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MATTHEW ARNOLD.

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## P R E F A C E .

IN two small volumes of Poems, published anonymously, one in 1849, the other in 1852, many of the Poems which compose the present volume have already appeared. The rest are now published for the first time.

I have, in the present collection, omitted the Poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title. I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason. Neither have I done so because I had, in my own opinion, failed in the delineation which I intended to effect. I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musæus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested ob-

jectivity have disappeared : the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced ; modern problems have presented themselves ; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.

The representation of such a man's feelings must be interesting, if consistently drawn. We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever : this is the basis of our love of Poetry ; and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us ; not to the philosopher only, but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is *not* interesting, is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind ; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn ; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting ; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspire and rejoice the reader : that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be " a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares : " and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. " All Art," says Schiller, " is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment."

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist: the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it: the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.

To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavored to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the Poem from the present collection.

And why, it may be asked, have I entered into this explanation respecting a matter so unimportant as the admission or exclusion of the Poem in question? I have done so, because I was anxious to avow that the sole reason for its exclusion was that which has been stated above; and that it has not been excluded in deference to the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain

against subjects chosen from distant times and countries : against the choice, in short, of any subjects but modern ones.

“The Poet,” it is said, and by an apparently intelligent critic, “the Poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters of present import, and *therefore* both of interest and novelty.”

Now this view I believe to be completely false. It is worth examining, inasmuch as it is a fair sample of a class of critical dicta everywhere current at the present day, having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact; and which are calculated to vitiate the judgment of readers of poetry, while they exert, so far as they are adopted, a misleading influence on the practice of those who write it.

What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations, and at all times? They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet. Vainly will the latter imagine that he has everything in his own power; that he can make an intrinsically inferior action equally delightful with a more excellent one by his treatment of it: he may indeed compel us to admire his skill, but his work will possess, within itself, an incurable defect.

The Poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that

which interests them is permanent and the same also. The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. A great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting to it than a smaller human action of to-day, even though upon the representation of this last the most consummate skill may have been expended, and though it has the advantage of appealing by its modern language, familiar manners, and contemporary allusions, to all our transient feelings and interests. These, however, have no right to demand of a poetical work that it shall satisfy them; their claims are to be directed elsewhere. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions: let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims upon them is at once silenced.

Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido — what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an “exhausted past?” We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time; yet I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *Jocelyn*, *The Excursion*, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad*, by the *Orestea*, or by the episode of *Dido*. And why is this? Simply

because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense; and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern Poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of *Œdipus* or of *Macbeth*, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man; with their feelings and behavior in certain tragic situations, which engage their passions as men: these have in them nothing local and casual; they are as accessible to the modern Poet as to a contemporary.

The date of an action, then, signifies nothing: the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this: that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not



that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it ; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style* : but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence ; because it is so simple and so well subordinated ; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys. For what reason was the Greek tragic poet confined to so limited a range of subjects ? Because there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence : and it was not thought that on any but an excellent subject could an excellent Poem be constructed. A few actions, therefore, eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the Greek tragic stage ; their significance appeared inexhaustible ; they were as permanent problems, perpetually offered to the genius of every fresh poet. This too is the reason of what appears to us moderns a certain baldness of expression in Greek tragedy ; of the triviality with which we often reproach the remarks of the chorus, where it takes part in the dialogue : that the action itself, the situation of Orestes, or Merope, or Alcmæon, was to stand the central point of interest, unforgotten, absorbing, principal ; that no accessories were for a moment to distract the spectator's attention from this ; that the tone of the parts was to be perpetually kept down, in order not to impair the grandiose effect of the whole. The terrible old mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theatre, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind ; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista : then came the Poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment

capriciously thrown in; stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group; more and more it revealed itself to the rivetted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty.

This was what a Greek critic demanded; this was what a Greek poet endeavored to effect. It signified nothing to what time an action belonged; we do not find that the *Persæ* occupied a particularly high rank among the dramas of Æschylus, because it represented a matter of contemporary interest: this was not what a cultivated Athenian required; he required that the permanent elements of his nature should be moved; and dramas of which the action, though taken from a long-distant mythic time, yet was calculated to accomplish this in a higher degree than that of the *Persæ*, stood higher in his estimation accordingly. The Greeks felt, no doubt, with their exquisite sagacity of taste, that an action of present times was too near them, too much mixed up with what was accidental and passing, to form a sufficiently grand, detached, and self-subsistent object for a tragic poem: such objects belonged to the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry. For the more serious kinds, for *pragmatic* poetry, to use an excellent expression of Polybius, they were more difficult and severe in the range of subjects which they permitted. But for all kinds of poetry alike there was one point on which they were rigidly exacting; the adaptability of the subject to the kind of poetry selected, and the careful construction of the poem. Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle, and the unrivalled works of their poets, exclaim with a thousand tongues—"All depends upon the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate

yourself with the feeling of its situations ; this done, everything else will follow."

How different a way of thinking from this is ours ! We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander meant, when he told a man who inquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages ; not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total-impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet ; they think the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity. Of his neglecting to gratify these, there is little danger ; he needs rather to be warned against the danger of attempting to gratify these alone ; he needs rather to be perpetually reminded to prefer his action to everything else ; so to treat this, as to permit its inherent excellences to develop themselves, without interruption from the intrusion of his personal peculiarities : most fortunate, when he most

entirely succeeds in effacing himself, and in enabling a noble action to subsist as it did in nature.

But the modern critic not only permits a false practice; he absolutely prescribes false aims. — “A true allegory of the state of one’s own mind in a representative history,” the Poet is told, “is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry.” — And accordingly he attempts it. An allegory of the state of one’s own mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions! No, assuredly, it is not, it never can be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim. Faust itself, in which something of this kind is attempted, wonderful passages as it contains, and in spite of the unsurpassed beauty of the scenes which relate to Margaret, Faust itself, judged as a whole, and judged strictly as a poetical work, is defective: its illustrious author, the greatest poet of modern times, the greatest critic of all times, would have been the first to acknowledge it; he only defended his work, indeed, by asserting it to be “something incommensurable.”

The confusion of the present times is great, the multitude of voices counselling different things bewildering, the number of existing works capable of attracting a young writer’s attention and of becoming his models, immense: what he wants is a hand to guide him through the confusion, a voice to prescribe to him the aim which he should keep in view, and to explain to him that the value of the literary works which offer themselves to his attention is relative to their power of helping him forward on his road towards this aim. Such a guide the English writer at the present day will nowhere find. Failing this, all that can be looked for, all indeed that can be desired, is, that his attention

should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce, at any rate, something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently.

Foremost amongst these models for the English writer stands Shakspeare: a name the greatest perhaps of all poetical names; a name never to be mentioned without reverence. I will venture, however, to express a doubt, whether the influence of his works, excellent and fruitful for the readers of poetry, for the great majority, has been of unmixed advantage to the writers of it. Shakspeare indeed chose excellent subjects; the world could afford no better than *Macbeth*, or *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Othello*: he had no theory respecting the necessity of choosing subjects of present import, or the paramount interest attaching to allegories of the state of one's own mind; like all great poets, he knew well what constituted a poetical action; like them, wherever he found such an action, he took it; like them, too, he found his best in past times. But to these general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own; a gift, namely, of happy, abundant, and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivalled: so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellences as a poet. Here has been the mischief. These other excellences were his fundamental excellences *as a poet*; what distinguishes the artist from the amateur, says Goethe, is *Architectonicè* in the highest sense; that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration. But these attractive accessories of a poetical

work being more easily seized than the spirit of the whole, and their accessories being possessed by Shakspeare in an unequal degree, a young writer having recourse to Shakspeare as his model runs great risk of being vanquished and absorbed by them, and, in consequence, of producing, according to the measure of his power, these, and these alone. Of this preponderating quality of Shakspeare's genius, accordingly, almost the whole of modern English poetry has, it appears to me, felt the influence. To the exclusive attention on the part of his imitators to this it is in a great degree owing, that of the majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless. In reading them one is perpetually reminded of that terrible sentence on a modern French poet — *il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.*

Let me give an instance of what I mean. I will take it from the works of the very chief among those who seem to have been formed in the school of Shakspeare: of one whose exquisite genius and pathetic death render him forever interesting. I will take the poem of *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, by Keats. I choose this rather than the *Endymion*, because the latter work, (which a modern critic has classed with the *Fairy Queen*!) although undoubtedly there blows through it the breath of genius, is yet as a whole so utterly incoherent, as not strictly to merit the name of a poem at all. The *Isabella*, then, is a perfect treasure-house of graceful and felicitous words and images: almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression, by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind, and which thrill the reader with a sudden delight. This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the

extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story? The action in itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the Poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null. Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the Decameron: he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express.

I have said that the imitators of Shakspeare, fixing their attention on his wonderful gift of expression, have directed their imitation to this, neglecting his other excellences. These excellences, the fundamental excellences of poetical art, Shakspeare no doubt possessed them — possessed many of them in a splendid degree; but it may perhaps be doubted whether even he himself did not sometimes give scope to his faculty of expression to the prejudice of a higher poetical duty. For we must never forget that Shakspeare is the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character; not from his gift of expression, which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very directest language, or its level character the very simplest. Mr. Hallam, than whom it is impossible to find a saner and more judicious critic, has had the courage (for at the present day it needs courage) to remark, how extremely and faultily difficult Shakspeare's language often is. It is so: you may find main scenes

in some of his greatest tragedies, King Lear for instance, where the language is so artificial, so curiously tortured, and so difficult, that every speech has to be read two or three times before its meaning can be comprehended. This over-curiosiveness of expression is indeed but the excessive employment of a wonderful gift — of the power of saying a thing in a happier way than any other man ; nevertheless, it is carried so far that one understands what M. Guizot meant, when he said that Shakspeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity. He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients, partly no doubt, because he had a far less cultivated and exacting audience : he has indeed a far wider range than they had, a far richer fertility of thought ; in this respect he rises above them : in his strong conception of his subject, in the genuine way in which he is penetrated with it, he resembles them, and is unlike the moderns : but in the accurate limitation of it, the conscientious rejection of superfluities, the simple and rigorous development of it from the first line of his work to the last, he falls below them, and comes nearer to the moderns. In his chief works, besides what he has of his own, he has the elementary soundness of the ancients ; he has their important action and their large and broad manner : but he has not their purity of method. He is therefore a less safe model ; for what he has of his own is personal, and inseparable from his own rich nature ; it may be imitated and exaggerated, it cannot be learned or applied as an art ; he is, above all, suggestive ; more valuable, therefore, to young writers as men than as artists. But the clearness of arrangement, rigor of development, simplicity of style — these may to a certain extent be learned : and these may, I am convinced, be learned best from the ancients, who although infinitely less



suggestive than Shakspeare, are thus, to the artist, more instructive.

What then, it will be asked, are the ancients to be our sole models? the ancients with their comparatively narrow range of experience, and their widely different circumstances? Not, certainly, that which is narrow in the ancients, nor that in which we can no longer sympathize. An action like the action of the Antigone of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that we should feel a deep interest. I am speaking too, it will be remembered, not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but for the best models of instruction for the individual writer. This last may certainly learn of the ancients, better than anywhere else, three things which it is vitally important for him to know:—the all-importance of the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction; and the subordinate character of expression. He will learn from them how unspeakably superior is the effect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the happiest image. As he penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient Poets aimed; that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works, and which makes them immortal. He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will deliver himself from the jargon of modern criticism, and escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness.

The present age makes great claims upon us: we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience: they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age: they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves: they know, too, that this is no easy task — *χαλεπὸν*, as Pittacus said, *χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι* — and they ask themselves sincerely whether their age and its literature can assist them in the attempt. If they are endeavoring to practise any art, they remember the plain and simple proceedings of the old artists, who attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the preëminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming Poet; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity; their business is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them: they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration.

They reply that with all this they can do nothing ; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul ; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them ; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them.

A host of voices will indignantly rejoin that the present age is inferior to the past neither in moral grandeur nor in spiritual health. He who possesses the discipline I speak of will content himself with remembering the judgments passed upon the present age, in this respect, by the men of strongest head and widest culture whom it has produced ; by Goethe and by Niebuhr. It will be sufficient for him that he knows the opinions held by these two great men respecting the present age and its literature ; and that he feels assured in his own mind that their aims and demands upon life were such as he would wish, at any rate, his own to be ; and their judgment as to what is impeding and disabling such as he may safely follow. He will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age ; he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience ; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also.

I am far indeed from making any claim, for myself, that I possess this discipline ; or for the following Poems, that they breathe its spirit. But I say, that in the sincere endeavor to

learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not. It is this uncertainty which is disheartening, and not hostile criticism. How often have I felt this when reading words of disparagement or of cavil : that it is the uncertainty as to what is really to be aimed at which makes our difficulty, not the dissatisfaction of the critic, who himself suffers from the same uncertainty. *Non me tua turbida terrent Dicta : Dii me terrent, et Jupiter hostis.*

Two kinds of *dilettanti*, says Goethe, there are in poetry : he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling ; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter. And he adds, that the first does most harm to Art, and the last to himself. If we must be *dilettanti* ; if it is impossible for us, under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly ; if we cannot attain to the mastery of the great artists — let us, at least, have so much respect for our Art as to prefer it to ourselves ; let us not bewilder our successors ; let us transmit to them the practice of Poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and cancelled by the influence of their eternal enemy, Caprice.

*Fox How, Ambleside,*  
October 1, 1853.

Ἔμ μάκαρ, ὅστις ἔην κείνου χρόνον ἔδρις ἀοιδῆς  
Μουσάων θεράπων, ὅτ' ἀκείρατος ἦν ἔτι λειμών·  
νῦν δ', ὅτε πάντα δέδασται, ἔχουσι δὲ πείρατα τέχνηαι,  
ἕστατοι ὥστε δρόμου καταλειπόμεθ' —



P O E M S .

*One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
One lesson, that in every wind is blown :  
One lesson of two duties serv'd in one,  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity —  
    Of Toil unsever'd from Tranquillity,  
Of Labor, that in still advance outgrows  
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in Repose,  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.  
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
Man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,  
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting :  
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil ;  
Laborers that shall not fail, when man is gone.*



## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

### AN EPISODE.

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

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood  
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand  
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere :  
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,  
And to a hillock came, a little back  
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,  
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.

The men of former times had crown'd the top  
 With a clay fort : but that was fall'n ; and now  
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
 Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,  
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
 Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;  
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said : —

“ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
 Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said : —  
 “ Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa : it is I.  
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe  
 Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie  
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.  
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek  
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,  
 In Sarmacand, before the army march'd ;  
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.  
 Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first  
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,  
 I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,  
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.  
 This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on  
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
 And beat the Persians back on every field,

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

He spoke : and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said : —  
“ O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !  
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
And share the battle's common chance with us  
Who love thee, but must press forever first,  
In single fight incurring single risk,  
To find a father thou hast never seen ?  
Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,  
To seek out Rustum — seek him not through fight :  
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,  
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !  
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.  
For now it is not as when I was young,  
When Rustum was in front of every fray :

But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

Whether that his own mighty strength at last  
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age ;  
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

There go : — Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes  
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost  
To us : fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
To seek thy father, not seek single fights

In vain : — but who can keep the lion's cub  
From ravening ? and who govern Rustum's son ?  
Go : I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,  
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;  
And on his head he plac'd his sheep-skin cap,  
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;  
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd  
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog  
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands :  
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd  
Into the open plain ; so Haman bade ;  
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd  
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.

From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd :  
As when, some gray November morn, the files,  
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,  
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes  
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,  
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
For the warm Persian sea-board : so they stream'd.  
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;  
Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come  
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.  
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,  
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;  
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink  
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.  
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;  
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks  
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards  
And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes  
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,  
Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,  
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.  
These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.  
And on the other side the Persians form'd :  
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,  
The Ilyats of Khorassan : and behind,

The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnished steel.  
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came  
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.  
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.  
And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said : —

“ Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear !  
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”

As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,  
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy —  
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,  
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow ;  
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries —  
In single file they move, and stop their breath,

For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows —  
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up  
To counsel : Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host  
Second, and was the uncle of the King :  
These came and counsell'd ; and then Gudurz said : —

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.  
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.  
But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits  
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart :  
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.  
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.  
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and said : —  
“ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.  
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode  
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.  
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,  
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,  
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.  
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
Just pitch'd : the high pavilion in the midst  
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.  
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found  
Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still

The table stood beside him, charg'd with food ;  
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
 And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sate  
 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
 And play'd with it ; but Gudurz came and stood  
 Before him ; and he look'd and saw him stand ;  
 And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,  
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said : —

“ Welcome ! these eyes could see no better sight.  
 What news ? but sit down first, and eat and drink.”

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said : —

“ Not now : a time will come to eat and drink,  
 But not to-day : to-day has other needs.

The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze :  
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought  
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight their champion — and thou know'st his name —  
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.

O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.

And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,

Or else too weak ; and all eyes turn to thee.

Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.”

He spoke : but Rustum answer'd with a smile : —

“ Go to ! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I

Am older : if the young are weak, the King

Errs strangely : for the King, for Kai Khosroo,

Himself is young, and honors younger men,

And lets the aged moulder to their graves.



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

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

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply : —  
 " O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words ?  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.  
 What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,  
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me ?

Are not they mortal, am not I myself?  
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?  
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.  
But I will fight unknown and in plain arms;  
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran  
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,  
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.  
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd  
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,  
And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose  
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,  
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
And from the fluted spine atop a plume  
Of horsehair waiv'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.  
So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,  
Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,  
Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,  
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once  
Did in Bokhara by the river find  
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,  
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;  
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green  
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd  
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know:  
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd  
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.  
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts

Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.  
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,  
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,  
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,  
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands —  
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

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

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire —  
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes —  
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum ey'd  
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar  
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
All the most valiant chiefs: long he perus'd

His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ;  
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound —  
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.

And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul  
As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,  
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said : —

“ O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,  
And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold.  
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.

Behold me : I am vast, and clad in iron,  
And tried ; and I have stood on many a field  
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe :  
Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.

O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?  
Be govern'd : quit the Tartar host, and come  
To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
And fight beneath my banner till I die.

There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.”

So he spake, mildly : Sohrab heard his voice,  
The mighty voice of Rustum ; and he saw  
His giant figure planted on the sand,  
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
Has builded on the waste in former years  
Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,  
Streak'd with its first gray hairs : hope fill'd his soul ;

And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,  
 And clasp'd his hand within his own and said : —  
 “ Oh, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !  
 Art thou not Rustum ? Speak ! art thou not he ? ”

But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,  
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul : —

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

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

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

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

He spoke ; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd

His spear : down from the shoulder, down it came,  
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk  
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds  
Drops like a plummet : Sohrab saw it come,  
And sprang aside, quick as a flash : the spear  
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,  
Which it sent flying wide : — then Sohrab threw  
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield : sharp rang,  
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.  
And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he  
Could wield : an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,  
Still rough ; like those which men in treeless plains  
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up  
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time  
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,  
And strewn the channels with torn boughs ; so huge  
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside  
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came  
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.  
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell  
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand :  
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,  
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay  
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand :  
But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,  
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said : —  
“ Thou strik'st too hard : that club of thine will float

Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.  
 But rise, and be not wroth ; not wroth am I ;  
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.  
 Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum : be it so.  
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?  
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too ;  
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,  
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;  
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.  
 Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?  
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !  
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,  
 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,  
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,  
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.  
 There are enough foes in the Persian host  
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;  
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
 Mayst fight ; fight them, when they confront thy spear.  
 But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me ! "

He ceas'd : but while he spake, Rustum had risen,  
 And stood erect, trembling with rage : his club  
 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand  
 Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,  
 The baleful sign of fevers : dust had soil'd  
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.  
 His breast heav'd ; his lips foam'd ; and twice his voice  
 Was chok'd with rage : at last these words broke way : —



“ Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !  
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !  
Fight ; let me hear thy hateful voice no more !  
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;  
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
Of battle, and with me, who make no play  
Of war : I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !  
Remember all thy valor : try thy feints  
And cunning : all the pity I had is gone :  
Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts  
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.”

He spoke ; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
And he too drew his sword : at once they rush'd  
Together, as two eagles on one prey  
Come rushing down together from the clouds,  
One from the east, one from the west : their shields  
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
Of hewing axes, crashing trees : such blows  
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.  
And you would say that sun and stars took part  
In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud  
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun  
Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose  
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,  
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.

In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;  
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes  
And laboring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield  
Which Sohrab held stiff out : the steel-spik'd spear  
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.  
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest  
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust ;  
And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom  
Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air,  
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,  
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :  
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,  
And comes at night to die upon the sand : —  
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,  
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.  
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd  
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.  
Then Rustum rais'd his head : his dreadful eyes

Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
 And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that shout,  
 And shrank amaz'd : back he recoil'd one step,  
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form :  
 And then he stood bewilder'd ; and he dropp'd  
 His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.  
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.  
 And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,  
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
 The cloud ; the two armies saw the pair ;  
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

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

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied : —  
 “ Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !  
 No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.

For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,  
And I were he who till to-day I was,  
They should be lying here, I standing there.  
But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm —  
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.  
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.  
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear !  
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !  
My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee !”

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,  
And follow'd her to find her where she fell  
Far off ; — anon her mate comes winging back  
From hunting, and a great way off descries  
His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks  
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps  
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she  
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,  
A heap of fluttering feathers : never more  
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;  
Never the black and dripping precipices  
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by : —

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss —  
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood  
Over his dying son, and knew him not.

