SELECT POEMS

OF

MATTHEW ARNOLD

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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Biography

MATTHEW ARNOLD was born at Laleham, on the Thames, in the county of Middlesex, December 24, 1822. He was the son of Thomas Arnold, who had begun practical life, as we may call it, on leaving Oxford, by taking private pupils. The father is famous now as Headmaster of Rugby, a man of most powerful and influential life in education, and in religion as well, whom his son always remembered with affection, though he followed a life or (more important) a line of thought very different from Thomas Arnold's. He was one of a large family who were closely bound together by great affection through life, so that the real view we have of Arnold's personal life is gained almost entirely from letters either to his mother, or his sisters, and, of course, to his wife. The influence of childhood amounted to much with Arnold, for, though the family soon left Laleham for Rugby (which is not a very attractive place), yet vacations were spent at Fox How in Westmoreland, of which Dr. Arnold was devotedly fond, where Matthew learned to know the Lake Country and Wordsworth — two very strong elements in forming his life and his poetry.

He went to school first at Winchester, where his father had been, but remained for a year only, when he returned to Rugby. He continued there four years and in 1841 went to Oxford. He had won an open scholarship at Balliol College, where he remained until he took his degree in 1845, and was shortly elected Fellow of Oriel College, as his father had been before him, but he soon left the university for Rugby, where for a time he taught

the classics. He was, however, all his life distinctively an Oxford man, not merely because for a time he held a fellowship, nor because he was for ten years Professor of Poetry, nor even because he was devotedly fond of the University, but because he was always a striking example of that literary scholarship or scholarly literature that is properly associated with the great English university. No matter how much he might interest himself in Tübingen theories, for instance, he was never like a German student. No matter how much he might absorb himself in poetry, whether of nature or of passion, he never seems to have the free artistic feeling — of Keats, let us say. His affection for the university never left him, and two of his finest pieces of prose and verse — the end of the Preface to *Essays in Criticism* and *The Scholar Gipsy* — were inspired by a deep love of her. Yet he lived in Oxford little in later life, for he was far too much a man of the world to be satisfied with the narrowness of academic life, and was by no means partial in his estimate of her. But the blended learning, devotion, beauty of the town and university were typical to him of the mental attitude which he admired more than any other.

In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, then President of the Privy Council, by whom in 1851 he was appointed to be an Inspector of Schools, a position which he held until almost the end of his life. He was shortly afterward married to Miss Frances Lucy Wightman. His educational work and his family became now, as far as time and interest were concerned, the main factors in his life. He became deeply interested in questions of Education, even if the actual work of inspecting was often too like drudgery, and he gave his position an immense amount of time and thought. And he was, as has been indicated, a man extremely fond of his family

and family life. In 1849, however, he had appeared in an aspect in which he is far more widely known, and most interesting to us just now, by the publication of his first volume of verse, called *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*. It was not published with his own name but as by A. More properly we should have dated his commencement as poet with the Rugby prize poem *Alaric at Rome*, and the Newdigate prize poem *Cromwell*, at Oxford.

The actual relation of Matthew Arnold's poetry to his life is a matter that is rather puzzling. Just how much of his emotional life found expression in his verse, is a question that is touched upon in pages xii–xv. Just how much part his poetry had in his everyday existence is unknown, to the public at least. In the *Letters*, the only thing in the way of authoritative biography, there is not very much allusion to his poetry. What there is gives me the notion that his poetry was something rather apart and separate from his everyday life. It may have been so: certainly the idea that was formed of him by the reviewers when his poems first appeared, as a misanthropic Timon, a selfish quietist, was very unlike what he generally seemed to his friends.

The external facts of Matthew Arnold's poetic life may be easily told. The first volume, published in 1849, was very soon withdrawn from circulation. A second, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*, published in 1852 under the name of A, was also soon withdrawn. In 1853 and 1855 most of the poems in these volumes were reissued, with a number of other poems, among them some of his best, as *Sohrab and Rustum* and *The Scholar Gipsy*. There were several editions of these volumes, differing from each other by the omission or inclusion of one or another poem. *Empedocles on Etna* had not been republished, but in 1858 he published another tragedy after the

Greek, called *Merope*. In 1867 he published a volume of *New Poems*, containing beside *Empedocles* some others of the first volume, and also about forty poems that had never appeared in book form before, though a few had appeared in magazines. After this he wrote but little poetry.

By this time, however, he had laid the foundation for what was during his later life his chief reputation. In 1857 he had been elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He was at this time known chiefly as a poet. The duties of the position were not very heavy: they consisted of the delivery of a certain number of lectures. In 1860 he took for his subject the question of translating Homer, and afterward published his lectures in a volume. This proved the beginning of a line of activity and achievement in which he has had more influence than in any other. His poetry has appealed to comparatively few. His practical work as Educational Inspector touched a great number of people, but not in such a way as to make his personal influence very important. As a critic, however, his influence was very wide and very considerable In 1863 he began to publish in the magazines essays on literary subjects, and in 1865 he gathered them together in *Essays in Criticism*. In 1869 he published *Culture and Anarchy*; in 1873 *Literature and Dogma*.

These are by no means all of Arnold's prose writings, but it is well to mention them together because they are typical. The first is literary criticism, the second is criticism of social ideas and aims, the third is criticism of religion. They show us Matthew Arnold, not as a professor of poetry only, a man (shall we say ?) who sits and reads books in his study, and then delivers academic lectures upon them, but rather as a man with ideas on literature and its relation to the life of his own time, ideas that

led him to have very clear-cut opinions on social life, on politics, on religion, as well as on books. Education in a large sense, that was the work of Matthew Arnold's life. He carried on the daily routine of inspecting schools; several times he made trips to France or Germany to study the educational systems of those countries; he held an academic position in one of the great universities of the world; and he was widely looked up to by very many among the English-speaking nations as a guide, or even master, in the intellectual life. Such a man can hardly, it would seem, remain a poet: at any rate, Arnold did not.

His other writings were as follows: *Celtic Literature* (1867) is a series of Oxford lectures. *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) is an interpretation of Paul's true doctrine. *Friendship's Garland* (1871) is a humorous trifle, but dedicated to a criticism of current ideas. *God and the Bible* is further criticism of religious ideas, and so are *Last Esssays on Church and Religion* (1877). *Mixed Essays* (1879) are chiefly on literary subjects, *Irish Essays* (1882) are political. *Discourses in America* (1885) were given in a lecture-tour in the United States. A second series of *Essays in Criticism*, which was published after his death, gathered up his later writings on literary subjects. A number of his magazine articles have not been reprinted.

This is not the place to attempt an estimate of Matthew Arnold as a critic of literature, religion, life. It must be enough to say that he was a critic on a grand scale (to parody one of his own phrases), a critic who did not so much give opinions and judgments on the particular works of art that appeared in his day, but expressed generally, and by particular instances chosen from a wide range of reading, a view of literature, and of the life in which literature was taken at its true worth. His conception of that life may be shortly stated: it was a life in which one

sought guidance from the best ideas to be attained in religion, in literature of one's own nation or of others, and in everyday affairs. Literature he viewed (theoretically) as a moral influence, a power in life; religion he regarded as an influence, also, without any supernatural elements; and life he considered chiefly as a question of doing the right thing. A very practical philosophy, one might say, practical at least in its aims, and certainly practical in its influence, which has been very great.

He was at the height of that influence, when he died suddenly of an attack of the heart, April 15, 1888.

Introduction

Matthew Arnold was always writing, but it was in the earlier years of his active life that he wrote poetry. In 1861, when he was thirty-eight years old, he wrote to his mother that he wanted to finish off his critical writings so as to give the next ten years earnestly to poetry. "It is not a bad ten years of one's life for poetry," he writes, "if one resolutely uses it, but it is a time in which if one does not use it, one dries up and becomes prosaic altogether." [1] We need not say that Matthew Arnold dried up or became prosaic. But he had practically finished his work as a poet at the time he wrote those words. It is true that he wrote some beautiful poetry afterward, but not much, and none that does more than deepen impressions made by earlier writings.[2] By 1861 Matthew Arnold had almost settled down to the non-poetic ways of helping the world that he followed during the rest of his life. He had already made his definite place in the work of education, both by specific inspection of particular schools and by broader views of national questions both in England and on the continent. He had begun his work as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, a position

[1] *Letters*, 1, 165.

[2] A number of the best known of the poems of the volume of 1867 had been written before this time, for instance *Rugby Chapel*, *Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse*, *A Southern Night*, as well as *Empedocles* and several that had been published with it in 1852.

which gave him a chance to speak to a select but influential audience on subjects concerning education in its larger sense. And more and more, beside these two agencies and the different interests and activities that they suggested, he was expressing himself in that long series of prose writings in which he was neither educator nor scholar, precisely, but a critic of life in a very broad sense, as he has generally been thought of since. At the close of his life in 1888, he was almost universally so known and thought of: by this present time his poetical reputation has increased, but not so far as to have eclipsed the former view.

We may, therefore, look upon Matthew Arnold's poetry as but a part, and that an early part, of his whole activity. It was the form in which the energies of his early life expressed themselves.

One would like to interpret this poetry by its relation to his life. But there is a difficulty in the way: we know but little about the real connection of his poetry with his life. If we attempt to go beyond generalizations we must do it without obvious foundation. We do not know the facts in the case: not much is generally known of his earlier life, for one thing, and, for another, not much is known of the exact time of composition of his poems. They were published in several collections, it is true, but they were rarely published at the very time of writing, and they were so republished and rearranged in the course of his life, their interrelation is so changed and their connection with what is known of his life is so slight, that it is impossible to think that they were written in the order of pub-

lication, or to feel sure of any other order. In 1849 he published a volume, in 1852 another. In 1853 he published a selection from the two, with nine poems that were new. In 1855 (really late in 1854) he published a second series, including poems of the volumes of 1849 and 1852 that had not already been republished and two new poems. In 1867 he published a volume of new poems, which also included several poems of the volume of 1852 which had not been republished. In 1869 he rearranged all his poems in two volumes, omitting a number that had already appeared and changing the names of others. With all these rearrangements, we have very few facts which connect a given poem closely with a given event. A few examples will show the conditions of any criticism that seeks to base itself securely on the facts of the poet's life.

In 1881 appeared in his collected works a poem entitled *The Lord's Messengers*. It will probably remind the reader of *Rugby Chapel*, written according to its definite date twenty-four years before. What should we suppose? That it was written about the same time? Such is probably the case, for it was originally published in a magazine in the year 1860, seven years before *Rugby Chapel* appeared in print and three years after that poem was written. Yet it is only by accident that in other cases we can thus come anywhere near surety, for few of the poems are dated, and few were published in magazines.

In 1867 were published *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. It may occur to the reader that they were written about the same time as the *Stanzas to the*

Author of Obermann, published in 1852, fifteen years before. But we could hardly justify such an impression except that the *Grande Chartreuse* was originally published in "Fraser's" in 1855. That brings the poem back twelve years. But the Stanzas on Obermann, it appears from a chance date, were written three years before they were published, which increases the years between the poems that we had previously reduced.

In the present editions there occurs, among the *Early Poems*, a poem called *A Dream* that is in itself rather a puzzle. But it is addressed to Marguerite and may therefore be connected with *Switzerland*, which is not among the *Early Poems*. It does not seem much like the best-known poem of that series entitled *To Marguerite*. But it appears from a study of editions that the two were grouped together in the *Switzerland* poems of 1853, and that really *To Marguerite* was published first. And when we look at the *Switzerland* series in the edition of 1853, we see that it begins with *A Memory Picture*, which was published in 1849. In the absence of particular facts, we may be much puzzled as to just when any of these Switzerland poems may have been written.

Any attempt, then, really to interpret the poems of Matthew Arnold by their relation to the events of his life must clearly rest upon a far larger knowledge of the facts in the case than is at present at the control of the general student. It is well known that the greater number of Matthew Arnold's poems appeared within a period of six years. He may have written many before that period; it is certainly not improbable, con-

sidering that his first volume was published at the age of twenty-seven, and that he afterwards in various cases kept poems for years before printing them. He certainly wrote a good number of poems after that period, but except for a few cases his *Letters* have very little connection with them. It is hardly possible even to attempt a careful chronological criticism that should show the actual development of his poetic ideas.

But though we cannot in Matthew Arnold's poems perceive any real development in harmony with the events of his life, yet we may perceive something that will be of value to us. We may be able to discern phases or stages of poetic power or development which will give us substantial truth, though not the exactness of biography. A poet presumably does not develop with the regularity of a tree or an animal. Like any other person, he passes from phase to phase with irregularity, with anticipations and reversions, so that often particular facts, if they were known, might seem to contradict the main movement. The matter of importance to the student of poetry is not so much biographic fact as it is truth to poetic principle.

Looking at the poems, then, from rather a general standpoint, but correcting our impressions wherever it is possible by the facts at hand, we may note, first, a series of poems that seem the expression of an actual experience of life. There are twenty poems which seem to present to us feelings, ideas, thoughts arising from the poet's relations with Marguerite.[1] Of this

[1] A more specific criticism of these poems, showing reasons for regarding them as one group, will be found in the Appendix, p. 199.

lady, I believe there is no trace, nor is it necessary that there should be for our purposes. We do not desire to ascertain the facts of Matthew Arnold's life: we want to know his poetry as poetry, and although there may doubtless be an error or two in our proceeding without the substantiation of actual fact, yet if our criticism is borne out by the qualities of the poetry, we may feel that it is substantially well based. One point, it is true, is of importance. Can these poems be purely imaginative? Can such a poem as *A Memory-Picture*, for instance, be written without any real person, any real situation in mind? If it could be so, we should get a somewhat different idea of the poet from what we would have if we were sure that the poem had been suggested by definite circumstances. But some of these poems seem as though they must have basis in fact and in the same fact. It would seem that *A Memory-Picture*, *On the Rhine*, and *The Terrace at Berne* must be, almost without a doubt, written with an actual person in mind and that the same person. If we may proceed from them to the different poems that are connected with them, we shall have sufficient basis of fact for our further proceeding.

This group of poems is marked by one circumstance, namely, that it contains very little that is thought of as characteristic of the author, nothing, save a line or so, that has been thought by anybody to be a part of his best work. Whatever the inspiration of these poems, whether one inspiration or many, it did not have the effect of stirring him to his best. The reviewers of his time did not understand these poems or did not like them: later

critics have admired one or two, but have given no place to their general idea or spirit in their criticism of Matthew Arnold. Yet they are not hard to understand if we read them altogether, nor is their general idea one that we should neglect in an attempt to get the full spirit of his poetry.

The greater number of these poems were published in 1852 in *Empedocles on Etna*. They were printed there in what seems, as one reads it, rather a natural chronological order (which the author broke up later), but with no indication that they formed a definite series, or that they were expressive of any real episode of life. If they were so expressive, I believe that they were written some time before their publishing in 1852, even before Matthew Arnold's first volume of 1849. The chief reason for this belief is that at the time of publishing these poems Matthew Arnold had been for some time happily married to a lady whom he had known several years before marriage. It seems too absurd to suppose that these poems of an unhappy and unsuccessful love could have been written during the progress of what was a very happy and successful love. If they were founded on fact, the thing is impossible; if not founded on fact, it seems ridiculous. So these poems, which Matthew Arnold wrote under the inspiration of Marguerite, we may put, I believe, among his first written poems. I should say among his earliest, but that point is not of vital importance. If they are not chronologically first, it will appear that they are, as we may say, poetically first.

These poems are poetically first, because as a group

they come most directly from life with the least admixture of reflection. A poem like *Resignation* comes from life too; there are actual people and actual places that gave rise to it. But these people, places, events, are in reality only a means by which the poet expresses many ideas which he has formed otherwise without any connection with them. The Marguerite poems are not such. They are, as a rule, the expression of mood or fancy directly caused by some event. Thus *A Dream* is pretty clearly based on some fact to us unknown. Not that we must think that the poet ever had any such dream, but we can hardly believe that Martin, Olivia, Marguerite, the Swiss scenery, were all the product of imagination for the purposes of a dramatic lyric. These poems are without much doubt expressive of the poet's feelings during an episode that lasted some little time, but came to no happy end, unless to remain free were such. What is their general idea, mood, quality?

It is the insistence on the idea of separation. That is the thought that finds expression in the one well-known line in the whole series. People in this world, he says, are like isles separated by

"The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea."

The poet stood apart from Marguerite: they could not somehow get together. She was sweet, charming, affectionate, friendly, and yet they stood apart. Why? As the poems go on we have all sorts of answers. At first (*Euphrosyne*) he thinks it is because neither he nor any other man is worthy of her. Then (*Urania*) it is be-

cause she has no need of love. Then (*Too Late*) they might have got together had it not been too late, or (*Parting*) had it not been for their different past. Then (*Farewell*) he thinks it is because she will not understand her true self. Finally in *Isolation* he sees that everybody is alone, though all do not realize it; in *To Marguerite*, that people are separated in life, as surely as islands by the sea; in *Human Life*, that it is idle to stop for friends to whom one has no natural right; in *The Terrace at Berne* that people meet and pass each other like driftwood on the ocean. In *Despondency* he fancies that no one can know for what he is really meant in life.

Such is the thought or mood of these poems. It is not very important whether we call it thought or mood, for it is plain there is no clear, consistent, definite thought at all. There are only ideas or fancies called up by special causes, real or imaginary. Whether the poems are based on a real episode or not is not of first importance here, for the main point is that here are a dozen explanations for the separation of two souls. That is the dominant note: separation, from one who is loved. That feeling impressed itself on the poet's thought, or wrung out of him expression. Whether it were an idea natural to his thinking and feeling, or aroused simply by unhappy fact, we can hardly say, and it would be the task of the biographer to determine. The fact for the critic and the student is that in these poems — say one-sixth of all, in number at least — we have the lyric expression of the sentiment of separation.

So far as these poems, at least, are concerned, it would seem that the poet came to his intense appreciation of this sentiment by an experience in that field in which most young men gain experience, namely the field of Love. Now there is a poem in the first collection which indicates to us that as a poet Matthew Arnold did not consider this field his own proper element. *The New Sirens* was pronounced by Blackwood to be "utterly without meaning." Read without introduction, the poem certainly has some dark sayings, which are not all enlightened by what the poet otherwise wrote. But if we read *The New Sirens* with the idea of a poet who has had an unhappy love-experience, and feels that it came about through venturing out of his own domain into another where he never was at home, we shall see that a meaning is not very far to seek.

In the surroundings and circumstance of *The New Sirens* we see very soon that the poet has left the upland valleys, the sacred glens, the fountains and springs of knowledge, where he used to watch the white east for the morning rays and the rose-flush on the mountain-peaks, — he has left all that for the charming creatures who live in lower palaces and ceiled chambers, with enchanted lawns and statued alleys, whose thrones are heaped with myrtle and whose feasts are bright with scent and song and light and flowers. Surely it is not very hard to read that imagery, even if it be not always easy to see just what each turn of thought is meant to express. We need not say that Marguerite was a New Siren, but it seems obvious — as we turn from the love poetry where the poet has found only the sad sense of

separation and temptation — that, however charming she and those like her may have been, the poet was never quite at home with her, that her world of emotion was not his, that he never quite forgot the upland valley and the mountain glen where he had left his laurel crown among the shepherds of that pastoral realm that was more truly his home.

