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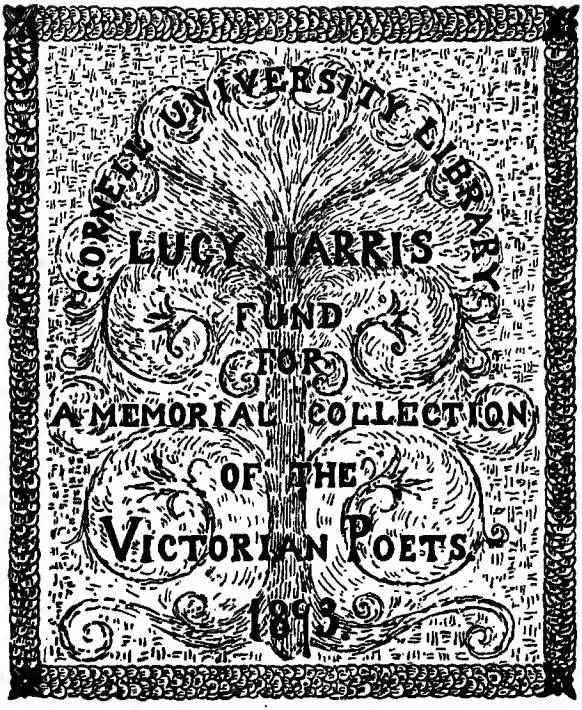

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NOCTURNES AND PASTORALS

NOCTURNES AND PASTORALS

A BOOK OF VERSE

By A. BERNARD MIALL

LEONARD SMITHERS
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TO

NELLIE FRANCIS

I have to thank the courtesy of the Editor of the "Pall Mall Gazette" for several reprints. Other verses have appeared in the "Speaker" and the "Academy."

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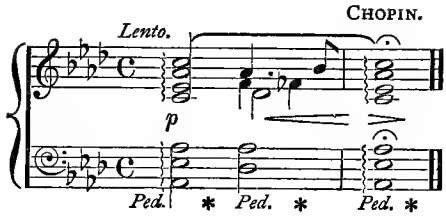
NOCTURNES.



Silver and Grey.

HER grey veil the night
Draweth o'er sky and sea;
Grey meeteth grey
Sweetly where dieth day,
Now that the night is free.

Lights of the town,
Low on the headland's sweep,
Mirrored in grey,
Quivering low in the bay,
Shine as fires in the deep.

Silent, afar,
White in grey overhead,
Cometh a star,
White where no others are.
Day that was dying is dead.

Thames Ditton Station.

A VEIL of branches, bare and grey,
But trembling to the breath of spring;
A silver star where branches sway,
Where soon the bat and swallow wing.

With pearly emerald girt about
Day sweeps her robes adown the sky:
The night's are softly shaken out,
Where jewels that wax and glisten lie.

A throstle sings; two women pass,
Laughing; a fragrance sweetly trails
Behind them. Into darkness pass
Two gleaming vistas of straight rails.

Day treads at last o'er hidden hills;
The silver star sinks down amain.
The lamps are lit: from darkness shrills
The sudden whistle of the train.

The Serpentine.

THE dancing paths of molten gold
As golden pillars seem
To hold on high the golden lights
That flicker as they gleam.

Black water and black cloudless sky,
White stars as cold as Fate.
Beneath the shadowy whispering trees
The women watch and wait.

On the Common.

OVER the hill of silent elms
The faint light of the city shines,
A light that half the sky o'erwhelms;
A livid and ambiguous night
Flows in the sky where no star shines,
The even sky of silent night.

Above the shadowy common, white,
Without a seam, without a shade,
A misty veil, indefinite,
Floats, and is still as a still sea
That has no mirrored trace nor shade
Of island-trees that cleave the sea.

I thought there was no wind—but see!
Afar a golden light is dead,
But shines again. Some stir of tree,
Or one who trod the rising road
Had passed across. The wind is dead;
A slow cart rattles on the road.

It seems as though a silent load
Lay in the air. The rangèd trees
Marshalled along this dusky road
Are still and black as iron. Far,
A train slips murmuring past the trees,
A string of fiery jewels afar.

Still trees, still sky that has no star,
How still the night! But far behind

A dog is barking; not so far
A gate is clanged—O is it hers?
Among the whins there pass behind
Voices, and steps that are not hers.

All night but I is full of ease;
Now every sound has passed away.
I listen with the mournful trees
That seem half-human listeners.
Slow footsteps come, and pass away;
But close, a step—and that is hers!

A Nocturne.

WITHOUT, the rumble of the street,
  The flare of lamps, the fall of rain;
Within, the firelight and the beat
  Of drops against the window-pane.

Your thin gown rustles as you rise;
  You cross the room; you touch the keys.
The outer uproar and the cries
  Fade as the drone of passing bees.

I close my eyes; the night rolls by.
  The dead dark years are rent and torn;
Their crimson flecks the emerald sky;
  A silver star shines in the morn.

No earth there is, but heaven, the star,
  And glowing clouds whose perfect hue
Is fairer than the sky they bar:
  Life's dawn lit up by love of you.

Above the crescent song of Day
  The morning star sings once again.
The mists of years are rolled away;
  Hope rises whence she long has lain.

* * * * *

The sweet notes die along the night;
  The outer uproar suddenly
Swells in the room; the fire's warm light
  Shines on your white face turned to me.

Harmony.

THE dunes are bathed in silver light,
And as a silver ocean lie;
A fleet rides anchored there all night,
Of pine-trees, black against the sky.

Out of the pine-wood ringing free
A silver song along the sand
Blends with the lapping of the sea
And breeze's whisper overland.

Your tresses hold your dreaming face
As night embowers the pallid moon,
Travelling slow through crystal space,
Lest day should follow her too soon.

Your breath has mingled with the wind
That through the dusky upland sighs.
The stars have found the sky unkind,
But found sweet peace within your eyes.

Your presence fills the night above,
That holds us loving. Without stir,
In your embrace and hers I love
Nature in you, and you in Her.

From Heine.

STARS with golden feet are creeping,
Wandering sad with footsteps light,
Lest they wake the tired earth sleeping,
Sleeping in the lap of Night.

Every leaf a green ear seeming
List the woodlands, still and calm,
And the mountain, as if dreaming,
Stretches up its shadowy arm.

But who calls there? Echoes ringing
Pierce within my heart and fail:
Was it the Beloved singing?
Was it but the nightingale?

The Boudoir.

FROM THE FRENCH OF PAUL VERLAINE.

THE piano that a slender hand has kissed
Shines rose and grey in the grey evening mist;
While, with light murmur as of wings that beat,
An ancient tender melody and sweet
Treads hushed, an almost timid wanderer,
Through the boudoir long odorous of Her.

Ah, what is this that as a cradle now
Lulls my poor heart?—how tenderly and slow!
What would you with me, dainty song? and, ah!
What would you, hesitating sweet refrain,
So quickly by the window dead again,
The window on the garden just ajar?

The Shepherd's Hour.

FROM THE FRENCH OF PAUL VERLAINE.

LOW lies the moon red in the smoky sky,
And in a dancing mist the meadow-land
Lies asleep, veiled; a frog croaks near at hand,
'Mid green reeds where a shiver rustles by.

The water-lilies close their crowns in sleep;
Far distant poplars, straight and closely bound,
Profile uncertain shadows; on the ground
Towards the thickets now the glow-worms creep.

The screech-owls wake and pass in silent flight,
With heavy soft wings fanning the dark air;
The zenith fills with glimmerings, faintly clear.
Venus emerges, pale, and it is Night.

Jadis. I.

THROUGH birches white in the autumn-tide,
Through the drift of the fallen leaves,
The little fallen leaves at her side
That whirl in the wind in the autumn-tide,
With swift feet cometh my Sweet:
Her tresses tremble at the kiss of little winds,
Her cheek is cool, and cool as the night her hair,
And her throat is white in the morning.

The skies are grey, but her loosened hair
Hath gold to enwind my heart:
The winter cometh, and everywhere
The earth forsaken shall lie and bare,
Or covered with snow when the wind shall blow;
The earth shall be desolate, and all things dead,
Yet summer shall not leave us much regret:
O love, thy throat, thy hands are mine to kiss!

II.

NOUGHT in the sultry heat of summer night
But stillness of the drowsed, half-empty town;
Now, as the orient brings a cheerless light,
Slow footsteps by the houses echo down
The desolate dusty streets, and, faintly white,
Vague fevered shadows, drifting in the room,
Fade at the casement's welcome pallid gloom.

But morning brings a mockery of past years
In sleep, wherein I seem
To hear the autumn-whirl and brush of trees,
Yet knowing that I dream;
Knowing that on my weary lids the tears
Start at the dream of these.

The skies are grey, but her loosened hair
Hath gold to enwind my heart;
The wind is sobbing, the woods are bare,
And sorrow and winter have drawn anear,
Where we greet who are far apart
In this country mournful of memories,
Where neither parting nor meeting is,
But the love of remembered years;
And the kisses have paled on her lips to sighs,
And the light of her eyes
Is of tears—of tears.