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

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

He spoke ; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,  
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.  
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.  
Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew ;  
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all :  
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;  
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;  
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.  
So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought ;  
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
At the full moon : tears gathered in his eyes ;  
For he remember'd his own early youth,  
And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,  
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries  
A far bright City, smitten by the sun,  
Through many rolling clouds ; — so Rustum saw  
His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;  
And that old King, her father, who lov'd well  
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,  
They three, in that long-distant summer-time —  
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills

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

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

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

“ Man, who art thou who does deny my words ?  
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
 And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.  
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear  
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,

That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke : and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks ;  
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand  
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
 That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud :  
 And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said : —

“ Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.  
 If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd  
 His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,  
 And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
 Prick'd : as a cunning workman, in Peking,  
 Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
 An emperor's gift — at early morn he paints,  
 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
 Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands : —  
 So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
 On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.  
 It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,  
 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,  
 A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.  
 Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd —  
 Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.  
 And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,  
 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,  
 And then he touch'd it with his hand and said : —

“ How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign  
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ? ”



He spoke : but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood  
Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry —  
*O Boy — thy Father !* — and his voice chok'd there.  
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,  
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.  
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast  
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,  
Trying to call him back to life : and life  
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,  
And they stood wide with horror ; and he seiz'd  
In both his hands the dust which lay around,  
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,  
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :  
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,  
And his sobs chok'd him ; and he clutch'd his sword,  
To draw it, and forever let life out.  
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,  
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said : —  
“ Father, forbear : for I but meet to-day  
The doom that at my birth was written down  
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.  
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,  
I know it : but Fate trod those promptings down  
Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fate engag'd  
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.  
But let us speak no more of this : I find  
My father ; let me feel that I have found.

Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
 And wash them with thy tears, and say, 'My Son!'  
 Quick! quick! for numbered are my sands of life,  
 And swift; for like the lightning to this field  
 I came, and like the wind I go away —  
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.  
 But it was writ in Heaven that this should be."

So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart  
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast  
 His arms around his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts  
 When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,  
 With his head bowing to the ground, and mane  
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe  
 First to the one then to the other mov'd  
 His head, as if inquiring what their grief  
 Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
 The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.  
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said: —

"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet  
 Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,  
 When first they bore thy Master to this field."

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said: —  
 "Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,  
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!  
 My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,  
 That I should one day find thy lord and thee.  
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.

O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;  
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,  
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.  
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
 Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself  
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,  
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
 And said — ' O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well ! ' — but I  
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream :  
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen  
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
 The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream. —  
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

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

And, with a grave, mild voice, Sohrab replied —  
 " Desire not that, my father ; thou must live.  
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.  
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,

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

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

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

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied: —  
"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!  
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now;  
Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,  
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,  
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,  
Returning home over the salt blue sea,

From laying thy dear Master in his grave.”

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said : —  
 “ Soon be that day, my Son, and that deep sea !  
 Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.”

He spoke ; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took  
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd  
 His wound's imperious anguish : but the blood  
 Came welling from the open gash, and life  
 Flow'd with the stream : all down his cold white side  
 The crimson torrent pour'd, dim now, and soil'd,  
 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets  
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,  
 By romping children, whom their nurses call  
 From the hot fields at noon : his head droop'd low,  
 His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay —  
 White, with eyes clos'd ; only when heavy gasps,  
 Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,  
 Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,  
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face :  
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs  
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,  
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
 And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.  
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.  
 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd  
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
 His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,

Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side —  
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,  
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with night,  
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires  
Began to twinkle through the fog : for now  
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal :  
The Persians took it on the open sands  
Southward ; the Tartars by the river marge :  
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,  
Under the solitary moon : he flow'd  
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,  
Brimming, and bright, and large : then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents ; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer : — till at last  
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

“ After Chephren, Mycerinus, son of Cheops, reigned over Egypt. He abhorred his father’s courses, and judged his subjects more justly than any of their kings had done. — To him there came an oracle from the city of Buto, to the effect, that he was to live but six years longer, and to die in the seventh year from that time.” — *Herodotus*.



## MYCERINUS.

“ NOT by the justice that my father spurn'd,  
Not for the thousands whom my father slew,  
Altars unfed and temples overturn'd  
Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where thanks were  
due ;

Fell this late voice from lips that cannot lie,  
Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.  
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,  
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime  
Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of Law ;  
Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,  
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long ;  
Crown'd with gray hairs he died, and full of sway.  
I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated wrong ;  
The Gods declare my recompense to-day.  
I look'd for life more lasting, rule more high ;  
And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die !

Yet surely, O my people, did I deem  
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was given :  
A light that from some upper fount did beam,  
Some better archetype, whose seat was heaven :  
A light that, shining from the blest abodes,  
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.

Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart,  
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed :  
Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures, then depart,  
When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims its meed :  
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,  
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close.

Seems it so light a thing then, austere Powers,  
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things ?  
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with flowers,  
Love, free to range, and regal banquettings ?  
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,  
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy ?

Or is it that some Power, too wise, too strong,  
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,  
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,  
Like the broad rushing of the insurged Nile ?  
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be  
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity ?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,  
 Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,  
 And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,  
 Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night ?  
 Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,  
 Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene ?

Oh, wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,  
 Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream ?  
 Stringing vain words of powers we cannot see,  
 Blind divinations of a will supreme ;  
 Lost labor : when the circumambient gloom  
 But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our doom ?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak  
 My sand runs short ; and as yon star-shot ray,  
 Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak,  
 Now, as the barrier closes, dies away ;  
 Even so do past and future intertwine,  
 Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

Six years — six little years — six drops of time —  
 Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall wane,  
 And old men die, and young men pass their prime,  
 And languid Pleasure fade and flower again ;  
 And the dull Gods behold, ere these are flown,  
 Revels more deep, joy keener than their own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods  
I will go forth ; but something would I say —  
Something — yet what I know not : for the Gods  
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay ;  
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are fruitless all,  
And the night waxes, and the shadows fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your king.  
I go, and I return not. But the will  
Of the great Gods is plain ; and ye must bring  
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil  
Their pleasure, to their feet ; and reap their praise,  
The praise of Gods, rich boon ! and length of days.”

— So spake he, half in anger, half in scorn ;  
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze  
Broke from his sorrowing people : so he spake ;  
And turning, left them there ; and with brief pause,  
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way  
To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.  
There by the river banks he wander'd on,  
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,  
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and beneath  
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers :  
Where in one dream the feverish time of Youth  
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy  
Might wander all day long and never tire :  
Here came the king, holding high feast at morn,  
Rose-crown'd ; and ever, when the sun went down,

A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,  
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling grove,  
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,  
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd with wine ;  
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead  
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.

It may be that sometimes his wondering soul  
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips  
Might shrink half-startled, like a guilty man  
Who wrestles with his dream ; as some pale Shape,  
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,  
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,  
Whispering, " A little space, and thou art mine."  
It may be on that joyless feast his eye  
Dwelt with mere outward seeming ; he, within,  
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,  
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,  
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.  
It may be ; but not less his brow was smooth,  
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,  
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof  
Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity ;  
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and died  
In the rich languor of long summer days ;  
Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes that roof'd  
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,  
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless Spring ;  
No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought the clouds.  
So six long years he revell'd, night and day ;

And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound  
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,  
To tell his wondering people of their king ;  
In the still night, across the steaming flats,  
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

## CADMUS AND HARMONIA.

FAR, far, from here,  
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay  
Among the green Illyrian hills ; and there  
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,  
And by the sea, and in the brakes.  
The grass is cool, the sea-side air  
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers  
More virginal and sweet than ours.  
And there, they say, two bright and aged Snakes,  
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,  
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,  
In breathless quiet, after all their ills.  
Nor do they see their country, nor the place  
Where the Sphinx liv'd among the frowning hills,  
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,  
Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes.  
They had stay'd long enough to see,  
In Thebes, the billow of calamity  
Over their own dear children roll'd,

Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,  
For years, they sitting helpless in their home,  
A gray old man and woman : yet of old  
The Gods had to their marriage come,  
And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days  
In sight of blood ; but were rapt, far away,  
To where the west wind plays,  
And murmurs of the Adriatic come  
To those untrodden mountain lawns : and there  
Placed safely in chang'd forms, the Pair  
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,  
And all that Theban woe, and stray  
Forever through the glens, placid and dumb.



## PHILOMELA.

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

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain —

Say, will it never heal?

And can this fragrant lawn  
With its cool trees, and night,  
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,  
And moonshine, and the dew,  
To thy rack'd heart and brain

Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold

Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,  
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?

Dost thou again peruse  
With hot cheeks and scar'd eyes

The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame ?

Dost thou once more assay

Thy flight, and feel come over thee,

Poor Fugitive, the feathery change

Once more, and once more seem to make resound

With love and hate, triumph and agony,

Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale ?

Listen, Eugenia —

How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves !

Again — thou hearest !

Eternal Passion !

Eternal Pain !

## THE STRAYED REVELLER.

*The Portico of Circe's Palace. Evening.*

A YOUTH. CIRCE.

THE YOUTH.

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

Thou standest, smiling  
Down on me ; thy right arm  
Lean'd up against the column there,  
Props thy soft cheek ;

Thy left holds, hanging loosely,  
 The deep cup, ivy-cinctur'd,  
 I held but now.

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

## CIRCE.

Whence art thou, sleeper?

## THE YOUTH.

When the white dawn first  
 Through the rough fir planks  
 Of my hut, by the chestnuts,  
 Up at the valley-head,  
 Came breaking, Goddess,  
 I sprang up, I threw round me  
 My dappled fawn-skin :  
 Passing out, from the wet turf,  
 Where they lay, by the hut door,  
 I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff,  
 All drench'd in dew :

Came swift down to join  
 The rout early gather'd  
 In the town, round the temple,  
     Iacchus' white fane  
     On yonder hill.

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

## CIRCE.

Foolish boy ! Why tremblest thou ?  
 Thou lovest it, then, my wine ?  
 Wouldst more of it ? See, how glows,  
 Through the delicate flush'd marble,  
     The red creaming liquor,  
     Strown with dark seeds !

Drink, then ! I chide thee not,  
 Deny thee not my bowl.  
 Come, stretch forth thy hand, then — so, —  
 Drink, drink again !

## THE YOUTH.

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

## CIRCE.

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

## ULYSSES.

Ever new magic !  
 Hast thou then lur'd hither,  
 Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,  
 The young, languid-ey'd Ampelus,

Iacchus' darling —  
 Or some youth belov'd of Pan,  
 Of Pan and the Nymphs?  
 That he sits, bending downward  
 His white, delicate neck  
 To the ivy-wreath'd marge  
 Of thy cup: — the bright, glancing vine-leaves  
 That crown his hair,  
 Falling forwards, mingling  
 With the dark ivy-plants;  
 His fawn-skin, half untied,  
 Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,  
 That he sits overweigh'd  
 By fumes of wine and sleep,  
 So late, in thy portico?  
 What youth, Goddess, — what guest  
 Of Gods or mortals?

## CIRCE.

Hist! he wakes!  
 I lur'd him not hither, Ulysses.  
 Nay, ask him!

## THE YOUTH.

Who speaks? Ah! Who comes forth  
 To thy side, Goddess, from within?  
 How shall I name him?  
 This spare, dark-featur'd,

Quick-ey'd stranger ?  
 Ah ! and I see too  
 His sailor's bonnet,  
 His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,  
     With one arm bare. —  
 Art thou not he, whom fame  
     This long time rumors  
 The favor'd guest of Circe, brought by the waves ?  
 Art thou he, stranger ?  
 The wise Ulysses,  
 Laertes' son ?

ULYSSES.

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



## THE YOUTH.

The Gods are happy.  
They turn on all sides  
Their shining eyes :  
And see, below them,  
The Earth, and men.

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

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

They see the Indian  
Drifting, knife in hand,  
His frail boat moor'd to  
A floating isle thick matted

With large-leav'd, low-creeping melon-plants,  
And the dark cucumber.

He reaps, and stows them,  
Drifting — drifting : — round him,  
Round his green harvest-plot,  
Flow the coal lake waves :  
The mountains ring them.

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

They see the Ferry

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

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

These things, Ulysses,  
The wise Bards also

Behold and sing.  
 But oh, what labor !  
 O Prince, what pain !

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

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

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

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

They see the Heroes  
 Near harbor : — but they share  
 Their lives, and former violent toil, in Thebes,  
 Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy :  
 Or where the echoing oars  
 Of Argo, first,  
 Startled the unknown Sea.

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

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

Ah cool night-wind, tremulous stars !  
 Ah glimmering water —  
 Fitful earth-murmur —  
 Dreaming woods !  
 Ah golden-hair'd, strangely-smiling Goddess,

And thou, prov'd, much enduring,  
Wave-toss'd Wanderer !  
Who can stand still ?  
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me.  
The cup again !

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

## THEKLA'S ANSWER.

(*From Schiller.*)

WHERE I am, thou ask'st, and where I wended  
When my fleeting shadow pass'd from thee? —  
Am I not concluded now, and ended?  
Have not life and love been granted me?

Ask, where now those nightingales are singing,  
Who, of late on the soft nights of May,  
Set thine ears with soul-fraught music ringing —  
Only, while their love liv'd, lasted they.

Find I him, from whom I had to sever? —  
Doubt it not, we met, and we are one.  
There, where what is join'd, is join'd for ever,  
There, where tears are never more to run.

There thou too shalt live with us together,  
When thou too hast borne the love we bore:  
There, from sin deliver'd, dwells my Father,  
Track'd by Murder's bloody sword no more.



There he feels it was no dream deceiving  
Lur'd him starwards to uplift his eye :  
God doth match his gifts to man's believing ;  
Believe, and thou shalt find the Holy nigh.

All thou augurest here of lovely seeming  
There shall find fulfilment in its day :  
Dare, O Friend, be wandering, dare be dreaming ;  
Lofty thought lies oft in childish play.

“IN the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagil, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises. The king of Ireland, at Tristram’s solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter’s confidante a philtre, or love-portion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers. —

“After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews. — Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands. — He married her — more out of gratitude than love. — Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

“Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to accompany him to Brittany,” &c. — *Dunlop’s History of Fiction.*

# TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

## I.

TRISTRAM.

TRISTRAM.

Is she not come? The messenger was sure.  
Prop me upon the pillows once again —  
Raise me, my Page: this cannot long endure.  
Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!  
What lights will those out to the northward be?

THE PAGE.

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

TRISTRAM.

Soft — who is that stands by the dying fire?

THE PAGE.

Iseult.

## TRISTRAM.

Ah ! not the Iseult I desire.

\* \* \* \*

What Knight is this, so weak and pale,  
 Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,  
 Propt on pillows in his bed,  
 Gazing seawards for the light  
 Of some ship that fights the gale  
 On this wild December night ?  
 Over the sick man's feet is spread  
 A dark green forest dress.  
 A gold harp leans against the bed,  
 Ruddy in the fire's light.

I know him by his harp of gold,  
 Famous in Arthur's court of old :  
 I know him by his forest dress.

The peerless hunter, harper, knight —  
 Tristram of Lyonesse.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire  
 Gleams so rich in the light of the fire ?  
 The ringlets on her shoulders lying  
 In their flitting lustre vying  
 With the clasp of burnish'd gold  
 Which her heavy robe doth hold.  
 Her looks are mild, her fingers slight  
 As the driven snow are white ;

And her cheeks are sunk and pale.

Is it that the bleak sea-gale  
Beating from the Atlantic sea  
On this coast of Brittany,  
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower ? —

Is it that a deep fatigue  
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,  
Passing all her youthful hour  
Spinning with her maidens here,  
Listlessly through the window bars  
Gazing seawards many a league  
From her lonely shore-built tower,  
While the knights are at the wars ? —

Or, perhaps, has her young heart  
Felt already some deeper smart,  
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,  
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair ? —

Who is this snow-drop by the sea ?  
I know her by her mildness rare,  
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair ;  
I know her by her rich silk dress,  
And her fragile loveliness.  
The sweetest Christian soul alive,  
Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany ? — but where  
Is that other Iseult fair,  
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen ?  
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore

To Tyntagil from Ireland bore,  
 To Cornwall's palace, to the side  
 Of King Marc, to be his bride ?  
 She who, as they voyag'd, quaff'd  
 With Tristram that spic'd magic draught,  
 Which since then forever rolls  
 Through their blood, and binds their souls,

Working love, but working teen ? —  
 There were two Iseults, who did sway  
 Each her hour of Tristram's day ;  
 But one possess'd his waning time,  
 The other his resplendent prime.  
 Behold her here, the patient Flower,  
 Who possess'd his darker hour.  
 Iseult of the Snow-White Hand

Watches pale by Tristram's bed. —  
 She is here who had his gloom,  
 Where art thou who hadst his bloom ?  
 One such kiss as those of yore  
 Might thy dying knight restore —

Does the love-draught work no more ?  
 Art thou cold, or false, or dead,  
 Iseult of Ireland ?

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,  
 And the knight sinks back on his pillows again.  
 He is weak with fever and pain,  
 And his spirit is not clear :  
 Hark ! he mutters in his sleep,

As he wanders far from here,  
 Changes place and time of year,  
 And his closed eye doth sweep  
 O'er some fair unwint'ry sea,  
 Not this fierce Atlantic deep,  
 As he mutters brokenly —

## TRISTRAM.

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails —  
 Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,  
 And overhead the cloudless sky of May. —  
 “ *Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,  
 Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.  
 Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,  
 Reach me my golden cup that stands by thee,  
 And pledge me in it first for courtesy. —* ”

Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd like mine?  
 Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd wine!  
 Iseult! . . . .

\* \* \* \*

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!  
 Keep his eyelids! let him seem  
 Not this fever-wasted wight  
 Thinn'd and pal'd before his time,  
 But the brilliant youthful knight  
 In the glory of his prime,  
 Sitting in the gilded barge,

At thy side, thou lovely charge !

Bending gaily o'er thy hand,

Iseult of Ireland !

And she too, that princess fair,

If her bloom be now less rare,

Let her have her youth again —

Let her be as she was then !

Let her have her proud dark eyes,

And her petulant quick replies,

Let her sweep her dazzling hand

With its gesture of command,

And shake back her raven hair

With the old imperious air.

As of old, so let her be,

That first Iseult, princess bright,

Chatting with her youthful knight

As he steers her o'er the sea,

Quitting at her father's will

The green isle where she was bred,

And her bower in Ireland,

For the surge-beat Cornish strand,

Where the prince whom she must wed

Keeps his court in Tyntagil,

Fast beside the sounding sea.

And that golden cup her mother

Gave her, that her future lord,

Gave her, that King Marc and she,

Might drink it on her marriage day,

And forever love each other,



Let her, as she sits on board,  
 Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,  
 See it shine, and take it up,  
 And to Tristram laughing say —  
 “ Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy  
 Pledge me in my golden cup ! ”  
 Let them drink it — let their hands  
 Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,  
 As they feel the fatal bands  
 Of a love they dare not name,  
 With a wild delicious pain,

Twine about their hearts again.

Let the early summer be  
 Once more round them, and the sea  
 Blue, and o'er its mirror kind  
 Let the breath of the May wind,  
 Wandering through their drooping sails,  
 Die on the green fields of Wales.  
 Let a dream like this restore  
 What his eye must see no more.

TRISTRAM.

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce walks are drear.  
 Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here ?  
 Were feet like those made for so wild a way ?  
 The southern winter-parlor, by my fay,  
 Had been the likeliest trysting place to-day. —  
 “ *Tristram ! — nay, nay — thou must not take my hand —*  
*Tristram — sweet love — we are betray'd — out-plann'd.* ”

*Fly — save thyself — save me. I dare not stay.” —*  
*One last kiss first! — “ ’Tis vain — to horse — away ! ”*

\* \* \* \*

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move  
 Faster surely than it should,  
 From the fever in his blood.  
 All the spring-time of his love  
 Is already gone and past,  
 And instead thereof is seen  
 Its winter, which endureth still —  
 The palace towers of Tyntagil,  
 The pleasaunce walks, the weeping queen,  
 The flying leaves, the straining blast,  
 And that long, wild kiss — their last.  
 And this rough December night  
 And his burning fever pain  
 Mingle with his hurrying dream  
 Till they rule it, till he seem  
 The press'd fugitive again,  
 The love-desperate banish'd knight  
 With a fire in his brain  
 Flying o'er the stormy main.

Whither does he wander now?  
 Haply in his dreams the wind  
 Wafts him here, and lets him find  
 The lovely Orphan Child again  
 In her castle by the coast,

The youngest, fairest chatelaine,  
That this realm of France can boast,  
Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,  
Iseult of Brittany.

And — for through the haggard air,  
The stain'd arms, the matted hair  
Of that stranger knight ill-starr'd,  
There gleam'd something that recall'd  
The Tristram who in better days  
Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard —  
Welcom'd here, and here install'd,  
Tended of his fever here,

Haply he seems again to move  
His young guardian's heart with love ;

In his exil'd loneliness,  
In his stately deep distress,  
Without a word, without a tear. —

Ah, 'tis well he should retrace  
His tranquil life in this lone place ;  
His gentle bearing at the side  
Of his timid youthful bride ;  
His long rambles by the shore  
On winter evenings, when the roar  
Of the near waves came, sadly grand,  
Through the dark, up the drown'd sand :

Or his endless reveries  
In the woods, where the gleams play  
On the grass under the trees,  
Passing the long summer's day

Idle as a mossy stone  
 In the forest depths alone ;  
 The chase neglected, and his hound  
 Couch'd beside him on the ground. —

Ah, what trouble's on his brow ?  
 Hither let him wander now,  
 Hither, to the quiet hours  
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours  
 By the gray Atlantic sea.

Hours, if not of ecstasy,  
 From violent anguish surely free.

TRISTRAM.

All red with blood the whirling river flows,  
 The wide plain rings, the daz'd air throbs with blows.  
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome —  
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bath'd in foam.  
 "Up, Tristram, up," men cry, "thou moonstruck knight!  
 What foul fiend rides thee? On into the fight!" —

Above the din her voice is in my ears —  
 I see her form glide through the crossing spears. —  
 Iseult! . . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah, he wanders forth again ;  
 We cannot keep him ; now as then  
 There's a secret in his breast  
 That will never let him rest.

These musing fits in the green wood  
They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.

His sword is sharp — his horse is good —  
Beyond the mountains will he see  
The famous towns of Italy,  
And label with the blessed sign  
The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.  
At Arthur's side he fights once more  
With the Roman Emperor.  
There's many a gay knight where he goes  
Will help him to forget his care.  
The march — the leaguer — Heaven's blithe air —  
The neighing steeds — the ringing blows ;

Sick pining comes not where these are.  
Ah, what boots it, that the jest  
Lightens every other brow,  
What, that every other breast  
Dances as the trumpets blow,  
If one's own heart beats not light  
On the waves of the toss'd fight,  
If oneself cannot get free  
From the clog of misery ?

Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale  
Watching by the salt sea tide  
With her children at her side  
For the gleam of thy white sail.  
Home, Tristram, to thy halls again !  
To our lonely sea complain,  
To our forests tell thy pain.

## TRISTRAM.

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,  
 But it is moonlight in the open glade :  
 And in the bottom of the glade shine clear  
 The forest chapel and the fountain near.

I think, I have a fever in my blood :  
 Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,  
 Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.

Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light.  
 God ! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright. —  
 “ Fair love,” she says, “ canst thou forget so soon,  
 At this soft hour, under this sweet moon ? ” —  
 Iseult ! . . . .

\* \* \* \*

Ah, poor soul, if this be so,  
 Only death can balm thy woe.  
 The solitudes of the green wood  
 Had no medicine for thy mood.  
 The rushing battle clear'd thy blood  
 As little as did solitude.

Ah, his eyelids slowly break  
 Their hot seals, and let him wake.  
 What new change shall we now see ?  
 A happier ? Worse it cannot be.

## TRISTRAM.

Is my Page here ? Come, turn me to the fire.  
 Upon the window panes the moon shines bright ;  
 The wind is down : but she'll not come to-night.  
 Ah no — she is asleep in Tyntagil  
 Far hence — her dreams are fair — her sleep is still.  
 Of me she recks not, nor of my desire.

I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my Page,  
 Would take a score years from a strong man's age ;  
 And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,  
 Scant leisure for a second messenger.

My Princess, art thou there ? Sweet, 'tis too late.  
 To bed, and sleep : my fever is gone by :  
 To-night my Page shall keep me company.  
 Where do the children sleep ? kiss them for me.  
 Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I :  
 This comes of nursing long and watching late.  
 To bed — good night !

\* \* \* \*

She left the gleam-lit fire-place,  
 She came to the bed-side.  
 She took his hands in hers : her tears  
 Down on her slender fingers rain'd.  
 She rais'd her eyes upon his face —  
 Not with a look of wounded pride,  
 A look as if the heart complained : —

Her look was like a sad embrace ;  
The gaze of one who can divine  
A grief, and sympathize.  
Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes  
Are not more innocent than thine.  
But they sleep in shelter'd rest,  
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,  
On the Castle's southern side ;  
Where feebly comes the mournful roar  
Of buffeting wind and surging tide  
Through many a room and corridor.  
Full on their window the Moon's ray  
Makes their chamber as bright as day ;  
It shines upon the blank white walls,  
And on the snowy pillow falls,  
And on two angel-heads doth play  
Turn'd to each other : — the eyes clos'd —  
The lashes on the cheeks repos'd.  
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set  
Hardly lets peep the golden hair ;  
Through the soft-open'd lips the air  
Scarcely moves the coverlet.  
One little wandering arm is thrown  
At random on the counterpane,  
And often the fingers close in haste  
As if their baby owner chas'd  
The butterflies again.  
This stir they have and this alone ;  
But else they are so still.



Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.  
But were you at the window now  
To look forth on the fairy sight  
Of your illumin'd haunts by night ;  
To see the park-glades where you play  
Far lovelier than they are by day ;  
To see the sparkle on the eaves,  
And upon every giant bough  
Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves  
Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain —

How would your voices run again !  
And far beyond the sparkling trees  
Of the castle park one sees  
The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,  
Moor behind moor, far, far away,  
Into the heart of Brittany.  
And here and there, lock'd by the land,  
Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,  
And many a stretch of watery-sand  
All shining in the white moon-beams.  
But you see fairer in your dreams.

What voices are these on the clear night air ?  
What lights in the court ? what steps on the stair ?

# TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

## II.

### ISEULT OF IRELAND.

#### TRISTRAM.

RAISE the light, my Page, that I may see her. —

Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen!  
Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever:  
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

#### ISEULT.

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:  
I was bound, I could not break the band.  
Chide not with the past, but feel the present:  
I am here — we meet — I hold thy hand.

#### TRISTRAM.

Thou art come, indeed — thou hast rejoind me;  
Thou hast dar'd it: but too late to save.  
Fear not now that men should tax thy honor.  
I am dying: build — (thou may'st) — my grave

## ISEULT.

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak kindly !

What, I hear these bitter words from thee ?

Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel —

Take my hand — dear Tristram, look on me !

## TRISTRAM.

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.

Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.

But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult !

And thy beauty never was more fair.

## ISEULT.

Ah, harsh flatterer ! let alone my beauty.

I, like thee, have left my youth afar.

Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers —

See my cheek and lips, how white they are.

## TRISTRAM.

Thou art paler : — but thy sweet charm, Iseult !

Would not fade with the dull years away.

Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight !

I forgive thee, Iseult ! — thou wilt stay ?

## ISEULT.

Fear me not, I will be always with thee ;  
 I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain ;  
 Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers  
 Join'd at evening of their days again.

## TRISTRAM.

No, thou shalt not speak ; I should be finding  
 Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.  
 Sit — sit by me : I will think, we've liv'd so  
 In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

## ISEULT.

Alter'd, Tristram ? Not in courts, believe me,  
 Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.  
 Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.  
 Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd.

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband —  
 That was bliss to make my sorrows flee !  
 Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings —  
 Those were friends to make me false to thee !

What, thou think'st, men speak in courtly chambers  
 Words by which the wretched are consol'd ?  
 What, thou think'st, this aching brow was cooler,  
 Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold ?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanc'd,  
Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,  
Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest —  
Me, a smiling queen upon my throne ?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd ;  
Both have pass'd a youth constrain'd and sad ;  
Both have brought their anxious day to evening,  
And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth : nor will thy people,  
Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,  
That an ancient rival shares her office,  
When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,  
I, a statue on thy chapel floor,  
Pour'd in grief before the Virgin Mother,  
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry — “ Is this the foe I dreaded ?  
This his idol ? this that royal bride ?  
Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight ;  
Stay, pale queen ! forever by my side.”

Hush, no words ! that smile, I see, forgives me.  
I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.  
Close thine eyes — this flooding moonlight blinds them —  
Nay, all's well again : thou must not weep.

## TRISTRAM.

I am happy : yet I feel, there's something  
 Swells my heart, and takes my breath away :  
 Through a mist I see thee : near ! — come nearer !  
 Bend — bend down — I yet have much to say.

## ISEULT.

Heaven ! his head sinks back upon the pillow ! —  
 Tristram ! Tristram ! let thy heart not fail.  
 Call on God and on the holy angels !  
 What, love, courage ! — Christ ! he is so pale.

## TRISTRAM.

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching.  
 This is what my mother said should be,  
 When the fierce pains took her in the forest,  
 The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

“ Son,” she said, “ thy name shall be of sorrow !  
 Tristram art thou call'd for my death's sake ! ”  
 So she said, and died in the drear forest.  
 Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying. — Start not, nor look wildly !  
 Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.  
 But, since living we were ununited,  
 Go not far, O Iseult ! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult :

Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.

Say, I charg'd her, that ye live together : —

She will grant it — she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death I leave thee.

One last kiss upon the living shore !

ISEULT.

Tristram ! — Tristram ! — stay — receive me with thee !

Iseult leaves thee, Tristram, never more.

\* \* \* \*

You see them clear : the moon shines bright.

Slow — slow and softly, where she stood,

She sinks upon the ground : her hood

Had fallen back : her arms outspread

Still hold her lover's hands : her head

Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.

O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair

Lies in disorder'd streams ; and there,

Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,

And the golden bracelets heavy and rare

Flash on her white arms still.

The very same which yesternight

Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,

When the feast was loud and the laughter shrill

In the banquet-hall of Tyntagil.

But then they deck'd a restless ghost

With hot flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes  
And quivering lips on which the tide  
Of courtly speech abruptly died,  
And a glance that over the crowded floor,  
The dancers, and the festive host,  
Flew ever to the door.

That the knights eyed her in surprise,  
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly —  
“ Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers !  
But yesternight and she would be  
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,  
And now to-night she laughs and speaks  
And has a color in her cheeks,

Heaven keep us from such fantasy ! ” —

The air of the December night  
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,  
Where those lifeless lovers be.  
Swinging with it, in the light  
Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.  
And on the arras wrought you see  
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,  
And round him a fresh forest scene.  
On that clear forest knoll he stays  
With his pack round him, and delays.

He stares and stares, with troubled face,  
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,  
At the bright iron-figur'd door,  
And those blown rushes on the floor.

He gazes down into the room



With heated cheeks and flurried air,  
 And to himself he seems to say —  
 “ *What place is this, and who are they ?*  
*Who is that kneeling Lady fair ?*  
*And on his pillows that pale Knight*  
*Who seems of marble on a tomb ?*  
*How comes it here, this chamber bright,*  
*Through whose mullion'd windows clear*  
*The castle court all wet with rain,*  
*The drawbridge and the moat appear,*  
*And then the beach, and, mark'd with spray,*  
*The sunken reefs, and far away*  
*The unquiet bright Atlantic plain ? —*

*What, has some glamour made me sleep,*  
*And sent me with my dogs to sweep,*  
*By night, with boisterous bugle peal,*  
*Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,*  
*Not in the free greenwood at all ?*  
*That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer*  
*That Lady by the bed doth kneel :*  
*Then hush, thou boisterous bugle peal ! ” —*

The wild boar rustles in his lair —  
 The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air —  
 But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,  
 O Hunter ! and without a fear  
 Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,  
 And through the glades thy pastime take !

For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here.  
For these thou seest are unmov'd ;  
Cold, cold as those who liv'd and lov'd  
A thousand years ago.

# TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

## III.

### ISEULT OF BRITTANY.

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away,  
In Cornwall, Tristram and queen Iseult lay ;  
At Tyntagil, in King Marc's chapel old :  
There is a ship they bore those lovers cold. m/  
The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,  
Had wander'd forth : her children were at play  
In a green circular hollow in the heath  
Which borders the sea-shore ; a country path  
Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.  
The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclin'd,  
And to one standing on them, far and near  
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear  
Over the waste : — This cirque of open ground  
Is light and green ; the heather, which all round  
Creeps thickly, grows not here ; but the pale grass  
Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass

Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there  
Dotted with holly trees and juniper.

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

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,  
Under the hollies, in the clear still air —  
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening  
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.  
Long they staid still — then, pacing at their ease,  
Moved up and down under the glossy trees ;

But still as they pursued their warm dry road  
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,  
And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes  
Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise ;  
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,  
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,  
Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away  
From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,  
Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams  
Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,  
Swooping to landward ; nor to where, quite clear,  
The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.  
And they would still have listen'd, till dark night  
Came keen and chill down on the heather bright ;  
But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,  
And the gray turrets of the castle old  
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening air, —  
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,  
And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,  
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy ? Does she see unmov'd  
The days in which she might have liv'd and lov'd  
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,  
One after one, to-morrow like to-day ?  
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will : —  
Is it this thought that makes her mien so still,  
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,  
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet

Her children's? She moves slow : her voice alone  
Has yet an infantine and silver tone,  
But even that comes languidly : in truth,  
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.  
And now she will go home and softly lay  
Her laughing children in their beds, and play  
Awhile with them before they sleep ; and then  
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen  
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,  
Along this iron coast, know like a star,  
And take her broidery frame, and there she'll sit  
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it,  
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind  
Her children, or to listen to the wind.  
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move  
Her work away, and let her fingers rove  
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound  
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground :  
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes  
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap ; then rise,  
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told  
Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,  
Then to her soft sleep : and to-morrow 'll be  
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.  
The children, and the gray-hair'd seneschal,  
Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,  
Are there the sole companions to be found.

But these she loves : and noisier life than this  
 She would find ill to bear, weak as she is :  
 She has her children too, and night and day  
 Is with them ; and the wide heaths where they play,  
 The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,  
 The sand, the sea birds, and the distant sails,  
 These are to her dear as to them : the tales  
 With which this day the children she beguil'd  
 She glean'd from Breton grandames when a child  
 In every hut along this sea-coast wild.  
 She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,  
 Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

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

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

Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear  
Before the children's fancy him and her.

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

They came to where the brushwood ceas'd, and day  
Peer'd twixt the stems ; and the ground broke away  
In a slop'd sward down to a brawling brook,  
And up as high as where they stood to look  
On the brook's further side was clear ; but then  
The underwood and trees began again.



This open glen was studded thick with thorns  
Then white with blossom ; and you saw the horns,  
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-deer  
Which come at noon down to the water here.  
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along  
Under the thorns on the green sward ; and strong  
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,  
And the light chipping of the woodpecker  
Rang lonelily and sharp : the sky was fair,  
And a fresh breath of spring stir'd everywhere.  
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow  
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough  
Which glistening lay all round them, lone and mild,  
As if to itself the quiet forest smil'd.  
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn ; and here  
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear  
Across the hollow : white anemones  
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses  
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.  
No fairer resting-place a man could find.  
“ Here let us halt,” said Merlin then ; and she  
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep  
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.  
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,  
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,  
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over  
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.

Nine times she wav'd the fluttering wimple round,  
And made a little plot of magic ground.  
And in that daisied circle, as men say,  
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,  
But she herself whither she will can rove,  
For she was passing weary of his love.

# THE CHURCH OF BROU.

## I.

### THE CASTLE.

Down the Savoy valleys sounding,  
Echoing round this castle old,  
'Mid the distant mountain chalets  
Hark ! what bell for church is toll'd ?

---

In the bright October morning  
Savoy's Duke had left his bride.  
From the Castle, past the drawbridge,  
Flow'd the hunters' merry tide.

Steeds are neighing, gallants glittering.  
Gay, her smiling lord to greet,  
From her mullion'd chamber casement  
Smiles the Duchess Marguerite.

From Vienna by the Danube  
Here she came, a bride, in spring.  
Now the autumn crisps the forest ;  
Hunters gather, bugles ring.

Hounds are pulling, prickers swearing,  
Horses fret, and boar-spears glance :  
Off ! — They sweep the marshy forests,  
Westward, on the side of France.

Hark ! the game's on foot ; they scatter : —  
Down the forest ridings lone,  
Furious, single horsemen gallop.  
Hark ! a shout — a crash — a groan !

Pale and breathless, came the hunters.  
On the turf dead lies the boar.  
God ! the Duke lies stretch'd beside him —  
Senseless, weltering in his gore.

---

In the dull October evening,  
Down the leaf-strewn forest road,  
To the Castle, past the drawbridge,  
Came the hunters with their load.

In the hall, with sconces blazing,  
 Ladies waiting round her seat,  
 Cloth'd in smiles, beneath the dais  
 Sate the Duchess Marguerite.

Hark ! below the gates unbarring !  
 Tramp of men and quick commands !  
 “ — 'Tis my lord come back from hunting.” —  
 And the Duchess claps her hands.

Slow and tired came the hunters !  
 Stopp'd in darkness in the court.  
 “ — Ho, this way, ye laggard hunters !  
 To the hall ! What sport, what sport ? ” —

Slow they enter'd with their Master ;  
 In the hall they laid him down.  
 On his coat were leaves and blood-stains :  
 On his brow an angry frown.

Dead her princely youthful husband  
 Lay before his youthful wife ;  
 Bloody, 'neath the flaring sconces :  
 And the sight froze all her life.

In Vienna by the Danube  
 Kings hold revel, gallants meet.  
 Gay of old amid the gayest  
 Was the Duchess Marguerite.

In Vienna by the Danube

Feast and dance her youth beguil'd.  
Till that hour she never sorrow'd ;  
But from then she never smil'd.

'Mid the Savoy mountain valleys

Far from town or haunt of man,  
Stands a lonely Church, unfinish'd,  
Which the Duchess Maud began :

Old, that Duchess stern began it ;

In gray age, with palsied hands.  
But she died as it was building,  
And the Church unfinish'd stands ;

Stands as erst the builders left it,

When she sunk into her grave.  
Mountain greensward paves the chancel.  
Harebells flower in the nave.

“ In my Castle all is sorrow,” —

Said the Duchess Marguerite then.

“ Guide me, vassals, to the mountains !

We will build the Church again.” —

Sandall'd palmers, faring homeward,

Austrian knights from Syria came.

“ Austrian wanderers bring, O warders,

Homage to your Austrian dame.”

From the gate the warders answer'd ;  
    “ Gone, O knights, is she you knew.  
Dead our Duke, and gone his Duchess.  
    Seek her at the Church of Brou.” —

Austrian knights and march-worn palmers  
    Climb the winding mountain way.  
Reach the valley, where the Fabric  
    Rises higher day by day.

Stones are sawing, hammers ringing ;  
    On the work the bright sun shines :  
In the Savoy mountain meadows,  
    By the stream, below the pines.

On her palfrey white the Duchess  
    Sate and watch'd her working train ;  
Flemish carvers, Lombard gilders,  
    German masons, smiths from Spain.

Clad in black, on her white palfrey ;  
    Her old architect beside —  
There they found her in the mountains,  
    Morn and noon and eventide.

There she sate, and watch'd the builders,  
    Till the Church was roof'd and done.  
Last of all the builders rear'd her  
    In the nave a tomb of stone.

On the tomb two Forms they sculptur'd  
Lifelike in the marble pale.  
One, the Duke in helm and armor ;  
One, the Duchess in her veil.

Round the tomb the carv'd stone fret-work  
Was at Easter tide put on.  
Then the Duchess closed her labors ;  
And she died at the St. John.



# THE CHURCH OF BROU.

## II.

### THE CHURCH.

UPON the glistening leaden roof  
Of the new Pile, the sunlight shines.  
The stream goes leaping by.  
The hills are cloth'd with pines sun-proof.  
'Mid bright green fields, below the pines,  
Stands the Church on high.  
What Church is this, from men aloof?  
'Tis the Church of Brou.

At sunrise, from their dewy lair  
Crossing the stream, the kine are seen  
Round the wall to stray ;

The churchyard wall that clips the square  
Of shaven hill-sward trim and green  
Where last year they lay.  
But all things now are order'd fair  
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, at the matin chime,  
The Alpine peasants, two and three,  
Climb up here to pray.  
Burghers and dames, at summer's prime,  
Ride out to church from Chambery,  
Dight with mantles gay.  
But else it is a lonely time  
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays too, a priest doth come  
From the wall'd town beyond the pass,  
Down the mountain way.  
And then you hear the organ's hum,  
You hear the white-rob'd priest say mass,  
And the people pray.  
But else the woods and fields are dumb  
Round the church of Brou.

And after church, when mass is done,  
The people to the nave repair  
Round the Tomb to stray.

And marvel at the Forms of stone,  
And praise the chisell'd broideries rare,  
Then they drop away.  
The Princely Pair are left alone  
In the Church of Brou.

## THE CHURCH OF BROU.

### III.

#### THE TOMB.

So rest, forever rest, O Princely Pair!  
In your high Church, 'mid the still mountain air,  
Where horn, and hound, and vassals, never come.  
Only the blessed Saints are smiling dumb  
From the rich painted windows of the nave  
On aisle, and transept, and your marble grave:  
Where thou, young Prince, shalt never more arise  
From the fring'd mattress where thy Duchess lies,  
On autumn mornings, when the bugle sounds,  
And ride across the drawbridge with thy hounds  
To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve.  
And thou, O Princess, shalt no more receive,  
Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,  
The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,  
Come benighted to the castle gate.

So sleep, forever sleep, O Marble Pair!  
And if ye wake, let it be then, when fair

On the carv'd Western Front a flood of light  
Streams from the setting sun, and colors bright  
Prophets, transfigur'd Saints, and Martyrs brave,  
In the vast western window of the nave ;  
And on the pavement round the Tomb their glints  
A chequer-work of glowing sapphire tints,  
And amethyst, and ruby ; — then unclose  
Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,  
And from your broider'd pillows lift your heads,  
And rise upon your cold white marble beds,  
And looking down on the warm rosy tints  
That chequer, at your feet, the illumin'd flints,  
Say — “ *What is this ? we are in bliss — forgiven —  
Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven !* ” —  
Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain  
Doth rustlingly above your heads complain  
On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls  
Shedding her pensive light at intervals  
The moon through the clere-story windows shines,  
And the wind washes in the mountain pines.  
Then, gazing up through the dim pillars high,  
The foliag'd marble forest where ye lie,  
“ *Hush* ” — ye will say — “ *it is eternity.  
This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and these  
The columns of the Heavenly Palaces.* ”  
And in the sweeping of the wind your ear  
The passage of the Angels' wings will hear,  
And on the lichen-crust'd leads above  
The rustle of the eternal rain of Love.

## THE NECKAN.

IN summer, on the headlands,  
The Baltic Sea along,  
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,  
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,  
Green rolls the Baltic Sea.  
And there, below the Neckan's feet,  
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,  
Its shells and roses pale.  
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings ;  
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,  
And sings a mournful stave  
Of all he saw and felt on earth,  
Far from the green sea wave.

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd  
By castle, field, and town. —  
But earthly knights have harder hearts  
Than the Sea Children own.

Sings of his earthly bridal —  
Priest, knights, and ladies gay.  
“And who art thou,” the priest began,  
“Sir Knight, who wedd'st to-day?”

“I am no knight,” he answer'd;  
“From the sea waves I come.” —  
The knights drew sword, the ladies scream'd,  
The surplic'd priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel  
He vanish'd with his bride,  
And bore her down to the sea halls,  
Beneath the salt sea tide.

He sings how she sits weeping  
'Mid shells that round her lie.  
“False Neckan shares my bed,” she weeps;  
“No Christian mate have I.” —

He sings how through the billows  
He rose to earth again,  
And sought a priest to sign the cross,  
That Neckan Heaven might gain.

He sings how, on an evening,  
    Beneath the birch trees cool,  
He sate and play'd his harp of gold,  
    Beside the river pool.

Beside the pool sate Neckan —  
    Tears fill'd his cold blue eye.  
On his white mule, across the bridge,  
    A cassock'd priest rode by.

“ Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,  
    And play'st thy harp of gold ?  
Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,  
    Than thou shalt Heaven behold.” —

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,  
    And vanish'd with his mule.  
And Neckan in the twilight gray  
    Wept by the river pool.

In summer, on the headlands,  
    The Baltic Sea along,  
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,  
    And sings this plaintive song.



## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

COME, dear children, let us away ;

Down and away below.

Now my brothers call from the bay ;

Now the great winds shorewards blow ;

Now the salt tides seawards flow ;

Now the wild white horses play,

Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.

Children dear, let us away.

This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.

Call once yet.