If we then ask whether we have any poems of that other realm, the poet's home country, in Matthew Arnold's earlier writing, we have only to look to find. In *Resignation* we have undoubtedly a poem of the upland and the mountain.

> "And now, in front, behold outspread
> Those upper regions we must tread!
> Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
> The cheerful silence of the fells.
> Some two hours' march with serious air,
> Through the deep noontide heats we fare;
> The red-grouse springing at our sound,
> Skims, now and then, the shining ground;
> No life, save his and ours, intrudes
> Upon these breathless solitudes."

This poem introduces us to another group, which, though they may not be the outcome of any personal episode, or even the product of one given time, yet seem very clearly to present one poetic phase. If one will read at the same time, and in this order, *Resignation* (1849), *Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön* (1867), *Bacchanalia* (1867), *A Summer Night* (1852), *The Youth of Man* (1852), *Lines written in Kensington Gardens* (1852), *The Youth of Nature* (1852), one will observe that they agree in two respects. One is

that each poem is suggested by some actual event or some actual scene: the poet has walked with Fausta over well-remembered ground; he strolls with a friend in Hyde Park; he walks in the country at twilight; one evening in the city as the moon appears over the housetops he is reminded of a night in the past on the seashore by the mountains; he stands with friends on Richmond Hill overlooking the Thames; he lies at ease on the grass in a quiet spot in Kensington Gardens; he rows on Grasmere under Rydal and Fairfield on a clear June night, — in each case the friend, the scene, the event gives the starting-point, suggests the poem. Indeed, it does more: it gives a body, as we may say, to the poem, a body into which the poet breathes a certain spirit, a certain thought even. For, secondly, in none of these poems is the friend, the scene, the event, more than the starting-point for the idea: the idea itself must have been otherwise formed; it is the outcome of long meditation, of thinking stimulated by a thousand things now forgotten.

Thus in *Resignation* he tells Fausta of his view of the functions of the poet. The poet, he believes, contemplates life and appreciates it, but somehow he is above it; one not so fortunate may content himself if he "tread at ease life's uncheered ways" without delivering himself up to the turbulence and excitement around him. The *Epilogue* and *Bacchanalia*, written presumably some time afterward, but in the same manner and mood, emphasize the position of the poet in the world: a spectator and chronicler of its emotions and motives, and yet often sickened by its meaningless clatter. In

A Summer Night he is reminded of a feeling of older days when the calm serenity of the heavens had seemed to show him a possible way of life that was neither a deadened rest after toil nor a fierce participation in life. In *The Youth of Man* his thoughts turn to somewhat the same idea, the calm of nature as superior to the futile struggles of man. So, also, in *Kensington Gardens* the same thought comes to mind. And in *The Youth of Nature* the thought of Wordsworth, lately dead, arouses questions as to the real power of nature, which he feels are answered by the wonderful largeness of nature, of which no poet can do more than reveal a little.

These are not many poems, but they are enough to show a very clear difference from the poems which we considered first. The poems to Marguerite were direct expressions of life: however faint (he called some of them *Faded Leaves*), they come directly from life. The poet felt intensely, we may be sure, and expressed his feeling in verse: whatever thought, ideas, philosophy may be found in those poems is accidental, a matter of chance almost, often only a fancy. They would generally be better if there were no thought at all: thus *Longing* impresses me as the most poetic of the series, and *Parting* so impresses others, both poems of emotion rather than thought. But the poems of the second group are different: they give generally a somewhat more definite (if also more objective) conception of the circumstances which gave rise to them, but it is clear that the circumstances, the roadside inn at Wythburn, the view from Richmond Hill — these are but the means of touch-

ing a great reserved store of thought and feeling. They give occasion, it is true, but occasion for saying what has long been in the mind, perhaps, and what might have come to voice in other circumstances. This is clearly a different kind of poetry from the preceding. Let us, before comparing with the others, turn to a third group of the poems.

It must be enough merely to suggest the third phase of poetic production which we may observe in Matthew Arnold's poetry. If we have, first, poems inspired by life itself, then poems in which life suggests a thought, we may naturally suppose that there will be also poems of thought alone, as we may call them. And such is the case. There are a number of Matthew Arnold's poems in which the idea (always as poetically expressed, but still the idea) is the only matter of importance. Take, for instance, the sonnet entitled *Quiet Work*. It was doubtless suggested by something, but that something was not important to the poet. The idea of the poem is not exactly the same as that of *A Summer Night* but it is near enough to make a comparison, and as soon as we make it, how great the difference. One gives us the idea almost in concrete form, almost as it came to the poet: which is best remembered, the "deserted, moon-blanched street," the headlands standing out in the moonlit deep, "the blue haze-cradled mountains," or the idea that nature shows us how boundless may be our soul's horizons? But the sonnet gives us the thought distilled into beautiful, permanent poetic form. It is not always so with the sonnets: often, especially in the sonnet

called *East London*, the circumstance that aroused the thought is perfectly clear and as important as the thought itself. But there are in Matthew Arnold's poems as a whole a number in which we have only the idea: *The Second Best*, for instance, *Growing Old*, *Pis Aller*, *The Last Word*, *Self-Dependence*, *A Wish*, *The Future;* and others will readily be found by turning to the poems.

Such discriminations remind one of an early criticism of Matthew Arnold's poetry. In the *North British Review* for August, 1854, was an article that the poet read with interest. In it occurs the following: "Indeed, as a general rule, it might be said that there are but two kinds of lyrics which are really valuable. The one, wherein the poet, having felt more deeply, has expressed more happily than ever before was done some thought, sentiment, or emotion, in which all men share. The other, in which some original and thoughtful man, in the solitary strength of his own genius, goes forth to explore new paths of meditative feeling. To neither of these good kinds do Mr. Arnold's lyrics belong."

As examples of the two kinds of lyric poets the reviewer mentioned Burns and Wordsworth. The discrimination is not precisely the same as that which we have made between Matthew Arnold's poems of life only, and poems of thought only, but it would seem to point to somewhat the same division in development. Matthew Arnold was certainly not a lyric poet like Burns, and the poems of the first group show clearly that he was not. The review that we have quoted re-

marks of the lyrics grouped under the head of *Switzerland*, that, "in spite of their frequent felicity of expression," they are "like faded violets, so pale their colour, so languid the passion. If indeed passion was ever there," it continues, "it has been held up so long, and contemplated so steadily by the intellect that it has wholly evaporated." Without entirely agreeing with the last idea, we shall see truth in the general position: Matthew Arnold is by no means a poet of the personal life. There are among his poems a few very beautiful lyrics which give us a wonderful appreciation of the intensity of a poetic moment. But they are very few. Such is *Philomela;* such is *Longing;* such, though not so fine, is *The Voice;* it is hard to find others. It is by no means with Burns that we can think of Matthew Arnold.

Nor shall we be nearer the truth if we try to think of him as particularly a poet of thought: if we summon up those poems which we remember because they express an idea and express it so fully and well. We need not speak of Wordsworth here, for he was not a poet of thought alone, nor indeed can we find any poet whose poetry as a whole, or whose typical poems, present to us such independent and definite embodiments of an idea as do those mentioned above and a number more. Not Wordsworth, certainly; but perhaps Emerson comes nearer to such a character. There may be expressions of the idea, with hardly an admixture of circumstance, — *The Last Word* appeals to me as the best example of such poetry, — yet collect as many such as we may from Matthew Arnold, we shall

never be able to pronounce him a poet of thought, of idea, of philosophy alone, — if indeed there can be such a one who still remains a poet.

No; Matthew Arnold is evidently best represented — in so far as we have reviewed his work — by the poems which we placed in the second group, poems arising from some intensely-conceived experience and expressing some long-meditated thought. We may join to the poems that we have mentioned some other of Arnold's best known: *Dover Beach* for instance, *East London* among the sonnets, *The Buried Life*. If we had made a complete survey of his poems, we should pause here to characterize his genius.

But there is another group of poems which many will think the most characteristic things which he wrote, namely those which he grouped under the name of *Elegiac Poems*. In these poems, as a rule, Matthew Arnold considers the life and work of one whom he has loved and admired, now dead. A man of thought will naturally, on such occasions, turn over in his mind the especial things for which that friend stood. So in *Rugby Chapel* Arnold defines the especial power of his father, in *Memorial Verses* the especial power of Wordsworth. In the same spirit is *Thyrsis*, an elegy on the death of A. H. Clough. In the same spirit, also, are some poems not exactly personal in character, as *Stanzas to the Memory of the Author of "Obermann,"* and *Obermann Once More;* not exactly elegies on Senancour, they are, at least, commentaries upon that book that was so potent an influence in molding the poet's thought. Such also are *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, and such

also is *The Scholar Gipsy* which, though suggested by a pure fiction, is also a criticism, or an ideal of life.

The last-named poem shows us how close is the connection of these elegies with those poems of Arnold's which we grouped together as most characteristically his. All of these elegies are full of the spirit of place; the poet is always led to express his thoughts of one or another by the suggestion of place. Rugby Chapel, Montmartre, Haworth Churchyard; the Cumner country, the road from the Gemmi to the Rhone, the home of the Carthusians among the eternal snows, these are not to the readers of these poems mere names, they are poetic necessities. The poems would not be themselves without them. Yet as before, each poem has its matter of thought otherwise formed, its definite idea, indeed in each the matter of thought may seem the essential thing.

The Scholar Gipsy is the best-known of these poems. The figure of the man of letters and the study, and yet of the world also, and of the woods and fields, the depth of the life of thought, and the broad freedom of the life of action, the union of culture and nature, has for many centuries delighted the world. We have the ideal in the *Scholares vaganti*, in Villon, in Lavengro, in Bayard Taylor, in Stevenson and his donkey; such figures have long been fascinating. But the Scholar Gipsy is not one of them; his charm is not the charm of the book of nature and the book of man; we do not have in Matthew Arnold's embodiment of the old story from Glanvil one more of those conceptions with which the world has long been familiar. The main idea of the

poem is quite different: the love of books is there and the love of nature, but the Scholar Gipsy is not merely a lover of nature and a lover of books. He is one of those who in an older time and early in life decided upon one aim and one desire, instead of the vague and uncertain fluctuation from one thing to another that is common in the hurried and distracted change and haste of modern life. He is the man of firm purpose, of clear aim, of unconquerable hope. What is his purpose, his aim, his hope we are not told; he is shy, elusive, an avoider of those who might desire his secret. He has what modern life has not, a clear and definite ideal, and so he is fresh, free, and firm. And so he is fascinating to the poet who, when he looks to the life of his time, sees it to be languid, weary, fluctuating, baffled, idle, without purpose, without aim, without hope, because without ideal. That is the Scholar Gipsy. The garb of scholarship and nature is lovely and the poet loves it, the background of Oxford and the charming country around gives a sentiment to the poems that to many is the most charming thing about it. But these are not the essential: the Scholar Gipsy might have been some one quite different in these respects from what he was, if only he had "one aim, one business, one desire." That was the thing that made him immortal, that made him live in the mind of Matthew Arnold.

So, turning to *Thyrsis*, when he thought of his friend Clough, he thought of him as one who could not keep in touch with such an ideal. He could not remain in the charming country of *The Scholar Gipsy*, for he could not rid himself of his knowledge of "some life of men

unblessed." His piping took a troubled sound, the music of his rustic flute took on a stormy note of the contentions of men, and their groanings, even though far away. Yet even though he wandered till he died, he kept the notion of a fixed ideal, he was sure that the light they sought was burning still.

Something of the same thing may be seen in the *Memorial Verses*. Byron showed us the strife of passion, Goethe the heights of wisdom, but Wordsworth brings us back from doubts, distinctions, disputes, to nature, to the freshness of the early world, to a permanence that is calm amidst distractions, peaceful amid strife, unchanging amid change.

In every one of the Elegiac Verses we should find some echo or variation of this thought. Whatever else there is, there is always this feeling, this desire for something fixed and firm amid the vaguenesses, the variations, the trivialities of modern life. Sometimes, as in *A Southern Night*, it is only the thought that the peaceful graves by the Mediterranean, by the ancient hills of India are hardly true resting-places for those who were spent with this workaday age. In *Haworth Churchyard* he has little other wish for Charlotte Brontë than that she shall sleep peacefully, even though he feels the impossibility of his wish. In *Rugby Chapel* he thinks of his father as

> "Not like the men of the crowd,
> Who all around me to-day
> Bluster and cringe and make vile,"

and as one who not merely marches right on in the journey to the City of God, but helps others thither.

And when he thinks of Heine as the sardonic smile of the spirit of the world, he hopes that for himself will be a mood of that spirit more serene, with more of the rapture of peace. In the naked austerity of the Grande Chartreuse, though the voices of earlier masters whisper, "What dost thou in this living tomb?" yet still the monastery is a refuge for the moment for his soul from the chafings of hourly false control of the world. And though he does not believe in the silence, yet it is better than the outcry which he has left behind. The author of *Obermann* is one of the few of the century who attained to see as did Goethe and Wordsworth. He saw the tangle of the age and had, at least, the power to withdraw himself from it, even if in a sort of cold despair; to take himself out of the world to those whose one bond is that they are unspotted by the world. And even after many years he still feels the mournful calm of his sad, tranquil lore.

With all the variations the same note is to be heard throughout, the desire for rest, peace, calm, in a world of unguided and misguided activity. Over and over again, in a hundred different ways, he gives us his impression of the blustering, dazzling, working, hurried, tangled, uncertain, stormy, fluctuating time in which he lived. It is not that there is effort and strife: he would himself strive and use his powers. It is not that there are troubles and difficulties: he understands that life is not a mere wayside inn for rest or carouse. But there is a lack of aim, of object, of ideal; everyone is busy doing, but no one knows what they are doing or why they are doing it; it is every man for himself, each man doing

as he likes, without any true knowledge of goodness or right. Matthew Arnold "longs for a repose that ever is the same."

In spirit these elegiac poems are very representative of all Matthew Arnold's lyric poetry. There is hardly one of his poems — excepting the purely personal poems, and the narrative and dramatic poems to be mentioned later — which will not be read more appreciatively, understood better, if one begins it with the thought of its author as a man who would gladly stand aloof from a world that he cannot love, cannot understand, cannot endure. It may be that that attitude will not always connect itself with the thought of the poem, but it will almost always be in harmony with the mood.

Nor was this tendency, in the earlier poems at least, unperceived at the time. *Blackwood's Magazine*, which reviewed the first volume rather unsympathetically, says that the poet cannot look for sympathy so long as he appeals neither to the heart, nor the affections, nor the passions of mankind, but prefers appearing in the ridiculous guise of a misanthrope. "He would fain persuade us that he is a sort of Timon, who, despairing of the tendency of the age, wishes to wrap himself up in the mantle of necessity, and takes no part whatever in the vulgar concerns of existence." And the *North British Review*, in an article of more friendly tone, notes what it calls "an indolent selfish quietism," and says that "less of aversion to action in all its forms, greater sympathy with the wants of the present generation, will endear him to many who

would now turn away contemptuously from the self-complacent reverie and refined indolence which too often disfigure its pages."

And, if it does not prolong too much this presentation of what may be quite obvious, let us further note his own words in his letters of about this time. Writing to his mother of the events in Paris of 1848, he speaks of an article by Carlyle in the *Examiner*. "How deeply restful it comes upon one amidst the hot dizzy trash that one reads about these changes everywhere." That anything by Carlyle should be restful may seem strange, but we get the reason in a few lines. "The source of repose in Carlyle's article is that he alone puts aside the din and whirl and brutality which envelop a movement of the masses, to fix his thoughts on its ideal character." It is with some such idea that Arnold does not think England livable-in just yet (March 7th, 1848), and somewhat later retires more and more "from the modern world and modern literature." Nature is an unfailing resource, and one can always gain help and power from her, but otherwise the lesson — if we look for a lesson — is but a negative one. Fix one's thoughts on an ideal, is a good enough thing to say; but when we look at the poems to find what sort of ideal, what sort of aim in life, what purpose Matthew Arnold has gained either by meditation or by a study of those who have inspired him, we get very slight answer. His father, as well as others, was on the march to the City of God, but the poet gives us no hint of where any such city may be, nor who the God may be who created it (so

far off) as his abiding-place. Wordsworth certainly had healing power, but the poet makes no attempt to define it, as he did long afterward in prose. Clough, Heine, Charlotte Brontë, even de Senancour, offer no guide in life, nor is any indicated in these poems, save slightly here and there, unless we call one a guide in life who would avoid it altogether and live to himself with nature and the great minds of the past.

If we turn, however, from the lyric poetry to that which is narrative and dramatic, we shall be conscious of a considerable difference. We certainly do not find in the subject, at least, of the narrative poems, anything that particularly reminds us of the view of life that has been seen in the lyric poems. The story of the father who unwittingly kills his son, the story of the hunter and harper and his ill-fated love, the story of the God of love and beauty killed by the malice of the hidden enemy, these topics seem to have nothing at all to do with the ideas of which we have been speaking. In fact, we have to do with something else, — all of them are examples of tragedy through fate. Now Matthew Arnold was not a fatalist, so far as we know; he had no real conception of tragedy through fate as a definite element in life. Familiar with the idea, as he was, in the classics which he loved, or in the romantic legends from which he usually took his narrative subjects, he had no idea, so far as is now known, of fate as a tragic element in life. Perhaps his mind may have been attracted by such subjects from the idea of the struggle with the circumstances of modern life being like the struggle with mere fate. But he cer-

tainly did not take very striking analogies. He did not do as Mr. Pater did some time afterward, who in thinking of a subject for imaginative expression, chose Marius the Epicurean, as a young man living in an age of transition not very different in essentials from the age in which he himself lived. Once Matthew Arnold did that. Empedocles was "one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern." But this poem practically the one of his dramatic or narrative poems that reflects, in subject at least, the view of life of which we have been speaking — Matthew Arnold omitted from his published poetry, and later he restored it; but, in both cases for reasons quite unconnected with these matters. And the narrative poems which he did retain and publish certainly do not re-echo the view of life that we cannot avoid in the lyric poetry, except in so far as they give us the idea of enduring a vast power that we cannot overcome. How can we understand that they are written by the same man?

For one thing they are narrative and dramatic, and the other poems are lyric. And the chief and great difference between these kinds of poetry is that while the lyric poet makes his poetry out of the thoughts, feelings, emotions, views of life within his own heart and head, the narrative poet or the dramatist is im-

mensely impressed by something in the world without and makes that the subject of his work. Nor will that something in the world without have any close relation, in Matthew Arnold's opinion at least, to his lyric emotion. In his preface of 1857 he scoffs at those who think that the finest thing in the way of poetry is "a true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history." "No, assuredly it is not (he says), it never can be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim!"