Grey Night.

THE foam-flecked river flies past the ferry,
What the sea gave goes back to the sea;
Seabirds white cry wailing or merry,
Sound of the upland is wafted to me.
The salt sweet smell of the hurrying river
Lingers by marshes and meadow-lands grey,
And the sea-wrack floats to the sea the giver,
Wreaths the river put off with the day.

The bar's faint seething sounds o'er the water,
The broad grey water that sinks at length;
The grey sea greets her returning daughter,
Borne of her bosom, strong with her strength.
The grey gulls cry and the grey skies darken,
The journeying waters sink down to sleep;
The marshlands hush in the night to hearken,
The night that throbs with the voice of the deep.

And the river whispers: "As I am flowing
The days and the nights of years go by;
As wrack and the foam-wreath wrought by my going,
Lives uprooted and lives that die.
Nought is fair as the spring-time's fulness,
The green shore left and regained no more:
Lie in my bosom, plunge in my coolness;
Sleep, and forget that you left the shore."

Midnight.

THE jasmine tapped at my window: I said,
My Beloved calls me.
I looked out into the night: the shadow of the
house lay black on the grass.
The silver corn rustled: I said, *My Beloved is walk-
ing through the field.*

The dim dark woods were still till the nightingale's
song floated out;
Deep in the mystic darkness he sang the death of
the Present,
Sang the fear of the Future, and long regret of the
Past.

The night was full of silvery silence. I said, *My
Beloved used to await me*
*Down by the brook in the fields where the veil of the
meadows is floating:*
*Where roses were pale in the darkness, she was alone
in the night.*

Over the woods two stars were pale in the heavens;
I turned again to the darkness: her face was dim in
the chamber;
Two stars shone in the shadows: two stars shone
from the Past.

*Eyes of my Beloved, I have not sinned lest you should
be shamèd;*

Eyes of my Beloved, I have been brave lest you should grieve;
Eyes of my Beloved, I have not wept lest you should weep.

You have ever been with me: go, lest you see me broken.
Go, let me do as I would, let me bow my head unashamèd.
Eyes of my dead Beloved, go, lest you see me die.

The Message.

WINTER it was, yet waking I dreamed it was summer still,
That I heard the roses rustle, and the wind breathe o'er the yews,
And the nightingale's silver voice, and the bell of the little church,
And the seethe of the moonlit waves of the silver sea of corn.

But then the night grew silent, save for the nightingale's singing.
In the dark corners of the room dim shapes and shadows rose and faded,
Came to me, passed behind me: but my Beloved's face I could not see.

But slept, and woke again, and between my sleeping and waking
A girl's form leant above me, and the scent of a woman's hair was about me,
My Beloved's face bent over me, and her soft lips touched my own.

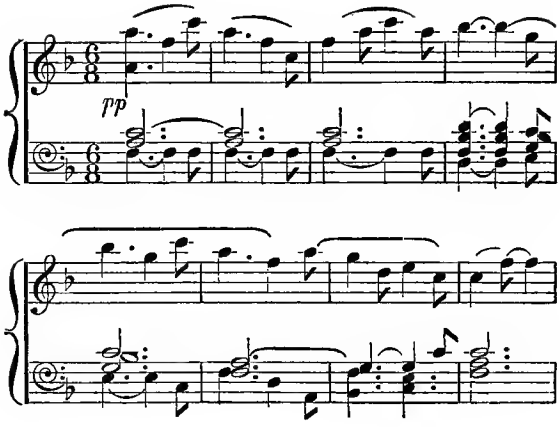
And she said—yet I know not whether 'twas she that spake, or the silence,
Or the shaken trees by the cornfield, or the nightingale's song from the woods—
Said in a voice sweet as silence, as she kissed me, before she vanished:

"*This, my Love, for a token: that I shall never forget thee.*
Now I am gone, thou art left, but my love shall be ever about thee.
Hope and be strong and despair not: I am far, but I have not forgotten."

Then I woke, and the winter wind sobbed in the tossing elms,
And the withered leaves were driven along the desolate path,
And a bell tolled on—I know not why—in the wintry dawn:
But the bird wept on in my heart, and it has not ceased to sing.

PASTORALS.

BEETHOVEN.



Violets.

MY Love in glancing through a well-loved book
Came to a place where pages fell apart,
Finding held safely in its inmost heart
Strewn and pressed violets; and met the look,
When slowly turning o'er the leaves she paused,
I raised at sudden stillness: and her eyes
Brimmed with soft tears that sorrow never caused,
For tears so sweet at sweet regrets arise.

Once in the murmuring morning, lulled with the breeze
Whispering from southwards through glittering hazel-withes,
Moss-grown at root, 'neath the shivering broad-leaved trees,
High on the bank of the salt ebbing stream, that writhes
Down through its mud-flats silently to the sea,
By still pools mirroring sky or bough of tree,
(Like windows opening to some forest under-world
Full of blue streams, in a brown veil silver-pearled,)
Still we lay on the soft moss pierced with flowers,
Scattered with last year's leaves, through the morning hours.

The warmth and the sound of the underwood burning green,
The sound and the warmth and the scent of the wavering wind,

The light and the sound and the life of the wood between
Soft sky and earth, the one as the other kind,
Beat all around us, below us, and overhead.
Then, when a silence fell after sweet words said,
She, knowing well the words that would follow soon,
Opened her book, and read through the whispering noon:
Bending her girl's dark head with sun-threaded hair
Over the page, as I watched her and found her fair.

Bending her face with the wild-anemone flush
Over the page flecked with moving gold as her gown,
With soft low voice that her sweet thoughts gave a hush,
Read as the sun in the greenwood drifted down:
Voice of a girl growing to woman soon,
Even as May was growing to die in June:
I listening and looking, my hand straying idly round
Gathering violets unthinking from mossy ground,
While as I listened my hurrying heart kept time
With her voice as it rose and fell in the cadenced rhyme.

Then at the end her fingers sought mine with a thrill,
Taking the flowers the soft south wind had fanned:
Took them, and closed them between the leaves, and were still.
Then was the book laid down, and I took her hand

That clung and tightened in mine, till I bent and kissed
White slim fingers and palm, past her blue-veined wrist,
Over her sleeve and up to her throbbing throat,
Over her hair where the sunlight seemed to float;
Kissed her cheek till her lashes her eyes revealed,
And she lifted her flower-like face for the kiss that sealed.

In the Orchard.

THE little flowers are not so delicate,
The tender rosy blossoms in the green,
The little petals fluttering as I wait
Are not so delicate
As her still face.
Nothing so pure is seen,
Nor have the wind-swayed lilies a lighter grace.

Out here the drifting gold o' the sun all day
Shall kiss her amorously through the leaves,
As I have kissed her soft face turned away
Through clustering hair to-day:
None saw us but the swallows in the eaves,
The swift swallows at play.

Sweet are cool kisses when the winds are playing,
And all the green boughs swaying,
And sweet the soft consent that needs no saying;
But he, the sun, who never came a-praying
For her warm throat, for her soft lips—ah! this is
As sweet almost as kisses—
But he, the sun—ah, too bold lover,
Who kisses her all over
And never prays for kisses,
He knows not what he misses!

June.

LONG shafts of sunlight strike the sea:
The sea is flecked with floating gold.
The still sea shivers as with cold
At breezes fanning fitfully.

The phantom vessels in the south
Sail faintly where the skies descend,
Where neither sea nor sky has end,
But greyly mingle in the south.

Along the shore the water's fret
Mounts up the silence of the cliff,
A languorous happy sound, as if
The lips of land and ocean met.

There is no wind to stir about
The poppies in the seeding grass:
But in the south the vessels pass;
Below, the fisher-folk set out.

Wind and Sun.

COOL wind's and open plain's austerity
Fill the great moor where clear beneath blue sky
Warm, living sunlight and sharp shadows lie;
Green distant hills in broad day's verity
Rise to meet paling heavens bright and clear:
Here, where no fears nor heart's misgivings are,
Shrill cry of kite and clink of sheep-bell far
With sound of shaken heather reach the ear.

Sweet and austere and full of wholesomeness
Blows the keen air earth-scented from the north;
From the blown grass swift flits the skylark forth,
Scattering his sudden song, whose glad notes bless
Pure wind, fair earth, and strong unclouded sun
That tell of glad strength till the day is done.

A Night.

DO you remember, Sweet, how one summer night,
Lost in our walk, down a lane we wandered, we two?—
Where the dark trees stirred, and a startled moth beat through
Rattling his wings on the leaves, and athwart our sight
Slowly with solemn note sailed, and some drowsy beast
Lowed, as the Eagle, dim and afraid, soared up in the east;
When the tremulous hush of the night-time fell over all,
And ghostly and weird from the woods came the screech-owl's call,
Into the silent slumbering meadows we turned our feet,
Where a white veil, cool and moist, floated and shrouded the ground:
Through it we slowly went, and beneath the great oak-trees found,
Deep in the stack, a bed. You remember, Sweet?

