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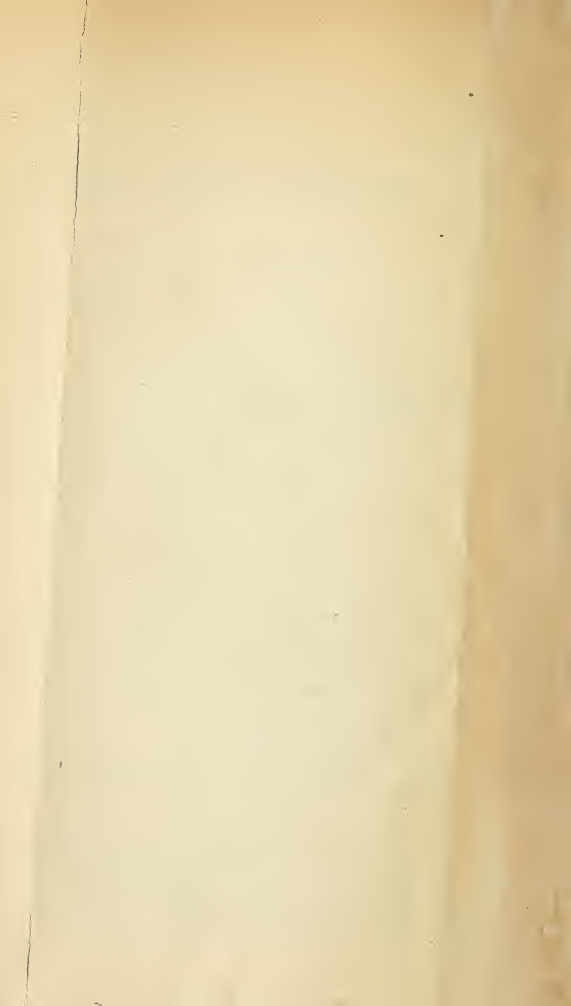
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## CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

---

	PAGE
Claribel .....	3
Lilian .....	4
Isabel .....	5
Mariana .....	6
To — .....	8
Madeline .....	9
Song.—The Owl .....	11
Second Song.—To the Same .....	11
Recollections of the Arabian Nights .....	12
Ode to Memory .....	17
Song .....	20
Adeline .....	21
A Character .....	23
The Poet .....	24
The Poet's Mind .....	26
The Dying Swan .....	27
A Dirge .....	28
Love and Death .....	30
The Ballad of Oriana .....	31
Circumstance .....	34
The Merman .....	34
The Mermaid .....	35
Sonnet to J. M. K. ....	37
The Lady of Shalott .....	38
Mariana in the South .....	43
Eleanore .....	46
The Miller's Daughter .....	50
Fatima .....	57
Cenone .....	59
The Sisters .....	66
To — .....	68
The Palace of Art .....	68
Lady Clara Vere De Vere .....	78
The May Queen .....	80

	PAGE
New Year's Eve.....	83
Conclusion.....	86
The Lotos-Eaters.....	90
A Dream of Fair Women.....	96
Margaret.....	108
The Blackbird.....	110
The Death of the Old Year.....	111
To J. S.....	112
"You ask me why, though ill at ease".....	115
"Of old sat freedom on the heights".....	116
"Love thou thy land with love far brought".....	117
The Goose.....	120
The Epic.....	123
Morte D'Arthur.....	124
The Gardener's Daughter.....	132
Dora.....	140
Audley Court.....	144
Walking to the Mail.....	147
St. Simeon Stylites.....	150
The Sea-Fairies.....	156
The Deserted House.....	157
Edwin Morris; or, the Lake.....	158
To ——, after reading a Life and Letters.....	163
To E. L., on his Travels in Greece.....	164
"Come not when I am dead".....	165
The Eagle; a Fragment.....	165
The Talking Oak.....	166
Love and Duty.....	177
The Golden Year.....	180
Ulysses.....	182
Locksley Hall.....	184
Godiva.....	196
The Two Voices.....	199
The Day-Dream:—	
Prologue.....	214
The Sleeping Palace.....	215
The Sleeping Beauty.....	217
The Arrival.....	217
The Revival.....	218
The Departure.....	219
Moral.....	220
L'Envoi.....	221
Epilogue.....	223
Amphion.....	223
St. Agnes' Eve.....	226
Sir Galahad.....	227
Edward Gray.....	230

	PAGE
Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue.....	231
Lady Clare.....	238
The Lord of Burleigh.....	241
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere.....	244
A Farewell.....	245
The Beggar Maid.....	246
The Vision of Sin.....	247
The Skipping Rope.....	253
"Move eastward, happy earth, and leave".....	254
"Break, break, break".....	254
The Poet's Song.....	255
The Princess.....	255





TO THE QUEEN.

---

REVERED, beloved,—O you that hold  
A nobler office upon earth  
Than arms, or power of brain, or birth,  
Could give the warrior kings of old,

Victoria,—since your Royal grace  
To one of less desert allows  
This laurel greener from the brows  
Of him that uttered nothing base;

And should your greatness, and the care  
That yokes with empire, yield you time  
To make demand of modern rhyme,  
If aught of ancient worth be there;

Then—while a sweeter music wakes,  
And through wild March the throstle calls,  
Where, all about your palace-walls,  
The sunlit almond-blossom shakes—

Take, Madam, this poor book of song;  
For, though the faults were thick as dust  
In vacant chambers, I could trust  
Your kindness. May you rule us long,

And leave us rulers of your blood  
As noble till the latest day!  
May children of our children say,  
“She wrought her people lasting good;

“ Her court was pure ; her life serene ;  
God gave her peace ; her land reposed ;  
A thousand claims to reverence closed  
In her as Mother, Wife and Queen ;

“ And statesmen at her council met  
Who knew the seasons, when to take  
Occasion by the hand, and make  
The bounds of freedom wider yet,

By shaping some august decree,  
Which kept her throne unshaken still,  
Broad-based upon her people's will,  
And compassed by the inviolate sea.”

MARCH, 1851.

# POEMS.

---

## CLARIBEL.

### A MELODY.

**WHERE** Claribel low-lieth  
The breezes pause and die,  
Letting the rose-leaves fall :  
**But** the solemn oak-tree sigheth,  
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,  
With an ancient melody  
Of an inward agony,  
Where Claribel low-lieth.

At eve the beetle boometh  
Athwart the thicket lone :  
At noon the wild bee hummeth  
About the mossed headstone :  
At midnight the moon cometh  
And looketh down alone.  
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,  
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,  
The callow throstle lispeth,  
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,  
The babbling runnel crispeth,  
The hollow grot replieth  
Where Claribel low-lieth.

## LILIAN.

AIRY, fairy Lilian,  
 Flitting, fairy Lilian,  
 When I ask her if she love me,  
 Clasps her tiny hands above me,  
 Laughing all she can ;  
 She'll not tell me if she love me,  
 Cruel little Lilian.

When my passion seeks  
 Pleasance in love-sighs,  
 She, looking through and through me  
 Thoroughly to undo me,  
 Smiling, never speaks :  
 So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,  
 From beneath her gathered wimple  
 Glancing with black-beaded eyes,  
 Till the lightning laughters dimple  
 The baby-roses in her cheeks ;  
 Then away she flies.

Prithee weep, May Lilian !  
 Gayety without eclipse  
 Wearieth me, May Lilian :  
 Through my very heart it thrilleth  
 When from crimson-threaded lips  
 Silver-treble laughter trilleth :  
 Prithee weep, May Lilian.

Praying all I can,  
 If prayers will not hush thee,  
 Airy Lilian,  
 Like a rose-leaf I will crush thee,  
 • Fairy Lilian.

## I S A B E L .

EYES not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed  
 With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,  
 Clear without heat, undying, tended by  
 Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane  
 Of her still spirit ; locks not wide dispread,  
 Madonna-wise on either side her head ;  
 Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign  
 The summer calm of golden charity,  
 Were fixed shadows of thy fixed mood,  
 Revered Isabel, the crown and head,  
 The stately flower of female fortitude,  
 Of perfect wifehood and pure lowlihead.

The intuitive decision of a bright  
 And thorough-edged intellect to part  
 Error from crime ; a prudence to withhold ;  
 The laws of marriage charactered in gold  
 Upon the blanched tablets of her heart ;  
 A love still burning upward, giving light  
 To read those laws ; an accent very low  
 In blandishment, but a most silver flow  
 Of subtle-paced counsel in distress,  
 Right to the heart and brain, though undescried,  
 Winning its way with extreme gentleness  
 Through all the outworks of suspicious pride ;  
 A courage to endure and to obey ;  
 A hate of gossip parlance, and of sway,  
 Crowned Isabel, through all her placid life,  
 The queen of marriage, a most perfect wife.

The mellowed reflex of a winter moon ;  
 A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,  
 Till in its onward current it absorbs  
 With swifter movement and in purer light  
 The vexed eddies of its wayward brother :  
 A leaning and upbearing parasite,  
 Clothing the stem, which else had fallen quite,

With clustered flower-bells and ambrosial orbs  
 Of rich fruit-bunches leaning on each other—  
 Shadow forth thee :—the world hath not another  
 (Though all her fairest forms are types of thee,  
 And thou of God in thy great charity)  
 Of such a finished chastened purity.

## M A R I A N A .

“Mariana in the moated grange.”—*Measure for Measure*.

### I.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots  
 Were thickly crusted, one and all :  
 The rusted nails fell from the knots  
 That held the peach to the garden-wall.  
 The broken sheds looked sad and strange :  
 Unlifted was the clinking latch ;  
 Weeded and worn the ancient thatch  
 Upon the lonely moated grange.  
 She only said, “My life is dreary,  
 He cometh not,” she said ;  
 She said, “I am aweary, aweary,  
 I would that I were dead !”

### II.

Her tears fell with the dews at even ;  
 Her tears fell ere the dews were dried ;  
 She could not look on the sweet heaven,  
 Either at morn or eventide.  
 After the flitting of the bats,  
 When thickest dark did trance the sky,  
 She drew her casement-curtain by,  
 And glanced athwart the glooming flats.  
 She only said, “The night is dreary,  
 He cometh not,” she said ;  
 She said, “I am aweary, aweary,  
 I would that I were dead !”

## III.

Upon the middle of the night,  
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow :  
The cock sung out an hour ere light :  
From the dark fen the oxen's low  
Came to her : without hope of change,  
In sleep she seemed to walk forlorn,  
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn  
About the lonely moated grange.  
She only said, " The day is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, " I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead ! "

## IV.

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blackened waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The clustered marish-mosses crept.  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark :  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray.  
She only said, " My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, " I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead ! "

## V.

And ever when the moon was low,  
And the shrill winds were up and away,  
In the white curtain, to and fro,  
She saw the gusty shadow sway.  
But when the moon was very low,  
And wild winds bound within their cell,  
The shadow of the poplar fell  
Upon her bed, across her brow.  
She only said, " The night is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;

She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

## VI.

All day within the dreamy house  
The doors upon their hinges creaked ;  
The blue fly sung i' the pane ; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked,  
Or from the crevice peered about.  
Old faces glimmered through the doors,  
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,  
Old voices called her from without.  
She only said, "My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said ;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

## VII.

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,  
The slow clock ticking, and the sound  
Which to the wooing wind aloof  
The poplar made, did all confound  
Her sense ; but most she loathed the hour  
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay  
Athwart the chambers, and the day  
Was sloping toward his western bower.  
Then, said she, "I am very dreary,  
He will not come," she said ;  
She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,  
O God ! that I were dead!"

TO ———.

**CLEAR-HEADED** friend, whose joyful scorn,  
Edged with sharp laughter, cuts atwain  
The knots that tangle human creeds,  
The wounding cords that bind and strain



The heart until it bleeds,  
 Ray-fringed eyelids of the morn  
 Roof not a glance so keen as thine :  
 If aught of prophecy be mine,  
 Thou wilt not live in vain.

Low-cowering shall the Sophist sit ;  
 Falsehood shall bare her plaited brow :  
 Fair-fronted Truth shall droop not now  
 With shrilling shafts of subtle wit.  
 Nor martyr-flames nor trenchant swords  
 Can do away that ancient lie :  
 A gentler death shall Falsehood die,  
 Shot through and though with cunning words.

Weak Truth, a-leaning on her crutch,  
 Wan, wasted Truth, in her utmost need,  
 Thy kingly intellect shall feed,  
 Until she be an athlete bold,  
 And weary with a finger's touch  
 Those writhed limbs of lightning speed ;  
 Like that strange angel which of old,  
 Until the breaking of the light,  
 Wrestled with wandering Israel,  
 Past Yabbok brook the livelong night,  
 And heaven's mazed signs stood still  
 In the dim tract of Penuel.

### MADELINE.

THOU art not steeped in golden languors,  
 No tranced summer calm is thine,  
 Ever varying Madeline.  
 Through light and shadow thou dost range,  
 Sudden glances, sweet and strange,  
 Delicious spites, and darling angers,  
 And airy forms of flitting change.

Smiling, frowning, evermore,  
 Thou art perfect in love-lore.  
 Revelings deep and clear are thine  
 Of wealthy smiles: but who may know  
 Whether smile or frown be fleetest?  
 Whether smile or frown be sweeter,  
     Who may know?

Frowns perfect-sweet along the brow  
 Light-glooming over eyes divine,  
 Like little clouds sun-fringed, are thine,  
     Ever varying Madeline.  
 Thy smile and frown are not aloof  
     From one another,  
     Each to each is dearest brother;  
 Hues of the silken sheeny woof  
     Momently shot into each other.  
     All the mystery is thine;  
 Smiling, frowning, evermore,  
 Thou art perfect in love-lore,  
     Ever varying Madeline.

A subtle, sudden flame,  
     By veering passion fanned,  
     About thee breaks and dances.  
     When I would kiss thy hand,  
 The flush of angered shame  
     O'erflows thy calmer glances,  
 And o'er black brows drops down  
 A sudden-curved frown:  
 But when I turn away,  
 Thou, willing me to stay,

Wooest not, nor vainly wranglest,  
     But, looking fixedly the while,  
 All my bounding heart entanglest  
     In a golden-netted smile;  
 Then in madness and in bliss,  
 If my lips should dare to kiss

Thy taper fingers amorously,  
 Again thou blushest angerly;  
 And o'er black brows drops down  
 A sudden-curved frown.

## SONG.—THE OWL.

WHEN cats run home and light is come,  
 ALL dew is cold upon the ground,  
 And the far-off stream is dumb,  
 And the whirring sail goes round,  
 And the whirring sail goes round;  
 Alone and warming his five wits,  
 The white owl in the belfry sits.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,  
 And rarely smells the new-mown hay,  
 And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch  
 Twice or thrice his roundelay,  
 Twice or thrice his roundelay;  
 Alone and warming his five wits,  
 The white owl in the belfry sits.

## SECOND SONG.

TO THE SAME.

THY tuwhits are lulled, I wot,  
 Thy tuwhoos of yesternight,  
 Which upon the dark afloat,  
 So took echo with delight,  
 So took echo with delight,  
 That her voice, untuneful grown,  
 Wears all day a fainter tone.

I would mock thy chant anew ;  
 But I cannot mimic it ;  
 Not a whit of thy tuwhoo,  
 Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,  
 Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,  
 With a lengthened loud halloo,  
 Tuwhoo, tuwhit, tuwhit, tuwhoo-o-o.

RECOLLECTIONS  
 OF  
 THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

I.

WHEN the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free  
 In the silken sail of infancy,  
 The tide of time flowed back with me,  
 The forward-flowing tide of time ;  
 And many a sheeny summer-morn,  
 Adown the Tigris I was borne,  
 By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,  
 High-walled gardens green and old ;  
 True Mussulman was I and sworn,  
 For it was in the golden prime  
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

II.

Anight my shallop, rustling through  
 The low and bloomed foliage, drove  
 The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove  
 The citron-shadows in the blue :  
 By garden porches on the brim,  
 The costly doors flung open wide,  
 Gold glittering through lamplight dim,  
 And broidered sofas on each side :  
 In sooth it was a goodly time,  
 For it was in the golden prime  
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## III.

Often, where clear-stemmed platans guard  
The outlet, did I turn away  
The boat-head down a broad canal  
From the main river sluiced, where all  
The sloping of the moonlit sward  
Was damask-work, and deep inlay  
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept  
Adown to where the waters slept.

A goodly place, a goodly time,  
For it was in the golden prime  
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## IV.

A motion from the river won  
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on  
My shallop through the star-strown calm,  
Until another night in night  
I entered, from the clearer light,  
Imbowered vaults of pillared palm,  
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb  
Heavenward, were stayed beneath the dome

Of hollow boughs.— A goodly time,  
For it was in the golden prime  
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## V.

Still onward; and the clear canal  
Is rounded to as clear a lake.  
From the green rivage many a fall  
Of diamond rillets musical,  
Through little crystal arches low  
Down from the central fountain's flow  
Fallen silver-chiming, seemed to shake  
The sparkling flints beneath the prow.

A goodly place, a goodly time,  
For it was in the golden prime  
Of good Haroun Alraschid

## VI.

Above through many a bowery turn  
 A walk with vary-colored shells  
 Wandered engrained. On either side  
 All round about the fragrant marge  
 From fluted vase, and brazen urn,  
 In order, eastern flowers large,  
 Some dropping low their crimson bells  
 Half-closed, and others studded wide  
     With disks and tiars, fed the time  
     With odor in the golden prime  
     Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## VII.

Far off, and where the lemon-grove  
 In closest coverture upsprung,  
 The living airs of middle night  
 Died round the bulbul as he sung ;  
 Not he : but something which possessed  
 The darkness of the world, delight,  
 Life, anguish, death, immortal love,  
 Ceasing not, mingled, unrepressed,  
     Apart from place, withholding time,  
     But flattering the golden prime  
     Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## VIII.

Black the garden-bowers and grots  
 Slumbered : the solemn palms were ranged  
 Above, unwooded of summer wind :  
 A sudden splendor from behind  
 Flushed all the leaves with rich gold-green,  
 And, flowing rapidly between  
 Their interspaces, counterchanged  
 The level lake with diamond-plots  
     Of dark and bright. A lovely time,  
     For it was in the golden prime  
     Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## IX.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,  
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,  
Grew darker from that under-flame :  
So, leaping lightly from the boat,  
With silver anchor left afloat,  
In marvel whence that glory came  
Upon me, as in sleep I sank  
In cool soft turf upon the bank,  
    Entranced with that place and time,  
    So worthy of the golden prime  
    Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## X.

Thence through the garden I was drawn—  
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,  
And many a shadow-chequered lawn  
Full of the city's stilly sound,  
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round  
The stately cedar, tamarisks,  
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,  
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks  
    Graven with emblems of the time,  
    In honor of the golden prime  
    Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## XI.

With dazed vision unawares  
From the long alley's lattice shade  
Emerged, I came upon the great  
Pavilion of the Caliphat.  
Right to the carven cedarn doors,  
Flung inward over spangled floors,  
Broad-based flights of marble stairs  
Ran up with golden balustrade,  
    After the fashion of the time,  
    And humor of the golden prime  
    Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## XII.

The fourscore windows all alight  
 As with the quintessence of flame,  
 A million tapers flaring bright  
 From twisted silvers looked to shame  
 The hollow-vaulted dark, and streamed  
 Upon the mooned domes aloof  
 In inmost Bagdat, till there seemed  
 Hundreds of crescents on the roof  
 Of night new risen, that marvellous time,  
 To celebrate the golden prime  
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## XIII.

Then stole I up, and trancedly  
 Gazed on the Persian girl alone,  
 Serene with argent-lidded eyes,  
 Amorous, and lashes like to rays  
 Of darkness, and a brow of pearl  
 Tressed with redolent ebony,  
 In many a dark delicious curl,  
 Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;  
 The sweetest lady of the time,  
 Well worthy of the golden prime  
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

## XIV.

Six columns, three on either side,  
 Pure silver, underpropt a rich  
 Throne of the massive ore, from which  
 Down-drooped, in many a floating fold,  
 Engarlanded and diapered  
 With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.  
 Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirred  
 With merriment of kingly pride,  
 Sole star of all that place and time,  
 I saw him—in his golden prime,  
 THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID!



## ODE TO MEMORY.

## I.

THOU who stealest fire,  
 From the fountains of the past,  
 To glorify the present; oh, haste,  
 Visit my low desire!  
 Strengthen me, enlighten me!  
 I faint in this obscurity,  
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

## II.

Come not as thou camest of late,  
 Flinging the gloom of yesternight  
 On the white day; but robed in softened light  
 Of orient state.  
 Whilome thou camest with the morning mist,  
 Even as a maid, whose stately brow  
 The dew-impearled winds of dawn have kissed,  
 When she, as thou,  
 Stays on her floating locks the lovely freight  
 Of overflowing blooms, and earliest shoots  
 Of orient green, giving safe pledge of fruits,  
 Which in wintertide shall star  
 The black earth with brilliance rare.

## III.

Whilome thou camest with the morning mist,  
 And with the evening cloud,  
 Showering thy gleaned wealth into my open breast  
 (Those peerless flowers which in the rudest wind  
 Never grow sere,  
 When rooted in the garden of the mind,  
 Because they are the earliest of the year.)  
 Nor was the night thy shroud.  
 In sweet dreams softer than unbroken rest  
 Thou leddest by the hand thy infant Hope.  
 The eddyng of her garments caught from thee

The light of thy great presence ; and the cope  
 Of the half-attained futurity,  
 Though deep, not fathomless,  
 Was cloven with the million stars that tremble  
 O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy.  
 Small thought was there of life's distress ;  
 For sure she deemed no mist of earth could dull  
 Those spirit-thrilling eyes so keen and beautiful :  
 Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,  
 Listening the lordly music flowing from  
 The illimitable years.  
 O strengthen me, enlighten me !  
 I faint in this obscurity,  
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

## IV.

Come forth, I charge thee, arise,  
 Thou of the many tongues, the myriad eyes !  
 Thou comest not with shows of flaunting vines  
 Unto mine inner eye,  
 Divinest memory !  
 Thou wert not nursed by the waterfall  
 Which ever sounds and shines  
 A pillar of white light upon the wall  
 Of purple cliffs, aloof descried :  
 Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side  
 The seven elms, the poplars four,  
 That stand beside my father's door,  
 And chiefly from the brook that loves  
 To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,  
 Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,  
 Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,  
 In every elbow and turn,  
 The filtered tribute of the rough woodland.  
 O ! hither lead thy feet !  
 Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat  
 Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds,  
 Upon the ridged wolds,  
 When the first matin-song hath wakened loud

Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,  
 What time the amber morn  
 Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.

## V.

Large dowries doth the raptured eye  
 To the young spirit present  
 When first she is wed ;  
 And like a bride of old  
 In triumph led,  
 With music and sweet showers  
 Of festal flowers,  
 Unto the dwelling she must sway.  
 Well hast thou done, great artist Memory,  
 In setting round thy first experiment  
 With royal framework of wrought gold ;  
 Needs must thou dearly love thy first essay,  
 And foremost in thy various gallery  
 Place it, where sweetest sunlight falls  
 Upon the storied walls ;  
 For the discovery  
 And newness of thine art so pleased thee,  
 That all which thou hast drawn of fairest  
 Or boldest since, but lightly weighs  
 With thee unto the love thou bearest  
 The first-born of thy genius. Artist-like,  
 Ever retiring thou dost gaze  
 On the prime labor of thine early days :  
 No matter what the sketch might be ;  
 Whether the high field on the bushless Pike,  
 Or even a sand-built ridge  
 Of heaped hills that mound the sea,  
 Overblown with murmurs harsh,  
 Or even a lowly cottage whence we see  
 Stretched wide and wild the waste enormous  
 marsh,  
 Where from the frequent bridge,  
 Like emblems of infinity,  
 The trenched waters run from sky to sky :

Or a garden bowered close  
 With plaited alleys of the trailing rose,  
 Long alleys falling down to twilight grotts,  
 Or opening upon level plots  
 Of crowned lilies, standing near  
 Purple-spiked lavender :  
 Whether in after life retired  
 From brawling storms,  
 From weary wind,  
 With youthful fancy re-inspired,  
 We may hold converse with all forms  
 Of the many-sided mind,  
 And those whom passion had not blinded,  
 Subtle-thoughted, myriad-minded,  
 My friend, with you to live alone,  
 Were how much better than to own  
 A crown, a sceptre, and a throne.  
 O strengthen me, enlighten me !  
 I faint in this obscurity,  
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

## S O N G .

## I.

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours,  
 Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers :  
     To himself he talks ;  
 For at eventide, listening earnestly,  
 At his work you may hear him sob and sigh  
     In the walks ;  
     Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks  
 Of the mouldering flowers :  
     Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
     Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;  
     Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
     Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

## II.

The air is damp, and hushed, and close,  
 As a sick man's room when he taketh repose  
     An hour before death ;  
 My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves  
 At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,  
     And the breath  
     Of the fading edges of box beneath,  
 And the year's last rose.  
     Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
     Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;  
     Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
     Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

## ADELINE.

MYSTERY of mysteries,  
 Faintly smiling Adeline,  
 Scarce of earth nor all divine,  
 Nor unhappy, nor at rest,  
     But beyond expression fair,  
     With thy floating flaxen hair ;  
 Thy rose-lips and full blue eyes  
     Take the heart from out my breast.  
 Wherefore those dim looks of thine,  
 Shadowy, dreaming Adeline ?

Whence that aery bloom of thine,  
 Like a lily which the sun  
 Looks through in his sad decline,  
 And a rose-bush leans upon,  
 Thou that faintly smilest still,  
     As a Naiad in a well,  
     Looking at the set of day,  
 Or a phantom two hours old  
     Of a maiden past away,

Ere the placid lips be cold ?  
 Wherefore those faint smiles of thine,  
 Spiritual Adeline ?

What hope or fear or joy is thine ?  
 Who talketh with thee, Adeline ?  
 For sure thou art not all alone :  
   Do beating hearts of salient springs  
 Keep measure with thine own ?  
   Hast thou heard the butterflies  
   What they say betwixt their wings ?  
 Or in stillest evenings  
 With what voice the violet woos  
 To his heart the silver dews ?  
   Or when little airs arise,  
 How the merry bluebell rings  
   To the mosses underneath ?  
   Hast thou looked upon the breath  
 Of the lilies at sunrise ?  
 Wherefore that faint smile of thine,  
 Shadowy, dreaming Adeline ?

Some honey-converse feeds thy mind,  
 Some spirit of a crimson rose  
 In love with thee forgets to close  
   His curtains, wasting odorous sighs  
 All night long on darkness blind.  
 What aileth thee ? whom waitest thou  
 With thy softened, shadowed brow,  
   And those dew-lit eyes of thine,  
 Thou faint smiler, Adeline ?

Lovest thou the doleful wind  
   When thou gazest at the skies ?  
 Doth the low-tongued Orient  
   Wander from the side o' the morn,  
   Dripping with Sabæan spice  
 On thy pillow, lowly bent  
   With melodious airs lovelorn,

Breathing light against thy face,  
 While his locks a-dropping twined  
     Round thy neck in subtle ring  
 Make a carcanet of rays  
 And ye talk together still,  
 In the language wherewith Spring  
 Letters cowslips on the hill?  
 Hence that look and smile of thine,  
 Spiritual Adeline.

## A CHARACTER.

## I.

WITH a half-glance upon the sky  
 At night he said, "The wanderings  
 Of this most intricate Universe  
 Teach me the nothingness of things."  
 Yet could not all creation pierce  
 Beyond the bottom of his eye.

## II.

He spake of beauty: that the dull  
 Saw no divinity in grass,  
 Life in dead stones, or spirit in air;  
 Then looking as 'twere in a glass,  
 He smoothed his chin and sleeked his hair,  
 And said the earth was beautiful.

## III.

He spake of virtue: not the gods  
 More purely, when they wish to charm  
 Pallas and Juno sitting by:  
 And with a sweeping of the arm,  
 And a lack-lustre dead-blue eye,  
 Devolved his rounded periods.

## IV.

Most delicately hour by hour  
 He canvassed human mysteries,  
 And trod on silk, as if the winds  
 Blew his own praises in his eyes,  
 And stood aloof from other minds  
 In impotence of fancied power.

## V.

With lips depressed as he were meek,  
 Himself unto himself he sold :  
 Upon himself himself did feed :  
 Quiet, dispassionate, and cold,  
 And other than his form of creed,  
 With chiselled features clear and sleek.

## THE POET.

THE poet in a golden clime was born,  
 With golden stars above ;  
 Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,  
 The love of love.

He saw through life and death, through good and ill,  
 He saw through his own soul.  
 The marvel of the everlasting will,  
 An open scroll,

Before him lay : with echoing feet he threaded  
 The secret'st walks of fame :  
 The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed  
 And winged with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,  
 And of so fierce a flight,  
 From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,  
 Filling with light



And vagrant melodies the winds which bore  
Them earthward till they lit ;  
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field-flower,  
The fruitful wit,

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew  
Where'er they fell, behold,  
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew  
A flower all gold,

And bravely furnished all abroad to fling  
The winged shafts of truth,  
To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring  
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with beams,  
Though one did fling the fire.  
Heaven flowed upon the soul in many dreams  
Of high desire.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world  
Like one great garden showed,  
And through the wreaths of floating dark upcurled  
Rare sunrise flowed.

And Freedom reared in that august sunrise  
Her beautiful bold brow,  
When rites and forms before his burning eyes  
Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden robes  
Sunned by those orient skies ;  
But round about the circles of the globes  
Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was traced in flame  
WISDOM, a name to shake  
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.  
And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,  
 And as the lightning to the thunder  
 Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,  
 Making earth wonder,

So was their meaning to her words. No sword  
 Of wrath her right arm whirled,  
 But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his* word  
 She shook the world.

## THE POET'S MIND.

### I.

VEX not thou the poet's mind  
 With thy shallow wit :  
 Vex not thou the poet's mind ;  
 For thou canst not fathom it.  
 Clear and bright it should be ever,  
 Flowing like a crystal river ;  
 Bright as light, and clear as wind.

### II.

Dark-browed sophist, come not anear ;  
 All the place is holy ground ;  
 Hollow smile and frozen sneer  
 Come not here.  
 Holy water will I pour  
 Into every spicy flower  
 Of the laurel-shrubs that hedge it around.  
 The flowers would faint at your cruel cheer.  
 In your eye there is death,  
 There is frost in your breath  
 Which would blight the plants.  
 Where you stand you cannot hear  
 From the groves within  
 The wild-bird's din.  
 In the heart of the garden the merry bird chants,

It would fall to the ground if you came in.  
 In the middle leaps a fountain  
   Like sheet lightning,  
   Ever brightening  
 With a low melodious thunder ;  
 All day and all night it is ever drawn  
 From the brain of the purple mountain  
 Which stands in the distance yonder :  
 It springs on a level of bowery lawn,  
 And the mountain draws it from Heaven above,  
 And it sings a song of undying love ;  
 And yet, though its voice be so clear and full,  
 You never would hear it—your ears are so dull ;  
 So keep where you are : you are foul with sin ;  
 It would shrink to the earth if you came in.

### THE DYING SWAN.

THE plain was grassy, wild and bare,  
 Wide, wild, and open to the air,  
 Which had built up everywhere  
   An under-roof of doleful gray.  
 With an inner voice the river ran,  
 Adown it floated a dying swan,  
   And loudly did lament.  
 It was the middle of the day.  
   Ever the weary wind went on,  
   And took the reed-tops as it went.

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,  
 And white against the cold-white sky  
 Shone out their crowning snows.

One willow over the river wept,  
 And shook the wave as the wind did sigh ;  
 Above in the wind was the swallow,  
 Chasing itself as its own wild will,  
 And far through the marish green and still

The tangled watercourses slept,  
Shot over with purple, and green and yellow

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul  
Of that waste place with joy  
Hidden in sorrow : at first to the ear  
The warble was low, and full and clear ;  
And floating about the under-sky,  
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole  
Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear ;  
But anon her awful jubilant voice,  
With a music strange and manifold,  
Flowed forth on a carol free and bold :  
As when a mighty people rejoice  
With shawms, and with cymbals, and harps of gold,  
And the tumult of their acclaim is rolled  
Through the open gates of the city afar,  
To the shepherd who watcheth the evening star.  
And the creeping mosses and clambering weeds,  
And the willow-branches hoar and dank,  
And the wavy swell of the soughing reeds,  
And the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,  
And the silvery marish-flowers that throng  
The desolate creeks and pools among,  
Were flooded over with eddying song.

## A DIRGE .

### I.

Now is done thy long day's work ;  
Fold thy palms across thy breast,  
Fold thine arms, turn to thy rest.

Let them rave.

Shadows of the silver birk  
Sweep the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

## II.

Thee nor carketh care nor slander ;  
 Nothing but the small cold worm  
 Fretteth thine enshrouded form.

Let them rave.

Light and shadow ever wander  
 O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

## III.

Thou wilt not turn upon thy bed ;  
 Chanteth not the brooding bee  
 Sweeter tones than calumny ?

Let them rave.

Thou wilt never raise thine head  
 From the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

## IV.

Crocodiles wept tears for thee ;  
 The woodbine and eglatere  
 Drip sweeter dews than traitor's tear.

Let them rave.

Rain makes music in the tree  
 O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

## V.

Round thee blow, self-pleached deep  
 Bramble-roses, faint and pale,  
 And long purples of the dale.

Let them rave.

These in every shower creep  
 Through the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

## VI.

The gold-eyed kingcups fine,  
 The frail bluebell peereth over

Rare broidry of the purple clover.  
 Let them rave.  
 Kings have no such couch as thine,  
 As the green that folds thy grave.  
 Let them rave.

## VII.

Wild words wander here and there;  
 God's great gift of speech abused  
 Makes thy memory confused—  
 But let them rave.  
 The balm-cricket carols clear  
 In the green that folds thy grave.  
 Let them rave.

## LOVE AND DEATH.

WHAT time the mighty moon was gathering light,  
 Love paced the thymy plots of Paradise,  
 And all about him rolled his lustrous eyes;  
 When, turning round a cassia, full in view  
 Death, walking all alone beneath a yew,  
 And talking to himself, first met his sight:  
 "You must begone," said Death; "these walks are  
 mine."

Love wept and spread his sheeny vans for flight;  
 Yet ere he parted said, "This hour is thine;  
 Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree  
 Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,  
 So in the light of great eternity  
 Life eminent creates the shade of death;  
 The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,  
 But I shall reign forever over all."

## THE BALLAD OF ORIANA.

My heart is wasted with my woe,  
    Oriana.

There is no rest for me below,  
    Oriana.

When the long dun wolds are ribbed with snow,  
And loud the Norland whirlwinds blow,

    Oriana,  
Alone I wander to and fro,  
    Oriana.

Ere the light on dark was growing,  
    Oriana,

At midnight the cock was crowing,  
    Oriana :

Winds were blowing, waters flowing,  
We heard the steeds to battle going,

    Oriana ;  
Aloud the hollow bugle blowing,  
    Oriana.

In the yew-wood, black as night,  
    Oriana,

Ere I rode into the fight,  
    Oriana,

While blissful tears blinded my sight,  
By star-shine and by moonlight,

    Oriana,  
I to thee my troth did plight,  
    Oriana.

She stood upon the castle wall,  
    Oriana :

She watched my crest among them all,  
    Oriana :

She saw me fight, she heard me call,  
When forth there stept a foeman tall,  
    Oriana,

Atween me and the castle wall,  
 Oriana.

The bitter arrow went aside,  
 Oriana :

The false, false arrow went aside,  
 Oriana :

The damned arrow glanced aside,  
 And pierced thy heart, my love, my bride,  
 Oriana !

Thy heart, my life, my love, my bride,  
 Oriana !

O ! narrow, narrow was the space,  
 Oriana.

Loud, loud rung out the bugle's brays,  
 Oriana.

O ! deathful stabs were dealt apace,  
 The battle deepened in its place,  
 Oriana ;

But I was down upon my face,  
 Oriana.

They should have stabbed me where I lay,  
 Oriana !

How could I rise and come away,  
 Oriana ?

How could I look upon the day ?  
 They should have stabbed me where I lay.  
 Oriana—

They should have trod me into clay,  
 Oriana.

O ! breaking heart that will not break,  
 Oriana ;

O ! pale, pale face so sweet and meek,  
 Oriana.

Thou smilest, but thou dost not speak,



And then the tears run down my cheek,  
    Oriana :  
What wantest thou ? whom dost thou seek,  
    Oriana ?

I cry aloud : none hear my cries,  
    Oriana.  
Thou comest atween me and the skies,  
    Oriana.  
I feel the tears of blood arise  
Up from my heart unto my eyes,  
    Oriana.  
Within thy heart my arrow lies,  
    Oriana.

O cursed hand ! oh cursed blow !  
    Oriana !  
O happy thou that liest low,  
    Oriana !  
All night the silence seems to flow  
Beside me in my utter woe,  
    Oriana.  
A weary, weary way I go,  
    Oriana.

When Norland winds pipe down the sea,  
    Oriana,  
I walk, I dare not think of thee,  
    Oriana.  
Thou liest beneath the greenwood tree,  
I dare not die and come to thee,  
    Oriana.  
I hear the roaring of the sea,  
    Oriana.

## CIRCUMSTANCE.

Two children in two neighbor villages  
 Playing mad pranks along the heathy leas ;  
 Two strangers meeting at a festival ;  
 Two lovers whispering by an orchard wall ;  
 Two lives bound fast in one with golden ease ;  
 Two graves grass-green beside a gray church-tower,  
 Washed with still rains and daisy-blossomed ;  
 Two children in one hamlet born and bred ;  
 So runs the round of life from hour to hour.

## THE MERMAN.

WHO would be  
 A merman bold  
 Sitting alone,  
 Singing alone  
 Under the sea,  
 With a crown of gold,  
 On a throne ?

I would be a merman bold ;  
 I would sit and sing the whole of the day ;  
 I would fill the sea-halls with a voice of power,  
 But at night I would roam abroad, and play  
 With the mermaids in and out of the rocks,  
 Dressing their hair with the white sea-flower ;  
 And holding them back by their flowing locks,  
 I would kiss them often under the sea,  
 And kiss them again till they kissed me  
 Laughingly, laughingly ;  
 And then we would wander away, away  
 To the pale-green sea-groves straight and high,  
 Chasing each other merrily.

There would be neither moon nor star ;  
 But the wave would make music above us afar—  
 Low thunder and light in the magic night—  
     Neither moon nor star.  
 We would call aloud in the dreamy dells,  
 Call to each other and whoop and cry  
     All night, merrily, merrily ;  
 They would pelt me with starry spangles and shells  
 Laughing and clapping their hands between,  
     All night, merrily, merrily ;  
 But I would throw them back in mine  
 Turkis and agate and almondine :  
 Then leaping out upon them unseen,  
 I would kiss them often under the sea,  
 And kiss them again till they kissed me  
     Laughingly, laughingly.  
 O ! what a happy life were mine  
 Under the hollow-hung ocean green !  
 Soft are the moss-beds under the sea ;  
 We would live merrily, merrily.

## THE MERMAID.

WHO would be  
 A mermaid fair,  
     Singing alone,  
 Combing her hair  
 Under the sea,  
 In a golden curl  
 With a comb of pearl,  
     On a throne ?

I would be a mermaid fair ;  
 I would sing to myself the whole of the day ;  
 With a comb of pearl I would comb my hair ;  
 And still as I combed I would sing and say,  
 “ Who is it loves me ? who loves not me ? ”

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 sevenfold  
Round the hall where I sate, and look in at the gate  
With his large calm eyes for the love of me.  
And all the mermen under the sea  
Would feel their immortality  
Die in their hearts for the love of me.

But at night I would wander away, away,  
    I would fling on each side my low-flowing locks  
And lightly vault from the throne and play  
    With the mermen in and out of the rocks ;  
We would run to and fro, and hide and seek,  
    On the broad sea-wolds i' the crimson shells,  
    Whose silvery spikes are nighest the sea.  
But if any came near, I would call and shriek,  
And adown the steep like a wave I would leap  
    From the diamond ledges that jut from the dells.  
For I would not be kissed by all who would list,  
Of the bold merry mermen under the sea ;  
They would sue me, and woo me, and flatter me,  
In the purple twilights under the sea ;  
But the king of them all would carry me,  
Woo me, and win me, and marry me,  
In the branching jaspers under the sea ;  
Then all the dry pied things that be  
In the hueless mosses under the sea  
Would curl round my silver feet silently,  
All looking up for the love of me.

And if I should carol aloud, from aloft  
All things that are forked, and horned, and soft,  
Would lean out from the hollow sphere of the sea,  
All looking down for the love of me.

## SONNET TO J. M. K.

MY hope and heart is with thee—thou wilt be  
A latter Luther, and a soldier-priest  
To scare church-harpies from the master's feast;  
Our dusted velvets have much need of thee:  
Thou art no sabbath-drawler of old saws,  
Distilled from some worm-cankered homily;  
But spurred at heart with fieriest energy  
To embattail and to wall about thy cause  
With iron-worded proof, hating to hark  
The humming of the drowsy pulpit-drone  
Half God's good sabbath, while the worn-out clerk  
Brow-beats his desk below. Thou from a throne  
Mounted in heaven wilt shoot into the dark  
Arrows of lightnings. I will stand and mark.

# POEMS

(PUBLISHED 1832.)

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## THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

### PART I.

ON either side the river lie  
Long fields of barley and of rye,  
That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;  
And through the field the road runs by  
    To many-towered Camelot ;  
And up and down the people go,  
Gazing where the lilies blow  
Round an island there below,  
    The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,  
Little breezes dusk and shiver  
Through the wave that runs forever  
By the island in the river  
    Flowing down to Camelot.  
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,  
Overlook a space of flowers,  
And the silent isle embowers  
    The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,  
Slide the heavy barges trailed

By slow horses ; and unhailed,  
 The shallop flitteth silken-sailed,  
     Skimming down to Camelot :  
 But who hath seen her wave her hand ?  
 Or at the casement seen her stand ?  
 Or is she known in all the land,  
     The Lady of Shalott ?

Only reapers, reaping early  
 In among the bearded barley,  
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly  
 From the river winding clearly,  
     Down to towered Camelot :  
 And by the moon the reaper weary,  
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,  
 Listening, whispers " 'Tis the fairy  
     Lady of Shalott."

## PART II.

THERE she weaves by night and day  
 A magic web with colors gay.  
 She has heard a whisper say,  
 A curse is on her if she stay  
     To look down to Camelot.  
 She knows not what the curse may be,  
 And so she weaveth steadily,  
 And little other care hath she,  
     The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear  
 That hangs before her all the year,  
 Shadows of the world appear.  
 There she sees the highway near  
     Winding down to Camelot :  
 There the river eddy whirls,  
 And there the surly village-churls,  
 And the red cloaks of market-girls,  
     Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,  
 An abbot on an ambling pad,  
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,  
 Or long-haired page in crimson clad,  
     Goes by to towered Camelot ;  
 And sometimes through the mirror blue  
 The knights come riding two and two :  
 She hath no loyal knight and true,  
     The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
 To weave the mirror's magic sights,  
 For often through the silent nights  
 A funeral, with plumes and lights,  
     And music, went to Camelot :  
 Or when the moon was overhead,  
 Came two young lovers lately wed ;  
 " I am half-sick of shadows," said  
     The Lady of Shalott.

## PART III.

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,  
 He rode between the barley sheaves,  
 The sun came dazzling through the leaves,  
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves  
     Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
 A redcross knight forever kneeled  
 To a lady in his shield,  
 That sparkled on the yellow field,  
     Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,  
 Like to some branch of stars we see  
 Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
 The bridle bells rang merrily  
     As he rode down to Camelot :  
 And from his blazoned baldric slung  
 A mighty silver bugle hung,



And as he rode his armor rung,  
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather  
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,  
The helmet and the helmet-feather  
Burned like one burning flame together,  
As he rode down to Camelot.

As often through the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed ;  
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode ;  
From underneath his helmet flowed  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot.

From the bank and from the river  
He flashed into the crystal mirror,  
" Tirra lirra," by the river  
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,  
She made three paces through the room,  
She saw the water-lily bloom,  
She saw the helmet and the plume,  
She looked down to Camelot.

Out flew the web and floated wide ;  
The mirror cracked from side to side ;  
" The curse is come upon me," cried  
The Lady of Shalott.

#### PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,  
The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining,  
Heavily the low sky raining  
Over towered Camelot ;

Down she came and found a boat  
 Beneath a willow left afloat,  
 And round about the prow she wrote  
     *The Lady of Shalott.*

And down the river's dim expanse—  
 Like some bold seër in a trance,  
 Seeing all his own mischance—  
 With a glassy countenance  
     Did she look to Camelot.  
 And at the closing of the day  
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay ;  
 The broad stream bore her far away,  
     The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white  
 That loosely flew to left and right—  
 The leaves upon her falling light—  
 Through the noises of the night  
     She floated down to Camelot :  
 And as the boat-head wound along  
 The willowy hills and fields among,  
 They heard her singing her last song,  
     The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,  
 Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
 Till her blood was frozen slowly,  
 And her eyes were darkened wholly,  
     Turned to towered Camelot ;  
 For ere she reached upon the tide  
 The first house by the water-side,  
 Singing in her song she died,  
     The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,  
 By garden-wall and gallery,  
 A gleaming shape she floated by,  
 Dead-pale between the houses high,  
     Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharves they came,  
 Knight and burgher, lord and dame,  
 And round the prow they read her name,  
     *The Lady of Shalott.*

Who is this ? and what is here ?  
 And in the lighted palace near  
 Died the sound of royal cheer ;  
 And they crossed themselves for fear,  
     All the knights at Camelot :  
 But Lancelot mused a little space ;  
 He said, " She has a lovely face ;  
 God in his mercy lend her grace,  
     The Lady of Shalott."

## MARIANA IN THE SOUTH.

## I.

WITH one black shadow at its feet,  
 The house through all the level shines,  
 Close-latticed to the brooding heat,  
 And silent in its dusty vines :  
 A faint-blue ridge upon the right,  
 An empty river-bed before,  
 And shallows on a distant shore,  
 In glaring sand and inlets bright.  
 But " Ave Mary," made she moan,  
 And " Ave Mary," night and morn,  
 And " Ah," she sang, " to be all alone,  
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

## II.

She, as her carol sadder grew,  
 From brow and bosom slowly down,  
 Through rosy taper fingers drew  
 Her streaming curls of deepest brown  
 To left and right, and made appear,

Still-lighted in a secret shrine,  
 Her melancholy eyes divine,  
 The home of woe without a tear.  
 And "Ave Mary," was her moan,  
 "Madonna, sad is night and morn ;"  
 And "Ah," she sang, "to be all alone,  
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

## . III.

Till all the crimson changed, and past  
 Into deep orange o'er the sea,  
 Low on her knees herself she cast,  
 Before Our Lady murmured she ;  
 Complaining, "Mother, give me grace  
 To help me of my weary load."  
 And on the liquid mirror glowed  
 The clear perfection of her face.  
 "Is this the form," she made her moan,  
 "That won his praises night and morn ?"  
 And "Ah," she said, "but I wake alone,  
 I sleep forgotten, I wake forlorn."

## IV.

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,  
 Nor any cloud would cross the vault,  
 But day increased from heat to heat,  
 On stony drought and steaming salt ;  
 Till now at noon she slept again,  
 And seemed knee-deep in mountain grass,  
 And heard her native breezes pass,  
 And runlets babbling down the glen.  
 She breathed in sleep a lower moan,  
 And murmuring, as at night and morn,  
 She thought, "My spirit is here alone,  
 Walks forgotten, and is forlorn."

## V.

Dreaming, she knew it was a dream :  
 She felt he was and was not there.

She woke : the babble of the stream  
 Fell, and without the steady glare  
 Shrank one sick willow sere and small.  
 The river-bed was dusty white ;  
 And all the furnace of the light  
 Struck up against the blinding wall.  
 She whispered, with a stifled moan  
 More inward than at night or morn,  
 " Sweet Mother, let me not here alone  
 Live forgotten, and die forlorn."

## VI.

And, rising, from her bosom drew  
 Old letters, breathing of her worth,  
 For " Love," they said, " must needs be true  
 To what is loveliest upon earth."  
 An image seemed to pass the door,  
 To look at her with slight, and say,  
 " But now thy beauty flows away,  
 So be alone for evermore."  
 " O cruel heart," she changed her tone,  
 " And cruel love, whose end is scorn,  
 Is this the end to be left alone,  
 To live forgotten, and die forlorn !"

## VII.

But sometimes in the falling day  
 An image seemed to pass the door,  
 To look into her eyes and say,  
 " But thou shalt be alone no more."  
 And flaming downward over all  
 From heat to heat the day decreased,  
 And slowly rounded to the east  
 The one black shadow from the wall.  
 " The day to night," she made her moan,  
 " The day to night, the night to morn,  
 And day and night I am left alone,  
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

## VIII.

At eve a dry cicala sung,  
 There came a sound as of the sea;  
 Backward the lattice-blind she flung,  
 And leaned upon the balcony.  
 There all in spaces rosy-bright  
 Large Hesper glittered on her tears,  
 And deepening through the silent spheres,  
 Heaven over Heaven rose the night.  
 And weeping then she made her moan,  
 "The night comes on that knows not more  
 When I shall cease to be all alone,  
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn."

## E L E A N O R E .

THY dark eyes opened not,  
 Nor first revealed themselves to English air,  
 For there is nothing here,  
 Which, from the outward to the inward brought,  
 Moulded thy baby thought.  
 Far off from human neighborhood,  
 Thou wert born, on a summer morn,  
 A mile beneath the cedar-wood.  
 Thy bounteous forehead was not fanned  
 With breezes from our oaken glades,  
 But thou wert nursed in some delicious land  
 Of lavish lights, and floating shades:  
 And flattering thy childish thought  
 The oriental fairy brought,  
 At the moment of thy birth,  
 From old well-heads of haunted rills,  
 And the hearts of purple hills,  
 And shadowed coves on a sunny shore,  
 The choicest wealth of all the earth,

Jewel or shell, or starry ore,  
To deck thy cradle, Eleänore.

Or the yellow-banded bees,  
Through half-open lattices  
Coming in the scented breeze,  
Fed thee, a child, lying alone,  
With whitest honey in fairy gardens culled  
A glorious child, dreaming alone,  
In silk-soft folds, upon yielding down,  
With the hum of swarming bees  
Into dreamful slumber lulled.

Who may minister to thee?  
Summer herself should minister  
To thee, with fruitage golden-rinded  
On golden salvers, or it may be,  
Youngest Autumn, in a bower  
Grape-thickened from the light, and blinded  
With many a deep-hued bell-like flower  
Of fragrant trailers, when the air  
Sleepeth over all the heaven,  
And the crag that fronts the Even,  
All along the shadowing shore,  
Crimsons over an inland mere,  
Eleänore!

How may full-sailed verse express,  
How may measured words adore  
The full-flowing harmony  
Of thy swan-like stateliness,  
Eleänore?  
The luxuriant symmetry  
Of thy floating gracefulness,  
Eleänore?  
Every turn and glance of thine,  
Every lineament divine,  
Eleänore,  
And the steady sunset glow,

That stays upon thee? For in thee  
 Is nothing sudden, nothing single,  
 Like two streams of incense free  
 From one censer, in one shrine,  
 Thought and motion mingle,  
 Mingle ever. Motions flow  
 To one another, even as though  
 They were modulated so  
 To an unheard melody,  
 Which lives about thee, and a sweep  
 Of richest pauses, evermore  
 Drawn from each other mellow-deep;  
 Who may express thee, Eleänore?

I stand before thee, Eleänore;  
 I see thy beauty gradually unfold,  
 Daily and hourly, more and more.  
 I muse, as in a trance, the while  
 Slowly, as from a cloud of gold,  
 Comes out thy deep ambrosial smile.  
 I muse, as in a trance, whene'er  
 The languors of thy love-deep eyes  
 Float on to me. I would I were  
 So tranced, so rapt in ecstasies,  
 To stand apart, and to adore,  
 Gazing on thee for evermore,  
 Serene, imperial Eleänore!

Sometimes, with most intensity  
 Gazing, I seem to see  
 Thought folded over thought, smiling asleep,  
 Slowly awakened, grow so full and deep  
 In thy large eyes, that, overpowered quite,  
 I cannot veil, or droop my sight,  
 But am as nothing in its light:  
 As though a star, in inmost heaven set,  
 Even while we gaze on it,  
 Should slowly round his orb, and slowly grow  
 To a full face, there like a sun remain



Fixed—then as slowly fade again,  
 And draw itself to what it was before ;  
 So full, so deep, so slow,  
 Thought seems to come and go  
 In thy large eyes, imperial Eleānore.

As thunderclouds that, hung on high,  
 Roofed the world with doubt and fear,  
 Floating through an evening atmosphere,  
 Grow golden all about the sky ;  
 In thee all passion becomes passionless,  
 Touched by thy spirit's mellowness,  
 Losing his fire and active might  
 In a silent meditation,  
 Falling into a still delight,  
 And luxury of contemplation :  
 As waves that up a quiet cove  
 Rolling slide, and lying still  
 Shadow forth the banks at will ;  
 Or sometimes they swell and move,  
 Pressing up against the land,  
 With motions of the outer sea :  
 And the selfsame influence  
 Controlleth all the soul and sense  
 Of Passion gazing upon thee.  
 His bowstring slackened, languid Love,  
 Leaning his cheek upon his hand,  
 Droops both his wings, regarding thee,  
 And so would languish evermore,  
 Serene, imperial Eleānore.

But when I see thee roam, with tresses unconfined,  
 While the amorous, odorous wind  
 Breathes low between the sunset and the moon ;  
 Or, in a shadowy saloon,  
 On silken cushions half reclined ;  
 I watch thy grace ; and in its place  
 My heart a charmed slumber keeps,  
 While I muse upon thy face :

And a languid fire creeps  
 Through my veins to all my frame,  
 Dissolvingly and slowly: soon,  
 From thy rose-red lips MY name  
 Floweth; and then, as in a swoon,  
 With dinning sound my ears are rife,  
 My tremulous tongue faltereth,  
 I lose my color, I lose my breath,  
 I drink the cup of a costly death,  
 Brimmed with delirious draughts of warmest life.  
 I die with my delight, before  
 I hear what I would hear from thee;  
 Yet tell my name again to me.  
 I *would* be dying evermore,  
 So dying ever, Eleänore.

## THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

I SEE the wealthy miller yet,  
 His double chin, his portly size,  
 And who that knew him could forget  
 The busy wrinkles round his eyes?  
 The slow wise smile that, round about  
 His dusty forehead dryly curled,  
 Seemed half-within and half-without,  
 And full of dealings with the world?

In yonder chair I see him sit,  
 Three fingers round the old silver cup—  
 I see his gray eyes twinkle yet  
 At his own jest—gray eyes lit up  
 With summer lightnings of a soul  
 So full of summer warmth, so glad,  
 So healthy, sound, and clear and whole,  
 His memory scarce can make me sad.

Yet fill my glass: give me one kiss:  
 My own sweet Alice, we must die.

There's somewhat in this world amiss  
Shall be unriddled by and by.  
There's somewhat flows to us in life,  
But more is taken quite away.  
Pray, Alice, pray, my darling wife,  
That we may die the selfsame day.

Have I not found a happy earth ?  
I least should breathe a thought of pain.  
Would God renew me from my birth  
I'd almost live my life again.  
So sweet it seems with thee to walk,  
And once again to woo thee mine—  
It seems in after-dinner talk  
Across the walnuts and the wine—

To be the long and listless boy  
Late left an orphan of the squire,  
Where this old mansion mounted high  
Looks down upon the village spire :  
For even here, where I and you  
Have lived and loved alone so long,  
Each morn my sleep was broken through  
By some wild skylark's matin song.

And oft I heard the tender dove  
In firry woodlands making moan ;  
But ere I saw your eyes, my love,  
I had no motion of my own.  
For scarce my life with fancy played  
Before I dreamed that pleasant dream—  
Still hither thither idly swayed  
Like those long mosses in the stream.

Or from the bridge I leaned to hear  
The mill-dam rushing down with noise,  
And see the minnows everywhere  
In crystal eddies glance and poise,  
The tall flag-flowers, when they sprung

Below the range of stepping stones,  
 And those three chestnuts near, that hung  
 In masses thick with milky cones.

But, Alice, what an hour was that,  
 When, after roving in the woods,  
 ('Twas April then,) I came and sat  
 Below the chestnuts, when their buds  
 Were glistening to the breezy blue ;  
 And on the slope, an absent fool,  
 I cast me down, nor thought of you,  
 But angled in the higher pool.

A love-song I had somewhere read,  
 An echo from a measured strain,  
 Beat time to nothing in my head  
 From some odd corner of the brain.  
 It haunted me, the morning long,  
 With weary sameness in the rhymes,  
 The phantom of a silent song,  
 That went and came a thousand times

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood  
 I watched the little circles die ;  
 They past into the level flood,  
 And there a vision caught my eye ;  
 The reflex of a beauteous form,  
 A glowing arm, a gleaming neck,  
 As when a sunbeam wavers warm  
 Within the dark and dimpled beck.

For you remember, you had set,  
 That morning, on the casement's edge  
 A long green box of mignonette,  
 And you were leaning from the ledge :  
 And when I raised my eyes, above  
 They met with two so full and bright—  
 Such eyes ! I swear to you, my love,  
 That these have never lost their light

I loved, and love dispelled the fear  
That I should die an early death :  
For love possessed the atmosphere,  
And filled the breast with purer breath.  
My mother thought, What ails the boy ?  
For I was altered, and began  
To move about the house with joy,  
And with the certain step of man.

I loved the brimming wave that swam  
Through quiet meadows round the mill,  
The sleepy pool above the dam,  
The pool beneath it never still,  
The meal-sacks on the whitened floor,  
The dark round of the dripping wheel,  
The very air about the door  
Made misty with the floating meal.

And oft in ramblings on the wold,  
When April nights began to blow,  
And April's crescent glimmered cold,  
I saw the village lights below ;  
I knew your taper far away,  
And full at heart of trembling hope,  
From off the wold I came, and lay  
Upon the freshly-flowered slope.

The deep brook groaned beneath the mill ;  
And "by that lamp," I thought, "she sits !"  
The white chalk-quarry from the hill  
Gleamed to the flying moon by fits.  
"O that I were beside her now !  
O will she answer if I call ?  
O would she give me vow for vow,  
Sweet Alice, if I told her all ?"

Sometimes I saw you sit and spin ;  
And, in the pauses of the wind,  
Sometimes I heard you sing within ;

Sometimes your shadow crossed the blind ;  
At last you rose and moved the light,  
And the long shadow of the chair  
Flitted across into the night,  
And all the casement darkened there.

But when at last I dared to speak,  
The lanes, you know, were white with May  
Your ripe lips moved not, but your cheek  
Flushed like the coming of the day ;  
And so it was—half-sly, half-shy,  
You would, and would not, little one !  
Although I pleaded tenderly,  
And you and I were all alone.

And slowly was my mother brought  
To yield consent to my desire :  
She wished me happy, but she thought  
I might have looked a little higher ;  
And I was young—too young to wed :  
“ Yet must I love her for your sake ;  
Go fetch your Alice here,” she said :  
Her eyelid quivered as she spake.

And down I went to fetch my bride :  
But, Alice, you were ill at ease ;  
This dress and that by turns you tried,  
Too fearful that you should not please.  
I loved you better for your fears,  
I knew you could not look but well ;  
And dews, that would have fall'n in tears.  
I kissed away before they fell.

I watched the little flutterings,  
The doubt my mother would not see ;  
She spoke at large of many things,  
And at the last she spoke of me ;  
And turning looked upon your face,  
As near this door you sat apart,

And rose, and, with a silent grace  
Approaching, pressed you heart to heart.

Ah, well—but sing the foolish song  
I gave you, Alice, on the day  
When, arm in arm, we went along,  
A pensive pair, and you were gay  
With bridal flowers—that I may seem,  
As in the nights of old, to lie  
Beside the mill-wheel in the stream,  
While those full chestnuts whisper by.

---

It is the miller's daughter,  
And she is grown so dear, so dear,  
That I would be the jewel  
That trembles at her ear:  
For, hid in ringlets day and night,  
I'd touch her neck so warm and white.

And I would be the girdle  
About her dainty, dainty waist,  
And her heart would beat against me  
In sorrow and in rest:  
And I should know if it beat right,  
I'd clasp it round so close and tight.

And I would be the necklace,  
And all day long to fall and rise  
Upon her balmy bosom,  
With her laughter or her sighs,  
And I would lie so light, so light,  
I scarce should be unclasped at night.

---

A trifle, sweet! which true love spells—  
True love interprets—right alone.  
His light upon the letter dwells,  
For all the spirit is his own.  
So, if I waste words now, in truth  
You must blame Love. His early rage

Had force to make me rhyme in youth,  
And makes me talk too much in age.

And now those vivid hours are gone,  
Like mine own life to me thou art,  
Where Past and Present, wound in one,  
Do make a garland for the heart:  
So sing that other song I made,  
Half-angered with my happy lot,  
The day, when in the chestnut shade  
I found the blue Forget-me-not.

---

Love that hath us in the net,  
Can he pass, and we forget?  
Many suns arise and set.  
Many a chance the years beget.  
Love the gift is Love the debt.

Even so.

Love is hurt with jar and fret.  
Love is made a vague regret.  
Eyes with idle tears are wet.  
Idle habit links us yet.  
What is love? for we forget:  
Ah, no! no!

---

Look through mine eyes with thine. True wife  
Round my true heart thine arms entwine;  
My other dearer life in life,  
Look through my very soul with thine!  
Untouched with any shade of years,  
May those kind eyes forever dwell!  
They have not shed a many tears,  
Dear eyes, since first I knew them well.

Yet tears they shed: they had their part  
Of sorrow: for when time was ripe,  
The still affection of the heart



Became an outward breathing type,  
 That into stillness past again,  
 And left a want unknown before ;  
 Although the loss that brought us pain,  
 That loss but made us love the more,

With farther lookings on. The kiss,  
 The woven arms, seem but to be  
 Weak symbols of the settled bliss,  
 The comfort, I have found in thee :  
 But that God bless thee, dear—who wrought  
 Two spirits to one equal mind—  
 With blessings beyond hope or thought,  
 With blessings which no words can find.

Arise, and let us wander forth  
 To yon old mill across the wolds ;  
 For look, the sunset, south and north,  
 Winds all the vale in rosy folds,  
 And fires your narrow casement glass,  
 Touching the sullen pool below :  
 On the chalk-hill the bearded grass  
 Is dry and dewless. Let us go.

## F A T I M A .

## I.

O LOVE, Love, Love ! O withering might !  
 O sun, that from thy noonday height  
 Shudderest when I strain my sight,  
 Throbbing through all thy heat and light,  
 Lo, falling from my constant mind,  
 Lo, parched and withered, deaf and blind  
 I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.

## II.

Last night I wasted hateful hours  
 Below the city's eastern towers :

I thirsted for the brooks, the showers :  
 I rolled among the tender flowers :  
     I crushed them on my breast, my mouth :  
     I looked athwart the burning drouth  
     Of that long desert to the south.

## III.

Last night, when some one spoke his name,  
 From my swift blood that went and came  
 A thousand little shafts of flame  
 Were shivered in my narrow frame.  
     O Love, O fire ! once he drew  
     With one long kiss my whole soul through  
     My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

## IV.

Before he mounts the hill, I know  
 He cometh quickly : from below  
 Sweet gales, as from deep gardens, blow  
 Before him, striking on my brow.  
     In my dry brain my spirit soon,  
     Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,  
     Faints like a dazzled morning moon.

## V.

The wind sounds like a silver wire,  
 And from beyond the noon a fire  
 Is poured upon the hills, and nigher  
 The skies stoop down in their desire ;  
     And, isled in sudden seas of light,  
     My heart, pierced through with fierce delight,  
     Bursts into blossom in his sight.

## VI.

My whole soul waiting silently,  
 All naked in a sultry sky,  
 Droops blinded with his shining eye :  
 I *will* possess him or will die.  
     I will grow round him in his place,

Grow, live, die looking on his face,  
Die, dying clasped in his embrace.

ÆNONE.

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier  
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.  
The swimming vapor slopes athwart the glen,  
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,  
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand  
The lawns and meadow ledges midway down  
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars  
The long brook falling through the cloven ravine  
In cataract after cataract to the sea.  
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus  
Stands up and takes the morning; but in front  
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal  
Troas and Ilion's columned citadel,  
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon  
Mournful Ænone, wandering forlorn  
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.  
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck  
Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.  
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,  
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade  
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff

“ O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:  
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:  
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,  
Rests like a shadow, and the cicala sleeps.  
The purple flower's droop: the golden bee  
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.

My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,  
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,  
And I am all aweary of my life.

“ O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
Hear me O Earth, hear me O Hills, O Caves,  
That house the cold crowned snake! O mountain  
    brooks,  
I am the daughter of a River-God ;  
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all  
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls  
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,  
A cloud that gathered shape : for it may be  
That, while I speak of it, a little while  
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

“ O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
I waited underneath the dawning hills,  
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,  
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain-pine :  
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,  
Leading a jet-black goat white-horned, white-hooved,  
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

“ O mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
Far-off the torrent called me from the cleft :  
Far up the solitary morning smote  
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes  
I sat alone : white breasted like a star  
Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard skin  
Drooped from his shoulder, but his sunny hair  
Clustered about his temples like a God's ;  
And his cheek brightened as the foam-bow brightens  
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart  
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

“ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm

Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,  
That smelt ambrosially, and while I looked  
And listened, the full-flowing river of speech  
Came down upon my heart.

“ ‘ My own Cenone,  
Beautiful-browed Cenone, my own soul,  
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind engraven  
“ For the most fair,” would seem to award it thine,  
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt  
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace  
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.’

“ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,  
And added, ‘ This was cast upon the board,  
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods  
Ranged in the halls of Peleus ; whereupon  
Rose feud, with question unto whom ’twere due :  
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,  
Delivering that to me, by common voice  
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day  
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each  
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave  
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,  
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard  
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.’

“ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
It was the deep midnight : one silvery cloud  
Had lost his way between the piney sides  
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came  
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,  
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,  
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,  
Lotos and lilies : and a wind arose,  
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,  
This way and that, in many a wild festoon

Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs  
 With bunch and berry and flower through and  
 through.

“ O mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,  
 And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and leaned  
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.  
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom  
 Coming through Heaven, like a light that grows  
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods  
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made  
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule  
 Unquestioned, overflowing revenue  
 Wherewith to embellish state, ' from many a vale  
 And river-sundered champaign clothed with corn,  
 Or labored mines, undrainable of ore.  
 Honor,' she said, ' and homage, tax and toll,  
 From many an inland town and haven large,  
 Mast-thronged beneath her shadowing citadel  
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers.' ”

“ O mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 Still she spake on, and still she spake of power,  
 ' Which in all action is the end of all ;  
 Power fitted to the season ; wisdom-bred  
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbor crowns  
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand  
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,  
 From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,  
 A shepherd all thy life, but yet king-born,  
 Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power  
 Only, are likest Gods, who have attained  
 Rest in a happy place and quiet seats  
 Above the thunder, with undying bliss,  
 In knowledge of their own supremacy.' ”

“ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit

Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power  
 Flattered his spirit ; but Pallas where she stood  
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs  
 O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear  
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,  
 The while, above, her full and earnest eye  
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek  
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

“ Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power.  
 Yet not for power, (power of herself  
 Would come uncalled for,) but to live by law,  
 Acting the law we live by without fear ;  
 And because right is right, to follow right  
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.’

“ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 Again she said : ‘ I woo thee not with gifts.  
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me  
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,  
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,

If gazing on divinity disrobed,  
 Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,  
 Unbiased by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure  
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,  
 So that my vigor, wedded to thy blood,  
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,  
 To push thee forward through a life of shocks,  
 Dangers and deeds, until endurance grow  
 Sinewed with action, and the full-grown will,  
 Circled through all experiences, pure law,  
 Commeasure perfect freedom.’

“ Here she ceased,  
 And Paris pondered, and I cried, ‘ O Paris,  
 Give it to Pallas ! ’ but he heard me not,  
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me !

“ O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,  
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,  
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,  
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew  
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair  
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat  
 And shoulder: from the violets her light foot  
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form  
 Between the shadows of the vine bunches  
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

“ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,  
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh,  
 Half-whispered in his ear, ‘ I promise thee  
 The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.’  
 She spoke and laughed: I shut my sight for fear:  
 But when I looked, Paris had raised his arm,  
 And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,  
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,  
 And I was left alone within the bower;  
 And from that time to this I am alone,  
 And I shall be alone until I die.

“ Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?  
 My love hath told me so a thousand times.  
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,  
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,  
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail,  
 Crouched fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?  
 Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms  
 Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest  
 Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew  
 Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains  
 Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

“ O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 They came, they cut away my tallest pines,



My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge  
 High over the blue gorge, and all between  
 The snowy peak and snow-white cataract  
 Fostered the callow eaglet—from beneath  
 Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn  
 The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat  
 Low in the valley. Never, never more  
 Shall lone Ænone see the morning mist  
 Sweep through them; never see them overlaid  
 With narrow moonlit slips of silver cloud,  
 Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

“ O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 I wish that somewhere in the ruined folds,  
 Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,  
 Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her,  
 The Abominable, that uninvited came  
 Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,  
 And cast the golden fruit upon the board,  
 And bred this change; that I might speak my  
     mind,  
 And tell her to her face how much I hate  
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

“ O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,  
 In this green valley, under this green hill,  
 Even on this hand, and sitting on this stone?  
 Sealed it with kisses? watered it with tears?  
 O happy tears, and how unlike to these!  
 O happy Heaven! how canst thou see my face?  
 O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?  
 O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,  
 There are enough unhappy on this earth;  
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:  
 I pray thee pass before my light of life,  
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.  
 Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,  
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

“ O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts  
 Do shape themselves within me more and more,  
 Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear  
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,  
 Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see  
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother  
 Conjectures of the features of her child  
 Ere it is born : her child !—a shudder comes  
 Across me : never child be born of me,  
 Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes !

“ O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,  
 Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me  
 Walking the cold and starless road of Death  
 Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love  
 With the Greek woman. I will rise and go  
 Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth  
 Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says  
 A fire dances before her, and a sound  
 Rings ever in her ears of armed men.  
 What this may be I know not, but I know  
 That, wheresoe’er I am by night and day,  
 All earth and air seem only burning fire.”

## THE SISTERS.

### I.

WE were two daughters of one race :  
 She was the fairest in the face :  
 The wind is blowing in turret and tree.  
 They were together, and she fell ;  
 Therefore revenge became me well.  
 O the Earl was fair to see !

## II.

She died : she went to burning flame :  
She mixed her ancient blood with shame.  
The wind is howling in turret and tree.  
Whole weeks and months, and early and late,  
To win his love I lay in wait.  
O the Earl was fair to see !

## III.

I made a feast ; I bade him come :  
I won his love, I brought him home.  
The wind is roaring in turret and tree.  
And after supper, on a bed,  
Upon my lap he laid his head :  
O the Earl was fair to see !

## IV.

I kissed his eyelids into rest :  
His ruddy cheek upon my breast.  
The wind is raging in turret and tree.  
I hated him with the hate of hell,  
But I loved his beauty passing well.  
O the Earl was fair to see !

## V.

I rose up in the silent night :  
I made my dagger sharp and bright.  
The wind is raving in turret and tree.  
As half-asleep his breath he drew,  
Three times I stabbed him through and through  
O the Earl was fair to see !

## VI.

I curled and combed his comely head,  
He looked so grand when he was dead.  
The wind is blowing in turret and tree.  
I wrapt his body in the sheet,  
And laid him at his mother's feet.  
O the Earl was fair to see !

## T O ———

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

I SEND you here a sort of allegory,  
 (For you will understand it,) of a soul,  
 A sinful soul possessed of many gifts,  
 A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,  
 A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,  
 That did love Beauty only, (Beauty seen  
 In all varieties of mould and mind,)  
 And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,  
 Good only for its beauty, seeing not  
 That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are three sister  
 That dote upon each other, friends to man,  
 Living together under the same roof,  
 And never can be sundered without tears.  
 And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be  
 Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie  
 Howling in outer darkness. Not for this  
 Was common clay ta'en from the common earth,  
 Moulded by God, and tempered with the tears  
 Of angels to the perfect shape of man.

## THE PALACE OF ART.

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,  
 Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.  
 I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,  
 Dear soul, for all is well."

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnished brass,  
 I chose. The ranged ramparts bright  
 From level meadow-bases of deep grass  
 Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf  
 The rock rose clear, or winding stair.  
 My soul would live alone unto herself  
 In her high palace there.

And "while the world runs round and round," I said,  
 "Reign thou apart, a quiet king,  
 Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade  
 Sleeps on his luminous ring."

To which my soul made answer readily:  
 "Trust me, in bliss I shall abide  
 In this great mansion, that is built for me,  
 So royal-rich and wide."  
 \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \*

Four courts I made, East, West, and South and  
 North,  
 In each a squared lawn, wherefrom  
 The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth  
 A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran a row  
 Of cloisters, branched like mighty woods,  
 Echoing all night to that sonorous flow  
 Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery  
 That lent broad verge to distant lands,  
 Far as the wild swan wings, to where the sky  
 Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one swell  
 Across the mountain streamed below  
 In misty folds, that floating as they fell  
 Lit up a torrent-blow.

And high on every peak a statue seemed  
 To hang on tiptoe, tossing up

A cloud of incense of all odor steamed  
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, "And who shall gaze upon  
My palace with unblinded eyes,  
While this great bow will waver in the sun,  
And that sweet incense rise?"

For that sweet incense rose and never failed,  
And, while day sank or mounted higher,  
The light aerial gallery, golden-railed,  
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stained and traced,  
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires  
From shadowed grots of arches interlaced,  
And tipt with frost-like spires.

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Full of long-sounding corridors it was,  
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,  
Through which the livelong day my soul did pass,  
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,  
All various, each a perfect whole  
From living Nature, fit for every mood  
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and blue,  
Showing a gaudy summer-morn,  
Where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blew  
His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seemed all dark and red—a tract of sand,  
And some one pacing there alone,  
Who paced forever in a glimmering land,  
Lit with a low large moon.

One showed an iron coast and angry waves.  
 You seemed to hear them climb and fall  
 And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,  
 Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow  
 By herds upon an endless plain,  
 The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,  
 With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.  
 In front they bound the sheaves. Behind  
 Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,  
 And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones and slags,  
 Beyond a line of heights, and higher  
 All barred with long white cloud the scornful crags,  
 And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight poured  
 On dewy pastures, dewy trees,  
 Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,  
 A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,  
 As fit for every mood of mind,  
 Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there,  
 Not less than truth designed.

\* \* \* \*

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,  
 In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,  
 Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx  
 Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,  
 Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
 Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
 An angel looked at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,  
 A group of Houris bowed to see  
 The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes  
 That said, we wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son  
 In some fair space of sloping greens  
 Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,  
 And watched by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,  
 To list a footfall, ere he saw  
 The wood-nymph, stayed the Ausonian king to hear  
 Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrailed,  
 And many a tract of palm and rice,  
 The throne of Indian Cama slowly sailed  
 A summer fanned with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasped  
 From off her shoulder backward borne :  
 From one hand drooped a crocus : one hand grasped  
 The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flushed Ganymede, his rosy thigh  
 Half-buried in the Eagle's down,  
 Sole as a flying star shot through the sky  
 Above the pillared town.

Nor these alone : but every legend fair  
 Which the supreme Caucasian mind  
 Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,  
 Not less than life, designed.

\* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*

Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung  
 Moved of themselves, with silver sound ;  
 And with choice paintings of wise men I hung  
 The royal dais round.



For there was Milton like a seraph strong,  
Beside him Shakspeare bland and mild ;  
And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,  
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest ;  
A million wrinkles carved his skin ;  
A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,  
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set  
Many an arch high up did lift,  
And angels rising and descending met  
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely planned  
With cycles of the human tale  
Of this wide world, the times of every land  
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,  
Toiled onward, pricked with goads and stings ;  
Here played, a tiger, rolling to and fro  
The heads and crowns of kings ;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or bind  
All force in bonds that might endure,  
And here once more like some sick man declined,  
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod : and those great bells  
Began to chime. She took her throne :  
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,  
To sing her songs alone,

And through the topmost Oriels' colored flame  
Two godlike faces gazed below :  
Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulan,  
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion were  
 Full-welling fountain-heads of change,  
 Betwixt the slender shafts were blazoned fair  
 In diverse raiment strange :

Through which the lights, rose, amber, emerald, blue,  
 Flushed in her temples and her eyes,  
 And from her lips, as morn from Memnon, drew  
 Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong  
 Her low preamble all alone,  
 More than my soul to hear her echoed song  
 Throb through the ribbed stone ;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,  
 Joying to feel herself alive,  
 Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,  
 Lord of the senses five ;

Communing with herself: " All these are mine,  
 And let the world have peace or wars,  
 'Tis one to me." She—when young night divine  
 Crowned dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—  
 Lit light in wreaths and anadems,  
 And pure quintessences of precious oils  
 In hollowed moons of gems,

To mimic heaven ; and clapt her hands and cried,  
 " I marvel if my still delight  
 In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,  
 Be flattered to the height.

" O all things fair to sate my various eyes !  
 O shapes and hues that please me well !  
 O silent faces of the Great and Wise,  
 My Gods, with whom I dwell !

“ O God-like isolation which art mine,  
 I can but count thee perfect gain,  
 What time I watch the darkening droves of swine  
 That range on yonder plain.

“ In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,  
 They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;  
 And oft some brainless devil enters in,  
 And drives them to the deep.”

Then of the moral instinct would she prate,  
 And of the rising from the dead,  
 As hers by right of full-accomplished Fate;  
 And at the last she said :

“ I take possession of man’s mind and deed.  
 I care not what the sects may brawl.  
 I sit as God, holding no form of creed,  
 But contemplating all.”

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Full oft the riddle of the painful earth  
 Flashed through her as she sat alone,  
 Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,  
 And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prospered : so three years  
 She prospered : on the fourth she fell,  
 Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,  
 Struck through with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,  
 God, before whom ever lie bare  
 The abysmal deeps of Personality,  
 Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where’er she turned her sight  
 The airy hand confusion wrought,  
 Wrote “ Mene, mene,” and divided quite  
 The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude  
Fell on her, from which mood was born  
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood  
Laughter at her self-scorn.

“What! is not this my place of strength,” she said,  
“My spacious mansion built for me,  
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid  
Since my first memory?”

But in dark corners of her palace stood  
Uncertain shapes; and unawares  
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,  
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,  
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,  
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,  
That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light  
Or power of movement, seemed my soul,  
Mid onward-sloping motions infinite  
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand;  
Left on the shore; that hears all night  
The plunging seas draw backward from the land  
Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance  
Joined not, but stood, and standing saw  
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance  
Rolled round by one fixed law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curled.  
“No voice,” she shrieked in that lone hall,  
“No voice breaks through the stillness of this world  
One deep, deep silence all!”

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering  
sod,  
Inwrapt tenfold in slothful shame,  
Lay there exiled from eternal God,  
Lost to her place and name ;

And death and life she hated equally,  
And nothing saw, for her despair,  
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,  
No comfort anywhere ;

Remaining utterly confused with fears.  
And ever worse with growing time,  
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,  
And all alone in crime :

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round  
With blackness as a solid wall,  
Far off she seemed to hear the dully sound  
Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,  
In doubt and great perplexity,  
A little before moon-rise hears the low  
Moan of an unknown sea ;

And knows not if it be thunder or a sound  
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry  
Of great wild beasts ; then thinketh, "I have found  
A new land, but I die."

She howled aloud, "I am on fire within.  
There comes no murmur of reply.  
What is it that will take away my sin,  
And save me lest I die ?"

So when four years were wholly finished,  
She threw her royal robes away.  
"Make me a cottage in the vale," she said.  
"Where I may mourn and pray.

“ Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are  
 So lightly, beautifully built :  
 Perchance I may return with others there  
 When I have purged my guilt.”

## LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE.

LADY Clara Vere de Vere,  
 Of me you shall not win renown ;  
 You thought to break a country heart  
 For pastime, ere you went to town.  
 At me you smiled, but unbeguiled  
 I saw the snare, and I retired :  
 The daughter of a hundred Earls,  
 You are not one to be desired.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,  
 I know you proud to bear your name ;  
 Your pride is yet no mate for mine,  
 Too proud to care from whence I came.  
 Nor would I break for your sweet sake  
 A heart that dotes on truer charms.  
 A simple maiden in her flower  
 Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,  
 Some meeker pupil you must find,  
 For were you queen of all that is,  
 I could not stoop to such a mind.  
 You sought to prove how I could love,  
 And my disdain is my reply.  
 The lion on your old stone gates  
 Is not more cold to you than I.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,  
 You put strange memories in my head

Not thrice your branching limes have blown  
 Since I beheld young Laurence dead.  
 O your sweet eyes, your low replies :  
 A great enchantress you may be ;  
 But there was that across his throat  
 Which you had hardly cared to see.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,  
 When thus he met his mother's view,  
 She had the passions of her kind,  
 She spake some certain truths of you.  
 Indeed, I heard one bitter word  
 That scarce is fit for you to hear ;  
 Her manners had not that repose  
 Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,  
 There stands a spectre in your hall :  
 The guilt of blood is at your door :  
 You changed a wholesome heart to gall.  
 You held your course without remorse,  
 To make him trust his modest worth,  
 And, last, you fixed a vacant stare,  
 And slew him with your noble birth.

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,  
 From yon blue heavens above us bent  
 The grand old gardener and his wife  
 Smile at the claims of long descent.  
 Howe'er it be, it seems to me,  
 'Tis only noble to be good.  
 Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
 And simple faith than Norman blood.

I know you, Clara Vere de Vere :  
 You pine among your halls and towers,  
 The languid light of your proud eyes  
 Is wearied of the rolling hours.  
 In glowing health, with boundless wealth,

But sickening of a vague disease,  
 You know so ill to deal with time,  
 You needs must play such pranks as these.

Clara, Clara Vere de Vere,  
 If Time be heavy on your hands,  
 Are there no beggars at your gate,  
 Nor any poor about your lands?  
 O! teach the orphan-boy to read,  
 Or teach the orphan-girl to sew,  
 Pray Heaven for a human heart,  
 And let the foolish yeoman go.

## THE MAY QUEEN.

### I.

You must wake and call me early, call me early,  
 mother dear;  
 To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad  
 New-year;  
 Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest,  
 merriest day;  
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
 be Queen o' the May.

### II.

There's many a black, black eye, they say, but none  
 so bright as mine;  
 There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caro-  
 line:  
 But none so fair as little Alice in all the land, they  
 say:  
 So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be  
 Queen o' the May.



## III.

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never  
wake,  
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to  
break :  
But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and  
garlands gay,  
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
be Queen o' the May.

## IV.

As I came up the valley, whom think ye should I see,  
But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-  
tree ?  
He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him  
yesterday,—  
But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
be Queen o' the May.

## V.

He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in  
white,  
And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of  
light.  
They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what  
they say,  
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
be Queen o' the May.

## VI.

They say he's dying all for love, but that can never  
be :  
They say his heart is breaking, mother—what is  
that to me ?  
There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any summer  
day,  
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
be Queen o' the May.

## VII.

Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,  
 And you'll be there, too, mother, to see me made  
 the Queen :  
 For the shepherd lads on every side 'ill come from  
 far away,  
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
 be Queen o' the May.

## VIII.

The honeysuckle round the porch has woven its  
 wavy bowers,  
 And by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet  
 cuckoo-flowers ;  
 And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in  
 swamps and hollows gray,  
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
 be Queen o' the May.

## IX.

The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the  
 meadow grass,  
 And the happy stars above them seem to brighten  
 as they pass ;  
 There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the  
 livelong day,  
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother I'm to  
 be Queen o' the May.

## X.

All the valley, mother, 'ill be fresh and green and  
 still,  
 And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the  
 hill,  
 And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily  
 glance and play,  
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
 be Queen o' the May.

## XI.

So you must wake and call me early, call me early,  
 mother dear,  
 To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad  
 New-year:  
 To-morrow 'ill be of all the year the maddest, mer-  
 riest day,  
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to  
 be Queen o' the May.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE.

## I.

If you're waking call me early, call me early,  
 mother dear,  
 For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-  
 year.  
 It is the last New-year that I shall ever see,  
 Then you may lay me low i' the mould, and think  
 no more of me.

## II.

To-night I saw the sun set: he set and left behind  
 The good old year, the dear old time, and all my  
 peace of mind;  
 And the New-year's coming up, mother, but I shall  
 never see  
 The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the  
 tree.

## III.

Last May we made a crown of flowers: we had a  
 merry day;  
 Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me  
 Queen of May;

And we danced about the May-pole and in the  
 hazel copse,  
 Till Charles's Wain came out above the tall white  
 chimney-tops.

## IV.

There's not a flower on all the hills: the frost is on  
 the pane:  
 I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again:  
 I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out  
 on high:  
 I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

## V.

The building rook 'ill caw from the windy tall elm-  
 tree,  
 And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,  
 And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer  
 o'er the wave,  
 But I shall lie alone, mother, within the moulder-  
 ing grave.

## VI.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave  
 of mine,  
 In the early early morning the summer sun 'ill  
 shine,  
 Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the  
 hill,  
 When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the  
 world is still.

## VII.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the  
 waning light  
 You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at  
 night;  
 When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow  
 cool  
 On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bul-  
 rush in the pool.

## VIII.

You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the haw-  
 thorn shade,  
 And you'll come sometimes and see me where I am  
 lowly laid.  
 I shall not forget you, mother, I shall hear you when  
 you pass,  
 With your feet above my head in the long and  
 pleasant grass.

## IX.

I have been wild and wayward, but you'll forgive  
 me now ;  
 You'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere  
 I go :  
 Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be  
 wild,  
 You should not fret for me, mother, you have  
 another child.

## X.

If I can I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-  
 place ;  
 Though you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon  
 your face ;  
 Though I cannot speak a word, I shall harken what  
 you say,  
 And be often, often with you when you think I'm  
 far away.

## XI.

Good-night, good-night, when I have said good-night  
 forevermore,  
 And you see me carried out from the threshold of  
 the door ;  
 Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be  
 growing green :  
 She'll be a better child to you than ever I have  
 been.

## XII.

She'll find my garden-tools upon the granary floor :  
 Let her take 'em : they are hers : I shall never  
     garden more :  
 But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rose-bush  
     that I set  
 About the parlor-window and the box of migno-  
     nette.

## XIII.

Good-night, sweet mother : call me before the day  
     is born.  
 All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn ;  
 But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-  
     year,  
 So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother  
     dear.

## CONCLUSION.

## I.

I THOUGHT to pass away before, and yet alive I  
     am ;  
 And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of  
     the lamb.  
 How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the  
     year !  
 To die before the snowdrop came, and now the  
     violet's here.

## II.

O sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the  
     skies,  
 And sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that  
     cannot rise,

And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers  
 that blow,  
 And sweeter far is death than life to me that long  
 to go.

## III.

It seemed so hard at first, mother, to leave the  
 blessed sun,  
 And now it seems as hard to stay ; and yet, His will  
 be done !  
 But still I think it can't be long before I find re-  
 lease ;  
 And that good man, the clergyman, has told me  
 words of peace.

## IV.

O blessings on his kindly voice and on his silver  
 hair !  
 And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet  
 me there !  
 O blessings on his kindly heart and on his silver  
 head !  
 A thousand times I blest him, as he knelt beside my  
 bed.

## V.

He taught me all the mercy, for he showed me all  
 the sin.  
 Now, though my lamp was lighted late, there's One  
 will let me in :  
 Nor would I now be well, mother, again, if that  
 could be,  
 For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for  
 me.

## VI.

I did not hear the dog howl, mother, or the death-  
 watch beat,  
 There came a sweeter token when the night and  
 morning meet :

But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand  
 in mine,  
 And Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign

## VII.

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels  
 call;  
 It was when the moon was setting, and the dark  
 was over all;  
 The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to  
 roll,  
 And in the wild March-morning I heard them call  
 my soul.

## VIII.

For lying broad awake I thought of you and Effie  
 dear;  
 I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer  
 here;  
 With all my strength I prayed for both, and so I  
 felt resigned,  
 And up the valley came a swell of music on the  
 wind.

## IX.

I thought that it was fancy, and I listened in my  
 bed,  
 And then did something speak to me—I know not  
 what was said;  
 For great delight and shuddering took hold of all  
 my mind,  
 And up the valley came again the music on the  
 wind.

## X.

But you were sleeping; and I said, "It's not for  
 them; it's mine."  
 And if it comes three times, I thought, I take it for  
 a sign.



And once again it came, and close beside the  
window-bars,  
Then seemed to go right up to heaven and die  
among the stars.

## XI.

So now I think my time is near. I trust it is. I  
know  
The blessed music went that way my soul will have  
to go.  
And for myself, indeed, I care not if I go to-day,  
But, Effie, you must comfort *her* when I am past  
away.

## XII.

And say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to  
fret;  
There's many worthier than I would make him  
happy yet.  
If I had lived—I cannot tell—I might have been  
his wife;  
But all these things have ceased to be, with my  
desire of life.

## XIII.

O look! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in  
a glow;  
He shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I  
know.  
And there I move no longer now, and there his  
light may shine—  
Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than  
mine.

## XIV.

O sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this  
day is done  
The voice that now is speaking may be beyond the  
sun—

Forever and forever with those just souls and true—  
 And what is life, that we should moan? why make  
 we such ado?

## XV.

Forever and forever, all in a blessed home—  
 And there to wait a little while till you and Effie  
 come—  
 To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your  
 breast—  
 And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary  
 are at rest.

