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MICHAEL VILLIERS, IDEALIST

AND OTHER POEMS

MICHAEL VILLIERS, IDEALIST

AND OTHER POEMS

only BY
E. H. HICKEY

AUTHOR OF 'VERSE-TALES, LYRICS, AND TRANSLATIONS'
'A SCULPTOR AND OTHER POEMS,' EDITOR OF BROWNING'S 'STRAFFORD'

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MICHAEL VILLIERS, IDEALIST

TO
HENRY AND LAURA JULIA HOWGRAVE GRAHAM

*Were the grapes ripe whereof this wine was brewed?
I know not, brother, sister ; but I know
More sunshine came upon them where you stood ;
More genial dews and showers refreshed them so.
This much I set in rime ; and for the rest
The golden silence is indeed the best.*

March 1891.

They had their visions of the perfect State,
Large Plato wisdom-lipt, and quick-souled More,
And Bacon, who knew the spell whereby to soar
From knowledge into power ; the good, the great,
The sons of many an age, early and late,
Have dreamed their dreams, and gone to seek the store
Their dreams had shadowed, on some unknown shore.
Where sight on faith, where good on hope may wait.

Not with their dreams content, nor satisfied
With visions of their visions, glimpses caught
Reflected from the glory of their thought ;
The greater we, because they lived and died,
We seek the Ideal too, that will not hide
Her face for aye when Love and Truth have sought.

MICHAEL VILLIERS, IDEALIST

I

SIR WILLIAM VILLIERS, of Villiers Keep, a man
Of somewhat narrow mind, for which his breadth
Of heart, and generous impulse half atoned,
Brought Michael up, his one dead brother's son,
And heir to all his money and his lands.

Strong-built Sir William was, with mighty frame
Which heeded never stress of heat or cold.
A landowner and Justice of the Peace ;
A kindly lord of the manor ; a genial host ;
His body healthy and his footstep firm ;
His brain not over-fiercely exercised
Upon the *Times*, and *Field*, and *County News*.
His brother John, cast in a kindred mould,
If somewhat broader-souled and narrower-backed,
Was heir to lands and title ; William said

He liked his freedom overmuch to wive.
I know not if the jest were meant or no
To hide some wound his life was hurt withal
When John was hardly more than schoolboy yet ;
But William brought no wife to Villiers Keep,
So John was heir to all ; and William said
That Jack would make the best of masters when
He, come before him by a score of years,
Slept with his fathers in the mother-earth.

One year John hunted on the Irish lands,
And met the orphan girl with violet eyes,
And sweet pathetic mouth, and silver voice
That lingered o'er familiar English words
With new strange music ; and John Villiers, thus
Beholding, loved the maid, and won her love.
She was the one great passion of his life,
She the one poem he was fain to read ;
And he was passion and poem both to her.
She came with him unto the English home,
Where he was master as his brother's self,
And made it very lovely with the light
Of her dear presence ; but, as time wore on,
She waxed most lily-pale, and her small face
Seemed all a light of wonderful great eyes,
And gossips shook their heads ; but Villiers thought

Within himself that when the day were come
Of mother-joy to her, and pride to him,
The bonny girl would be herself once more.
Then, as her time drew near, he read some wish
Unuttered, in the depth of her dear eyes,
And prayed her tell it ; and she clasped his hands,
Saying, ' I fain would bring our little one
Into the light of day on Irish ground.'
And John laughed out that cheery laugh of his,
And said, ' Amen ! our eldest son shall see
Your Irish day, and hear the Irish brogue,
And learn it too, if so his mother will.'

And when the day was come for setting forth,
Sir William Villiers gript his brother's hand,
And said in tones that sounded strange and hoarse,
' God bless you, Jack ! bring home the wife and boy'—
They always talked about the boy to come,
As if there were no chance he proved a girl !
The man-child must be first at Villiers Keep,
The brothers said, the maid-child by-and-by—
' We'll call the youngster Michael, after Dad,
Unless our little gold-haired lady have
A fancy otherwise.' And John half laughed,
Saying, ' He shall be Michael, verily,
For so his mother wills him to be called ;

Our father's name ; my Mary's heart was glad
To know it his, albeit she rather thinks
Of that great angel with the death-tipt spear,
His left foot planted on the dragon's head,
Whom Raphael painted. There's a mezzotint,
You know, upon the wall that fronts the couch
She lies on, tired. I take it over sea,
To pleasure her ! If Raphael were alive,
Would we not pray of him audaciously
That he would paint a replica for her ?'

Then soft-fold movement of a woman's dress
Was in the hall, and Mary Villiers stood
To say good-bye ; her small face very pale,
The great eyes ringed about with violet rings,
The bright hair like Saint Mary's aureole.
And William Villiers kissed his brother's wife,
As close he drew her to his breast and held
In gentle-hearted ursine clasp ; and said,
' Jack, take good care of her ! God bless you both !—
God bless you three !' And parting-time was come.

Sir William Villiers owned a great estate
In the fair country of the setting sun ;
A house three centuries old, looking on lawns
Of that fine turf which takes a longer time

In making than a gentleman, they say ;
And many great old trees and, miles beyond,
A mountain-range that caught the tempest's stress
And the fierce ardour of the unveiled sun
Upon a breast of ruggedness, unlike
The delicate rondure of the English downs
That rose in gentle swells by Villiers Keep ;
And more than they in beauty and in might.
But William Villiers thought not how that house
Of his was based upon a nation's wrong,
Its walls cemented with a folk's despair,
Its fields manured with a people's blood.
And his were many homesteads in the land,
Full of the happy light which children make ;
And Mary, born and bred upon the soil,
Knew all the women and men and little ones,
And loved them much, and much was loved by them.

Much gold Sir William drew from this estate,
And spent it all Saint George's other side,
Even as his sires before him always did ;
And left the soil beneath the pitiless hand
Of one who ruled it with an iron rule.

Right glad they were at Lisnagh when they heard
Mary O'Neill would be among them soon,

John Villiers' wife, one day to bear the heir
Of Villiers Keep, and baronet to be.
So men and women drest them in their best,
And as the carriage past the Castle gates,
'Cead mille failthe !' rang from many a throat
Sonorous on the air ; and she looked out,
The great-eyed lady, on the cheering crowd,
While her heart leapt within her, and she smiled
To right and left of her, and bowed her head.

But when at night upon her bed she lay,
That heart of hers was full of a strange light .
Caught from the shining wings of motherhood
Which brooded warm and fair upon her life.
And happy thoughts went softly floating on,
Each with each blended, dear as undefined,
Breathing out scent, and light, and melody,
In one sweet fusion, till her heart was fain
To ease itself with tears. So the night wore,
With no unquiet counting of the hours ;
And just before the dawn there came to her
A sudden dreadful poignancy of joy,
Piercing her soul like pain ; and she cried out,
Her seemed, but John awaking, heard as though
She laughed a little joyous laugh ; and rose
To look upon her lovely face that lay

Sweet in the rippling sunshine of a smile,
In the grey quiet of the faded night ;
Then kissed her with his eyes, because his mouth
Might break the slumber that she needed much,
And laid him down again, saying, ' She dreams !
Sleep on, beloved, and wake to sweeter things
Than sweetest dreams can bring you ! ' And he slept,
Unwitting of the vision Mary saw.

