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Poems.



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POEMS

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD
=

NEW AND COMPLETE EDITION

IN ONE VOLUME

New York

MACMILLAN AND CO.

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EARLY POEMS.



SONNETS.

Quiet Work.

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

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

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

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

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,¹
 And Tmolus hill, and Smyrna 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 shamed him. But be his

My special thanks, whose even-balanced 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.

Shakspeare.

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

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

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

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

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 smiled and pass'd by;
 A smile of wistful incredulity
 As though one spake of life unto the dead—
 Scornful, and strange, and sorrowful, and full
 Of bitter knowledge. Yet the will is free;
 Strong is the soul, and wise, and beautiful;
 The seeds of godlike power are in us still;
 Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!—
 Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?

Written in Butler's Sermons.

AFFECTIONS, Instincts, Principles, and Powers,
 Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control—
 So men, unravelling God's harmonious whole,
 Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.

Vain labour! Deep and broad, where none may see,
 Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne
 Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,
 Centred in a majestic unity;

And rays her powers, like sister-islands seen
 Linking their coral arms under the sea,
 Or cluster'd peaks with plunging gulfs between
 Spann'd by ærial arches all of gold,
 Whereo'er the chariot wheels of life are roll'd
 In cloudy circles to eternity.

To the Duke of Wellington.

ON HEARING HIM MISPRaised.

BECAUSE thou hast believed, the wheels of life
 Stand never idle, but go always round;
 Not by their hands, who vex the patient ground,
 Moved only; but by genius, in the strife
 Of all its chafing torrents after thaw,
 Urged; and to feed whose movement, spinning sand,
 The feeble sons of pleasure set their hand;
 And, in this vision of the general law,
 Hast labour'd, but with purpose; hast become
 Laborious, persevering, serious, firm—
 For this, thy track, across the fretful foam
 Of vehement actions without scope or term,
 Call'd history, keeps a splendour; due to wit,
 Which saw one clue to life, and follow'd it.

In Harmony with Nature.

TO A PREACHER.

'IN harmony with Nature?' Restless fool,
 Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
 When true, the last impossibility—
 To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool!
 Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
 And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
 Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;
 Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;
 Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;
 Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;
 Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest
 Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
 Nature and man can never be fast friends.
 Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

To George Cruikshank.

ON SEEING, IN THE COUNTRY, HIS PICTURE
 OF 'THE BOTTLE.'

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, urged too fiercely, says:
 'Why tremble? True, the nobleness of man
 May be by man effaced; man can control
 To pain, to death, the bent of his own days.
 Know thou the worst! So much, not more, he *can!*'

To a Republican Friend, 1848.

God knows it, I am with you. If to prize
 Those virtues, prized and practised by too few,
 But prized, but loved, 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 they require not 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 you are,
 Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

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, famed in all great arts, in none supreme;
 Seeing this vale, this earth, whereon we dream,
 Is on all sides o'ershadow'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 superposed
 By selfish occupation--plot and plan,
 Lust, avarice, envy--liberated man,
 All difference with his fellow-mortal closed,
 Shall be left standing face to face with God.

Religious Isolation.

TO THE SAME FRIEND.

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 to 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 th' 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!

MYCERINUS.²

'Nor 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
are due;

Fell this dread 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 loved injustice, and lived long;
Crown'd with grey hairs he died, and full of sway.
I loved the good he scorn'd, and hated wrong—
The Gods declare my recompence to-day.
I look'd for life more lasting, rule more high;
And when six years are measured, 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, which quench our pleasures, then depart,
When the duped 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 banquetings?
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmoved eye,
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

‘Or is it that some Force, too stern, too strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,
Bears earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,
Like the broad volume of the insurgent 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 labour! 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; though 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 loved.
 There by the river-banks he wander'd on,
 From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,
 Their smooth tops shining sunward, 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.

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 gal'op.—
 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,
 Clothed in smiles, beneath the daïs
 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 beguiled
 Till that hour she never sorrow'd;
 . But from then she never smiled.

'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 grey age, with palsied hands;
 But she died while it was building,
 And the Church unfinish'd stands—

Stands as erst the builders left it,
 When she sank 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, some one, to the mountain!
 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 sculptured,
 Lifelike in the marble pale—
 One, the Duke in helm and armour;
 One, the Duchess in her veil.

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

II.

The Church.

UPON the glistening leaden roof
 Of the new pile, the sunlight shines;
 The stream goes leaping by.
 The hills are clothed 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 open hill-sward fresh 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-robed 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.

III.

The Tomb.

So rest, for ever 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 fringed 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,
 Coming benighted to the castle-gate.

So sleep, for ever sleep, O marble Pair!
 Or, if ye wake, let it be then, when fair
 On the carved western front a flood of light
 Streams from the setting sun, and colours bright
 Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs brave,
 In the vast western window of the nave;
 And on the pavement round the tomb there 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
 Which chequer, at your feet, the illumined 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 through the mountain-pines;—
 Then, gazing up 'mid the dim pillars high,
 The foliated 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-crustled leads above
 The rustle of the eternal rain of love.

A MODERN SAPPHO.

THEY are gone—all is still! Foolish heart, dost
 thou quiver?

Nothing stirs on the lawn but the quick lilac-
 shade.

Far up shines the house, and beneath flows the
river—

Here lean, my head, on this cold balustrade!

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

Of dark elms shoot round, dropping down the
proud stream,

Let me pause, let me strive, in myself make some
order,

Ere their boat-music sound, ere their broider'd
flags gleam.

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 passion 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.

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

'Tis he! 'tis their flag, 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 bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

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

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

YOUTH AND CALM.

'Tis death! and peace, indeed, is here,
 And ease from shame, and rest from fear.
 There's nothing can disarmle now
 The smoothness of that limpid brow.
 But is a calm like this, in truth,
 The crowning end of life and youth,
 And when this boon rewards the dead,
 Are all debts paid, has all been said?
 And is the heart of youth so light,
 Its step so firm, its eye so bright,
 Because on its hot brow there blows
 A wind of promise and repose
 From the far grave, to which it goes;
 Because it has the hope to come,
 One day, to harbour in the tomb?
 Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one
 For daylight, for the cheerful sun,
 For feeling nerves and living breath -
 Youth dreams a bliss on this side death.

It dreams a rest, if not more deep,
 More grateful than this marble sleep;
 It hears a voice within it tell:
Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.
 'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,
 But 'tis not what our youth desires.

A MEMORY PICTURE.

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

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

Marguerite says: 'As last year went,
 So the coming year'll be spent;
 Some day next year, I shall be,
 Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee.'

Ah, I hope!—yet, once away,
 What may chain us, who can say?
 Ere the parting hour go by,
 Quick, thy tablets, Memory

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

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

Paint those eyes, so blue, so kind,
 Eager tell-tales of her mind;
 Paint, with their impetuous stress
 Of enquiring tenderness,
 Those frank eyes, where deep doth be
 An angelic gravity.
 Ere the parting hour go by,
 Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

What, my friends, these feeble lines
 Shew, you say, my love declines?

To paint ill as I have done,
 Proves forgetfulness begun?
 Time's gay minions, pleased you see,
 Time, your master, governs me;
 Pleased, you mock the fruitless cry:
 'Quick, thy tablets, Memory!'

Ah, too true! Time's current strong
 Leaves us 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 hour go by,
 Quick, thy tablets, Memory!

THE NEW SIRENS.

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

Who are they, O pensive Graces,
 —For I dream'd they wore your forms—
 Who on shores and sea-wash'd places
 Scoop the shelves and fret the storms?

Who, when ships are that way tending,
Troop across the flushing sands,
To all reefs and narrows wending,
With blown tresses, and with beckoning lands?

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

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

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

Are the accents of your luring
More melodious than of yore?
Are those frail forms more enduring
Than the charms Ulysses bore?

That we sought you with rejoicings,
 Till at evening we descry
 At a pause of Siren voicings
 These vext branches and this howling sky? . . .

* * * * *

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

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

'Come,' you say, 'the hours were dreary;
 Life without love does but fade;
 Vain it wastes, and we grew weary
 In the slumbrous cedarn shade.
 Round our hearts with long caresses,
 With low sighings, Silence stole,
 And her load of steaming tresses
 Weigh'd, like Ossa, on the aery soul.

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

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

I am dumb. Alas, too soon all
 Man's grave reasons disappear !
 Yet, I think, at God's tribunal
 Some large answer you shall hear.
 But for me, my thoughts are straying
 Where at sunrise, through your vines,
 On these lawns I saw you playing,
 Hanging garlands on your odorous pines ;

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

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

* * * * *

For a bound was set to meetings,
 And the sombre day dragg'd on;
 And the burst of joyful greetings,
 And the joyful dawn, were gone.
 For the eye grows fill'd with gazing,
 And on raptures follow calms;
 And those warm locks men were praising,
 Droop'd, unbraided, on your listless arms.

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

Is the pleasure that is tasted
 Patient of a long review?

Will the fire joy hath wasted,
 Mused on, warm the heart anew?
 —Or, are those old thoughts returning,
 Guests the dull sense never knew,
 Stars, set deep, yet inly burning,
 Germs, your untrimm'd passion overgrew?

Once, like us, you took your station
 Watchers for a purer fire;
 But you droop'd in expectation,
 And you wearied in desire.
 When the first rose flush was steeping
 All the frore peak's awful crown,
 Shepherds say, they found you sleeping
 In some windless valley, farther down.

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

* * * * *

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

Do I brighten at your sorrow,
 O sweet Pleaders?—doth my lot
 Find assurance in to-morrow
 Of one joy, which you have not?
 O, speak once, and shame my sadness!
 Let this sobbing, Phrygian strain,
 Mock'd and baffled by your gladness,
 Mar the music of your feasts in vain!

* * * * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

When a dreary light is wading
 Through this waste of sunless greens,
 When the flashing lights are fading
 On the peerless cheek of queens,
 When the mean shall no more sorrow,
 And the proudest no more smile ;
 While the dawning of the morrow
 Widens slowly westward all that while?

Then, when change itself is over,
 When the slow tide sets one way,
 Shall you find the radiant lover,
 Even by moments, of to-day?

The eye wanders, faith is failing—
 O, loose hands, and led it be!
 Proudly, like a king bewailing,
 O, let fall one tear, and set us free!

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

Long we wander'd with you, feeding
 Our rapt souls on your replies,
 In a wistful silence reading
 All the meaning of your eyes.
 By moss-border'd statues sitting,
 By well-heads, in summer days.
 But we turn, our eyes are flitting—
 See, the white east, and the morning-rays!

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

Come, loose hands! The winged fleetness
 Of immortal feet is gone;
 And your scents have shed their sweetness,
 And your flowers are overblown.

And your jewell'd gauds surrender
 Half their glories to the day;
 Freely did they flash their splendour,
 Freely gave it—but it dies away.

In the pines the thrush is waking—
 Lo, yon orient hill in flames!
 Scores of true love knots are breaking
 At divorce which it proclaims.
 When the lamps are paled at morning,
 Heart quits heart and hand quits hand.
 Cold in that unlovely dawning,
 Loveless, rayless, joyless you shall stand!

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

THE VOICE.

As the kindling glances,
 Queen-like and clear,
 Which the bright moon lances
 From her tranquil sphere
 At the sleepless waters
 Of a lonely mere,
 On the wild whirling waves, mournfully, mournfully,
 Shiver and die.

As the tears of sorrow
 Mothers have shed—
 Prayers that to-morrow
 Shall in vain be sped
 When the flower they flow for
 Lies frozen and dead—
 Fall on the throbbing brow, fall on the burning breast,
 Bringing no rest.

Like bright waves that fall
 With a lifelike motion
 On the lifeless margin of the sparkling Ocean;
 A wild rose climbing up a mouldering wall—
 A gush of sunbeams through a ruin'd hall—
 Strains of glad music at a funeral—
 So sad, and with so wild a start
 To this deep-sober'd heart,
 So anxiously and painfully,
 So drearily and doubtfully.
 And oh, with such intolerable change
 Of thought, such contrast strange,
 O unforgotten voice, thy accents come,
 Like wanderers from the world's extremity,
 Unto their ancient home!

In vain, all, all in vain,
 They beat upon mine ear again,
 Those melancholy tones so sweet and still.
 Those lute-like tones which in the bygone year
 Did steal into mine ear—
 Blew such a thrilling summons to my will,
 Yet could not shake it;
 Made my tost heart its very life-blood spill,
 Yet could not break it.

YOUTH'S AGITATIONS.

WHEN I shall be divorced, some ten years hence,
 From this poor present self which I am now ;
 When youth has done its tedious vain expense
 Of passions that for ever ebb and flow ;

Shall I not joy youth's heats are left behind,
 And breathe more happy in an even clime?—
 Ah no, for then I shall begin to find
 A thousand virtues in this hated time !

Then I shall wish its agitations back,
 And all its thwarting currents of desire ;
 Then I shall praise the heat which then I lack,
 And call this hurrying fever, generous fire ;

And sigh that one thing only has been lent
 To youth and age in common—discontent.

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 valours, 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!’

STAGIRIUS.³

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 reconciled,
 All pains beguiled !

Light bring no blindness,
 Love no unkindness,
 Knowledge no ruin,
 Fear no undoing!
 From the cradle to the grave,
 Save, oh! save.

HUMAN LIFE.

WHAT mortal, when he saw,
 Life's voyage done, his heavenly Friend,
 Could ever yet dare tell him fearlessly:
 'I have kept unfringed my nature's law;
 The inly-written chart thou gavest me,
 To guide me, I have steer'd by to the end'?

Ah! let us make no claim,
 On life's incognisable sea,
 To too exact a steering of our way;
 Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim,
 If some fair coast has lured us to make stay,
 Or some friend hail'd us to keep company.

Ay! we would each fain drive
 At random, and not steer by rule.
 Weakness! and worse, weakness bestow'd in vain!
 Winds from our side the unsuiting consort rive,
 We rush by coasts where we had lief remain;
 Man cannot, though he would, live chance's fool.

No! as the foaming swath
 Of torn-up water, on the main,
 Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar

On either side the black deep-furrow'd path
 Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,
 And never touches the ship-side again;

Even so we leave behind,
 As, charter'd by some unknown Powers,
 We stem across the sea of life by night,
 The joys which were not for our use design'd;—
 The friends to whom we had no natural right,
 The homes that were not destined to be ours.

TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE
 SEA-SHORE,

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN.

Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes?
 Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?
 Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
 Who mass'd, round that slight brow, these clouds of
 doom?

Lo! sails that gleam a moment and are gone;
 The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.
 Not idly Earth and Ocean labour 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 which sought thine eyes thou didst con-
verse,

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.

Some exile's, mindful how the past was glad?
Some angel's, in an 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 grey-hair'd king
Unravel all his many-colour'd lore;
Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,
Mused much, loved life a little, loathed 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 grey-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 eased us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
 Not daily labour'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 mortals 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, be gone;
 Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud
 To halve a lodging that was all her own—

Once, ere thy day go down, 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.

A QUESTION.

TO FAUSTA.

Joy comes and goes, hope ebbs and flows
Like the wave ;
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men,
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles ; and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly, friends smile and die
Like spring flowers ;
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves with bitter tears
For their dead hopes ; and all,
Mazed with doubts and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

We count the hours ! These dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Do we go hence and find they are not dead ?
Joys we dimly apprehend,
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow ?

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS.

IF, in the silent mind of One all-pure,
At first imagined lay
The sacred world ; and by procession sure

From those still deeps, in form and colour drest,
 Seasons alternating, and night and day,
 The long-mused thought to north, south, east, and west,
 Took then its all-seen way ;

O waking on a world which thus-wise springs !
 Whether it needs thee count
 Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things
 Ages or hours—O waking on life's stream !
 By lonely pureness to the all-pure fount
 (Only by this thou canst) the colour'd dream
 Of life remount !

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow,
 And faint the city gleams ;
 Rare the lone pastoral huts—marvel not thou !
 The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
 But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams ;
 Alone the sun arises, and alone
 Spring the great streams.

But, if the wild unfather'd mass no birth
 In divine seats hath known ;
 In the blank, echoing solitude if Earth,
 Rocking her obscure body to and fro,
 Ceases not from all time to heave and groan,
 Unfruitful oft, and at her happiest throe
 Forms, what she forms, alone ;

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bathed head
 Piercing the solemn cloud
 Round thy still dreaming brother-world outspread !
 O man, whom Earth, thy long-vext mother, bare
 Not without joy—so radiant, so endow'd
 (Such happy issue crown'd her painful care)—
 Be not too proud !

O when most self-exalted most alone,
 Chief dreamer, own thy dream!
 Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown;
 Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's part—
 Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning teem.
 Oh, what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart!
 'I, too, but seem.'

THE WORLD AND THE QUIETIST.

TO CRITIAS.

'WHY, when the world's great mind
 Hath finally inclined,
 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 labourers send
 Who still their labour 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 labourer

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-robed slave stole to the Great King's side.
 He spake—the Great King heard;
 Felt the slow-rolling word
 Swell his attentive soul;
 Breathed deeply as it died,
 And drain'd his mighty bowl.

THE SECOND BEST.

MODERATE tasks and moderate leisure,
 Quiet living, strict-kept measure
 Both in suffering and in pleasure—
 'Tis for this thy nature yearns.

But so many books thou readest,
 But so many schemes thou breedest,
 But so many wishes feedest,
 That thy poor head almost turns.

And (the world's so madly jangled,
 Human things so fast entangled)
 Nature's wish must now be strangled
 For that best which she discerns.

So it *must* be! yet, while leading
 A strain'd life, while overfeeding,
 Like the rest, his wit with reading,
 No small profit that man earns,

Who through all he meets can steer him,
 Can reject what cannot clear him,
 Cling to what can truly cheer him;
 Who each day more surely learns
 That an impulse, from the distance
 Of his deepest, best existence,
 To the words, 'Hope, Light, Persistence,'
 Strongly sets and truly burns.

CONSOLATION.

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.

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

Strange unloved uproar*
 Shrills round their portals;
 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.

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

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

* Written during the siege of Rome by the French, 1849.

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 eternalise,
 Ten thousand mourners
 Well pleased 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.

RESIGNATION.

TO FAUSTA.

*To die be given us, or attain!
 Fierce work 't were, to do again.*

So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd
 At burning noon ; so warriors said,
 Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the miles
 Of dust which wreathed their struggling files
 Down Lydian mountains ; so, when snows
 Round Alpine summits, eddying, rose,
 The Goth, bound Rome-wards ; so the Hun,
 Crouch'd on his saddle, while the sun
 Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
 Through which the groaning Danube strains
 To the drear Euxine ;—so pray all,
 Whom labours, self-ordain'd, enthrall.
 Because they to themselves propose
 On this side the all-common close
 A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.
 So pray they ; and to stand again
 Where they stood once, to them were pain ;
 Pain to thread back and to renew
 Past straits, and currents long steer'd through.