We need not be surprised, then, at finding that *Sohrab and Rustum*, *Tristram and Iseult*, *The Strayed Reveller*, seem to have little connection with the Matthew Arnold of *The Scholar Gipsy*, the *Memorial Verses*, and *Requiescat*. Yet we may wonder a little at the contradiction, or at least the difference, and we may desire to know how it may be that a man who in some of his best poems is so much in pain at the confusion and flux of his own day, can interest himself calmly in a medieval romance that betrays no sign of mental struggle, confusion, disturbance, or, indeed, even of any intellectual life at all. It is probably for this very reason that these themes appealed to the poet. This very thing is quite apparent, too, in the style and treatment as well as in the action, and, in a way, the style and treatment are the most important things about them. It is true that Matthew Arnold himself seems to tell us the reverse in his preface of 1857, where he lays so much stress on the action and considers the expression as something of little moment. But there he has in mind particularities of expression: these he rightly says

are of little moment when compared with the action as designed and molded and formed in the poet's mind. It is not thought merely that he has in mind in that preface: it is thought-in-form, as we may say, total impression, as he says himself. The great poetic power is "the power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes; not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration." But whatever be his critical expressions, there can be no doubt that Matthew Arnold took great pains with the poetic form of these poems. He had in mind a very clear ideal of poetic form, and that ideal is of great importance to the student of his poetry and his thought.

And that ideal, it need hardly be said, is the ideal of classic art, the ideal of clear, definite, absolute beauty, that beauty of which distinction and repose are the unfailing charm. We are not carried away here by the power of passion as in Byron, by the brilliancy and richness as in Keats, by the exhilarated imagination as in Shelley. Here we have clearly conceived figures presented in clear-cut outlines. It is not that there is absence of imagination, of detail of feeling; there is as a rule more and it is more like life than in Byron, Keats, or Shelley. Let us take a few examples.

> "Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,
> Watching her children play; their little hands
> Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
> Of stagshorn for their hats; anon, with screams
> Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
> Among the holly-clumps, and broken ground,

Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush
Out of their glossy coverts; but when now
Their cheeks were flush'd and over each hot brow,
Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair,
In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair —
Then Iseult called them to her, and the three
Clustered under the holly-screen, and she
Told them an old-world Breton history."

It is certainly Iseult of the medieval story, Iseult of the fair hands, the second Iseult, and yet how classic the manner. How fully, how clearly, even how definitely it is stated. A single line or two may give a whole picture. Let us take another instance, the figure of Vivian from the same poem.

"Blowing between the stems, the forest air
Had loosen'd the brown locks of Vivian's hair,
Which played on her flush'd cheek, and her blue eyes
Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bathed in sweat,
For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.
A briar in that tangled wilderness
Had scored her white right hand, which she allows
To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress;
The other warded off the drooping boughs.
But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize.
Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,
The spirit of the woods was in her face.
She look'd so witching fair, that learned wight
Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight;
And he grew fond, and eager to obey
His mistress, use her empire as she may."

This is perhaps a better example of Matthew Arnold's style, for our purposes, because it is one that we

may readily compare with a figure done at almost the same time by a master of a very different style. Tennyson in the idyll now called *Merlin and Vivien* gives a very different picture of the enchantress.

"He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,
Half-suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-wintered fleece of throat and chin.
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,
And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or thrice,
Leapt from her session in his lap, and stood
Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love,
Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of death!
White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger puff'd
Her fairy nostril out; her hand half clinch'd
Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,
And feeling; had she found a dagger there
(For in a wink the false love turns to hate)
She would have stabb'd him; but she found it not:
His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
A long, long weeping, not consolable."

We need not decide, nor attempt to decide which of the two is better, but it is certainly not hard to see what is the difference between them.

Clearness of outline, perfection of detail where there is any, these are classic qualities, and there is one quality more, — its universality. These figures are human and so are living; Iseult might be a widow and her children by the seashore to-day: Vivian might be a modern coquette.[1] But they are not particularly modern either: they belong to any time you choose.

[1] Her hair and eyes, and her mocking charm remind one of Marguerite.

These clear-cut figures are easy to perceive in the creative poetry as we may call it, whether narrative or descriptive. It is not that they are characters of a classic age, like Empedocles and Callicles, Circe and Ulysses: that is but an accident; some are of classic time and some are not. But all when they are described are described in the same way, and that way characteristic of classic poetry. Whatever else we have, here are the figures as they actually are, without emotion on the part of the poet to blind us or accessory to distract us. Costume and circumstance are of interest, but only in making more clear, more particular, more definite the human emotion that is the main thing. "The calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity" — those qualities which Matthew Arnold himself sees in "the great monuments of early Greek genius" — are to be seen to a varying degree in his own poetry, because he loved those qualities and desired his readers to feel them as he had felt them. But he felt their power because by them he felt that he could best present the universal emotion, feeling, that appealed to him. In Empedocles on Etna he saw not merely the story of "a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago," but in this Greek's feelings he recognized much that many thought exclusively modern, much in other words that belonged to the human spirit itself and not to Sicily or England, to the fifth century before Christ or the nineteenth century after. The particular time of his story therefore mattered as little to Matthew Arnold as it did to Shakespeare. It might come from antiquity, it might come from medievalism,

and from the medievalism of the North or the East, quite as well as the more familiar land of Arthurian romance. Only Arnold living at a scientific period of the world's development preferred to be historically accurate[1] as far as he could be without making his work dry and painstaking. Shakespeare, whose characters were presented by actors clad in the costume of his own day, was quite indifferent to historic accuracy in costume or circumstance, and had the Athenian clowns put new ribbons in their pumps, or Brutus put a book in his pocket, or Cleopatra go and play billiards, without the slightest compunction. Arnold will at times be more accurate as when Iseult wraps herself in her mantle of rich fur brought by Venetian ships from Egypt, but he will also be content with the circumstance and background that belong to one time as well as another, the birds, the flowers, the trees and all the constantly changing and changeless paraphernalia of Nature.

That one should have an action and present it in its essentials, — that, he said himself, was the great thing. In essentials a human action in classic antiquity or in Gothic medievalism is all one, or whether in Bokhara or Scandinavia. "The terrible old mythic story," he wrote, "on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theatre, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark

[1] Col. Yule spoke to him of the sugared mulberries of *Sohrab and Rustum*, and told him that in talking of them to some Indians, they had told him that the more usual thing to keep in the mouth was a garlic plant. Matthew Arnold, however, had an authority all ready. *Letters*, II, 146.

vista: *then came the Poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in; stroke upon stroke,* the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group; more and more it revealed itself to the rivetted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty." I have italicized the words which seem to show most clearly Matthew Arnold's own way of dealing with the stories that he presents. "Immortal beauty" — that was the thing to which one might turn in the hideous jar of current life. That was what the poet should offer to his age, instead of speculations on current topics even when of intense interest to Chartist, Tory, or Whig. That shows the connection these narrative and dramatic poems have with the elegiac and the lyric.

This survey presents to us the chief elements of the view of life expressed in Matthew Arnold's poetry. The confusing and depressing character of the life of our time, the restoring calm of nature, and the permanent power of ideal beauty, nobility, excellence, — these are the chief notes which in one combination or another are to be heard in almost all the poems.

Sometimes one will find a poem that seems written under a different impulse. The whole group of the poems to Marguerite may stand aside from this characterization. They are poems of personal feeling, of a particular feeling so intense as to dull any other emotion for the time. Some other poems, too, have little of the ideas which have been presented. *A Modern*

Sappho appears to be an effort to realize a dramatic moment, a piece of life conceived in and for its own interest, and without element or reminiscence of haunting thoughts and meditations. *Mycerinus* is a rendering of a story in Herodotus that seems entirely apart from modern life and any speculation on it. And there are several sonnets and slighter poems, generally little bits of morality in which we can trace no one especially of the lines that we have been following.

But, as a rule, the poetry of Arnold will be found, not merely to present, but to be formed and molded by one or another of the ideas of which we have spoken. Take some of the best known and look them through. In *Dover Beach* we have first a picture of the calm of nature, then the thought of the turbid tides of humanity, then the thought of the sad incomprehensible waning of faith, and then, as with a sudden pang at heart, he turns to the one beside him as a sort of sole refuge in a confused and ignorant world. Or take the fine piece called *Stagirius*. Stagirius was a young monk of the fourth century, but we should lose little if we took no thought of him, for the poem is really more lyric than it is dramatic, and doubtless has appealed to many because it expressed a conception of the world to-day better than of centuries ago. Take the well-known *Requiescat:* it tells us that death is a happy release, it is peace after the turning maze of life. Take *Self-Deception:* the poet, sick of asking himself what he can do, turns to the stars, and finds them calmly pursuing their appointed tasks with indifference to matters that do not concern them. Take *Sohrab and*

Rustum, Tristram and Iseult: each ends with the feeling of peace after the turmoil of life. There are all sorts of combinations of the three motives; there are combinations with new ideas; but we shall rarely find anything that has no hint of them.

It may be worth a moment to ask how it came about that Matthew Arnold was under the influence of such ideas. It is not from mere curiosity that one would ask the question, but because the poet's own life — so far as it appeared to the world — was so very different from the picture we might make of him. He was not a misanthropic Timon, nor a selfish quietist who retired from the work of the world to sulk: he was singularly gay and cheerful with his friends and his family; he was a hard worker not merely as a critic and professor of poetry, but as a day-to-day inspector of schools. *Blackwood's* in a review of his first poems cries, "What would he be at?" and advises him, whether Whig, Tory, or Chartist to get to work in politics. At about this time Matthew Arnold accepted a position as Inspector of Schools, that sometimes compelled him to work five and six hours together, with "nothing to eat except a biscuit, which a charitable lady" gave him, and often required of him a daily stint of examination books that came up to "sixty pages of close writing" to read in addition to other occupations. And this toilsome occupation he did not take up for a little while, to get a start in life; he held to it for more than thirty years, and was busy at it at a time when he was also writing essays that have become landmarks in criticism, and pursuing studies that to

many have been guides in life. Nor can we say that the poetry came first and the work afterward: such was the case, doubtless, in a large way. But about the time of writing *The Scholar Gipsy*, for instance, he was also writing to his wife, as follows: — "I did not arrive here till just two, as the train was late; went to the school, and found there were three of them. About four o'clock I found myself so exhausted, having had nothing since breakfast, that I sent out for a bun, and ate it before the astonished school. Since then I have had a very good extempore dinner on mutton chops and bread pudding, all the Quaker household having dined early, and now I am in for the pupil teachers till ten o'clock." Of course the working attitude was the one that lasted, but the worker and the poet existed for years in the same person.

We may do something to find the origin of these ideas that give such a special quality to his poetry. The conception of the world as a jarring maze, continually confusing itself and everybody else, this idea doubtless resulted in part from Arnold's losing older conceptions of life and religion, and his forming new ones. But especially, I do not doubt, did Arnold pick up such ideas from his father. At first thought no two people would seem farther apart than the author of *Bacchanalia* and of *Dover Beach*, for instance, and the powerful and inspiring master of Rugby. But Thomas Arnold with all his power and all his inspiration had his share and more than his share of the feeling of pained repulsion that his son shows in his poems. Of religious affairs in 1839 he wrote, "It is so sad that if I were

to allow myself to dwell much upon them, I think it would utterly paralyze me." Of public affairs, at about the same time: "I feel the state of public affairs so deeply that I cannot bear either to read, or hear, or speak, or write about them;" and again, "It is more painful than enough to read of evils which one can neither cure nor palliate." Nor was this feeling merely for something in which he was not deeply concerned: of education he wrote, that "a great school can never present images of rest and peace; and when the spring and activity of youth is altogether unsanctified by anything pure and elevated in its desires, it becomes a spectacle that is as dizzying and almost more morally distressing than the shouts and gambols of a set of lunatics." It is hard to imagine that the son at a most impressionable time of his life should not have been deeply influenced by these views of his father. It is possible, of course, that he knew nothing of them, but this, when we consider the close bonds between them and Thomas Arnold's well-known habit of treating even boys as intelligent agents, does not seem very likely.

From his father, too, Matthew Arnold doubtless learned much of his thought on nature, though here, doubtless, was a great element of influence from Wordsworth, as needs hardly to be said to one who reads his poetry and his prose. But Thomas Arnold was quite as devoted to nature as his son, possibly even more so, and devoted to those especial spots in nature which inspired his son. Thus the country about Cumner was his favorite. "I am going with Walrond to-day to explore the Cumner country," wrote Matthew Arnold

in October, 1854, "and on Thursday I got up alone into one of the little coombs that papa was so fond of, and which I had in my mind in the *Gipsy Scholar*, and felt the peculiar *sentiment* of the country and neighbourhood as deeply as ever." And Thomas Arnold near the end of his life looked forward to going to Oxford, because (among other things) it would give him a chance to take his children walking in Bagley wood. The Lake Country, of course, Matthew Arnold came to know and love, because his father had known and loved it before him.

Nor need we go far to discover the source of Matthew Arnold's love for the classics and his feeling that in the permanance of classic beauty is to be found something that will outlast the fluctuations and eddyings of a thousand days of the present.

It is not very hard, indeed, to imagine to ourselves how the poet's thought developed. Nor need we wonder that the view which it presented was not more permanent. Like his father, Matthew Arnold recognized that however unpeaceful and restless was the world, he could do something for it. Like his father, too, he never allowed his delight in nature to change from a power to recreate into an anodyne which should deaden. He did not have his father's loving devotion to Jesus Christ nor the power that came from it, but he did have at bottom his father's sense of responsibility and sense of power. So he, like his father, kept on one side his doubts as to the sad incomprehensible world, and used only where it could be useful the immeasurable power and charm of nature, while he

did the work that as time went on he found himself able to do.

One thing he never put aside, — the feeling for the satisfying beauty of the ideal. It is true that the especial power of poetic beauty no longer satisfied him as the years passed. But more and more it became an ideal of intellectual beauty which was as classic and as enduring as the other. And if at the end of those ten years he had meant to devote to poetry, he found his poetic productions still few, yet he must have had the feeling that the same powers that had produced the best of his poems were still dominant. Purged of some of the intensity and short-sightedness of earlier days, he had lost nothing of power of conception or of expression, and he could go on in the new medium of which he found himself a greater master than of the old, with full assurance that he was putting the whole force of his character where it would count most.

We shall want, perhaps, before leaving Matthew Arnold, to formulate our idea as to his position in relation to others of his time. While he was writing, his poetry was often compared with that of Tennyson, and, as a rule, unfavorably. Later his work found many admirers among those who did not find Tennyson intellectual enough, but these people commonly found in Browning a poet more attractive to their intellectualizing propensities. Still a third class to whom he had made his strongest appeal at first — those practically of the Pre-Raphaelite way of looking at things — very soon went off on a line of interest in which they strayed very far away from Arnold. It is eminently

characteristic that Michael Rossetti and Swinburne both admired exceedingly *The New Sirens*, a poem which stands quite alone, in its most characteristic qualities, in the poet's work.

Our preceding studies have shown us where to look for Matthew Arnold's chief quality. He is not great as a poet of the personal life, in spite of the charm of some of the poems of *Faded Leaves* and *Switzerland*. Nor is he great as a poet of ideas, in spite of the satisfaction that many who look sadly or impatiently on life take in thinking his thoughts. And if we compare him with Tennyson or Browning, we recognize at once that he has not the breadth and the sense of beauty of one, nor the depth and the sense of life of the other. We cannot measure him with either on their own ground any more than we can measure either of them with the other. Nor can we compare him with Swinburne because he wrote *The New Sirens*, nor with Mrs. Browning because he wrote *A Modern Sappho*. No: Matthew Arnold's greatness as a poet is not seen from such standpoints. He is a great poet because he is the author of *Dover Beach* and *Bacchanalia*, of *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Rugby Chapel*, of the *Forsaken Merman* and *Sohrab and Rustum*. The author of these poems stands alone among English poets, because there is no one who so feels and so expresses the question as to the meaning of life, the recreating charm of nature, and the power of classic beauty. Wordsworth will be thought of, and without a doubt *Tintern Abbey* is a finer poem than *Resignation*. But it is finer chiefly because it is truer and more profound in its

ideas. Shelley may be thought of, and *Adonais* is (to my mind) finer than *Thyrsis*, but not for the things that make *Thyrsis* fine, not for the sense of the spirit of place. *Adonais* is fine because Shelley feels the wonderful things of life so intensely and expresses them so happily. We shall come nearer Matthew Arnold if we think of Keats, — the Keats of the *Grecian Urn*, the *Autumn*, the *Nightingale*, the beginning of *Hyperion*, the *Lamia*. And there, if we are thinking of poetic power, we must think of the opportunities of the two. Matthew Arnold had been from his birth under the inspiration of Oxford and Westmoreland. But Keats did what he did with little more knowledge of nature than he could gain from Hampstead Heath, and what feeling for the classics he could gain by reading Lempriere's Dictionary. He was the man for poetic power. Yet he lacked something that Matthew Arnold had. The charm of nature he felt, the power of classic beauty, but as to life itself he was still in confusion. Matthew Arnold was the clearer thinker, perhaps too clear a thinker to be a perfect poet, perhaps the more he thought the less he imagined. However that may be, there was a time with him when imagination and thought mingled, neither for the time overweighing the other, and then he produced beautiful poetry, poetry which in its particular qualities no other of the many poets of England has ever equaled.

Select Poems of Matthew Arnold

POEMS OF THE PERSONAL LIFE

A MEMORY-PICTURE

Laugh, my friends, and without blame
Lightly quit what lightly came;
Rich to-morrow as to-day,
Spend as madly as you may!
I, with little land to stir,
Am the exacter labourer.
  Ere the parting hour go by,
  Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Once I said: 'A face is gone
If too hotly mused upon;
And our best impressions are
Those that do themselves repair.'
Many a face I so let flee,
Ah! is faded utterly.
  Ere the parting hour go by,
  Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Marguerite says: 'As last year went,
So the coming year 'll be spent;
Some day next year, I shall be,
Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee.'
Ah, I hope! — yet, once away,
What may chain us, who can say?
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair around;
Tied under the archest chin
Mockery ever ambush'd in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint that figure's pliant grace
As she toward me lean'd her face,
Half refus'd and half resign'd,
Murmuring: 'Art thou still unkind?'
Many a broken promise then
Was new made — to break again.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,
Eager tell-tales of her mind;

Paint, with their impetuous stress
Of enquiring tenderness,
Those frank eyes, where deep I see
An angelic gravity.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

What, my friends, these feeble lines
Shew, you say, my love declines?
To paint ill as I have done,
Proves forgetfulness begun?
Time's gay minions, pleased you see,
Time, your master, governs me;
Pleased, you mock the fruitless cry:
'Quick, thy tablets, Memory!'

Ah, too true! Time's current strong
Leaves us fixt to nothing long.
Yet, if little stays with man,
Ah, retain we all we can!
If the clear impression dies,
Ah, the dim remembrance prize!
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

LONGING

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to others as to me!

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth;
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say: *My love! why sufferest thou?*

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

ISOLATION

We were apart; yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.

I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learn'd —
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturn'd.
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell —
Thou lov'st no more; — Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell! — and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spheréd course
To haunt the place where passions reign —
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer-night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,

Wandering in Heaven, far removed.
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth — to prove, and make thine own:
'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.'

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things —
Ocean and clouds and night and day;
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men — for they, at least,
Have *dream'd* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolong'd; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

TO MARGUERITE

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour —

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain —
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing 's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire? —
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

THE TERRACE AT BERNE

(COMPOSED TEN YEARS AFTER THE PRECEDING)

TEN years! — and to my waking eye
Once more the roofs of Berne appear;

The rocky banks, the terrace high,
The stream! — and do I linger here?