In a voice that she will know :

“ Margaret ! Margaret ! ”

Children’s voices should be dear

(Call once more) to a mother’s ear :

Children’s voices, wild with pain.

Surely she will come again.

Call her once and come away.

This way, this way.

“ Mother dear, we cannot stay.”

The wild white horses foam and fret.

Margaret ! Margaret !

Come, dear children, come away down.

Call no more.

One last look at the white-wall'd town,  
And the little gray church on the windy shore.

Then come down.

She will not come though you call all day.

Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday

We heard the sweet bells over the bay ?

In the caverns where we lay,

Through the surf and through the swell.

The far-off sound of a silver bell ?

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,

Where the winds are all asleep :

Where the spent lights quiver and gleam ;

Where the salt weed sways in the stream ;

Where the sea-beasts rang'd all round

Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground :

Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,

Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;

Where great whales come sailing by,

Sail and sail, with unshut eye,

Round the world forever and aye ?

When did music come this way ?

Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, was it yesterday  
(Call yet once) that she went away ?  
Once she sate with you and me,  
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,  
And the youngest sate on her knee.

She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,  
When down swung the sound of the far-off bell.  
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea.  
She said ; " I must go, for my kinsfolk pray  
In the little gray church on the shore to-day.  
'Twill be Easter-time in the world — ah me !  
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee."  
I said ; " Go up, dear heart, through the waves,  
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves."  
She smil'd, she went up through the surf in the bay.  
Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, were we long alone ?  
" The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.  
Long prayers," I said, " in the world they say.  
Come," I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.  
We went up the beach, by the sandy down  
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town.  
Through the narrow pav'd streets, where all was still  
To the little gray church on the windy hill.  
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,  
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.  
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones, worn with rains,  
And we gaz'd up the aisle through the small leaded panes,

She sate by the pillar ; we saw her clear :

“ Margaret, hist ! come quick, we are here.

Dear heart,” I said, “ we are long alone.

The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.”

But, ah, she gave me never a look,

For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.

“ Loud prays the priest ; shut stands the door.”

Come away, children, call no more.

Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.

Down to the depths of the sea.

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,

Singing most joyfully.

Hark, what she sings ; “ O joy, O joy,

For the humming street, and the child with its toy.

For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well.

For the wheel where I spun,

And the blessed light of the sun.”

And so she sings her fill,

Singing most joyfully,

Till the shuttle falls from her hand,

And the whizzing wheel stands still.

She steals to the window, and looks at the sand ;

And over the sand at the sea ;

And her eyes are set in a stare ;

And anon there breaks a sigh,

And anon there drops a tear,

From a sorrow-clouded eye,

And a heart sorrow-laden,  
A long, long sigh.  
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaid,  
And the gleam of her golden hair.

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

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

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

# SWITZERLAND.

## I.

TO MY FRIENDS,

WHO RIDICULED A TENDER LEAVE-TAKING.

LAUGH, my Friends, and without blame  
Lightly quit what lightly came :  
Rich to-morrow as to-day  
Spend as madly as you may.  
I, with little land to stir,  
Am the exacter laborer.  
Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

But my Youth reminds me — “ Thou  
Hast liv'd light as these live now :  
As these are, thou too wert such :  
Much hast had, hast squander'd much.”  
Fortune's now less frequent heir,  
Ah ! I husband what's grown rare.  
Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Young, I said : “ A face is gone  
 If too hotly mus'd upon :  
 And our best impressions are  
 Those that do themselves repair.”  
 Many a face I then let by,  
 Ah ! is faded utterly.  
     Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
     Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

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

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

Paint that figure's pliant grace  
 As she towards me lean'd her face,



Half refus'd and half resign'd  
Murmuring, " Art thou still unkind ? "  
Many a broken promise then  
Was new made — to break again.  
Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,  
Eager tell-tales of her mind :  
Paint, with their impetuous stress  
Of inquiring tenderness,  
Those frank eyes, where deep doth lie  
An angelic gravity.  
Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory !

What, my Friends, these feeble lines  
Shew, you say, my love declines ?  
To paint ill as I have done,  
Proves forgetfulness begun ?  
Time's gay minions, pleas'd you see,  
Time, your master, governs me.  
Pleas'd, you mock the fruitless cry  
" Quick, thy tablets, Memory ! "

Ah ! too true. Time's current strong  
Leaves us true to nothing long.

Yet, if little stays with man,  
Ah! retain we all we can!  
If the clear impression dies,  
Ah! the dim remembrance prize!  
Ere the parting kiss be dry,  
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

## II.

## THE LAKE.

AGAIN I see my bliss at hand ;  
The town, the lake are here.  
My Marguerite smiles upon the strand  
Unalter'd with the year.

I know that graceful figure fair,  
That cheek of languid hue ;  
I know that soft enkerchief'd hair,  
And those sweet eyes of blue.

Again I spring to make my choice ;  
Again in tones of ire  
I hear a God's tremendous voice —  
“ Be counsell'd, and retire ! ”

Ye guiding Powers, who join and part,  
What would ye have with me ?  
Ah, warn some more ambitious heart,  
And let the peaceful be !

## I I I .

## A D R E A M .

WAS it a dream ? We sail'd, I thought we sail'd,  
Martin and I, down a green Alpine stream,  
Under o'erhanging pines ; the morning sun,  
On the wet umbrage of their glossy tops,  
On the red pinings of their forest floor,  
Drew a warm scent abroad ; behind the pines  
The mountain skirts, with all their sylvan change  
Of bright-leaf'd chestnuts, and moss'd walnut-trees,  
And the frail scarlet-berried ash, began.  
Swiss chalets glitter'd on the dewy slopes,  
And from some swarded shelf high up, there came,  
Notes of wild pastoral music : over all  
Rang'd, diamond-bright, the eternal wall of snow.  
Upon the mossy rocks at the stream's edge,  
Back'd by the pines, a plank-built cottage stood,  
Bright in the sun ; the climbing gourd-plant's leaves  
Muffled its walls, and on the stone-strewn roof  
Lay the warm golden gourds ; golden, within,  
Under the eaves, peer'd rows of Indian corn.  
We shot beneath the cottage with the stream.  
On the brown rude-carv'd balcony two Forms  
Came forth — Olivia's, Marguerite ! and thine.

Clad were they both in white, flowers in their breasts ;  
Straw hats bedeck'd their heads, with ribbons blue  
Which wav'd, and on their shoulders fluttering play'd.  
They saw us, they conferred ; their bosoms heav'd,  
And more than mortal impulse fill'd their eyes.  
Their lips mov'd ; their white arms, wav'd eagerly,  
Flash'd once, like falling streams : — we rose, we gaz'd :  
One moment, on the rapid's top, our boat  
Hung pois'd — and then the darting River of Life,  
Loud thundering, bore us by : swift, swift it foam'd ;  
Black under cliffs it rac'd, round headlands shone.  
Soon the plank'd cottage 'mid the sun-warm'd pines  
Faded, the moss, the rocks ; us burning Plains  
Bristled with cities, us the Sea receiv'd.

## I V.

## P A R T I N G .

YE storm-winds of Autumn  
Who rush by, who shake  
The window, and ruffle  
The gleam-lighted lake ;  
Who cross to the hill-side  
Thin-sprinkled with farms,  
Where the high woods strip sadly  
Their yellowing arms ; —

Ye are bound for the mountains —  
Ah, with you let me go  
Where your cold distant barrier,  
The vast range of snow,  
Through the loose clouds lifts dimly  
Its white peaks in air —  
How deep is their stillness !  
Ah ! would I were there !

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,  
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear ?  
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn  
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn ?

Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain-brook  
That the sweet voice its upland clearness took ?

Ah ! it comes nearer —  
Sweet notes this way !

Hark ! fast by the window  
The rushing winds go,  
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,  
The vast seas of snow.  
There the torrents drive upward  
Their rock-strangled hum,  
There the avalanche thunders  
The hoarse torrent dumb.  
— I come, O ye mountains !  
Ye torrents, I come !

But who is this, by the half-open'd door,  
Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor ?  
The sweet blue eyes — the soft, ash-color'd hair —  
The cheeks that still their gentle paleness wear —  
The lovely lips, with their arch smile, that tells  
The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit dwells —  
Ah ! they bend nearer —  
Sweet lips, this way !

Hark ! the wind rushes past us —  
Ah ! with that let me go  
To the clear waning hill-side  
Unspotted by snow,

There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,  
The frore mountain wall,  
Where the nich'd snow-bed sprays down  
Its powdery fall.  
There its dusky blue clusters  
The aconite spreads ;  
There the pines slope, the cloud-strips  
Hung soft in their heads.  
No life but, at moments,  
The mountain-bee's hum.  
— I come, O ye mountains !  
Ye pine-woods, I come !

Forgive me ! forgive me !  
Ah, Marguerite, fain  
Would these arms reach to clasp thee : —  
But see ! 'tis in vain.

In the void air towards thee  
My strain'd arms are cast.  
But a sea rolls between us —  
Our different past.

To the lips, ah ! of others,  
Those lips have been prest,  
And others, ere I was,  
Were clasp'd to that breast ;



Far, far from each other  
Our spirits have grown.  
And what heart knows another?  
Ah! who knows his own?

Blow, ye winds! lift me with you!  
I come to the wild.  
Fold closely, O Nature!  
Thine arms round thy child.

To thee only God granted  
A heart ever new:  
To all always open;  
To all always true.

Ah, calm me! restore me!  
And dry up my tears  
On thy high mountain platforms,  
Where Morn first appears,

Where the white mists, forever,  
Are spread and upfurl'd;  
In the stir of the forces  
Whence issued the world.

## V.

## TO MARGUERITE.

YES : in the sea of life enisl'd,  
 With echoing straits between us thrown,  
 Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
 We mortal millions live *alone*.

The islands feel the enclasping flow,  
 And then their endless bounds they know.

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

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

Who order'd, that their longing's fire  
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd ?  
Who renders vain their deep desire ? —

A God, a God their severance rul'd ;  
And bade betwixt their shores to be  
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

## VI.

## A B S E N C E .

IN this fair stranger's eyes of gray  
Thine eyes, my love, I see.  
I shudder : for the passing day  
Had borne me far from thee.

This is the curse of life : that not  
A nobler calmer train  
Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot  
Our passions from our brain ;

But each day brings its petty dust  
Our soon-chok'd souls to fill,  
And we forget because we must,  
And not because we will.

I struggle towards the light ; and ye,  
Once long'd-for storms of love !  
If with the light ye cannot be,  
I bear that ye remove.

I struggle towards the light ; but oh,  
While yet the night is chill,  
Upon Time's barren, stormy flow,  
Stay with me, Marguerite, still !

## RICHMOND HILL.

MURMUR of living !

Stir of existence !

Soul of the world !

Make, oh make yourselves felt  
To the dying Spirit of Youth !  
Come, like the breath of the Spring !  
Leave not a human soul  
To grow old in darkness and pain.

Only the living can feel you,  
But leave us not while we live !

## A MODERN SAPHO.

THEY are gone : all is still : Foolish heart dost thou  
quiver ?

Nothing moves on the lawn but the quick lilac shade.  
Far up gleams the house, and beneath flows the river.  
Here lean, my head, on this cool balustrade.

Ere he come : ere the boat, by the shining-branch'd  
border

Of dark elms come round, dropping down the proud  
stream ;

Let me pause, let me strive, in myself find some order,  
Ere their boat-music sound, ere their broider'd flags  
gleam.

Is it hope makes me linger ? the dim thought, that  
sorrow

Means parting ? that only in absence lies pain ?  
It was well with me once if I saw him : to-morrow  
May bring one of the old happy moments again.

Last night we stood earnestly talking together —  
She enter'd — that moment his eyes turn'd from me.  
Fasten'd on her dark hair and her wreath of white  
    heather —  
As yesterday was, so to-morrow will be.

Their love, let me know, must grow strong and yet  
    stronger,  
Their passion burn more, ere it ceases to burn :  
They must love — while they must : But the hearts that  
    love longer  
Are rare : ah ! most loves but flow once, and return.

I shall suffer ; but they will outlive their affection :  
I shall weep ; but their love will be cooling : and he,  
As he drifts to fatigue, discontent, and dejection,  
Will be brought, thou poor heart ! how much nearer to  
    thee !

For cold is his eye to mere beauty, who, breaking  
The strong band which beauty around him hath furl'd,  
Disenchanted by habit, and newly awaking,  
Looks languidly round on a gloom-buried world.

Through that gloom he will see but a shadow appearing,  
Perceive but a voice as I come to his side :  
But deeper their voice grows, and nobler their bearing,  
Whose youth in the fires of anguish hath died.

Then — to wait. But what notes down the wind, hark!  
are driving?

'Tis he! 'tis the boat, shooting round by the trees!

Let my turn, if it will come, be swift in arriving!

Ah! hope cannot long lighten torments like these.

Hast thou yet dealt him, O Life, thy full measure?

World, have thy children yet bow'd at his knee?

Hast thou with myrtle-leaf crown'd him, O Pleasure?

Crown, crown him quickly, and leave him for me.



## REQUIESCAT.

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

Her mirth the world required :  
She bath'd it in smiles of glee.  
But her heart was tired, tired,  
And now they let her be.

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

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,  
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.  
To-night it doth inherit  
The vasty Hall of Death.

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

## THE SCHOLAR GIPSY.

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

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,  
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves  
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruise,  
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,  
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use ;  
Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away  
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne ;  
With distant cries of reapers in the corn —  
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd in this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,  
And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will I be.

Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,  
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see  
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep :

And air-swept lindens yield

Their scent, and rustle down their perfum'd showers  
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,  
And bower me from the August sun with shade ;  
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers :

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book —

Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,

The story of that Oxford scholar poor,

Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,

Who, tir'd of knocking at Preferment's door,

One summer morn forsook

His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy lore,

And roam'd the world with that wild brotherhood,

And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,

But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,

Two scholars whom at college erst he knew

Met him, and of his way of life inquir'd.

Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy crew,

His mates, had arts to rule as they desired

The workings of men's brains ;

And they can bind them to what thoughts they will ;  
“ And I,” he said, “ the secret of their art,  
When fully learn’d, will to the world impart :  
But it needs happy moments for this skill.”

This said, he left them, and return’d no more,  
But rumors hung about the country side  
That the lost scholar long was seen to stray,  
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,  
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of gray,  
The same the Gipsies wore.  
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in Spring :  
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,  
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frock’d boors  
Had found him seated at their entering,

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

For most, I know, thou lov’st retired ground.  
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,

Returning home on summer nights, have met,  
 Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
 Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
 As the slow punt swings round :  
 And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,  
 And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
 Pluck'd in shy fields and distant woodland bowers,  
 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

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

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here  
 In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,  
 Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass  
 Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering  
 Thames,  
 To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
 Have often pass'd thee near

Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown :

Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,

Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air ;

But, when they came from bathing, thou wert  
gone.

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,

Where at her open door the housewife darns,

Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate

To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.

Children, who early range these slopes and late

For cresses from the rills,

Have known thee watching, all an April day,

The springing pastures and the feeding kine ;

And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and  
shine,

Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,

Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edg'd way

Pitch their smok'd tents, and every bush you see

With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of gray,

Above the forest ground call'd Thessaly —

The blackbird picking food

Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all ;

So often has he known thee past him stray

Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,

And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill

Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,

Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge

Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,

Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge ?

And thou hast climb'd the hill

And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range,

Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snow-flakes  
fall,

The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall —

Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd  
grange.

But what — I dream ! Two hundred years are flown

Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,

And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe

That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls

To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy tribe :

And thou from earth art gone

Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid ;

Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave

Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave —

Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

— No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.

For what wears out the life of mortal men ?

'Tis that from change to change their being rolls :

'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,

Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,

And numb the elastic powers.



Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and teen,  
 And tir'd upon a thousand schemes our wit,  
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
 Our worn-out life, and are — what we have been.

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

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers  
 Fresh, undiverted to the world without,  
 Firm to their mark, not spent on other things ;  
 Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,  
 Which much to have tried, in much been baffled,  
 brings.  
 O Life unlike to ours !  
 Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
 Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he  
 strives,  
 And each half lives a hundred different lives ;  
 Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

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

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,  
And then we suffer ; and amongst us One,  
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly  
His seat upon the intellectual throne ;  
And all his store of sad experience he  
Lays bare of wretched days ;  
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,  
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,  
And how the breast was sooth'd, and how the head,  
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest ; and we others pine,  
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,  
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear  
With close-lipp'd Patience for our only friend,  
Sad Patience, too near neighbor to Despair :  
But none has hope like thine.

Thou through the fields and through the woods dost  
stray,  
Roaming the country side, a truant boy,  
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,  
And every doubt long blown by time away.

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

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

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly !

For strong the infection of our mental strife,

Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest ;

And we should win thee from thy own fair life,

Like us distracted, and like us unblest.

Soon, soon thy cheer would die,

Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,

And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made :

And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,

Fade, and grow old at last and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles !

— As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,

Descried at sunrise an emerging prow

Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,

The fringes of a southward-facing brow

Among the Ægean isles ;

And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,

Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,

Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine ;

And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the waves ;

And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,

And day and night held on indignantly

O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,

Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,

To where the Atlantic raves

Outside the Western Straits, and unbent sails  
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of  
foam,  
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come ;  
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

## SONNETS.

### I.

TO A FRIEND.

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind ?  
He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd of men,  
Saw The Wide Prospect,\* and the Asian Fen,  
And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though blind,  
Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,  
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis  
'Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son  
Clear'd Rome of what most sham'd him. But be his  
My special thanks, whose even-balance'd soul,  
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,  
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild :  
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole :  
The mellow glory of the Attic stage ;  
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

\* *Εὐρώπη.*

## I I .

## SHAKSPEARE.

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.  
We ask and ask : Thou smilest and art still,  
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill  
That to the stars uncrowns his majesty,  
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,  
Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwelling-place,  
Spares but the cloudy border of his base  
To the foil'd searching of mortality :  
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,  
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honor'd, self-secure  
Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better so !  
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness that impairs, all griefs that bow,  
Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

## III.

WRITTEN IN EMERSON'S ESSAYS.

“ O MONSTROUS, dead, unprofitable world,  
That thou canst hear, and hearing, hold thy way.  
A voice oracular hath peal'd to-day,  
To-day a hero's banner is unfurl'd.  
Hast thou no lip for welcome ? ” So I said.  
Man after man, the world smil'd and pass'd by :  
A smile of wistful incredulity  
As though one spake of noise unto the dead :  
Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful ; and full  
Of bitter knowledge. Yet the Will is free :  
Strong is the Soul, and wise, and beautiful :  
The seeds of Godlike power are in us still :  
Gods are we, Bards, Saints, Heroes, if we will. —  
Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery ?



## I V .

TO GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, ESQ.

ON SEEING FOR THE FIRST TIME HIS PICTURE OF "THE BOTTLE,"  
IN THE COUNTRY.

ARTIST, whose hand, with horror wing'd, hath torn  
From the rank life of towns this leaf: and flung  
The prodigy of full-blown crime among  
Valleys and men to middle fortune born,  
Not innocent, indeed, yet not forlorn:  
Say, what shall calm us, when such guests intrude,  
Like comets on the heavenly solitude?  
Shall breathless glades, cheer'd by shy Dian's horn,  
Cold-bubbling springs, or caves? Not so! The Soul  
Breasts her own griefs: and, urg'd too fiercely, says:  
"Why tremble? True, the nobleness of man  
May be by man effac'd: man can control  
To pain, to death, the bent of his own days.  
Know thou the worst. So much, not more, he *can*."

## V.

TO A REPUBLICAN FRIEND. 1948.

God knows it, I am with you. If to prize  
Those virtues, priz'd and practis'd by too few,  
But priz'd, but lov'd, but eminent in you,  
Man's fundamental life : if to despise  
The barren optimistic sophistries  
Of comfortable moles, whom what they do  
Teaches the limit of the just and true —  
And for such doing have no need of eyes :  
If sadness at the long heart-wasting show  
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted :  
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow  
The armies of the homeless and unfed : —  
If these are yours, if this is what your are,  
Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

## V I .

## CONTINUED.

YET, when I muse on what life is, I seem  
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud  
Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud,  
France, fam'd in all great arts, in none supreme.  
Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream,  
Is on all sides o'ershadov'd by the high  
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,  
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.  
Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,  
When, bursting through the network superpos'd  
By selfish occupation — plot and plan,  
Lust, avarice, envy — liberated man,  
All difference with his fellow-man compos'd,  
Shall be left standing face to face with God.

## VII.

## RELIGIOUS ISOLATION.

TO THE SAME.

CHILDREN (as such forgive them) have I known,  
Ever in their own eager pastime bent  
To make the incurious bystander, intent  
On his own swarming thoughts, an interest own;  
Too fearful or too fond to play alone.  
Do thou, whom light in thine own inmost soul  
(Not less thy boast) illuminates, control  
Wishes unworthy of a man full-grown.  
What though the holy secret which moulds thee  
Moulds not the solid Earth? though never Winds  
Have whisper'd it to the complaining Sea,  
Nature's great law, and law of all men's minds?  
To its own impulse every creature stirs:  
Live by thy light, and Earth will live by hers.

## VIII.

## THE WORLD'S TRIUMPHS.

So far as I conceive the World's rebuke  
To him address'd who would recast her new,  
Not from herself her fame of strength she took,  
But from their weakness, who would work her rue.

“Behold,” she cries, “so many rages lull'd,  
So many fiery spirits quite cool'd down:  
Look how so many valors, long undull'd,  
After short commerce with me, fear my frown.  
Thou too, when thou against my crimes wouldst cry,  
Let thy foreboded homage check thy tongue.” —  
The World speaks well: yet might her foe reply —  
“Are wills so weak? then let not mine wait long.  
Hast thou so rare a poison? let me be  
Keener to slay thee, lest thou poison me.”

## STANZAS

IN MEMORY OF THE LATE EDWARD QUILLINAN, ESQ.

I SAW him sensitive in frame,  
I knew his spirits low ;  
And wish'd him health, success, and fame :  
I do not wish it now.

For these are all their own reward,  
And leave no good behind ;  
They try us, oftenest make us hard,  
Less modest, pure, and kind.

Alas ! Yet to the suffering man,  
In this his mortal state,  
Friends could not give what fortune can —  
Health, ease, a heart elate.