## THE LOTOS-EATERS.

## I.

“COURAGE!” he said, and pointed toward the  
 land;  
 “This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.”  
 In the afternoon they came unto a land,  
 In which it seemed always afternoon.  
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,  
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.  
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;  
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream  
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

## II.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,  
 Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
 And some through wavering lights and shadows  
 broke  
 Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
 From the inner land: far-off, three mountain-tops,  
 Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,

Stood sunset-flushed : and, dewed with showery  
 drops,  
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

## III.

The charmed sunset lingered low adown  
 In the red West : through mountain clefts the dale  
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
 Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale  
 And meadow, set with slender galingale ;  
 A land where all things always seemed the same !  
 And round about the keel with faces pale,  
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

## IV.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
 To each, but whoso did receive of them,  
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
 Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave  
 On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,  
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave ;  
 And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,  
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

## V.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore ;  
 And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,  
 Of child, and wife, and slave ; but evermore  
 Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,  
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
 Then some one said, " We will return no more ;"  
 And all at once they sang, " Our island home  
 Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer roam."

## CHORIC SONG.

## 1.

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;  
 Music that gentler on the spirit lies  
 Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes ;  
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the bliss-  
 ful skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,  
 And through the moss the ivies creep,  
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in  
 sleep.

## 2.

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,  
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
 While all things else have rest from weariness ?  
 All things have rest : why should we toil alone,  
 We only toil, who are the first of things,  
 And make perpetual moan,  
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown :  
 Nor ever fold our wings,  
 And cease from wanderings,  
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;  
 Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,  
 " There is no joy but calm !"  
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of  
 things ?

## 3.

Lo ! in the middle of the wood,  
 The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud  
 With winds upon the branch, and there  
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care

Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon  
 Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow  
 Falls, and floats adown the air.  
 Lo ! sweetened with the summer light,  
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,  
 Drops in a silent autumn night.  
 All its allotted length of days,  
 The flower ripens in its place,  
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,  
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

## 4.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,  
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.  
 Death is the end of life ; ah, why  
 Should life all labor be ?  
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,  
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.  
 Let us alone. What is it that will last ?  
 All things are taken from us, and become  
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.  
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have  
 To war with evil ? Is there any peace  
 In ever climbing up the climbing wave ?  
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave  
 In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :  
 Give us long rest or death, dark death or dreamful  
 ease !

## 5.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,  
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem  
 Falling asleep in a half-dream !  
 To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,  
 Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height ;  
 To hear each other's whispered speech ;  
 Eating the Lotos, day by day,  
 To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,  
 And tender-curving lines of creamy spray :

To lend our hearts and spirits wholly  
 To the influence of mild-minded melancholy ;  
 To muse and brood and live again in memory,  
 With those old faces of our infancy  
 Heaped over with a mound of grass,  
 Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of  
 brass !

## 6.

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,  
 And dear the last embraces of our wives  
 And their warm tears : but all hath suffered change ;  
 For surely now our household hearths are cold :  
 Our sons inherit us : our looks are strange :  
 And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.  
 Or else the island princes, over-bold  
 Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings  
 Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,  
 And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.  
 Is there confusion in the little isle ?  
 Let what is broken so remain.  
 The Gods are hard to reconcile :  
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.  
 There is confusion worse than death,  
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,  
 Long labor unto aged breath,  
 Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars,  
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

## 7.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,  
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly )  
 With half-dropt eyelids still,  
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,  
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly  
 His waters from the purple hill—  
 To hear the dewy echoes calling  
 From cave to cave through the thick-twined vine—  
 To watch the emerald-colored water falling

Through many a woven acanthus-wreath divine !  
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,  
 Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the  
     pine.

## 8.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak :  
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek :  
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone  
 Through every hollow cave and alley lone  
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-  
     dust is blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,  
 Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the  
     surge was seething free,  
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-  
     fountains in the sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal  
     mind,

In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
 On the hills like Gods together, careless of man-  
     kind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are  
     hurled

Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are  
     lightly curled

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleam-  
     ing world ;

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted  
     lands,

Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring  
     deeps and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking  
     ships, and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a  
     doleful song

Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of  
     wrong,

Like a tale of little meaning, though the words are  
     strong ;

Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave  
     the soil,  
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring  
     toil,  
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and  
     oil ;  
 Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whis-  
     pered—down in hell  
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys  
     dwell,  
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.  
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the  
     shore  
 Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave  
     and oar ;  
 O rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander  
     more.

## A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN.

### I.

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,  
     “ *The Legend of Good Women,*” long ago  
 Sung by the morning star of song, who made  
     His music heard below ;

### II.

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath  
     Preluded those melodious bursts, that fill  
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
     With sounds that echo still.

### III.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art  
     Held me above the subject, as strong gales  
 Hold swollen clouds from raining, though my heart,  
     Brimful of those wild tales,



## IV.

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In every land  
I saw, wherever light illumineth,  
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand  
The downward slope to death.

## V.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient song  
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning stars,  
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,  
And trumpets blown for wars ;

## VI.

And clattering flints battered with clanging hoofs :  
And I saw crowds in columned sanctuaries ;  
And forms that passed at windows and on roofs  
Of marble palaces ;

## VII.

Corpses across the threshold ; heroes tall  
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet  
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall ;  
Lancers in ambush set ;

## VIII.

And high shrine-doors burst through with heated  
blasts  
That run before the fluttering tongues of fire ;  
White surf wind-scattered over sails and masts,  
And ever climbing higher ;

## IX.

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,  
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,  
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,  
And hushed seraglios.

## X.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when to land  
 Bluster the winds and tides the self-same way,  
 Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand,  
 Torn from the fringe of spray.

## XI.

I started once, or seemed to start, in pain,  
 Resolved on noble things, and strove to speak,  
 As when a great thought strikes along the brain,  
 And flushes all the cheek.

## XII.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down  
 A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,  
 That bore a lady from a leaguered town ;  
 And then, I know not how,

## XIII.

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing thought  
 Streamed onward, lost their edges, and did creep  
 Rolled on each other, rounded, smoothed, and  
 brought  
 Into the gulfs of sleep.

## XIV.

At last methought that I had wandered far  
 In an old wood : fresh-washed in coolest dew,  
 The maiden splendors of the morning star  
 Shook in the steadfast blue.

## XV.

Enormous elm-tree boles did stoop and lean  
 Upon the dusky brushwood underneath  
 Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest  
 green,  
 New from its silken sheath.

## XVI.

The dim red morn had died, her journey done,  
And with dead lips smiled at the twilight plain,  
Half-fallen across the threshold of the sun,  
Never to rise again.

## XVII.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,  
Not any song of bird or sound of rill ;  
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre  
Is not so deadly still

## XVIII.

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine turned  
Their humid arms festooning tree to tree,  
And at the root through lush green grasses burned  
The red anemone.

## XIX.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I knew  
The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn  
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drenched in  
dew,  
Leading from lawn to lawn.

## XX.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,  
Poured back into my empty soul and frame  
The times when I remember to have been  
Joyful and free from blame.

## XXI.

And from within me a clear under-tone  
Thrilled through mine ears in that unblissful  
clime,  
" Pass freely through ! the wood is all thine own,  
Until the end of time."

## XXII.

At length I saw a lady within call,  
 Still than chiselled marble, standing there ;  
 A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,  
 And most divinely fair.

## XXIII.

Her loveliness with shame and with surprise  
 Froze my swift speech ; she turning on my face  
 The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,  
 Spoke slowly in her place.

## XXIV.

“ I had great beauty : ask thou not my name :  
 No one can be more wise than destiny.  
 Many drew swords and died. Where'er I came  
 I brought calamity.”

## XXV.

“ No marvel, sovereign lady ! in fair field,  
 Myself for such a face had boldly died,”  
 I answered free, and turning I appealed  
 To one that stood beside.

## XXVI.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,  
 To her full height her stately stature draws ;  
 “ My youth,” she said, “ was blasted with a curse :  
 This woman was the cause.

## XXVII.

“ I was cut off from hope in that sad place,  
 Which yet to name my spirit loathes and fears  
 My father held his hand upon his face :  
 I, blinded with my tears,

## XXVIII.

“ Still strove to speak : my voice was thick with sighs  
 As in a dream. Dimly I could descry

The stern black-bearded kings, with wolfish eyes,  
Waiting to see me die.

## XXIX.

“The high masts flickered as they lay afloat;  
The crowds, the temples, wavered, and the  
shore;  
The bright death quivered at the victim’s throat;  
Touched; and I knew no more.”

## XXX.

Whereto the other with a downward brow:  
“I would the white cold heavy-plunging foam,  
Whirled by the wind, had rolled me deep below,  
Then when I left my home.”

## XXXI.

Her slow full words sank through the silence drear,  
As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea:  
Sudden I heard a voice that cried, “Come here,  
That I may look on thee.”

## XXXII.

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,  
One sitting on a crimson scarf unrolled;  
A queen with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,  
Brow-bound with burning gold.

## XXXIII.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:  
“I governed men by change, and so I swayed  
All moods. ’Tis long since I have seen a man.  
Once, like the moon, I made

## XXXIV.

“The ever-shifting currents of the blood  
According to my humor ebb and flow.  
I have no men to govern in this wood:  
That makes my only woe.

## XXXV.

“Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not bend  
 . One will ; nor tame and tutor with mine eye  
 That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prithee, friend,  
 Where is Mark Antony ?

## XXXVI.

“The man my lover, with whom I rode sublime  
 On Fortune’s neck : we sat as God by God :  
 The Nilus would have risen before his time  
 And flooded at our nod.

## XXXVII.

“We drank the Lybian Sun to sleep, and lit  
 Lamps which outburned Canopus. O my life  
 In Egypt ! O the dalliance and the wit,  
 The flattery and the strife,

## XXXVIII.

“And the wild kiss, when fresh from war’s alarms,  
 My Hercules, my Roman Antony,  
 My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,  
 Contented there to die !

## XXXIX.

“And there he died ; and when I heard my name  
 Sighed forth with life I would not brook my fear  
 Of the other : with a worm I balked his fame.  
 What else was left ?—look here !”

## XL.

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half  
 The polished argent of her breast to sight  
 Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,  
 Showing the aspick’s bite :)

## XLI.

“I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found  
 Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,

A name forever!—lying robed and crowned,  
Worthy a Roman spouse.”

## XLII.

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range  
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance  
From tone to tone, and glided through all change  
Of liveliest utterance.

## XLIII.

When she made pause I knew not for delight ;  
Because with sudden motion from the ground  
She raised her piercing orbs and filled with light  
The interval of sound.

## XLIV.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest darts ;  
As once they drew into two burning rings  
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts  
Of captains and of kings.

## XLV.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard  
A noise of some one coming through the lawn,  
And singing clearer than the crested bird,  
That claps his wings at dawn.

## XLVI.

“The torrent brooks of hallowed Israel  
From craggy hollows pouring, late and soon,  
Sound all night long, in falling through the dell,  
Far-heard beneath the moon.

## XLVII.

“The balmy moon of blessed Israel  
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams  
divine :  
All night the splintered crags that wall the dell  
With spires of silver shine.”

## XLVIII.

As one that museth where broad sunshine laves  
 The lawn by some cathedral, through the doo  
 Hearing the holy organ rolling waves  
 Of sound on roof and floor

## XLIX.

Within, and anthem sung, is charmed and tied  
 To where he stands,—so stood I, when that flow  
 Of music left the lips of her that died  
 To save her father's vow ;

## L.

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,  
 A maiden pure ; as when she went along  
 From Mizpeh's towered gate with welcome light,  
 With timbrel and with song.

## LI.

My words leapt forth : " Heaven heads the count  
 of crimes  
 With that wild oath." She rendered answer  
 high :  
 " Not so, nor once alone ; a thousand times  
 I would be born and die.

## LII.

" Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root  
 Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,  
 Feeding the flower : but ere my flower to fruit  
 Changed, I was ripe for death.

## LIII.

" My God, my land, my father—these did move  
 Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,  
 Lowered softly with a threefold cord of love  
 Down to a silent grave.



## LIV.

“ And I went mourning, ‘ No fair Hebrew boy  
Shall smile away my maiden blame among  
The Hebrew mothers,’—emptied of all joy,  
Leaving the dance and song.

## LV.

“ Leaving the olive-gardens far below,  
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,  
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow  
Beneath the battled tower.

## LVI.

“ The light white cloud swam over us. Anon  
We heard the lion roaring from his den ;  
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,  
Or, from the darkened glen,

## LVII.

“ Saw God divide the night with flying flame,  
And thunder on the everlasting hills.  
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became  
A solemn scorn of ills.

## LVIII.

“ When the next moon was rolled into the sky,  
Strength came to me that equalled my desire.  
How beautiful a thing it was to die  
For God and for my sire !

## LIX.

“ It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,  
That I subdued me to my father’s will ;  
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,  
Sweetens the spirit still.

## LX.

“ Moreover, it is written that my race  
Hewed Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer

On Arnon unto Minneth." Here her face  
Glowed, as I looked at her.

## LXI.

She locked her lips : she left me where I stood :  
"Glory to God," she sang, and past afar,  
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,  
Toward the morning-star.

## LXII.

Losing her carol I stood pensively,  
As one that from a casement leans his head,  
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,  
And the old year is dead.

## LXIII.

"Alas ! alas !" a low voice, full of care,  
Murmured beside me ; "Turn and look on me :  
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,  
If what I was I be.

## LXIV.

"Would I had been some maiden coarse and poor !  
O me ! that I should ever see the light !  
Those dragon eyes of angered Eleanor  
Do hunt me, day and night."

## LXV.

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and trust :  
To whom the Egyptian : "O, you tamely died !  
You should have clung to Fulvia's waist, and thrust  
The dagger through her side."

## LXVI.

With that sharp sound the white dawn's creeping  
beams,  
Stolen to my brain, dissolved the mystery  
Of folded sleep. The captain of my dreams  
Ruled in the eastern sky.

## LXVII.

Morn broadened on the borders of the dark,  
Ere I saw her who clasped in her last trance  
Her murdered father's head, or Joan of Arc,  
A light of ancient France ;

## LXVIII.

Or her, who knew that Love can vanquish Death,  
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king,  
Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,  
Sweet as new buds in Spring.

## LXIX.

No memory labors longer from the deep  
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden ore  
That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep  
To gather and tell o'er

## LXX.

Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain  
Compassed, how eagerly I sought to strike  
Into that wondrous track of dreams again !  
But no two dreams are like.

## LXXI.

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,  
Desiring what is mingled with past years,  
In yearnings that can never be exprest  
By signs or groans or tears ;

## LXXII.

Because all words, though culled with choicest art,  
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,  
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart  
Faints, faded by its heat.

## M A R G A R E T .

O SWEET pale Margaret,  
 O rare pale Margaret,  
 What lit your eyes with tearful power,  
 Like moonlight on a falling shower?  
 Who lent you, love, your mortal dower  
     Of pensive thought and aspect pale,  
     Your melancholy, sweet and frail  
 As perfume of the cuckoo-flower?  
 From the westward-winding flood,  
 From the evening-lighted wood,  
     From all things outward you have won  
 A tearful grace, as though you stood  
     Between the rainbow and the sun.

The very smile before you speak,  
 That dimples your transparent cheek,  
     Encircles all the heart, and feedeth  
 The senses with a still delight  
     Of dainty sorrow without sound,  
     Like the tender amber round,  
     Which the moon about her spreadeth,  
 Moving through a fleecy night.

You love, remaining peacefully,  
     To hear the murmur of the strife,  
     But enter not the toil of life.  
 Your spirit is the calmed sea,  
     Laid by the tumult of the fight.  
 You are the evening star, always  
     Remaining betwixt dark and bright:  
 Lulled echoes of laborious day  
     Come to you, gleams of mellow light  
     Float by you on the verge of night.

What can it matter, Margaret,  
     What songs below the waning stars

The lion-heart, Plantagenet,  
 Sang looking through his prison bars?  
 Exquisite Margaret, who can tell  
 The last wild thought of Chatelet,  
 Just ere the falling axe did part  
 The burning brain from the true heart,  
 Even in her sight he loved so well?

A fairy shield your Genius made  
 And gave you on your natal day.  
 Your sorrow, only sorrow's shade,  
 Keeps real sorrow far away.  
 You move not in such solitudes,  
 You are not less divine,  
 But more human in your moods,  
 Than your twin-sister, Adeline.  
 Your hair is darker, and your eyes  
 Touched with a somewhat darker hue,  
 And less aërially blue,  
 But ever trembling through the dew  
 Of dainty-woful sympathies.

O sweet pale Margaret,  
 O rare pale Margaret,  
 Come down, come down, and hear me speak  
 Tie up the ringlets on your cheek:  
 The sun is just about to set.  
 The arching limes are tall and shady,  
 And faint, rainy lights are seen,  
 Moving in the leavy beech.  
 Rise from the feast of sorrow, lady,  
 Where all day long you sit between  
 Joy and woe, and whisper each.  
 Or only look across the lawn,  
 Look out below your bower-eaves,  
 Look down, and let your blue eyes dawn  
 Upon me through the jasmine-leaves.

## THE BLACKBIRD.

O BLACKBIRD! sing me something well:  
While all the neighbors shoot thee round,  
I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground,  
Where thou may'st warble, eat and dwell.

The espaliers and the standards all  
Are thine; the range of lawn and park:  
The unnetted blackhearts ripen dark,  
All thine, against the garden wall.

Yet, though I spared thee all the spring,  
Thy sole delight is, sitting still,  
With that gold dagger of thy bill  
To fret the summer jenneting.

A golden bill! the silver tongue,  
Cold February loved, is dry:  
Plenty corrupts the melody  
That made thee famous once, when young:

And in the sultry garden-squares,  
Now thy flute-notes are changed to coarse,  
I hear thee not at all, or hoarse  
As when a hawker hawks his wares.

Take warning! he that will not sing  
While yon sun prospers in the blue,  
Shall sing for want, ere leaves are new,  
Caught in the frozen palms of Spring.

## THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

## I.

FULL knee-deep lies the winter snow,  
And the winter winds are wearily sighing.  
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,  
And tread softly and speak low,  
For the old year lies a-dying.

Old year, you must not die ;  
You came to us so readily,  
You lived with us so steadily,  
Old year, you shall not die.

## II.

He lieth still : he doth not move :  
He will not see the dawn of day.  
He hath no other life above.  
He gave me a friend, and a true, true-love,  
And the New-year will take 'em away.

Old year, you must not go ;  
So long as you have been with us,  
Such joy as you have seen with us,  
Old year, you shall not go.

## III.

He frothed his bumpers to the brim ;  
A jollier year we shall not see.  
But though his eyes are waxing dim,  
And though his foes speak ill of him,  
He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die ;  
We did so laugh and cry with you,  
I've half a mind to die with you,  
Old year, if you must die.

## IV.

He was full of joke and jest,  
But all his merry quips are o'er.

To see him die, across the waste  
 His son and heir doth ride post-haste,  
 But he'll be dead before.

Every one for his own.

The night is starry and cold, my friend,  
 And the New-year, blithe and bold, my friend,  
 Comes up to take his own.

## V.

How hard he breathes! over the snow  
 I heard just now the crowing cock.  
 The shadows flicker to and fro:  
 The cricket chirps: the light burns low:  
 'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

Shake hands, before you die.

Old year, we'll dearly rue for you:

What is it we can do for you?

Speak out before you die.

## VI.

His face is growing sharp and thin.  
 Alack! our friend is gone.  
 Close up his eyes: tie up his chin:  
 Step from the corpse, and let him in  
 That standeth there alone,

And waiteth at the door.

There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,

And a new face at the door, my friend,

A new face at the door.

## TO J. S.

## I.

THE wind, that beats the mountain, blows  
 More softly round the open wold,  
 And gently comes the world to those  
 That are cast in gentle mould.



## II.

And me this knowledge bolder made,  
 Or else I had not dared to flow  
 In these words toward you, and invade  
 Even with a verse your holy woe.

## III.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,  
 Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,  
 Fall into shadow, soonest lost :  
 Those we love first are taken first.

## IV.

God gives us love. Something to love  
 He lends us ; but, when love is grown  
 To ripeness, that on which it throve  
 Falls off, and love is left alone.

## V.

This is the curse of time. Alas !  
 In grief I am not all unlearned ;  
 Once through mine own doors Death did pass ;  
 One went, who never hath returned.

## VI.

He will not smile—not speak to me  
 Once more. Two years his chair is seen  
 Empty before us. That was he  
 Without whose life I had not been.

## VII.

Your loss is rarer ; for this star  
 Rose with you through a little arc  
 Of heaven, nor having wandered far,  
 Shot on the sudden into dark.

## VIII.

I knew your brother : his mute dust  
 I honor, and his living worth :

A man more pure and bold and just  
Was never born into the earth.

## IX.

I have not looked upon you nigh,  
Since that dear soul hath fallen asleep.  
Great Nature is more wise than I:  
I will not tell you not to weep.

## X.

And though my own eyes fill with dew,  
Drawn from the spirit through the brain,  
I will not even preach to you,  
“ Weep, weeping dulls the inward pain.”

## XI.

Let Grief be her own mistress still.  
She loveth her own anguish deep  
More than much pleasure. Let her will  
Be done—to weep or not to weep.

## XII.

I will not say “ God’s ordinance  
Of Death is blown in every wind ; ”  
For that is not a common chance  
That takes away a noble mind.

## XIII.

His memory long will live alone  
In all our hearts, as mournful light  
That broods above the fallen sun,  
And dwells in heaven half the night.

## XIV.

Vain solace ! Memory standing near  
Cast down her eyes, and in her throat  
Her voice seemed distant, and a tear  
Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

## XV.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,  
 How *should* I soothe you anyway,  
 Who miss the brother of your youth?  
 Yet something I did wish to say :

## XVI.

For he too was a friend to me :  
 Both are my friends, and my true breast  
 Bleedeth for both ; yet it may be  
 That only silence suiteth best.

## XVII.

Words weaker than your grief would make  
 Grief more. 'Twere better I should cease  
 Although myself could almost take  
 The place of him that sleeps in peace :

## XVIII.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace :  
 Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,  
 While the stars burn, the moons increase,  
 And the great ages onward roll.

## XIX.

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.  
 Nothing comes to thee new or strange.  
 Sleep full of rest from head to feet ;  
 Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

“ YOU ASK ME, WHY, THOUGH ILL  
 AT EASE.”

You ask me, why, though ill at ease,  
 Within this region I subsist,  
 Whose spirits falter in the mist,  
 And languish for the purple seas ?

It is the land that freemen till,  
 That sober-suited Freedom chose,  
 The land where, girt with friends or foes,  
 A man may speak the thing he will ;

A land of settled government,  
 A land of just and old renown,  
 Where Freedom broadens slowly down  
 From precedent to precedent :

Where faction seldom gathers head,  
 But by degrees to fulness wrought,  
 The strength of some diffusive thought  
 Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute  
 Opinion, and induce a time  
 When single thought is civil crime,  
 And individual freedom mute ;

Though Power should make from land to land  
 The name of Britain trebly great—  
 Though every channel of the State  
 Should almost choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbor-mouth,  
 Wild wind ! I seek a warmer sky,  
 And I will see before I die  
 The palms and temples of the South.

“ OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE  
 HEIGHTS.”

OF old sat Freedom on the heights,  
 The thunders breaking at her feet :  
 Above her shook the starry lights :  
 She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,  
 Self-gathered in her prophet-mind,  
 But fragments of her mighty voice  
 Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down through town and field  
 To mingle with the human race,  
 And part by part to men revealed  
 The fulness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,  
 From her isle-altar gazing down,  
 Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,  
 And, King-like, wears the crown :

Her open eyes desire the truth.  
 The wisdom of a thousand years  
 Is in them. May perpetual youth  
 Keep dry their light from tears ;

That her fair form may stand and shine,  
 Make bright our days and light our dreams,  
 Turning to scorn with lips divine  
 The falsehood of extremes !

“ LOVE THOU THY LAND, WITH LOVE  
 FAR BROUGHT.”

LOVE thou thy land, with love far brought  
 From out the storied Past, and used  
 Within the Present, but transfused  
 Through future time by power of thought.

True love turned round on fixed poles,  
 Love that endures not sordid ends,  
 For English natures, freemen, friends,  
 Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,  
 Nor feed with crude imaginings  
 The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings,  
 That every sophister can lime.

Deliver not the tasks of might  
 To weakness, neither hide the ray  
 From those, not blind, who wait for day,  
 Though sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds ;  
 But let her herald, Reverence, fly  
 Before her to whatever sky  
 Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

Watch what main-currents draw the years :  
 Cut Prejudice against the grain :  
 But gentle words are always gain :  
 Regard the weakness of thy peers :

Nor toil for title, place, or touch  
 Of pension, neither count on praise :  
 It grows to guerdon after-days :  
 Nor deal in watchwords overmuch ;

Not clinging to some ancient saw :  
 Not mastered by some modern term ;  
 Not swift nor slow to change, but firm :  
 And in its season bring the law ;

That from Discussion's lip may fall  
 With Life, that, working strongly, binds—  
 Set in all lights by many minds,  
 To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,  
 And moist and dry, devising long,  
 Through many agents making strong,  
 Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control  
Our being, lest we rust in ease.  
We all are changed by still degrees,  
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free  
To ingroove itself with that, which flies  
And work, a joint of state, that plies  
Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying hard to shape in act ;  
For all the past of Time reveals  
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,  
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Even now we hear with inward strife  
A motion toiling in the gloom—  
The Spirit of the years to come  
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-developed strength awaits  
Completion in a painful school ;  
Phantoms of other forms of rule,  
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,  
But vague in vapor, hard to mark ;  
And round them sea and air are dark  
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly joined,  
Is bodied forth the second whole.  
Regard gradation, lest the soul  
Of Discord race the rising wind :

A wind to puff your idol-fires,  
And heap their ashes on the head ;  
To shame the boast so often made,  
That we are wiser than our sires.

O yet, if Nature's evil star  
 Drive men in manhood, as in youth,  
 To follow flying steps of Truth  
 Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,  
 Must ever shock, like armed foes,  
 And this be true, till Time shall close,  
 That Principles are rained in blood ;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease  
 To hold his hope through shame and guilt.  
 But with his hand against the hilt,  
 Would pace the troubled land, like Peace ;

Not less, though dogs of Faction bay,  
 Would serve his kind in deed and word,  
 Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,  
 That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke  
 From either side, nor veil his eyes :  
 And if some dreadful need should rise,  
 Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke :

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,  
 As we bear blossom of the dead ;  
 Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed  
 Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

## THE GOOSE.

### I.

I KNEW an old wife lean and poor,  
 Her rags scarce held together ;  
 There strode a stranger to the door,  
 And it was windy weather.



## II.

He held a goose upon his arm,  
He uttered rhyme and reason,  
“Here, take the goose, and keep you warm,  
It is a stormy season.”

## III.

She caught the white goose by the leg,  
A goose—’twas no great matter.  
The goose let fall a golden egg  
With cackle and with clatter.

## IV.

She dropt the goose, and caught the pelf,  
And ran to tell her neighbors;  
And blessed herself, and cursed herself,  
And rested from her labors.

## V.

And feeding high, and living soft,  
Grew plump and able-bodied;  
Until the grave churchwarden doffed,  
The parson smirked and nodded.

## VI.

So sitting, served by man and maid,  
She felt her heart grow prouder:  
But ah! the more the white goose laid,  
It clacked and cackled louder.

## VII.

It cluttered here, it chuckled there;  
It stirred the old wife’s mettle:  
She shifted in her elbow-chair,  
And hurled the pan and kettle.

## VIII.

“A quinsy choke thy cursed note!”  
Then waxed her anger stronger.

“Go, take the goose, and wring her throat,  
I will not bear it longer.”

## IX.

Then yelped the cur, and yawled the cat;  
Ran Gaffer, stumbled Gammer.  
The goose flew this way and flew that,  
And filled the house with clamor.

## X.

As head and heels upon the floor  
They floundered all together,  
There strode a stranger to the door,  
And it was windy weather:

## IX.

He took the goose upon his arm,  
He uttered words of scorning;  
“So keep you cold, or keep you warm,  
It is a stormy morning.”

## XII.

The wild wind rang from park and plain,  
And round the attics rumbled,  
Till all the tables danced again,  
And half the chimneys tumbled.

## XIII.

The glass blew in, the fire blew out,  
The blast was hard and harder.  
Her cap blew off, her gown blew up,  
And a whirlwind cleared the larder;

## XIV.

And while on all sides breaking loose  
Her household fled the danger,  
Quoth she, “The Devil take the goose,  
And God forget the stranger!”

## THE EPIC.

AT Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve,—  
 The game of forfeits done—the girls all kissed  
 Beneath the sacred bush and past away—  
 The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,  
 The host and I, sat round the wassail-bowl,  
 Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held a tall,  
 How all the old honor had from Christmas gone,  
 Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games  
 In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired out  
 With cutting eights that day upon the pond,  
 Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,  
 I bumped the ice into three several stars,  
 Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard  
 The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,  
 Now harping on the church-commissioners,  
 Now hawking at Geology and schism ;  
 Until I woke, and found him settled down  
 Upon the general decay of faith  
 Right through the world—" at home was little left,  
 And none abroad : there was no anchor, none,  
 To hold by." Francis, laughing, clapt his hand  
 On Everard's shoulder, with " I hold by him."  
 " And I," quoth Everard, " by the wassail-bowl."  
 " Why yes," I said, " we knew your gift that way  
 At college : but another which you had,  
 I mean of verse, (for so we held it then,)  
 What came of that ?" " You know," said Frank,  
     " he burnt  
 His epic of King Arthur, some twelve books"—  
 And then to me demanding why ? " O, sir,  
 He thought that nothing new was said, or else  
 Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth  
 Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :  
 God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.  
 It pleased *me* well enough." " Nay, nay," said Hall,  
 " Why take the style of those heroic times ?

For nature brings not back the Mastodon,  
 Nor we those times; and why should any man  
 Remodel models? these twelve books of mine  
 Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth,  
 Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt." "But I,"  
 Said Francis, "picked the eleventh from this hearth,  
 And have it: keep a thing, its use will come.  
 I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes."  
 He laughed, and I, though sleepy, like a horse  
 That hears the corn-bin open, pricked my ears;  
 For I remembered Everard's college fame  
 When we were Freshmen: then at my request  
 He brought it; and the poet, little urged,  
 But with some prelude of disparagement,  
 Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes,  
 Deep-chested music, and to this result.

## MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled  
 Among the mountains by the winter sea;  
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,  
 Had fallen in Lyonnese about their Lord,  
 King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,  
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,  
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land.  
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
 "The sequel of to-day unsolders all  
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights  
 Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep  
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we  
 Shall never more, at any future time,  
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls  
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.  
I perish by this people which I made,—  
Though Merlin sware that I should come again  
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,  
I am so deeply smitten through the helm  
That without help I cannot last till morn.  
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how  
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm  
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across  
And took it, and have worn it, like a king:  
And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
In aftertime this also shall be known:  
But now delay not: take Excalibur,  
And fling him far into the middle meer:  
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.”

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:

“It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,  
Aidless, alone, and smitten through the helm.  
A little thing may harm a wounded man.  
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,  
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.”

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept,  
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down  
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,  
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,  
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth  
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:  
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,  
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work  
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long

That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood  
 This way and that dividing the swift mind,  
 In act to throw; but at the last it seemed  
 Better to leave Excalibur concealed  
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,  
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge  
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :

Hast thou performed my mission which I gave ?  
 What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

“ I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,  
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.”

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :

“ Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,  
 Not rendering true answer, as beseemed  
 Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :  
 For surer sign had followed, either hand  
 Or voice, or else a motion of the meer.  
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie.  
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again  
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing  
 I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.”

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,  
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought ;  
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,  
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote  
 His palms together, and he cried aloud.

“ And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
 Should thus be lost forever from the earth,  
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men  
 What good should follow this, if this were done ?  
 What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,  
 Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.  
 Were it well to obey then, if a king demand  
 An act unprofitable, against himself ?  
 The king is sick, and knows not what he does.  
 What record, or what relic of my lord

*The standard of his name is love.*

Should be to aftertime, but empty breath  
 And rumors of a doubt? but were this kept,  
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,  
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,  
 Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,  
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.  
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps  
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'  
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime  
 To all the people, winning reverence.  
 But now much honor and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,  
 And hid Excalibur the second time,  
 And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:  
 "What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 "I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
 And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:

"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,  
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!  
 Authority forgets a dying king,  
 Laid widowed of the power in his eye  
 That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art.  
 For thou, the latest left of all my knights,  
 In whom should meet the offices of all,  
 Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;  
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl  
 Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.  
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,  
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:  
 But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,  
 I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,  
 And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged  
 Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,  
 And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand  
 Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock  
By night, with noises of the northern sea.

So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur :

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him  
Three times, and drew him under in the meer.

And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath  
“ Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.  
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen ! ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

“ Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems  
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,  
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
Not though I live three lives of mortal men,  
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;  
But when I looked again, behold an arm,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him  
Three times, and drew him under in the meer.”

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard  
“ My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.  
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,  
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear  
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.’

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,  
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere  
Remorsefully regarded through his tears,  
And would have spoken, but he found not words,  
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,  
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,  
And rising bore him through the place of tombs.



But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard  
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
 When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,  
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick  
 quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die."

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,  
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked  
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.  
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
 Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.  
 Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves  
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right  
 The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based  
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—  
 And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,  
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
 Beneath them; and descending they were ware  
 That all the decks were dense with stately forms  
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these  
 Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them  
 rose

A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,  
 And, as it were one voice, an agony  
 Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills  
 All night in a waste land, where no one comes,  
 Or hath come, since the making of the world.  
 Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"  
 And to the barge they came. There those three  
 Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King, and  
 wept.

But she that rose the tallest of them all  
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,  
 And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his  
 hands,

And called him by his name, complaining loud,  
 And dropping bitter tears against his brow  
 Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white  
 And colourless, and like the withered moon  
 Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;  
 And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops  
 Of onset: and the light and lustrous curls—  
 That made his forehead like a rising sun  
 High from the dais-throne—were parched with  
 dust;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,  
 Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his  
 lips.

So like a shattered column lay the King;  
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,  
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
 Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged  
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,  
 "Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?  
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?  
 For now I see the true old times are dead,  
 When every morning brought a noble chance,  
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.  
 Such times have been not since the light that led  
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.  
 But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved  
 Which was an image of the mighty world;  
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
 And the days darken round me, and the years,  
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:  
 "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
 And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
 Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?  
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
 May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,

Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by  
 prayer  
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy  
 voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
 For what are men better than sheep or goats  
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
 Both for themselves and those who call them  
 friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way  
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
 But now farewell. I am going a long way  
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go  
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)  
 To the island-valley of Avilion ;  
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
 Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies,  
 Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns  
 And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,  
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.”

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail  
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan,  
 That, fluting a wild carol, ere her death,  
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood  
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere  
 Revolving many memories, till the hull  
 Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,  
 And on the meer the wailing died away.

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Here ended Hall, and our last light, that long  
 Had winked and threatened darkness, flared and  
 fell ;

At which the Parson, sent to sleep with sound,  
 And waked with silence, grunted “ Good ! ” but we  
 Sat rapt : it was the tone with which he read—  
 Perhaps some modern touches here and there

Redeemed it from the charge of nothingness—  
 Or else we loved the man, and prized his work ;  
 I know not : but we sitting, as I said,  
 The cock crew loud : as at that time of year  
 The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn :  
 Then Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,  
 “ There now—that’s nothing ! ” drew a little back,  
 And drove his heel into the smouldered log,  
 That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue :  
 And so to bed ; where yet in sleep I seemed  
 To sail with Arthur under looming shores,  
 Point after point, till on to dawn, when dreams  
 Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,  
 To me, methought, who waited with a crowd,  
 There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore  
 King Arthur, like a modern gentleman  
 Of stateliest port ; and all the people cried,  
 “ Arthur is come again : he cannot die.”  
 Then those that stood upon the hills behind  
 Repeated—“ Come again, and thrice as fair ; ”  
 And, further inland, voices echoed—“ Come  
 With all good things, and war shall be no more.”  
 At this a hundred bells began to peal,  
 That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed  
 The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas morn

## THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER ;

OR,

### THE PICTURES.

THIS morning is the morning of the day  
 When I and Eustace from the city went  
 To see the Gardener's Daughter ; I and he,  
 Brothers in Art ; a friendship so complete  
 Portioned in halves between us, that we grew  
 The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules ;  
 So muscular he spread, so broad a breast.  
 He, by some law that holds in love, and draws  
 The greater to the lesser, long desired  
 A certain miracle of symmetry,  
 A miniature of loveliness, all grace  
 Summed up and closed in little ;—Juliet, she  
 So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she  
 To me myself, for some three careless moons,  
 The summer pilot of an empty heart  
 Unto the shores of nothing ! Know you not  
 Such touches are but embassies of love,  
 To tamper with the feelings, ere he found  
 Empire for life ? but Eustace painted her,  
 And said to me, she sitting with us then,  
 “ When will *you* paint like this ? ” and I replied,  
 (My words were half in earnest, half in jest,)  
 “ ’Tis not your work, but Love’s. Love unper-  
 ceived.

A more ideal Artist he than all,  
 Came, drew your pencil from you, made those eyes  
 Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair  
 More black than ashbuds in the front of March.”  
 And Juliet answered laughing, “ Go and see  
 The Gardener’s daughter : trust me, after that,  
 You scarce can fail to match his masterpiece.”  
 And up we rose, and on the spur we went.

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite  
 Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.  
 News from the humming city comes to it  
 In sound of funeral or of marriage bells ;  
 And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear  
 The windy clanging of the minster clock ;  
 Although between it and the garden lies  
 A league of grass, washed by a slow broad stream,  
 That, stirred with languid pulses of the oar,  
 Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,  
 Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge  
 Crowned with the minster-towers.

The fields between  
 Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-uddered kine,  
 And all about the large lime feathers low,  
 The lime a summer home of murmurous wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,  
 Grew, seldom seen : not less among us lived  
 Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not heard  
 Of Rose, the Gardener's daughter? Where was  
 he,

So blunt in memory, so old at heart,  
 At such a distance from his youth in grief,  
 That, having seen, forgot? The common mouth,  
 So gross to express delight, in praise of her  
 Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,  
 And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,  
 Would play with flying forms and images,  
 Yet this is also true, that, long before  
 I looked upon her, when I heard her name  
 My heart was like a prophet to my heart,  
 And told me I should love. A crowd of hopes,  
 That sought to sow themselves like winged seeds,  
 Born out of every thing I heard and saw,  
 Fluttered about my senses and my soul ;  
 And vague desires, like fitful blasts of balm  
 To one that travels quickly, made the air  
 Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,  
 That verged upon them, sweeter than the dream  
 Dreamed by a happy man, when the dark East,  
 Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds  
 Forever in itself the day we went  
 To see her. All the land in flowery squares,  
 Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,  
 Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud  
 Drew downward : but all else of Heaven was pure  
 Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge,  
 And May with me from head to heel. And now,  
 As though 'twere yesterday, as though it were

The hour just flown, that morn with all its sound,  
 (For those old Mays had thrice the life of these,)  
 Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,  
 And, where the hedge-row cuts the pathway, stood,  
 Leaning his horns into the neighbor field,  
 And lowing to his fellows. From the woods  
 Came voices of the well-contented doves.  
 The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,  
 But shook his song together as he neared  
 His happy home, the ground. To left and right,  
 The cuckoo told his name to all the hills;  
 The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm;  
 The redcap whistled; and the nightingale  
 Sang loud, as though he were the bird of day.

And Eustace turned, and smiling said to me,  
 "Hear how the bushes echo! by my life,  
 These birds have joyful thoughts. Think you they  
 sing

Like poets, from the vanity of song?  
 Or have they any sense of why they sing?  
 And would they praise the heavens for what they  
 have?"

And I made answer, "Were there nothing else  
 For which to praise the heavens but only love,  
 That only love were cause enough for praise."

Lightly he laughed, as one that read my thought,  
 And on we went; but ere an hour had passed,  
 We reached a meadow slanting to the North;  
 Down which a well-worn pathway courted us  
 To one green wicket in a privet hedge;  
 This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk  
 Through crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned;  
 And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume, blew  
 Beyond us, as we entered in the cool.

The garden stretches southward. In the midst  
 A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade.  
 The garden-glasses shone, and momentarily  
 The twinkling laurel scattered silver lights.

"Eustace," I said, "this wonder keeps the house."

He nodded, but a moment afterwards  
 He cried, "Look! look!" Before he ceased I  
 turned,

And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,  
 That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught,  
 And blown across the walk. One arm aloft—  
 Gowned in pure white, that fitted to the shape—  
 Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood.  
 A single stream of all her soft brown hair  
 Poured on one side: the shadow of the flowers  
 Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering,  
 Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—  
 Ah, happy shade!—and still went wavering down,  
 But, ere it touched a foot that might have danced  
 The greensward into greener circles, dipt,  
 And mixed with shadows of the common ground!  
 But the full day dwelt on her brows, and sunned  
 Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe-bloom,  
 And doubled his own warmth against her lips,  
 And on the bounteous wave of such a breast  
 As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,  
 She stood, a sight to make an old man young.

So rapt, we neared the house; but she, a Rose  
 In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,  
 Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance turned  
 Into the world without; till close at hand,  
 And almost ere I knew mine own intent,  
 This murmur broke the stillness of that air  
 Which brooded round about her:

"Ah, one rose,  
 One rose, but one, by those fair fingers culled,  
 Were worth a hundred kisses pressed on lips  
 Less exquisite than thine!"

She looked: but all  
 Suffused with blushes—neither self-possessed  
 Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and that,  
 Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,  
 And dropt the branch she held, and turning, wound



Her looser hair in braid, and stirred her lips  
 For some sweet answer, though no answer came ;  
 Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,  
 And moved away, and left me, statue-like,  
 In act to render thanks.

I, that whole day,  
 Saw her no more, although I lingered there  
 Till every daisy slept, and Love's white star  
 Beamed through the thickened cedar in the dusk.

So home we went, and all the livelong way  
 With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.  
 " Now," said he, " will you climb the top of Art.  
 You cannot fail but work in hues to dim  
 The Titianic Flora. Will you match  
 My Juliet ? you, not you,—the Master, Love,  
 A more ideal Artist he than all."

So home I went, but could not sleep for joy,  
 Reading her perfect features in the gloom,  
 Kissing the rose she gave me o'er and o'er,  
 And shaping faithful record of the glance  
 That graced the giving—such a noise of life  
 Swarmed in the golden present, such a voice  
 Called to me from the years to come, and such  
 A length of bright horizon rimmed the dark.  
 And all that night I heard the watchmen peal  
 The sliding season : all that night I heard  
 The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy hours.  
 The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,  
 O'er the mute city stole with folded wings,  
 Distilling odors on me as they went  
 To greet their fairer sisters of the East.

Love at first sight, first-born and heir to all,  
 Made this night thus. Henceforward squall nor  
 storm

Could keep me from that Eden where she dwelt.  
 Light pretexts drew me : sometimes a Dutch love  
 For tulips ; then for roses, moss or musk,  
 To grace my city-rooms ; or fruits and cream  
 Served in the weeping elm ; and more and more

A word could bring the color to my cheek ;  
 A thought would fill my eyes with happy dew ;  
 Love trebled life within me, and with each  
 The year increased.

The daughters of the year,  
 One after one, through that still garden passed :  
 Each garlanded with her peculiar flower  
 Danced into light, and died into the shade ;  
 And each in passing touched with some new  
 grace

Or seemed to touch her, so that day by day,  
 Like one that never can be wholly known,  
 Her beauty grew ; till Autumn brought an hour  
 For Eustace, when I heard his deep " I will,"  
 Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to hold  
 From thence through all the worlds : but I rose up  
 Full of his bliss, and following her dark eyes,  
 Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reached  
 The wicket-gate, and found her standing there.

There sat we down upon a garden mound,  
 Two mutually enfolded ; Love, the third,  
 Between us, in the circle of his arms  
 Enwound us both ; and over many a range  
 Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,  
 Across a hazy glimmer of the west,  
 Revealed their shining windows : from them clashed  
 The bells ; we listened ; with the time we played ;  
 We spoke of other things ; we coursed about  
 The subject most at heart, more near and near,  
 Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round  
 The central wish, until we settled there.

Then, in that time and place, I spoke to her,  
 Requiring, though I knew it was mine own,  
 Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,  
 Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,  
 A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved ;  
 And in that time and place she answered me,  
 And in the compass of three little words,  
 More musical than ever came in one,

The silver fragments of a broken voice,  
Made me most happy, faltering "I am thine!"

Shall I cease here? Is this enough to say  
That my desire, like all strongest hopes,  
By its own energy fulfilled itself,  
Merged in completion? Would you learn at full  
How passion rose through circumstantial grades  
Beyond all grades developed? and indeed  
I had not stayed so long to tell you all,  
But while I mused came Memory with sad eyes,  
Holding the folded annals of my youth;  
And while I mused, Love with knit brows went by,  
And with a flying finger swept my lips,  
And spake, "Be wise: not easily forgiven  
Are those, who setting wide the doors, that bar  
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,  
Let in the day." Here, then, my words have end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of farewells—  
Of that which came between, more sweet than each,  
In whispers, like the whispers of the leaves  
That tremble round a nightingale—in sighs  
Which perfect Joy, perplexed for utterance,  
Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I not tell  
Of difference, reconciliation, pledges given,  
And vows, where there was never need of vows,  
And kisses, where the heart on one wild leap  
Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above  
The heavens between their fairy fleeces pale  
Sowed all their mystic gulfs with fleeting stars;  
Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,  
Spread the light haze along the river-shores,  
And in the hollows; or as once we met  
Unheedful, though beneath a whispering rain  
Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind,  
And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.

But this whole hour your eyes have been intent  
On that veiled picture—veiled, for what it holds  
May not be dwelt on by the common day.  
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy soul,

Make thine heart ready with thine eyes : the time  
Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,

As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,  
My first, last love ; the idol of my youth,  
The darling of my manhood, and, alas !  
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

### D O R A .

WITH farmer Allan at the farm abode  
William and Dora. William was his son,  
And she his niece. He often looked at them,  
And often thought " I'll make them man and wife."  
Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,  
And yearned towards William ; but the youth, be-  
cause  
He had been always with her in the house,  
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day

When Allan called his son, and said : " My son,  
I married late, but I would wish to see  
My grandchild on my knees before I die :  
And I have set my heart upon a match.  
Now therefore look to Dora ; she is well  
To look to ; thrifty too beyond her age.  
She is my brother's daughter : he and I  
Had once hard words, and parted, and he died  
In foreign lands ; but for his sake I bred  
His daughter Dora : take her for your wife ;  
For I have wished this marriage, night and day,  
For many years." But William answered short,  
" I cannot marry Dora ; by my life,  
I will not marry Dora." Then the old man  
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands, and said :  
" You will not, boy ! you dare to answer thus !  
But in my time a father's word was law,

And so it shall be now for me. Look to't ;  
Consider, William : take a month to think,  
And let me have an answer to my wish ;  
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall pack,  
And nevermore darken my doors again ! ”  
But William answered madly ; bit his lips,  
And broke away. The more he looked at her  
The less he liked her ; and his ways were harsh ;  
But Dora bore them meekly. Then before  
The month was out he left his father's house,  
And hired himself to work within the fields ;  
And half in love, half spite, he wooed and wed  
A laborer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing, Allan called  
His niece and said : “ My girl, I love you well ;  
But if you speak with him that was my son,  
Or change a word with her he calls his wife,  
My home is none of yours. My will is law.”  
And Dora promised, being meek. She thought,  
“ It cannot be : my uncle's mind will change ! ”

And days went on, and there was born a boy  
To William ; then distresses came on him ;  
And day by day he passed his father's gate,  
Heart-broken, and his father helped him not.  
But Dora stored what little she could save,  
And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know  
Who sent it ; till at last a fever seized  
On William, and in harvest-time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat  
And looked with tears upon her boy, and thought  
Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said :  
“ I have obeyed my uncle until now,  
And I have sinned, for it was all through me  
This evil came on William at the first.  
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone,  
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,  
And for this orphan, I am come to you :  
You know there has not been for these five years  
So full a harvest : let me take the boy,

And I will set him in my uncle's eye  
Among the wheat ; that when his heart is glad  
Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,  
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone."

And Dora took the child, and went her way  
Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound  
That was unsown, where many poppies grew.  
Far off the farmer came into the field  
And spied her not ; for none of all his men  
Dare tell him Dora waited with the child ;  
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,  
But her heart failed her ; and the reapers reaped,  
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and took  
The child once more, and sat upon the mound ;  
And made a little wreath of all the flowers  
That grew about, and tied it round his hat  
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.  
Then when the farmer passed into the field  
He spied her, and he left his men at work,  
And came and said : "Where were you yesterday?  
Whose child is that ? What are you doing here ?"  
So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,  
And answered softly : " This is William's child !"  
" And did I not," said Allan, " did I not  
Forbid you, Dora ?" Dora said again :  
" Do with me as you will, but take the child  
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone !"  
And Allan said : " I see it is a trick  
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.  
I must be taught my duty, and by you !  
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared  
To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy ;  
But go you hence, and never see me more."

So saying, he took the boy, that cried aloud  
And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell  
At Dora's feet. She bowed upon her hands,  
And the boy's cry came to her from the field,  
More and more distant. She bowed down her head

Remembering the day when first she came,  
 And all the things that had been. She bowed down  
 And wept in secret; and the reapers reaped,  
 And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood  
 Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy  
 Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise  
 To God, that helped her in her widowhood.  
 And Dora said: "My uncle took the boy;  
 But, Mary, let me live and work with you:  
 He says that he will never see me more."  
 Then answered Mary: "This shall never be,  
 That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself:  
 And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,  
 For he will teach him hardness, and to slight  
 His mother; therefore thou and I will go,  
 And I will have my boy, and bring him home;  
 And I will beg of him to take thee back;  
 But if he will not take thee back again,  
 Then thou and I will live within one house,  
 And work for William's child, until he grows  
 Of age to help us."

So the women kissed  
 Each other, and set out and reached the farm.  
 The door was off the latch; they peeped and saw  
 The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,  
 Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,  
 And clapt him on the hands and on the cheeks,  
 Like one that loved him: and the lad stretched out  
 And babbled for the golden seal, that hung  
 From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.  
 Then they came in; but when the boy beheld  
 His mother, he cried out to come to her:  
 And Allan sat him down, and Mary said:  
 "O Father!—if you let me call you so—  
 I never came a-begging for myself,  
 Or William, or this child; but now I come  
 For Dora: take her back; she loves you well.  
 O Sir, when William died, he died at peace

With all men ; for I asked him, and he said,  
 He could not ever rue his marrying me.—  
 I had been a patient wife : but, Sir, he said  
 That he was wrong to cross his father thus :  
 ‘ God bless him ! ’ he said, ‘ and may he never know  
 The troubles I have gone through ! ’ Then he turned  
 His face and passed—unhappy that I am !  
 But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you  
 Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight  
 His father’s memory ; and take Dora back,  
 And let all this be as it was before.”

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face  
 By Mary. There was silence in the room ;  
 And all at once the old man burst in sobs :—

“ I have been to blame—to blame ! I have killed  
 my son !

I have killed him—but I loved him—my dear son !  
 May God forgive me !—I have been to blame.  
 Kiss me, my children ! ”

Then they clung about  
 The old man’s neck, and kissed him many times.  
 And all the man was broken with remorse ;  
 And all his love came back a hundred fold ;  
 And for three hours he sobbed o’er William’s child,  
 Thinking of William.

So those four abode  
 Within one house together ; and as years  
 Went forward, Mary took another mate ;  
 But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

## AUDLEY COURT.

“ THE Bull, the Fleece are crammed, and not a  
 room  
 For love or money. Let us picnic there  
 At Audley Court.”

I spoke, while Audley feast



Hummed like a hive all round the narrow quay,  
 To Francis, with a basket on his arm,  
 To Francis just alighted from the boat,  
 And breathing of the sea. "With all my heart,"  
 Said Francis. Then we shouldered through the  
 swarm

And rounded by the stillness of the beach  
 To where the bay runs up its latest horn.

We left the dying ebb that faintly lipped  
 The flat red granite; so by many a sweep  
 Of meadow smooth from aftermath we reached  
 The griffin-guarded gates, and passed through all  
 The pillared dusk of sounding sycamores,  
 And crossed the garden to the gardener's lodge,  
 With all its casements bedded, and its walls  
 And chimneys muffled in the leafy vine.

There, on a slope of orchard, Francis laid  
 A damask napkin wrought with horse and hound,  
 Brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,  
 And, half-cut-down, a pasty costly-made,  
 Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,  
 Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks  
 Imbedded and injellied; last, with these,  
 A flask of cider from his father's vats,  
 Prime, which I knew; and so we sat and eat  
 And talked old matters over: who was dead,  
 Who married, who was like to be, and how  
 The races went, and who would rent the hall:  
 Then touched upon the game, how scarce it was  
 This season: glancing thence, discussed the farm,  
 The fourfield system and the price of grain;  
 And struck upon the corn-laws, where we split,  
 And came again together on the king  
 With heated faces; till he laughed aloud;  
 And, while the blackbird on the pippin hung  
 To hear him, clapt his hand in mine and sang—

"O! who would fight and march and counter  
 march,

Be shot for sixpence in a battle-field,

And shovelled up into a bloody trench  
Where no one knows? but let me live my life.

“O! who would cast and balance at a desk,  
Perched like a crow upon a three-legged stool,  
Till all his juice is dried, and all his joints  
Are full of chalk? but let me live my life.

“Who’d serve the state? for if I carved my name  
Upon the cliffs that guard my native land,  
I might as well have traced it in the sands;  
The sea wastes all: but let me live my life.

“O! who would love? I wooed a woman once,  
But she was sharper than an eastern wind,  
And all my heart turned from her, as a thorn  
Turns from the sea: but let me live my life.”

He sang his song, and I replied with mine:  
I found it in a volume, all of songs,  
Knocked down to me, when old Sir Robert’s pride,  
His books—the more the pity, so I said—  
Came to the hammer here in March—and this—  
I set the words, and added names I knew.

“Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, sleep, and dream of me:  
Sleep, Ellen, folded in thy sister’s arm,  
And sleeping, haply dream her arm is mine.

“Sleep, Ellen, folded in Emilia’s arm;  
Emilia, fairer than all else but thou,  
For thou art fairer than all else that is.

“Sleep, breathing health and peace upon her  
breast:

Sleep, breathing love and trust against her lip:  
I go to-night: I come to-morrow morn.

“I go, but I return: I would I were  
The pilot of the darkness and the dream.  
Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, love, and dream of me.”

So sang we each to either, Francis Hale,  
The farmer’s son who lived across the bay,  
My friend; and I, that having wherewithal,  
And in the fallow leisure of my life  
A rolling stone of here and everywhere,  
Did what I would; but ere the night we rose  
And sauntered home beneath a moon, that, just

In crescent, dimly rained about the leaf  
 Twilights of airy silver, till we reached  
 The limit of the hills; and as we sank  
 From rock to rock upon the glooming quay,  
 The town was hushed beneath us: lower down  
 The bay was oily calm; the harbor-buoy  
 With one green sparkle ever and anon  
 Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart.

## WALKING TO THE MAIL.

*John.* I'm glad I walked. How fresh the meadows  
 look  
 Above the river, and, but a month ago,  
 The whole hill-side was redder than a fox.  
 Is yon plantation where this by-way joins  
 The turnpike?

*James.* Yes.

*John.* And when does this come by?

*James.* The mail? At one o'clock.

*John.* What is it now?

*James.* A quarter to.

*John.* Whose house is that I see  
 Beyond the watermills?

*James.* Sir Edward Head's:

But he's abroad: the place is to be sold.

*John.* O, his. He was not broken.

*James.* No sir, he,  
 Vexed with a morbid devil in his blood  
 That veiled the world with jaundice, hid his face  
 From all men, and commercing with himself,  
 He lost the sense that handles daily life—  
 That keeps us all in order more or less—  
 And sick of home, went overseas for change.

*John.* And whither?

*James.* Nay, who knows? he's here and  
 there

But let him go ; his devil goes with him,  
As well as with his tenant, Jocky Dawes.

*John.* What's that ?

*James.* You saw the man—on Monday, was it ?  
There by the humpbacked willow ; half stands up  
And bristles ; half has fallen and made a bridge ;  
And there he caught the younker tickling trout—  
Caught in *flagrante*—what's the Latin word ?—  
*Delicto* : but his house, for so they say,  
Was haunted with a jolly ghost, that shook  
The curtains, whined in lobbies, tapt at doors,  
And rummaged like a rat : no servant stayed :  
The farmer vext packs up his beds and chairs,  
And all his household stuff ; and with his boy  
Betwixt his knees, his wife upon the tilt,  
Sets out, and meets a friend who hails him, “ What !  
You're flitting ! ” “ Yes, we're flitting,” says the ghost,  
(For they had packed the thing among the beds.)  
“ O well,” says he, “ you flitting with us too—  
Jack, turn the horses' heads and home again.”

*John.* He left his wife behind ; for so I heard.

*James.* He left her, yes. I met my lady once :  
A woman like a butt, and harsh as crabs.

*John.* O yet but I remember, ten years back—  
'Tis now at least ten years—and then she was—  
You could not light upon a sweeter thing :  
A body slight and round, and like a pear  
In growing, modest eyes, a hand, a foot  
Lessening in perfect cadence, and a skin  
As clean and white as privet when it flowers.

*James.* Ay, ay, the blossom fades, and they that  
loved

At first like dove and dove were cat and dog.  
She was the daughter of a cottager,  
Out of her sphere. What betwixt shame and pride,  
New things and old, himself and her, she soured  
To what she is : a nature never kind !  
Like men, like manners : like breeds like, they say.  
Kind nature is the best : those manners next

That fit us like a nature second-hand ;  
Which are indeed the manners of the great.

*John.* But I had heard it was this bill that past,  
And fear of change at home, that drove him hence.

*James.* That was the last drop in the cup of gall.  
I once was near him when his bailiff brought  
A Chartist pike. You should have seen him wince  
As from a venomous thing : he thought himself  
A mark for all, and shuddered, lest a cry  
Should break his sleep by night, and his nice eyes  
Should see the raw mechanic's bloody thumbs  
Sweat on his blazoned chairs ; but, sir, you know  
That these two parties still divide the world—  
Of those that want, and those that have : and still  
The same old sore breaks out from age to age  
With much the same result. Now I myself,  
A Tory to the quick, was as a boy  
Destructive, when I had not what I would.

I was at school—a college in the South :  
There lived a flayflint near ; we stole his fruit,  
His hens, his eggs ; but there was law for *us* ;  
We paid in person. He had a sow, sir. She,  
With meditative grunts of much content,  
Lay great with pig, wallowing in sun and mud.  
By night we dragged her to the college tower  
From her warm bed, and up the corkscrew stair  
With hand and rope we haled the groaning sow,  
And on the leads we kept her till she pigged.  
Large range of prospect had the mother sow,  
And but for daily loss of one she loved,  
As one by one we took them—but for this—  
As never sow was higher in this world—  
Might have been happy : but what lot is pure ?  
We took them all, till she was left alone  
Upon her tower, the Niobe of swine,  
And so returned unfarrowed to her sty.

*John.* They found you out ?

*James.* Not they.

*John.* Well—after all—

What know we of the secret of a man ?

His nerves were wrong. What ails us, who are  
sound,

That we should mimic this raw fool the world,  
Which charts us all in its coarse blacks or whites,  
As ruthless as a baby with a worm,  
As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows  
To Pity—more from ignorance than will.

But put your best foot forward, or I fear  
That we shall miss the mail: and here it comes  
With five at top: as quaint a four-in-hand  
As you shall see—three pyebalds and a roan.

### ST. SIMEON STYLITES.

ALTHOUGH I be the basest of mankind,  
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,  
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet  
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,  
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold  
Of saintdom, and to clamor, mourn and sob,  
Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer,  
Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.

Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,  
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years,  
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,  
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,  
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and  
cramps,

A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,  
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne [snow;  
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and  
And I had hoped that ere this period closed  
Thou wouldst have caught me up into thy rest,  
Denying not these weather-beaten limbs  
The meed of saints, the white robe and the palm.

O take the meaning, Lord: I do not breathe,  
Not whisper, any murmur of complaint.  
Pain heaped ten-hundred-fold to this, were still

Less burthen, by ten-hundred-fold, to bear,  
 Than were those lead-like tons of sin, that crushed  
 My spirit flat before thee.

O Lord, Lord,  
 Thou knowest I bore this better at the first,  
 For I was strong and hale of body then ;  
 And though my teeth, which now are dropt away,  
 Would chatter with the cold, and all my beard  
 Was tagged with icy fringes in the moon,  
 I drowned the whoopings of the owl with sound  
 Of pious hymns and psalms, and sometimes saw  
 An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.  
 Now am I feeble grown : my end draws nigh—  
 I hope my end draws nigh : half deaf I am,  
 So that I scarce can hear the people hum  
 About the column's base, and almost blind,  
 And scarce can recognize the fields I know.  
 And both my thighs are rotted with the dew,  
 Yet cease I not to clamor and to cry,  
 While my stiff spine can hold my weary head,  
 Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the stone,  
 Have mercy, mercy : take away my sin.

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,  
 Who may be saved ? who is it may be saved ?  
 Who may be made a saint, if I fail here ?  
 Show me the man hath suffered more than I.  
 For did not all thy martyrs die one death ?  
 For either they were stoned, or crucified,  
 Or burned in fire, or boiled in oil, or sawn  
 In twain beneath the ribs ; but I die here  
 To-day, and whole years long, a life of death.  
 Bear witness, if I could have found a way  
 (And heedfully I sifted all my thought)  
 More slowly-painful to subdue this home  
 Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate,  
 I had not stinted practice, oh my God !

For not alone this pillar-punishment,  
 Not this alone I bore : but while I lived  
 In the white convent down the valley there,

For many weeks about my loins I wore  
 The rope that haled the buckets from the well,  
 Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose;  
 And spake not of it to a single soul,  
 Until the ulcer, eating through my skin,  
 Betrayed my secret penance, so that all  
 My brethren marvelled greatly. More than this  
 I bore, whereof, oh God, thou knowest all.

Three winters, that my soul might grow to thee,  
 I lived up there on yonder mountain side.  
 My right leg chained into the crag, I lay  
 Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones;  
 Inswathed sometimes in wandering mist, and twice  
 Blacked with thy branding thunder, and sometimes  
 Sucking the damps for drink, and eating not,  
 Except the spare chance-gift of those that came  
 To touch my body and be healed, and live:  
 And they say then that I worked miracles,  
 Whereof my fame is loud amongst mankind,  
 Cured lameness, palsies, cancers. Thou, oh God,  
 Knowest alone whether this was or no.  
 Have mercy, mercy; cover all my sin!

Then, that I might be more alone with thee,  
 Three years I lived upon a pillar high  
 Six cubits, and three years on one of twelve;  
 And twice three years I crouched on one that rose  
 Twenty by measure; last of all, I grew  
 Twice ten long weary, weary years to this,  
 That numbers forty cubits from the soil.

I think that I have borne as much as this—  
 Or else I dream—and for so long a time,  
 If I may measure time by yon slow light,  
 And this high dial, which my sorrow crowns—  
 So much—even so.

And yet I know not well,  
 For that the evil ones come here, and say,  
 “Fall down, oh Simeon: thou hast suffered long  
 For ages and for ages!” Then they prate  
 Of penances I cannot have gone through,



Perplexing me with lies ; and oft I fall,  
 Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies,  
 That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are choked.

But yet

Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all the saints  
 Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth  
 House in the shade of comfortable roofs,  
 Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,  
 And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls,  
 I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,  
 Bow down one thousand and two hundred times,  
 To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints ;  
 Or in the night, after a little sleep,  
 I wake : the chill stars sparkle ; I am wet  
 With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.  
 I wear an undressed goatskin on my back ;  
 A grazing iron collar grinds my neck ;  
 And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,  
 And strive and wrestle with thee till I die :  
 O mercy, mercy ! wash away my sin !

O Lord, thou knowest what a man I am ;  
 A sinful man, conceived and born in sin ;  
 'Tis their own doing ; this is none of mine ;  
 Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for this,  
 That here come those that worship me ? Ha ! ha !  
 They think that I am somewhat. What am I ?  
 The silly people take me for a saint,  
 And bring me offerings of fruit and flowers ;  
 And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness here)  
 Have all in all endured as much, and more  
 Than many just and holy men, whose names  
 Are registered and calendered for saints.

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.  
 What is it I can have done to merit this ?  
 I am a sinner viler than you all.  
 It may be I have wrought some miracles,  
 And cured some halt and maimed ; but what of that ?  
 It may be, no one, even among the saints,  
 May match his pains with mine ; but what of that ?

Yet do not rise : for you may look on me,  
 And in your looking you may kneel to God.  
 Speak ! is there any of you halt or maimed ?  
 I think you know I have some power with Heaven  
 From my long penance : let him speak his wish.

Yes, I can heal him. Power goes forth from me  
 They say that they are healed. Ah, hark ! they  
 shout

“ St. Simeon Stylites.” Why, if so,  
 God reaps a harvest in me. O my soul,  
 God reaps a harvest in thee. If this be,  
 Can I work miracles and not be saved ?  
 This is not told of any. They were saints.  
 It cannot be but that I shall be saved ;  
 Yea, crowned a saint. They shout, “ Behold a  
 saint ! ”

And lower voices saint me from above.  
 Courage, St. Simeon ! This dull chrysalis  
 Cracks into shining wings, and hope ere death  
 Spreads more and more and more, that God hath  
 now

Sponged and made blank of crimeful record all  
 My mortal archives.

O my sons, my sons,  
 I, Simeon of the pillar, by surname  
 Stylites, among men ; I, Simeon,  
 The watcher on the column till the end ;  
 I, Simeon, whose brain the sunshine bakes ;  
 I, whose bald brows in silent hours become  
 Unnaturally hoar with rime, do now  
 From my high nest of penance here proclaim  
 That Pontius and Iscariot by my side  
 Showed like fair seraphs. On the coals I lay,  
 A vessel full of sin : all hell beneath  
 Made me boil over. Devils plucked my sleeve,  
 Abaddon and Asmodeus caught at me.  
 I smote them with the cross ; they swarmed again.  
 In bed like monstrous apes they crushed my chest.  
 They flapped my light out as I read : I saw

Their faces grow between me and my book :  
 With colt-like whinny and with hoggish whine  
 They burst my prayer. Yet this way was left,  
 And by this way I 'scaped them. Mortify  
 Your flesh, like me, with scourges and with thorns  
 Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may be, fast  
 Whole Lents, and pray. I hardly, with slow steps—  
 With slow, faint steps, and much exceeding pain—  
 Have scrambled past those pits of fire, that still  
 Sing in mine ears. But yield not me the praise :  
 God only through his bounty hath thought fit,  
 Among the powers and princes of this world,  
 To make me an example to mankind,  
 Which few can reach to. Yet I do not say  
 But that a time may come—yea, even now,  
 Now, now, his footsteps smite the threshold stairs  
 Of life—I say, that time is at the doors  
 When you may worship me without reproach ;  
 For I will leave my relics in your land,  
 And you may carve a shrine about my dust,  
 And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,  
 When I am gathered to the glorious saints.

While I spake then, a sting of shrewdest pain  
 Ran shrivelling through me, and a cloudlike change,  
 In passing, with a grosser film made thick  
 These heavy, horny eyes. The end ! the end !  
 Surely the end ! What's here ? a shape, a shade,  
 A flash of light. Is that the angel there  
 That holds a crown ? Come, blessed brother, come.  
 I know thy glittering face. I waited long ;  
 My brows are ready. What ! deny it now ?  
 Nay, draw, draw, draw nigh. So I clutch it. Christ  
 'T is gone : 'tis here again ; the crown ! the crown !  
 So now 'tis fitted on and grows to me,  
 And from it melt the dews of Paradise,  
 Sweet ! sweet ! spikenard, and balm, and frankin-  
 cense.

Ah ! let me not be fooled, sweet saints : I trust  
 That I am whole, and clean, and meet for Heaven.

Speak, if there be a priest, a man of God,  
 Among you there, and let him presently  
 Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft,  
 And climbing up into my airy home,  
 Deliver me the blessed sacrament ;  
 For by the warning of the Holy Ghost,  
 I prophesy that I shall die to-night,  
 A quarter before twelve.

But thou, oh Lord,

Aid all this foolish people ; let them take  
 Example, pattern : lead them to thy light.

### THE SEA-FAIRIES.

SLOW sailed the weary mariners, and saw,  
 Betwixt the green brink and the running foam,  
 Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms prest  
 To little harps of gold ; and, while they mused,  
 Whispering to each other half in fear,  
 Shrill music reached them on the middle sea.

Whither away, whither away, whither away ? fly  
 no more.

Whither away from the high green field, and the  
 happy blossoming shore ?

Day and night to the billow the fountain calls ;  
 Down shower the gambolling waterfalls  
 From wandering over the lea :  
 Out of the live-green heart of the dells  
 They freshen the silvery-crimson shells,  
 And thick with white bells the clover-hill swells  
 High over the full-toned sea :  
 O hither, come hither, and furl your sails,  
 Come hither to me and to me !  
 Hither, come hither, and frolic and play ;  
 Here it is only the mew that wails ;  
 We will sing to you all the day :

Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,  
 For here are the blissful downs and dales,  
 And merrily, merrily carol the gales,  
 And the spangle dances in bight and bay,  
 And the rainbow forms and flies on the land  
 Over the islands free ;  
 And the rainbow lives in the curve of the sand ;  
 Hither, come hither and see ;  
 And the rainbow hangs on the poising wave,  
 And sweet is the color of cove and cave,  
 And sweet shall your welcome be ;  
 O hither, come hither, and be our lords,  
 For merry brides are we !  
 We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak sweet words :  
 O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten  
 With pleasure and love and jubilee !  
 O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten  
 When the sharp, clear twang of the golden chords  
 Runs up the ridgéd sea !  
 Who can light on as happy a shore  
 All the world o'er, all the world o'er ?  
 Whither away ? listen and stay : mariner, mariner  
 fly no more.

## THE DESERTED HOUSE.

### I.

LIFE and Thought have gone away  
 Side by side,  
 Leaving door and windows wide :  
 Careless tenants they !

### II.

All within is dark as night :  
 In the windows is no light ;  
 And no murmur at the door,  
 So frequent on its hinge before.

## III.

Close the door, the shutters close,  
 Or through the windows we shall see  
 The nakedness and vacancy  
 Of the dark, deserted house.

## IV.

Come away ; no more of mirth  
 Is here or merry-making sound.  
 The house was builded of the earth,  
 And shall fall again to ground.

## V.

Come away ; for Life and Thought  
 Here no longer dwell ;  
 But in a city glorious—  
 A great and distant city—have bought  
 A mansion incorruptible.  
 Would they could have stayed with us

## EDWIN MORRIS ;

## OR, THE LAKE.

O ME, my pleasant rambles by the lake,  
 My sweet, wild, fresh three quarters of a year,  
 My one Oasis in the dust and drouth  
 Of city life ! I was a sketcher then ;  
 See here, my doing : curves of mountain, bridge,  
 Boat, island, ruins of a castle, built  
 When men knew how to build, upon a rock,  
 With turrets lichen-gilded like a rock ;  
 And here, new-comers in an ancient hold,  
 New-comers from the Mersey, millionaires,  
 Here lived the Hills,—a Tudor-chimneyed bulk  
 Of mellow brickwork on an isle of bowers.

O me ! my pleasant rambles by the lake  
 With Edwin Morris and with Edward Bull,  
 The curate ; he was fatter than his cure.

But Edwin Morris, he that knew the names,  
 Long learned names of agaric, moss and fern,  
 Who forged a thousand theories of the rocks,  
 Who taught me how to skate, to row, to swim,  
 Who read me rhymes elaborately good,  
 His own,—I called him Crichton, for he seemed  
 All-perfect, finished to the finger nail.

And once I asked him of his early life,  
 And his first passion ; and he answered me ;  
 And well his words became him : was he not  
 A full-celled honeycomb of eloquence  
 Stored from all flowers ? Poet-like he spoke :

“ My love for Nature is as old as I ;  
 But thirty moons, one honeymoon to that,  
 And three rich sennights more, my love for her.  
 My love for Nature and my love for her,  
 Of different ages, like twin-sisters grew,  
 Twin-sisters differently beautiful.  
 To some full music rose and sank the sun,  
 And some full music seemed to move and change  
 With all the varied changes of the dark,  
 And either twilight and the day between ;  
 For daily hope fulfilled, to rise again  
 Revolving toward fulfilment, made it sweet  
 To walk, to sit, to sleep, to wake, to breathe.”

Or this or something like to this he spoke.  
 Then said the fat-faced curate, Edward Bull,

“ I take it, God made the woman for the man,  
 And for the good and increase of the world.  
 A pretty face is well, and this is well,  
 To have a dame indoors that trims us up,  
 And keeps us tight ; but these unreal ways

Seem but the theme of writers, and, indeed,  
Worn threadbare. Man is made of solid stuff.  
I say, God made the woman for the man,  
And for the good and increase of the world."

"Parson," said I, "you pitch the pipe too low ;  
But I have sudden touches, and can run  
My faith beyond my practice into his ;  
Though if, in dancing after Letty Hill,  
I do not hear the bells upon my eap,  
I scarce hear other music ; yet say on.  
What should one give to light on such a dream ?"  
I asked him half-sardonically.

"Give ?

Give all thou art," he answered, and a light  
Of laughter dimpled in his swarthy cheek ;  
"I would have hid her needle in my heart,  
To save her little finger from a scratch  
No deeper than the skin ; my ears could hear  
Her lightest breaths ; her least remark was worth  
The experience of the wise. I went and came ;  
Her voice fled always through the summer land ;  
I spoke her name alone. Thrice-happy days !  
The flower of each, those moments when we met,  
The crown of all, we met to part no more."

Were not his words delicious, I a beast  
To take them as I did ? but something jarred ;  
Whether he spoke too largely ; that there seemed  
A touch of something false, some self-conceit,  
Or over-smoothness ; howsoe'er it was,  
He scarcely hit my humor, and I said :—

"Friend Edwin, do not think yourself alone  
Of all men happy. Shall not Love to me,  
As in the Latin song I learnt at school,  
Sneeze out a full God-bless-you right and left ?  
But you can talk ; yours is a kindly vein ;



I have, I think,—Heaven knows,—as much within ;  
 Have, or should have, but for a thought or two,  
 That, like a purple beech among the greens,  
 Looks out of place ; 'tis from no want in her :  
 It is my shyness, or my self-distrust,  
 Or something of a wayward modern mind  
 Dissecting passion. Time will set me right.”

So spoke I, knowing not the things that were.  
 Then said the fat-faced curate, Edward Bull :  
 “ God made the woman for the use of man,  
 And for the good and increase of the world.”  
 And I and Edwin laughed ; and now we paused  
 About the windings of the marge to hear  
 The soft wind blowing over meadowy holms  
 And alders, garden-isles ; and now we left  
 The clerk behind us, I and he, and ran  
 By ripply shallows of the lispng lake,  
 Delighted with the freshness and the sound.

But, when the bracken rusted on their crags,  
 My suit had withered, nipt to death by him  
 That was a God, and is a lawyer's clerk,  
 The rent-roll Cupid of our rainy isles.  
 'Tis true we met ; one hour I had, no more,  
 She sent a note, the seal an *Elle vous suit*,  
 The close “ Your Letty, only yours ; ” and this  
 Thrice underscored. The friendly mist of morn  
 Clung to the lake. I boated over, ran  
 My craft aground, and heard with beating heart  
 The Sweet-Gale rustle round the shelving keel ;  
 And out I stopt, and up I crept ; she moved,  
 Like Proserpine in Enna, gathering flowers ;  
 Then low and sweet I whistled thrice ; and she,  
 She turned, we closed, we kissed, swore faith, I  
 breathed

In some new planet ; a silent cousin stole  
 Upon us and departed. “ Leave,” she cried,  
 “ O leave me ! ” “ Never, dearest, never ; here

I brave the worst ;” and while we stood like fools  
 Embracing, all at once a score of pugs  
 And poodles yelled within, and out they came,  
 Trustees and aunts and uncles. “ What, with him !’  
 “ Go ” (shrilled the cotton-spinning chorus), “ him !”  
 I choked. Again they shrieked the burthen  
 “ Him !”

Again with hands of wild rejection, “ Go !—  
 Girl, get you in !” She went,—and in one month  
 They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds,  
 To lands in Kent and messuages in York,  
 And slight Sir Robert with his watery smile  
 And educated whisker. But for me,  
 They set an ancient creditor to work :  
 It seems I broke a close with force and arms ;  
 There came a mystic token from the king  
 To greet the sheriff, needless courtesy !  
 I read, and fled by night, and flying turned ;  
 Her taper glimmered in the lake below ;  
 I turned once more, close-buttoned to the storm ;  
 So left the place, left Edwin, nor have seen  
 Him since, nor heard of her, nor cared to hear.

Nor cared to hear ? perhaps ; yet long ago  
 I have pardoned little Letty ; not indeed,  
 It may be, for her own dear sake, but this,  
 She seems a part of those fresh days to me ;  
 For, in the dust and drouth of London life,  
 She moves among my visions of the lake,  
 While the prime swallow dips his wing, or then  
 While the gold-lily blows, and overhead  
 The light cloud smoulders on the summer crag.

## TO —,

AFTER READING A LIFE AND LETTERS.

“Cursed be he that moves my bones.”  
*Shakspeare's Epitaph.*

YOU might have won the Poet's name,  
 If such be worth the winning now,  
 And gained a laurel for your brow  
 Of sounder leaf than I can claim ;

But you have made the wiser choice,  
 A life that moves to gracious ends  
 Through troops of unrecording friends,  
 A deedful life, a silent voice ;

And you have missed the irreverent doom  
 Of those that wear the Poet's crown ;  
 Hereafter neither knave nor clown  
 Shall hold their orgies at your tomb.

For now the Poet cannot die,  
 Nor leave his music as of old,  
 But round him, ere he scarce be cold,  
 Begins the scandal and the cry :

“Proclaim the faults he would not show ;  
 Break lock and seal ; betray the trust ;  
 Keep nothing sacred ; 'tis but just  
 The many-headed beast should know.”

Ah, shameless ! for he did but sing  
 A song that pleased us from its worth ;  
 No public life was his on earth,  
 No blazoned statesman he, nor king.

He gave the people of his best ;  
 His worst he kept, his best he gave.  
 My Shakspeare's curse on clown and knave  
 Who will not let his ashes rest !

Who make it seem more sweet to be  
 The little life of bank and brier,  
 The bird that pipes his lone desire  
 And dies unheard within his tree,

Than he that warbles long and loud  
 And drops at Glory's temple-gates,  
 For whom the carrion vulture waits  
 To tear his heart before the crowd !

## TO E. L., ON HIS TRAVELS IN GREECE

ILLYRIAN woodlands, echoing falls  
 Of water, sheets of summer glass,  
 The long divine Peneïan pass,  
 The vast Akrokeraunian walls,

Tomohrit, Athos, all things fair,  
 With such a pencil, such a pen,  
 You shadow forth to distant men,  
 I read and felt that I was there :

And trust me while I turned the page,  
 And tracked you still on classic ground,  
 I grew in gladness till I found  
 My spirits in the golden age.

For me the torrent ever poured  
 And glistened,—here and there alone  
 The broad-limbed Gods at random thrown  
 By fountain-urns ;—and Naiads oared

A glimmering shoulder under gloom  
 Of cavern pillars; on the swell  
 The silver lily heaved and fell;  
 And many a slope was rich in bloom,

From him that on the mountain lea  
 By dancing rivulets fed his flocks,  
 To him who sat upon the rocks,  
 And fluted to the morning sea.

“COME NOT, WHEN I AM DEAD.”

COME not, when I am dead,  
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,  
 To trample round my fallen head,  
 And vex the unhappy dust thou would'st not save.  
 There let the wind sweep and the plover cry;  
 But thou, go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime,  
 I care no longer, being all unblest;  
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time,  
 And I desire to rest.  
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie:  
 Go by, go by.

## THE EAGLE.

### A FRAGMENT.

HE clasps the crag with hookéd hands;  
 Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
 Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
 He watches from his mountain walls,  
 And like a thunderbolt he falls.

## THE TALKING OAK.

## I.

ONCE more the gate behind me falls ;  
Once more before my face  
I see the mouldered Abbey-walls,  
That stand within the chace.

## II.

Beyond the lodge the city lies,  
Beneath its drift of smoke ;  
And ah ! with what delighted eyes  
I turn to yonder oak !

## III.

For when my passion first began,  
Ere that which in me burned,  
The love that makes me thrice a man,  
Could hope itself returned ;

## IV.

To yonder oak within the field  
I spoke without restraint,  
And with a larger faith appealed  
Than Papist unto Saint.

## V.

For oft I talked with him apart,  
And told him of my choice,  
Until he plagiarized a heart,  
And answered with a voice.

## VI.

Though what he whispered under Heaven  
None else could understand ;  
I found him garrulously given,  
A babbler in the land.

## VII.

But since I heard him make reply  
 Is many a weary hour ;  
 'Twere well to question him, and try  
 If yet he keeps the power.

## VIII.

Hail, hidden to the knees in fern,  
 Broad oak of Sumner-chace,  
 Whose topmost branches can discern  
 The roofs of Sumner-place !

## IX.

Say thou, whereon I carved her name,  
 If ever maid or spouse,  
 As fair as my Olivia, came  
 To rest beneath thy boughs ?—

## X.

“ O Walter, I have sheltered here  
 Whatever maiden grace  
 The good old Summers, year by year,  
 Made ripe in Sumner-chace :

## XI.

“ Old Summers, when the monk was fat,  
 And, issuing shorn and sleek,  
 Would twist his girdle tight, and pat  
 The girls upon the cheek,

## XII.

“ Ere yet, in scorn of Peter's-pence,  
 And numbered bead, and shrift,  
 Bluff Harry broke into the spence,  
 And turned the cowls adrift :

## XIII.

“ And I have seen some score of those  
 Fresh faces, that would thrive

When his man-minded offset rose  
To chase the deer at five ;

## XIV.

“ And all that from the town would stroll,  
Till that wild wind made work,  
in which the gloomy brewer’s soul  
Went by me, like a stork :

## XV.

“ The slight she-slips of loyal blood,  
And others, passing praise,  
Strait-laced, but all-too-full in bud  
For puritanic stays :

## XVI.

“ And I have shadowed many a group  
Of beauties, that were born  
In teacup-times of hood and hoop,  
Or while the patch was worn ;

## XVII.

“ And, leg and arm with love-knots gay,  
About me leaped and laughed  
The modish Cupid of the day,  
And shrilled his tinsel shaft.

## XVIII.

“ I swear (and else may insects prick  
Each leaf into a gall)  
This girl, for whom your heart is sick,  
Is three times worth them all ;

## XIX.

“ For those and theirs, by Nature’s law,  
Have faded long ago ;  
But in these latter springs I saw  
Your own Olivia blow,



## XX.

“ From when she gambolled on the greens,  
A baby-germ, to when  
The maiden blossoms of her teens  
Could number five from ten.

## XXI.

“ I swear, by leaf, and wind, and rain,  
(And hear me with thine ears,)  
That, though I circle in the grain  
Five hundred rings of years—

## XXII.

“ Yet, since I first could cast a shade,  
Did never creature pass  
So slightly, musically made,  
So light upon the grass :

## XXIII.

“ For as to fairies, that will flit  
To make the greensward fresh,  
I hold them exquisitely knit,  
But far too spare of flesh.”

## XXIV.

O, hide thy knotted knees in fern,  
And overlook the chace ;  
And from thy topmost branch discern  
The roofs of Sumner-place.

## XXV.

But thou, whereon I carved her name,  
That oft hast heard my vows,  
Declare when last Olivia came  
To sport beneath thy boughs.

## XXVI.

“ O yesterday, you know, the fair  
Was holden at the town ;

Her father left his good arm-chair,  
And rode his hunter down.

## XXVII.

“ And with him Albert came on his.  
I looked at him with joy :  
As cowslip unto oxlip is,  
So seems she to the boy.

## XXVIII.

An hour had past—and, sitting straight  
Within the low-wheeled chaise,  
Her mother trundled to the gate  
Behind the dappled grays.

## XXIX.

“ But, as for her, she stayed at home,  
And on the roof she went,  
And down the way you use to come  
She looked with discontent.

## XXX.

“ She left the novel half-uncut  
Upon the rosewood shelf ;  
She left the new piano shut :  
She could not please herself.

## XXXI.

“ Then ran she, gamesome as the colt,  
And livelier than a lark  
She sent her voice through all the holt  
Before her, and the park.

## XXXII.

“ A light wind chased her on the wing,  
And in the chase grew wild,  
As close as might be would he cling  
About the darling child :

## XXXIII.

“ But light as any wind that blows  
 So fleetly did she stir,  
 The flower, she touched on, dipt and rose,  
 And turned to look at her.

## XXXIV.

“ And here she came, and round me played,  
 And sang to me the whole  
 Of those three stanzas that you made  
 About my ‘ giant bole ;’

## XXXV.

“ And in a fit of frolic mirth  
 She strove to span my waist :  
 Alas, I was so broad of girth,  
 I could not be embraced.

## XXXVI.

‘ I wished myself the fair young beech  
 That here beside me stands,  
 That round me, clasping each in each,  
 She might have locked her hands.

## XXXVII.

“ Yet seemed the pressure thrice as sweet  
 As woodbine’s fragile hold,  
 Or when I feel about my feet  
 The berried briony fold.”

## XXXVIII.

O muffle round thy knees with fern,  
 And shadow Sumner-chace !  
 Long may thy topmost branch discern .  
 The roofs of Sumner-place !

## XXXIX.

But tell me, did she read the name  
 I carved with many vows,

When last with throbbing heart I came  
To rest beneath thy boughs ?

## XL.

“ O yes, she wandered round and round  
These knotted knees of mine,  
And found, and kissed the name she found,  
And sweetly murmured thine.

## XLI.

“ A tear-drop trembled from its source,  
And down my surface crept.  
My sense of touch is something coarse,  
But I believe she wept.

## XLII.

“ Then flushed her cheek with rosy light,  
She glanced across the plain ;  
But not a creature was in sight :  
She kissed me once again.

## XLIII.

“ Her kisses were so close and kind,  
That, trust me on my word,  
Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,  
But yet my sap was stirred :

## XLIV.

“ And even into my inmost ring  
A pleasure I discerned,  
Like those blind motions of the Spring,  
That show the year is turned.

## XLV.

“ Thrice-happy he that may caress  
The ringlet's waving balm—  
The cushions of whose touch may press  
The maiden's tender palm.

## XLVI.

“ I, rooted here among the groves,  
 But languidly adjust  
 My vapid vegetable loves  
 With anthers and with dust :

## XLVII.

“ For ah! my friend, the days were brief  
 Whereof the poets talk,  
 When that, which breathes within the leaf,  
 Could slip its bark and walk.

## XLVIII.

“ But could I, as in times-foregone,  
 From spray, and branch, and stem,  
 Have sucked and gathered into one  
 The life that spreads in them,

## XLIX.

“ She had not found me so remiss ;  
 But lightly issuing through,  
 I would have paid her kiss for kiss  
 With usury thereto.”

## L.

O flourish high, with leafy towers,  
 And overlook the lea,  
 Pursue thy loves among the bowers,  
 But leave thou mine to me.

## LI.

O flourish, hidden deep in fern,  
 Old oak, I love thee well ;  
 A thousand thanks for what I learn  
 And what remains to tell.

## LII.

“ 'Tis little more : the day was warm ;  
 At last, tired out with play,

She sank her head upon her arm,  
And at my feet she lay.

## LIII.

“ Her eyelids dropped their silken eaves,  
I breathed upon her eyes  
Through all the summer of my leaves  
A welcome mixed with sighs.

## LIV.

“ I took the swarming sound of life—  
The music from the town—  
The murmurs of the drum and fife,  
And lulled them in my own.

## LV.

“ Sometimes I let a sunbeam slip,  
To light her shaded eye ;  
A second fluttered round her lip  
Like a golden butterfly ;

## LVI.

“ A third would glimmer on her neck  
To make the necklace shine ;  
Another slid, a sunny fleck,  
From head to ankle fine.

## LVII.

“ Then close and dark my arms I spread,  
And shadowed all her rest—  
Dropt dews upon her golden head,  
An acorn in her breast.

## LVIII.

“ But in a pet she started up,  
And plucked it out, and drew  
My little oakling from the cup,  
And flung him in the dew.

## LIX.

“ And yet it was a graceful gift—  
 I felt a pang within  
 As when I see the woodman lift  
 His axe to slay my kin.

## LX.

“ I shook him down because he was  
 The finest on the tree.  
 He lies beside thee on the grass.  
 O kiss him once for me !

## LXI.

“ O kiss him twice and thrice for me,  
 That have no lips to kiss,  
 For never yet was oak on lea  
 Shall grow so fair as this.”

## LXII.

Step deeper yet in herb and fern,  
 Look further through the chace,  
 Spread upward till thy boughs discern  
 The front of Sumner-place.

## LXIII.

This fruit of thine by Love is blest,  
 That but a moment lay  
 Where fairer fruit of Love may rest  
 Some happy future day.

## LXIV.

I kiss it twice, I kiss it thrice,  
 The warmth it thence shall win  
 To riper life may magnetize  
 The baby-oak within.

## LXV.

But thou, while kingdoms overset,  
 Or lapse from hand to hand,

Thy leaf shall never fail, nor yet  
Thine acorn in the land.

## LXVI.

May never saw dismember thee,  
Nor wielded axe disjoint;  
That art the fairest spoken tree  
From here to Lizard-point.

## LXVII.

O rock upon thy towery top  
All throats that gurgle sweet!  
All starry culmination drop  
Balm-dews to bathe thy feet!

## LXVIII.

All grass of silky feather grow—  
And while he sinks or swells  
The full south-breeze around thee blow  
The sound of minster bells.

## LXIX.

The fat earth feed thy branchy root,  
That under deeply strikes!  
The northern morning o'er thee shoot,  
High up, in silver spikes!

## LXX.

Nor ever lightning char thy grain,  
But, rolling as in sleep,  
Low thunders bring the mellow rain,  
That makes thee broad and deep!