The clouds are on the Oberland,
The Jungfrau snows look faint and far;
But bright are those green fields at hand,
And through those fields comes down the Aar,

And from the blue twin-lakes it comes,
Flows by the town, the church-yard fair;
And 'neath the garden-walk it hums,
The house! — and is my Marguerite there?

Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,
Quick through the oleanders brush,
And clap thy hands, and cry: *'Tis thou!*

Or hast thou long since wander'd back,
Daughter of France! to France, thy home;
And flitted down the flowery track
Where feet like thine too lightly come?

Doth riotous laughter now replace
Thy smile; and rouge, with stony glare,
Thy cheek's soft hue; and fluttering lace
The kerchief that enwound thy hair?

Or is it over? — art thou dead? —
Dead! — and no warning shiver ran
Across my heart, to say thy thread
Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

Could from earth's ways that figure slight
Be lost, and I not feel 't was so?
Of that fresh voice the gay delight
Fail from earth's air, and I not know?

Or shall I find thee still, but changed,
But not the Marguerite of thy prime?
With all thy being re-arranged, —
Pass'd through the crucible of time;

With spirit vanish'd, beauty waned,
And hardly yet a glance, a tone,
A gesture — anything — retain'd
Of all that was my Marguerite's own?

I will not know! For wherefore try,
To things by mortal course that live,
A shadowy durability,
For which they were not meant, to give?

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,

So on the sea of life, alas!
Man meets man — meets, and quits again.

I knew it when my life was young;
I feel it still now youth is o'er.
— The mists are on the mountain hung,
And Marguerite I shall see no more.

THE NEW SIRENS

In the cedar shadow sleeping,
Where cool grass and fragrant glooms
Late at eve had lured me, creeping
From your darken'd palace rooms —
I, who in your train at morning
Stroll'd and sang with joyful mind,
Heard, in slumber, sounds of warning;
Saw the hoarse boughs labour in the wind.

Who are they, O pensive Graces,
— For I dream'd they wore your forms —
Who on shores and sea-wash'd places
Scoop the shelves and fret the storms?
Who, when ships are that way tending,
Troop across the flushing sands,
To all reefs and narrows wending,
With blown tresses, and with beckoning hands?

Yet I see, the howling levels
Of the deep are not your lair;
And your tragic-vaunted revels
Are less lonely than they were.
Like those Kings with treasure steering
From the jewell'd lands of dawn,
Troops, with gold and gifts, appearing,
Stream all day through your enchanted lawn.

And we too, from upland valleys,
Where some Muse with half-curved frown
Leans her ear to your mad sallies
Which the charm'd winds never drown;
By faint music guided, ranging
The scared glens, we wander'd on,
Left our awful laurels hanging,
And came heap'd with myrtles to your throne.

From the dragon-warder'd fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are,
From the watchers on the mountains,
And the bright and morning star;
We are exiles, we are falling,
We have lost them at your call —
O ye false ones, at your calling
Seeking ceiled chambers and a palace-hall!

Are the accents of your luring
More melodious than of yore?

Are those frail forms more enduring
Than the charms Ulysses bore?
That we sought you with rejoicings,
Till at evening we descry
At a pause of Siren voicings
These vext branches and this howling sky? . . .
. . . . . .

Oh, your pardon! The uncouthness
Of that primal age is gone,
And the skin of dazzling smoothness
Screens not now a heart of stone.
Love has flush'd those cruel faces;
And those slacken'd arms forgo
The delight of death-embraces,
And yon whitening bone-mounds do not grow.

'Ah,' you say; 'the large appearance
Of man's labour is but vain,
And we plead as staunch adherence
Due to pleasure as to pain.'
Pointing to earth's careworn creatures,
'Come,' you murmur with a sigh:
'Ah! we own diviner features,
Loftier bearing, and a prouder eye.

'Come,' you say, 'the hours were dreary;
Dull did life in torpor fade;

Time is tame, and we grow weary
In the slumbrous cedarn shade.
Round our hearts with long caresses,
With low sighings, Silence stole,
And her load of steaming tresses
Weigh'd, like Ossa, on the aery soul.

'Come,' you say, 'the soul is fainting
Till she search and learn her own,
And the wisdom of man's painting
Leaves her riddle half unknown.
Come,' you say, 'the brain is seeking,
While the sovran heart is dead;
Yet this glean'd, when Gods were speaking,
Rarer secrets than the toiling head.

'Come,' you say, 'opinion trembles,
Judgment shifts, convictions go;
Life dries up, the heart dissembles—
Only, what we feel, we know.
Hath your wisdom known emotions?
Will it weep our burning tears?
Hath it drunk of our love-potions
Crowning moments with the weight of years?'

I am dumb. Alas, too soon all
Man's grave reasons disappear!
Yet, I think, at God's tribunal

Some large answer you shall hear.
But for me, my thoughts are straying
Where at sunrise, through your vines,
On these lawns I saw you playing,
Hanging garlands on your odorous pines;

When your showering looks enwound you,
And your heavenly eyes shone through;
When the pine-boughs yielded round you,
And your brows were starr'd with dew;
And immortal forms, to meet you,
Down the statued alleys came,
And through golden horns, to greet you,
Blew such music as a God may frame.

Yes, I muse! And if the dawning
Into daylight never grew,
If the glistering wings of morning
On the dry noon shook their dew,
If the fits of joy were longer,
Or the day were sooner done,
Or, perhaps, if hope were stronger,
No weak nursling of an earthly sun . . .
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
Dusk the hall with yew!

. . . . . .

For a bound was set to meetings,
And the sombre day dragg'd on;

And the burst of joyful greetings,
And the joyful dawn, were gone.
For the eye grows fill'd with gazing,
And on raptures follow calms;
And those warm locks men were praising,
Droop'd, unbraided, on your listless arms.

Storms unsmooth'd your folded valleys,
And made all your cedars frown;
Leaves were whirling in the alleys
Which your lovers wander'd down.
—Sitting cheerless in your bowers,
The hands propping the sunk head,
Do they gall you, the long hours,
And the hungry thought, that must be fed?

Is the pleasure that is tasted
Patient of a long review?
Will the fire joy hath wasted,
Mused on, warm the heart anew?
—Or, are those old thoughts returning,
Guests the dull sense never knew,
Stars, set deep, yet inly burning,
Germs, your untrimm'd passion overgrew?

Once, like us, you took your station
Watchers for a purer fire;
But you droop'd in expectation,
And you wearied in desire.

When the first rose flush was steeping
All the frore peak's awful crown,
Shepherds say, they found you sleeping
In some windless valley, farther down.

Then you wept, and slowly raising
Your dozed eyelids, sought again,
Half in doubt, they say, and gazing
Sadly back, the seats of men —
Snatch'd a turbid inspiration
From some transient earthly sun,
And proclaimed your vain ovation
For those mimic raptures you had won. . . .
. . . . . .

With a sad, majestic motion,
With a stately, slow surprise,
From their earthward-bound devotion
Lifting up your languid eyes —
Would you freeze my louder boldness,
Dumbly smiling as you go,
One faint frown of distant coldness
Flitting fast across each marble brow?

Do I brighten at your sorrow,
O sweet Pleaders? — doth my lot
Find assurance in to-morrow
Of one joy, which you have not?

O, speak once, and shame my sadness!
Let this sobbing, Phrygian strain,
Mock'd and baffled by your gladness,
Mar the music of your feasts in vain!

. . . . . .

Scent, and song, and light, and flowers!
Gust on gust, the harsh winds blow —
Come, bind up those ringlet showers!
Roses for that dreaming brow!
Come, once more that ancient lightness,
Glancing feet, and eager eyes!
Let your broad lamps flash the brightness
Which the sorrow-stricken day denies!

Through black depths of serried shadows,
Up cold aisles of buried glade;
In the mist of river-meadows
Where the looming kine are laid;
From your dazzled windows streaming,
From your humming festal room,
Deep and far, a broken gleaming
Reels and shivers on the ruffled gloom.

Where I stand, the grass is glowing;
Doubtless you are passing fair!
But I hear the north wind blowing,
And I feel the cold night-air.

Can I look on your sweet faces,
And your proud heads backward thrown,
From this dusk of leaf-strewn places
With the dumb woods and the night alone?

Yet, indeed, this flux of guesses —
Mad delight, and frozen calms —
Mirth to-day and vine-bound tresses,
And to-morrow — folded palms;
Is this all? this balanced measure?
Could life run no happier way?
Joyous, at the height of pleasure,
Passive, at the nadir of dismay?

But indeed, this proud possession,
This far-reaching, magic chain,
Linking in a mad succession
Fits of joy and fits of pain —
Have you seen it at the closing?
Have you track'd its clouded ways?
Can your eyes, while fools are dozing,
Drop, with mine, adown life's latter days?

When a dreary light is wading
Through this waste of sunless greens,
When the flashing lights are fading
On the peerless cheek of queens,

When the mean shall no more sorrow,
And the proudest no more smile;
As old age, youth's fatal morrow
Spreads its cold light wider all that while?

Then, when change itself is over,
When the slow tide sets one way,
Shall you find the radiant lover,
Even by moments, of to-day?
The eye wanders, faith is failing —
O, loose hands, and let it be!
Proudly, like a king bewailing,
O, let fall one tear, and set us free!

All true speech and large avowal
Which the jealous soul concedes;
All man's heart which brooks bestowal,
All frank faith which passion breeds —
These we had, and we gave truly;
Doubt not, what we had, we gave!
False we were not, nor unruly;
Lodgers in the forest and the cave.

Long we wander'd with you, feeding
Our rapt souls on your replies,
In a wistful silence reading
All the meaning of your eyes.

By moss-border'd statues sitting,
By well-heads, in summer days.
But we turn, our eyes are flitting —
See, the white east, and the morning-rays!

And you too, O worshipp'd Graces,
Sylvan Gods of this fair shade!
Is there doubt on divine faces?
Are the blessed Gods dismay'd?
Can men worship the wan features,
The sunk eyes, the wailing tone,
Of unsphered, discrowned creatures,
Souls as little godlike as their own?

Come, loose hands! The winged fleetness
Of immortal feet is gone;
And your scents have shed their sweetness,
And your flowers are overblown.
And your jewell'd gauds surrender
Half their glories to the day;
Freely did they flash their splendour,
Freely gave it — but it dies away.

In the pines the thrush is waking —
Lo, yon orient hill in flames!
Scores of true love knots are breaking
At divorce which it proclaims.
When the lamps are paled at morning,

Heart quits heart and hand quits hand,
Cold in that unlovely dawning,
Loveless, rayless, joyless you shall stand!

Pluck no more red roses, maidens,
Leave the lilies in their dew —
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens,
Dusk, oh, dusk the hall with yew!
— Shall I seek, that I may scorn her,
Her I loved at eventide?
Shall I ask, what faded mourner
Stands, at daybreak, weeping by my side? . . .
Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens!
Dusk the hall with yew!

POEMS OF NATURE AND THOUGHT

RESIGNATION

TO FAUSTA

To die be given us, or attain!
Fierce work it were, to do again.
So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd
At burning noon; so warriors said,
Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the miles
Of dust which wreathed their struggling files
Down Lydian mountains; so, when snows
Round Alpine summits, eddying, rose,
The Goth, bound Rome-wards; so the Hun,
Crouch'd on his saddle, while the sun
Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
Through which the groaning Danube strains
To the drear Euxine; — so pray all,
Whom labours, self-ordain'd, enthrall;
Because they to themselves propose
On this side the all-common close
A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.
So pray they; and to stand again

Where they stood once, to them were pain;
Pain to thread back and to renew
Past straits, and currents long steer'd through.

But milder natures, and more free —
Whom an unblamed serenity
Hath freed from passions, and the state
Of struggle these necessitate;
Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd —
These mourn not, that their goings pay
Obedience to the passing day.
These claim not every laughing Hour
For handmaid to their striding power;
Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,
To await their march; and when appear'd,
Through the cold gloom, with measured race,
To usher for a destined space
(Her own sweet errands all foregone)
The too imperious traveller on.
These, Fausta, ask not this; nor thou,
Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now!

We left, just ten years since, you say,
That wayside inn we left to-day.
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,
Shouts greeting from his easy chair.
High on a bank our leader stands,

Reviews and ranks his motley bands,
Makes clear our goal to every eye —
The valley's western boundary.
A gate swings to! our tide hath flow'd
Already from the silent road.
The valley-pastures, one by one,
Are threaded, quiet in the sun;
And now beyond the rude stone bridge
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.
Its woody border, and the last
Of its dark upland farms is past;
Cool farms, with open-lying stores,
Under their burnish'd sycamores —
All past! and through the trees we glide
Emerging on the green hill-side.
There climbing hangs, a far-seen sign,
Our waving, many-colour'd line;
There winds, upstreaming slowly still
Over the summit of the hill.
And now, in front, behold outspread
Those upper regions we must tread!
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
The cheerful silence of the fells.
Some two hours' march, with serious air,
Through the deep noontide heats we fare;
The red-grouse, springing at our sound,
Skims, now and then, the shining ground;
No life, save his and ours, intrudes

Upon these breathless solitudes.
O joy! again the farms appear.
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer;
There springs the brook will guide us down,
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.
Lingering, we follow down; we gain
The town, the highway, and the plain.
And many a mile of dusty way,
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day;
But, Fausta, I remember well,
That as the balmy darkness fell
We bathed our hands with speechless glee,
That night, in the wide-glimmering sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road,
Fausta, which ten years since we trod;
Alone we tread it, you and I,
Ghosts of that boisterous company.
Here, where the brook shines, near its head,
In its clear, shallow, turf-fringed bed;
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town;
Here sit we, and again unroll,
Though slowly, the familiar whole.
The solemn wastes of heathy hill
Sleep in the July sunshine still;
The self-same shadows now, as then,
Play through this grassy upland glen;

The loose dark stones on the green way
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay;
On this mild bank above the stream,
(You crush them!) the blue gentians gleam.
Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
The sailing foam, the shining pool!
These are not changed; and we, you say,
Are scarce more changed, in truth, than they.

The gipsies, whom we met below,
They, too, have long roam'd to and fro;
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.
And often to some kindly place
Chance guides the migratory race,
Where, though long wanderings intervene,
They recognise a former scene.
The dingy tents are pitch'd; the fires
Give to the wind their wavering spires;
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame
Their children, as when first they came;
They see their shackled beasts again
Move, browsing, up the grey-wall'd lane.
Signs are not wanting, which might raise
The ghost in them of former days —
Signs are not wanting, if they would;
Suggestions to disquietude.
For them, for all, time's busy touch,

While it mends little, troubles much.
Their joints grow stiffer — but the year
Runs his old round of dubious cheer;
Chilly they grow — yet winds in March,
Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch;
They must live still — and yet, God knows,
Crowded and keen the country grows;
It seems as if, in their decay,
The law grew stronger every day.
So might they reason, so compare,
Fausta, times past with times that are;
But no! — they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way,
And they will rub through, if they can,
To-morrow on the self-same plan,
Till death arrive to supersede,
For them, vicissitude and need.

The poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of man.
Though he move mountains, though his day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway,
Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,
Though he hath borne immortal pains,
Action and suffering though he know —
He hath not lived, if he lives so.

He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand,
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude,
Exults — yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.
Beautiful eyes meet his — and he
Bears to admire uncravingly;
They pass — he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town;
Surveys each happy group, which fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets,
Each with some errand of its own —
And does not say: *I am alone.*
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When morning purifies the earth;
He leans upon a gate, and sees
The pastures, and the quiet trees.
Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,
Folds the still valley almost round;
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn;
In the hedge straggling to the stream,
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam;
But, where the farther side slopes down,
He sees the drowsy new-waked clown

In his white quaint-embroider'd frock
Make, whistling, toward his mist-wreathed
flock —
Slowly, behind his heavy tread,
The wet, flower'd grass heaves up its head.
Lean'd on his gate, he gazes — tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years.
Before him he sees life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole —
That general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
That life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
The life of plants, and stones, and rain,
The life he craves — if not in vain
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen — but that wandering smile,
Fausta, betrays you cold the while!
Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.
Those gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,
Are less, the poet more, than man.
They feel not, though they move and see;
Deeper the poet feels; but he
Breathes, when he will, immortal air,

Where Orpheus and where Homer are.
In the day's life, whose iron round
Hems us all in, he is not bound;
He leaves his kind, o'erleaps their pen,
And flees the common life of men.
He escapes thence, but we abide —
Not deep the poet sees, but wide.

The world in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love,
Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,
Remorse, grief, joy; — and were the scope
Of these affections wider made,
Man still would see, and see dismay'd,
Beyond his passion's widest range,
Far regions of eternal change.
Nay, and since death, which wipes out man,
Finds him with many an unsolved plan,
With much unknown, and much untried,
Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,
Still gazing on the ever full
Eternal mundane spectacle —
This world in which we draw our breath,
In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death.

Blame thou not, therefore, him who dares
Judge vain beforehand human cares;
Whose natural insight can discern

What through experience others learn;
Who needs not love and power, to know
Love transient, power an unreal show;
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways —
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise!
Rather thyself for some aim pray
Nobler than this, to fill the day;
Rather that heart, which burns in thee,
Ask, not to amuse, but to set free;
Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd
For quiet, and a fearless mind.
And though fate grudge to thee and me
The poet's rapt security,
Yet they, believe me, who await
No gifts from chance, have conquer'd fate.
They, winning room to see and hear,
And to men's business not too near,
Through clouds of individual strife
Draw homeward to the general life.
Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd;
To the wise, foolish; to the world,
Weak; — yet not weak, I might reply,
Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,
To whom each moment in its race,
Crowd as we will its neutral space,
Is but a quiet watershed
Whence, equally, the seas of life and death are fed.

Enough, we live! — and if a life,
With large results so little rife,
Though bearable, seem hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream which falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.
And even could the intemperate prayer
Man iterates, while these forbear,
For movement, for an ampler sphere,
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;
Not milder is the general lot
Because our spirits have forgot,
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
The something that infects the world.

BACCHANALIA

OR

THE NEW AGE

I

The evening comes, the fields are still.
The tinkle of the thirsty rill,
Unheard all day, ascends again;

Deserted is the half-mown plain,
Silent the swaths! the ringing wain,
The mower's cry, the dog's alarms,
All housed within the sleeping farms!
The business of the day is done,
The last-left haymaker is gone.
And from the thyme upon the height,
And from the elder-blossom white
And pale dog-roses in the hedge,
And from the mint-plant in the sedge,
In puffs of balm the night-air blows
The perfume which the day forgoes.
And on the pure horizon far,
See, pulsing with the first-born star,
The liquid sky above the hill!
The evening comes, the fields are still.

Loitering and leaping,
With saunter, with bounds —
Flickering and circling
In files and in rounds —
Gaily their pine-staff green
Tossing in air,
Loose o'er their shoulders white
Showering their hair —
See! the wild Mænads
Break from the wood,
Youth and Iacchus

Maddening their blood.
See! through the quiet land
Rioting they pass —
Fling the fresh heaps about,
Trample the grass.
Tear from the rifled hedge
Garlands, their prize;
Fill with their sports the field,
Fill with their cries.

Shepherd, what ails thee, then?
Shepherd, why mute?
Forth with thy joyous song!
Forth with thy flute!
Tempts not the revel blithe?
Lure not their cries?
Glow not their shoulders smooth?
Melt not their eyes?
Is not, on cheeks like those,
Lovely the flush?
— *Ah, so the quiet was!*
So was the hush!

