throng;
 The steeds, wild-plunging, filled us with affright;
 The chariots whirled along.

Within a marble hall a river ran—

A living tide, half muslin and half cloth :

And here one mourned a broken wreath or fan,

Yet swallowed down her wrath ;

And here one offered to a thirsty fair

(His words half-drowned amid those thunders
tuneful)

Some frozen viand (there were many there),

A tooth-ache in each spoonful.

There comes a happy pause, for human strength

Will not endure to dance without cessation ;

And every one must reach the point at length

Of absolute prostration.

At such a moment ladies learn to give

To partners, who would urge them over-much,

A flat and yet decided negative—

Photographers love such.

There comes a welcome summons—hope revives,
And fading eyes grow bright, and pulses quicken;
Incessant pop the corks, and busy knives
Dispense the tongue and chicken.

Flushed with new life, the crowd flows back again:
And all is tangled talk and mazy motion—
Much like a waving field of golden grain,
Or a tempestuous ocean.

And thus they give the time that Nature meant
For peaceful sleep and meditative snores,
To thoughtless din, and mindless merriment,
And waste of shoes and floors.

And one (we name him not) that flies the flowers,
That dreads the dances, and that shuns the salads,
They doom to pass in solitude the hours,
Writing acrostic-ballads.

How late it grows! Long since the hour is past
That should have warned us with its double knock;
The twilight wanes, and morning comes at last—
“Oh, Uncle! what’s o’clock?”

The Uncle gravely nods, and wisely winks—
It *may* mean much; but how is one to know?
He opes his mouth—yet out of it, methinks,
No words of wisdom flow.

SIZE AND TEARS.

WHEN on the sandy shore I sit,
Beside the salt sea-wave,
And fall into a weeping fit
Because I dare not shave—
A little whisper at my ear
Enquires the reason of my fear.

I answer "If that ruffian Jones,
Should recognise me here,
He'd bellow out my name in tones
Offensive to the ear:
He chaffs me so on being stout
(A thing that always puts me out)."

Ah me! I see him on the cliff!

Farewell, farewell to hope,

If he should look this way, and if

He's got his telescope!

To whatsoever place I flee,

My odious rival follows me!

For every night, and everywhere,

I meet him out at dinner;

And when I've found some charming fair,

And vowed to die or win her,

The wretch (he's thin and I am stout)

Is sure to come and cut me out!

The girls (just like them!) all agree

To praise J. Jones, Esquire:

I ask them what on earth they see

About him to admire?

They cry, "He is so sleek and slim,

It's quite a treat to look at him!"

They vanish in tobacco smoke,

Those visionary maids—

I feel a sharp and sudden poke

Between the shoulder-blades—

“Why, Brown, my boy! You’re growing stout!”

(I told you he would find me out!)

“My growth is not *your* business, Sir!”

“No more it is, my boy!

But if it’s *yours*, as I infer,

Why, Brown, I give you joy!

A man whose business prospers so

Is just the sort of man to know!

“It’s hardly safe, though, talking here—

I’d best get out of reach:

For such a weight as yours, I fear,

Must shortly sink the beach!”—

Insult me thus because I’m stout!

I vow I’ll go and call him out!

POETA FIT, NON NASCITUR.

“How shall I be a poet?

How shall I write in rhyme?

You told me once ‘the very wish

Partook of the sublime:’

Then tell me how! Don’t put me off

With your ‘another time’!”

The old man smiled to see him,

To hear his sudden sally;

He liked the lad to speak his mind

Enthusiastically:

And thought “There’s no hum-drum in him,

Nor any shilly-shally.”

“And would you be a poet
Before you’ve been to school?

Ah, well! I hardly thought you
So absolute a fool.

First learn to be spasmodic—
A very simple rule.

“For first you write a sentence,
And then you chop it small;
Then mix the bits, and sort them out
Just as they chance to fall:
The order of the phrases makes
No difference at all.

“Then if you’d be impressive,
Remember what I say,
That abstract qualities begin
With capitals always:
The True, the Good, the Beautiful—
Those are the things that pay!

“Next, when you are describing
A shape, or sound, or tint;
Don't state the matter plainly,
But put it in a hint;
And learn to look at all things
With a sort of mental squint.”

“For instance, if I wished, Sir,
Of mutton-pies to tell,
Should I say ‘dreams of fleecy flocks
Pent in a wheaten cell’?”

“Why, yes,” the old man said; “that phrase
Would answer very well.

“Then fourthly, there are epithets
That suit with any word—
As well as Harvey's Reading Sauce
With fish, or flesh, or bird—
Of these, ‘wild,’ ‘lonely,’ ‘weary,’ ‘strange,’
Are much to be preferred.”

“And will it do, O will it do
To take them in a lump—
As ‘the wild man went his weary way
To a strange and lonely pump’?”

“Nay, nay! You must not hastily
To such conclusions jump.

“Such epithets, like pepper,
Give zest to what you write;
And, if you strew them sparely,
They whet the appetite:
But if you lay them on too thick,
You spoil the matter quite.

“Last, as to the arrangement:
Your reader, you should show him,
Must take what information he
Can get, and look for no im-
mature disclosure of the drift
And purpose of your poem.

“Therefore, to test his patience—

How much he can endure—

Mention no places, names, or dates,

And evermore be sure

Throughout the poem to be found

Consistently obscure.

“First fix upon the limit

To which it shall extend :

Then fill it up with ‘padding’—

(Beg some of any friend) :

Your great SENSATION-STANZA

You place towards the end.”

“And what is a Sensation,

Grandfather, tell me, pray?

I think I never heard the word

So used before to-day :

Be kind enough to mention one

‘*Exempli gratiâ.*’”

And the old man, looking sadly
 Across the garden-lawn,
Where here and there a dew-drop
 Yet glittered in the dawn,
Said "Go to the Adelphi,
 And see the 'Colleen Bawn.'

"The word is due to Boucicault—
 The theory is his,
Where Life becomes a spasm,
 And History a whiz:
If that is not Sensation,
 I don't know what it is.

"Now try your hand, ere Fancy
 Has lost its present glow—"
"And then," his grandson added,
 "We'll publish it, you know:
Green cloth—gold-lettered at the back—
 In duodecimo!"

Then proudly smiled that old man

To see the eager lad

Rush madly for his pen and ink

And for his blotting-pad—

But, when he thought of *publishing*,

His face grew stern and sad.

ATALANTA IN CAMDEN-TOWN.