## LXXI.

And hear me swear a solemn oath,  
That only by thy side  
Will I to Olive plight my troth,  
And gain her for my bride.



## LXXII.

And when my marriage-morn may fall,  
 She, Dryad-like, shall wear  
 Alternate leaf and acorn-ball  
 In wreath about her hair.

## LXXIII.

And I will work in prose and rhyme,  
 And praise thee more in both  
 Than bard has honored beech or lime,  
 Or that Thessalian growth

## LXXIV.

In which the swarthy ringdove sat,  
 And mystic sentence spoke ;  
 And more than England honors that,  
 Thy famous brother-oak,

## LXXV.

Wherein the younger Charles abode  
 Till all the paths were dim,  
 And far below the Roundhead rode,  
 And hummed a surly hymn.

## LOVE AND DUTY.

OF love that never found his earthly close,  
 What sequel ? Streaming eyes and breaking hearts ?  
 Or all the same as if he had not been ?

Not so. Shall Error in the round of time  
 Still father Truth ? O, shall the braggart shout  
 For some blind glimpse of freedom work itself  
 Through madness, hated by the wise, to law  
 System and empire ? Sin itself be found  
 The cloudy porch oft opening on the Sun ?  
 And only he, this wonder, dead, become

Mere highway dust? or year by year alone  
 Sit brooding in the ruins of a life,  
 Nightmare of youth, the spectre of himself?

If this were thus, if this, indeed, were all,  
 Better the narrow brain, the stony heart,  
 The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless days,  
 The long mechanic pacings to and fro,  
 The set gray life, and apathetic end.

But am I not the nobler through thy love?  
 O three times less unworthy! likewise thou  
 Art more through Love, and greater than thy years.  
 The Sun will run his orbit, and the Moon  
 Her circle. Wait, and Love himself will bring  
 The drooping flower of knowledge changed to fruit  
 Of wisdom. Wait: my faith is large in Time,  
 And that which shapes it to some perfect end.

Will some one say, then why not ill for good?  
 Why took ye not your pastime? To that man  
 My work shall answer, since I knew the right  
 And did it; for a man is not as God,  
 But then most Godlike being most a man.

—So let me think 'tis well for thee and me—  
 Ill-fated that I am, what lot is mine  
 Whose foresight preaches peace, my heart so slow  
 To feel it! For how hard it seemed to me,  
 When eyes, love-languid through half-tears, would  
 dwell

One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,  
 Then not to dare to see! when thy low voice,  
 Faltering, would break its syllables, to keep  
 My own full-tuned,—hold passion in a leash,  
 And not leap forth and fall about thy neck,  
 And on thy bosom, (deep-desired relief!)  
 Rain out the heavy mist of tears, that weighed  
 Upon my brain, my senses and my soul!

For Love himself took part against himself  
 To warn us off, and Duty loved of Love—  
 O this world's curse—beloved but hated—came  
 Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and mine,

And crying, "Who is this? behold thy bride,"  
She pushed me from thee.

If the sense is hard

To alien ears, I did not speak to these—  
No, not to thee, but to thyself in me:  
Hard is my doom and thine: thou knowest it all.

Could love part thus? was it not well to speak,  
To have spoken once? It could not but be well.  
The slow sweet hours that bring us all things good,  
The slow sad hours that bring us all things ill,  
And all good things from evil, brought the night  
In which we sat together and alone,  
And to the want, that hollowed all the heart,  
Gave utterance by the yearning of an eye,  
That burned upon its object through such tears  
As flow but once a life.

The trance gave way

To those caresses, when a hundred times  
In that last kiss, which never was the last,  
Farewell, like endless welcome, lived and died.  
Then followed counsel, comfort, and the words  
That make a man feel strong in speaking truth;  
Till now the dark was worn, and overhead  
The lights of sunset and of sunrise mixed  
In that brief night; the summer night, that paused  
Among her stars to hear us; stars that hung  
Love-charmed to listen: all the wheels of Time  
Spun round in station, but the end had come.

O then like those, who clench their nerves to  
rush  
Upon their dissolution, we two rose,  
There—closing like an individual life—  
In one blind cry of passion and of pain,  
Like bitter accusation even to death,  
Caught up the whole of love and uttered it,  
And bade adieu forever.

Live—yet live—

Shall sharpest pathos blight us, knowing all  
Life needs for life is possible to will—

Live happy, tend thy flowers; be tended by  
 My blessing! Should my Shadow cross thy thoughts  
 Too sadly for thy peace, remand it thou  
 For calmer hours to Memory's darkest hold,  
 If not to be forgotten—not at once—  
 Not all forgotten. Should it cross thy dreams,  
 O might it come like one that looks content,  
 With quiet eyes unfaithful to the truth,  
 And point thee forward to a distant light,  
 Or seem to lift a burthen from thy heart  
 And leave thee freer, till thou wake refreshed,  
 Then when the first low matin-chirp hath grown  
 Full quire, and morning driven her plow of pearl  
 Far furrowing into light the mounded rack,  
 Beyond the fair green field and eastern sea.

## THE GOLDEN YEAR

WELL, you shall have that song which Leonard  
 It was last summer on a tour in Wales: [wrote:  
 Old James was with me: we that day had been  
 Up Snowdon; and I wished for Leonard there,  
 And found him in Llanberis: then we crost  
 Between the lakes, and clambered half way up  
 The counter side; and that same song of his  
 He told me; for I bantered him, and swore  
 They said he lived shut up within himself,  
 A tongue-tied Poet in the feverous days,  
 That, setting the *how much* before the *how*,  
 Cry, like the daughters of the horse-leech, "give,  
 Cram us with all," but count not me the herd!

To which, "They call me what they will," he said:  
 "But I was born too late: the fair new forms,  
 That float about the threshold of an age,  
 Like truths of Science waiting to be caught—  
 Catch me who can, and make the catcher crowned—  
 Are taken by the forelock. Let it be.

But if you care indeed to listen, hear  
These measured words, my work of yestermorn.

“We sleep and wake and sleep, but all things  
move ;

The Sun flies forward to his brother Sun ;  
The dark Earth follows wheeled in her ellipse :  
And human things returning on themselves  
Move onward, leading up the golden year.

“Ah, though the times when some new thought  
can bud

Are but as poets' seasons when they flower,  
Yet seas that daily gain upon the shore  
Have ebb and flow conditioning their march,  
And slow and sure comes up the golden year.

“When wealth no more shall rest in mounded  
heaps,

But smit with freer light shall slowly melt  
In many streams to fatten lower lands,  
And light shall spread, and man be liker man  
Through all the season of the golden year.

“Shall eagles not be eagles? wrens be wrens?  
If all the world were falcons, what of that?  
The wonder of the eagle were the less,  
But he not less the eagle. Happy days  
Roll onward, leading up the golden year.

“Fly, happy, happy sails, and bear the Press ;  
Fly happy with the mission of the Cross ;  
Knit land to land, and blowing havenward.  
With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear of toll,  
Enrich the markets of the golden year.

“But we grow old. Ah! when shall all men's  
good

Be each man's rule, and universal Peace  
Lie like a shaft of light across the land,  
And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,  
Through all the circle of the golden year?”

Thus far he flowed, and ended; whereupon  
“Ah, folly!” in mimic cadence answered James—  
“Ah, folly! for it lies so far away,

Not in our time, nor in our children's time,  
 'Tis like the second world to us that live,  
 'Twere all as one to fix our hopes on Heaven  
 As on this vision of the golden year."

With that he struck his staff against the rocks  
 And broke it,—James,—you know him,—old, but  
 full

Of force and choler, and firm upon his feet,  
 And like an oaken stock in winter woods,  
 O'erflourished with the hoary clematis:  
 Then added, all in heat:

“What stuff is this?”

Old writers pushed the happy season back,—  
 The more fools they,—we forward: dreamers both:  
 You most, that in an age, when every hour  
 Must sweat her sixty minutes to the death,  
 Live on, God love us, as if the seedsman, rapt  
 Upon the teeming harvest, should not dip  
 His hand into the bag: but well I know  
 That unto him who works, and feels he works,  
 This same grand year is ever at the doors."

He spoke; and, high above, I heard them blast  
 The steep slate-quarry, and the great echo flap  
 And buffet round the hills from bluff to bluff.

## ULYSSES.

It little profits that an idle king,  
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
 Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me  
 I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
 Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed  
 Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those  
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
 Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;  
 For always roaming with a hungry heart  
 Much have I seen and known ; cities of men  
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
 Myself not least, but honored of them all ;  
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
 I am a part of all that I have met ;  
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough  
 Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades  
 Forever and forever when I move.  
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
 To rust unburnished, not to shine in use !  
 As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life  
 Were all too little, and of one to me  
 Little remains : but every hour is saved  
 From that eternal silence, something more,  
 A bringer of new things ; and vile it were  
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,  
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—  
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
 This labor, by slow prudence to make mild  
 A rugged people, and through soft degrees  
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
 Of common duties, decent not to fail  
 In offices of tenderness, and pay  
 Meet adoration to my household gods  
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port : the vessel puffs her sail :  
 There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,  
 Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought  
 with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took  
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;  
 Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;  
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.  
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:  
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the  
     deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,  
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
 Of all the western stars, until I die.  
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
 Though much is taken, much abides; and though  
 We are not now that strength which in old days  
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we  
     are;  
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

## LOCKSLEY HALL.

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet the  
     early morn:

Leave me here, and when you want me, sound  
     upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the cur-  
     lews call.

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over  
     Locksley Hall;



Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the  
sandy tracts,  
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I  
went to rest,  
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the  
West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising through the  
mellow shade,  
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver  
braid.

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a  
youth sublime  
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result  
of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land  
reposed;  
When I clung to all the present for the promise  
that it closed:

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could  
see;  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder  
that would be.—

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the  
Robin's breast;  
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself  
another crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the bur-  
nished dove;  
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to  
thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should  
 be for one so young,  
 And her eyes on all my motions with a mute ob-  
 servance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the  
 truth to me,  
 Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets  
 to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and  
 a light,  
 As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern  
 night.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden  
 storm of sighs—  
 All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel  
 eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should  
 do me wrong ;"  
 Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin ?" weeping, "I  
 have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in  
 his glowing hands ;  
 Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden  
 sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the  
 chords with might ;  
 Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in  
 music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the  
 copses ring,  
 And her whisper thronged my pulses with the ful-  
 ness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the  
stately ships,  
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of  
the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine  
no more!  
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren,  
barren shore!

Falsar than all fancy fathoms, falsar than all songs  
have sung,  
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrew-  
ish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known  
me—to decline  
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart  
than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by  
day,  
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympa-  
thize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with  
a clown,  
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to  
drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent  
its novel force,  
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than  
his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they  
are glazed with wine.  
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand  
in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is over-  
wrought :

Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with  
thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to under-  
stand—

Better thou wert dead before me, though I slew  
thee with my hand !

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the  
heart's disgrace,

Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last  
embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the  
strength of youth !

Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living  
truth !

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest  
Nature's rule !

Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead  
of the fool !

Well,—'tis well that I should bluster !—Hadst thou  
less unworthy proved—

Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever  
wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears  
but bitter fruit ?

I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be  
at the root.

Never, though my mortal summers to such length  
of years should come

As the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging  
rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the  
mind?

Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew  
her, kind?

I remember one that perished: sweetly did she  
speak and move:

Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to  
love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the  
love she bore?

No—she never loved me truly: love is love forever-  
more.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth  
the poet sings,

That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering  
happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart  
be put to proof,

In the dead, unhappy night, and when the rain is  
on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring  
at the wall,

Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the  
shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to hi  
drunken sleep,

To thy widowed marriage-pillows, to the tears that  
thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by  
the phantom years,

And a song from out the distance in the ringing of  
thine ears

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness  
on thy pain.

Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow ; get thee to thy  
rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace ; for a tender  
voice will cry.

'Tis a purer life than thine ; a lip to drain thy  
trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down : my latest rival  
brings thee rest.

Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the  
mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness  
not his due.

Half is thine and half is his : it will be worthy of  
the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty  
part,

With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a  
daughter's heart.

“ They were dangerous guides the feelings—she  
herself was not exempt—

Truly, she herself had suffered ”—Perish in thy  
self-contempt !

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy ! wherefore should  
I care ?

I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by  
despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon  
days like these ?

Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to  
golden keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets  
overflow.

I have but an angry fancy : what is that which I  
should do ?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's  
ground,

When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds  
are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that  
Honor feels,

And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each  
other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness ? I will turn that earlier  
page.

Hide me from my deep emotion, oh thou wondrous  
Mother-Age !

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before  
the strife,

When I heard my days before me, and the tumult  
of my life ;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming  
years would yield,

Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his  
father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and  
nearer drawn,

Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a  
dreary dawn ;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before  
him then,

Underneath the light he looks at, in among the  
throngs of men ;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping  
something new :  
That which they have done but earnest of the things  
that they shall do :

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could  
see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder  
that would be ;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of  
magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with  
costly bales ;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there  
rained a ghastly dew  
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the cen-  
tral blue ;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind  
rushing warm,  
With the standards of the peoples plunging through  
the thunder-storm ;

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the  
battle-flags were furled  
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the  
world ;

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful  
realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal  
law.

So I triumphed, ere my passion sweeping through  
me left me dry,  
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the  
jaundiced eye ;



Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are  
out of joint,  
Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from  
point to point :

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping  
nigher,  
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-  
dying fire.

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing  
purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the  
process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his  
youthful joys,  
Though the deep heart of existence beat forever  
like a boy's ?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger  
on the shore,  
And the individual withers, and the world is more  
and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears  
a laden breast,  
Full of sad experience moving toward the stillness  
of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the  
bugle-horn,  
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for  
their scorn :

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a  
mouldered string ?  
I am shamed through all my nature to have loved  
so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's  
 pleasure, woman's pain—  
 Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a  
 shallower brain :

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions,  
 matched with mine,  
 Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto  
 wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah,  
 for some retreat  
 Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began  
 to beat ;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-  
 starred ;  
 I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's  
 ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far  
 away,  
 On from island unto island at the gateways of the  
 day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and  
 happy skies,  
 Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots  
 of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European  
 flag,  
 Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the  
 trailer from the crag ;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the  
 heavy-fruited tree—  
 Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres  
 of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in  
this march of mind,  
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts  
that shake mankind.

There the passions, cramped no longer, shall have  
scope and breathing-space ;  
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my  
dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and  
they shall run,  
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their  
lances in the sun ;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rain-  
bows of the brooks,  
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable  
books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy ! but I *know* my  
words are wild,  
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the  
Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our  
glorious gains,  
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with  
lower pains !

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun  
or clime ?  
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of  
time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one  
by one,  
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's  
moon in Ajalon !

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range.  
 Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of change.

Through the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day :  
 Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-age, (for mine I knew not,) help me as when life begun :  
 Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the Sun—

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.  
 Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall !  
 Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapor from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,  
 Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow ;  
 For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

## G O D I V A .

*I waited for the train at Coventry ;  
 I hung with grooms and porters on the bridge,*

To watch the three tall spires ; and there I shaped  
The city's ancient legend into this :—

Not only we, the latest seed of Time,  
New men, that in the flying of a wheel  
Cry down the past, not only we, that prate  
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the people well,  
And loathed to see them overtaxed ; but she  
Did more, and underwent, and overcame,  
The woman of a thousand summers back,  
Godiva, wife to that grim Earl, who ruled  
In Coventry : for when he laid a tax  
Upon his town, and all the mothers brought  
Their children, clamoring, " If we pay, we starve !"  
She sought her lord, and found him, where he strode  
About the hall, among his dogs, alone,  
His beard a foot before him, and his hair  
A yard behind. She told him of their tears,  
And prayed him, " If they pay this tax, they starve."  
Whereat he stared, replying half-amazed,  
" You would not let your little finger ache  
For such as *these* ?"—" But I would die," said she.  
He laughed, and swore by Peter and by Paul :  
Then fillicked at the diamond in her ear ;  
" O ay, ay, ay, you talk !"—" Alas !" she said,  
" But prove me what it is I would not do."  
And from a heart as rough as Esau's hand,  
He answered, " Ride you naked through the town,  
And I repeal it ;" and nodding, as in scorn,  
He parted, with great strides among his dogs.

So left alone, the passions of her mind,  
As winds from all the compass shift and blow,  
Made war upon each other for an hour,  
Till pity won. She sent a herald forth,  
And bade him cry, with sound of trumpet, all  
The hard condition ; but that she would loose  
The people : therefore, as they loved her well,  
From then till noon no foot should pace the street,  
No eye look down, she passing ; but that all  
Should keep within, door shut, and window barred.

Then fled she to her inmost bower, and **there**  
 Unclasped the wedded eagles of her belt,  
 The grim Earl's gift ; but ever at a breath  
 She lingered, looking like a summer moon  
 Half-dipt in cloud : anon she shook her head,  
 And showered the rippled ringlets to her knee ;  
 Unclad herself in haste ; adown the stair  
 Stole on ; and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid  
 From pillar unto pillar, until she reached  
 The gateway ; there she found her palfrey **trapt**  
 In purple blazoned with armorial gold.

Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity :  
 The deep air listened round her as she rode,  
 And all the low wind hardly breathed for fear.  
 The little wide-mouthed heads upon the spout  
 Had cunning eyes to see : the barking cur  
 Made her cheek flame : her palfrey's footfall shot  
 Light horrors through her pulses : the blind walls  
 Were full of chinks and holes ; and overhead  
 Fantastic gables, crowding, stared : but she  
 Not less through all bore up, till, last, she saw  
 The white-flowered elder thicket from the field  
 Glean through the Gothic archways in the wall.

Then she rode back, clothed on with chastity.  
 And one low churl, compact of thankless earth,  
 The fatal byword of all years to come,  
 Boring a little auger-hole in fear,  
 Peeped—but his eyes, before they had their will,  
 Were shrivelled into darkness in his head,  
 And dropt before him. So the Powers, who **wait**  
 On noble deeds, cancelled a sense misused ;  
 And she, that knew not, passed : and all at once,  
 With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless

noon

Was clashed and hammered from a hundred towers,  
 One after one : but even then she gained  
 Her bower ; whence reissuing, robed and crowned,  
 To meet her lord, she took the tax away,  
 And built herself an everlasting name.

## THE TWO VOICES.

A STILL small voice spake unto me,  
"Thou art so full of misery,  
Were it not better not to be?"

Then to the still small voice I said:  
"Let me not cast in endless shade  
What is so wonderfully made."

To which the voice did urge reply:  
"To-day I saw the dragon-fly  
Come from the wells where he did lie.

"An inner impulse rent the veil  
Of his old husk: from head to tail  
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

"He dried his wings: like gauze they grew  
Through crofts and pastures wet with dew  
A living flash of light he flew."

I said, "When first the world began,  
Young Nature through five cycles ran,  
And in the sixth she moulded man.

"She gave him mind, the lordliest  
Proportion, and, above the rest,  
Dominion in the head and breast."

Thereto the silent voice replied:  
"Self-blinded are you by your pride:  
Look up through night: the world is wide.

"This truth within thy mind rehearse,  
That in a boundless universe  
Is boundless better, boundless worse.

“ Think you this mould of hopes and fears  
 Could find no statelier than his peers  
 In yonder hundred million spheres ? ”

It spake, moreover, in my mind :  
 “ Though thou wert scattered to the wind,  
 Yet is there plenty of the kind.”

Then did my response clearer fall :  
 “ No compound of this earthly ball  
 Is like another, all in all.”

To which he answered scoffingly :  
 “ Good soul ! suppose I grant it thee,  
 Who'll weep for thy deficiency ? ”

“ Or will one beam be less intense,  
 When thy peculiar difference  
 Is cancelled in the world of sense ? ”

I would have said, “ Thou canst not know,  
 But my full heart, that worked below,  
 Rained through my sight its overflow.”

Again the voice spake unto me :  
 “ Thou art so steeped in misery,  
 Surely 'twere better not to be.”

“ Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,  
 Nor any train of reason keep :  
 Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep.”

I said, “ The years with change advance :  
 If I make dark my countenance,  
 I shut my life from happier chance.”

“ Some turn this sickness yet might take,  
 Even yet.” But he : “ What drug can make  
 A withered palsy cease to shake ? ”



I wept, " Though I should die, I know  
That all about the thorn will blow  
In tufts of rosy-tinted snow ;

" And men, through novel spheres of thought  
Still moving after truth long sought,  
Will learn new things when I am not."

" Yet," said the secret voice, " some time,  
Sooner or later, will gray prime  
Make thy grass hoar with early rime.

" Not less swift souls that yearn for light,  
Rapt after heaven's starry flight,  
Would sweep the tracts of day and night.

" Not less the bee would range her cells,  
The furzy prickle fire the dells,  
The foxglove cluster dappled bells."

I said that " all the years invent ;  
Each month is various to present  
The world with some development.

" Were this not well, to bide mine hour,  
Though watching from a ruined tower  
How grows the day of human power ?"

" The highest-mounted mind," he said,  
" Still sees the sacred morning spread  
The silent summit overhead.

" Will thirty seasons render plain  
Those lonely lights that still remain,  
Just breaking over land and main ?

" Or make that morn, from his cold crown  
And crystal silence creeping down,  
Flood with full daylight glebe and town ?

“ Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let  
Thy feet, millenniums hence, be set  
In midst of knowledge dreamed not yet.

“ Thou hast not gained a real height,  
Nor art thou nearer to the light,  
Because the scale is infinite.

“ ’Twere better not to breathe or speak,  
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,  
And seem to find, but still to seek.

“ Moreover, but to seem to find  
Asks what thou lackest, thought resigned,  
A healthy frame, a quiet mind.”

I said, “ When I am gone away,  
‘ He dared not tarry,’ men will say,  
Doing dishonor to my clay.”

“ This is more vile,” he made reply,  
“ To breathe and loathe, to live and sigh,  
Than once from dread of pain to die.

“ Sick art thou—a divided will  
Still heaping on the fear of ill  
The fear of men, a coward still.

“ Do men love thee ? Art thou so bound  
To men, that how thy name may sound  
Will vex thee lying underground ?

“ The memory of the withered leaf  
In endless time is scarce more brief  
Than of the garnered Autumn-sheaf.

“ Go, vexed Spirit, sleep in trust ;  
The right ear, that is filled with dust,  
Hears little of the false or just.”

“ Hard task, to pluck resolve,” I cried,  
“ From emptiness and the waste wide  
Of that abyss, or scornful pride !

“ Nay—rather yet that I could raise  
One hope that warned me in the days  
While still I yearned for human praise.

“ When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,  
Among the tents I paused and sung,  
The distant battle flashed and rung.

“ I sung the joyful Pæan clear,  
And, sitting, burnished without fear  
The brand, the buckler, and the spear—

“ Waiting to strive a happy strife,  
To war with falsehood to the knife,  
And not to lose the good of life—

“ Some hidden principle to move,  
To put together, part and prove,  
And mete the bounds of hate and love—

“ As far as might be, to carve out  
Free space for every human doubt,  
That the whole mind might orb about—

“ To search through all I felt and saw,  
The springs of life, the depths of awe,  
And reach the law within the law :

“ At least, not rotting like a weed,  
But having sown some generous seed,  
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

“ To pass, when Life her light withdraws,  
Not void of righteous self-applause,  
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

“ In some good cause, not in mine own,  
To perish, wept for, honored, known,  
And like a warrior overthrown ;

“ Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,  
When, soiled with noble dust, he hears  
His country’s war-song thrill his ears :

“ Then dying of a mortal stroke,  
What time the foeman’s line is broke,  
And all the war is rolled in smoke.”

“ Yea !” said the voice, “ thy dream was good,  
While thou abodest in the bud.  
It was the stirring of the blood.

“ If Nature put not forth her power  
About the opening of the flower,  
Who is it that could live an hour ?

“ Then comes the check, the change, the fall.  
Pain rises up, old pleasures pall.  
There is one remedy for all.

“ Yet hadst thou, through enduring pain,  
Linked month to month with such a chain  
Of knitted purport, all were vain.

“ Thou hadst not between death and birth  
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.  
So were thy labor little-worth.

“ That men with knowledge merely played,  
I told thee—hardly nigher made,  
Though scaling slow from grade to grade ;

“ Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,  
Named man, may hope some truth to find,  
That bears relation to the mind.

“ For every worm beneath the moon  
Draws different threads, and late and soon  
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

“ Cry, faint not : either Truth is born  
Beyond the polar gleam forlorn,  
Or in the gateways of the morn.

“ Cry, faint not, climb : the summits slope  
Beyond the furthest flights of hope,  
Wrapt in dense cloud from base to cope,

“ Sometimes a little corner shines,  
As over rainy mist inclines  
A gleaming crag with belts of pines.

“ I will go forward, sayest thou,  
I shall not fail to find her now.  
Look up, the fold is on her brow.

“ If straight thy track, or if oblique,  
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost strike,  
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like ;

“ And owning but a little more  
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor,  
Calling thyself a little lower

“ Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl !  
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl ?  
There is one remedy for all.”

“ O dull, one-sided voice,” said I,  
“ Wilt thou make everything a lie,  
To flatter me that I may die ?

“ I know that age to age succeeds,  
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,  
A dust of systems and of creeds.

“I cannot hide that some have striven,  
Achieving calm, to whom was given  
The joy that mixes man with Heaven:

“Who, rowing hard against the stream,  
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,  
And did not dream it was a dream;

“But heard, by secret transport led,  
Even in the charnels of the dead,  
The murmur of the fountain-head—

“Which did accomplish their desire,  
Bore and forbore, and did not tire,  
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.

“He heeded not reviling tones,  
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,  
Though cursed and scorned, and bruised with  
stones:

“But looking upward, full of grace,  
He prayed, and from a happy place  
God’s glory smote him on the face.”

The sullen answer slid betwixt:

“Not that the grounds of hope were fixed,  
The elements were kindlier mixed.”

I said, “I toil beneath the curse,  
But, knowing not the universe,  
I fear to slide from bad to worse.

“And that, in seeking to undo  
One riddle, and to find the true,  
I knit a hundred others new:

“Or that this anguish fleeting hence,  
Unmanacled from bonds of sense,  
Be fixed and frozen to permanence:

“ For I go, weak from suffering here ;  
Naked I go, and void of cheer :  
What is it that I may not fear ? ”

“ Consider well,” the voice replied,  
“ His face, that two hours since hath died ;  
Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride ? ”

“ Will he obey when one commands ?  
Or answer should one press his hands ?  
He answers not, nor understands.

“ His palms are folded on his breast :  
There is no other thing expressed  
But long disquiet merged in rest.

“ His lips are very mild and meek :  
Though one should smite him on the cheek,  
And on the mouth, he will not speak.

“ His little daughter, whose sweet face  
He kissed, taking his last embrace,  
Becomes dishonor to her race—

“ His sons grow up that bear his name,  
Some grow to honor, some to shame,—  
But he is chill to praise or blame.

“ He will not hear the north-wind rave,  
Nor, moaning, household shelter crave  
From winter rains that beat his grave.

“ High up the vapors fold and swim :  
About him broods the twilight dim :  
The place he knew forgetteth him.”

“ If all be dark, vague voice,” I said,  
“ These things are wrapped in doubt and dread,  
Nor canst thou show the dead are dead.

“The sap dries up : the plant declines.  
A deeper tale my heart divines.  
Know I not Death ? the outward signs ?

“I found him when my years were few ;  
A shadow on the graves I knew,  
And darkness in the village yew.

“From grave to grave the shadow crept :  
In her still place the morning wept :  
Touched by his feet the daisy slept.

“The simple senses crowned his head :  
‘Omega ! thou art Lord,’ they said,  
‘We find no motion in the dead.’”

“Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,  
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,  
Not make him sure that he shall cease ?

“Who forged that other influence,  
That heat of inward evidence,  
By which he doubts against the sense ?

“He owns the fatal gift of eyes,  
That read his spirit blindly wise,  
Not simple as a thing that dies.

“Here sits he shaping wings to fly ;  
His heart forebodes a mystery :  
He names the name Eternity.

“That type of Perfect in his mind  
In Nature can he nowhere find,  
He sows himself on every wind.

“He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,  
And through thick veils to apprehend  
A labor working to an end.



“ The end and the beginning vex  
His reason : many things perplex,  
With motions, checks, and counter-checks.

“ He knows a baseness in his blood  
At such strange war with something good,  
He may not do the thing he would.

“ Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn.  
Vast images in glimmering dawn,  
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

“ Ah ! sure within him and without,  
Could his dark wisdom find it out,  
There must be answer to his doubt.

“ But thou canst answer not again.  
With thine own weapon art thou slain,  
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

“ The doubt would rest, I dare not solve.  
In the same circle we revolve.  
Assurance only breeds resolve.”

“ As when a billow, blown against,  
Falls back, the voice with which I fenced  
A little ceased, but recommenced.

“ Where wert thou when thy father played  
In his free field, and pastime made,  
A merry boy in sun and shade ?

“ A merry boy they called him then.  
He sat upon the knees of men  
In days that never come again.

“ Before the little ducts began  
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran  
Their course, till thou wert also man :

“ Who took a wife, who reared his race,  
Whose wrinkles gathered on his face,  
Whose troubles number with his days :

“ A life of nothings, nothing-worth,  
From that first nothing ere his birth  
To that last nothing under earth ! ”

“ These words,” I said, “ are like the rest,  
No certain clearness, but at best  
A vague suspicion of the breast :

“ But if I grant, thou might'st defend  
The thesis which thy words intend—  
That to begin implies to end ;

“ Yet how should I for certain hold,  
Because my memory is so cold,  
That I first was in human mould ?

“ I cannot make this matter plain,  
But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,  
A random arrow from the brain.

“ It may be that no life is found,  
Which only to one engine bound  
Falls off, but cycles always round.

“ As old mythologies relate,  
Some draught of Lethe might await  
The slipping through from state to state.

“ As here we find in trances, men  
Forget the dream that happens then,  
Until they fall in trance again.

“ So might we, if our state were such  
As one before, remember much,  
For those two likes might meet and touch

“ But, if I lapsed from nobler place,  
Some legend of a fallen race  
Alone might hint of my disgrace ;

“ Some vague emotion of delight  
In gazing up an Alpine height,  
Some yearning toward the lamps of night.

“ Or if through lower lives I came—  
Though all experience past became  
Consolidate in mind and frame—

“ I might forget my weaker lot ;  
For is not our first year forgot ?  
The haunts of memory echo not.

“ And men, whose reason long was blind,  
From cells of madness unconfined,  
Oft lose whole years of darker mind.

“ Much more, if first I floated free,  
As naked essence, must I be  
Incompetent of memory :

“ For memory dealing but with time,  
And he with matter, could she climb  
Beyond her own material prime ?

“ Moreover, something is or seems,  
That touches me with mystic gleams,  
• Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

“ Of something felt, like something here ;  
Of something done, I know not where ;  
Such as no language may declare.”

The still voice laughed. “ I talk,” said he,  
“ Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee  
Thy pain is a reality.”

“But thou,” said I, “hast missed thy mark  
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,  
By making all the horizon dark.

“Why not set forth, if I should do  
This rashness, that which might ensue  
With this old soul in organs new ?

“Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath  
Has ever truly longed for death.

“'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
O life, not death, for which we pant ;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.”

I ceased, and sat as one forlorn.  
Then said the voice, in quiet scorn,  
“Behold, it is the Sabbath morn.”

And I arose, and I released  
The casement, and the light increased  
With freshness in the dawning east.

Like softened airs that blowing steal,  
When meres begin to uncongeal,  
The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest :  
Passing the place where each must rest,  
Each entered like a welcome guest.

One walked between his wife and child,  
With measured footfall firm and mild,  
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood  
Leaned on him, faithful, gentle, good,  
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,  
The little maiden walked demure,  
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,  
My frozen heart began to beat,  
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wandered on.  
I spoke, but answer came there none.  
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

A second voice was at mine ear,  
A little whisper silver-clear,  
A murmur, "Be of better cheer."

As from some blissful neighborhood,  
A notice faintly understood,  
"I see the end, and know the good."

A little hint to solace woe,  
A hint, a whisper breathing low,  
"I may not speak of what I know."

Like an Æolian harp that wakes  
No certain air, but overtakes  
Far thought with music that it makes:

Such seemed the whisper at my side:  
"What is it thou knowest, sweet voice?" I  
cried.

"A hidden hope," the voice replied:

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour  
From out my sullen heart a power  
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

To feel, although no tongue can prove,  
That every cloud, that spreads above  
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,  
 And Nature's living motion lent  
 The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wondered at the bounteous hours,  
 The slow result of winter showers:  
 You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

I wondered, while I paced along:  
 The woods were filled so full with song,  
 There seemed no room for sense of wrong.

So variously seemed all things wrought,  
 I marvelled how the mind was brought  
 To anchor by one gloomy thought;

And wherefore rather I made choice  
 To commune with that barren voice,  
 Than him that said, "Rejoice! rejoice!"

## THE DAY-DREAM.

### PROLOGUE.

O, LADY FLORA, let me speak:  
 A pleasant hour has past away  
 While, dreaming on your damask cheek,  
 The dewy sister-eyelids lay.  
 As by the lattice you reclined,  
 I went through many wayward moods  
 To see you dreaming—and, behind,  
 A summer crisp with shining woods.  
 And I too dreamed, until at last  
 Across my fancy, brooding warm,  
 The reflex of a legend past,  
 And loosely settled into form.

And would you have the thought I had,  
 And see the vision that I saw,  
 Then take the broidery-frame, and add  
 A crimson to the quaint Macaw,  
 And I will tell it. Turn your face,  
 Nor look with that too-earnest eye—  
 The rhymes are dazzled from their place,  
 And ordered words asunder fly.

## THE SLEEPING PALACE.

The varying year with blade and sheaf  
 Clothes and re-clothes the happy plains;  
 Here rests the sap within the leaf,  
 Here stays the blood along the veins.  
 Faint shadows, vapors lightly curled,  
 Faint murmurs from the meadows come,  
 Like hints and echoes of the world  
 To spirits folded in the womb.

Soft lustre bathes the range of urns  
 On every slanting terrace-lawn.  
 The fountain to his place returns  
 Deep in the garden lake withdrawn.  
 Here droops the banner on the tower,  
 On the hall-hearths the festal fires,  
 The peacock in his laurel bower,  
 The parrot in his gilded wires.

Roof-haunting martins warm their eggs:  
 In these, in those the life is stayed.  
 The mantles from the golden pegs  
 Droop sleepily: no sound is made,  
 Not even of a gnat that sings.  
 More like a picture seemeth all  
 Than those old portraits of old kings,  
 That watch the sleepers from the wall.

Here sits the Butler with a flask  
 Between his knees, half-drained; and there  
 The wrinkled steward at his task,  
 The maid-of-honor blooming fair:  
 The page has caught her hand in his:  
 Her lips are severed as to speak:  
 His own are pouted to a kiss:  
 The blush is fixed upon her cheek.

Till all the hundred summers pass,  
 The beams, that through the Oriel shine,  
 Make prisms in every carven glass,  
 And beaker brimmed with noble wine.  
 Each baron at the banquet sleeps,  
 Grave faces gathered in a ring.  
 His state the king reposing keeps.  
 He must have been a jovial king.

All round a hedge upshoots, and shows  
 At distance like a little wood;  
 Thorns, ivies, woodbine, mistletoes,  
 And grapes with bunches red as blood;  
 All creeping plants, a wall of green  
 Close-matted, burr and brake and briar,  
 And glimpsing over these, just seen,  
 High up, the topmost palace-spire.

When will the hundred summers die,  
 And thought and time be born again,  
 And newer knowledge, drawing nigh,  
 Bring truth that sways the soul of men?  
 Here all things in their place remain,  
 As all were ordered, ages since.  
 Come, Care and Pleasure, Hope and Pain,  
 And bring the fated fairy Prince.



## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

Year after year unto her feet,  
She lying on her couch alone,  
Across the purple coverlet,  
The maiden's jet-black hair has grown,  
On either side her tranced form  
Forth streaming from a braid of pearl :  
The slumbrous light is rich and warm,  
And moves not on the rounded curl.

The silk star-broidered coverlid  
Unto her limbs itself doth mould  
Languidly ever ; and, amid  
Her full black ringlets downward rolled,  
Gloweth forth each softly-shadowed arm  
With bracelets of the diamond bright :  
Her constant beauty doth inform  
Stillness with love, and day with light.

She sleeps : her breathings are not heard  
In palace chambers far apart.  
The fragrant tresses are not stirred  
That lie upon her charmed heart.  
She sleeps : on either hand upswells  
The gold-fringed pillow lightly prest .  
She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells  
A perfect form in perfect rest.

## THE ARRIVAL.

All precious things, discovered late,  
To those that seek them issue forth ;  
For love in sequel works with fate,  
And draws the veil from hidden worth.  
He travels far from other skies—  
His mantle glitters on the rocks—

A fairy Prince, with joyful eyes,  
And lighter-footed than the fox.

The bodies and the bones of those  
That strove in other days to pass,  
Are withered in the thorny close,  
Or scattered blanching in the grass.  
He gazes on the silent dead :  
“ They perished in their daring deeds.”  
This proverb flashes through his head,  
“ The many fail : the one succeeds.”

He comes, scarce knowing what he seeks :  
He breaks the hedge : he enters there :  
The color flies into his cheeks :  
He trusts to light on something fair ;  
For all his life the charm did talk  
About his path, and hover near  
With words of promise in his walk,  
And whispered voices at his ear.

More close and close his footsteps wind ;  
The magic music in his heart  
Beats quick and quicker, till he find  
The quiet chamber far apart.  
His spirit flutters like a lark,  
He stoops—to kiss her—on his knee.  
“ Love, if thy tresses be so dark,  
How dark those hidden eyes must be !”

#### THE REVIVAL.

A touch, a kiss ! the charm was snapt.  
There rose a noise of striking clocks,  
And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,  
And barking dogs, and crowing cocks ;  
A fuller light illumined all,  
A breeze through all the garden swept,

A sudden hubbub shook the hall,  
And sixty feet the fountain leapt.

The hedge broke in, the banner blew,  
The butler drank, the steward scrawled,  
The fire shot up, the martin flew,  
The parrot screamed, the peacock squalled,  
The maid and page renewed their strife,  
The palace banged, and buzzed and clackt,  
And all the long-pent stream of life  
Dashed downward in a cataract.

And last with these the king awoke,  
And in his chair himself upreared,  
And yawned, and rubbed his face, and spoke,  
"By holy rood, a royal beard!  
How say you? we have slept, my lords.  
My beard has grown into my lap."  
The barons swore, with many words,  
'Twas but an after-dinner's nap.

"Pardy," returned the king, "but still  
My joints are something stiff or so.  
My lord, and shall we pass the bill  
I mentioned half an hour ago?"  
The chancellor, sedate and vain,  
In courteous words returned reply:  
But dallied with his golden chain,  
And, smiling, put the question by.

#### THE DEPARTURE.

And on her lover's arm she leant,  
And round her waist she felt it fold,  
And far across the hills they went  
In that new world which is the old:  
Across the hills, and far away  
Beyond their utmost purple rim,

And deep into the dying day  
The happy princess followed him.

“ I'd sleep another hundred years,  
O love, for such another kiss ;”  
“ O wake forever, love,” she hears,  
“ O love, 'twas such as this and this.”  
And o'er them many a sliding star,  
And many a merry wind was borne,  
And, streamed through many a golden bar,  
The twilight melted into morn.

“ O eyes long laid in happy sleep !”  
“ O happy sleep, that lightly fled !”  
“ O happy kiss, that woke thy sleep !”  
“ O love, thy kiss would wake the dead !”  
And o'er them many a flowing range  
Of vapor buoyed the crescent-bark,  
And, rapt through many a rosy change,  
The twilight died into the dark.

“ A hundred summers ! can it be ?  
And whither goest thou, tell me where !”  
“ O seek my father's court with me,  
For there are greater wonders there.”  
And o'er the hills, and far away  
Beyond their utmost purple rim,  
Beyond the night, across the day,  
Through all the world she followed him.

#### MORAL:

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,  
And if you find no moral there,  
Go look in any glass and say,  
What moral is in being fair.

O, to what uses shall we put  
 The wildweed-flower that simply blows?  
 And is there any moral shut  
 Within the bosom of the rose?

But any man that walks the mead  
 In bud or blade, or bloom, may find,  
 According as his humors lead,  
 A meaning suited to his mind.  
 And liberal applications lie  
 In Art like Nature, dearest friend;  
 So 'twere to cramp its use, if I  
 Should hook it to some useful end.

## L'ENVOI.

You shake your head. A random string  
 Your finer female sense offends.  
 Well—were it not a pleasant thing  
 To fall asleep with all one's friends;  
 To pass with all our social ties  
 To silence from the paths of men;  
 And every hundred years to rise  
 And learn the world, and sleep again;  
 To sleep through terms of mighty wars,  
 And wake on science grown to more,  
 On secrets of the brain, the stars,  
 As wild as aught of fairy lore;  
 And all that else the years will show,  
 The Poet-forms of stronger hours,  
 The vast Republics that may grow,  
 The Federations and the Powers;  
 Titanic forces taking birth  
 In divers seasons, divers climes;  
 For we are Ancients of the earth,  
 And in the morning of the times.

So sleeping, so aroused from sleep  
 Through sunny decades new and strange,  
 Or gay quinqueniads, would we reap  
 The flower and quintessence of change.

Ah, yet would I—and would I might !  
 So much your eyes my fancy take—  
 Be still the first to leap to light,  
 That I might kiss those eyes awake !  
 For, am I right or am I wrong,  
 To choose your own you did not care ;  
 You'd have *my* moral from the song,  
 And I will take my pleasure there :  
 And, am I right or am I wrong,  
 My fancy, ranging through and through,  
 To search a meaning for the song,  
 Perforce will still revert to you ;  
 Nor finds a closer truth than this  
 All-graceful head, so richly curled,  
 And evermore a costly kiss,  
 The prelude to some brighter world.

For since the time when Adam first  
 Embraced his Eve in happy hour,  
 And every bird of Eden burst  
 In carol, every bud to flower,  
 What eyes, like thine, have wakened hopes ?  
 What lips, like thine, so sweetly joined ?  
 Where on the double rosebud droops  
 The fulness of the pensive mind ;  
 Which all too dearly self-involved,  
 Yet sleeps a dreamless sleep to me ;  
 A sleep by kisses undissolved,  
 That lets thee neither hear nor see :  
 But break it. In the name of wife,  
 And in the rights that name may give,  
 Are clasped the moral of thy life,  
 And that for which I care to live.

## EPILOGUE.

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,  
 And, if you find a meaning there,  
 O whisper to your glass, and say,  
 "What wonder, if he thinks me fair?"  
 What wonder I was all unwise,  
 To shape the song for your delight,  
 Like long-tailed birds of Paradise,  
 That float through Heaven, and cannot light?  
 Or old-world trains, upheld at court  
 By Cupid-boys of blooming hue—  
 But take it—earnest wed with sport,  
 And either sacred unto you.

## AMPHION.

My father left a park to me,  
 But it is wild and barren,  
 A garden too with scarce a tree,  
 And waster than a warren:  
 Yet say the neighbors when they call,  
 It is not bad but good land,  
 And in it is the germ of all  
 That grows within the woodland.

O had I lived when song was great  
 In days of old Amphion,  
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,  
 Nor cared for seed or scion!  
 And had I lived when song was great,  
 And legs of trees were limber,  
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,  
 And fiddled in the timber!

'Tis said he had a tuneful tongue,  
 Such happy intonation,

Wherever he sat down and sung  
 He left a small plantation ;  
 Wherever in a lonely grove  
 He set up his forlorn pipes,  
 The gouty oak began to move,  
 And flounder into hornpipes.

The mountain stirred its bushy crown,  
 And, as tradition teaches,  
 Young ashes pirouetted down,  
 Coquetting with young beeches ;  
 And briony-vine and ivy-wreath  
 Ran forward to his rhyming,  
 And from the valleys underneath  
 Came little copses climbing.

The linden broke her ranks and rent  
 The woodbine wreaths that bind her,  
 And down the middle buzz ! she went  
 With all her bees behind her :  
 The poplars, in long order due,  
 With cypress promenaded,  
 The shock-head willows two and two  
 By rivers galloped.

Came wet-shod alder from the wave,  
 Came yews, a dismal coterie ;  
 Each plucked his one foot from the grave,  
 Poussetting with a sloe-tree :  
 Old elms came breaking from the vine,  
 The vine streamed out to follow,  
 And, sweating rosin, plumped the pine  
 From many a cloudy hollow.

And wasn't it a sight to see,  
 When, ere his song was ended,  
 Like some great landslip, tree by tree,  
 The country-side descended ;  
 And shepherds from the mountain-caves



Looked down, half-pleased, half-frightened,  
As dashed about the drunken leaves  
The random sunshine lightened!

O, nature first was fresh to men,  
And wanton without measure;  
So youthful and so flexile then,  
You moved her at your pleasure.  
Twang out, my fiddle! shake the twigs!  
And make her dance attendance:  
Blow, flute, and stir the stiff-set sprigs,  
And scirrhous roots and tendons.

'Tis vain! in such a brassy age  
I could not move a thistle;  
The very sparrows in the hedge  
Scarce answer to my whistle;  
Or at the most, when three-parts-sick  
With strumming and with scraping,  
A jackass heehaws from the rick,  
The passive oxen gaping.

But what is that I hear? a sound  
Like sleepy counsel pleading:  
O Lord!—'tis in my neighbor's ground,  
The modern Muses reading.  
They read Botanic Treatises,  
& And Works on Gardening through there,  
And Methods of transplanting trees,  
To look as if they grew there.

The withered Misses! how they prose  
O'er books of travelled seamen,  
And show you slips of all that grows  
From England to Van Diemen.  
They read in arbors clipt and cut,  
And alleys, faded places,  
By squares of tropic summer shut,  
And warmed in crystal cases.

But these, though fed with careful dirt,  
 Are neither green nor sappy ;  
 Half-conscious of the garden-squirt,  
 The spindlings look unhappy.  
 Better to me the meanest weed  
 That blows upon its mountain,  
 The vilest herb that runs to seed  
 Beside its native fountain.

And I must work through months of toil,  
 And years of cultivation,  
 Upon my proper patch of soil,  
 To grow my own plantation.  
 I'll take the showers as they fall,  
 I will not vex my bosom :  
 Enough, if at the end of all  
 A little garden blossom.

## ST. AGNES' EVE.

### I.

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows  
 Are sparkling to the moon :  
 My breath to heaven like vapor goes :  
 May my soul follow soon !  
 The shadows of the convent-towers  
 Slant down the snowy sward,  
 Still creeping with the creeping hours  
 That lead me to my Lord :  
 Make Thou my spirit pure and clear  
 As are the frosty skies,  
 Or this first snowdrop of the year  
 That in my bosom lies.

### II.

As these white robes are soiled and dark,  
 To yonder shining ground ;

As this pale taper's earthly spark,  
 To yonder argent round ;  
 So shows my soul before the Lamb,  
 My spirit before Thee ;  
 So in mine earthly house I am,  
 To that I hope to be.  
 Break up the heavens, oh Lord ! and far,  
 Through all yon starlight keen,  
 Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,  
 In raiment white and clean.

## III.

He lifts me to the golden doors ;  
 The flashes come and go ;  
 All heaven bursts her starry floors,  
 And strews her lights below,  
 And deepens on and up ! the gates  
 Roll back, and far within  
 For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,  
 To make me pure of sin.  
 The sabbaths of Eternity,  
 One sabbath deep and wide—  
 A light upon the shining sea—  
 The Bridegroom with his bride !

## SIR GALAHAD.

## I.

My good blade carves the casques of men,  
 My tough lance thrusteth sure,  
 My strength is as the strength of ten,  
 Because my heart is pure.  
 The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,  
 The hard brands shiver on the steel,  
 The splintered spear-shafts crack and fly,  
 The horse and rider reel :  
 They reel, they roll in clanging lists,

And when the tide of combat stands,  
 Perfume and flowers fall in showers,  
 That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

## II.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend  
 On whom their favors fall !  
 For them I battle till the end,  
 To save from shame and thrall :  
 But all my heart is drawn above,  
 My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine :  
 I never felt the kiss of love,  
 Nor maiden's hand in mine.  
 More bounteous aspects on me beam,  
 Me mightier transports move and thrill ;  
 So keep I fair through faith and prayer  
 A virgin heart in work and will.

## III.

When down the stormy crescent goes,  
 A light before me swims,  
 Between dark stems the forest glows,  
 I hear a noise of hymns :  
 Then by some secret shrine I ride ;  
 I hear a voice, but none are there ;  
 The stalls are void, the doors are wide,  
 The tapers burning fair.  
 Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,  
 The silver vessels sparkle clean,  
 The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,  
 And solemn chants resound between.

## IV.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres  
 I find a magic bark ;  
 I leap on board : no helmsman steers :  
 I float till all is dark.  
 A gentle sound, an awful light !  
 Three angels bear the holy Grail :

With folded feet, in stoles of white,  
 On sleeping wings they sail.  
 Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!  
 My spirit beats her mortal bars,  
 As down dark tides the glory slides,  
 And star-light mingles with the stars.

## V.

When on my goodly charger borne  
 Through dreaming towns I go,  
 The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,  
 The streets are dumb with snow.  
 The tempest crackles on the leads,  
 And, ringing, spins from brand and mail;  
 But o'er the dark a glory spreads,  
 And gilds the driving hail.  
 I leave the plain, I climb the height;  
 No branchy thicket shelter yields;  
 But blessed forms in whistling storms  
 Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

## VI.

A maiden knight—to me is given  
 Such hope, I know not fear;  
 I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven  
 That often meet me here.  
 I muse on joy that will not cease,  
 Pure spaces clothed in living beams,  
 Pure lilies of eternal peace,  
 Whose odors haunt my dreams;  
 And, stricken by an angel's hand,  
 This mortal armor that I wear,  
 This weight and size, this heart and eyes,  
 Are touched, are turned to finest air.

## VII.

The clouds are broken in the sky,  
 And through the mountain-walls  
 A rolling organ-harmony

Swells up, and shakes and falls.  
 Then move the trees, the copses nod,  
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear :  
 " O just and faithful knight of God !  
 Ride on ! the prize is near."  
 So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;  
 By bridge and ford, by park and pale,  
 All-armed I ride, whate'er betide,  
 Until I find the holy Grail.

### EDWARD GRAY.

SWEET Emma Moreland of yonder town  
 Met me walking on yonder way,  
 " And have you lost your heart ?" she said ;  
 " And are you married yet, Edward Gray ?"

Sweet Emma Moreland spoke to me :  
 Bitterly weeping I turned away :  
 " Sweet Emma Moreland, love no more  
 Can touch the heart of Edward Gray.

" Ellen Adair she loved me well,  
 Against her father's and mother's will :  
 To-day I sat for an hour and wept,  
 By Ellen's grave, on the windy hill.

" Shy she was, and I thought her cold ;  
 Thought her proud, and fled over the sea ;  
 Filled I was with folly and spite,  
 When Ellen Adair was dying for me.

" Cruel, cruel the words I said !  
 Cruelly came they back to-day :  
 ' You're too slight and fickle,' I said,  
 ' To trouble the heart of Edward Gray.'

“ There I put my face in the grass—  
 Whispered, ‘ Listen to my despair :  
 I repent me of all I did :  
 Speak a little, Ellen Adair ! ’

“ Then I took a pencil, and wrote  
 On the mossy stone, as I lay,  
 ‘ Here lies the body of Ellen Adair ;  
 And here the heart of Edward Gray ! ’

“ Love may come, and love may go,  
 And fly, like a bird, from tree to tree :  
 But I will love no more, no more,  
 Till Ellen Adair come back to me.

“ Bitterly wept I over the stone :  
 Bitterly weeping I turned away :  
 There lies the body of Ellen Adair !  
 And there the heart of Edward Gray ! ”

## WILL WATERPROOF'S LYRICAL MONOLOGUE.

MADE AT THE COCK.

O PLUMP head-waiter at The Cock,  
 To which I most resort,  
 How goes the time ? ’Tis five o'clock.  
 Go fetch a pint of port :  
 But let it not be such as that  
 You set before chance-comers,  
 But such whose father-grape grew fat  
 On Lusitanian summers.

No vain libation to the Muse,  
 But may she still be kind,  
 And whisper lovely words, and use  
 Her influence on the mind.

To make me write my random rhymes,  
 Ere they be half-forgotten ;  
 Nor add and alter, many times,  
 Till all be ripe and rotten.

I pledge her, and she comes and dips  
 Her laurel in the wine,  
 And lays it thrice upon my lips,  
 These favored lips of mine ;  
 Until the charm have power to make  
 New life-blood warm the bosom,  
 And barren commonplaces break  
 In full and kindly blossom.

I pledge her silent at the board ;  
 Her gradual fingers steal  
 And touch upon the master-chord  
 Of all I felt and feel.  
 Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,  
 And phantom hopes assemble ;  
 And that child's heart within the man's  
 Begins to move and tremble.

Through many an hour of summer suns  
 By many pleasant ways,  
 Against its fountain upward runs  
 The current of my days :  
 I kiss the lips I once have kissed ;  
 The gas-light wavers dimmer ;  
 And softly, through a vinous mist,  
 My college friendships glimmer.

I grow in worth, and wit, and sense,  
 Unboding critic-pen,  
 Or that eternal want of pence,  
 Which vexes public men,  
 Who hold their hands to all, and cry  
 For that which all deny them—  
 Who sweep the crossings, wet or dry,  
 And all the world go by them.



Ah yet, though all the world forsake,  
 Though fortune clip my wings,  
 I will not cramp my heart, nor take  
 Half-views of men and things.  
 Let Whig and Tory stir their blood ;  
 There must be stormy weather ;  
 But for some true result of good  
 All parties work together.

Let there be thistles, there are grapes ;  
 If old things, there are new ;  
 Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,  
 Yet glimpses of the true.  
 Let riffs be rife in prose and rhyme,  
 We lack not rhymes and reasons,  
 As on this whirligig of Time  
 We circle with the seasons.

This earth is rich in man and maid ;  
 With fair horizons bound :  
 This whole wide earth of light and shade  
 Comes out, a perfect round.  
 High over roaring Temple-bar,  
 And, set in Heaven's third story,  
 I look at all things as they are,  
 But through a kind of glory.  
 \* \* \* \*

Head-waiter, honored by the guest  
 Half-mused, or reeling-ripe,  
 The pint, you brought me, was the best  
 That ever came from pipe.  
 But though the port surpasses praise,  
 My nerves have dealt with stiffer.  
 Is there some magic in the place ?  
 Or do my peptics differ ?

For since I came to live and learn,  
 No pint of white or red  
 Had ever half the power to turn  
 This wheel within my head,

Which bears a seasoned brain about,  
 Unsubject to confusion,  
 Though soaked and saturate, out and out,  
 Through every convolution.

For I am of a numerous house,  
 With many kinsmen gay,  
 Where long and largely we carouse,  
 As who shall say me nay :  
 Each month, a birthday coming on,  
 We drink, defying trouble,  
 Or sometimes two would meet in one,  
 And then we drank it double ;

Whether the vintage, yet unkept,  
 Had relish fiery-new,  
 Or, elbow-deep in sawdust, slept,  
 As old as Waterloo ;  
 Or stowed (when classic Canning died)  
 In musty bins and chambers,  
 Had cast upon its crusty side  
 The gloom of ten Decembers.

The Muse, the jolly Muse, it is !  
 She answered to my call,  
 She changes with that mood or this,  
 Is all-in-all to all :  
 She lit the spark within my throat,  
 To make my blood run quicker,  
 Used all her fiery will, and smote  
 Her life into the liquor.

And hence this halo lives about  
 The waiter's hands, that reach  
 To each his perfect pint of stout,  
 His proper chop to each.  
 He looks not like the common breed  
 That with the napkin dally ;  
 I think he came, like Ganymede,  
 From some delightful valley.

The Cock was of a larger egg  
 Than modern poultry drop,  
 Stept forward on a firmer leg,  
 And crammed a plumper crop ;  
 Upon an ampler dunghill trod,  
 Crowed lustier, late and early,  
 Sipt wine from silver, praising God,  
 And raked in golden barley.

A private life was all his joy,  
 Till in a court he saw  
 A something-pottle-bodied boy,  
 That knuckled at the law :  
 He stooped and clutched him, fair and good,  
 Flew over roof and casement :  
 His brothers of the weather stood  
 Stock-still for sheer amazement.

But he, by farmstead, thorpe and spire,  
 And followed with acclaims,  
 A sign to many a staring shire,  
 Came crowing over Thames.  
 Right down by smoky Paul's they bore,  
 Till, where the street grows straiter,  
 One fixed forever at the door,  
 And one became head-waiter.

\* \* \* \*

But whither would my fancy go ?  
 How out of place she makes  
 The violet of a legend blow  
 Among the chops and steaks !  
 'Tis but a steward of the can,  
 One shade more plump than common  
 As just and mere a serving-man  
 As any, born of woman.

I ranged too high : what draws me down  
 Into the common day ?

Is it the weight of that half-crown,  
 Which I shall have to pay ?  
 For, something duller than at first,  
 Nor wholly comfortable,  
 I sit, (my empty glass reversed,)  
 And thrumming on the table :

Half-fearful that, with self at strife,  
 I take myself to task :  
 Lest of the fulness of my life  
 I leave an empty flask :  
 For I had hope, by something rare,  
 To prove myself a poet ;  
 But, while I plan and plan, my hair  
 Is gray before I know it.

So fares it since the years began,  
 Till they be gathered up ;  
 The truth that flies the flowing can,  
 Will haunt the vacant cup :  
 And others' follies teach us not,  
 Nor much their wisdom teaches ;  
 And most, of sterling worth, is what  
 Our own experience preaches.

Ah ! let the rusty theme alone !  
 We know not what we know.  
 But for my pleasant hour, 'tis gone,  
 'Tis gone, and let it go.  
 'Tis gone : a thousand such have slipt  
 Away from my embraces,  
 And fallen into the dusty crypt  
 Of darkened forms and faces.

Go, therefore, thou ! thy betters went  
 Long since, and came no more :  
 With peals of genial clamor sent  
 From many a tavern-door,  
 With twisted quirks and happy hits,  
 From misty men of letters ;

The tavern-hours of mighty wits—  
Thine elders and thy betters.

Hours, when the Poet's words and looks  
Had yet their native glow :  
Nor yet the fear of little books  
Had made him talk for show ;  
But, all his vast heart sherris-warmed,  
He flashed his random speeches ;  
Ere days, that deal in ana, swarmed  
His literary leeches.

So mix forever with the past,  
Like all good things on earth !  
For should I prize thee, couldst thou last,  
At half thy real worth ?  
I hold it good, good things should pass :  
With time I will not quarrel :  
It is but yonder empty glass  
That makes me maudlin-moral.

\* \* \* \*

Head-waiter of the chop-house here,  
To which I most resort,  
I too must part : I hold thee dear  
For this good pint of port.  
For this, thou shalt from all things suck  
Marrow of mirth and laughter ;  
And, wheresoe'er thou move, good luck  
Shall fling her old shoe after.

But thou wilt never move from hence.  
The sphere thy fate allots :  
Thy latter days increased with pence  
Go down among the pots :  
Thou battenest by the greasy gleam  
In haunts of hungry sinners,  
Old boxes, larded with the steam  
Of thirty thousand dinners.

*We* fret, *we* fume, would shift our skins,  
 Would quarrel with our lot ;  
*Thy* care is, under polished tins,  
 To serve the hot-and-hot ;  
 To come and go, and come again,  
 Returning like the pewit,  
 And watched by silent gentlemen,  
 That trifle with the cruet.

Live long, ere from thy topmost head  
 The thick-set hazel dies ;  
 Long, ere the hateful crow shall tread  
 The corners of thine eyes ;  
 Live long, nor feel in head or chest  
 Our changeful equinoxes,  
 Till mellow Death, like some late guest,  
 Shall call thee from the boxes.

But when he calls, and thou shalt cease  
 To pace the gritted floor,  
 And, laying down an unctuous lease  
 Of life, shalt earn no more :  
 No carved cross-bones, the types of Death,  
 Shall show thee past to Heaven ;  
 But carved cross-pipes, and, underneath,  
 A pint-pot, neatly graven.

### LADY CLARE.

It was the time when lilies blow,  
 And clouds are highest up in air,  
 Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe  
 To give his cousin, Lady Clare.

I trow they did not part in scorn :  
 Lovers long-betrothed were they :  
 They two will wed the morrow morn ;  
 God's blessing on the day !

“ He does not love me for my birth,  
Nor for my lands so broad and fair;  
He loves me for my own true worth,  
And that is well,” said Lady Clare.

In there came old Alice the nurse,  
Said, “ Who was this that went from thee ? ”  
“ It was my cousin,” said Lady Clare,  
“ To-morrow he weds with me.”

“ O God be thanked ! ” said Alice the nurse,  
“ That all comes round so just and fair :  
Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,  
And you are not the Lady Clare.”

“ Are ye out of your mind, my nurse, my  
nurse ? ”  
Said Lady Clare, “ that ye speak so wild ? ”  
“ As God’s above,” said Alice the nurse,  
“ I speak the truth : you are my child.

“ The old Earl’s daughter died at my breast ;  
I speak the truth as I live by bread !  
I buried her like my own sweet child,  
And put my child in her stead.”

“ Falsely, falsely have ye done,  
O mother,” she said, “ if this be true,  
To keep the best man under the sun  
So many years from his due.”

“ Nay now, my child,” said Alice the nurse,  
“ But keep the secret for your life,  
And all you have will be Lord Ronald’s,  
When you are man and wife.”

“ If I’m a beggar born,” she said,  
“ I will speak out, for I dare not lie.  
Pull off, pull off the brooch of gold,  
And fling the diamond necklace by.”

“Nay now, my child,” said Alice the nurse,  
 “But keep the secret all ye can.”  
 She said “Not so: but I will know  
 If there be any faith in man.”

“Nay now, what faith?” said Alice the nurse,  
 “The man will cleave unto his right.”  
 “And he shall have it,” the lady replied,  
 “Though I should die to-night.”

“Yet give one kiss to your mother dear!  
 Alas, my child, I sinned for thee.”  
 “O mother, mother, mother,” she said,  
 “So strange it seems to me.

“Yet here’s a kiss for my mother dear,  
 My mother dear, if this be so,  
 And lay your hand upon my head,  
 And bless me, mother, ere I go.”

She clad herself in a russet gown,  
 She was no longer Lady Clare:  
 She went by dale, and she went by down,  
 With a single rose in her hair.

The lily-white doe Lord Ronald had brought  
 Leapt up from where she lay,  
 Dropt her head in the maiden’s hand,  
 And followed her all the way.

Down stept Lord Ronald from his tower:  
 “O Lady Clare, you shame your worth!  
 Why come you drest like a village maid,  
 That are the flower of the earth?”

“If I come drest like a village maid,  
 I am but as my fortunes are:  
 I am a beggar born,” she said,  
 “And not the Lady Clare.”



“Play me no tricks,” said Lord Ronald,  
“For I am yours in word and deed.  
Play me no tricks,” said Lord Ronald,  
“Your riddle is hard to read.”

O and proudly stood she up!  
Her heart within her did not fail:  
She looked into Lord Ronald’s eyes,  
And told him all her nurse’s tale.

He laughed a laugh of merry scorn:  
He turned and kissed her where she stood  
“If you are not the heiress born,  
And I,” said he, “the next in blood—

“If you are not the heiress born,  
And I,” said he, “the lawful heir,  
We two will wed to-morrow morn,  
And you shall still be Lady Clare.”

## THE LORD OF BURLEIGH.

In her ear he whispers gayly,  
“If my heart by signs can tell,  
Maiden, I have watched thee daily,  
And I think thou lov’st me well.”  
She replies, in accents fainter,  
“There is none I love like thee.”  
He is but a landscape-painter,  
And a village maiden she.  
He to lips, that fondly falter,  
Presses his without reproof;  
Leads her to the village altar,  
And they leave her father’s roof.  
“I can make no marriage present;  
Little can I give my wife.

Love will make our cottage pleasant,  
And I love thee more than life.”  
They by parks and lodges going  
See the lordly castles stand :  
Summer woods, about them blowing,  
Made a murmur in the land.  
From deep thought himself he rouses,  
Says to her that loves him well,  
“ Let us see these handsome houses  
Where the wealthy nobles dwell.”  
So she goes by him attended,  
Hears him lovingly converse,  
Sees whatever fair and splendid  
Lay betwixt his home and hers ;  
Parks with oak and chestnut shady,  
Parks and ordered gardens great,  
Ancient homes of lord and lady,  
Built for pleasure and for state. \*  
All he shows her makes him dearer :  
Evermore she seems to gaze  
On that cottage growing nearer,  
Where they twain will spend their days.  
O but she will love him truly !  
He shall have a cheerful home ;  
She will order all things duly,  
When beneath his roof they come.  
Thus her heart rejoices greatly,  
Till a gateway she discerns  
With armorial bearings stately,  
And beneath the gate she turns ;  
Sees a mansion more majestic  
Than all those she saw before ;  
Many a gallant gay domestic  
Bows before him at the door.  
And they speak in gentle murmur,  
When they answer to his call,  
While he treads with footstep firmer,  
Leading on from hall to hall.

And, while now she wonders blindly,  
Nor the meaning can divine,  
Proudly turns he round and kindly,  
"All of this is mine and thine."  
Here he lives in state and bounty,  
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,  
Not a lord in all the county  
Is so great a lord as he.  
All at once the color flushes  
Her sweet face from brow to chin :  
As it were with shame she blushes,  
And her spirit changed within.  
Then her countenance all over  
Pale again as death did prove :  
But he clasped her like a lover,  
And he cheered her soul with love.  
So she strove against her weakness,  
Though at times her spirit sank :  
Shaped her heart with woman's meekness  
To all duties of her rank :  
And a gentle consort made he,  
And her gentle mind was such  
That she grew a noble lady,  
And the people loved her much.  
But a trouble weighed upon her,  
And perplexed her, night and morn,  
With the burthen of an honor  
Unto which she was not born.  
Faint she grew, and ever fainter,  
As she murmured, "O, that he  
Were once more that landscape-painter,  
Which did win my heart from me!"  
So she drooped and drooped before him,  
Fading slowly from his side :  
Three fair children first she bore him,  
Then before her time she died.  
Weeping, weeping late and early,  
Walking up and pacing down,

Deeply mourned the Lord of Burleigh,  
 Burleigh-house by Stamford town.  
 And he came to look upon her,  
 And he looked at her and said,  
 "Bring the dress, and put it on her,  
 That she wore when she was wed."  
 Then her people, softly treading,  
 Bore to earth her body, drest  
 In the dress that she was wed in,  
 That her spirit might have rest.

## SIR LAUNCELOT AND QUEEN GUINEVERE.

### A FRAGMENT.

LIKE souls that balance joy and pain,  
 With tears and smiles from heaven again  
 The maiden Spring upon the plain  
 Came in a sun-lit fall of rain.

In crystal vapor everywhere  
 Blue isles of heaven laughed between,  
 And, far in forest-deeps unseen,  
 The topmost elm tree gathered green  
 From draughts of balmy air.

Sometimes the linnet piped his song:  
 Sometimes the throstle whistled strong:  
 Sometimes the sparrowhawk, wheeled along,  
 Hushed all the groves from fear of wrong:

By grassy capes with fuller sound  
 In curves the yellowing river ran,  
 And drooping chestnut-buds began  
 To spread into the perfect fan,  
 Above the teeming ground.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,  
 Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere  
 Rode through the coverts of the deer,  
 With blissful treble ringing clear.

She seemed a part of joyous Spring :  
 A gown of grass-green silk she wore,  
 Buckled with golden clasps before ;  
 A light-green tuft of plumes she bore  
 Closed in a golden ring.

Now on some twisted ivy-net,  
 Now by some tinkling rivulet,  
 In mosses mixt with violet,  
 Her cream-white mule his pastern set :  
 And fleetier now she skimmed the plains  
 Than she whose elfin prancer springs  
 By night to eery warblings,  
 When all the glimmering moorland rings  
 • With jingling bridle-reins.

As she fled fast through sun and shade,  
 The happy winds upon her played,  
 Blowing the ringlet from the braid :  
 She looked so lovely, as she swayed  
 The rein with dainty finger-tips,  
 A man had given all other bliss,  
 And all his worldly worth for this,  
 To waste his whole heart in one kiss  
 Upon her perfect lips.

## A FAREWELL.

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,  
 Thy tribute wave deliver :  
 No more by thee my steps shall be  
 Foréver and forever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea  
 A rivulet then a river :  
 Nowhere by thee my steps shall be,  
 Forever and forever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree  
 And here thine aspen shiver ;  
 And here by thee will hum the bee  
 Forever and forever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,  
 A thousand moons will quiver ;  
 But not by thee my steps shall be,  
 Forever and forever.

## THE BEGGAR MAID.

HER arms across her breast she laid ;  
 She was more fair than words can say :  
 Barefooted came the beggar maid  
 Before the King Cophetua.  
 In robe and crown the king stepped down,  
 To meet and greet her on her way ;  
 "It is no wonder," said the lords,  
 "She is more beautiful than day."

As shines the moon in clouded skies,  
 She in her poor attire was seen :  
 One praised her ankles, one her eyes,  
 One her dark hair and lovesome mien.  
 So sweet a face, such angel grace,  
 In all that land had never been :  
 Cophetua sware a royal oath :  
 "This beggar maid shall be my queen !"

## THE VISION OF SIN.

I HAD a vision when the night was late :  
 A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.  
 He rode a horse with wings that would have flown,  
 But that his heavy rider kept him down.  
 And from the palace came a child of sin,  
 And took him by the curls, and led him in,  
 Where sat a company with heated eyes,  
 Expecting when a fountain should arise :  
 A sleepy light upon their brows and lips—  
 As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse,  
 Dreams over lake and lawn, and isles and capes—  
 Suffused them, sitting, lying, languid shapes,  
 By heaps of gourds, and skins of wine, and piles of  
 grapes.

Then methought I heard a mellow sound,  
 Gathering up from all the lower ground ;  
 Narrowing in to where they sat assembled,  
 Low voluptuous music winding trembled,  
 Woven in circles : they that heard it sighed,  
 Panted hand in hand with faces pale,  
 Swung themselves, and in low tones replied ;  
 Till the fountain spouted, showering wide  
 Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail ;  
 Then the music touched the gates and died ;  
 Rose again from where it seemed to fail,  
 Stormed in orbs of song, a growing gale ;  
 Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,  
 As 'twere a hundred-throated nightingale,  
 The strong tempestuous treble throbbed and palpi-  
 tated ;  
 Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,  
 Caught the sparkles, and in circles,  
 Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,  
 Flung the torrent rainbow round ;  
 Then they started from their places,

Moved with violence, changed in hue,  
 Caught each other with wild grimaces,  
 Half-invisible to the view,  
 Wheeling with precipitate paces  
 To the melody, till they flew,  
 Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces,  
 Twisted hard in fierce embraces,  
 Like to Furies, like to Graces,  
 Dashed together in blinding dew :  
 Till, killed with some luxurious agony  
 The nerve-dissolving melody  
 Fluttered headlong from the sky.

And then I looked up toward a mountain-tract,  
 That girt the region with high cliff and lawn :  
 I saw that every morning, far withdrawn  
 Beyond the darkness and the cataract,  
 God made himself an awful rose of dawn,  
 Unheeded : and detaching, fold by fold,  
 From those still heights, and, slowly drawing near,  
 A vapor heavy, hueless, formless, cold,  
 Came floating on for many a month and year,  
 Unheeded : and I thought I would have spoken,  
 And warned that madman ere it grew too late :  
 But, as in dreams, I could not. Mine was broken,  
 When that cold vapor touched the palace gate,  
 And linked again. I saw within my head  
 A gray and gap-toothed man as lean as death,  
 Who slowly rode across a withered heath,  
 And lighted at a ruined inn, and said :

“ Wrinkled ostler, grim and thin !  
 Here is custom come your way ;  
 Take my brute, and lead him in,  
 Stuff his ribs with mouldy hay.

“ Bitter barmaid, waning fast !  
 See that sheets are on my bed ;  
 What ! the flower of life is past :  
 It is long before you wed.



“ Slip-shod waiter, lank and sour,  
At The Dragon on the heath !  
Let us have a quiet hour,  
Let us hob-and-nob with Death.

“ I am old, but let me drink ;  
Bring me spices, bring me wine ;  
I remember, when I think,  
That my youth was half divine.

“ Wine is good for shrivelled lips,  
When a blanket wraps the day,  
When the rotten woodland drips,  
And the leaf is stamped in clay.

“ Sit thee down, and have no shame,  
Cheek by jowl, and knee by knee :  
What care I for any name ?  
What for order or degree ?

“ Let me screw thee up a peg :  
Let me loose thy tongue with wine :  
Callest thou that thing a leg ?  
Which is thinnest ? thine or mine ?

“ Thou shalt not be saved by works :  
Thou hast been a sinner too :  
Ruined trunks on withered forks,  
Empty scarecrows, I and you !

“ Fill the cup, and fill the can :  
Have a rouse before the morn :  
Every moment dies a man,  
Every moment one is born.

“ We are men of ruined blood ;  
Therefore comes it we are wise.  
Fish are we that love the mud,  
Rising to no fancy-flies.

“ Name and fame ! to fly sublime  
Through the courts, the camps, the schools,  
Is to be the ball of Time,  
Banded by the hands of fools.

“ Friendship !—to be two in one—  
Let the canting liar pack !  
Well I know, when I am gone,  
How she mouths behind my back.

“ Virtue !—to be good and just—  
Every heart, when sifted well,  
Is a clot of warmer dust,  
Mixed with cunning sparks of hell.

“ O ! we two as well can look  
Whited thought and cleanly life  
As the priest, above his book  
Leering at his neighbor's wife.

“ Fill the cup, and fill the can :  
Have a rouse before the morn :  
Every moment dies a man,  
Every moment one is born.

“ Drink, and let the parties rave :  
They are filled with idle spleen,  
Rising, falling, like a wave,  
For they know not what they mean.

“ He that roars for liberty  
Faster binds a tyrant's power ;  
And the tyrant's cruel glee  
Forces on the freer hour.

“ Fill the can, and fill the cup :  
All the windy ways of men  
Are but dust that rises up,  
And is lightly laid again.

“ Greet her with applausive breath,  
Freedom, gayly doth she tread ;  
In her right a civic wreath,  
In her left a human head.

“ No, I love not what is new ;  
She is of an ancient house :  
And I think we know the hue  
Of that cap upon her brows.

“ Let her go ! her thirst she slakes  
Where the bloody conduit runs :  
Then her sweetest meal she makes  
On the first-born of her sons.

“ Drink to lofty hopes that cool—  
Visions of a perfect State :  
Drink we, last, the public fool,  
Frantic love and frantic hate.

“ Chant me now some wicked stave,  
Till thy drooping courage rise,  
And the glow-worm of the grave  
Glimmer in thy rheumy eyes.

“ Fear not thou to loose thy tongue ;  
Set thy hoary fancies free ;  
What is loathsome to the young  
Savors well to thee and me.

“ Change, reverting to the years,  
When thy nerves could understand  
What there is in loving tears,  
And the warmth of hand in hand.

“ Tell me tales of thy first love—  
April hopes, the fools of chance ;  
Till the graves begin to move,  
And the dead begin to dance.

- “ Fill the can, and fill the cup :  
All the windy ways of men  
Are but dust that rises up,  
And is lightly laid again.
- “ Trooping from their mouldy dens  
The chap-fallen circle spreads :  
Welcome, fellow-citizens,  
Hollow hearts and empty heads !
- “ You are bones, and what of that ?  
Every face, however full,  
Padded round with flesh and fat,  
Is but modelled on a skull.
- “ Death is king, and Vivat Rex !  
Tread a measure on the stones,  
Madam—if I know your sex,  
From the fashion of your bones.
- “ No, I cannot praise the fire  
In your eye—nor yet your lip :  
All the more do I admire  
Joints of cunning workmanship.
- “ Lo ! God’s likeness—the ground-plan—  
Neither modelled, glazed, or framed :  
Buss me, thou rough sketch of man,  
Far too naked to be shamed !
- “ Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,  
While we keep a little breath !  
Drink to heavy Ignorance !  
Hob-and-nob with brother Death !
- “ Thou art mazed, the night is long,  
And the longer night is near :  
What ! I am not all as wrong  
As a bitter jest is dear.

“ Youthful hopes, by scores, to all,  
 When the locks are crisp and curled ;  
 Unto me my maudlin gall,  
 And my mockeries of the world.

“ Fill the cup, and fill the can !  
 Mingle madness, mingle scorn !  
 Dregs of life, and lees of man :  
 Yet we will not die forlorn.”

The voice grew faint : there came a further change ;  
 Once more uprose the mystic mountain-range :  
 Below were men and horses pierced with worms,  
 And slowly quickening into lower forms ;  
 By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of dross,  
 Old plash of rains, and refuse patched with moss.  
 Then some one spake : “ Behold ! it was a crime  
 Of sense avenged by sense that wore with time.”  
 Another said : “ The crime of sense became  
 The crime of malice, and is equal blame.”  
 And one : “ He had not wholly quenched his  
 power ;  
 A little grain of conscience made him sour.”  
 At last I heard a voice upon the slope  
 Cry to the summit, “ Is there any hope ? ”  
 To which an answer pealed from that high land,  
 But in a tongue no man could understand :  
 And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn  
 God made himself an awful rose of dawn.

## THE SKIPPING-ROPE.

SURE never yet was Antelope  
 Could skip so lightly by.  
 Stand off, or else my skipping-rope  
 Will hit you in the eye.

How lightly whirls the skipping-rope !  
 How fairy-like you fly !  
 Go, get you gone, you muse and mope—  
 I hate that silly sigh.  
 Nay, dearest, teach me how to hope,  
 Or tell me how to die.  
 There, take it, take my skipping-rope  
 And hang yourself thereby.

### MOVE EASTWARD, HAPPY EARTH, AND LEAVE.

MOVE eastward, happy earth, and leave  
 Yon orange sunset waning slow ;  
 From fringes of the faded eve,  
 O, happy planet, eastward go ;  
 Till over thy dark shoulder glow  
 Thy silver sister-world, and rise  
 To glass herself in dewy eyes  
 That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,  
 Dip forward under starry light,  
 And move me to my marriage-morn,  
 And round again to happy night.

### BREAK, BREAK, BREAK.

BREAK, break, break,  
 On thy cold gray stones, oh Sea !  
 And I would that my tongue could utter  
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,  
 That he shouts with his sister at play !  
 O well for the sailor lad,  
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on  
 To their haven under the hill;  
 But oh for the touch of a vanished hand,  
 And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,  
 At the foot of thy crags, oh Sea!  
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
 Will never come back to me.

### THE POET'S SONG.

THE rain had fallen, the Poet arose,  
 He passed by the town, and out of the street,  
 A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,  
 And waves of shadow went over the wheat,  
 And he sat him down in a lonely place,  
 And chanted a melody loud and sweet,  
 That made the wild-swan pause in her cloud,  
 And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the bee,  
 The snake slipt under a spray,  
 The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak  
 And stared, with his foot on the prey,  
 And the nightingale thought, "I have sung many  
 songs,  
 But never a one so gay,  
 For he sings of what the world will be  
 When the years have died away."

### THE PRINCESS; A MEDLEY.

#### PROLOGUE.

SIR WALTER VIVIAN all a summer's day  
 Gave his broad lawns until the set of sun  
 Up to the people: thither flocked at noon  
 His tenants, wife and child, and thither half

The neighboring borough with their Institute,  
 Of which he was the patron. I was there  
 From college, visiting the son,—the son  
 A Walter, too,—with others of our set,  
 Five others: we were seven at Vivian-place.

And me that morning Walter showed the house,  
 Greek, set with busts: from vases in the hall  
 Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than their  
 names,

Grew side by side; and on the pavement lay  
 Carved stones of the Abbey-ruin in the park,  
 Huge Ammonites, and the first bones of Time;  
 And on the tables every clime and age  
 Jumbled together; celts and calumets,  
 Claymore and snowshoe, toys in lava, fans  
 Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,  
 Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere,  
 The cursed Malayan crease, and battle-clubs  
 From the isles of palm: and higher on the walls,  
 Betwixt the monstrous horns of elk and deer,  
 His own forefathers' arms and armor hung.

And "this," he said, "was Hugh's at Agincourt;  
 And that was old Sir Ralph's at Ascalon:  
 A good knight he! we keep a chronicle  
 With all about him,"—which he brought, and I  
 Dived in a hoard of tales that dealt with knights  
 Half-legend, half-historic, counts and kings  
 Who laid about them at their wills and died;  
 And mixt with these, a lady, one that armed  
 Her own fair head, and sallying through the gate,  
 Had beat her foes with slaughter from her walls.

"O miracle of women," said the book,  
 "O noble heart who, being strait-besieged  
 By this wild king to force her to his wish,  
 Nor bent, nor broke, nor shunned a soldier's death,  
 But now when all was lost or seemed as lost—  
 Her stature more than mortal in the burst  
 Of sunrise, her arm lifted, eyes on fire—



Brake with a blast of trumpets from the gate,  
 And, falling on them like a thunderbolt,  
 She trampled some beneath her horses' heels,  
 And some were whelmed with missiles of the wall,  
 And some were pushed with lances from the rock,  
 And part were drowned within the whirling brook:  
 O miracle of noble womanhood!"

So sang the gallant glorious chronicle;  
 And, I all rapt in this, "Come out," he said,  
 "To the Abbey: there is Aunt Elizabeth  
 And sister Lilia with the rest." We went  
 (I kept the book and had my finger in it)  
 Down through the park: strange was the sight to me;  
 For all the sloping pasture murmured, sown  
 With happy faces and with holiday.  
 There moved the multitude, a thousand heads:  
 The patient leaders of their Institute  
 Taught them with facts. One reared a font of  
     stone,  
 And drew, from butts of water on the slope,  
 The fountain of the moment, playing now  
 A twisted snake, and now a rain of pearls,  
 Or steep-up spout whereon the gilded ball  
 Danced like a wisp: and somewhat lower down  
 A man with knobs and wires and vials fired  
 A cannon: Echo answered in her sleep  
 From hollow fields: and here were telescopes  
 For azure views; and there a group of girls  
 In circle waited, whom the electric shock  
 Dislinked with shrieks and laughter: round th  
     lake  
 A little clock-work steamer paddling plied  
 And shook the lilies: perched about the knolls  
 A dozen angry models jetted steam:  
 A petty railway ran: a fire-balloon  
 Rose gem-like up before the dusky groves  
 And dropt a fairy parachute and past:  
 And there through twenty posts of telegraph

They flashed a saucy message to and fro  
 Between the mimic stations ; so that sport  
 Went hand in hand with Science ; otherwhere  
 Pure sport : a herd of boys with clamor bowled  
 And stumped the wicket ; babies rolled about  
 Like tumbled fruit in grass ; and men and maids  
 Arranged a country dance, and flew through light  
 And shadow, while the twangling violin  
 Struck up with Soldier-laddie, and overhead  
 The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime  
 Made noise with bees and breeze from end to end.

Strange was the sight and smacking of the time  
 And long we gazed, but satiated at length  
 Came to the ruins. High-arched and ivy-claspt,  
 Of finest Gothic, lighter than a fire,  
 Through one wide chasm of time and frost they  
 gave

The park, the crowd, the house ; but all within  
 The sward was trim as any garden lawn :  
 And here we lit on Aunt Elizabeth,  
 And Lilia with the rest, and lady friends  
 From neighbor seats : and there was Ralph himself,  
 A broken statue propt against the wall,  
 As gay as any. Lilia, wild with sport,  
 Half child, half woman as she was, had wound  
 A scarf of orange round the stony helm,  
 And robed the shoulders in a rosy silk,  
 That made the old warrior from his ivied nook  
 Glow like a sunbeam : near his tomb a feast  
 Shone, silver-set ; about it lay the guests,  
 And there we joined them : then the maiden Aunt  
 Took this fair day for text, and from it preached  
 An universal culture for the crowd,  
 And all things great ; but we, unworthier, told  
 Of college : he had climbed across the spikes,  
 And he had squeezed himself betwixt the bars,  
 And he had breathed the Proctor's dogs ; and one  
 Discussed his tutor, rough to common men

But honeying at the whisper of a lord ;  
 And one the Master, as a rogue in grain  
 Veneered with sanctimonious theory.

But while they talked, above their heads I saw  
 The feudal warrior lady-clad ; which brought  
 My book to mind ; and opening this, I read  
 Of old Sir Ralph a page or two that rang  
 With tilt and tourney ; then the tale of her  
 That drove her foes with slaughter from her walls,  
 And much I praised her nobleness, and " Where,"  
 Asked Walter, patting Lilia's head, (she lay  
 Beside him,) " lives there such a woman now ?"

Quick answered Lilia, " There are thousands now  
 Such women, but convention beats them down :  
 It is but bringing up ; no more than that :  
 You men have done it : how I hate you all !  
 Ah, were I something great ! I wish I were  
 Some mighty poetess, I would shame you then,  
 That love to keep us children ! O, I wish  
 That I were some great Princess, I would build  
 Far off from men a college like a man's,  
 And I would teach them all that men are taught ;  
 We are twice as quick !" And here she shook  
 aside  
 The hand that played the patron with her curls.

And one said, smiling, " Pretty were the sight  
 If our old halls could change their sex, and flaunt  
 With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,  
 And sweet girl-graduates in their golden-hair.  
 I think they should not wear our rusty gowns,  
 But move as rich as Emperor-moths, or Ralph  
 Who shines so in the corner ; yet I fear,  
 If there were many Lilias in the brood,  
 However deep you might embower the nest,  
 Some boy would spy it."

At this upon the sward

She tapt her tiny silken-sandaled foot :  
 " That's your light way ; but I would make it death  
 For any male thing but to peep at us."

Petulant she spoke, and at herself she laughed ;  
 A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,  
 And sweet as English air could make her, she :  
 But Walter hailed a score of names upon her,  
 And " petty Ogress," and " ungrateful Puss,"  
 And swore he longed at college, only longed,  
 All else was well, for she-society.  
 They boated and they cricketed ; they talked  
 At wine, in clubs, of art, of politics ;  
 They lost their weeks ; they vexed the souls of deans ;  
 They rode ; they betted ; made a hundred friends,  
 And caught the blossom of the flying terms,  
 But missed the mignonette of Vivian-place,  
 The little hearth-flower Lilia. Thus he spoke,  
 Part banter, part affection.

" True," she said,  
 " We doubt not that. O yes, you missed us much.  
 I'll stake my ruby ring upon it you did."

She held it out ; and as a parrot turns  
 Up through gilt wires a crafty loving eye,  
 And takes a lady's finger with all care,  
 And bites it for true heart, and not for harm,  
 So he with Lilia's. Daintily she shrieked  
 And wrung it. " Doubt my word again !" he said.  
 " Come, listen ! here is proof that you were missed :  
 We seven stayed at Christmas up to read ;  
 And there we took one tutor as to read :  
 The hard-grained Muses of the cube and square  
 Were out of season : never man, I think,  
 So mouldered in a sinecure as he :  
 For while our cloisters echoed frosty feet,  
 And our long walks were stript as bare as brooms,  
 We did but talk you over, pledge you all  
 In wassail : often, like as many girls—

Sick for the hollies and the yews of home—  
 As many little trifling Lilies—played  
 Charades and riddles as at Christmas here,  
 And *what's my thought* and *when* and *where* and *how*,  
 And often told a tale from mouth to mouth  
 As here at Christmas.”

She remembered that:

A pleasant game, she thought: she liked it more  
 Than magic music, forfeits, all the rest.  
 But these—what kind of tales did men tell men,  
 She wondered, by themselves?

A half-disdain

Perched on the pouted blossom of her lips:  
 And Walter nodded at me: “*He* began,  
 The rest would follow, each in turn; and so  
 We forged a seven-fold story. Kind? what kind?  
 Chimeras, crotchets, Christmas solecisms,  
 Seven-headed monsters only made to kill  
 Time by the fire in winter.”

“Kill him now,

The tyrant! kill him in the summer too,”  
 Said Lilia; “Why not now,” the maiden Aunt.  
 “Why not a summer’s as a winter’s tale?  
 A tale for summer, as befits the time;  
 And something it should be to suit the place,  
 Heroic, for a hero lies beneath,  
 Grave, solemn!”

Walter warped his mouth at this  
 To something so mock-solemn, that I laughed,  
 And Lilia woke with sudden-shrilling mirth  
 An echo, like a ghostly woodpecker,  
 Hid in the ruins; till the maiden Aunt  
 (A little sense of wrong had touched her face  
 With color) turned to me with “As you will—  
 Heroic if you will, or what you will,  
 Or be yourself your hero if you will.”  
 ‘Take Lilia, then, for heroine,” clamored he,  
 ‘And make her some great Princess, six feet **high**,

Grand, epic, homicidal ; and be you  
The Prince to win her !”

“ Then follow me, the Prince,”  
I answered ; “ each be hero in his turn !  
Seven and yet one, like shadows in a dream.—  
Heroic seems our Princess as required.—  
But something made to suit with time and place,  
A Gothic ruin, and a Grecian house,  
A talk of college and of ladies’ rights,  
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,  
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experiments,  
For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt them  
all,—

This *were* a medley ! we should have him back  
Who told the ‘ Winter’s tale,’ to do it for us.  
No matter : we will say whatever comes.  
And let the ladies sing us, if they will,  
From time to time, some ballad, or a song,  
To give us breathing-space.”

So I began,  
And the rest followed ; and the women sang  
Between the rougher voices of the men,  
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind :  
And here I give the story and the songs.

## I.

A PRINCE I was, blue-eyed, and fair in face,  
Of temper amorous, as the first of May,  
With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl,  
For on my cradle shone the northern star.

There lived an ancient legend in our house.  
Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt  
Because he cast no shadow, had foretold,  
Dying, that none of all our blood should know  
The shadow from the substance, and that one  
Should come to fight with shadows, and to fall.  
For so, my mother said, the story ran.