But milder natures, and more frce—
 Whom an unblamed serenity
 Hath freed from passions, and the state
 Of struggle these necessitate ;
 Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
 Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd—
 These mourn not, that their goings pay
 Obedience to the passing day.
 These claim not every laughing Hour
 For handmaid to their striding power ;
 Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,
 To await their march ; and when appear'd,
 Through the cold gloom, with measured race,
 To usher for a destined space

(Her own sweet errands all forgone)
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.⁴
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-colour'd line;
There winds, upstreaming slowly still
Over the summit of the hill.
And now, in front, behold outspread
Those upper regions we must tread!
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
The cheerful silence of the fells.
Some two hours' march, with serious air,
Through the deep noontide heats we fare;

The red-grouse, springing at our sound,
Skims, now and then, the shining ground;
No life, save his and ours, intrudes
Upon these breathless solitudes.
O joy! again the farms appear.
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer;
There springs the brook will guide us down,
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.
Lingering, we follow down; we gain
The town, the highway, and the plain.
And many a mile of dusty way,
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day;
But, Fausta, I remember well,
That as the balmy darkness fell
We bathed our hands with speechless glee,
That night, in the wide-glimmering sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road,
Fausta, which ten years since we trod;
Alone we tread it, you and I,
Ghosts of that boisterous company.
Here, where the brook shines, near its head,
In its clear, shallow, turf-fringed bed;
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town;
Here sit we, and again unroll,
Though slowly, the familiar whole.
The solemn wastes of heathy hill
Sleep in the July sunshine still;
The self-same shadows now, as then,
Play through this grassy upland glen;
The loose dark stones on the green way
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay;
On this mild bank above the stream,
(You crush them!) the blue gentians gleam.

Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
The sailing foam, the shining pool!
These are not changed; and we, you say,
Are scarce more changed, in truth, than they.

The gipsies, whom we met below,
They, too, have long roam'd to and fro;
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.
And often to some kindly place
Chance guides the migratory race,
Where, though long wanderings intervene,
They recognise a former scene.

The dingy tents are pitch'd; the fires
Give to the wind their wavering spires;
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame
Their children, as when first they came;
They see their shackled beasts again
Move, browsing, up the grey-wall'd lane.
Signs are not wanting, which might raise
The ghost in them of former days—
Signs are not wanting, if they would;
Suggestions to disquietude.

For them, for all, time's busy touch,
While it mends little, troubles much.
Their joints grow stiffer—but the year
Runs his old round of dubious cheer;
Chilly they grow—yet winds in March,
Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch;
They must live still—and yet, God knows,
Crowded and keen the country grows;
It seems as if, in their decay,
The law grew stronger every day.
So might they reason, so compare,
Fausta, times past with times that are;

But no!—they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way,
And they will rub through, if they can,
To-morrow on the self-same plan,
Till death arrive to supersede,
For them, vicissitude and need.

The poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of man.
Though he move mountains, though his day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway,
Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,
Though he hath borne immortal pains,
Action and suffering though he know—
He hath not lived, if he lives so.
He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand,
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude,
Exults—yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.
Beautiful eyes meet his—and he
Bears to admire uncravingly ;
They pass—he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town ;
Surveys each happy group, which fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets,
Each with some errand of its own—
And does not say: *I am alone.*
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When morning purifies the earth ;

He leans upon a gate, and sees
 The pastures, and the quiet trees.
 Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,
 Folds the still valley almost round ;
 The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
 Is answer'd from the depth of dawn ;
 In the hedge straggling to the stream,
 Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam ;
 But, where the farther side slopes down,
 He sees the drowsy new-waked clown
 In his white quaint-embroider'd frock
 Make, whistling, toward his mist-wreathed flock—
 Slowly, behind his heavy tread,
 The wet, flower'd grass heaves up its head.
 Lean'd on his gate, he gazes—tears
 Are in his eyes, and in his ears
 The murmur of a thousand years.
 Before him he sees life unroll,
 A placid and continuous whole—
 That general life, which does not cease,
 Whose secret is not joy, but peace ;
 That life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
 If birth proceeds, if things subsist ;
 The life of plants, and stones, and rain,
 The life he craves—if not in vain
 Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
 His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen—but that wandering smile,
 Fausta, betrays you cold the while !
 Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
 Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.
Those gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,
Are less, the poet more, than man.

*They feel not, though they move and see ;
 Deeper the poet feels ; but he
 Breathes, when he will, immortal air,
 Where Orpheus and where Homer are.
 In the day's life, whose iron round
 Hems us all in, he is not bound ;
 He leaves his kind, o'erleaps their pen,
 And flees the common life of men.
 He escapes thence, but we abide—
 Not deep the poet sees, but wide.*

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

Blame thou not, therefore, him who dares
 Judge vain beforehand human cares ;
 Whose natural insight can discern
 What through experience others learn ;
 Who needs not love and power, to know
 Love transient, power an unreal show ;

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

Enough, we live!—and if a life,
 With large results so little rife,
 Though bearable, seem hardly worth
 This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;
 Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
 The solemn hills around us spread,
 This stream which falls incessantly,
 The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,

If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.
And even could the intemperate prayer
Man iterates, while these forbear,
For movement, for an ampler sphere,
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;
Not milder is the general lot
Because our spirits have forgot,
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
The something that infects the world.

NARRATIVE POEMS.



SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.⁵

An Episode.

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

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which
stood

Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere;
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink—the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now

The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm and said:—

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

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

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
But of a single combat fame speaks clear.'

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—
'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight!
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old,
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace

To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain;—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?
Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires.'

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

The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade—
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they
stream'd;

As when some grey November morn the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board—so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore

And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
 Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere—
 These all filed out from camp into the plain.
 And on the other side the Persians form'd;—
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan; and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they
 stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—
 'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.'

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,

A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as a troop of pe.llars, from Cabool,
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow ;
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging
 snows—

So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

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

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

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

He spake ; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode

Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
 Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood before him, 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 Khosrō,
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,
 And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
 For would that I myself had such a son,
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have—
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
 And he has none to guard his weak old age.
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,
 And with my great name fence that weak old
 man,
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no
 more.'

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

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:—
 'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,

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

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and
 ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy—
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
 Of horshair waved, a scarlet horshair plume.
 So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel—
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the
 earth,

The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes

Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

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

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

And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and
straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,

By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—

'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
 And tried; and I have stood on many a field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
 Be govern'd! quit the Tartar host, and come
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,
 And fight beneath my banner till I die!
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'

So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw
 His giant figure planted on the sand,
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Hath builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs;—hope fill'd his soul,
 And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
 And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said:—

'Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
 Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?'

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

'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,
 And hide it not, but say: *Rustum is here!*

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
"I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away."
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me.'

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

He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—
'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.

Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know;
Only the event will teach us in its hour.'

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

Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand;
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand;
But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—

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

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,

The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soil'd
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
 His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice
 Was choked with rage; at last these words broke
 way:—

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

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

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

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

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

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:—
'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,
And I were that which till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear;
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!

My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!’

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

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

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
‘Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?’

Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old king, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.'

He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain-lodge describes

A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
 And that old king, her father, who loved well
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:—

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

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

‘Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?’

Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
 And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear.
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.'

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

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

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

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

He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood

Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry:
O boy—thy father!—and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,—
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:—
 'Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father, let me feel that I have found!
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say: *My son!*
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—

Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind;
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.'

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

'Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,
When first they bore thy master to this field!'

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
'Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said: *O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!*—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,

Nor slaked my thirst at the clear *Helmund* stream;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, *Samarcand*,
Bokhara, and lone *Khiva* in the waste,
And the black *Toorkmun* tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, *Moorghab* and *Tejend*,
Kohik, and where the *Kalmuks* feed their sheep,
The northern *Sir*; and this great *Oxus* stream,
The yellow *Oxus*, by whose brink I die.'

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

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

*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!
And I be not forgotten in my grave.'*

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

And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :--
 'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
 But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,
 Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day,
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
 Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,
 From laying thy dear master in his grave.'

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

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

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.

As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now mid their broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

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

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

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 Registàn,
 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 chanced.

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 did break
 The law, and by the law must die!
 Vengeance, O King!'

But the King spake:

'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 way 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 canst 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 short 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 cursed them—dost thou hear?—
One was my mother——Now, do right!’

But my lord mused a space, and said:
‘Send him away, Sirs, and make on!
It is some madman!’ the King said.
As the King bade, 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 grudged?
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path
I will not stir till I be judged!’

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 sentenced him, as the law is,
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charged us secretly:
'Stoned must he be, the law stands so.
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way;
Hinder 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 bruised him sore
But he praised 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?
—Hol 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 favour 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 swerved,
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 I 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, labouring 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 away.

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 colour'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 brought 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 wast a sinner, thou poor man !
 Thou wast athirst ; and didst not see,
 That, though we take 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 honour 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.'

BALDER DEAD.⁶

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 pierced 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 loved 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 ye 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 women'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 composed 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 cared for, in the appointed day.

Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns,
 Bring wood to the seashore 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 spake the King of Gods, and straightway rose,
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 toward 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 stretched 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 served them placed
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, honour'd mother of the Gods,
And shews its lighted windows to the main.
There he went up, and pass'd the open doors;
And in the hall he found those women old,
The prophetesses, who by rite eterne
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-loved 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 hath 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 loved 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, toward 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 giant's home,
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.
And he must fare across the dismal ice
Northward, unt'l 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 dwell the dead,
And hear 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 must he not regard the wailful ghosts
Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around;
But he must straight accost their solemn quecn,

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 ceased 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 loathéd 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
Bleidablik, on whose columns Balder graved
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 harbour, 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 gazed 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, moved 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 by 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 intoned 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 lids 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 gazed 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 honour 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 restored thee, Nanna, to my side,
Whom thou so well hast loved; but I can smoothe
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 desired—
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;
For 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 lived, 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 sank 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 ranged; 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 ranged 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 drave their steeds before.
And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared
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 haled them down,
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,
And drave 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 loosed them of their loads on the seashore,
And ranged 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 fared
In silence up the dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went
All day; and daylight waned, and night came on.
And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,
Nine days, nine nights, toward 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,
Wedge'd in the snow; then painfully the hinds
With goad and shouting urge their catle 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 colour on thy cheeks,
 Like men who live, and draw the vital air;
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,
 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 vapour-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 fared.
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 Niflheim, 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 armour wore,
And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.
Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,
Greeted of none, disfeatured 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 endured to leave
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades?
 How didst 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 ner 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 his island in the lake afar,
Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength
Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.
Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,
Your mate, though loathed, 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 feeble haters do—
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,
Helpless to better us, or ruin them.
Come then! if Balder was so dear beloved,
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.
Show 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 answered 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 wast of Gods the most beloved,
 And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,
 Here, and hast honour 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 serf, a captured 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 loved, 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 saved or no;
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen
Me sitting here below by Hela's side.
Crown'd, having honour among all the dead.'

He spake, and raised 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 fared 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 vapours 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 Asg-ard; and the golden halls were dumb.
 Then Hermod knew what labour 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 neighbour 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,
 Some 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 neighbour, moved 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 carcase, 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 communed with their solemn queen;
 And to your prayer she sends you this reply:
Show her through all the world the signs of grief!
Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops!
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP 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 loved a God.
 And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands
 On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail:—

‘Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, 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 laughty 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, labouring to compose their brawls.
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind!
 For we lose him, who smoothed 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 honour'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 wast
 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, wast for ever 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 ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,
 Living; but Ella capured 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 waged,
 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 who at his table fed,
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,
And threw them on the pyre, and Odin threw
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.
The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,
Then they put 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 wreathed 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 gazed.

And while they gazed, 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 long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's pile;
But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared;
The bodies were consumed, ash choked 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 loathéd 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 for ever 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-beloved was Balder while he lived
 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 Frea, 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 ruled.
 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 cast 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.
 Last, 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 Niflheim thou threw'st,
 And gav'st 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 mine 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 loved 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 lived, 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 show 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

Fringed with dark pines, and sands where sea-fowl
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.'

Then, 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 dear country, and can plain 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 grey 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 traversed Giall's stream,
 And down to Ocean groped, 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 Niflheim, 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 gulp's
 Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest 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 appeased! 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 breathed the balm
Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,
And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell.'

He spake; and, as he ceased, a puff of wind
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside
Round where they stood, and they beheld two forms
Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.
And Hermod straight perceived 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 toward thee, nor train up
Forset, thy son, to be beloved 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
 Love 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 for ever; 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 Lok 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 marshal'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 fall shall Asgard's towers,
 And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven;
 But what were I, to save them in that hour?
 If strength might 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 marshal'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 enforced
 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 reach'd 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 re-assembling 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 preserved,
 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;
 Re-enter 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 wherewith 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 may'st 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 waved 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 gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin.

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

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 seaward 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;
But 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 snowdrop 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
 From Ireland to Cornwall bore,
 To Tyntagel, to the side
 Of King Marc, to be his bride?
 She who, as they voyaged, quaff'd
 With Tristram that spiced magic draught
 Which since then for ever 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 are 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 unwintry sea,
Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
While 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,
But 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 paled 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
Dwells on loud Tyntagel's hill,
High above 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 their marriage-day,
And for ever 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-parlour, 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—
Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,
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,
Mingie 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, which recall'd
The Tristram who in better days
Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—
Welcomed 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 exiled 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 grey 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 dazed air throbs with blows.
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed 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
Which 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 Cornwall now,
 Far hence; her dreams are fair—smooth is her brow.
 Of me she recks not, nor my vain 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 raised her eyes upon his face—
 Not with a look of wounded pride,
 A look as if the heart complain'd—
 Her look was like a sad embrace;
 The gaze of one who can divine
 A grief, and sympathise.
 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 closed,
The lashes on the cheeks reposed.
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 chased
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 illumined 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;
 Bound I was, 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 rejoin'd me;
 Thou hast dared it—but too late to save.
 Fear not now that men should tax thine honour!
 I am dying; build—(thou may'st)—my grave!

Iseult.

Tristram, ah, for 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 lived so
 In the green wood, 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!

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

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!

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanced,
Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown—
Thee, a pining 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 repress'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 a former 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 prayer 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! for ever 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.

Close mine eyes, then seek the princess Iseult;
 Speak her fair, she is of royal blood!
 Say, I charged her, that thou stay beside me—
 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 gay and the laughter loud
 In Tyntagel's palace proud.
 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 which 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 whispered 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 colour in her cheeks;
Christ keep us from such fantasy!—

Yes, now the longing is o'erpast,
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by shame,
Shook her weak bosom day and night,
Consumed her beauty like a flame,
And dimm'd it like the desert-blast.
And though the curtains hide her face,
Yet were it lifted to the light,
The sweet expression of her brow
Would charm the gazer, till his thought
Erased the ravages of time,
Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought
A freshness back as of her prime—
So healing is her quiet now.
So perfectly the lines express
A tranquil, settled loveliness,
Her younger rival's purest grace.

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 that bright, iron-figured 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 green wood 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 unmoved;
 Cold, cold as those who lived and loved
 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;
In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old—
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.

The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
Had wander'd forth. Her children were at play
In a green circular hollow in the heath
Which borders the sea-shore—a country path
Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
The hollow's grassy banks are soft-inclined,
And to one standing on them, far and near
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
Over the waste. This cirque of open ground
Is light and green; the heather, which all round
Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the pale grass
Is strewn with rocks and many a shiver'd mass
Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there
Dotted with holly-trees and juniper.
In the smooth centre of the opening stood
Three hollies side by side, and made a screen,
Warm with the winter-sun, of burnish'd green
With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.
Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,
Watching her children play; their little hands
Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
Of stagshorn for their hats; anon, with screams
Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
Among the holly-clumps and broken ground,

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

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,
Under the hollies, in the clear still air—
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
Long they stay'd still—then, pacing at their ease,
Moved up and down under the glossy trees;
But still, as they pursued their warm dry road,
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes
Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise;
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
Nor to the snow, which, though '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 grey turrets of the castle old
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening-air,
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,

And brought her tale to an end, and found the path
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmoved
The days in which she might have lived and loved
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,
One after one, to-morrow like to-day?
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will—
Is it this thought which makes her mien so still,
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's? She moves slow; her voice alone
Hath yet an infantine and silver tone,
But even that comes languidly; in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home, and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery-frame, and there she'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it;
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground;
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
Her rosary-beads of ebony tipp'd with gold;
Then to her soft sleep—and to-morrow'll be
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

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

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
Not suffering, which shuts up eye and ear
To all that has delighted them before,
And lets us be what we were once no more.
No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
By what of old pleased us, and will again.
No, 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
But takes away the power—this can avail,
By drying up our joy in everything,
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.
This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit
Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,

Till for its sake alone we live and move—
 Call it ambition, or remorse, or love—
 This too can change us wholly, and make seem
 All which we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
 How this fool passion gulls men potently;
 Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,
 And an unnatural overheat at best.
 How they are full of languor and distress
 Not having it; which when they do possess,
 They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,
 And spend their lives in posting here and there
 Where this plague drives them; and have little ease,
 Are furious with themselves, and hard to please.
 Like that bald Cæsar, the famed Roman wight,
 Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight
 Who made a name at younger years than he;
 Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,
 Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,
 Who carried the great war from Macedon
 Into the Soudan's realm, and thundered on
 To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

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

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
 Away the other side of Brittany,
 Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea;
 Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
 Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine
 creeps,
 Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.
 For here he came with the fay Vivian,
 One April, when the warm days first began.

He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
On her white palfrey; here he met his end,
In these lone sylvan glades, that April-day.
This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear
Before the children's fancy him and her.

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

'They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day
Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground broke away,
In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook.
And up as high as where they stood to look
On the brook's farther side was clear; but then
The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with thorns
Then white with blossom; and you saw the horns,

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

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

SAINT BRANDAN.

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main ;
 The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
 He greets them once, he sails again ;
 So late !—such storms !—The Saint is mad !

He heard, across the howling seas,
 Chime convent-bells on wintry nights ;
 He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
 Twinkle the monastery-lights ;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd—
 And now no bells, no convents more !
 The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,
 The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night ;
 Stars shone after a day of storm)—
 He sees float past an iceberg white,
 And on it—Christ !—a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
 Of hair that red and tufted fell—
 It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly?—
 The traitor Judas, out of hell !

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate ;
 The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
 He hears a voice sigh humbly : ' Wait !
 By high permission I am here.

' One moment wait, thou holy man !
 On earth my crime, my death, they knew ;
 My name is under all men's ban—
 Ah, tell them of my respite too !

'Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night—
 (It was the first after I came,
 Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
 To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

'I felt, as I in torment lay
 'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
 An angel touch mine arm, and say:
Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!

'“Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?” I said.
The Leper recollect, said he,
Who ask'd the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.

'Then I remember'd how I went,
 In Joppa, through the public street,
 One morn when the sirocco spent
 Its storms of dust with burning heat;

'And in the street a leper sate,
 Shivering with fever, naked, old;
 Sand raked his sores from heel to pate.
 The hot wind fever'd him five-fold.

'He gazed upon me as I pass'd,
 And murmur'd: *Help me, or I die!*—
 To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
 Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

'Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,
 What blessing must full goodness shower,
 When fragment of it small, like mine,
 Hath such inestimable power!

'Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I
 Did that chance act of good, that one!
 Then went my way to kill and lie—
 Forgot my good as soon as done.