Ay, 'twas here, on this spot,

In that summer of yore,

Atalanta did not

Vote my presence a bore,

Nor reply, to my tenderest talk, she had 'heard all
that nonsense before.'

She'd the brooch I had bought

And the necklace and sash on,

And her heart, as I thought,

Was alive to my passion ;

And she'd done up her hair in the style that the
Empress had brought into fashion.

I had been to the play
With my pearl of a Peri—
But, for all I could say,
She declared she was weary,
That 'the place was so crowded and hot', and she
'couldn't abide that Dundreary.'

Then I thought "'Tis for me
That she whines and she whimpers!"
And it soothed me to see
Those sensational simpers,
And I said "This is scrumptious!"—a phrase I had
learned from the Devonshire shrimpers.

And I vowed "'Twill be said
I'm a fortunate fellow,
When the breakfast is spread,
When the toppers are mellow,
When the foam of the bride-cake is white, and the
fierce orange-blossoms are yellow."

O that languishing yawn!

O those eloquent eyes!

I was drunk with the dawn

Of a splendid surmise—

I was stung by a look, I was slain by a tear, by a
tempest of sighs.

And I whispered "I guess

The sweet secret thou keepest,

And the dainty distress

That thou wistfully weapest;

And the question is 'License or banns?' though
undoubtedly banns are the cheapest."

Then her white hand I clasped,

And with kisses I crowned it:

But she glared and she gasped,

And she muttered "Confound it!"—

Or at least it was something like that, but the noise
of the omnibus drowned it.

THE ELECTIONS TO THE HEBDOMADAL COUNCIL.

[In the year 1866, a Letter with the above title was published in Oxford, addressed by Mr. Goldwin Smith to the Senior Censor of Christ Church, with the twofold object of revealing to the University a vast political misfortune which it had unwittingly encountered, and of suggesting a remedy which should at once alleviate the bitterness of the calamity and secure the sufferers from its recurrence. The misfortune thus revealed was no less than the fact that, at a recent election of Members to the Hebdomadal Council, *two* Conservatives had been chosen, thus giving a Conservative majority in the Council; and the remedy suggested was a sufficiently sweeping one, embracing, as it did, the following details:—

1. 'The exclusion' (from Congregation) 'of the non-academical elements which form a main part of the strength of this party' domination.' These 'elements' are afterwards enumerated as 'the parish clergy and the professional men of the city, and chaplains who are without any academical occupation.'

2. The abolition of the Hebdomadal Council.

3. The abolition of the legislative functions of Convocation.

These are all the main features of this remarkable scheme of Reform, unless it be necessary to add

4. 'To preside over a Congregation with full legislative powers, the Vice-Chancellor ought no doubt to be a man of real capacity.'

But it would be invidious to suppose that there was any intention of suggesting this as a novelty.

The following rhythmical version of the Letter develops its principles to an extent which possibly the writer had never contemplated.]

‘ Now is the *Winter* of our discontent*.’

‘ HEARD ye the arrow hurtle in the sky?
Heard ye the dragon-monster’s deathful cry?’—
Excuse this sudden burst of the Heroic;
The present state of things would vex a Stoic!
And just as Sairey Gamp, for pains within,
Administered a modicum of gin,
So does my mind, when vexed and ill at ease,
Console itself with soothing similes.
The ‘ dragon-monster’ (pestilential schism!)
I need not tell you is Conservatism;
The ‘ hurtling arrow’ (till we find a better)
Is represented by the present Letter.

* Dr. Wynter, President of St. John’s, one of the recently elected Conservative members of Council.

'Twas, I remember, but the other day,
 Dear Senior Censor, that you chanced to say
 You thought these party-combinations would
 Be found, "though needful, no unmingled good."
 Unmingled good? They are unmingled ill*!
 I never took to them, and never will †—
 What am I saying? Heed it not, my friend:
 On the next page I mean to recommend
 The very dodges that I now condemn
 In the Conservatives! Don't hint to them
 A word of this! (In confidence. Ahem!)

Need I rehearse the history of Jowett?
 I need not, Senior Censor, for you know it ‡.
That was the Board Hebdomadal, and oh!
 Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow!

* 'In a letter on a point connected with the late elections to the Hebdomadal Council you incidentally remarked to me that our combinations for these elections, "though necessary, were not an unmixed good." They are an unmixed evil.'

† 'I never go to a *caucus* without reluctance: I never write a canvassing letter without a feeling of repugnance to my task.'

‡ 'I need not rehearse the history of the Regius Professorship of Greek.'

Let each that wears a beard, and each that shaves,
Join in the cry 'We never will be slaves!'

"But can the University afford

To be a slave to any kind of board?

A *slave?*" you shuddering ask. "Think you it can, Sir?"

"*Not at the present moment,*" is my answer*.

I've thought the matter o'er and o'er again,

And given to it all my powers of brain;

I've thought it out, and this is what I make it,

(And I don't care a Tory how you take it:)

It may be right to go ahead, I guess :
It may be right to stop, I do confess :
Also, it may be right to retrogress †. }

So says the oracle, and, for myself, I

Must say it beats to fits the one at Delphi!

To save beloved Oxford from the yoke,

(For this majority's beyond a joke,)

* 'The University cannot afford at the present moment to be delivered over as a slave to any non-academical interest whatever.'

† 'It may be right to go on, it may be right to stand still, or it may be right to go back.'

We must combine *, aye! hold a *caucus*-meeting †,
Unless we want to get another beating.

That they should 'bottle' us is nothing new—

But shall they bottle us and *caucus* too?

See the 'fell unity of purpose' now

With which Obstructives plunge into the row ‡!

'Factionous Minorities,' we used to sigh—

'Factionous Majorities!' is now the cry.

'Votes—ninety-two'—no combination here:

'Votes—ninety-three'—conspiracy, 'tis clear ||!

You urge "'Tis but a unit." I reply

That in that unit lurks their 'unity.'

Our voters often bolt, and often baulk us,

But then they never, never go to *caucus*!

* 'To save the University from going completely under the yoke . . . we shall still be obliged to combine.'

† 'Caucus-holding and wire-pulling would still be almost inevitably carried on to some extent.'