And, truly, waking dreams were, more or less,  
 An old and strange affection of the house.  
 Myself too had weird seizures, Heaven knows what:  
 On a sudden, in the midst of men and day,  
 And while I walked and talked as heretofore,  
 I seemed to move among a world of ghosts,  
 And feel myself the shadow of a dream.  
 Our great court-Galen poised his gilt-head cane,  
 And pawed his beard, and mutter'd catalepsy.  
 My mother pitying made a thousand prayers;  
 My mother was as mild as any saint,  
 Half-canonized by all that looked on her,  
 So gracious was her tact and tenderness:  
 But my good father thought a king a king;  
 He cared not for the affection of the house;  
 He held his sceptre like a pedant's wand  
 To lash offence, and with long arms and hands  
 Reached out, and picked offenders from the mass  
 For judgment.

Now it chanced that I had been,  
 While life was yet in bud and blade, betrothed  
 To one, a neighboring Princess; she to me  
 Was proxy-wedded with a bootless calf  
 At eight years old; and still from time to time  
 Came murmurs of her beauty from the South,  
 And of her brethren, youths of puissance;  
 And still I wore her picture by my heart,  
 And one dark tress; and all around them both  
 Sweet thoughts would swarm, as bees about their  
 queen.

But when the days drew nigh that I should wed,  
 My father sent ambassadors with furs  
 And jewels, gifts, to fetch her: these brought back  
 A present, a great labor of the loom;  
 And therewithal an answer vague as wind:  
 Besides, they saw the king; he took the gifts;  
 He said there was a compact; that was true:  
 But then she had a will; was he to blame?

And maiden fancies ; loved to live alone  
Among her women : certain would not wed.

That morning in the presence-room I stood  
With Cyril and with Florian, my two friends :  
The first, a gentleman of broken means,  
(His father's fault,) but given to starts and bursts  
Of revel ; and the last, my other heart,  
And almost my half-self, for still we moved  
Together, twinned, as horse's ear and eye.

Now while they spake I saw my father's face  
Grow long and troubled, like a rising moon,  
Inflamed with wrath : he started on his feet,  
Tore the king's letter, snowed it down, and rent  
The wonder of the loom through warp and woof,  
From skirt to skirt ; and at the last he sware  
That he would send a hundred thousand men,  
And bring her in a whirlwind ; then he chewed  
The thrice-turned cud of wrath, and cooked his  
spleen,  
Communing with his captains of the war.

At last I spoke. " My father, let me go.  
It cannot be but some gross error lies  
In this report, this answer of a king,  
Whom all men rate as kind and hospitable :  
Or, maybe, I myself, my bride once seen,  
Whate'er my grief to find her less than fame,  
May rue the bargain made." And Florian said :  
" I have a sister at the foreign court,  
Who moves about the Princess ; she, you know,  
Who wedded with a nobleman from thence :  
He, dying lately, left her, as I hear,  
The lady of three castles in that land.  
Through her this matter might be sifted clean."  
And Cyril whispered : " Take me with you too."  
Then, laughing, " What if these weird seizures come  
Upon you in those lands, and no one near



To point you out the shadow from the truth!  
 Take me: I'll serve you better in a strait;  
 I grate on rusty hinges here:" but "No!"  
 Roared the rough king, "you shall not; we ourself  
 Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead  
 In iron gauntlets: break the council up."

But when the council broke, I rose and passed  
 Through the wild woods that hung about the town;  
 Found a still place, and plucked her likeness out;  
 Laid it on flowers, and watched it lying bathed  
 In the green gleam of dewy-tasselled trees:  
 What were those fancies? wherefore break her  
 troth?

Proud looked the lips: but while I meditated,  
 A wind arose, and rushed upon the South,  
 And shook the songs, the whispers, and the shrieks  
 Of the wild woods together; and a Voice  
 Went with it, "Follow, follow, thou shalt win."

Then, ere the silver sickle of that month  
 Became her golden shield, I stole from court  
 With Cyril and with Florian, unperceived,  
 Cat-footed through the town, and half in dread  
 To hear my father's clamor at our backs,  
 With Ho! from some bay-window shake the night  
 But all was quiet: from the bastioned walls  
 Like threaded spiders, one by one, we dropt,  
 And flying reached the frontier: then we crost  
 To a livelier land; and so, by tith and grange,  
 And vines, and blowing bosks of wilderness,  
 We gained the mother-city thick with towers,  
 And in the imperial palace found the king.  
 His name was Gama; cracked and small his voice,  
 But bland the smile that like a wrinkling wind  
 On glassy water drove his cheek in lines;  
 A little dry old man, without a star,  
 Not like a king: three days he feasted us,  
 And on the fourth I spake of why we came,

And my betrothed. " You do us, Prince," he said;  
 Airing a snowy hand and signet gem,  
 " All honor. We remember love ourselves  
 In our sweet youth : there did a compact pass  
 Long summers back, a kind of ceremony—  
 I think the year in which our olives failed.  
 I would you had her, Prince, with all my heart,  
 With my full heart : but there were widows here,  
 Two widows, Lady Psyche, Lady Blanche ;  
 They fed her theories, in and out of place,  
 Maintaining that with equal husbandry  
 The woman were an equal to the man.  
 They harped on this ; with this our banquets rang ;  
 Our dances broke and buzzed in knots of talk ;  
 Nothing but this : my very ears were hot  
 To hear them : knowledge, so my daughter held,  
 Was all in all ; they had but been, she thought,  
 As children ; they must lose the child, assume  
 The woman ; then, Sir, awful odes she wrote,  
 Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,  
 But all she is and does is awful ; odes  
 About this losing of the child ; and rhymes  
 And dismal lyrics, prophesying change  
 Beyond all reason : these the women sang ;  
 And they that know such things—I sought but  
     peace,  
 No critic I—would call them masterpieces :  
 They mastered me. At last she begged a boon,  
 A certain summer palace which I have  
 Hard by your father's frontier : I said no,  
 Yet being an easy man, gave it ; and there,  
 All wild to found an University  
 For maidens, on the spur she fled ; and more  
 We know not,—only this : They see no men,  
 Not even her brother Arac, nor the twins  
 Her brethren, though they love her, look upon her  
 As on a kind of paragon ; and I  
 (Pardon me saying it) were much loth to breed  
 Dispute betwixt myself and mine : but since

(And I confess with right) you think me bound  
 In some sort, I can give you letters to her ;  
 And yet, to speak the truth, I rate your chance  
 Almost at naked nothing."

Thus the king ;  
 And I, though nettled that he seemed to slur  
 With garrulous ease and oily courtesies  
 Our formal compact, yet, not less (all frets  
 But chafing me on fire to find my bride)  
 Went forth again with both my friends. We rode  
 Many a long league back to the North. At last  
 From hills that looked across a land of hope  
 We dropt with evening on a rustic town  
 Set in a gleaming river's crescent-curve,  
 Close at the boundary of the liberties ;  
 There entered an old hostel, called mine host  
 To council, plied him with his richest wines,  
 And showed the late-writ letters of the king.

He, with a long, low sibilation, stared  
 As blank as death in marble ; then exclaimed,  
 Averring it was clear against all rules  
 For any man to go : but as his brain  
 Began to mellow, " If the king," he said,  
 " Had given us letters, was he bound to speak ?  
 The king would bear him out ;" and at the last—  
 The summer of the vine in all his veins—  
 " No doubt that we might make it worth his while.  
 She once had passed that way ; he heard her speak  
 She scared him ; life ! he never saw the like ;  
 She looked as grand as doomsday, and as grave :  
 And he, he revered his liege-lady there ;  
 He always made a point to post with mares ;  
 His daughter and his housemaid were the boys :  
 The land he understood for miles about  
 Was tilled by women ; all the swine were sows  
 And all the dogs"—

But while he jested thus,  
A thought flashed through me, which I clothed in  
act,

Remembering how we three presented Maid,  
Or Nymph, or Goddess, at high tide of feast,  
In masque or pageant at my father's court.  
We sent mine host to purchase female gear ;  
He brought it, and himself, a sight to shake  
The midriff of despair with laughter, help  
To lace us up, till, each, in maiden plumes  
We rustled : him we gave a costly bribe  
To guerdon silence, mounted our good steeds,  
And boldly ventured on the liberties.

We followed up the river as we rode,  
And rode till midnight, when the college lights  
Began to glitter firefly-like in copse  
And linden alley ; then we past an arch,  
Whereon a woman-statue rose with wings  
From four winged horses dark against the stars,  
And some inscription ran along the front,  
But deep in shadow : further on we gained  
A little street, half garden and half house ;  
But scarce could hear each other speak for noise  
Of clocks and chimes, like silver hammers falling  
On silver anvils, and the splash and stir  
Of fountains spouted up and showering down  
In meshes of the jasmine and the rose :  
And all about us pealed the nightingale,  
Rapt in her song, and careless of the snare.

There stood a bust of Pallas for a sign,  
By two sphere lamps blazoned like Heaven and  
Earth

With constellation and with continent,  
Above an entry : riding in, we called ;  
A plump-armed Ostleress and a stable wench  
Came running at the call, and helped us down.  
Then stept a buxom hostess forth, and sailed

Full-blown before us into rooms which gave  
 Upon a pillared porch, the bases lost  
 In laurel: her we asked of that and this,  
 And who were tutors. "Lady Blanche," she said,  
 "And Lady Psyche." "Which was prettiest,  
 Best-natured?" "Lady Psyche." "Hers are we,"  
 One voice, we cried; and I sat down and wrote,  
 In such a hand as when a field of corn  
 Bows all its ears before the roaring East;

"Three ladies of the Northern empire pray  
 Your Highness would enroll them with your own,  
 As Lady Psyche's pupils."

This I sealed:

The seal was Cupid bent above a scroll,  
 And o'er his head Uranian Venus hung,  
 And raised the blinding bandage from his eyes:  
 I gave the letter to be sent with dawn;  
 And then to bed, where half in doze I seemed  
 To float about a glimmering night, and watch  
 A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight, swell  
 On some dark shore just seen that it was rich.

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As through the land at eve we went,  
 And plucked the ripened ears,  
 We fell out, my wife and I,  
 O, we fell out, I know not why,  
 And kissed again with tears.

For when we came where lies the child  
 We lost in other years,  
 There above the little grave,  
 O, there above the little grave,  
 We kissed again with tears.

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## II.

AT break of day the College Portress came ;  
 She brought us Academic silks, in hue  
 The lilac, with a silken hood to each,  
 And zoned with gold ; and now when these were  
                   on,

And we as rich as moths from dusk cocoons,  
 She, curtseying her obeisance, let us know  
 The Princess Ida waited : out we paced,  
 I first, and following through the porch that sang  
 All round with laurel, issued in a court  
 Compact of lucid marbles, bossed with lengths  
 Of classic frieze, with ample awnings gay  
 Betwixt the pillars, and with great urns of flowers.  
 The Muses and the Graces, grouped in threes,  
 Enringed a billowing fountain in the midst  
 And here and there on lattice edges lay  
 Or book or lute ; but hastily we past,  
 And up a flight of stairs into the hall.

There at a board by tome and paper sat,  
 With two tame leopards crouched beside her throne,  
 All beauty compassed in a female form,  
 The Princess ; liker to the inhabitant  
 Of some clear planet close upon the Sun,  
 Than our man's earth : such eyes were in her head,  
 And so much grace and power, breathing down  
 From over her arched brows, with every turn  
 Lived through her to the tips of her long hands  
 And to her feet. She rose her height, and said :

“ We give you welcome : not without redound  
 Of use and glory to yourselves ye come,  
 The first-fruits of the stranger : aftertime,  
 And that full voice which circles round the grave,  
 Will rank you nobly, mingled up with me.  
 What ! are the ladies of your land so tall ? ”  
 “ We of the court,” said Cyril. “ From the court ? ”

She answered, " then ye know the Prince ? " and he ·  
 " The climax of his age : as though there were  
 One rose in all the world, your Highness that,  
 He worships your ideal : " she replied :  
 " We scarcely thought in our own hall to hear  
 This barren verbiage, current among men,  
 Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.  
 Your flight from out your bookless wilds would seem  
 As arguing love of knowledge and of power ;  
 Your language proves you still the child. Indeed  
 We dream not of him : when we set our hand  
 To this great work, we purposed with ourselves  
 Never to wed. You likewise will do well,  
 Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling  
 The tricks, which make us toys of men, that so,  
 Some future time, if so indeed you will,  
 You may with those self-styled our lords ally  
 Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with scale."

At those high words, we, conscious of ourselves,  
 Perused the matting ; then an officer  
 Rose up and read the statutes, such as these :  
 Not for three years to correspond with home ;  
 Not for three years to cross the liberties ;  
 Not for three years to speak with any men ;  
 And many more, which hastily subscribed,  
 We entered on the boards : and " Now," she cried,  
 " Ye are green wood, see ye warp not. Look, our  
 hall !

Our statues!—not of those that men desire,  
 Sleek Odalisques, or oracles of mode,  
 Nor stunted squaws of West or East ; but she  
 That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she  
 The foundress of the Babylonian wall,  
 The Carian Artemisia strong in war,  
 The Rhodope that built the pyramid,  
 Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene  
 That fought Aurelian, and the Roman brows  
 Of Agrippina. Dwell with these, and lose

Convention, since to look on noble forms  
 Makes noble through the sensuous organism  
 That which is higher. O, lift your natures up :  
 Embrace our aims ; work out your freedom. Girls,  
 Knowledge is now no more a fountain sealed :  
 Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,  
 The sins of emptiness, gossip, and spite,  
 And slander, die. Better not be at all  
 Than not be noble. Leave us : you may go :  
 To-day the Lady Psyche will harangue  
 The fresh arrivals of the week before ;  
 For they press in from all the provinces,  
 And fill the hive."

She spoke, and, bowing, waved  
 Dismissal ; back again we crost the court  
 To Lady Psyche's : as we entered in,  
 There sat along the forms, like morning doves  
 That sun their milky bosoms on the thatch,  
 A patient range of pupils ; she herself  
 Erect behind a desk of satin-wood,  
 A quick brunette, well-moulded, falcon-eyed,  
 And on the hither side, or so she looked,  
 Of twenty summers. At her left, a child,  
 In shining draperies, headed like a star,  
 Her maiden babe, a double April old,  
 Aglaïa slept. We sat : the Lady glanced :  
 Then Florian, but no livelier than the dame  
 That whispered " Asses ears " among the sedge,  
 " My sister." " Comely too by all that's fair,"  
 Said Cyril. " O, hush, hush ! " and she began.

" This world was once a fluid haze of light,  
 Till toward the centre set the starry tides  
 And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast  
 The planets : then the monster, then the man ;  
 Tattooed or woaded, winter-clad in skins,  
 Raw from the prime, and crushing down his mate ;  
 As yet we find in barbarous isles, and here  
 Among the lowest."



Thereupon she took  
 A bird's-eye-view of all the ungracious past ;  
 Glanced at the legendary Amazon  
 As emblematic of a nobler age ;  
 Appraised the Lycian custom, spoke of those  
 That lay at wine with Lar and Lucumo ;  
 Ran down the Persian, Grecian, Roman lines  
 Of empire, and the woman's state in each,  
 How far from just : till warming with her theme,  
 She fulminated out her scorn of laws Salique  
 And little-footed China, touched on Mahomet  
 With much contempt, and came to chivalry :  
 When some respect, however slight, was paid  
 To woman, superstition all awry :  
 However, then commenced the dawn : a beam  
 Had slanted forward, falling in a land  
 Of promise ; fruit would follow. Deep, indeed,  
 Their debt of thanks to her who first had dared  
 To leap the rotten pales of prejudice,  
 Disyoke their necks from custom, and assert  
 None lordlier than themselves but that which made  
 Woman and man. She had founded ; they must  
 build :

Here might they learn whatever men were taught :  
 Let them not fear : some said their heads were less :  
 Some men's were small ; not they the least of men ;  
 For often fineness compensated size :  
 Besides, the brain was like the hand, and grew  
 With using : thence the man's, if more was more ;  
 He took advantage of his strength to be  
 First in the field : some ages had been lost ;  
 But woman ripened earlier, and her life  
 Was longer ; and albeit their glorious names  
 Were fewer, scattered stars, yet since in truth  
 The highest is the measure of the man,  
 And not the Caffre, Hottentot, Malay,  
 Nor those horn-handed breakers of the glebe,  
 But Homer, Plato, Verulam ; even so  
 With woman : and in arts of government,

Elizabeth and others ; arts of war,  
 The peasant Joan and others ; arts of grace,  
 Sappho and others vied with any man :  
 And, last not least, she who had left her place,  
 And bowed her state to them, that they might grow  
 To use and power on this Oasis, lapt  
 In the arms of leisure, sacred from the blight  
 Of ancient influence and scorn.

At last

She rose upon a wind of prophecy,  
 Dilating on the future ; “ everywhere  
 Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,  
 Two in the tangled business of the world,  
 Two in the liberal offices of life,  
 Two plummetts dropt for one to sound the abyss  
 Of science, and the secrets of the mind :  
 Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more :  
 And everywhere the broad and bounteous Earth  
 Should bear a double growth of those rare souls,  
 Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the  
 world.”

She ended here, and beckoned us : the rest  
 Parted ; and, glowing full-faced welcome, she  
 Began to address us, and was moving on  
 In gratulation, till as when a boat  
 Tacks, and the slackened sail flaps, all her voice  
 Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she cried,  
 “ My brother ! ” “ Well, my sister. ” “ O, ” she  
 said,  
 “ What do you here ? and in this dress ? and these ?  
 Why, who are these ? a wolf within the fold !  
 A pack of wolves ! the Lord be gracious to me !  
 A plot, a plot, a plot to ruin all ! ”  
 “ No plot, no plot, ” he answered. “ Wretched boy,  
 How saw you not the inscription on the gate,  
 LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF DEATH ? ”  
 “ And if I had, ” he answered, “ who could think

The softer Adams of your Academe,  
 O, sister, Sirens though they be, were such  
 As chanted on the blanching bones of men ? ”  
 “ But you will find it otherwise,” she said.  
 “ You jest; ill jesting with edge-tools! My vow  
 Binds me to speak, and O, that iron will,  
 That axe-like edge unturnable, our Head,  
 The Princess.” “ Well, then, Psyche, take my life,  
 And nail me like a weasel on a grange  
 For warning : bury me beside the gate,  
 And cut this epitaph above my bones ;  
*Here lies a brother by a sister slain,  
 All for the common good of womankind.*”  
 “ Let me die, too,” said Cyril, “ having seen  
 And heard the Lady Psyche.”

I struck in :

“ Albeit so masked, Madam, I love the truth ;  
 Receive it ; and in me behold the Prince  
 Your countryman, affianced years ago  
 To the Lady Ida : here, for here she was,  
 And thus (what other way was left) I came.”  
 “ O Sir, oh Prince, I have no country ; none ;  
 If any, this ; but none. Whate'er I was  
 Disrooted, what I am is grafted here.  
 Affianced, Sir ? love-whispers may not breathe  
 Within this vestal limit, and how should I,  
 Who am not mine, say, live : the thunderbolt  
 Hangs silent ; but prepare : I speak ; it falls.”  
 “ Yet pause,” I said ; “ for that inscription there,  
 I think no more of deadly lurks therein,  
 Than in a clapper clapping in a garth,  
 To scare the fowl from fruit : if more there be,  
 If more and acted on, what follows ? war ;  
 Your own work marred ; for this your Academe,  
 Whichever side be Victor, in the halloo  
 Will topple to the trumpet down, and pass  
 With all fair theories only made to gild  
 A stormless summer.’ “ Let the Princess judge

Of that," she said: "farewell, Sir—and to you.  
I shudder at the sequel, but I go."

"Are you that Lady Psyche," I rejoined,  
"The fifth in line from that old Florian,  
Yet hangs his portrait in my father's hall  
(The gaunt old Baron with his beetle brow  
Sun-shaded in the heat of dusty fights)  
As he bestrode my Grandsire, when he fell,  
And all else fled: we point to it, and we say,  
The loyal warmth of Florian is not cold,  
But branches current yet in kindred veins."  
"Are you that Psyche," Florian added, "she  
With whom I sang about the morning hills,  
Flung ball, flew kite, and raced the purple fly,  
And snared the squirrel of the glen? are you  
That Psyche, wont to bind my throbbing brow,  
To smooth my pillow, mix the foaming draught  
Of fever, tell me pleasant tales, and read  
My sickness down to happy dreams? are you  
That brother-sister Psyche, both in one?  
You were that Psyche, but what are you now?"  
"You are that Psyche," Cyril said, "for whom  
I would be that forever which I seem,  
Woman, if I might sit beside your feet,  
And glean your scattered sapience."

Then once more,

"Are you that Lady Psyche," I began,  
"That on her bridal morn before she past  
From all her old companions, when the king  
Kissed her pale cheek, declared that ancient ties  
Would still be dear beyond the southern hills;  
That were there any of our people there  
In want or peril, there was one to hear  
And help them? look! for such are these and I."  
"Are you that Psyche," Florian asked, "to whom,  
In gentler days, your arrow-wounded fawn  
Came flying while you sat beside the well?"

The creature laid his muzzle on your lap,  
 And sobbed, and you sobbed with it, and the blood  
 Was sprinkled on your kirtle, and you wept.  
 That was fawn's blood, not brother's, yet you wept.  
 O by the bright head of my little niece,  
 You were that Psyche, and what are you now?"  
 "You are that Psyche," Cyril said again,  
 "The mother of the sweetest little maid  
 That ever crowed for kisses."

"Out upon it!"

She answered, "peace! and why should I not play  
 The Spartan Mother with emotion, be  
 The Lucius Junius Brutus of my kind?  
 Him you call great: he for the common weal,  
 The fading politics of mortal Rome,  
 As I might slay this child, if good need were,  
 Slew both his sons: and I, shall I, on whom  
 The secular emancipation turns  
 Of half this world, be swerved from right to save  
 A prince, a brother? a little will I yield.  
 Best so, perchance, for us, and well for you.  
 O hard, when love and duty clash! I fear  
 My conscience will not count me fleckless; yet—  
 Hear my conditions: promise (otherwise  
 You perish) as you came to slip away,  
 To-day, to-morrow, soon: it shall be said,  
 These women were too barbarous, would not learn;  
 They fled, who might have shamed us: promise,  
 all."

What could we else, we promised each; and she,  
 Like some wild creature, newly-caged, commenced  
 A to-and-fro, so pacing till she paused  
 By Florian; holding out her lily arms,  
 Took both his hands, and smiling faintly said:  
 "I knew you at the first: though you have grown,  
 You scarce have altered: I am sad and glad  
 To see you, Florian. I give thee to death,

My brother ! it was duty spoke, not I.  
 My needful seeming harshness, pardon it.  
 Our mother, is she well ? ”

With that she kissed

His forehead, then, a moment after, clung  
 About him, and betwixt them blossomed up  
 From out a common vein of memory  
 Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,  
 And far allusion, till the gracious dews  
 Began to glisten and to fall : and while  
 They stood, so rapt, we gazing, came a voice,  
 “ I brought a message here from Lady Blanche.”  
 Back started she, and turning round we saw  
 The Lady Blanche’s daughter where she stood,  
 Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,  
 A rosy blonde, and in a college gown  
 That clad her like an April daffodilly,  
 (Her mother’s color,) with her lips apart,  
 And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,  
 As bottom agates seem to wave and float  
 In crystal currents of clear morning seas.

So stood that same fair creature at the door.  
 Then Lady Psyche, “ Ah—Melissa—you !  
 You heard us ? ” and Melissa, “ O pardon me !  
 I heard, I could not help it, did not wish :  
 But, dearest Lady, pray you fear me not,  
 Nor think I bear that heart within my breast,  
 To give three gallant gentlemen to death.”  
 “ I trust you,” said the other, “ for we two  
 Were always friends, none closer, elm and vine :  
 But yet your mother’s jealous temperament—  
 Let not your prudence, dearest, drowse, or prove  
 The Danaïd of a leaky vase, for fear  
 This whole foundation ruin, and I lose  
 My honor, these their lives.” “ Ah, fear me not,”  
 Replied Melissa, “ no—I would not tell,  
 No, not for all Aspasia’s cleverness,

No, not to answer, Madam, all those hard things  
 That Sheba came to ask of Solomon."  
 "Be it so," the other, "that we still may lead  
 The new light up, and culminate in peace,  
 For Solomon may come to Sheba yet."  
 Said Cyril, "Madam, he the wisest man,  
 Feasted the woman wisest then, in halls  
 Of Lebanonian cedar: nor should you  
 (Though madam *you* should answer, *we* would ask)  
 Less welcome find among us, if you came  
 Among us, debtors for our lives to you,  
 Myself for something more." He said not what,  
 But "Thanks," she answered, "go: we have been  
     too long  
 Together: keep your hoods about the face;  
 They do so that affect abstraction here.  
 Speak little; mix not with the rest; and hold  
 Your promise: all, I trust, may yet be well."

We turned to go, but Cyril took the child,  
 And held her round the knees against his waist,  
 And blew the swollen cheek of a trumpeter,  
 While Psyche watched them, smiling, and the child  
 Pushed her flat hand against his face and laughed;  
 And thus our conference closed.

And then we strolled  
 For half the day through stately theatres  
 Benched crescent-wise. In each we sat, we heard  
 The grave Professor. On the lecture slate  
 The circle rounded under female hands  
 With flawless demonstration: followed then  
 A classic lecture, rich in sentiment,  
 With scraps of thundrous Epic lilted out  
 By violet-hooded Doctors, elegies  
 And quoted odes, and jewels five-words-long,  
 That on the stretched forefinger of all Time  
 Sparkle forever: then we dipt in all  
 That treats of whatsoever is, the state,

The total chronicles of man, the mind,  
The morals, something of the frame, the rock,  
The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the flower,  
Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,  
And whatsoever can be taught and known ;  
Till like three horses that have broken fence,  
And glutted all night long breast-deep in corn,  
We issued gorged with knowledge, and I spoke :  
“ Why, Sirs, they do all this as well as we.”  
“ They hunt old trails,” said Cyril, “ very well ;  
But when did woman ever yet invent ? ”  
“ Ungracious ! ” answered Florian, “ have you learnt  
No more from Psyche’s lecture, you that talked  
The trash that made me sick, and almost sad ? ”  
“ O trash,” he said, “ but with a kernel in it.  
Should I not call her wise who made me wise ?  
And learnt ? I learnt more from her in a flash,  
Than if my brainpan were an empty hull,  
And every Muse tumbled a science in.  
A thousand hearts lie fallow in these halls  
And round these halls a thousand baby loves  
Fly twanging headless arrows at the hearts,  
Whence follows many a vacant pang ; but O  
With me, Sir, entered in the bigger boy,  
The Head of all the golden-shafted firm,  
The long-limbed lad that had a Psyche too ;  
He cleft me through the stomacher ; and now  
What think you of it, Florian ? do I chase  
The substance or the shadow ? will it hold ?  
I have no sorcerer’s malison on me,  
No ghostly hauntings like his Highness. I  
Flatter myself that always, everywhere,  
I know the substance when I see it. Well,  
Are castles shadows ? Three of them ? Is she  
The sweet proprietress a shadow ? If not,  
Shall those three castles patch my tattered coat ?  
For dear are those three castles to my wants,  
And dear is sister Psyche to my heart,  
And two dear things are one of double worth,



And much I might have said, but that my zone  
 Unmanned me : then the Doctors ! O to hear  
 The Doctors ! O to watch the thirsty plants  
 Imbibing ! once or twice I thought to roar,  
 To break my chain, to shake my mane : but thou,  
 Modulate me, Soul of mincing mimicry !  
 Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my throat ;  
 Abase those eyes that ever loved to meet  
 Star-sisters answering under crescent brows ;  
 Abate the stride, which speaks of man, and loose  
 A flying charm of blushes o'er this cheek,  
 Where they like swallows coming out of time  
 Will wonder why they came : but hark the bell  
 For dinner, let us go ! ”

And in we streamed  
 Among the columns, pacing staid and still  
 By twos and threes, till all from end to end  
 With beauties every shade of brown and fair,  
 In colors gayer than the morning mist,  
 The long hall glittered like a bed of flowers.  
 How might a man not wander from his wits,  
 Pierced through with eyes, but that I kept mine  
 own  
 Intent on her, who rapt in glorious dreams  
 The second-sight of some Astræan age,  
 Sat compassed with professors : they, the while,  
 Discussed a doubt, and tossed it to and fro :  
 A clamor thickened, mixed with inmost terms  
 Of art and science ; Lady Blanche alone,  
 Of faded form and haughtiest lineaments,  
 With all her Autumn tresses falsely brown,  
 Shot sidelong daggers at us, a tiger-cat  
 In act to spring.

At last a solemn grace  
 Concluded, and we sought the gardens : there  
 One walked reciting by herself, and one  
 In this hand held a volume as to read,

And smoothed a petted peacock down with that :  
 Some to a low song oared a shallop by,  
 Or under arches of the marble bridge  
 Hung, shadowed from the heat : some hid and  
 sought

In the orange thickets : others tost a ball  
 Above the fountain-jets, and back again  
 With laughter : others lay about the lawns,  
 Of the older sort, and murmured that their May  
 Was passing : what was learning unto them ?  
 They wished to marry ; they could rule a house ;  
 Men hated learned women : but we three  
 Sat muffled like the Fates ; and often came  
 Melissa, hitting all we saw with shafts  
 Of gentle satire, kin to charity,  
 That harmed not : then day droopt ; the chapel  
 bells

Called us : we left the walks ; we mixt with those  
 Six hundred maidens, clad in purest white,  
 Before two streams of light from wall to wall,  
 While the great organ almost burst his pipes,  
 Groaning for power, and rolling through the court  
 A long melodious thunder to the sound  
 Of solemn psalms and silver litanies,  
 The work of Ida, to call down from Heaven  
 A blessing on her labors for the world.

---

Sweet and low, sweet and low,  
 Wind of the western sea,  
 Low, low, breathe and blow,  
 Wind of the western sea !  
 Over the rolling waters go,  
 Come from the dying moon, and blow,  
 Blow him again to me ;  
 While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,  
 Father will come to thee soon ;

Rest, rest, on mother's breast,  
 Father will come to thee soon;  
 Father will come to his babe in the nest,  
 Silver sails all out of the west,  
 Under the silver moon;  
 Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

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### III.

MORN in the white wake of the morning star  
 Came furrowing all the orient into gold.  
 We rose, and each by other drest with care  
 Descended to the court that lay three parts  
 In shadow, but the Muses' heads were touched  
 Above the darkness from their native East.

There while we stood beside the fount, and  
 watched  
 Or seemed to watch the dancing bubble, approached  
 Melissa, tinged with wan from lack of sleep,  
 Or grief, and glowing round her dewy eyes  
 The circled Iris of a night of tears;  
 "And fly," she cried, "O fly, while yet you may!  
 My mother knows:" and when I asked her "how,"  
 "My fault," she wept, "my fault! and yet not  
 mine:  
 Yet mine in part. O hear me, pardon me!  
 My mother, 'tis her wont from night to night  
 To rail at Lady Psyche and her side.  
 She says the Princess should have been the Head,  
 Herself and Lady Psyche the two arms;  
 And so it was agreed when first they came;  
 But Lady Psyche was the right hand now,  
 And she the left, or not, or seldom used;  
 Hers more than half the students, all the love.  
 And so last night she fell to canvass you:  
 Her countrywomen! she did not envy her  
 Who ever saw such wild barbarians?

Girls?—more like men!’ and at these words the snake,

My secret, seemed to stir within my breast ;  
 And oh, Sirs, could I help it, but my cheek  
 Began to burn and burn, and her lynx eye  
 To fix and make me hotter, till she laughed :

‘ O marvellously modest maiden, you !

Men ! girls, like men ! why, if they had been **men**,  
 You need not set your thoughts in rubric thus  
 For wholesale comment.’ Pardon, I am shamed

That I must needs repeat for my excuse  
 What looks so little graceful : ‘ men ’ (for still  
 My mother went revolving on the word)

‘ And so they are,—very like men indeed—  
 And with that woman closeted for hours.’

Then came these dreadful words out one by one,

‘ Why—these—*are*—men : ’ I shuddered : ‘ and  
 you know it ! ’

‘ O ask me nothing,’ I said : ‘ And she knows too,  
 And she conceals it ! ’ So my mother clutched  
 The truth at once, but with no word from me ;  
 And now thus early risen she goes to inform  
 The Princess : Lady Psyche will be crushed ;  
 But you may yet be saved, and therefore fly :  
 But heal me with your pardon ere you go.”

“ What pardon, sweet Melissa, for a blush ? ”  
 Said Cyril : “ Pale one, blush again : than wear  
 Those lilies, better blush our lives away.  
 Yet let us breathe for one hour more in Heaven,”  
 He added, “ lest some classic Angel speak  
 In scorn of us, ‘ They mounted, Ganymedes,  
 To tumble, Vulcans, on the second morn.’  
 But I will melt this marble into wax  
 To yield us further furlough : ” and he went.

Melissa shook her doubtful curls, and thought  
 He scarce would prosper. “ Tell us,” Florian asked,  
 ‘ How grew this feud betwixt the right and left.”

"O long ago," she said, "betwixt these two  
 Division smoulders hidden: 'tis my mother,  
 Too jealous, often fretful as the wind  
 Pent in a crevice: much I bear with her:  
 I never knew my father, but she says  
 (God help her!) she was wedded to a fool;  
 And still she railed against the state of things.  
 She had the care of Lady Ida's youth,  
 And from the Queen's decease she brought her up  
 But when your sister came she won the heart  
 Of Ida: they were still together, grew  
 (For so they said themselves) inoculated;  
 Consonant chords that shiver to one note:  
 One mind in all things: yet my mother still  
 Affirms your Psyche thieved her theories,  
 And angled with them for her pupil's love:  
 She calls her plagiarist; I know not what:  
 But I must go: I dare not tarry," and light  
 As flies the shadow of a bird she fled.

Then murmured Florian, gazing after her:  
 "An open-hearted maiden, true and pure.  
 If I could love, why this were she: how pretty  
 Her blushing was, and how she blushed again,  
 As if to close with Cyril's random wish:  
 Not like your Princess crammed with erring pride,  
 Nor like poor Psyche whom she drags in tow."

"The crane," I said, "may chatter of the crane,  
 The dove may murmur of the dove, but I  
 An eagle clang an eagle to the sphere.  
 My Princess, oh my Princess! true she errs,  
 But in her own grand way: being herself  
 Three times more noble than threescore of men  
 She sees herself in every woman else,  
 And so she wears her error like a crown  
 To blind the truth and me: for her, and her,  
 Hebes are they to hand ambrosia, mix  
 The nectar; but—ah she—whene'er she moves

The Samian Herè rises and she speaks  
A Memnon smitten with the morning Sun."

So saying, from the court we paced, and gained  
The terrace ranged along the Northern front,  
And leaning there on those balusters, high  
Above the empurpled champaign, drank the gale  
That blown about the foliage underneath,  
And sated with the innumerable rose,  
Beat balm upon our eyelids. Hither came  
Cyril, and yawning, "O hard task!" he cried,  
"No fighting shadows here! I forced a way  
Through solid opposition, crabbed and gnarled.  
Better to clear prime forests, heave and thump  
A league of street in summer solstice down,  
Than hammer at this reverend gentlewoman.  
I knocked, and bidden, entered; found her there  
At point to move, and settled in her eyes  
The green malignant light of coming storm.  
Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-oiled,  
As man's could be; yet maiden-meeek I prayed  
Concealment: she demanded who we were,  
And why we came? I fabled nothing fair,  
But, your example pilot, told her all.  
Up went the hushed amaze of hand and eye.  
But when I dwelt upon your old affiance,  
She answered sharply that I talked astray.  
I urged the fierce inscription on the gate,  
And our three lives. True—we had limed ourselves  
With open eyes, and we must take the chance.  
But such extremes, I told her, well might harm  
The woman's cause. 'Not more than now,' she said,  
'So puddled as it is with favoritism.'  
I tried the mother's heart. Shame might befall  
Melissa, knowing, saying not she knew:  
Her answer was, 'Leave me to deal with that.'  
I spoke of war to come and many deaths,  
And she replied, her duty was to speak,  
And duty duty, clear of consequences.

I grew discouraged, Sir ; but since I knew  
 No rock so hard but that a little wave  
 May beat admission in a thousand years,  
 I recommenced ; ‘ Decide not ere you pause.  
 I find you here but in the second place,  
 Some say the third—the authentic foundress you.  
 I offer boldly : we will seat you highest :  
 Wink at our advent : help my Prince to gain  
 His rightful bride, and here I promise you  
 Some palace in our own land, where you shall reign,  
 The head and heart of all our fair she-world,  
 And your great name flow on with broadening time  
 Forever.’ Well, she balanced this a little,  
 And told me she would answer us to-day,  
 Meantime be mute : thus much, nor more, I gained.”

He ceasing, came a message from the Head.  
 “ That afternoon the Princess rode to take  
 The dip of certain strata to the North.  
 Would we go with her ? we should find the land  
 Worth seeing ; and the river made a fall  
 Out yonder : ” then she pointed on to where  
 A double hill ran up his furrowy forks  
 Beyond the thick-leaved platans of the vale.

Agreed to, this, the day fled on through all  
 Its range of duties to the appointed hour.  
 Then summoned to the porch we went. She stood  
 Among her maidens, higher by the head,  
 Her back against a pillar, her foot on one  
 Of those tame leopards. Kittenlike he rolled  
 And pawed about her sandal. I drew near :  
 I gazed. On a sudden my strange seizure came  
 Upon me, the weird vision of our house :  
 The Princess Ida seemed a hollow show,  
 Her gay-furred cats a painted fantasy,  
 Her college and her maidens empty masks,  
 And I myself the shadow of a dream,  
 For all things were and were not. Yet I felt

My heart beat thick with passion and with awe,  
 Then from my breast the involuntary sigh  
 Brake, as she smote me with the light of eyes  
 That lent my knee desire to kneel, and shook  
 My pulses, till to horse we got, and so  
 Went forth in long retinue following up  
 The river as it narrowed to the hills.

I rode beside her, and to me she said :  
 " O friend, we trust that you esteemed us not  
 Too harsh to your companion yesternorn ;  
 Unwillingly we spake." " No—not to her,"  
 I answered, " but to one of whom we spake  
 Your Highness might have seemed the thing you  
 say."  
 " Again ?" she cried ; " are you ambassadresses  
 From him to me ? we give you, being strange,  
 A license : speak, and let the topic die."

I stammered that I knew him—could have  
 wished—  
 " Our king expects—was there no precontract—  
 There is no truer-hearted—ah, you seem  
 All he prefigured, and he could not see  
 The bird of passage flying south but longed  
 To follow : surely, if your Highness keep  
 Your purport, you will shock him even to death,  
 Or baser courses, children of despair."

" Poor boy," she said, " can he not read—no  
 books ?  
 Quoit, tennis, ball—no games ? nor deals in that  
 Which men delight in, martial exercise ?  
 To nurse a blind ideal, like a girl,  
 Methinks he seems no better than a girl ;  
 As girls were once, as we ourselves have been :  
 We had our dreams ; perhaps he mixt with them :  
 We touch on our dead self, nor shun to do it,  
 Being other—since we learnt our meaning here,



To lift the woman's fallen divinity  
Upon an even pedestal with man."

She paused, and added with a haughtier smile  
"And as to precontracts, we move, my friend,  
At no man's beck, but know ourselves and thee,  
O Vashti, noble Vashti! Summoned out  
She kept her state, and left the drunken king  
To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms."

"Alas! your Highness breathes full East," I said,  
"On that which leans to you. I know the Prince,  
I prize his truth: and then how vast a work  
To assail this gray preëminence of man!  
You grant me license: might I use it? think,  
Ere half be done, perchance your life may fail;  
Then comes the feebler heiress of your plan,  
And takes and ruins all; and thus your pains  
May only make that footprint upon sand  
Which old-recurring waves of prejudice  
Resmooth to nothing: might I dread that you,  
With only Fame for spouse and your great deeds  
For issue, yet may live in vain, and miss,  
Meanwhile, what every woman counts her due,  
Love, children, happiness?"

And she exclaimed,  
"Peace, you young savage of the Northern wild!  
What! though your Prince's love were like a God's,  
Have we not made ourself the sacrifice?  
You are bold indeed: we are not talked to thus:  
Yet will we say for children, would they grew  
Like field-flowers everywhere! we like them well:  
But children die; and let me tell you, girl,  
Howe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die:  
They with the sun and moon renew their light  
Forever, blessing those that look on them:  
Children—that men may pluck them from our  
          hearts

Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves—

O—children—there is nothing upon earth  
 More miserable than she that has a son  
 And sees him err : nor would we work for fame ;  
 Though she perhaps might reap the applause of  
     Great,  
 Who learns the one POU STO whence after-hands  
 May move the world, though she herself effect  
 But little : wherefore up and act, nor shrink  
 For fear our solid aim be dissipated  
 By frail successors. Would, indeed, we had been,  
 In lieu of many mortal flies, a race  
 Of giants, living, each, a thousand years,  
 That we might see our own work out, and watch  
 The sandy footprint harden into stone.”

I answered nothing, doubtful in myself  
 If that strange Poet-princess with her grand  
 Imaginations might at all be won.  
 And she broke out, interpreting my thoughts :

“ No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you :  
 We are used to that ; for women, up till this  
 Cramped under worse than South-sea-isle taboo,  
 Dwarfs of the gynecæum, fail so far  
 In high desire, they know not, cannot guess  
 How much their welfare is a passion to us.  
 If we could give them surer, quicker proof—  
 O, if our end were less achievable  
 By slow approaches than by single act  
 Of immolation, any phase of death,  
 We were as prompt to spring against the pikes,  
 Or down the fiery gulf, as talk of it,  
 To compass our dear sisters’ liberties.”

She bowed as if to veil a noble tear ;  
 And up we came to where the river sloped  
 To plunge in cataract, shattering on black blocks  
 A breadth of thunder. O’er it shook the woods  
 And danced the color, and, below, stuck out

The bones of some vast bulk that lived and roared  
 Before man was. She gazed a while and said,  
 "As these rude bones to us, are we to her  
 That will be." "Dare we dream of that," I asked,  
 "Which wrought us, as the workman and his work  
 That practice betters?" "How," she cried, "you  
 love

The metaphysics! read and earn our prize,  
 A golden brooch: beneath an emerald plane  
 Sits Diotima, teaching him that died  
 Of hemlock; our device; wrought to the life;  
 She rapt upon her subject, he on her:  
 For there are schools for all." "And yet," I said,  
 "Methinks I have not found among them all  
 One anatomic." "Nay, we thought of that,"  
 She answered, "but it pleased us not: in truth  
 We shudder but to dream our maids should ape  
 Those monstrous males that carve the living hound,  
 And cram him with the fragments of the grave,  
 Or in the dark dissolving human heart,  
 And holy secrets of this microcosm,  
 Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful jest,  
 Encarnalize their spirits: yet we know  
 Knowledge is knowledge, and this matter hangs:  
 Howbeit ourself, foreseeing casualty,  
 Nor willing men should come among us, learnt,  
 For many weary moons before we came,  
 This craft of healing. Were you sick, ourself,  
 Would tend upon you. To your question now,  
 Which touches on the workman and his work.  
 Let there be light, and there was light: 'tis so:  
 For was, and is, and will be, are but is;  
 And all creation is one act at once,  
 The birth of light: but we that are not all,  
 As parts, can see but parts, now this, now that,  
 And live, perforce, from thought to thought, and  
 make

One act a phantom of succession: thus  
 Our weakness somehow shapes the shadow, Time;

But in the shadow will we work, and mould  
The woman to the fuller day."

She spake

With kindled eyes : we rode a league beyond,  
And o'er a bridge of pinewood crossing, came  
On flowery levels underneath the crag,  
Full of all beauty. "O how sweet," I said,  
(For I was half oblivious of my mask,)  
"To linger here with one that loved us!" "Yea,  
She answered, "or with fair philosophies  
That lift the fancy ; for indeed these fields  
Are lovely, lovelier not the Elysian lawns,  
Where paced the Demigods of old, and saw  
The soft white vapor streak the crowned towers  
Built to the Sun : " then, turning to her maids,  
"Pitch our pavilion here upon the sward ;  
Lay out the viands." At the word, they raised  
A tent of satin, elaborately wrought  
With fair Corinna's triumph : here she stood,  
Engirt with many a florid maiden-cheek,  
The woman-conqueror ; woman-conquered there  
The bearded Victor of ten thousand hymns,  
And all the men mourned at his side : but we  
Set forth to climb ; then, climbing, Cyril kept  
With Psyche, with Melissa Florian, I  
With mine affianced. Many a little hand  
Glanced like a touch of sunshine on the rocks,  
Many a light foot shone like a jewel set  
In the dark crag : and then we turned, we wound  
About the cliffs, the copses, out and in,  
Hammering and clinking, chattering stony names  
Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and tuff,  
Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the Sun  
Grew broader toward his death and fell, and all  
The rosy heights came out above the lawns.

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The splendor falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story ;

The long light shakes across the lakes,  
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying.  
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,  
 And thinner, clearer, farther going;  
 O sweet and far, from cliff and scar,  
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:  
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
 They faint on hill or field or river:  
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
 And grow forever and forever.  
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

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#### IV.

“THERE sinks the nebulous star we call the Sun,  
 If that hypothesis of theirs be sound,”  
 Said Ida; “let us down and rest:” and we  
 Down from the lean and wrinkled precipices,  
 By every coppice-feathered chasm and cleft,  
 Dropt through the ambrosial gloom to where below,  
 No bigger than a glow-worm, shone the tent  
 Lamp-lit from the inner. Once she leaned on me,  
 Descending; once or twice she lent her hand,  
 And blissful palpitations in the blood,  
 Stirring a sudden transport, rose and fell.

But when we planted level feet, and dipt  
 Beneath the satin dome and entered in,  
 There leaning deep in broidered down we sank  
 Our elbows: on a tripod in the midst  
 A fragrant flame rose, and before us glowed  
 Fruit, blossom, viand, amber wine and gold.

Then she, " Let some one sing to us ; lightlier  
 move  
 The minutes fledged with music ;" and a maid,  
 Of those beside her, smote her harp, and sang.

" Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
 And thinking of the days that are no more.

" Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,  
 That brings our friends up from the underworld,  
 Sad as the last which reddens over one  
 That sinks with all we love below the verge ;  
 So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

" Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns  
 The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds  
 To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
 The casement slowly grows a glimmering square ;  
 So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

" Dear as remembered kisses after death,  
 And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned  
 On lips that are for others ; deep as love,  
 Deep as first love, and wild with all regret ;  
 O Death in Life, the days that are no more."

She ended with such passion that the tear,  
 She sang of, shook and fell, an erring pearl  
 Lost in her bosom : but with some disdain  
 Answered the Princess, " If indeed there haunt  
 About the mouldered lodges of the Past  
 So sweet a voice and vague, fatal to men,  
 Well needs it we should cram our ears with wool  
 And so pace by : but thine are fancies hatched  
 In silken-folded idleness ; nor is it  
 Wiser to weep a true occasion lost,

But trim our sails, and let old by-gones be,  
 While down the streams that float us each and all  
 To the issue, goes, like glittering bergs of ice,  
 Throne after throne, and molten on the waste  
 Becomes a cloud: for all things serve their time  
 Toward that great year of equal might and rights,  
 Nor would I fight with iron laws, in the end  
 Found golden: let the past be past; let be  
 Their cancelled Babels: though the rough kex  
 break

The starred mosaic, and the wild goat hang  
 Upon the shaft, and the wild fig-tree split  
 Their monstrous idols, care not while we hear  
 A trumpet in the distance pealing news  
 Of better, and Hope, a poisoning eagle, burns  
 Above the unrisen morrow: "then to me;  
 "Know you no song of your own land," she said,  
 "Not such as moans about the retrospect,  
 But deals with the other distance and the hues  
 Of promise; not a death's head at the wine."

Then I remembered one myself had made  
 What time I watched the swallow winging south  
 From mine own land, part made long since, and  
 part  
 Now while I sang; and maidenlike as far  
 As I could ape their treble, did I sing.

"O Swallow, Swallow, flying South,  
 Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves.  
 And tell her, tell her what I tell to thee.

"O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,  
 That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,  
 And dark and true and tender is the North.

"O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light  
 Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,  
 And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

“ O were I thou that she might take me in,  
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart  
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

“ Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,  
Delaying as the tender ash delays  
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green ?

“ O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown :  
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,  
But in the North long since my nest is made.

“ O tell her, brief is life but love is long,  
And brief the sun of summer in the North,  
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

“ O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,  
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her  
mine,  
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.”

I ceased, and all the ladies, each at each,  
Like the Ithacensian suitors in old time,  
Stared with great eyes, and laughed with alien lips,  
And knew not what they meant ; for still my voice  
Rang false : but smiling, “ Not for thee,” she said,  
“ O Bulbul, any rose of Gulistan  
Shall burst her veil : marsh-divers, rather, maid,  
Shall croak thee sister, or the meadow-crake  
Grate her harsh kindred in the grass : and this  
A mere love-poem ! O for such, my friend,  
We hold them slight : they mind us of the time  
When we made bricks in Egypt. Knaves are men,  
That lute and flute fantastic tenderness,  
And dress the victim to the offering up,  
And paint the gates of Hell with Paradise,  
And play the slave to gain the tyranny.  
Poor soul ! I had a maid of honor once ;  
She wept her true eyes blind for such a one,



A rogue of canzonets and serenades.  
 I loved her. Peace be with her. She is dead.  
 So they blaspheme the muse ! but great is song  
 Used to great ends : ourself have often tried  
 Valkyrian hymns, or into rhythm have dashed  
 The passion of the prophetess : for song  
 Is duer unto freedom, force, and growth  
 Of spirit, than to junketing and love.  
 Love is it ? Would this same mock-love and this  
 Mock-Hymen were laid up like winter bats,  
 Till all men grew to rate us at our worth,  
 Not vassals to be beat, nor pretty babes  
 To be dandled, no, but living wills, and sphered  
 Whole in ourselves, and owed to none. Enough !  
 But now to leaven play with profit, you,  
 Know you no song, the true growth of your soil,  
 That gives the manners of your countrywomen ? ”

She spoke, and turned her sumptuous head with  
 eyes  
 Of shining expectation fixt on mine.  
 Then while I dragged my brains for such a song,  
 Cyril, with whom the bell-mouthed flask had  
 wrought,  
 Or mastered by the sense of sport, began  
 To troll a careless, careless tavern-catch  
 Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences  
 Unmeet for ladies. Florian nodded at him,  
 I frowning ; Psyche flushed and wanned and shook ;  
 The lily-like Melissa drooped her brows ;  
 “ Forbear,” the Princess cried ; “ Forbear, Sir,” I ;  
 And heated through and through with wrath and  
 love,  
 I smote him on the breast ; he started up ; /  
 There rose a shriek as of a city sacked ;  
 Melissa clamored, “ Flee the death ! ” “ To horse ! ”  
 Said Ida ; “ home ! to horse ! ” and fled, as flies  
 A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk,  
 When some one batters at the dovecote doors,

Disorderly the women. Alone I stood  
 With Florian, cursing Cyril, vext at heart,  
 In the pavilion : there like parting hopes  
 I heard them passing from me : hoof by hoof,  
 And every hoof a knell to my desires,  
 Clanged on the bridge ; and then another shriek,  
 " The Head, the Head, the Princess, oh the Head !"  
 For blind with rage she missed the plank, and  
 rolled

In the river. Out I sprang from glow to gloom :  
 There whirled her white robe like a blossomed  
 branch

Rapt to the horrible fall : a glance I gave,  
 No more ; but woman-vested as I was,  
 Plunged ; and the flood drew ; yet I caught her  
 then

Oaring one arm, and bearing in my left  
 The weight of all the hopes of half the world,  
 Strove to buffet to land in vain. A tree  
 Was half-disrooted from his place, and stooped  
 To drench his dark locks in the gurgling wave  
 Mid-channel. Right on this we drove and caught,  
 And grasping down the boughs I gained the shore.

There stood her maidens glimmeringly grouped  
 In the hollow bank. One reaching forward drew  
 My burthen from mine arms ; they cried " She  
 lives !"

They bore her back into the tent ; but I,  
 So much a kind of shame within me wrought,  
 Not yet endured to meet her opening eyes,  
 Nor found my friends ; but pushed alone on foot  
 (For since her horse was lost I left her mine)  
 Across the woods, and less from Indian craft  
 Than beelike instinct hiveward, found at length  
 The garden portals. Two great statues, Art  
 And Science, Caryatids, lifted up  
 A weight of emblem, and betwixt were valves  
 Of open-work in which the hunter rued

His rash intrusion, manlike, but his brows  
 Had sprouted, and the branches thereupon  
 Spread out at top, and grimly spiked the gates.

A little space was left between the horns,  
 Through which I clambered o'er at top with pain,  
 Dropt on the sward, and up the linden walks,  
 And, tost on thoughts that changed from hue to hue,  
 Now poring on the glow-worm, now the star,  
 I paced the terrace, till the bear had wheeled  
 Through a great arc his seven slow suns.

A step

Of lightest echo, then a loftier form  
 Than female, moving through the uncertain gloom,  
 Disturbed me with the doubt "if this were she,"  
 But it was Florian. "Hist, O hist," he said,  
 "They seek us: out so late is out of rules.  
 Moreover, 'seize the strangers' is the cry.  
 How came you here?" I told him. "I," said he,  
 "Last of the train, a moral leper, I,  
 To whom none spake, half-sick at heart, returned.  
 Arriving all confused among the rest,  
 With hooded brows I crept into the hall,  
 And, couched behind a Judith, underneath  
 The head of Holofernes peeped and saw.  
 Girl after girl was called to trial: each  
 Disclaimed all knowledge of us: last of all,  
 Melissa: trust me, Sir, I pitied her.  
 She, questioned if she knew us men, at first  
 Was silent; closer prest, denied it not:  
 And then, demanded if her mother knew,  
 Or Psyche, she affirmed not, or denied:  
 From whence the Royal mind, familiar with her,  
 Easily gathered either guilt. She sent  
 For Psyche, but she was not there; she called  
 For Psyche's child to cast it from the doors;  
 She sent for Blanche to accuse her face to face;  
 And I slipt out: but whither will you now?

And where are Psyche, Cyril ? both are fled.  
 What, if together ? that were not so well.  
 Would rather we had never come ! I dread  
 His wildness, and the chances of the dark."

" And yet," I said, " you wrong him more than I  
 That struck him : this is proper to the clown,  
 Though smocked, or furred and purpled, still the  
 clown,  
 To harm the thing that trusts him, and to shame  
 That which he says he loves : for Cyril, howe'er  
 He deal in frolic, as to-night—the song  
 Might have been worse and sinned in grosser lips  
 Beyond all pardon—as it is, I hold  
 These flashes on the surface are not he.  
 He has a solid base of temperament :  
 But as the water-lily starts and slides,  
 Upon the level in little puffs of wind,  
 Though anchored to the bottom, such is he."

Scarce had I ceased, when from a tamarisk near  
 Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying, " Names."  
 He, standing still, was clutched ; but I began  
 To thrud the musky-circled mazes, wind  
 And double in and out the boles, and race  
 By all the fountains : fleet I was of foot :  
 Before me showered the rose in flakes ; behind  
 I heard the puffed pursuer ; at mine ear  
 Bubbled the nightingale and heeded not,  
 And secret laughter tickled all my soul.  
 At last I hooked my ankle in a vine,  
 That claspt the feet of a Mnemosyne,  
 And falling on my face was caught and known.

They haled us to the Princess, where she sat  
 High in the hall : above her drooped a lamp,  
 And made the single jewel on her brow  
 Burn like the mystic fire on a mast-head,  
 Prophet of storm : a handmaid on each side

Rowed toward her, combing out her long black hair  
 Damp from the river ; and close behind her stood  
 Eight daughters of the plough, stronger than men,  
 Huge women, blowzed with health, and wind, and  
     rain,  
 And labor. Each was like a Druid rock ;  
 Or like a spire of land that stands apart  
 Cleft from the main, and wailed about with mews.

Then, as we came, the crowd dividing clove  
 An advent to the throne ; and there beside,  
 Half-naked as if caught at once from bed,  
 And tumbled on the purple footcloth, lay  
 The lily-shining child ; and on the left,  
 Bowed on her palms and folded up from wrong,  
 Her round white shoulder shaken with her sobs,  
 Melissa knelt ; but Lady Blanche, erect,  
 Stood up and spake, an affluent orator.

“ It was not thus, oh Princess, in old days :  
 You prized my counsel, lived upon my lips :  
 I led you then to all the Castalies ;  
 I fed you with the milk of every Muse ;  
 I loved you like this kneeler, and you me,  
 Your second mother : those were gracious times.  
 Then came your new friend : you began to change—  
 I saw it and grieved—to slacken and to cool ;  
 Till taken with her seeming openness  
 You turned your warmer currents all to her,  
 To me you froze : this was my meed for all.  
 Yet I bore up in part from ancient love,  
 And partly that I hoped to win you back,  
 And partly conscious of my own deserts,  
 And partly that you were my civil head,  
 And chiefly you were born for something great  
 In which I might your fellow-worker be,  
 When time should serve ; and thus a noble scheme  
 Grew up from seed we two long since had sown :  
 In us true growth, in her a Jonah's gourd,

Up in one night and due to sudden sun :  
 We took this palace ; but even from the first  
 You stood in your own light and darkened mine.  
 What student came but that you planed her path  
 To Lady Psyche, younger, not so wise,  
 A foreigner, and I your countrywoman,  
 I your old friend and tried, she new in all ?  
 But still her lists were swelled and mine were lean ;  
 Yet I bore up, in hope she would be known :  
 Then came these wolves : *they* knew her : *they*  
     endured,  
 Long-closeted with her the yestermorn,  
 To tell her what they were, and she to hear :  
 And me none told : not less to an eye like mine,  
 A lidless watcher of the public weal,  
 Last night, their mask was patent, and my foot  
 Was to you : but I thought again : I feared  
 To meet a cold ' We thank you, we shall hear of it  
 From Lady Psyche : ' you had gone to her,  
 She told, perforce ; and winning easy grace,  
 No doubt for slight delay, remained among us  
 In our young nursery still unknown, the stem  
 Less grain than touchwood, while my honest heat  
 Were all miscounted as malignant haste  
 To push my rival out of place and power.  
 But public use required she should be known ;  
 And since my oath was ta'en for public use,  
 I broke the letter of it to keep the sense.  
 I spoke not then at first, but watched them well,  
 Saw that they kept apart, no mischief done ;  
 And yet this day (though you should hate me for  
     it)  
 I came to tell you ; found that you had gone,  
 Ridden to the hills, she likewise : now, I thought,  
 That surely she will speak ; if not, then I.  
 Did she ? these monsters blazoned what they were,  
 According to the coarseness of their kind,  
 For thus I hear ; and known at last (my work)  
 And full of cowardice and guilty shame,

(I grant in her some sense of shame,) she flies ;  
 And I remain on whom to wreak your rage,  
 I, that have lent my life to build up yours,  
 I, that have wasted here health, wealth and time  
 And talents, I—you know it—I will not boast :  
 Dismiss me, and I prophesy your plan,  
 Divorced from my experience, will be chaff  
 For every gust of chance, and men will say  
 We did not know the real light, but chased  
 The wisp that flickers where no foot can tread."

She ceased : the Princess answered coldly, " Good :  
 Your oath is broken : we dismiss you : go.  
 For this lost lamb (she pointed to the child)  
 Our mind is changed : we take it to ourselves."

Thereat the Lady stretched a vulture throat,  
 And shot from crooked lips a haggard smile.  
 " The plan was mine. I built the nest," she said,  
 " To hatch the cuckoo. Rise!" and stooped to  
 updrag

Melissa : she, half on her mother propt,  
 Half-drooping from her, turned her face, and cast  
 A liquid look on Ida, full of prayer,  
 Which melted Florian's fancy as she hung,  
 A Niobean daughter, one arm out,  
 Appealing to the bolts of Heaven ; and while  
 We gazed upon her came a little stir  
 About the doors, and on a sudden rushed  
 Among us, out of breath, as one pursued,  
 A woman-post in flying raiment. Fear  
 Stared in her eyes, and chalked her face, and  
 winged

Her transit to the throne, whereby she fell  
 Delivering sealed despatches, which the Head  
 Took half-amazed, and in her lion's mood  
 Tore open, silent we with blind surmise  
 Regarding, while she read, till over brow  
 And cheek and bosom brake the wrathful bloom  
 As of some fire against a stormy cloud,

When the wild peasant rights himself, the rick  
 Flames, and his anger reddens in the heavens ;  
 For anger most it seemed, while now her breast,  
 Beaten with some great passion at her heart,  
 Palpitated, her hand shook, and we heard  
 In the dead hush the papers that she held  
 Rustle : at once the lost lamb at her feet  
 Sent out a bitter bleating for its dam ;  
 The plaintive cry jarred on her ire ; she crushed  
 The scrolls together, made a sudden turn  
 As if to speak, but, utterance failing her,  
 She whirled them on to me, as who should say  
 " Read," and I read—two letters—one her sire's.

" Fair daughter, when we sent the Prince your  
 way  
 We knew not your ungracious laws, which learnt,  
 We, conscious of what temper you are built,  
 Came all in haste to hinder wrong, but fell  
 Into his father's hands, who has this night,  
 You lying close upon his territory,  
 Slipt round and in the dark invested you,  
 And here he keeps me hostage for his son."

The second was my father's, running thus :  
 " You have our son : touch not a hair of his head :  
 Render him up unscathed : give him your hand :  
 Cleave to your contract : though indeed we hear  
 You hold the woman is the better man ;  
 A rampant heresy, such as if it spread  
 Would make all women kick against their Lords  
 Through all the world, and which might well deserve  
 That we this night should pluck your palace down ;  
 And we will do it, unless you send us back  
 Our son, on the instant, whole."

So far I read ;  
 And then stood up and spoke impetuously.

" O not to pry and peer on your reserve,  
 But led by golden wishes and a hope



The child of regal compact, did I break  
 Your precinct ; not a scorner of your sex  
 But venerator, zealous it should be  
 All that it might be : hear me, for I bear,  
 Though man, yet human, whatsoe'er your wrongs,  
 From the flaxen curl to the gray lock a life  
 Less mine than yours : my nurse would tell me of  
 you ;

I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,  
 Vague brightness ; when a boy, you stooped to me  
 From all high places, lived in all fair lights,  
 Came in long breezes rapt from inmost south,  
 And blown to inmost north ; at eve and dawn  
 With *Ida, Ida, Ida*, rang the woods ;  
 The leader wild-swan in among the stars  
 Would clang it, and lapt in wreaths of glow-worm  
 light

The mellow breaker murmured *Ida*. Now,  
 Because I would have reached you, had you been  
 Sphered up with *Cassiopëia*, or the enthroned  
*Persephone* in *Hades*, now at length,  
 Those winters of abeyance all worn out,  
 A man I came to see you : but, indeed,  
 Not in this frequency can I lend full tongue,  
 O noble *Ida*, to those thoughts that wait  
 On you, their centre : let me say but this,  
 That many a famous man and woman, town  
 And landskip, have I heard of, after seen  
 The dwarfs of presage ; though when known, there  
 grew

Another kind of beauty in detail  
 Made them worth knowing ; but in you I found  
 My boyish dream involved and dazzled down  
 And mastered, while that after-beauty makes  
 Such head from act to act, from hour to hour,  
 Within me, that except you slay me here,  
 According to your bitter statute-book,  
 I cannot cease to follow you as they say  
 The seal does music ; who desire you more

Than growing boys their manhood ; dying lips,  
 With many thousand matters left to do,  
 The breath of life ; oh, more than poor men wealth,  
 Than sick men health—yours, yours, not mine—but  
     half

Without you, with you, whole ; and of those halves  
 You worthiest ; and howe'er you block and bar  
 Your heart with system out from mine, I hold  
 That it becomes no man to nurse despair,  
 But in the teeth of clenched antagonisms  
 To follow up the worthiest till he die :  
 Yet that I came not all unauthorized,  
 Behold your father's letter."

On one knee

Kneeling, I gave it, which she caught, and dashed  
 Unopened at her feet : a tide of fierce  
 Invective seemed to wait behind her lips,  
 As waits a river level with the dam  
 Ready to burst and flood the world with foam :  
 And so she would have spoken, but there rose  
 A hubbub in the court of half the maids  
 Gathered together ; from the illumined hall  
 Long lanes of splendor slanted o'er a press  
 Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded ewes,  
 And rainbow robes, and gems and gemlike eyes,  
 And gold and golden heads ; they to and fro  
 Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red, some pale,  
 All open-mouthed, all gazing to the light,  
 Some crying there was an army in the land.  
 And some that men were in the very walls,  
 And some they cared not ; till a clamor grew  
 As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,  
 And worse-confounded : high above them stood  
 The placid marble Muses, looking peace.

Not peace, she looked, the Head : but rising up  
 Robed in the long night of her deep hair, so  
 To the open window moved, remaining there

Fixt like a beacon-tower above the waves  
 Of tempest, when the crimson-rolling eye  
 Glares ruin, and the wild birds on the light  
 Dash themselves dead. She stretched her arms  
 and called  
 Across the tumult, and the tumult fell :

“ What fear ye, brawlers ? am not I your Head ?  
 On me, me, me, the storm first breaks : *I* dare  
 All these male thunderbolts : what is it ye fear ?  
 Peace ! there are those to avenge us, and they  
 come :

If not,—myself were like enough, oh girls,  
 To unfurl the maiden banner of our rights,  
 And clad in iron burst the ranks of war,  
 Or, falling, protomartyr of our cause,  
 Die : yet I blame ye not so much for fear ;  
 Six thousand years of fear have made ye that  
 From which I would redeem ye : but for those  
 That stir this hubbub—you and you—I know  
 Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow morn  
 We hold a great convention : then shall they  
 That love their voices more than duty, learn  
 With whom they deal, dismissed in shame to live  
 No wiser than their mothers, household stuff,  
 Live chattels, mincers of each other’s fame,  
 Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,  
 The drunkard’s football, laughing-stocks of Time,  
 Whose brains are in their hands and in their heels,  
 But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to thrum,  
 To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to scour,  
 Forever slaves at home and fools abroad ! ”

She, ending, waved her hands : thereat the crowd  
 Muttering, dissolved : then with a smile, that looked  
 A stroke of cruel sunshine on the cliff  
 When all the glens are drowned in azure gloom  
 Of thunder-shower, she floated to us and said :

“ You have done well and like a gentleman,  
 And like a prince : you have our thanks for all :  
 And you look well too in your woman’s dress :  
 Well have you done, and like a gentleman.  
 You saved our life : we owe you bitter thanks :  
 Better have died and spilt our bones in the flood—  
 Then men had said—but now—What hinders me  
 To take such bloody vengeance on you both ?—  
 Yet since our father—Wasps in our good hive,  
 You would-be quenchers of the light to be,  
 Barbarians, grosser than your native bears—  
 O would I had his sceptre for one hour !  
 You that have dared to break our bound, and gulled  
 Our servants, wronged and lied and thwarted us—  
*I wed with thee ! I bound by precontract*  
 Your bride, your bondslave ! not though all the  
     gold  
 That veins the world were packed to make your  
     crown,  
 And every spoken tongue should lord you ! Sir,  
 Your falsehood and yourself are hateful to us :  
 I trample on your offers and on you :  
 Begone ! we will not look upon you more.  
 Here, push them out at gates ! ”

In wrath she spake.

Then those eight mighty daughters of the plough  
 Bent their broad faces toward us and addressed  
 Their motion : twice I sought to plead my cause,  
 But on my shoulder hung their heavy hands,  
 The weight of destiny : so from her face  
 They pushed us, down the steps, and through the  
     court,  
 And with grim laughter thrust us out at gates.

We crossed the street, and gained a petty mound  
 Beyond it, whence we saw the lights and heard  
 The voices murmuring. While I listened came  
 On a sudden the weird seizure and the doubt :  
 I seemed to move among a world of ghosts ;

The Princess with her monstrous woman-guard,  
 The jest and earnest working side by side,  
 The cataract, and the tumult, and the kings  
 Were shadows; and the long fantastic night  
 With all its doings had and had not been,  
 And all things were and were not.

This went by

As strangely as it came, and on my spirits  
 Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy;  
 Not long; I shook it off; for spite of doubts  
 And sudden ghostly shadowings I was one  
 To whom the touch of all mischance but came  
 As night to him that sitting on a hill  
 Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun,  
 Set into sunrise: then we moved away.

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Thy voice is heard through rolling drums  
 That beat to battle where he stands;  
 Thy face across his fancy comes,  
 And gives the battle to his hands:  
 A moment, while the trumpets blow,  
 He sees his brood about thy knee;  
 The next, like fire he meets the foe,  
 And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

So Lilia sang: we thought her half-possessed,  
 She struck such warbling fury through the words;  
 And, after, feigning pique at what she called  
 The raillery, or grotesque, or false sublime—  
 Like one that wishes at a dance to change  
 The music—clapt her hands and cried for war,  
 Or some grand fight to kill and make an end:  
 And he that next inherited the tale,  
 Half turning to the broken statue, said,  
 “Sir Ralph has got your colors: if I prove  
 Your knight and fight your battle, what for me?”  
 It chanced her empty glove upon the tomb  
 Lay by her like a model of her hand.  
 She took it and she flung it. “Fight,” she said,

“ And make us all we would be, great and good.”  
 He knightlike in his cap instead of casque,  
 A cap of Tyrol borrowed from the hall,  
 Arranged the favor and assumed the Prince.

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V.

Now scarce three paces measured from the mound  
 We stumbled on a stationary voice,  
 And “ Stand, who goes ? ” “ Two from the pal-  
 ace,” I.

“ The second two : they wait,” he said, “ pass on ;  
 His Highness wakes : ” and one, that clashed in arms  
 By glimmering lanes and walls of canvas, led  
 Threading the soldier-city, till we heard  
 The drowsy folds of our great ensign shake  
 From blazoned lions o’er the imperial tent  
 Whispers of war.

Entering, the sudden light  
 Dazed me half-blind : I stood and seemed to hear,  
 As in a poplar grove when a light wind wakes  
 A lisping of the innumerable leaf and dies,  
 Each hissing in his neighbor’s ear ; and then  
 A strangled titter, out of which there brake  
 On all sides, clamoring etiquette to death,  
 Unmeasured mirth ; while now the two old kings  
 Began to wag their baldness up and down,  
 The fresh young captains flashed their glittering  
 teeth ;  
 The huge bush-bearded Barons heaved and blew,  
 And slain with laughter rolled the gilded Squire.

At length my Sire, his rough cheek wet with  
 tears,  
 Panted from weary sides, “ King, you are free !  
 We did but keep you surety for our son,

If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin, thou,  
 That tends her bristled grunterns in the sludge:”  
 For I was drenched with ooze, and torn with briers,  
 More erumpled than a poppy from the sheath,  
 And all one rag, disprinned from head to heel:  
 Then some one sent beneath his vaulted palm  
 A whispered jest to some one near him, “Look,  
 He has been among his shadows.” “Satan take  
 The old women and their shadows! (thus the king  
 Roared) make yourself a man to fight with men.  
 Go: Cyril told us all.”

As boys that slink

From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,  
 Away we stole, and transient in a trice  
 From what was left of faded woman-slough  
 To sheathing splendors and the golden scale  
 Of harness, issued in the sun that now  
 Leapt from the dewy shoulders of the Earth,  
 And hit the northern hills. Here Cyril met us,  
 A little shy at first, but by and by  
 We twain, with mutual pardon asked and given  
 For stroke and song, resoldered peace, whereon  
 Followed his tale. Amazed he fled away  
 Through the dark land, and later in the night  
 Had come on Psyche weeping: “then we fell  
 Into your father’s hand, and there she lies,  
 But will not speak, nor stir.”

He showed a tent

A stone-shot off: we entered in, and there  
 Among piled arms and rough accoutrements,  
 Pitiful sight, wrapt in a soldier’s cloak,  
 Like some sweet sculpture draped from head to  
 foot,  
 And pushed by rude hands from its pedestal,  
 All her fair length upon the ground she lay:  
 And at her head a follower of the camp,  
 A charred and wrinkled piece of womanhood,  
 Sat watching like a watcher by the dead.

Then Florian knelt, and "Come," he whispered to her,  
 "Lift up your head, sweet sister: lie not thus. What have you done but right? you could not slay Me, nor your prince: look up: be comforted: Sweet is it to have done the thing one ought, When fallen in darker ways." And likewise I:  
 "Be comforted: have I not lost her too, In whose least act abides the nameless charm That none has else for me." She heard, she moved, She moaned, a folded voice; and up she sat, And raised the cloak from brows as pale and smooth As those that mourn half-shrouded over death In deathless marble, "Her," she said, "my friend—  
 Parted from her—betrayed her cause and mine— Where shall I breathe? why kept ye not your faith?  
 O base and bad! what comfort? none for me!" To whom remorseful Cyril, "Yet I pray Take comfort: live, dear lady, for your child," At which she lifted up her voice and cried.

"Ah me, my babe, my blossom, ah my child, My one sweet child, whom I shall see no more! For now will cruel Ida keep her back; And either she will die from want of care, Or sicken with ill usage, when they say The child is hers—for every little fault, The child is hers; and they will beat my girl, Remembering her mother: oh my flower! Or they will take her, they will make her hard, And she will pass me by in after-life With some cold reverence worse than were she dead.  
 Ill mother that I was to leave her there, To lag behind, scared by the cry they made, The horror of the shame among them all: But I will go and sit beside the doors,



And make a wild petition night and day,  
 Until they hate to hear me like a wind  
 Wailing forever, till they open to me,  
 And lay my little blossom at my feet,  
 My babe, my sweet Aglaïa, my one child:  
 And I will take her up and go my way,  
 And satisfy my soul with kissing her:  
 Ah! what might that man not deserve of me,  
 Who gave me back my child?" "Be comforted,"  
 Said Cyril, "you shall have it:" but again  
 She veiled her brows, and prone she sank, and so  
 Like tender things that being caught feign death,  
 Spoke not, nor stirred.

By this a murmur ran  
 Through all the camp, and inward raced the scouts  
 With rumor of Prince Arac hard at hand.  
 We left her by the woman, and without  
 Found the gray kings at parole: and "Look you,"  
 cried  
 My father, "that our compact be fulfilled:  
 You have spoilt this child; she laughs at you and  
 man:  
 She wrongs herself, her sex, and me, and him.  
 But red-faced war has rods of steel and fire;  
 She yields, or war."

Then Gama turned to me:  
 "We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy time  
 With our strange girl: and yet they say that still  
 You love her. Give us, then, your mind at large:  
 How say you, war or not?"

"Not war, if possible,  
 O King," I said, "lest from the abuse of war,  
 The desecrated shrine, the trampled year,  
 The smouldering homestead, and the household  
 flower  
 Torn from the lintel—all the common wrong—  
 A smoke go up through which I loom to her

Three times a monster : now she lightens scorn  
 At him that mars her plan, but then would hate  
 (And every voice she talked with ratify it,  
 And every face she looked on justify it)  
 The general foe. More soluble is this knot  
 By gentleness than war. I want her love.  
 What were I nigher this, although we dashed  
 Your cities into shards with catapults ;  
 She would not love ;—or brought her chained, a  
     slave,  
 The lifting of whose eyelash is my lord,  
 Not ever would she love ; but brooding turn  
 The book of scorn, till all my little chance  
 Were caught within the record of her wrongs,  
 And crushed to death ; and rather, Sire, than this,  
 I would the old God of war himself were dead,  
 Forgotten, rusting on his iron hills,  
 Rotting on some wild shore with ribs of wreck,  
 Or like an old-world mammoth bulked in ice,  
 Not to be molten out.”

And roughly spake

My father, “ Tut, you know them not, the girls.  
 Boy, when I hear you prate I almost think  
 That idiot legend credible. Look you, Sir !  
 Man is the hunter ; woman is his game ;  
 The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,  
 We hunt them for the beauty of their skins ;  
 They love us for it, and we ride them down.  
 Wheedling and siding with them ! Out ! for shame !  
 Boy, there’s no rose that’s half so dear to them  
 As he that does the thing they dare not do,  
 Breathing and sounding beauteous battle, comes  
 With the air of the trumpet round him, and leaps in  
 Among the women, snares them by the score,  
 Flattered and flustered, wins, though dashed with  
     death  
 He reddens what he kisses ; thus I won  
 Your mother, a good mother, a good wife,

Worth winning ; but this firebrand--gentleness  
 To such as her ! if Cyril spake her true,  
 To catch a dragon in a cherry net,  
 To trip a tigress with a gossamer,  
 Were wisdom to it."

" Yea, but Sire," I cried,

" Wild natures need wise curbs. The soldier ?

No :

What dares not Ida do that she should prize  
 The soldier ? I beheld her, when she rose  
 The yesternight, and storming in extremes  
 Stood for her cause, and flung defiance down  
 Gagelike to man and had not shunned the death,  
 No, not the soldier's : yet I hold her, King,  
 True woman : but you clash them all in one,  
 That have as many differences as we.  
 The violet varies from the lily as far  
 As oak from elm : one loves the soldier, one  
 The silken priest of peace, one this, one that,  
 And some unworthily ; their sinless faith,  
 A maiden moon that sparkles on a sty,  
 Glorifying clown and satyr ; whence they need  
 More breadth of culture : is not Ida right ?  
 They worth it ? truer to the law within ?  
 Severer in the logic of a life ?  
 Twice as magnetic to sweet influences  
 Of Earth and Heaven ? and she of whom you  
 speak,

My mother, looks as whole as some serene  
 Creation minted in the golden moods  
 Of sovereign artists ; not a thought, a touch,  
 But pure as lines of green that streak the white  
 Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves ; I say  
 Not like the piebald miscellany, man,  
 Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire,  
 But whole and one : and take them all-in-all,  
 Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,  
 As truthful, much that Ida claims as right  
 Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly theirs

As dues of Nature. To our point: not war:  
Lest I lose all."

"Nay, nay, you spake but sense,"  
Said Gama. "We remember love ourselves  
In our sweet youth: we did not rate him then  
This red-hot iron to be shaped with blows.  
You talk almost like Ida: she can talk;  
And there is something in it as you say:  
But you talk kindlier: we esteem you for it.—  
He seems a gracious and a gallant prince,  
I would he had our daughter: for the rest,  
Our own detention, why the causes weighed,  
Fatherly fears—you used us courteously—  
We would do much to gratify your Prince—  
We pardon it; and for your ingress here  
Upon the skirt and fringe of our fair land,  
You did but come as goblins in the night,  
Nor in the furrow broke the ploughman's head,  
Nor burnt the grange, nor bussed the milking-maid,  
Nor robbed the farmer of his bowl of cream:  
But let your Prince (our royal word upon it,  
He comes back safe) ride with us to our lines,  
And speak with Arac: Arac's word is thrice  
As ours with Ida: something may be done—  
I know not what—and ours shall see us friends.  
You, likewise, our late guests, if so you will,  
Follow us: who knows? we four may build some plan  
Foursquare to opposition."

Here he reached  
White hands of farewell to my sire, who growled  
An answer which, half-muffled in his beard,  
Let so much out as gave us leave to go.

Then rode we with the old king across the lawns  
Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of Spring  
In every bole, a song on every spray  
Of birds that piped their Valentines, and woke

Desire in me to infuse my tale of love  
 In the old king's ears, who promised help, and  
     oozed

All o'er with honeyed answer as we rode ;  
 And blossom-fragrant slipt the heavy dews,  
 Gathered by night and peace, with each light air  
 On our mailed heads: but other thoughts than  
     Peace

Burnt in us, when we saw the embattled squares,  
 And squadrons of the Prince, trampling the flowers  
 With clamor: for among them rose a cry.  
 As if to greet the king; they made a halt;  
 The horses yelled; they clashed their arms; the  
     drum

Beat; merrily-blowing shrilled the martial fife;  
 And in the blast and bray of the long horn  
 And serpent-throated bugle, undulated  
 The banner: anon to meet us lightly pranced  
 Three captains out; nor ever had I seen  
 Such thews of men: the midmost and the highest  
 Was Arac: all about his motion clung  
 The shadow of his sister, as the beam  
 Of the East, that played upon them, made them  
     glance

Like those three stars of the airy Giant's zone,  
 That glitter burnished by the frosty dark;  
 And as the fiery Sirius alters hue,  
 And bickers into red and emerald, shone  
 Their morions, washed with morning, as they came.

And I that prated peace, when first I heard  
 War-music, felt the blind wild beast of force  
 Whose home is in the sinews of a man  
 Stir in me as to strike; then took the king  
 His three broad sons; with now a wandering hand  
 And now a pointed finger, told them all:  
 A common light of smiles at our disguise  
 Broke from their lips, and, ere the windy jest  
 Had labored down within his ample lungs,

The genial giant, Arac, rolled himself  
Thrice in the saddle, then burst out in words.

“ Our land invaded, 'sdeath ! and he himself  
Your captive, yet my father wills not war :  
And, 'sdeath ! myself, what care I, war or no ?  
But then this question of your troth remains ;  
And there's a downright honest meaning in her ;  
She flies too high, she flies too high ! and yet  
She asked but space and fair play for her scheme  
She prest and prest it on me—I myself,  
What know I of these things ? but, life and soul.  
I thought her half right talking of her wrongs ;  
I say she flies too high, 'sdeath ! what of that ?  
I take her for the flower of womankind,  
And so I often told her, right or wrong,  
And, Prince, she can be sweet to those she loves,  
And, right or wrong, I care not : this is all,  
I stand upon her side : she made me swear it—  
'Sdeath !—and with solemn rites by candle-light—  
Swear by St. something—I forget her name—  
Her that talked down the fifty wisest men ;  
*She* was a princess too ; and so I swore.  
Come, this is all ; she will not : waive your claim :  
If not, the foughten field, what else, at once  
Decides it, 'sdeath ! against my father's will.”

I lagged in answer, loth to render up  
My precontract, and loth by brainless war  
To cleave the rift of difference deeper yet ;  
Till one of those two brothers, half aside  
And fingering at the hair about his lip,  
To prick us on to combat, “ Like to like !  
The woman's garment hid the woman's heart.”  
A taunt that clenched his purpose like a blow !  
For fiery-short was Cyril's counter-scoff,  
And sharp I answered, touched upon the point  
Where idle boys are cowards to their shame,  
“ Decide it here : why not ? we are three to three.”

Then spake the third, "But three to three! no more?"

No more, and in our noble sister's cause?  
 More, more, for honor: every captain waits  
 Hungry for honor, angry for his king.  
 More, more, some fifty on a side, that each  
 May breathe himself, and quick! by overthrow  
 Of these or those, the question settled, die."

"Yea," answered I, "for this wild wreath of air,  
 This flake of rainbow flying on the highest  
 Foam of men's deeds—this honor, if ye will.  
 It needs must be for honor if at all:  
 Since, what decision? if we fail, we fail,  
 And if we win, we fail: she would not keep  
 Her compact." "'Sdeath! but we will send to  
 her,"

Said Arac; "worthy reasons why she should  
 Bide by this issue: let our missive through,  
 And you shall have her answer by the word."

"Boys!" shrieked the old king, but vainlier than  
 a hen

To her false daughters in the pool; for none  
 Regarded; neither seemed there more to say:  
 Back rode we to my father's camp, and found  
 He thrice had sent a herald to the gates,  
 To learn if Ida yet would cede our claim,  
 Or by denial flush her babbling wells  
 With her own people's life: three times he went:  
 The first, he blew and blew, but none appeared.  
 He battered at the doors; none came: the next,  
 An awful voice within had warned him thence:  
 The third, and those eight daughters of the plough  
 Came sallying through the gates, and caught his  
 hair,

And so belabored him on rib and cheek  
 They made him wild: not less one glance he caught  
 Through open doors of Ida stationed there

Unshaken, clinging to her purpose, firm  
 Though compassed by two armies and the noise  
 Of arms ; and standing like a stately pine  
 Set in a cataract on an island-crag,  
 When storm is on the heights, and right and left  
 Sucked from the dark heart of the long hills roll  
 The torrents, dashed to the vale : and yet her will  
 Bred will in me to overcome it or fall.

But when I told the king that I was pledged  
 To fight in tourney for my bride, he clashed  
 His iron palms together with a cry ;  
 Himself would tilt it out among the lads :  
 But overborne by all his bearded lords  
 With reasons drawn from age and state, perforce  
 He yielded, wroth and red, with fierce demur :  
 And many a bold knight started up in heat,  
 And sware to combat for my claim till death.

All on this side the palace ran the field  
 Flat to the garden-wall : and likewise here,  
 Above the garden's glowing blossom-belts,  
 A columned entry shone and marble stairs,  
 And great bronze valves, embossed with Tomyris  
 And what she did to Cyrus after fight,  
 But now fast barred : so here upon the flat  
 All that long morn the lists were hammered up,  
 And all that morn the heralds to and fro,  
 With message and defiance, went and came ;  
 Last, Ida's answer, in a royal hand,  
 But shaken here and there, and rolling words  
 Oration-like. I kissed it and I read.

“ O brother, you have known the pangs we felt,  
 What heats of indignation, when we heard  
 Of those that iron-cramped their women's feet ;  
 Of lands in which at the altar the poor bride  
 Gives her harsh groom for bridal-gift a scourge ;  
 Of living hearts that crack within the fire



Where smoulder their dead despots ; and of those,—  
 Mothers,—that, all prophetic pity, fling  
 Their pretty maids in the running flood, and swoops  
 The vulture, beak and talon, at the heart  
 Made for all noble motion : and I saw  
 That equal baseness lived in sleeker times  
 With smother men : the old leaven leavened all :  
 Millions of throats would bawl for civil rights,  
 No woman named : therefore I set my face  
 Against all men and lived but for mine own.  
 Far off from men I built a fold for them :  
 I stored it full of rich memorial :  
 I fenced it round with gallant institutes,  
 And biting laws to scare the beasts of prey,  
 And prospered ; till a rout of saucy boys  
 Brake on us at our books, and marred our peace,  
 Masked like our maids, blustering I know not what  
 Of insolence and love, some pretext held  
 Of baby troth, invalid, since my will  
 Sealed not the bond—the striplings!—for their  
 sport !

I tamed my leopards : shall I not tame these ?  
 Or you ? or I ? for since you think me touched  
 In honor—what, I would not aught of false—  
 Is not our cause pure ? and whereas I know  
 Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's blood  
 You draw from, fight ; you failing, I abide  
 What end soever, fail you will not. Still  
 Take not his life : he risked it for my own ;  
 His mother lives : yet whatsoe'er you do,  
 Fight and fight well ; strike, and strike home. O  
 dear

Brothers, the woman's Angel guards you, you  
 The sole men to be mingled with our cause,  
 The sole men we shall prize in the after time,  
 Your very armor hallowed, and your statues  
 Reared, sung to, when, this gad-fly brushed aside,  
 We plant a solid foot into the Time,  
 And mould a generation strong to move

With claim on claim from right to right, till she  
 Whose name is yoked with children's, know herself ;  
 And knowledge in our own land make her free,  
 And, ever following those two crowned twins,  
 Commerce and conquest, shower the fiery grain  
 Of Freedom broadcast over all that orbs  
 Between the Northern and the Southern morn."

Then came a postscript dashed across the rest.  
 " See that there be no traitors in your camp :  
 We seem a nest of traitors—none to trust  
 Since our arms failed—this Egypt-plague of men !  
 Almost our maids were better at their homes,  
 Than thus man-girdled here : Indeed I think  
 Our chiefest comfort is the little child  
 Of one unworthy mother ; which she left :  
 She shall not have it back : the child shall grow  
 To prize the authentic mother of her mind.  
 I took it for an hour in mine own bed,  
 This morning : there the tender orphan hands  
 Felt at my heart, and seemed to charm from thence  
 The wrath I nursed against the world : farewell."

I ceased ; he said : " Stubborn, but she may sit  
 Upon a king's right hand in thunder-storms  
 And breed up warriors ! See now, though yourself  
 Be dazzled by the wildfire Love to sloughs  
 That swallow common sense, the spindling king,  
 This Gama swamped in lazy tolerance.  
 When the man wants weight the woman takes it  
 up,  
 And topples down the scales ; but this is fixt  
 As are the roots of earth and base of all.  
 Man for the field, and woman for the hearth :  
 Man for the sword, and for the needle she :  
 Man with the head, and woman with the heart :  
 Man to command, and woman to obey ;  
 All else confusion. Look you : the gray mare  
 Is ill to live with. when her whinny shrills

From tile to scullery, and her small goodman  
 Shrinks in his arm-chair, while the fires of Hell  
 Mix with his hearth : but you—she's yet a colt—  
 Take, break her : strongly groomed and straitly  
 curbed,

She might not rank with those detestable  
 That let the bantling scald at home, and brawl  
 Their rights or wrongs like pot-herbs in the street.  
 They say she's comely ; there's the fairer chance :  
 I like her none the less for rating at her !  
 Besides, the woman wed is not as we,  
 But suffers change of frame. A lusty brace  
 Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy,  
 The bearing and the training of a child  
 Is woman's wisdom."