Deep, deep in the straw, away from the chilling dark,
Down in the sweeter, warmer night that your tresses made,
With the warmth of your cheek to mine, were you too afraid,
As I, for sweet bliss, to sleep? Far away the bark

Of a shepherd's dog, or the shrill of a bat, or the owl
Groaning his call in the woods, stirred in the outer night,
Or the plaint of the nightingale shone like a constellation's light
In the calm deep sky of your breathing. Above, the cowl
Of the silent oaks was drawn o'er the dew-sprent stack;
A cockchafer boomed where the roses paled at the back;
Till sound, and the rise of your breast, and the warmth of your fallen hair
Faded and blended in odorous sleep: but asleep I knew you were there.

* * * * *

Then the merry thrush sang matins when the grey dawn shone through sleep,
And I woke, but you slept, and your cheek was still warm to mine,
And your throat shone white in the morning. Above, a peep
Of the sky held a faltering star that was all but afraid to shine.
Then you stirred at my turning, and woke, and your slim hands clung
While your fresh lips greeted mine: I forgot the star
And the dawn, and all else but you, till you lightly flung
The fragrant dewy covering off: afar,

Dim through the veil of the night that was yet undrawn
The rose of the morning blossomed, as hand in hand,
Your hair bedewed at my cheek, we watched the dawn,
Till the sun rose softly up and drew the veil from the land.

The sun shone pale and low in the pale unclouded sky,
And looked over all the hedges, to see the jewels that the night
Had strung on the grass of the meadows; the flowers nigh
Seemed, as the earth, to slumber still. A faint film, light,
Airy and pale as the ghost of the evening mist,
Rose from the fields like incense; with green the hedge-tops burned;
The whole world sparkled with dew, that the sun soon kissed
Sweetly and warmly away. Then you, Sweet, turned
For another kiss your smooth cheek cool with the morn,
And the daisies and orchis and buttercups felt the touch of your feet
When together we left our rest, half regretting the dawn,
As we went forth into the day. You remember, Sweet?

August.

NOW are the days when golden grain
Bows to the wind and bows again.
The waves go rolling across the field:
O the sea itself is the sea's own yield,
And the poppies, like scarlet argosies,
Toss in the ocean's mutinies.

Dust and wind on the white highway:
Corn is golden and poppies are red.
The dust sinks down when the wind is dead:
There is only the sun on the white highway.

Rustle of corn and roll of wheels,
Clatter of horses the hedge conceals;
Voices that come on the wind and are gone
From us in the briar's shade alone.
There by the windmill, over the hill,
The road goes winding silent and still.

Dust and wind on the white highway:
Corn is golden and poppies are red.
The dust sinks down when the wheels have sped:
There is only the sun on the white highway.

See the clouds in their stately flight,
Brighter than silver, whiter than white;
See their shadows that follow fast
And dip in the vales as they hurry past;
Lie back and watch them, deep in the sky,
Like snowy islands we journey by.

It's O to lie by the rippling corn
With a pretty maid, and the sun on her hair:
And to watch the great white clouds in the air
From the briar's shade, by the waving corn.

What shall we say to the sun to-day?
"*Not so proud when the rain's away!*"
What shall we say to the sun again?
"*Ripen the apples and swell the grain:*
Yet gentle be with the earth your bride
Lest weary she be in the autumn-tide."

Fields are ready for harvesting:
But O to lie in the briar's shade
With a pretty maid, with a silent maid:
And there's plenty of time to harvesting!

Hope Deferred. I.

THE moonlight glitters on the shivering leaves,
Drifts through the casement, flickers on the wall;
There is no sound save ghostly owlet's call
And rustling scrape of boughs against the eaves.
As indeterminate the weary hours
Pass to the slow pained throbbing of my heart,
The room that memories of our past embowers
Seems haunted by it now we are apart.

The hot tears fall where once her tresses lay;
Her face shines dimly in uncertain shade
Whose fevered images that wax and fade
Blind all my soul with longing: yet I say,
Hoping for day, yet of its length afraid:
"Does the night pass? Surely she comes at day?"

II.

AS a dim fire that flameless smouldering long
Leaps into sudden flame when ashes fall,
So springs desire when at the orient's call
The stirring world begins its morning-song:
As in the days when came my Love of old
O'er fallen petals with swift dewy feet,
Where blossom-laden boughs unheeding meet,
And raised her cheek for kisses, morning-cold.

I hear the misty breeze awakened sway
The rustling fitful leaves, and flirt of wing
Of waking bird whose thin crescendoes sing
Death to the impotent night that fades away;
And sigh, with hope and fear foregathering:
"Will she not come? Surely she comes to-day?"

III.

WITH swooning heat the glowing noontide heaves;
The boughs throw still grey shadows on the grass;
No sound is heard as weary minutes pass
But drowsy hum of bees among the leaves.
The wallflower's scent is heavy in the air
Around the blazing trees, beneath whose shade,
In days whose memory makes Despair afraid,
My head was pillowed on her outspread hair.

The day with heat and I with longing swoon.
The white road quivers through the poppied corn
Quite empty now. She came not in the morn
That wearied slowly to this weary noon:
Will she not come when silent stars are born
And eve grows hushed? Surely my Love comes soon?

IV.

IN the dark misty vale the river winds
With sinuous amber gleam toward the west;
A violet haze with mystic softness blinds
The hills o'er which the red sun went to rest.
Above the purple glow a golden star
Drops in a fading sky of pearly-green,
Where flight of swift-returning bat is seen;
Now cattle low from shrouded fields afar.

Hope dies with day, but not the yearning dumb,
The longing too intense to find a cry.
The breath of quiet night that wanders by
Mocks writhen lips that moan with horror numb:
"God! that my longing now would let me die!
She has not come, and she will never come!"

Autumn Morning.

THE vaporous veil before the breeze
Discloses as it drifts away
The blossom of awakened day
Below the clouds, above the trees.

The ebbing clouds begin to fly;
The leaves dance to the autumn's tune,
And like an outworn shell the moon
Is still beneath the watery sky.

About the edges of the moor
And where the mournful waters rest
A misty paleness, wind-caressed,
Is rolled across the autumn floor.

A woodman in the russet whirl
Rests where a silvery aspen stood:
And to him singing through the wood
A slender swift white-throated girl.

October.

UNDER the beeches at autumn-tide,
O withered leaves, O wind-blown hair,
Fresh the wind, and she at my side;
And little need have we to speak.
Whirl of leaves and her hair at my cheek.

The sweet blood tingles through our veins,
Thirst of summer is over and gone.
Now are we done with parting's pains;
Love is sighing among the trees.
O but the word to give me ease.

White is her hand that touches mine,
O sudden leaping warmth of love!
O red and warm are her lips as wine,
And warm her throat 'neath her loosened hair.
O many the kisses that linger there!

Rain.

RAIN, rain, rain on the hill,
Rain, rain in my heart;
Grey the mist on the rainy hill
And heavy my heart.

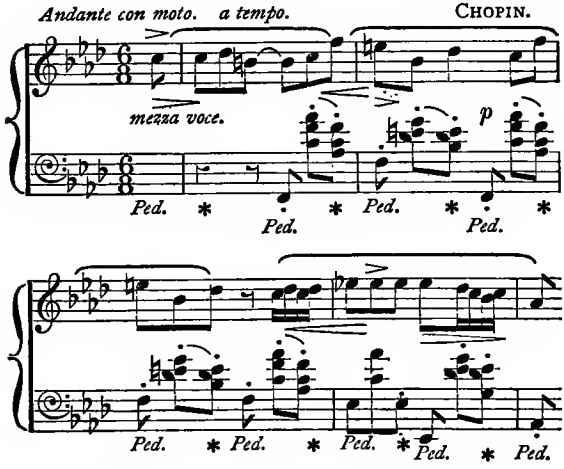
Wind, wind from the dusky west,
Wind among the whins;
There are the flowers she loved the best,
Rain-flowers on the whins.
Never again, O heavy heart,
Never more in the rain
To kiss her salt cold cheek, O heart,
In the wet of the mist and rain;
Never with rain on her face and hair
Will she come from the mist again.

Marshlands.

OVER the marshes the rain rustles down,
A veil of grey, of soft grey sound.
The line of the town fades, and around
There is only the grey, only the sound
Of the dirge of the rain on the sweep of the marshes.

And the veil of the sound is riven asunder
By bruit of the sea, like a mournful thunder.
Even in sorrow there is no peace,
But day and morrow a vain increase.
And the voice of the sea, the voice of unrest,
Pierces the rain, and pierces my breast.
It rives asunder the chiming rain,
'Tis the voice of unrest I would hear not again.
I would live with sorrow until it cease;
But, day or morrow, I find no peace.

A BALLAD AND OTHER POEMS.



The Ballad of Marie Vautrin.

WHERE olives grow above the vines,
Where o'er bright plains the white clouds sail,
Where North unto the South declines,
She lived of whom men tell this tale.