But he is now by Fortune foil'd  
No more ; and we retain  
The memory of a man unspoil'd,  
Sweet, generous, and humane ;

With all the fortunate have not —  
    With gentle voice and brow.  
Alive, we would have chang'd his lot :  
    We would not change it now.

## MORALITY.

WE cannot kindle when we will  
The fire that in the heart resides,  
The spirit bloweth and is still,  
In mystery our soul abides :

But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet  
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;  
We bear the burden and the heat  
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.

Not till the hours of light return  
All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,  
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,  
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,  
Thy struggling task'd morality.

Nature, whose free, light; cheerful air,  
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.



And she, whose censure thou dost dread,  
Whose eye thou wert afraid to seek,  
See, on her face a glow is spread,  
A strong emotion on her cheek.

“ Ah child,” she cries, “ that strife divine —  
Whence was it, for it is not mine ?

“ There is no effort on *my* brow —  
I do not strive, I do not weep.  
I rush with the swift spheres, and glow  
In joy, and, when I will, I sleep. —  
Yet that severe, that earnest air,  
I saw, I felt it once — but where ? ”

“ I knew not yet the gauge of Time,  
Nor wore the manacles of Space.  
I felt it in some other clime —  
I saw it in some other place.

— ’Twas when the heavenly house I trod,  
And lay upon the breast of God.”

## SELF-DEPENDENCE.

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

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

“ Ah, once more,” I cried, “ ye Stars, ye Waters,  
On my heart your mighty charm renew :  
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,  
Feel my soul becoming vast like you.”

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

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

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

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

O air-born Voice ! long since, severely clear  
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.

“ Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he  
Who finds himself, loses his misery.”

## CONSOLATION.

The wide earth is still  
Wider than one man's passion : there's no mood,  
No meditation, no delight, no sorrow,  
Cas'd in one man's dimensions, can distil  
Such pregnant and infectious quality,  
Six yards round shall not ring it. —

MIST clogs the sunshine.  
Smoky dwarf houses  
Hem me round everywhere.  
A vague dejection  
Weighs down my soul.

Yet, while I languish,  
Everywhere, countless  
Prospects unroll themselves,  
And countless beings  
Pass countless moods.

Far hence, in Asia,  
On the smooth convent-roofs,  
On the gold terraces  
Of holy Lassa,  
Bright shines the sun.

Gray time-worn marbles  
Hold the pure Muses.  
In their cool gallery,  
    By yellow Tiber,  
They still look fair.

Strange unlov'd uproar \*  
Shrills round their portal.  
Yet not on Helicon  
    Kept they more cloudless  
Their noble calm.

Through sun-proof alleys,  
In a lone, sand-hemm'd  
City of Africa,  
    A blind, led beggar,  
Age-bow'd, asks alms.

No bolder Robber  
Erst abode ambush'd  
Deep in the sandy waste :  
    No clearer eyesight  
Spied prey afar.

Saharan sand-winds  
Sear'd his keen eyeballs.  
Spent is the spoil he won,  
    For him the present  
Holds only pain.

\* Written during the siege of Rome by the French.

Two young, fair lovers,  
Where the warm June wind,  
Fresh from the summer fields,  
Plays fondly round them,  
Stand, tranc'd in joy.

With sweet, join'd voices,  
And with eyes brimming —  
“ Ah,” they cry, “ Destiny !  
Prolong the present !  
Time ! stand still here ! ”

The prompt stern Goddess  
Shakes her head, frowning.  
Time gives his hour-glass  
Its due reversal.  
Their hour is gone.

With weak indulgence  
Did the just Goddess  
Lengthen their happiness.  
She lengthen'd also  
Distress elsewhere.

The hour, whose happy  
Unalloy'd moments  
I would eternalize,  
Ten thousand mourners  
Well pleas'd see end.

The bleak stern hour,  
Whose severe moments  
I would annihilate,  
    Is pass'd by others  
In warmth, light, joy.

Time, so complain'd of,  
Who to no one man  
Shows partiality,  
    Brings round to all men  
Some undimm'd hours.

## THE FUTURE.

For Nature hath long kept this inn, the Earth,  
And many a guest hath she therein receiv'd —

A WANDERER is man from his birth :

He was born in a ship  
On the breast of the River of Time.  
Brimming with wonder and joy  
He spreads out his arms to the light,  
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.

Whether he wakes  
Where the snowy mountainous pass  
Echoing the screams of the eagles  
Hems in its gorges the bed  
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream :

Whether he first sees light  
Where the river in gleaming rings  
Sluggishly winds through the plain :  
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea : —  
As is the world on the banks  
So is the mind of the man.



Vainly does each as he glides  
Fable and dream  
Of the lands which the River of Time  
Had left ere he woke on its breast,  
Or shall reach when his eyes have been clos'd.  
Only the tract where he sails  
He wots of: only the thoughts,  
Rais'd by the objects he passes, are his.

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

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

What Bard,  
At the height of his vision, can deem  
Of God, of the world, of the soul,  
With a plainness as near,

As flashing as Moses felt,  
When he lay in the night by his flock  
On the starlit Arabian waste?  
Can rise and obey  
The beck of the Spirit like him?

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

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

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

Haply the River of Time,  
As it grows, as the towns on its marge  
Fling their wavering lights  
On a wider statelier stream —  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
    Yet a solemn peace of its own.  
And the width of the waters, the hush  
Of the gray expanse where he floats,  
Freshening its current and spotted with foam  
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike  
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:  
    As the pale Waste widens around him. —  
As the banks fade dimmer away —  
As the stars come out, and the night-wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

# BALDER DEAD.

## AN EPISODE.

### 1. *Sending.*

So on the floor lay Balder dead; and round  
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts and spears,  
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown  
At Balder, whom no weapon pierc'd or clove :  
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough  
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave  
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw :  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.  
And all the Gods and all the Heroes came  
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor  
Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang  
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries :  
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,  
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd sculls the wine :  
And now would Night have fall'n, and found them yet  
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will :  
And thus the Father of the Ages spake : —

“ Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !  
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.

If any here might weep for Balder's death  
 I most might weep, his Father ; such a son  
 I lose to-day, so bright, so lov'd a God.  
 But he has met that doom which long ago  
 The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,  
 And Fate set seal, that so his end must be.  
 Balder has met his death, and ye survive :  
 Weep him an hour ; but what can grief avail ?  
 For you yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,  
 All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,  
 And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all ;  
 But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,  
 With woman's tears and weak complaining cries —  
 Why should we meet another's portion so ?  
 Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,  
 With cold dry eyes, and hearts compos'd and stern,  
 To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven :  
 By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,  
 The Foe, the Accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
 Be strictly car'd for, in the appointed day.  
 Meanwhile to-morrow, when the morning dawns,  
 Bring wood to the sea-shore to Balder's ship,  
 And on the deck build high a funeral pile,  
 And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put  
 Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea  
 To burn ; for that is what the dead desire."

So having spoke, the King of Gods arose  
 And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode,

And from the hall of Heaven he rode away  
To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,  
The Mount, from whence his eye surveys the world.  
And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs  
To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men :  
And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze  
Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow ;  
And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,  
Fair men, who live in holes under the ground :  
Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,  
Nor towards Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;  
For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,  
And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre.

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back  
From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;  
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.  
And on their golden chairs they sate again,  
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ;  
And before each the cooks who serv'd them plac'd  
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,  
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.  
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes,  
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,  
While Twilight fell, and sacred Night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods  
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,

And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd  
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall.  
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.  
Down to the margin of the roaring sea  
He came, and sadly went along the sand  
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs  
Where in and out the screaming sea-fowl fly ;  
Until he came to where a gully breaks  
Through the cliff wall, and a fresh stream runs down  
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.  
There in the glen Fensaler stands, the house  
Of Frea, honor'd Mother of the Gods,  
And shews its lighted windows to the main.  
There he went up, and pass'd the open'd doors :  
And in the hall he found those women old,  
The Prophetesses, who by rite cterne  
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire  
Both night and day ; and by the inner wall  
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,  
With folded hands, revolving things to come :  
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said : —

“ Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me.  
For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,  
Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;  
And, after that, of ignorant witless mind  
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul :  
That I alone must take the branch from Lok,  
The Foe, the Accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,

And cast it at the dear-lov'd Balder's breast,  
At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw —  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.  
Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly?  
For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven? —  
Can I, O Mother, bring them Balder back?  
Or — for thou know'st the Fates, and things allow'd —  
Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,  
And make exchange, and give my life for his?"

He spoke; the Mother of the Gods replied: —  
“Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,  
Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these?  
That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,  
Should change his lot, and fill another's life,  
And Hela yield to this, and let him go!  
On Balder Death had laid her hand, not thee;  
Nor doth she count this life a price for that.  
For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,  
Would freely die to purchase Balder back,  
And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.  
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven  
Which Gods and Heroes lead, in feast and fray,  
Waiting the darkness of the final times,  
That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake,  
Balder their joy, so bright, so lov'd a God.  
But Fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.  
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,  
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail:  
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail.”



And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said : —  
“ What way is this, O Mother, that thou shew'st?  
Is it a matter which a God might try ? ”

And straight the Mother of the Gods replied : —  
“ There is a way which leads to Hela's realm,  
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.  
Who goes that way must take no other horse  
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse alone.  
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods  
Which every day they come and go in Heaven,  
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard Fortress, down to Earth and men ;  
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride  
Nine days, nine nights, towards the northern ice,  
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring streams.  
And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a Damsel keeps,  
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way  
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.  
And she will bid him northward steer his course :  
Then he will journey through no lighted land,  
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set ;  
But he must ever watch the northern Bear  
Who from her frozen height with jealous eye  
Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,  
And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.

And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand ;  
Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world,  
And on whose marge the ancient Giants dwell.  
But he will reach its unknown northern shore,  
Far, far beyond the outmost Giants home,  
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow :  
And he will fare across the dismal ice  
Northward, until he meets a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
But then he must dismount, and on the ice  
Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
And make him leap the grate, and come within.  
And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,  
The plains of Niflheim, where dwells the dead,  
And here the roaring of the streams of Hell.  
And he will see the feeble shadowy tribes,  
And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne.  
Then he must not regard the wailful ghosts  
Who all will flit, like eddying leaves around :  
But he must straight accost their solemn Queen,  
And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,  
Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven  
For Balder, whom she holds by right below :  
If haply he may melt her heart with words,  
And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke : but Hoder answer'd her and said : —

" Mother, a dreadful way is this thou shew'st.  
No journey for a sightless God to go."

And straight the Mother of the Gods replied : —  
“ Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.  
But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st  
To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way,  
Shall go, and I will be his guide unseen.”

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,  
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.  
But at the central hearth those Women old  
Who while the Mother spake had ceas'd their toil  
Began again to heap the sacred fire :  
And Hoder turn'd and left his mother's house,  
Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;  
And came again down to the roaring waves,  
And back along the beach to Asgard went,  
Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But Night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets.  
Then from their loathed feast the Gods arose,  
And lighted torches, and took up the corpse  
Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,  
And laid it on a bier, and bare him home  
Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house  
Breidablik, on whose columns Balder grav'd  
The enchantments, that recall the dead to life :  
For wise he was, and many curious arts,  
Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;  
Unhappy : but that art he did not know  
To keep his own life safe, and see the sun : —

There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,  
And each bespake him as he laid him down : —

“ Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne  
Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,  
So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods.”

They spake : and each went home to his own house.  
But there was one, the first of all the Gods  
For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven ;  
Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,  
Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house  
Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,  
Against the harbor, by the city wall :  
Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up  
From the sea cityward, and knew his step ;  
Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,  
For it grew dark ; but Hoder touch'd his arm :  
And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers  
Brushes across a tired traveller's face  
Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,  
On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,  
And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by —  
So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said : —

“ Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn  
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back :  
And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.  
And Hermod gaz'd into the night, and said : —

“ Who is it utters through the dark his hest  
So quickly, and will wait for no reply ?  
The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.  
Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;  
For there rang note divine in that command.”

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came  
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house,  
And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.  
And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,  
Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods :  
And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt  
His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,  
The throne, from which his eye surveys the world ;  
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode  
To Asgard. And the stars came out in Heaven,  
High over Asgard, to light home the King.  
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, mov'd in heart ;  
And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came :  
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang  
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets ;  
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds  
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home ;  
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came :

And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left  
Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall :  
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik Nanna, Balder's wife,  
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,  
And stood round Balder lying on his bier :  
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds  
Who in their lives were famous for their song ;  
These o'er the corpse inton'd a plaintive strain,  
A dirge ; and Nanna and her train replied.  
And far into the night they wail'd their dirge :  
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,  
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went  
Into an upper chamber, and lay down ;  
And Frea seal'd her tired lips with sleep.

And 'twas when Night is bordering hard on Dawn,  
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low,  
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,  
In garb, in form, in feature as he was  
Alive, and still the rays were round his head  
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven ; he stood  
Over against the curtain of the bed,  
And gaz'd on Nanna as she slept, and spake : —

“ Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe.  
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,  
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou,

Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.  
Sleep on : I watch thee, and am here to aid.  
Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul,  
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.  
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare  
To gather wood, and build a funeral pile  
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,  
That sad, sole honor of the dead ; and thee  
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,  
With me, for thus ordains the common rite :  
But it shall not be so : but mild, but swift,  
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,  
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,  
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.  
And well I know that by no stroke of death,  
Tardy or swift, wouldst thou be loath to die,  
So it restor'd thee, Nanna, to my side,  
Whom thou so well hast lov'd : but I can smooth  
Thy way, and this at least my prayers avail.  
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward  
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven  
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desir'd :  
But Right bars this, not only thy desire.  
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead  
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm ;  
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,  
Whom Hela with austere control presides ;  
For of the race of Gods is no one there  
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn Queen :

And all the nobler souls of mortal men  
On battle-field have met their death, and now  
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall ;  
Only the inglorious sort are there below,  
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there,  
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.  
But even there, O Nanna, we might find  
Some solace in each other's look and speech,  
Wandering together through that gloomy world,  
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,  
While we yet liv'd among the other Gods."

He spake, and straight his lineaments began  
To fade : and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out  
Her arms towards him with a cry ; but he  
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.  
And as the woodman sees a little smoke  
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear —  
So Balder faded in the night away.  
And Nanna on her bed sunk back : but then  
Frea, the Mother of the Gods, with stroke  
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,  
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below :  
And instantly the sacred Morn appear'd.



*2. Journey to the Dead.*

FORTH from the East, up the ascent of Heaven,  
Day drove his courser with the Shining Mane ;  
And in Valhalla, from his gable perch,  
The golden-crested Cock began to crow :  
Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,  
With shrill and dismal cries that Bird shall crow,  
Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven ;  
But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,  
To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.  
And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke.  
And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd  
Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,  
And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court  
Were rang'd ; and then the daily fray began.  
And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn  
'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood ;  
But all at night return to Odin's hall  
Woundless and fresh : such lot is theirs in Heaven.  
And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth  
Toward Earth and fights of men ; and at their side  
Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode :

And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard Fortress, down to Earth they came :  
There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,  
Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,  
And pick the bravest warriors out for death,  
Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven,  
To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,  
Into the Tilt-Yard, where the Heroes fought,  
To feast their eyes with looking on the fray :  
Nor did they to their Judgment-Place repair  
By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,  
Where they hold council, and give laws for men :  
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,  
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;  
Where are in circle rang'd twelve golden chairs,  
And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne :  
There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;  
And thus the Father of the Ages spake : —

“ Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,  
With all, which it beseems the dead to have,  
And make a funeral pile on Balder's ship.  
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.  
But Hermod, thou take Sleipner, and ride down  
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back.”

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took

Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,  
Shouldering his Hammer, which the Giants know :  
Forth wended they, and drove their steeds before :  
And up the dewy mountain tracks they far'd  
To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;  
And up and down and side and slant they roam'd :  
And from the glens all day an echo came  
Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor  
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines  
And burst their roots ; while to their tops the Gods  
Made fast the woven ropes, and hal'd them down,  
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,  
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,  
And drove them homeward ; and the snorting steeds  
Went straining through the crackling brushwood down,  
And by the darkling forest paths the Gods  
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.  
And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd  
Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,  
And loos'd them of their loads on the seashore,  
And rang'd the wood in stacks by Balder's ship ;  
And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone,  
Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth  
And saddled him ; before that, Sleipner brook'd  
No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,  
On his broad back no lesser rider bore :  
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,

Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,  
Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.  
But Hermod mounted him, and sadly far'd,  
In silence, up the dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went  
All day ; and Daylight wan'd, and Night came on.  
And all that night he rode, and journeyed so,  
Nine days, nine nights, towards the northern ice,  
Through valleys deep engulph'd, by roaring streams :  
And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
And on the bridge a Damsel watching arm'd,  
In the strait passage, at the further end,  
Where the road issues between walling rocks.  
Scant space that Warder left for passers by ;  
But, as when cowherds in October drive  
Their kine across a snowy mountain pass  
To winter pasture on the southern side,  
And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way  
Wedg'd in the snow ; then painfully the hinds  
With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,  
Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow  
To right and left, and warm steam fills the air —  
So on the bridge that Damsel block'd the way,  
And question'd Hermod as he came, and said : —

“ Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse  
Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream  
Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race and home.

But yestermorn five troops of dead pass'd by  
 Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,  
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.  
 And thou hast flesh and color on thy cheeks  
 Like men who live and draw the vital air ;  
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceas'd,  
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here."

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her : —  
 " O Damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son  
 Of Odin ; and my high-roof'd house is built  
 Far hence, in Asgard, in the City of Gods :  
 And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.  
 And I come, sent this road on Balder's track :  
 Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no ? "

He spake ; the Warder of the bridge replied : —  
 " O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods  
 Or of the horses of the Gods resound  
 Upon my bridge ; and, when they cross, I know.  
 Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road  
 Below there, to the north, toward Hela's realm.  
 From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,  
 Not lit with sun, but through the darksome air  
 By the dim vapor-blotted light of stars,  
 Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.  
 For in that ice are lost those northern streams  
 Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,  
 Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,

The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.  
 There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,  
 Hela's pale swarms ; and there was Balder bound.  
 Ride on ; pass free : but he by this is there."

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room.  
 And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by  
 Across the bridge ; then she took post again.  
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below :  
 And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,  
 But by the blotted light of stars, he far'd ;  
 And he came down to Ocean's northern strand  
 At the drear ice, beyond the Giants' home :  
 Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice  
 Still north, until he met a stretching wall  
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
 Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,  
 On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
 And made him leap the grate, and came within.  
 And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,  
 The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the dead,  
 And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.  
 For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,  
 Outmost : the others near the centre run —  
 The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain :  
 These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.  
 And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes :  
 And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds  
 Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,

On autumn days, before they cross the sea ;  
 And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs  
 Swinging, and others skim the river streams,  
 And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores —  
 So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.  
 Women, and infants, and young men who died  
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields ;  
 And old men, known to Glory, but their star  
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,  
 Not wounds : yet, dying, they their armor wore,  
 And now have chief regard' in Hela's realm.  
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,  
 Greeted of none, disfeatur'd and forlorn —  
 Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive :  
 And round them still the wattled hurdles hung  
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them  
     deep,  
 To hide their shameful memory from men.  
 But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne  
 Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,  
 And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern ;  
 And thus bespake him first the solemn Queen : —

“ Unhappy, how hast thou endur'd to leave  
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land  
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades ?  
 How did'st thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,  
 Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore ?  
 Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall ? ”

She spake : but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,  
 And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees ;  
 And spake, and mild entreated her, and said : —

“ O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare  
 Their errands to each other, or the ways  
 They go ? the errand and the way is known.  
 Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in  
     Heaven  
 For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below :  
 Restore him, for what part fulfils he here ?  
 Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,  
 And touch the apathetic ghosts' with joy ?  
 Not for such end, O Queen, thou hold'st thy realm.  
 For Heaven was Balder born, the City of Gods  
 And Heroes, where they live in light and joy :  
 Thither restore him, for his place is there.”

He spoke ; and grave replied the solemn Queen : —  
 “ Hermod, for he thou art, thou Son of Heaven !  
 A strange, unlikely errand, sure, is thine.  
 Do the Gods send to me to make them blest ?  
 Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtain'd.  
 Three mighty children to my Father Lok  
 Did Angerbode, the Giantess, bring forth —  
 Fenris the Wolf, the Serpent huge, and Me :  
 Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,  
 Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain,  
 And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world :



Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw  
And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule :  
While on this island in the lake, afar,  
Made fast to the bor'd crag, by wile not strength  
Subdu'd, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.  
Lok 'still subsists in Heaven, our Father wise,  
Your mate, though loath'd, and feasts in Odin's hall ;  
But him too foes await, and netted snares,  
And in a cave a bed of needle rocks,  
And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.  
Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,  
And with himself set us his offspring free,  
When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.  
Till then in peril or in pain we live,  
Wrought by the Gods : and ask the Gods our aid ?  
Howbeit we abide our day : till then,  
We do not as some feebler haters do,  
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,  
Helpless to better us, or ruin them.  
Come then ; if Balder was so dear belov'd,  
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's —  
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restor'd.  
Shew me through all the world the signs of grief :  
Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops :  
Let all that lives and moves upon the earth  
Weep him, and all that is without life weep :  
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him ; plants and stones.  
So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,  
And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."

She spake ; and Hermod answer'd her, and said : —  
 “ Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.  
 But come, declare me this, and truly tell :  
 May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail?  
 Or is it here withheld to greet the dead ? ”

He spake ; and straightway Hela answer'd him : —  
 “ Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold  
 Converse : his speech remains, though he be dead.”

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake : —  
 “ Even in the abode of Death, O Balder, hail !  
 Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,  
 The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven :  
 Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.  
 For not unmindful of thee are the Gods  
 Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell ;  
 Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.  
 And sure of all the happiest far art thou  
 Who ever have been known in Earth or Heaven :  
 Alive, thou wert of Gods the most lov'd :  
 And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,  
 Here, and hast honor among all the dead.”

He spake ; and Balder utter'd him reply,  
 But feebly, as a voice far off ; he said : —

“ Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death.  
 Better to live a slave, a captur'd man,

Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,  
 Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.  
 And now I count not of these terms as safe  
 To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,  
 Though I be lov'd, and many mourn my death :  
 For double-minded ever was the seed  
 Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.  
 Howbeit, report thy message ; and therewith,  
 To Odin, to my Father, take this ring,  
 Memorial of me, whether sav'd or no :  
 And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen  
 Me sitting here below by Hela's side,  
 Crown'd, having honor among all the dead."