Thus the hard old king :

I took my leave, for it was nearly noon :  
 I pored upon her letter which I held,  
 And on the little clause, " take not his life :  
 I mused on that wild morning in the woods,  
 And on the " Follow, follow, thou shalt win :"  
 I thought on all the wrathful king had said,  
 And how the strange betrothment was to end :  
 Then I remembered that burnt sorcerer's curse,  
 That one should fight with shadows, and should fall  
 And like a flash the weird affection came :  
 King, camp and college turned to hollow shows ;  
 I seemed to move in old memorial tilts,  
 And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,  
 To dream myself the shadow of a dream ;  
 And ere I woke it was the point of noon,  
 The lists were ready. Empanoplied and plumed  
 We entered in, and waited, fifty there  
 Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared  
 At the barrier, like a wild horn in a land  
 Of echoes, and a moment, and once more  
 The trumpet, and again : at which the storm  
 Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of spears,

And riders front to front, until they closed  
In conflict with the crash of shivering points,  
And thunder. Yet it seemed a dream ; I dreamed  
Of fighting. On his haunches rose the steed,  
And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,  
And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.  
Part sat like rocks : part reeled but kept their seats •  
Part rolled on the earth and rose again and drew :  
Part stumbled, mixt with floundering horses. Down  
From those two bulks at Arac's side, and down  
From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,  
The large blows rained, as here and everywhere  
He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing lists,  
And all the plain,—brand, mace, and shaft, and  
shield,

Shocked, like an iron-clanging anvil banged  
With hammers ; till I thought, can this be he  
From Gama's dwarfish loins ? if this be so,  
The mother makes us most—and in my dream  
I glanced aside, and saw the palace-front  
Alive with fluttering scarfs and ladies' eyes,  
And highest among the statues, statue-like,  
Between a cymbaled Miriam and a Jael,  
With Psyche's babe, was Ida watching us,  
A single band of gold about her hair,  
Like a Saint's glory up in heaven : but she  
No saint—inexorable—no tenderness—  
Too hard, too cruel : yet she sees me fight,  
Yea, let her see me fall ! with that I drave  
Among the thickest, and bore down a Prince,  
And Cyril one. Yea, let me make my dream  
All that I would. But that large-moulded man,  
His visage all agrin as at a wake,  
Made at me through the press, and staggering back  
With stroke on stroke the horse and horseman, came  
As comes a pillar of electric cloud,  
Flaying the roofs and sucking up the drains,  
And shadowing down the champaign till it strikes

On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and cracks, and  
 splits,  
 And twists the grain with such a roar that Earth  
 Reels and the herdsmen cry, for every thing  
 Gave way before him : only Florian, he  
 That loved me closer than his own right eye,  
 Thrust in between ; but Arac rode him down :  
 And Cyril seeing it, pushed against the Prince,  
 With Psyche's color round his helmet, tough,  
 Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at arms ;  
 But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that smote  
 And threw him : last I spurred ; I felt my veins  
 Stretch with fierce heat ; a moment hand to hand,  
 And sword to sword, and horse to horse, we hung,  
 Till I struck out and shouted ; the blade glanced ;  
 I did but shear a feather, and dream and truth  
 Flowed from me ; darkness closed me ; and I fell.

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Home they brought her warrior dead :  
 She nor swooned, nor uttered cry :  
 All her maidens, watching, said,  
 " She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,  
 Called him worthy to be loved,  
 Truest friend and noblest foe ;  
 Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,  
 Lightly to the warrior stept,  
 Took the face-cloth from the face :  
 Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,  
 Set his child upon her knee—  
 Like summer tempest came her tears—  
 " Sweet my child, I live for thee."

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## VI.

MY dream had never died or lived again.  
 As in some mystic middle state I lay ;  
 Seeing I saw not, hearing not I heard ;  
 Though, if I saw not, yet they told me all  
 So often, that I speak as having seen.

For so it seemed, or so they said to me,  
 That all things grew more tragic and more strange,  
 That when our side was vanquished, and my cause  
 Forever lost, there went up a great cry,  
 The Prince is slain. My father heard and ran  
 In on the lists, and there unlaced my casque  
 And grovelled on my body, and after him  
 Came Psyche, sorrowing for Aglaïa.

But high upon the palace Ida stood  
 With Psyche's babe in arm : there on the roofs  
 Like that great dame of Lapidoth she sang.

“ Our enemies have fallen, have fallen : the seed,  
 The little seed they laughed at in the dark,  
 Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk  
 Of spanless girth, that lays on every side  
 A thousand arms and rushes to the Sun.

“ Our enemies have fallen, have fallen : they  
 came ;  
 The leaves were wet with women's tears : they  
 heard  
 A noise of songs they would not understand.  
 They marked it with the red cross to the fall,  
 And would have strown it, and are fallen themselves.

“ Our enemies have fallen, have fallen : they  
 came,  
 The woodmen with their axes : lo the tree !  
 But we will make it fagots for the hearth,

And shape it plank and beam for roof and floor,  
And boats and bridges for the use of men.

“ Our enemies have fallen, have fallen : they  
struck ;  
With their own blows they hurt themselves, nor  
knew  
There dwelt an iron nature in the grain :  
The glittering axe was broken in their arms,  
Their arms were shattered to the shoulder blade.”

“ Our enemies have fallen, but this shall grow  
A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth  
Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power ; and rolled  
With music in the growing breeze of Time,  
The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs  
Shall move the stony bases of the world.

“ And now, O maids, behold our sanctuary  
Is violate, our laws broken : fear we not  
To break them more in their behoof, whose arms  
Championed our cause and won it with a day  
Blanched in our annals, and perpetual feast,  
When dames and heroines of the golden year  
Shall strip a hundred hollows bare of Spring,  
To rain an April of ovation round  
Their statues, borne aloft, the three : but come,  
We will be liberal, since our rights are won.  
Let them not lie in the tents, with coarse mankind,  
Ill nurses ; but descend, and proffer these,  
The brethren of our blood and cause, that there  
Lie bruised and maimed, the tender ministries  
Of female hands and hospitality.”

She spoke, and with the babe yet in her arms,  
Descending, burst the great bronze valves, and led  
A hundred maids in train across the Park.  
Some cowed, and some bareheaded, on they came,  
Their feet in flowers, her loveliest : by them went

The enamored air sighing, and on their curls  
From the high tree the blossom wavering fell,  
And over them the tremulous isles of light  
Slided, they moving under shade: but Blanche  
At distance followed: so they came: anon  
Through open field into the lists they wound  
Timorously; and as the leader of the herd  
That holds a stately fretwork to the Sun,  
And followed up by a hundred airy does,  
Steps with a tender foot, light as on air,  
The lovely, lordly creature floated on  
To where her wounded brethren lay; there stayed;  
Knelt on one knee,—the child on one,—and prest  
Their hands, and called them dear deliverers,  
And happy warriors, and immortal names,  
And said, “You shall not lie in the tents, but here,  
And nursed by those for whom you fought, and  
served  
With female hands and hospitality.”

Then, whether moved by this, or was it chance,  
She past my way. Up started from my side  
The old lion, glaring with his whelpless eye,  
Silent; but when she saw me lying stark,  
Dishelmed and mute, and motionlessly pale,  
Cold even to her, she sighed; and when she saw  
The haggard father's face and reverend beard  
Of grisly twine, all dabbled with the blood  
Of his own son, shuddered, a twitch of pain  
Tortured her mouth, and o'er her forehead past  
A shadow, and her hue changed, and she said:  
“He saved my life: my brother slew him for it.”  
No more: at which the king in bitter scorn  
Drew from my neck the painting and the tress,  
And held them up: she saw them, and a day  
Rose from the distance on her memory,  
When the good queen, her mother, shore the tress  
With kisses, ere the days of Lady Blanche:  
And then once more she looked at my pale face:



Till understanding all the foolish work  
 Of Fancy, and the bitter close of all,  
 Her iron will was broken in her mind;  
 Her noble heart was molten in her breast;  
 She bowed, she set the child on the earth; she laid  
 A feeling finger on my brows, and presently  
 "O Sire," she said, "he lives: he is not dead:  
 O let me have him with my brethren here  
 In our own palace: we will tend on him  
 Like one of these; if so, by any means,  
 To lighten this great clog of thanks, that make  
 Our progress falter to the woman's goal."

She said: but at the happy word, "he lives,"  
 My father stooped; re-fathered o'er my wounds.  
 So those two foes above my fallen life,  
 With brow to brow like night and evening mixt  
 Their dark and gray, while Psyche ever stole  
 A little nearer, till the babe, that by us,  
 Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden brede,  
 Lay like a new-fallen meteor on the grass,  
 Uncared for, spied its mother, and began  
 A blind and babbling laughter, and to dance  
 Its body, and reach its fatling innocent arms,  
 And lazy lingering fingers. She the appeal  
 Brooked not, but clamoring out "Mine—mine—  
                   not yours,

It is not yours, but mine: give me the child,"  
 Ceased all on tremble: piteous was the cry:  
 So stood the unhappy mother open-mouthed,  
 And turned each face her way: wan was her cheek  
 With hollow watch, her blooming mantle torn,  
 Red grief and mother's hunger in her eye,  
 And down dead-heavy sank her curls, and half  
 The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst  
 The laces toward her babe; but she nor cared  
 Nor knew it, clamoring on, till Ida heard,  
 Looked up, and rising slowly from me, stood  
 Erect and silent, striking with her glance

The mother, me, the child ; but he that lay  
 Beside us, Cyril, battered as he was,  
 Trailed himself up on one knee : then he drew  
 Her robe to meet his lips, and down she looked  
 At the armed man sideways, pitying, as it seemed,  
 Or self-involved ; but when she learnt his face,  
 Remembering his ill-omened song, arose  
 Once more through all her height, and o'er him  
                   grew  
 Tall as a figure lengthened on the sand  
 When the tide ebbs in sunshine, and he said :

“ O fair and strong and terrible ! Lioness  
 That with your long locks play the Lion's mane !  
 But Love and Nature, these are two more terrible  
 And stronger. See, your foot is on our necks,  
 We vanquished, you the Victor of your will.  
 What would you more ? give her the child ! remain  
 Orbed in your isolation : he is dead,  
 Or all as dead : henceforth we let you be :  
 Win you the hearts of women ; and beware  
 Lest, where you seek the common love of these,  
 The common hate, with the revolving wheel,  
 Should drag you down, and some great Nemesis  
 Break from a darkened future, crowned with fire,  
 And tread you out forever : but howsoe'er  
 Fixed in yourself, never in your own arms  
 To hold your own, deny not hers to her,  
 Give her the child ! O if, I say, you keep  
 One pulse that beats true woman, if you loved  
 The breast that fed or arm that dandled you,  
 Or own one part of sense not flint to prayer,  
 Give her the child ! or if you scorn to lay it,  
 Yourself, in hands so lately clasped with yours,  
 Or speak to her, your dearest, her one fault  
 The tenderness, not yours, that could not kill,  
 Give *me* it ; I will give it her.”

He said :

At first her eye with slow dilation rolled

Dry flame, she listening ; after sank and sank,  
 And, into mournful twilight mellowing, dwelt  
 Full on the child ; she took it : " Pretty bud !  
 Lily of the vale ! half-opened bell of the woods !  
 Sole comfort of my dark hour, when a world  
 Of traitorous friend and broken system made  
 No purple in the distance, mystery,  
 Pledge of a love not to be mine, farewell ;  
 These men are hard upon us as of old,  
 We two must part : and yet how fain was I  
 To dream thy cause embraced in mine, to think  
 I might be something to thee, when I felt  
 Thy helpless warmth about my barren breast  
 In the dead prime : but may thy mother prove  
 As true to thee as false, false, false, to me !  
 And, if thou needs must bear the yoke, I wish it  
 Gentle as freedom "—here she kissed it : then—  
 " All good go with thee ! take it, Sir," and so  
 Laid the soft babe in his hard-mailed hands,  
 Who turned half-round to Psyche as she sprang  
 To meet it, with an eye that swam in thanks,  
 Then felt it sound and whole from head to foot,  
 And hugged and never hugged it close enough,  
 And in her hunger mouthed and mumbled it,  
 And hid her bosom with it ; after that  
 Put on more calm, and added suppliantly ;

" We two were friends : I go to mine own land  
 Forever ; find some other : as for me,  
 I scarce am fit for your great plans : yet speak to  
 me.  
 Say one soft word, and let me part forgiven."

But Ida spoke not, rapt upon the child.  
 Then Arac. " Ida—'sdeath ! you blame the man ;  
 You wrong yourselves—the woman is so hard  
 Upon the woman. Come, a grace to me !  
 I am your warrior ; I and mine have fought  
 Your battle : kiss her ; take her hand, she weeps :

'Sdeath! I would sooner fight thrice o'er than see  
it.'

But Ida spoke not, gazing on the ground ;  
And reddening in the furrows of his chin,  
And moved beyond his custom, Gama said :

“ I've heard that there is iron in the blood,  
And I believe it. Not one word ? Not one ?  
Whence drew you this steel temper ? not from me,  
Not from your mother, now a saint with saints.  
She said you had a heart—I heard her say it—  
' Our Ida has a heart,'—just ere she died—  
' But see that some one with authority  
Be near her still,' and I—I sought for one—  
All people said she had authority—  
The Lady Blanche : much profit ! Not one word ;  
No ! though your father sues : see how you stand  
Stiff as Lot's wife, and all the good knights maimed,  
I trust that there is no one hurt to death,  
For your wild whim : and was it, then, for this,  
Was it for this we gave our palace up,  
Where we withdrew from summer heats and state,  
And had our wine and chess beneath the planes,  
And many a pleasant hour with her that's gone,  
Ere you were born to vex us ? Is it kind ?  
Speak to her, I say : is this not she of whom,  
When first she came, all flushed you said to me,  
Now had you got a friend of your own age,  
Now could you share your thought ; now should  
men see

Two women faster welded in one love  
Than pairs of wedlock ; she you walked with, she  
You talked with, whole nights long, up in the tower .  
Of sine and arc, spheroid and azimuth,  
And right ascension, Heaven knows what ; and now  
A word, but one, one little kindly word,  
Not one to spare her : out upon you, flint !  
You love nor her, nor me, nor any ; nay,

You shame your mother's judgment too. Not one?  
 You will not? well—no heart have you, or such  
 As fancies, like the vermin in a nut,  
 Have fretted all to dust and bitterness!"  
 So said the small king, moved beyond his wont.

But Ida stood nor spoke, drained of her force  
 By many a varying influence and so long:  
 Down through her limbs a drooping languor wept:  
 Her head a little bent; and on her mouth  
 A doubtful smile dwelt like a clouded moon  
 In a still water: then brake out my sire,  
 Lifting his grim head from my wounds: "O you,  
 Woman, whom we thought woman even now,  
 And were half-fooled to let you tend our son,  
 Because he might have wished it—but we see  
 The accomplice of your madness unforgiven,  
 And think that you might mix his draught with  
 death,  
 When your skies change again: the rougher hand  
 Is safer: on to the tents: take up the Prince."

He rose, and while each ear was pricked to attend  
 A tempest, through the cloud that dimmed her  
 broke  
 A genial warmth and light once more, and shone  
 Through glittering drops on her sad friend.

"Come hither,  
 O Psyche," she cried out, "embrace me, come,  
 Quick, while I melt; make reconciliation sure  
 With one that cannot keep her mind an hour:  
 Come to the hollow heart they slander so!  
 Kiss and be friends like children being chid!  
 I seem no more: I want forgiveness too:  
 I should have had to do with none but maids,  
 That have no links with men. Ah false but dear,  
 Dear traitor too much loved, why?—why?—Yet  
 see

Before these kings we embrace you yet once more  
 With all forgiveness, all oblivion,  
 And trust not love you less.

And now, O Sire,  
 Grant me your son to nurse, to wait upon him,  
 Like mine own brother. For my debt to him,  
 This nightmare weight of gratitude, I know it ;  
 Taunt me no more : yourself and yours shall have  
 Free adit ; we will scatter all our maids  
 Till happier times, each to her proper hearth ;  
 What use to keep them here, now ? grant my  
 prayer.

Help, father, brother, help ; speak to the king :  
 Thaw this male nature to some touch of that  
 Which kills me with myself, and drags me down  
 From my fixt height to mob me up with all  
 The soft and milky rabble of womankind,  
 Poor weakling even as they are."

Passionate tears  
 Followed : the king replied not : Cyril said :  
 " Your brother, Lady,—Florian,—ask for him  
 Of your great head—for he is wounded too—  
 That you may tend upon him with the Prince."  
 " Ay so," said Ida, with a bitter smile,  
 " Our laws are broken : let him enter too."  
 Then Violet, she that sang the mournful song  
 And had a cousin tumbled on the plain,  
 Petitioned too for him. " Ay so," she said,  
 " I stagger in the stream : I cannot keep  
 My heart an eddy from the brawling hour :  
 We break our laws with ease, but let it be."  
 " Ay so ?" said Blanche : " amazed am I to hear  
 Your Highness : but your Highness breaks with  
 ease

The law your Highness did not make : 'twas I . .  
 I had been wedded wife, I knew mankind,  
 And blocked them out ; but these men came to woo  
 Your Highness—verily I think to win."

So she, and turned askance a wintry eye :  
But *Ida*, with a voice that like a bell  
Tolled by an earthquake in a trembling tower  
Rang ruin, answered full of grief and scorn :

“ Fling our doors wide ! all, all, not one, but all,  
Not only he, but, by my mother’s soul,  
Whatever man lies wounded, friend or foe,  
Shall enter, if he will. Let our girls flit  
Till the storm die ! but had you stood by us,  
The roar that breaks the *Pharos* from his base  
Had left us rock. She fain would sting us too,  
But shall not. Pass, and mingle with your likes.  
We brook no further insult, but are gone.”

She turned ; the very nape of her white neck  
Was rosed with indignation : but the Prince  
Her brother came ; the king her father charmed  
Her wounded soul with words ; nor did mine own  
Refuse her proffer, lastly gave his hand.

Then us they lifted up, dead weights, and bare  
Straight to the doors : to them the doors gave way  
Groaning, and in the vestal entry shrieked  
The virgin marble under iron heels :  
And on they moved and gained the hall, and there  
Rested : but great the crush was, and each base,  
To left and right, of those tall columns drowned  
In silken fluctuation and the swarm  
Of female whisperers : at the further end  
Was *Ida* by the throne, the two great cats  
Close by her like supporters on a shield  
Bow-backed with fear : but in the centre stood  
The common men with rolling eyes ; amazed  
They glared upon the women, and aghast  
The women stared at these, all silent, save  
When armor clashed or jingled, while the day,  
Descending, struck athwart the hall, and shot  
A flying splendor out of brass and steel,

That o'er the statues leaped from head to head,  
 Now fired an angry Pallas on the helm,  
 Now set a wrathful Dian's moon on flame,  
 And now and then an echo started up,  
 And shuddering fled from room to room, and died  
 Of fright in far apartments.

Then the voice

Of Ida sounded, issuing ordinance :  
 And me they bore up the broad stairs and through  
 The long-laid galleries past a hundred doors  
 To one deep chamber shut from sound, and due  
 To languid limbs and sickness ; left me in it ;  
 And others elsewhere they laid ; and all  
 That afternoon a sound arose of hoof  
 And chariot, many a maiden passing home  
 Till happier times ; but some were left of those  
 Held sagest, and the great lords out and in,  
 From those two hosts that lay beside the walls,  
 Walked at their will, and every thing was changed.

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Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea ;  
 The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the  
 shape,  
 With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape ;  
 But, O too fond, when have I answered thee ?  
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give ?  
 I love not hollow cheek or faded eye :  
 Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die !  
 Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live ;  
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are sealed :  
 I strove against the stream and all in vain :  
 Let the great river take me to the main :  
 No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield ;  
 Ask me no more.

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## VII.

So was their sanctuary violated,  
 So their fair college turned to hospital;  
 At first with all confusion: by and by  
 Sweet order lived again with other laws:  
 A kindlier influence reigned; and everywhere  
 Low voices with the ministering hand  
 Hung round the sick: the maidens came, they  
 talked,  
 They sang, they read: till she not fair, began  
 To gather light, and she that was, became  
 Her former beauty treble; and to and fro  
 With books, with flowers, with Angel offices,  
 Like creatures native unto gracious act,  
 And in their own clear element, they moved.

But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,  
 And hatred of her weakness, blent with shame.  
 Old studies failed: seldom she spoke; but oft  
 Clomb to the roofs, and gazed alone for hours  
 On that disastrous leaguer, swarms of men  
 Darkening her female field: void was her use;  
 And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze  
 O'er land and main, and sees a great black cloud  
 Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of night,  
 Blot out the slope of sea from verge to shore,  
 And suck the blinding splendor from the sand,  
 And quenching lake by lake and tarn by tarn  
 Expunge the world: so fared she gazing there;  
 So blackened all her world in secret, blank  
 And waste it seemed and vain; till down she came  
 And found fair peace once more among the sick.

And twilight dawned; and morn by morn the  
 lark  
 Shot up and shrilled in flickering gyres, but I  
 Lay silent in the muffled cage of life:

And twilight gloomed; and broader grown the  
bowers

Drew the great night into themselves, and Heaven  
Star after star arose and fell; but I,  
Deeper than those weird doubts could reach me, lay  
Quite sundered from the moving Universe,  
Nor knew what eye was on me nor the hand  
That nursed me, more than infants in their sleep.

But Psyche tended Florian: with her oft  
Melissa came; for Blanche had gone, but left  
Her child among us, willing she should keep  
Court-favor: here and there the small bright head,  
A light of healing, glanced about the couch,  
Or through the parted silks the tender face  
Peeped, shining in upon the wounded man  
With blush and smile, a medicine in themselves  
To wile the length from languorous hours and draw  
The sting from pain; nor seemed it strange that  
soon

He rose up whole, and those fair charities  
Joined at her side: nor stranger seemed that hearts  
So gentle, so employed, should close in love,  
Than when two dew-drops on the petal shake  
To the same sweet air and tremble deeper down,  
And slip at once all-fragrant into one.

Less prosperously the second suit obtained  
At first with Psyche. Not though Blanche had  
sworn

That after that dark night among the fields,  
She needs must wed him for her own good name;  
Not though he built upon the babe restored;  
Nor though she liked him, yielded she, but feared  
To incense the Head once more; till on a day  
When Cyril pleaded, Ida came behind  
Seen but of Psyche. On her foot she hung  
A moment and she heard, at which her face  
A little flushed and she past on; but each

Assumed from thence a half-consent involved  
In stillness, plighted troth, and were at peace.

Nor only these : Love in the sacred halls  
Held carnival at will, and flying struck  
With showers of random sweet on maid and man.  
Nor did her father cease to press my claim,  
Nor did mine own, now reconciled ; nor yet  
Did those twin brothers, risen again and whole ;  
Nor Arac, satiate with his victory.

But I lay still, and with me oft she sat :  
Then came a change ; for sometimes I would catch  
Her hand in wild delirium, gripe it hard,  
And fling it like a viper off, and shriek  
“ You are not Ida ; ” clasp it once again,  
And call her Ida, though I knew her not,  
And call her sweet, as if in irony,  
And call her hard and cold which seemed a truth :  
And still she feared that I should lose my mind,  
And often she believed that I should die :  
Till out of long frustration of her care,  
And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,  
And watches in the dead, the dark, when clocks  
Throbb'd thunder through the palace floors, or  
called

On flying Time from all their silver tongues—  
And out of memories of her kindlier days,  
And sidelong glances at my father's grief,  
And at the happy lovers heart in heart—  
And out of hauntings of my spoken love,  
And lonely listenings to my muttered dream,  
And often feeling of the helpless hands,  
And wordless broodings on the wasted cheek—  
From all a closer interest flourished up  
Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,  
Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears  
By some cold morning glacier ; frail at first

And feeble, all unconscious of itself,  
But such as gathered color day by day.

Last I woke sane, but wellnigh close to death  
For weakness : it was evening : silent light  
Slept on the painted walls, wherein were wrought  
Two grand designs ; for on one side arose  
The women up in wild revolt, and stormed  
At the Oppian law. Titanic shapes, they crammed  
The forum, and half-crushed among the rest  
A dwarf-like Cato cowered. On the other side  
Hortensia spoke against the tax ; behind,  
A train of dames : by axe and eagle sat,  
With all their foreheads drawn in Roman scowls,  
And half the wolf's-milk curdled in their veins,  
The fierce triumvirs ; and before them paused  
Hortensia, pleading : angry was her face.

I saw the forms : I knew not where I was :  
They did but look like hollow shows ; nor more  
Sweet Ida : palm to palm she sat : the dew  
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape  
And rounder seemed : I moved : I sighed : a touch  
Came round my wrist, and tears upon my hand :  
Then all for languor and self-pity ran  
Mine down my face, and with what life I had,  
And like a flower that cannot all unfold,  
So drenched it is with tempest, to the sun,  
Yet, as it may, turns toward him, I on her  
Fixt my faint eyes, and uttered whisperingly :

“ If you be, what I think you, some sweet dream,  
I would but ask you to fulfil yourself :  
But if you be that Ida whom I knew,  
I ask you nothing : only, if a dream,  
Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.  
Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die.”

I could no more, but lay like one in trance,

That hears his burial talked of by his friends,  
 And cannot speak, nor move, nor make one sign,  
 But lies and dreads his doom. She turned; she  
     paused;

She stooped; and out of languor leapt a cry,  
 Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of death;  
 And I believed that in the living world  
 My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;  
 Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose  
 Glowing all over noble shame; and all  
 Her falsè self slipt from her like a robe,  
 And left her woman, lovelier in her mood  
 Than in her mould that other, when she came  
 From barren deeps to conquer all with love;  
 And down the streaming crystal dropt, and she  
 Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,  
 Naked, a double light in air and wave,  
 To meet her Graces, where they decked her out  
 For worship without end; nor end of mine,  
 Stateliest, for thee! but mute she glided forth,  
 Nor glanced behind her, and I sank and slept,  
 Filled through and through with Love, a happy  
     sleep.

Deep in the night I woke: she, near me, held  
 A volume of the Poets of her land:  
 There to herself, all in low tones, she read.

“Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white,  
 Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;  
 Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:  
 The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.

“Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost,  
 And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

“Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,  
 And all thy heart lies open unto me.

“ Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves  
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

“ Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,  
And slips into the bosom of the lake :  
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip  
Into my bosom and be lost in me.”

I heard her turn the page ; she found a small  
Sweet Idyl, and once more, as low, she read :

“ Come down, oh maid, from yonder mountain  
height :

What pleasure lives in height, (the shepherd sang,)  
In height and cold, the splendor of the hills ?  
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease  
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine ; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,  
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls  
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :  
But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down  
To find him in the valley ; let the wild  
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave  
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,  
That like a broken purpose waste in air :  
So waste not thou ; but come ; for all the vales  
Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth  
Arise to thee ; the children call, and I  
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,

Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;  
 Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,  
 The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
 And murmuring of innumerable bees."

So she low-toned; while with shut eyes I lay  
 Listening; then looked. Pale was the perfect face;  
 The bosom with long sighs labored; and meek  
 Seemed the full lips, and mild the luminous eyes,  
 And the voice trembled and the hand. She said  
 Brokenly, that she knew it, she had failed  
 In sweet humility; had failed in all;  
 That all her labor was but as a block  
 Left in the quarry; but she still were loth,  
 She still were loth to yield herself to one,  
 That wholly scorned to help their equal rights  
 Against the sons of men, and barbarous laws.  
 She prayed me not to judge their cause from her  
 That wronged it, sought far less for truth than  
 power

In knowledge: something wild within her breast,  
 A greater than all knowledge, beat her down.  
 And she had nursed me there from week to week:  
 Much had she learnt in little time. In part  
 It was ill counsel had misled the girl  
 To vex true hearts: yet was she but a girl—  
 "Ah fool, and made myself a Queen of farce!  
 When comes another such? never, I think,  
 Till the Sun drop dead from the signs."

Her voice  
 Choked, and her forehead sank upon her hands,  
 And her great heart through all the faultful Past  
 Went sorrowing in a pause I dared not break;  
 Till notice of a change in the dark world  
 Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird  
 That early woke to feed her little ones  
 Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light:  
 She moved, and at her feet the volume fell.

" Blame not thyself too much," I said, " nor blame  
 Too much the sons of men and barbarous laws ;  
 These were the rough ways of the world till now.  
 Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know  
 The woman's cause is man's : they rise or sink  
 Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free :  
 For she that out of Lethe scales with man  
 The shining steps of Nature, shares with man  
 His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,  
 Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—  
 If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,  
 How shall men grow ? but work no more alone !  
 Our place is much : as far as in us lies  
 We two will serve them both in aiding her—  
 Will clear away the parasitic forms  
 That seem to keep her up, but drag her down—  
 Will leave her space to burgeon out of all  
 Within her—let her make herself her own  
 To give or keep, to live and learn and be  
 All that not harms distinctive womanhood.  
 For woman is not undeveloped man,  
 But diverse : could we make her as the man,  
 Sweet love were slain : his dearest bond is this  
 Not like to like, but like in difference :  
 Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;  
 The man be more of woman, she of man ;  
 He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
 Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world  
 She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,  
 Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind ;  
 Till at the last she set herself to man,  
 Like perfect music unto noble words ;  
 And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,  
 Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,  
 Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,  
 Self-reverent each and reverencing each,  
 Distinct in individualities,  
 But like each other even as those who love.  
 Then comes the statelier Eden back to men :



Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm  
 Then springs the crowning race of humankind.  
 May these things be !”

Sighing she spoke, “ I fear  
 They will not.”

“ Dear, but let us type them now  
 In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest  
 Of equal ; seeing either sex alone  
 Is half itself, and in true marriage lies  
 Nor equal, nor unequal : each fulfils  
 Defect in each, and always thought in thought,  
 Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,  
 The single pure and perfect animal,  
 The two-celled heart, beating with one full stroke,  
 Life.”

And again sighing she spoke : “ A dream  
 That once was mine ! what woman taught you this ? ”

“ Alone,” I said, “ from earlier than I know,  
 Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world,  
 I loved the woman : he, that doth not, lives  
 A drowning life, besotted in sweet self,  
 Or pines in sad experience worse than death,  
 Or keeps his winged affections clipt with crime :  
 Yet was there one through whom I loved her, one  
 Not learned, save in gracious household ways,  
 Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,  
 No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt  
 In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,  
 Interpreter between the Gods and men,  
 Who looked all native to her place, and yet  
 On tiptoe seemed to touch upon a sphere  
 Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce  
 Swayed to her from their orbits as they moved  
 And girdled her with music. Happy he  
 With such a mother ! faith in womankind  
 Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
 Comes easy to him, and though he trip and fall,  
 He shall not blind his soul with clay.”

“ But I,”

Said Ida, tremulously, “ so all unlike—  
It seems you love to cheat yourself with words :  
This mother is your model. I have heard  
Of your strange doubts : they well might be : I seem  
A mockery to my own self. Never, Prince ;  
You cannot love me.”

“ Nay, but thee,” I said,  
“ From year-long poring on thy pictured eyes,  
Ere seen I loved, and loved thee seen, and saw  
Thee woman through the crust of iron moods  
That masked thee from men’s reverence up, and  
forced

Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood : now  
Given back to life ; to life indeed, through thee,  
Indeed I love : the new day comes, the light  
Dearer for night, as dearer thou for faults  
Lived over : lift thine eyes ; my doubts are dead,  
My haunting sense of hollow shows : the change,  
This truthful change in thee has killed it. Dear,  
Look up and let thy nature strike on mine  
Like yonder morning on the blind half-world ;  
Approach and fear not ; breathe upon my brows ;  
In that fine air I tremble, all the past  
Melts mist-like into this bright hour, and this  
Is morn to more, and all the rich to come  
Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels  
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds. Forgive me,  
I waste my heart in signs : let be. My bride,  
My wife, my life. O we will walk this world,  
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,  
And so through those dark gates across the wild  
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee ; come,  
Yield thyself up : my hopes and thine are one :  
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself,  
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me.”

## CONCLUSION

So closed our tale, of which I give you all  
 The random scheme as wildly as it rose :  
 The words are mostly mine : for when we ceased  
 There came a minute's pause, and Walter said,  
 " I wish she had not yielded ! " then to me,  
 " What, if you drest it up poetically ? "  
 So prayed the men, the women : I gave assent :  
 Yet how to bind the scattered scheme of seven  
 Together in one sheaf ? What style could suit ?  
 The men required that I should give throughout  
 The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque,  
 With which we bantered little Lilia first :  
 The women—and perhaps they felt their power,  
 For something in the ballads which they sang,  
 Or in their silent influence as they sat,  
 Had ever seemed to wrestle with burlesque,  
 And drove us, last, to quite a solemn close—  
 They hated banter, wished for something real,  
 A gallant fight, a noble princess—why  
 Not make her true-heroic—true-sublime ?  
 Or all, they said, as earnest as the close ?  
 Which yet with such a framework scarce could be.  
 Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,  
 Betwixt the mockers and the realists :  
 And I, betwixt them both, to please them both,  
 And yet to give the story as it rose,  
 I moved as in a strange diagonal,  
 And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.

But Lilia pleased me, for she took no part  
 In our dispute : the sequel of the tale  
 Had touched her ; and she sat, she plucked the  
 grass,  
 She flung it from her, thinking : last, she fixt  
 A showery glance upon her aunt, and said,  
 " You—tell us what we are ; " who might have told,

For she was crammed with theories out of books,  
 But that there rose a shout: the gates were closed  
 At sunset, and the crowd were swarming now,  
 To take their leave, about the garden rails.

So I and some went out to these: we climbed  
 The slope to Vivian-place, and turning saw  
 The happy valleys half in light and half  
 Far-shadowing from the west, a land of peace:  
 Gray halls alone among their massive groves;  
 Trim hamlets; here and there a rustic tower  
 Half-lost in belts of hop and breadths of wheat;  
 The shimmering glimpses of a stream; the seas;  
 A red sail, or a white; and far beyond,  
 Imagined more than seen, the skirts of France.

“Look there, a garden!” said my college friend,  
 The Tory member’s elder son, “and there!  
 God bless the narrow sea which keeps her off,  
 And keeps our Britain, whole within herself,  
 A nation yet, the rulers and the ruled—  
 Some sense of duty, something of a faith,  
 Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made,  
 Some patient force to change them when we will,  
 Some civic manhood firm against the crowd—  
 But yonder, whiff! there comes a sudden heat,  
 The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,  
 The king is scared, the soldier will not fight,  
 The little boys begin to shoot and stab,  
 A kingdom topples over with a shriek  
 Like an old woman, and down rolls the world  
 In mock heroics stranger than our own;  
 Revolts, republics, revolutions, most  
 No graver than a school-boys’ barring out;  
 Too comic for the solemn things they are,  
 Too solemn for the comic touches in them,  
 Like our wild Princess with as wise a dream  
 As some of theirs—God bless the narrow seas!  
 I wish they were a whole Atlantic broad.”

“Have patience,” I replied, “ourselves are full  
 Of social wrong; and maybe wildest dreams  
 Are but the needful preludes of the truth:  
 For me, the genial day, the happy crowd,  
 The sport half-science, fill me with a faith.  
 This fine old world of ours is but a child  
 Yet in the go-cart. Patience! Give it time  
 To learn its limbs: there is a hand that guides.”

In such discourse we gained the garden rails,  
 And there we saw Sir Walter where he stood,  
 Before a tower of crimson holly-oaks,  
 Among six boys, head under head, and looked  
 No little lily-handed Baronet he,  
 A great broad-shouldered genial Englishman,  
 A lord of fat prize-oxen and of sheep,  
 A raiser of huge melons and of pine,  
 A patron of some thirty charities,  
 A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,  
 A quarter-sessions chairman, abler none;  
 Fair-haired and redder than a windy morn;  
 Now shaking hands with him, now him, of those  
 That stood the nearest—now addressed to speech—  
 Who spoke few words and pithy, such as closed  
 Welcome, farewell, and welcome for the year  
 To follow: a shout rose again, and made  
 The long line of the approaching rookery swerve  
 From the elms, and shook the branches of the deer  
 From slope to slope through distant ferns, and rang  
 Beyond the bourn of sunset; O, a shout  
 More joyful than the city-roar that hails  
 Premier or king! Why should not these great Sirs  
 Give up their parks some dozen times a year  
 To let the people breathe? So thrice they cried,  
 I likewise, and in groups they streamed away.

But we went back to the Abbey, and sat on,  
 So much the gathering darkness charmed: we sat  
 But spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie,

Perchance upon the future man : the walls  
Blackened about us, bats wheeled, and owls  
    whooped,  
And gradually the powers of the night,  
That range above the region of the wind,  
Deepening the courts of twilight broke them up  
Through all the silent spaces of the worlds,  
Beyond all thought into the Heaven of Heavens.

Last little Lilia, rising quietly,  
Disrobed the glimmering statue of Sir Ralph  
From those rich silks, and home well pleased we  
    went.

END OF VOL. I.

VOLUME II.

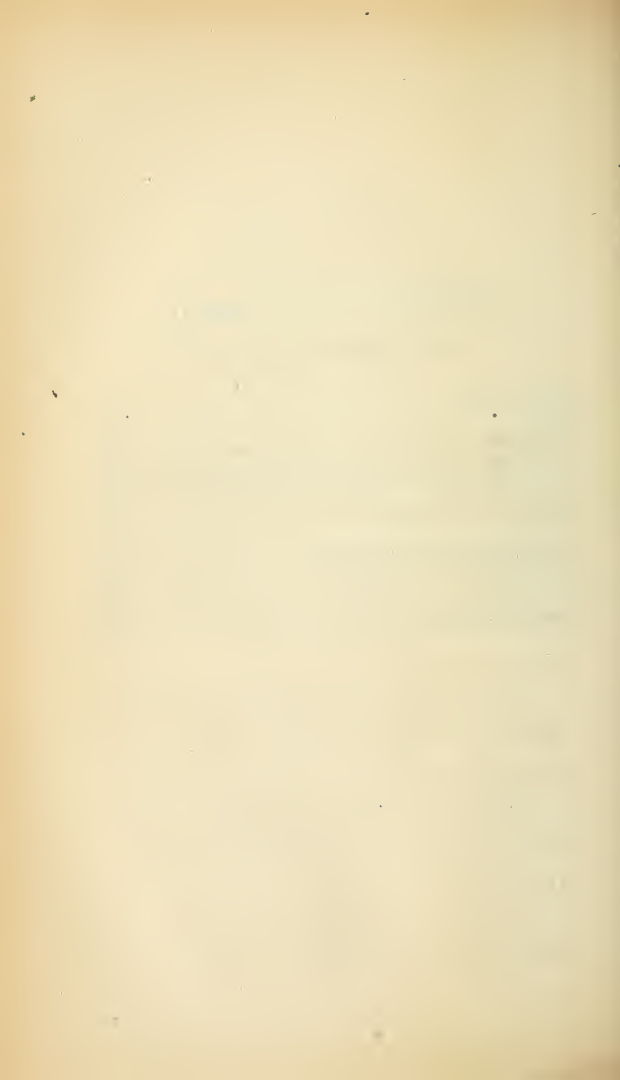




## CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

---

	PAGE
In Memoriam .....	5
Maud.....	105
The Brook.....	154
The Letters .....	161
Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.....	162
The Daisy.....	170
To the Rev. F. D. Maurice.....	174
Will .....	175
The Charge of the Light Brigade.....	176
The Grandmother's Apology.....	178
Sea Dreams .....	185
Tithonus .....	194
Idylls of the King.....	197



## IN MEMORIAM

---

**STRONG** Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove!

Thine are these orbs of light and shade ;  
Thou madest Life in man and brute ;  
Thou madest Death ; and lo ! thy foot  
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :  
Thou madest man, he knows not why ;  
He thinks he was not made to die ;  
And thou hast made him : thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, thou :  
Our wills are ours, we know not how ;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day ;  
They have their day and cease to be ;  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, oh Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith : we cannot know ;  
For knowledge is of things we see ;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell ;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music, as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight ;  
We mock thee when we do not fear :  
But help thy foolish ones to bear ;  
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me ;  
What seemed my worth since I began ;  
For merit lives from man to man,  
And not from man, oh Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,  
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.  
I trust he lives in thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,  
Confusions of a wasted youth ;  
Forgive them where they fail in truth,  
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849.

IN MEMORIAM

A. H. H.

OBITU MDCCLXXXIII.

I.

I HELD it truth, with him who sings  
    To one clear harp in divers tones,  
    That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years,  
    And find in loss a gain to match?  
    Or reach a hand through time to catch  
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief, lest both be drowned,  
    Let darkness keep her raven gloss;  
    Ah! sweeter to be drunk with loss,  
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn  
    The long result of love, and boast:  
    "Behold the man that loved and lost,  
But all he was is overworn."

II.

OLD Yew, which graspest at the stones  
    That name the underlying dead,  
    Thy fibres net the dreamless head;  
Thy roots are wrapped about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,  
 And bring the firstling to the flock;  
 And in the dusk of thee, the clock  
 Beats out the little lives of men.

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,  
 Who changest not in any gale!  
 Nor branding summer suns avail  
 To touch thy thousand years of gloom.

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,  
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,  
 I seem to fail from out my blood,  
 And grow incorporate into thee.

### III.

O SORROW, cruel fellowship!  
 O Priestess in the vaults of Death!  
 O sweet and bitter in a breath,  
 What whispers from thy lying lip?

"The stars," she whispers, "blindly run;  
 A web is woven across the sky;  
 From out waste places comes a cry,  
 And murmurs from the dying sun:

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands,—  
 With all the music in her tone,  
 A hollow echo of my own,—  
 A hollow form with empty hands."

And shall I take a thing so blind,  
 Embrace her as my natural good;  
 Or crush her, like a vice of blood,  
 Upon the threshold of the mind?

## IV.

To Sleep I give my powers away,  
 My will is bondsman to the dark ;  
 I sit within a helmless bark,  
 And with my heart I muse, and say :

O heart, how fares it with thee now,  
 That thou shouldst fail from thy desire,  
 Who scarcely darest to inquire  
 " What is it makes me beat so low ? "

Something it is which thou hast lost,  
 Some pleasure from thine early years.  
 Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,  
 That grief hath shaken into frost !

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross  
 All night below the darkened eyes ;  
 With morning wakes the will, and cries,  
 " Thou shall not be the fool of loss ! "

## V.

I SOMETIMES hold it half a sin  
 To put in words the grief I feel,  
 For words, like nature, half reveal  
 And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,  
 A use in measured language lies ;  
 The sad mechanic exercise,  
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,  
 Like coarsest clothes against the cold ;  
 But that large grief which these infold  
 Is given in outline and no more.

## VI.

ONE writes, that " Other friends remain,"  
 That " Loss is common to the race,"—  
 And common is the commonplace,  
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make  
 My own less bitter, rather more :  
 Too common ! Never morning wore  
 To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,  
 Who pledgest now thy gallant son ;  
 A shot, ere half thy draught be done,  
 Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save  
 Thy sailor, while thy head is bowed,  
 His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud  
 Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought  
 At that last hour to please him well ;  
 Who mused on all I had to tell,  
 And something written, something thought :

Expecting still his advent home ;  
 And ever met him on his way  
 With wishes, thinking, here to-day,  
 Or here to-morrow will he come.

O, somewhere, meek unconscious dove,  
 That sittest 'ranging golden hair ;  
 And glad to find thyself so fair,  
 Poor child, that waitest for thy love :

For now her father's chimney glows  
 In expectation of a guest ;  
 And thinking " this will please him best,"  
 She takes a ribbon or a rose ;



For he will see them on to-night ;  
 And with the thought her color burns ;  
 And, having left the glass, she turns  
 Once more to set a ringlet right ;

And, even when she turned, the curse  
 Had fallen, and her future Lord  
 Was drowned in passing through the ford,  
 Or killed in falling from his horse.

O, what to her shall be the end ?  
 And what to me remains of good ?  
 To her, perpetual maidenhood,  
 And unto me, no second friend.

## VII.

DARK house, by which once more I stand,  
 Here in the long unlovely street,  
 Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
 So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more,—  
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,  
 And like a guilty thing I creep  
 At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here ; but far away  
 The noise of life begins again,  
 And ghastly through the drizzling rain  
 On the bald street breaks the blank day.

## VIII.

A HAPPY lover who has come  
 To look on her that loves him well,  
 Who lights, and rings the gateway bell,  
 And learns her gone, and far from home,

He saddens, all the magic light  
 Dies off at once from bower and hall,  
 And all the place is dark, and all  
 The chambers emptied of delight.

So find I every pleasant spot  
 In which we two were wont to meet,  
 The field, the chamber, and the street,  
 For all is dark, where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there  
 In those deserted walks, may find  
 A flower beat with rain and wind,  
 Which once she fostered up with care ;

So seems it in my deep regret,  
 O my forsaken heart, with thee,  
 And this poor flower of poesy,  
 Which, little cared for, fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanished eye,  
 I go to plant it on his tomb,  
 That if it can it there may bloom,  
 Or dying there at least may die.

## IX.

FAIR ship, that from the Italian shore  
 Sailest the placid ocean plains,  
 With my lost Arthur's loved remains,  
 Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er !

So draw him home to those that mourn,  
 In vain ; a favorable speed  
 Ruffle thy mirrored mast, and lead  
 Through prosperous floods his holy urn !

All night no ruder air perplex  
 Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright

As our pure love, through early light  
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks!

Sphere all your lights around, above;  
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;  
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,  
My friend, the brother of my love!

My Arthur! whom I shall not see  
Till all my widowed race be run;  
Dear as the mother to the son,  
More than my brothers are to me!

## X.

I HEAR the noise about thy keel;  
I hear the bell struck in the night;  
I see the cabin-window bright;  
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bringest the sailor to his wife;  
And travelled men from foreign lands;  
And letters unto trembling hands;  
And, thy dark freight, a vanished life.

So bring him: we have idle dreams:  
This look of quiet flatters thus  
Our home-bred fancies: oh, to us,  
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,  
That takes the sunshine and the rains,  
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains  
The chalice of the grapes of God,

Than if with thee the roaring wells  
Should gulf him fathom deep in brine;  
And hands so often clasped in mine  
Should toss with tangle and with shells.

## XI.

CALM is the morn, without a sound,  
 Calm as to suit a calmer grief,  
 And only through the faded leaf  
 The chestnut pattering to the ground :

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,  
 And on these dews that drench the furze,  
 And all the silvery gossamers  
 That twinkle into green and gold :

Calm and still light on yon great plain,  
 That sweeps, with all its autumn bowers,  
 And crowded farms and lessening towers,  
 To mingle with the bounding main :

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,  
 These leaves that redden to the fall ;  
 And in my heart, if calm at all,  
 If any calm, a calm despair :

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,  
 And waves that sway themselves in rest,  
 And dead calm in that noble breast  
 Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

## XII.

Lo ! as a dove when up she springs,  
 To bear through Heaven a tale of woe,  
 Some dolorous message knit below  
 The wild pulsation of her wings ;

Like her I go : I cannot stay ;  
 I leave this mortal ark behind,  
 A weight of nerves without a mind,  
 And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean mirrors rounded large,  
 And reach the glow of southern skies,  
 And see the sails at distance rise,  
 And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying, " Comes he thus, my friend ?  
 Is this the end of all my care ? "  
 And circle moaning in the air :  
 " Is this the end ? Is this the end ? "

And forward dart again, and play  
 About the prow, and back return  
 To where the body sits, and learn  
 That I have been an hour away.

## XIII.

TEARS of the widower, when he sees  
 A late-lost form that sleep reveals,  
 And moves his doubtful arms, and feels  
 Her place is empty, fall like these,

Which weep a loss forever new,  
 A void where heart on heart reposed ;  
 And, where warm hands have pressed and  
 closed,  
 Silence, till I be silent too.

Which weep the comrade of my choice,  
 An awful thought, a life removed,  
 The human-hearted man I loved,  
 A spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come, Time, and teach me many years  
 I do not suffer in a dream ;  
 For now so strange do these things seem,  
 Mine eyes have leisure for their tears ;

My fancies time to rise on wing,  
 And glance about the approaching sails,  
 As though they brought but merchants' bales,  
 And not the burthen that they bring.

## XIV.

If one should bring me this report,  
 That thou hadst touched the land to-day,  
 And I went down unto the quay,  
 And found thee lying in the port ;

And standing, muffled round with woe,  
 Should see thy passengers in rank  
 Come stepping lightly down the plank,  
 And beckoning unto those they know ;

And if along with these should come  
 The man I held as half divine ;  
 Should strike a sudden hand in mine,  
 And ask a thousand things of home ;

And I should tell him all my pain,  
 And how my life had drooped of late,  
 And he should sorrow o'er my state,  
 And marvel what possessed my brain ;

And I perceive no touch of change,  
 No hint of death in all his frame,  
 But found him all in all the same,  
 I should not feel it to be strange.

## XV.

TO-NIGHT the winds begin to rise  
 And roar from yonder dropping day ;  
 The last red leaf is whirled away,  
 The rooks are blown about the skies ;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,  
 The cattle huddled on the lea ;  
 And wildly dashed on tower and tree  
 The sunbeam strikes along the world ;

And but for fancies, which aver  
 That all thy motions gently pass  
 Athwart a plane of molten glass,  
 I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud ;  
 And but for fear it is not so,  
 The wild unrest that lives in woe  
 Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,  
 And onward drags a laboring breast,  
 And topples round the dreary west,  
 A looming bastion fringed with fire.

## XVI.

WHAT words are these have fallen from me ?

Can calm despair and wild unrest  
 Be tenants of a single breast,  
 Or sorrow such a changeling be ?

Or doth she only seem to take  
 The touch of change in calm or storm ;  
 But knows no more of transient form  
 In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark  
 Hung in the shadow of a heaven ?  
 Or has the shock, so harshly given,  
 Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,  
 And staggers blindly ere she sink ?  
 And stunned me from my power to think,  
 And all my knowledge of myself ;

And made me that delirious man  
 Whose fancy fuses old and new,  
 And flashes into false and true,  
 And mingles all without a plan ?

## XVII.

THOU comest, much wept for ; such a breeze  
 Compelled thy canvas, and my prayer  
 Was as the whisper of an air  
 To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move  
 Through circles of the bounding sky ;  
 Week after week : the days go by :  
 Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou mayst roam,  
 My blessing, like a line of light,  
 Is on the waters day and night,  
 And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars  
 Mid-ocean spare thee, sacred bark ;  
 And balmy drops in summer dark  
 Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,  
 Such precious relics brought by thee ;  
 The dust of him I shall not see  
 Till all my widowed race be run.

## XVIII.

'TIS well, 'tis something, we may stand  
 Where he in English earth is laid,  
 And from his ashes may be made  
 The violet of his native land.



'Tis little ; but it looks in truth  
 As if the quiet bones were blest  
 Among familiar names to rest,  
 And in the places of his youth.

Come, then, pure hands, and bear the head  
 That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep ;  
 And come, whatever loves to weep,  
 And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah ! yet, even yet, if this might be,  
 I, falling on his faithful heart,  
 Would, breathing through his lips, impart  
 The life that almost dies in me :

That dies not, but endures with pain,  
 And slowly forms the firmer mind,  
 Treasuring the look it cannot find,  
 The words that are not heard again.

## XIX.

THE Danube to the Severn gave  
 The darkened heart that beat no more ;  
 They laid him by the pleasant shore,  
 And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills,  
 The salt sea-water passes by,  
 And hushes half the babbling Wye,  
 And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hushed nor moved along ;  
 And hushed my deepest grief of all,  
 When, filled with tears that cannot fall,  
 I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again  
 Is vocal in its wooded walls :  
 My deeper anguish also falls,  
 And I can speak a little then.

## XX.

THE lesser griefs, that may be said,  
 That breathe a thousand tender vows,  
 Are but as servants in a house  
 Where lies the master newly dead ;

Who speak their feeling as it is,  
 And weep the fulness from the mind.  
 " It will be hard," they say, " to find  
 Another service such as this."

My lighter moods are like to these,  
 That out of words a comfort win ;  
 But there are other griefs within,  
 And tears that at their fountain freeze ;

For by the hearth the children sit  
 Cold in that atmosphere of Death,  
 And scarce endure to draw the breath,  
 Or like to noiseless phantoms flit ;

But open converse is there none,  
 So much the vital spirits sink  
 To see the vacant chair, and think,  
 " How good ! how kind ! and he is gone."

## XXI.

I SING to him that rests below,  
 And, since the grasses round me wave,  
 I take the grasses of the grave,  
 And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,  
 And sometimes harshly will he speak :  
 " This fellow would make weakness weak,  
 And melt the waxen hearts of men."

Another answers, "Let him be ;  
 He loves to make parade of pain,  
 That with his piping he may gain  
 The praise that comes to constancy."

A third is wroth : " Is this an hour  
 For private sorrow's barren song,  
 When more and more the people throng  
 The chairs and thrones of civil power ?

" A time to sicken and to swoon,  
 When science reaches forth her arms  
 To feel from world to world, and charms  
 Her secret from the latest moon ? "

Behold, ye speak an idle thing :  
 Ye never knew the sacred dust ;  
 I do but sing because I must,  
 And pipe but as the linnets sing.

And one is glad ; her note is gay,  
 For now her little ones have ranged :  
 And one is sad ; her note is changed,  
 Because her brood is stolen away.

## XXII.

THE path by which we twain did go,  
 Which led by tracts that pleased us well,  
 Through four sweet years arose and fell,  
 From flower to flower, from snow to snow.

And we with singing cheered the way,  
 And crowned with all the season lent,  
 From April on to April went,  
 And glad at heart from May to May.

But where the path we walked began  
 To slant the fifth autumnal slope,  
 As we descended, following Hope,  
 There sat the Shadow feared of man ;

Who broke our fair companionship,  
 And spread his mantle dark and cold ;  
 And wrapped thee formless in the fold,  
 And dulled the murmur on thy lip ;

And bore thee where I could not see  
 Nor follow, though I walk in haste ;  
 And think that, somewhere in the waste,  
 The Shadow sits and waits for me.

### XXIII.

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,  
 Or breaking into song by fits ;  
 Alone, alone, to where he sits,  
 The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,  
 I wander, often falling lame,  
 And looking back to whence I came,  
 Or on to where the pathway leads ;

And crying, "how changed from where it ran  
 Through lands where not a leaf was dumb ;  
 But all the lavish hills would hum  
 The murmur of a happy Pan :

When each by turns was guide to each,  
 And Fancy light from Fancy caught,  
 And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought,  
 Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech ;

And all we met was fair and good,  
 And all was good that Time could bring,  
 And all the secret of the Spring  
 Moved in the chambers of the blood ;

And many an old philosophy  
 On Argive heights divinely sang,  
 And round us all the thicket rang  
 To many a flute of Arcady."

## XXIV.

AND was the day of my delight  
 As pure and perfect as I say ?  
 The very source and fount of Day  
 Is dashed with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,  
 This earth had been the Paradise  
 It never looked to human eyes  
 Since Adam left his garden yet.

And is it that the haze of grief  
 Makes former gladness loom so great ?  
 The lowness of the present state,  
 That sets the past in this relief ?

Or that the past will always win  
 A glory from its being far ;  
 And orb into the perfect star  
 We saw not, when we moved therein ?

## XXV.

I KNOW that this was Life,—the track  
 Whereon with equal feet we fared ;  
 And then, as now, the day prepared  
 The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move  
 As light as carrier-birds in air :  
 I loved the weight I had to bear,  
 Because it needed help of Love ;

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,  
 When mighty Love would cleave in twain  
 The lading of a single pain,  
 And part it, giving half to him.

## XXVI.

STILL onward winds the dreary way ;  
 I with it ; for I long to prove  
 No lapse of moons can canker Love,  
 Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt  
 And goodness, and hath power to see  
 Within the green the mouldered tree,  
 And towers fallen as soon as built,—

O, if indeed that eye foresee,  
 Or see, (in Him is no before,)  
 In more of life true life no more,  
 And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn  
 Breaks hither over Indian seas,  
 That Shadow waiting with the keys.  
 To shroud me from my proper scorn.

## XXVII.

I ENVY not, in any moods,  
 The captive void of noble rage,  
 The linnet born within the cage,  
 That never knew the summer woods :

I envy not the beast that takes  
 His license in the field of time,  
 Unfettered by the sense of crime,  
 To whom a conscience never wakes ;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,  
 The heart that never plighted troth,  
 But stagnates in the weeds of sloth,  
 Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall ;  
 I feel it, when I sorrow most ;  
 'T is better to have loved and lost  
 Than never to have loved at all.

## XXVIII.

THE time draws near the birth of Christ :  
 The moon is hid ; the night is still ;  
 The Christmas bells from hill to hill  
 Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,  
 From far and near, on mead and moor,  
 Swell out and fail, as if a door  
 Were shut between me and the sound :

Each voice four changes on the wind,  
 That now dilate, and now decrease,  
 Peace and good-will, good-will and peace,  
 Peace and good-will, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,  
 I almost wished no more to wake,  
 And that my hold on life would break  
 Before I heard those bells again :

But they my troubled spirit rule,  
 For they controlled me when a boy ;  
 They bring me sorrow touched with joy,  
 The merry, merry bells of Yule.

## XXIX.

WITH such compelling cause to grieve  
 As daily vexes household peace,  
 And chains regret to his decease,  
 How dare we keep our Christmas eve ;

Which brings no more a welcome guest  
 To enrich the threshold of the night  
 With showered largess of delight,  
 In dance and song and game and jest.

Yet go, and while the holly-boughs  
 Entwine the cold baptismal font,  
 Make one wreath more for Use and Wont  
 That guard the portals of the house ;

Old sisters of a day gone by,  
 Gray nurses, loving nothing new ;  
 Why should they miss their yearly due  
 Before their time ? They too will die.

## XXX.

WITH trembling fingers did we weave  
 The holly round the Christmas hearth ;  
 A rainy cloud possessed the earth,  
 And sadly fell our Christmas eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall  
 We gambolled, making vain pretence  
 Of gladness, with an awful sense  
 Of one mute Shadow watching all.



We paused : the winds were in the beech :  
 We heard them sweep the winter land ;  
 And in a circle hand in hand  
 Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang ;  
 We sung, though every eye was dim,  
 A merry song we sang with him  
 Last year : impetuously we sang :

We ceased : a gentler feeling crept  
 Upon us : surely rest is meet :  
 " They rest," we said, " their sleep is sweet,"  
 And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range ;  
 Once more we sang : " They do not die,  
 Nor lose their mortal sympathy,  
 Nor change to us, although they change ;

" Rapt from the fickle and the frail,  
 With gathered power, yet the same,  
 Pierces the keen seraphic flame  
 From orb to orb, from veil to veil.

" Rise, happy morn ! rise, holy morn !  
 Draw forth the cheerful day from night :  
 O Father ! touch the east, and light  
 The light that shone when Hope was born."

## XXXI.

WHEN Lazarus left his charnel-cave,  
 And home to Mary's house returned,  
 Was this demanded,—if he yearned  
 To hear her weeping by his grave ?

“ Where wert thou, brother, those four days ? ”  
 There lives no record of reply,  
 Which, telling what it is to die,  
 Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbors met,  
 The streets were filled with joyful sound ;  
 A solemn gladness even crowned  
 The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ !  
 The rest remaineth unrevealed ;  
 He told it not ; or something sealed  
 The lips of that Evangelist.

## XXXII.

HER eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
 Nor other thought her mind admits  
 But, he was dead, and there he sits,  
 And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede  
 All other, when her ardent gaze  
 Roves from the living brother's face,  
 And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,  
 Borne down by gladness so complete,  
 She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet  
 With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,  
 Whose loves in higher love endure ;  
 What souls possess themselves so pure,  
 Or is there blessedness like theirs ?

## XXXIII.

O THOU that after toil and storm  
 Mayst seem to have reached a purer air,  
 Whose faith has centre everywhere,  
 Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,  
 Her early Heaven, her happy views;  
 Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse  
 A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith through form is pure as thine,  
 Her hands are quicker unto good.  
 O, sacred be the flesh and blood  
 To which she links a truth divine!

See, thou that countest reason ripe  
 In holding by the law within,  
 Thou fail not in a world of sin,  
 And ev'n for want of such a type.

## XXXIV.

MY own dim life should teach me this,  
 That life shall live forevermore,  
 Else earth is darkness at the core,  
 And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,  
 Fantastic beauty; such as lurks  
 In some wild Poet, when he works  
 Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?  
 'Twere hardly worth my while to choose  
 Of things all mortal, or to use  
 A little patience ere I die.

"Twere best at once to sink to peace,  
 Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
 To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
 Of vacant darkness, and to cease.

## XXXV.

YET if some voice that man could trust  
 Should murmur from the narrow house :  
 "The cheeks drop in ; the body bows ;  
 Man dies : nor is there hope in dust :"

Might I not say ? "yet even here,  
 But for one hour, oh Love, I strive  
 To keep so sweet a thing alive :"  
 But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,  
 The sound of streams that, swift or slow,  
 Draw down Æonian hills, and sow  
 The dust of continents to be ;

And Love would answer, with a sigh,  
 "The sound of that forgetful shore  
 Will change my sweetness more and more,  
 Half dead to know that I shall die."

O me ! what profits it to put  
 An idle case ? If Death were seen  
 At first as Death, Love had not been,  
 Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,  
 Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape  
 Had bruised the herb and crushed the grape,  
 And basked and battened in the woods.

## XXXVI.

THOUGH truths in manhood darkly join,  
 Deep-seated in our mystic frame,  
 We yield all blessing to the name  
 Of Him that made them current coin ;

For wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
 Where Truth in closest words shall fail,  
 When Truth embodied in a tale  
 Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
 With human hands the creed of creeds  
 In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
 More strong than all poetic thought ;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,  
 Or builds the house, or digs the grave,  
 And those wild eyes that watch the wave  
 In roarings round the coral reef.

## XXXVII.

URANIA speaks with darkened brow :  
 " Thou pratest here where thou art least ;  
 This faith has many a purer priest,  
 And many an abler voice, than thou ;

" Go down beside thy native rill,  
 On thy Parnassus set thy feet,  
 And hear thy laurel whisper sweet  
 About the ledges of the hill."

And my Melpomene replies,  
 A touch of shame upon her cheek :  
 " I am not worthy ev'n to speak  
 Of thy prevailing mysteries ;

“ For I am but an earthly Muse,  
 And owning but a little art  
 To lull with song an aching heart,  
 And render human love his dues ;

“ But brooding on the dear one dead,  
 And all he said of things divine,  
 (And dear to me as sacred wine  
 To dying lips is all he said,)

“ I murmured, as I came along,  
 Of comfort clasped in truth revealed ;  
 And loitered in the master’s field,  
 And darkened sanctities with song.”

## XXXVIII.

WITH weary steps I loiter on,  
 Though always under altered skies  
 The purple from the distance dies,  
 My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,  
 The herald melodies of spring,  
 But in the songs I love to sing  
 A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here  
 Survive in spirits rendered free,  
 Then are these songs I sing of thee  
 Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

## XXXIX.

COULD we forget the widowed hour,  
 And look on Spirits breathed away,  
 As on a maiden in the day  
 When first she wears her orange-flower !

When crowned with blessing she doth rise  
 To take her latest leave of home,  
 And hopes and light regrets that come  
 Make April of her tender eyes ;

And doubtful joys the father move,  
 And tears are on the mother's face,  
 As parting, with a long embrace,  
 She enters other realms of love ;

Her office there to rear, to teach,  
 Becoming, as is meet and fit,  
 A link among the days, to knit  
 The generations each with each ;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given  
 A life that bears immortal fruit  
 In such great offices as suit  
 The full-grown energies of heaven.

Ay me, the difference I discern !  
 How often shall her old fireside  
 Be cheered with tidings of the bride !  
 How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,  
 And bring her babe, and make her boast,  
 Till even those that missed her most  
 Shall count new things as dear as old !

But thou and I have shaken hands,  
 Till growing winters lay me low ;  
 My paths are in the fields I know,  
 And thine in undiscovered lands.

## XL.

THY spirit, ere our fatal loss,  
 Did ever rise from high to higher ;  
 As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,  
 As flies the lighter through the gross.

But thou art turned to something strange,  
 And I have lost the links that bound  
 Thy changes; here upon the ground,  
 No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly! yet that this could be —  
 That I could wing my will with might  
 To leap the grades of life and light,  
 And flash at once, my friend, to thee:

For though my nature rarely yields  
 To that vague fear implied in death;  
 Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,  
 The howlings from forgotten fields;

Yet oft, when sundown skirts the moor,  
 An inner trouble I behold,  
 A spectral doubt which makes me cold,  
 That I shall be thy mate no more,

Though following with an upward mind  
 The wonders that have come to thee,  
 Through all the secular to be,  
 But evermore a life behind.

## XLI.

I VEX my heart with fancies dim:  
 He still outstripped me in the race;  
 It was but unity of place  
 That made me dream I ranked with him.

And so may Place retain us still,  
 And he the much-beloved again,  
 A lord of large experience, train  
 To riper growth the mind and will:

And what delights can equal those  
 That stir the spirit's inner deeps,  
 When one that loves, but knows not, reaps  
 A truth from one that loves and knows?



## XLII.

IF Sleep and Death be truly one,  
 And every spirit's folded bloom  
 Through all its intervital gloom  
 In some long trance should slumber on ;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,  
 Bare of the body, might it last,  
 And silent traces of the past  
 Be all the color of the flower :

So then were nothing lost to man ;  
 So that still garden of the souls  
 In many a figured leaf enrolls  
 The total world since life began :

And love will last as pure and whole  
 As when he loved me here in Time,  
 And at the spiritual prime  
 Rewaken with the dawning soul.

## XLIII.

How fares it with the happy dead ?  
 For here the man is more and more ;  
 But he forgets the days before  
 God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanished, tone and tint,  
 And yet perhaps the hoarding sense  
 Gives out, at times, (he knows not whence,)  
 A little flash, a mystic hint ;

And in the long, harmonious years  
 (If Death so taste Lethean springs)  
 May some dim touch of earthly things  
 Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,  
     O turn thee round, resolve the doubt,  
     My guardian angel will speak out  
 In that high place, and tell thee all.

## XLIV.

The baby new to earth and sky,  
     What time his tender palm is pressed  
     Against the circle of the breast,  
 Has never thought that "this is I:"

But as he grows he gathers much,  
     And learns the use of "I," and "me,"  
     And finds "I am not what I see,  
 And other than the things I touch:"

So rounds he to a separate mind  
     From whence clear memory may begin,  
     As through the frame that binds him in  
 His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,  
     Which else were fruitless of their due,  
     Had man to learn himself anew  
 Beyond the second birth of Death.

## XLV.

WE ranging down this lower track,  
     The path we came by, thorn and flower,  
     Is shadowed by the growing hour,  
 Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last  
     In that deep dawn behind the tomb,  
     But clear from marge to marge shall bloom  
 The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time revealed ;  
 The fruitful hours of still increase ;  
 Days ordered in a wealthy peace,  
 And those five years its richest field.

O Love ! thy province were not large,  
 A bounded field, nor stretching far,  
 Look also, Love, a brooding star,  
 A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

## XLVI.

THAT each, who seems a separate whole,  
 Should move his rounds, and fusing all  
 The skirts of self again, should fall  
 Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet :  
 Eternal form shall still divide  
 The eternal soul from all beside ;  
 And I shall know him when we meet :

And we shall sit at endless feast,  
 Enjoying each the other's good ;  
 What vaster dream can hit the mood  
 Of Love on earth ? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,  
 Before the spirits fade away,  
 Some landing-place, to clasp and say,  
 " Farewell ! We lose ourselves in light."

## XLVII.

IF these brief lays, of Sorrow born,  
 Were taken to be such as closed  
 Grave doubts and answers here proposed,  
 Then these were such as men might scorn :

Her care is not to part and prove ;  
 She takes, when harsher moods remit,  
 What slender shade of doubt may flit,  
 And makes it vassal unto love :

And hence, indeed, she sports with words ;  
 But better serves a wholesome law,  
 And holds it sin and shame to draw  
 The deepest measure from the chords :

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,  
 But rather loosens from the lip  
 Short swallow-flights of song, that dip  
 Their wings in tears, and skim away.

## XLVIII.

FROM art, from nature, from the schools,  
 Let random influences glance,  
 Like light in many a shivered lance  
 That breaks about the dappled pools :

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,  
 The fancy's tenderest eddy wreath,  
 The slightest air of song shall breathe,  
 To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,  
 But blame not thou the winds that make  
 The seeming-wanton ripple break,  
 The tender-pencilled shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears,  
 Ay me ! the sorrow deepens down,  
 Whose muffled motions blindly drown  
 The bases of my life in tears.

## XLIX.

BE near me when my light is low,  
 When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick

And tingle ; and the heart is sick,  
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame  
Is racked with pangs that conquer trust ;  
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,  
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,  
And men the flies of latter spring,  
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,  
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,  
To point the term of human strife,  
And on the low dark verge of life  
The twilight of eternal day.

## L.

Do we indeed desire the dead  
Should still be near us at our side ?  
Is there no baseness we would hide ?  
No inner vileness that we dread ?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,  
I had such reverence for his blame,  
See with clear eye some hidden shame,  
And I be lessened in his love ?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue :  
Shall love be blamed for want of faith ?  
There must be wisdom with great Death :  
The dead shall look me through and through.

Be near us when we climb or fall :  
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours  
With larger other eyes than ours,  
To make allowance for us all.

## LI.

I CANNOT love thee as I ought,  
 For love reflects the thing beloved ;  
 My words are only words, and moved  
 Upon the topmost froth of thought.

“ Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,”  
 The Spirit of true love replied ;  
 “ Thou canst not move me from thy side,  
 Nor human frailty do me wrong.

“ What keeps a spirit wholly true  
 To that ideal which he bears ?  
 What record ? not the sinless years  
 That breathed beneath the Syrian blue :

“ So fret not, like an idle girl,  
 That life is dashed with flecks of sin.  
 Abide : thy wealth is gathered in,  
 When Time hath sundered shell from pearl.”

## LII.

How many a father have I seen,  
 A sober man, among his boys,  
 Whose youth was full of foolish noise,  
 Who wears his manhood hale and green :

And dare we to this fancy give,  
 That had the wild oat not been sown,  
 The soil, left barren, scarce had grown  
 The grain by which a man may live ?

O, if we held the doctrine sound  
 For life outliving heats of youth,  
 Yet who would preach it as a truth  
 To those that eddy round and round ?

Hold thou the good : define it well :  
 For fear divine Philosophy  
 Should push beyond her mark, and be  
 Procureess to the Lords of Hell.

## LIII.

O, YET we trust that somehow good  
 Will be the final goal of ill,  
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
 Defects of doubt and taints of blood ;

That nothing walks with aimless feet ;  
 That not one life shall be destroyed,  
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
 When God hath made the pile complete ;

That not a worm is cloven in vain ;  
 That not a moth with vain desire  
 Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,  
 Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not any thing ;  
 I can but trust that good shall fall  
 At last—far off—at last, to all,  
 And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream : but what am I ?  
 An infant crying in the night :  
 An infant crying for the light :  
 And with no language but a cry.

## LIV.

THE wish, that of the living whole  
 No life may fail beyond the grave,  
 Derives it not from what we have  
 The likest God within the soul ?

Are God and Nature then at strife,  
 That Nature lends such evil dreams ?  
 So careful of the type she seems,  
 So careless of the single life ;

That I, considering everywhere  
 Her secret meaning in her deeds,  
 And finding that of fifty seeds  
 She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,  
 And falling with my weight of cares  
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
 That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
 And gather dust and chaff, and call  
 To what I feel is Lord of all,  
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

## LV.

"So careful of the type?" but no.  
 From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone  
 She cries, "A thousand types are gone:  
 I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:  
 I bring to life, I bring to death:  
 The spirit does but mean the breath:  
 I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,  
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,  
 Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,  
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed,  
 And love Creation's final law—  
 Though Nature, red in tooth and claw  
 With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,  
 Who battled for the True, the Just,  
 Be blown about the desert dust,  
 Or sealed within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,  
 A discord. Dragons of the prime,  
 That tare each other in their slime,  
 Were mellow music matched with him.



O life as futile, then, as frail !  
 O for thy voice to soothe and bless !  
 What hope of answer, or redress ?  
 Behind the veil, behind the veil.

## LVI.

PEACE ; come away : the song of woe  
 Is after all an earthly song :  
 Peace ; come away : we do him wrong  
 To sing so wildly : let us go.

Come ; let us go : your cheeks are pale ;  
 But half my life I leave behind :  
 Methinks my friend is richly shrined ;  
 But I shall pass ; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,  
 One set slow bell will seem to toll  
 The passing of the sweetest soul  
 That ever looked with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,  
 Eternal greetings to the dead ;  
 And " Ave, Ave, Ave," said,  
 " Adieu, adieu," forevermore !

## LVII.

IN those sad words I took farewell :  
 Like echoes in sepulchral halls,  
 As drop by drop the water falls  
 In vaults and catacombs, they fell ;

And, falling, idly broke the peace  
 Of hearts that beat from day to day,  
 Half conscious of their dying clay,  
 And those cold crypts where they shall cease.

The high Muse answered : " Wherefore grieve  
 Thy brethren with a fruitless tear ?

Abide a little longer here,  
And thou shalt take a nobler leave."

## LVIII.

O SORROW, wilt thou live with me  
No casual mistress, but a wife,  
My bosom-friend and half of life ;  
As I confess it needs must be ;

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,  
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,  
And put thy harsher moods aside,  
If thou wilt have me wise and good.

My centred passion cannot move,  
Nor will it lessen from to-day ;  
But I'll have leave at times to play  
As with the creature of my love ;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,  
With so much hope for years to come,  
That, howsoe'er I know thee, some  
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

## LIX.

HE passed ; a soul of nobler tone :  
My spirit loved and loves him yet,  
Like some poor girl whose heart is set  
On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,  
She finds the baseness of her lot,  
Half jealous of she knows not what,  
And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn ;  
She sighs amid her narrow days,  
Moving about the household ways,  
In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbors come and go,  
 And tease her till the day draws by ;  
 At night she weeps, " How vain am I !  
 How should he love a thing so low ? "

## LX.

If, in thy second state sublime,  
 Thy ransomed reason change replies  
 With all the circle of the wise,  
 The perfect flower of human time ;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,  
 How dimly characterized and slight,  
 How dwarfed a growth of cold and night,  
 How blanched with darkness, must I grow !

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,  
 Where thy first form was made a man ,  
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can  
 The soul of Shakspeare love thee more.

## LXI.

THOUGH if an eye that's downward cast  
 Could make thee somewhat blench or fail,  
 Then be my love an idle tale,  
 And fading legend of the past ;

And thou, as one that once declined,  
 When he was little more than boy,  
 On some unworthy heart with joy,  
 But lives to wed an equal mind ;

And breathes a novel world, the while  
 His other passion wholly dies,  
 Or in the light of deeper eyes  
 Is matter for a flying smile.

## LXII.

YET pity for a horse o'erdriven,  
 And love in which my hound has part,  
 Can hang no weight upon my heart,  
 In its assumptions up to heaven ;

And I am so much more than these,  
 As thou, perchance, art more than I,  
 And yet I spare them sympathy,  
 And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,  
 As, unto vaster motions bound,  
 The circuits of thine orbit round  
 A higher height, a deeper deep.

## LXIII.

Dost thou look back on what hath been,  
 As some divinely gifted man,  
 Whose life in low estate began,  
 And on a simple village green ;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,  
 And grasps the skirts of happy chance,  
 And breasts the blows of circumstance,  
 And grapples with his evil star ;

Who makes by force his merit known,  
 And lives to clutch the golden keys,  
 To mould a mighty state's decrees,  
 And shape the whisper of the throne ;

And moving up from high to higher,  
 Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope  
 The pillar of a people's hope,  
 The centre of a world's desire ;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,  
 When all his active powers are still,  
 A distant dearness in the hill,  
 A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,  
 While yet beside its vocal springs  
 He played at counsellors and kings,  
 With one that was his earliest mate ;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea,  
 And reaps the labor of his hands,  
 Or in the furrow musing stands :  
 " Does my old friend remember me ? "

## LXIV.

SWEET soul ! do with me as thou wilt ;  
 I lull a fancy trouble-tost  
 With " Love's too precious to be lost,  
 A little grain shall not be spilt."

And in that solace can I sing,  
 Till out of painful phases wrought  
 There flutters up a happy thought,  
 Self-balanced on a lightsome wing ;

Since we deserved the name of friends,  
 And thine effect so lives in me,  
 A part of mine may live in thee,  
 And move thee on to noble ends.

## LXV.

You thought my heart too far diseased ;  
 You wonder when my fancies play,  
 To find me gay among the gay,  
 Like one with any trifle pleased.

The shade by which my life was crossed,  
 Which makes a desert in the mind,  
 Has made me kindly with my kind,  
 And like to him whose sight is lost ;

Whose feet are guided through the land,  
 Whose jest among his friends is free,  
 Who takes the children on his knee,  
 And winds their curls about his hand ;

He plays with threads, he beats his chair  
 For pastime, dreaming of the sky ;  
 His inner day can never die,  
 His night of loss is always there.

## LXVI.

WHEN on my bed the moonlight falls,  
 I know that in thy place of rest,  
 By that broad water of the west,  
 There comes a glory on the walls :

Thy marble bright in dark appears,  
 As slowly steals a silver flame  
 Along the letters of thy name,  
 And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away ;  
 From off my bed the moonlight dies :  
 And closing eaves of wearied eyes  
 I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray :

And then I know the mist is drawn  
 A lucid veil from coast to coast,  
 And in the dark church like a ghost  
 Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

## LXVII.

WHEN in the down I sink my head,  
 Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my  
 breath ;  
 Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not  
 Death,  
 Nor can I dream of thee as dead :

I walk as ere I walked forlorn,  
 When all our path was fresh with dew,  
 And all the bugle breezes blew  
 Reveillé to the breaking morn.

But what is this ? I turn about,  
 I find a trouble in thine eye,  
 Which makes me sad, I know not why,  
 Nor can my dream resolve the doubt :

But ere the lark hath left the lea  
 I wake, and I discern the truth ;  
 It is the trouble of my youth  
 That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

## LXVIII.

I DREAMED there would be Spring no more,  
 That Nature's ancient power was lost :  
 The streets were black with smoke and frost,  
 They chattered trifles at the door.

I wandered from the noisy town,  
 I found a wood with thorny boughs ;  
 I took the thorns to bind my brows,  
 I wore them like a civic crown.

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns,  
 From youth and babe and hoary hairs :  
 They called me in the public squares  
 The fool that wears a crown of thorns.

They called me fool, they called me child :  
 I found an angel of the night :  
 The voice was low, the look was bright,  
 He looked upon my crown and smiled :

He reached the glory of a hand,  
 That seemed to touch it into leaf :  
 The voice was not the voice of grief ;  
 The words were hard to understand.

## LXIX.

I CANNOT see the features right,  
 When on the gloom I strive to paint  
 The face I know ; the hues are faint,  
 And mix with hollow masks of night ;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,  
 A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,  
 A hand that points, and palled shapes  
 In shadowy thoroughfares of thought ;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,  
 And shoals of puckered faces drive ;  
 Dark bulks that tumble half alive,  
 And lazy lengths on boundless shores :

Till all at once, beyond the will,  
 I hear a wizard music roll,  
 And through a lattice on the soul  
 Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

## LXX.

SLEEP, kinsman thou to death and trance  
 And madness, thou hast forged at last  
 A night-long Present of the Past  
 In which we went through summer France.



Hadst thou such credit with the soul ?  
 Then bring an opiate trebly strong,  
 Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong  
 That so my pleasure may be whole ;

While now we talk, as once we talked  
 Of men and minds, the dust of change,  
 The days that grow to something strange,  
 In walking as of old we walked

Beside the river's wooded reach,  
 The fortress, and the mountain ridge,  
 The cataract flashing from the bridge,  
 The breaker breaking on the beach.

## LXXI.

RISEST thou thus, dim dawn, again,  
 And howlest, issuing out of night,  
 With blasts that blow the poplar white,  
 And lash with storm the streaming pane ?

Day, when my crowned estate begun  
 To pine in that reverse of doom,  
 Which sickened every living bloom,  
 And blurred the splendor of the sun ;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour  
 With thy quick tears that make the rose  
 Pull sideways, and the daisy close  
 Her crimson fringes to the shower ;

Who mightst have heaved a windless flame  
 Up the deep East, or, whispering, played  
 A checker-work of beam and shade  
 Along the hills, yet looked the same,

As wan, as chill, as wild, as now ;  
 Day, marked as with some hideous crime,  
 When the dark hand struck down through  
 time,  
 And cancelled nature's best : but thou,  
  
 Lift as thou mayst thy burdened brows  
 Through clouds that drench the morning  
 star,  
 And whirl the ungarnered sheaf afar,  
 And sow the sky with flying boughs,  
  
 And up thy vault with roaring sound  
 Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day ;  
 Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,  
 And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

## LXXII.

So many worlds, so much to do,  
 So little done, such things to be,  
 How know I what had need of thee,  
 For thou wert strong as thou wert true ?  
  
 The fame is quenched that I foresaw,  
 The head hath missed an earthly wreath :  
 I curse not nature ; no, nor death,  
 For nothing is that errs from law.  
  
 We pass : the path that each man trod  
 Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds :  
 What fame is left for human deeds  
 In endless age ? It rests with God.  
  
 O hollow wraith of dying fame,  
 Fade wholly, while the soul exults,  
 And self-infolds the large results  
 Of force that would have forged a name.

## LXXIII.

As sometimes in a dead man's face,  
 To those that watch it more and more,  
 A likeness hardly seen before  
 Comes out,—to some one of his race :

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,  
 I see thee what thou art, and know  
 Thy likeness to the wise below,  
 Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see,  
 And what I see I leave unsaid,  
 Nor speak it, knowing Death has made  
 His darkness beautiful with thee.

## LXXIV.

I LEAVE thy praises unexpressed  
 In verse that brings myself relief,  
 And by the measure of my grief  
 I leave thy greatness to be guessed ;

What practice, howsoe'er expert  
 In fitting aptest words to things,  
 Or voice the richest-toned that sings,  
 Hath power to give thee as thou wert ?

I care not, in these fading days,  
 To raise a cry that lasts not long,  
 And round thee with the breeze of song  
 To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perished in the green,  
 And, while we breathe beneath the sun,  
 The world which credits what is done  
 Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame ;  
 But somewhere, out of human view,  
 Whate'er thy hands are set to do  
 Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

## LXXV.

TAKE wings of fancy, and ascend,  
 And in a moment set thy face  
 Where all the starry heavens of space  
 Are sharpened to a needle's end ;

Take wings of foresight ; lighten through  
 The secular abyss to come,  
 And lo ! thy deepest lays are dumb  
 Before the mouldering of a yew ;

And if the matin songs, that woke  
 The darkness of our planet, last,  
 Thine own shall wither in the vast,  
 Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers  
 With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain ;  
 And what are they when these remain  
 The ruined shells of hollow towers ?

## LXXVI.

WHAT hope is here for modern rhyme  
 To him, who turns a musing eye  
 On songs, and deeds, and lives, that lie  
 Foreshortened in the tract of time ?

These mortal lullabies of pain  
 May bind a book, may line a box,  
 May serve to curl a maiden's locks ;  
 Or, when a thousand moons shall wane,

A man upon a stall may find,  
 And, passing, turn the page that tells  
 A grief,—then changed to something else,  
 Sung by a long forgotten mind.

But what of that? My darkened ways  
 Shall ring with music all the same;  
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,  
 To utter love more sweet than praise.

## LXXVII.

AGAIN at Christmas did we weave  
 The holly round the Christmas hearth,  
 The silent snow possessed the earth,  
 And calmly fell our Christmas eve;

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,  
 No wing of wind the region swept,  
 But over all things brooding slept  
 The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,  
 Again our ancient games had place,  
 The mimic pictures breathing grace,  
 And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who showed a token of distress?  
 No single tear, no mark of pain:  
 O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?  
 O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!  
 No,—mixed with all this mystic frame,  
 Her deep relations are the same,  
 But with long use her tears are dry.

## LXXVIII.

“MORE than my brothers are to me,”—  
 Let this not vex thee, noble heart!  
 I know thee of what force thou art,  
 To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,  
 As moulded like in nature's mint;  
 And hill and wood and field did print  
 The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curled  
 Through all his eddying coves; the same  
 All winds that roam the twilight came  
 In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffered vows,  
 One lesson from one book we learned,  
 Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turned  
 To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,  
 But he was rich where I was poor,  
 And he supplied my want the more  
 As his unlikeness fitted mine.

## LXXIX.

IF any vague desire should rise,  
 That holy Death, ere Arthur died,  
 Had moved me kindly from his side,  
 And dropped the dust on tearless eyes;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,  
 The grief my loss in him had wrought,  
 A grief as deep as life or thought,  
 But stayed in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain ;  
 I hear the sentence that he speaks ;  
 He bears the burden of the weeks,  
 But turns his burden into gain.

His credit thus shall set me free ;  
 And, influence-rich to soothe and save,  
 Unused example from the grave,  
 Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

## LXXX.

COULD I have said while he was here,  
 "My love shall now no further range,  
 There cannot come a mellow change,  
 For now is love mature in ear."

Love, then, had hope of richer store :  
 What end is here to my complaint ?  
 This haunting whisper makes me faint,  
 "More years had made me love thee more."

But Death returns an answer sweet :  
 "My sudden frost was sudden gain,  
 And gave all ripeness to the grain,  
 It might have drawn from after-heat."

## LXXXI.

I WAGE not any feud with Death  
 For changes wrought on form and face ;  
 No lower life that earth's embrace  
 May breed with him can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,  
 From state to state the spirit walks ;  
 And these are but the shattered stalks  
 Or ruined chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare  
 The use of virtue out of earth ;  
 I know transplanted human worth  
 Will bloom to profit, otherwhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak  
 The wrath that garners in my heart ;  
 He put our lives so far apart  
 We cannot hear each other speak.

## LXXXII.

DIP down upon the northern shore,  
 O sweet new year, delaying long ;  
 Thou doest expectant nature wrong,  
 Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,  
 Thy sweetness from its proper place ?  
 Can trouble live with April days,  
 Or sadness in the summer moons ?

Bring orchis, bring the fox-glove spire,  
 The little speedwell's darling blue,  
 Deep tulips dashed with fiery dew,  
 Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new year, delaying long,  
 Delayest the sorrow in my blood,  
 That longs to burst a frozen bud,  
 And flood a fresher throat with song.

## LXXXIII.

WHEN I contemplate, all alone,  
 The life that had been thine below,  
 And fix my thoughts on all the glow  
 To which thy crescent would have grown ;



I see thee sitting crowned with good,  
A central warmth diffusing bliss  
In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,  
On all the branches of thy blood ;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine ;  
For now the day was drawing on,  
When thou shouldst link thy life with one  
Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled " Uncle " on my knee ;  
But that remorseless iron hour  
Made cypress of her orange-flower,  
Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,  
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.  
I see their unborn faces shine  
Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honored guest,  
Thy partner in the flowery walk  
Of letters, genial table-talk,  
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest :

While now thy prosperous labor fills  
The lips of men with honest praise,  
And sun by sun the happy days  
Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair ;  
And all the train of bounteous hours  
Conduct, by paths of growing powers,  
To reverence and the silver hair ;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,  
Her lavish mission richly wrought,  
Leaving great legacies of thought,  
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe ;

What time mine own might also flee,  
 As linked with thine in love and fate,  
 And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait  
 To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,  
 And he that died in Holy Land  
 Would reach us out the shining hand,  
 And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant ?  
 Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake  
 The old bitterness again, and break  
 The low beginnings of content ?

## LXXXIV.

THIS truth came borne with bier and pall,  
 I felt it, when I sorrowed most,  
 'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
 Than never to have loved at all ———

O true in word, and tried in deed,  
 Demanding, so to bring relief  
 To this which is our common grief,  
 What kind of life is that I lead ;

And whether trust in things above  
 Be dimmed of sorrow, or sustained,  
 And whether love for him have drained  
 My capabilities of love ;

Your words have virtue such as draws  
 A faithful answer from the breast,  
 Through light reproaches, half expressed,  
 And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,  
Till on mine ear this message falls,  
That in Vienna's fatal walls  
God's finger touched him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair  
That range above our mortal state,  
In circle round the blessed gate,  
Received and gave him welcome there ;

And led him through the blissful climes,  
And showed him in the fountain fresh  
All knowledge that the sons of flesh  
Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remained, whose hopes were dim,  
Whose life, whose thoughts, were little worth,  
To wander on a darkened earth,  
Where all things round me breathed of him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,  
O heart, with kindest motion warm,  
O sacred essence, other form,  
O solemn ghost ! O crowned soul !

Yet none could better know than I  
How much of act at human hands  
The sense of human will demands,  
By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,  
I felt and feel, though left alone,  
His being working in mine own,  
The footsteps of his life in mine ;

A life that all the Muses decked  
With gifts of grace that might express  
All comprehensive tenderness,  
All-subtilizing intellect :

And so my passion hath not swerved  
 To works of weakness, but I find  
 An image comforting the mind,  
 And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,  
 That loved to handle spiritual strife,  
 Diffused the shock through all my life,  
 But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again  
 For other friends that once I met;  
 Nor can it suit me to forget  
 The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love: I count it crime  
 To mourn for any overmuch;  
 I, the divided half of such  
 A friendship as had mastered Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is  
 Eternal, separate from fears.  
 The all-assuming months and years  
 Can take no part away from this:

But Summer on the steaming floods,  
 And Spring that swells the narrow brooks,  
 And Autumn with a noise of rooks,  
 That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave  
 Recalls, in change of light or gloom,  
 My old affection of the tomb,  
 And my prime passion in the grave:

My old affection of the tomb,  
 A part of stillness yearns to speak:  
 "Arise, and get thee forth and seek  
 A friendship for the years to come.

“ I watch thee from the quiet shore ;  
 Thy spirit up to mine can reach ;  
 But in dear words of human speech  
 We two communicate no more.”

And I, “ Can clouds of nature stain  
 The starry clearness of the free ?  
 How is it ? Canst thou feel for me  
 Some painless sympathy with pain ? ”

And lightly does the whisper fall :  
 “ ’Tis hard for thee to fathom this ;  
 I triumph in conclusive bliss,  
 And that serene result of all.”

So hold I commerce with the dead ;  
 Or so methinks the dead would say ;  
 Or so shall grief with symbols play,  
 And pining life be fancy-fed.

Now looking to some settled end,  
 That these things pass, and I shall prove  
 A meeting somewhere, love with love,  
 I crave your pardon, oh my friend ;

If not so fresh, with love as true,  
 I, clasping brother-hands, aver  
 I could not, if I would, transfer  
 The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart  
 The promise of the golden hours ?  
 First love, first friendship, equal powers,  
 That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine that cannot but deplore,  
 That beats within a lonely place,  
 That yet remembers his embrace,  
 But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, though widowed, may not rest  
 Quite in the love of what is gone,  
 But seeks to beat in time with one  
 That warms another living breast.