'That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

'Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas-night's repose,
Arising from the sinner's lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

'I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest
That Joppan leper's ease was pain.'—

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bow'd his head, he breathed a prayer—
Then look'd, and lo, the frosty skies!
The iceberg, and no Judas there!

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 kind 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 answered;
 'From the sea-waves I come.'—
 The knights drew sword, the ladies scream'd
 The surpliced 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 mild 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.’—

But, lo, the staff, it budded!
 It green'd, it branch'd, it waved.
 ‘—O ruth of God,’ the priest cried out,
 ‘This lost sea-creature saved!’

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

He wept: ‘The earth hath kindness,
 The sea, the starry poles;
 Earth, sea, and sky, and God above—
 But, ah, not human souls!’

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 shoreward blow,
 Now the salt tides seaward flow;

Now the wild white horses play,
 Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.

Children dear, let us away!

This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—

Call once yet!

In a voice that she will know:

‘Margaret! Margaret!’

Children’s voices should be dear

(Call once more) to a mother’s ear;

Children’s voices, wild with pain—

Surely she will come again!

Call her once and come away;

This way, this way!

‘Mother dear, we cannot stay!

The wild white horses foam and fret.’

Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;

Call no more!

One last look at the white-wall’d town,

And the little grey church on the windy shore;

Then come down!

She will not come though you call all day;

Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday

We heard the sweet bells over the bay?

In the caverns where we lay,

Through the surf and through the swell,

The far-off sound of a silver bell?

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,

Where the winds are all asleep;

Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,

Where the salt weed sways in the stream,

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

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;
She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
'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 smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday?
Children dear, were we long alone?
'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say;
Come!' I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little grey church on the windy hill.

From the church came a murmur of folk at their
prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with
rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded
panes.

She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

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

And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh ;
For the cold strange eyes of a little 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 for ever
The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low ;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom ;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,

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

SONNETS.

Austerity of Poetry.

THAT son of Italy who tried to blow,^o
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way! crash fell a platform! lo,

Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

A Picture at Newstead.

WHAT made my heart, at Newstead, fullest swell?—
'Twas not the thought of Byron, of his cry
Stormily sweet, his Titan-agony;
It was the sight of that Lord Arundel

Who struck, in heat, his child he loved so well,
 And his child's reason flicker'd, and did die.
 Painted (he will'd it) in the gallery
 They hang; the picture doth the story tell.

Behold the stern, mail'd father, staff in hand!
 The little fair-hair'd son, with vacant gaze,
 Where no more lights of sense or knowledge are!

Methinks the woe, which made that father stand
 Baring his dumb remorse to future days,
 Was woe than Byron's woe more tragic far.

Rachel.

I.

IN Paris all look'd hot and like to fade;
 Sere, in the garden of the Tuileries,
 Sere with September, droop'd the chestnut-trees;
 'Twas dawn, a brougham roll'd through the streets
 and made

Halt at the white and silent colonnade
 Of the French Theatre. Worn with disease,
 Rachel, with eyes no gazing can appease,
 Sate in the brougham and those blank walls survey'd.

She follows the gay world, whose swarms have fled
 To Switzerland, to Baden, to the Rhine;
 Why stops she by this empty play-house drear?

Ah, where the spirit its highest life hath led,
 All spots, match'd with that spot, are less divine;
 And Rachel's Switzerland, her Rhine, is here!

II.

UNTO a lonely villa, in a dell
 Above the fragrant warm Provençal shore,
 The dying Rachel in a chair they bore
 Up the steep pine-plumed paths of the Estrelle,
 And laid her in a stately room, where fell
 The shadow of a marble Muse of yore,
 The rose-crown'd queen of legendary lore,
 Polymnia, full on her death-bed.—'Twas well!
 The fret and misery of our northern towns,
 In this her life's last day, our poor, our pain,
 Our jangle of false wits, our climate's frowns,
 Do for this radiant Greek-soul'd artist cease;
 Sole object of her dying eyes remain
 The beauty and the glorious art of Greece.

III.

SPRUNG from the blood of Israel's scatter'd race,
 At a mean inn in German Aarau born,
 To forms from antique Greece and Rome uptorn,
 Trick'd out with a Parisian speech and face,
 Imparting life renew'd, old classic grace;
 Then, soothing with thy Christian strain forlorn,
 A-Kempis! her departing soul outworn,
 While by her bedside Hebrew rites have place—
 Ah, not the radiant spirit of Greece alone
 She had—one power, which made her breast its home!
 In her, like us, there clash'd, contending powers,
 Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome.
 The strife, the mixture in her soul, are ours;
 Her genius and her glory are her own.

Worldly Place.

EVEN in a palace, life may be led well!

So spake the imperial sage, pure t of men,
 Marcus Aurelius. But the stifling den
 Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,
 Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
 And drudge under some foolish master's ken
 Who rates us if we peer outside our pen—
 Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell?

Even in a palace! On his truth sincere,
 Who spoke these words, no shadow ever came;
 And when my ill-school'd spirit is aflame
 Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,
 I'll stop, and say: 'There were no succour here!
 The aids to noble life are all within.'

East London.

'TWAS August, and the fierce sun overhead
 Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
 And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
 In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
 'Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?'--
 'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been
 Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread!*
 O human soul! as long as thou canst so
 Set up a mark of everlasting light,
 Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
 To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
 Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!
 Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

West London.

CROUCH'D on the pavement, close by Belgrave Square,
 A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied.
 A babe was in her arms, and at her side
 A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.
 Some labouring men, whose work lay somewhere there,
 Pass'd opposite; she touch'd her girl, who hied
 Across, and begg'd, and came back satisfied.
 The rich she had let pass with frozen stare.
 Thought I: Above her state this spirit towers;
 She will not ask of aliens, but of friends,
 Of sharers in a common human fate.
 She turns from that cold succour, which attends
 The unknown little from the unknowing great,
 And points us to a better time than ours.'

East and West.

IN the bare midst of Anglesey they show
 Two springs which close by one another play;
 And, 'Thirteen hundred years ago,' they say,
 'Two saints met often where those waters flow.
 One came from Penmon westward, and a glow
 Whiten'd his face from the sun's fronting ray;
 Eastward the other, from the dying day,
 And he with unsunn'd face did always go.'
Sciriol the Bright, Kybi the Dark! men said.
 The seër from the East was then in light,
 The seër from the West was then in shade.
 Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sunshine bright
 The man of the bold West now comes array'd;
 He of the mystic East is touch'd with night.

The Better Part.

LONG fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
 How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
 'Christ,' some one says, 'was human as we are;
 No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;
 We live no more, when we have done our span.'--
 'Well, then, for Christ,' thou answerest, 'who can care?
 From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
 Live we like brutes our life without a plan!
 So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
 'Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high!*
 Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?—
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
 Was Christ a man like us?—*Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!

The Divinity.

'YES, write it in the rock,' Saint Bernard said,
 'Grave it on brass with adamantine pen!
 'Tis God himself becomes apparent, when
 God's wisdom and God's goodness are display'd,
 For God of these his attributes is made.'—
 Well spake the impetuous Saint, and bore of men
 The suffrage captive; now, not one in ten
 Recalls the obscure opposer he outweigh'd.⁹
God's wisdom and God's goodness!—Ay, but fools
 Mis-define thee till God knows them no more.
Wisdom and goodness, they are God!—what schools
 Have yet so much as heard this simpler lore?
 This no Saint preaches, and this no Church rules;
 'Tis in the desert, now and heretofore.

Immortality.

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

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
 The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they,
 Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
 Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be
 Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
 And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
 From strength to strength advancing—only he,
 His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
 Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

The Good Shepherd with the Kid.

HE saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save.
 So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
 Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried:¹⁰
 'Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,
 Who sins, once wash'd by the baptismal wave.'—
 So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sigh'd,
 The infant Church! of love she felt the tide
 Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.
 And then she smiled; and in the Catacombs,
 With eye suffused but heart inspired true,
 On those walls subterranean, where she hid
 Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,
 She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew—
 And on his shoulders, not a lamb, a kid.

*Monica's Last Prayer.*¹¹

' Ah could thy grave at home, at Carthage, be !—
Care not for that, and lay me where I fall !
Everywhere heard will be the judgment-call ;
But at God's altar, oh ! remember me.

Thus Monica, and died in Italy.

Yet fervent had her longing been, through all
Her course, for home at last, and burial
With her own husband, by the Libyan sea.

Had been ! but at the end, to her pure soul
All tie with all beside seem'd vain and cheap,
And union before God the only care.

Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole.
Yet we her memory, as she pray'd, will keep,
Keep by this : *Life in God, and union there !*

LYRIC AND DRAMATIC POEMS.



SWITZERLAND

1. *Meeting.*

AGAIN I see my bliss at hand,
The town, the lake are here;
My Marguerite smiles upon the strand,¹²
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!

2. *Parting.*

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-colour'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 niched 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 stretch'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 strain'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, for ever,
 Are spread and upfur'd—
 In the stir of the forces
 Whence issued the world.

3. *A Farewell.*

My horse's feet beside the lake,
Where sweet the unbroken moonbeams lay,
Sent echoes through the night to wake
Each glistening strand, each heath-fringed bay.

The poplar avenue was pass'd,
And the roof'd bridge that spans the stream;
Up the steep street I hurried fast,
Led by thy taper's starlike beam.

I came! I saw thee rise!—the blood
Pour'd flushing to thy languid cheek.
Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,
In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew;—ah, soon I could discern
A trouble in thine alter'd air!
Thy hand lay languidly in mine,
Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare.

I blame thee not!—this heart, I know,
To be long loved was never framed;
For something in its depths doth glow
Too strange, too restless, too untamed.

And women—things that live and move
Mined by the fever of the soul—
They seek to find in those they love
Stern strength, and promise of control.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways;
These they themselves have tried and known;
They ask a soul which never sways
With the blind gusts that shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore
In a too strong emotion's sway;
I too have wish'd, no woman more,
This starting, feverish heart away.

I too have long'd for trenchant force,
And will like a dividing spear;
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

But in the world I learnt, what there
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

Go, then!—till time and fate impress
This truth on thee, be mine no more!
They will!—for thou, I feel, not less
Than I, wast destined to this love.

We school our manners, act our parts—
But He, who sees us through and through,
Knows that the bent of both our hearts
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas!
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course
To every thought the mass ignore;
We shall not then call hardness force,
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,
Our soothed, encouraged souls will dare
To seem as free from pride and guile,
As good, as generous, as they are.

Then we shall know our friends!—though much
Will have been lost—the help in strife,
The thousand sweet, still joys of such
As hand in hand face earthly life—

Though these be lost, there will be yet
A sympathy august and pure;
Ennobled by a vast regret,
And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,
May then more neighbouring courses ply;
May to each other be brought near,
And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,
My sister! to maintain with thee
The hush among the shining stars,
The calm upon the moonlit sea!

How sweet to feel, on the boon air,
All our unquiet pulses cease!
To feel that nothing can impair
The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd
On this wild earth of hate and fear;
The thirst for peace a raving world
Would never let us satiate here.

4. *Isolation. To Marguerite*

WE were apart; yet, day by day,
 I bade my heart more constant be.
 I bade it keep the world away,
 And grow a home for only thee;
 Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
 Like mine, each day, more tried, more true

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

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

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

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
 How vain a thing is mortal love,
 Wandering in Heaven, far removed;
 But thou hast long had place to prove
 This truth—to prove, and make thine own:
 'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.'

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

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

5. *To Marguerite. Continued.*

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

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

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

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

6. *Absence.*

IN this fair stranger's eyes of grey
 Thine eyes, my love! I see.
 I shiver; 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-choked 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!

7. *The Terrace at Berne.*

(COMPOSED TEN YEARS AFTER THE PRECEDING.)

TEN years!—and to my waking eye
Once more the roofs of Berne appear;
The rocky banks, the terrace high,
The stream!—and do I linger here?
The clouds are on the Oberland,
The Jungfrau snows look faint and far;
But bright are those green fields at hand,
And through those fields comes down the Aar,
And from the blue twin-lakes it comes,
Flows by the town, the church-yard fair;
And 'neath the garden-walk it hums,
The house!—and is my Marguerite there?
Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,
Quick through the oleanders brush,
An' clap thy hands, and cry: '*Tis thou!*
Or hast thou long since wander'd back,
Daughter of France! to France, thy home;
And flitted down the flowery track
Where feet like thine too lightly come?
Doth riotous laughter now replace
Thy smile, and rouge, with stony glare,
Thy cheek's soft hue, and fluttering lace
The kerchief that enwound thy hair?
Or is it over?—art thou dead?—
Dead!—and no warning shiver ran
Across my heart, to say thy thread
Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

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

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

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

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

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,
So on the sea of life, alas!
Man meets man—meets, and quits again.

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

THE STRAYED REVELLER.

THE PORTICO OF CIRCE'S PALACE. EVENING.

*A Youth. Circe.**The Youth.*

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

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

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

Circe.

Whence art thou, sleeper?

The Youth.

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

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

Circe.

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

The Youth.

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

Circe.

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

Ulysses.

Ever new magic!
Hast thou then lured hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,

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

Circe.

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

The Youth.

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

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

Ulysses.

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

The Youth.

The Gods are happy.
 They turn on all sides
 Their shining eyes,
 And see below them
 The earth and men.
 They see Tiresias
 Sitting, staff in hand,
 On the warm, grassy
 Asopus bank,

His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head,
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

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

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick-matted
With large-leaved, low-creeping melon-plants,
And the dark cucumber.
He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting—drifting ;—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves,
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide stepp, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon.
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal—
Mares' milk, and bread
Baked on the embers ;—all around
The boundless, waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag leaved iris-flowers.

Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal; before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard-fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil; here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny waste.

They see the ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasman 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 covering merchants in long robes
Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barr'd onyx-stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies;
The Gods behold them.

They see the Heroes
Sitting in the dark ship
On the foamless, long-heaving,

Violet sea,
At sunset nearing
The Happy Islands.
These things, Ulysses,
The wise bards also
Behold and sing.
But oh, what labour!
O prince, what pain!
They too can see
Tiresias;—but the Gods,
Who give them vision,
Added this law:
That they should bear too
His groping blindness,
His dark foreboding,
His scorn'd white hairs;
Bear Hera's anger
Through a life lengthen'd
To seven ages.
They see the Centaurs
On Pelion;—then they feel,
They too, the maddening wine
Swell their large veins to bursting; in wild pain
They feel the biting spears
Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,
Drive crashing through their bones; they feel
High on a jutting rock in the red stream
Alcmena's dreadful son
Ply his bow;—such a price
The Gods exact for song:
To become what we sing.
They see the Indian
On his mountain lake;—but squalls

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FRAGMENT OF AN
ANTIGONE.

The Chorus.

WELL hath he done who hath seized 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 infringed,
 Makes his own welfare his unswerved-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, this time with death.

 In little companies,
 And, our own place once left,
 Ignorant where to stand, or whom to avoid,
 By city and household group'd, we live ; and many
 shocks
 Our order heaven-ordain'd
 Must every day endure :
 Voyages, exiles, hates, dissensions, wars.

Besides what waste *he* makes,
 The all-hated, order-breaking,
 Without friend, city, or home,
 Death, who dissevers all.

Him then I praise, who dares
 To self-selected good
 Prefer obedience to the primal law,
 Which consecrates the ties of blood; for these,
 indeed,
 Are to the Gods a care;
 That touches but himself.
 For every day man may be link'd and loosed
 With strangers; but the bond
 Original, deep-inwound,
 Of blood, can he not bind,
 Nor, if Fate binds, not bear.

But hush! Hæmon, whom Antigone,
 Robbing herself of life in burying,
 Against Creon's law, Polynices,
 Robs of a loved bride—pale, imploring,
 Waiting her passage,
 Forth from the palace hitherward comes.

Hæmon.

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!—honourest 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.¹⁸

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 desired 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 enthroned too high
 To fear assault of envious Gods,
 His beloved 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 saved his tired son
 Beholding him where the Two Pillars stand
 O'er the sun-redden'd western straits,¹⁴
 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 there need less than the burning pile
 Under the towering Trachis crags,
 And the Spercheios vale, shaken with groans,
 And the roused Maliac gulph,
 And scared Cætæan snows,
 To achieve his son's deliverance, O my child!

FRAGMENT OF CHORUS OF A
DEŢANEIRA.

O FRIVOLOUS m'nd of man,
Light ignorance, and hurrying, unsure thoughts !
Though man bewails you not,
How *I* bewail you !

Little in your prosperity
Do you seek counsel of the Gods.
Proud, ignorant, self-adored, you live alone.
In profound silence stern,
Among their savage gorges and cold springs,
Unvisited remain
The great oracular shrines.

Thither in your adversity
Do you betake yourselves for light,
But strangely misinterpret all you hear.
For you will not put on
New hearts with the enquirer's holy robe,
And purged, considerate minds.

And him on whom, at the end
Of toil and dolour untold,
The Gods have said that repose
At last shall descend undisturb'd—
Him you expect to behold
In an easy old age, in a happy home ;
No end but this you praise.

But him, on whom, in the prime
Of life, with vigour undimm'd,
With unspent mind, and a soul
Unworn, undebased, undecay'd,

Mournfully grating, the gates
 Of the city of death have for ever closed—
Him, I count *him*, well-starr'd.

EARLY DEATH AND FAME.

For him who must see many years,
 I praise the life which slips away
 Out of the light and mutely; which avoids
 Fame, and her less fair followers, envy, strife,
 Stupid detraction, jealousy, cabal,
 Insincere praises; which descends
 The quiet mossy track to age.

But, when immature death
 Beckons too early the guest
 From the half-tried banquet of life,
 Young, in the bloom of his days;
 Leaves no leisure to press,
 Slow and surely, the sweets
 Of a tranquil life in the shade—
 Fuller for him be the hours!
 Give him emotion, though pain!
 Let him live, let him feel: *I have lived.*
 Heap up his moments with life!
 Triple his pulses with fame!

PHILOMELA.

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

O wanderer from a Grecian shore,
 Still, after many years, in distant lands,
 Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
 That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain--
 Say, will it never heal?
 And can this fragrant lawn
 With its cool trees, and night,
 And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
 And moonshine, and the dew,
 To thy rack'd heart and brain
 Afford no balm?

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

URANIA

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 labour'd, puny passion-fits—
 Ah, may she scorn them still, till we
 Scorn them as bitterly as she!

Yet show her once, ye heavenly Powers,
 One of some worthier race than ours!
 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 pure, unwavering, deep disdain.

EUPHROSYNE.

I **MUST** not say that she was true,
Yet let me say that she was fair;
And they, that lovely face who view,
They should 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
Hath 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 shine 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.

On one she smiled, and he was blest;
She smiles elsewhere—we make a din!
But 'twas not love which heaved her breast,
Fair child!—it was the bliss within.

CALAIS SANDS.

A THOUSAND knights have rein'd their steeds
 To watch this line of sand-hills run,
 Along the never-silent strait,
 To Calais glittering in the sun;

To look toward Ardres' Golden Field
 Across this wide aerial plain,
 Which glows as if the Middle Age
 Were gorgeous upon earth again.