‡ 'But what are we to do? Here is a great political and theological party . . . labouring under perfect discipline and with fell unity of purpose, to hold the University in subjection, and fill her government with its nominees.'

|| At a recent election to Council, the Liberals mustered ninety-two votes, and the Conservatives ninety-three; whereupon the latter

Our voters can't forget the maxim famous
'Semel electum semper eligamus ;'
 They never can be worked into a ferment
 By visionary promise of preferment,
 Nor taught, by hints of 'Paradise *' beguiled,
 To whisper 'C for Chairman' like a child †!
 And thus the friends that we have tempted down
 Oft take the two-o'clock Express for town ‡.

This is our danger : this the secret foe
 That aims at Oxford such a deadly blow.
 What champion can we find to save the State,
 To crush the plot? We darkly whisper 'Wait || !'

were charged with having obtained their victory by a conspiracy.

* 'Not to mention that, as we cannot promise Paradise to our supporters, they are very apt to take the train for London just before the election.'

† It is not known to what the word 'Paradise' was intended to allude, and therefore the hint, here thrown out, that the writer meant to recall the case of the late Chairman of Mr. Gathorne Hardy's committee, who had been recently collated to the See of Chester, is wholly wanton and gratuitous.

‡ A case of this had actually occurred on the occasion of the division just alluded to.

|| Mr. Wayte, now President of Trinity, then put forward as the Liberal candidate for election to Council.

My scheme is this: remove the votes of all
 The residents that are not Liberal*—
 Leave the young Tutors uncontrolled and free,
 And Oxford then shall see—what it shall see.
 What next? Why then, I say, let Convocation
 Be shorn of all her powers of legislation †.
 But why stop there? Let us go boldly on—
 Sweep everything beginning with a ‘Con’
 Into oblivion! Convocation first,
 Conservatism next, and, last and worst,
 ‘*Concilium Hebdomadale*’ must,
 Consumed and conquered, be consigned to dust ‡!

And here I must relate a little fable
 I heard last Saturday at our high table:—

* ‘You and others suggest, as the only effective remedy, that the Constituency should be reformed, by the exclusion of the non-academical elements which form a main part of the strength of this party domination.’

† ‘I confess that, having included all the really academical elements in Congregation, I would go boldly on, and put an end to the legislative functions of Convocation.’

‡ ‘This conviction, that while we have Elections to Council we

The cats, it seems, were masters of the house,
 And held their own against the rat and mouse :
 Of course the others couldn't stand it long,
 So held a *caucus*, (not, in their case, wrong :)
 And, when they were assembled to a man,
 Uprose an aged rat, and thus began:—

‘Brothers in bondage! Shall we bear to be
 For ever left in a minority?
 With what “fell unity of purpose” cats
 Oppress the trusting innocence of rats!
 So unsuspecting are we of disguise,
 Their machinations take us by surprise*—
 Insulting and tyrannical absurdities†!
 It is too bad by half—upon my word it is!

shall not entirely get rid of party organization and its evils, leads me to venture a step further, and to raise the question whether it is really necessary that we should have an Elective Council for legislative purposes at all.’

* ‘Sometimes, indeed, not being informed that the wires are at work, we are completely taken by surprise.’

† ‘We are without protection against this most insulting and tyrannical absurdity.’

For, now that these Con——, cats, I should say,
 (frizzle 'em!)

Are masters, they exterminate like Islam*!

How shall we deal with them? I'll tell you
 how:—

Let none but kittens be allowed to miaow!

The Liberal kittens seize us but in play,

And, while they frolic, we can run away:

But older cats are not so generous,

Their claws are too Conservative for us!

Then let *them* keep the stable and the oats,

While kittens, rats, and mice have all the votes.

'Yes; banish cats! The kittens would not use
 Their powers for blind obstruction †, nor refuse
 To let us sip the cream and gnaw the cheese—
 How glorious then would be our destinies ‡!

* 'It is as exterminating as Islam.'

† 'Their powers would scarcely be exercised for the purposes of fanaticism, or in a spirit of blind obstruction.'

‡ 'These narrow local bounds, within which our thoughts and schemes have hitherto been pent, will begin to disappear, and a far wider sphere of action will open on the view.'

Kittens and rats would occupy the throne,
And rule the larder for itself alone *!

So rhymed my friend, and asked me what I
thought of it.

I told him that so much as I had caught of it
Appeared to me (as I need hardly mention)
Entirely undeserving of attention.

But now, to guide the Congregation, when
It numbers none but really 'able' men,
A '*Vice-Cancellarius*' will be needed
Of every kind of human weakness weeded!
Is such the president that we have got?
He ought no doubt to be; why should he not †?

I do not hint that Liberals should dare
To oust the present holder of the chair—

* 'Those councils must be freely opened to all who can serve her well and who will serve her for herself.'

† 'To preside over a Congregation with full legislative powers, the Vice-Chancellor ought no doubt to be a man of real capacity; but why should he not? His mind ought also, for this as well as for his other high functions, to be clear of petty details, and devoted to the great matters of University business; but why should not this condition also be fulfilled?'

But surely he would not object to be
Gently examined by a Board of three?
Their duty being just to ascertain
That he's 'all there' (I mean, of course, in brain),
And that his mind, from 'petty details' clear,
Is fitted for the duties of his sphere.

All this is merely moonshine, till we get
The seal of Parliament upon it set.
A word then, Senior Censor, in your ear:
The Government is in a state of fear—
Like some old gentleman, abroad at night,
Seized with a sudden shiver of affright,
Who offers money, on his bended knees,
To the first skulking vagabond he sees—
Now is the lucky moment for our task;
They daren't refuse us anything we ask*!

* 'If you apply now to Parliament for this or any other University reform, you will find the House of Commons in a propitious mood. . . . Even the Conservative Government, as it looks for the support of moderate Liberals on the one great subject, is very unwilling to present itself in such an aspect that these men may not be able decently to give it their support.

And then our Fellowships shall open be
To Intellect, no meaner quality!
No moral excellence, no social fitness
Shall ever be admissible as witness.

'Avaunt, dull Virtue!' is Oxonia's cry:
'Come to my arms, ingenious Villainy!'

For Classic Fellowships, an honour high,
Simonides and Co. will then apply—
Our Mathematics will to Oxford bring
The 'cutest members of the betting-ring—
Law Fellowships will start upon their journeys
A myriad of unscrupulous attorneys—
While poisoners, doomed till now to toil unknown,
Shall mount the Physical Professor's throne!