Ah! take the imperfect gift I bring,  
 Knowing the primrose yet is dear,  
 The primrose of the later year,  
 As not unlike to that of Spring.

## LXXXV.

SWEET after showers, ambrosial air,  
 That rollest from the gorgeous gloom  
 Of evening over brake and bloom  
 And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below  
 Through all the dewy-tasselled wood,  
 And shadowing down the horned flood  
 In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh  
 The full new life that feeds thy breath  
 Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,  
 Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas,  
 On leagues of odor streaming far,  
 To where, in yonder orient star,  
 A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

## LXXXVI.

I PASSED beside the reverend walls  
 In which of old I wore the gown;  
 I roved at random through the town,  
 And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes  
 The storm their high-built organs make,  
 And thunder-music, rolling, shake  
 The prophets blazoned on the panes ;

And caught once more the distant shout,  
 The measured pulse of racing oars  
 Among the willows ; paced the shores  
 And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats again, and felt  
 The same, but not the same ; and last,  
 Up that long walk of limes I passed,  
 To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door :  
 I lingered ; all within was noise  
 Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys  
 That crashed the glass and beat the floor ;

Where once we held debate, a band  
 Of youthful friends, on mind and art,  
 And labor, and the changing mart,  
 And all the framework of the land ;

When one would aim an arrow fair,  
 But send it slackly from the string ;  
 And one would pierce an outer ring,  
 And one an inner, here and there ;

And last, the master-bowman, he  
 Would cleave the mark. A willing ear  
 We lent him, Who, but hung to hear  
 The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point with power and grace,  
 And music in the bounds of law,  
 To those conclusions when we saw  
 The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow  
 In azure orbits heavenly-wise ;  
 And over those ethereal eyes  
 The bar of Michael Angelo.

## LXXXVII.

WILD bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,  
 Rings Eden through the budded quicks,  
 O, tell me where the senses mix,  
 O, tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate : fierce extremes employ  
 Thy spirits in the darkening leaf.  
 And in the midmost heart of grief  
 Thy passion clasps a secret joy :

And I,—my harp would prelude woe,—  
 I cannot all command the strings ;  
 The glory of the sum of things  
 Will flash along the chords and go.

## LXXXVIII.

WITCH-ELMS, that counterchange the floor  
 Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright ;  
 And thou, with all thy breadth and height  
 Of foliage, towering sycamore ;

How often, hither wandering down,  
 My Arthur found your shadows fair,  
 And shook to all the liberal air  
 The dust and din and steam of town !

He brought an eye for all he saw ;  
 He mixed in all our simple sports ;  
 They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts  
 And dusky purlieus of the law.



O joy to him, in this retreat,  
    Immantled in ambrosial dark,  
    To drink the cooler air, and mark  
The landscape winking through the heat !

O sound to rout the brood of cares,  
    The sweep of scythe in morning dew,  
    The gust that round the garden flew,  
And tumbled half the mellowing pears !

O bliss, when all in circle drawn  
    About him, heart and ear were fed  
    To hear him, as he lay and read  
The Tuscan poets on the lawn :

Or in the all-golden afternoon  
    A guest, or happy sister, sung,  
    Or here she brought the harp, and flung  
A ballad to the brightening moon :

Nor less it pleased, in livelier moods,  
    Beyond the bounding hill to stray.  
    And break the livelong summer day  
With banquet in the distant woods ;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,  
    Discussed the books to love or hate,  
    Or touched the changes of the state,  
Or threaded some Socratic dream ;

But if I praised the busy town,  
    He loved to rail against it still,  
    For "ground in yonder social mill,  
We rub each other's angles down,

"And merge," he said, "in form and gloss,  
    The picturesque of man and man."  
    We talked : the stream beneath us ran,  
The wine-flask lying couched in moss,

Or cooled within the glooming wave,  
 And last, returning from afar,  
 Before the crimson-circled star  
 Had fallen into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,  
 We heard behind the woodbine veil  
 The milk that bubbled in the pail,  
 And buzzings of the honeyed hours.

## LXXXIX.

HE tasted love with half his mind,  
 Nor ever drank the inviolate spring  
 Where nighest heaven, who first could fling  
 This bitter seed among mankind ;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes  
 Were closed with wail, resume their life.  
 They would but find in child and wife  
 An iron welcome when they rise :

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,  
 To pledge them with a kindly tear :  
 To talk them over, to wish them here,  
 To count their memories half divine ;

But if they came who passed away,  
 Behold their brides in other hands :  
 The hard heir strides about their lands,  
 And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, though their sons were none of these,  
 Not less the yet-loved sire would make  
 Confusion worse than death, and shake  
 The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me :  
 Whatever change the years have wrought,  
 I find not yet one lonely thought  
 That cries against my wish for thee.

## XC.

WHEN rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
 And rarely pipes the mounted thrush ;  
 Or underneath the barren bush  
 Flits by the sea-blue bird of March ;

Come, wear the form by which I know  
 Thy spirit in time among thy peers ;  
 The hope of unaccomplished years  
 Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change  
 May breathe with many roses sweet  
 Upon the thousand waves of wheat,  
 That ripple round the lonely grange ;

Come : not in watches of the night,  
 But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,  
 Come, beauteous in thine after form,  
 And like a finer light in light.

## XCI.

IF any vision should reveal  
 Thy likeness, I might count it vain,  
 As but the canker of the brain ;  
 Yea, though it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast  
 Together in the days behind,  
 I might but say, I hear a wind  
 Of memory murmuring the past.

Yea, though it spake and bared to view  
 A fact within the coming year ;  
 And though the months, revolving near,  
 Should prove the phantom-warning true,

They might not seem thy prophecies,  
 But spiritual presentiments,  
 And such refraction of events  
 As often rises ere they rise.

## XCII.

I SHALL not see thee. Dare I say  
 No spirit ever brake the band  
 That stays him from the native land  
 Where first he walked when clasped in clay ?

No visual shade of some one lost,  
 But he, the Spirit himself, may come  
 Where all the nerve of sense is numb ;  
 Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from thy sightless range  
 With gods in unconjectured bliss,  
 O, from the distance of the abyss  
 Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter ; hear  
 The wish too strong for words to name ;  
 That in this blindness of the frame  
 My Ghost may feel that thine is near

## XCIII.

How pure at heart and sound in head,  
 With what divine affections bold,  
 Should be the man whose thought would  
 hold  
 An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call  
 The spirits from their golden day,  
 Except, like them, thou too canst say,  
 My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,  
Imaginations calm and fair,  
The memory like a cloudless air,  
The conscience as a sea at rest :

But when the heart is full of din,  
And doubt beside the portal waits,  
They can but listen at the gates,  
And hear the household jar within.

## XCIV.

By night we lingered on the lawn,  
For under foot the herb was dry ;  
And genial warmth ; and o'er the sky  
The silvery haze of summer drawn ;

And calm that let the tapers burn  
Unwavering : not a cricket chirred :  
The brook alone far off was heard,  
And on the board the fluttering urn :

And bats went round in fragrant skies,  
And wheeled or lit the filmy shapes  
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes  
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes ;

While now we sang old songs that pealed  
From knoll to knoll, where, couched at ease,  
The white kine glimmered, and the trees  
Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,  
Withdrew themselves from me and night,  
And in the house light after light  
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart ; I read  
Of that glad year which once had been,  
In those fallen leaves which kept their green,  
The noble letters of the dead :

And strangely on the silence broke  
 The silent-speaking words, and strange  
 Was love's dumb cry defying change  
 To test his worth ; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigor, bold to dwell  
 On doubts that drive the coward back,  
 And keen through wordy snares to track  
 Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,  
 The dead man touched me from the past,  
 And all at once it seemed at last  
 His living soul was flashed on mine,

And mine in his was wound, and whirled  
 About empyreal heights of thought,  
 And came on that which is, and caught  
 The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out  
 The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance,—  
 The blows of Death. At length my trance  
 Was cancelled, stricken through with doubt.

Vague words ! but ah, how hard to frame  
 In matter-moulded forms of speech,  
 Or even for intellect to reach  
 Through memory that which I became :

Till now the doubtful dusk revealed  
 The knolls once more where, couched at ease,  
 The white kine glimmered, and the trees  
 Laid their dark arms about the field :

And sucked from out the distant gloom,  
 A breeze began to tremble o'er  
 The large leaves of the sycamore,  
 And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,  
 Rocked the full-foliaged elms, and swung  
 The heavy-folded rose, and flung  
 The lilies to and fro, and said

“The dawn, the dawn,” and died away ;  
 And East and West, without a breath,  
 Mixed their dim lights, like life and death,  
 To broaden into boundless day.

## XCV.

You say, but with no touch of scorn,  
 Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes  
 Are tender over drowning flies,  
 You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew  
 In many a subtile question versed,  
 Who touched a jarring lyre at first,  
 But ever strove to make it true :

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,  
 At last he beat his music out.  
 There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
 Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,  
 He would not make his judgment blind,  
 He faced the spectres of the mind  
 And laid them : thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own ;  
 And Power was with him in the night,  
 Which makes the darkness and the light,  
 And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,  
 As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
 While Israel made their gods of gold,  
 Although the trumpet blew so loud.

## XCVI.

MY love has talked with rocks and trees,  
He finds on misty mountain-ground  
His own vast shadow glory-crowned,  
He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life,—  
I looked on these and thought of thee  
In vastness and in mystery,  
And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two,—they dwelt with eye on eye,  
Their hearts of old have beat in tune,  
Their meetings made December June,  
Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never passed away ;  
The days she never can forget  
Are earnest that he loves her yet,  
Whate'er the faithless people say.

Her life is lone, he sits apart,  
He loves her yet, she will not weep,  
Though, rapt in matters dark and deep,  
He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,  
He reads the secret of the star,  
He seems so near and yet so far,  
He looks so cold : she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,  
A withered violet is her bliss ;  
She knows not what his greatness is ;  
For that, for all, she loves him more.

For him she plays, to him she sings  
Of early faith and plighted vows ;  
She knows but matters of the house,  
And he, he knows a thousand things.



Her faith is fixed and cannot move,  
 She darkly feels him great and wise,  
 She dwells on him with faithful eyes,  
 "I cannot understand: I love."

## XCVII.

You leave us; you will see the Rhine,  
 And those fair hills I sailed below,  
 When I was there with him; and go  
 By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,  
 That City. All her splendor seems  
 No livelier than the wisp that gleams  
 On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair  
 Enwind her isles, unmarked of me:  
 I have not seen, I will not see  
 Vienna: rather dream that there,

A treble darkness, Evil haunts  
 The birth, the bridal; friend from friend  
 Is oftener parted, fathers bend  
 Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey  
 By each cold hearth, and sadness flings  
 Her shadow on the blaze of kings;  
 And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town  
 With statelier progress to and fro  
 The double tides of chariots flow  
 By park and suburb under brown

Of lustier leaves ; nor more content,  
 He told me, lives in any crowd,  
 When all is gay with lamps, and loud  
 With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain ;  
 And wheels the circled dance, and breaks  
 The rocket molten into flakes  
 Of crimson or in emerald rain.

## XCVIII.

RISEST thou thus, dim dawn, again,  
 So loud with voices of the birds,  
 So thick with lowings of the herds,  
 Day, when I lost the flower of men ;

Who tremblest through thy darkling red  
 On yon swollen brook that bubbles fast  
 By meadows breathing of the past,  
 And woodlands holy to the dead ;

Who murmurest in the foliated eaves  
 A song that slights the coming care,  
 And Autumn laying here and there  
 A fiery finger on the leaves ;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath  
 To myriads on the genial earth,  
 Memories of bridal, or of birth,  
 And unto myriads more, of death.

O, wheresoever those may be,  
 Betwixt the slumber of the poles,  
 To-day they count as kindred souls ;  
 They know me not, but mourn with me.

## XCIX.

I CLIMB the hill : from end to end,  
 Of all the landscape underneath,  
 I find no place that does not breathe  
 Some gracious memory of my friend ;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,  
 Or low morass and whispering reed,  
 Or simple stile from mead to mead,  
 Or sheepwalk up the windy wold ;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw  
 That hears the latest linnnet trill,  
 Nor quarry trenched along the hill,  
 And haunted by the wrangling daw ;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock ;  
 Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves  
 To left and right through meadowy curves,  
 That feed the mothers of the flock ;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,  
 And each reflects a kindlier day ;  
 And, leaving these, to pass away,  
 I think once more he seems to die.

## C.

UNWATCHED the garden bough shall sway,  
 The tender blossom flutter down,  
 Unloved that beech will gather brown,  
 This maple burn itself away ;

Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair,  
 Ray round with flames her disk of seed,  
 And many a rose-carnation feed  
 With summer spice the humming air ;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,  
 The brook shall babble down the plain,  
 At noon, or when the lesser wain  
 Is twisting round the polar star ;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,  
 And flood the haunts of hern and crake,  
 Or into silver arrows break  
 The sailing moon in creek and cove ;

Till from the garden and the wild  
 A fresh association blow,  
 And year by year the landscape grow  
 Familiar to the stranger's child ;

As year by year the laborer tills  
 His wonted glebe, or lops the glades ;  
 And year by year our memory fades  
 From all the circle of the hills.

CI.

WE leave the well-beloved place  
 Where first we gazed upon the sky ;  
 The roofs that heard our earliest cry  
 Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,  
 As down the garden-walks I move,  
 Two spirits of a diverse love  
 Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, here thy boyhood sung  
 Long since its matin song, and heard  
 The low love-language of the bird  
 In native hazels tassel-hung.

The other answers, " Yea, but here  
 Thy feet have strayed in after hours  
 With thy lost friend among the bowers,  
 And this hath made them trebly dear."

These two have striven half the day,  
 And each prefers his separate claim,  
 Poor rivals in a losing game,  
 That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go : my feet are set  
 To leave the pleasant fields and farms ;  
 They mix in one another's arms  
 To one pure image of regret.

## CII.

ON that last night before we went  
 From out the doors where I was bred,  
 I dreamed a vision of the dead,  
 Which left my after morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,  
 And maidens with me ; distant hills  
 From hidden summits fed with rills  
 A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.  
 They sang of what is wise and good  
 And graceful. In the centre stood  
 A statue veiled, to which they sang ;

And which, though veiled, was known to me,  
 The shape of him I loved, and love  
 Forever : then flew in a dove,  
 And brought a summons from the sea :

And when they learnt that I must go,  
They wept and wailed, but led the way  
To where a little shallop lay  
At anchor in the flood below ;

And on by many a level mead,  
And shadowing bluff that made the banks,  
We glided, winding under ranks  
Of iris, and the golden reed ;

And still, as vaster grew the shore,  
And rolled the floods in grander space,  
The maidens gathered strength and grace,  
And presence lordlier than before ;

And I myself, who sat apart  
And watched them, waxed in every limb ;  
I felt the thews of Anakim,  
The pulses of a Titan's heart ;

As one would sing the death of war,  
And one would chant the history  
Of that great race, which is to be,  
And one the shaping of a star ;

Until the forward-creeping tides  
Began to foam, and we to draw  
From deep to deep, to where we saw  
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,  
But thrice as large as man he bent  
To greet us. Up the side I went,  
And fell in silence on his neck :

Whereat those maidens, with one mind,  
Bewailed their lot ; I did them wrong :  
" We served thee here," they said, " so long,  
And wilt thou leave us now behind ? "

So rapt I was, they could not win  
 An answer from my lips, but he  
 Replying, "Enter likewise ye  
 And go with us:" they entered in.

And while the wind began to sweep  
 A music out of sheet and shroud,  
 We steered her toward a crimson cloud  
 That landlike slept along the deep.

## CIII.

THE time draws near the birth of Christ ;  
 The moon is hid, the night is still ;  
 A single church below the hill  
 Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,  
 That wakens at this hour of rest  
 A single murmur in the breast,  
 That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,  
 In lands where not a memory strays,  
 Nor landmark breathes of other days,  
 But all is new, unhallowed ground.

## CIV.

THIS holly by the cottage-eave,  
 To-night, ungathered, shall it stand :  
 We live within the stranger's land,  
 And strangely falls our Christmas eve.

Our father's dust is left alone  
 And silent under other snows :  
 There in due time the woodbine blows,  
 The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse  
 The genial hour with mask and mime ;  
 For change of place, like growth of time,  
 Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,  
 By which our lives are chiefly proved,  
 A little spare the night I loved,  
 And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,  
 Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm :  
 For who would keep an ancient form  
 Through which the spirit breathes no more ?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast,  
 Nor harp be touched, nor flute be blown  
 No dance, no motion, save alone  
 What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.  
 Long sleeps the summer in the seed ;  
 Run out your measured arcs, and lead  
 The closing cycle rich in good.

## CV.

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
 The flying cloud, the frosty light  
 The year is dying in the night ;  
 Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow :  
 The year is going, let him go ;  
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.



Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more ;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife ;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times ;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite ;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

## CVI.

It is the day when he was born,  
A bitter day that early sank  
Behind a purple-frosty bank  
Of vapor, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves  
 To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies  
 The blast of North and East, and ice  
 Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns  
 To yon hard crescent, as she hangs  
 Above the wood which grides and clangs  
 Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass,  
 To darken on the rolling brine  
 That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,  
 Arrange the board and brim the glass ;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,  
 To make a solid core of heat ;  
 Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat  
 Of all things even as he were by :

We keep the day. With festal cheer,  
 With books and music, surely we  
 Will drink to him, whate'er he be,  
 And sing the songs he loved to hear.

## CVII.

I WILL not shut me from my kind ;  
 And, lest I stiffen into stone,  
 I will not eat my heart alone,  
 Nor feed with sighs a passing wind :

What profit lies in barren faith,  
 And vacant yearning, though with might  
 To scale the heaven's highest height,  
 Or dive below the wells of Death ?

What find I in the highest place,  
 But mine own phantom chanting hymns?  
 And on the depths of death there swims  
 The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be  
 Of sorrow under human skies :  
 'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,  
 Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

## CVIII.

HEART-AFFLUENCE in discursive talk  
 From household fountains never dry ;  
 The critic clearness of an eye,  
 That saw through all the Muses' walk ;

Seraphic intellect and force  
 To seize and throw the doubts of man ;  
 Impassioned logic, which outran  
 The hearer in its fiery course ;

High nature amorous of the good,  
 But touched with no ascetic gloom ;  
 And passion pure in snowy bloom  
 Through all the years of April blood ;

A love of freedom rarely felt,  
 Of freedom in her regal seat  
 Of England, not the schoolboy heat,  
 The blind hysterics of the Celt ;

And manhood fused with female grace  
 In such a sort, the child would twine  
 A trustful hand, unasked, in thine,  
 And find his comfort in thy face ;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes  
 Have looked on : if they looked in vain,  
 My shame is greater who remain,  
 Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

## CIX.

THEY converse drew us with delight,  
 The men of rathe and riper years :  
 The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,  
 Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,  
 The proud was half disarmed of pride,  
 Nor cared the serpent at thy side  
 To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,  
 The flippant put himself to school  
 And heard thee, and the brazen fool  
 Was softened, and he knew not why ;

While I, thy dearest, sat apart,  
 And felt thy triumph was as mine ;  
 And loved them more, that they were thine,  
 The graceful tact, the Christian art ;

Not mine the sweetness or the skill,  
 But mine the love that will not tire,  
 And, born of love, the vague desire  
 That spurs an imitative will.

## CX.

THE churl in spirit, up or down,  
 Along the scale of ranks, through all  
 To him who grasps a golden ball  
 By blood a king, at heart a clown ;

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil  
 His want in forms for fashion's sake,  
 Will let his coltish nature break  
 At seasons through the gilded pale :

For who can always act ? but he,  
 To whom a thousand memories call,  
 Not being less but more than all  
 The gentleness he seemed to be,

Best seemed the thing he was, and joined  
 Each office of the social hour  
 To noble manners, as the flower  
 And native growth of noble mind ;

Nor ever narrowness or spite,  
 Or villain fancy fleeting by,  
 Drew in the expression of an eye,  
 Where God and Nature met in light,

And thus he bore without abuse  
 The grand old name of gentleman  
 Defamed by every charlatan,  
 And soiled with all ignoble use.

## CXI.

HIGH wisdom holds my wisdom less,  
 That I, who gaze with temperate eyes  
 On glorious insufficiencies,  
 Set light by narrower perfectness.

But thou, that fillest all the room  
 Of all my love, art reason why  
 I seem to cast a careless eye  
 On souls, the lesser lords of doom.

For what wert thou ? some novel power  
 Sprang up forever at a touch,  
 And hope could never hope too much,  
 In watching thee from hour to hour,

Large elements in order brought,  
 And tracts of calm from tempest made,  
 And world-wide fluctuation swayed  
 In vassal tides that followed thought.

## CXII.

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise ;  
 Yet how much wisdom sleeps with thee  
 Which not alone had guided me,  
 But served the seasons that may rise ;

For can I doubt who knew thee keen  
 In intellect, with force and skill  
 To strive, to fashion, to fulfil,—  
 I doubt not what thou wouldst have been :

A life in civic action warm,  
 A soul on highest mission sent.  
 A potent voice of Parliament,  
 A pillar steadfast in the storm,

Should licensed boldness gather force,  
 Becoming, when the time has birth,  
 A lever to uplift the earth  
 And roll it in another course,

With thousand shocks that come and go,  
 With agonies, with energies,  
 With overthrowings, and with cries,  
 And undulations to and fro.

## CXIII.

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail  
 Against her beauty? May she mix  
 With men and prosper! Who shall fix  
 Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire:  
 She sets her forward countenance  
 And leaps into the future chance,  
 Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain,—  
 She cannot fight the fear of death.  
 What is she, cut from love and faith,  
 But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst  
 All barriers in her onward race  
 For power. Let her know her place,  
 She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,  
 If all be not in vain; and guide  
 Her footsteps, moving side by side  
 With wisdom, like the younger child;

For she is earthly of the mind,  
 But wisdom heavenly of the soul.  
 O friend, who camest to thy goal  
 So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee  
 Who grewest not alone in power  
 And knowledge, but by year and hour  
 In reverence and in charity.

## CXIV.

Now fades the last long streak of snow,  
 Now burgeons every maze of quick  
 About the flowering squares, and thick  
 By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,  
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,  
 And drowned in yonder living blue  
 The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,  
 The flocks are whiter down the vale,  
 And milkier every milky sail  
 On winding stream or distant sea ;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives  
 In yonder greening gleam, and fly  
 The happy birds, that change their sky  
 To build and brood ; that live their lives

From land to land ; and in my breast  
 Spring wakens too ; and my regret  
 Becomes an April violet,  
 And buds and blossoms like the rest.

## CXV.

Is it, then, regret for buried time  
 That keenlier in sweet April wakes,  
 And meets the year, and gives and takes  
 The colors of the crescent prime ?

Not all ; the songs, the stirring air,  
 The life re-orient out of dust,  
 Cry through the sense to hearten trust  
 In that which made the world so fair.



Not all regret ; the face will shine  
 Upon me, while I muse alone ;  
 And that dear voice, I once have known,  
 Still speak to me of me and mine :

Yet less of sorrow lives in me  
 For days of happy commune dead ;  
 Less yearning for the friendship fled,  
 Than some strong bond which is to be.

## CXVI.

O DAYS and hours, your work is this,  
 To hold me from my proper place,  
 A little while from his embrace,  
 For fuller gain of after bliss :

That out of distance might ensue  
 Desire of nearness doubly sweet ;  
 And unto meeting, when we meet,  
 Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,  
 And every span of shade that steals,  
 And every kiss of toothed wheels,  
 And all the courses of the suns.

## CXVII.

CONTEMPLATE all this work of Time,  
 The giant laboring in his youth ;  
 Nor dream of human love and truth,  
 As dying Nature's earth and lime ;

But trust that those we call the dead  
 Are breathers of an ampler day  
 For ever nobler ends. They say,  
 The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,  
 And grew to seeming-random forms,  
 The seeming prey of cyclic storms,  
 Till at the last arose the man ;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,  
 The herald of a higher race,  
 And of himself in higher place,  
 If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more ;  
 And, crowned with attributes of woe  
 Like glories, move his course, and show  
 That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,  
 And heated hot with burning fears ;  
 And dipped in baths of hissing tears,  
 And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly  
 The reeling Faun, the sensual feast ;  
 Move upward, working out the beast,  
 And let the ape and tiger die.

## CXVIII.

DOORS, where my heart was used to beat  
 So quickly, not as one that weeps  
 I come once more ; the city sleeps ;  
 I smell the meadow in the street ;

I hear a chirp of birds ; I see  
 Betwixt the black fronts long withdrawn  
 A light-blue lane of early dawn,  
 And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,  
 And bright the friendship of thine eye ;  
 And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh  
 I take the pressure of thine hand.

## CXIX.

I TRUST I have not wasted breath :  
 I think we are not wholly brain,  
 Magnetic mockeries ; not in vain,  
 Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death ;

Not only cunning casts in clay :  
 Let Science prove we are, and then  
 What matters Science unto men,  
 At least to me ? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs  
 Hereafter, up from childhood shape  
 His action like the greater ape,  
 But I was born to other things.

## CXX.

SAD Hesper o'er the buried sun,  
 And ready, thou, to die with him,  
 Thou watchest all things ever dim  
 And dimmer, and a glory done :

The team is loosened from the wain,  
 The boat is drawn upon the shore ;  
 Thou listenest to the closing door,  
 And life is darkened in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,  
 By thee the world's great work is heard  
 Beginning, and the wakeful bird ;  
 Behind thee comes the greater light :

The market-boat is on the stream,  
 And voices hail it from the brink ;  
 Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,  
 And seest the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name  
 For what is one, the first, the last,  
 Thou, like my present and my past,  
 Thy place is changed, thou art the same.

## CXXI.

O, WAST thou with me, dearest, then,  
 While I rose up against my doom,  
 And strove to burst the folded gloom,  
 To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,  
 The strong imagination roll  
 A sphere of stars about my soul,  
 In all her motion one with law;

If thou wert with me, and the grave  
 Divide us not, be with me now,  
 And enter in at breast and brow,  
 Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quickened with a livelier breath,  
 And like an inconsiderate boy,  
 As in the former flash of joy,  
 I slip the thoughts of life and death,

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,  
 And every dew-drop paints a bow;  
 The wizard lightnings deeply glow,  
 And every thought breaks out a rose.

## CXXII.

THERE rolls the deep where grew the tree.  
 O earth, what changes hast thou seen!  
 There where the long street roars, hath been  
 The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow  
 From form to form, and nothing stands ;  
 They melt like mist, the solid lands,  
 Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,  
 And dream my dream, and hold it true ;  
 For though my lips may breathe adieu,  
 I cannot think the thing farewell.

## CXXIII.

THAT which we dare invoke to bless ;  
 Our dearest faith, our ghastliest doubt ;  
 He, They, One, All ; within, without ;  
 The Power in darkness whom we guess ;

I found Him not in world or sun,  
 Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye ;  
 Nor through the questions men may try,  
 The petty cobwebs we have spun :

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,  
 I heard a voice, " Believe no more,"  
 And heard an ever-breaking shore  
 That tumbled in the Godless deep ;

A warmth within the breast would melt  
 The freezing reason's colder part,  
 And like a man in wrath the heart  
 Stood up and answered, " I have felt."

No, like a child in doubt and fear :  
 But that blind clamor made me wise ;  
 Then was I as a child that cries,  
 But, crying, knows his father near ;

And what I seem beheld again  
 What is, and no man understands ;  
 And out of darkness came the hands  
 That reach through nature, moulding men

## CXXIV.

WHATEVER I have said or sung,  
     Some bitter notes my harp would give,  
     Yea, though there often seemed to live  
 A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth ;  
     She did but look through dimmer eyes ;  
     Or Love but played with gracious lies,  
 Because he felt so fixed in truth :

And if the song were full of care,  
     He breathed the spirit of the song ;  
     And if the words were sweet and strong,  
     He set his royal signet there ;

Abiding with me till I sail  
     To seek thee on the mystic deeps,  
     And this electric force, that keeps  
 A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

## CXXV.

LOVE is and was my Lord and King,  
     And in his presence I attend  
     To hear the tidings of my friend,  
 Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,  
     And will be, though as yet I keep  
     Within his court on earth, and sleep  
 Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel  
     Who moves about from place to place,  
     And whispers to the worlds of space  
 In the deep night, that all is well.

## CXXVI.

AND all is well, though faith and form  
 Be sundered in the night of fear ;  
 Well roars the storm to those that hear  
 A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,  
 And justice, ev'n though thrice again  
 The red fool-fury of the Seine  
 Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,  
 And him, the lazar, in his rags :  
 They tremble, the sustaining crags ;  
 The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood ;  
 The fortress crashes from on high,  
 The brute earth lightens to the sky,  
 And the vast Æon sinks in blood,

And compassed by the fires of Hell,  
 While thou, dear spirit, happy star,  
 O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,  
 And smilest, knowing all is well.

## CXXVII.

THE love that rose on stronger wings,  
 Unpalsied when he met with Death,  
 Is comrade of the lesser faith  
 That sees the course of human things.

No doubt, vast eddies in the flood  
 Of onward time shall yet be made,  
 And throned races may degrade ;  
 Yet, oh ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,  
 If all your office had to do  
 With old results that look like new,  
 If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,  
 To fool the crowd with glorious lies,  
 To cleave a creed in sects and cries,  
 To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,  
 To cramp the student at his desk,  
 To make old bareness picturesque  
 And tuft with grass a feudal tower ;

Why then my scorn might well descend  
 On you and yours. I see in part  
 That all, as in some piece of art,  
 Is toil coöperant to an end.

## CXXVIII.

DEAR friend, far off, my lost desire,  
 So far, so near, in woe and weal ;  
 O, loved the most when most I feel  
 There is a lower and a higher ;

Known and unknown, human, divine !  
 Sweet human hand and lips and eye,  
 Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,  
 Mine, mine, forever, ever mine !

Strange friend, past, present, and to be,  
 Loved deeper, darklier understood ;  
 Behold I dream a dream of good  
 And mingle all the world with thee.



## CXXIX.

**THY** voice is on the rolling air ;  
 I hear thee where the waters run ;  
 Thou standest in the rising sun,  
 And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou, then ? I cannot guess ;  
 But though I seem in star and flower  
 To feel thee, some diffusive power,  
 I do not therefore love thee less :

My love involves the love before ;  
 My love is vaster passion now ;  
 Though mixed with God and Nature **thou**,  
 I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh ;  
 I have thee still, and I rejoice :  
 I prosper, circled with thy voice ;  
 I shall not lose thee, though I die.

## CXXX.

**O** LIVING will that shalt endure  
 When all that seems shall suffer shock,  
 Rise in the spiritual rock,  
**F**low through our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out the dust  
 A voice as unto him that hears,  
 A cry above the conquered years  
 To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,  
 The truths that never can be proved  
 Until we close with all we loved,  
 And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O TRUE and tried, so well and long,  
Demand not thou a marriage lay ;  
In that it is thy marriage day  
Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss  
Since first he told me that he loved  
A daughter of our house ; nor proved  
Since that dark day a day like this ;

Though I since then have numbered o'er  
Some thrice three years : they went and came,  
Remade the blood and changed the frame  
And yet is love not less, but more ;

No longer caring to embalm  
In dying songs a dead regret,  
But like a statue solid-set,  
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more  
Than in the summers that are flown,  
For I myself with these have grown  
To something greater than before ;

Which makes appear the songs I made  
As echoes out of weaker times,  
As half but idle brawling rhymes,  
The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,  
That must be made a wife ere noon ?  
She enters, glowing like the moon  
Of Eden on its bridal bower :

On me she bends her blissful eyes  
    And then on thee ; they meet thy look,  
    And brighten like the star that shook  
Betwixt the palms of paradise.

O, when her life was yet in bud,  
    He too foretold the perfect rose.  
    For thee she grew, for thee she grows  
Forever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy ; full of power ;  
    As gentle ; liberal-minded, great,  
    Consistent ; wearing all that weight  
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out : the noon is near,  
    And I must give away the bride ;  
    She fears not, or with thee beside  
And me behind her, will not fear :

For I that danced her on my knee,  
    That watched her on her nurse's arm,  
    That shielded all her life from harm,  
At last must part with her to thee ;

Now waiting to be made a wife,  
    Her feet, my darling, on the dead ;  
    Their pensive tablets round her head,  
And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,  
    The " wilt thou " answered, and again  
    The " wilt thou " asked, till out of twain  
Her sweet " I will " has made ye one.

Now sign your names, which shall be read  
    Mute symbols of a joyful morn,  
    By village eyes as yet unborn ;  
The names are signed, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells  
The joy to every wandering breeze ;  
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees  
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

O happy hour ! and happier hours  
Await them. Many a merry face  
Salutes them,—maidens of the place,  
That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour ! behold the bride  
With him to whom her hand I gave.  
They leave the porch, they pass the grave  
That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,  
For them the light of life increased  
Who stay to share the morning feast,  
Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance  
To meet and greet a whiter sun ,  
My drooping memory will not shun  
The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,  
And hearts are warmed and faces bloom,  
As drinking health to bride and groom,  
We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I  
Conjecture of a stiller guest,  
Perchance, perchance, among the rest,  
And, though in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go ; the time draws on,  
And those white-favored horses wait ;  
They rise, but linger, it is late ;  
Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark  
 From little cloudlets on the grass,  
 But sweeps away as out we pass  
 To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,  
 And talk of others that are wed,  
 And how she looked, and what he said,  
 And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,  
 The shade of passing thought, the wealth  
 Of words and wit, the double health,  
 The crowning cup, the three times three,

And last the dance;—till I retire :  
 Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,  
 And high in heaven the streaming cloud,  
 And on the downs a rising fire :

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,  
 Till over down and over dale  
 All night the shining vapor sail  
 And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,  
 And catch at every mountain head,  
 And o'er the friths that branch and spread  
 Their sleeping silver through the hills ;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,  
 With tender gloom the roof, the wall ;  
 And breaking let the splendor fall  
 To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,  
 And, star and system rolling past,  
 A soul shall draw from out the vast  
 And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved through life of lower phase,  
Result in man, be born and think,  
And act and love, a closer link  
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look  
On knowledge; under whose command  
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand  
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,  
For all we thought and loved and did,  
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed  
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod  
This planet, was a noble type  
Appearing ere the times were ripe,  
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.

## MAUD.

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### I.

#### 1.

I HATE the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,  
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-  
red heath,  
The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of  
blood,  
And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers  
'Death.'

#### 2.

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was  
found,  
His who had given me life — O father! O God!  
was it well? —  
Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and dented into  
the ground:  
There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he  
fell.

#### 3.

Did he fling himself down? who knows? for a vast  
speculation had fail'd,  
And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever  
wann'd with despair,  
And out he walk'd when the wind like a broken  
worldling wail'd,  
And the flying gold of the ruin'd woodlands drove  
thro' the air.

## 4.

I remember the time, for the roots of my hair were  
 stirr'd  
 By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a  
 whisper'd fright,  
 And my pulses closed their gates with a shock on  
 my heart as I heard  
 The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the  
 shuddering night.

## 5.

Villany somewhere ! whose ? One says, we are  
 villains all.  
 Not he : his honest fame should at least by me be  
 maintain'd :  
 But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and  
 the Hall,  
 Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had left us  
 flaccid and drain'd.

## 6.

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace ? we  
 have made them a curse,  
 Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its  
 own ;  
 And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better  
 or worse  
 Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his  
 own hearthstone ?

## 7.

But these are the days of advance, the works of  
 the men of mind,  
 When who but a fool would have faith in a trades-  
 man's ware or his word ?  
 Is it peace or war ? Civil war, as I think, and that  
 of a kind  
 The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the  
 sword.



## 8.

Sooner or later I too may passively take the print  
 Of the golden age—why not? I have neither  
     hope nor trust;  
 May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as  
     a flint,  
 Cheat and be cheated, and die: who knows? we  
     are ashes and dust.

## 9.

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days  
     gone by,  
 When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together,  
     each sex, like swine,  
 When only the ledger lives, and when only not all  
     men lie;  
 Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company  
     forges the wine.

## 10.

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's  
     head,  
 Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the  
     trampled wife,  
 While chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the  
     poor for bread,  
 And the spirit of murder works in the very means  
     of life.

## 11.

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villanous  
     centre-bits  
 Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moon-  
     less nights,  
 While another is cheating the sick of a few last  
     gasps, as he sits  
 To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson  
     lights.

## 12.

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a  
 burial fee,  
 And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's  
 bones,  
 Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land  
 and by sea.  
 War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hun-  
 dred thrones.

## 13.

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round  
 by the hill,  
 And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three-  
 decker out of the foam,  
 That the smooth-faced snub-nosed rogue would  
 leap from his counter and till,  
 And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheat-  
 ing yard-wand, home.

## 14.

What! am I raging alone as my father raged in  
 his mood?  
 Must *I* too creep to the hollow and dash myself  
 down and die  
 Rather than hold by the law that I made, never-  
 more to brood  
 On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a wretched  
 swindler's lie?

## 15.

Would there be sorrow for *me*? there was *love* in  
 the passionate shriek,  
 Love for the silent thing that had made false haste  
 to the grave—  
 Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and thought he  
 would rise and speak  
 And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God, as he  
 used to rave.

## 16.

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am sick of  
the moor and the main.

Why should I stay? can a sweeter chance ever  
come to me here?

O, having the nerves of motion as well as the  
nerves of pain,

Were it not wise if I fled from the place and the  
pit and the fear?

## 17.

There are workmen up at the Hall: they are  
coming back from abroad;

The dark old place will be gilt by the touch of a  
millionnaire:

I have heard, I know not whence, of the singular  
beauty of Maud;

I play'd with the girl when a child; she promised  
then to be fair.

## 18.

Maud with her venturous climbings and tumbles  
and childish escapes,

Maud the delight of the village, the ringing joy of  
the Hall,

Maud with her sweet purse-mouth when my father  
dangled the grapes,

Maud the beloved of my mother, the moon-faced  
darling of all,—

## 19.

What is she now? My dreams are bad. She may  
bring me a curse.

No, there is fatter game on the moor; she will let  
me alone.

Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether woman  
or man be the worse.

I will bury myself in my books, and the Devil may  
pipe to his own.

## II.

**LONG** have I sigh'd for a calm : God grant I may  
 find it at last !  
 It will never be broken by Maud, she has neither  
 savor nor salt,  
 But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found when her  
 carriage past,  
 Perfectly beautiful : let it be granted her : where  
 is the fault ?  
 All that I saw (for her eyes were downcast, not to  
 be seen)  
 Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,  
 Dead perfection, no more ; nothing more, if it had  
 not been  
 For a chance of travel, a paleness, an hour's defect  
 of the rose,  
 Or an underlip, you may call it a little too ripe,  
 too full,  
 Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in a  
 sensitive nose,  
 From which I escaped heart-free, with the least  
 little touch of spleen.

## III.

**COLD** and clear-cut face, why come you so cruelly  
 meek,  
 Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful folly was  
 drown'd,  
 Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash dead on  
 the cheek,  
 Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on a gloom  
 profound ;  
 Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a tran-  
 sient wrong  
 Done but in thought to your beauty, and ever as  
 pale as before  
 Growing and fading and growing upon me without  
 a sound,

Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike, half the  
 night long  
 Growing and fading and growing, till I could bear  
 it no more,  
 But arose, and all by myself in my own dark gar-  
 den ground,  
 Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung ship-  
 wrecking roar,  
 Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragg'd  
 down by the wave,  
 Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and  
 found  
 The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his  
 grave.

## IV

## 1.

A MILLION emeralds break from the ruby-budded  
 lime  
 In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore  
 cannot I be  
 Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful  
 season bland,  
 When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a  
 softer clime,  
 Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent  
 of sea,  
 The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the  
 land?

## 2.

Below me, there, is the village, and looks how quiet  
 and small!  
 And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gossip, scandal,  
 and spite;  
 And Jack on his ale-house bench has as many lies  
 as a Czar;  
 And here on the landward side, by a red rock,  
 glimmers the Hall;

And up in the high Hall-garden I see her pass like  
 a light ;  
 But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading  
 star !

## 3.

When have I bow'd to her father, the wrinkled head  
 of the race ?  
 I met her to-day with her brother, but not to her  
 brother I bow'd ;  
 I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by on the  
 moor ;  
 But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over her  
 beautiful face.  
 O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it, in being  
 so proud ;  
 Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I am  
 nameless and poor.

## 4.

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready to slander  
 and steal ;  
 I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like a stoic, or  
 like  
 A wiser epicurean, and let the world have its  
 way :  
 For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher  
 can heal ;  
 The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow  
 spear'd by the shrike,  
 And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of  
 plunder and prey.

## 5.

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair  
 in her flower ;  
 Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen  
 hand at a game

That pushes us off from the board, and others ever  
succeed ?

Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for  
an hour ;

We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a  
brother's shame ;

However we brave it out, we men are a little  
breed.

## 6.

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and Master of  
Earth,

For him did his high sun flame, and his river  
billowing ran,

And he felt himself in his force to be Nature's  
crowning race.

As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe for  
his birth,

So many a million of ages have gone to the making  
of man :

He now is first, but is he the last ? is he not too  
base ?

## 7.

The man of science himself is fonder of glory, and  
vain,

An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded  
and poor ;

The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd into folly  
and vice.

I would not marvel at either, but keep a temperate  
brain ;

For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it,  
were more

Than to walk all day like the sultan of old in a  
garden of spice.

## 8.

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by  
 the veil.  
 Who knows the ways of the world, how God will  
 bring them about ?  
 Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is  
 wide.  
 Shall I weep if a Poland fall ? shall I shriek if a  
 Hungary fail ?  
 Or an infant civilization be ruled with rod or with  
 knout ?  
 I have not made the world, and He that made it  
 will guide.

## 9.

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland  
 ways,  
 Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless peace be  
 my lot,  
 Far off from the clamor of liars belied in the hubbub  
 of lies ;  
 From the long-neck'd geese of the world that are  
 ever hissing dispraise  
 Because their natures are little, and, whether he  
 heed it or not,  
 Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of  
 poisonous flies.

## 10.

And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness  
 of love,  
 The honey of poison-flowers and all the measureless  
 ill.  
 Ah Maud, you milk-white fawn, you are all unmeet  
 for a wife.  
 Your mother is mute in her grave as her image in  
 marble above ;



Your father is ever in London, you wander about  
 at your will;  
 You have but fed on the roses, and lain in the lilies  
 of life.

## V.

## 1.

A VOICE by the cedar tree,  
 In the meadow under the Hall!  
 She is singing an air that is known to me,  
 A passionate ballad gallant and gay,  
 A martial song like a trumpet's call!  
 Singing alone in the morning of life,  
 In the happy morning of life and of May,  
 Singing of men that in battle array,  
 Ready in heart and ready in hand,  
 March with banner and bugle and fife  
 To the death, for their native land.

## 2.

Maud with her exquisite face,  
 And wild voice pealing up to the sunny sky,  
 And feet like sunny gems on an English green,  
 Maud in the light of her youth and her grace,  
 Singing of Death, and of Honor that cannot die,  
 Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and mean  
 And myself so languid and base.

## 3.

Silence, beautiful voice!  
 Be still, for you only trouble the mind  
 With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,  
 A glory I shall not find.  
 Still! I will hear you no more,  
 For your sweetness hardly leaves me a choice  
 But to move to the meadow and fall before  
 Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,  
 Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,  
 Not her, not her, but a voice.

## VI.

## 1.

MORNING arises stormy and pale,  
 No sun, but a wannish glare  
 In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,  
 And the budded peaks of the wood are bow'd  
 Caught and cuff'd by the gale :  
 I had fancied it would be fair.

## 2.

Whom but Maud should I meet  
 Last night, when the sunset burn'd  
 On the blossom'd gable-ends  
 At the head of the village street,  
 Whom but Maud should I meet ?  
 And she touch'd my hand with a smile so sweet  
 She made me divine amends  
 For a courtesy not return'd.

## 3.

And thus a delicate spark  
 Of glowing and growing light  
 Thro' the livelong hours of the dark  
 Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams,  
 Ready to burst in a color'd flame ;  
 Till at last when the morning came  
 In a cloud, it faded, and seems  
 But an ashen-gray delight.

## 4.

What if with her sunny hair,  
 And smile as sunny as cold,  
 She meant to weave me a snare  
 Of some coquettish deceit,  
 Cleopatra-like as of old  
 To entangle me when we met  
 To have her lion roll in a silken net  
 And fawn at a victor's feet.

## 5.

Ah, what shall I be at fifty  
 Should Nature keep me alive,  
 If I find the world so bitter  
 When I am but twenty-five ?  
 Yet, if she were not a cheat,  
 If Maud were all that she seem'd,  
 And her smile were all that I dream'd,  
 Then the world were not so bitter  
 But a smile could make it sweet.

## 6.

What if tho' her eye seem'd full  
 Of a kind intent to me,  
 What if that dandy-despot, he,  
 That jewell'd mass of millinery,  
 That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull  
 Smelling of musk and of insolence,  
 Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,  
 Who wants the finer politic sense  
 To mask, tho' but in his own behoof,  
 With a glassy smile his brutal scorn—  
 What if he had told her yester-morn  
 How prettily for his own sweet sake  
 A face of tenderness might be feign'd,  
 And a moist mirage in desert eyes,  
 That so, when the rotten hustings shake  
 In another month to his brazen lies,  
 A wretched vote may be gain'd.

## 7.

For a raven ever croaks, at my side,  
 Keep watch and ward, keep watch and ward,  
 Or thou wilt prove their tool.  
 Yea too, myself from myself I guard,  
 For often a man's own angry pride  
 Is cap and bells for a fool.

## 8.

Perhaps the smile and tender tone  
 Came out of her pitying womanhood,  
 For am I not, am I not, here alone  
 So many a summer since she died,  
 My mother, who was so gentle and good ?  
 Living alone in an empty house,  
 Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,  
 Where I hear the dead at midday moan,  
 And the shrieking rush of the wainscot mouse,  
 And my own sad name in corners cried,  
 When the shiver of dancing leaves is thrown  
 About its echoing chambers wide,  
 Till a morbid hate and horror have grown  
 Of a world in which I have hardly mixt,  
 And a morbid eating lichen fixt  
 On a heart half-turn'd to stone.

## 9.

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught  
 By that you swore to withstand ?  
 For what was it else within me wrought  
 But, I fear, the new strong wine of love,  
 That made my tongue so stammer and trip  
 When I saw the treasured splendor, her hand  
 Come sliding out of her sacred glove,  
 And the sunlight broke from her lip ?

## 10.

I have play'd with her when a child ;  
 She remembers it now we meet.  
 Ah well, well, well, I may be beguiled  
 By some coquettish deceit.  
 Yet, if she were not a cheat,  
 If Maud were all that she seem'd,  
 And her smile had all that I dream'd,  
 Then the world were not so bitter  
 But a smile could make it sweet.

## VII.

## 1.

DID I hear it half in a doze  
 Long since, I know not where ?  
 Did I dream it an hour ago,  
 When asleep in this arm-chair ?

## 2.

Men were drinking together,  
 Drinking and talking of me ;  
 ' Well, if it prove a girl, the boy  
 Will have plenty ; so let it be.'

## 3.

Is it an echo of something  
 Read with a boy's delight,  
 Viziers nodding together  
 In some Arabian night ?

## 4.

Strange, that I hear two men,  
 Somewhere, talking of me ;  
 ' Well, if it prove a girl, my boy  
 Will have plenty : so let it be.'

## VIII.

SHE came to the village church,  
 And sat by a pillar alone ;  
 An angel watching an urn  
 Wept over her, carved in stone ;  
 And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,  
 And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd  
 To find they were met by my own ;  
 And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat stronger  
 And thicker, until I heard no longer  
 The snowy-banded, dilettante,

Delicate-handed priest intone ;  
 And thought, is it pride, and mused and sigh'd  
 ' No surely, now it cannot be pride.'

## IX.

I WAS walking a mile,  
 More than a mile from the shore,  
 The sun look'd out with a smile,  
 Betwixt the cloud and the moor,  
 And riding at set of day  
 Over the dark moor land,  
 Rapidly riding far away,  
 She waved to me with her hand.  
 There were two at her side,  
 Something flash'd in the sun,  
 Down by the hill I saw them ride,  
 In a moment they were gone :  
 Like a sudden spark  
 Struck vainly in the night,  
 And back returns the dark  
 With no more hope of light.

## X.

## 1.

SICK, am I sick of a jealous dread ?  
 Was not one of the two at her side  
 This new-made lord, whose splendor plucks  
 The slavish hat from the villager's head ?  
 Whose old grandfather has lately died,  
 Gone to a blacker pit, for whom  
 Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks  
 And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom  
 Wrought, till he crept from a gutted mine  
 Master of half a servile shire,  
 And left his coal all turn'd into gold  
 To a grandson, first of his noble line,  
 Rich in the grace all women desire,  
 Strong in the power that all men adore,

And simper and set their voices lower,  
 And soften as if to a girl, and hold  
 Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,  
 Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,  
 New as his title, built last year,  
 There amid perky larches and pine,  
 And over the sullen-purple moor  
 (Look at it) pricking a cockney ear.

## 2.

What, has he found my jewel out?  
 For one of the two that rode at her side  
 Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he:  
 Bound for the Hall, and I think for a bride.  
 Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.  
 Maud could be gracious too, no doubt,  
 To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,  
 A bought commission, a waxen face,  
 A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—  
 Bought? what is it he cannot buy?  
 And therefore splenetic, personal, base,  
 A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,  
 At war with myself and a wretched race,  
 Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

## 3.

Last week came one to the county town,  
 To preach our poor little army down,  
 And play the game of the despot kings,  
 Tho' the state has done it and thrice as well:  
 This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,  
 Whose ear is stuff'd with his cotton, and rings  
 Even in dreams to the chink of his pence,  
 This huckster put down war! can he tell  
 Whether war be a cause or a consequence?  
 Put down the passions that make earth Hell!  
 Down with ambition, avarice, pride,  
 Jealousy, down! cut off from the mind

The bitter springs of anger and fear ;  
 Down too, down at your own fireside,  
 With the evil tongue and the evil ear,  
 For each is at war with mankind.

## 4.

I wish I could hear again  
 The chivalrous battle-song  
 That she warbled alone in her joy !  
 I might persuade myself then  
 She would not do herself this great wrong  
 To take a wanton dissolute boy  
 For a man and leader of men.

## 5.

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,  
 Like some of the simple great ones gone  
 Forever and ever by,  
 One still strong man in a blatant land,  
 Whatever they call him, what care I,  
 Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one  
 Who can rule and dare not lie.

## 6.

And ah for a man to arise in me,  
 That the man I am may cease to be !

## XI.

## 1.

O LET the solid ground  
     Not fail beneath my feet  
 Before my life has found  
     What some have found so sweet,  
 Then let come what come may,  
 What matter if I go mad,  
 I shall have had my day.

## 2.

Let the sweet heavens endure,  
     Not close and darken above me



Before I am quite quite sure  
 That there is one to love me ;  
 Then let come what come may  
 To a life that has been so sad,  
 I shall have had my day.

## XII.

## 1.

BIRDS in the high Hall-garden  
 When twilight was falling,  
 Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,  
 They were crying and calling

## 2.

Where was Maud ? in our wood ;  
 And I, who else, was with her,  
 Gathering woodland lilies,  
 Myriads blow together.

## 3.

Birds in our wood sang  
 Ringing thro' the valleys,  
 Maud is here, here, here  
 In among the lilies.

## 4.

I kiss'd her slender hand,  
 She took the kiss sedately ;  
 Maud is not seventeen,  
 But she is tall and stately.

## 5.

I to cry out on pride  
 Who have won her favor !  
 O Maud were sure of Heaven  
 If lowliness could save her.

## 6.

I know the way she went  
 Home with her maiden posy,  
 For her feet have touch'd the meadows  
 And left the daisies rosy.

## 7.

Birds in the high Hall-garden  
 Were crying and calling to her,  
 Where is Maud, Maud, Maud,  
 One is come to woo her.

## 8.

Look, a horse at the door,  
 And little King Charles is snarling,  
 Go back, my lord, across the moor,  
 You are not her darling.

## XIII.

## 1.

SCORN'D, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,  
 Is that a matter to make me fret ?  
 That a calamity hard to be borne ?  
 Well, he may live to hate me yet.  
 Fool that I am to be vext with his pride !  
 I past him, I was crossing his lands ;  
 He stood on the path a little aside ;  
 His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,  
 Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and white,  
 And six feet two, as I think, he stands ;  
 But his essences turn'd the live air sick,  
 And barbarous opulence jewel-thick  
 Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

## 2.

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair,  
 I long'd so heartily then and there

To give him the grasp of fellowship ;  
 But while I past he was humming an air,  
 Stopt, and then with a riding-whip  
 Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,  
 And curving a contumelious lip,  
 Gorgonised me from head to foot  
 With a stony British stare.

## 3.

Why sits he here in his father's chair ?  
 That old man never comes to his place :  
 Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen ?  
 For only once, in the village street,  
 Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,  
 A gray old wolf and a lean.  
 Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat ;  
 For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,  
 She might by a true descent be untrue ;  
 And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet :  
 Tho' I fancy her sweetness only due  
 To the sweeter blood by the other side ;  
 Her mother has been a thing complete,  
 However she came to be so allied.  
 And fair without, faithful within,  
 Maud to him is nothing akin :  
 Some peculiar mystic grace  
 Made her only the child of her mother,  
 And heap'd the whole inherited sin  
 On that huge scapegoat of the race,  
 All, all upon the brother.

## 4.

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be !  
 Has not his sister smiled on me ?

## XIV.

## 1.

MAUD has a garden of roses,  
 And lilies fair on a lawn ;  
 There she walks in her state  
 And tends upon bed and bower,  
 And thither I climb'd at dawn  
 And stood by her garden-gate ;  
 A lion ramps at the top,  
 He is claspt by a passion-flower.

## 2.

Maud's own little oak-room  
 (Which Maud, like a precious stone  
 Set in the heart of the carven gloom,  
 Lights with herself, when alone  
 She sits by her music and books,  
 And her brother lingers late  
 With a roystering company) looks  
 Upon Maud's own garden gate :  
 And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as white  
 As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid  
 On the hasp of the window, and my Delight  
 Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost, to glide  
 Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down to my side,  
 There were but a step to be made.

## 3.

The fancy flatter'd my mind,  
 And again seem'd overbold ;  
 Now I thought that she cared for me,  
 Now I thought she was kind  
 Only because she was cold.

## 4.

I heard no sound where I stood  
 But the rivulet on from the lawn  
 Running down to my own dark wood ,

Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it swell'd  
 Now and then in the dim-gray dawn ;  
 But I look'd, and round, all round the house I  
     beheld  
 The death-white curtain drawn ;  
 Felt a horror over me creep,  
 Prickle my skin and catch my breath,  
 Knew that the death-white curtain meant but sleep,  
 Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool of the sleep  
     of death.

## XV.

So dark a mind within me dwells,  
     And I make myself such evil cheer,  
 That if I be dear to some one else,  
     Then some one else may have much to fear ;  
 But if I be dear to some one else,  
     Then I should be to myself more dear.  
 Shall I not take care of all that I think,  
 Yea, ev'n of wretched meat and drink,  
 If I be dear,  
 If I be dear to some one else.

## XVI.

## 1.

THIS lump of earth has left his estate  
 The lighter by the loss of his weight ;  
 And so that he find what he went to seek,  
 And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and drown  
 His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,  
 He may stay for a year who has gone for a week :  
 But this is the day when I must speak,  
 And I see my Oread coming down,  
 O this is the day !  
 O beautiful creature, what am I  
 That I dare to look her way ;  
 Think I may hold dominion sweet,  
 Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast,

And dream of her beauty with tender dread,  
 From the delicate Arab arch of her feet  
 To the grace that, bright and light as the crest  
 Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,  
 And she knows it not: O, if she knew it,  
 To know her beauty might half undo it.  
 I know it the one bright thing to save  
 My yet young life in the wilds of Time,  
 Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,  
 Perhaps from a selfish grave.

## 2.

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,  
 Dare I bid her abide by her word?  
 Should I love her so well if she  
 Had given her word to a thing so low?  
 Shall I love her as well if she  
 Can break her word were it even for me?  
 I trust that it is not so.

## 3.

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,  
 Let not my tongue be a thrall to my eye,  
 For I must tell her before we part,  
 I must tell her or die.

## XVII.

Go not, happy day,  
 From the shining fields,  
 Go not, happy day,  
 Till the maiden yields.  
 Rosy is the West,  
 Rosy is the South,  
 Roses are her cheeks,  
 And a rose her mouth.  
 When the happy Yes  
 Falters from her lips,  
 Pass and blush the news  
 O'er the blowing ships.

Over blowing seas,  
 Over seas at rest,  
 Pass the happy news,  
 Blush it thro' the West ;  
 Till the red man dance  
 By his red cedar tree,  
 And the red man's babe  
 Leap, beyond the sea.  
 Blush from West to East,  
 Blush from East to West,  
 Till the West is East,  
 Blush it thro' the West.  
 Rosy is the West,  
 Rosy is the South,  
 Roses are her cheeks,  
 And a rose her mouth.

## XVIII.

## 1.

I HAVE led her home, my love, my only friend.  
 There is none like her, none.  
 And never yet so warmly ran my blood  
 And sweetly, on and on  
 Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,  
 Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

## 2.

None like her, none.  
 Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk  
 Seem'd her light foot along the garden walk,  
 And shook my heart to think she comes once more ;  
 But even then I heard her close the door,  
 The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

## 3.

There is none like her, none.  
 Nor will be when our summers have deceased.

O, art thou sighing for Lebanon  
 In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious  
     East,  
 Sighing for Lebanon,  
 Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,  
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,  
 And looking to the South, and fed  
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,  
 And haunted by the starry head  
 Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,  
 And made my life a perfumed altar-flame ;  
 And over whom thy darkness must have spread  
 With such delight as theirs of old, thy great  
 Forefathers of the thornless garden, there  
 Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she  
     came.

## 4.

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,  
 And you fair stars that crown a happy day  
 Go in and out as if at merry play,  
 Who am no more so all forlorn,  
 As when it seem'd far better to be born  
 To labor and the mattock-harden'd hand,  
 Than nursed at ease and brought to understand  
 A sad astrology, the boundless plan  
 That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,  
 Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,  
 Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand  
 His nothingness into man.

## 5.

But now shine on, and what care I,  
 Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl  
 The counter-charm of space and hollow sky,  
 And do accept my madness, and would die  
 To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

## 6.

Would die ; for sullen-seeming Death may give  
 More life to Love than is or ever was



In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.  
 Let no one ask me how it came to pass ;  
 It seems that I am happy, that to me  
 A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,  
 A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

## 7.

Not die ; but live a life of truest breath,  
 And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.  
 O, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs,  
 Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death ?  
 Make answer, Maud my bliss,  
 Maud made my Maud by that long lover's kiss,  
 Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this ?  
 "The dusky strand of Death inwoven here  
 With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more  
 dear."

## 8.

Is that enchanted moan only the swell  
 Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay ?  
 And hark the clock within, the silver knell  
 Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal white,  
 And died to live, long as my pulses play ;  
 But now by this my love has closed her sight  
 And given false death her hand, and stol'n away  
 To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell  
 Among the fragments of the golden day.  
 May nothing there her maiden grace affright !  
 Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell.  
 My bride to be, my evermore delight,  
 My own heart's heart and ownest own, farewell.  
 It is but for a little space I go :  
 And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell  
 Beat to the noiseless music of the night !  
 Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow  
 Of your soft splendors that you look so bright ?  
 I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.  
 Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,  
 Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,

Blest, but for some dark under-current woe  
That seems to draw—but it shall not be so:  
Let all be well, be well.

## XIX.

## 1.

HER brother is coming back to-night,  
Breaking up my dream of delight.

## 2.

My dream? do I dream of bliss?  
I have walk'd awake with Truth.  
O when did a morning shine  
So rich in atonement as this  
For my dark-dawning youth,  
Darken'd watching a mother decline  
And that dead man at her heart and mine:  
For who was left to watch her but I?  
Yet so did I let my freshness die.

## 3.

I trust that I did not talk  
To gentle Maud in our walk  
(For often in lonely wanderings  
I have cursed him even to lifeless things)  
But I trust that I did not talk,  
Not touch on her father's sin:  
I am sure I did but speak  
Of my mother's faded cheek  
When it slowly grew so thin,  
That I felt she was slowly dying  
Vext with lawyers and harass'd with debt:  
For how often I caught her with eyes all wet,  
Shaking her head at her son and sighing  
A world of trouble within!

## 4.

And Maud too, Maud was moved  
To speak of the mother she loved  
As one scarce less forlorn,  
Dying abroad and it seems apart  
From him who had ceased to share her heart,  
And ever mourning over the feud,  
The household Fury sprinkled with blood  
By which our houses are torn :  
How strange was what she said,  
When only Maud and the brother  
Hung over her dying bed—  
That Maud's dark father and mine  
Had bound us one to the other,  
Betrothed us over their wine,  
On the day when Maud was born ;  
Seal'd her mine from her first sweet breath.  
Mine, mine by a right, from birth till death,  
Mine, mine—our fathers have sworn.

## 5.

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat  
To dissolve the precious seal on a bond,  
That, if left uncancell'd, had been so sweet :  
And none of us thought of a something beyond,  
A desire that awoke in the heart of the child,  
As it were a duty done to the tomb,  
To be friends for her sake, to be reconciled ;  
And I was cursing them and my doom,  
And letting a dangerous thought run wild  
While often abroad in the fragrant gloom  
Of foreign churches—I see her there,  
Bright English lily, breathing a prayer  
To be friends, to be reconciled !

## 6.

But then what a flint is he !  
 Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,  
 I find whenever she touch'd on me  
 This brother had laugh'd her down,  
 And at last, when each came home,  
 He had darken'd into a frown,  
 Chid her, and forbid her to speak  
 To me, her friend of the years before ;  
 And this was what had redden'd her cheek  
 When I bow'd to her on the moor.

## 7.

Yet Maud, altho' not blind  
 To the faults of his heart and mind,  
 I see she cannot but love him,  
 And says he is rough but kind,  
 And wishes me to approve him,  
 And tells me, when she lay  
 Sick once, with a fear of worse,  
 That he left his wine and horses and play,  
 Sat with her, read to her, night and day,  
 And tended her like a nurse.

## 8.

Kind ? but the deathbed desire  
 Spurn'd by this heir of the liar—  
 Rough but kind ? yet I know  
 He has plotted against me in this,  
 That he plots against me still.  
 Kind to Maud ? that were not amiss.  
 Well, rough but kind ; why, let it be so :  
 For shall not Maud have her will ?

## 9.

For, Maud, so tender and true,  
 As long as my life endures  
 I feel I shall owe you a debt,  
 That I never can hope to pay ;  
 And if ever I should forget  
 That I owe this debt to you  
 And for your sweet sake to yours ;  
 O then, what then shall I say ?—  
 If ever I *should* forget,  
 May God make me more wretched  
 Than ever I have been yet !

## 10.

So now I have sworn to bury  
 All this dead body of hate,  
 I feel so free and so clear  
 By the loss of that dead weight,  
 That I should grow light-headed, I fear,  
 Fantastically merry ;  
 But that her brother comes, like a blight  
 On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

## XX.

## 1.

STRANGE, that I felt so gay,  
 Strange, that I tried to-day  
 To beguile her melancholy ;  
 The Sultan, as we name him,—  
 She did not wish to blame him—  
 But he vexed her and perplexed her  
 With his worldly talk and folly :  
 Was it gentle to reprove her  
 For stealing out of view  
 From a little lazy lover  
 Who but claims her as his due ?

Or for chilling his caresses  
 By the coldness of her manners,  
 Nay, the plainness of her dresses?  
 Now I know her but in two,  
 Nor can pronounce upon it  
 If one should ask me whether  
 The habit, hat, and feather,  
 Or the frock and gypsy bonnet  
 Be the neater and completer;  
 For nothing can be sweeter  
 Than maiden Maud in either.

## 2.

But to-morrow, if we live,  
 Our ponderous squire will give  
 A grand political dinner  
 To half the squirelings near;  
 And Maud will wear her jewels,  
 And the bird of prey will hover,  
 And the titmouse hope to win her  
 With his chirrup at her ear.

## 3.

A grand political dinner  
 To the men of many acres,  
 A gathering of the Tory,  
 A dinner and then a dance  
 For the maids and marriage-makers,  
 And every eye but mine will glance  
 At Maud in all her glory.

## 4.

For I am not invited,  
 But, with the Sultan's pardon,  
 I am all as well delighted,  
 For I know her own rose-garden,  
 And mean to linger in it  
 Till the dancing will be over;  
 And then, O then, come out to me

For a minute, but for a minute,  
 Come out to your own true lover,  
 That your true lover may see  
 Your glory also, and render  
 All homage to his own darling,  
 Queen Maud in all her splendor.

## XXI.

RIVULET crossing my ground,  
 And bringing me down from the Hall  
 This garden-rose that I found,  
 Forgetful of Maud and me,  
 And lost in trouble and moving round  
 Here at the head of a tinkling fall  
 And trying to pass to the sea ;  
 O Rivulet, born at the Hall,  
 My Maud has sent it by thee  
 (If I read her sweet will right)  
 On a blushing mission to me,  
 Saying in odor and color, 'Ah, be  
 Among the roses to-night.'

## XXII.

## 1.

COME into the garden, Maud,  
 For the black bat, night, has flown,  
 Come into the garden, Maud,  
 I am here at the gate alone ;  
 And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,  
 And the musk of the roses blown.

## 2.

For a breeze of morning moves,  
 And the planet of Love is on high,  
 Beginning to faint in the light that she loves

On a bed of daffodil sky,  
 To faint in the light of the sun she loves,  
 To faint in his light, and to die.

## 3.

All night have the roses heard  
 The flute, violin, bassoon ;  
 All night has the casement jessamine stirr'd  
 To the dancers dancing in tune :  
 Till a silence fell with the waking bird,  
 And a hush with the setting moon.

## 4.

I said to the lily, " There is but one  
 With whom she has heart to be gay.  
 When will the dancers leave her alone ?  
 She is weary of dance and play."  
 Now half to the setting moon are gone,  
 And half to the rising day ;  
 Low on the sand and loud on the stone  
 The last wheel echoes away.

## 5.

I said to the rose, " The brief night goes  
 In babble and revel and wine.  
 O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,  
 For one that will never be thine ?  
 But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,  
 " For ever and ever, mine."

## 6.

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,  
 As the music clash'd in the hall ;  
 And long by the garden lake I stood,  
 For I heard your rivulet fall  
 From the lake to the meadow and on to the  
 wood,  
 Our wood, that is dearer than all ;



## 7.

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet  
 That whenever a March-wind sighs  
 He sets the jewel-print of your feet  
 In violets blue as your eyes,  
 To the woody hollows in which we meet  
 And the valleys of Paradise.

## 8.

The slender acacia would not shake  
 One long milk-bloom on the tree ;  
 The white lake-blossom fell into the lake,  
 As the pimpernel dozed on the lea ;  
 But the rose was awake all night for your sake,  
 Knowing your promise to me ;  
 The lilies and roses were all awake,  
 They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

## 9.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,  
 Come hither, the dances are done,  
 In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,  
 Queen lily and rose in one ;  
 Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,  
 To the flowers, and be their sun.

## 10.

There has fallen a splendid tear  
 From the passion-flower at the gate.  
 She is coming, my dove, my dear ;  
 She is coming, my life, my fate ;  
 The red rose cries, " She is near, she is near ;  
 And the white rose weeps, " She is late ; "  
 The larkspur listens, " I hear, I hear ; "  
 And the lily whispers, " I wait. "

## 11.

She is coming, my own, my sweet ;  
 Were it ever so airy a tread,

My heart would hear her and beat,  
 Were it earth in an earthy bed ;  
 My dust would hear her and beat,  
 Had I lain for a century dead ;  
 Would start and tremble under her feet,  
 And blossom in purple and red.

## XXIII.

## 1.

‘ THE fault was mine, the fault was mine ’—  
 Why am I sitting here so stunn’d and still,  
 Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the hill?—  
 It is this guilty hand!—  
 And there rises ever a passionate cry  
 From underneath in the darkening land—  
 What is it that has been done ?  
 O dawn of Eden bright over earth and sky,  
 The fires of Hell brake out of thy rising sun,  
 The fires of Hell and of Hate ;  
 For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a word,  
 When her brother ran in his rage to the gate.  
 He came with the babe-faced lord ;  
 Heap’d on her terms of disgrace,  
 And while she wept, and I strove to be cool,  
 He fiercely gave me the lie,  
 Till I with as fierce an anger spoke,  
 And he struck me, madman, over the face,  
 Struck me before the languid fool,  
 Who was gaping and grinning by :  
 Struck for himself an evil stroke ;  
 Wrought for his house an irredeemable woe  
 For front to front in an hour we stood,  
 And a million horrible bellowing echoes broke  
 From the red-ribb’d hollow behind the wood,  
 And thunder’d up into Heaven the Christless code  
 That must have life for a blow.  
 Ever and ever afresh they seem’d to grow.

Was it he lay there with a fading eye ?  
 "The fault was mine," he whisper'd, "fly!"  
 Then glided out of the joyous wood  
 The ghastly Wraith of one that I know ;  
 And there rang on a sudden a passionate cry,  
 A cry for a brother's blood :  
 It will ring in my heart and my ears, till I die, till  
     I die.

## 2.

Is it gone ? my pulses beat—  
 What was it ? a lying trick of the brain ?  
 Yet I thought I saw her stand,  
 A shadow there at my feet,  
 High over the shadowy land.  
 It is gone ; and the heavens fall in a gentle rain,  
 When they should burst and drown with deluging  
     storms  
 The feeble vassals of wine and anger and lust,  
 The little hearts that know not how to forgive :  
 Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold Thee just,  
 Strike dead the whole weak race of venomous  
     worms,  
 That sting each other here in the dust ;  
 We are not worthy to live.

## XXIV.

## 1.

SEE what a lovely shell,  
 Small and pure as a pearl,  
 Lying close to my foot,  
 Frail, but a work divine,  
 Made so fairily well  
 With delicate spire and whorl,  
 How exquisitely minute,  
 A miracle of design !

## 2.

What is it? a learned man  
 Could give it a clumsy name.  
 Let him name it who can,  
 The beauty would be the same.

## 3.

The tiny cell is forlorn,  
 Void of the little living will  
 That made it stir on the shore.  
 Did he stand at the diamond door  
 Of his house in a rainbow frill?  
 Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,  
 A golden foot or a fairy horn  
 Thro' his dim water-world?

## 4.

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap  
 Of my finger-nail on the sand,  
 Small, but a work divine,  
 Frail, but of force to withstand,  
 Year upon year, the shock  
 Of cataract seas that snap  
 The three-decker's oaken spine  
 Athwart the ledges of rock,  
 Here on the Breton strand!

## 5.

Breton, not Briton; here  
 Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast  
 Of ancient fable and fear—  
 Plagued with a flitting to and fro,  
 A disease, a hard mechanic ghost  
 That never came from on high  
 Nor ever arose from below,  
 But only moves with the moving eye,  
 Flying along the land and the main—

Why should it look like Maud ?  
 Am I to be overawed  
 By what I cannot but know  
 Is a juggle born of the brain ?

## 6.

Back from the Breton coast,  
 Sick of a nameless fear,  
 Back to the dark sea-line  
 Looking, thinking of all I have lost ;  
 An old song vexes my ear ;  
 But that of Lamech is mine.

## 7.

For years, a measureless ill,  
 For years, for ever, to part—  
 But she, she would love me still ;  
 And as long, O God, as she  
 Have a grain of love for me,  
 So long, no doubt, no doubt,  
 Shall I nurse in my dark heart,  
 However weary, a spark of will  
 Not to be trampled out.

## 8.

Strange, that the mind, when fraught  
 With a passion so intense  
 One would think that it well  
 Might drown all life in the eye,—  
 That it should, by being so overwrought,  
 Suddenly strike on a sharper sense  
 For a shell, or a flower, little things  
 Which else would have been past by !  
 And now I remember, I,  
 When he lay dying there,  
 I noticed one of his many rings  
 (For he had many, poor worm) and thought  
 It is his mother's hair.

## 9.

Who knows if he be dead ?  
 Whether I need have fled ?  
 Am I guilty of blood ?  
 However this may be,  
 Comfort her, comfort her, all things good,  
 While I am over the sea !  
 Let me and my passionate love go by,  
 But speak to her all things holy and high,  
 Whatever happen to me !  
 Me and my harmful love go by ;  
 But come to her waking, find her asleep,  
 Powers of the height, Powers of the deep,  
 And comfort her tho' I die.

## XXV.

COURAGE, poor heart of stone !  
 I will not ask thee why  
 Thou canst not understand  
 That thou art left forever alone :  
 Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—  
 Or if I ask thee why,  
 Care not thou to reply :  
 She is but dead, and the time is at hand  
 When thou shalt more than die.

## XXVI.

## 1.

O THAT 'twere possible  
 After long grief and pain  
 To find the arms of my true love  
 Round me once again !

## 2.

When I was wont to meet her  
 In the silent woody places

By the home that gave me birth,  
We stood tranced in long embraces  
Mixt with kisses sweeter, sweeter  
Than anything on earth.

## 3.

A shadow flits before me,  
Not thou, but like to thee;  
Ah Christ, that it were possible  
For one short hour to see  
The souls we loved, that they might tell us  
What and where they be.

## 4.

It leads me forth at evening,  
It lightly winds and steals  
In a cold white robe before me,  
When all my spirit reels  
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,  
And the roaring of the wheels.

## 5.

Half the night I waste in sighs,  
Half in dreams I sorrow after  
The delight of early skies;  
In a wakeful doze I sorrow  
For the hand, the lips, the eyes,  
For the meeting of the morrow,  
The delight of happy laughter,  
The delight of low replies.

## 6.

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,  
And a dewy splendor falls  
On the little flower that clings  
To the turrets and the walls;  
'Tis a morning pure and sweet,  
And the light and shadow fleet;  
She is walking in the meadow,

And the woodland echo rings ;  
 In a moment we shall meet ;  
 She is singing in the meadow,  
 And the rivulet at her feet  
 Ripples on in light and shadow  
 To the ballad that she sings.

## 7.

Do I hear her sing as of old,  
 My bird with the shining head,  
 My own dove with the tender eye ?  
 But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry,  
 There is some one dying or dead,  
 And a sullen thunder is roll'd ;  
 For a tumult shakes the city,  
 And I wake, my dream is fled ;  
 In the shuddering dawn, behold,  
 Without knowledge, without pity,  
 By the curtains of my bed  
 That abiding phantom cold.

## 8.

Get thee hence, nor come again,  
 Mix not memory with doubt,  
 Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,  
 Pass and cease to move about,  
 'Tis the blot upon the brain  
 That *will* show itself without.

## 9.

Then I rise, the eave-drops fall,  
 And the yellow vapors choke  
 The great city sounding wide ;  
 The day comes, a dull red ball  
 Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke,  
 On the misty river-tide.

## 10.

Thro' the hubbub of the market  
 I steal, a wasted frame,



It crosses here, it crosses there,  
Thro' all that crowd confused and loud,  
The shadow still the same ;  
And on my heavy eyelids  
My anguish hangs like shame.

## 11.

Alas for her that met me,  
That heard me softly call,  
Came glimmering thro' the laurels  
At the quiet evenfall,  
In the garden by the turrets  
Of the old manorial hall.

## 12.

Would the happy spirit descend,  
From the realms of light and song,  
In the chamber or the street,  
As she looks among the blest,  
Should I fear to greet my friend  
Or to say "forgive the wrong,"  
Or to ask her, "take me, sweet,  
To the regions of thy rest?"

## 13.

But the broad light glares and beats,  
And the shadow flits and fleets  
And will not let me be ;  
And I loathe the squares and streets,  
And the faces that one meets,  
Hearts with no love for me :  
Always I long to creep  
Into some still cavern deep,  
There to weep, and weep, and weep  
My whole soul out to thee.

## XXVII.

## 1.

DEAD, long dead,  
 Long dead !  
 And my heart is a handful of dust,  
 And the wheels go over my head,  
 And my bones are shaken with pain,  
 For into a shallow grave they are thrust,  
 Only a yard beneath the street,  
 And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,  
 The hoofs of the horses beat,  
 Beat into my scalp and my brain,  
 With never an end to the stream of passing feet,  
 Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,  
 Clamor and rumble, and ringing and clatter,  
 And here beneath it is all as bad,  
 For I thought the dead had peace, but it is not so  
 To have no peace in the grave, is that not sad ?  
 But up and down and to and fro,  
 Ever about me the dead men go ;  
 And then to hear a dead man chatter  
 Is enough to drive one mad.

## 2.

Wretchedest age, since Time began  
 They cannot even bury a man ;  
 And tho' we paid our tithes in the days that are  
     gone,  
 Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read ;  
 It is that which makes us loud in the world of the  
     dead ;  
 There is none that does his work, not one ;  
 A touch of their office might have sufficed,  
 But the churchmen fain would kill their church,  
 As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

## 3.

See, there is one of us sobbing,  
 No limit to his distress ;  
 And another, a lord of all things, praying  
 To his own great self, as I guess ;  
 And another, a statesman there, betraying  
 His party-secret, fool, to the press ;  
 And yonder a vile physician, blabbing  
 The case of his patient—all for what ?  
 To tickle the maggot born in an empty head,  
 And wheedle a world that loves him not,  
 For it is but a world of the dead.

## 4.

Nothing but idiot gabble !  
 For the prophecy given of old  
 And then not understood,  
 Has come to pass as foretold ;  
 Not let any man think for the public good,  
 But babble, merely for babble.  
 For I never whisper'd a private affair  
 Within the hearing of cat or mouse,  
 No, not to myself in the closet alone,  
 But I heard it shouted at once from the top of the  
     house ;  
 Everything came to be known :  
 Who told *him* we were there ?

## 5.

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not back  
 From the wilderness, full of wolves, where he used  
     to lie ;  
 He has gather'd the bones for his o'ergrown whelp  
     to crack ;  
 Crack them now for yourself, and howl, and die.

## 6.

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,  
 And curse me the British vermin, the rat ;

I know not whether he came in the Hanover ship,  
 But I know that he lies and listens mute  
 In an ancient mansion's crannies and holes :  
 Arsenic, Arsenic, sure, would do it,  
 Except that now we poison our babes, poor souls !  
 It is all used up for that.

## 7.

Tell him now : she is standing here at my head  
 Not beautiful now, not even kind ;  
 He may take her now ; for she never speaks her  
                   mind,  
 But is ever the one thing silent here.  
 She is not of us, as I divine ;  
 She comes from another stiller world of the dead,  
 Stiller, not fairer than mine.

## 8.

But I know where a garden grows,  
 Fairer than aught in the world beside,  
 All made up of the lily and rose  
 That blow by night, when the season is good,  
 To the sound of dancing music and flutes :  
 It is only flowers, they had no fruits,  
 And I almost fear they are not roses, but blood ;  
 For the keeper was one, so full of pride,  
 He linkt a dead man there to a spectral bride ;  
 For he, if he had not been a Sultan of brutes,  
 Would he have that hole in his side ?

## 9.

But what will the old man say ?  
 He laid a cruel snare in a pit  
 To catch a friend of mine one stormy day ;  
 Yet now I could even weep to think of it ;  
 For what will the old man say  
 When he comes to the second corpse in the pit ?

## 10.

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,  
 Then to strike him and lay him low,  
 That were a public merit, far,  
 Whatever the Quaker holds; from sin,  
 But the red life spilt for a private blow—  
 I swear to you, lawful and lawless war  
 Are scarcely even akin.

## 11.

O me, why have they not buried me deep enough?  
 Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,  
 Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?  
 Maybe still I am but half dead;  
 Then I cannot be wholly dumb;  
 I will cry to the steps above my head,  
 And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come  
 To bury me, bury me  
 Deeper, ever so little deeper.

## XXVIII.

## 1.

My life has crept so long on a broken wing  
 Thro' cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear,  
 That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing:  
 My mood is changed, for it fell at a time of year  
 When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,  
 And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer  
 And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns  
 Over Orion's grave low down in the west,  
 That like a silent lightning under the stars  
 She seem'd to divide in a dream from a band of the  
     blest,  
 And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming  
     wars—  
 "And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,  
 Knowing I tarry for thee," and pointed to Mars  
 As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's  
     breast.

## 2.

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear  
 delight  
 To have look'd, tho' but in a dream, upon eyes so  
 fair,  
 That had been in a weary world my one thing  
 bright ;  
 And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd my despair  
 When I thought that a war would arise in defence  
 of the right,  
 That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,  
 The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,  
 Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionaire :  
 No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace  
 Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,  
 And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase,  
 Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore,  
 And the cobweb woven across the cannon's throat,  
 Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more.

## 3.

And as months ran on and rumor of battle grew,  
 "It is time, it is time, O passionate heart," said I  
 (For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and  
 true,)  
 "It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,  
 That old hysterical mock-disease should die."  
 And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd my breath  
 With a loyal people shouting a battle cry,  
 Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly  
 Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death.

## 4.

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims  
 Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,  
 And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and  
 shames,  
 Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told ;

And hail once more to the banner of battle un-  
 roll'd !  
 Tho' many a light shall darken, and many shall  
 weep  
 For those that are crush'd in the clash of jarring  
 claims,  
 Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant  
 liar ;  
 And many a darkness into the light shall leap,  
 And shine in the sudden making of splendid names  
 And noble thought be freer under the sun,  
 And the heart of a people beat with one desire ;  
 For the peace that I deemed no peace is over and  
 done,  
 And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic  
 deep,  
 And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress,  
 flames  
 The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.

## 5.

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a  
 wind,  
 We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are  
 noble still,  
 And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better  
 mind ;  
 It is better to fight for the good, than to rail at  
 the ill ;  
 I have felt with my native land, I am one with my  
 kind,  
 I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom  
 assign'd.

## THE BROOK;

AN IDYL.

"HERE, by this brook, we parted; I to the East  
 And he for Italy—too late—too late:  
 One whom the strong sons of the world despise;  
 For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and share,  
 And mellow metres more than cent for cent;  
 Nor could he understand how money breeds,  
 Thought it a dead thing; yet himself could make  
 The thing that is not as the thing that is.  
 O had he lived! In our school-books we say,  
 Of those that held their heads above the crowd,  
 They flourish'd then or then; but life in him  
 Could scarce be said to flourish, only touch'd  
 On such a time as goes before the leaf,  
 When all the wood stands in a mist of green,  
 And nothing perfect: yet the brook he loved,  
 For which, in branding summers of Bengal,  
 Or ev'n the sweet half-English Neilgherry air,  
 I panted, seems, as I re-listen to it,  
 Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,  
 To me that loved him; for 'O brook,' he says,  
 'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his rhyme,  
 'Whence come you?' and the brook, why not?  
 replies.

I come from haunts of coot and hern,  
 I make a sudden sally  
 And sparkle out among the fern,  
 To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,  
 Or slip between the ridges,  
 By twenty thorps, a little town,  
 And half a hundred bridges.



Till last by Philip's farm I flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on forever.

“ Poor lad, he died at Florence, quite worn out,  
 Travelling to Naples. There is Darnley bridge,  
 It has more ivy; there the river; and there  
 Stands Philip's farm where brook and river meet.

I chatter over stony ways,  
 In little sharps and trebles,  
 I bubble into eddying bays,  
 I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret  
 By many a field and fallow,  
 And many a fairy foreland set  
 With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on forever.

“ But Philip chatter'd more than brook or bird;  
 Old Philip; all about the fields you caught  
 His weary daylong chirping, like the dry  
 High-elbow'd grigs that leap in summer grass.

I wind about, and in and out,  
 With here a blossom sailing,  
 And here and there a lusty trout,  
 And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake  
 Upon me, as I travel,  
 With many a silvery waterbreak  
 Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on forever.

“ O darling Katie Willows, his one child !  
 A maiden of our century, yet most meek ;  
 A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse ;  
 Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand ;  
 Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair  
 In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell  
 Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

“ Sweet Katie, once I did her a good turn,  
 Her and her far-off' cousin and betrothed,  
 James Willows, of one name and heart with her.  
 For here I came, twenty years back—the week  
 Before I parted with poor Edmund ; crost  
 By that old bridge which, half in ruins then,  
 Still makes a hoary eyebrow for the gleam  
 Beyond it, where the waters marry—crost,  
 Whistling a random bar of Bonny Doon,  
 And push'd at Philip's garden-gate. The gate,  
 Half-parted from a weak and scolding hinge,  
 Stuck ; and he clamor'd from a casement, “ run,”  
 To Katie somewhere in the walks below,  
 “ Run, Katie ! ” Katie never ran : she moved  
 To meet me, winding under woodbine bowers,  
 A little flutter'd, with her eyelids down,  
 Fresh apple-blossom, blushing for a boon.

“ What was it ? less of sentiment than sense  
 Had Katie ; not illiterate ; neither one  
 Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,  
 And nursed by mealy-mouth'd philanthropies,  
 Divorce the Feeling from her mate the Deed.

“ She told me. She and James had quarrell'd.  
 Why ?

What cause of quarrel ? None, she said, no cause ;  
 James had no cause : but when I prest the cause,  
 I learnt that James had flickering jealousies  
 Which anger'd her. Who anger'd James ? I said  
 But Katie snatch'd her eyes at once from mine,  
 And sketching with her slender pointed foot

Some figure like a wizard's pentagram  
 On garden gravel, let my query pass  
 Unclaim'd, in flushing silence, till I ask'd  
 If James were coming. 'Coming every day,'  
 She answered, 'ever longing to explain,  
 But evermore her father came across  
 With some long-winded tale, and broke him short ;  
 And James departed vext with him and her.'  
 How could I help her ? 'Would I—was it  
 wrong ?'

(Claspt hands and that petitionary grace  
 Of sweet seventeen subdued me ere she spoke)  
 'O would I take her father for one hour,  
 For one half-hour, and let him talk to me !'  
 And even while she spoke, I saw where James  
 Made toward us, like a wader in the surf,  
 Beyond the brook, waist-deep in meadow-sweet.

"O Katie, what I suffer'd for your sake !  
 For in I went, and call'd old Philip out  
 To show the farm : full willingly he rose :  
 He led me thro' the short sweet-smelling lanes  
 Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went.  
 He praised his land, his horses, his machines ;  
 He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs, his dogs  
 He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-hens ;  
 His pigeons, who in session on their roofs  
 Approved him, bowing at their own deserts :  
 Then from the plaintive mother's teat he took  
 Her blind and shuddering puppies, naming each,  
 And naming those, his friends, for whom they  
 were :

Then cros't the common into Darnley chase  
 To show Sir Arthur's deer. In copse and fern  
 Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.  
 Then, seated on a serpent-rooted beech,  
 He pointed out a pasturing colt, and said :  
 'That was the four-year-old I sold the Squire.'  
 And there he told a long long-winded tale

Of how the Squire had seen the colt at grass,  
 And how it was the thing his daughter wish'd,  
 And how he sent the bailiff to the farm  
 To learn the price, and what the price he ask'd,  
 And how the bailiff swore that he was mad,  
 But he stood firm; and so the matter hung;  
 He gave them line: and five days after that  
 He met the bailiff at the Golden Fleece,  
 Who then and there had offer'd something more,  
 But he stood firm; and so the matter hung;  
 He knew the man; the colt would fetch its price  
 He gave them line: and how by chance at last  
 (It might be May or April, he forgot,  
 The last of April or the first of May)  
 He found the bailiff riding by the farm,  
 And, talking from the point, he drew him in,  
 And there he mellow'd all his heart with ale,  
 Until they closed a bargain, hand in hand.

“Then, while I breathed in sight of haven, he,  
 Poor fellow, could he help it? recommenced,  
 And ran thro' all the coltish chronicle,  
 Wild Will, Black Bess, Tantivy, Tallyho,  
 Reform, White Rose, Bellerophon, the Jilt,  
 Arbaces, and Phenomenon, and the rest,  
 Till, not to die a listener, I arose,  
 And with me Philip, talking still; and so  
 We turn'd our foreheads from the falling sun,  
 And following our own shadows thrice as long  
 As when they follow'd us from Philip's door,  
 Arrived, and found the sun of sweet content  
 Re-risen in Katie's eyes, and all things well.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,  
 I slide by hazel covers;  
 I move the sweet forget-me-nots  
 That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,  
 Among my skimming swallows ;  
 I make the netted sunbeam dance  
 Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars  
 In brambly wildernesses ;  
 I linger by my shingly bars ;  
 I loiter round my cresses ;

And out again I curve and flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on forever.

Yes, men may come and go ; and these are gone,  
 All gone. My dearest brother, Edmund, sleeps,  
 Not by the well-known stream and rustic spire,  
 But unfamiliar Arno, and the dome  
 Of Brunelleschi ; sleeps in peace : and he,  
 Poor Philip, of all his lavish waste of words  
 Remains the lean P. W. on his tomb :  
 I scraped the lichen from it : Katie walks  
 By the long wash of Australasian seas  
 Far off, and holds her head to other stars,  
 And breathes in converse seasons. All are gone."

So Lawrence Aylmer, seated on a stile  
 In the long hedge, and rolling in his mind  
 Old waifs of rhyme, and bowing o'er the brook  
 A tonsured head in middle age forlorn,  
 Mused, and was mute. On a sudden a low breath  
 Of tender air made tremble in the hedge  
 The fragile bindweed-bells and briony rings ;  
 And he look'd up. There stood a maiden near,  
 Waiting to pass. In much amaze he stared  
 On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair  
 in gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell  
 Divides threefold to show the fruit within :  
 Then, wondering, ask'd her, "Are you from the  
 farm ?"—

" Yes," answer'd she.—" Pray stay a little : pardon  
 me ;

What do they call you ?"—"Katie."—"That were strange.

What surname ?"—"Willows."—"No !"—"That is my name."—

"Indeed !" and here he look'd so self-perplext,  
That Katie laugh'd, and laughing blush'd, till he  
Laugh'd also, but as one before he wakes,  
Who feels a glimmering strangeness in his dream.  
Then looking at her ; "Too happy, fresh and fair,  
Too fresh and fair in our sad world's best bloom,  
To be the ghost of one who bore your name  
About these meadows, twenty years ago."