Oh, that to share this famous scene,
 I saw, upon the open sand,
 Thy lovely presence at my side,
 Thy shawl, thy look, thy smile, thy hand!

How exquisite thy voice would come,
 My darling, on this lonely air!
 How sweetly would the fresh sea-breeze
 Shake loose some band of soft brown hair!

Yet now my glance but once hath roved
 O'er Calais and its famous plain;
 To England's cliffs my gaze is turn'd,
 O'er the blue strait mine eyes I strain.

Thou comest! Yes! the vessel's cloud
 Hangs dark upon the rolling sea.
 Oh, that yon sea-bird's wings were mine,
 To win one instant's glimpse of thee!

I must not spring to grasp thy hand,
 To woo thy smile, to seek thine eye;
 But I may stand far off, and gaze,
 And watch thee pass unconscious by,

And spell thy looks, and guess thy thoughts,
 Mixt with the idlers on the pier—
 Ah, might I always rest unseen,
 So I might have thee always near!

To-morrow hurry through the fields
 Of Flanders to the storied Rhine!
 To-night those soft-fringed eyes shall close
 Beneath one roof, my queen! with mine.

FADED LEAVES.

1. *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,
 My 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 teased o'erlabour'd heart
 For ever leaves its vain employ,
 Dead to its deep habitual smart,
 And dead to hopes of future joy.

2. *Too Late.*

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 !*

3. *Separation.*

STOP!—not to me, at this bitter 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 stedfast commandment of Nature
 Wills that remembrance should always decay—
 If the loved form and the deep-cherish'd feature
 Must, when unseen, from the soul fade away—

Me let no half-effaced 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 toward me,
 Scanning my face and the changes wrought there :
Who, let me say, is this stranger regards me,
With the grey eyes, and the lovely brown hair ?

4. *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.
 Tamed is their turbulent youthful glow;
 Their joy is in their calm.

5. *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.

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.

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
 Staved us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through Heaven guided
 Man's new 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 refused 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 that 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?

DOVER BEACH.

THE sea is calm to-night.
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair
 Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
 Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

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

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

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

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

GROWING OLD.

WHAT is it to grow old?
 Is it to lose the glory of the form,
 The lustre of the eye?
 Is it for beauty to forgo her wreath?
 —Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
 Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay?
 Is it to feel each limb
 Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
 Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not,
 Ah! 'tis not what in youth we dream'd 'twould be.
 'Tis not to have our life
 Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset-glow,
 A golden day's decline.

'Tis not to see the world
 As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
 And heart profoundly stirr'd;
 And weep, and feel the fulness of the past,
 The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
 And not once feel that we were ever young;
 It is to add, immured
 In the hot prison of the present, month
 To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
 And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
 Deep in our hidden heart
 Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
 But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
 When we are frozen up within, and quite
 The phantom of ourselves,
 To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost,
 Which blamed the living man.

THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

A Variation.

YOUTH rambles on life's arid mount,
 And strikes the rock, and finds the vein,
 And brings the water from the fount,
 The fount which shall not flow again.
 The man mature with labour chops
 For the bright stream a channel grand,
 And sees not that the sacred drops
 Ran off and vanish'd out of hand.
 And then the old man totters nigh,
 And feebly rakes among the stones.
 The mount is mute, the channel dry;
 And down he lays his weary bones.

PIS ALLER.

'MAN is blind because of sin,
 Revelation makes him sure;
 Without that, who looks within,
 Looks in vain, for all's obscure.'
 Nay, look closer into man!
 Tell me, can you find indeed
 Nothing sure, no moral plan
 Clear prescribed, without your creed?

'No, I nothing can perceive !
Without that, all 's dark for men.
That, or nothing, I believe.'—
For God's sake, believe it then!

THE LAST WORD.

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

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

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

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

A NAMELESS EPITAPH.

Ask not my name, O friend!
That Being only, which hath known each man
From the beginning, can
Remember each unto the end.

EMPEDOCLES ON ETNA.

A DRAMATIC POEM.

PERSONS.

EMPEDOCLES.

PAUSANIAS, a Physician.

CALLICLES, a young Harp-player.

The Scene of the Poem is on Mount Etna; at first in the forest region, afterwards on the summit of the mountain.

ACT I, SCENE I.

Morning. A Pass in the forest region of Etna.

CALLICLES.

(Alone, resting on a rock by the path.)

THE mules, I think, will not be here this hour;
They feel the cool wet turf under their feet
By the stream-side, after the dusty lanes
In which they have toil'd all night from Catana,
And scarcely will they budge a yard. O Pan,
How gracious is the mountain at this hour!
A thousand times have I been here alone
Or with the revellers from the mountain-towns,
But never on so fair a morn;—the sun
Is shining on the brilliant mountain-crests,
And on the highest pines; but farther down,
Here in the valley, is in shade; the sward
Is dark, and on the stream the mist still hangs;
One sees one's foot-prints crush'd in the wet grass,

One's breath curls in the air; and on these pines
 That climb from the stream's edge, the long grey tufts,
 Which the goats love, are jewell'd thick with dew.
 Here will I stay till the slow litter comes
 I have my harp too—that is well.—Apollo!
 What mortal could be sick or sorry here?
 I know not in what mind Empedocles,
 Whose mules I follow'd, may be coming up,
 But if, as most men say, he is half mad
 With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs,
 Pausanias, his sage friend, who mounts with him,
 Could scarce have lighted on a lovelier cure.
 The mules must be below, far down. I hear
 Their tinkling bells, mix'd with the song of birds,
 Rise faintly to me—now it stops!—Who's here?
 Pausanias! and on foot? alone?

Pausanias.

And thou, then?

I left thee supping with Peisianax,
 With thy head full of wine, and thy hair crown'd,
 Touching thy harp as the whim came on thee,
 And praised and spoil'd by master and by guests
 Almost as much as the new dancing-girl.
 Why hast thou follow'd us?

Callicles.

The night was hot,
 And the feast past its prime; so we slipp'd out,
 Some of us, to the portico to breathe;—
 Peisianax, thou know'st, drinks late;—and then,
 As I was lifting my soil'd garland off,
 I saw the mules and litter in the court,
 And in the litter sate Empedocles;
 Thou, too, wast with him. Straightway I sped home,

I saddled my white mule, and all night long
 Through the cool lovely country follow'd you,
 Pass'd you a little since as morning dawn'd,
 And have this hour sate by the torrent here,
 Till the slow mules should climb in sight again.
 And now?

Pausanias.

And now, back to the town with speed!
 Crouch in the wood first, till the mules have pass'd;
 They do but halt, they will be here anon.
 Thou must be viewless to Empedocles;
 Save mine, he must not meet a human eye.
 One of his moods is on him that thou know'st;
 I think, thou wouldst not vex him.

Callicles.

No—and yet
 I would fain stay, and help thee tend him. Once
 He knew me well, and would oft notice me;
 And still, I know not how, he draws me to him,
 And I could watch him with his proud sad face,
 His flowing locks and gold-encircled brow
 And kingly gait, for ever; such a spell
 In his severe looks, such a majesty
 As drew of old the people after him,
 In Agrigentum and Olympia,
 When his star reign'd, before his banishment,
 Is potent still on me in his decline.
 But oh! Pausanias, he is changed of late;
 There is a settled trouble in his air
 Admits no momentary brightening now,
 And when he comes among his friends at feasts,
 'Tis as an orphan among prosperous boys.
 Thou know'st of old he loved this harp of mine,

When first he sojourn'd with Peisianax;
 He is now always moody, and I fear him;
 But I would serve him, soothe him, if I could,
 Dared one but try.

Pausanias.

Thou wast a kind child ever!
 He loves thee, but he must not see thee now.
 Thou hast indeed a rare touch on thy harp,
 He loves that in thee, too;—there was a time
 (But that is pass'd), he would have paid thy strain
 With music to have drawn the stars from heaven.
 He has his harp and laurel with him still,
 But he has laid the use of music by,
 And all which might relax his settled gloom.
 Yet thou may'st try thy playing, if thou wilt—
 But thou must keep unseen; follow us on,
 But at a distance! in these solitudes,
 In this clear mountain-air, a voice will rise,
 Though from afar, distinctly; it may soothe him.
 Play when we halt, and, when the evening comes
 And I must leave him (for his pleasure is
 To be left musing these soft nights alone
 In the high unfrequented mountain-spots),
 Then watch him, for he ranges swift and far,
 Sometimes to Etna's top, and to the cone;
 But hide thee in the rocks a great way down,
 And try thy noblest strains, my Callicles,
 With the sweet night to help thy harmony!
 Thou wilt earn my thanks sure, and perhaps his.

Callicles.

More than a day and night, Pausanias,
 Of this fair summer-weather, on these hills,
 Would I bestow to help Empedocles.

That needs no thanks; one is far better here
 Than in the broiling city in these heats.
 But tell me, how hast thou persuaded him
 In this his present fierce, man-hating mood,
 To bring thee out with him alone on Etna?

Pausanias.

Thou hast heard all men speaking of Pantheia,
 The woman who at Agrigentum lay
 Thirty long days in a cold trance of death,
 And whom Empedocles call'd back to life.
 Thou art too young to note it, but his power
 Swells with the swelling evil of this time,
 And holds men mute to see where it will rise.
 He could stay swift diseases in old days,
 Chain madmen by the music of his lyre,
 Cleanse to sweet airs the breath of poisonous streams,
 And in the mountain-chinks inter the winds.
 This he could do of old; but now, since all
 Clouds and grows daily worse in Sicily,
 Since broils tear us in twain, since this new swarm
 Of sophists has got empire in our schools
 Where he was paramount, since he is banish'd,
 And lives a lonely man in triple gloom—
 He grasps the very reins of life and death.
 I ask'd him of Pantheia yesterday,
 When we were gather'd with Peisianax,
 And he made answer, I should come at night
 On Etna here, and be alone with him,
 And he would tell me, as his old, tried friend,
 Who still was faithful, what might profit me;
 That is, the secret of this miracle.

Callicles.

Bah! Thou a doctor! Thou art superstitious.
 Simple Pausanias, 'twas no miracle!

Pantheia, for I know her kinsmen well,
 Was subject to these trances from a girl.
 Empedocles would say so, did he deign;
 But he still lets the people, whom he scorns,
 Gape and cry *wizard* at him, if they list.
 But thou, thou art no company for him!
 Thou art as cross, as soured as himself!
 Thou hast some wrong from thine own citizens,
 And then thy friend is banish'd, and on that,
 Straightway thou fallest to arraign the times,
 As if the sky was impious not to fall.
 The sophists are no enemies of his;
 I hear, Gorgias, their chief, speaks nobly of him,
 As of his gifted master, and once friend.
 He is too scornful, too high-wrought, too bitter.
 'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex him;
 There is some root of suffering in himself,
 Some secret and unfollow'd vein of woe,
 Which makes the time look black and sad to him.
 Pester him not in this his sombre mood
 With questionings about an idle tale,
 But lead him through the lovely mountain-paths,
 And keep his mind from preying on itself,
 And talk to him of things at hand and common,
 Not miracles! thou art a learned man,
 But credulous of fables as a girl.

Pausanias.

And thou, a boy whose tongue outruns his knowledge,
 And on whose lightness blame is thrown away.
 Enough of this! I see the litter wind
 Up by the torrent-side, under the pines.
 I must rejoin Empedocles. Do thou
 Crouch in the brushwood till the mules have pass'd;
 Then play thy kind part well. Farewell till night!

SCENE II.

Noon. *A Glen on the highest skirts of the woody region
of Etna.*

EMPEDOCLES. PAUSANIAS.

Pausanias.

The noon is hot. When we have cross'd the stream,
We shall have left the woody tract, and come
Upon the open shoulder of the hill.
See how the giant spires of yellow bloom
Of the sun-loving gentian, in the heat,¹⁵
Are shining on those naked slopes like flame!
Let us rest here; and now, Empedocles,
Pantheia's history! [*A harp-note below is heard.*

Empedocles.

Hark! what sound was that
Rose from below? If it were possible,
And we were not so far from human haunt,
I should have said that some one touch'd a harp.
Hark! there again!

Pausanias.

'Tis the boy Callicles,
The sweetest harp-player in Catana.
He is for ever coming on these hills,
In summer, to all country-festivals,
With a gay revelling band; he breaks from them
Sometimes, and wanders far among the glens.
But heed him not, he will not mount to us;
I spoke with him this morning. Once more, therefore,
Instruct me of Pantheia's story, Master,
As I have pray'd thee.

Empedocles.

That? and to what end?

Pausanias.

It is enough that all men speak of it.
But I will also say, that when the Gods
Visit us as they do with sign and plague,
To know those spells of thine which stay their hand
Were to live free from terror.

Empedocles.

Spells? Mistrust them!
Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven;
Man has a mind with which to plan his safety—
Know that, and help thyself!

Pausanias.

But thine own words?
'The wit and counsel of man was never clear,
Troubles confound the little wit he has.'
Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with,
To lead those false who trust it.

[*The harp sounds again.*]

Empedocles.

Hist! once more!
Listen, Pausanias!—Ay, 'tis Callicles;
I know those notes among a thousand. Hark!

Callicles.

(*Sings unseen, from below.*)

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 anemonies,
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 tired 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 which heroes lead
 Before they reach the Elysian place
 And rest in the immortal mead ;
 And all the wisdom of his race.

*The music below ceases, and EMPEDOCLES speaks,
 accompanying himself in a solemn manner on
 his harp.*

The out-spread world to span
 A cord the Gods first slung,
 And then the soul of man
 There, like a mirror, hung,
 And bade the winds through space impel the gusty toy.

Hither and thither spins
 The wind-borne, mirroring soul,
 A thousand glimpses wins,
 And never sees a whole ;
 Looks once, and drives elsewhere, and leaves its
 last employ.

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
 To watch man doubt and fear,
 Who knows not what to believe
 Since he sees nothing clear,
 And dares stamp nothing false where he finds
 nothing sure.

Is this, Pausanias, so ?
 And can our souls not strive,
 But with the winds must go,
 And hurry where they drive ?
 Is Fate indeed so strong, man's strength indeed so
 poor ?

I will not judge. That man,
 Howbeit, I judge as lost,
 Whose mind allows a plan,
 Which would degrade it most;
 And he treats doubt the best who tries to see least ill.
 Be not, then, fear's blind slave!
 Thou art my friend; to thee,
 All knowledge that I have,
 All skill I wield, are free.
 Ask not the latest news of the last miracle,
 Ask not what days and nights
 In trance Pantheia lay,
 But ask how thou such sights
 May'st see without dismay;
 Ask what most helps when known, thou son of
 Anchitus!
 What? hate, and awe, and shame
 Fill thee to see our time;
 Thou feelest thy soul's frame
 Shaken and out of chime?
 What? life and chance go hard with thee too, as
 with us;
 Thy citizens, 'tis said,
 Envy thee and oppress,
 Thy goodness no men aid,
 All strive to make it less;
 Tyranny, pride, and lust, fill Sicily's abodes;
 Heaven is with earth at strife,
 Signs make thy soul afraid,
 The dead return to life,
 Rivers are dried, winds stay'd;
 Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are
 the Gods;

And we feel, day and night,
 The burden of ourselves—
 Well, then, the wiser wight
 In his own bosom delves,
 And asks what ails him so, and gets what cure he can.

The sophist sneers: Fool, take
 Thy pleasure, right or wrong.
 The pious wail: Forsake
 A world these sophists throng.
 Be neither saint nor sophist-led, but be a man!

These hundred doctors try
 To preach thee to their school.
 We have the truth! they cry;
 And yet their oracle,
 Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
 And thou hast done with fears;
 Man gets no other light,
 Search he a thousand years.
 Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine.

What makes thee struggle and rave?
 Why are men ill at ease?—
 'Tis that the lot they have
 Fails their own will to please;
 For man would make no murmuring, were his will
 obey'd.

And why is it, that still
 Man with his lot thus fights?—
 'Tis that he makes this *will*
 The measure of his *rights*,
 And believes Nature outraged if his will's gainsaid.

Couldst thou, Pausanias, learn
 How deep a fault is this ;
 Couldst thou but once discern
 Thou hast no *right* to bliss,
 No title from the Gods to welfare and repose ;

Then thou wouldst look less mazed
 Whene'er of bliss debarr'd,
 Nor think the Gods were crazed
 When thy own lot went hard.
 But we are all the same—the fools of our own woes !

For, from the first faint morn
 Of life, the thirst for bliss
 Deep in man's heart is born ;
 And, sceptic as he is,
 He fails not to judge clear if this be quench'd or no.

Nor is that thirst to blame.
 Man errs not that he deems
 His welfare his true aim,
 He errs because he dreams
 The world does but exist that welfare to bestow.

We mortals are no kings
 For each of whom to sway
 A new-made world up-springs,
 Meant merely for his play ;
 No, we are strangers here ; the world is from of old.

In vain our pent wills fret,
 And would the world subdue.
 Limits we did not set
 Condition all we do ;
 Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

Born into life!—man grows
 Forth from his parents' stem,
 And blends their bloods, as those
 Of theirs are blent in them;
 So each new man strikes root into a far fore-time.

Born into life!—we bring
 A bias with us here,
 And, when here, each new thing
 Affects us we come near;
 To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime.

Born into life!—in vain,
 Opinions, those or these,
 Unalter'd to retain
 The obstinate mind decrees;
 Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in.

Born into life!—who lists
 May what is false hold dear,
 And for himself make mists
 Through which to see less clear;
 The world is what it is, for all our dust and din.

Born into life!—'tis we,
 And not the world, are new;
 Our cry for bliss, our plea,
 Others have urged it too—
 Our wants have all been felt, our errors made before.

No eye could be too sound
 To observe a world so vast,
 No patience too profound
 To sort what's here amass'd;
 How man may here best live no care too great to
 explore.

But we—as some rude guest
 Would change, where'er he roam,
 The manners there profess'd
 To those he brings from home—
 We mark not the world's course, but would have *it*
 take *ours*.

The world's course proves the terms
 On which man wins content;
 Reason the proof confirms—
 We spurn it, and invent
 A false course for the world, and for ourselves,
 false powers.

Riches we wish to get,
 Yet remain spendthrifts still;
 We would have health, and yet
 Still use our bodies ill;
 Bafflers of our own prayers, from youth to life's last scenes.

We would have inward peace,
 Yet will not look within;
 We would have misery cease,
 Yet will not cease from sin;
 We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means;

We do not what we ought,
 What we ought not, we do,
 And lean upon the thought
 That chance will bring us through;
 But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

Yet, even when man forsakes
 All sin,—is just, is pure,
 Abandons all which makes
 His welfare insecure,—
 Other existences there are, that clash with ours

Like us, the lightning-fires
 Love to have scope and play;
 The stream, like us, desires
 An unimpeded way;
 Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.

Streams will not curb their pride
 The just man not to entomb,
 Nor lightnings go aside
 To give his virtues room;
 Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good
 man's barge.

Nature, with equal mind,
 Sees all her sons at play;
 Sees man control the wind,
 The wind sweep man away;
 Allows the proudly-riding and the foundering bark.