II

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill —
The famous orators have shone,

The famous poets sung and gone,
The famous men of war have fought,
The famous speculators thought,
The famous players, sculptors, wrought,
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all.
The combatants are parted now —
Uphung the spear, unbent the bow,
The puissant crown'd, the weak laid low.
And in the after-silence sweet,
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame
Of this or that down-trodden name,
Delicate spirits, push'd away
In the hot press of the noon-day.
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage —
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen nights —
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly,
Like stars over the bounding hill.
The epoch ends, the world is still.

Thundering and bursting
In torrents, in waves —

Carolling and shouting
Over tombs, amid graves —
See! on the cumber'd plain
Clearing a stage,
Scattering the past about,
Comes the new age.
Bards make new poems,
Thinkers new schools,
Statesmen new systems,
Critics new rules.
All things begin again;
Life is their prize;
Earth with their deeds they fill,
Fill with their cries.

Poet, what ails thee, then?
Say, why so mute?
Forth with thy praising voice!
Forth with thy flute!
Loiterer! why sittest thou
Sunk in thy dream?
Tempts not the bright new age?
Shines not its stream?
Look, ah, what genius,
Art, science, wit!
Soldiers like Cæsar,
Statesmen like Pitt!
Sculptors like Phidias,

Raphaels in shoals,
Poets like Shakspeare —
Beautiful souls!
See, on their glowing cheeks
Heavenly the flush!
—*Ah, so the silence was!*
So was the hush!

The world but feels the present's spell,
The poet feels the past as well;
Whatever men have done, might do,
Whatever thought, might think it too.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE

Raised are the dripping oars,
Silent the boat! the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June-night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye.
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely; a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
For he lent a new life to these hills.
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
Which border Ennerdale Lake,
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
The gleam of The Evening Star
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
But ruin'd and solemn and grey
The sheepfold of Michael survives;
And, far to the south, the heath
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
By the favourite waters of Ruth.
These survive! — yet not without pain,
Pain and dejection to-night,
Can I feel that their poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
He look'd on the rushing decay
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth —
Felt the dissolving throes
Of a social order he loved —
Outlived his brethren, his peers;
And, like the Theban seer,
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,
Copais lay bright in the moon,
Helicon glass'd in the lake

Its firs, and afar rose the peaks
Of Parnassus, snowily clear;
Thebes was behind him in flames,
And the clang of arms in his ear,
When his awe-struck captors led
The Theban seer to the spring.
Tiresias drank and died.
Nor did reviving Thebes
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head
Of a sacred poet lies low
In an age which can rear them no more!
The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.
He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
Of his race is past on the earth;
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For, oh! is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the poet who sings you so well?
Is it you, O beauty, O grace,
O charm, O romance, that we feel,

Or the voice which reveals what you are?
Are ye, like daylight and sun,
Shared and rejoiced in by all?
Or are ye immersed in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world
Too deep for the most to discern?
Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage,
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

'They are here' — I heard, as men heard
In Mysian Ida the voice
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,
The murmur of Nature reply—
'Loveliness, magic, and grace,
They are here! they are set in the world,
They abide; and the finest of souls
Hath not been thrill'd by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal and live,
For they are the life of the world.
Will ye not learn it, and know,
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,
That the singer was less than his themes,
Life, and emotion, and I?

'More than the singer are these.
Weak is the tremor of pain
That thrills in his mournfullest chord
To that which once ran though his soul.
Cold the elation of joy
In his gladdest, airiest song,
To that which of old in his youth
Fill'd him and made him divine.
Hardly his voice at its best
Gives us a sense of the awe,
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
Of the unlit gulph of himself.

'Ye know not yourselves; and your bards —
The clearest, the best, who have read
Most in themselves — have beheld
Less than they left unreveal'd.
Ye express not yourselves; — can ye make
With marble, with colour, with word,
What charm'd you in others re-live?
Can thy pencil, O artist! restore
The figure, the bloom of thy love,
As she was in her morning of spring?
Canst thou paint the ineffable smile
Of her eyes as they rested on thine?
Can the image of life have the glow,
The motion of life itself?

'Yourselves and your fellows you know not; and me,
The mateless, the one, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Utter'd the voice of my hills?
When your great ones depart, will ye say:
All things have suffer'd a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave?

'Race after race, man after man,
Have thought that my secret was theirs,
Have dream'd that I lived but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.
— They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
I remain.'

DOVER BEACH

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; — on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

PHILOMELA

Hark! ah, the nightingale —
The tawny-throated!
Hark, from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark! — what pain!

O wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain —
Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,

And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold,
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia —
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!
Again — thou hearest?
Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!

POEMS CHIEFLY OF THOUGHT

QUIET WORK

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity —

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

SHAKSPEARE

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask — Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-
place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams
know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-
secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at. — Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which
bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

IN EMERSON'S ESSAYS

'O MONSTROUS, dead, unprofitable world,
That thou canst hear, and hearing, hold thy way!
A voice oracular hath peal'd to-day,
To-day a hero's banner is unfurl'd;

Hast thou no lip for welcome?'—So I said.
Man after man, the world smiled and pass'd by;
A smile of wistful incredulity
As though one spake of life unto the dead—

Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful, and full
Of bitter knowledge. Yet the will is free;
Strong is the soul, and wise, and beautiful;

The seeds of godlike power are in us still;
Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!—
Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?

EAST LONDON

'T WAS August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
'Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?'—
'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*'

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

IMMORTALITY

Foil'd by our fellow-men, depress'd, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience! in another life*, we say,
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they,

Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing — only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

REQUIESCAT

Strew on her roses, roses,
  And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
  Ah! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required;
  She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
  And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
  In mazes of heat and sound;
But for peace her soul was yearning,
  And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath;
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

THE LAST WORD

Creep into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou art tired; best be still.

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged — and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!

SELF-DEPENDENCE

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
'Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!'

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
'Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

'And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

'Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.'

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:
'Resolve to be thyself; and know, that he
Who finds himself, loses his misery!'

A WISH

I ASK not that my bed of death
From bands of greedy heirs be free;
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favour'd sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears.
Let those who will, if any, weep!
There are worse plagues on earth than tears.

I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind
Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom —
All, which makes death a hideous show!

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head, and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother-doctor of the soul,
To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things —
That undiscover'd mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these; but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,

Moved to the window near, and see
Once more, before my dying eyes,

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wide aerial landscape spread —
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead;

Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze, till I become
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind — instead

Of the sick room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath —
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death!

Thus feeling, gazing, might I grow
Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

THE FUTURE

A WANDERER is man from his birth.
He was born in a ship
On the breast of the river of Time;
Brimming with wonder and joy
He spreads out his arms to the light,
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.
Whether he wakes
Where the snowy mountainous pass,
Echoing the screams of the eagles,
Hems in its gorges the bed
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream;
Whether he first sees light
Where the river in gleaming rings
Sluggishly winds through the plain;
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea —
As is the world on the banks,
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each, as he glides,
Fable and dream
Of the lands which the river of Time
Had left ere he woke on its breast,
Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.

Only the tract where he sails
He wots of; only the thoughts,
Raised by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green earth any more
As she was by the sources of Time?
Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?
Who thinks as they thought,
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,
Her vigorous, primitive sons?

What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the river of Time
Now flows through with us, is the plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities, and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confused as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the river of Time.
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks.
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the river of Time —
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider, statelier stream —

May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the grey expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with foam
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast —
As the pale waste widens around him,
As the banks fade dimmer away,
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

ELEGIAC POEMS

RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER, 1857

Coldly, sadly descends
The autumn-evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent; — hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows — but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back in the light

Of thy radiant vigour again;
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer-morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,
We who till then in thy shade
Rested as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,
Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live —
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly repressest the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succourest! — this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth? —
Most men eddy about
Here and there — eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die —
Perish — and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild

Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust.
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes! some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path —
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance! — but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth —
Then, on the height, comes the storm.
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breach'd
The track, the stream-bed descends
In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep — the spray

Boils o'er its borders! aloft
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin; — alas,
Havoc is made in our train!
Friends, who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.
We, we only are left! —
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,
On — and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs —
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm.
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing — to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honour'd and blest
By former ages, who else —
Such, so soulless, so poor,

Is the race of men whom I see —
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God! — or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost —
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending? — A God
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal. —
Ah, but the way is so long!

Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve. —
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; on the rocks
Batter for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine.
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave.
Order, courage, return;
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.

Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come;
The last poetic voice is dumb—
We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said:
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.

Physician of the iron age,
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life—
He said: *The end is everywhere,*
Art still has truth, take refuge there!
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time

Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! Since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear —
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly —
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head;
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late —
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use —
Here will I sit and wait,

While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn —
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August-sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book —
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook

His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;
Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.'

This said, he left them, and return'd no more. —
But rumours hung about the country-side,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore.

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer-heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,

Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more! —
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way;
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers — the frail-leaf'd, white anemony,
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves —
But none hath words she can report of thee!

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass,

Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air —
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April-day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood —
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way

Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush
you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly —
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-
travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden
bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the
snow,
Thy face toward Hinksey and its wintry
ridge?
And thou hast climb'd the hill,
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner
range;
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the
snow-flakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church
hall —
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd
grange.

But what — I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe.
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid —
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

— No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'T is that from change to change their being rolls;
'T is that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,

To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our well-worn life, and are — what we have
been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish,
so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since number'd with
the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy
fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age,
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst — what we, alas! have
not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other
things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been
baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,

Of whom each strives, nor knows for
what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different
lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in
deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been
fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-
day —
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it! — but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and
signs,

And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair —
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife —
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern

From her false friend's approach in Hades
turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing
through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade —
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils
for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair
life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy
powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting
made;

And then thy glad perennial youth would
fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
— As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægæan isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian
wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in
brine —
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves —
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more
sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits, and unbent sails
There where down cloudy cliffs, through
sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

THYRSIS

A Monody, *to commemorate the author's friend,* Arthur Hugh Clough, *who died at Florence,* 1861.

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks —
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 't is no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days —
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,

The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful
Thames? —
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and
briers!
And that sweet city with her dreaming
spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening,

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night! —
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland
dim.
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with
him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west — I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we
said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not
dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
But once I knew each field, each flower, each
stick;

And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart,
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest,
He loved each simple joy the country yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,

Before the roses and the longest day —
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
With blossoms red and white of fallen May,
And chestnut-flowers are strewn —
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,

And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see;
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed —
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Alack, for Corydon no rival now! —
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate;
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair
Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!
Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not
I? —
But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried
High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time;
Down each green bank hath gone the plough-boy's team,
And only in the hidden brookside gleam
Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
Above the locks, above the boating throng,
Unmoor'd our skiff when through the Wytham flats,
Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,
And darting swallows and light water-gnats,
We track'd the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass? —
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train; —
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet! — Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.
Quick! let me fly, and cross
Into yon farther field! — 'T is done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there! —
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,

These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,
Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
For thee the Lityerses-song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes —
And how a call celestial round him rang,
And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the soft canopy of English air

That lonely tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 't is clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemonies in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
'T is not in the world's market bought and sold —
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound!
Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour!
Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,
If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,

Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime!
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone;
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat —
It fail'd, and thou wast mute!
Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
— Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:

Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

HEINE'S GRAVE

'*Henri Heine*' —— 'tis here!
The black tombstone, the name
Carved there — no more! and the smooth,
Swarded alleys, the limes
Touch'd with yellow by hot
Summer, but under them still,
In September's bright afternoon,
Shadow, and verdure, and cool.
Trim Montmartre! the faint
Murmur of Paris outside;
Crisp everlasting-flowers,
Yellow and black, on the graves.

Half blind, palsied, in pain,
Hither to come, from the streets'
Uproar, surely not loath
Wast thou, Heine! — to lie
Quiet, to ask for closed

Shutters, and darken'd room,
And cool drinks, and an eased
Posture, and opium, no more;
Hither to come, and to sleep
Under the wings of Renown.

Ah! not little, when pain
Is most quelling, and man
Easily quell'd, and the fine
Temper of genius so soon
Thrills at each smart, is the praise,
Not to have yielded to pain!
No small boast, for a weak
Son of mankind, to the earth
Pinn'd by the thunder, to rear
His bolt-scathed front to the stars;
And, undaunted, retort
'Gainst thick-crashing, insane,
Tyrannous tempests of bale,
Arrowy lightnings of soul.

Hark! through the alley resounds
Mocking laughter! A film
Creeps o'er the sunshine; a breeze
Ruffles the warm afternoon,
Saddens my soul with its chill.
Gibing of spirits in scorn
Shakes every leaf of the grove,

Mars the benignant repose
Of this amiable home of the dead.

Bitter spirits, ye claim
Heine? —— Alas, he is yours!
Only a moment I long'd
Here in the quiet to snatch
From such mates the outworn
Poet, and steep him in calm.
Only a moment! I knew
Whose he was who is here
Buried — I knew he was yours!
Ah, I knew that I saw
Here no sepulchre built
In the laurell'd rock, o'er the blue
Naples bay, for a sweet
Tender Virgil! no tomb
On Ravenna sands, in the shade
Of Ravenna pines, for a high
Austere Dante! no grave
By the Avon side, in the bright
Stratford meadows, for thee,
Shakspeare! loveliest of souls,
Peerless in radiance, in joy!

What, then, so harsh and malign,
Heine! distils from thy life?
Poisons the peace of thy grave?

I chide with thee not, that thy sharp
Upbraidings often assail'd
England, my country — for we,
Heavy and sad, for her sons,
Long since, deep in our hearts,
Echo the blame of her foes.
We, too, sigh that she flags;
We, too, say that she now —
Scarce comprehending the voice
Of her greatest, golden-mouth'd sons
Of a former age any more —
Stupidly travels her round
Of mechanic business, and lets
Slow die out of her life
Glory, and genius, and joy.

So thou arraign'st her, her foe;
So we arraign her, her sons.

Yes, we arraign her! but she,
The weary Titan, with deaf
Ears, and labour-dimm'd eyes,
Regarding neither to right
Nor left, goes passively by,
Staggering on to her goal;
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlanteän, the load,
Wellnigh not to be borne,
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

But was it thou — I think
Surely it was! — that bard
Unnamed, who, Goethe said,
Had every other gift, but wanted love;
Love, without which the tongue
Even of angels sounds amiss?

Charm is the glory which makes
Song of the poet divine,
Love is the fountain of charm.
How without charm wilt thou draw,
Poet! the world to thy way?
Not by the lightnings of wit —
Not by the thunder of scorn!
These to the world, too, are given;
Wit it possesses, and scorn —
Charm is the poet's alone.
Hollow and dull are the great,
And artists envious, and the mob profane.
We know all this, we know!
Cam'st thou from heaven, O child
Of light! but this to declare?
Alas, to help us forget
Such barren knowledge awhile,
God gave the poet his song!

Therefore a secret unrest
Tortured thee, brilliant and bold!

Therefore triumph itself
Tasted amiss to thy soul.
Therefore, with blood of thy foes,
Trickled in silence thine own.
Therefore the victor's heart
Broke on the field of his fame.

Ah! as of old, from the pomp
Of Italian Milan, the fair
Flower of marble of white
Southern palaces — steps
Border'd by statues, and walks
Terraced, and orange-bowers
Heavy with fragrance — the blond
German Kaiser full oft
Long'd himself back to the fields,
Rivers, and high-roof'd towns
Of his native Germany; so,
So, how often! from hot
Paris drawing-rooms, and lamps
Blazing, and brilliant crowds,
Starr'd and jewell'd, of men
Famous, of women the queens
Of dazzling converse — from fumes
Of praise, hot, heady fumes, to the poor brain
That mount, that madden — how oft
Heine's spirit outworn
Long'd itself out of the din,

Back to the tranquil, the cool
Far German home of his youth!

See! in the May-afternoon,
O'er the fresh, short turf of the Hartz,
A youth, with the foot of youth,
Heine! thou climbest again!
Up, through the tall dark firs
Warming their heads in the sun,
Chequering the grass with their shade —
Up, by the stream, with its huge
Moss-hung boulders, and thin
Musical water half-hid —
Up, o'er the rock-strewn slope,
With the sinking sun, and the air
Chill, and the shadows now
Long on the grey hill-side —
To the stone-roof'd hut at the top!

Or, yet later, in watch
On the roof of the Brocken-tower
Thou standest, gazing! — to see
The broad red sun, over field,
Forest, and city, and spire,
And mist-track'd stream of the wide
Wide German land, going down
In a bank of vapours —— again
Standest, at nightfall, alone!

Or, next morning, with limbs
Rested by slumber, and heart
Freshen'd and light with the May,
O'er the gracious spurs coming down
Of the Lower Hartz, among oaks
And beechen coverts, and copse
Of hazels green in whose depth
Ilse, the fairy transform'd,
In a thousand water-breaks light
Pours her petulant youth —
Climbing the rock which juts
O'er the valley — the dizzily perch'd
Rock — to its iron cross
Once more thou cling'st; to the Cross
Clingest! with smiles, with a sigh!

Goethe, too, had been there.
In the long-past winter he came
To the frozen Hartz, with his soul
Passionate, eager — his youth
All in ferment! — but he
Destined to work and to live
Left it, and thou, alas!
Only to laugh and to die.

But something prompts me: Not thus
Take leave of Heine! not thus
Speak the last word at his grave!

Not in pity, and not
With half censure — with awe
Hail, as it passes from earth
Scattering lightnings, that soul!

The Spirit of the world,
Beholding the absurdity of men —
Their vaunts, their feats — let a sardonic smile,
For one short moment, wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine! — for its earthly hour
The strange guest sparkled; now 't is pass'd
away.

That was Heine! and we,
Myriads who live, who have lived,
What are we all, but a mood,
A single mood, of the life
Of the Spirit in whom we exist,
Who alone is all things in one?

Spirit, who fillest us all!
Spirit, who utterest in each
New-coming son of mankind
Such of thy thoughts as thou wilt!
O thou, one of whose moods,
Bitter and strange, was the life
Of Heine — his strange, alas,
His bitter life! — may a life

Other and milder be mine!
May'st thou a mood more serene,
Happier, have utter'd in mine!
May'st thou the rapture of peace
Deep have embreathed at its core;
Made it a ray of thy thought,
Made it a beat of thy joy!

GEIST'S GRAVE

Four years! — and didst thou stay above
The ground, which hides thee now, but four?
And all that life, and all that love,
Were crowded, Geist! into no more?

Only four years those winning ways,
Which make me for thy presence yearn,
Call'd us to pet thee or to praise,
Dear little friend! at every turn?

That loving heart, that patient soul,
Had they indeed no longer span,
To run their course, and reach their goal,
And read their homily to man?

That liquid melancholy eye,
From whose pathetic, soul-fed springs

Seem'd surging the Virgilian cry,[1]
The sense of tears in mortal things —

That steadfast, mournful strain, consoled
By spirits gloriously gay,
And temper of heroic mould —
What, was four years their whole short day?

Yes, only four! — and not the course
Of all the centuries to come,
And not the infinite resource
Of Nature, with her countless sum

Of figures, with her fulness vast
Of new creation evermore,
Can ever quite forget the past,
Or just thy little self restore.