Marie was tall at seventeen,
But fashioned very slenderly;
Quiet, and partly sad of mien,
And still her pure face was to see:

Like to the Mother Maiden's face
When incense curls through pealing air,
When stolen touch of Heaven's embrace
Steals down the organ's vibrant stair.

Her lips were carven tenderly,
Her eyes seemed unknown skies to hold;
Her forehead seemed warm ivory,
Her hair God spun of dream-red gold.

At eve before her mother's call
She looked beyond the shrinking plain
To see the red sun stoop and fall
Through night toward the day again;

Seeing before the sun had gone,
Glowing within the molten skies,
The paths the angels trod upon,
And flower-gardens of Paradise;

Or sheltered from the mistral's breath
Watched daylight die through leaded panes,
With purple glow, or veiled with grey
And sullen tears of winter rains.

At dawn she saw the pale sun rise
From weary journey of the night,
When every leaf bore sparkling eyes
That faded in the growing light.

She saw the hill-tops burning gold,
Above the glinting olives grey;
She saw the mountain mists unrolled
And over valleys swept away.

When earth slept on though light was born
Through passion-flower and jasmine spray
She from her chamber leant at dawn
To steal from earth the kiss of day.

And ever hidden in her heart
An awe that was not wholly fear
Grew sweet and strong, and took its part
The more in every peaceful year.

She softly sorrowed without woe,
Hoping for what the years might bring;
She saw the seasons come and go,
And waited for some certain thing.

The sight of all the world she knew
Was like soft music in her heart;

God spake above the morning dew,
In th' evening hush His voice had part.

When thrice the Angelus rang soft
She stayed her wheel to dream awhile;
She spoke not, yet her heart spoke oft
In thanking God with tear or smile.

Down from the convent in the vale
The vesper bell as eve delayed
Chimed with the voice of clear stars pale
That from her bed she saw arrayed.

When midnight passed the matin bell
Rang gently at the gates of sleep.
Dimly she knew that all was well,
And slumbered on from deep to deep,
Sometimes murmuring reverently
"Mary Mother, blessed be,
Mary who hast chosen me."

II.

In autumn when the grapes hung ripe
The leaves were fretting restlessly
To dance before the winter's pipe
In northern countries oversea.

At eve the fervid day burnt out,
Her red robes trailed adown the West;
Still hills with moisture swathed about
Watched o'er the sleep of dales at rest.

Then silver turned the golden star
As day forsook its emerald bed,
Beckoning faintly from afar
The timid stars to overhead.

Ashamèd at the western glare
The red shield of the rising moon
Turned silver in the silvery air
And held night rapt in wonder soon.

When Night with jewelled mantle crept
Up from the East, and no more lay
In hiding from the sun, but leapt
To kiss the blushing day away,

Pale Marie on the terraced walk
Down to her slim hands leant her head,
And watched the darkening shadows stalk
In silence from their hidden bed.

"Is Heaven more fair than this?" she said,
"O earth were so a heaven indeed,
Did Christ come down to heal the dead,
To right past wrong and present need."

The dim woods called her from afar,
The night rang with a silent voice
That seemed to come from the evening star
And call the valley to rejoice.

Her mother called her from the house;
The yellow lights were glimmering there.

She turned about to shade her brows ;
Sunset and moonlight lit her hair.

Her mother spoke of this and that
With Jeanne the nurse, and looked aside
At Marie where she silent sat,
Watching the sky where day had died.

"Gaston comes home now war is past."
"A certain maiden should be wed."
"Ah, Marie, thou hast heard at last ?
A fair maid thou to hold a-bed ! "

Said Marie, "I will never wed,
For I will vow my life to Heaven.
O mother, surely in my stead
Some other may be gladly given ? "

"Nay," said the mother, "who can tell,
Save he be pleased, what may befall ?
His serving-men are many, and well
He loves thy face and figure tall."

"O, love ! " she said, "I will not wed.
What knows a one like him of love ?
Should I not die on my marriage-bed
If Hell were here and Heaven above ? "

She sought her room in sudden fright ;
The moonlit night was cool without.
She bared her bosom to the night,
And loosed her tresses round about.

The soft tears trembled in her eyes
Until the stars grew pale and great
That for a while she watched arise
And climb toward where the pale moon sate.

A great moth rattled in the room;
A lone cicala suddenly
Shrilled in the dark; the distant boom
Of falling waves came fitfully.

The night wind kissed her bosom bare
When she with wide eyes listening leant;
It stole the fragrance of her hair
To add unto its store of scent.

The dim woods called her from afar,
The night rang with a silent voice
That seemed the voice of every star
Calling the valleys to rejoice.

When all the household slept but she
She listened at her chamber door;
She crept below and silently
Stole o'er the polished moonlit floor.

She trembling drew the bolts and stept
Between the roses; in affright
She hastened while her bosom leapt
To meet the kisses of the night.

When she went up the silent road
The world she loved so well seemed new,

Transfigured in the light that flowed
From the silver moon in silvery blue.

The stony hillside path she trod
Beneath the olive's trembling shade;
It seemed as though she walked with God
In wondering silence, not afraid.

A network black of shadow lay
Quivering on the silver ground.
The glinting olives twinkled grey
Stirring with uncertain sound.

The night seemed full of voices then,
And somewhat seemed to cross her way
Unknown to eye or ear of men,
Unheard the words they seemed to say.

"If Christ should come again!" she cried:
"O will He come as child or man?
Will Mary come, who happy died
Because of Him, who as years ran

"Men looked for, though He never came?
Will it be woman's lot again
To bear the Son of God, the same
For whom the Virgin had sweet pain?

"O He will come! O happy earth!
'Twill know and welcome Him at last!
Surely it waits now for His birth,
So many years have come and passed.

"And strong and beautiful He'll grow
Quiet in the valley of His birth,
Till forth into the world He'll go,
To save and conquer all the earth."

She raised her tearful eyes, and there
A figure clad in shimmering grey
Stood close before; in sudden fear
She cried, she fell, she swooned away.

III.

When Marie woke the moon had set,
And coldly in the sea of night
The white stars shone, and cold and wet
The stony ground was. In affright

She rose and leaned with sudden cry
Against a twisted olive bough,
Pressing her hand where, hard and dry,
The blood had clotted on her brow.

Her pulses failed and leaped again;
The white stars whirled and then stood still;
Her hot brow throbbed with rhythmic pain;
Strange sounds seemed gathering round the hill.

She wandered down the dark hillside
Beneath the olives black and still;
She reached the roadway dim and wide;
She gained the garden on the hill.

The roses shone but dimly now;
To drink their perfume in she bent,
And with their cool tears bathed her brow
Ere quietly to the door she went:

But shuddering feared to enter in;
The darkness seemed an evil thing,
Stifling and close; and dread as sin
Great fearful shapes were beckoning.

She turned in fear, and thought to flee,
But sat without in the fragrant night
Till o'er the mountains could she see
The red fringe of the morning light;

Till light came; till she opened wide
The door that dawn and she crept through;
The house was still as death; she hied
Up to her room; a late cock crew;

The valley shivered, and the glow
Of paling sky grew bright and red;
The stars swooned on to death below,
But glittered faintly overhead.

When she sank fainting on her bed
Night fled before grey dawn that streamed
Over her bruisèd brow and head,
Over her body, as she dreamed.

She dreamed that in bright Paradise,
Girt with the radiance of her hair,

The Virgin slim with loving eyes
Greeted her as she waited there.

She dreamed that Mary stooped and said:
"My daughter, I have chosen thee."
A hand upon her side she laid,
And whispered: "I have chosen thee."

The air grew rich with distant song,
With incense and with joyful shout;
But she, half-swooning, woke ere long
To hear her mother's voice without.
Then did she say unwittingly:
"Mary Mother, blessed be,
Mary who hast chosen me."

IV.

Winter had gone and spring was born,
But still the memory was clear
Of that strange night; and at breaking morn
She seemed the angels' songs to hear.

But Marie failed as spring increased,
And went her ways with languid foot;
No ill she had, but often ceased
Her work as though no thing might boot.

One night she slept not, and the air
Was hot and stifling in the house.
She rose and pressed her shaken hair
Back from her eyes and straight white brows.

She watched the sombre valley grow
In silver brightness as the moon
Climbed up the hills of clouds below
Into the empty night: and soon

The memory of her dream grew strong,
Till in the night she walked once more;
Slept, and returning after long
She met her mother at the door.

"O thou for Gaston all too pure!
O thou who pratest well of Heaven!
I did but think: now am I sure.
Thus is good God's intended given!

"Thou movest slowly—this the cause;
God bring thou diest on thy bed!"
For powerless rage she made a pause,
While Marie gazed as one half-dead.

"Mother," she cried, "but what is this?"
"Harlot," the other shrieked, "be still!
The maid too pure to wed this is:
Too pure! so thou hast had thy will!"

She seized her daughter's slender wrists
And thrust her downward. "Speak his name—
Who is thy lover? One with fists
Full of red gold to buy thy shame?