To what a varied feast of learning then
Should we invite our intellectual men!
Professor Caseley should instruct our flock
To analyse the mysteries of Locke—
Barnum should lecture them on Rhetoric—
The Davenports upon the cupboard-trick—

Robson and Redpath, Strahan and Paul and Bates
 Should store the minds of undergraduates—
 From Fagin's lecture-room a class should come
 Versed in all arts of finger and of thumb,
 To illustrate in practice (though by stealth)
 The transitory character of wealth.
 And thus would Oxford educate, indeed,
 Men far beyond a merely local need—
 With no career before them, I may say*,
 Unless they're wise enough to go away,
 And seek, far West, or in the distant East,
 Another flock of pigeons to be fleeced.

I might go on, and trace the destiny
 Of Oxford in an age which, though it be
 Thus breaking with tradition, owns a new
 Allegiance to the intellectual few—

(I mean, of course, the—pshaw! no matter who!)

* 'With open Fellowships, Oxford will soon produce a supply of men fit for the work of high education far beyond her own local demands, and in fact with no career before them unless a career can be opened elsewhere.'

But, were I to pursue the boundless theme,
I fear that I should seem to you to dream*.

This to fulfil, or even—humbler far—
To shun Conservatism's noxious star
And all the evils that it brings behind,
These pestilential coils must be untwined—
These party-coils, that clog the march of Mind—
Choked in whose meshes Oxford, slowly wise,
Has lain for three disastrous centuries†.
Away with them! (It is for this I yearn.)
Each twist untwist, each Turner overturn!
Disfranchise each Conservative, and cancel
The votes of Michell, Liddon, Wall, and Mansel!
Then, then shall Oxford be herself again,
Neglect the heart, and cultivate the brain—

* 'I should seem to you to dream if I were to say what I think the destiny of the University may be in an age which, though it is breaking with tradition, is, from the same causes, owning a new allegiance to intellectual authority.'

† 'But to fulfil this, or even a far humbler destiny—to escape the opposite lot—the pestilential coils of party, in which the University has lain for three disastrous centuries choked, must be untwined.'

Then this shall be the burden of our song,
'All change is good—whatever is, is wrong'—
Then Intellect's proud flag shall be unfurled,
And Brain, and Brain alone, shall rule the world!

PART II.

THE VALLEY OF THE
SHADOW OF DEATH.

HARK, *said the dying man, and sighed,*

To that complaining tone—

Like sprite condemned, each eventide,

To walk the world alone :

At sunset, when the air is still,

I hear it creep from yonder hill ;

It breathes upon me, dead and chill,

A moment, and is gone.

My son, it minds me of a day

Left half a life behind,

That I have prayed to put away

For ever from my mind.

But bitter memory will not die :
It haunts my soul when none is nigh :
I hear its whisper in the sigh
 Of that complaining wind.

And now in death my soul is fain
 To tell the tale of fear
That secret in my breast hath lain
 Through many a weary year :
Yet time would fail to utter all—
The evil spells that held me thrall,
And thrust my life from fall to fall,
 Thou needest not to hear.

The spells that bound me with a chain
 Sin's stern behests to do,
Till Pleasure's self, invoked in vain,
 A heavy burden grew—

Till from my spirit's fevered eye,
A hunted thing, I seemed to fly
Through the dark woods that underlie
 Yon mountain-range of blue.

Deep in those woods I found a vale
 No sunlight visiteth,
Nor star, nor wandering moonbeam pale;
 Where never comes the breath
Of summer breeze—there in mine ear,
Even as I lingered half in fear,
I heard a whisper, cold and clear,
 ‘This is the gate of Death.

‘O bitter is it to abide
 In weariness always;
At dawn to sigh for eventide,
 At eventide for day.

Thy noon is passed: thy sun hath shone:
The brightness of thy day is gone—
What need to lag and linger on
Till life be cold and gray?

‘O well,’ it said, ‘beneath yon pool,
In some still cavern deep,
The fevered brain might slumber cool,
The eyes forget to weep:
Within that goblet’s mystic rim
Are draughts of healing, stored for him
Whose heart is sick, whose sight is dim,
Who prayeth but to sleep!’

The evening breeze went moaning by
Like mourner for the dead,
And stirred, with shrill complaining sigh,
The tree-tops overhead—

My guardian angel seemed to stand
And mutely wave a warning hand—
With sudden terror all unmanned,
I turned myself and fled!

A cottage-gate stood open wide :
Soft fell the dying ray
On two fair children, side by side,
That rested from their play—
Together bent the earnest head,
As ever and anon they read
From one dear Book: the words they said
Come back to me to-day.

Like twin cascades on mountain-stair
Together wandered down
The ripples of the golden hair,
The ripples of the brown :

While, through the tangled silken haze,
Blue eyes looked forth in eager gaze,
More starlike than the gems that blaze
About a monarch's crown.

My son, there comes to each an hour
When sinks the spirit's pride—
When weary hands forget their power
The strokes of death to guide:
In such a moment, warriors say,
A word the panic rout may stay,
A sudden charge redeem the day
And turn the living tide.

I could not see, for blinding tears,
The glories of the west:
A heavenly music filled mine ears,
A heavenly peace my breast.

‘Come unto Me, come unto Me—
All ye that labour, unto Me—
Ye heavy-laden, come to Me—
And I will give you rest.’

The night drew onward: thin and blue
The evening mists arise
To bathe the thirsty land in dew,
As erst in Paradise—
While over silent field and town
The deep blue vault of heaven looked down;
Not, as of old, in angry frown,
But bright with angels’ eyes.

Blest day! Then first I heard the voice
That since hath oft beguiled
These eyes from tears, and bid rejoice
This heart with anguish wild—

Thy mother, boy, thou hast not known,
So soon she left me here to moan—
Left me to weep and watch, alone,
Our one beloved child.

Though, parted from my aching sight,
Like homeward-speeding dove,
She passed into the perfect light
That floods the world above;
Yet our twin spirits, well I know—
Though one abide in pain below—
Love, as in summers long ago,
And evermore shall love.

So with a glad and patient heart
I move toward mine end:
The streams, that flow awhile apart,
Shall both in ocean blend.

I dare not weep: I can but bless
The Love that pitied my distress,
And lent me, in life's wilderness,
 So sweet and true a friend.

But if there be—O if there be
 A truth in what they say,
That angel-forms we cannot see
 Go with us on our way;
Then surely she is with me here,
I dimly feel her spirit near—
The morning mists grow thin and clear,
 And Death brings in the Day.

BEATRICE.

In her eyes is the living light
Of a wanderer to earth
From a far celestial height :
Summers five are all the span—
Summers five since Time began
To veil in mists of human night
A shining angel-birth.