And, lastly, though of ours
 No weakness spoil our lot,
 Though the non-human powers
 Of Nature harm us not,
 The ill deeds of other men make often *our* life dark.

What were the wise man's plan?—
 Through this sharp, toil-set life,
 To fight as best he can,
 And win what's won by strife.—
 But we an easier way to cheat our pains have found.

Scratch'd by a fall, with moans
 As children of weak age
 Lend life to the dumb stones
 Whereon to vent their rage,
 And bend their little fists, and rate the senseless ground;

So, loath to suffer mute,
 We, peopling the void air,
 Make Gods to whom to impute
 The ills we ought to bear;
 With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

Yet grant—as sense long miss'd
 Things that are now perceived,
 And much may still exist
 Which is not yet believed—
 Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see;

All things the world which fill
 Of but one stuff are spun,
 That we who rail are still,
 With what we rail at, one;
 One with the o'er-labour'd Power that through the
 breadth and length
 Of earth, and air, and sea,
 In men, and plants, and stones,
 Hath toil perpetually,
 And travails, pants, and moans;
 Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails
 in strength.

And patiently exact
 This universal God
 Alike to any act
 Proceeds at any nod,
 And quietly declaims the cursings of himself.

This is not what man hates,
 Yet he can curse but this.
 Harsh Gods and hostile Fates
 Are dreams! this only is—
 Is everywhere; sustains the wise, the foolish elf.

Nor only, in the intent
 To attach blame elsewhere,
 Do we at will invent
 Stern Powers who make their care
 To embitter human life, malignant Deities ;

But, next, we would reverse
 The scheme ourselves have spun,
 And what we made to curse
 We now would lean upon,
 And feign kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.

Look, the world tempts our eye,
 And we would know it all !
 We map the starry sky,
 We mine this earthen ball,
 We measure the sea-tides, we number the sea-sands ;

We scrutinise the dates
 Of long-past human things,
 The bounds of effaced states,
 The lines of deceased kings ;
 We search out dead men's words, and works of dead
 men's hands ;

We shut our eyes, and muse
 How our own minds are made,
 What springs of thought they use,
 How righten'd, how betray'd—
 And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed.

But still, as we proceed,
 The mass swells more and more
 Of volumes yet to read,
 Of secrets yet to explore.
 Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimm'd, our heat
 is tamed ;

We rest our faculties,
 And thus address the Gods:
 'True science if there is,
 It stays in your abodes!
 Man's measures cannot mete the immeasurable All.

'You only can take in
 The world's immense design;
 Our desperate search was sin,
 Which henceforth we resign,
 Sure only that your mind sees all things which befall.'

Fools! That in man's brief term
 He cannot all things view,
 Affords no ground to affirm
 That there are Gods who do;
 Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest.

Again.—Our youthful blood
 Claims rapture as its right;
 The world, a rolling flood
 Of newness and delight,
 Draws in the enamour'd gazer to its shining breast;

Pleasure, to our hot grasp,
 Gives flowers after flowers;
 With passionate warmth we clasp
 Hand after hand in ours;
 Now do we soon perceive how fast our youth is spent.

At once our eyes grow clear!
 We see, in blank dismay,
 Year posting after year,
 Sense after sense decay;
 Our shivering heart is mined by secret discontent;

Yet still, in spite of truth,
 In spite of hopes entomb'd,
 That longing of our youth
 Burns ever unconsumed,
 Still hungrier for delight as delights grow more rare.

We pause; we hush our heart,
 And thus address the Gods:
 'The world hath fail'd to impart
 The joy our youth forebodes,
 Fail'd to fill up the void which in our breasts we bear.

'Changeful till now, we still
 Look'd on to something new;
 Let us, with changeless will,
 Henceforth look on to you,
 To find with you the joy we in vain here require!'

Fools! That so often here
 Happiness mock'd our prayer,
 I think, might make us fear
 A like event elsewhere;
 Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.

And yet, for those who know
 Themselves, who wisely take
 Their way through life, and bow
 To what they cannot break,
 Why should I say that life need yield but *moderate* bliss?

Shall we, with temper spoil'd,
 Health sapp'd by living ill,
 And judgment all embroil'd
 By sadness and self-will,
 Shall *we* judge what for man is not true bliss or is?

Is it so small a thing
 To have enjoy'd the sun,
 To have lived light in the spring,
 To have loved, to have thought, to have done;
 To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling
 foes—

That we must feign a bliss
 Of doubtful future date,
 And, while we dream on this,
 Lose all our present state,
 And relegate to worlds yet distant our repose?

Not much, I know, you prize
 What pleasures may be had,
 Who look on life with eyes
 Estranged, like mine, and sad;
 And yet the village-churl feels the truth more than you,
 Who's loath to leave this life
 Which to him little yields—
 His hard-task'd sunburnt wife,
 His often-labour'd fields,
 The boors with whom he talk'd, the country-spots he
 knew.

But thou, because thou hear'st
 Men scoff at Heaven and Fate,
 Because the Gods thou fear'st
 Fail to make blest thy state,
 Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are!

I say: Fear not! Life still
 Leaves human effort scope.
 But, since life teems with ill,
 Nurse no extravagant hope;
 Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then
 despair!

A long pause. At the end of it the notes of a harp below are again heard, and CALLICLES sings:—

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 lived 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 grey 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 changed forms, the pair

Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
 And all that Theban woe, and stray
 For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

Empedocles.

That was my harp-player again!—where is he?
 Down by the stream?

Pausanias.

Yes, Master, in the wood.

Empedocles.

He ever loved the Theban story well!
 But the day wears Go now, Pausanias,
 For I must be alone. Leave me one mule;
 Take down with thee the rest to Catana.
 And for young Callicles, thank him from me;
 Tell him, I never fail'd to love his lyre;
 But he must follow me no more to-night.

Pausanias.

Thou wilt return to-morrow to the city?

Empedocles.

Either to-morrow or some other day,
 In the sure revolutions of the world,
 Good friend, I shall revisit Catana.
 I have seen many cities in my time,
 Till mine eyes ache with the long spectacle,
 And I shall doubtless see them all again;
 Thou know'st me for a wanderer from of old.
 Meanwhile, stay me not now. Farewell, Pausanias!

He departs on his way up the mountain.

Pausanias (alone).

I dare not urge him further—he must go;
 But he is strangely wrought!—I will speed back

And bring Peisianax to him from the city ;
 His counsel could once soothe him. But, Apollo !
 How his brow lighten'd as the music rose !
 Callicles must wait here, and play to him ;
 I saw him through the chestnuts far below,
 Just since, down at the stream.—Ho ! Callicles !
He descends, calling.

ACT II.

Evening. The Summit of Etna.

EMPEDOCLES.

Alone !—

On this charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste,
 Crown'd by the awful peak, Etna's great mouth,
 Round which the sullen vapour rolls—alone !
 Pausanias is far hence, and that is well,
 For I must henceforth speak no more with man.
 He has his lesson too, and that debt 's paid ;
 And the good, learned, friendly, quiet man,
 May bravelier front his life, and in himself
 Find henceforth energy and heart. But I,—
 The weary man, the banish'd citizen—
 Whose banishment is not his greatest ill,
 Whose weariness no energy can reach,
 And for whose hurt courage is not the cure—
 What should I do with life and living more ?

No, thou art come too late, Empedocles !
 And the world hath the day, and must break thee,
 Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live,
 Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine ;
 And being lonely thou art miserable,

For something has impair'd thy spirit's strength,
 And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.
 Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself—
 O sage! O sage!—Take then the one way left;
 And turn thee to the elements, thy friends,
 Thy well-tried friends, thy willing ministers,
 And say: Ye servants, hear Empedocles,
 Who asks this final service at your hands!
 Before the sophist-brood hath overlaid
 The last spark of man's consciousness with words;
 Ere quite the being of man, ere quite the world
 Be disarray'd of their divinity;
 Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,
 And awe be dead, and hope impossible,
 And the soul's deep eternal night come on—
 Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!

*He advances to the edge of the crater. Smoke
 and fire break forth with a loud noise, and
 CALLICLES is heard below singing:—*

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;
 To Typho only, 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 tortured heart still proud?
 Is thy fire-scathed arm still rash?

Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?
Doth thy fierce soul still deplore
Thine ancient rout by the Cilician hills,
And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?
Do thy bloodshot eyes still weep
The fight which crown'd thine ills,
Thy last mischance on this Sicilian deep?
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 rest,
Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair?
That thy groans, like thunder prest,
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 sovran eye
The curtains of the blue films slowly meet.
And the white Olympus-peaks
Rosily brighten, and the soothed Gods smile
At one another from their golden chairs,
And no one round the charmed circle speaks.

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

Empedocles.

He fables, yet speaks truth!
 The brave impetuous heart yields everywhere
 To the subtle, contriving head;
 Great qualities are trodden down,
 And littleness united
 Is become invincible.

These rumblings are not Typho's groans, I know!
 These angry smoke-bursts
 Are not the passionate breath
 Of the mountain-crush'd, tortured, intractable Titan
 king—

But over all the world
 What suffering is there not seen
 Of plainness oppress'd by cunning,
 As the well-counsell'd Zeus oppress'd
 That self-helping son of earth!
 What anguish of greatness,
 Rail'd and hunted from the world,
 Because its simplicity rebukes
 This envious, miserable age!

I am weary of it.

—Lie there, ye ensigns

Of my unloved preëminence

In an age like this!

Among a people of children,

Who throng'd me in their cities,

Who worshipp'd me in their houses,

And ask'd, not wisdom,
 But drugs to charm with,
 But spells to mutter—
 All the fool's-armoury of magic!—Lie there,
 My golden circlet,
 My purple robe!

Callicles (from below).

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 which 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 grey
 Of that solitary lake
 Where Mæander's springs are born;
 Where the ridged pine-wooded 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 carved 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!

Empedocles.

And lie thou there,
 My laurel bough!
 Scornful Apollo's ensign, lie thou there!
 Though thou hast been my shade in the world's heat—
 Though I have loved thee, lived in honouring thee—
 Yet lie thou there,
 My laurel bough!

I am weary of thee.
 I am weary of the solitude
 Where he who bears thee must abide—
 Of the rocks of Parnassus,
 Of the gorge of Delphi,
 Of the moonlit peaks, and the caves.
 Thou guardest them, Apollo!
 Over the grave of the slain Pytho,
 Though young, intolerably severe!
 Thou keepest aloof the profane,
 But the solitude oppresses thy votary!
 The jars of men reach him not in thy valley—
 But can life reach him?
 Thou fencest him from the multitude—

Who will fence him from himself?
 He hears nothing but the cry of the torrents,
 And the beating of his own heart;
 The air is thin, the veins swell,
 The temples tighten and throb there—
 Air! air!

Take thy bough, set me free from my solitude;
 I have been enough alone!

Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?—
 But they will gladly welcome him once more,
 And help him to unbend his too tense thought,
 And rid him of the presence of himself,
 And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,
 And haunt him, till the absence from himself,
 That other torment, grow unbearable;
 And he will fly to solitude again,
 And he will find its air too keen for him,
 And so change back; and many thousand times
 Be miserably bandied to and fro
 Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee,
 Thou young, implacable God! and only death
 Shall cut his oscillations short, and so
 Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

And yet what days were those, Parmenides!
 When we were young, when we could number friends
 In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
 When with elated hearts we join'd your train,
 Ye Sun-born Virgins! on the road of truth.¹⁶
 Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
 Nor outward things were closed and dead to us;
 But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
 On simple minds with a pure natural joy;

And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,
We had the power to feel the pressure eased,
The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,
In the delightful commerce of the world.
We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
Thought's slaves and dead to every natural joy.
The smallest thing could give us pleasure then—
The sports of the country-people,
A flute-note from the woods,
Sunset over the sea ;
Seed-time and harvest,
The reapers in the corn,
The vinedresser in his vineyard,
The village-girl at her wheel.

Fulness of life and power of feeling, ye
Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,
Who dwell on a firm basis of content!
But he, who has outlived his prosperous days—
But he, whose youth fell on a different world
From that on which his exiled age is thrown—
Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd
By other rules than are in vogue to-day—
Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,
But, in a world he loves not, must subsist
In ceaseless opposition, be the guard
Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards,
That the world win no mastery over him—
Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one ;
Who has no minute's breathing-space allow'd
To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy—
Joy and the outward world must die to him,
As they are dead to me.

A long pause, during which EMPEDOCLES remains motionless, plunged in thought. The night deepens. He moves forward and gazes round him, and proceeds:—

And you, ye stars,
 Who slowly begin to marshal,
 As of old, in the fields of heaven,
 Your distant, melancholy lines!
 Have you, too, survived yourselves?
 Are you, too, what I fear to become?
 You, too, once lived;
 You too moved joyfully,
 Among august companions,
 In an older world, peopled by Gods,
 In a mightier order,
 The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven.
 But now, ye 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, unneer'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.

No, no, ye stars! there is no death with you,
 No languor, no decay! languor and death,
 They are with me, not you! ye are alive—
 Ye, and the pure dark ether where ye ride

Brilliant above me! And thou, fiery world,
 That sapp'st the vitals of this terrible mount
 Upon whose charr'd and quaking crust I stand—
 Thou, too, brimmest with life!—the sea of cloud,
 That heaves its white and billowy vapours up
 To moat this isle of ashes from the world,
 Lives; and that other fainter sea, far down,
 O'er whose lit floor a road of moonbeams leads
 To Etna's Liparëan sister-fires
 And the long dusky line of Italy—
 That mild and luminous floor of waters lives,
 With held-in joy swelling its heart; I only,
 Whose spring of hope is dried, whose spirit has fail'd,
 I, who have not, like these, in solitude
 Maintain'd courage and force, and in myself
 Nursed an immortal vigour—I alone
 Am dead to life and joy, therefore I read
 In all things my own deadness.

A long silence. He continues:—

Oh, that I could glow like this mountain!
 Oh, that my heart bounded with the swell of the sea!
 Oh, that my soul were full of light as the stars!
 Oh, that it brooded over the world like the air!
 But no, this heart will glow no more; thou art
 A living man no more, Empedocles!
 Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—
 But a naked, eternally restless mind!

After a pause:—

To the elements it came from
 Everything will return—
 Our bodies to earth,
 Our blood to water,

Heat to fire,
 Breath to air.
 They were well born, they will be well entomb'd—
 But mind? . . .

And we might gladly share the fruitful stir
 Down in our mother earth's miraculous womb;
 Well would it be
 With what roll'd of us in the stormy main;
 We might have joy, blent with the all-bathing air,
 Or with the nimble, radiant life of fire.

But mind, but thought,
 If these have been the master part of us—
 Where will *they* find their parent element?
 What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?
 But we shall still be in them, and they in us,
 And we shall be the strangers of the world,
 And they will be our lords, as they are now;
 And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
 And never let us clasp and feel the All
 But through their forms, and modes, and stifling vens.
 And we shall be unsatisfied as now;
 And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
 The ineffable longing for the life of life
 Baffled for ever; and still thought and mind
 Will hurry us with them on their homeless march.
 Over the unallied unopening earth,
 Over the unrecognising sea; while air
 Will blow us fiercely back to sea and earth,
 And fire repel us from its living waves.
 And then we shall unwillingly return
 Back to this meadow of calamity,
 This uncongenial place, this human life;

And in our individual human state
 Go through the sad probation all again,
 To see if we will poise our life at last,
 To see if we will now at last be true
 To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
 Being one with which we are one with the whole
 world;

Or whether we will once more fall away
 Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
 Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
 Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power.
 And each succeeding age in which we are born
 Will have more peril for us than the last;
 Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,
 Will fret our minds to an intenser play,
 Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.

And we shall struggle awhile, gasp and rebel—
 And we shall fly for refuge to past times,
 Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness;
 And the reality will pluck us back,
 Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature.
 And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,
 And rally them for one last fight—and fail;
 And we shall sink in the impossible strife,
 And be astray for ever.

Slave of sense

I have in no wise been; but slave of thought?—
 And who can say: I have been always free,
 Lived ever in the light of my own soul?—
 I cannot; I have lived in wrath and gloom,
 Fierce, disputatious, ever at war with man,
 Far from my own soul, far from warmth and light,
 But I have not grown easy in these bonds—
 But I have not denied what bonds these were.

Yea, I take myself to witness,
 That I have loved no darkness,
 Sophisticated no truth,
 Nursed no delusion,
 Allow'd no fear!

And therefore, O ye elements! I know—
 Ye know it too—it hath been granted me
 Not to die wholly, not to be all enslaved.
 I feel it in this hour. The numbing cloud
 Mounts off my soul; I feel it, I breathe free.

Is it but for a moment?
 —Ah, boil up, ye vapours!
 Leap and roar, thou sea of fire!
 My soul glows to meet you.
 Ere it flag, ere the mists
 Of despondency and gloom
 Rush over it again,
 Receive me, save me! *He plunges into the crater.*

Callicles (from below).

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
 Thick breaks the red flame;
 All Etna heaves fiercely
 Her forest-clothed 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 for ever;
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 his hotness,
 The strife with the palm;
 The night in her silence,
 The stars in their calm.

BACCHANALIA; OR, THE NEW AGE.

I.

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

Loitering and leaping,
 With saunter, with bounds—
 Flickering and circling
 In files and in rounds—
 Gaily their pine-staff green
 Tossing in air,
 Loose o'er their shoulders white
 Showering their hair—
 See! the wild Mænads
 Break from the wood,
 Youth and Iacchus
 Maddening their blood.
 See! through the quiet land
 Rioting they pass—
 Fling the fresh heaps about,
 Trample the grass.
 Tear from the rifled hedge
 Garlands, their prize;
 Fill with their sports the field,
 Fill with their cries.

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

II.

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

Thundering and bursting
 In torrents, in waves—

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

Poet, what ails thee, then?
 Say, why so mute?
 Forth with thy praising voice!
 Forth with thy flute!
 Loiterer! why sittest thou
 Sunk in thy dream?
 Tempts not the bright new age?
 Shines not its stream?
 Look, ah, what genius,
 Art, science, wit!
 Soldiers like Cæsar,
 Statesmen like Pitt!
 Sculptors like Phidias,
 Raphaels in shoals,
 Poets like Shakspeare—
 Beautiful souls!
 See, on their glowing cheeks
 Heavenly the flush!
 —*Ah, so the silence was!*
So was the hush!

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

EPILOGUE TO LESSING'S LAOCOÖN.

ONE morn as through Hyde Park we walk'd,
 My friend and I, by chance we talk'd
 Of Lessing's famed Laocoön ;
 And after we awhile had gone
 In Lessing's track, and tried to see
 What painting is, what poetry—
 Diverging to another thought,
 'Ah,' cries my friend, 'but who hath taught
 Why music and the other arts
 Oftener perform aright their parts
 Than poetry? why she, than they,
 Fewer fine successes can display?
 'For 'tis so, surely! Even in Greece,
 Where best the poet framed his piece
 Even in that Phœbus-guarded ground
 Pausanias on his travels found
 Good poems, if he look'd, more rare
 (Though many) than good statues were—
 For these, in truth, were everywhere.
 Of bards full many a stroke divine
 In Dante's, Petrarch's, Tasso's line,
 The land of Ariosto show'd ;
 And yet, e'en there, the canvas glow'd
 With triumphs, a yet ampler brood,
 Of Raphael and his brotherhood.