"Or good to see—say, who is he?"
She flung the girl away in wrath,

Who slowly rose and falteringly,
As falteringly her words came forth.

"Thou knowest well no man I know,
Thou knowest that I know no shame.
Thou wilt not hear ?—then let me go.
What is thy talk about one's name ?

"What is my sin ? Yea, tell me this."
"O fool," the mother said, "thy shame
The shame of one unwedded is
Who bears a child without a name."

The day came flowing up the east
Incarnadine with shame or love;
And then awhile for Marie ceased
The darkness of the light above.

She woke upon her bed when day
Had won a greater space from night,
She flung the coverlet away,
And rose to watch the reddening light.

To shield her from the orient glow
She raised her hands, and half afraid
Saw two marks red on wrists of snow:
Bruises her mother's clasp had made.

She dropped her eyes; her silver feet
Were gallèd by her heavy shoes.
She let her robe fall, and where meet
Bosom and waist there was a bruise.

Five bruisèd wounds on her body fair,
Two on her wrists, two on her feet,
A scar beneath her red-gold hair
And a bruise beneath her bosom's beat.

She stood in unclad purity;
Her bosom wore the morning's rose.
Even so the sun in the winter sky
Reddens the heights of winter snows.

"O the Stigmata! Holy God!
O Holy Mother, blessed be!
For I, I am the Mother of God!
O Mary, Thou hast chosen Me!"

Swooning she sank, and summer through,
As the year waxed in heat and light,
Wrapped in her awful joy she knew
Nor night from day, nor day from night.

Across the whitened rafters played
Fair shapes and shadows fever-born,
And voices sweet from morn to morn
And wandering holy visions strayed
In rhythmic fields of golden grain,
And over silent moonlit plain
Grey mournful ghosts a pageant made.

But when at last the child was born,
The child that was to conquer earth,
Only she had a son to mourn;
Thus was the great Christ's second birth.

Only when dying, when the priest
With ghastly face said, bending low,
" Bring her the child—this is the least
And most—and then she will not know :"

The setting sun shone low and clear
And lit the cloth about its head.
It seemed a halo resting there.
They breathed: "She knows not it is dead."

Nay—for she looked on it awhile,
And whispered with a fearful smile:
" Blessed Mary Mother be,
Mary who hast chosen Me."

She faintly turned upon her side,
And stretched white arms forth wearily.
She spoke these words before she died:
" Mary Sister, hail to Thee."

The priest in hollow tone groaned low,
" She goeth, she in peace doth go.
Mary forgive thy soul through me,
Mary who hath taken thee."

To the Doubting Mistress.

FEAR not thou love's decrease, who art so sweet
That one must love for this
Even though in evil ways should walk thy feet,
So great thy beauty is.
Yet fear not that for this alone I pray
Gift of thy life to mine.
Thy body that doth visibly portray
Thy soul to me, I love:
Could I forget it? So regret not, dear,
Nor have thou any fear
That coming years our one life may untwine,
Or memory of thine inmost heart remove.
And in our life that shall grow one so soon
Shall I not always see
In every word of thine and every deed
What now thy perfect eyes show unto me?
So thou hast little need
Of beauty: yet thank God for this great boon.

If with thy body's age should age thy soul
So for thyself alone
I could not love thee, even then the whole
Of perfect years bygone
Should make thee still belovèd to the last,
Since I should see in thee
Always the girl whose memory I shall love.
For, all the world above,
Thou, Dear, wouldst bring me closest to the past,
Thou alone bring thine old self back to me.

Two Women.

I.

HOW should I love you, being not like her?
Her beauty was as night, yours as the sun.
Her face was calm as sleeping lilies are,
Her grey eyes still as evening begun.
A lily was my Love, you are a rose,
Your eyes like heaven when the day's half run:
Being not like I cannot love you, Sweet.

II.

O God! you seem her ghost, her very self!
Be not so like, who cannot be the same!
You hold her very sorrow in your eyes,
And voice that comes to me as her voice came!
To see is to remember, so to grieve,
To love you were to ever hear her name,
And ever mourn. . . . I dare not love you, Sweet!

Love's Vanity.

YOU have broken my life and my heart,
You have played for my soul and won;
We may kiss and remember and part,
But what you have done is done.

I wept out my heart at your sorrow:
You thought the sorrow my own.
You played with my love on the morrow
That pity for you had sown.

I wish I might learn to hate you,
But then were I utterly base.
I can but vainly await you,
Who never will turn your face.

There is nought in my life that is human
Save uttermost pity of you.
O hateful and suffering woman,
Look now at your lover and see:
I never did aught but love you,
But what have you done to me?

To a Woman of the Streets.

DESIRE as pure as thirst or hunger is
Until men fence it round and call it sin,
Save folk pay toll before they enter in
To motley crowd of priest and matron: this,
Because thou hast not paid, is called thy vice.
So thou alone of women hast thy price?
What, has none other sold her breast to kiss?

Thy shame the less is this, and theirs the more,
Matron and priest, that pander each to each
Laws that declare what Nature will not teach,
Who veil Her truths, who make and name thee whore,
Who trample thee to keep an unspotted hem.
Ah, that some voice Divine might say to them:
"No man condemns, but I. Go, sin no more."

Amor Corporis.

"VERILY love is great," the mother said,
"Love between wife and husband. But this tie
That binds my babe to me is holier.
There is no tie on earth so pure as this,
Nor any so unselfish." "No?" I said:
"What of the perfect trust of soul to soul,
The love that gives, but never asks again,
That seeks in love to purify itself,
That bears long cruelty without a cry?
Reason is here: 'tis love of heart and head.
But this love for your child,—is this the same?
Is one or other purer for this love?
Why, is not this almost the only thing
You share—at least, the only thing you share
Almost unaltered, with the lowest brute?"
"And therefore," said she, flushing angrily,
"The holier, binding all things great and small."
"O yes," I said, "and lust, and anger, too?"

Hesternæ Rosæ.

I.

STILL in the darkness I am waiting here:
Tired as I am I have no heart to die.
Dead are the flowers that were once so dear,
And dead the sweetness of all years gone by,
And only has Death spared the memory
Of all that was and never more may be;
And lest that too be lost to me I fear,
Therefore I pray that Death will come not here.

Come not to me, O Death,
Thou who hast stilled her breath:
Take thou not from me bereft
All of her that thou hast left,
But leave to me
Her sacred memory.

II.

Once in my garden gay
Dreaming at break of day
Sweet was the flowers' scent;
Lilies and roses fair
Shone in the fragrant air,
Quivered and shook and bent.

But a Reaper reaping near
Among my neighbour's corn
Broke down the wall of my garden
When scarce had lived the morn,

And mowed down the roses and lilies
That had shone so fair i' the dawn.

Now in my garden grey
I wander at close of day
Among a host of phantoms sweet
Of flowers that were fair
Pale in the chilly air;
Though the flowers are not, yet still their ghosts
are swaying round my feet.

Here while I live they shall grow,
Nor fade as the seasons pass,
Nor wither for frost nor snow,
Nor droop on the sodden grass.
The visions that comfort me
None other than I may see;
Flowers of my soul, ere it pass
They shall fade not utterly.

O weep that thy flowers are dead,
But rejoice that their phantoms pale
Are blowing around thy head:
Till their life with thine is fled
That no blossom shall ever fail.

No care is needed now:
I may not tend my garden in these days.
No fragrant flowers that bow
Are bruisèd when a rough wind plays.
Pale and faded, but changeless now,
I have them round me till the end of my
lonely days.

But the Reaper one day
Shall stride through the broken wall,
And shall take my life away.
Glad would I give him all
Since my flowers are torn
From the ground that is barren of seed,
And the fruitless years are forlorn
Of any hope or deed.

But the ghostly flowers that live
In my sight to comfort me
Are all that the years shall give
Of beauty past to see:
Therefore I dread the day
When the Reaper's scythe shall sever
Fair stems that shall die for ever,
That shall utterly pass away.

III.

Because the night has come we do not weep,
Knowing that soon shall come the birth of day:
Yet what if darkness never passed away,
And if eternally should be no sleep?
Surely remembrance would be bitterness:
And yet the sense that once day was *would bless*
Our sorrow, and at length we should not weep.

When of old darkness came and I alone
The night endured,
The darkness was not very hard to bear,
With day assured:
But what of night that never looks for dawn,
Of heartache never cured?

In the night without end
Should we gather where torches flare
And speak friend to friend
In the flickering sickly glare,
Try to live as of old
In a make-believe daylight there?
Or past day bewailing,
Sickening for death,
Breathe sighs unavailing
With every breath?

After a little while of hot despair
I think that we should ponder on the past
Saying: *'Tis gone, but it was very fair.*
The night is desert, but our lot is cast.
Earth is not wholly ill: for though night last,
The day was once, and it was very fair.

IV.

Love, I shall never kiss thee now,
But once I kissed
Sweet lips and eyes and almost hidden brow
And supple wrist:
Kisses that taught me how
Love's plenitude by other men is missed.
I weep that I shall never kiss thee now:
Should I not weep more had I never kissed?