Does an angel look from her eyes?
Will she suddenly spring away,
And soar to her home in the skies?
Beatrice! Blessing and blessed to be!
Beatrice! Still as I gaze on thee,
Visions of two sweet maids arise,
Whose life was of yesterday :

Of a Beatrice pale and stern,
 With the lips of a dumb despair,
With the innocent eyes that yearn—
 Yearn for the young sweet hours of life,
 Far from sorrow and far from strife,
For the happy summers that never return,
 When the world seemed good and fair:

Of a Beatrice glorious, bright—
 Of a sainted, ethereal maid,
Whose blue eyes are deep fountains of light,
 Cheering the poet that broodeth apart,
 Filling with gladness his desolate heart,
Like the moon when she shines thro' a cloudless
 night
 On a world of silence and shade.

And the visions waver and faint,
 And the visions vanish away
That my fancy delighted to paint—

She is here at my side, a living child,
With the glowing cheek and the tresses wild,
Nor death-pale martyr, nor radiant saint,
Yet stainless and bright as they.

For I think, if a grim wild beast
Were to come from his charnel-cave,
From his jungle-home in the East—
Stealthily creeping with bated breath,
Stealthily creeping with eyes of death—
He would all forget his dream of the feast,
And crouch at her feet a slave.

She would twine her hand in his mane,
She would prattle in silvery tone
Like the tinkle of summer rain—
Questioning him with her laughing eyes,
Questioning him with a glad surprise,
Till she caught from those fierce eyes again
The love that lit her own.

And be sure, if a savage heart,
 In a mask of human guise,
Were to come on her here apart—
 Bound for a dark and deadly deed,
 Hurrying past with pitiless speed—
He would suddenly falter and guiltily start
 At the glance of her pure blue eyes.

Nay, be sure, if an angel fair,
 A bright seraph undefiled,
Were to stoop from the trackless air,
 Fain would she linger in glad amaze—
 Lovingly linger to ponder and gaze,
With a sister's love and a sister's care,
 On the happy, innocent child.

L I N E S.

[Addressed to three little girls, with a copy of 'Holiday House.']

LITTLE maidens, when you look
On this little story-book,
Reading with attentive eye
Its enticing history ;
Never think that hours of play
Are your only holiday,
And that, in a time of joy,
Lessons serve but to annoy.
If in any HOUSE you find
Children of a gentle mind,
Each the others helping ever,
Each the others vexing never,
Daily task and pastime daily
In their order taking gaily—
Then be very sure that they
Have a *life* of HOLIDAY.

THE PATH OF ROSES.

[Written soon after the Crimean War, when the name of Florence Nightingale had already become a household word, dear to all true British hearts.]

IN the dark silence of an ancient room,
Whose one tall window fronted to the West,
Where, through laced tendrils of a hanging vine,
The sunset glow was fading into night,
Sat a pale Lady, resting weary hands
Upon a great clasped volume, and her face
Within her hands. Not as in rest she bowed,
But large hot tears went coursing down her cheek,
And her low-panted sobs broke awfully
Upon the sleeping echoes of the night.

Soon she unclasped the volume once again,
And read the words in tone of agony,
As in self-torture, weeping as she read:

*“ He crowns the glory of his race ;
He prayeth but in some fair place
To meet his foeman face to face ;*

*“ And battling for the true, the right,
From ruddy dawn to purple night,
To perish in the midmost fight ;*

*“ Where foes are fierce and weapons strong,
Where roars the battle loud and long,
Where blood is dropping in the throng.*

*“ Still with a dim and glazing eye
To watch the tide of victory,
To hear in death the battle-cry.*

*“ Then, gathered grandly to his grave,
To rest among the true and brave,
In holy ground, where yew-trees wave ;*

*“ Where, from church-windows carven fair,
Float out upon the evening air
The note of praise, the voice of prayer ;*

*“ Where no vain marble mockery
Insults with loud and boastful lie
The simple soldier’s memory ;*

*“ Where sometimes little children go,
And read, in whispered accent slow,
The name of him who sleeps below.”*

Her voice died out; like one in dreams she sat.

“ Alas !” she sighed, “ for what can woman do ?

Her life is aimless, and her death unknown ;

Hemmed in by social forms she pines in vain:
Man has his work, but what can woman do?"

And answer came there from the creeping gloom,
The creeping gloom that settled into night:
"Peace, for thy lot is other than a man's;
His is a path of thorns; he beats them down—
He faces death—he wrestles with despair:
Thine is of roses; to adorn and cheer
His barren lot, and hide the thorns in flowers."

She spake again, in bitter tone she spake;
"Aye, as a toy, the puppet of an hour;
Or a fair posy, newly plucked at morn,
But flung aside and withered ere the night."

And answer came there from the creeping gloom,
The creeping gloom that blackened into night:
"So shalt thou be the lamp to light his path,
What time the shades of sorrow close around."

And, so it seemed to her, an awful light
Pierced slowly through the darkness, orbed, and grew,

Until all passed away—the ancient room—
The sunlight dying through the trellised vine—
The one tall window—all had passed away,
And she was standing on the mighty hills.

Beneath, around, and far as eye could see,
Squadron on squadron, stretched opposing hosts,
Ranked as for battle, mute and motionless.
Anon a distant thunder shook the ground,
The tramp of horses, and a troop shot by—
Plunged headlong in that living sea of men—
Plunged to their death: back from that fatal field
A scattered handful, fighting hard for life,
Broke through the serried lines; but as she gazed
They shrank and melted, and their forms grew thin—
Grew pale as ghosts when the first morning ray
Dawns from the East—the trumpet's brazen blare
Died into silence—and the vision passed;—

Passed to a room where sick and dying lay,
In long, sad line—there brooded Fear and Pain—

Darkness was there, the shade of Azrael's wing.
But there was one that ever, to and fro,
Moved with light footfall: purely calm her face
And those deep steadfast eyes that starred the gloom:
Still as she went, she ministered to each
Comfort and counsel; cooled the fevered brow
With softest touch, and in the listening ear
Of the pale sufferer whispered words of peace.
The dying warrior, gazing as she passed,
Clasped his thin hands and blessed her. Bless her too,
THEOU, who didst bless the merciful of old!

So prayed the Lady, watching tearfully
Her gentle moving onward, till the night
Had veiled her wholly, and the vision passed.