A woman standing by her, with deep eyes
Most beautiful with high resolve and joy,
And the calm lips of one who knows and sees.
And Mary asked her, ' Who and whence art thou ? '

Then the clear words came forth ; ' I am a voice
Of Love who crieth in the city's heart,
And in the lonely wilderness, alike ;
Of Love who calleth, calleth, evermore.
And some of those I call are gross of ear,
And cannot hear the sound ; and some of them
Catch as it were a distant music-strain,
And stay their footsteps for a little while,
Listening and not distinguishing ; and some
Know me for one who singeth pleasantly,
Playing upon a lovely instrument ;

And some, for one who sounds a trumpet-blare,
Of terrible summons to arise and fight.

‘Some of them turn upon their beds of down,
With slumber sealing close their heavy lids ;
While some awake, and hearken for a space,
Then get them to their farms and merchandise.
But others hear a summons like a keen
Bright sword, which thrills, and pierces, and divides
Asunder joints and marrow ; and, for these,
They shall not rest again for agony
Until they cannot rest again for bliss,
For bliss and agony shall grasp and hold,
And rouse them to the passion that must grow
To high resolve and to immortal deed.
Then in their glory and might they shall go forth.

‘I am the giver of dreadful gifts and sweet ;
The seer’s eye, that so a man may see ;
The prophet’s tongue, that so he may declare ;
The soldier’s heart, that he may dare to die ;
The lover’s soul, that he may dare to live.
And all my gifts are branded with a cross ;
My jewels dint and cut the brows they round ;
My stars of glory burn the quivering flesh ;
My purple raiment bites and eats into

The body it clothes, which would not cast it off,
No, not for all the ease of nakedness.
And seeming waste of many a royal gift
Bringeth great bitterness ; strength, genius, love,
Fall even as thickly as the blossoms fall
The blasts forbid to fruit ; and in despite,
And maugre pain and anguish, these my sons
Must know God never wastes, but only spends,
Howe'er it seemeth otherwise ; and this,
Even this faith, shall break the gates of hell.'

And Mary said, 'Take thou mine unborn son,
To shape him as thou wilt.' But those fair lips
Made answer, 'Nay, thy son must give himself ;
For none can give another's soul away ;
Not even the mother, though she consecrate
All strength, all energy, and all desire,
To shape the way the unborn feet shall tread ;
Yea, light the antenatal gloom for him
With all the splendour of hope and faith and love.
Would'st thou indeed thy son should hear my
call ?
Would'st thou thy son should suffer, being born
With infinite desire for all the fair
And good for flesh, and soul, and spirit ; yea,
Be hurt and agonized and crucified,

Tormented with the perilous desire
To have the beautiful and know the true ;
To show the beautiful, and tell the true ?'

' Yea, yea, I would indeed, so he attain
The goal of all high hopes and clean desires ;
So he be giver of the true and good,
Having the kingdom of the good and true.'

' Pray for thy son that he may be of those
Whom God is real to ; and pray for him
That he *get kings, if he himself be none.*'

II

AND Mary pondered much upon these things,
And prayed, until the time was come to her
Which brought the one man-child of all the world,
As every mother deems her first-born son.
She saw his face upon Saint Michael's day ;
The mother who should die at Hallowmas.

And in that little space of motherhood,
She prayed full many a heart-born prayer for him,
The baby Michael, in whose sturdy limbs
His father's strength should grow with growing years ;
The clear-eyed boy, whose lusty life was fed
From a clean-hearted Irish peasant's breast.

Passioned with love and faith she spake to him ;
'Michael, my Michael, I am weak, but thou
Art born no weakling ; thou shalt fight and win ;
Shalt wrestle with the dragon, my beloved,

And beat him down, and pierce his cursed head ;
The dragon of wrath and wrong ; thou trampling him
In thy superb young strength.'

And Mary died.

And now for John the time was out of joint,
Although the boy was born ; and he was changed,
This strong man, who was wont to look as though
He could have borne all blows that Fate could give,
Nor winced at all beneath her buffetings.
So his flesh fell from him ; and in his eyes
There came a look of one who hears a call
From yonder side o' the ferry ; and he died
Before his boy had learned to go alone.

He had no fear nor dread for Michael's sake,
For William Villiers had him in his heart,
His brother's son being even as his own.
So Michael from a child grew to a boy,
A healthy strong-limbed lad, expert at games,
Who swam, and ran, and wrestled, with the best,
And rode cross-country at his uncle's side.
' His father's son,' Sir William proudly said,
But kindlier to his book than Jack had been.
And Michael had the mother's strain ; her eyes
With some unspoken question in their depths ;
The Irish music of her voice ; her hands

Of delicate shape, stronger in muscle and nerve ;
Her Keltic quickness, as it were to leap
Up to a truth, and catch it in the air ;
Albeit when his manhood came to him,
He vext his very soul with questioning
If the fair thing were truth indeed or no.
And there was in him willingness to face
Truth grim for lacking mixture of a lie ;
No willingness to hold a good unshared,
Whate'er it might be, knowledge, gold, or love :
A passionate sense of justice ; not the sense
Which drives a man to wrestle for his right,
Cost what it may ; but that which bids him look
With careful eyes, to see if any wrong
Come of his right to any other man :
A questioning soul that sent upon his lips
Full oftentimes the curious hows and whys
Which posed Sir William and his teachers too,
Although they never thought that they were posed ;
Such as, ' Why do we live at Villiers Keep,
And Gardener Robin in a little house ?
And why do rich folk hunt and fish and ride,
And go to balls, and poor folk work all day ?
And why have I the things I like to have,
For asking, sometimes even for a wish,
While Jim—who is he ? why, Dick Hallett's son,

The boy I told you all about one time,
You know—at Herbert Eyre's, last holidays—
He could not buy a decent pair of boots ;
We bought a pair for him, Herbert and I ;
His father makes so little for his pains ;
He works the whole day long whene'er he can,
And sometimes has not any work to do,
And then he has no money ; Uncle Will,
You've lots of money and you do not work ;
I should so like to know the reason why.'
So on, so on ; questions which met replies,
Such as, ' These things are all ordained, my lad ;
There must be rich and poor in every land ;
But Mr. Eyre of Eyreleigh ought to look
After his tenants better ; you'll not find
Such things at Villiers Keep, I think, my boy !'
' It's true we do not plow, and dig, and hoe,
But we have much to do in other ways ;
And we have what the labourers do not have,
And you will have, one day when I am gone—
Responsibility—that's a big word,
And a big thing ; you'll know it by-and-by.'
' If every man had equal share to-day
In all the wealth that England's owner of,
A year hence one man would be twice as rich,
Another in the workhouse.'