Love, I shall never kiss thy lips again,
Nor know again the fragrance of thy breast;
And though for thee is never any pain,
And though for thee is now unending rest,

Thou art not *thou* to know it, overborne
And scattered utterly as wisps are torn
And whirled from what was once the thrush's nest.

Because of this my heart is very tired;
What thou wouldst wish I have no strength to work;
No wish to go where secret sorrows lurk,
No heart to take what once I so desired.
No praise is sweet save thine who art not now;
No hand but one long dead may cool my brow;
Because of this my heart is very tired.

Yet still remembrance of thy pure pale face,
Thy low soft voice and yielding throat of white,
Comfort me sadly in the quiet night;
Yea, and the world is not so drear a place
Nor wholly wrong, if ever such things were;
So of all things I hold thy memory dear,
Who yet do live in memory's despite.

None other loved thee as I loved thee, Sweet.
To others now thy misty eyes are dead,
Yet wilt thou live till all my days are sped
In well-beloved ways where trod thy feet.
But Death shall take thy memory from me,
Shall kill what liveth of thee utterly;
So with sick heart I wait till I am sought.
Yet to the last I have this perfect thought:
None other loved thee as I loved thee, Sweet.

A Soul's Progress.

I.

SO weary of the round of common things,
So weary of my life that's vain, I said:
Shall I not know the strong hope comforted
And fearless sight that perfect trusting brings?
I have but known the forerunner who sings
His Master's advent when his feet are sped:
Love is not born, and yet I deemed him dead.

Are all things vain? yet Love remains to thee.
Thou art not blind: thy very eyes shall see
The unrevealed signs of what shall be.

II.

Ripe is the fruit and near at hand to-day,
Low hang the blossoms on the tree, I said:
Yet shall I gain by any change of way?—
Pleasures die quickly; and when years are sped,
When all Desires with clinging Hopes are dead,
When years that none can stay bring Death to me,
What shall remain of all their sweets to see?

Live thou at ease, one saith, but shut thine eyes!
Live, take thy fill, but hear not the World's cries:
Take what thou mayst, for Death shall bring no prize.

III.

Willing for striving, yet my hands are fast:
Seeing the whole I cannot work alone.

What though I seek to ease my brother's moan
For very loneliness I faint at last.
There is no profit in all pleasure past;
I will not seek the pleasure that might be,
Knowing how vain a thing it were to me.

Hast ears and canst not hear the weary moan?
Art blind, who yet hast burden of thine own?—
Yet it may be thou canst not work alone.

IV.

Lost dreams and longings and desires that cease:
These, did I say, encompass me around,
Nor may I ever find a little peace
Until the great Desire of life be found.
Then strength shall come, and Life be nobly crowned:
For love to love shall not unheeding cling,
But, hand in hand, fail not in any thing.

Work thou and hope; and love if Love be thine.
Hope thou for Love on all thy ways to shine,
And soul no less than flesh to intertwine.

V.

I had no strength, I said: now Love shall give
Strength to be doubly mine. Yet though thou art
My soul's sweet mistress while we both shall live
Love is not mine except a little part,
Though all thy grief has place within my heart,
Filling the place that grew for Love to fill;
So strength has come not, and I wait it still.

Hope thou and live, and love: thou art not mine,
Yet let thy life with my life intertwine:
Love and take heart: my love and life are thine.

VI.

What though Love be not mine? I love thee now
More than reward of fairest life untold.
What of thy shame? Ah, Love, thy perfect brow
And eyes more perfect certain promise hold
Of perfect goodness. Might my love unfold
And watch thy goodness budding, surely then
My love had fate not hoped by other men.

No sin nor shame the knell of love may toll;
Love is grown strong: the perfect woman's soul
Needs not my love for help, but thou, the whole.

VII.

Now thou art come so very near to me,
So very near, though never mine thou art,
Body nor troubled soul, shall I not see
The secret things of shame within thy heart?
Yea, and in all thy sorrow take my part
Now that thy soul indeed is mine to know,
Loving thee better, being less below.

Fear we and doubt, reach holiness through grief:
Doubt and yet work, nor weep, for life is brief,
And ours the eyes that see the ungarnered sheaf.

* * * * *

VIII.

You wish no love of mine, except to own.
Once I was blind who see too clearly now;
But I am calm; there is not any moan
On my tired lips at last for Hope laid low.
I sought to see a woman in your brow,
Your eyes, your speech, your silence. There is none;
Only my love may never be undone.

Child, in your weakness let my own strength be,
Lest even to love you I unworthy be.
Leave me not here forsaken utterly:
I have no strength—except you lean on me.

Unknown Days. I.

WE walked from her home one day toward town,
And the summer fields gave way to lanes
Where fragrance floated and sun shone down.
There, as at night complains
The falling sea to stream on upland hill,
The city's constant murmuring
Droned as an undercurrent to her voice,
The sweet notes, moonlight-silvern, glimmering
On the dark turbid river of faint noise,—
The encroaching bruit of ill.

She turned at one house, white among cool limes:
Her birthplace, so she said,
And thitherward her school, and in old times
This was the daily way she used to tread,
And trod at last with me: but O the days,
The desolate days before we met!
So many lonely days and ways:
O waste of love and life! O strange regret!
And yet,
O Sweet, this pure unsought delight:
Your saddened youth grown young again and white!

II.

THE days when we had never met!—
What were you then? Ah, very slim,
With pale warm cheek I love to kiss,
But none had kissed it then: the dim,
Vague, unexpectant smile that is
A fairer semblance of regret:
With scarce a touch of woman yet,
But slender straight limbs, delicate,
As now, revealèd more than hid:
Ah, Sweet! the place is dedicate
To you—the white-thorn tree where slid
The sudden linnet, gave to you
A blossom for your morning gown;
And here before the murmuring town
Had thrown us two together—two,
But one, I like to think, at last,—
Here every morn of maidenhood
You walked alone, and, morning past,
The white house held you. It is good
To feel your past not quite so far:
For I want all of you—but, ah!
I only have the years to be:
The dear years dead are not for me.

III.

ONE sorrow I have always, strange and sad,
But sweet as sad; and thinking what I will,
Even in your white arms it is not still:
Even in your embrace it is not glad,
It is, that I have never loved or known
Your virginal sweet youth, white-blossoming,
Your lonely maidenhood—O holy thing!—
Nor days of desolate reverie, long alone.

For this my heart is ever sorrowing,
My heart that knew its loss in finding love;
Though you I have, with all the years may bring,
Though with grief-given strength I love you, yet
There was this maid I never learnt to love:
I sorrow for this mistress never met.

IV.

THIS, Dear, I would have had my love to do:
To have kissed soft tears to being on the brink
Of your sad eyes—to have kissed the tears away:
To have thought one thought even as now we think
Of glad hope then, of hope deflowered to-day:
This, Sweet, I would have had my heart to do.

Love was not born, though you had need of me;
You wept for love: I was not there to see!

V.

HERE she trod as a maiden low-bosomed
Her virginal way:
Here the flower of her springtime blossomed
That is faded to-day.

The hawthorn and hedgeflower saw her
Unspoiled, undefiled;
When the spring of her life was before her
These bloomed for the child.

I have fled from the streets of the city
That girt us around;
But the place of her shame has no pity:
Ah, the horrible sound!

I have fled from the sights that reminded
Of anguish and sin;
For here to her spirit unblinded
No shame entered in.

Remember and ever remember!
I am crushed by my doom.
By the light of the smouldering ember
I see my heart's gloom.

The ways where I met her were better,
Yet I wander, I know not why,
In the ways where I never met her:
I shall haunt them, I think, till I die.

VI.

THE shuddering rain is falling
Down from the gloomy boughs;
The shivering sparrows calling
Tweet by the mournful house.
The grey cold drops are falling
On the wilderness of grass;
And the rain and the sparrows calling
Wax as the minutes pass.
The flowers are straggling and broken
That she plucked for the breast of her gown.
The doom of the world seems spoken,
And the grey rain rustles down.
The curtainless windows darken,
Blind as a dead man's eyes;
There is nothing to hear as I hearken
But the rain's mad harmonies:
Mad with monotonous weeping,
Dull with the soul of despair:
Yet here in the shadows creeping
The sunlight dappled her hair.
Here where her girlhood budded
There is desolation alone,
And the grief of the day, slow-blooded,
Moaning its crepitant moan.
The creeper is torn from her casement
That stares as the eye of a skull.
I have known Hope's lowest abasement,
And my heart with despair is full.
She went down to Death in her downfall:
I never shall see her again.
Instead of her light swift footfall
The sullen drip of the rain.

In Hades.

I AM alone beside the shoreless sea,
Beside the barren country mountainless,
Where all is grey, and even misery
Has found no voice, and passion no caress.

Even in dying after you were dead
I laughed: "Had ever man a kinder fate—
To dwell in Hades and be comforted
By love of her: for him, most perfect hate?

"What man had ever loved and hated so?
At last my soul shall know itself a man!"
Alas! in entering here all love must go,
And go all hate upgrown since love began.