He spake, and rais'd his hand, and gave the ring.  
 And with inscrutable regard the Queen  
 Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.  
 But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more  
 Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn Queen ;  
 Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride  
 Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.  
 And to the wall he came, and found the grate  
 Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice ;  
 And o'er the ice he far'd to Ocean's strand,  
 And up from thence, a wet and misty road,  
 To the arm'd Damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.  
 Worse was that way to go than to return,  
 For him : for others all return is barr'd.  
 Nine days he took to go, two to return ;

And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.  
And as a traveller in the early dawn  
To the steep edge of some great valley comes  
Through which a river flows, and sees beneath  
Clouds of white rolling vapors fill the vale,  
But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries  
Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun —  
So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.  
And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air  
Of Heaven: and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.  
And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise:  
And he drew near, and heard no living voice  
In Asgard; but the golden halls were dumb.  
Then Hermod knew what labor held the Gods:  
And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd  
Under the gate-house to the sands, and found  
The Gods on the seashore by Balder's ship.

3. *Funeral.*

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,  
Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne ;  
And Hermod came down towards them from the gate.  
And Lok, the Father of the Serpent, first  
Beheld him come, and to his neighbor spake : —

“ See, here is Hermod, who comes single back  
From Hell ; and shall I tell thee how he seems ?  
Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,  
One morn, at market, in a crowded town —  
Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,  
And follows this man after that, for hours ;  
And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls  
Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,  
With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue  
Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,  
And piteously he eyes the passers by :  
But home his master comes to his own farm,  
Far in the country, wondering where he is —  
So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home.”

And straight his neighbor, mov'd with wrath, replied : —

“ Deceiver, fair in form, but false in heart,  
 Enemy, Mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate —  
 Peace, lest our Father Odin hear thee gibe.  
 Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,  
 And bind thy carcass, like a bale, with cords,  
 And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim.  
 If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;  
 But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,  
 And perish, against fate, before thy day ! ”

So they two soft to one another spake.  
 But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw  
 His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried :  
 And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,  
 And in his Father's hand put Sleipner's rein,  
 And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said : —

“ Odin, my Father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !  
 Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.  
 Into the joyless kingdom have I been,  
 Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes  
 Of ghosts, and commun'd with their solemn Queen ;  
 And to your prayer she sends you this reply : —  
*Shew her through all the world the signs of grief :*  
*Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops.*  
*Let Gods, men, brutes, bewep him, plants and stones.*  
*So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,*  
*And bend her heart, and give you Balder back.”*

He spoke ; and all the Gods to Odin look'd :  
And straight the Father of the Ages said : —

“ Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.  
But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,  
And in procession all come near, and weep  
Balder ; for that is what the dead desire.  
When ye enough have wept, then build a pile  
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire  
Out of our sight ; that we may turn from grief,  
And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven.”

He spoke ; and the Gods arm'd : and Odin donn'd  
His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,  
And led the way on Sleipner : and the rest  
Follow'd, in tears, their Father and their King.  
And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,  
Weeping ; the sands were wetted, and their arms,  
With their thick-falling tears : so good a friend  
They mourn'd that day, so bright, so lov'd a God.  
And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands  
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail : —

“ Farewell, O Balder, bright and lov'd, my Son !  
In that great day, the Twilight of the Gods,  
When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven,  
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm.”

Thou camest near the next, O Warrior Thor !  
Shouldering thy Hammer, in thy chariot drawn,

Swaying the long-hair'd Goats with silver'd rein ;  
 And over Balder's corpse these words didst say : —

“ Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,  
 And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,  
 Now, and I know not how they prize thee there,  
 But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd.  
 For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife  
 Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,  
 As among those, whose joy and work is war :  
 And daily strifes arise, and angry words :  
 But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,  
 Heard no one ever an injurious word  
 To God or Hero, but thou keptest back  
 The others, laboring to compose their brawls.  
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind :  
 For we lose him, who smooth'd all strife in Heaven.”

He spake : and all the Gods assenting wail'd.  
 And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears :  
 The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all  
 Most honor'd after Frea, Odin's wife :  
 Her long ago the wandering Oder took  
 To mate, but left her to roam distant lands ;  
 Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold :  
 Names hath she many ; Vanadis on earth  
 They call her ; Freya is her name in Heaven :  
 She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake : —



“ Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road  
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way  
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,  
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.  
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wert  
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,  
 And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word.  
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,  
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart  
 First drove him from me into distant lands.  
 Since then I vainly seek him through the world,  
 And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,  
 But neither God nor mortal heeds my pain.  
 Thou only, Balder, wert forever kind,  
 To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say : —  
*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !*  
*One day the wandering Oder will return,*  
*Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search*  
*On some great road, or resting in an inn,*  
*Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree. —*  
 So Balder said ; but Oder, well I know,  
 My truant Oder I shall see no more  
 To the world’s end ; and Balder now is gone ;  
 And I am left uncomforted in Heaven.”

She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail’d.  
 Last, from among the Heroes one came near,  
 No god, but of the Hero-troop the chief —  
 Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,

And rul'd o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,  
Living; but Ella captur'd him and slew:  
A king, whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,  
Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds:  
He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said: —

“ Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven  
Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,  
Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone:  
And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,  
After the feast is done, in Odin's hall:  
But they harp ever on one string, and wake  
Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,  
Such as on earth we valiantly have wag'd,  
And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death:  
But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike  
Another note, and, like a bird in spring,  
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,  
And wife, and children, and our ancient home.  
Yes, and I too remember'd then no more  
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,  
Nor Ella's victory on the English coast;  
But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle;  
And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend  
Her flock along the white Norwegian beach:  
Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy:  
Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead.”

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd,

But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,  
And soon had all that day been spent in wail;  
But then the Father of the Ages said: —

“Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail.  
Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship;  
Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre.”

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought  
The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,  
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty; then the corpse  
Of Balder on the highest top they laid,  
With Nanna on his right, and on his left  
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.  
And they set jars of wine and oil to lean  
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,  
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine;  
And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,  
And slew the dogs which at his table fed,  
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he lov'd,  
And threw them on the pyre, and Odin threw  
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.  
They fixt the mast, and hoisted up the sails,  
Then they put the fire to the wood; and Thor  
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern  
To push the ship through the thick sand: sparks flew  
From the deep trench she plough'd — so strong a God  
Furrow'd it — and the water gurgled in.  
And the Ship floated on the waves, and rock'd:

But in the hills a strong East-Wind arose,  
And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls  
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd  
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.  
And, wreath'd in smoke, the Ship stood out to sea.  
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,  
And the pile crackled ; and between the logs  
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,  
Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd  
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,  
And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the Ship  
Drove on, ablaze, above her hull, with fire.  
And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gaz'd :  
And, while they gaz'd, the Sun went lurid down  
Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and Night came on.  
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm.  
But through the dark they watch'd the burning Ship  
Still carried o'er the distant waters on  
Farther and farther, like an Eye of Fire.  
And as in the dark night a travelling man  
Who bivouacs in a forest 'mid the hills,  
Sees suddenly a spire of flame shoot up  
Out of the black waste forest, far below,  
Which woodcutters have lighted near their lodge  
Against the wolves ; and all night long it flares :—  
So flar'd, in the far darkness, Balder's pyre.  
But fainter, as the stars rose high, it burn'd ;  
The bodies were consum'd, ash chok'd the pile :  
And as in a decaying winter fire

A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks —  
 So, with a shower of sparks, the pile fell in,  
 Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the shore  
 To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall  
 At table, and the funeral feast began.  
 All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh,  
 And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,  
 Silent, and waited for the sacred Morn.

And Morning over all the world was spread.  
 Then from their loathed feast the Gods arose,  
 And took their horses, and set forth to ride  
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain :  
 Thor came on foot ; the rest on horseback rode.  
 And they found Mimir sitting by his Fount  
 Of Wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ;  
 And saw the Nornies watering the roots  
 Of that world-shadowing tree with Honey-dew :  
 There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones :  
 And thus the Father of the Ages said : —

“ Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod  
 brought.

Accept them or reject them ; both have grounds.  
 Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,  
 To leave forever Balder in the grave,

An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.  
 But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail? —  
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd ;  
 For dear-belov'd was Balder while he liv'd  
 In Heaven and Earth, and who would grudge him tears?  
 But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,  
 These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.  
 Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way? —  
 Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?  
 If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,  
 Mounted on Sleipner, with the Warrior Thor  
 Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,  
 All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,  
 Should make irruption into Hela's realm,  
 And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,  
 And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?"

He spake ; and his fierce sons applauded loud.  
 But Frœa, Mother of the Gods, arose,  
 Daughter and wife of Odin : thus she said : —

" Odin, thou Whirlwind, what a threat is this !  
 Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even thine.  
 For of all Powers the mightiest far art thou,  
 Lord over men on Earth, and Gods in Heaven ;  
 Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld  
 One thing ; to undo what thou thyself hast rul'd.  
 For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee :  
 In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,

Before the Heavens were builded thou didst slay  
The Giant Ymir, whom the Abyss brought forth,  
Thou and thy brethren fierce, the Sons of Bor,  
And threw his trunk to choke the abysmal void :  
But of his flesh and members thou didst build  
The Earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven :  
And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,  
Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,  
Sun, Moon and Stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,  
Dividing clear the paths of night and day ;  
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard Fort :  
Then me thou mad'st ; of us the Gods were born :  
Then, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars  
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,  
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail :  
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,  
Save one, Bergelmer ; he on shipboard fled  
Thy deluge, and from him the Giants sprang ;  
But all that brood thou hast removed far off,  
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell :  
But Hela into Nifheim thou threw'st,  
And gave her nine unlighted worlds to rule,  
A Queen, and empire over all the dead.  
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up  
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear ? —  
Try it ; but I, for one, will not applaud.  
Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight  
Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven :  
For I too am a Goddess born of thee,

Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung ;  
 And all that is to come I know, but lock  
 In my own breast, and have to none reveal'd.  
 Come then ; since Hela holds by right her prey,  
 But offers terms for his release to Heaven,  
 Accept the chance ; — thou canst no more obtain.  
 Send through the world thy messengers : entreat  
 All living and unliving things to weep  
 For Balder ; if thou haply thus may'st melt  
 Hela, and win the lov'd one back to Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,  
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.  
 Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word ;  
 Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods :

" Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray  
 All living and unliving things to weep  
 Balder, if haply he may thus be won."

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took  
 Their horses, and rode forth through all the world.  
 North, south, east, west they struck, and roam'd the  
 world,  
 Entreating all things to weep Balder's death :  
 And all that liv'd, and all without life wept.  
 And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
 At winter's end, before the spring begins,  
 And a warm west wind blows, and thaw sets in —



After an hour a dripping sound is heard  
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow  
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,  
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;  
And in fields sloping to the south dark plots  
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,  
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad —  
So through the world was heard a dripping noise  
Of all things weeping to bring Balder back :  
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took  
To shew him spits and beaches of the sea  
Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep —  
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know :  
Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,  
With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods :  
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek  
Fring'd with dark pines, and sands where seafowl  
    scream : —

They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.  
And they rode home together, through the wood  
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies  
Bordering the Giants, where the trees are iron ;  
There in the wood before a cave they came  
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny Hag,  
Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by :  
Thok is she call'd ; but now Lok wore her shape :  
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said : —

“Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,  
That ye come pleasuring to Thok’s Iron Wood?  
Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.  
Look, as in some boor’s yard a sweet-breath’d cow  
Whose manger is stuff’d full of good fresh hay  
Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head  
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet —  
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven.”

She spake; but Hermod answer’d her and said: —  
“Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.  
Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,  
But will restore, if all things give him tears.  
Begrudge not thine; to all was Balder dear.”

But, with a louder laugh, the Hag replied: —  
“Is Balder dead? and do ye come for tears?  
Thok with dry eyes will weep o’er Balder’s pyre.  
Weep him all other things, if weep they will —  
I weep him not: let Hela keep her prey!”

She spake; and to the cavern’s depth she fled,  
Mocking: and Hermod knew their toil was vain.  
And as seafaring men, who long have wrought  
In the great deep for gain, at last come home,  
And towards evening see the headlands rise  
Of their own country, and can clear descry  
A fire of wither’d furze which boys have lit  
Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds

Out of a till'd field inland : — then the wind  
 Catches them, and drives out again to sea :  
 And they go long days tossing up and down  
 Over the gray sea ridges ; and the glimpse  
 Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil —  
 So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake : —  
 “ It is the Accuser Lok, who flouts us all.  
 Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news.  
 I must again below, to Hela's realm.”

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.  
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below ;  
 The way he knew : and travers'd Giall's stream,  
 And down to Ocean grop'd, and cross'd the ice,  
 And came beneath the wall, and found the grate  
 Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown.  
 And once more Hermod saw around him spread  
 The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.  
 But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound  
 Of Nifheim, he saw one Ghost come near,  
 Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid ;  
 Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew :  
 And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,  
 And call'd him by his name, and sternly said : —

“ Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes !  
 Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph

Of the deep inner gloom, but fittest here,  
 In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,  
 Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne?  
 Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,  
 Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay."

He spoke ; but Hoder answer'd him and said : —  
 " Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue  
 The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave ?  
 For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,  
 Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,  
 Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven —  
 And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by ?  
 No less than Balder have I lost the light  
 Of Heaven, and communion with my kin :  
 I too had once a wife, and once a child,  
 And substance, and a golden house in Heaven :  
 But all I left of my own act, and fled  
 Below, and dost thou hate me even here ?  
 Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,  
 Though he has cause, have any cause ; but he,  
 When that with downcast looks I hither came,  
 Stretch'd forth his hand, and, with benignant voice,  
*Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,  
 Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me.*  
 And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force  
 My hated converse on thee, came I up  
 From the deep gloom, where I will now return ;  
 But earnestly I long'd to hover near,

Not too far off, when that thou camest by,  
To feel the presence of a brother God,  
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,  
For the last time: for here thou com'st no more."

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom.  
But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said: —

"Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind.  
Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind  
Was Lok's; the unwitting hand alone was thine.  
But Gods are like the sons of men in this —  
When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.  
Howbeit stay, and be pleas'd; and tell —  
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,  
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead?"

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake: —  
"His place of state remains by Hela's side,  
But empty: for his wife, for Nanna came  
Lately below, and join'd him; and the Pair  
Frequent the still recesses of the realm  
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.  
But they too doubtless, will have breath'd the balm  
Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,  
And have drawn upwards to this verge of Hell."

He spake; and, as he ceas'd, a puff of wind  
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside

Round where they stood, and they beheld Two Forms  
 Make towards them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.  
 And Hermod straight perceiv'd them, who they were,  
 Balder and Nanna; and to Balder said: —

“ Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare.  
 Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.  
 No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge  
 In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy  
 The love all bear towards thee, nor train up  
 Forset, thy son, to be belov'd like thee.  
 Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.  
 Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail!”

He spake; and Balder answer'd him and said: —  
 “ Hail and farewell, for here thou com'st no more.  
 Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st  
 In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,  
 As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn:  
 For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,  
 In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side;  
 And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd  
 My former life, and cheers me even here.  
 The iron frown of Hela is relax'd  
 When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead  
 Trust me, and gladly bring for my award  
 Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates,  
 Shadows of hates, but they distress them still.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply : —  
 “ Thou hast then all the solace death allows,  
 Esteem and function : and so far is well.  
 Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,  
 Rusting forever : and the years roll on,  
 The generations pass, the ages grow,  
 And bring us nearer to the final day  
 When from the south shall march the Fiery Band  
 And cross the Bridge of Heaven, with Lök for guide,  
 And Fenris at his heel with broken chain :  
 While from the east the Giant Rymer steers  
 His ship, and the great Serpent makes to land ;  
 And all are marshall'd in one flaming square  
 Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven.  
 I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then.”

He spake ; but Balder answer'd him and said : —  
 “ Mourn not for me : Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods :  
 Mourn for the men on Earth, the Gods in Heaven,  
 Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day.  
 The day will come, when Asgard's towers shall fall,  
 And Odin, and his Sons, the seed of Heaven :  
 But what were I, to save them in that hour ?  
 If strength could save them, could not Odin save,  
 My Father, and his pride, the Warrior Thor,  
 Vidar the Silent, the Impetuous Tyr ?  
 I, what were I, when these can nought avail ?  
 Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,  
 And the two Hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven

The golden-crested Cock shall sound alarm,  
And his black Brother-Bird from hence reply,  
And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour —  
Longing will stir within my breast, though vain.  
But not to me so grievous, as, I know,  
To other Gods it were, is my enforc'd  
Absence from fields where I could nothing aid :  
For I am long since weary of your storm  
Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life  
Something too much of war and broils, which make  
Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.  
Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;  
Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.  
Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,  
Unarm'd, inglorious : I attend the course  
Of ages, and my late return to light,  
In times less alien to a spirit mild,  
In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spake ; and the fleet Hermod thus replied : —  
" Brother, what seats are these, what happier day ?  
Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him : —  
" Far to the south, beyond The Blue, there spreads  
Another Heaven, The Boundless : no one yet  
Hath reached it : there hereafter shall arise  
The second Asgard, with another name.  
Thither, when o'er this present Earth and Heavens



The tempest of the latter days hath swept,  
And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,  
Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair :  
Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.  
There reassembling we shall see emerge  
From the bright Ocean at our feet an Earth  
More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits  
Self-springing, and a seed of man preserv'd,  
Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.  
But we in Heaven shall find again with joy  
The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats  
Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;  
Reënter them with wonder, never fill  
Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.  
And we shall tread once more the well-known plain  
Of Ida, and among the grass shall find  
The golden dice with which we play'd of yore ;  
And that will bring to mind the former life  
And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse  
Of Odin, the delights of other days.  
O Hermod, pray that thou mayst join us then !  
Such for the future is my hope : meanwhile,  
I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure  
Death, and the gloom which round me even now  
Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.  
Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd."

He spoke, and wav'd farewell, and gave his hand  
To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind

Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and The Three  
Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon  
Faded from sight into the interior gloom.  
But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,  
Mute, gazing after them in tears : and fain,  
Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,  
Though they to Death were bound, and he to Heaven,  
Then ; but a Power he could not break withheld.  
And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,  
And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees  
Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head  
To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun ;  
He strains to join their flight, and, from his shed,  
Follows them with a long complaining cry —  
So Hermod gaz'd, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

## THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA.

HUSSEIN.

O MOST just Vizier, send away  
The cloth-merchants, and let them be,  
Them and their dues, this day : the King  
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

THE VIZIER.

O merchants, tarry yet a day  
Here in Bokhara : but at noon  
To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay  
Each fortieth web of cloth to me,  
As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King.  
Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,  
Ferdousi's, and the others', lead.  
How is it with my lord ?

HUSSEIN.

Alone,  
 Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,  
 O Vizier, without lying down,  
 In the great window of the gate,  
 Looking into the Registràn ;  
 Where through the sellers' booths the slaves  
 Are this way bringing the dead man.  
 O Vizier, here is the King's door.

THE KING.

O Vizier, I may bury him ?

THE VIZIER.

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick  
 These many days, and heard no thing,  
 (For Allah shut my ears and mind)  
 Not even what thou dost, O King.  
 Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,  
 Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste  
 To speak in order what hath chanc'd.

THE KING.

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

HUSSEIN.

Three days since, at the time of prayer,

A certain Moollah, with his robe  
 All rent, and dust upon his hair,  
 Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd  
 The golden mace-bearers aside,  
 And fell at the King's feet, and cried ;

“ Justice, O King, and on myself !  
 On this great sinner, who hath broke  
 The law, and by the law must die !  
 Vengeance, O King ! ”

But the King spoke :

“ What fool is this, that hurts our ears  
 With folly ? or what drunken slave ?  
 My guards, what, prick him with your spears !  
 Prick me the fellow from the path ! ”  
 As the King said, so was it done,  
 And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King  
 Went forth again, the holy book  
 Carried before him, as is right,  
 And through the square his path he took ;

My man comes running, fleck'd with blood  
 From yesterday, and falling down  
 Cries out most earnestly ; “ O King,  
 My lord, O King, do right, I pray !

“ How can'st thou, ere thou hear, discern  
If I speak folly ? but a king,  
Whether a thing be great or small,  
Like Allah, hears and judges all.

“ Wherefore hear thou ! Thou know'st, how fierce  
In these last days the sun hath burn'd :  
That the green water in the tanks  
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd :  
And the canal, that from the stream  
Of Samarcand is brought this way,  
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

“ Now I at nightfall had gone forth  
Alone, and in a darksome place  
Under some mulberry trees I found  
A little pool ; and in brief space  
With all the water that was there  
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home  
Unseen : and having drink to spare,  
I hid the can behind the door,  
And went up on the roof to sleep.

“ But in the night, which was with wind  
And burning dust, again I creep  
Down, having fever, for a drink.

“ Now meanwhile had my brethren found  
The water-pitcher where it stood

Behind the door upon the ground,  
And call'd my mother : and they all,  
As they were thirsty, and the night  
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there ;  
That they sate with it, in my sight,  
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

“ Now mark ! I, being fever'd, sick,  
(Most unblest also) at that sight  
Brake forth, and curs'd them — dost thou hear ? —  
One was my mother —— Now, do right ! ”

But my lord mus'd a space, and said,  
“ Send him away, sirs, and make on.  
It is some madman,” the King said :  
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow at the self-same hour  
In the King's path, behold, the man,  
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd : he stood  
Right opposite, and thus began,  
Frowning grim down : — “ Thou wicked King,  
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give ear !  
What, must I howl in the next world,  
Because thou wilt not listen here ?

“ What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,  
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd ?  
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path  
I will not stir till I be judg'd.”

Then they who stood about the King  
Drew close together and conferr'd :  
Till that the King stood forth and said,  
“ Before the priests thou shalt be heard.”

But when the Ulemas were met  
And the thing heard, they doubted not ;  
But sentenc'd him, as the law is,  
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charg'd us secretly :  
“ Ston'd must he be, the law stands so :  
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way :  
Forbid him not, but let him go.”

So saying, the King took a stone,  
And cast it softly : but the man,  
With a great joy upon his face,  
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones ;  
That they flew thick and bruis'd him sore :  
But he prais'd Allah with loud voice,  
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had cover'd up his face :  
But when one told him, “ He is dead,”  
Turning him quickly to go in,  
“ Bring thou to me his corpse,” he said.