Michael heard
These things again, after he was a boy,
And after he had grappled, might and main,
With the grim problem, Poverty and Wealth.

And many questions stayed in Michael's soul,
Not to die there, but bide their hour ; and time
Went on, and brought him work and holiday,
And friends, and many things that mould a life
Into the beauty narrowness and strain
Hurt often with irreparable hurt.
Sir William said, ' His life shall be as bright
As I can make it, and his tether as long.
If he gets into scrapes,—and who that's worth
A straw avoids them ?—he'll get out again.
Our house has ever kept its honour unstained,
He'll keep it so ; and I will teach the boy,
And yet, perhaps he will not need to learn,
To hurt no woman for his mother's sake ;
And come whatever may, we'll still be friends.'

So Michael had his uncle's love, and knew
Strong was the bond that bound them each to each ;
Albeit his life was fed from many a source
His uncle's had not known. That Nature whom
Sir William knew as maker of dale and down,
Breeder of deer, guardian of fish and game,

Servant of man, especially of men
Who had, like him, their portion in the land,
To Michael was a mystery and delight,
Of spirit not his own, and yet at times
Seeming his own ; a glory and a sheen,
And a shadow and a terror ; and he knew
All the great poems that are living souls,
And greater ones, spirits of quickening ;
And pondered much upon their winged words.
But more he pondered on some things wherein
The shallow-sighted see no poetry.
He looked about the world, and saw and felt
What men were doing and what men had done
In that great land which gave his father birth ;
He mused upon the many-mannered world
Outside of England, thought upon its ways,
But never lingered long away from home,
His uncle being old ; and year by year,
He went to see that land where he was born,
And saw the grave wherein his mother slept ;
And knew each one among the villagers,
His foster-mother and her bonny brood
The best. And Michael Villiers thought and thought,
Having much stuff for thought. He knew each one
Of all the tenantry, and was his friend
As far as might be ; seeing he was set

Away from them by birth and circumstance,
And all those old traditions, strong to bind
And loose, beyond the force of any law ;
He might forget them, but they never could.
And Michael knew the men who loved him much
Were separate from him and all apart
By barriers ; not fine linen and broadcloth ; nay,
Nor yet by culture of body, soul, and mind ;
But by the barriers, custom called, and caste,
Invisible symbolized by visible
Difference in clothing of body, soul, and mind :
Barriers which individuals perhaps
Here and there overleap ; but classes ne'er.
We say that God made men ;—and classes too ?
Man from man differeth, and class from class.
Shall Death, the old great Leveller, stand alone
To make us equals in our beds of clay ?
Not so ; we are not equals even then,
By all the glory of that which cannot die,
Set on a generation's heart to give
A light for generations yet to be,
The light of noble thought and noble deed
By freemen nobly thought and nobly done,
Which yet their brothers could not think nor do,
Because their day was one grim fight to keep
Their little spark of life from going out.

So Michael thought when he had come to face
Things worse than death in the heart of our great
towns :

And so he thought and thought.

Some men all night

Wrestle, with wrestlings vehement and strong,
To gain the blessing ; and go maimed for life,
For the fierce grip which Truth has laid on them :
And others find the angel as they go
About the common things of every day,
In rain and sunshine ; and he speaks them fair,
And bares his loveliness, and lets them see
Things sweeter than sweet dreams, and clearer much
Than clearest visions. Truth has many ways
Of revelation to the sons of men.

None knoweth what may come, nor how, to them
Who set their faces steadfastly to go
Toward the City of cities ; for to some
The daily walk, the commonest thoughts and cares,
Are the Delectable Mountains, whence they see
That Shining City, whereunto their feet
Shall come untired ; the while for other men,
The mists hang dull and heavy, and their eyes
Are dim, their shoulders bowed, and their feet torn
With briars and brambles of the wilderness.

III

Now time was ripe, good old Sir William thought,
Michael were wed, seeing the time drew near
Should see the young man master at Villiers Keep ;
So would not Michael, ere his uncle died,
Bring home a wife? But Michael shook his head ;
For thoughts were working fast within his brain,
Because the man had looked around and seen
Full many a thing his uncle could not see ;
And he was waiting till the hour should come
He might translate his thinking into deed ;
And, till it came, he would not make one tie
He could not break, if so there came a need.

But had you asked if he had dreamed a dream,
Or seen a vision, or had heard a call
To be apart from men, and do some work
When he were free (for, while his uncle lived,
He held himself bound first of all to him,

Daughter and son in one, to love and tend),
His fellows might not share ; some work that
claimed

Body and soul and spirit ; shutting out
The radiancy of common happiness
Which broods about a home ; he had replied,

‘ I know not aught of this ; I only fear
It is no time to marry and increase.

I have seen visions maybe ; dreamed perhaps
Some dream quick with the passion of my land ;
Perchance have heard a calling from a voice

Of unfamiliar tone ; but this I know,
I hear a cry from many human throats ;
I look around and see this English land
Is filled with great injustice ; and I say,

“ Now God do so to me, and also more,
If so I strive not hard to see aright
The remedy as well as the disease,—

And better with Ignotus see aright,
Than err with Plato ;—and to do aright,
When it may be I see ; and never stay

From wrestling hard to win the liberty
Of men bound hand and foot by circumstance,
And mocked with name of freemen.”

O my God,

Who art not far from any one of us ;

Who art as near the Englishman to-day
As to the Hebrew thirty centuries back ;
Wilt thou not show me what to do, and how,
If so be I will go the way to see ?'

IV

AND so while Michael bare upon his soul
The trouble of those who work with darkened hearts,
And have no time for anything but toil,
And drop unheeded into the silent gulf,
Having existed only, never lived
With the full life of those to whom their work
Is pleasure and delight ; whose selves go out
Along the glory of the cunning hand
That bears the glory of the cunning brain ;
He studied much upon the ways of men,
And watched what men and women thought and did ;
Knowing that inward ripeness was not his,
And knowing too that none can work alone ;
And no one who is impious to the past
Can help the present or the future time ;
And none who liveth only in the past
Can be the servant of the present time,
And sow the seeds to bear the future's growth.

‘All things are free to all in this free land,’
Said one he spoke with, Arthur Grey, a man
Whom he believed in, who believed in him,
Albeit the twain were aye at loggerheads
In argument ; and often Arthur Grey
Would speak on what he called the better side,
The side of common sense. Why should his friend
Vex himself thinking upon things that are
A part of natural order? Some go up,
And some go down ; and so the world evolves,
If not the best, the meetest for her need.
And anyway, the chances do not fall
So heavily wrong,—at least on English soil,—
As folk with bees in their bonnets seem to think.