Then once again the awful whisper came:
"So in the darkest path of man's despair,
Where War and Terror shake the troubled earth,
Lies woman's mission; with unblenching brow
To pass through scenes of anguish and affright

Where men grow sick and tremble; unto her
All things are sanctified, for all are good.
Nothing so mean, but shall deserve her care;
Nothing so great, but she may bear her part.
No life is vain: each has his place assigned:
Do thou thy task, and leave the rest to heaven."
And there was silence, but the Lady made
No answer, save one deeply-breathed "Amen."

And she arose, and in that darkening room
Stood lonely as a spirit of the night—
Stood calm and fearless in the gathered night—
And raised her eyes to heaven. There were tears
Upon her face, but in her heart was peace,
Peace that the world nor gives nor takes away!

April 10, 1856.

THE SAILOR'S WIFE.

SEE! There are tears upon her face—
Tears newly shed, and scarcely dried:
Close, in an agonized embrace,
She clasps the infant at her side.

Peace dwells in those soft-lidded eyes,
And parted lips that faintly smile—
Peace, the foretaste of Paradise,
In heart too young for care or guile.

No peace the mother's features wear;
But quivering lip, and knotted brow,
And broken mutterings, all declare
The fearful dream that haunts her now.

The storm-wind, rushing through the sky,
Wails from the depths of cloudy space;
Shrill, piercing as the seaman's cry
When Death and he are face to face.

Familiar tones are in the gale;
They ring upon her startled ear:
And quick and low she pants the tale
That tells of agony and fear:

“Still that phantom-ship is nigh—
With a vexed and life-like motion,
All beneath an angry sky,
Rocking on an angry ocean.

“Round the straining mast and shrouds
Throng the spirits of the storm;
Darkly seen through driving clouds,
Bends each gaunt and ghastly form.

“See! The good ship yields at last!
Dumbly yields, and fights no more;
Driving in the frantic blast
Headlong on the fatal shore.

“Hark! I hear her battered side,
With a low and sullen shock,
Dashed amid the foaming tide
Full upon a sunken rock.

“His face shines out against the sky,
Like a ghost, so cold and white;
With a dead despairing eye
Gazing through the gathered night.

“Is he watching, through the dark,
Where a mocking ghostly hand
Points to yonder feeble spark
Glimmering from the distant land?

“ Sees he, in this hour of dread,
: Hearth and home and wife and child?
Loved ones who, in summers fled,
Clung to him and wept and smiled?

“ Reeling sinks the fated bark
To her tomb beneath the wave;
Must he perish in the dark—
Not a hand stretched out to save?

“ See the spirits, how they crowd!
Watching death with eyes that burn!
Waves rush in——” she shrieks aloud
Ere her waking sense return.

The storm is gone: the skies are clear:
Hush'd is that bitter cry of pain:
The only sound that meets her ear
The heaving of the sullen main.

Though heaviness endure the night,
Yet joy shall come with break of day;
She shudders with a strange delight—
The fearful dream is pass'd away.

She wakes; the grey dawn streaks the dark;
With early songs the copses ring:
Far off she hears the watch-dog bark
A joyful bark of welcoming!

STOLEN WATERS.

THE light was faint, and soft the air
That breathed around the place ;
And she was lithe, and tall, and fair,
And with a wayward grace
Her queenly head she bare.

With glowing cheek, with gleaming eye,
She met me on the way :
My spirit owned the witchery
Within her smile that lay :
I followed her, I knew not why.

The trees were thick with many a fruit,
The grass with many a flower :
My soul was dead, my tongue was mute,
In that accurs'd hour.

And, in my dream, with silvery voice,

She said, or seemed to say,

“Youth is the season to rejoice—”

I could not choose but stay ;

I could not say her nay.

She plucked a branch above her head,

With rarest fruitage laden :

“Drink of the juice, Sir Knight,” she said,

“’Tis good for knight and maiden.”

Oh, blind mine eye that would not trace—

And deaf mine ear that would not heed—

The mocking smile upon her face,

The mocking voice of greed !

I drank the juice, and straightway felt

A fire within my brain ;

My soul within me seemed to melt

In sweet delirious pain.

“Sweet is the stolen draught,” she said;

“Hath sweetness stint or measure?

Pleasant the secret hoard of bread;

What bars us from our pleasure?”

“Yea, take we pleasure while we may,”

I heard myself replying;

In the red sunset, far away,

My happier life was dying:

My heart was sad, my voice was gay.

And unawares, I knew not how,

I kissed her dainty finger-tips,

I kissed her on the lily brow,

I kissed her on the false, false lips—

That burning kiss, I feel it now!

“True love gives true love of the best:

Then take,” I cried, “my heart to thee!”

The very heart from out my breast
I plucked, I gave it willingly:
Her very heart she gave to me—
Then died the glory from the west.

In the gray light I saw her face,
And it was withered, old, and gray;
The flowers were fading in their place,
Were fading with the fading day.

Forth from her, like a hunted deer,
Through all that ghastly night I fled,
And still behind me seemed to hear
Her fierce unflagging tread:
And scarce drew breath for fear.

Yet marked I well how strangely seemed
The heart within my breast to sleep:
Silent it lay, or so I dreamed,
With never a throb nor leap.

For hers was now my heart, she said,
 The heart that once had been mine own :
And in my breast I bore instead
 A cold cold heart of stone.
So grew the morning overhead.

The sun shot downward through the trees
 His old familiar flame ;
All ancient sounds upon the breeze
 From copse and meadow came—
 But I was not the same.

They call me mad ; I smile, I weep,
 Uncaring how or why :
Yea, when one's heart is laid asleep,
 What better than to die ?
So that the grave be dark and deep.

To die! To die? And yet, methinks,
 I drink of life to-day,
Deep as the thirsty traveller drinks
 Of fountain by the way :
My voice is sad, my heart is gay.

When yestereve was on the wane,
 I heard a clear voice singing ;
And suddenly, like summer rain,
 My happy tears came springing :
My human heart returned again.

*“ A rosy child—
Sitting and singing, in a garden fair,
 The joy of hearing, seeing,
 The simple joy of being—
Or twining rosebuds in the golden hair
 That ripples free and wild.*

“ A sweet pale child—

Wearily looking to the purple West—

Waiting the great For-ever

That suddenly shall sever

The cruel chains that hold her from her rest—

By earth-joys unbeguiled.

“ An angel-child—

Gazing with living eyes on a dead face :

The mortal form forsaken,

That none may now awaken,

That lieth painless, moveless in her place,

As though in death she smiled !