"Have you not heard ?" said Katie, "we came back.

We bought the farm we tenanted before.  
Am I so like her ? so they said on board.  
Sir, if you knew her in her English days,  
My mother, as it seems you did, the days  
That most she loves to talk of, come with me.  
My brother James is in the harvest-field :  
But she—you will be welcome—O, come in !"

## THE LETTERS.

## 1.

STILL on the tower stood the vane,  
 A black yew gloom'd the stagnant air,  
 I peer'd athwart the chancel pane  
 And saw the altar cold and bare.  
 A clog of lead was round my feet,  
 A band of pain across my brow ;  
 " Cold altar, Heaven and earth shall meet  
 Before you hear my marriage vow."

## 2.

I turn'd and humm'd a bitter song  
 'That mock'd the wholesome human heart,  
 And then we met in wrath and wrong,  
 We met, but only meant to part.  
 Full cold my greeting was and dry ;  
 She faintly smiled, she hardly moved ;  
 I saw with half-unconscious eye  
 She wore the colors I approved.

## 3.

She took the little ivory chest,  
 With half a sigh she turn'd the key,  
 Then raised her head with lips comprest,  
 And gave my letters back to me.  
 And gave the trinkets and the rings,  
 My gifts, when gifts of mine could please ,  
 As looks a father on the things  
 Of his dead son, I look'd on these.

## 4.

She told me all her friends had said ;  
 I raged against the public liar ;  
 She talk'd as if her love were dead,  
 But in my words were seeds of fire.

“ No more of love ; your sex is known :  
 I never will be twice deceived.  
 Henceforth I trust the man alone,  
 The woman cannot be believed. ”

## 5.

“ Thro’ slander, meanest spawn of Hell  
 (And women’s slander is the worst),  
 And you, whom once I loved so well,  
 Thro’ you, my life will be accurst.”  
 I spoke with heart, and heat and force,  
 I shook her breast with vague alarms—  
 Like torrents from a mountain source  
 We rush’d into each other’s arms.

## 6.

We parted : sweetly gleam’d the stars,  
 And sweet the vapor-braided blue,  
 Low breezes fann’d the belfry bars,  
 As homeward by the church I drew.  
 The very graves appear’d to smile,  
 So fresh they rose in shadow’d swells ;  
 “ Dark porch,” I said, “ and silent aisle,  
 There comes a sound of marriage bells.”

## ODE ON THE DEATH

OF

## THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

## 1.

BURY the Great Duke  
 With an empire’s lamentation,  
 Let us bury the Great Duke  
 To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,



Mourning when their leaders fall,  
 Warriors carry the warrior's pall,  
 And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

## 2.

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore ?  
 Here, in streaming London's central roar.  
 Let the sound of those he wrought for,  
 And the feet of those he fought for,  
 Echo round his bones for evermore.

## 3.

Lead out the pageant : sad and slow,  
 As fits an universal woe,  
 Let the long, long procession go,  
 And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,  
 And let the mournful martial music blow ;  
 The last great Englishman is low.

## 4.

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,  
 Remembering all his greatness in the Past.  
 No more in soldier fashion will he greet  
 With lifted hand the gazer in the street.  
 O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute :  
 Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,  
 The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,  
 Whole in himself, a common good.  
 Mourn for the man of amplest influence,  
 Yet clearest of ambitious crime,  
 Our greatest yet with least pretence,  
 Great in council and great in war,  
 Foremost captain of his time,  
 Rich in saving common-sense,  
 And, as the greatest only are,  
 In his simplicity sublime.  
 O good gray head which all men knew,  
 O voice from which their omens all men drew,  
 O iron nerve to true occasion true,  
 O fall'n at length that tower of strength

Which stood foursquare to all the winds that  
blew !

Such was he whom we deplore.

The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.

The great World-victor's victor will be seen no  
more.

## 5.

All is over and done :

Render thanks to the Giver,

England, for thy son.

Let the bell be toll'd.

Render thanks to the Giver,

And render him to the mould.

Under the cross of gold

That shines over city and river,

There he shall rest forever

Among the wise and the bold.

Let the bell be toll'd :

And a reverent people behold

The towering car, the sable steeds :

Bright let it be with his blazon'd deeds,

Dark in its funeral fold.

Let the bell be toll'd :

And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd ;

And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd

Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;

And the volleying cannon thunder his loss ;

He knew their voices of old.

For many a time in many a clime

His captain's-ear has heard them boom

Bellowing victory, bellowing doom ;

When he with those deep voices wrought,

Guarding realms and kings from shame ;

With those deep voices our dead captain taught

The tyrant, and asserts his claim

In that dread sound to the great name,

Which he has worn so pure of blame,

In praise and in dispraise the same,

A man of well-attemper'd frame.

O civic muse, to such a name,  
 To such a name for ages long,  
 To such a name,  
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,  
 And ever-ringing avenues of song.

## 6.

Who is he that cometh like an honor'd guest,  
 With banner and with music, with soldier and with  
 priest,  
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest ?  
 Mighty seaman, this is he  
 Was great by land as thou by sea.  
 Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,  
 The greatest sailor since our world began.  
 Now, to the roll of muffled drums,  
 To thee the greatest soldier comes ;  
 For this is he  
 Was great by land as thou by sea ;  
 His foes were thine ; he kept us free ;  
 O give him welcome, this is he,  
 Worthy of our gorgeous rites,  
 And worthy to be laid by thee ;  
 For this is England's greatest son,  
 He that gain'd a hundred fights,  
 Nor ever lost an English gun ;  
 This is he that far away  
 Against the myriads of Assaye  
 Clash'd with his fiery few and won ;  
 And underneath another sun,  
 Warring on a later day,  
 Round affrighted Lisbon drew  
 The treble works, the vast designs  
 Of his labor'd rampart lines,  
 Where he greatly stood at bay,  
 Whence he issued forth anew,  
 And ever great and greater grew.  
 Beating from the wasted vines  
 Back to France her banded swarms,

Back to France with countless blows,  
Till o'er the hills her eagles flew  
Past the Pyrenean pines,  
Follow'd up in valley and glen  
With blare of bugle, clamor of men,  
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,  
And England pouring on her foes.  
Such a war had such a close.  
Again their ravening eagle rose  
In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,  
And barking for the thrones of kings ;  
Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown  
On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down ;  
A day of onsets of despair !  
Dash'd on every rocky square  
Their surging charges foam'd themselves away ;  
Last, the Prussian trumpet blew ;  
Through the long-tormented air  
Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,  
And down we swept and charged and overthrew  
So great a soldier taught us there,  
What long-enduring hearts could do  
In that world's earthquake, Waterloo !  
Mighty seaman, tender and true,  
And pure as he from taint of craven guile,  
O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,  
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,  
If aught of things that here befall  
Touch a spirit among things divine,  
If love of country move thee there at all,  
Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine !  
And thro' the centuries let a people's voice  
In full acclaim,  
A people's voice,  
The proof and echo of all human fame,  
A people's voice, when they rejoice  
At civic revel and pomp and game,  
Attest their great commander's claim  
With honor, honor, honor, honor to him,  
Eternal honor to his name.

## 7.

A people's voice ! we are a people yet.  
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget  
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers ;  
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set  
His Saxon in blown seas and storming showers,  
We have a voice with which to pay the debt  
Of boundless love and reverence and regret  
To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.  
And keep it ours, O God, from brute control ;  
O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul  
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,  
And save the one true seed of freedom sown  
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,  
That sober freedom out of which there springs  
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings ;  
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind  
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,  
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,  
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.  
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.  
Remember him who led your hosts ;  
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.  
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall ;  
His voice is silent in your council-hall  
Forever ; and whatever tempests lower  
Forever silent ; even if they broke  
In thunder, silent ; yet remember all  
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke ;  
Who never sold the truth, to serve the hour,  
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power ;  
Who let the turbid streams of rumor flow  
Thro' either babbling world of high and low ;  
Whose life was work, whose language rife  
With rugged maxims hewn from life ;  
Who never spoke against a foe ;  
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke  
All great self-seekers trampling on the right :

Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named ;  
 Truth-lover was our English Duke ;  
 Whatever record leap to light  
 He never shall be shamed.

## 8.

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars  
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,  
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,  
 He, on whom from both her open hands  
 Lavish Honor shower'd all her stars,  
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.  
 Yea, let all good things await  
 Him who cares not to be great,  
 But as he saves or serves the state.  
 Not once or twice in our rough island-story,  
 The path of duty was the way to glory :  
 He that walks it, only thirsting  
 For the right, and learns to deaden  
 Love of self, before his journey closes,  
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting  
 Into glossy purples, which outredden  
 All voluptuous garden-roses.  
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story,  
 The path of duty was the way to glory :  
 He, that ever following her commands,  
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won  
 His path upward, and prevail'd,  
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled  
 Are close upon the shining table-lands  
 To which our God Himself is moon and sun.  
 Such was he : his work is done :  
 But while the races of mankind endure,  
 Let his great example stand  
 Colossal, seen of every land,  
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure ;  
 Till in all lands and thro' all human story  
 The path of duty be the way to glory :

And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame  
 For many and many an age proclaim  
 At civic revel and pomp and game,  
 And when the long-illumined cities flame,  
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,  
 With honor, honor, honor, honor to him,  
 Eternal honor to his name.

## 9.

Peace, his triumph will be sung  
 By some yet unmoulded tongue  
 Far on in summers that we shall not see :  
 Peace, it is a day of pain  
 For one about whose patriarchal knee  
 Late the little children clung :  
 O peace, it is a day of pain  
 For one, upon whose hand and heart and brain  
 Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.  
 Ours the pain, be his the gain !  
 More than is of man's degree  
 Must be with us, watching here  
 At this, our great solemnity.  
 Whom we see not we revere.  
 We revere, and we refrain  
 From talk of battles loud and vain,  
 And brawling memories all too free  
 For such a wise humility  
 As befits a solemn fane :  
 We revere, and while we hear  
 The tides of Music's golden sea  
 Setting toward eternity,  
 Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,  
 Until we doubt not that for one so true  
 There must be other nobler work to do  
 Than when he fought at Waterloo,  
 And Victor he must ever be.  
 For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill  
 And break the shore, and evermore  
 Make and break, and work their will ;

Tho' worlds on worlds in myriad myriads roll  
 Round us, each with different powers,  
 And other forms of life than ours,  
 What know we greater than the soul?  
 On God and Godlike men we build our trust.  
 Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears:  
 The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears:  
 The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;  
 Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;  
 He is gone who seem'd so great.—  
 Gone; but nothing can bereave him  
 Of the force he made his own  
 Being here, and we believe him  
 Something far advanced in State,  
 And that he wears a truer crown  
 Than any wreath that man can weave him.  
 But speak no more of his renown,  
 Lay your earthly fancies down,  
 And in the vast cathedral leave him.  
 God accept him, Christ receive him.

## THE DAISY

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH.

---

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,  
 In lands of palm and southern pine;  
     In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,  
 Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbia show'd  
 In ruin, by the mountain road;  
     How like a gem, beneath the city  
 Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.



How richly down the rocky dell  
The torrent vineyard streaming fell  
To meet the sun and sunny waters,  
That only heaved with a summer swell

What slender campanili grew  
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue ;  
Where, here and there, on sandy beaches  
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,  
Yet present in his natal grove,  
Now watching high on mountain cornice,  
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim ;  
Till, in a narrow street and dim,  
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,  
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,  
Not the clipt palm of which they boast ;  
But distant color, happy hamlet,  
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen  
A light amid its olives green ;  
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean ;  
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed  
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread ;  
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten  
Of ice, far off on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,  
Those niched shapes of noble mould,  
A princely people's awful princes,  
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,  
 In those long galleries, were ours ;  
 What drives about the fresh Cascinè,  
 Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,  
 Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,  
 Or palace, how the city glitter'd,  
 Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we crost the Lombard plain  
 Remember what a plague of rain ;  
 Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma ;  
 At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles  
 Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles ;  
 Porch-pillars on the lion resting,  
 And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,  
 The giant windows' blazon'd fires,  
 The height, the space, the gloom, the glory !  
 A mount of marble, a hundred spires !

I climb'd the roofs at break of day ;  
 Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.  
 I stood among the silent statues,  
 And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,  
 Was Monte Rosa, hanging there  
 A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys  
 And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last  
 To Como ; shower and storm and blast  
 Had blown the lake beyond his limit,  
 And all was flooded ; and how we past

From Como, when the light was gray,  
 And in my head, for half the day,  
 The rich Virgilian rustic measure  
 Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,  
 As on The Lariano crept  
 To that fair port below the castle  
 Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept ;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake  
 A cypress in the moonlight shake,  
 The moonlight touching o'er a terrace  
 One tall Agave above the lake.

What more ? we took our last adieu,  
 And up the snowy Splugen drew,  
 But ere we reach'd the highest summit  
 I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,  
 And now it tells of Italy.  
 O love, we two shall go no longer  
 To lands of summer across the sea ;

So dear a life your arms enfold  
 Whose crying is a cry for gold :  
 Yet here to-night in this dark city,  
 When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,  
 This nursling of another sky  
 Still in the little book you lent me,  
 And where you tenderly laid it by :

And I forgot the clouded Forth,  
 The gloom that saddens Heaven and Earth,  
 The bitter east, the misty summer  
 And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,  
 Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,  
 Perchance, to dream you still beside me,  
 My fancy fled to the South again.

### TO THE REV. F. D. MAURICE.

COME, when no graver cares employ,  
 Godfather, come and see your boy :  
 Your presence will be sun in winter,  
 Making the little one leap for joy.

For, being of that honest few,  
 Who give the Fiend himself his due,  
 Should eighty thousand college-councils  
 Thunder "Anathema," friend, at you ;

Should all our churchmen foam in spite  
 At you, so careful of the right,  
 Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome  
 (Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight ;

Where, far from noise and smoke of town,  
 I watch the twilight falling brown  
 All round a careless-order'd garden  
 Close to the ridge of a noble down.

You'll have no scandal while you dine,  
 But honest talk and wholesome wine,  
 And only hear the magpie gossip  
 Garrulous under a roof of pine :

For groves of pine on either hand,  
 To break the blast of winter, stand ;  
 And further on, the hoary Channel  
 Tumbles a breaker on chalk and sand ;

Where, if below the milky steep  
 Some ship of battle slowly creep,  
 And on thro' zones of light and shadow  
 Glimmer away to the lonely deep,

We might discuss the Northern sin  
 Which made a selfish war begin ;  
 Dispute the claims, arrange the chances ;  
 Emperor, Ottoman, which shall win :

Or whether war's avenging rod  
 Shall lash all Europe into blood ;  
 Till you should turn to dearer matters,  
 Dear to the man that is dear to God ;

How best to help the slender store,  
 How mend the dwellings, of the poor ;  
 How gain in life, as life advances,  
 Valor and charity more and more.

Come, Maurice, come : the lawn as yet  
 Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet ;  
 But when the wreath of March has blossom'd,  
 Crocus, anemone, violet,

Or later, pay one visit here,  
 For those are few we hold as dear ;  
 Nor pay but one, but come for many,  
 Many and many a happy year.

*January, 1854.*

## WILL.

### 1.

O WELL for him whose will is strong !  
 He suffers, but he will not suffer long ;

He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong :  
 For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,  
 Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,  
 Who seems a promontory of rock,  
 That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,  
 In middle ocean meets the surging shock,  
 Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.

## 2.

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,  
 Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,  
 And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,  
 Or seeming-genial venial fault,  
 Recurring and suggesting still !  
 He seems as one whose footsteps halt,  
 Toiling in immeasurable sand,  
 And o'er a weary sultry land,  
 Far beneath a blazing vault,  
 Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,  
 The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

## THE

## CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

## 1.

HALF a league, half a league,  
 Half a league onward,  
 All in the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.  
 "Forward, the Light Brigade !  
 "Charge for the guns !" he said :  
 Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.

## 2.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”  
 Was there a man dismay'd?  
 Not tho' the soldier knew  
     Some one had blunder'd:  
 Theirs not to make reply,  
 Theirs not to reason why,  
 Theirs but to do and die,  
 Into the valley of Death  
     Rode the six hundred.

## 3.

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon in front of them  
     Volley'd and thunder'd;  
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
 Boldly they rode and well,  
 Into the jaws of Death,  
 Into the mouth of Hell  
     Rode the six hundred.

## 4.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
 Flash'd as they turn'd in air,  
 Sabring the gunners there,  
 Charging an army, while  
     All the world wonder'd:  
 Plunged in the battery-smoke  
 Right thro' the line they broke;  
 Cossack and Russian  
 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
     Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
 Then they rode back, but not  
     Not the six hundred.

## 5.

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon behind them  
     Volley'd and thunder'd ;  
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
 While horse and hero fell,  
 They that had fought so well  
 Came thro' the jaws of Death  
 Back from the mouth of Hell,  
 All that was left of them,  
     Left of six hundred.

## 6.

When can their glory fade ?  
 O the wild charge they made !  
     All the world wonder'd.  
 Honor the charge they made !  
 Honor the Light Brigade,  
     Noble six hundred !

## THE GRANDMOTHER'S APOLOGY.

## I.

AND Willy, my eldest born, is gone, you say, little  
     Anne ?  
 Ruddy and white, and strong on his legs, he looks  
     like a man.  
 And Willy's wife has written : she never was over-  
     wise,  
 Never the wife for Willy : he wouldn't take my  
     advice.



## II.

For, Annie, you see, her father was not the man to  
 save,  
 Hadn't a head to manage, and drank himself into  
 his grave.  
 Pretty enough, very pretty! but I was against it  
 for one.  
 Eh!—but he wouldn't hear me—and Willy, you  
 say, is gone.

## III.

Willy, my beauty, my eldest boy, the flower of the  
 flock,  
 Never a man could fling him: for Willy stood like  
 a rock.  
 "Here's a leg for a babe of a week!" says doctor;  
 and he would be bound,  
 There was not his like that year in twenty parishes  
 round.

## IV.

Strong of his hands, and strong on his legs, but still  
 of his tongue!  
 I ought to have gone before him: I wonder he went  
 so young.  
 I cannot cry for him, Annie: I have not long to stay;  
 Perhaps I shall see him the sooner, for he lived far  
 away.

## V.

Why do you look at me, Annie? you think I am  
 hard and cold;  
 But all my children have gone before me, I am so  
 old:  
 I cannot weep for Willy, nor can I weep for the  
 rest;  
 Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with  
 the best.

## VI.

For I remember a quarrel I had with your father,  
my dear,  
All for a slanderous story, that cost me many a  
tear.  
I mean your grandfather, Annie: it cost me a world  
of woe,  
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

## VII.

For Jenny, my cousin, had come to the place, and  
I knew right well  
That Jenny had tript in her time: I knew, but I  
would not tell.  
And she to be coming and slandering me, the base  
little liar!  
But the tongue is a fire as you know, my dear, the  
tongue is a fire.

## VIII.

And the parson made it his text that week, and he  
said likewise,  
That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest  
of lies,  
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought  
with outright,  
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to  
fight.

## IX.

And Willy had not been down to the farm for a  
week and a day;  
And all things look'd half-dead, tho' it was the  
middle of May.  
Jenny, to slander me, who knew what Jenny had  
been!  
But soiling another, Annie, will never make oneself  
clean.

## X.

And I cried myself well-nigh blind, and all of an evening late  
 I climb'd to the top of the garth, and stood by the road at the gate.  
 The moon like a rick on fire was rising over the dale,  
 And whit, whit, whit, in the bush beside me chirrupt the nightingale.

## XI.

All of a sudden he stopt: there past by the gate of the farm,  
 Willy,—he didn't see me,—and Jenny hung on his arm.  
 Out into the road I started, and spoke I scarce knew how;  
 Ah, there's no fool like the old one—it makes me angry now.

## XII.

Willy stood up like a man, and look'd the thing that he meant;  
 Jenny, the viper, made me a mocking courtesy and went.  
 And I said, "Let us part: in a hundred years it'll all be the same,  
 You cannot love me at all, if you love not my good name."

## XIII.

And he turn'd, and I saw his eyes all wet, in the sweet moonshine:  
 "Sweetheart, I love you so well that your good name is mine.  
 And what do I care for Jane, let her speak of you well or ill;  
 But marry me out of hand: we two shall be happy still."

## XIV.

“Marry you, Willy!” said I, “but I needs must  
 speak my mind,  
 I fear you will listen to tales, be jealous and hard  
 and unkind.”  
 But he turn’d and claspt me in his arms, and an  
 swer’d, “No, love, no;”  
 Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

## XV.

So Willy and I were wedded: I wore a lilac  
 gown;  
 And the ringers rang with a will, and he gave the  
 ringers a crown.  
 But the first that ever I bare was dead before he  
 was born,  
 Shadow and shine is life, little Annie, flower and  
 thorn.

## XVI.

That was the first time, too, that ever I thought of  
 death.  
 There lay the sweet little body that never had  
 drawn a breath.  
 I had not wept, little Annie, not since I had been a  
 wife;  
 But I wept like a child that day, for the babe had  
 fought for his life.

## XVII.

His dear little face was troubled, as if with anger  
 or pain:  
 I look’d at the still little body—his trouble had all  
 been in vain.  
 For Willy I cannot weep, I shall see him another  
 morn:  
 But I wept like a child for the child that was dead  
 before he was born.

## XVIII.

But he cheer'd me, my good man, for he seldom  
 said me nay :  
 Kind, like a man, was he ; like a man, too, would  
 have his way :  
 Never jealous—not he : we had many a happy  
 year ;  
 And he died, and I could not weep—my own time  
 seem'd so near.

## XIX.

But I wish'd it had been God's will that I, too, then  
 could have died :  
 I began to be tired a little, and fain had slept at  
 his side.  
 And that was ten years back, or more, if I don't  
 forget :  
 But as to the children, Annie, they're all about me  
 yet.

## XX.

Pattering over the boards, my Annie who left me  
 at two,  
 Patter she goes, my own little Annie, an Annie like  
 you :  
 Pattering over the boards, she comes and goes at  
 her will,  
 While Harry is in the five-acre and Charlie plough-  
 ing the hill.

## XXI.

And Harry and Charlie, I hear them too—they  
 sing to their team :  
 Often they come to the door in a pleasant kind of a  
 dream.  
 They come and sit by my chair, they hover about  
 my bed—  
 I am not always certain if they be alive or dead.

## XXII.

And yet I know for a truth, there's none of them  
left alive ;  
For Harry went at sixty, your father at sixty-five :  
And Willy, my eldest born, at nigh threescore and  
ten ;  
I knew them all as babies, and now they're elderly  
men.

## XXIII.

For mine is a time of peace, it is not often I  
grieve ;  
I am oftener sitting at home in my father's farm at  
eve :  
And the neighbors come and laugh and gossip,  
and so do I ;  
I find myself often laughing at things that have  
long gone by.

## XXIV

To be sure the preacher says, our sins should make  
us sad :  
But mine is a time of peace, and there is Grace to  
be had ;  
And God, not man, is the Judge of us all when life  
shall cease ;  
And in this Book, little Annie, the message is one  
of Peace.

## XXV.

And age is a time of peace, so it be free from  
pain,  
And happy has been my life ; but I would not live  
it again.  
I seem to be tired a little, that's all, and long for  
rest ;  
Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with  
the best.

## XXVI.

So Willy has gone, my beauty, my eldest-born, my  
 flower ;  
 But how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for  
 an hour,—  
 Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the  
 next ;  
 I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to  
 be vext ?

## XXVII.

And Willy's wife has written, she never was over-  
 wise.  
 Get me my glasses, Annie : thank God that I keep  
 my eyes.  
 There is but a trifle left you, when I shall have past  
 away.  
 But stay with the old woman now : you cannot have  
 long to stay.

## SEA DREAMS. AN IDYL.

A CITY clerk, but gently born and bred ;  
 His wife—an unknown artist's orphan child—  
 One babe was theirs, a Margaret, three years old ;  
 They, thinking that her clear germander eye  
 Droopt in the giant-factoried city-gloom,  
 Came, with a month's leave given them, to the sea ;  
 For which his gains were dock'd, however small :  
 His gains were small, and hard his work ; besides,  
 Their slender household fortunes (for the man  
 Had risk'd his little), like the little thrift,  
 Trembled in perilous places o'er a deep :  
 And oft, when sitting all alone, his face  
 Would darken, as he cursed his credulousness,

And that one unctuous mouth which lured him,  
     rogue,  
 To buy wild shares in some Peruvian mine.  
 Now seaward-bound for health, they gain'd a  
     coast,  
 All sand, and cliff, and deep inrunning cave,  
 At close of day ; slept, woke, and went the next,  
 The Sabbath, pious variers from the church,  
 To chapel ; where a heated pulpiteer,  
 Not preaching simple Christ to simple men,  
 Announced the coming doom, and fulminated  
 Against the scarlet woman and her creed :  
 For sideways up he swung his arms, and shriek'd  
 " Thus, thus with violence," ev'n as if he held  
 The Apocalyptic millstone, and himself  
 Were that great Angel ; " Thus with violence  
 Shall Babylon be cast into the sea ;  
 Then comes the close." The gentle-hearted wife  
 Sat shuddering at the ruin of a world ;  
 He at his own : but when the wordy storm  
 Had ended, forth they moved and paced the sand,  
 Ran in and out the long sea-foaming caves,  
 Drank the large air, and saw, but scarce believed  
 (The sootflake of so many a summer still  
 Clung to their fancies) that they saw, the sea.  
 So now on sand they walk'd, and now on cliff,  
 Lingering on all the thymy promontories,  
 Until the sails were darken'd in the west  
 And rosed in the east : then homeward and to  
     bed :

Where she, that kept a tender Christian hope  
 Haunting a holy text, and still to that  
 Returning, as the bird returns, at night,  
 " Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,"  
 Said, " Love, forgive him : " but he did not speak :  
 Then all in silence for an hour she lay,  
 Remembering our dear Lord who died for all,  
 And musing on the little lives of men,  
 And how they mar that little with their feuds.



But after these were sleeping, a full tide  
 Rose with ground-swell, which, on the foremost rocks  
 Touching, upjetted in spirits of wild sea-smoke,  
 And scaled in sheets of wasteful foam, and fell  
 In vast sea-cataracts—ever and anon  
 Dead claps of thunder from within the cliffs  
 Heard through the living roar. At this the child,  
 Their little Margaret, cradled near them, made  
 A wail which, howsoever slight, aroused  
 The mother, and the father suddenly cried,  
 “A wreck, a wreck!” then turn’d, and groaning  
 said :

“Forgive! How many will say, ‘Forgive,’ and find  
 A sort of absolution in the sound  
 To hate a little longer! No; the sin  
 That neither God nor man can well forgive,  
 Hypocrisy, I saw it in him at once.  
 It is not true that second thoughts are best,  
 But first, and third, which are a riper first,  
 Too ripe, too late! they come too late for use.  
 Ah, love, there surely lives in man and beast  
 Something divine to warn them of their foes;  
 And such a sense, when first I lighted on him,  
 Said, ‘trust him not;’ but after, when I came  
 To know him more, I lost it, knew him less;  
 Fought with what seem’d my own uncharity;  
 Sat at his table, drank his costly wines,  
 Made more and more allowance for his talk,  
 Went further, fool! and trusted him with all,  
 All my poor scrapings from a dozen years  
 Of dust and deskwork: there is no such mine,  
 None; but a gulf of ruin, swallowing gold,  
 Not making. Ruin’d! ruin’d! the sea roars  
 Ruin: a fearful night!”

“Not fearful; fair,”  
 Said the good wife, “if every star in heaven  
 Can make it fair: you do but hear the tide.  
 Had you ill dreams?”

"O yes," he said, "I dream'd  
 Of such a tide swelling toward the land,  
 And I from out the boundless outer deep  
 Swept with it to the shore, and enter'd one  
 Of those dark caves that run beneath the cliffs.  
 I thought the motion of the boundless deep  
 Bore through the cave, and I was heaved upon it  
 In darkness: then I saw one lonely star  
 Larger and larger. 'What a world,' I thought,  
 'To live in;' but in moving on I found  
 Only the landward exit of the cave,  
 Bright with the sun upon the stream beyond:  
 And near the light a giant woman sat,  
 All over earthy, like a piece of earth,  
 A pickaxe in her hand: then out I slipt  
 Into a land all sun and blossom, trees  
 As high as heaven, and every bird that sings:  
 And here the firelight flickering in my eyes  
 Awoke me."

"That was then your dream," she said  
 "Not sad, but sweet."

"So sweet, I lay," said he,  
 "And mused upon it, drifting up the stream  
 In fancy, till I slept again, and pieced  
 The broken vision; for I dream'd that still  
 The motion of the great deep bore me on,  
 And that the woman walk'd upon the brink:  
 I wonder'd at her strength, and ask'd her of it:  
 'It came,' she said, 'by working in the mines:'  
 Oh, then, to ask her of my shares, I thought;  
 And ask'd; but not a word; she shook her head.  
 And then the motion of the current ceas'd,  
 And there was rolling thunder; and we reach'd  
 A mountain, like a wall of burs and thorns;  
 But she, with her strong feet, up the steep hill  
 Trod out a path; I follow'd; and at top  
 She pointed seaward: there a fleet of glass,  
 That seem'd a fleet of jewels under me,  
 Sailing along before a gloomy cloud

That not one moment ceased to thunder, past  
 In sunshine : right across its track there lay,  
 Down in the water, a long reef of gold,  
 Or what seem'd gold ; and I was glad at first  
 To think that in our often-ransack'd world  
 Still so much gold was left ; and then I fear'd  
 Lest that gay navy there should splinter on it,  
 And fearing wav'd my arm to warn them off ;  
 An idle signal, for the brittle fleet  
 (I thought I could have died to save it)  
 Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and vanish'd, and I  
       woke,

I heard the clash so clearly. Now, I see,  
 My dream was life ; the woman honest Work ;  
 And my poor venture but a fleet of glass  
 Wreck'd on a reef of visionary gold."

"Nay," said the kindly wife to comfort him,  
 "You raised your arm, you tumbled down and  
       broke  
 The glass with little Margaret's medicine in it;  
 And, breaking that, you made and broke your  
       dream :  
 A trifle makes a dream ; a trifle breaks."

"No trifle," groan'd the husband ; "yesterday  
 I met him suddenly in the street, and ask'd  
 That which I ask'd the woman in my dream.  
 Like her, he shook his head. 'Show me the books !'  
 He dodged me with a long and loose account.  
 'The books, the books !' but he, he could not wait,  
 Bound on a matter he of life and death :  
 When the great Books (see Daniel seven, the tenth)  
 Were open'd, I should find he meant me well ;  
 And then began to bloat himself, and ooze  
 All over with the fat affectionate smile  
 That makes the widow lean. 'My dearest friend,  
 Have faith, have faith ! We live by faith,' said he ;  
 And all things work together for the good

Of those'—it makes me sick to quote him—last  
 Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-you went  
 I stood like one that had received a blow :  
 I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,  
 A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,  
 A curse in his God-bless-you : then my eyes  
 Pursued him down the street, and far away,  
 Among the honest shoulders of the crowd,  
 Read rascal in the motions of his back,  
 And scoundrel in the supple sliding knee.”

“ Was he so bound, poor soul ? ” said the good wife  
 “ So are we all : but do not call him, love,  
 Before you prove him, rogue, and proved, forgive.  
 His gain is loss ; for he that wrongs his friend  
 Wrongs himself more, and ever bears about  
 A silent court of justice in his breast,  
 Himself the judge and jury, and himself  
 The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn'd :  
 And that drags down his life : then comes what  
       comes  
 Hereafter ; and he meant, he said he meant,  
 Perhaps he meant, or partly meant, you well.”

“ ‘ With all his conscience and one eye askew ’—  
 Love, let me quote these lines, that you may learn  
 A man is likewise counsel for himself,  
 Too often, in that silent court of yours—  
 ‘ With all his conscience and one eye askew,  
 So false, he partly took himself for true ;  
 Whose pious talk, when most his heart was dry,  
 Made wet the crafty crow’s-foot round his eye ;  
 Who, never naming God except for gain,  
 So never took that useful name in vain ;  
 Nor deeds of gift, but gifts of grace he forged,  
 And snakelike slimed his victim ere he gorged ;  
 Made God his cat’s-paw, and the cross his tool,  
 And Christ the snare to trap a fledgling fool ;  
 And oft at Bible meetings, o’er the rest

Arising, did his holy oily best,  
 Dropping the too rough H in Hell and Heaven,  
 To spread the word by which himself had thriven.  
 How like you this old satire ?”

“Nay,” she said,  
 “I loathe it : he had never kindly heart,  
 Nor ever cared to better his own kind,  
 Who first wrote satire, with no pity in it.  
 But will you hear my dream, for I had one  
 That altogether went to music ? still,  
 It awed me. Well—I dream’d that round the north  
 A light—a belt of luminous vapor—lay,  
 And ever in it a low musical note  
 Swell’d up and died ; and, as it swell’d, a ridge  
 Of breakers came from out the belt, and still  
 Grew with the growing note, and when the note  
 Had reach’d a thunderous fulness, on these cliffs  
 Broke, mixt with awful light (the same as that  
 Which lived within the belt), by which I saw  
 That all these lines of cliffs were cliffs no more,  
 But huge cathedral fronts of every age :—  
 Grave, florid, stern, as far as eye could see,  
 One after one ; and then the great ridge drew,  
 Lessening to the lessening music, back,  
 And past into the belt and swell’d again  
 To music : ever when it broke I saw  
 The statues, saint, or king, or founder fall ;  
 Then from the gaps of ruin which it left  
 Came men and women in dark clusters round,  
 Some crying, ‘Set them up ! they shall not fall !’  
 And others ‘Let them lie, for they have fall’n.’  
 And still they strove and wrangled ; and I grieved  
 In my strange dream, I knew not why, to find  
 Their wildest wailings never out of tune  
 With that sweet note ; and ever when their shrieks  
 Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave  
 Returning—though none mark’d it—on the crowd  
 Broke, mix’d with awful light, and show’d their eyes

Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept away  
 The men of flesh and blood, and men of stone,  
 To the waste deeps together; and I fixt  
 My wistful eyes on two fair images,  
 Both crown'd with stars and high among the  
 stars,—

The Virgin Mother standing with her child  
 High up on one of those dark minster-fronts—  
 Till she began to totter; and the child  
 Clung to the mother, and sent out a cry,  
 Which mix'd with little Margaret's, and I woke,  
 And my dream awed me:—well—but what are  
 dreams!

Yours came but from the breaking of a glass,  
 And mine but from the crying of a child."

"Child? No!" said he, "but this tide's roar,  
 and his,  
 Our Boanerges, with his threats of doom,  
 And loud-lung'd Antibabylonianisms  
 (Although I grant but little music there)  
 Went both to make your dream: but were there  
 such

A music, harmonizing our wild cries,  
 Sphere music such as that you dream'd about,  
 Why, that would make our passions far too like  
 The discord dear to the musician. No—  
 One shriek of hate would jar all hymns of heaven:  
 True Devils with no ear, they howl in tune  
 With nothing but the Devil!"

"True indeed!

One of our town, but later by an hour  
 Here than ourselves, spoke with me on the shore.  
 While you were running down the sands, and made  
 The dimpled flounce of the sea-furbelow flap,  
 Good man, to please the child: she brought strange  
 news.

I would not tell you then to spoil your day,  
 But he, at whom you rail so much, is dead."

“Dead? who is dead?”

“The man your eye pursued.  
A little after you had parted with him,  
He suddenly dropt dead of heart disease.”

“Dead? he? of heart disease? what heart had he  
To die of? dead?”

“Ah, dearest, if there be  
A devil in man, there is an angel too,  
And if he did that wrong you charge him with,  
His angel broke his heart. But your rough voice  
(You spoke so loud) has roused the child again.  
Sleep, little birdie, sleep! will she not sleep  
Without her ‘little birdie?’ well then, sleep,  
And I will sing you ‘birdie.’”

Saying this,  
The woman half turn'd round from him she loved,  
Left him one hand, and reaching through the night  
Her other, found (for it was close beside)  
And half embraced the basket cradle-head:  
With one soft arm, which like the pliant bough  
That moving moves the nest and nestling, sway'd  
The cradle, while she sang this baby song.

What does little birdie say  
In her nest at peep of day?  
Let me fly, says little birdie,  
Mother, let me fly away.  
Birdie, rest a little longer,  
Till the little wings are stronger.  
So she rests a little longer  
Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,  
In her bed at peep of day?  
Baby says, like little birdie,  
Let me rise and fly away.  
Baby, sleep a little longer,

Till the little limbs are stronger.  
 If she sleeps a little longer  
 Baby too shall fly away.

“ She sleeps : let us too, let all evil, sleep.  
 He also sleeps—another sleep than ours.  
 He can do no more wrong : forgive him, dear,  
 And I shall sleep the sounder ! ”

Then the man,  
 “ His deeds yet live, the worst is yet to come.  
 Yet let your sleep for this one night be sound :  
 I do forgive him ! ”

“ Thanks, my love,” she said,  
 “ Your own will be the sweeter,” and they slept.

## TITHONUS.

Ay me ! ay me ! the woods decay and fall,  
 The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,  
 Man comes and tills the earth and lies beneath,  
 And after many a summer dies the swan.  
 Me only cruel immortality  
 Consumes : I wither slowly in thine arms,  
 Here at the quiet limit of the world,  
 A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream  
 The ever silent spaces of the East,  
 Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas ! for this gray shadow, once a man —  
 So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,  
 Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd  
 To his great heart none other than a God !  
 I ask'd thee, “ Give me immortality.”  
 Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,  
 Like wealthy men who care not how they give.  
 But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,



And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,  
 And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd  
 To dwell in presence of immortal youth,  
 Immortal age beside immortal youth,  
 And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,  
 Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,  
 Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,  
 Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears  
 To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:  
 Why should a man desire in any way  
 To vary from the kindly race of men,  
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance  
 Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes  
 A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.  
 Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals  
 From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,  
 And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.  
 Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,  
 Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,  
 Ere yet they blind the stars, and that wild team  
 Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,  
 And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,  
 And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful  
 In silence, then before thine answer given  
 Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,  
 And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,  
 In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?  
 "The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts."

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart  
 In days far-off, and with what other eyes  
 I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—  
 The lucid outline forming round thee, saw

The dim curls kindle into sunny rings,  
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood  
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all  
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,  
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm  
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds  
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd  
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,  
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing  
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not forever in thine East :  
How can my nature longer mix with thine ?  
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold  
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet  
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam  
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes  
Of happy men that have the power to die,  
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.  
Release me, and restore me to the ground ;  
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave :  
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn ;  
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,  
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

IDYLLS OF THE KING.

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“Flos Regum Arthurus.”

JOSEPH OF EXETER.



## CONTENTS OF THE IDYLLS.

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	PAGE.
ENID . . . . .	201
VIVIEN . . . . .	252
ELAINE . . . . .	275
GUINEVERE . . . . .	315



## ENID.

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THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,  
A tributary prince of Devon, one  
Of that great order of the Table Round,  
Had wedded Enid, Yniol's only child,  
And loved her, as he loved the light of Heaven.  
And as the light of Heaven varies, now  
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night  
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint  
To make her beauty vary day by day,  
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.  
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,  
Who first had found and loved her in a state  
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him  
In some fresh splendour; and the Queen herself,  
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,  
Loved her, and often with her own white hands  
Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,  
Next after her own self, in all the court.  
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart  
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best  
And loveliest of all women upon earth.  
And seeing them so tender and so close,  
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.  
But when a rumour rose about the Queen,  
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,  
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard  
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,  
Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell  
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,

Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,  
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint  
In nature : wherefore going to the king,  
He made this pretext, that his principedom lay  
Close on the borders of a territory,  
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,  
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand  
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law :  
And therefore, till the king himself should please  
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,  
He craved a fair permission to depart,  
And there defend his marches ; and the king  
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,  
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,  
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores  
Of Severn, and they passed to their own land ;  
Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife  
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,  
He compass'd her with sweet observances  
And worship, never leaving her, and grew  
Forgetful of his promise to the king,  
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,  
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,  
Forgetful of his glory and his name,  
Forgetful of his principedom and its cares.  
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.  
And by and by the people, when they met  
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,  
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him  
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,  
And molten down in mere uxoriousness.  
And this she gather'd from the people's eyes :  
This too the women who attired her head,  
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,  
Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the more :  
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,  
But could not out of bashful delicacy ;  
While he that watch'd her sadden, was the more  
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.



At last, it chanced that on a summer morn  
(They sleeping each by other) the new sun  
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the room,  
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams ;  
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,  
And bared the knotted column of his throat,  
The massive square of his heroic breast,  
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,  
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,  
Running too vehemently to break upon it.  
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,  
Admiring him, and thought within herself,  
Was ever man so grandly made as he ?  
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk  
And accusation of uxoriousness  
Across her mind, and bowing over him,  
Low to her own heart piteously she said :

' O noble breast and all-puissant arms,  
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men  
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone ?  
I *am* the cause because I dare not speak  
And tell him what I think and what they say.  
And yet I hate that he should linger here ;  
I cannot love my lord and not his name.  
Far liever had I gird his harness on him,  
And ride with him to battle and stand by,  
And watch his mightful hand striking great blows  
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.  
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,  
Not hearing any more his noble voice,  
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,  
And darken'd from the high light in his eyes,  
Than that my lord thro' me should suffer shame.  
Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,  
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,  
Or may be pierced to death before mine eyes,  
And yet not dare to tell him what I think,  
And how men slur him, saying all his force

Is melted into mere effeminacy?  
 O me, I fear that I am no true wife.'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,  
 And the strong passion in her made her weep  
 True tears upon his broad and naked breast,  
 And these awoke him, and by great mischance  
 He heard but fragments of her later words,  
 And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.  
 And then he thought, 'In spite of all my care,  
 For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,  
 She is not faithful to me, and I see her  
 Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall.'  
 Then tho' he loved and revered her too much  
 To dream she could be guilty of foul act,  
 Right thro' his manful breast darted the pang  
 That makes a man, in the sweet face of her  
 Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.  
 At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed,  
 And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,  
 'My charger and her palfrey,' then to her,  
 'I will ride forth into the wilderness;  
 For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,  
 I have not fall'n so low as some would wish.  
 And you, put on your worst and meanest dress  
 And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd, amazed,  
 'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'  
 But he, 'I charge you, ask not but obey.'  
 Then she bethought her of a faded silk,  
 A faded mantle and a faded veil,  
 And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,  
 Wherein she kept them folded reverently  
 With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,  
 She took them, and array'd herself therein,  
 Remembering when first he came on her  
 Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,  
 And all her foolish fears about the dress,  
 And all his journey to her, as himself  
 Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before  
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.  
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,  
Before him came a forester of Dean,  
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart  
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,  
First seen that day : these things he told the king.  
Then the good king gave order to let blow  
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.  
And when the Queen petition'd for his leave  
To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.  
So with the morning all the court were gone.  
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,  
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love  
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt ;  
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,  
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood ;  
There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd  
Waiting to hear the hounds ; but heard instead  
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,  
Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress  
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,  
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford  
Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.  
A purple scarf, at either end whereof  
There swung an apple of the purest gold,  
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up  
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly  
In summer suit and silks of holiday.  
Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,  
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace  
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd him :  
'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later than we !'  
'Yea, noble Queen,' he answer'd, 'and so late  
That I but come like you to see the hunt,  
Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,' she said ;  
'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,  
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds :  
Here often they break covert at our feet.'

And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,  
 And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,  
 King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode  
 Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;  
 Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the knight  
 Had visor up, and show'd a youthful face,  
 Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.  
 And Guinevere, not mindful of his face  
 In the king's hall, desired his name, and sent  
 Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf;  
 Who being vicious, old and irritable,  
 And doubling all his master's vice of pride,  
 Made answer sharply that she should not know.  
 'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said.  
 'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried the dwarf;  
 'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him;'  
 And when she put her horse toward the knight,  
 Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd  
 Indignant to the Queen; at which Geraint  
 Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'  
 Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,  
 Who answer'd as before; and when the Prince  
 Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,  
 Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.  
 The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,  
 Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand  
 Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him:  
 But he, from his exceeding manfulness  
 And pure nobility of temperament,  
 Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrain'd  
 From ev'n a word, and so returning said:

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,  
 Done in your maiden's person to yourself:  
 And I will track this vermin to their earths:  
 For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt  
 To find, at some place I shall come at, arms  
 On loan, or else for pledge; and, being found,  
 Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,

And on the third day, will again be here,  
So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell.'

'Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd the stately  
Queen.

'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all ;  
And may you light on all things that you love,  
And live to wed with her whom first you love :  
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,  
And I, were she the daughter of a king,  
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,  
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard  
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,  
A little vext at losing of the hunt,  
A little at the vile occasion, rode,  
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade  
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.  
At last they issued from the world of wood,  
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,  
And showed themselves against the sky, and sank.  
And thither came Geraint, and underneath  
Beheld the long street of a little town  
In a long valley, on one side of which,  
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose ;  
And on one side a castle in decay,  
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine :  
And out of town and valley came a noise  
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed  
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks  
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,  
And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.  
'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd him to his  
earth.'

And down the long street riding wearily,  
Found every hostel full, and everywhere

Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss  
 And bustling whistle of the youth who scour'd  
 His master's armour; and of such a one  
 He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in the town?'  
 Who told him, scouring still, 'The sparrow-hawk!'  
 Then riding close behind an ancient churl,  
 Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,  
 Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,  
 Ask'd yet once more what meant the hubbub here?  
 Who answer'd gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-hawk.'  
 Then riding further past an armourer's,  
 Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above his work,  
 Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,  
 He put the self-same query, but the man  
 Not turning round, nor looking at him, said:  
 'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk  
 Has little time for idle questioners.'  
 Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden spleen:  
 'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!  
 Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead!  
 Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg  
 The murmur of the world! What is it to me?  
 O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,  
 Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!  
 Speak, if you be not like the rest, hawk-mad,  
 Where can I get me harbourage for the night?  
 And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!  
 At this the armourer turning all amazed  
 And seeing one so gay in purple silks,  
 Came forward with the helmet yet in hand  
 And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger knight;  
 We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,  
 And there is scanty time for half the work.  
 Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.  
 Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,  
 It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge  
 Yonder.' He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,

Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine.  
 There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,  
 (His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,  
 Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and said :  
 ' Whither, fair son ? ' to whom Geraint replied,  
 ' O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night.'  
 Then Yniol, ' Enter therefore and partake  
 The slender entertainment of a house  
 Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd.'  
 ' Thanks, venerable friend,' replied Geraint ;  
 ' So that you do not serve me sparrow-hawks  
 For supper, I will enter, I will eat  
 With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast.'  
 Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed Earl,  
 And answer'd, ' Graver cause than yours is mine  
 To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk :  
 But in, go in ; for save yourself desire it,  
 We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest.'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,  
 His charger trampling many a prickly star  
 Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.  
 He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.  
 Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern ;  
 And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,  
 Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,  
 And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers :  
 And high above a piece of turret stair,  
 Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound  
 Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems  
 Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,  
 And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd  
 A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,  
 The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang  
 Clear thro' the open casement of the Hall,  
 Singing ; and as the sweet voice of a bird,  
 Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,

Moves him to think what kind of bird it is  
 That sings so delicately clear, and make  
 Conjecture of the plumage and the form;  
 So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;  
 And made him like a man abroad at morn  
 When first the liquid note beloved of men  
 Comes flying over many a windy wave  
 To Britain, and in April suddenly  
 Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,  
 And he suspends his converse with a friend,  
 Or it may be the labour of his hands,  
 To think or say, 'there is the nightingale;'  
 So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,  
 'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me.'

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one  
 Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the  
 proud;  
 Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and  
 cloud;  
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or  
 frown;  
 With that wild wheel we go not up or down;  
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;  
 Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;  
 For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;  
 Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;  
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.'

'Hark, by the bird's song you may learn the  
 nest,



Said Yniol ; ' Enter quickly.' Entering then,  
 Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,  
 The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd Hall,  
 He found an ancient dame in dim brocade ;  
 And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,  
 That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,  
 Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,  
 Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,  
 ' Here by God's rood is the one maid for me.'  
 But none spake word except the hoary Earl :  
 ' Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court ;  
 Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then  
 Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine ;  
 And we will make us merry as we may.  
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.'

He spake : the Prince, as Enid past him, fain  
 To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught  
 His purple scarf, and held, and said ' Forbear !  
 Rest ! the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my Son,  
 Endures not that her guest should serve himself.'  
 And reverencing the custom of the house  
 Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall ;  
 And after went her way across the bridge,  
 And reach'd the town, and while the Prince and  
 Earl  
 Yet spoke together, came again with one,  
 A youth, that following with a costrel bore  
 The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.  
 And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,  
 And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.  
 And then, because their hall must also serve  
 For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,  
 And stood behind, and waited on the three.  
 And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,  
 Geraint had longing in him evermore  
 To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,

That crost the trencher as she laid it down :  
 But after all had eaten, then Geraint,  
 For now the wine made summer in his veins,  
 Let his eye rove in following, or rest  
 On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,  
 Now here, now there, about the dusky hall ;  
 Then suddenly address the hoary Earl :

‘ Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy ;  
 This sparrow-hawk, what is he, tell me of him.  
 His name ? but no, good faith, I will not have it :  
 For if he be the knight whom late I saw  
 Ride into that new fortress by your town,  
 White from the mason’s hand, then have I sworn  
 From his own lips to have it — I am Geraint  
 Of Devon — for this morning when the Queen  
 Sent her own maiden to demand the name,  
 His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,  
 Struck at her with his whip, and she return’d  
 Indignant to the Queen ; and then I swore  
 That I would track this caitiff to his hold,  
 And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.  
 And all unarm’d I rode, and thought to find  
 Arms in your town, where all the men are mad ;  
 They take the rustic murmur of their bourg  
 For the great wave that echoes round the world ;  
 They would not hear me speak : but if you know  
 Where I can light on arms, or if yourself  
 Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn  
 That I will break his pride and learn his name,  
 Avenging this great insult done the Queen.’

Then cried Earl Yniol. ‘ Art thou he indeed,  
 Geraint, a name far-sounded among men  
 For noble deeds ? and truly I, when first  
 I saw you moving by me on the bridge,  
 Felt you were somewhat, yea and by your state  
 And presence might have guess’d you one of those  
 That eat in Arthur’s hall at Camelot.

Nor speak I now from foolish flattery ;  
For this dear child hath often heard me praise  
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused  
Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear ;  
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds  
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong :  
O never yet had woman such a pair  
Of suitors as this maiden ; first Limours,  
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,  
Drunk even when he woo'd ; and be he dead  
I know not, but he past to the wild land.  
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,  
My curse, my nephew — I will not let his name  
Slip from my lips if I can help it — he,  
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent  
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke ;  
And since the proud man often is the mean,  
He sow'd a slander in the common ear,  
Affirming that his father left him gold,  
And in my charge, which was not render'd to him ;  
Bribed with large promises the men who served  
About my person, the more easily  
Because my means were somewhat broken into  
Thro' open doors and hospitality ;  
Raised my own town against me in the night  
Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house ;  
From mine own earldom foully ousted me ;  
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,  
For truly there are those who love me yet ;  
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,  
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,  
But that his pride too much despises me :  
And I myself sometimes despise myself ;  
For I have let men be, and have their way ;  
Am much too gentle, have not used my power :  
Nor know I whether I be very base  
Or very manful, whether very wise  
Or very foolish ; only this I know,  
That whatsoever evil happen to me,

I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,  
But can endure it all most patiently.'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint, 'but  
arms:

That if, as I suppose, your nephew fights  
In next day's tourney I may break his pride.'

And Yniol answer'd, 'Arms, indeed, but old  
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,  
Are mine, and therefore, at your asking yours.  
But in this tournament can no man tilt,  
Except the lady he loves best be there.  
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,  
And over these is laid a silver wand,  
And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk,  
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.  
And this, what knight soever be in field  
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,  
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,  
Who being apt at arms and big of bone  
Has ever won it for the lady with him,  
And toppling over all antagonism  
Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-hawk.  
But you, that have no lady, cannot fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,  
Leaning a little toward him, 'Your leave!  
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,  
For this dear child, because I never saw,  
Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,  
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.  
And if I fall her name will yet remain  
Untarnish'd as before; but if I live,  
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,  
As I will make her truly my true wife.'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart  
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.

And looking round he saw not Enid there,  
(Who hearing her own name had slipt away)  
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly  
And fondling all her hand in his he said,  
'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,  
And best by her that bore her understood.  
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest  
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince.'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she  
With frequent smile and nod departing found,  
Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl ;  
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then  
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,  
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,  
And told her all their converse in the hall,  
Proving her heart : but never light and shade  
Coursed one another more on open ground  
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale  
Across the face of Enid hearing her ;  
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,  
When weight is added only grain by grain,  
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast ;  
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,  
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it ;  
So moving without answer to her rest  
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw  
The quiet night into her blood, but lay  
Contemplating her own unworthiness ;  
And when the pale and bloodless east began  
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised  
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved  
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,  
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint  
Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,  
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,  
Himself beyond the rest pushing could move

The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms  
 Were on his princely person, but thro' these  
 Princelike his bearing shone; and errant knights  
 And ladies came, and by and by the town  
 Flow'd in, and settling, circled all the lists.  
 And there they fixt the forks into the ground,  
 And over these they placed a silver wand  
 And over that a golden sparrow-hawk.  
 Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,  
 Spake to the lady with him and proclaim'd  
 'Advance and take as fairest of the fair,  
 For I these two years past have won it for thee,  
 The prize of beauty.' Loudly spake the Prince,  
 'Forbear: there is a worthier,' and the knight  
 With some surprise and thrice as much disdain  
 Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his face  
 Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at Yule,  
 So burnt he was with passion, crying out,  
 'Do battle for it then,' no more; and thrice  
 They clash'd together, and thrice they brake their  
                   spears.

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd at each  
 So often and with such blows, that all the crowd  
 Wonder'd, and now and then from distant walls  
 There came a clapping as of phantom hands.  
 So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and  
                   still

The dew of their great labour, and the blood  
 Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain'd their force.  
 But either's force was match'd till Yniol's cry,  
 'Remember that great insult done the Queen,'  
 Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,  
 And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the bone,  
 And fell'd him, and set foot upon his breast,  
 And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the fallen man  
 Made answer, groaning, 'Edyrn, son of Nudd!  
 Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.  
 My pride is broken: men have seen my fall.'  
 'Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd,' replied Geraint,

‘ These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.

First, thou thyself, thy lady, and thy dwarf,  
 Shalt ride to Arthur’s court, and being there,  
 Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,  
 And shalt abide her judgment on it; next,  
 Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.  
 These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die.’  
 And Edyrn answer’d, ‘ These things will I do,  
 For I have never yet been overthrown,  
 And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride  
 Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall!’  
 And rising up, he rode to Arthur’s court,  
 And there the Queen forgave him easily.  
 And being young, he changed himself, and grew  
 To hate the sin that seem’d so like his own  
 Of Modred, Arthur’s nephew, and fell at last  
 In the great battle fighting for the king.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn  
 Made a low splendour in the world, and wings  
 Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay  
 With her fair head in the dim-yellow light  
 Among the dancing shadows of the birds,  
 Woke and bethought her of her promise given  
 No later than last eve to Prince Geraint —  
 So bent he seem’d on going the third day,  
 He would not leave her, till her promise given —  
 To ride with him this morning to the court,  
 And there be made known to the stately Queen,  
 And there be wedded with all ceremony.  
 At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,  
 And thought it never yet had look’d so mean.  
 For as a leaf in mid-November is  
 To what it was in mid-October, seem’d  
 The dress that now she look’d on to the dress  
 She look’d on ere the coming of Geraint.  
 And still she look’d, and still the terror grew  
 Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,

All staring at her in her faded silk :  
And softly to her own sweet heart she said :

‘This noble prince who won our earldom back,  
So splendid in his acts and his attire,  
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him !  
Would he could tarry with us here awhile !  
But being so beholden to the Prince,  
It were but little grace in any of us,  
Bent as he seem’d on going this third day,  
To seek a second favour at his hands.  
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,  
Myself would work eye dim, and finger lame,  
Far liefer than so much discredit him.’

And Enid fell in longing for a dress  
All branch’d and flower’d with gold, a costly gift  
Of her good mother, given her on the night  
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,  
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack’d their house,  
And scatter’d all they had to all the winds :  
For while the mother show’d it, and the two  
Were turning and admiring it, the work  
To both appear’d so costly, rose a cry  
That Edyrn’s men were on them, and they fled  
With little save the jewels they had on,  
Which being sold and sold had bought them bread :  
And Edyrn’s men had caught them in their flight,  
And placed them in this ruin ; and she wish’d  
The Prince had found her in her ancient home ;  
Then let her fancy flit across the past,  
And roam the goodly places that she knew ;  
And last bethought her how she used to watch,  
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp ;  
And one was patch’d and blurr’d and lustreless  
Among his burnish’d brethren of the pool ;  
And half asleep she made comparison  
Of that and these to her own faded self  
And the gay court, and fell asleep again ;



And dreamt herself was such a faded form  
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool;  
But this was in the garden of a king;  
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she knew  
That all was bright; that all about were birds  
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;  
That all the turf was rich in plots that look'd  
Each like a garnet or a turkis in it;  
And lords and ladies of the high court went  
In silver tissue talking things of state;  
And children of the king in cloth of gold  
Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down the walks;  
And while she thought 'they will not see me,' came  
A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,  
And all the children in their cloth of gold  
Ran to her, crying, 'if we have fish at all  
Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now  
To pick the faded creature from the pool,  
And cast it on the mixen that it die.'  
And therewithal one came and seized on her,  
And Enid started waking, with her heart  
All overshadow'd by the foolish dream,  
And lo! it was her mother grasping her  
To get her well awake; and in her hand  
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid  
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

' See here, my child, how fresh the colours look,  
How fast they hold, like colours of a shell  
That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.  
Why not? it never yet was worn, I trow:  
Look on it, child, and tell me if you know it.'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at first,  
Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream:  
Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,  
And answer'd, ' Yea, I know it; your good gift,  
So sadly lost on that unhappy night;  
Your own good gift!' ' Yea, surely,' said the dame,

'And gladly given again this happy morn.  
 For when the jousts were ended yesterday,  
 Went Yniol thro' the town, and everywhere  
 He found the sack and plunder of our house  
 All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town ;  
 And gave command that all which once was ours,  
 Should now be ours again : and yester-eve,  
 While you were talking sweetly with your Prince,  
 Came one with this and laid it in my hand,  
 For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,  
 Because we have our earldom back again.  
 And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,  
 But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.  
 Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise ?  
 For I myself unwillingly have worn  
 My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,  
 And howsoever patient, Yniol his.  
 Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,  
 With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,  
 And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,  
 And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all  
 That appertains to noble maintenance.  
 Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house ;  
 But since our fortune slipt from sun to shade,  
 And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need  
 Constrain'd us, but a better time has come ;  
 So clothe yourself in this, that better fits  
 Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride :  
 For tho' you won the prize of fairest fair,  
 And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,  
 Let never maiden think, however fair,  
 She is not fairer in new clothes than old.  
 And should some great court-lady say, the Prince  
 Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the hedge,  
 And like a madman brought her to the court,  
 Then were you shamed, and, worse, might shame  
     the Prince  
 To whom we are beholden ; but I know,  
 When my dear child is set forth at her best,

That neither court nor country, tho' they sought  
Thro' all the provinces like those of old  
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match.'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath;  
And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay;  
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn  
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by  
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,  
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,  
Help'd by the mother's careful hand and eye,  
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;  
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round, and said,  
She never yet had seen her half so fair;  
And call'd her 'like that maiden in the tale,  
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers,  
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,  
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar first  
Invaded Britain, but we beat him back,  
As this great prince invaded us, and we,  
Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.  
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,  
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;  
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream  
I see my princess as I see her now,  
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the gay.'

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint  
Woke where he slept in the high hall, and call'd  
For Enid, and when Yniol made report  
Of that good mother making Enid gay  
In such apparel as might well beseem  
His princess, or indeed the stately queen,  
He answer'd; 'Earl, entreat her by my love,  
Albeit I give no reason but my wish,  
That she ride with me in her faded silk.'  
Yniol with that hard message went; it fell,  
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:  
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,

Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,  
 But silently, in all obedience,  
 Her mother silent too, nor helping her,  
 Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd gift,  
 And robed them in her ancient suit again,  
 And so descended. Never man rejoiced  
 More than Geraint to greet her thus attired ;  
 And glancing all at once as keenly at her,  
 As careful robins eye the delver's toil,  
 Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,  
 But rested with her sweet face satisfied ;  
 Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,  
 Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said.

‘ O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved  
 At your new son, for my petition to her.  
 When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,  
 In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,  
 Made promise, that whatever bride I brought,  
 Herself would clothe her like the sun in Heaven.  
 Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hold,  
 Beholding one so bright in dark estate,  
 I vow'd that could I gain her, our kind Queen,  
 No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst  
 Sunlike from cloud — and likewise thought perhaps,  
 That service done so graciously would bind  
 The two together ; for I wish the two  
 To love each other : how should Enid find  
 A nobler friend ? Another thought I had ;  
 I came among you here so suddenly,  
 That tho' her gentle presence at the lists  
 Might well have served for proof that I was loved,  
 I doubted whether filial tenderness,  
 Or easy nature, did not let itself  
 Be moulded by your wishes for her weal ;  
 Or whether some false sense in her own self  
 Of my contrasting brightness, overbore  
 Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall ;  
 And such a sense might make her long for court

And all its dangerous glories : and I thought,  
That could I someway prove such force in her  
Link'd with such love for me, that at a word  
(No reason given her) she could cast aside  
A splendour dear to women, new to her,  
And therefore dearer ; or if not so new,  
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power  
Of intermitted custom ; then I felt  
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,  
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,  
A prophet certain of my prophecy,  
That never shadow of mistrust can cross  
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts :  
And for my strange petition I will make  
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,  
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift  
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,  
Who knows ? another gift of the high God,  
Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp you  
thanks.'

He spoke : the mother smiled, but half in tears,  
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,  
And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climb'd  
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,  
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,  
And white sails flying on the yellow sea ;  
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea  
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,  
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come ;  
And then descending met them at the gates,  
Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,  
And did her honour as the Prince's bride,  
And clothed her for her bridals like the sun  
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,  
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,  
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.  
 But Enid ever kept the faded silk,  
 Remembering how first he came on her,  
 Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,  
 And all her foolish fears about the dress,  
 And all his journey toward her, as himself  
 Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,  
 'Put on your worst and meanest dress,' she found  
 And took it, and array'd herself therein.

O purblind race of miserable men,  
 How many among us at this very hour  
 Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,  
 By taking true for false, or false for true ;  
 Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world  
 Groping, how many, until we pass and reach  
 That other, where we see as we are seen !

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth  
 That morning, when they both had got to horse,  
 Perhaps because he loved her passionately,  
 And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,  
 Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce  
 Upon a head so dear in thunder, said :  
 'Not at my side ! I charge you ride before,  
 Ever a good way on before ; and this  
 I charge you, on your duty as a wife,  
 Whatever happens, not to speak to me,  
 No, not a word !' and Enid was aghast ;  
 And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,  
 When crying out 'Effeminate as I am,  
 I will not fight my way with gilded arms,  
 All shall be iron ;' he loosed a mighty purse,  
 Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward the squire.  
 So the last sight that Enid had of home  
 Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown  
 With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the squire

Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,  
 'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down the tracks  
 Thro' which he bade her lead him on, they past  
 The marches, and by bandit-haunted holes,  
 Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,  
 And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode:  
 Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd soon:  
 A stranger meeting them had surely thought,  
 They rode so slowly and they look'd so pale,  
 That each had suffer'd some exceeding wrong.  
 For he was ever saying to himself  
 'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,  
 To compass her with sweet observances,  
 To dress her beautifully and keep her true'—  
 And there he broke the sentence in his heart  
 Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue  
 May break it, when his passion masters him.  
 And she was ever praying the sweet heavens  
 To save her dear lord whole from any wound.  
 And ever in her mind she cast about  
 For that unnoticed failing in herself,  
 Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;  
 Till the great plover's human whistle amazed  
 Her heart, and glancing round the waste she  
 fear'd

In every wavering brake an ambuscade.  
 Then thought again 'if there be such in me,  
 I might amend it by the grace of heaven,  
 If he would only speak and tell me of it.'

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,  
 Then Enid was aware of three tall knights  
 On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a rock  
 In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;  
 And heard one crying to his fellow, 'Look,  
 Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,  
 Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;  
 Come, we will slay him and will have his horse  
 And armour, and his damsel shall be ours.'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and said ;  
 ' I will go back a little to my lord,  
 And I will tell him all their caitiff talk ;  
 For, be he wroth even to slaying me,  
 Far liever by his dear hand had I die,  
 Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame.'

Then she went back some paces of return,  
 Met his full frown timidly firm, and said :  
 ' My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock  
 Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast  
 That they would slay you, and possess your horse  
 And armour, and your damsel should be theirs.'

He made a wrathful answer. ' Did I wish  
 Your silence or your warning ? one command  
 I laid upon you, not to speak to me,  
 And thus you keep it ! Well then, look — for  
     now,  
 Whether you wish me victory or defeat,  
 Long for my life, or hunger for my death,  
 Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,  
 And down upon him bare the bandit three.  
 And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint  
 Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his breast  
 And out beyond ; and then against his brace  
 Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him  
 A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,  
 Swung from his brand a windy buffet out  
 Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd the twain  
 Or slew them, and dismounting like a man  
 That skins the wild beast after slaying him,  
 Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born  
 The three gay suits of armour which they wore,  
 And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits  
 Of armour on their horses, each on each,  
 And tied the bridle-reins of all the three



Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on  
Before you ;' and she drove them thro' the waste.

He follow'd nearer : ruth began to work  
Against his anger in him, while he watch'd  
The being he loved best in all the world,  
With difficulty in mild obedience  
Driving them on : he fain had spoken to her,  
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath  
And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all within ;  
But evermore it seem'd an easier thing  
At once without remorse to strike her dead,  
Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own bright face  
Accuse her of the least immodesty :  
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the  
more  
That she *could* speak whom his own ear had  
heard .

Call herself false : and suffering thus he made  
Minutes an age : but in scarce longer time  
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,  
Before he turn to fall seaward again,  
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold  
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,  
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,  
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly arm'd,  
Whereof one seem'd far larger than her lord,  
And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a prize !  
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,  
And all in charge of whom ? a girl : set on.'  
'Nay' said the second, 'yonder comes a knight.'  
The third, 'A craven ; how he hangs his head.'  
The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one ?  
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him.'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and said,  
'I will abide the coming of my lord,  
And I will tell him all their villainy.  
My lord is weary with the fight before,

And they will fall upon him unawares.  
 I needs must disobey him for his good ;  
 How should I dare obey him to his harm ?  
 Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me for it,  
 I save a life dearer to me than mine.'

And she abode his coming and said to him  
 With timid firmness, ' Have I leave to speak ? '  
 He said, ' You take it, speaking,' and she spoke.

' There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,  
 And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one  
 Is larger limb'd than you are, and they say  
 That they will fall upon you while you pass.'

To which he flung a wrathful answer back :  
 ' And if there were an hundred in the wood,  
 And every man were larger-limb'd than I,  
 And all at once should sally out upon me,  
 I swear it would not ruffle me so much  
 As you that not obey me. Stand aside,  
 And if I fall, cleave to the better man.'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,  
 Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe  
 Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.  
 And he, she dreaded most, bare down upon him.  
 Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd ; but Geraint's,  
 A little in the late encounter strain'd,  
 Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corselet home,  
 And then brake short, and down his enemy roll'd,  
 And there lay still ; as he that tells the tale,  
 Saw once a great piece of a promontory,  
 That had a sapling growing on it, slip  
 From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the  
 beach,  
 And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew :  
 So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair  
 Of comrades, making slower at the Prince,

When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood ;  
 On whom the victor, to confound them more,  
 Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry ; for as one,  
 That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,  
 All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears  
 The drumming thunder of the huger fall  
 At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear  
 His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,  
 And foemen scared, like that false pair who turn'd  
 Flying, but, overtaken, died the death  
 Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd the lance  
 That pleased him best, and drew from those dead  
                   wolves

Their three gay suits of armour, each from each,  
 And bound them on their horses, each on each,  
 And tied the bridle-reins of all the three  
 Together, and said to her, ' Drive them on  
 Before you,' and she drove them thro' the wood.

He follow'd nearer still : the pain she had  
 To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,  
 Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,  
 Together, served a little to disedge  
 The sharpness of that pain about her heart :  
 And they themselves, like creatures gently born  
 But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long  
 By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light ears, and felt  
 Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood they past,  
 And issuing under open heavens beheld  
 A little town with towers, upon a rock,  
 And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased  
 In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it :  
 And down a rocky pathway from the place  
 There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in his hand  
 Bare victual for the mowers : and Geraint

Had ruth again on Enid looking pale :  
 Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,  
 He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by him, said,  
 ' Friend, let her eat ; the damsel is so faint.'  
 ' Yea, willingly,' replied the youth ; ' and you,  
 My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,  
 And only meet for mowers ;' then set down  
 His basket, and dismounting on the sward  
 They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.  
 And Enid took a little delicately,  
 Less having stomach for it than desire  
 To close with her lord's pleasure ; but Geraint  
 Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,  
 And when he found all empty, was amazed ;  
 And ' Boy,' said he, ' I have eaten all, but take  
 A horse and arms for guerdon ; choose the best.'  
 He, reddening in extremity of delight,  
 ' My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'  
 ' You will be all the wealthier,' cried the Prince.  
 ' I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,  
 ' Not guerdon ; for myself can easily,  
 While your good damsel rests, return, and fetch  
 Fresh victual for these mowers of our Earl ;  
 For these are his, and all the field is his,  
 And I myself am his ; and I will tell him  
 How great a man you are : he loves to know  
 When men of mark are in his territory :  
 And he will have you to his palace here,  
 And serve you costlier than with mowers' fare.'

Then said Geraint, ' I wish no better fare :  
 I never ate with angrier appetite  
 Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.  
 And into no Earl's palace will I go.  
 I know, God knows, too much of palaces !  
 And if he want me, let him come to me.  
 But hire us some fair chamber for the night,  
 And stalling for the horses, and return  
 With victual for these men, and let us know.'

‘Yea, my kind lord,’ said the glad youth, and went,  
Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,  
And up the rocky pathway disappear’d,  
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

But when the Prince had brought his errant eyes  
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance  
At Enid, where she droopt: his own false doom,  
That shadow of mistrust should never cross  
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sigh’d ;  
Then with another humourous ruth remark’d  
The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,  
And watch’d the sun blaze on the turning scythe,  
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.  
But she, remembering her old ruin’d hall,  
And all the windy clamour of the daws  
About her hollow turret, pluck’d the grass  
There growing longest by the meadow’s edge,  
And into many a listless annulet,  
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,  
Wove and unwove it, till the boy return’d  
And told them of a chamber, and they went ;  
Where, after saying to her, ‘ If you will,  
Call for the woman of the house,’ to which  
She answer’d, ‘ Thanks, my lord ; ’ the two remain’d  
Apart by all the chamber’s width, and mute  
As creatures voiceless thro’ the fault of birth,  
Or two wild men supporters of a shield.  
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance  
The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,  
And heel against the pavement echoing, burst  
Their drowze ; and either started while the door,  
Push’d from without, drave backward to the wall,  
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,  
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,  
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,  
Enter’d the wild lord of the place, Limours.

He moving up with pliant courtliness,  
 Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,  
 In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,  
 Found Enid with the corner of his eye,  
 And knew her sitting sad and solitary.  
 Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer  
 To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously  
 According to his fashion, bad the host  
 Call in what men soever were his friends,  
 And feast with these in honour of their earl ;  
 'And care not for the cost ; the cost is mine.'

And wine and food were brought, and Earl  
 Limours

Drank till he jested with all ease, and told  
 Free tales, and took the word and play'd upon it,  
 And made it of two colours ; for his talk,  
 When wine and free companions kindled him,  
 Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem  
 Of fifty facets ; thus he moved the Prince  
 To laughter and his comrades to applause.  
 Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd Limours,  
 'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak  
 To your good damsel there who sits apart,  
 And seems so lonely ?' 'My free leave' he said ;  
 'Get her to speak : she does not speak to me.'  
 Then rose Limours and looking at his feet,  
 Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,  
 Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,  
 Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisperingly :

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,  
 Enid my early and my only love,  
 Enid the loss of whom has turn'd me wild —  
 What chance is this ? how is it I see you here ?  
 You are in my power at last, are in my power.  
 Yet fear me not : I call mine own self wild,  
 But keep a touch of sweet civility  
 Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.

I thought, but that your father came between,  
 In former days you saw me favourably.  
 And if it were so do not keep it back ;  
 Make me a little happier : let me know it :  
 Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost ?  
 Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.  
 And, Enid, you and he, I see it with joy —  
 You sit apart, you do not speak to him,  
 You come with no attendance, page or maid,  
 To serve you — does he love you as of old ?  
 For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know  
 Tho' men may bicker with the things they love,  
 They would not make them laughable in all eyes,  
 Not while they loved them ; and your wretched  
 dress,  
 A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks  
 Your story, that this man loves you no more.  
 Your beauty is no beauty to him now :  
 A common chance — right well I know it — pall'd —  
 For I know men : nor will you win him back,  
 For the man's love once gone never returns.  
 But here is one who loves you as of old ;  
 With more exceeding passion than of old :  
 Good, speak the word : my followers ring him round :  
 He sits unarm'd ; I hold a finger up ;  
 They understand : no ; I do not mean blood :  
 Nor need you look so scared at what I say :  
 My malice is no deeper than a moat,  
 No stronger than a wall : there is the keep ;  
 He shall not cross us more ; speak but the word :  
 Or speak it not ; but then by Him that made me  
 The one true lover which you ever had,  
 I will make use of all the power I have.  
 O pardon me ! the madness of that hour,  
 When first I parted from you, moves me yet.'

At this the tender sound of his own voice  
 And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,  
 Made his eye moist ; but Enid fear'd his eyes,

Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast ;  
 And answer'd with such craft as women use,  
 Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance  
 That breaks upon them perilously, and said :

‘ Earl, if you love me as in former years,  
 And do not practise on me, come with morn,  
 And snatch me from him as by violence ;  
 Leave me to-night : I am weary to the death.’

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd plume  
 Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous Earl,  
 And the stout Prince bad him a loud good-night.  
 He moving homeward babbled to his men,  
 How Enid never loved a man but him,  
 Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,  
 Debating his command of silence given,  
 And that she now perforce must violate it,  
 Held commune with herself, and while she held  
 He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart  
 To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased  
 To find him yet unwounded after fight,  
 And hear him breathing low and equally.  
 Anon she rose, and stepping lightly, heap'd  
 The pieces of his armour in one place,  
 All to be there against a sudden need ;  
 Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd  
 By that day's grief and travel, evermore  
 Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then  
 Went slipping down horrible precipices,  
 And strongly striking out her limbs awoke ;  
 Then thought she heard the wild Earl at the door,  
 With all his rout of random followers,  
 Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her ;  
 Which was the red cock shouting to the light,  
 As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world,  
 And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.



And once again she rose to look at it,  
 But touch'd it unawares : jangling, the casque  
 Fell, and he started up and stared at her.  
 Then breaking his command of silence given,  
 She told him all that Earl Limours had said,  
 Except the passage that he loved her not ;  
 Nor left untold the craft herself had used ;  
 But ended with apology so sweet,  
 Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd  
 So justified by that necessity,  
 That tho' he thought ' was it for him she wept  
 In Devon ? ' he but gave a wrathful groan,  
 Saying ' your sweet faces make good fellows fools  
 And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring  
 Charger and palfrey.' So she glided out  
 Among the heavy breathings of the house,  
 And like a household Spirit at the walls  
 Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and return'd :  
 Then tending her rough lord, tho' all unask'd,  
 In silence, did him service as a squire ;  
 Till issuing arm'd he found the host and 'cried,  
 ' Thy reckoning, friend ? ' and ere he learnt it,  
     ' Take  
 Five horses and their armours ; ' and the host,  
 Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,  
 ' My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one !'  
 ' You will be all the wealthier ' said the Prince,  
 And then to Enid, ' Forward ! and to-day  
 I charge you, Enid, more especially,  
 What thing soever you may hear, or see,  
 Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use  
 To charge you) that you speak not but obey.'

And Enid answer'd, ' Yea, my lord, I know  
 Your wish, and would obey ; but riding first,  
 I hear the violent threats you do not hear,  
 I see the danger which you cannot see :  
 Then not to give you warning, that seems hard ;  
 Almost beyond me : yet I would obey.'

‘Yea so,’ said he, ‘do it: be not too wise;  
 Seeing that you are wedded to a man,  
 Not quite mismated with a yawning clown,  
 But one with arms to guard his head and yours,  
 With eyes to find you out however far,  
 And ears to hear you even in his dreams.’

With that he turn’d and look’d as keenly at her  
 As careful robins eye the delver’s toil;  
 And that within her, which a wanton fool,  
 Or hasty judger would have call’d her guilt,  
 Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.  
 And Geraint look’d and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,  
 Led from the territory of false Limours  
 To the waste earldom of another earl,  
 Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call’d the Bull,  
 Went Enid with her sullen follower on.  
 Once she look’d back, and when she saw him ride  
 More near by many a rood than yester-morn,  
 It well nigh made her cheerful; till Geraint  
 Waving an angry hand as who should say  
 ‘You watch me,’ sadden’d all her heart again.  
 But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,  
 The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof  
 Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw  
 Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.  
 Then not to disobey her lord’s behest,  
 And yet to give him warning, for he rode  
 As if he heard not, moving back she held  
 Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.  
 At which the warrior in his obstinacy,  
 Because she kept the letter of his word  
 Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood.  
 And in the moment after, wild Limours,  
 Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud  
 Whose skirts are loosen’d by the breaking storm,  
 Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,

And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,  
 Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore  
 Down by the length of lance and arm beyond  
 The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,  
 And overthrew the next that follow'd him,  
 And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.  
 But at the flash and motion of the man  
 They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal  
 Of darting fish, that on a summer morn  
 Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot  
 Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,  
 But if a man who stands upon the brink  
 But lift a shining hand against the sun,  
 There is not left the twinkle of a fin  
 Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower ;  
 So, scared but at the motion of the man,  
 Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,  
 And left him lying in the public way ;  
 So vanish friendships only made in wine. }

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,  
 Who saw the chargers of the two that fell  
 Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,  
 Mixt with the flyers. ' Horse and man,' he said,  
 ' All of one mind and all right-honest friends !  
 Not a hoof left : and I methinks till now  
 Was honest — paid with horses and with arms ;  
 I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg :  
 And so what say you, shall we strip him there  
 Your lover ? has your palfrey heart enough  
 To bear his armour ? shall we fast, or dine ?  
 No ? — then do you, being right honest, pray  
 That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,  
 I too would still be honest.' Thus he said :  
 And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,  
 And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss  
 Falls in a far land and he knows it not,

But coming back he learns it, and the loss  
 So pains him that he sickens nigh to death ;  
 So fared it with Geraint, who being prick'd  
 In combat with the follower of Limours,  
 Bled underneath his armour secretly,  
 And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife  
 What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,  
 Till his eye darken'd and his helmet wagg'd ;  
 And at a sudden swerving of the road,  
 Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,  
 The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,  
 Suddenly came, and at his side all pale  
 Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,  
 Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye  
 Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,  
 And tearing off her veil of faded silk  
 Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,  
 And swathed the hurt that drain'd her dear lord's  
 life.

Then after all was done that hand could do,  
 She rested, and her desolation came  
 Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,  
 For in that realm of lawless turbulence,  
 A woman weeping for her murder'd mate  
 Was cared as much for as a summer shower :  
 One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,  
 Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him :  
 Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,  
 Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl ;  
 Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,  
 He drove the dust against her veilless eyes :  
 Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm  
 Before an ever-fancied arrow, made  
 The long way smoke beneath him in his fear ;  
 At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,

And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,  
While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,  
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,  
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,  
Came riding with a hundred lances up ;  
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,  
Cried out with a big voice, ' What, is he dead ?'  
' No, no, not dead !' she answer'd in all haste.  
' Would some of your kind people take him up,  
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun :  
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead.'

Then said Earl Doorm ; ' Well, if he be not  
dead,  
Why wail you for him thus ? you seem a child.  
And be he dead, I count you for a fool ;  
Your wailing will not quicken him : dead or not,  
You mar a comely face with idiot tears.  
Yet, since the face is comely — some of you,  
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall :  
An if he live, we will have him of our band ;  
And if he die, why earth has earth enough  
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,  
A noble one.'

He spake, and past away,  
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,  
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone  
Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys  
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears  
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,  
Gnawing and growling : so the ruffians growl'd,  
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,  
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid ;  
Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,  
Such as they brought upon their forays out  
For those that might be wounded ; laid him on it  
All in the hollow of his shield, and took

And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,  
 (His gentle charger following him unled)  
 And cast him and the bier in which he lay  
 Down on an oaken settle in the hall,  
 And then departed, hot in haste to join  
 Their luckier mates, but growling as before,  
 And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,  
 And their own Earl, and their own souls, and  
 her.

They might as well have blest her: she was deaf  
 To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,  
 There in the naked hall, propping his head,  
 And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.  
 And at the last he waken'd from his swoon,  
 And found his own dear bride propping his head,  
 And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him;  
 And felt the warm tears falling on his face;  
 And said to his own heart, 'she weeps for me:'  
 And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as dead,  
 That he might prove her to the uttermost,  
 And say to his own heart 'she weeps for me.'

But in the falling afternoon return'd  
 The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.  
 His lusty spearmen follow'd him with noise:  
 Each hurling down a heap of things that rang  
 Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,  
 And doff'd his helm: and then there flutter'd in,  
 Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,  
 A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,  
 And mingled with the spearmen: and Earl Doorm  
 Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,  
 And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his spears.  
 And men brought in whole hogs and quarter  
 beeves,  
 And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh:  
 And none spaké word, but all sat down at once,

And ate with tumult in the naked hall,  
 Feeding like horses when you hear them feed ;  
 Till Enid shrank far back into herself,  
 To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.  
 But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,  
 He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and found  
 A damsel drooping in a corner of it.  
 Then he remember'd her, and how she wept ;  
 And out of her there came a power upon him ;  
 And rising on the sudden he said, ' Eat !  
 I never yet beheld a thing so pale.  
 God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.  
 Eat ! Look yourself. Good luck had your good  
     man,  
 For were I dead who is it would weep for me ?  
 Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath,  
 Have I beheld a lily like yourself.  
 And so there lived some colour in your cheek,  
 There is not one among my gentlewomen  
 Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.  
 But listen to me, and by me be ruled,  
 And I will do the thing I have not done,  
 For you shall share my earldom with me, girl,  
 And we will live like two birds in one nest,  
 And I will fetch you forage from all fields,  
 For I compel all creatures to my will.'

He spoke : the brawny spearman let his cheek  
 Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and turning  
     stared ;  
 While some, whose souls the old serpent long had  
     drawn  
 Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf  
 And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear  
 What shall not be recorded — women they,  
 Women, or what had been those gracious things,  
 But now desired the humbling of their best,  
 Yea, would have helped him to it : and all at once  
 They hated her, who took no thought of them,

But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet  
 Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesy,  
 He being as he is, to let me be.'

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,  
 But like a mighty patron, satisfied  
 With what himself had done so graciously,  
 Assumed that she had thanked him, adding, 'yea,  
 Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I be glad  
 Henceforth in all the world at anything,  
 Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her talk,  
 As all but empty heart and weariness  
 And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,  
 And bare her by main violence to the board,  
 And thrust the dish before her, crying, 'Eat.'

'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not eat,  
 Till yonder man upon the bier arise,  
 And eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' he answer'd.  
 'Here!'

(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it to her,)  
 'Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,  
 God's curse, with anger — often I myself,  
 Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat:  
 Drink therefore, and the wine will change your  
 will.'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I will not drink,  
 Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,  
 And drink with me; and if he rise no more,  
 I will not look at wine until I die.'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his hall,  
 Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper lip,  
 And coming up close to her, said at last;



' Girl, for I see you scorn my courtesies,  
 Take warning : yonder man is surely dead ;  
 And I compel all creatures to my will.  
 Nor eat nor drink ? And wherefore wail for one,  
 Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn  
 By dressing it in rags ? Amazed am I,  
 Beholding how you butt against my wish,  
 That I forbear you thus : cross me no more.  
 At least put off to please me this poor gown,  
 This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed :  
 I love that beauty should go beautifully :  
 For see you not my gentlewomen here,  
 How gay, how suited to the house of one,  
 Who loves that beauty should go beautifully !  
 Rise therefore ; robe yourself in this : obey.'

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen  
 Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,  
 Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue  
 Play'd into green, and thicker down the front  
 With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,  
 When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,  
 And with the dawn ascending lets the day  
 Strike where it clung : so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved  
 Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,  
 With life-long injuries burning unavenged,  
 And now their hour has come ; and Enid said :

' In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,  
 And loved me serving in my father's hall :  
 In this poor gown I rode with him to court,  
 And there the Queen array'd me like the sun :  
 In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,  
 When now we rode upon this fatal quest  
 Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd :  
 And this poor gown I will not cast aside  
 Until himself arise a living man,

And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough :  
 Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be :  
 I never loved, can never love but him :  
 Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,  
 He being as he is, to let me be.'

Then strode the brute Earl up and down his hall,  
 And took his russet beard between his teeth ;  
 Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood  
 Crying, ' I count it of no more avail,  
 Dame to be gentle than ungentle with you ;  
 Take my salute,' unknighly with flat hand,  
 However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid in her utter helplessness,  
 And since she thought, ' he had not dared to do it,  
 Except he surely knew my lord was dead,'  
 Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,  
 As of a wild thing taken in the trap,  
 Which sees the trapper coming thro' the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword,  
 (It lay beside him in the hollow shield),  
 Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it  
 Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a ball  
 The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor.  
 So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.  
 And all the men and women in the hall  
 Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled  
 Yelling as from a spectre, and the two  
 Were left alone together, and he said :

' Enid, I have used you worse than that dead  
 man ;  
 Done you more wrong : we both have undergone  
 That trouble which has left me thrice your own :  
 Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.  
 And here I lay this penance on myself,  
 Not, tho' mine own ears heard you yester-morn —

You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,  
I heard you say, that you were no true wife :  
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it :  
I do believe yourself against yourself,  
And will henceforward rather die than doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender word,  
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart :  
She only prayed him, ' Fly, they will return  
And slay you ; fly, your charger is without,  
My palfrey lost.' ' Then, Enid, shall you ride  
Behind me.' ' Yea,' said Enid, ' let us go.'  
And moving out they found the stately horse,  
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,  
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,  
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came, and stoop'd  
With a low whinny toward the pair : and she  
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,  
Glad also ; then Geraint upon the horse  
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot  
She set her own and climb'd ; he turn'd his face  
And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms  
About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise  
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,  
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind  
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous hour  
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,  
And felt him hers again : she did not weep,  
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist  
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green  
Before the useful trouble of the rain :  
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes  
As not to see before them on the path,  
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,  
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance  
In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.  
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,

She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,  
 Shriek'd to the stranger, 'Slay not a dead man !'  
 'The voice of Enid,' said the knight ; but she,  
 Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,  
 Was moved so much the more, and shriek'd again,  
 'O cousin, slay not him who gave you life.'  
 And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake :  
 'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love ;  
 I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm ;  
 And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,  
 Who love you, Prince, with something of the love  
 Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.  
 For once, when I was up so high in pride  
 That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,  
 By overthrowing me you threw me higher.  
 Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,  
 And since I knew this Earl, when I myself  
 Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,  
 I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm  
 (The King is close behind me) bidding him  
 Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,  
 Submit, and hear the judgment of the King.'

'He hears the judgment of the King of Kings,'  
 Cried the wan Prince ; 'and lo the powers of Doorm  
 Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,  
 Where, huddled here and there on mound and  
 knoll,  
 Were men and women staring and aghast,  
 While some yet fled ; and then he plainlier told  
 How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall.  
 But when the knight besought him, 'Follow me,  
 Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear  
 Speak what has chanced ; you surely have endured  
 Strange chances here alone ;' that other flush'd,  
 And hung his head, and halted in reply,  
 Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,  
 And after madness acted question ask'd :  
 Till Edyrn crying, 'If you will not go

To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'  
 'Enough,' he said, 'I follow,' and they went.  
 But Enid in their going had two fears  
 One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,  
 And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,  
 When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,  
 She shrank a little. In a hollow land,  
 From which old fires have broken, men may fear  
 Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said :

'Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause  
 To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.  
 Yourself were first the blameless cause to make  
 My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood  
 Break into furious flame; being repulsed  
 By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought  
 Until I overturn'd him; then set up  
 (With one main purpose ever at my heart)  
 My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;  
 Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,  
 And, toppling over all antagonism,  
 So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself  
 Unconquerable, for I was well-nigh mad:  
 And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,  
 I should have slain your father, seized yourself.  
 I lived in hope that sometime you would come  
 To these my lists with him whom best you loved;  
 And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,  
 The truest eyes that ever answer'd heaven,  
 Behold me overturn and trample on him.  
 Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd to me,  
 I should not less have kill'd him. And you  
 came, —  
 But once you came, — and with your own true eyes  
 Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one  
 Speaks of a service done him) overthrow  
 My proud self, and my purpose three years old,  
 And set his foot upon me, and give me life.  
 There was I broken down; there was I saved :

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life  
 He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.  
 And all the penance the Queen laid upon me  
 Was but to rest awhile within her court ;  
 Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,  
 And waiting to be treated like a wolf,  
 Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,  
 Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,  
 Such fine reserve and noble reticence,  
 Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace  
 Of tenderest courtesy, that I began  
 'To glance behind me at my former life,  
 And find that it had been the wolf's indeed :  
 And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,  
 Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,  
 Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,  
 Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.  
 And you were often there about the Queen,  
 But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw ;  
 Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,  
 But kept myself aloof till I was changed ;  
 And fear not, cousin ; I am changed indeed.'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,  
 Like simple noble natures, credulous  
 Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,  
 There most in those who most have done them ill.  
 And when they reach'd the camp the King himself  
 Advanced to greet them, and beholding her  
 'Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a word,  
 But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held  
 In converse for a little, and return'd,  
 And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,  
 And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-like,  
 And show'd an empty tent allotted her,  
 And glancing for a minute, till he saw her  
 Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and said :

'Prince, when of late you pray'd me for my leave

To move to your own land, and there defend  
 Your marches, I was prick'd with some reproof,  
 As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be,  
 By having look'd too much thro' alien eyes,  
 And wrought too long with delegated hands,  
 Not used mine own : but now behold me come  
 To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,  
 With Edyrn and with others : have you look'd  
 At Edyrn ? have you seen how nobly changed ?  
 This work of his is great and wonderful.  
 His very face with change of heart is changed.  
 The world will not believe a man repents :  
 And this wise world of ours is mainly right.  
 Full seldom *does* a man repent, or use  
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch  
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,  
 And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.  
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart  
 As I will weed this land before I go.  
 I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,  
 Not rashly, but have proved him everyway  
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,  
 Sanest and most obedient : and indeed  
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself  
 After a life of violence, seems to me  
 A thousand-fold more great and wonderful  
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,  
 My subject with my subjects under him,  
 Should make an onslaught single on a realm  
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,  
 And were himself nigh wounded to the death.'