And nobly perfect, in our day
Of haste, half-work, and disarray,
Profound yet touching, sweet yet strong,
Hath risen Goethe's, Wordsworth's song ;
Yet even I (and none will bow
Deeper to these) must needs allow,
They yield us not, to soothe our pains,
Such multitude of heavenly strains
As from the kings of sound are blown,
Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn.'

While thus my friend discoursed, we pass
Out of the path, and take the grass.
The grass had still the green of May,
And still the unblacken'd elms were gay ;
The kine were resting in the shade,
The flies a summer-murmur made.
Bright was the morn and south the air ;
The soft-couch'd cattle were as fair
As those which pastured by the sea,
That old-world morn, in Sicily,
When on the beach the Cyclops lay,
And Galatea from the bay
Mock'd her poor lovelorn giant's lay.
'Behold,' I said, 'the painter's sphere !
The limits of his art appear.
The passing group, the summer-morn,
The grass, the elms, that blossom'd thorn--
Those cattle couch'd, or, as they rise,
Their shining flanks, their liquid eyes--
These, or much greater things, but caught
Like these, and in one aspect brought I
In outward semblance he must give
A moment's life of things that live ;

Then let him choose his moment well,
With power divine its story tell.'

Still we walk'd on, in thoughtful mood,
And now upon the bridge we stood.
Full of sweet breathings was the air,
Of sudden stirs and pauses fair.
Down o'er the stately bridge the breeze
Came rustling from the garden-trees
And on the sparkling waters play'd;
Light-plashing waves an answer made,
And mimic boats their haven near'd,
Beyond, the Abbey-towers appear'd—
By mist and chimneys unconfined,
Free to the sweep of light and wind;
While through their earth-moor'd nave below
Another breath of wind doth blow,
Sound as of wandering breeze—but sound
In laws by human artists bound.
'The world of music!' I exclaim'd—
'This breeze that rustles by, that famed
Abbey recall it! what a sphere,
Large and profound, hath genius here!
The inspired musician what a range,
What power of passion, wealth of change!
Some source of feeling he must choose
And its lock'd fount of beauty use,
And through the stream of music tell
Its else unutterable spell;
To choose it rightly is his part,
And press into its inmost heart.

'*Miserere, Domine!*

The words are utter'd, and they flee.

Deep is their penitential moan,
 Mighty their pathos, but 'tis gone.
 They have declared the spirit's sore
 Sore load, and words can do no more.
 Beethoven takes them then—those two
 Poor, bounded words—and makes them new;
 Infinite makes them, makes them young;
 Transplants them to another tongue,
 Where they can now, without constraint,
 Pour all the soul of their complaint,
 And roll adown a channel large
 The wealth divine they have in charge.
 Page after page of music turn,
 And still they live and still they burn,
 Eternal, passion-fraught, and free—
Miserere, Domine!

Onward we moved, and reach'd the ride
 Where gaily flows the human tide.
 Afar, in rest the cattle lay;
 We heard, afar, faint music play;
 But agitated, brisk, and near,
 Men, with their stream of life, were here.
 Some hang upon the rails, and some
 On foot behind them go and come.
 This through the ride upon his steed
 Goes slowly by, and this at speed.
 The young, the happy, and the fair,
 The old, the sad, the worn, were there;
 Some vacant, and some musing went,
 And some in talk and merriment.
 Nods, smiles, and greetings, and farewells †
 And now and then, perhaps, there swells
 A sigh, a tear—but in the throng
 All changes fast, and hies along.

Hies, ah, from whence, what native ground?
 And to what goal, what ending, bound?
 'Behold at last the poet's sphere!
 But who,' I said, 'suffices here?

'For, ah! so much he has to do;
 Be painter and musician too!
 The aspect of the moment show,
 The feeling of the moment know!
 The aspect not, I grant, express
 Clear as the painter's art can dress;
 The feeling not, I grant, explore
 So deep as the musician's lore—
 But clear as words can make revealing,
 And deep as words can follow feeling.
 But, ah! then comes his sorest spell
 Of toil—he must life's *movement* tell!
 The thread which binds it all in one,
 And not its separate parts alone.
 The *movement* he must tell of life,
 Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife;
 His eye must travel down, at full,
 The long, unpausing spectacle;
 With faithful unrelaxing force
 Attend it from its primal source,
 From change to change and year to year
 Attend it of its mid career,
 Attend it to the last repose
 And solemn silence of its close.

'The cattle rising from the grass
 His thought must follow where they pass;
 The penitent with anguish bow'd
 His thought must follow through the crowd.
 Ycs! all this eddying, motley throng

That sparkles in the sun along,
 Girl, statesman, merchant, soldier bold,
 Master and servant, young and old,
 Grave, gay, child, parent, husband, wife,
 He follows home, and lives their life.

‘And many, many are the souls
 Life’s movement fascinates, controls.
 It draws them on, they cannot save
 Their feet from its alluring wave;
 They cannot leave it, they must go
 With its unconquerable flow.
 But ah! how few, of all that try
 This mighty march, do aught but die!
 For ill-endow’d for such a way,
 Ill-stored in strength, in wits, are they.
 They faint, they stagger to and fro,
 And wandering from the stream they go;
 In pain, in terror, in distress,
 They see, all round, a wilderness.
 Sometimes a momentary gleam
 They catch of the mysterious stream;
 Sometimes, a second’s space, their ear
 The murmur of its waves doth hear;
 That transient glimpse in song they say,
 But not as painter can portray—
 That transient sound in song they tell,
 But not, as the musician, well.
 And when at last their snatches cease,
 And they are silent and at peace,
 The stream of life’s majestic whole
 Hath ne’er been mirror’d on their soul.
 ‘Only a few the life-stream’s shore
 With safe unwandering feet explore;

Untired its movement bright attend,
 Follow its windings to the end.
 Then from its brimming waves their eye
 Drinks up delighted ecstasy,
 And its deep-toned, melodious voice
 For ever makes their ear rejoice.
 They speak! the happiness divine
 They feel, runs o'er in every line;
 Its spell is round them like a shower—
 It gives them pathos, gives them power.
 No painter yet hath such a way,
 Nor no musician made, as they,
 And gather'd on immortal knolls
 Such lovely flowers for cheering souls.
 Beethoven, Raphael, cannot reach
 The charm which Homer, Shakspeare, teach.
 'To these, to these, their thankful race
 Gives, then, the first, the fairest place;
 And brightest is their glory's sheen,
 For greatest hath their labour been.'

PERSISTENCY OF POETRY.

THOUGH the Muse be gone away,
 Though she move not earth to-day,
 Souls, erewhile who caught her word,
 Ah! still harp on what they heard.

A CAUTION TO POETS.

WHAT poets feel not, when they make,
 A pleasure in creating,
 The world, in *its* turn, will not take
 Pleasure in contemplating,

THE YOUTH OF NATURE.

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

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

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
He look'd on the rushing decay
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth—
Felt the dissolving throes

Of a social order he loved—
Outlived his brethren, his peers;
And, like the Theban seer,
Died in his enemies' day.

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

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

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

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

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

‘More than the singer are these.
 Weak is the tremor of pain
 That thrills in his mournfullest chord
 To that which once ran through his soul.
 Cold the elation of joy

In his gladdest, airiest song,
 To that which of old in his youth
 Fill'd him and made him divine.
 Hardly his voice at its best
 Gives us a sense of the awe,
 The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
 Of the unlit gulph of himself.

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

'Yourselves and your fellows 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 thought that my secret was theirs,
 Have dream’d that I lived but for them,
 That they were my glory and joy.
 —They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!
 I remain.’

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;
 Man, man is the king of the world!
 Fools that these mystics are
 Who prate of Nature! but she
 Hath 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, wast 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 grey balustrade
Crowns the still valley ; behind
In the castled house with its woods
Which shelter'd their childhood—the sun
On its ivied windows ; a scent
From the grey-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, reposed
In the twilight, and bathed 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 grey 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 changed.
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!

PALLADIUM.

SET where the upper streams of Simois flow
 Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood;
 And Hector was in Ilium, far below,
 And fought, and saw it not—but there it stood!
 It stood, and sun and moonshine rain'd their light
 On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.
 Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight
 Round Troy—but while this stood, Troy could not fall.
 So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.
 Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air;
 Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll;
 We visit it by moments, ah, too rare!
 Men will renew the battle in the plain
 To-morrow;—red with blood will Xanthus be;
 Hector and Ajax will be there again,
 Helen will come upon the wall to see.
 Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
 And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
 And fancy that we put forth all our life,
 And never know how with the soul it fares.
 Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
 Upon our life a ruling effluence send;
 And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
 And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

 PROGRESS.

THE Master stood upon the mount, and taught.
 He saw a fire in his disciples' eyes;
 'The old law,' they said, 'is wholly come to nought,
 Behold the new world rise!'

‘Was it,’ the Lord then said, ‘with scorn ye saw
The old law observed by Scribes and Pharisees?
I say unto you, see *ye* keep that law
More faithfully than these!

‘Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas!
Think not that I to annul the law have will’d;
No jot, no tittle from the law shall pass,
Till all have been fulfill’d.’

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.
And what then shall be said to those to-day,
Who cry aloud to lay the old world low
To clear the new world’s way?

‘Religious fervours! ardour misapplied!
Hence, hence,’ they cry, ‘ye do but keep man blind!
But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
And lame the active mind!

Ah! from the old world let some one answer give:
‘Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares?
I say unto you, see that *your* souls live
A deeper life than theirs!

‘Say ye: “The spirit of man has found new roads,
And we must leave the old faiths, and walk therein?”—
Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods,
But guard the fire within!

‘Bright, else, and fast the stream of life may roll,
And no man may the other’s hurt behold;
Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul
Which perishes of cold.’

Here let that voice make end; then, let a strain,
From a far lonelier distance, like the wind
Be heard, floating through heaven, and fill again
These men’s profoundest mind:

‘Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
 For ever doth accompany mankind,
 Hath look’d on no religion scornfully
 That men did ever find.

‘Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
 Which has not fall’n on the dry heart like rain?
 Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
Thou must be born again!

‘Children of men! not that your age excel
 In pride of life the ages of your sires,
 But that *ye* think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
 The Friend of man desires.’

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 combined, 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.

SELF-DEPENDENCE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MORALITY.

WE cannot kindle when we will
 The fire which 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 wast 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.'

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
 Heaved dazzlingly 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,
 Which 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 labour 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 doth he know how there prevail,
Despotic on that sea,
Trade-winds which cross it from eternity.
Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd
By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind 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 languor, 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 live there, and breathe free ;
 How fair a lot to fill
 Is left to each man still !

THE BURIED LIFE.

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
 Behold, with tears mine 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 reproved;
 I knew they lived and moved
 Trick'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!—doth 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
 Even in his own despite his being's law,
 Bade 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 at large 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 which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives 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, spirit 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 for ever 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 belovéd 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 loved 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 for ever chase
 The 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.

 LINES WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON
 GARDENS.

IN this lone, open glade I lie,
 Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
 And at its end, to stay the eye,
 Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine-trees stand!
 Birds here make song, each bird has his,
 Across the girdling city's hum.
 How green under the boughs it is!
 How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy ;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here !
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass !
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain-sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard by,
Be others happy if they can !
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new !
When I who watch them am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass !
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things ! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
 The power to feel with others give!
 Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
 Before I have begun to live.

A WISH.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bring none of these; but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more, before my dying eyes,

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

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

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

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

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

THE FUTURE.

A WANDERER is man from his birth.
He was born in a ship
On the breast of the river of Time ;
Brimming with wonder and joy
He spreads out his arms to the light,
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.
As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.
Whether he wakes
Where the snowy mountainous pass,
Echoing the screams of the eagles,
Hems in its gorges the bed
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream ;
Whether he first sees light
Where the river in gleaming rings
Sluggishly winds through the plain ;
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea—
As is the world on the banks,
So is the mind of the man.
Vainly does each, as he glides,
Fable and dream
Of the lands which the river of Time
Had left ere he woke on its breast,
Or shall reach when his eyes have been closed.
Only the tract where he sails
He wots of ; only the thoughts,
Raised by the objects he passes, are his.
Who can see the green earth any more
As she was by the sources of Time ?
Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough ?

Who thinks as they thought,
 The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,
 Her vigorous, primitive sons?

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

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

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

And we say that repose has fled
 For ever the course of the river of Time.
 That cities will crowd to its edge
 In a blacker incessanter line;
 That the din will be more on its banks,

Denser the trade on its stream,
 Flatter the plain where it flows,
 Fiercer the sun overhead.
 That never will those on its breast
 See an ennobling sight,
 Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

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

Haply, the river of Time—
 As it grows, as the towns on its marge
 Fling their wavering lights
 On a wider, statelier stream—
 May acquire, if not the calm
 Of its early mountainous shore,
 Yet a solemn peace of its own.

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

ELEGIAC POEMS.

THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY.¹⁷

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 is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.

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

And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed
showers

Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August-sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!

The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook

His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roam'd the world with that wild brother-
hood,

And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,

Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;

Whereat he answer'd, that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired

The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they
will.

'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.'

This said, he left them, and return'd no more.—

But rumours hung about the country-side,
 That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
 Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
 In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
 The same the gipsies wore.

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
 At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
 On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frock'd
~~boors~~

Had found him seated at their entering,

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

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
 Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
 Returning home on summer-nights, have met
 Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,
 Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
 As the punt's rope chops round;
 And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
 And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
 Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood
 bowers,
 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

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

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
 In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
 Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass,
 Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering
 Thames,
 To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
 Have often pass'd thee near
 Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
 Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
 Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
 But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

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

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

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

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

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours !
 For what wears out the life of mortal men ?
 '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 used our nerves with bliss and teen,
 And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
 To the just-pausing Genius we remit
 Our well-worn life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so ?
 Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire ;
 Else wert thou long since number'd with the
 dead !

Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire !
 The generations of thy peers are fled,
 And we ourselves shall go ;
 But thou possessest an immortal lot,
 And we imagine thee exempt from age,
 And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
 Because thou hadst—what we, alas ! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
 Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
 Firm to their mark, not spent on other things ;
 Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
 Which much to have tried, in much been baffled,
 brings.

 O life unlike to ours !
 Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
 Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he
 strives,
 And each half lives a hundred different lives ;
 Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
 —As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,

Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
 Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
 The fringes of a southward-facing brow
 Among the Ægæan isles;
 And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
 Freightèd with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
 Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in
 brine—
 And knew the intruders on his ancient home,
 The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
 And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail,
 And day and night held on indignantly
 O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
 Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
 To where the Atlantic raves
 Outside the western straits, and unbent sails
 There where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets
 of foam,
 Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
 And on the beach undid his corded bales.

THYRSIS.¹⁸

A MONODY, *to commemorate the author's friend,*
 ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, *who died at Florence, 1861.*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
 In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
 The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
 And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
 And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks—
 Are ye too changed, ye hills?

See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
 To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
 Here came I often, often, in old days—
 Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

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

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

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

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
 But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;
 And with the country-folk acquaintance made
 By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
 Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
 Ah me! this many a year
 My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday!

Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
 Into the world and wave of men depart,
 But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.
 He loved each simple joy the country yields,
 He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
 For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,
 Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
 Some life of men unblest
 He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his
 head.

He went; his piping took a troubled sound
 Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
 He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

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

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

And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

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

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

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

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
 Yet, Thyrſis, let me give my grief its hour
 In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!
 Who, if not I, for queſting here hath power?
 I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
 I know the Fyfield tree,
 I know what white, what purple fritillaries
 The grassy harveſt of the river-fields,
 Above by Enſham, down by Sandford, yields,
 And what ſedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;
 I know theſe ſlopes; who knows them if not I?—
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
 With thorns once ſtudded, old, white-bloſſom'd
 trees,
 Where thick the cowſlips grew, and far deſcried
 High tower'd the ſpikes of purple orchis,es,
 Hath ſince our day put by
 The coronals of that forgotten time;
 Down each green bank hath gone the plough-
 boy's team,
 And only in the hidden brookſide gleam
 Primroſes, orphans of the flowery prime.
 Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
 Above the locks, above the boating throng,
 Unmoor'd our ſkiff when through the Wytham
 flats,
 Red looſeſtrife and blond meadow-ſweet among
 And darting ſwallows and light water-gnats,
 We track'd the ſhy Thames ſhore?
 Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny ſwell
 Of our boat paſſing heaved the river-graſs,
 Stood with ſuſpended ſcythe to ſee us paſs?—
 They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

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

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

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
 Of quiet!—Look, adown the dusk hillside,
 A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
 As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
 From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they
 come.

Quick! let me fly, and cross
 Into yon farther field!—'Tis done; and see,
 Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
 The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
 Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

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

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!—
 Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
 These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
 That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;
 To a boon southern country he is fled,
 And now in happier air,
 Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
 (And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
 I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
 Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!
 Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
 In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
 For thee the Lityerses-song again
 Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth
 sing;¹⁹
 Sings his Sicilian fold,
 His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes—
 And how a call celestial round him rang,
 And heavenward from the fountain-brink he
 sprang,
 And all the marvel of the golden skies

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
 Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry
 'Neath the soft canopy of English air
 That lonely tree against the western sky.
 Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
 Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
 Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
 Woods with anemonies in flower till May,
 Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
 Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
 This does not come with houses or with gold,
 With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
 'Tis not in the world's market bought and
 sold—

But the smooth-slipping weeks
 Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
 Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
 He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
 Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound!
 Thou wander'dst with me for a little hour!
 Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,
 If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,
 If men procur'd thee trouble, gave thee rest.
 And this rude Cumner ground,
 Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
 Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
 Here was thine height of strength, thy golden
 prime!
 And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
 Kept not for long its happy, country tone;
 Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note
 Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,
 Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy
 throat—

It fail'd, and thou wast mute!
 Yet hadst thou always visions of our light,
 And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
 And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
 Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
 'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
 Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
 —Then through the great town's harsh, heart-
 wearying roar,

Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
 To chase fatigue and fear:

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

MEMORIAL VERSES.

APRIL, 1850.

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

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

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

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
 For never has such soothing voice
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade

Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as well
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

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

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

STANZAS

IN MEMORY OF EDWARD QUILLINAN.

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 élate.

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 changed his lot,
 We would not change it now.

STANZAS FROM CARNAC.

FAR on its rocky knoll descried
Saint Michael's chapel cuts the sky.
I climb'd;—beneath me, bright and wide,
Lay the lone coast of Brittany.

Bright in the sunset, weird and still,
It lay beside the Atlantic wave,
As though the wizard Merlin's will
Yet charm'd it from his forest-grave.

Behind me on their grassy sweep,
Bearded with lichen, scrawl'd and grey,
The giant stones of Carnac sleep,
In the mild evening of the May.

No priestly stern procession now
Streams through their rows of pillars old;
No victims bleed, no Druids bow—
Sheep make the daisied aisles their fold.

From bush to bush the cuckoo flies,
The orchis red gleams everywhere;
Gold furze with broom in blossom vies,
The blue-bells perfume all the air.