And Michael answered something on this wise.

‘“ All things are free to all in this free land ! ”
Why, so they are ! The veriest lowborn girl,
Who toils all day and shouts in the streets at night,
If her respectability be proved,—
And some can prove themselves respectable,
Without a better right than she, poor child,—
May, if she will, send the Lord Chamberlain
Her name for the next Drawing-room : of course
There is no sumptuary law forbids
The workgirl to be clad in costly silk

That trails its shining length upon the ground ;
 Her neck may glitter with the orient gems ;
 The ostrich-plumes may nod upon her head ;
 If she can pay the price, and that is all,
 Save find the lady who presents her ; well,
 And that's not so impossible a thing.
 You smile, as thinking me a very fool ;
 You would not waste an argument on me.

‘ Well, let us take a lower level, then.
 What law forbids the girl, who, let us say,
 Assists the State by making match-boxes,
 A dozen dozen for twopence-farthing, Grey ;
 She has a shilling a day to—keep herself ?
 She finds her fire and glue and string, her time
 To fetch the stuff, take back the article :
 That shilling is something under twelvepence worth †
 What law, I ask you, Grey, forbids this girl
 To throw her work aside, and let the sun
 Kiss her white cheek to red, and the wind play
 With her soft hair, soft as your sister's is ;
 The meadows cool her feet, and all the bliss
 Of tree and flower and bird and butterfly
 Run revel in her heart ? What law forbids ?
 None ? only this ;—the penalty is death !
 Not any sudden, violent, ugly death :

Only that if she do not work, she starves.
No Ugolino horror ! such as that
Belongs to Hell, and this is—England, sir.'

'It's a mad world, my masters, save for one
Or two ; that's I,—and you, by courtesy !
Or is the big world sane, and we two mad ?'
So Arthur Grey laughed over his cigar
To Michael, as the two sat by the fire,
Another day, when many weeks had gone.
Then, laughter passing from him, thus he spoke.

'Michael, you say that none should reap the corn
He hath not sown, and none should gather where
He hath not strawed ! The thing's impossible !
Surely there is not any man of us
But reaps the grain he hath not sown ; and none
But gathers daily where he has not strawed.
The seed that one man dowers the ground withal
Another man shall reap ; the vine he plants
Shall quench another's drought and warm his veins.
Why grudge to take what one would gladly give ;
What one must give, as one must surely take ?'

'Nay, nay,' said Michael ; 'I never meant it so ;
All that you say is true, and yet, a truth
Wrongly applied is very like a lie.

This were a lie to me, though not to you.
We all must reap where we have never sown ;
We all must gather where we have not strawed ;
Else were the solidarity of man
A dreamer's dream, and no reality.
Some needs come out of emptiness, and some
Come out of fullness ; so the baby-lips
Seek for the overflowing mother-breasts :
And so the mother-breasts crave to be sucked.
God sets the taker by the giver's side ;
And all mankind is with mankind entwined.
And cannot loose itself ; only, who reaps
Must sow again for others' harvesting.

But what give we, we who have cost so much
In blood and sweat and agony of men ?
Shed on for century after century ?
If our hearts beat high-pulsed, the blood that leaps
Within them came from some whose veins were drained
For our veins' fullness. If our hearts send up
Their life's broad litanies that breast the heaven,
Quick with the passion of humanity,
Cries for all beauty, all good, all happiness,
Cries for the supreme blessing that we dare
Not cloud by definition ; what of them,
Our brothers, who have only power to cry

For elemental needs of food and clothes,
Or have no voice to cry for anything?
What right have we to live on others' lives?
What do we give the men who work for us?
The privilege of having gentlemen
To look at! It's a lofty privilege,
Almost as great as gentleness itself!

'No country but is gainer,' answered Grey,
'By having its leisured class. How would you get
Your poets, your artists, your philanthropists,
Were all men doomed to starve who did not toil?'

'We want no leisured class, but leisured men
Who win their leisure from the heart of work—
Of work, I say, and not of drudgery—
Not merely see that all the work be done.
And, saying this, I mean not to assert
That all should work in like degree or kind;
"To every man his work:" the common gain
Springs not from individuality
Crushed down, or maimed, but from its perfect use.
Yet if the individual's life be fed
Not from the wholesomeness of Mother Earth,
Nor from the heirdom of humanity,
Nor from the grandeur of the awful spheres,

But from the very blood of other lives,
Deprived whereof it needs must faint and fall,
Down with such individuality !
You have not man and man, but slave and slaves,
The enslaver being doubly the enslaved.
A better Art will rise from better life ;
Beauty is more than any beauties are,
And beauty lives on life and not on death.

‘ I hate the very name philanthropist,’
Michael went on, ‘ perhaps because it seems
To mean not one who loves his fellow-men,
But one who gives his time, and strength, and gold,
Feeling his own superiority ;
Daring to offer what he would not take.
Were the State sounder at the core, no need
To have philanthropy, but only love.’

‘ What can it matter what a man is called,’
Said Grey, ‘ if so he do his duty well ?
Philanthropist, or love-man, it’s all one !
Philanthropy will never harm the world ;
And sinners must be cleaned before they are loved.
I only talk a little common sense ;
I know it sounds but flat compared with words
Of fire and pathos—which I do not feel,

And should be merely insincere to use.
It seems to me the duty of a man
Is just to do whatever comes to hand,
And do it rightly ; there 's no Golden Age
To come ; we jog along and do our best
In our own station ; nothing can be gained
By giving up of any vantage-ground
Whereon our feet are set ; and if we have
A larger vision thence, why, those who see
Dimmer than we do, vex not so their souls
With troublings for the future ; if their joys
Are narrower,—lower, do you like to say?—
Is not their pain less keen ? and would you dower
The lives you say are inarticulate
With voices only to go up in wails
For what they may not have ? Depend upon it,
Things are more justly shared than often seems.
At any rate we can afford to wait
Till the Time-Spirit shape the way for us.'

‘ “ Till the Time-Spirit shape the way for us ! ”
What is the Spirit of the Time, except
The essence of the noblest thoughts and deeds
Of all the strongest spirits of the time ?
A nation's life is wrong where every man
Lives for himself, or for himself and those

He has begotten ; and her life is wrong
If some of those her sons have set themselves,
However it may be in ignorance,
To live upon the work of other men,
Whose lives are none the richer because of theirs.
We have not come into our heritage
Of body and soul as yet ; and shall not come
Until we go another way than now.
That other way is Justice ; we may talk
Of Love ; let us at least do Justice first !