Stern law of every mortal lot!
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear,
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.

But thou, when struck thy hour to go,
On us, who stood despondent by,
A meek last glance of love didst throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.

[1] *Sunt lacrimæ rerum!*

Yet would we keep thee in our heart —
Would fix our favourite on the scene,
Nor let thee utterly depart
And be as if thou ne'er hadst been.

And so there rise these lines of verse
On lips that rarely form them now;
While to each other we rehearse:
Such ways, such arts, such looks hadst thou!

We stroke thy broad brown paws again,
We bid thee to thy vacant chair,
We greet thee by the window-pane,
We hear thy scuffle on the stair.

We see the flaps of thy large ears
Quick raised to ask which way we go;
Crossing the frozen lake, appears
Thy small black figure on the snow!

Nor to us only art thou dear
Who mourn thee in thine English home;
Thou hast thine absent master's tear,
Dropt by the far Australian foam.

Thy memory lasts both here and there,
And thou shalt live as long as we.
And after that — thou dost not care!
In us was all thy world to thee.

Yet, fondly zealous for thy fame,
Even to a date beyond our own
We strive to carry down thy name,
By mounded turf, and graven stone.

We lay thee, close within our reach,
Here, where the grass is smooth and warm,
Between the holly and the beech,
Where oft we watch'd thy couchant form,

Asleep, yet lending half an ear
To travellers on the Portsmouth road; —
There build we thee, O guardian dear,
Mark'd with a stone, thy last abode.

Then some, who through this garden pass,
When we too, like thyself, are clay,
Shall see thy grave upon the grass
And stop before the stone and say:

People who lived here long ago
Did by this stone, it seems, intend
To name for future times to know
The dachshound, Geist, their little friend.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

THE STRAYED REVELLER

THE PORTICO OF CIRCE'S PALACE. EVENING.

A Youth. Circe.

The Youth

FASTER, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

Thou standest, smiling
Down on me! thy right arm,
Lean'd up against the column there,
Props thy soft cheek;
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,
I held but now.

Is it then evening
So soon? I see, the night-dews,
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim
The agate brooch-stones
On thy white shoulder;
The cool night-wind, too,
Blows through the portico,
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,
Waves thy white robe!

Circe

Whence art thou, sleeper?

The Youth

When the white dawn first
Through the rough fir-planks
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,
Up at the valley-head,
Came breaking, Goddess!
I sprang up, I threw round me
My dappled fawn-skin;
Passing out, from the wet turf,
Where they lay, by the hut door,
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff,
All drench'd in dew —
Came swift down to join
The rout early gather'd
In the town, round the temple,

Iacchus' white fane
On yonder hill.

Quick I pass'd, following
The wood-cutters' cart-track
Down the dark valley; — I saw
On my left, through the beeches,
Thy palace, Goddess,
Smokeless, empty!
Trembling, I enter'd; beheld
The court all silent,
The lions sleeping,
On the altar this bowl.
I drank, Goddess!
And sank down here, sleeping,
On the steps of thy portico.

Circe

Foolish boy! Why tremblest thou?
Thou lovest it, then, my wine?
Wouldst more of it? See, how glows,
Through the delicate, flush'd marble,
The red, creaming liquor,
Strown with dark seeds!
Drink, then! I chide thee not,
Deny thee not my bowl.
Come, stretch forth thy hand, then — so!
Drink — drink again!

The Youth

Thanks, gracious one!
Ah, the sweet fumes again!
More soft, ah me,
More subtle-winding
Than Pan's flute-music!
Faint — faint! Ah me,
Again the sweet sleep!

Circe

Hist! Thou — within there!
Come forth, Ulysses!
Art tired with hunting?
While we range the woodland,
See what the day brings.

Ulysses

Ever new magic!
Hast thou then lured hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,
Iacchus' darling —
Or some youth beloved of Pan,
Of Pan and the Nymphs?
That he sits, bending downward
His white, delicate neck
To the ivy-wreathed marge

Of thy cup; the bright, glancing vine-leaves
That crown his hair,
Falling forward, mingling
With the dark ivy-plants —
His fawn-skin, half-untied,
Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,
That he sits, overweigh'd
By fumes of wine and sleep,
So late, in thy portico?
What youth, Goddess, — what guest
Of Gods or mortals?

Circe

Hist! he wakes!
I lured him not hither, Ulysses.
Nay, ask him!

The Youth

Who speaks? Ah, who comes forth
To thy side, Goddess, from within?
How shall I name him?
This spare, dark-featured,
Quick-eyed stranger?
Ah, and I see too
His sailor's bonnet,
His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,
With one arm bare! —
Art thou not he, whom fame

This long time rumours
The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by
the waves?
Art thou he, stranger?
The wise Ulysses,
Laertes' son?

Ulysses

I am Ulysses.
And thou, too, sleeper?
Thy voice is sweet.
It may be thou hast follow'd
Through the islands some divine bard,
By age taught many things,
Age and the Muses;
And heard him delighting
The chiefs and people
In the banquet, and learn'd his songs
Of Gods and Heroes,
Of war and arts,
And peopled cities,
Inland, or built
By the grey sea — If so, then hail!
I honour and welcome thee.

The Youth

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides

Their shining eyes,
And see below them
The earth and men.

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm, grassy
Asopus bank,
His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head,
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools,
With streaming flanks, and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick-matted
With large-leaved, low-creeping
melon-plants,

And the dark cucumber.
He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting — drifting; — round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves,
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide stepp, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon.
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal —
Mares' milk, and bread
Baked on the embers; — all around
The boundless, waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leaved iris-flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal; before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard-fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil; here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny waste.

They see the ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasmian stream; — thereon,
With snort and strain,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm-harness'd by the mane; a chief,
With shout and shaken spear,
Stands at the prow, and guides them; but
astern
The cowering merchants in long robes
Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barr'd onyx-stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies;
The Gods behold them.

They see the Heroes
Sitting in the dark ship
On the foamless, long-heaving,
Violet sea,
At sunset nearing
The Happy Islands.

These things, Ulysses,
The wise bards also
Behold and sing.
But oh, what labour!
O prince, what pain!

They too can see
Tiresias; — but the Gods,
Who give them vision,
Added this law:
That they should bear too
His groping blindness,
His dark foreboding,
His scorn'd white hairs;
Bear Hera's anger
Through a life lengthen'd
To seven ages.

They see the Centaurs
On Pelion; — then they feel,
They too, the maddening wine
Swell their large veins to bursting; in wild pain
They feel the biting spears
Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,
Drive crashing through their bones; they feel
High on a jutting rock in the red stream
Alcmena's dreadful son
Ply his bow; — such a price

The Gods exact for song:
To become what we sing.

They see the Indian
On his mountain lake; — but squalls
Make their skiff reel, and worms
In the unkind spring have gnawn
Their melon-harvest to the heart. — They see
The Scythian; — but long frosts
Parch them in winter-time on the bare stepp,
Till they too fade like grass; they crawl
Like shadows forth in spring.

They see the merchants
On the Oxus stream; — but care
Must visit first them too, and make them pale.
Whether, through whirling sand,
A cloud of desert robber-horse have burst
Upon their caravan; or greedy kings,
In the wall'd cities the way passes through,
Crush'd them with tolls; or fever-airs,
On some great river's marge,
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes
Near harbour; — but they share
Their lives, and former violent toil in Thebes,
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy;

Or where the echoing oars
Of Argo first
Startled the unknown sea.

The old Silenus
Came, lolling in the sunshine,
From the dewy forest-coverts,
This way, at noon.
Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water-side
Sprinkled and smoothed
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.

But I, Ulysses,
Sitting on the warm steps,
Looking over the valley,
All day long, have seen,
Without pain, without labour,
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Mænad —
Sometimes a Faun with torches —
And sometimes, for a moment,
Passing through the dark stems
Flowing-robed, the beloved,
The desired, the divine,
Beloved Iacchus.

Ah, cool night-wind, tremulous stars!
Ah, glimmering water,

Fitful earth-murmur,
Dreaming woods!
Ah, golden-hair'd, strangely smiling Goddess,
And thou, proved, much enduring,
Wave-toss'd Wanderer!
Who can stand still?
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me —
The cup again!

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Come, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below!
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go —
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
'Margaret! Margaret!'
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain —
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
'Mother dear, we cannot stay!
The wild white horses foam and fret.'
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little grey church on the windy shore;
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,

Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;
She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
'T will be Easter-time in the world — ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.'

I said: 'Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!'
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say;
Come!' I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little grey church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone;

The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!
Down to the depths of the sea!
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: 'O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!'
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,

A long, long sigh;
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children;
Come children, come down!
The hoarse wind blows colder;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing: 'Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly

On the blanch'd sands a gloom;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hill-side —
And then come back down.
Singing: 'There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.'

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

An Episode

And the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,

And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere;
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink — the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said: —
'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?'

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said: —
'Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone —
Rustum, my father; who I hoped should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day; but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall —

Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
But of a single combat fame speaks clear.'
He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said: —
'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 't is truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
To seek out Rustum — seek him not through fight!
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last

Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go! — Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain; — but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?
Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires.'
So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.
The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade —
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled

The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd;
As when some grey November morn the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board — so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards

And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;
These all filed out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians form'd; —
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
The Ilyats of Khorassan; and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said: —
'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.'

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy —
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries —
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows —
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.
And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King;
These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said: —
'Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name;
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'
So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried: —
'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said!
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'
He spake; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood before him, charged with food —
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,

And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,
And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said: —
'Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.'
But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said: —
'Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion — and thou know'st his name —
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!'
He spoke; but Rustum answer'd with a smile: —
'Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older; if the young are weak, the King

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

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply: —

'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:

Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'
And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply: —
'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man.'
He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy —
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,

Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel —
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all
the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were
work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters
know.
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands —
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.
And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,

And in the midst a stubble, short and bare —
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.
As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire —
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes —
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound —
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul

As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be govern'd! quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die!
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'
So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streak'd with its first grey hairs;—hope fill'd his soul,
And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said:—
'Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?'
But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul:—

'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may
mean!
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say: *Rustum is here!*
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
"I challenged once, when the two armies
camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away."
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through
me.'

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—
'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or
yield!
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand

Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this —
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer-floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away.'

He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet: —

'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young —
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know;
Only the event will teach us in its hour.'

He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,
Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide;—then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.

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

And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host,
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy spear!
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!'
He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,
The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice
Was choked with rage; at last these words broke way: —
'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus-sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play

Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valour; try thy feints
And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.'
He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west; their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees — such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;

For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry; —
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand.

The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for
fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing
spear,
And shouted: *Rustum!* — Sohrab heard that
shout,
And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing
form;
And then he stood bewilder'd, and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierced his
side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sank to the
ground,
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair; —
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began: —
'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill

A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'
And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied: —
'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,
And I were that which till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that beloved name unnerved my arm —
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear;
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!

My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!'
As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell
Far off; — anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers — never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by —
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.
And, with a cold, incredulous voice, he said: —
'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.'
And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied: —

'Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old king, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.'
He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son

Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all —
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds — so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old king, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time —
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,

Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass — so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said: —

'O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved.
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false — thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son; one child he had —
But one — a girl; who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us —
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.'

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die —
But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said: —

'Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?

Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.'
He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud;
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said: —
'Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.'
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift — at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands —
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks;

Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and
loved —
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and
said: —
'How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper
sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'
He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed,
and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry:
O boy — thy father! — and his voice choked
there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his
cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his
hair, —
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;

And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said: —
'Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father, let me feel that I have found!
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say: *My son!*
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away —
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind;
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.'
So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast

His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if enquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said: —
'Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,
When first they bore thy master to this field!'
But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said: —
'Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,

And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said: *O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!* —
but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund
stream;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'
Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd: —
'Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!'
But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied: —
'Desire not that, my father! thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.

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

And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have —
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say: *O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!
But now in blood and battles was my youth,

And full of blood and battles is my age,
And I shall never end this life of blood.'
Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied: —
'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,
Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave.'
And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said: —
'Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure.'
He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream; — all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face;
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now mid their broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now

Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.
But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon; — he flow'd
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer — till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT: PART THREE

Iseult of Brittany

A year had flown, and o'er the sea away,
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult lay;
In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old —
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.

The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
Had wander'd forth. Her children were at play
In a green circular hollow in the heath
Which borders the sea-shore — a country path
Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
The hollow's grassy banks are soft-inclined,
And to one standing on them, far and near
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
Over the waste. This cirque of open ground
Is light and green; the heather, which all round
Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the pale grass
Is strewn with rocks and many a shiver'd mass
Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there
Dotted with holly-trees and juniper.

In the smooth centre of the opening stood
Three hollies side by side, and made a screen,
Warm with the winter-sun, of burnish'd green
With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.
Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,
Watching her children play; their little hands
Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
Of stagshorn for their hats; anon, with screams
Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
Among the holly-clumps and broken ground,
Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush
Out of their glossy coverts; — but when now
Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each hot brow,
Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair,
In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair —
Then Iseult call'd them to her, and the three
Cluster'd under the holly-screen, and she
Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,
Under the hollies, in the clear still air —
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistering
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
Long they stay'd still — then, pacing at their ease,

Moved up and down under the glossy trees;
But still, as they pursued their warm dry road,
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes
Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise;
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
Nor to the snow, which, though 't was all away
From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,
Nor to the shining sea-fowl, that with screams
Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,
Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite clear,
The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.
And they would still have listen'd, till dark night
Came keen and chill down on the heather bright;
But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,
And the grey turrets of the castle old
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening-air,
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,
And brought her tale to an end, and found the path
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmoved
The days in which she might have lived and loved
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,

One after one, to-morrow like to-day?
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will —
Is it this thought which makes her mien so still,
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's? She moves slow; her voice alone
Hath yet an infantine and silver tone,
But even that comes languidly; in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home, and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then
She 'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery-frame, and there she 'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it;
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground;
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,

And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
Her rosary-beads of ebony tipp'd with gold;
Then to her soft sleep — and to-morrow 'll be
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.
The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,
Are there the sole companions to be found.
But these she loves; and noisier life than this
She would find ill to bear, weak as she is.
She has her children, too, and night and day
Is with them; and the wide heaths where they play,
The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,
The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,
These are to her dear as to them; the tales
With which this day the children she beguiled
She gleaned from Breton grandames, when a child,
In every hut along this sea-coast wild;
She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,
Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
Not suffering, which shuts up eye and ear
To all that has delighted them before,

And lets us be what we were once no more.
No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
By what of old pleased us, and will again.
No, 't is the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel —
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring —
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
But takes away the power — this can avail,
By drying up our joy in everything,
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.
This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit
Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,
Till for its sake alone we live and move —
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love —
This too can change us wholly, and make seem
All which we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently;
Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,
And an unnatural overheat at best.
How they are full of languor and distress
Not having it; which when they do possess,
They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,

And spend their lives in posting here and there
Where this plague drives them; and have little ease,
Are furious with themselves, and hard to please.
Like that bold Cæsar, the famed Roman wight,
Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight
Who made a name at younger years than he;
Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,
Who carried the great war from Macedon
Into the Soudan's realm, and thundered on
To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

What tale did Iseult to the children say,
Under the hollies, that bright winter's day?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.
For here he came with the fay Vivian,
One April, when the warm days first began.
He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
On her white palfrey; here he met his end,

In these lone sylvan glades, that April-day.
This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear
Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems, the forest-air
Had loosen'd the brown locks of Vivian's hair,
Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her blue eyes
Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bathed in sweat,
For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.
A briar in that tangled wilderness
Had scored her white right hand, which she allows
To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress;
The other warded off the drooping boughs.
But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize.
Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,
The spirit of the woods was in her face;
She look'd so witching fair, that learned wight
Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight,
And he grew fond, and eager to obey
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day
Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground broke away,
In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook.
And up as high as where they stood to look
On the brook's farther side was clear; but then
The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with thorns
Then white with blossom; and you saw the horns,
Through last year's fern, of the shy fallow-deer
Who come at noon down to the water here.
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the green sward; and strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
And the weird chipping of the woodpecker
Rang lonelily and sharp; the sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow,
To gaze on the light sea of leaf and bough
Which glistering plays all round them, lone and mild,
As if to itself the quiet forest smiled.
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn, and here
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear
Across the hollow; white anemonies
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses

Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
No fairer resting-place a man could find.
'Here let us halt,' said Merlin then; and she
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple
throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.
Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple
round,
And made a little plot of magic ground.
And in that daisied circle, as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day;
But she herself whither she will can rove —
For she was passing weary of his love.

Notes

A Memory Picture

This poem was originally printed, with the name *To My Friends*, in the volume of 1849: then in 1853 it was given its present name and was made No. 1 in the series of poems called *Switzerland*, which consisted otherwise of poems that had not been published until 1852. It is selected here, not so much for its own poetic charm or quality, as because it is a good example of the group of lyric poems spoken of in pages xv–xxi of the Introduction. Note particularly its picture of Marguerite in the fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas. Those who would like a little casuistry on minor matters of poetic art may consult Swinburne's review of *New Poems* in the *Fortnightly* for October, 1867.

Longing

This poem was originally printed in the volume of 1852: it was not republished the next year, but in 1855 was included in *Faded Leaves*, where it now stands. It is one of the few of these personal poems that gives me, at least, something of real lyric feeling: it makes one remember how wretchedly people really feel in such positions.

Isolation. To Marguerite

This poem was first printed in 1857, with the name *To Marguerite*. It will be easily apprehended if it be remembered that only the first two stanzas are addressed to Marguerite. The others are addressed to his own "lonely heart."

Which never yet, etc. The idea of leaving his own "remote and sphered course to haunt the place where passions reign" will explain and be explained by *The New Sirens*.

Have *dream'd* two, etc. People never really get together, says the poet: but some are fortunate enough to think they do.

To Marguerite — Continued

This poem, though it is called a continuation of the preceding, was printed before it, in 1852. The next year it was included in the *Switzerland* group. It is probable enough, however, that they were written about the same time. The preceding poem hardly could have been written sincerely by a man in the first years of a happy married life: see p. xvii.

When originally published this poem had appended to the title these words: "In returning a volume of *The Letters of Ortis.*" This book (by Ugo Foscolo, 1807) I have not read, but find Ortis described as a "political Werther," "an undeceived Italian patriot." It does not seem to have made a lasting impression on Arnold, as did Senancour's *Obermann*.

The last line of the poem is often quoted as a fine example of perfect epithet and pregnant expression.

The Terrace at Berne

This poem was first published by itself in the volume of 1867: in 1869 it was placed at the end of the *Switzerland* series, where it now stands, and to which it gives a very satisfactory conclusion. The recollection of Marguerite is most charming, but, after all, it is best that that page of life should be fastened down forever, — torn out, perhaps we should say, and forgotten.

A final speculation as to date may be pardoned. The poem was "composed ten years after the preceding," namely *Absence* first published in 1852. If "ten years" be dependable, the poem was written at least by the year 1862. The Introduction offers some reasons for supposing that "the preceding poem" and the others of the same group were written at least a while before the poet's marriage. That would push this poem still farther back, and make it one of those many of Matthew Arnold's poems that were written a good while before publishing.