“ Be as a child—

So shalt thou sing for very joy of breath—

So shalt thou wait thy dying,

In holy transport lying—

So pass rejoicing through the gate of death,

In garment undefiled.

Then call me what they will, I know

That now my soul is glad:

If this be madness, better so,

Far better to be mad,

Weeping or smiling as I go.

For if I weep, it is that now

I see how deep a loss is mine,

And feel how brightly round my brow

The coronal might shine,

Had I but kept mine early vow:

And if I smile, it is that now

I see the promise of the years—

The garland waiting for my brow,

That must be won with tears,

With pain—with death—I care not how.

STANZAS FOR MUSIC.

THE morn was bright, the steeds were light,
The wedding guests were gay ;
Young Ellen stood within the wood
And watched them pass away.
She scarcely saw the gallant train,
The tear-drop dimmed her ee ;
Unheard the maiden did complain
Beneath the Willow tree.

“ O Robin, thou didst love me well,
Till on a bitter day
She came, the Lady Isabel,
And stole my Love away.
My tears are vain, I live again
In days that used to be,
When I could meet thy welcome feet
Beneath the Willow tree.

“O Willow gray, I may not stay
Till Spring renew thy leaf,
But I will hide myself away,
And nurse a hopeless grief.
It shall not dim life’s joy for him,
My tears he shall not see;
While he is by, I’ll come not nigh
My weeping Willow tree.

“But when I die, O let me lie
Beneath thy loving shade,
That he may loiter careless by
Where I am lowly laid.
And let the white white marble tell,
If he should stoop to see,
‘Here’ lies a maid that loved thee well,
Beneath the Willow tree.’”

SOLITUDE.

I LOVE the stillness of the wood,
I love the music of the rill,
I love to couch in pensive mood
Upon some silent hill.

Scarce heard, beneath yon arching trees,
The silver-crested ripples pass ;
And, like a mimic brook, the breeze
Whispers among the grass.

Here from the world I win release,
Nor scorn of men, nor footstep rude,
Break in to mar the holy peace
Of this great solitude.

Here may the silent tears I weep
Lull the vexed spirit into rest,
As infants sob themselves to sleep
Upon a mother's breast.

But when the bitter hour is gone,
And the keen throbbing pangs are still,
Oh sweetest then to couch alone
Upon some silent hill!

To live in joys that once have been,
To put the cold world out of sight,
And deck life's drear and barren scene
With hues of rainbow light.

For what to man the gift of breath,
If sorrow be his lot below;
If all the day that ends in death
Be dark with clouds of woe?

Shall the poor transport of an hour
Repay long years of sore distress—
The fragrance of a lonely flower
Make glad the wilderness?

Ye golden hours of life's young spring,
Of innocence, of love and truth!
Bright beyond all imagining,
Thou fairy dream of youth!

I'd give all wealth that years have piled,
The slow result of life's decay,
To be once more a little child
For one bright summer day.

ONLY A WOMAN'S HAIR.

[After the death of Dean Swift, there was found among his papers a small packet containing a single lock of hair and inscribed with the above words.]

'ONLY a woman's hair'! Fling it aside!

A bubble on Life's mighty stream:

Heed it not, man, but watch the broadening tide

Bright with the western beam.

Nay! In those words there rings from other years

The echo of a long low cry,

Where a proud spirit wrestles with his tears

In loneliest agony.

And as I touch that lock, strange visions rise

Before me in a shadowy throng—

Of woman's hair, the joy of lovers' eyes,

The theme of poet's song.

A child's bright tresses, by the breezes kissed
To sweet disorder as she flies,
Veiling beneath a cloud of golden mist
Flushed cheek and laughing eyes—

Or fringing like a shadow, raven-black,
The glory of a queen-like face—
Or from a gipsy's sunny brow tossed back
In wild and wanton grace—

Or crown-like on the hoary head of Age,
Whose tale of life is well-nigh told—
Or, last, in dreams I make my pilgrimage
To Bethany of old.

I see the feast—the purple and the gold—
The gathering crowd of Pharisees,
Whose scornful eyes are centred to behold
Yon woman on her knees.

The stifled sob rings strangely on mine ears,
 Wrung from the depth of sin's despair:
And still she bathes the sacred feet with tears,
 And wipes them with her hair.

HE scorned not then the simple loving deed
 Of her, the lowest and the last;
Then scorn not thou, but use with earnest heed
 This relic of the past.

The eyes that loved it once no longer wake:
 So lay it by with reverent care—
So touch it tenderly for sorrow's sake—
 It is a woman's hair.

THREE SUNSETS.

HE saw her once, and in the glance,
A moment's glance of meeting eyes,
His heart stood still in sudden trance,
He trembled with a sweet surprise—
All in the waning light she stood
The star of perfect womanhood.

That summer eve his heart was light,
With lighter step he trod the ground,
And life was fairer in his sight,
And music was in every sound;
He blessed the world where there could be
So beautiful a thing as she.

There once again, as evening fell
And stars were peering overhead,
Two lovers met to bid farewell:
The western sun gleamed faint and red,
Lost in a drift of purple cloud
That wrapped him like a funeral-shroud.

Long time the memory of that night—
The hand that clasped, the lips that kissed,
The form that faded from his sight
Slow sinking through the tearful mist—
In dreamy music seemed to roll
Through the dark chambers of his soul.

So after many years he came
A wanderer from a distant shore;
The street, the house, were still the same,
But those he sought were there no more:
His burning words, his hopes and fears,
Unheeded fell on alien ears.

Only the children from their play
 Would pause the mournful tale to hear,
Shrinking in half-alarm away,
 Or, step by step, would venture near
To touch with timid curious hands
That strange wild man from other lands.

He sat beside the busy street,
 There, where he last had seen her face;
And thronging memories, bitter-sweet,
 Seemed yet to haunt the ancient place:
Her footfall ever floated near,
Her voice was ever in his ear.

He sometimes, as the daylight waned
 And evening mists began to roll,
In half-soliloquy complained
 Of that black shadow on his soul,
And blindly fanned, with cruel care,
The ashes of a vain despair.

The summer fled: the lonely man
Still lingered out the lessening days;
Still, as the night drew on, would scan
Each passing face with closer gaze—
Till, sick at heart, he turned away,
And sighed "she will not come to-day."