So spake the King ; low bow'd the Prince, and  
 felt

His work was neither great nor wonderful,  
 And past to Enid's tent ; and thither came  
 The King's own leech to look into his hurt ;  
 And Enid tended on him there ; and there  
 Her constant motion round him, and the breath

Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,  
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood  
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,  
 As the south-west that blowing Bala lake  
 Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,  
 The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes  
 On whom his father Uther left in charge  
 Long since, to guard the justice of the King :  
 He look'd and found them wanting ; and as now  
 Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills  
 To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,  
 He rooted out the slothful officer  
 Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at wrong,  
 And in their chairs set up a stronger race  
 With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men  
 To till the wastes, and moving everywhere  
 Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,  
 And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they past  
 With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.  
 There the great Queen once more embraced her  
 friend,  
 And clothed her in apparel like the day.  
 And tho' Geraint could never take again  
 That comfort from their converse which he took  
 Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,  
 He rested well content that all was well.  
 Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,  
 And fifty knights rode with them to the shores  
 Of Severn, and they past to their own land.  
 And there he kept the justice of the King  
 So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts  
 Applauded and the spiteful whisper died :  
 And being ever foremost in the chase,  
 And victor at the tilt and tournament,  
 They call'd him the great Prince and man of men.



But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call  
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named  
Enid the Good ; and in their halls arose  
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints  
Of times to be ; nor did he doubt her more  
But rested in her fëalty, till he crown'd  
A happy life with a fair death, and fell  
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea  
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

## VIVIEN.

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A STORM was coming. but the winds were still,  
And in the wild woods of Broceliande,  
Before an oak, so hollow huge and old  
It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,  
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court :  
She hated all the knights, and heard in thought  
Their lavish comment when her name was named.  
For once, when Arthur walking all alone,  
Vext at a rumour rife about the Queen,  
Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,  
Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood  
With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,  
And flutter'd adoration, and at last  
With dark sweet hints of some who prized him more  
Than who should prize him most ; at which the King  
Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by :  
But one had watch'd, and had not held his peace :  
It made the laughter of an afternoon  
That Vivien should attempt the blameless King.  
And after that, she set herself to gain  
Him, the most famous man of all those times,  
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,  
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,  
Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens ;  
The people called him Wizard ; whom at first  
She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk,  
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd points

Of slander, glancing here and grazing there ;  
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the Seer  
Would watch her at her petulance, and play,  
Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and laugh  
As those that watch a kitten ; thus he grew  
Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and she,  
Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,  
Began to break her sports with graver fits,  
Turn red or pale, would often when they met  
Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him  
With such a fixt devotion, that the old man,  
Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at times  
Would flatter his own wish in age for love,  
And half believe her true : for thus at times  
He waver'd ; but that other clung to him,  
Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.  
Then fell upon him a great melancholy ;  
And leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the beach ;  
There found a little boat, and stept into it ;  
And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her not.  
She took the helm and he the sail ; the boat  
Drave with a sudden wind across the deeps,  
And touching Breton sands, they disembark'd.  
And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,  
Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande.  
For Merlin once had told her of a charm,  
The which if any wrought on any one  
With woven paces and with waving arms,  
The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie  
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,  
From which was no escape for evermore ;  
And none could bind that man for evermore,  
Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm  
Coming and going, and he lay as dead  
And lost to life and use and name and fame.  
And Vivien ever sought to work the charm  
Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,  
As fancying that her glory would be great  
According to his greatness whom she quench'd.

There lay she all her length and kiss'd his feet,  
 As if in deepest reverence and in love.  
 A twist of gold was round her hair ; a robe  
 Of samite without price, that more exprest  
 Than hid her, clung about her lissome limbs,  
 In colour like the satin-shining palm  
 On shallows in the windy gleams of March :  
 And while she kiss'd them, crying, ' Trample me,  
 Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the world,  
 And I will pay you worship ; tread me down  
 And I will kiss you for it ; ' he was mute :  
 So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,  
 As on a dull day in an Ocean cave  
 The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall  
 In silence : wherefore, when she lifted up  
 A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,  
 ' O Merlin, do you love me ? ' and again,  
 ' O Merlin, do you love me ? ' and once more,  
 ' Great Master, do you love me ? ' he was mute.  
 And lissome Vivien holding by his heel,  
 Writhed toward him, slid up his knee and sat,  
 Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet  
 Together, curved an arm about his neck,  
 Clung like a snake ; and letting her left hand  
 Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,  
 Made with her right a comb of pearl to part  
 The lists of such a beard as youth gone out  
 Had left in ashes : then he spoke and said,  
 Not looking at her, ' who are wise in love  
 Love most, say least, ' and Vivien answer'd quick,  
 ' I saw the little elf-god eyeless once  
 In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot :  
 But neither eyes nor tongue — O stupid child !  
 Yet you are wise who say it ; let me think  
 Silence is wisdom : I am silent then  
 And ask no kiss ; ' then adding all at once,  
 ' And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom, ' drew  
 The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard  
 Across her neck and bosom to her knee,

And call'd herself a gilded summer fly  
 Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,  
 Who meant to eat her up in that wild wood  
 Without one word. So Vivien call'd herself,  
 But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star  
 Veil'd in gray vapour ; till he sadly smiled :  
 ' To what request for what strange boon,' he said,  
 ' Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,  
 O Vivien, the preamble ? yet my thanks,  
 For these have broken up my melancholy.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,  
 ' What, O my master, have you found your voice ?  
 I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at last !  
 But yesterday you never open'd lip,  
 Except indeed to drink : no cup had we :  
 In mine own lady palms I cull'd the spring  
 That gather'd trickling dropwise from the cleft,  
 And made a pretty cup of both my hands  
 And offer'd you it kneeling : then you drank  
 And knew no more, nor gave me one poor word ;  
 O no more thanks than might a goat have given  
 With no more sign of reverence than a beard.  
 And when we halted at that other well,  
 And I was faint to swooning, and you lay  
 Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of those  
 Deep meadows we had traversed, did you know  
 That Vivien bathed your feet before her own ?  
 And yet no thanks : and all thro' this wild wood  
 And all this morning when I fondled you :  
 Boon, yes, there was a boon, one not so strange —  
 How had I wrong'd you ? surely you are wise,  
 But such a silence is more wise than kind.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said ;  
 ' O did you never lie upon the shore,  
 And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave  
 Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks ?  
 Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,

Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,  
 Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.  
 And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court  
 To break the mood. You follow'd me unask'd ;  
 And when I look'd, and saw you following still,  
 My mind involved yourself the nearest thing  
 In that mind-mist : for shall I tell you truth ?  
 You seem'd that wave about to break upon me  
 And sweep me from my hold upon the world,  
 My use and name and fame. Your pardon, child.  
 Your pretty sports have brighten'd all again.  
 And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,  
 Once for wrong done you by confusion, next  
 For thanks it seems till now neglected, last  
 For these your dainty gambols : wherefore ask ;  
 And take this boon so strange and not so strange.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully ;  
 ' O not so strange as my long asking it,  
 Nor yet so strange as you yourself are strange,  
 Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.  
 I ever fear'd you were not wholly mine ;  
 And see, yourself have own'd you did me wrong.  
 The people call you prophet : let it be :  
 But not of those that can expound themselves.  
 Take Vivien for expounder ; she will call  
 That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours  
 No presage, but the same mistrustful mood  
 That makes you seem less noble than yourself,  
 Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,  
 Now ask'd again : for see you not, dear love,  
 That such a mood as that, which lately gloom'd  
 Your fancy when you saw me following you,  
 Must make me fear still more you are not mine,  
 Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,  
 And make me wish still more to learn this charm  
 Of woven paces and of waving hands,  
 As proof of trust. O, Merlin, teach it me.  
 The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.

For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,  
 I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,  
 Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.  
 And therefore be as great as you are named,  
 Not muffled round with selfish reticence.  
 How hard you look and how denyingly !  
 O, if you think this wickedness in me,  
 That I should prove it on you unawares,  
 To make you lose your use and name and fame,  
 That makes me most indignant ; then our bond  
 Had best be loosed for ever : but think or not,  
 By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean truth,  
 As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk :  
 O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,  
 If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,  
 Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,  
 Have tript on such conjectural treachery —  
 May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir hell  
 Down, down, and close again, and nip me flat,  
 If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,  
 Till which I scarce can yield you all I am ;  
 And grant my re-reiterated wish,  
 The great proof of your love : because I think,  
 However wise, you hardly know me yet.  
 And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said,  
 ' I never was less wise, however wise,  
 Too curious Vivien, tho' you talk of trust,  
 Than when I told you first of such a charm.  
 Yea, if you talk of trust I tell you this,  
 Too much I trusted, when I told you that,  
 And stirr'd this vice in you which ruin'd man  
 'Thro' woman the first hour ; for howso'er  
 In children a great curiousness be well,  
 Who have to learn themselves and all the world,  
 In you, that are no child, for still I find  
 Your face is practised, when I spell the lines,  
 I call it, — well, I will not call it vice :  
 But since you name yourself the summer fly,  
 I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,

That settles, beaten back, and beaten back  
 Settles, till one could yield for weariness :  
 But since I will not yield to give you power  
 Upon my life and use and name and fame,  
 Why will you never ask some other boon ?  
 Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much.'

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid  
 That ever bided tryst at village stile,  
 Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears.  
 ' Nay, master, be not wrathful with your maid ;  
 Caress her : let her feel herself forgiven  
 Who feels no heart to ask another boon.  
 I think you hardly know the tender rhyme  
 Of " trust me not at all or all in all."  
 I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,  
 And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

" In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,  
 Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers :  
 Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

" It is the little rift within the lute,  
 That by and by will make the music mute,  
 And ever widening slowly silence all.

" The little rift within the lover's lute,  
 Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,  
 That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

" It is not worth the keeping : let it go :  
 But shall it ? answer, darling, answer, no.  
 And trust me not at all or all in all."

O, master, do you love my tender rhyme ?'

And Merlin look'd and half believed her true,  
 So tender was her voice, so fair her face,  
 So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears



Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower :  
And yet he answer'd half indignantly.

‘ Far other was the song that once I heard  
By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit :  
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,  
To chase a creature that was current then  
In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns.  
It was the time when first the question rose  
About the founding of a Table Round,  
That was to be, for love of God and men  
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world.  
And each incited each to noble deeds.  
And while we waited, one, the youngest of us,  
We could not keep him silent, out he flash'd,  
And into such a song, such fire for fame,  
Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down  
To such a stern and iron-clashing close,  
That when he stopt we long'd to hurl together,  
And should have done it ; but the beauteous beast  
Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,  
And like a silver shadow slipt away  
Thro' the dim land ; and all day long we rode  
Thro' the dim land against a rushing wind,  
That glorious roundel echoing in our ears,  
And chased the flashes of his golden horns  
Until they vanish'd by the fairy well  
That laughs at iron — as our warriors did —  
Where children cast their pins and nails, and cry,  
“ Laugh, little well,” but touch it with a sword,  
It buzzes wildly round the point ; and there  
We lost him : such a noble song was that.  
But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet rhyme,  
I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,  
Were proving it on me, and that I lay  
And felt them slowly ebbing, name and fame.’

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully ;  
‘ O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,

And all thro' following you to this wild wood,  
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.  
 Lo now, what hearts have men ! they never mount  
 As high as woman in her selfless mood.  
 And touching fame, howe'er you scorn my song  
 Take one verse more — the lady speaks it — this :

“ My name, once mine, now thine, is closelier  
 mine,  
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were thine,  
 And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were  
 mine.  
 So trust me not at all or all in all.”

‘ Says she not well ? and there is more — this  
 rhyme  
 Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the Queen,  
 That burst in dancing, and the pearls were spilt ;  
 Some lost, some stolen, some as relics kept.  
 But nevermore the same two sister pearls  
 Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other  
 On her white neck — so is it with this rhyme :  
 It lives dispersedly in many hands,  
 And every minstrel sings it differently ;  
 Yet is there one true line, the pearl of pearls ;  
 “ Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to love.”  
 True : Love, tho' Love were of the grossest, carves  
 A portion from the solid present, eats  
 And uses, careless of the rest ; but Fame,  
 The Fame that follows death is nothing to us ;  
 And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,  
 And counterchanged with darkness ? you yourself  
 Know well that Envy calls you Devil's son,  
 And since you seem the Master of all Art,  
 They fain would make you Master of all Vice.’

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said,  
 ‘ I once was looking for a magic weed,  
 And found a fair young squire who sat alone,

Had carved himself a knightly shield of wood,  
 And then was painting on it fancied arms,  
 Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun  
 In dexter chief; the scroll "I follow fame."  
 And speaking not, but leaning over him,  
 I took his brush and blotted out the bird,  
 And made a Gardener putting in a graff,  
 With this for motto, "Rather use than fame."  
 You should have seen him blush; but afterwards  
 He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,  
 For you, methinks you think you love me well;  
 For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and Love  
 Should have some rest and pleasure in himself,  
 Not ever be too curious for a boon,  
 Too prurient for a proof against the grain  
 Of him you say you love: but Fame with men,  
 Being but ampler means to serve mankind,  
 Should have small rest or pleasure in herself,  
 But work as vassal to the larger love,  
 That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.  
 Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame again  
 Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my boon!  
 What other? for men sought to prove me vile,  
 Because I wish'd to give them greater minds:  
 And then did Envy call me Devil's son:  
 The sick weak beast seeking to help herself  
 By striking at her better, miss'd, and brought  
 Her own claw back, and wounded her own heart.  
 Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,  
 But when my name was lifted up, the storm  
 Broke on the mountain and I cared not for it.  
 Right well know I that Fame is half-disfame,  
 Yet needs must work my work. That other fame,  
 To one at least, who hath not children, vague,  
 The cackle of the unborn about the grave,  
 I cared not for it: a single misty star,  
 Which is the second in a line of stars  
 That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,  
 I never gazed upon it but I dreamt

Of some vast charm concluded in that star  
 To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I fear,  
 Giving you power upon me thro' this charm,  
 That you might play me falsely, having power,  
 However well you think you love me now  
 (As sons of kings loving in pupillage  
 Have turn'd to tyrants when they came to power)  
 I rather dread the loss of use than fame ;  
 If you — and not so much from wickedness,  
 As some wild turn of anger, or a mood  
 Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,  
 To keep me all to your own self, or else  
 A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,  
 Should try this charm on whom you say you love.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in wrath.  
 ' Have I not sworn ? I am not trusted. Good !  
 Well, hide it, hide it ; I shall find it out ;  
 And being found take heed of Vivien.  
 A woman and not trusted, doubtless I  
 Might feel some sudden turn of anger born  
 Of your misfaith ; and your fine epithet  
 Is accurate too, for this full love of mine  
 Without the full heart back may merit well  
 Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,  
 My daily wonder is, I love at all.  
 And as to woman's jealousy, O why not ?  
 O to what end, except a jealous one,  
 And one to make me jealous if I love,  
 Was this fair charm invented by yourself ?  
 I well believe that all about this world  
 You cage a buxom captive here and there,  
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower  
 From which is no escape for evermore.'

Then the great Master merrily answer'd her.  
 ' Full many a love in loving youth was mine,  
 I needed then no charm to keep them mine  
 But youth and love ; and that full heart of yours

Whereof you prattle, may now assure you mine :  
So live uncharm'd. For those who wrought it first,  
The wrist is parted from the hand that waved,  
The feet unmortised from their ankle-bones  
Who paced it, ages back : but will you hear  
The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme ?

‘ There lived a king in the most Eastern East,  
Less old than I, yet older, for my blood  
Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.  
A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,  
Whose bark had plunder'd twenty nameless isles,  
And passing one, at the high peep of dawn,  
He saw two cities in a thousand boats  
All fighting for a woman on the sea.  
And pushing his black craft among them all,  
He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought her off,  
With loss of half his people arrow-slain ;  
A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,  
They said a light came from her when she moved :  
And since the pirate would not yield her up,  
The King impaled him for his piracy ;  
Then made her Queen : but those isle-nurtur'd eyes  
Waged such unwilling tho' successful war  
On all the youth, they sicken'd ; councils thinn'd,  
And armies waned, for magnet-like she drew  
The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts ;  
And beasts themselves would worship ; camels knelt  
Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain back  
That carry kings in castles, bow'd black knees  
Of homage, ringing with their serpent hands,  
To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.  
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent  
His horns of proclamation out thro' all  
The hundred under-kingdoms that he sway'd  
To find a wizard who might teach the King  
Some charm, which being wrought upon the Queen  
Might keep her all his own : to such a one  
He promised more than ever king has given,

A league of mountain full of golden mines,  
 A province with a hundred miles of coast,  
 A palace and a princess, all for him :  
 But on all those who tried and fail'd, the King  
 Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning by it  
 To keep the list low and pretenders back,  
 Or like a king, not to be trifled with —  
 Their heads should moulder on the city gates.  
 And many tried and fail'd, because the charm  
 Of nature in her overbore their own :  
 And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the walls :  
 And many weeks a troop of carrion crows  
 Hung like a cloud above the gateway towers.'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said :  
 ' I sit and gather honey ; yet, methinks,  
 Your tongue has tript a little : ask yourself.  
 The lady never made *unwilling* war  
 With those fine eyes : she had her pleasure in it,  
 And made her good man jealous with good cause.  
 And lived there neither dame nor damsel then  
 Wroth at a lover's loss ? were all as tame,  
 I mean, as noble, as their Queen was fair ?  
 Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,  
 Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,  
 Or make her paler with a poison'd rose ?  
 Well, those were not our days : but did they find  
 A wizard ? Tell me, was he like to thee ?'

She ceased, and made her lithe arm round his  
 neck  
 Tighten, and then drew back, and let her eyes  
 Speak for her, glowing on him, like a bride's  
 On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answer'd laughing, ' Nay, not like to me.  
 At last they found — his foragers for charms —  
 A little glassy-headed hairless man,  
 Who lived alone in a great wild on grass ;

Read but one book, and ever reading grew  
 So grated down and filed away with thought,  
 So lean his eyes were monstrous ; while the skin  
 Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and spine.  
 And since he kept his mind on one sole aim,  
 Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted flesh,  
 Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall  
 That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men  
 Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,  
 And heard their voices talk behind the wall,  
 And learnt their elemental secrets, powers  
 And forces ; often o'er the sun's bright eye  
 Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,  
 And lash'd it at the base with slanting storm ;  
 Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,  
 When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood roar'd,  
 And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow, sunn'd  
 The world to peace again : here was the man.  
 And so by force they dragg'd him to the King.  
 And then he taught the King to charm the Queen  
 In such-wise, that no man could see her more,  
 Nor saw she save the King, who wrought the charm,  
 Coming and going, and she lay as dead,  
 And lost all use of life : but when the King  
 Made proffer of the league of golden mines,  
 The province with a hundred miles of coast,  
 The palace and the princess, that old man  
 Went back to his old wild, and lived on grass,  
 And vanish'd, and his book came down to me.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily ;  
 ' You have the book : the charm is written in it :  
 Good : take my counsel : let me know it at once :  
 For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,  
 With each chest lock'd and padlock'd thirty-fold,  
 And whelm all this beneath as vast a mound  
 As after furious battle turfs the slain  
 On some wild down above the windy deep,  
 I yet should strike upon a sudden means

To dig, pick, open, find and read the charm :  
Then, if I tried it, who should blame me then ?'

And smiling as a Master smiles at one  
That is not of his school, nor any school  
But that where blind and naked Ignorance  
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,  
On all things all day long ; he answer'd her.

'*You* read the book, my pretty Vivien !  
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,  
But every page having an ample marge,  
And every marge enclosing in the midst  
A square of text that looks a little blot,  
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas ;  
And every square of text an awful charm,  
Writ in a language that has long gone by.  
So long, that mountains have arisen since  
With cities on their flanks — *you* read the book  
And every margin scribbled, crost, and cramm'd  
With comment, densest condensation, hard  
To mind and eye ; but the long sleepless nights  
Of my long life have made it easy to me.  
And none can read the text, not even I ;  
And none can read the comment but myself ;  
And in the comment did I find the charm.  
O, the results are simple ; a mere child  
Might use it to the harm of any one,  
And never could undo it : ask no more :  
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,  
But keep that oath you swore, you might, perchance,  
Assay it on some one of the Table Round,  
And all because you dream they babble of you.'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger, said :  
' What dare the full-fed liars say of me ?  
*They* ride abroad redressing human wrongs !  
They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn.  
*They* bound to holy vows of chastity !



Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.  
 But you are man, you well can understand  
 The shame that cannot be explain'd for shame.  
 Not one of all the drove should touch me : swine !'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her words.  
 ' You breathe but accusation vast and vague,  
 Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If you know,  
 Set up the charge you know, to stand or fall !'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrathfully.  
 ' O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him  
 Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his wife  
 And two fair babes, and went to distant lands ;  
 Was one year gone, and on returning found  
 Not two but three : there lay the reckling, one  
 But one hour old ! What said the happy sire ?  
 A seven months' babe had been a truer gift.  
 Those twelve sweet moons confused his fatherhood.'

Then answer'd Merlin, ' Nay, I know the tale.  
 Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame :  
 Some cause had kept him sunder'd from his wife :  
 One child they had : it lived with her : she died :  
 His kinsman travelling on his own affair  
 Was charged by Valence to bring home the child.  
 He brought, not found it therefore : take the truth.'

' O ay,' said Vivien, ' overtrue a tale.  
 What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagramore,  
 That ardent man ? " to pluck the flower in season ;"  
 So says the song, " I trow it is no treason."  
 O Master, shall we call him overquick  
 To crop his own sweet rose before the hour ?'

And Merlin answer'd ' Overquick are you  
 To catch a lothly plume fall'n from the wing  
 Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole prey  
 Is man's good name : he never wrong'd his bride.

I know the tale. An angry gust of wind  
 Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-room'd  
 And many-corridor'd complexities  
 Of Arthur's palace: then he found a door  
 And darkling felt the sculptured ornament  
 That wreathen round it made it seem his own;  
 And wearied out made for the couch and slept,  
 A stainless man beside a stainless maid;  
 And either slept, nor knew of other there;  
 Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose  
 In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely down,  
 Blushing upon them blushing, and at once  
 He rose without a word and parted from her:  
 But when the thing was blazed about the court,  
 The brute world howling forced them into bonds,  
 And as it chanced they are happy, being pure.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely too.  
 What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale  
 And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,  
 The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,  
 Or some black wether of St. Satan's fold.  
 What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,  
 Among the knightly brasses of the graves,  
 And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead!'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her charge.  
 'A sober man is Percivale and pure;  
 But once in life was fluster'd with new wine,  
 Then paced for coolness in the chapel-yard;  
 Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught  
 And meant to stamp him with her master's  
 mark;  
 And that he sinn'd, is not believable;  
 For, look upon his face! — but if he sinn'd,  
 The sin that practice burns into the blood,  
 And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,  
 Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be:  
 Or else were he, the holy king, whose hymns

Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.  
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have ye more ?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in wrath ;  
' O ay ; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend ?  
Traitor or true ? that commerce with the Queen,  
I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,  
Or whisper'd in the corner ? do you know it ?'

To which he answer'd sadly, ' Yea, I know it.  
Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,  
To fetch her, and she took him for the King ;  
So fixt her fancy on him : let him be.  
But have you no one word of loyal praise  
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless man ?'

She answer'd with a low and chuckling laugh ;  
' Him ? is he man at all, who knows and winks ?  
Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks ?  
By which the good king means to blind himself,  
And blinds himself and all the Table Round  
To all the foulness that they work. Myself  
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)  
The pretty, popular name such manhood earns,  
Could call him the main cause of all their crime ;  
Yea, were he not crown'd king, coward, and fool.'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said ;  
' O true and tender ! O my liege and king !  
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,  
Who would'st against thine own eye-witness fain  
Have all men true and leal, all women pure ;  
How, in the mouths of base interpreters,  
From over-fineness not intelligible  
To things with every sense as false and foul  
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle street,  
Is thy white blamelessness accounted blame !'

But Vivien deeming Merlin overborne

By instance, recommenced, and let her tongue  
 Rage like a fire among the noblest names,  
 Polluting, and imputing her whole self,  
 Defaming and defacing, till she left  
 Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.

Her words had issue other than she will'd.  
 He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down, and made  
 A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,  
 And mutter'd in himself, 'tell *her* the charm !  
 So, if she had it, would she rail on me  
 To snare the next, and if she have it not,  
 So will she rail. What did the wanton say ?  
 " Not mount as high ; " we scarce can sink as low :  
 For men at most differ as Heaven and earth,  
 But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell.  
 I know the Table Round, my friends of old ;  
 All brave, and many generous, and some chaste.  
 I think she cloaks the wounds of loss with lies ;  
 I do believe she tempted them and fail'd,  
 She is so bitter : for fine plots may fail,  
 Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face  
 With colours of the heart that are not theirs.  
 I will not let her know : nine tithes of times  
 Face-flatterers and backbiters are the same.  
 And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime  
 Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,  
 Wanting the mental range ; or low desire  
 Not to feel lowest makes them level all ;  
 Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain,  
 To leave an equal baseness ; and in this  
 Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find  
 Some stain or blemish in a name of note,  
 Not grieving that their greatest are so small,  
 Inflate themselves with some insane delight,  
 And judge all nature from her feet of clay,  
 Without the will to lift their eyes, and see  
 Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual fire,  
 And touching other words. I am weary of *her*.'

He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,  
 Half-suffocated in the hoary fell  
 And many-winter'd fleece of throat and chin.  
 But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,  
 And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or thrice,  
 Leapt from her session on 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-clench'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.  
 Then her false voice made way broken with sobs.

'O crueller than was ever told in tale,  
 Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!  
 O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,  
 Or seeming shameful, for what shame in love,  
 So love be true, and not as yours is — nothing  
 Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust  
 Who call'd her what he call'd her — all her crime,  
 All — all — the wish to prove him wholly hers.'

She mused a little, and then clapt her hands.  
 Together with a wailing shriek, and said:  
 'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to the heart!  
 Seeth'd like the kid in its own mother's milk!  
 Kill'd with a word worse than a life of blows!  
 I thought that he was gentle, being great:  
 O God, that I had loved a smaller man!  
 I should have found in him a greater heart.  
 O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw

The knights, the court, the king, dark in your light,  
 Who loved to make men darker than they are,  
 Because of that high pleasure which I had  
 To seat you sole upon my pedestal  
 Of worship — I am answer'd, and henceforth  
 The course of life that seem'd so flowery to me  
 With you for guide and master, only you,  
 Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,  
 And ending in a ruin — nothing left,  
 But into some low cave to crawl, and there,  
 If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,  
 Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness.'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung her head,  
 The snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid  
 Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,  
 And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm  
 In silence, while his anger slowly died  
 Within him, till he let his wisdom go  
 For ease of heart, and half believed her true :  
 Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,  
 ' Come from the storm ' and having no reply,  
 Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the face  
 Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame ;  
 Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest-touching terms  
 To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in vain.  
 At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,  
 And as the cageling newly flown returns,  
 The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing  
 Came to her old perch back, and settled there.  
 There while she sat, half-falling from his knees,  
 Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw  
 The slow tear creep from her closed eyelid yet,  
 About her, more in kindness than in love,  
 The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.  
 But she disliuk'd herself at once and rose,  
 Her arms upon her breast across, and stood  
 A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,  
 Upright and flush'd before him : then she said :

‘ There must be now no passages of love  
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore.  
Since, if I be what I am grossly call’d,  
What should be granted which your own gross  
heart

Would reckon worth the taking? I will go.  
In truth, but one thing now — better have died  
Thrice than have ask’d it once — could make me  
stay —

That proof of trust — so often ask’d in vain!  
How justly, after that vile term of yours,  
I find with grief! I might believe you then,  
Who knows? once more. O, what was once to me  
Mere matter of the fancy, now has grown  
The vast necessity of heart and life.  
Farewell; think kindly of me, for I fear  
My fate or fault, omitting gayer youth  
For one so old, must be to love you still.  
But ere I leave you let me swear once more  
That if I schemed against your peace in this,  
May you just heaven, that darkens o’er me, send  
One flash, that, missing all things else, may make  
My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie.’

Scarce had she ceased, when out of heaven a  
bolt

(For now the storm was close above them) struck,  
Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining  
With darted spikes and splinters of the wood  
The dark earth round. He raised his eyes and  
saw

The tree that shone white-listed thro’ the gloom.  
But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her oath,  
And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,  
And deafen’d with the stammering cracks and claps  
That follow’d, flying back and crying out,  
‘ O Merlin, tho’ you do not love me, save,  
Yet save me!’ clung to him and hugg’d him close;  
And call’d him dear protector in her fright,

Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,  
But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close.  
The pale blood of the wizard at her touch  
Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.  
She blamed herself for telling hearsay tales :  
She shook from fear, and for her fault she wept  
Of petulancy ; she call'd him lord and liege,  
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,  
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate love  
Of her whole life ; and ever overhead  
Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten branch  
Snapt in the rushing of the river-rain  
Above them ; and in change of glare and gloom  
Her eyes and neck glittering went and came ;  
Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,  
Moaning and calling out of other lands,  
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more  
To peace ; and what should not have been had  
    been,  
For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,  
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm  
Of woven paces and of waving hands,  
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,  
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying ' I have made his glory mine,'  
And shrieking out ' O fool,' the harlot leapt  
Adown the forest and the thicket closed  
Behind her, and the forest echo'd ' fool.'



## ELAINE.

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ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,  
Elaine the lily maid of Astolat,  
High in her chamber up a tower to the east  
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot ;  
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray  
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam ;  
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it  
A case of silk, and braided thereupon  
All the devices blazon'd on the shield  
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,  
A border fantasy of branch and flower,  
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.  
Nor rested thus content, but day by day  
Leaving her household and good father climb'd  
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,  
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,  
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,  
Now made a pretty history to herself  
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,  
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,  
Conjecturing when and where : this cut is fresh ;  
That ten years back ; this dealt him at Caerlyle ;  
That at Caerleon ; this at Camelot :  
And ah God's mercy what a stroke was there !  
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God  
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,  
And saved him : so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield

Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name ?  
 He left it with her, when he rode to tilt  
 For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,  
 Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name  
 Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur when none knew from whence he  
 came,  
 Long ere the people chose him for their king,  
 Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,  
 Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.  
 A horror lived about the tarn, and clave  
 Like its own mists to all the mountain side :  
 For here two brothers, one a king, had met  
 And fought together ; but their names were lost.  
 And each had slain his brother at a blow,  
 And down they fell and made the glen abhorr'd :  
 And there they lay till all their bones were  
 bleach'd,  
 And lichen'd into colour with the crags :  
 And one of these, the king, had on a crown  
 Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.  
 And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass  
 All in a misty moonshine, unawares  
 Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull  
 Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown  
 Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims  
 Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn :  
 And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and  
 caught,  
 And set it on his head, and in his heart  
 Heard murmurs ' lo, thou likewise shalt be king.'

Thereafter, when a king, he had the gems  
 Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his  
 knights,  
 Saying ' these jewels, whereupon I chanced  
 Divinely, are the kingdom's not the king's —  
 For public use : henceforward let there be,

Once every year, a joust for one of these :  
 For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn  
 Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow  
 In use of arms and manhood, till we drive  
 The Heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land  
 Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he spoke :  
 And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and  
 still

Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,  
 With purpose to present them to the Queen,  
 When all were won ; but meaning all at once  
 To snare her royal fancy with a boon  
 Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last  
 And largest, Arthur, holding then his court  
 Hard on the river nigh the place which now  
 Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust  
 At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh  
 Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere  
 'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move  
 To these fair jousts ?' 'Yea, lord,' she said, 'you  
 know it.'

'Then will you miss,' he answer'd, 'the great deeds  
 Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,  
 A sight you love to look on.' And the Queen  
 Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly  
 On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.  
 He thinking that he read her meaning there,  
 'Stay with me, I am sick ; my love is more  
 Than many diamonds,' yielded, and a heart,  
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen  
 (However much he yearn'd to make complete  
 The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)  
 Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,  
 Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,  
 And lets me from the saddle ;' and the King  
 Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.  
 No sooner gone than suddenly she began.

' To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame.  
 Why go you not to these fair jousts? the knights  
 Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd  
 Will murmur, lo the shameless ones, who take  
 Their pastime now the trustful king is gone !'  
 Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain :  
 ' Are you so wise? you were not once so wise,  
 My Queen, that summer, when you loved me first.  
 Then of the crowd you took no more account  
 Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,  
 When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,  
 And every voice is nothing. As to knights,  
 Them surely can I silence with all ease.  
 But now my loyal worship is allow'd  
 Of all men : many a bard, without offence,  
 Has link'd our names together in his lay,  
 Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,  
 The pearl of beauty : and our knights at feast  
 Have pledged us in this union, while the king  
 Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?  
 Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,  
 Now weary of my service and devoir,  
 Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh.  
 ' Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,  
 That passionate perfection, my good lord —  
 But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?  
 He never spake word of reproach to me,  
 He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,  
 He cares not for me : only here to-day  
 There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes :  
 Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him — else  
 Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,  
 And swearing men to vows impossible,  
 To make them like himself : but, friend, to me  
 He is all fault who hath no fault at all :  
 For who loves me must have a touch of earth ;  
 The low sun makes the colour : I am yours,

Not Arthur's, as you know, save by the bond.  
 And therefore hear my words : go to the jousts :  
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream  
 When sweetest ; and the vermin voices here  
 May buzz so loud — we scorn them, but they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights.  
 ' And with what face, after my pretext made,  
 Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I  
 Before a king who honours his own word,  
 As if it were his God's ?'

' Yea,' said the Queen,  
 ' A moral child without the craft to rule,  
 Else had he not lost me : but listen to me,  
 If I must find you wit : we hear it said  
 That men go down before your spear at a touch  
 But knowing you are Lancelot ; your great name,  
 This conquers : hide it therefore ; go unknown :  
 Win ! by this kiss you will : and our true king  
 Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,  
 As all for glory ; for to speak him true,  
 You know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,  
 No keener hunter after glory breathes.  
 He loves it in his knights more than himself :  
 They prove to him his work : win and return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,  
 Wroth at himself : not willing to be known,  
 He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,  
 Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,  
 And there among the solitary downs,  
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way ;  
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,  
 That all in loops and links among the dales  
 Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw  
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.  
 Thither he made and wound the gateway horn.  
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,  
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.

And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man ;  
 And issuing found the Lord of Astolat.  
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,  
 Moving to meet him in the castle court ;  
 And close behind them stept the lily maid  
 Elaine, his daughter : mother of the house  
 There was not : some light jest among them rose  
 With laughter dying down as the great knight  
 Approach'd them : then the Lord of Astolat.  
 ' Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what  
 name  
 Livest between the lips ? for by thy state  
 And presence I might guess thee chief of those,  
 After the king, who eat in Arthur's halls.  
 Him have I seen : the rest, his Table Round,  
 Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights.  
 ' Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,  
 What I by mere mischance have brought, my  
 shield.  
 But since I go to joust as one unknown  
 At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,  
 Hereafter you shall know me — and the shield —  
 I pray you lend me one, if such you have,  
 Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, ' Here is Torre's :  
 Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.  
 And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.  
 His you can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,  
 ' Yea since I cannot use it, you may have it.'  
 Here laugh'd the father saying ' Fie, Sir Churl,  
 Is that an answer for a noble knight ?  
 Allow him : but Lavaine, my younger here,  
 He is so full of lustihood, he will ride  
 Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour  
 And set it in this damsel's golden hair,  
 To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

‘Nay, father, nay good father, shame me not  
 Before this noble knight’ said young Lavaine  
 ‘For nothing. Surely I but play’d on Torre:  
 He seem’d so sullen, vext he could not go:  
 A jest, no more: for, knight, the maiden dreamt  
 That some one put this diamond in her hand,  
 And that it was too slippery to be held,  
 And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,  
 The castle-well, belike; and then I said  
 That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it  
 (But all was jest and joke among ourselves)  
 Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.  
 But father give me leave, and if he will,  
 To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:  
 Win shall I not, but do my best to win:  
 Young as I am, yet would I do my best.’

‘So you will grace me,’ answer’d Lancelot,  
 Smiling a moment, ‘with your fellowship  
 O’er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,  
 Then were I glad of you as guide and friend;  
 And you shall win this diamond — as I hear,  
 It is a fair large diamond, — if you may,  
 And yield it to this maiden, if you will.’  
 ‘A fair large diamond,’ added plain Sir Torre,  
 ‘Such be for Queens and not for simple maids.’  
 Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,  
 Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,  
 Flush’d slightly at the slight disparagement  
 Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,  
 Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return’d.  
 ‘If what is fair be but for what is fair,  
 And only Queens are to be counted so,  
 Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid  
 Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,  
 Not violating the bond of like to like.’

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,  
 Won by the mellow voice before she look’d,

Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.  
 The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,  
 In battle with the love he bare his lord,  
 Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere his time.  
 Another sinning on such heights with one,  
 The flower of all the west and all the world,  
 Had been the sleeker for it: but in him  
 His mood was often like a fiend, and rose  
 And drove him into wastes and solitudes  
 For agony, who was yet a living soul.  
 Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest man,  
 That ever among ladies ate in Hall,  
 And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.  
 However marr'd, of more than twice her years,  
 Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,  
 And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes  
 And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,  
 Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall  
 Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain  
 Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,  
 But kindly man moving among his kind:  
 Whom they with meats and vintage of their best  
 And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.  
 And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,  
 And ever well and readily answer'd he:  
 But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,  
 Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,  
 Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,  
 The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.  
 'He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design  
 Against my house, and him they caught and  
 maim'd;  
 But I my sons and little daughter fled  
 From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods  
 By the great river in a boatman's hut.  
 Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke  
 The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'



‘O there, great Lord, doubtless,’ Lavaine said,  
rapt

By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth  
Toward greatness in its elder, ‘you have fought.  
O tell us; for we live apart, you know  
Of Arthur’s glorious wars.’ And Lancelot spoke  
And answer’d him at full, as having been  
With Arthur in the fight which all day long  
Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;  
And in the four wild battles by the shore  
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war  
That thunder’d in and out the gloomy skirts  
Of Celidon the forest; and again  
By castle Gurnion where the glorious King  
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady’s Head,  
Carved of one emerald, center’d in a sun  
Of silver rays, that lighten’d as he breathed;  
And at Caerleon had he help’d his lord,  
When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse  
Set every gilded parapet shuddering;  
And up in Agned Cathregonion too,  
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,  
Where many a heathen fell; ‘and on the mount  
Of Badon I myself beheld the King  
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,  
And all his legions crying Christ and him,  
And break them; and I saw him, after, stand  
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume  
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,  
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried  
“They are broken, they are broken” for the King,  
However mild he seems at home, nor cares  
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts —  
For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs  
Saying, his knights are better men than he —  
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God  
Fills him: I never saw his like: there lives  
No greater leader.’

While he utter’d this,

Low to her own heart said the lily maid  
' Save your great self, fair lord ; ' and when he fell  
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry —  
Being mirthful he but in a stately kind —  
She still took note that when the living smile  
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud  
Of melancholy severe, from which again,  
Whenever in her hovering to and fro  
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,  
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness  
Of manners and of nature : and she thought  
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.  
And all night long his face before her lived,  
As when a painter, poring on a face,  
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man  
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,  
' The shape and colour of a mind and life,  
Lives for his children, ever at its best  
And fullest ; so the face before her lived,  
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full  
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.  
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought  
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.  
First as in fear, step after step, she stole  
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating :  
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,  
' This shield, my friend, where is it ? ' and Lavaine  
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.  
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and  
smooth'd  
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.  
Half-jealous of the flattering hand, she drew  
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amazed  
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw  
The maiden standing in the dewy light.  
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.  
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,  
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood  
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.

Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,  
 That he should wear her favour at the tilt.  
 She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.  
 'Fair lord, whose name I know not — noble it is,  
 I well believe, the noblest — will you wear  
 My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he,  
 'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn  
 Favour of any lady in the lists.  
 Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know.'  
 'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing mine  
 Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,  
 That those who know should know you.' And he  
 turn'd

Her counsel up and down within his mind,  
 And found it true, and answer'd, 'true, my child.  
 Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:  
 What is it?' and she told him 'a red sleeve  
 Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it: then he  
 bound

Her token on his helmet, with a smile  
 Saying, 'I never yet have done so much  
 For any maiden living,' and the blood  
 Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight;  
 But left her all the paler, when Lavaine  
 Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,  
 His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,  
 Who parted with his own to fair Elaine;  
 'Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield  
 In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'  
 She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your Squire.'  
 Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, 'Lily maid,  
 For fear our people call you lily maid  
 In earnest, let me bring your colour back;  
 Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to  
 bed.'

So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,  
 And thus they moved away: she stay'd a minute,  
 Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there —  
 Her bright hair blown about the serious face

Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss —  
 Paused in the gateway, standing by the shield  
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off  
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.  
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,  
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away  
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,  
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight  
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years  
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and pray'd  
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself  
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall  
 On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,  
 And cells and chambers : all were fair and dry ;  
 The green light from the meadows underneath  
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs ;  
 And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees  
 And poplars made a noise of falling showers.  
 And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,  
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,  
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away :  
 Then Lancelot saying, ' hear, but hold my name  
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,'  
 Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,  
 Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,  
 But left him leave to stammer, ' is it indeed ?'  
 And after muttering ' the great Lancelot '  
 At last he got his breath and answer'd ' One,  
 One have I seen — that other, our liege lord,  
 The dread Pendragon, Britain's king of kings,  
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,  
 He will be there — then were I stricken blind  
 That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists

By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes  
 Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round  
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,  
 Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat  
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,  
 Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,  
 And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,  
 And from the carven-work behind him crept  
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make  
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them  
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable  
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found  
 The new design wherein they lost themselves,  
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work :  
 And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,  
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.  
 Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said,  
 ' Me you call great : mine is the firmer seat,  
 The truer lance : but there is many a youth  
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am  
 And overcome it ; and in me there dwells  
 No greatness, save it be some far-off touch  
 Of greatness to know well I am not great :  
 There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped upon him  
 As on a thing miraculous, and anon  
 The trumpets blew ; and then did either side,  
 They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,  
 Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,  
 Meet in the midst, and there so furiously  
 Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,  
 If any man that day were left afield,  
 The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.  
 And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw  
 Which were the weaker ; then he hurl'd into it  
 Against the stronger : little need to speak  
 Of Lancelot in his glory : King, duke, earl,  
 Count, baron — whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,

Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,  
 Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight  
 Should do and almost overdo the deeds  
 Of Lancelot; and one said to the other 'Lo!  
 What is he? I do not mean the force alone,  
 The grace and versatility of the man —  
 Is it not Lancelot!' 'When has Lancelot worn  
 Favour of any lady in the lists?  
 Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know.'  
 'How then? who then?' a fury seized on them,  
 A fiery family passion for the name  
 Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.  
 They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds  
                   and thus,  
 Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they  
                   made  
 In moving, all together down upon him  
 Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,  
 Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with  
                   all  
 Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,  
 Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,  
 And him that helms it, so they overbore  
 Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear  
 Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear  
 Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head  
 Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt, and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;  
 He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,  
 And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.  
 He up the side, sweating with agony, got,  
 But thought to do while he might yet endure,  
 And being lustily holpen by the rest,  
 His party, — tho' it seemed half-miracle  
 To those he fought with — drave his kith and kin,  
 And all the Table Round that held the lists,  
 Back to the barrier; then the heralds blew  
 Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve

Of scarlet, and the pearls ; and all the knights,  
 His party, cried ' Advance, and take your prize  
 The diamond ; ' but he answer'd, ' diamond me  
 No diamonds ! for God's love, a little air !  
 Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death !  
 Hence will I and I charge you, follow me not.

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field  
 With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.  
 There from his charger down he slid, and sat,  
 Gasping to Sir Lavaine, ' draw the lance-head : '  
 ' Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,  
 ' I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'  
 But he ' I die already with it : draw —  
 Draw' — and Lavaine drew, and that other gave  
 A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,  
 And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank  
 For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.  
 Then came the hermit out and bare him in,  
 There stanch'd his wound ; and there, in daily doubt  
 Whether to live or die, for many a week  
 Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove  
 Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,  
 And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,  
 His party, knights of utmost North and West,  
 Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,  
 Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him  
 ' Lo, Sire, our knight thro' whom we won the day  
 Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize  
 Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'  
 ' Heaven hinder,' said the King ' that such an one,  
 So great a knight as we have seen to-day —  
 He seem'd to me another Lancelot —  
 Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot —  
 He must not pass uncared for. Gawain, rise,  
 My nephew, and ride forth and find the knight.  
 Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.

I charge you that you get at once to horse.  
 And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of  
     you  
 Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given :  
 His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him  
 No customary honour : since the knight  
 Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,  
 Ourselves will send it after. Wherefore take  
 This diamond, and deliver it, and return,  
 And bring us what he is and how he fares,  
 And cease not from your quest, until you find.'

So saying from the carven flower above,  
 To which it made a restless heart, he took,  
 And gave, the diamond : then from where he sat  
 At Arthur's right, with smiling face, arose,  
 With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince  
 In the mid might and flourish of his May  
 Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,  
 And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint  
 And Lamorack, a good knight, but therewithal  
 Sir Modred's brother, of a crafty house,  
 Nor often loyal to his word, and now  
 Wroth that the king's command to sally forth  
 In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave  
 The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went ;  
 While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,  
 Past, thinking ' is it Lancelot who has come  
 Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain  
 Of glory, and has added wound to wound,  
 And ridd'n away to die ? ' So fear'd the King,  
 And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.  
 Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,  
 ' Love, are you yet so sick ? ' ' Nay, lord,' she  
     said.

' And where is Lancelot ? ' Then the Queen amazed  
 ' Was he not with you ? won he not your prize ? '



‘Nay, but one like him.’ ‘Why that like was he.’  
 And when the King demanded how she knew,  
 Said ‘Lord, no sooner had you parted from us,  
 Than Lancelot told me of a common talk  
 That men went down before his spear at a touch,  
 But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name  
 Conquer’d; and therefore would he hide his name  
 From all men, ev’n the king, and to this end  
 Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,  
 That he might joust unknown of all, and learn  
 If his old prowess were in aught decay’d:  
 And added, “our true Arthur, when he learns,  
 Will well allow my pretext, as for gain  
 Of purer glory.”’

Then replied the King:

‘Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,  
 In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,  
 To have trusted me as he has trusted you.  
 Surely his king and most familiar friend  
 Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,  
 Albeit I know my knights fantastical,  
 So fine a fear in our large Lancelot  
 Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains  
 But little cause for laughter: his own kin —  
 Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, these!  
 His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;  
 So that he went sore wounded from the field:  
 Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are mine  
 That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.  
 He wore, against his wont, upon his helm  
 A sleeve of scarlet, broidered with great pearls,  
 Some gentle maiden’s gift.’

‘Yea, lord,’ she said,

‘Your hopes are mine,’ and saying that she choked,  
 And sharply turn’d about to hide her face,  
 Moved to her chamber, and there flung herself  
 Down on the great King’s couch, and writhed  
 upon it,  
 And clench’d her fingers till they bit the palm,

And shriek'd out 'traitor' to the unhearing wall,  
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,  
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region round  
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,  
Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,  
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat:  
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid  
Glanced at, and cried 'What news from Camelot,  
lord?

What of the knight with the red sleeve?' 'He  
won.'

'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the jousts  
Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her breath;  
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go;  
Thereon she smote her hand: well-nigh she  
swoon'd:

And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came  
The lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince  
Reported who he was, and on what quest  
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find  
The victor, but had ridden wildly round  
To seek him and was wearied of the search.  
To whom the lord of Astolat 'Bide with us,  
And ride no longer wildly, noble Prince!  
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;  
'This will he send or come for: furthermore  
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,  
Needs must we hear.' To this the courteous Prince  
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,  
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,  
And stay'd; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:  
Where could be found face daintier? then her  
shape

From forehead down to foot perfect — again  
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:  
'Well — if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!  
And oft they met among the garden yews,

And there he set himself to play upon her  
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a height  
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,  
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence  
 And amorous adulation, till the maid  
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, 'Princè,  
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,  
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,  
 Whence you might learn his name? Why slight  
 your King,

And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove  
 No surer than our falcon yesterday,  
 Who lost the hern we slipt him at, and went  
 To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine head,' said he,  
 'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,  
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes:  
 But an you will it let me see the shield.'  
 And when the shield was brought, and Gawain  
 saw

Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,  
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd;  
 'Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true  
 man!'

'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, 'I,  
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all.'  
 'And if I dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that you love  
 This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, you know it!  
 Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in vain?'

Full simple was her answer 'What know I?  
 My brethren have been all my fellowship,  
 And I, when often they have talk'd of love,  
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd,  
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself—  
 I know not if I know what true love is,  
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,  
 Methinks there is none other I can love.'

'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'you love him well,  
 But would not, knew you what all others know,  
 And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried Elaine,

And lifted her fair face and moved away :  
 But he pursued her calling ' Stay a little !  
 One golden minute's grace : he wore your sleeve :  
 Would he break faith with one I may not name ?  
 Must our true man change like a leaf at last ?  
 May it be so ? why then, far be it from me  
 To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves !  
 And, damsel, for I deem you know full well  
 Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave  
 My quest with you ; the diamond also : here !  
 For if you love, it will be sweet to give it ;  
 And if he love, it will be sweet to have it  
 From your own hand ; and whether he love or not,  
 A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well  
 A thousand times ! — a thousand times farewell !  
 Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two  
 May meet at court hereafter : there, I think,  
 So you will learn the courtesies of the court,  
 We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,  
 And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,  
 The diamond, and all wearied of the quest  
 Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went  
 A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past ; there told the King  
 What the King knew ' Sir Lancelot is the knight.'  
 And added ' Sire, my liege, so much I learnt ;  
 But fail'd to find him tho' I rode all round  
 The region : but I lighted on the maid,  
 Whose sleeve he wore ; she loves him ; and to her,  
 Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,  
 I gave the diamond : she will render it ;  
 For by mine head she knows his hiding-place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied,  
 ' Too courteous truly ! you shall go no more  
 On quest of mine, seeing that you forget  
 Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth but all in awe,  
 For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,  
 Linger'd that other, staring after him;  
 Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad  
 About the maid of Astolat, and her love.  
 All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were  
 loosed:

'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,  
 Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'  
 Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and  
 all

Had marvel what the maid might be, but most  
 Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame  
 Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.  
 She, that had heard the noise of it before,  
 But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,  
 Marr'd her friend's point with pale tranquillity.  
 So ran the tale like fire about the court,  
 Fire in dry stubble a nine days' wonder flared:  
 Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice  
 Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,  
 And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid  
 Smiled at each other, while the Queen who sat  
 With lips severely placid felt the knot  
 Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen  
 Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor  
 Beneath the banquet, where the meats became  
 As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,  
 Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept  
 The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,  
 Crept to her father, while he mused alone,  
 Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said.  
 'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault  
 Is yours who let me have my will, and now,  
 Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'  
 'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore let me hence,  
 She answer'd, 'and find out our dear Lavaine.'

' You will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine :  
 Bide,' answer'd he : ' we needs must hear anon  
 Of him, and of that other.' ' Ay,' she said,  
 ' And of that other, for I needs must hence  
 And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,  
 And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,  
 Lest I be found as faithless in the quest  
 As you proud Prince who left the quest to me.  
 Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams  
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid.  
 The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,  
 My father, to be sweet and serviceable  
 To noble knights in sickness, as you know,  
 When these have worn their tokens : let me hence  
 I pray you.' Then her father nodding said,  
 ' Ay, ay, the diamond : wit you well, my child,  
 Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,  
 Being our greatest : yea, and you must give it —  
 And sure I think this fruit is hung too high  
 For any mouth to gape for save a Queen's —  
 Nay, I mean nothing : so then, get you gone,  
 Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,  
 And while she made her ready for her ride,  
 Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,  
 ' Being so very wilful you must go,'  
 And changed itself and echoed in her heart,  
 ' Being so very wilful you must die.'  
 But she was happy enough and shook it off,  
 As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us ;  
 And in her heart she answer'd it and said,  
 ' What matter, so I help him back to life ?'  
 Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide  
 Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs  
 To Camelot, and before the city-gates  
 Came on her brother with a happy face  
 Making a roan horse caper and curvet

For pleasure all about a field of flowers :  
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'La-  
vaine,  
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He amazed,  
'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!  
How know you my lord's name is Lancelot?'  
But when the maid had told him all her tale,  
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods  
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,  
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,  
Past up the still rich city to his kin,  
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;  
And her Lavaine across the poplar grove  
Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque  
Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,  
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,  
Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,  
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,  
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.  
And when they gain'd the cell in which he slept,  
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands  
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream  
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.  
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,  
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
Uttered a little tender dolorous cry.  
The sound not wonted in a place so still  
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes  
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying  
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King:'  
His eyes glisten'd: she fancied 'is it for me?'  
And when the maid had told him all the tale  
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest  
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt  
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,  
And laid the diamond in his open hand.  
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child  
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.  
At once she slipt like water to the floor.

‘Alas,’ he said, ‘your ride has wearied you.’  
 Rest must you have.’ ‘No rest for me,’ she said;  
 ‘Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.’  
 What might she mean by that? his large black  
 eyes,

Yet larger thro’ his leanness, dwelt upon her,  
 Till all her heart’s sad secret blazed itself  
 In the heart’s colours on her simple face;  
 And Lancelot look’d and was perplexed in mind,  
 And being weak in body said no more;  
 But did not love the colour; woman’s love,  
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn’d  
 Sighing, and feign’d a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro’ the fields,  
 And past beneath the wildly-sculptured gates  
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin;  
 There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and  
 past

Down thro’ the dim rich city to the fields,  
 Thence to the cave: so day by day she past  
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro  
 Gliding, and every day she tended him,  
 And likewise many a night: and Lancelot  
 Would, tho’ he call’d his wound a little hurt  
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times  
 Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem  
 Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid  
 Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him  
 Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,  
 Milder than any mother to a sick child,  
 And never woman yet, since man’s first fall,  
 Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love  
 Upbore her; till the hermit, skill’d in all  
 The simples and the science of that time,  
 Told him that her fine care had saved his life.  
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush,  
 Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,  
 Would listen for her coming and regret



Her parting step, and held her tenderly,  
 And loved her with all love except the love  
 Of man and woman when they love their best  
 Closest and sweetest, and had died the death  
 In any knightly fashion for her sake.

And peradventure had he seen her first  
 She might have made this and that other world  
 Another world for the sick man ; but now  
 The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,  
 His honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
 And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made  
 Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.  
 These, as but born of sickness, could not live :  
 For when the blood ran lustier in him again,  
 Full often the sweet image of one face,  
 Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,  
 Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.  
 Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace  
 Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,  
 Or short and coldly, and she knew right well  
 What the rough sickness meant, but what this  
 meant

She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,  
 And drave her ere her time across the fields  
 Far into the rich city, where alone  
 She murmur'd ' vain, in vain : it cannot be.  
 He will not love me : how then ? must I die.'  
 Then as a little helpless innocent bird,  
 That has but one plain passage of few notes,  
 Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er  
 For all an April morning, till the ear  
 Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid  
 Went half the night repeating, ' must I die ?'  
 And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,  
 And found no ease in turning or in rest ;  
 And ' him or death ' she mutter'd, ' death or him,'  
 Again and like a burthen, ' him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,  
To Astolat returning rode the three.  
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self  
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,  
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought  
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,  
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'  
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid  
That she should ask some goodly gift of him  
For her own self or hers; 'and do not shun  
To speak the wish most near to your true heart;  
Such service have you done me, that I make  
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I  
In mine own land, and what I will I can.'  
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,  
But like a ghost without the power to speak.  
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,  
And bode among them yet a little space  
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced  
He found her in among the garden yews,  
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,  
Seeing I must go to-day : ' then out she brake ;  
'Going? and we shall never see you more.  
And I must die for want of one bold word.'  
'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'  
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:  
'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.'  
'Ah sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'  
And innocently extending her white arms,  
'Your love,' she said, 'your love — to be your  
wife.'  
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chos'n to wed,  
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine:  
But now there never will be wife of mine.'  
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,  
But to be with you still, to see your face,  
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'  
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world, the world,  
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart

To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue  
 To blare its own interpretation — nay,  
 Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,  
 And your good father's kindness.' And she said,  
 'Not to be with you, not to see your face —  
 Alas for me then, my good days are done.'  
 'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay!  
 This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,  
 Most common: yea I know it of mine own self:  
 And you yourself will smile at your own self  
 Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life  
 To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:  
 And then will I, for true you are and sweet  
 Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,  
 More specially should your good knight be poor,  
 Endow you with broad land and territory  
 Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,  
 So that would make you happy: furthermore,  
 Ev'n to the death, as tho' you were my blood,  
 In all your quarrels will I be your knight.  
 This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,  
 And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke  
 She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale  
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied;  
 'Of all this will I nothing;' and so fell,  
 And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of  
 yew  
 Their talk had pierced, her father. 'Ay, a flash,  
 I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.  
 Too courteous are you, fair Lord Lancelot.  
 I pray you, use some rough discourtesy  
 To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,  
 'That were against me: what I can I will;'  
 And there that day remain'd, and toward even  
 Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,

Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield ;  
 Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,  
 Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd  
 Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.  
 And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound ;  
 And she by tact of love was well aware  
 That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.  
 And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,  
 Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away.  
 This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat :  
 His very shield was gone ; only the case,  
 Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.  
 But still she heard him, still his picture form'd  
 And grew between her and the pictured wall.  
 Then came her father, saying in low tones  
 ' Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.  
 Then came her brethren saying, ' Peace to thee,  
 Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all calm.  
 But when they left her to herself again,  
 Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field  
 Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd ; the owls  
 Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt  
 Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms  
 Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,  
 And call'd her song ' The Song of Love and Death,'  
 And sang it : sweetly could she make and sing.

" Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain ;  
 And sweet is death who puts an end to pain :  
 I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

" Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must  
     be :  
 Love, thou art bitter ; sweet is death to me.  
 O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

“ Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,  
Sweet death that seems to make us loveless clay,  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

“ I fain would follow love, if that could be ;  
I needs must follow death, who calls for me ;  
Call and I follow, I follow ! let me die.”

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,  
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind  
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and  
thought  
With shuddering ‘ Hark the Phantom of the house  
That ever shrieks before a death,’ and call’d  
The father, and all three in hurry and fear  
Ran to her, and lo ! the blood-red light of dawn  
Flared on her face, she shrilling ‘ Let me die !’

As when we dwell upon a word we know  
Repeating, till the word we know so well  
Becomes a wonder and we know not why,  
So dwelt the father on her face and thought  
‘ Is this Elaine ?’ till back the maiden fell,  
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,  
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.  
At last she said ‘ Sweet brothers, yesternight  
I seem’d a curious little maid again,  
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,  
And when you used to take me with the flood  
Up the great river in the boatman’s boat.  
Only you would not pass beyond the cape  
That has the poplar on it : there you fixt  
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.  
And yet I cried because you would not pass  
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood  
Until we found the palace of the king.  
And yet you would not ; but this night I dream’d  
That I was all alone upon the flood,  
And then I said “ Now shall I have my will :”

And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.  
 So let me hence that I may pass at last  
 Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,  
 Until I find the palace of the king.  
 There will I enter in among them all,  
 And no man there will dare to mock at me ;  
 But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,  
 And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me ;  
 Gawain, who had a thousand farewells to me,  
 Lancelot, who coldly went nor bad me one :  
 And there the King will know me and my love,  
 And there the Queen herself will pity me,  
 And all the gentle court will welcome me,  
 And after my long voyage I shall rest !'

'Peace,' said her father. 'O my child, you seem  
 Light-headed, for what force is yours to go  
 So far, being sick ? and wherefore would you look  
 On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all ?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,  
 And bluster into stormy sobs and say.  
 'I never loved him : an I meet with him,  
 I care not howsoever great he be,  
 Then will I strike at him and strike him down,  
 Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,  
 For this discomfort he hath done the house.'

To which the gentle sister made reply,  
 'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,  
 Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault  
 Not to love me, than it is mine to love  
 Him of all men who seems to me the highest.'

'Highest ?' the Father answer'd, echoing 'highest ?'

(He meant to break the passion in her) 'nay,  
 Daughter, I know not what you call the highest ;  
 But this I know, for all the people know it,

He loves the Queen, and in an open shame :  
 And she returns his love in open shame.  
 If this be high, what is it to be low ?'

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat ;  
 ' Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I  
 For anger : these are slanders : never yet  
 Was noble man but made ignoble talk.  
 He makes no friend who never made a\*foe.  
 But now it is my glory to have loved  
 One peerless, without stain : so let me pass,  
 My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,  
 Not all unhappy, having loved God's best  
 And greatest, tho' my love had no return :  
 Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,  
 Thanks, but you work against your own desire ;  
 For if I could believe the things you say  
 I should but die the sooner ; wherefore cease,  
 Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man  
 Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,  
 She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,  
 Besought Lavaine to write as she devised  
 A letter, word for word ; and when he ask'd  
 ' Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord ?  
 Then will I bear it gladly ;' she replied,  
 ' For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,  
 But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote  
 The letter she devised ; which being writ  
 And folded, ' O sweet father, tender and true,  
 Deny me not,' she said — ' you never yet  
 Denied my fancies — this, however strange,  
 My latest : lay the letter in my hand  
 A little ere I die, and close the hand  
 Upon it ; I shall guard it even in death.  
 And when the heat is gone from out my heart,  
 Then take the little bed on which I died  
 For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen  
 In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.  
 And let there be prepared a chariot-bier  
 To take me to the river, and a barge  
 Be ready on the river, clothed in black.  
 I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.  
 There surely I shall speak for mine own self,  
 And none of you can speak for me so well.  
 And therefore let our dumb old man alone  
 Go with me, he can steer and row, and he  
 Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased : her father promised ; whereupon  
 She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death  
 Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.  
 But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh  
 Her father laid the letter in her hand,  
 And closed the hand upon it, and she died.  
 So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,  
 Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows  
 Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier  
 Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone  
 Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,  
 Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.  
 There sat the lifelong creature of the house,  
 Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,  
 Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.  
 So those two brethren from the chariot took  
 And on the black decks laid her in her bed,  
 Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung  
 The silken case with braided blazonings,  
 And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her  
 ' Sister, farewell for ever,' and again  
 ' Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.  
 Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead  
 Steer'd by the dumb went upward with the flood —  
 In her right hand the lily, in her left



The letter — all her bright hair streaming down —  
 And all the coverlid was cloth of gold  
 Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white  
 All but her face, and that clear-featured face  
 Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead  
 But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved  
 Audience of Guinevere, to give at last  
 The price of half a realm, his costly gift,  
 Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,  
 With deaths of others, and almost his own,  
 The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw  
 One of her house, and sent him to the Queen  
 Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed  
 With such and so unmoved a majesty  
 She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,  
 Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet  
 For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye  
 The shadow of a piece of pointed lace,  
 In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,  
 And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,  
 Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,  
 They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, ' Queen,  
 Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,  
 Take, what I had not won except for you,  
 These jewels, and make me happy, making them  
 An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,  
 Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's  
 Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words:  
 Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin  
 In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it  
 Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words  
 Perchance, we both can pardon: but, my Queen,  
 I hear of rumours flying thro' your court.  
 Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,  
 Should have in it an absoluter trust

To make up that defect : let rumours be :  
 When did not rumours fly ? these, as I trust  
 That you trust me in your own nobleness,  
 I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away, the Queen  
 Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine  
 Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,  
 Till all the place whereon she stood was green ;  
 Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand  
 Received at once and laid aside the gems  
 There on a table near her, and replied.

' It may be, I am quicker of belief  
 Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.  
 Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.  
 This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,  
 It can be broken easier. I for you  
 This many a year have done despite and wrong  
 To one whom ever in my heart of hearts  
 I did acknowledge nobler. What are these ?  
 Diamonds for me ! they had been thrice their worth  
 Being your gift, had you not lost your own.  
 To loyal hearts the value of all gifts  
 Must vary as the giver's. Not for me !  
 For her ! for your new fancy. Only this  
 Grant me, I pray you : have your joys apart.  
 I doubt not that however changed, you keep  
 So much of what is graceful : and myself  
 Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy  
 In which as Arthur's queen I move and rule :  
 So cannot speak my mind. An end to this !  
 A strange one ! yet I take it with Amen.  
 So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls ;  
 Deck her with these ; tell her, she shines me down :  
 An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's  
 Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck  
 O as much fairer — as a faith once fair  
 Was richer than these diamonds — hers not mine —

Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,  
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will —  
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,

And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,  
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the  
stream.

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,  
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.  
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disgust  
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,  
Close underneath his eyes, and right across  
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge  
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat  
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away  
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,  
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.  
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door; to  
whom,  
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,  
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that  
ask'd  
'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard face,  
As hard and still as is the face that men  
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks  
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said,  
'He is enchanted, cannot speak — and she,  
Look how she sleeps — the Fairy Queen, so fair!  
Yea but how pale! what are they? flesh and  
blood?  
Or come to take the King to fairy land?  
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,  
But that he passes into fairy land.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King  
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless  
man

From the half-face to the full eye, and rose  
 And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.  
 So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale  
 And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid ;  
 And reverently they bore her into hall.  
 Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,  
 And Lancelot later came and mused at her,  
 And last the Queen herself and pitied her :  
 But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,  
 Stoop't, took, brake seal, and read it ; this was all.

‘ Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,  
 I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,  
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,  
 Hither, to take my last farewell of you.  
 I loved you, and my love had no return,  
 And therefore my true love has been my death.  
 And therefore to our lady Guinevere,  
 And to all other ladies, I make moan.  
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.  
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,  
 As thou art a knight peerless.’

Thus he read,

And ever in the reading, lords and dames  
 Wept, looking often from his face who read  
 To hers which lay so silent, and at times,  
 So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,  
 Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all ;  
 ‘ My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,  
 Know that for this most gentle maiden's death  
 Right heavy am I ; for good she was and true,  
 But loved me with a love beyond all love  
 In women, whomsoever I have known.  
 Yet to be loved makes not to love again ;  
 Not at my years, however it hold in youth.  
 I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave  
 No cause, not willingly, for such a love :

To this I call my friends in testimony,  
 Her brethren, and her father, who himself  
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,  
 To break her passion, some discourtesy  
 Against my nature : what I could, I did.  
 I left her and I bad her no farewell.  
 Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,  
 I might have put my wits to some rough use,  
 And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen  
 (Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm)  
 ' You might at least have done her so much grace,  
 Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her  
 death.'

He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,  
 He adding,  
 ' Queen, she would not be content  
 Save that I wedded her, which could not be.  
 Then might she follow me thro' the world, she  
 ask'd ;

It could not be. I told her that her love  
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken down  
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame  
 Toward one more worthy of her — then would I,  
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor,  
 Estate them with large land and territory  
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,  
 To keep them in all joyance : more than this  
 I could not ; this she would not, and she died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, ' O my knight,  
 It will be to your worship, as my knight,  
 And mine, as head of all our Table Round,  
 To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all the  
 realm  
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went  
 The marshall'd order of their Table Round,

And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see  
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,  
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,  
 And mass, and rolling music, like a Queen.  
 And when the knights had laid her comely head  
 Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,  
 Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let her tomb  
 Be costly, and her image thereupon.  
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet  
 Be carven, and her lily in her hand.  
 And let the story of her dolorous voyage  
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb  
 In letters gold and azure!' which was wrought  
 Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames  
 And people, from the high door streaming, brake  
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,  
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,  
 Drew near, and sigh'd in passing 'Lancelot,  
 Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.'  
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,  
 'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.'  
 But Arthur who beheld his cloudy brows  
 Approach'd him, and with full affection flung  
 One arm about his neck, and spake and said.

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have  
 Most love and most affiance, for I know  
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,  
 And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt  
 Strike down the lusty and long-practised knight,  
 And let the younger and unskill'd go by  
 To win his honour and to make his name,  
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man  
 Made to be loved; — but now I would to God,  
 For the wild people say wild things of thee,  
 Thou could'st have loved this maiden, shaped, it  
     seems,  
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,  
 If one may judge the living by the dead,

Delicately pure and marvellously fair,  
 Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man  
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons  
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,  
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fair she was, my  
 King,  
 Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.  
 To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,  
 To doubt her pureness were to want a heart —  
 Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love  
 Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said the King.  
 'Let love be free; free love is for the best:  
 And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,  
 What should be best, if not so pure a love  
 Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee  
 She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,  
 Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,  
 And at the inrunning of a little brook  
 Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd  
 The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes  
 And saw the barge that brought her moving down,  
 Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said  
 Low in himself 'Ah, simple heart and sweet,  
 You loved me, damsel, surely with a love  
 Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?  
 Ay, that will I. Farewell too — now at last —  
 Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"  
 Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?  
 Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,  
 May not your crescent fear for name and fame  
 Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?  
 Why did the King dwell on my name to me?  
 Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,

Lancelot, whom the Lady of the lake  
Stole from his mother — as the story runs —  
She chanted snatches of mysterious song  
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn  
She kiss'd me saying thou art fair, my child,  
As a king's son, and often in her arms  
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.  
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be !  
For what am I ? what profits me my name  
Of greatest knight ? I fought for it, and have it :  
Pleasure to have it, none ; to lose it, pain ;  
Now grown a part of me : but what use in it ?  
To make men worse by making my sin known ?  
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great ?  
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man  
Not after Arthur's heart ! I needs must break  
These bonds that so defame me : not without  
She wills it : would I, if she will'd it ? nay,  
Who knows ? but if I would not, then may God,  
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down  
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,  
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,  
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,  
Not knowing he should die a holy man.



## GUINEVERE.

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QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat  
There in the holy house at Almesbury  
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,  
A novice : one low light betwixt them burn'd  
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,  
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,  
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,  
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight  
Sir Modred ; he the nearest to the King,  
His nephew, ever like a subtle beast  
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,  
Ready to spring, waiting a chance : for this,  
He chill'd the popular praises of the King  
With silent smiles of slow disparagement ;  
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,  
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left ; and sought  
To make disruption in the Table Round  
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds  
Serving his traitorous end ; and all his aims  
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,  
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,  
Had been, their wont, a-maying and return'd,  
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,  
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall  
To spy some secret scandal if he might,

And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best  
 Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court  
 The wiliest and the worst ; and more than this  
 He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by  
 Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand  
 Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,  
 So from the high wall and the flowering grove  
 Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,  
 And cast him as a worm upon the way ;  
 But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd with dust,  
 He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,  
 Made such excuses as he might, and these  
 Full knightly without scorn ; for in those days  
 No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn ;  
 But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him  
 By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,  
 Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,  
 And he was answer'd softly by the King  
 And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help  
 To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice  
 Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went :  
 But, ever after, the small violence done  
 Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,  
 As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long  
 A little bitter pool about a stone  
 On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told  
 This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd  
 Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,  
 Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries  
 ' I shudder, some one steps across my grave ;'  
 Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed  
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,  
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers  
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn.  
 Henceforward rarely could she front in Hall,  
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,  
 Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye :  
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,

To help it from the death that cannot die,  
And save it even in extremes, began  
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,  
Beside the placid breathings of the King,  
In the dead night, grim faces came and went  
Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—  
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,  
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,  
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—  
Held her awake : or if she slept, she dream'd  
An awful dream ; for then she seem'd to stand  
On some vast plain before a setting sun,  
And from the sun there swiftly made at her  
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew  
Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—  
When lo ! her own, that broadening from her feet,  
And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it  
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.  
And all this trouble did not pass but grew ;  
Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,  
And trustful courtesies of household life,  
Became her bane ; and at the last she said,  
' O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,  
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,  
And if we meet again, some evil chance  
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze  
Before the people, and our lord the King.'  
And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,  
And still they met and met. Again she said,  
' O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'  
And then they were agreed upon a night  
(When the good King should not be there) to meet  
And part for ever. Passion-pale they met  
And greeted : hands in hands, and eye to eye,  
Low on the border of her couch they sat  
Stammering and staring : it was their last hour,  
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought  
His creatures to the basement of the tower  
For testimony ; and crying with full voice

‘Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,’ aroused  
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike  
 Leapt on him, and hurl’d him headlong, and he  
 fell

Stunn’d, and his creatures took and bare him off  
 And all was still: then she, ‘the end is come  
 And I am shamed for ever;’ and he said  
 ‘Mine be the shame; mine was the sin; but rise,  
 And fly to my strong castle overseas:  
 There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,  
 There hold thee with my life against the world.’  
 She answer’d ‘Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?  
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.  
 Would God, that thou could’st hide me from myself!  
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou  
 Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,  
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,  
 And bide my doom.’ So Lancelot got her horse,  
 Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,  
 And then they rode to the divided way,  
 There kiss’d, and parted weeping: for he past,  
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,  
 Back to his land; but she to Almesbury  
 Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,  
 And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald  
 Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan  
 And in herself she moan’d ‘too late, too late!’  
 Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,  
 A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,  
 Croak’d, and she thought ‘he spies a field of death;  
 For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,  
 Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,  
 Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land.’

And when she came to Almesbury she spake  
 There to the nuns, and said, ‘mine enemies  
 Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,  
 Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask  
 Her name, to whom ye yield it, till her time

To tell you; and her beauty, grace and power,  
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared  
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode  
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns;  
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,  
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,  
But communed only with the little maid,  
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness  
Which often lured her from herself; but now,  
This night, a rumour wildly blown about  
Came, that Sir Modred had usurped the realm,  
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King  
Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,  
'With what a hate the people and the King  
Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon her hands  
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd  
No silence, brake it, uttering 'late! so late!  
What hour, I wonder, now?' and when she drew  
No answer, by and by began to hum  
An air the nuns had taught her; 'late, so late!'  
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and  
said,  
'O maiden, if indeed you list to sing,  
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.'  
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

"Late, late, so late! and dark the night and  
chill!

Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light had we: for that we do repent;  
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!  
O let us in, that we may find the light!  
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

“ Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?  
 O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!  
 No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.”

So sang the novice, while full passionately,  
 Her head upon her hands, remembering  
 Her thought when first she came, wept the sad  
 Queen.

Then said the little novice prattling to her:

‘ O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;  
 But let my words, the words of one so small,  
 Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,  
 And if I do not there is penance given —  
 Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow  
 From evil done; right sure am I of that,  
 Who see your tender grace and stateliness.  
 But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,  
 And weighing find them less; for gone is he  
 To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,  
 Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;  
 And Modred whom he left in charge of all,  
 The traitor — Ah sweet lady, the King's grief  
 For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,  
 Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.  
 For me, I thank the saints, I am not great.  
 For if there ever come a grief to me  
 I cry my cry in silence, and have done:  
 None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:  
 But even were the griefs of little ones  
 As great as those of great ones, yet this grief  
 Is added to the griefs the great must bear,  
 That howsoever much they may desire  
 Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:  
 As even here they talk at Almesbury  
 About the good King and his wicked Queen,  
 And were I such a King with such a Queen,  
 Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,  
 But were I such a King, it could not be.’

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen.  
 'Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?'  
 But openly she answer'd 'must not I,  
 If this false traitor have displaced his lord,  
 Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's grief,  
 That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life  
 Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round  
 Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,  
 With signs and miracles and wonders, there  
 At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself again;  
 'Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?'  
 But openly she spake and said to her;  
 'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,  
 What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,  
 Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs  
 And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously.  
 'Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs  
 And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.  
 So said my father, and himself was knight  
 Of the great Table — at the founding of it;  
 And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and he said  
 That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain  
 After the sunset, down the coast, he heard  
 Strange music, and he paused and turning — there,  
 All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,  
 Each with a beacon-star upon his head,  
 And with a wild sea-light about his feet,  
 He saw them — headland after headland flame  
 Far on into the rich heart of the west:  
 And in the light the white mermaiden swam,  
 And strong man-breasted things stood from the  
 sea,  
 And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,

To which the little elves of chasm and cleft  
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.  
 So said my father — yea, and furthermore,  
 Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods,  
 Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy  
 Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,  
 That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes  
 When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed :  
 And still at evenings on before his horse  
 The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and broke  
 Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke  
 Flying, for all the land was full of life.  
 And when at last he came to Camelot,  
 A wreath of fairy dancers hand-in-hand  
 Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall ;  
 And in the hall itself was such a feast  
 As never man had dream'd ; for every knight  
 Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served  
 By hands unseen ; and even as he said  
 Down in the cellars merry bloated things  
 Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the butts  
 While the wine ran : so glad were spirits and men  
 Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly.  
 ' Were they so glad ? ill prophets were they all,  
 Spirits and men : could none of them foresee,  
 Not even thy wise father with his signs  
 And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm ? '

To whom the novice garrulously again.  
 ' Yea, one, a bard ; of whom my father said,  
 Full many a noble war-song had he sung,  
 Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,  
 Between the steep cliff and the coming wave ;  
 And many a mystic lay of life and death  
 Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,  
 When round him bent the spirits of the hills  
 With all their dewy hair blown back like flame :



So said my father — and that night the bard  
 Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King  
 As well-nigh more than man, and rail'd at those  
 Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois :  
 For there was no man knew from whence he  
     came ;

But after tempest, when the long wave broke  
 All down the thundering shores of Bude and Boss,  
 There came a day as still as heaven, and then  
 They found a naked child upon the sands  
 Of wild Dundagil by the Cornish sea ;  
 And that was Arthur ; and they foster'd him  
 Till he by miracle was approven king :  
 And that his grave should be a mystery  
 From all men, like his birth ; and could he find  
 A woman in her womanhood as great  
 As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,  
 The twain together well might change the world.  
 But even in the middle of his song  
 He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp,  
 And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have  
     fall'n,

But that they stay'd him up ; nor would he tell  
 His vision ; but what doubt that he foresaw  
 This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen ?'

Then thought the Queen ' lo ! they have set her  
     on,

Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,  
 To play upon me,' and bow'd her head nor spake.  
 Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hauds,  
 Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,  
 Said the good nuns would check her gadding  
     tongue

Full often, ' and, sweet lady, if I seem  
 To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,  
 Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales  
 Which my good father told me, check me too :  
 Nor let me shame my father's memory, one

Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say  
 Sir Lancelot had the noblest ; and he died,  
 Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,  
 And left me ; but of others who remain,  
 And of the two first-famed for courtesy —  
 And pray you check me if I ask amiss —  
 But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved  
 Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King ?'

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd  
 her.

' Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,  
 Was gracious to all ladies, and the same  
 In open battle or the tilting-field  
 Forbore his own advantage, and the King  
 In open battle or the tilting-field  
 Forbore his own advantage, and these two  
 Were the most nobly-mannered men of all ;  
 For manners are not idle, but the fruit  
 Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

' Yea,' said the maid, ' be manners such fair  
 fruit ?'

Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold  
 Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,  
 The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the Queen.

' O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,  
 What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights  
 And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe ?  
 If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,  
 Were for one hour less noble than himself,  
 Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,  
 And weep for her, who drew him to his doom.'

' Yea,' said the little novice, ' I pray for both ;  
 But I should all as soon believe that his,  
 Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,

As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be  
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt  
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where she  
would heal;

For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat  
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,  
'Such as thou art be never maiden more  
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague  
And play upon, and harry me, petty spy  
And traitress.' When that storm of anger brake  
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,  
White as her veil, and stood before the Queen  
As tremulously as foam upon the beach  
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,  
And when the Queen had added 'get thee hence'  
Fled frightened. Then that other left alone  
Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,  
Saying in herself 'the simple, fearful child  
Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt  
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.  
But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent.  
For what is true repentance but in thought —  
Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again  
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:  
And I have sworn never to see him more,  
To see him more.'

And ev'n in saying this,  
Her memory from old habit of the mind  
Went slipping back upon the golden days  
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,  
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,  
Ambassador, to lead her to his lord  
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead  
Of his and her retinue moving, they,  
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love  
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the time  
Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd,)

Rode under groves that look'd a paradise  
 Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth  
 That seem'd the heavens upbreking thro' the earth,  
 And on from hill to hill, and every day  
 Beheld at noon in some delicious dale  
 The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised  
 For brief repast or afternoon repose  
 By couriers gone before ; and on again,  
 Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw  
 The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,  
 That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,  
 Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen, immersed in such a trance,  
 And moving thro' the past unconsciously,  
 Came to that point, when first she saw the King  
 Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find  
 Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him  
 cold,  
 High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,  
 'Not like my Lancelot' — while she brooded thus  
 And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,  
 There rode an armed warrior to the doors.  
 A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,  
 Then on a sudden a cry, 'the King.' She sat  
 Stiff-stricken, listening ; but when armed feet  
 Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors  
 Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell  
 And grovell'd with her face against the floor :  
 There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair  
 She made her face a darkness from the King :  
 And in the darkness heard his armed feet  
 Pause by her ; then came silence, then a voice,  
 Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's  
 Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed the King's.

'Liest thou here so low, the child of one  
 I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame ?  
 Well is it that no child is born of thee.

The children born of thee are sword and fire,  
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,  
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts  
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea.  
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,  
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,  
Have everywhere about this land of Christ  
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.  
And knowest thou now from whence I come —  
from him,

From waging bitter war with him: and he,  
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,  
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,  
He spared to lift his hand against the King  
Who made him knight: but many a knight was  
slain;

And many more, and all his kith and kin  
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.  
And many more when Modred raised revolt,  
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave  
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.  
And of this remnant will I leave a part,  
True men who love me still, for whom I live,  
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,  
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.  
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.  
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies  
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.  
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,  
That I the King should greatly care to live;  
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.  
Bear with me for the last time while I show,  
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinu'd.  
For when the Roman left us, and their law  
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways  
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed  
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.  
But I was first of all the kings who drew  
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all

The realms together under me, their Head,  
In that fair order of my Table Round,  
A glorious company, the flower of men,  
To serve as model for the mighty world,  
And be the fair beginning of a time.  
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear  
To reverence the King, as if he were  
Their conscience, and their conscience as their  
King,

To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,  
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
Until they won her; for indeed I knew  
Of no more subtle master under heaven  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable words  
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.  
And all this throve until I wedded thee!  
Believing "lo mine helpmate, one to feel  
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."  
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;  
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;  
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,  
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,  
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite  
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,  
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine  
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,  
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think  
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,  
To sit once more within his lonely hall,  
And miss the wonted number of my knights,  
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds  
As in the golden days before thy sin.

For which of us, who might be left, could speak  
 Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?  
 And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk  
 Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,  
 And I should evermore be vext with thee  
 In hanging robe or vacant ornament,  
 Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.  
 For think not, tho' thou would'st not love thy  
 lord,

Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.  
 I am not made of so slight elements.  
 Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.  
 I hold that man the worst of public foes  
 Who either for his own or children's sake,  
 To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife  
 Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:  
 For being thro' his cowardice allow'd  
 Her station, taken everywhere for pure,  
 She like a new disease, unknown to men,  
 Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,  
 Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps  
 The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse  
 With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.  
 Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!  
 Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart  
 Than thou reseated in thy place of light,  
 The mockery of my people, and their bane.'

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch  
 Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.  
 Far off a solitary trumpet blew.  
 Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd  
 As at a friend's voice, and he spake again.

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,  
 I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,  
 I, whose vast pity almost makes me die  
 To see thee, laying there thy golden head,  
 My pride in happier summers, at my feet.

The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce  
law,

The doom of treason and the flaming death,  
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.

The pang — which while I weigh'd thy heart with  
one

'Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,  
Made my tears burn — is also past, in part.

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,

Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God

Forgives : do thou for thine own soul the rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved ?

O golden hair, with which I used to play

Not knowing ! O imperial-moulded form,

And beauty such as never woman wore,

Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee —

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,

But Lancelot's : nay, they never were the King's.

I cannot take thy hand ; that too is flesh,

And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd ; and mine own  
flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries

“ I loathe thee : ” yet not less, O Guinevere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,

My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life

So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.

Let no man dream but that I love thee still.

Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,

And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,

Hereafter in that world where all are pure

We two may meet before high God, and thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know

I am thine husband — not a smaller soul,

Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,

I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow :

They summon me their King to lead mine hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,

Where I must strike against my sister's son,



Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and  
knights

Once mine, and strike him dead, and meet myself  
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.

And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;

But hither shall I never come again,

Never lie by thy side, see thee no more,

Farewell !'

And while she grovell'd at his feet,  
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,  
And, in the darkness o'er her fallen head,  
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,  
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found  
The casement : ' Peradventure ' so she thought,  
' If I might see his face, and not be seen.'

And lo, he sat on horseback at the door !

And near him the sad nuns with each a light  
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen.  
To guard and foster her for evermore.

And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,

To which for crest the golden dragon clung

Of Britain ; so she did not see the face,

Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,

Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,

The Dragon of the great Pendragonship

Blaze, making all the night a stream of fire.

And even then he turn'd ; and more and more

The moony vapour rolling round the King,

Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,

Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray

And grayer, till himself became as mist

Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud

' O Arthur ! ' there her voice brake suddenly,

Then — as a stream that spouting from a cliff

Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base

Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale —  
Went on in passionate utterance.

‘Gone — my lord!

Gone thro’ my sin to slay and to be slain!  
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.  
Farewell? I should have answer’d his farewell.  
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,  
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?  
The shadow of another cleaves to me,  
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,  
Call’d me polluted: shall I kill myself?  
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,  
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;  
No, nor by living can I live it down.  
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,  
The months will add themselves and make the  
    years,  
The years will roll into the centuries,  
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.  
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.  
Let the world be; that is but of the world.  
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,  
Except he mock’d me when he spake of hope;  
His hope he call’d it; but he never mocks,  
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.  
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven  
My wickedness to him, and left me hope  
That in mine own heart I can live down sin  
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens  
Before high God. Ah great and gentle lord,  
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint  
Among his warring senses, to thy knights —  
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took  
Full easily all impressions from below,  
Would not look up, or half-despised the height  
To which I would not or I could not climb —  
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air  
That pure severity of perfect light —  
I wanted warmth and colour which I found

In Lancelot — now I see thee what thou art,  
 Thou art the highest and most human too,  
 Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none  
 Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?  
 Now — ere he goes to the great Battle? none:  
 Myself must tell him in that purer life,  
 But now it were too daring. Ah my God,  
 What might I not have made of thy fair world,  
 Had I but loved thy highest creature here?  
 It was my duty to have loved the highest:  
 It surely was my profit had I known:  
 It would have been my pleasure had I seen.  
 We needs must love the highest when we see it,  
 Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand  
 Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd and  
 saw

The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her  
 'Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?'  
 Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns  
 All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed  
 Within her, and she wept with these and said:

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke  
 The vast design and purpose of the King.  
 O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,  
 Meek maidens, from the voices crying "shame."  
 I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.  
 Let no one dream but that he loves me still.  
 So let me, if you do not shudder at me  
 Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;  
 Wear black and white, and be a nun like you;  
 Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;  
 Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,  
 But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;  
 Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your shrines;  
 Do each low office of your holy house;  
 Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole  
 To poor sick people, richer in his eyes

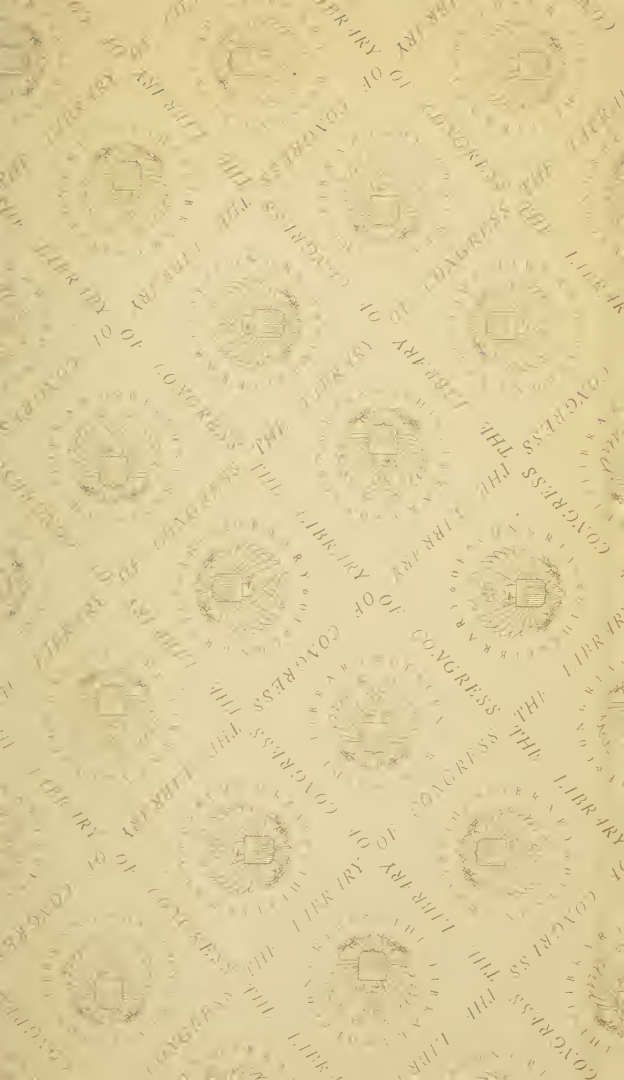
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I;  
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;  
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer  
The sombre close of that voluptuous day,  
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.'

She said: they took her to themselves; and she  
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'  
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.  
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,  
And for the power of ministration in her,  
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,  
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived  
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past  
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

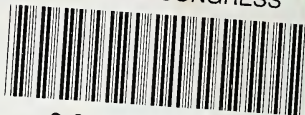
THE END.







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