And truly, while I speak, O King,  
I hear the bearers on the stair.  
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in ?  
— Ho ! enter ye who tarry there !

## THE VIZIER.

O King, in this I praise thee not.  
Now must I call thy grief not wise.  
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,  
To find such favor in thine eyes ?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,  
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.  
It were not meet the balance swerv'd,  
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,  
Why for no cause make sad thy face ?  
Lo, I am old : three kings, ere thee,  
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,  
Could bear the burden of his years,  
If he for strangers pain'd his heart  
Not less than those who merit tears ?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child ;  
And grievous is the grief for these :

This pain alone, which *must* be borne,  
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own  
One man is not well made to bear.  
Besides, to each are his own friends,  
To mourn with him, and shew him care.

Look, this is but one single place,  
Though it be great : all the earth round,  
If a man bear to have it so,  
Things which might vex him shall be found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where  
The watchers of two armies stand  
Near one another, many a man,  
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave :  
They snatch also, towards Mervè,  
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,  
And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, laboring for a lord,  
Eat not the fruit of their own hands :  
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,  
To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse !)  
Vex one another, night, and day :  
There are the lepers, and all sick :  
There are the poor who faint alway.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,  
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.  
Wilt thou have pity on all these ?  
No, nor on this dead dog, O King !

## THE KING.

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.  
Clear in these things I cannot see.  
My head is burning ; and a heat  
Is in my skin which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men !  
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,  
Unto a rule more strong than theirs  
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes  
Gazing up hither, the poor man,  
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,  
Below there, in the Registràn,

Says, " Happy he, who lodges there !  
 With silken raiment, store of rice,  
 And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,  
 Grape syrup, squares of color'd ice,

" With cherries serv'd in drifts of snow."  
 In vain hath a king power to build  
 Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques ;  
 And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, bought from far ;  
 With cisterns for the winter rain ;  
 And in the desert, spacious inns  
 In divers places ; — if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,  
 If his will be not satisfied :  
 And that it be not, from all time  
 The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man !  
 Thou wert athirst ; and didst not see,  
 That, though we snatch what we desire,  
 We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,  
 And rooms of treasures, not a few.  
 But I am sick, nor heed I these :  
 And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honor which I have,  
When I am dead, will soon grow still.  
So have I neither joy, nor fame.  
But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb  
Upon a hill on the right hand,  
Hard by a close of apricots,  
Upon the road of Samarcand :

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear  
This man my pity could not save ;  
And, plucking up the marble flags,  
There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.  
Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb.  
Then say ; “ He was not wholly vile,  
Because a king shall bury him.”

## THE HARP-PLAYER ON ETNA.

### I.

#### THE LAST GLEN.

THE track winds down to the clear stream,  
To cross the sparkling shallows : there  
The cattle love to gather, on their way  
To the high mountain pastures, and to stay,  
Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,  
Knee-deep in the cool ford : for 'tis the last  
Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells  
On Etna ; and the beam  
Of noon is broken there by chestnut boughs  
Down its steep verdant sides : the air  
Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws  
Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots  
Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots  
Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells  
Of hyacinths, and on late anemones,  
That muffle its wet banks : but glade,  
And stream, and sward, and chestnut trees,

End here : Etna beyond, in the broad glare  
Of the hot noon, without a shade,  
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare ;  
The peak, round which the white clouds play.

In such a glen, on such a day,  
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,  
Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay ;  
The young Achilles standing by.  
The Centaur taught him to explore  
The mountains : where the glens are dry,  
And the tir'd Centaurs come to rest,  
And where the soaking springs abound,  
And the straight ashes grow for spears,  
And where the hill-goats come to feed,  
And the sea-eagles build their nest.  
He show'd him Phthia far away,  
And said — *O Boy, I taught this lore  
To Peleus, in long-distant years.* —  
He told him of the Gods, the stars,  
The tides : — and then of mortal wars,  
And of the life that Heroes lead  
Before they reach the Elysian place  
And rest in the immortal mead :  
And all the wisdom of his race.

## II.

## TYPHO.

THE lyre's voice is lovely everywhere.  
In the court of Gods, in the city of men,  
And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain glen,  
In the still mountain air.

Only to Typho it sounds hatefully,  
Only to Typho, the rebel o'erthrown,  
Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone,  
To imbed them in the sea.

Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?  
Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,  
Through the dark night, suddenly,  
Typho, such red jets of flame?  
Is thy tortur'd heart still proud?  
Is thy fire-scath'd arm still rash?  
Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?

Does thy fierce soul still deplore  
Thy ancient rout in the Cilician hills,  
And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?  
Do thy bloodshot eyes still see



The fight that crown'd thy ills,  
Thy last defeat in this Sicilian sea ?  
Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,  
Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee down  
Never to cease to writhe, and try to sleep,  
Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair ?  
That thy groans, like thunder deep,  
Begin to roll, and almost drown  
The sweet notes, whose lulling spell  
Gods and the race of mortals love so well,  
When through thy caves thou hearest music swell ?

But an awful pleasure bland  
Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,  
When the sound climbs near his seat,  
The Olympian Council sees ;  
As he lets his lax right hand,  
Which the lightnings doth embrace,  
Sink upon his mighty knees.

And the Eagle, at the beck  
Of the appeasing gracious harmony,  
Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep-feather'd neck,  
Nestling nearer to Jove's feet ;  
While o'er his sovereign eye  
The curtains of the blue films slowly meet.

And the white Olympus peaks  
Rosily brighten, and the sooth'd Gods smile  
At one another from their golden chairs ;  
And no one round the charmed circle speaks.

Only the lov'd Hebe bears  
The cup about whose draughts beguile  
Pain and care, with a dark store  
Of fresh-pull'd violets wreath'd and nodding o'er ;  
And her flush'd feet glow on the marble floor.

## III.

## MARSYAS.

As the sky-brightening South-wind clears the day,  
And makes the mass'd clouds roll,  
The music of the lyre blows away  
The clouds that wrap the soul.

Oh that Fate had let me see  
That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,  
That famous, final victory,  
When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire ;

When, from far Parnassus' side,  
Young Apollo, all the pride  
Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,  
To the Phrygian highlands came :  
Where the long green reed-beds sway  
In the rippled waters gray  
Of that solitary lake  
Where Mæander's springs are born :  
Whence the ridg'd pine-muffled roots  
Of Messogis westward break.  
Mounting westward, high and higher :  
There was held the famous strife ;

There the Phrygian brought his flutes,  
And Apollo brought his lyre,  
And, when now the westering sun  
Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,  
And the attentive Muses said,  
*Marsyas ! thou art vanquished.*

Then Apollo's minister  
Hang'd upon a branching fir  
Marsyas, that unhappy Faun,  
And began to whet his knife.  
But the Mænads, who were there,  
Left their friend, and with robes flowing  
In the wind, and loose dark hair  
O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,  
Each her ribbon'd tambourine  
Flinging on the mountain sod,  
With a lovely frighten'd mien  
Came about the youthful God.  
But he turn'd his beauteous face  
Haughtily another way,  
From the grassy sun-warm'd place,  
Where in proud repose he lay,  
With one arm over his head,  
Watching how the whetting sped.

But aloof, on the lake strand,  
Did the young Olympus stand,  
Weeping at his master's end ;  
For the Faun had been his friend.

For he taught him how to sing,  
And he taught him flute-playing.  
Many a morning had they gone  
To the glimmering mountain lakes,  
And had torn up by the roots  
The tall crested water reeds  
With long plumes and soft brown seeds,  
And had carv'd them into flutes,  
Sitting on a tabled stone  
Where the shoreward ripple breaks.

And he taught him how to please  
The red-snooded Phrygian girls,  
Whom the summer evening sees  
Flashing in the dance's whirls  
Underneath the starlit trees  
In the mountain villages.

Therefore now Olympus stands,  
At his master's piteous cries,  
Pressing fast with both his hands  
His white garment to his eyes,  
Not to see Apollo's scorn.

Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun! ah, poor Faun!

## I V .

## A P O L L O .

THROUGH the black, rushing smoke-bursts,  
Quick breaks the red flame ;  
All Etna heaves fiercely  
Her forest-cloth'd frame :

Not here, O Apollo !  
Are haunts meet for thee.  
But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets  
Send far their light voice  
Up the still vale of Thisbe,  
O speed, and rejoice !

On the sward, at the cliff-top,  
Lie strewn the white flocks ;  
On the cliff-side the pigeons  
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,  
Soft lull'd by the rills,  
Lie wrapt in their blankets,  
Asleep on the hills.

— *What Forms are these coming  
So white through the gloom ?  
What garments out-glistening  
The gold-flower'd broom ?*

— *What sweet-breathing Presence  
Out-perfumes the thyme ?  
What voices enrapture  
The night's balmy prime ? —*

'Tis Apollo comes leading  
His choir, The Nine.  
— *The Leader is fairest,  
But all are divine.*

*They are lost in the hollows.  
They stream up again.  
What seeks on this mountain  
The glorified train ? —*

They bathe on this mountain,  
In the spring by their road.  
Then on to Olympus,  
Their endless abode.

— *Whose praise do they mention ?*  
*Of what is it told ? —*  
What will be forever.  
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father  
Of all things : and then  
The rest of Immortals,  
The action of men.

The Day in its hotness,  
The strife with the palm ;  
The Night in its silence,  
The Stars in their calm.



## FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE."

### THE CHORUS.

WELL hath he done who hath seiz'd happiness.  
For little do the all-containing Hours,  
    Though opulent, freely give.  
    Who, weighing that life well  
    Fortune presents unpray'd,  
Declines her ministry, and carves his own :  
    And, justice not infrin'g'd,  
Makes his own welfare his unswerv'd-from law.

He does well too, who keeps that clue the mild  
Birth-Goddess and the austere Fates first gave  
    For from the day when these  
    Bring him a weeping child,  
    First to the light, and mark  
A country for him, kinsfolk, and a home,  
    Unguided he remains,  
Till the Fates come again, alone, with death.



Waiting her passage,  
Forth from the palace hitherward comes.

## HEMON.

No, no, old men, Creon I curse not.

I weep, Thebans,

One than Creon crueller far.

For he, he, at least, by slaying her,

August laws doth mightily vindicate :

But thou, too-bold, headstrong, pitiless,

Ah me ! — honorest more than thy lover,

O Antigone,

A dead, ignorant, thankless corpse.

## THE CHORUS.

Nor was the love untrue

Which the Dawn-Goddess bore

To that fair youth she erst

Leaving the salt sea-beds

And coming flush'd over the stormy frith

Of loud Euripus, saw :

Saw and snatch'd, wild with love,

From the pine-dotted spurs

Of Parnes, where thy waves,

Asopus, gleam rock-hemm'd ;

The Hunter of the Tanagræan Field.

But him, in his sweet prime,

By severance immature,

By Artemis' soft shafts,  
 She, though a Goddess born,  
 Saw in the rocky isle of Delos die.  
 Such end o'ertook that love.  
 For she desir'd to make  
 Immortal mortal man,  
 And blend his happy life,  
 Far from the Gods, with hers :  
 To him postponing an eternal law.

## HÆMON.

But, like me, she, wroth, complaining,  
 Succumb'd to the envy of unkind Gods :  
 And, her beautiful arms unclasping,  
 Her fair Youth unwillingly gave.

## THE CHORUS.

Nor, though, enthron'd too high  
 To fear assault of envious Gods,  
 His belov'd Argive Seer would Zeus retain  
 From his appointed end  
 In this our Thebes : but when

His flying steeds came near  
 To cross the steep Ismenian glen,  
 The broad Earth open'd and whelm'd them and him.  
 And through the void air sang  
 At large his enemy's spear.

And fain would Zeus have sav'd his tired son  
Beholding him where the Two Pillars stand

O'er the sun-redden'd Western Straits:  
Or at his work in that dim lower world.

Fain would he have recall'd  
The fraudulent oath which bound  
To a much feebler wight the heroic man:

But he preferr'd Fate to his strong desire.

Nor did their need less than the burning pile

Under the towering Trachis crags,  
And the Spercheius' vale, shaken with groans,

And the rous'd Maliac gulph,

And scar'd Cætæan snows,

To achieve his son's deliverance, O my child.

## MEMORIAL VERSES.

APRIL, 1850.

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,  
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.  
But one such death remain'd to come.  
The last poetic voice is dumb.  
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,  
We bow'd our head and held our breath.  
He taught us little: but our soul  
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.

With shivering heart the strife we saw  
Of Passion with Eternal Law;  
And yet with reverential awe  
We watch'd the fount of fiery life  
Which serv'd for that Titanic strife.

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

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

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

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



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

## REVOLUTIONS.

BEFORE Man parted for this earthly strand,  
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,  
God put a heap of letters in his hand,  
And bade him make with them what word he could.

And Man has turn'd them many times: made Greece,  
Rome, England, France: — yes, nor in vain essay'd  
Way after way, changes that never cease.  
The letters have combin'd: something was made.

But ah, an inextinguishable sense  
Haunts him that he has not made what he should.  
That he has still, though old, to recommence,  
Since he has not yet found the word God would.

And Empire after Empire, at their height  
Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on.  
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,  
And droop'd, and slowly died upon their throne.

One day thou say'st there will at last appear  
The word, the order, which God meant should be. —  
Ah, we shall know *that* well when it comes near :  
The band will quit Man's heart : — he will breathe free.

## THE WORLD AND THE QUIETIST.

TO CRITIAS.

*WHY, when the World's great mind  
Hath finally inclin'd,  
Why, you say, Critias, be debating still ?  
Why, with these mournful rhymes  
Learn'd in more languid climes,  
Blame our activity,  
Who, with such passionate will,  
Are, what we mean to be ?*

Critias, long since, I know,  
(For Fate decreed it so)  
Long since the World hath set its heart to live.  
Long since with credulous zeal  
It turns Life's mighty wheel.  
Still doth for laborers send,  
Who still their labor give ;  
And still expects an end.

Yet, as the wheel flies round,  
With no ungrateful sound  
Do adverse voices fall on the World's ear.  
Deafen'd by his own stir  
The rugged Laborer  
Caught not till then a sense  
So glowing and so near  
Of his omnipotence.

So, when the feast grew loud  
In Susa's palace proud,  
A white-rob'd slave stole to the Monarch's side.  
He spoke: the Monarch heard:  
Felt the slow-rolling word  
Swell his attentive soul.  
Breath'd deeply as it died,  
And drain'd his mighty bowl.

## FADED LEAVES.

### I.

#### THE RIVER.

STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat  
Under the rustling poplars' shade ;  
Silent the swans beside us float :  
None speaks, none heeds — ah, turn thy head.

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,  
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland :  
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine ;  
On mine let rest that lovely hand.

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,  
Hy heart is swoln with love unsaid :  
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,  
And on thy shoulder rest my head.

Before I die, before the soul,  
Which now is mine, must re-attain  
Immunity from my control,  
And wander round the world again :

Before this teas'd o'erlabor'd heart  
Forever leaves its vain employ,  
Dead to its deep habitual smart,  
And dead to hopes of future joy.

## II.

## T O O L A T E .

EACH on his own strict line we move,  
And some find death ere they find love.  
So far apart their lives are thrown  
From the twin soul that halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,  
The lovers meet, but meet too late.  
— Thy heart is mine ! — *True, true ! ah true !*  
— Then, love, thy hand ! — *Ah no ! adieu !*



## III.

## SEPARATION.

STOP — Not to me, at this departing,  
Speak of the sure consolations of Time.  
Fresh be the wound, still-renew'd be its smarting,  
So but thy image endure in its prime.

But, if the steadfast commandment of Nature  
Wills that remembrance should always decay;  
If the lov'd form and the deep-cherish'd feature  
Must, when unseen, from the soul fade away —

Me let no half-effac'd memories cumber!  
Fled, fled at once, be all vestige of thee —  
Deep be the darkness, and still be the slumber —  
Dead be the Past and its phantoms to me!

Then, when we meet, and thy look strays towards me,  
Scanning my face and the changes wrought there, —  
*Who, let me say, is this Stranger regards me,*  
*With the gray eyes, and the lovely brown hair?*

## IV.

## ON THE RHINE.

VAIN is the effort to forget.  
 Some day I shall be cold, I know,  
 As is the eternal moon-lit snow  
 Of the high Alps, to which I go :  
 But ah, not yet ! not yet !

Vain is the agony of grief.  
 'Tis true, indeed, an iron knot  
 Ties straitly up from mine thy lot,  
 And were it snapt — thou lov'st me not !  
 But is despair relief ?

Awhile let me with thought have done ;  
 And as this brimm'd unwrinkled Rhine  
 And that far purple mountain line  
 Lie sweetly in the look divine  
 Of the slow sinking sun ;

So let me lie, and calm as they  
 Let beam upon my inward view  
 Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue —  
 Eyes too expressive to be blue,  
 Too lovely to be grey.

Ah Quiet, all things feel thy balm !  
Those blue hills too, this river's flow,  
Were restless once, but long ago.  
Tam'd is their turbulent youthful glow :  
Their joy is in their calm.

## V.

## LONGING.

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

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

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

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

## SELF-DECEPTION.

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory  
Of possessing powers not our share? —  
Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,  
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit  
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God ;  
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit ;  
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager Being  
Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each gift it saw.  
Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing  
Stav'd us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven guided  
Man's blank spirit, since it was not we ?  
Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided  
What our gifts, and what our wants should be ?

For, alas ! he left us each retaining  
Shreds of gifts which he refus'd in full.  
Still these waste us with their hopeless straining —  
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling ;  
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.  
Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,  
Fail'd to place our master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers.  
Ends we seek we never shall attain.  
Ah, *some* power exists there, which is ours ?  
*Some* end is there, we indeed may gain ?

## EXCUSE.

I too have suffer'd: yet I know  
She is not cold, though she seems so:  
She is not cold, she is not light;  
But our ignoble souls lack might.

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,  
While we for hopeless passion die;  
Yet she could love, those eyes declare,  
Were but men nobler than they are.

Eagerly once her gracious ken  
Was turn'd upon the sons of men.  
But light the serious visage grew —  
She look'd, and smiled, and saw them through.

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,  
Our labor'd puny passion-fits —  
Ah, may she scorn them still, till we  
Scorn them as bitterly as she!

Yet oh, that Fate would let her see  
One of some worthier race than we ;  
One for whose sake she once might prove  
How deeply she who scorns can love.

His eyes be like the starry lights —  
His voice like sounds of summer nights —  
In all his lovely mien let pierce  
The magic of the universe.

And she to him will reach her hand,  
And gazing in his eyes will stand,  
And know her friend, and weep for glee,  
And cry — *Long, long I've look'd for thee.* —

Then will she weep — with smiles, till then,  
Coldly she mocks the sons of men.  
Till then her lovely eyes maintain  
Their gay, unwavering, deep disdain.



## INDIFFERENCE.

I MUST not say that thou wert true,  
Yet let me say that thou wert fair.  
And they that lovely face who view,  
They will not ask if truth be there.

Truth — what is truth? Two bleeding hearts  
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried,  
Outwearied with their lonely parts,  
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear ;  
Their lot was but to weep and moan.  
Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,  
For neither could subsist alone !

But souls whom some benignant breath  
Has charm'd at birth from gloom and care,  
These ask no love — these plight no faith,  
For they are happy as they are.

The world to them may homage make,  
And garlands for their forehead weave.  
And what the world can give, they take :  
But they bring more than they receive.

They smile upon the world : their ears  
To one demand alone are coy.  
They will not give us love and tears —  
They bring us light, and warmth, and joy.

It was not love that heav'd thy breast,  
Fair child ! it was the bliss within.  
Adieu ! and say that one, at least,  
Was just to what he did not win.

## RESIGNATION.

TO FAUSTA.

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

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

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

We left, just ten years since, you say,  
That wayside inn we left to-day :  
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,  
Shouts greeting from his easy chair ;

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

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

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

On this mild bank above the stream,  
(You crush them) the blue gentians gleam.  
Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,  
The sailing foam, the shining pool. —  
These are not chang'd ; and we, you say,  
Are scarce more chang'd, in truth, than they.

The Gipsies, whom we met below,  
They too have long roam'd to and fro.  
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,  
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.  
And often to some kindly place  
Chance guides the migratory race  
Where, though long wanderings intervene,  
They recognize a former scene.  
The dingy tents are pitch'd : the fires  
Give to the wind their wavering spires ;  
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame  
Their children, as when first they came ;  
They see their shackled beasts again  
Move, browsing, up the gray-wall'd lane.  
Signs are not wanting, which might raise  
The ghosts in them of former days :  
Signs are not wanting, if they would ;  
Suggestions to disquietude.  
For them, for all, Time's busy touch,  
While it mends little, troubles much :  
Their joints grow stiffer ; but the year  
Runs his old round of dubious cheer :

Chilly they grow ; yet winds in March  
 Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch :  
 They must live still ; and yet, God knows,  
 Crowded and keen the country grows :  
 It seems as if, in their decay,  
 The Law grew stronger every day.  
 So might they reason ; so compare,  
 Fausta, times past with times that are.  
 But no : — they rubb'd through yesterday  
 In their hereditary way ;  
 And they will rub through, if they can,  
 To-morrow on the self-same plan ;  
 Till death arrives to supersede,  
 For them, vicissitude and need.