And o'er the glistening, lonely land,
Rise up, all round, the Christian spires;
The church of Carnac, by the strand,
Catches the westering sun's last fires.

And there, across the watery way,
See, low above the tide at flood,
The sickle-sweep of Quiberon Bay,
Whose beach once ran with loyal blood!

And beyond that, the Atlantic wide!—
 All round, no soul, no boat, no hail;
 But, on the horizon's verge descried,
 Hangs, touch'd with light, one snowy sail!

Ah! where is he, who should have come²⁰
 Where that far sail is passing now,
 Past the Loire's mouth, and by the foam
 Of Finistère's unquiet brow,

Home, round into the English wave?—
 He tarries where the Rock of Spain
 Mediterranean waters lave;
 He enters not the Atlantic main.

Oh, could he once have reach'd this air
 Freshen'd by plunging tides, by showers!
 Have felt this breath he loved, of fair
 Cool northern fields, and grass, and flowers!

He long'd for it—press'd on.—In vain!
 At the Straits fail'd that spirit brave.
 The south was parent of his pain,
 The south is mistress of his grave.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT.

THE sandy spits, the shore-lock'd lakes,
 Melt into open, moonlit sea;
 The soft Mediterranean breaks
 At my feet, free.

Dotting the fields of corn and vine,
 Like ghosts, the huge, gnarl'd olives stand
 Behind, that lovely mountain-line!
 While, by the strand,

Cette, with its glistening houses white,
 Curves with the curving beach away
 To where the lighthouse beacons bright
 Far in the bay.

Ah! such a night, so soft, so lone,
 So moonlit, saw me once of yore²¹
 Wander unquiet, and my own
 Vext heart deplore.

But now that trouble is forgot;
 Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,
 My brother! and thine early lot,²²
 Possess me quite.

The murmur of this Midland deep
 Is heard to-night around thy grave,
 There, where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep
 O'erfrowns the wave.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,
 With Indian heats at last fordone,
 With public toil and private teen—
 Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning grey,
 I see the smoke-crown'd vessel come;
 Slow round her paddles dies away
 The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side;
 Ah, gently place him on the bench!
 That spirit—if all have not yet died—
 A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,
 The mien of youth we used to see,
 Poor, gallant boy!—for such thou wast,
 Still art, to me.

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse ;
The eyes are glazed, thou canst not speak ;
And whiter than thy white burnous
That wasted cheek !

Enough ! The boat, with quiet shock,
Unto its haven coming nigh,
Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock
Lands thee, to die.

Ah ! me ! Gibraltar's strand is far,
But farther yet across the brine
Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,
Remote from thine.

For there, where morning's sacred fount
Its golden rain on earth confers,
The snowy Himalayan Mount
O'ershadows her.

Strange irony of fate, alas,
Which, for two jaded English, saves,
When from their dusty life they pass,
Such peaceful graves !

In cities should we English lie,
Where cries are rising ever new,
And men's incessant stream goes by—
We who pursue

Our business with unslackening stride,
Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,
The soft Mediterranean side,
The Nile, the East,

And see all sights from pole to pole,
And glance, and nod, and bustle by ;
And never once possess our soul
Before we die.

Not by those hoary Indian hills,
Not by this gracious Midland sea
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,
Should our graves be.

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,
And men were specks, and life a play;
Who made the roots of trees his bed,
And once a day

With staff and gourd his way did bend
To villages and homes of man,
For food to keep him till he end
His mortal span

And the pure goal of being reach;
Grey-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,
Without companion, without speech,
By day and night

Pondering God's mysteries untold,
And tranquil as the glacier-snows—
He by those Indian mountains old
Might well repose.

Some grey crusading knight austere,
Who bore Saint Louis company,
And came home hurt to death, and here
Landed to die;

Some youthful troubadour, whose tongue
Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,
Who here outworn had sunk, and sung
His dying strain;

Some girl, who here from castle-bower,
With furtive step and cheek of flame,
'Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
By moonlight came

To meet her pirate-lover's ship,
And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair
Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip
And floating hair,
And lived some moons in happy trance,
Then learnt his death and pined away—
Such by these waters of romance
'Twas meet to lay.

But you—a grave for knight or sage,
Romantic, solitary, still,
O spent ones of a work-day age!
Befits you ill.

So sang I; but the midnight breeze,
Down to the brimm'd, moon-charmed main,
Comes softly through the olive-trees,
And checks my strain.

I think of her, whose gentle tongue,
All plaint in her own cause controll'd;
Of thee I think, my brother! young
In heart, high-soul'd—

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,
That cordial hand, that bearing free,
I see them still, I see them now,
Shall always see!

And what but gentleness untired,
And what but noble feeling warm,
Wherever shewn, how'er inspired,
Is grace, is charm?

What else is all these waters are,
What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,
What else is bright, what else is fair,
What else serene?

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine!
 Gently by his, ye waters, glide!
 To that in you which is divine
 They were allied.

HAWORTH CHURCHYARD.

APRIL, 1855.

WHERE, under Loughrigg, the stream
 Of Rotha sparkles through fields
 Vested for ever with green,
 Four years since, in the house
 Of a gentle spirit now dead,
 Wordsworth's son-in-law, friend—
 I saw the meeting of two
 Gifted women.²³ The one,
 Brilliant with recent renown,
 Young, unpractised, had told
 With a master's accent her feign'd
 Story of passionate life;
 The other, maturer in fame,
 Earning, she too, her praise
 First in fiction, had since
 Widen'd her sweep, and survey'd
 History, politics, mind.

The two held converse; they wrote
 In a book which of world-famous souls
 Kept the memorial;—bard,
 Warrior, statesman, had sign'd
 Their names; chief glory of all,
 Scott had bestow'd there his last
 Breathings of song, with a pen
 Tottering, a death-stricken hand.

Hope at that meeting smiled fair,
 Years in number, it seem'd,
 Lay before both, and a fame
 Heighten'd and multiplied power.—
 Behold! The elder, to-day,
 Lies expecting from death,
 In mortal weakness, a last
 Summons! the younger is dead!

First to the living we pay
 Mournful homage;—the Muse
 Gains not an earth-deafen'd ear.

Hail to the steadfast soul,
 Which, unflinching and keen,
 Wrought to erase from its depth
 Mist and illusion and fear!
 Hail to the spirit which dared
 Trust its own thoughts, before yet
 Echoed her back by the crowd!
 Hail to the courage which gave
 Voice to its creed, ere the creed
 Won consecration from time!

Turn we next to the dead.—
 How shall we honour the young,
 The ardent, the gifted? how mourn?
 Console we cannot, her ear
 Is deaf. Far northward from here,
 In a churchyard high 'mid the moors
 Of Yorkshire, a little earth
 Stops it for ever to praise.

Where behind Keighley the road
 Up to the heart of the moors
 Between heath-clad showery hills

Runs, and colliers' carts
Poach the deep ways coming down,
And a rough, grimed race have their homes—
There on its slope is built
The moorland town. But the church
Stands on the crest of the hill,
Lonely and bleak;—at its side
The parsonage-house and the graves.

Strew with laurel the grave
Of the early-dying! Alas,
Early she goes on the path
To the silent country, and leaves
Half her laurels unwon,
Dying too soon! yet green
Laurels she had, and a course
Short, but redoubled by fame.

And not friendless, and not
Only with strangers to meet,
Faces ungreeting and cold,
Thou, O mourn'd one, to-day
Enterest the house of the grave!
Those of thy blood, whom thou lov'dst,
Have preceded thee—young,
Loving, a sisterly band;
Some in art, some in gift
Inferior—all in fame.

They, like friends, shall receive
This comer, greet her with joy;
Welcome the sister, the friend;
Hear with delight of thy fame!

Round thee they lie—the grass
Blows from their graves to thy own!
She, whose genius, though not

Puissant like thine, was yet
 Sweet and graceful;—and she
 (How shall I sing her?) whose soul
 Knew no fellow for might,
 Passion, vehemence, grief,
 Daring, since Byron died,
 That world-famed son of fire—she, who sank
 Baffled, unknown, self-consumed;
 Whose too bold dying song²⁴
 Shook, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

Of one, too, I have heard,
 A brother—sleeps he here?
 Of all that gifted race
 Not the least gifted; young,
 Unhappy, eloquent—the child
 Of many hopes, of many tears.
 O boy, if here thou sleep'st, sleep well!
 On thee too did the Muse
 Bright in thy cradle smile;
 But some dark shadow came
 (I know not what) and interposed.

Sleep, O cluster of friends,
 Sleep!—or only when May,
 Brought by the west-wind, returns
 Back to your native heaths,
 And the plover is heard on the moors,
 Yearly awake to behold
 The opening summer, the sky,
 The shining moorland—to hear
 The drowsy bee, as of old,
 Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse
 Call from the heather in bloom!
 Sleep, or only for this
 Break your united repose!

EPILOGUE.

So I sang; but the Muse,
Shaking her head, took the harp—
Stern interrupted my strain,
Angrily smote on the chords.

April showers
Rush o'er the Yorkshire moors.
Stormy, through driving mist,
Loom the blurr'd hills; the rain
Lashes the newly-made grave.

Unquiet souls!
—In the dark fermentation of earth,
In the never idle workshop of nature,
In the eternal movement,
Ye shall find yourselves again!

RUGBY CHAPEL.

NOVEMBER, 1857.

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

The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back in the light
Of thy radiant vigour again;
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

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

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

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

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

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
 Not with the crowd to be spent,

Not without aim to go round
 In an eddy of purposeless dust.
 Effort unmeaning and vain.
 Ah yes! some of us strive
 Not without action to die
 Fruitless, but something to snatch
 From dull oblivion, nor all
 Glut the devouring grave!
 We, we have chosen our path—
 Path to a clear-purposed goal,
 Path of advance!—but it leads
 A long, steep journey, through sunk
 Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
 Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
 Then, on the height, comes the storm.
 Thunder crashes from rock
 To rock, the cataracts reply;
 Lightnings dazzle our eyes;
 Roaring torrents have breach'd
 The track, the stream-bed descends
 In the place where the wayfarer once
 Planted his footstep—the spray
 Boils o'er its borders! aloft
 The unseen snow-beds dislodge
 Their hanging ruin!—alas,
 Havoc is made in our train!
 Friends, who set forth at our side,
 Falter, are lost in the storm.
 We, we only are left!—
 With frowning foreheads, with lips
 Sternly compress'd, we strain on,
 On—and at nightfall at last
 Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;

Where the gaunt and taciturn host
 Stands on the threshold, the wind
 Shaking his thin white hairs—
 Holds his lantern to scan
 Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
 Whom in our party we bring?
 Whom we have left in the snow?

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

But thou would'st not alone
Be saved, my father! alone
 Conquer and come to thy goal,
 Leaving the rest in the wild.
 We were weary, and we
 Fearful, and we in our march
 Fain to drop down and to die.
 Still thou turnedst, and still
 Beckonedst the trembler, and still
 Gavest the weary thy hand.
 If, in the paths of the world,
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing—to us thou wast still
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
 Therefore to thee it was given
 Many to save with thyself;

And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honour'd and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

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

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.

Where are they tending?—A God
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.—
Ah, but the way is so long!

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

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

Stablish, continue our march,
 On, to the bound of the waste,
 On, to the City of God.

HEINE'S GRAVE.

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

Half blind, palsied, in pain,
 Hither to come, from the streets'
 Uproar, surely not loath
 Wast thou, Heine!—to lie
 Quiet, to ask for closed
 Shutters, and darken'd room,
 And cool drinks, and an eased
 Posture, and opium, no more;
 Hither to come, and to sleep
 Under the wings of Renown.

Ah! not little, when pain
 Is most quelling, and man

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

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

Bitter spirits, ye claim
 Heine?—Alas, he is yours!
 Only a moment I long'd
 Here in the quiet to snatch
 From such mates the outworn
 Poet, and steep him in calm.
 Only a moment! I knew
 Whose he was who is here
 Buried—I knew he was yours!
 Ah, I knew that I saw
 Here no sepulchre built
 In the laurell'd rock, o'er the blue

Naples bay, for a sweet
 Tender Virgil! no tomb
 On Ravenna sands, in the shade
 Of Ravenna pines, for a high
 Austere Dante! no grave
 By the Avon side, in the bright
 Stratford meadows, for thee,
 Shakspeare! loveliest of souls,
 Peerless in radiance, in joy!

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

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

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

Yes, we arraign her! but she,
 The weary Titan, with deaf

Ears, and labour-dimm'd eyes,
 Regarding neither to right
 Nor left, goes passively by,
 Staggering on to her goal;
 Bearing on shoulders immense,
 Atlanteän, the load,
 Wellnigh not to be borne,
 Of the too vast orb of her fate.

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

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

Therefore a secret unrest
Tortured thee, brilliant and bold!
Therefore triumph itself
Tasted amiss to thy soul.
Therefore, with blood of thy foes,
Trickled in silence thine own.
Therefore the victor's heart
Broke on the field of his fame.

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

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

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

Or, next morning, with limbs
Rested by slumber, and heart
Freshen'd and light with the May,
O'er the gracious spurs coming down
Of the Lower Hartz, among oaks
And beechen coverts, and copse
Of hazels green in whose depth
Ilse, the fairy transform'd,
In a thousand water-breaks light
Pours her petulant youth—
Climbing the rock which juts

O'er the valley—the dizzily perch'd
 Rock—to its iron cross
 Once more thou cling'st; to the Cross
 Clingest! with smiles, with a sigh!

Goethe, too, had been there.²⁵
 In the long-past winter he came
 To the frozen Hartz, with his soul
 Passionate, eager—his youth
 All in ferment!—but he
 Destined to work and to live
 Left it, and thou, alas!
 Only to laugh and to die.

But something prompts me: Not thus
 Take leave of Heine! not thus
 Speak the last word at his grave!
 Not in pity, and not
 With half censure—with awe
 Hail, as it passes from earth
 Scattering lightnings, that soul!

The Spirit of the world,
 Beholding the absurdity of men—
 Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile,
 For one short moment, wander o'er his lips.
That smile was Heine!—for its earthly hour
 The strange guest sparkled; now 'tis pass'd away.

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

Spirit, who fillest us all!
 Spirit, who utterest in each
 New-coming son of mankind
 Such of thy thoughts as thou wilt!
 O thou, one of whose moods,
 Bitter and strange, was the life
 Of Heine—his strange, alas,
 His bitter life!—may a life
 Other and milder be mine!
 May'st thou a mood more serene,
 Happier, have utter'd in mine!
 May'st thou the rapture of peace
 Deep have embreathed at its core;
 Made it a ray of thy thought,
 Made it a beat of thy joy!

STANZAS FROM
 THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE.

THROUGH Alpine meadows soft-suffused
 With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
 Past the dark forges long disused,
 The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
 The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,
 Through forest, up the mountain-side.
 The autumnal evening darkens round,
 The wind is up, and drives the rain;
 While, hark! far down, with strangled sound
 Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain,
 Where that wet smoke, among the woods,
 Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white
 Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
 Showing—then blotting from our sight!—
 Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines!
 High in the valley, wet and drear,
 The huts of Courrierie appear.

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and higher
 Mounts up the stony forest-way.
 At last the encircling trees retire;
 Look! through the showery twilight grey
 What pointed roofs are these advance?—
 A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!
 Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
 For rest in this outbuilding near;
 Then cross the sward and reach that gate;
 Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
 To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day
 Into their stone-carved basins cold
 The splashing icy fountains play—
 The humid corridors behold,
 Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,
 Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white!

The chapel, where no organ's peal
 Invests the stern and naked prayer!—
 With penitential cries they kneel
 And wrestle; rising then, with bare
 And white uplifted faces stand,
 Passing the Host from hand to hand;
 Each takes, and then his visage wan
 Is buried in his cowl once more.

The cells!—the suffering Son of Man
Upon the wall—the knee-worn floor—
And where they sleep, that wooden bed,
Which shall their coffin be, when dead!

The library, where tract and tome
Not to feed priestly pride are there,
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!
They paint of souls the inner strife,
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown—yet mild,
See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,
From England, Germany, or Spain—
All are before me! I behold
The House, the Brotherhood austere!—
And what am I, that I am here?

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

Forgive me, masters of the mind!
At whose behest I long ago
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd—
I come not here to be your foe!

I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
 To curse and to deny your truth ;
 Not as their friend, or child, I speak !
 But as, on some far northern strand,
 Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
 In pity and mournful awe might stand
 Before some fallen Runic stone—
 For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
 The other powerless to be born,
 With nowhere yet to rest my head,
 Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
 Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
 I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
 Ye solemn seats of holy pain !
 Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,
 Till I possess my soul again ;
 Till free my thoughts before me roll,
 Not chafed by hourly false control !

For the world cries your faith is now
 But a dead time's exploded dream ;
 My melancholy, sciolists say,
 Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme.—
 As if the world had ever had
 A faith, or sciolists been sad !

Ah if it *be* pass'd, take away,
 At least, the restlessness, the pain !
 Be man henceforth no more a prey
 To these out-dated stings again !
 The nobleness of grief is gone—
 Ah, leave us not the fret alone !

But—if you cannot give us ease—
 Last of the race of them who grieve
 Here leave us to die out with these
 Last of the people who believe!
 Silent, while years engrave the brow;
 Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,
 The kings of modern thought are dumb;
 Silent they are, though not content,
 And wait to see the future come.
 They have the grief men had of yore,
 But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears
 This sea of time whereon we sail;
 Their voices were in all men's ears
 Who pass'd within their puissant hail.
 Still the same ocean round us raves,
 But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
 And outcry of the former men?—
 Say, have their sons achieved more joys,
 Say, is life lighter now than then?
 The sufferers died, they left their pain—
 The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
 With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
 Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
 The pageant of his bleeding heart?
 That thousands counted every groan,
 And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
 Carried thy lovely wail away,

Musical through Italian trees
 Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
 Inheritors of thy distress
 Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,
 O Oberrmann! the sad, stern page,
 Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head
 From the fierce tempest of thine age
 In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
 Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!—
 The world, which for an idle day
 Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
 Long since hath flung her weeds away.
 The eternal trifler breaks your spell;
 But we—we learnt your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
 More fortunate, alas! than we,
 Which without hardness will be sage,
 And gay without frivolity.
 Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
 But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe
 The exulting thunder of your race;
 You give the universe your law,
 You triumph over time and space!
 Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
 We praise them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade
 Beneath some old-world abbey wall,
 Forgotten in a forest-glade,
 And secret from the eyes of all.

Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves!

But, where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam—
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war!

And through the woods, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some old forest-lodge at morn.
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green;
Laughter and cries—those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply?—
'Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry
And call us?—but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow,
Whose bent was taken long ago.

'Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine.
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

‘Fenced early in this cloistral round
 Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
 How should we grow in other ground?
 How can we flower in foreign air?
 —Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;
 And leave our desert to its peace!’

STANZAS

IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF
*OBERMANN.*²⁶

NOVEMBER, 1849.

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 baths²⁷
 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 mute 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 grey 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.