The New Sirens

This poem was published in 1849. It was said in the review in *Blackwood's* for May of that year to be an imitation of Mrs. Brown-

ing and utterly without meaning. In the Introduction (pp. xx, xxi) will be found some comment, based on biographic and bibliographic studies, which gives the idea of the poem and shows it to be not utterly meaningless after all. Such is often the advantage of minute investigations, but it should be remarked that real poetic insight will be apt to find its way without their help. Mr. Swinburne even as a boy caught the spirit of the poem without explanation; William Michael Rossetti thought it "perhaps the most perfect and elevated in tone" of all the volume, *The Germ*, No. 2. Indeed, when we do get at the meaning of the poem we shall not really appreciate it until we feel its poetic quality, that indefinable something that made *Blackwood's* think of Mrs. Browning, that made Swinburne remember it for its "music and colour and its bright sadness," that made the young Pre-Raphaelite critic value it for its "tone." It is not Matthew Arnold's usual quality: perhaps that makes it the more worth noting.

In the cedarn shadow. This is a "place where passions reign," as the poet says in *Isolation*, or just now where they have reigned. The poet has crept out of the darkened palace rooms, and is dozing in the cool shadow of the cedars. In his restless slumbers he sees the forms of the sirens of the old days, looking strangely like the pensive Graces with whom he has just been enjoying himself. So he compares the old sirens in his mind with the new.

Heard the hoarse . . . wind. Note the effect of the longer line at the end of the stanza. It is something like the effect of the Alexandrine at the end of the Spenserian stanza.

less lonely than they were. *They* means the old-time sirens.

from upland valleys. This gives us the realistic note, and reminds us of Westmoreland. Notice the contrast later in the stanza between the poetic laurel and the myrtle of love.

Are the accents, etc. The modern siren has all the charm of love: the stanzas following tell how she makes her appeal; "you say" means the New Sirens say. They say it is not worth while to toil painfully, it was tedious; the soul longed for something more than intellectual answers to the riddle of existence, after all there is no agreement in opinion; the pleasure of love, however, is ultimate and cannot be confuted.

I am dumb. The poet can think of no answer to such arguments, although he is sure there is one.

For a bound was set. Here, and in the following stanzas, we have the answer of Fact to all such arguings, or rather pleadings.

Scent, and song, etc. The poet, as he feels the mountain wind, asks his charming friends what answer they can give to his questions. Have they no further ideal than to be joyous at the height of pleasure, passive at the nadir of dismay? Suppose we take frankly what the New Sirens can give, what does it amount to? Better loose hands.

Resignation

For the point of view in reading this poem, published in the first collection, see the Introduction, p. xxii. The reader will wish to have clearly before him two things: the place and the philosophy. Of the former the poet himself writes, in a note to this poem: "Those who have been long familiar with the English Lake Country will find no difficulty in recalling, from the description in the text, the roadside inn at Wythburn on the descent from Dunmail Raise towards Keswick; its sedentary landlord of thirty years ago, and the passage over the Wythburn Fells to Watendlath." Most of us cannot do that. If one has a desire for topography, the course from Wythburn to Watendlath can be traced without much difficulty on a fair map of the Lake Country, as for instance the map of Cumberland in the Encyclopedia Britannica, to name the most easily found. Just what was "the wide-glimmering sea" which they were so glad to reach by dark, I cannot say, but suppose it to have been Derwentwater near Keswick. But topography is not in itself of great poetic value. We want to get a realized sense of the scenery which the poet has in mind, and this is not easy for us in America, because the scenery of the Lake Country is entirely different from any part of America. There are numbers of expressions in this poem that cannot convey to us the idea that they conveyed to the poet. "The rude stone bridge," the upper regions of "wild hollows and clear heathy swells," the fells themselves, the "grassy upland glens," these are things that, as they exist in Cumberland, are hardly seen in America. But though we cannot get an idea of the precise scenery that the poet described, we can be

familiar with the general features. The best books easily accessible are *The English Lakes* by W. T. Palmer, with illustrations in color by A. Heaton Cooper; *Highways and Byways in the Lake District* by Arthur G. Bradley, with illustrations in line by Joseph Pennell, and *Through the Wordsworth Country* by William Knight, with drawings by Harry Goodwin. From these books one can form something of an idea of the place that will serve, as it were, as the web on which the poem is embroidered.

As for the idea of the poem, in view of all that has been said in the Introduction of the thought of this and other poems, it will not be obtrusive to present rather a bald analysis of the subject-matter section by section. The idea of a poem is by no means the only thing, often not the best thing, but if there is one it is worth knowing what it is. "To find in the poem," writes Walter Pater, "amid the flowers, the allusions, the mixed perspectives, of *Lycidas* for instance, the thought, the logical structure; — how wholesome! how delightful!"

I. a. Those inspired with a passionate desire to accomplish one purpose wish to do and have done with. They are not willing to go over ground once trodden.

b. More serene natures do not feel so.

II. a. We made an excursion ten years ago, and were glad when we came to an end.

b. Now we make it again.

III. a. As we make it we see the gipsies. They rub on through life without complaint.

b. The poet-nature experiences life, but is able also to contemplate it.

IV. a. Fausta feels herself neither gipsy nor poet.

b. The writer tells her that to withdraw from passions and pains is to conquer fate.

We ought also to spend a moment on the metrical structure. The poem is written in rhymed octosyllabics, rather freely handled. Matthew Arnold used the same metre in part of *Bacchanalia*, in *Memorial Verses*, and elsewhere, but he seemed constantly attracted by the idea of greater freedom, as in *A Summer Night*, where though he retains rhyme he frequently varies the place of accent and

the number of syllables in the line. Then in a good many poems he adopts a very loose rhythm, as in *Rugby Chapel*, which seems to please him rather better. There have been different opinions on the subject (cf. note on *The Youth of Nature*) and we shall want to form an idea of how good each metre is for its purpose, and how well it is handled.

Bacchanalia

This poem, too, is full of the spirit of place, but not, if we may say so, of any particular place. It might be almost any quiet meadow in the twilight. The idea does not need explanation or interpretation, for the analogy it presents is obviously put forward in the alternative title and suggested in the comparative structure of the poem. The quatrain at the end is to be considered, also, though it does not give us just the same idea as the poem: it is a sort of appended remark. The reader will notice especially the rhythmical effects and their harmony with the idea. First the lines with four accents coming with almost regular alternation, giving the notion of calm and peace; then the lines of two accents, with frequent additional syllables, often irregular, indicating the dash and movement of the exhilarated present.

The Youth of Nature

This poem was published in 1852, in the same volume as *Memorial Verses*, p. xxx. Like *Resignation*, it has much of the spirit of place, and we may refer to the note on that poem for some comment on the Lake Country. One unfamiliar with the ground may be pardoned I hope, for not knowing the precise spot where the poet writes. Perhaps he is on Grasmere, whence may be seen the fells of Rydal, and Fairfield which is no field but a mountain. Mr. Palmer, a thorough lover of the Lakes, speaks of the country as "another haunt of the shepherd, a land bleak and wild — the ravines of Rydal Head and the great crags of Fairfield, fit home for the red deer." Wordsworth is buried in Grasmere churchyard.

The thought of the poem is not recondite and may be easily stated somewhat after the fashion of the note on *Resignation*.

The metre of the poem calls for a word. Arnold seems to have felt that it was a form in which he had freedom to express his best.

He uses it in *Rugby Chapel*, *Memorial Verses*, and other of his well-known poems. General feeling is to the effect that it is not a successful experiment, and we may well ask why. We have here unrhymed three-accent lines, with a number of syllables, varying from six to nine. Such a form allows great freedom for varying effects. We may have short lines,

"Silent the boat! the lake,"

and long, quickly moving lines

"They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!"

and we may have several variations between. The particular poetic effect of the metre would seem to lie chiefly in the various effects that can be given to a line by having more or fewer of the extra syllables that are possible. Without attempting a criticism on the metre, we may note one point in which the poet does not seem fully successful. The particular opportunity of this metre lies in the different number of unaccented syllables that may be introduced, after the principle that Coleridge made current in *Christabel*. But, though rules on that subject are lacking, it seems that such unaccented syllables should be comparatively light, short, easily pronounced. If they contain many consonants, for instance, they seem to impede the flow of the line. Thus of the lines —

But the val/leys are flood/ed with haze/ —
For he lent/ a new life/ to those hills/ —
By the fav/orite wa/ters of Ruth/ —
Of the times/ which had shel/tered his youth/ —
In an age/ which can rear/ them no more/ —

only the third, to my ear, runs easily. Such combinations as *But the*, *which had*, *which can*, etc., are not pronounced easily enough to make the line run smoothly: it is stiff and heavy. So these lines and others like them are stiff: —

And Eg/remont sleeps/ by the sea —
These survive/ yet not/ without pain —
Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa —

The spots which recall, etc. The reader of Wordsworth will recognize these places: others will do well to turn to the poet. The Pillar is a mountain pinnacle of which one may read in *The*

Brothers. Egremont is Sir Eustace of that name in *The Horn of Egremont Castle*. The Evening Star and the Sheepfold in Greenhead Ghyll come from *Michael*. The Quantock Hills, where Wordsworth and Coleridge walked and planned the *Lyrical Ballads*, are far to the south in Somersetshire.

He grew old. Wordsworth, though an enthusiast for liberty, and in his youth a great republican, became as he grew older more and more conservative.

For, oh! is it you. The poet propounds his subject: Is it Nature or the Poetic Mind that brings poetic joy to men? Nature herself gives an answer.

Dover Beach

For a slight comment on this very beautiful expression of mingled emotion and thought, see the Introduction, p. xliii.

19. **a thought.** Not the thought of Sophocles: Matthew Arnold was not much given to the consideration of human misery. His thought is on the decline of faith in his own day.

21. **The Sea of Faith.** One may read in connection with this poem the "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," noting particularly —

> "For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
> And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,
> Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,
> There bade me gaze, and there aspire.
> Even now their whispers pierce the gloom
> *What dost thou in this living tomb?*"

28. **Ah, love.** Human constancy the one firm standby in a dissolving world!

Philomela

This poem does not really belong in the group in which it is placed, for it is a lyric of pure emotion, the finest, indeed almost the only one of its kind to be found in Arnold's poetry: see the Introduction, p. xxvi.

Quiet Work

This sonnet was first published in 1849, and came at the beginning of the volume — not among the other sonnets — as a sort of motto. It sounds the importance of tranquillity and repose. Work, of course, but not work like that of many men, — work that is loud and noisy, hasty and competitive, done in a thousand discords, in fitful uproar, in vain turmoil. Mr. Paul in his *Matthew Arnold* (p. 22) says that the poem was "suggested by Goethe's famous 'Ohne Hast, ohne Rast.'" This may well be, although the idea is not uncommon with Arnold: see Introduction, p. xxxi.

Shakespeare

Shakespeare's spirit was far above the pains, weaknesses, griefs which generally bow down the immortal spirit on earth. Yet he knew those things and could speak for those who have no voice.

Written in Emerson's Essays

The world — monstrous, dead, unprofitable, smiling, wistful, incredulous, scornful, strange, full of bitter knowledge — pays no attention to a mind like Emerson's. Yet all his possibilities are within ourselves. Mr. Paul (p. 23) says of the last line, "What is the use of asking dumb judges to answer?" But it hardly seems necessary to think of the word dumb with physical literalness.

East London

This poem was first published in 1867, about the time that William Booth was beginning the work in East London that in the later form of the Salvation Army has spread over all the world. But Matthew Arnold seems to refer merely to any religious worker in that desolate field. Spitalfields and Bethnal Green are two districts in East London, of which one may gain some idea from Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*.

It may be remarked that Matthew Arnold interprets the preacher in terms of his own thought: he is one who can escape from the turmoil of this world (p. xxxii) to a sphere of peaceful ideality. The preacher himself, presumably, thought of Christ as a living power in the midst of the turmoil.

Immortality

One of the later sonnets. The possibility of a future life cannot make us supine as to the present. We must prepare for it.

Requiescat

One of Arnold's most familiar poems. A beautiful expression of the world-weariness so often spoken of.

The Last Word

This is one of Matthew Arnold's later poems, and gives us the characteristic idea of fighting in the very advance guard of the army of liberation, even if unsupported and left to oneself. Mr. Paul (p. 102), whose poetic insight has been observed already, says of the last stanza: "The natural meaning of these words would be that the person addressed had been engaged in defending the forts of folly, which, it need hardly be said, is the precise opposite of what Mr. Arnold intended." Mr. Paul seems to suggest an *un*-natural meaning: the lines seem clearly addressed to one who is making a charge on the forts of folly, a charge which in itself may not be successful, which may result in destruction to the assailant. Still when victory does come, even long afterward, the victors will find, close up by the walls of the fort, those who perished in the earlier attacks.

Self-Dependence

This poem, which seems mature in comparison with some others, was published in 1852. Its chief notes are: weariness, said to be of self, but more probably of those around him and the world in general; the appeal to Nature; Nature's answer that one must put one's life into one's work without regard to others. One will compare it with *Quiet Work*.

A Wish

This is one of those lyrics of idea, as we may call them, which give a notion of the poet's attitude towards the world and nature.

The Future

In this poem Arnold presents to us Life under the extended figure of a river, a figure otherwise used in the end of *Sohrab and Rustum*. The metre is worth noting; it is of the form discussed in the note on *Youth and Nature*. In this poem, however, it is used more irregularly; sometimes there are two accents in a line, sometimes four, sometimes only one. That is not very important; the metrical basis of the poem is a continuation of accented and unaccented syllables, with sufficient regularity to give us a feeling for the recurrence of accent, and enough variety to avoid monotony. In this poem, however, as in others of Matthew Arnold's, the unaccented syllables are often so long as to make the line very stiff and heavy.

What girl. The difference between the sophisticated present and the simplicity of the past is presented in two vivid comparisons.

Border'd by cities and hoarse. The favorite idea of the poet's concerning the present. He fears that things will grow worse, though he acknowledges the possibility of something different.

Rugby Chapel

Matthew Arnold's father was Thomas Arnold, for many years Headmaster of Rugby, a great figure in the history of education in the nineteenth century. To him, in great measure, do we owe the personal, human conception of education that so widely obtains today. He is buried in the chapel of the school. Dean Stanley says of him: "If there is any one place at Rugby more than another which was especially the scene of Dr. Arnold's labors, both as a teacher and as a master, it is the school-chapel." The readers of *Tom Brown at Rugby* will remember the last chapter of the book, in which Tom goes back to the school and spends an hour in the chapel.

Thomas Arnold, besides being the master of a great school, was a historian, keenly interested in the newer ideas of history that were coming in under the influence of Niebuhr. He published a *History of Rome*, and became Professor of Modern History at Oxford. He was also greatly interested in social and political questions. As one reads his *Life and Correspondence* by Dean Stanley, one is im-

mensely impressed at his single-souled Christian character, which found expression in various ways, but always had the one incentive of devotion to his Master.

Some time before writing this poem, Matthew Arnold expressed the main thought of it in writing to his mother. "But this is just what makes him great — that he was not only a good man saving his own soul by righteousness, but that he carried so many others with him in his hand, and saved them, if they would let him, along with himself."

At a call unforeseen, sudden. Dr. Arnold died of angina pectoris almost without warning. He waked in some pain between five and six in the morning, and died before eight o'clock.

A long steep journey. Mr. Theodore Walrond, who writes the account of Thomas Arnold in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says that the imagery of this passage is taken from the long Westmoreland rambles of which Dr. Arnold was so fond. But this must be a mistake; the spirit of the description came, doubtless, from the memory of those excursions, but the imagery is evidently alpine. It is not very like Arnold to indulge in vague generalizations.

Servants of God! — or Sons. So John i. 12, who gives a very different reason for so calling them, and one much more in keeping with Thomas Arnold's life. *Friends* is the word of Jesus in the passage of which this seems a reminiscence. John xv. 15.

It ought to be said at the end of this fine poem that Matthew Arnold by no means gives an interpretation of his father's life that his father would have agreed to. Thomas Arnold was all that his son said, doubtless, but he had a perfectly definite conception of the aim of his effort, which his son entirely lacked, and a perfectly definite conception of the reasons for his power, which his son does not give us. He was a man devoted to the work of God, because he was heart and soul devoted to his Son, Jesus Christ.

Memorial Verses

In these verses, written at the time of Wordsworth's death, Matthew Arnold expresses a view that he held through life, the view that after Goethe whom he greatly admired (and after Byron

in popular vogue), Wordsworth was the great poet not of England only, but of Europe, in the 19th century. In the introduction to the *Selections from Wordsworth*, which he made many years after this poem, he gives his reasons for this estimate. But he has expressed the general idea of this poem in several places. For instance, in one of his letters, September 22, 1864, he speaks of Goethe as a great and powerful spirit "in the line of human thought, Wordsworth in contemplation, Byron in that of passion."

This characterization of Byron may be compared with the estimate of thirty years later, to be found in the introduction to his volume of *Selections from Byron*, or in the Second Series of *Essays in Criticism*. The real Byron was "the true and puissant personality, with its direct strokes, its ever-welling force, its satire, its energy, and its agony." That perhaps was what he meant when he says we had *felt* him. As to teaching, he quotes with approval Goethe's remark that "the moment he begins to reflect he is a child." Most readers of Byron will agree. They will generally feel that his direct teaching, if there be any, is all wrong, but that he was a great and powerful spirit.

As to Goethe, Arnold, in one of his early prose writings, though some years after the time of this poem, *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, called him "one of the greatest of critics," and we shall understand this better by thinking of his view that the great effort of French and German literature in his day was critical, that criticism was a seeing anything as in itself it really is. "Goethe knew life and the world . . . much more comprehensively than Byron. He knew a great deal more of them, and he knew them much more as they really are." This is a good deal to say of any one, and makes us understand better the idea of these lines.

Of Wordsworth we need add little to these lines. Matthew Arnold was a Wordsworthian, as he later said, who could read anything of Wordsworth, — even *Peter Bell*, the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, and the *Address to Mr. Wilkinson's Spade*. And in a very few words in one of his later essays he tells what he thinks the chief power of Wordsworth. "Wordsworth's poetry is great," he says, "because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the

simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it." That, though written in 1879, is not very different from this judgment of 1850.

The Scholar-Gipsy

Matthew Arnold, in a note commonly printed with the poem, gives its suggestion as follows: —

"There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtility of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned." — Glanvil's *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

The poem more than any other of Arnold's is full of the spirit of place. He early learned to love the country about Oxford, and especially the stretch of country to the west, and it had a charm for him through life. Almost half a century after his undergraduate days, he writes, "On Friday I got out to Hinksey and up the hill to within sight of the Cumner firs. I cannot describe the effect which this landscape always has upon me — the hillside with the valleys, and Oxford in the Thames valley below." *Letters*, October 18, 1885. We may therefore do our best to realize the circumstances, both as to the general look of the country-side, and as to the especial charm of flower and tree.

Go, for they call you. These few words give us the pastoral tone and background. The poet has been talking with a shepherd toward evening, as they sat by the hedge in the corner of an upland field.

In this high field's dark corner. "On Thursday I got

up alone into one of the little coombs that papa was so fond of, and which I had in my mind in the 'Gipsy Scholar,' and felt the peculiar sentiment of the country and neighbourhood as deeply as ever." — *Letters*, October, 1854.