So by degrees his spirit bent
To mock its own despairing cry,
In strange self-torture to invent
New luxuries of agony,
And people all the vacant space
With visions of her perfect face:
Till for a moment she was nigh,
He heard no step, but she was there;
As if an angel suddenly
Were bodied from the viewless air,
And all her fine ethereal frame
Should fade as strangely as it came.

So, half in fancy's sunny trance,
And half in misery's aching void,
With set and stony countenance
His bitter being he enjoyed,
And thrust for ever from his mind
The happiness he could not find.

As when the wretch, in lonely room,
To selfish death is madly hurled,
The glamour of that fatal fume
Shuts out the wholesome living world—
So all his manhood's strength and pride
One sickly dream had swept aside

Yea, brother, and we passed him there,
But yesterday, in merry mood,
And marvelled at the lordly air
That shamed his beggar's attitude,
Nor heeded that ourselves might be
Wretches as desperate as he;

Who let the dream of bliss denied

Make havoc of our life and powers,
And pine, in solitary pride,

For peace that never shall be ours,
Because we will not work and wait
In trustful patience for our fate.

And so it chanced once more that she

Came by the old familiar spot;
The face he would have died to see

Bent o'er him, and he knew it not:
Too rapt in selfish grief to hear,
Even when happiness was near.

And pity filled her gentle breast

For him that would not stir nor speak;
The dying crimson of the west,

That faintly tinged his haggard cheek,
Fell on her as she stood, and shed
A glory round the patient head.

Awake, awake ! The moments fly ;

 This awful tryst may be the last.

And see ! The tear that dimmed her eye

 Had fallen on him ere she passed—

She passed ; the crimson paled to gray :

And hope departed with the day.

The heavy hours of night went by,

 And silence quickened into sound,

And light slid up the eastern sky,

 And life began its daily round—

But life and light for him were fled :

His name was numbered with the dead.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.

[From a Fairy to a Child.]

Lady dear, if fairies may—
For a moment lay aside
Cunning tricks and elfish play—
'Tis at happy Christmas-tide.

We have heard the children say—
Gentle children, whom we love—
Long ago, on Christmas Day
Came a message from above.

Still, as Christmas time comes round,
They remember it again—
Echo still the joyful sound.
'Peace on earth, good will to men!'

Yet the hearts must child-like be
Where such heavenly guests abide:
Unto children in their glee
All the year is Christmas-tide!

So, forgetting tricks and play
For a moment, lady dear,
We would wish you, if we may,
Merry Christmas, glad New Year!

AFTER THREE DAYS.

[Written after visiting Holman Hunt's picture of 'Christ in the Temple.']

I STOOD within the gate
Of a great temple, 'midst the living stream
Of worshippers that thronged its regal state
Fair pictured in my dream.

Jewels and gold were there;
And floors of marble lent a crystal sheen
To body forth, as in a lower air,
The wonders of the scene.

Such wild and lavish grace
Had whispers in it of a coming doom;
As richest flowers lie strown about the face
Of her that waits the tomb.

The wisest of the land
Had gathered there, three solemn trysting-days,
For high debate: men stood on either hand
To listen and to gaze.

The aged brows were bent,
Bent to a frown, half thought, and half annoy,
That all their stores of subtlest argument
Were baffled by a boy.

In each averted face
I marked but scorn and loathing, till mine eyes
Fell upon one that stirred not in his place,
Tranced in a dumb surprise

Surely within his mind
Strange thoughts are born, until he doubts the lore
Of those old men, blind leaders of the blind,
Whose kingdom is no more.

Surely he sees afar
A day of death the stormy future brings;
The crimson setting of the herald star
That led the Eastern kings.

Thus, as a sunless deep
Mirrors the shining heights that crown the bay,
So did my soul create anew in sleep
The picture seen by day.

Gazers came and went—
A restless hum of voices marked the spot—
In varying shades of critic discontent
Prating they knew not what.

“Where is the comely limb,
The form attuned in every perfect part,
The beauty that we should desire in him?”
Ah! Fools and slow of heart!

Look into those deep eyes,
Deep as the grave, and strong with love divine;
Those tender, pure, and fathomless mysteries,
That seem to pierce through thine.

Look into those deep eyes,
Stirred to unrest by breath of coming strife,
Until a longing in thy soul arise
That this indeed were life:

That thou couldst find Him there,
Bend at His sacred feet thy willing knee,
And from thy heart pour out the passionate prayer
“Lord, let me follow Thee!”

But see the crowd divide;
Mother and sire have found their lost one now:
The gentle voice, that fain would seem to chide
Whispers “Son, why hast thou”—

In tone of sad amaze—
“Thus dealt with us, that art our dearest thing?
Behold, thy sire and I, three weary days,
Have sought thee sorrowing.”

And I had stayed to hear
The loving words “How is it that ye sought?”—
But that the sudden lark, with matins clear,
Severed the links of thought.

Then over all there fell
Shadow and silence; and my dream was fled,
As fade the phantoms of a wizard's cell
When the dark charm is said.

Yet in the gathering light
I lay with half-shut eyes that would not wake,
Lovingly clinging to the skirts of night
For that sweet vision's sake.

Feb. 16, 1861.

FACES IN THE FIRE.

THE night creeps onward, sad and slow :
In these red embers' dying glow
The forms of Fancy come and go.

An island-farm—broad seas of corn
Stirred by the wandering breath of morn—
The happy spot where I was born.

The picture fadeeth in its place :
Amid the glow I seem to trace
The shifting semblance of a face.

'Tis now a little childish form—
Red lips for kisses pouted warm—
And elf-locks tangled in the storm.

'Tis now a grave and gentle maid,
At her own beauty half afraid,
Shrinking, and willing to be stayed.

Oh, time was young, and life was warm,
When first I saw that fairy form,
Her dark hair tossing in the storm.

And fast and free these pulses played,
When last I met that gentle maid—
When last her hand in mine was laid.

Those locks of jet are turned to gray,
And she is strange and far away
That might have been mine own to-day—

That might have been mine own, my dear,
Through many and many a happy year—
That might have sat beside me here.

Ay, changeless through the changing scene,
The ghostly whisper rings between,
The dark refrain of 'might have been.'

The race is o'er I might have run,
The deeds are past I might have done,
And sere the wreath I might have won.

Sunk is the last faint flickering blaze ;
The vision of departed days
Is vanished even as I gaze.

The pictures with their ruddy light
Are changed to dust and ashes white,
And I am left alone with night.

THE END.

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ALPHA CENTAURI

1875