‘ Culture and civilization ! Yes, I know
The meaning of the word, and of the thing !
The man climbs up his slow and toilsome way
To higher civilization by degrees,
Ay, “ base degrees,” if you will have it so,
Of lives he treads upon, and scorns away ;
Attains to culture thus, and sits enthroned
On a king-seat, that is not carved of wood,
And is not decked with gold, but wrought of all
Unkindled passion, unhumanized desire,
And decked with crushed-out hopes and murdered
faiths.

But what the race did, blindly striking out
Its limbs, scarce more than feelers at the first,
Toward some dim goal to which its instinct led,

Until that instinct into purpose grew,
The man developed cannot do, nor dare !
“ *Forgive them, for they know not what they do !* ”
Said One. For us, we know it very well,
And dare not shut our eyes, nor close our ears,
Lest on our life of lives there brood for aye
That deep damnation of the slain ideal,
Whose ghost for ever haunts the bed and board.’

‘ And do you, Michael, you, a sane man, hold
That monstrous creed, equality of all ?
Look Nature in the face, and see her laugh
At such a faith : she showers her goods and gifts
On one ; on one her wrongs and ills outpours ;
And goes her way, and cares not any whit
Whom she may slay or maim in body or mind,
She seeking out whom she would raise and crown.
Dame Nature makes an aristocracy ;
There ’s no democracy with her, my friend.’

And Michael answered, ‘ Are we Nature then,
Or men ? ’

And Grey was silent for the nonce.

V

HE spoke with one, a friend of college days,
Of Ireland and the Irish ; land and folk
That Gordon Moore, albeit, like Michael's self,
His earliest breath was drawn on Irish soil,
Loved not, but almost hated ; once he talked
After this fashion :

‘ Villiers, it's absurd
Of you to say you're half an Irishman —
At least that you have anything to do
With what they call the Irish people. Now,
I'll tell you what this Irish people is.—
A set of dirty, lazy priest-rid loons,
Who would not stir a foot to mend a fence
That any spuncilled¹ cow could overleap :
Who grub on half-boiled roots and buttermilk,
And swill the fiery stuff that makes 'em mad
To fight and break each other's empty heads.

¹ Hobbled.

· A folk that has not had a chance to be
A nation ; overcome by a strong race,
Good cross-breed meetly fused of strong and strong,
Ere its own day had come for clan and clan
To be one people. What is for a land
Gripped ere it gain a nation's unity?
Gripped, but not held ; they knew not how to hold !
A folk with all its own laws flung to ground,
Trampled beneath a strange law's heavy heel,
A better law, you say, but not its own :
Forbidden in vain by edicts writ in blood,
The fusion of race with race ; for English veins
'Neath Irish skies ran only Irish blood,
And English there thought only Irish thought ;
While English here hounded the Irishry
Down to the earth, savages unreclaimed,
Keltic or Norman, Irish all alike.
And all the land was watered with their blood,—
Their stript dead bodies lay upon the hills,
Which looked i' the distance, like a pasture-land
Whereon there swarmed a flock of night-lulled sheep.
They were but—savages—and when they slew
And burned in vengeance, they were savages
And we were always men and Englishmen !
Their mother-tongue was dumb for want of use ;
Their priests, like very vermin, hunted down ;

Their faith doomed to the pangs of martyrdom,
Without its glory ; a cross without a crown ;
Their tribelands seized and parcelled out amiss
To the unkind, unkinned, of other kith ;
Each effort made to right their land against
The bitter winds of evil chance annulled ;
Her industries made one mere ruin-heap ;
Her acres gript by men who only cared
To wring their rent, unwitting what it cost,
And only saw the houses and the lands
He owned across Saint George's Channel, when
The time of year to beat the coverts came.

“ Dirty and thriftless ! ” Ay, it is the use
To call their peasants so ! You know full well
When any among them seemed to thrive, the eyes
Of the good agent took a greedy glare,
As who should say, “ Why if these cunning hinds
Have wherewithal to thatch their roofs anew,
And dress their womenfolk in comely gear,
And deck their window-frames with mignonette,
They must have some fair hoard i' the Savingsbank,
Were better in the pocket of my lord.”
It was not well to seem as if one throve ;
So John and Pat and Mick abode in dirt,
And let the rotten fences be, and saw

The prashogue¹ eat the earth, the poppies choke
 The corn ; and learned their lesson well—to sit
 In apathy ; that is a vice which wears
 The look of that sweet virtue, patience' self !
 But patience feeds the heart, and apathy
 Drains the good lifeblood dry.

‘They lie, you say :

I think that all men lie who are not free.
 Serfs lie, and slaves, and men who are bound with
 those
 Thrice deadly bonds which bind the coward in
 Upon the heart, the man being left outside.
 You like to have them lie when lying means
 You shall not have to face some ugly truth :
 You scorn to hear them lie, when lies of theirs
 Muffle away some truth you'd care to see :
 You laugh to hear them lie, when 'tis your mood
 To be amused.

 ‘You hate your native land,
 Except for tickling your æsthetic sense
 With her brave mountains, and her quick sea's breath,
 And gentle undulating fields of green,
 And steep magnificence of crags that meet
 The wild winds' strength, and wrestle a fall, and win ;
 And here and there a maiden lovely-eyed,

¹ Charlock, *Sinapis arvensis*.

With delicate blooming cheek, and raven hair ;
Or barefoot urchin with the laughing face
You could not trust, and would not, if you could.
That's all you like in Ireland, save the sport
These farmers whom you curse have barred you from.
You are a scion of the dominant race,
And England is a good homeland to you ;
And never a touch of Irish accent fouls
The limpid pureness of your faultless speech :
And when the famine comes, as come it does,
You stroll in languidly to some bazaar,
Where pretty women sell you buttonholes
For guineas, " to relieve the sore distress
Of the poor Irish : don't you know they live
In huts with walls of peat and roofs of sod,
Chimneyless, windowless ; and the children go
The equals of the pigs ! Alas, poor things,
They scarce have heard at all of God or Christ ;
They are mere heathens ; when their need is o'er
Of common food, it might be charity
To have them christianized." You laugh, and take
Your guinea's worth, and pay, and chatter on
At leisure of the pretty stallkeeper.
You have heard me long enough, and I have done.
*Ye gete no more of me but ye wol rede
The original that telleth al the cas !'*

‘ And what’s the original ? ’

‘ Ireland’s history.’

‘ But, Villiers, you’re unjust ; in the old time,
Some wrong was done to Ireland, there’s no doubt,
But England long ago had seen that wrong,
And striven to make amends ; and still she strives,
With all her might and main.’

‘ I know it well,’

Said Michael, ‘ and I would not be unjust ;
But it may be that vision came too late,
And that amendment cannot now be done !
The bitterest punishment of punishments
To nations or to men is impotence
To mend a wrong they knew not when they did.’