The scarlet poppies. In July the scarlet poppies are scattered over nearly every wheat and oat field in the kingdom. — John Burroughs, *Fresh Fields*, p. 165.

Pale pink convolvulus. The pink convolvulus is very like the wild morning-glory or woodchuck vine, though the flower is somewhat smaller.

to learn the gipsy-lore. The two who have learned most of the Gipsies are George Borrow and Charles G. Leland. They learned much, but not exactly what Glanvil or Matthew Arnold had in mind.

on the Hurst. Hurst hill between the village of Cumner and Hinksey. Arnold speaks of it long afterward: "I went alone up the Hinksey hillside towards Cumner Hurst, and enjoyed it more than I can say." — *Letters*, October 19, 1885.

The Berkshire moors. Berkshire is the county south of Oxford, though here it lies to the west, just across the Thames.

Or in my boat I lie. The punt is a favorite retreat of the Oxford student from academic labors and cares: it is even more leisurely than the canoe which has of late intruded upon its domain.

Bab-lock-hithe. Just below the village of Cumner, a few miles to the west of Oxford, is a rope-guided barge now (or lately) the only one of its kind left on the Thames. It is about four miles from Oxford, but the river winds so that it is full twenty by water. — Cf. R. G. Thwaites, *Our Cycling Tour in England*, p. 285.

Wychwood bowers. Wychwood forest is some fifteen miles to the northwest of Oxford.

The Fyfield elm. "I know the Fyfield tree," he writes in *Thyrsis*. Fyfield is a village a few miles beyond Cumner, but the particular tree here mentioned seems a matter of conjecture.

Dark bluebells. How real was all this circumstance we may judge from a few words in the poet's letters (May 14, 1861): "Presently I am going to my old haunts among the Cumner hills and shall come back with plenty of orchises and bluebells."

Godstow Bridge. The ruins of Godstow nunnery are not

far from Wytham, three or four miles out of Oxford to the northwest, though longer by the river.

Bagley Wood was the favorite place of Matthew Arnold's father in his walks about Oxford.

Oh life unlike to ours. This phrase may serve as key to the poem. As in so many other poems, Arnold thinks of his own time ("this strange disease of modern life") as a time of blind and ignorant transition, in which men, having lost their earlier ideals and gained no new ones, are merely motes in a whirlwind of dust, or something of the sort. As a contrast, the idea of the simple definiteness of the Scholar-Gipsy gives him pleasure, as does the simplicity of the country-side. Eight years after this poem was published, on May 14, 1861, he wrote: "If I was disposed to fly for refuge to the country and its sights and sounds, against the rather humdrum life which prevailed here [Oxford] in old times, how much more am I disposed to do this now, convinced as I am that irritations and envyings are not only negatively injurious to one's spirit, like dullness, but positively and actively."

The figure in the last two stanzas is very beautiful in itself, though not quite so much in point as the closing lines of *Sohrab and Rustum*. Still the Tyrians, like the Oxford gipsy, were of an older civilization that could not cope with the domineering modern life, and since they could not battle with it preferred to fly.

Thyrsis

Clough was a friend of Arnold's at school, at college, and afterward. "We [illegible]o agreeing," he writes, March 10, 1848, "like two lambs in a world of wolves." Arnold calls him Thyrsis in recollection of the pastoral poetry of Theocritus, whom he read much during the two years in which he had the poem in mind. The ninth and tenth stanzas are suggested by the recollection of the Sicilian poet, although all the circumstance of the poem is truly English. The places of this poem are much the same as in *The Scholar-Gipsy*. The poet is on the Cumner hills to the west of Oxford, perhaps on Hurst hill mentioned in the preceding poem. The two Hinkseys are villages between himself and Oxford: perhaps he had walked through North Hinksey as he came out. At first he looks to the southwest toward Ilsley downs to find the well-

known elm-tree of older days. Of the other places, Ensham and Wytham are to the north on the Thames above Oxford, Sandford on the river below the city. The Vale mentioned in the second stanza is the White Horse Vale in Berkshire.

The cuckoo's parting cry. "The cuckoo on the wet June morning I heard in the garden at Woodford." *Letters*, April 7, 1866.

Oh easy access. This stanza, and the one beginning "And long the way," the poet himself liked best of the poem. The idea of the stanza, as of the preceding, will hardly be grasped without familiarity with the classical allusion.

I know . . . what purple fritillaries. The fritillary is a handsome bell-shaped flower. Visitors to Oxford nowadays need not miss it, for the fritillaries are now famous and may even be found at the flower-stores. When Ruskin went to Oxford, however, as he afterward indignantly complained, no one thought enough of the matter to let him know that there were any.

I know these slopes. This stanza also the poet liked, and that following, because they brought before him certain places and moments. *Letters*, April 7, 1866.

Heine's Grave

Heine, although a German poet, lived the latter part of his life in Paris, and died there. At his own desire he was buried, not in his native country, but in the cemetery of Montmartre. Eight years before his death he was attacked by a kind of paralytic stroke, (**Half-blind, palsied, in pain**) and was left with an incurable disease of the spinal marrow. After a short time he was not even able to go out, and lingered on for years, on what he called his "mattress-grave." He was literally half-blind and was often in great agony. It was something, Arnold thinks, to maintain, if not composure, even a bold sanity. Yet Heine was not one of the great calm souls of the world: there was quite a dash of bitterness in his make-up.

Some years after the time of this poem, Matthew Arnold, writing an essay on Heine and his place in literature, quotes from Goethe, as follows: "If I were to say what I had really been to the Germans in general, and to the young German poets in particular, I

should say I had been their *liberator*." He had taught them to be themselves, to be original. And thus Heine came to be, as he writes himself, "a brave soldier in the Liberation War of humanity." "Taking that terrible modern weapon, the pen, in his hand, he passed the remainder of his life in one fierce battle. What was that battle? the reader will ask. It was a life and death battle with Philistinism."

The mention of the Hartz, later in the poem is inspired by Heine's *Harzreise*, and Goethe's *Harzreise im Winter*.

Geist's Grave

This is one of Arnold's latest poems, as he says in Stanza 11: it was published in 1881. Geist was a dachshund of whom all the family were devotedly fond. Arnold wrote to his son: "The daily miss of him will wear off, but we shall never forget him."

The Strayed Reveller

This poem was the most considerable of the first collection (1849) called from it *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*. The volume was withdrawn, however, before many copies had been sold. With a few others, it was reprinted in the volume of 1853. The general critical opinion at the time of publishing (so far as there was one) was not very favorable. The *Athenæum* said it had some fine thinking, and the *North British Review* said it had some fine imagery, but neither said anything more of it. *Blackwood's* with its usual frankness called it "a confused chaunt about Circe, Ulysses, and the Gods from which no exercise of ingenuity can extract a meaning." The case does not seem quite so bad as that. The poem consists of a dramatic setting not hard to realize, and an expression of some ideas on poetry. The dramatic pictures, Circe's palace, with Circe herself and Ulyssess (how definitely imagined!) and the young man come down from his upland retreat in the wooded mountain, these make a beautiful poem with nothing else. The latter part, in which the young man expresses a theory of poetic art which he has learned of old Silenus, that also is interesting in itself and, one would say, by no means obscure. The main doctrine is

"such a price
The Gods exact for song;
To become what we sing."

This may be compared with the view of *Resignation*, which expresses a different element in the poetic experience, without denying this.

Most noteworthy in the poem, probably, are the pictures of the Indian, the Scythian, the Centaurs, the Chorasmian ferry. These are most characteristic, even of Matthew Arnold's most finished art. They have the clearness that comes from imaginative power and mastery of expression. If not composed with the eye on the object, yet they have something of the same naturalness. They are classic and yet they do not give us the sense of bareness that we may often get from such classicism, for instance, as that of Flaxman's outlines, or Thorwaldsen's sculpture. These pictures are like some modern pictures. They have color, richness, life.

The Forsaken Merman

This is one of the poems of the first collection, a poem of picture and emotion, rather than of thought. The situation, the King of the Sea and his children longing for the wife and mother who had left them: the circumstance, the stormy surface of the ocean, the silent depths: these are the materials of the poem, one which Mr. Swinburne remembered in after years. When a schoolboy at Eton he had got it mainly by heart, as he did one or two others less applicable to the appreciation of boyhood. The reader may be interested in asking himself whether this poem has the classic touch we speak of so often with Matthew Arnold. Compare it with the *Strayed Reveller*, and it is certainly not classic in subject: that is on an old Greek story, this is medieval. But it is not the subject that makes a poem classic: it is the handling. And to get at the essential character of the handling, let us put this poem beside another on a like subject, namely, *The Mermaid*, by Tennyson. It is not so much of a poem as this, but it has some of the qualities of its author, who was a great master of romantic poetry. We will print a few lines that one may easily compare with the description in our poem, of the world under the sea.

"I would comb my hair till my ringlets would fall
Low adown, low adown,
From under my starry sea-bud crown
Low adown and around,
And I should look like a fountain of gold
Springing alone
With a shrill inner sound,
Over the throne
In the midst of the hall;
Till that great sea-snake under the sea
From his coiled sleeps in the central deeps
Would slowly trail himself seven-fold
Round the hall where I sate, and look in at the gate
With his large calm eyes for the love of me."

Notice that the difference here is not that one poem has color and brilliancy and life: both have. Nor is it that one poem is imaginative, for both are. Rather is the difference that Arnold seems to have his object clearly present in mind, so that he sees the cool and deep cavern, the coiling and twining sea-snakes, and he is so satisfied with the sight of them that he is content to describe it. Tennyson, on the other hand, who does not see so much nor so definitely, is not content with it but adds the comparison to the golden fountain.

That is, of course, only one mark of the difference: Arnold wishes to see the whole scene as clearly and distinctly as he can imagine it. He does not want it to be colorless or bare or mean, but he wants it as it is, because he is sure if he can get the situation and the circumstance as it really is, he will have something beautiful. So his touches are descriptive; they are imaginative but not figurative. There is hardly a figure (of likeness at least) in the poem. Look through it and see: the waves are compared to white horses, the scales of the sea-snakes are called *mail*, but that is hardly a figure, her eyes are *sealed* to the book, the heath is *starred* with broom. After all, how slight that is: there is sometimes more simile and metaphor in a dozen lines of Tennyson than in the whole of this poem. That is because the romantic poet, his mind always full of beautiful images, is always telling us of them. But Matthew Arnold keeps his eye upon the thing he is writing of, for he wants us to see it very clearly and vividly. And that gives a certain quality to his poetry.

Sohrab and Rustum

This poem was written in 1853 and published in the volume of that year, often called *Poems: First Series*, in which Matthew Arnold got together what he desired out of *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*, and *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*, both of which he had withdrawn from circulation before many copies had been sold. "I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet, which is a good sign." *Letters*, April 14, 1853. And in writing to his mother, he says, "I think it by far the best thing I have done yet," and that the story is "a very noble and excellent one," May, 1853. We have here, therefore, a good opportunity to study Arnold's poetic qualities. Let us begin, methodically, by looking at the subject. This the poet gives us himself in a note that was printed with the poem.

The story of Sohrab and Rustum as told in Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, as follows: —

"The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days."

By reading this account and comparing it with the poem we get an idea of the "noble and excellent" story, and of the things in it that so impressed the poet. He had clearly no thought of any meaning in the story, or any analogy to be drawn from it as was, perhaps, the case in *Empedocles on Etna*. It was not that there was any lesson or moral in it, though, as must be the case in any real story from life, there may be powerful moral currents to be felt. It was not an opportunity to present some thoughts otherwise in mind, as in some degree in *The Strayed Reveller*. It was simply because the story of the lonely father's unwittingly killing his unknown son seemed to Arnold intensely affecting and tragic, and he felt sure that if it were told so that others could see it as he saw it, it would arouse feelings in his readers that would give poetic pleasure and a sympathy with the great things of life.

His manner of telling it is that to which we have become accustomed. It is (in the main) a plain, even bare, narrative that contents itself with stating what the poet has imagined. But this thing which the poet has imagined is not plain and bare at all. He imagines nothing that he does not imagine fully. Peran Wisa wears a woolen coat, sandals, a white cloak and a cap of sheepskin with curly black wool, and he carries a ruler's staff instead of a sword. Rustum sits by his morning meal of melons, bread, and roasted sheep, playing with a falcon on his wrist. Ruksh is a bright bay, with a golden-green saddlecloth, embroidered wonderfully with gold, and so on. The poet has a very particular idea of the strange and wonderful scene of which he writes. There is nothing that should be called imagery, but it is all a creation of the imagination.

There are further to be noted two characteristics of style that are classic; we may say that they come practically from Homer: the long formal speeches and the long formal similes. Why, one may ask, if one wants to be so true to nature, as would seem from the accurate almost prosaic description, why be so unnatural as to give speeches and modes of language that real men could never have used on such occasions? The answer will lie in the very nature of poetry and picture, namely, that neither can present life precisely as it is, that there must always be some conventionality of form, and that if this conventionality serves to help the main effect without distracting from the attention, or jarring on our sense of

life, we may be satisfied. Of course men do not commonly speak in long speeches or use long similes, but then men do not speak in poetry, nor indeed in literary language, even. Literary language, poetry, are conventional forms (just like the use of lines in drawing, or of marble in sculpture,) and we might well say that these additional conventionalities bear little harm with those accustomed to them, while they do (so the argument would run) aid much in the poet's desire to present very strongly the essential things in his subject. The figure of the rich woman looking with vague curiosity at the poor drudge does really make us appreciate the feeling of Rustum as he goes into the combat, just as his last long speech makes us feel his misery at the end of it. Or at least that is the theory of the matter.

And with all this attention to style the appreciative reader will not be distracted from the beauty of the story itself with its half-realistic and half-symbolic end. It is one of the astonishing confusions of life, surely, one of those confusions that so often hinder our action and distress us; but we shall sometime escape from them and enjoy calm and rest.

Tristram and Iseult

This selection is the third and last part of Arnold's partly dramatic, partly narrative poem. Tristram and Iseult, the wife of Mark of Cornwall, had fallen in love with each other by drinking through mistake a love-philtre that had been meant for the king. As Iseult belonged to another, Tristram had in time met and loved Iseult of Brittany, the Iseult of our extract. With her he lived happily for a time, but left her on some adventure where he received a death-wound and came back to Brittany. In his last hours (and here the poem begins) he longs for the first Iseult and sends for her. She comes to him and the two die together. In the third part we have a conclusion something like that of Sohrab and Rustum. After the fierce mistakes and follies of life comes this quiet picture of the old castle of Brittany, the widow and her children. The poet moralizes a bit upon it, in the guise of a medieval chronicler, and ends with the story of Merlin and Vivien, the enchanter's sleep after a life of laborious learning and toil.

Appendix

THE POEMS TO MARGUERITE

THE foundation of the present attempt to connect these poems into one series lies in two facts: First, the greater number of them appear in almost the order here assigned to them in *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*, 1852. Calling them by the numbers given them in this appendix they are as follows: 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20. Second, they are now, mostly, or once were grouped together in two lyric suites, entitled *Faded Leaves* (2, 5, 6, 7, 8) and *Switzerland* (9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21).

As originally published, these poems had no common title: they were merely the first fifteen poems following *Empedocles on Etna*. The groupings into *Faded Leaves* and *Switzerland* date from the years 1855 and 1853, respectively. In those years Arnold rearranged and republished his poems and added some new ones. In 1867 and 1885 he made some changes in these series, but without changing their general character. It seems plain, however, that the two suites are in reality one, and that their order is not as they stand at present, but as they originally stood, *Faded Leaves* coming first and *Switzerland* second. In the *Faded Leaves* the poet is seen *On the Rhine*, i. e. on the way to Switzerland. Each series consists of personal lyrics inspired by a charming and beautiful woman, whom the poet loves, but leaves because she cannot love him. In *Faded Leaves* she has arch eyes and mocking mouth, grey eyes and brown hair.

But her eyes were evidently not absolutely grey, for we have also the curious couplet,

> "Eyes too expressive to be blue,
> Too lovely to be grey."

The Marguerite of the *Switzerland* poems has eyes of blue (*Meeting*), which were very like grey (*Absence*). She has the archest chin, an arch smile, and mockery in her eyes. The inspiration seems the same person: it is hard to imagine two such episodes with two persons so closely resembling each other.

Such facts seem sufficient to give the presumption of a single series: we may next note the reasons in the case of each separate poem.

1. *A Memory-Picture.* This poem originally appeared in 1849 with the name *To My Friends.* In 1853 it was made I in *Switzerland.* In 1858 it was detached and now appears among *Early Poems.* It is a picture of Marguerite, evidently the same Marguerite as in *Parting* and *The Terrace at Berne.*

2. *The River.* I in *Faded Leaves.* In 1852 the first poem coming after *Empedocles.*

3. *Urania.* This poem was originally called *Excuse,* and in 1852 came immediately after 2. It may seen doubtful that it should refer to Marguerite, but when we think of her archness and mockery it may appear not unlikely.

4. *Euphrosyne.* This poem was originally called *Indifference,* and came in 1852 immediately after 3 and before 5 now in *Faded Leaves.* Euphrosyne is one full of inward happiness and joy, like Marguerite of the

> "arch smile which tells
> The unconquered joy that in her spirit dwells"
>
> *Parting.*

and of the gay delight showing in her fresh voice (*The Terrace at Berne*).

5. *Too Late.*
6. *Separation.*
7. *On the Rhine.*
8. *Longing.*

} Stand now in *Faded Leaves.*

9. *Meeting.* In 1852 called *The Lake* and coming immediately after 8. In 1853 it was made II in *Switzerland*, and in 1885 when No. 1 was detached it took first place.

10. *A Dream.* This poem was originally published (1853) as III in *Switzerland.* In 1869 it was omitted entirely and now appears among *Early Poems.* It is addressed to Marguerite.

11. *Parting.* In 1852 followed 9, then (1853) was made IV in *Switzerland*, and now on the omission of 1 and 10 stands second.

12. *A Farewell* first appeared in 1869 as IV in *Switzerland*, and now stands third.

13. *Isolation.* In 1857 called *To Marguerite*, the only new poem in the third edition of the *First Series.*

14. *To Marguerite: Continued.* In 1852 called *To Marguerite*; in 1853 made V in *Switzerland.*

15. *Absence.* In 1852 comes immediately after 11; in 1853 VI in *Switzerland.*

16. *Destiny.* In 1852 comes immediately after 15; it was not reprinted by Arnold.

17. *Human Life.* In 1852 this poem follows 14. It was not, however, printed in 1853 in *Switzerland*, but was republished in *New Poems*, 1867.

18. *Despondency.* In 1852 follows 17: unlike it, however, republished in 1855.

19. *Youth's Agitations.* In 1852 follows 18: like 17 not republished till 1867.

20. *Self-Deception.* In 1852 follows 19: like 18 republished in 1855.

21. *The Terrace at Berne.* Originally published in 1867, then (1869) the last poem of the *Switzerland* series.

Such reasons do not make a certain proof, but if the twenty-one poems are read in order, it will be seen that they are practically expressive of one general sentiment. If there were fact at bottom for the sentiment in some, it is reasonable enough to believe that it was at bottom of all. Nos. 17–20 have least reason to be included here. In the volume of 1852, however, they follow along immediately after the other poems and to my mind are rather explained by them.