I killed you, Sweet, lest you should grow too vile.
I worshipped you; I could not let you grow
Profaned, defiled. Now whoso would defile
Ashes, himself is ashes. Be it so.

I am not sorry that I killed you, Sweet.
I could not help you: it was grown too late.
I saw the stain upon your heedless feet,
The shameless shame. I could not learn to hate.

If I might know who neither love nor hate
How long ago I laid upon your breast?
Are we but newly dead, or is it late
So we are grown to dust, and laid to rest?

But here in Hades I may never know
Your face, for here eternally alone
Wander the souls that vaguely come and go,
And yet for very misery may not moan.

I am alone beside the sullen sea,
Beside the deathly country mountainless,
Where all is grey, and even misery
Has found no voice, and passion no caress.

Rosa Mortis.

I FOUND a hillside garden of the dead,
In dreams; and found a grave unkept, unknown.
A rose-briar blossomless was at its head,
And all around the feathery grass had grown,
Wherefrom continually there went a moan
Borne on the wind, and these the words it said:
And the grave seemed my own:

"I can no longer see you, who am dead. Alas!
Roses in spring about my grave had grown,
That were my eyes; but now is nought but grass
Where the winds moan.

"No longer on the hillside I may see
My untilled poppied fields unharvested,
Ruined by winter, passed unheedingly
Now I am dead.

"If you had but a little pity shown,
Had pitying taken of my ruined store,
I should lie quieter where the lone winds moan.
I had no more.

"Now I am still on the hillside above you.
If you had kissed me but to go again
It might have been as bitter that I love you,
But not so vain.

"The woodland ways are wet and grey with mist,
And o'er the fields the wailing breezes sough:

But not the breezes that your tresses kissed;
It is not summer now.

"I am now blind: but when spring comes again,
Sweet, if you kiss one rose that sways, half-blown,
To reach your lips, my rest will be less vain
Where the winds moan."

And in the greyness of that ghostly place
A veilèd figure went as though in pain.
I knew her, though I could not see her face
For all the silent rain.

The Solitary.

GIVE me rest, O God! for my heart is weary of roses,
I am weary of fruitless flowers, I am tired of all sweet sound;
I am weary of men and their ways: my heart is a flower that closes
Because nor the winds nor the dew have sought it upon the ground.

Give me sleep, O God! Thy world is fair, I have loved it:
But to me it is mournful as though there were none to love it but I.
Give me no joy who decreed my eye should be sole that approved it:
Mock me no longer at length: let me that am long dead, die.

For I scarce am one of the living: and how should I go to them now,
I, who am not of their kind, who am all unlearned in their ways?
But the dead are equal, the dead are quiet, the dead allow
Every man for a brother, to sleep with them all his days.

Fair was the gift of life Thou gavest in the beginning,
But not Thine, not Thine to-day is the gift that men buy and sell;

It has passed through a thousand hands, it is marred
by a thousand's sinning,
The gift that unless a man have perfect, it is not
well.

When the wind soughs over the weary dead, and the
white stars shine
Faint in the blue when the day flees through the
western gate,
Might I but know that I slept, no lonely lot should
be mine:
For I should be one with the dead; for the living,
I should but wait.

Fain am I for sleep, for my heart is weary of roses;
I am weary of all things vain, and that all is vain
I know.
In the name of a shadow I cry for peace—and peace
reposes
Only where none may know it: where every one
shall go.

Helen.

STILL in the little balcony
She stands against the curving rail,
Facing the light wind silently
That gently comes to fan and fail:
And dark behind her sunlit hair
The shivering poplars in the square.

She stands a little leaning to
The soft wind lost among the streets,
As if to greet this stranger, who
From outland ways and open sweets,
Bright seas where the white vessel slips,
Has come to greet her weary lips.

The lost wind comes to kiss your hair,
Stirring the dust adown the street.
The poplars glitter in the square;
Beneath their shade the listless feet
Of children tread the shrivelled grass,
More weary than the hours that pass.

Poor Nature, fenced and walled around,
So lonely in this wilderness!—
Poor, yet belovèd none the less,
Bearing no censure for her bound:
So, somewhat short of the divine,
Shall any blame you, Helen mine?

We all are failures, love of mine,
Save those who never strove, to fail:

Who love the respectably divine,
Who build their souls of gain and sale;
But you, the lost and saved between,
Have yet escaped the sordid mean.

Poor child! who knows what sunlit plain
Had cradled this sick heart of yours:
What years of loving, strong and sane,
Had filled your life? While life endures
I shall thank God that I have seen
The woman that you might have been.

God help me! Must I always see
The woman you will never be?

Her Room Forsaken.

DUSK, and the grey day's gloom,
And cries of the street in the little room:
Nothing is here that was hers.
Tattered paper, dusty floor,
Broken panes, and the wind at the door—
I and the wind, poor wanderers!

Oh, God! I throw myself down!
The mouldering smell of the place is the odour of death!
And here—here swept her maiden's gown,
Here I felt her breath,
When her wrists were about my head, and my lips at her breast,
And I was at rest.

What is that in the wail of the wind?
Mournful wind, why should you cry like that?
Weep—I will weep with you till I am blind,
But—ah! like that!
Why should you haunt me with the melody
Of all she played to me, pitiless wind?

I see the light of the fire—
Rosy light on the face that ever was white by day—
Light on her fingers that play
The song of my soul's desire;
There is scent of her hair on the air,
And her face is turned from me;
And the gathering melody

Passionate—higher—
O my love, my love grows greater than I can bear!

Why do I start and stare through the dreary gloom?
There is nought but the wind, and death, and I in
the room.

Oh, why do you mock me, wind?—
For you know she never will come again.
I do not think you are weeping, wind—
I hear no tears on the window-pane;
But there's rain in my heart and tears on my face
In this accursèd, belovèd, forsaken place.

The Sandhills at Leuchars.

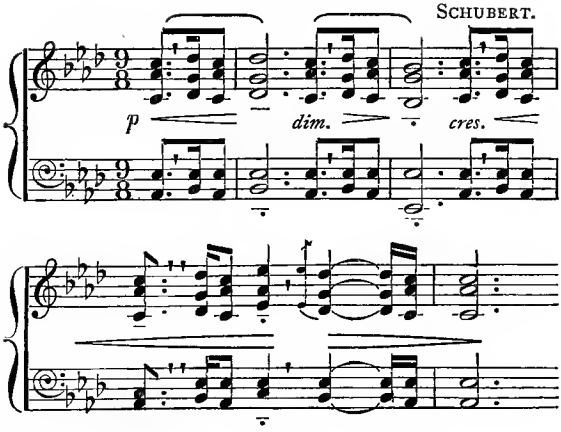
SINCE I am very weary, I will go away,
Away from the horrible streets, the unthinking crowd,
Over the moors and away afar to the sea,
Down by the windy sands and the swift white spray,
Where the broken music of billows, blown faint or loud,
Shall sweep on the wind to me.

There in the sun I will close my eyes,
And scarlet the light shall glow, and the sun's warmth fall
Over my face : I shall hear above it all
The scattered song of an inland lark,
And the white gull's cries.
I will turn my face to the cool smooth sands, and all shall be dark.

For I will lie in the sandhills, still in the sun,
And there no sound shall be but the sea-wind's song,
And the slow faint thunder of breakers borne along,
With the rustle of flying sand, on the wind that seethes in the grass :
And there as the long hours pass—
I still and at peace in the sun—
The sound of it all shall seem
As the voice of a dream in a dream.

A dream shall be my life, and a dream regret;
  A far dream all but peace shall be.
I will forget all men, and one woman I will forget;
  I will go down, down to the sea:
She shall kill me with cool caresses, shall kill my
    pain.
Long, long after again
She shall lay me to rest on the earth I have loved,
    when all is done,
Where nought of a man shall be but white bones laid
    in the sun.
I will lie in the kiss of the winds and the sun, I shall
    hear the voice of the deep:
I shall mix and be one with the life of it all; and yet
    I shall sleep.

SONNETS.



"Love Among the Ruins."

For the Picture by Burne-Jones.

MIDMOST the ruined palace of our dream
Sit we, Beloved, ever side by side
And hand in hand. I think your eyes espied
Sad Hope's grey garments when the loveless gleam
Of day first fell upon us; now you seem
Gazing, to watch her ever, to decide
Whether at last she vanish, to deride,
Or dwell for ever in our wakened dream.

I have no sight of Hope, so never lift
My eyes from your dear head. But raise your own:
Gaze not through thornèd roses overgrown
Through all our palace, and in every rift;
So I, in eyes that have a holier gift,
May see Hope's image once ere it is flown.

"Beata Beatrix."

For the Picture by Rossetti.

BEATRICE, the flower of sleep is near thee now,
The heavy-scented flower that brings thee peace:
Now in the slumbrous southern day's increase
Thy tresses hold an aureole round thy brow
Shed from the glow of Florence in the sun:
Thine eyes are closed for very blessedness,
Seeing the glory thou hast almost won,
That others see thy yearning face confess.