The Poet, to whose mighty heart  
 Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,  
 Subdues that energy to scan  
 Not his own course but that of Man.  
 Though he move mountains ; though his day  
 Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway ;  
 Though he hath loos'd a thousand chains ;  
 Though he hath borne immortal pains ;  
 Action and suffering though he know ;  
 — He hath not liv'd, if he lives so.  
 He sees, in some great-historied land,  
 A ruler of the people stand ;  
 Sees his strong thought in fiery flood  
 Roll through the heaving multitude ;



Exults : yet for no moment's space  
Enviest the all-regarded place.  
Beautiful eyes meet his ; and he  
Bears to admire uncravingly :  
They pass ; he, mingled with the crowd,  
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.  
From some high station he looks down,  
At sunset on a populous town ;  
Surveys each happy group that fleets,  
Toil ended, through the shining streets,  
Each with some errand of its own ; —  
And does not say, *I am alone.*  
He sees the gentle stir of birth  
When Morning purifies the earth :  
He leans upon a gate, and sees  
The pastures and the quiet trees.  
Low woody hill, with gracious bound,  
Folds the still valley almost round ;  
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,  
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn ;  
In the hedge straggling to the stream,  
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam :  
But where the further side slopes down  
He sees the drowsy new-wak'd clown  
In his white quaint-embroider'd frock  
Make, whistling, towards his mist-wreath'd flock ;  
Slowly behind the heavy tread,  
The wet flower'd grass heaves up its head. —  
Lean'd on his gate, he gazes : tears

Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
 The murmur of a thousand years :  
 Before him he sees Life unroll,  
 A placid and continuous whole ;  
 That general Life, which does not cease,  
 Whose secret is not joy, but peace ;  
 That Life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd  
 If birth proceeds, if things subsist :  
 The Life of plants, and stones, and rain :  
 The Life he craves ; if not in vain  
 Fate gave, what Chance shall not control,  
 His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen : — but that wandering smile,  
 Fausta, betrays you cold the while.  
 Your eyes pursue the bells of foam  
 Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.  
*Those Gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,  
 Are less, the Poet more, than man.  
 They feel not, though they move and see :  
 Deeply the Poet feels ; but he  
 Breathes, when he will, immortal air,  
 Where Orpheus and where Homer are.  
 In the day's life, whose iron round  
 Hems us all in, he is not bound.  
 He escapes thence, but we abide.  
 Not deep the Poet sees, but wide.*

The World in which we live and move  
 Outlasts aversion, outlasts love :

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

Blame thou not therefore him, who dares  
 Judge vain beforehand human cares.  
 Whose natural insight can discern  
 What through experience others learn.  
 Who needs not love and power, to know  
 Love transient, power an unreal show.  
 Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways : —  
 Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise.  
 Rather thyself for some aim pray  
 Nobler than this — to fill the day.  
 Rather, that heart, which burns in thee,  
 Ask, not to amuse, but to set free.  
 Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd  
 For quiet, and a fearless mind.

And though Fate grudge to thee and me  
 The Poet's rapt security,  
 Yet they, believe me, who await  
 No gifts from Chance, have conquer'd Fate.  
 They, winning room to see and hear,  
 And to men's business not too near,  
 Through clouds of individual strife  
 Draw homewards to the general Life.  
 Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd :  
 To the wise, foolish ; to the world,  
 Weak : yet not weak, I might reply,  
 Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,  
 To whom each moment in its race,  
 Crowd as we will its neutral space,  
 Is but a quiet watershed

Whence, equally, the Seas of Life and Death are fed.

Enough, we live : — and if a life,  
 With large results so little rife,  
 Though bearable, seem hardly worth  
 This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth ;  
 Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,  
 The solemn hills around us spread,  
 This stream that falls incessantly,  
 The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,  
 If I might lend their life a voice,  
 Seem to bear rather than rejoice.  
 And even could the intemperate prayer  
 Man iterates, while these forbear,

For movement, for an ampler sphere,  
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear ;  
Not milder is the general lot  
Because our spirits have forgot,  
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,  
The something that infects the world.

## DESPONDENCY.

THE thoughts that rain their steady glow  
Like stars on life's cold sea,  
Which others know, or say they know —  
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,  
But they will not remain.  
They light me once, they hurry by,  
And never come again.

## THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE STARS.

AND you, ye Stars !  
Who slowly begin to marshal,  
As of old, in the fields of heaven,  
Your distant, melancholy lines —  
Have you, too, surviv'd yourselves ?  
Are you, too, what I fear to become ?  
You too once liv'd —  
You too mov'd joyfully  
Among august companions  
In an older world, peopled by Gods,  
In a mightier order,  
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven !  
But now, you kindle  
Your lonely, cold-shining lights.  
Unwilling lingerers  
In the heavenly wilderness,  
For a younger, ignoble world.  
And renew, by necessity,

Night after night your courses,  
In echoing unnear'd silence,  
Above a race you know not.  
Uncaring and undelighted,  
Without friend and without home.  
Weary like us, though not  
    Weary with our weariness.



## DESIRE.

THOU, who dost dwell alone —  
Thou, who dost know thine own —  
Thou, to whom all are known  
From the cradle to the grave —

Save, oh, save.

From the world's temptations,  
From tribulations ;  
From that fierce anguish  
Wherein we languish ;  
From that torpor deep  
Wherein we lie asleep,  
Heavy as death, cold as the grave ;

Save, oh, save.

When the Soul, growing clearer,  
Sees God no nearer :  
When the Soul, mounting higher,  
To God comes no nigher :

But the arch-fiend Pride  
 Mounts at her side,  
 Foiling her high emprise,  
 Sealing her eagle eyes,  
 And, when she fain would soar,  
 Makes idols to adore ;  
 Changing the pure emotion  
 Of her high devotion  
 To a skin-deep sense  
 Of her own eloquence :  
 Strong to deceive, strong to enslave —  
     Save, oh, save.

From the ingrain'd fashion  
 Of this earthly nature  
 That mars thy creature.  
 From grief, that is but passion,  
 From mirth that is but feigning ;  
 From tears, that bring no healing ;  
     From wild and weak complaining ;  
     Thine old strength revealing,  
         Save, oh, save.

From doubt, where all is double :  
 Where wise men are not strong :  
 Where comfort turns to trouble :  
 Where just men suffer wrong.  
 Where sorrow treads on joy :  
 Where sweet things soonest cloy :

Where faiths are built on dust :  
Where Love is half mistrust,  
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea ;  
    Oh, set us free.  
O let the false dream fly  
Where our sick souls do lie  
    Tossing continually.  
O where thy voice doth come  
    Let all doubts be dumb :  
    Let all words be mild :  
    All strifes be reconcil'd :  
    All pains beguil'd.  
Light bring no blindness :  
Love no unkindness ;  
Knowledge no ruin ;  
Fear no undoing.  
From the cradle to the grave,  
    Save, oh, save.

## TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE,

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN.

Who taught this pleading to unpractis'd eyes?  
Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?  
Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?  
What clouds thy forehead, and fore-dates thy doom?

Lo! sails that gleam a moment and are gone;  
The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.  
Not idly Earth and Ocean labor on,  
Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy  
Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain,  
Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy;  
Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain:

Thou, drugging pain by patience; half averse  
From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee;  
With eyes that sought thine eyes thou didst converse,  
And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known :  
 Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.  
 Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own :  
 Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth.

What mood wears like complexion to thy woe ? —  
 His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,  
 Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below ? —  
 Ah ! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.

What exile's, changing bitter thoughts with glad ?  
 What seraph's, in some alien planet born ? —  
 No exile's dream was ever half so sad,  
 Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh  
 Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore :  
 But in disdainful silence turn away,  
 Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more ?

Or do I wait, to hear some gray-hair'd king  
 Unravel all his many-color'd lore :  
 Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,  
 Mus'd much, lov'd life a little, loath'd it more ?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,  
 Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give —  
 Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,  
 Foreseen thy harvest — yet proceed'st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain  
 Whose sureness gray-hair'd scholars hardly learn!  
 What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain?  
 What heavens, what earth, what suns shalt thou discern?

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,  
 Match that funereal aspect with her pall,  
 I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,  
 Have known too much — or else forgotten all.

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil  
 Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps:  
 Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale  
 Of grief, and eas'd us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,  
 Not daily labor's dull, Lethæan spring,  
 Oblivion in lost angels can infuse  
 Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing;

And though thou glean, what strenuous gleaners may,  
 In the throng'd fields where winning comes by strife;  
 And though the just sun gild, as all men pray,  
 Some reaches of thy storm-vest stream of life;

Though that blank sunshine blind thee: though the  
                   cloud  
 That sever'd the world's march and thine, is gone:  
 Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud  
 To halve a lodging that was all her own:

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,  
Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain.  
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,  
And wear this majesty of grief again.

## OBERMANN.

IN front the awful Alpine track  
Crawls up its rocky stair ;  
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack  
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths  
Mute in their meadows lone ;  
The leaves are on the valley paths ;  
The mists are on the Rhone —

The white mists rolling like a sea.  
I hear the torrents roar.  
— Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee !  
I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves : I feel their breath  
Once more upon me roll ;  
That air of languor, cold, and death,  
Which brooded o'er thy soul.



Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,  
Condemn'd to cast about,  
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,  
For comfort from without :

A fever in these pages burns  
Beneath the calm they feign ;  
A wounded human spirit turns  
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air  
Fresh through these pages blows,  
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare  
— The soul of their white snows,

Though here a mountain murmur swells  
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,  
Though, as you read, you hear the bells  
Of the high-pasturing kine —

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,  
And brooding mountain bee,  
There sobs I know not what ground tone  
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound  
Is fraught too deep with pain,  
That, Obermann ! the world around  
So little loves thy strain ?

Some secrets may the poet tell,  
For the world loves new ways.  
To tell too deep ones is not well ;  
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd  
In this our troubled day,  
I know but two, who have attain'd  
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in gray old age,  
His quiet home one keeps ; \*  
And one, the strong, much-toiling Sage,  
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken.  
From half of human fate ;  
And Goethe's course few sons of men  
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,  
His eyes on Nature's plan ;  
Neither made man too much a God,  
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free  
From mists, and sane, and clear ;  
Clearer, how much ! than ours : yet we  
Have a worse course to steer.

\* Written in November, 1849.

For though his manhood bore the blast  
Of Europe's stormiest time,  
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd  
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise —  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours ?  
What leisure to grow wise ?

Like children bathing on the shore,  
Buried a wave beneath,  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harass'd, to attain  
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide  
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder Sage !  
To thee : we feel thy spell.  
The hopeless tangle of our age —  
Thou too hast scann'd it well.

Immoveable thou sittest ; still  
As death ; compos'd to bear.  
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill —  
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,  
One hears thee saying now —  
*Greater by far than thou are dead :*  
*Strive not : die also thou. —*

Ah ! Two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood.  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

*The glow, he cries, the thrill of life —*  
*Where, where do these abound ? —*  
Not in the world, not in the strife  
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shar'd, the strife,  
Knows how the day hath gone ;  
He only lives with the world's life  
Who hath renounc'd his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd  
Where thou, O Seer, art set ;  
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold —  
The world is colder yet !

And thou hast pleasures too to share  
With those who come to thee :  
Balms floating on thy mountain air,  
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green  
On Jaman, hast thou sate  
By some high chalet door, and seen  
The summer day grow late,

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass  
With the pale crocus starr'd,  
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass  
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Lemman's waters, far below :  
And watch'd the rosy light  
Fade from the distant peaks of snow :  
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue  
Through the pine branches play :  
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young ;  
Listen'd, and wept — Away !

Away the dreams that but deceive !  
And thou, sad Guide, adieu !  
I go ; Fate drives me : but I leave  
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,  
Move on a rigorous line :  
Can neither, when we will, enjoy ;  
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live : — but thou,  
Thou melancholy Shade !  
Wilt not, if thou can'st see me now,  
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,  
And place with those dost claim,  
The Children of the Second Birth  
Whom the world could not tame ;

And with that small transfigur'd Band,  
Whom many a different way  
Conducted to their common land,  
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,  
Soldier and anchorite,  
Distinctions we esteem so grave,  
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pin'd unseen,  
Who was on action hurl'd,  
Whose one bond is that all have been  
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see  
Him who obeys thy spell  
No more, so he but rest, like thee,  
Unsoil'd : — and so, Farewell !

Farewell! — Whether thou now liest near  
That much-lov'd inland sea  
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer  
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,  
Where with clear-rustling wave  
The scented pines of Switzerland  
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls  
Issuing on that green place  
The early peasant still recalls  
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date  
Ere he plods on again ; —  
Or whether, by maligner Fate,  
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces  
The blue Seine rolls her wave,  
The Capital of Pleasure sees  
Thy hardly-heard-of grave —

Farewell ! Under the sky we part,  
In this stern Alpine dell.  
O unstrung will ! O broken heart !  
A last, a last farewell !

## THE BURIED LIFE.

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words, and yet,  
Behold with tears my eyes are wet.  
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,  
We know, we know that we can smile ;  
But there's a something in this breast  
To which thy light words bring no rest,  
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.

Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,  
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,  
And let me read there, love, thy inmost soul.

Alas, is even Love too weak  
To unlock the heart, and let it speak ?  
Are even lovers powerless to reveal  
To one another what indeed they feel ?  
I knew the mass of men conceal'd  
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd  
They would by other men be met  
With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd :  
I knew they liv'd and mov'd



Walk'd in disguises, alien to the rest  
Of men, and alien to themselves — and yet  
The same heart beats in every human breast.

But we, my love — does a like spell benumb  
Our hearts — our voices? — must we too be dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,  
Even for a moment, can get free  
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd:  
For that which seals them hath been deep ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw  
How frivolous a baby man would be,  
By what distractions he would be possess'd,  
How he would pour himself in every strife,  
And well-nigh change his own identity;  
That it might keep from his capricious play  
His genuine self, and force him to obey,  
In his own despite, his being's law,  
Bare through the deep recesses of our breast  
The unregarded River of our Life  
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;  
And that we should not see  
The buried stream, and seem to be  
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,  
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,

But often, in the din of strife,  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life,  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course ;  
-A longing to inquire  
Into the mystery of this heart that beats  
So wild, so deep in us, to know  
Whence our thoughts come and where they go.  
And many a man in his own breast then delves,  
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines :  
And we have been on many thousand lines,  
And we have shown on each talent and power,  
But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves ;  
Hardly had skill to utter one of all  
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,  
But they course on forever unexpress'd.  
And long we try in vain to speak and act  
Our hidden self, and what we say and do  
Is eloquent, is well — but 'tis not true :  
And then we will no more be rack'd  
With inward striving, and demand  
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour  
Their stupefying power ;  
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call :  
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,  
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne  
As from an infinitely distant land,

Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey  
A melancholy into all our day.

Only — but this is rare —  
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
When, jaded with the rush and glare  
Of the interminable hours,  
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
When our world-deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd, —

A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we  
know.

A man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth forever chase  
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows  
The Hills where his life rose,  
And the Sea where it goes.

## THE YOUTH OF NATURE.

RAIS'D are the dripping oars —  
Silent the boat: the lake,  
Lovely and soft as a dream,  
Swims in the sheen of the moon.  
The mountains stand at its head  
Clear in the pure June night,  
But the valleys are flooded with haze.  
Rydal and Fairfield are there ;  
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.  
So it is, so it will be for aye.

Nature is fresh as of old,  
Is lovely: a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,  
For he lent a new life to these hills.  
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields  
Which border Ennerdale Lake,  
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.  
The gleam of The Evening Star  
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,

But ruin'd and solemn and gray  
The sheepfold of Michael survives,  
And far to the south, the heath  
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,  
    By the favorite waters of Ruth.  
These survive : yet not without pain,  
Pain and dejection to-night,  
Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

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

    Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,  
Copais lay bright in the moon ;  
Helicon glass'd in the lake  
Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks  
Of Parnassus, snowily clear :  
Thebes was behind him in flames,  
And the clang of arms in his ear,  
When his awe-struck captors led  
The Theban seer to the spring.

    Tiresias drank and died.  
Nor did reviving Thebes  
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head  
Of a sacred poet lies low  
In an age which can rear them no more.  
The complaining millions of men  
Darken in labor and pain ;  
But he was a priest to us all  
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,  
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.

He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day  
Of his race is past on the earth ;  
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you,  
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,  
And mountains, that fill us with joy,  
Or the Poet who sings you so well ?  
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,  
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,  
Or the voice which reveals what you are ?  
Are ye, like daylight and sun,  
Shar'd and rejoic'd in by all ?  
Or are ye immers'd in the mass  
Of matter, and hard to extract,  
Or sunk at the core of the world  
Too deep for the most to discern ?

Like stars in the deep of the sky,  
Which arise on the glass of the sage,  
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

“They are here” — I heard, as men heard  
In Mysian Ida the voice  
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,  
The murmur of Nature reply —  
“Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,  
They are here — they are set in the world —  
They abide — and the finest of souls  
Has not been thrill'd by them all,  
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.  
The poet who sings them may die,  
But they are immortal, and live,  
For they are the life of the world.

Will ye not learn it, and know,  
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,  
That the singer was less than his themes,  
Life, and Emotion, and I?

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

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

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



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

## THE YOUTH OF MAN.

WE, O Nature, depart :  
Thou survivest us : this,  
This, I know, is the law.  
Yes, but more than this,  
Thou who seest us die  
Seest us change while we live ;  
Seest our dreams one by one,  
Seest our errors depart :  
    Watchest us, Nature, throughout,  
Mild and inscrutably calm.

Well for us that we change !  
Well for us that the Power  
Which in our morning prime  
Saw the mistakes of our youth,  
Sweet, and forgiving, and good,  
Sees the contrition of age !

Behold, O Nature, this pair !  
See them to-night where they stand,  
Not with the halo of youth

Crowning their brows with its light,  
Not with the sunshine of hope,  
Not with the rapture of spring,  
Which they had of old, when they stood  
Years ago at my side  
In this self-same garden, and said ;—  
“ We are young, and the world is ours.  
For man is the king of the world.  
Fools that these mystics are  
Who prate of Nature ! but she  
Has neither beauty, nor warmth,  
Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.  
But Man has a thousand gifts,  
And the generous dreamer invests  
The senseless world with them all.

Nature is nothing ! her charm  
Lives in our eyes which can paint,  
Lives in our hearts which can feel ! ”

Thou, O Nature, wert mute,  
Mute as of old : days flew,  
Days and years ; and Time  
With the ceaseless stroke of his wings  
Brush'd off the bloom from their soul.  
Clouded and dim grew their eye ;  
Languid their heart ; for Youth  
Quicken'd its pulses no more.  
Slowly within the walls  
Of an ever-narrowing world

They droop'd, they grew blind, they grew old.  
Thee and their Youth in thee,  
Nature, they saw no more.

Murmur of living !  
Stir of existence !  
Soul of the world !  
Make, oh make yourselves felt  
To the dying spirit of Youth.  
Come, like the breath of the spring.  
Leave not a human soul  
To grow old in darkness and pain.  
Only the living can feel you :  
But leave us not while we live.

Here they stand to-night —  
Here, where this gray balustrade  
Crowns the still valley : behind  
Is the castled house with its woods  
Which shelter'd their childhood, the sun  
On its ivied windows : a scent  
From the gray-wall'd gardens, a breath  
Of the fragrant stock and the pink,  
Perfumes the evening air.  
Their children play on the lawns.  
They stand and listen : they hear  
The children's shouts, and, at times,  
Faintly, the bark of a dog  
From a distant farm in the hills : —

Nothing besides : in front  
The wide, wide valley outspreads  
To the dim horizon, repos'd  
In the twilight, and bath'd in dew,  
    Corn-field and hamlet and copse  
Darkening fast ; but a light,  
Far off, a glory of day,  
Still plays on the city spires :  
And there in the dusk by the walls,  
With the gray mist marking its course  
Through the silent flowery land,  
    On, to the plains, to the sea,  
Floats the Imperial Stream.

Well I know what they feel.  
They gaze, and the evening wind  
Plays on their faces : they gaze ;  
Airs from the Eden of Youth  
Awake and stir in their soul :  
The Past returns ; they feel  
What they are, alas ! what they were.  
They, not Nature, are chang'd.  
Well I know what they feel.

Hush ! for tears  
Begin to steal to their eyes.  
Hush ! for fruit  
Grows from such sorrow as theirs.

And they remember  
With piercing untold anguish  
The proud boasting of their youth.  
And they feel how Nature was fair.  
And the mists of delusion,  
And the scales of habit,  
Fall away from their eyes.  
And they see, for a moment,  
Stretching out, like the Desert  
In its weary, unprofitable length,  
Their faded, ignoble lives.

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,  
While the soul still looks through thine eyes,  
While the heart still pours  
The mantling blood to thy cheek,  
Sink, O Youth, in thy soul!  
Yearn to the greatness of Nature!  
Rally the good in the depths of thyself!

## A SUMMER NIGHT.

In the deserted moon-blanch'd street  
How lonely rings the echo of my feet !  
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,  
Silent and white, unopening down,  
Repellent as the world : — but see !  
A break between the housetops shows  
The moon, and, lost behind her, fading dim  
Into the dewy dark obscurity  
Down at the far horizon's rim,  
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

And to my mind the thought  
Is on a sudden brought  
Of a past night, and a far different scene.  
Headlands stood out into the moon-lit deep  
As clearly as at noon ;  
The spring-tide's brimming flow  
Heav'd dazingly between ;  
Houses with long white sweep  
Girdled the glistening bay :

Behind, through the soft air,  
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away.

That night was far more fair ;  
But the same restless pacings to and fro,  
And the same vainly-throbbing heart was there,  
And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say —  
*Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast  
That neither deadens into rest,  
Nor ever feels the fiery glow  
That whirls the spirit from itself away,  
But fluctuates to and fro,  
Never by passion quite possess'd,  
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway ? —*  
And I, I know not if to pray  
Still to be what I am, or yield, and be  
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
Where in the sun's hot eye,  
With heads bent o'er their toil they languidly  
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,  
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.  
And as, year after year,  
Fresh products of their barren labor fall  
From their tired hands, and rest  
Never yet comes more near,  
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast.



And while they try to stem  
The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest,  
Death in their prison reaches them  
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,  
Escape their prison, and depart  
On the wide Ocean of Life anew.  
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart  
Listeth, will sail ;  
Nor does he know how there prevail,  
Despotic on life's sea,  
Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.

Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd  
By thwarting signs, and braves  
The freshening winds and blackening waves.  
And then the tempest strikes him, and between  
The lightning bursts is seen  
Only a driving wreck,  
And the pale Master on his spar-strewn deck  
With anguish'd face and flying hair  
Grasping the rudder hard,  
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,  
Still standing for some false impossible shore.

And sterner comes the roar  
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom  
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,  
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?  
Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!  
Clearness divine!

Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign  
Of langour, though so calm, and though so great,  
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate:  
Who though so noble share in the world's toil,  
And though so task'd keep free from dust and soil:  
I will not say that your mild deeps retain  
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain  
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain;  
But I will rather say that you remain  
A world above man's head, to let him see  
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,  
How vast, yet of what clear transparency.  
How it were good to sink there, and breathe free.  
How fair a lot to fill  
Is left to each man still.

THE END.







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