VI

Now in the eager atmosphere that girds
Workers in London, he fell in with some
To whom his heart went out, as theirs to him.
Among them were the Guilfoys, a young pair
True-wed in soul and body ; working hard,
Owning their souls in patience : at their rooms,
Three rooms they had, the nearest to the roof,
In Marylebone, he met some men whose hearts
Beat with a quickened pulse because of wrongs
Which drove them into thoughts and words of fire ;
Wrongs not their own, but suffered by the men
Wrongs had embruted till they knew them not
From rights ; and girls, and women, working hard
To help the world to find some kind of Christ,
Or individual or corporate,
Albeit many of them scorned that name,
Blurred with the breath of Christians who were
none.

The Man we need this nineteenth century
Is no enthusiast of the hollow jaws,
And fever-lighted eyes, and hectic flush
On the spare cheek, and slender blue-veined hands
The morbid soul beats through ; not such as this,
No mediæval mystic, drained of blood,
And stript of flesh ; all natural desires
Dazed in *hysterica passio* ; he being fain
Annihilate the flesh and leave the soul
Calm in her freedom ; cutting off his wings
To fly unhindered. Nay, O world of ours,
Not such as this must thy redeemer be !
Nor yet the man who sayeth in his heart,
There is no God, nor any need of Him :
Nor even he who knows the basal needs
Of body, soul, and spirit, and denies
No part of man : for more than this we cry !
Not even the stronger than the strong for us ;
We need the Christ in man ; not one strong man,
But a developed manhood ; we must fight
And bear, before we get Him ;—but, some day,
If so we grudge not freedom's heavy price,
Our loins shall teem with freeborn citizens,
Having the Christhood's glory on their heads.

Roger and Annie Guilfooy, socialists,

So Michael's friends feared not to call themselves :
No socialists of the fire-and-thunder faith
Which thinks that streams of blood will wash the world,
But socialists who recognized in truth
And word and deed the brotherhood of man,
And lived to set it forth, and if the need
Should ever come to them, to die for it.

As well impute to Christianity
The Inquisition hand of blood and fire,
All savage slaughter in the name of Christ,
Murder and lust set free in garb of hell
To range the world He taught the law of love,
As blame true socialism for any sins
Of socialists. But it were vain to speak,
A cause being raised or lowered in its men.
Now God bless all true workers, let us pray :
The night-time cometh when we all must rest :
Strive we, and do, lest by-and-by we sit
In that blind life to which all other fate
Is cause for envy ; with the naked souls
Who never lived, knowing nor praise nor blame,
But kept themselves in mean neutrality,
Hateful alike to God and to His foes.

VII

‘THE world has grown too wise for patriotism!’
Said a young beardless, narrow-shouldered man,
Bred on a lustre or two of narrow thought
Which deemed itself the broadest of the day :
He called himself a cosmopolitan.

And Michael Villiers smiled, and answered him ;
‘Perhaps ! then let us be behind our time ;
A whit more foolish than our fellows are ;
And love the land that bore us best of all !’

What do we owe our country,
O brothers, say ?
To turn our backs upon her
In scorn ; or pay
The easy and empty homage
Of lips to-day ?

- ' What do we owe the country
That gave us breath ?
To watch her struggling sorely
For life, for death,
Nor give her the quickening comfort
That comforteth ?
- ' Our mother-land that bare us,
Her face is set
Steadfastly toward the winning
Of freedom yet ;
Her heart is strong, though her eyelids
With tears be wet.
- ' The highest gift is freedom,
And holiest too ;
Who claims that a slave be noble,
A serf be true ?
Who asks of the fettered bondman
To dare and do ?
- ' Freedom to work for the people
Whose kin we are ;
Freedom to be lawmakers
To make, not mar ;
Freedom to be lawkeepers,
With never a bar.

‘ What is a sect or a party
To those who love ?
Let us take hands, O brothers,
And surely prove
True hearts, mankind’s and country’s,
Nothing shall move.

‘ Each of us servant of others,
Servant of all ;
So shall he be for ever
Nor slave nor thrall ;
So shall no force o’ercome him,
Whate’er befall.

‘ On, together, together,
By one love bound ;
On through the sea and the desert,
To holy ground
Where the light that slays the darkness
For aye is found.’

VIII

THERE was a woman Michael Villiers met
One evening at the Guilfoys' ; fair and tall,
With shining hair, and eyes that seemed to be
The home of truth itself ; and stately frame
Which well had worn the armour of the knight
Who did such gallant deeds at Joyous Gard.
'You are like Britomart,' said Annie once
To Lucy Vere ; 'like the deliverer
Of Amoret for Scudamore her love.'
'Nay,' said she, 'I am more like Amoret,
Whom Britomart delivered.' Knowing not
How strong as beautiful she was, she spake.

She went among a set of working girls,
Rough, rude, unchaste in word if not in deed,
And was a very light of joy to them,
In all the lovely rondure of her life,
And royal 'dower of inward happiness.'
And light and joy she was to more than these,

For the sweet strength and catholic sympathy,
Which showed themselves in look and word and deed,
Sweeter because of lovely reticence,
That rosy guardian of the fount of life :
She being what it costs so much to make,
And what it costs so much to have and keep,
Most precious thing was ever bought with price,
Whether that price be found too high or no,—
Even a gentlewoman born and bred.
Such women help to save us at the least
From ignorance or ignoring of the past,
The very source of crude irreverence.

There be some tender virgin souls that go
Fed by the wholesome food of natural things,
Keeping the powers one day to bless the world
In happy silentness and fair reserve,
And dimly feeling something is to come,
Before the end shall be ; some unknown good,
Some fair ineffable godship ; till, one day,
The cestus is undone by sweet strong hands,
And life goes all a-thrilling through and through,
Till by-and-by the quickened thoughts come forth
In all the splendid might of word and deed.

She might have been whatever she desired ;

Ruler of men, a star of stars set high
Above the pain and trouble of the poor ;
But chose to be no more than Lucy Vere,
One of the workers ; so, the time being come
To end her father's days of widowhood,
And a good woman filling her mother's place
For him, she gave her leisure up, and came
To work in London. She and Michael drew
Near to each other from the very first,
And clasped each other's hands in comradeship.
'Childe Michael,' on a day she called her friend,
'Because she knew him for a knight of God.'
'Nay, nay, no knight of God am I indeed,
Only a man who fain would find the truth,
At least, some part sufficient of the truth
To go by ; but as yet I cannot wear
My armour, for I have not proven it.
Maybe Burd Lucy by-and-by will help
To buckle on that harness for her friend.'

And so when Michael was at home, the two
Wrote to each other, and he told her things
He thought of, and she answered him again :
For both the hearts of them indeed were quick
With the live trouble that was in the air
They breathed ; they being children of their time.