For though his manhood bore the blast
 Of a tremendous 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, composed to bear!
 Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill,
 And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the son of Thetis said,
 I hear 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 shared, the strife,
 Knows how the day hath gone.

He only lives with the world's life,
 Who hath renounced 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, transfigured 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 pined unseen,
Who was on action hur'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-loved 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!

OBERMANN ONCE MORE.

(COMPOSED MANY YEARS AFTER THE PRECEDING.)

Savez-vous quelque bien qui console du regret d'un monde?

OBERMANN,

GLION?—Ah, twenty years, it cuts²³
 All meaning from a name!
 White houses prank where once were huts;
 Glion, but not the same!
 And yet I know not! All unchanged
 The turf, the pines, the sky!
 The hills in their old order ranged;
 The lake, with Chillon by!
 And, 'neath those chestnut-trees, where stiff
 And stony mounts the way,
 The crackling husk-heaps burn, as if
 I left them yesterday!
 Across the valley, on that slope,
 The huts of Avant shine!
 Its pines, under their branches, ope
 Ways for the pasturing kine.

Full-foaming milk-pails, Alpine fare,
Sweet heaps of fresh-cut grass,
Invite to rest the traveller there
Before he climb the pass—

The gentian-flower'd pass, its crown²⁹
With yellow spires aflame ;
Whence drops the path to Allière down,
And walls were Byron came,³⁰

By their green river, who doth change
His birth-name just below ;
Orchard, and croft, and full-stored grange
Nursed by his pastoral flow.

But stop!—to fetch back thoughts that stray
Beyond this gracious bound,
The cone of Jaman, pale and grey,
See, in the blue profound!

Ah, Jaman! delicately tall
Above his sun-warm'd firs—
What thoughts to me his rocks recall,
What memories he stirs!

And who but thou must be, in truth,
Obermann! with me here?
Thou master of my wandering youth,
But left this many a year!

Yes, I forget the world's work wrought,
Its warfare waged with pain!
An eremite with thee, in thought
Once more I slip my chain,

And to thy mountain-chalet come,
And lie beside its door,
And hear the wild bee's Alpine hum,
And thy sad, tranquil lore!

Again I feel the words inspire
 Their mournful calm; serene,
 Yet tinged with infinite desire
 For all that *might* have been—

The harmony from which man swerved
 Made his life's rule once more!
 The universal order served,
 Earth happier than before!

—While thus I mused, night gently ran
 Down over hill and wood.

Then, still and sudden, Obermann
 On the grass near me stood.

Those pensive features well I knew,
 On my mind, years before,
 Imaged so oft, imaged so true!
 —A shepherd's garb he wore;

A mountain-flower was in his hand,
 A book was in his breast.
 Bent on my face, with gaze which scann'd
 My soul, his eyes did rest.

'And is it thou,' he cried, 'so long
 Held by the world which we
 Loved not, who turnest from the throng
 Back to thy youth and me?

'And from thy world, with heart opprest,
 Chooseth thou *now* to turn?—

Ah me! we anchorites read things best,
 Clearest their course discern!

'Thou fledst me when the ungenial earth,
 Man's work-place, lay in gloom.
 Return'st thou in her hour of birth,
 Of hopes and hearts in bloom?

'Perceiv'st thou not the change of day?—
Ah! Carry back thy ken,
What, some two thousand years! Survey
The world as it was then!

'Like ours it look'd in outward air.
Its head was clear and true,
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,
No pause its action knew;

'Stout was its arm, each thew and bone
Seem'd puissant and alive—
But, ah! its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive!

'On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

'In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian way.

'He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crown'd his hair with flowers—
No easier nor no quicker pass'd
The impracticable hours.

'The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world.
The Roman tempest swell'd and swell'd,
And on her head was hurl'd.

'The East bow'd low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

'So well she mused, a morning broke
Across her spirit grey.

A conquering, new-born joy awoke,
And fill'd her life with day.

““Poor world,” she cried, “so deep accurst,
That runn’st from pole to pole
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—
Go, seek it in thy soul!”

'She heard it, the victorious West,
In crown and sword array'd!
She felt the void which mined her breast,
She shiver'd and obey'd.

'She veil'd her eagles, snapp'd her sword,
And laid her sceptre down;
Her stately purple she abhorr'd,
And her imperial crown.

'She broke her flutes, she stopp'd her sports,
Her artists could not please.
She tore her books, she shut her courts,
She fled her palaces.

'Lust of the eye and pride of life
She left it all behind,
And hurried, torn with inward strife,
The wilderness to find.

'Tears wash'd the trouble from her face!
She changed into a child!
'Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place
Of ruin—but she smiled!

'Oh, had I lived in that great day,
How had its glory new
Fill'd earth and heaven, and caught away
My ravish'd spirit too!

'No thoughts that to the world belong
Had stood against the wave
Of love which set so deep and strong
From Christ's then open grave.

'No cloister-floor of humid stone
Had been too cold for me;
For me no Eastern desert lone
Had been too far to flee.

'No lonely life had pass'd too slow,
When I could hourly scan
Upon his Cross, with head sunk low,
That nail'd, thorn-crowned Man!

'Could see the Mother with the Child
Whose tender winning arts
Have to his little arms beguiled
So many wounded hearts!

'And centuries came and ran their course,
And unspent all that time
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,
And still was at its prime.

'Ay, ages long endured his span
Of life—'tis true received—
That gracious Child, that thorn-crown'd Man!
—He lived while we believed.

'While we believed, on earth he went,
And open stood his grave.
Men call'd from chamber, church, and tent,
And Christ was by to save.

'Now he is dead! Far hence he lies
In the lorn Syrian town;
And on his grave, with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.

'In vain men still, with hoping new,
 Regard his death-place dumb,
 And say the stone is not yet to,
 And wait for words to come.

'Ah, from that silent sacred land,
 Of sun, and arid stone,
 And crumbling wall, and sultry sand,
 Comes now one word alone!

'From David's lips that word did roll,
 'Tis true and living yet:
*No man can save his brother's soul,
 Nor pay his brother's debt.*

'Alone, self-poised, henceforward man
 Must labour!—must resign
 His all too human creeds, and scan
 Simply the way divine!

'But slow that tide of common thought,
 Which bathed our life, retired.
 Slow, slow the old world wore to nought,
 And pulse by pulse expired.

'Its frame yet stood without a breach
 When blood and warmth were fled;
 And still it spake its wonted speech—
 But every word was dead.

'And oh, we cried, that on this corse
 Might fall a freshening storm!
 Rive its dry bones, and with new force
 A new-sprung world inform!

'—Down came the storm! O'er France it pass'd
 In sheets of scathing fire.
 All Europe felt that fiery blast,
 And shook as it rush'd by her.

'Down came the storm! In ruins fell
The worn-out world we knew.
It pass'd, that elemental swell—
Again appear'd the blue;

'The sun shone in the new-wash'd sky.
—And what from heaven saw he?
Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,
Float on a rolling sea!

'Upon them plies the race of man
All it before endeavour'd;
"Ye live," I cried, "ye work and plan,
And know not ye are sever'd!

"Poor fragments of a broken world
Whereon men pitch their tent!
Why were ye too to death not hurl'd
When your world's day was spent?

"That glow of central fire is done
Which with its fusing flame
Knit all your parts, and kept you one;—
But ye, ye are the same!

"The past, its mask of union on,
Had ceased to live and thrive.
The past, its mask of union gone,
Say, is it more alive?

"Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,
Your social order too!
Where tarries he, the Power who said:
See, I make all things new?

"The millions suffer still, and grieve.
And what can helpers heal
With old-world cures men half believe
For woes they wholly feel?

‘“And yet men have such need of joy!
But joy whose grounds are true;
And joy that should all hearts employ
As when the past was new.

‘“Ah, not the emotion of that past,
Its common hope, were vain!
Some new such hope must dawn at last,
Or man must toss in pain.

‘“But now the old is out of date,
The new is not yet born.
And who can be *alone* elate,
While the world lies forlorn?”

‘Then to the wilderness I fled.—
There among Alpine snows
And pastoral huts I hid my head,
And sought and found repose.

‘It was not yet the appointed hour.
Sad, patient, and resign’d,
I watch’d the crocus fade and flower,
I felt the sun and wind.

‘The day I lived in was not mine;
Man gets no second day.
In dreams I saw the future shine—
But ah! I could not stay!

‘Action I had not, followers, fame.
I pass’d obscure, alone.
The after-world forgets my name,
Nor do I wish it known.

‘Composed to bear, I lived and died.
And knew my life was vain.
With fate I murmur not, nor chide.
At Sèvres by the Seine

‘(If Paris that brief flight allow)
My humble tomb explore!
It bears: *Eternity, be thou*
My refuge! and no more.

‘But thou, whom fellowship of mood
Did make from haunts of strife
Come to my mountain-solitude,
And learn my frustrate life;

‘O thou, who, ere thy flying span
Was past of cheerful youth,
Didst find the solitary man
And love his cheerless truth—

‘Despair not thou as I despair’d,
Nor be cold gloom thy prison!
Forward the gracious hours have fared,
And see! the sun is risen!

‘He breaks the winter of the past;
A green, new earth appears.
Millions, whose life in ice lay fast,
Have thoughts, and smiles, and tears.

‘What though there still need effort, strife?
Though much be still unwon?
Yet warm it mounts, the hour of life
Death’s frozen hour is done!

‘The world’s great order dawns in sheen
After long darkness rude,
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.

‘With hope extinct and brow composed
I mark’d the present die;
Its term of life was nearly closed,
Yet it had more than I.

'But thou, though to the world's new hour
Thou come with aspect marr'd,
Shorn of the joy, the bloom, the power,
Which best befits its bard—

'Though more than half thy years be past,
And spent thy youthful prime;
Though, round thy firmer manhood cast,
Hang weeds of our sad time

'Whereof thy youth felt all the spell,
And traversed all the shade—
Though late, though dimm'd, though weak, yet tell
Hope to a world new-made!

'Help it to fill that deep desire,
The want which crazed our brain,
Consumed our soul with thirst like fire,
Immedicable pain;

'Which to the wilderness drove out
Our life, to Alpine snow,
And palsied all our word with doubt,
And all our work with woe—

'What still of strength is left, employ,
This end to help attain:
One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again!'

—The vision ended. I awoke
As out of sleep, and no
Voice moved;—only the torrent broke
The silence, far below.
Soft darkness on the turf did lie;
Solemn, o'er hut and wood,
In the yet star-sown nightly sky,
The peak of Jaman stood.

Still in my soul the voice I heard
Of Obermann!—away
I turned; by some vague impulse stirr'd,
Along the rocks of Naye

Past Sonchaud's piny flanks I gaze
And the blanch'd summit bare
Of Malatrait, to where in haze
The Valais opens fair,

And the domed Velan, with his snows,
Behind the upcrowding hills,
Doth all the heavenly opening close
Which the Rhone's murmur fills—

And glorious there, without a sound,
Across the glimmering lake,
High in the Valais-depth profound,
I saw the morning break.

NOTES.

NOTE 1, PAGE 2.

Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen.

The name Europe (*Εὐρώπη, the wide prospect*) probably describes the appearance of the European coast to the Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor opposite. The name Asia, again, comes, it has been thought, from the muddy fens of the rivers of Asia Minor, such as the Cayster or Mæander, which struck the imagination of the Greeks living near them.

NOTE 2, PAGE 8.

Mycerinus.

‘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.

NOTE 3, PAGE 37.

Stagirius.

Stagirius was a young monk to whom St. Chrysostom addressed three books, and of whom those books give an account. They will be found in the first volume of the Benedictine edition of St. Chrysostom’s works.

NOTE 4, PAGE 51.

That wayside inn we left to-day.

Those who have been long familiar with the English Lake-Country will find no difficulty in recalling, from the

description in the text, the roadside inn at Wythburn on the descent from Dunmail Raise towards Keswick; its sedentary landlord of thirty years ago, and the passage over the Wythburn Fells to Watendlath.

NOTE 5, PAGE 59.

Sohrab and Rustum.

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

‘The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum’s early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab’s death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross

the **Oxus unmolested**. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth ; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.'

NOTE 6, PAGE 94.

Balder Dead.

'**Balder the Good** having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Frigga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron, and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons, and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done, it became a favourite pastime of the Æsir, at their meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battle-axes, for do they what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honour shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Frigga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the Æsir were doing at their meetings. She replied, that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him.

"Ay," said Frigga, "neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all of them."

"What!" exclaimed the woman, "have all things sworn to spare Balder?"

"All things," replied Frigga, "except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called

Mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from."

'As soon as Loki heard this he went away, and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. There he found Hödur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, "Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?"

"Because I am blind," answered Hödur, "and see not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with."

"Come, then," said Loki, "do like the rest, and show honour to Balder by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands."

'Hödur then took the mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless.'—*Edda*.

NOTE 7, PAGE 131.

Tristram and Iseult.

'In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, 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-potion, 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*.

NOTE 8, PAGE 167.

That son of Italy who tried to blow.

Giacopone di Todi.

NOTE 9, PAGE 172.

Recalls the obscure opposer he outweigh’d.

Gilbert de la Porrée, at the Council of Rheims, in 1148.

NOTE 10, PAGE 173.

Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried.

The Montanists.

NOTE 11, PAGE 174.

Monica.

See St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, book ix, chapter 11.

NOTE 12, PAGE 175.

My Marguerite smiles upon the strand.

See, among ‘Early Poems,’ the poem called *A Memory-Picture*, p. 23.

NOTE 13, PAGE 199.

The Hunter of the Tanagræan Field.

Orion, the Wild Huntsman of Greek legend, and in this capacity appearing in both earth and sky.

NOTE 14, PAGE 200.

O’er the sun-redden’d western straits.

Erytheia, the legendary region around the Pillars of Hercules, probably took its name from the redness of the West under which the Greeks saw it.

NOTE 15, PAGE 222.

Of the sun-loving gentian, in the best.

The *gentiana lutea*.

NOTE 16, PAGE 246.

Ye Sun-born Virgins! on the road of truth.

See the Fragments of Parmenides:

. κούραι δ' ὁδὸν ἠγεμόνευον,
ἠλιάδες κούραι, προλιποῖσαι δώματα νυκτός,
εἰς φάος.

NOTE 17, PAGE 291.

The Scholar-Gipsy.

'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 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.

NOTE 18, PAGE 299.

Thyrsis.

Throughout this poem there is reference to the preceding piece, *The Scholar-Gipsy*.

NOTE 19, PAGE 305.

Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing.

Daphnis, the ideal Sicilian shepherd of Greek pastoral poetry, was said to have followed into Phrygia his mistress Piplea, who had been carried off by robbers, and to have found her in the power of the king of Phrygia, Lityerses. Lityerses used to make strangers try a contest with him in reaping corn, and to put them to death if he overcame them. Hercules arrived in time to save Daphnis, took upon himself the reaping-contest with Lityerses, overcame him, and slew him. The Lityerses-song connected with this tradition was, like the Linus-song, one of the early plaintive strains of Greek popular poetry, and used to be sung by corn-reapers. Other traditions represented Daphnis as beloved by a nymph who exacted from him an oath to love no one else. He fell in love with a princess, and was struck blind by the jealous nymph. Mercury, who was his father, raised him to Heaven, and made a fountain spring up in the place from which he ascended. At this fountain the Sicilians offered yearly sacrifices.—See Servius, *Comment. in Virgil. Bucol.*, v. 20, and viii. 68.

NOTE 20, PAGE 312.

Ab, where is he, who should have come.

The author's brother, William Delafield Arnold, Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, and author of *Oakfield, or Fellowship in the East*, died at Gibraltar on his way home from India, April the 9th, 1859.

NOTE 21, PAGE 313.

So moonlit, saw me once of yore.

See the poem, *A Summer Night*, p. 278.

NOTE 22, PAGE 313.

My brother! and thine early lot.

See Note 20.

NOTE 23, PAGE 317.

*I saw the meeting of two
Gifted women.*

Charlotte Brontë and Harriet Martineau.

NOTE 24, PAGE 320.

Whose too bold dying song.

See the last lines written by Emily Brontë in *Poems by Curver, Ellis, and Acton Bell*.

NOTE 25, PAGE 334.

Goethe, too; had been there.

See *Harzreise im Winter*, in Goethe's *Gedichte*.

NOTE 26, PAGE 342.

The author of *Obermann*, Étienne Pivert de Senancour, has little celebrity in France, his own country; and out of France he is almost unknown. But the profound inwardness, the austere sincerity, of his principal work, *Obermann*, the delicate feeling for nature which it exhibits, and the melancholy eloquence of many passages of it, have attracted and charmed some of the most remarkable spirits of this century, such as George Sand and Sainte-Beuve, and will probably always find a certain number of spirits whom they touch and interest.

Senancour was born in 1770. He was educated for the priesthood, and passed some time in the Seminary of St. Sulpice; broke away from the Seminary and from France itself, and passed some years in Switzerland, where he married; returned to France in middle life, and followed thenceforward the career of a man of letters, but with hardly any fame or success. He died an old man in 1846, desiring that on his grave might be placed these words only: *Éternité, deviens mon asile!*

The influence of Rousseau, and certain affinities with more famous and fortunate authors of his own day,—Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël,—are everywhere visible in Senancour. But though, like these eminent

personages, he may be called a sentimental writer, and though *Obermann*, a collection of letters from Switzerland treating almost entirely of nature and of the human soul, may be called a work of sentiment, Senancour has a gravity and severity which distinguish him from all other writers of the sentimental school. The world is with him in his solitude far less than it is with them; of all writers he is the most perfectly isolated and the least attitudinising. His chief work, too, has a value and power of its own, apart from these merits of its author. The stir of all the main forces, by which modern life is and has been impelled, lives in the letters of *Obermann*; the dissolving agencies of the eighteenth century, the fiery storm of the French Revolution, the first faint promise and dawn of that new world which our own time is but now fully bringing to light,—all these are to be felt, almost to be touched, there. To me, indeed, it will always seem that the impressiveness of this production can hardly be rated too high.

Besides *Obermann* there is one other of Senancour's works which, for those spirits who feel his attraction, is very interesting; its title is, *Libres Méditations d'un Solitaire Inconnu*.

NOTE 27, PAGE 342.

Behind are the abandon'd baths.

The Baths of Leuk. This poem was conceived, and partly composed, in the valley going down from the foot of the Gemmi Pass towards the Rhone.

NOTE 28, PAGE 348.

Glion?—Ah, twenty years, it cuts.

Probably all who know the Vevey end of the Lake of Geneva, will recollect Glion, the mountain-village above the castle of Chillon. Glion now has hotels, *pensions*, and villas; but twenty years ago it was hardly more than the huts of Avant opposite to it,—huts through which goes that beautiful path over the Col de Jaman, followed by so many foot-travellers on their way from Vevey to the Simmenthal and Thun.

NOTE 29, PAGE 349.

The gentian-flower'd pass, its crown.

See Note 15.

NOTE 30, PAGE 349.

And walls where Byron came.

Montbovon. See Byron's Journal, in his *Works*, vol. iii, p. 258. The river Saane becomes the Sarine below Montbovon.

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