So Dante, dreaming of thy quiet face,
Thy full lips longing, yet in part content,
Remembering, caught a little of thy grace,
And wrought in words the thoughts thy beauty lent,
Whose truths grow actual to us who see
This dream thy lover's namesake dreamt of thee.

Devotion.

MAY the unworthy for the good feel love,
Or only worship, reverence, respect?
I know not, but I know that they would prove
That their devotion overcomes defect:
All that is strong in me for evil now
Should turn to love you if you wished it so,
Love you and serve you, serve I care not how
So that I serve, and your approval know.
For if your soul were noble, mine were brave,
And if your heart were faint, my arms were strong
To hold you fast and shelter you as long
As life were given us, until the wave
Eternity, on-rolling, take us both
Still loving after love, and little loth.

To A—.

BECAUSE of friendship and the open mind
Wherewith my own once found a little ease,
Meeting so strangely over world-wide seas,
I thank thee now: yet wert thou chiefly kind
In leading me to one whose sorrows bind
My soul to hers that nothing can appease,
Nor any time, but only Death release,
Save one alone who craven is or blind.

For this I thank thee, seeing that she bore
Not pain alone, but joy within her hand;
Seeing the soft wind of her coming fanned
The rank mists into clouds, so light the more
Broke through the interspaces: once so poor,
Now have I light and shade at my command.

Transition.

WITH Hope I wandered down an alley green
The walls whereof were green boughs interlaced.
A soft wind travelled by me as I paced,
Toward the light that at the entrance seen
Enticed me forward; as I drew anear
I saw bright hills and meadow-lands outspread.
"The daylight is not all I gain," I said:
"The world lies open to me, wide and clear."

Hope has fled back, and I have reached the end;
The world is open: whither should I go?
And who may tell me every secret bend
Of many paths that wander high or low?
Drear the world seems and wide; and who may lend
A hand where all are lost?
Nay—seek and know!

The Secret.

FROM THE FRENCH OF FÉLIX ARVERS.

MY soul its secret hath, its mystery:
A love eternal in a moment born.
The ill is hopeless—silently I mourn,
And she who wrought it nothing knows of me.
I shall pass near her—ah! she will not see!
I shall go near her but to grow forlorn,
And, when my earthly days are quite outworn,
I, asking nought, shall unrewarded be.

For she, whom God so tender made and sweet,
Will go her way, distraught, and will not hear
This murmur of my love that tracks her feet;

But, faithful to her duteous way austere,
Will say, in reading this of her replete:
"Who is this woman?"—being unaware!

Blossom and Bud.

FEAR not I love alone thy body's grace
Because thy soul less wholly perfect is;
I could not love thee, Sweet, the less for this.
See the two flowers plucked a little space;
The wild rose nestling at thy fairer breast,
Beloved for beauty any man may see,
And bud unopened, that thy lips caressed,
Beloved for all its beauty that might be.

Even as the full rose is thy body fair,
So do I love it, and as secret power
Of perfect beauty is the green bud's dower
It also is thy soul's; and this my prayer:
Might my love woo it as the summer's air,
And watch it pass into the perfect flower.

"Not Goodbye!"

NAY, by my life I will not say goodbye,
Or, having gone, I must refuse to live.
You may not love, but what you can give, give,
Nor make hard fate thus harder by the lie:
"Our fate has parted us, so bid goodbye."
Easy it is to say we shall forget:
Easy to think it? Nay, O Sweet, and yet
This thing were well: but must I therefore die?

"Our fate has parted us?" Nay, cruel bliss,
But made us twain and me to love you, Sweet!
Strike not this last blow in my life's defeat:
Bid me not go: take help if trouble is:
I will be glad—yea, I am glad for this;
For this is life.
(Yet death were more complete.)

To One Playing.

SURELY your soul lives in the air to-night;
Each cadence a caress, a kiss each chord;
In violet-vistaed sound the flaming sword
That drave first love is whirling, and the height
Of crystal melody gives my soul sight
Of heavens of love by my love's utmost floored:
Your soul throbs out upon the air its hoard
Of passion and remembrance, wrong and right.

O Heart's Desire! is the love all your own.
Or do your lover's kisses linger there,
Pressed on white fingers and on loosened hair
You touched awhile ago? For kisses sown
With so sweet fruit of sound upon the air
Take these fresh kisses for my kisses strown.

Harmony.

HIGH on the cliff above the fretful sea,
Where breezes kiss the pine-woods slumbrously,
I lie in fragrant shade, while Memory
Carries some message from my Love to me:
Some poise of head, or half-forgotten tear,
Making desire grow sweet, as near at hand
The nightingale's swift-pulsing love-song clear
Blends with the surge's seething on the sand.

The liquid notes that ripple through the night,
The moonlit rhythm of the sleepless sea,
The sudden wilful waves upon the shore,
And restless thoughts that flicker as the light,
With sigh of wandering wind, in harmony
Sing of all love with mine for evermore.

Morning.

IS she asleep? I think she partly wakes,
But dreaming yet: her happy eyes are still,
And softly curtained by her lashes till
Her soul its journey from some dreamland makes.
Where does she wander? Ah, to join her there!
Yet O to kiss her faintly hollowed cheek!
Nay, lest she wake too soon I must not speak:
O sweet unrest that I may hardly bear!

To rest by her warm body am I fain,
Watching slow breathing stir a wanton tress;
Yet long to sleep, to ease the happy pain
Of soul that longs her dreamland way to bless;
O, but the rush of soul to flesh again,
The two made one reaching to my caress!

Self-Deception.

ONCE I met Love when all his joy had flown,
As through dim woodlands he went wandering,
And so he spake: "'Twould seem a happy thing
That she has gone from me, if all were known.
So long and wearily I lived alone,
But little comfort to her could I bring;
Tongue-tied was I, and best words faltering
Whereby my holy passion I might own.
So silent love would but her soul confine:
What if to hold her weary were my lot?
What if with bound desire her heart grew hot?
Thank God for her dear sake she is not mine."
But in his eyes I saw his pure soul shine,
And knew he spake what he believèd not.

Past Love.

I STROVE to put Love's memory away,
Knowing him dead I shuddered at his wraith;
There should come none like Love: I fled from
Faith,
Who to my darkness falsely promised day:
I fled from Memory, and free at last
Struggled and laughed and wantoned in despair,
When, lo! the soul of him I fled in fear
Shone as a star unsetting down the past.

Ever through stirless night the star shines still;
I would not have the light of day again.
The calm pure peace of night is not so ill
That I would change it for the sudden pain
Of clear strong day where loves and striving are.
I gaze long down the past at dead Love's star.

Injustice.

ONE said: Thy heart is very fain for peace;
The storm and stress of life oppress thee sore:
Is sleep so sweet? then strive and work the more,
Since sleep grows nearer with thy life's increase.
Be brave and strong in this thy day of life,
Since sleep shall come at last to pay for this:
Deep sleep wherein no thought of misery is,
Wherein thou shalt remember not thy strife.

I said: O fool, thou knowest that the night
Is welcome for the thought of coming day
With strong hope re-awakened and fresh strength;
And dawn is sweet because the distant length
Of day within our memory still doth stay:
Truly I sleep, but who dare say 'tis right?

A Creed.

GONE are the days of first unknowingness
When men saw not themselves, knowing not
the world:
Now Reason blindly with swift wings unfurled
Seeking false visions, seeketh Life the less.
Now are the days when Man, being wholly blind,
Cursing his brother, seeketh reckoning,
Cursing his own life, false gods worshipping:
Repression, with Power her paramour entwined.

Through great travail shall Man return again;
The time shall dawn of lawless harmony,
Of strong clean love and reverent liberty,
The Golden Age upon the summit of Pain;
The days of calm self-knowledge, wholly sane:
Conscious, intentional simplicity.

Immortality.

THY wisest keeper of thyself be thou.
Nor so well love thy life corporeal
As this thy soul of deeds, whose coronal
Thou twinest, and whose sword thou forgest now.
Yea, bind thy best as favour about his brow,
Who to thy death waxeth, and at thy fall
Shall swell that army immemorial
Of Fate whereunto unborn Time shall bow.

For evil or for good irrevocably,
Till the last sunrise and last sunsetting:
Till among dying men a dying thing
The ultimate harvest of mankind shall lie,
Of thy dead deeds the living soul shall beat
Onward with swift imperishable feet.

Futility.

AS one who, wondering, reading with closed ears,
Letting his hands fall down a musing-space,
Hears the world surge into his silent place,
Or feels in dreams the falling of past tears:
Or as a swimmer in the sea's embrace
From emerald stillness floats to air once more
To hear the crash of surges on the shore,
To feel the sting of spray upon his face:
So—to one dreaming that with sure feet Right
Shall follow strong Injustice, when shall be
Good sprung of Evil's ashes, and the Past
By Futures pinnacled—there sounds at last,
From wave-worn islands of Eternity
The murmuring of sorrows infinite.

FINIS.

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