And of his daily life she liked to hear ;
And things of outside that he dwelt amongst ;
As when a great old oak was levin-struck,
The Villiers oak, almost as old as Herne's :
And how the blue-tits built themselves a nest
In the breast-pocket of an old worn coat,
The gardener's scarecrow : how himself had found
The dainty spider-orchis on the day
He heard the nightingale sing his first song ;—
She minded the dispute—or argument—
She had with him about the nightingale ?
He now was more than ever sure the song
Was one triumphant pæan of his joy ;
He wished her there to hear it for herself.
She told him how her girls had gone with her
One Sunday afternoon to Hampstead Heath,
And seen the wealth of maybloom, golden furze,
And been so very happy for the nonce.
And Michael sent the choicest of the flowers
They had at Villiers Keep to Lucy Vere,
To brighten up those girls of hers, he said.
Their rooms were none the worse, as he supposed,
For a few roses ; though of course he knew
Her girls had many friends beside himself.
And when he came to London once again,
They talked and communed, oft and much and long ;

While Guilfooy and his wife looked on and guessed
Right guesses, though the comrades knew it not.

But one day something came to lift the veil,
And lo ! they knew it was love's self that each
Had shrined for each, unknowing how it was.
And Michael suffered bitter self-reproach,
Because he doubted much his right to wed,
Seeing it was a very troublous time,
And it might be indeed his lot to go
Into the wilderness *for Azazel*.
And Lucy held a wonder in her heart
Flushing her cheek with light, though Michael went
As one who bears a sorrow in his breast,
Nurst upon gladness ; till one day he said,
' Burd Lucy, I have made a little song,
For uttering what I cannot say unrimed.'

' What is your song, Childe Michael ? Let me hear.'

' " Burd Mary"—Mary was my mother's name,
The sweetest woman's name of Christendom,
Saving one only, *Lucy ! Ave, Lux !*
Yes, *ave ! ave !* though the light should bring
The last of days ;—*I being about to die*
Would still salute thee ; ave, ave, Lux !'

And Lucy wondered sore, and looked at him
With trouble in her eyes ; and he went on.

‘Burd Mary and Childe—Villiers, shall I say?—
Nay, I will call her by her own sweet name !

‘Burd Lucy and Childe Michael,
Two comrades true were they ;
Childe Michael loved Burd Lucy
For ever and a day.

‘Alas ! alas ! Childe Michael
Had fallen on evil times,
To reap an evil sowing
Of blunders and of crimes.’

‘ Shall I go on, or will Burd Lucy read
The rime herself ? ’

‘ Nay, you shall read it me.’

‘ And so it was, Childe Michael,
Who loved his comrade so,
Must face his life in lonesness,
And let Burd Lucy go.

‘ There was but fear and trouble,
(God send it soon surcease !)
No time to build fair houses,
To marry and increase.

- ‘ No time for aught but striving,
With fasting and with prayer,
Against the powers of evil,
All strong to do and dare.
- ‘ Some day, some day, hereafter,
When calmer grows the weather,
Two friends that here were parted
May meet and walk together.’

Then Michael took Burd Lucy by the hand,
And looked into her eyes a moment's space,
Saying, ‘ Forgive me, dear ; ’ and went from her.

And on the morrow came this rime to him,
Writ with the clear firm penmanship she used.

- ‘ Childe Michael and Burd Lucy,
Two comrades true were they,
Who loved each other dearly,
For ever and a day.
- ‘ They drank from common pewter,
They ate from common delf;
Their home had some great fairness,
Love being there himself.
- ‘ Burd Lucy kept the homestead,
And swept the floor and sewed,
And did on Michael's armour
Wherein he fought for God.

‘Childe Michael on his shoulder
Had known Love’s accolade ;
He fought for Love’s high kingdom
Whose coming maketh glad.

‘Upon his thigh he girded
A sword that gleamed like flame,
Whereon there was engraven
A strange and wondrous name.

‘More bright that sword than Morglay,
Than Courtain awfuller ;
It flashed more great and dreadful
Than brand Excalibur.

“It is Love’s sword,” said Michael,
“For wielding faithfully ;
And evermore I set it
Bared between self and me ;

“And all day long I wield it,
And when I rest at even,
Burd Lucy cleans the swordblade
Which came to me from heaven.”

‘Upon the hilts cross-shapen
Burd Lucy laid her hand,
And sware to help Childe Michael
To battle for his land.’

And Michael read his rime she made her rime
Over and over, and his life was thrilled,
And all his heart was sore ; and pen and ink

Seemed all incapable to bear his mind.
And so he went and sought Burd Lucy out.

Then at his coming all the gracious blood
Ran to her cheeks, and her whole body pulsed
The faster as she raised her eyes to his.
But Michael's cheek was pale, and round his lips
Ran a strange tremor as he looked at her ;
And passionately he took her hands in his,
And kissed them close, and laid them on his heart,
Then loosed them, saying, ' Lucy, it cannot be :
There are some things too hard for flesh and blood,
Too hard for flesh and blood like mine at least.
I know not, dear my lady, what may come ;
And I will never bring the bitterness
Of my uncertainty on one I love.
I know not now at all what I must do,
Nor how I may be called upon to act,
Or suffer, for my own and others' sin.
And, oh, Burd Lucy, you have your own work !
You fight, my dear, a better fight than mine.
And you to sweep the floor and sew, while I
Go in my armour ! O my Britomart,
I am not worthy to stoop down and kiss
The dust your feet have left a print upon.
You see, and do, while I can scarce discern

Men from trees walking. O my queen, my faith,
Pray for me, for I think that prayers like yours
Must needs be heard. I know not, nor may guess
Whither I go, nor how, not any whit :
I only know that God has laid on me
A burden which I must not dare shake off.
I would not shake it off if so I dared.
The very easiest path for me to take
Would be to live and labour with my hands,
And have the wages of my toil and sweat,
And share them with my fellow-men, and be
Among them even as one that serveth, not
As one that lordeth it ; and take my part
In the world's fellowship of suffering.
I would I might be poor instead of rich,
Because my brothers are not rich but poor ;
Because the women and the men who work
Can scarce keep body and soul together, while
I, just one man, have money and wealth enough
For filling thousands of the mouths and minds
That hunger very sorely, while I might
Surfeit, if so I pleased. It is not well.
I would I had no rights to give away,
Seeing my rights are based on others' wrongs.
Lucy, God knows I would, if I could see
It were the right of rights for me to do,

Go naked with my brothers of the State
Unsocial to the very inmost core.
And yet I know not if I may do thus—
I hate this wealth I am to have, and yet
I know not if to throw the burden down
Whereunto I was born, to ease my back
And ease my heart, were not indeed to make
The Great Refusal ; seeming best may be
The very worst ; and one may build a fair
And stately building on the shifting sands
The rain shall beat on, and the winds blow round
Till great indeed shall be the fall of it.
Besides—“ *I saw there was a way to hell
Even from the gates of heaven,*” John Bunyan says :
True for all time.’

And Lucy interposed,
‘ Ay, Michael ; and there is a way to heaven
Even from the gates of lowest hell itself.’
And into Michael’s eyes there came a light
A moment ; then, ‘ But only this I know,
A wrong is not amended by a wrong.
Yet none can trust who dare not trust himself ;
And if I cannot come to trust myself,
I am no worker for the commonweal.’

‘ My comrade,’ Lucy answered, ‘ there is none

Of men can do a generation's work ;
And none of generations that can do
The work of man ; the Seer of seers himself,
The Galilean with the eagle eyes
That looked straight up at God, and grew not blind,
Helped men the most, I think, in teaching them
By implication, not the having laws
Ready at hand to follow and obey,
But culture of that state of body and soul
Wherein each man is to himself a law,
Is manhood's crown upon its end and aim.
And nearly nineteen hundred years gone by,
Leaving the power still latent in mankind,
Only developed in a few, at most,
Disproves it not to be the best, because
With God a thousand years are as a day,
And he who trusteth Him shall not make haste.

‘You say you fain would suffer with the rest.
You, comrade, who are surely suffering much,
Vext with cross-lights which keep from seeing
clear !
You, who have felt upon your very soul
The blows a drunken husband gives his wife ;
You, who have looked on death with the wan eyes
Of famine-stricken children ; you, whose blood

Goes hot with righteous anger, horror-cold
When nameless wrongs are flung upon the world !

‘I talk not of this suffering now, my friend,
But of the trouble which has come because
That pulse of yours goes beating with the pulse
Of the Time-Spirit ; and because, begirt
With all your past, you cannot well discern
Garment from cerement. That will come to you
One day when you are glad for having known
The torment of uncertainty and doubt.
“Our light affliction for a moment’s space,
Yea, but a moment, worketh us a more
Exceeding weight of glory !” Does that mean
It fits us to receive ? that bitterness
Prepares the palate for the perfect sweet ;
That sickness shows the preciousness of health ;
That only after tasting pain we know
What pleasure is ; that blindness, deafness, shows
Glory of opened eye and ear unstopped ?’

And Michael smiled a little wistful smile ;
‘I am not over-eager, dear, I think,
To be released from pain, but I desire
To be set free for action, though I be
Maimed in the struggle first ; and better far

Enter God's kingdom halt or maimed or blind,
Than with two feet to find Gehenna fire,
The anguish of remorse for done or undone ;
Than with two eyes to look, but not on God.'

She said, 'Yes, comrade, yes ; but surely best,
Enter the kingdom with all members sound.
You fight, and not as one that beats the air ;
You wrestle, wrestling not with flesh and blood ;
You will not be contented, you who have
Earth's blessings of the basket and the store,
And of the healthy body and loyal heart,
You will not be contented save with best
Of all, the power to see and do aright.
And you will never cease to strive for this.

'But, I will say it, do not, O my friend,
Be overmuch afraid to do your best
Because mistakes may mar that best of yours.
Dare the mistakes may follow a purpose clean.
Michael, trust God, trust man, and trust yourself.
Trust God with your mistakes ; better, I think,
A smirch upon a life's white perfectness,
Than one dull grey pervading all of it.
Souls are for serving, not for lying by

In a fair silence, shut away from men ;
And if a serving soul be stained, God's eyes
Transmute the stain to splendour with their smile.
Go forth to do your work ; go forth, and trust
The quickening impulse of the law of love.'

And Michael looked upon the woman's face,
And as it were an angel's face he saw.

' I will go on, Burd Lucy ; will go on ;
And, winning not, my body in its fall
Shall help, at least, to overbridge the trench
Whereo'er my brothers pass to victory.'

And not a word she said ; but in her eyes
He read, '*Go on, O Michael, O my love !
I go with you wherever you may go ;
I strive with you however you may strive ;
I win with you however you may win ;
I fail with you however you may fail.*'

So, not divided, went the twain apart.

IX

‘ DEMOCRAT ! Socialist ! ’ Sir William said ;
‘ What is a democrat and socialist ?
An arrant knave that feigns to be a fool !
Pooh ! pooh ! this lad of mine’s too wise for that !
And if he have a maggot in his brain,
There’s nothing that will cure it sharp and fast
Like being, as he’ll be when I am gone,
Sir Michael Villiers of Villiers Keep ! You cure
Your churchman’s madness with a mitre, sir ;
You give your democrat a handled name ;
You set your socialist to owning land,
And dower him with responsibility ;
And straight, no democrat, no socialist,
But a true blue. What, do you think I say
Michael is not sincere ? Forsooth, not I ;
There’s no sincerer soul on English ground.
But he is young, and hot young brains will seethe,
And hot young hearts will waste their store of blood

In beating far too fast. He's a good lad,
And does his duty, and he loves me too ;
But no one who has never felt his hand
Close with the owner's grip can comprehend
The owner's duties. It is true, indeed,
He has been son and more than son to me,
And held my pursestrings lately as myself ;
But he's not master yet. Well, by-and-by,
He'll sober down, and wed, and get an heir,
And teach him better than his uncle could
The duty of a landed gentleman :
For Michael knows his duty very well.
He has made me see my duty better, sir,
Than I had seen it, I'm ashamed to own,
Ere his keen eyes had looked into the ways
Of my good agent and the hand he played
In that poor God-forgotten country, where
My sister, may God bless her, died sometime.
(She dreamt strange things before our Michael came :
Perhaps they somehow haunt my nephew still.)
I knew not, no, nor cared ; I know and care
A little now ; it's owing to the boy.
It would not be enough for him, you see,
As used to be for me, and more's the shame,
To hunt at Lisnagh every other year,
And make the little village tradesmen thrive,

Nor laugh too much to see them write themselves
*' Purveyors to Her Majesty the Queen,
The Lord Lieutenant, and Sir William Villiers.'*
Then back to merry England once again.
I did my duty to my English lands
Better than that ; and better still for him ;
Though yet, I know, there's room for betterment.
Look through his eyes, you'll see a trifle more
Than through the eyes of men like you and me :
And to see more is not so bad a thing.
Let the lad call himself whate'er he like,
He is the stuff that God makes good men of.'

X

AND now to Michael's life there came a year
Such as there comes to many a woman's life :
A time of watching with a woman's care,
Of patience, and of waiting for the end ;
For William Villiers now was stricken down,
And any day might bring the end for him.
So Michael only left his side to take
The needed food and rest and air ; the nurse
With the trained hand and eye and lady's voice
Was there, but was not Michael ; and the eyes
Of the old man dwelt ever on the place
Where Michael was, or sought for him, if so
He might be absent for a little while.

It was a time of very sacred speech,
And very sacred silence, for the twain ;
A time of Love's warm brooding on the nest ;
A time of quietness and confidence,

And blessed stirrings of the inmost life.
Just such a time as, looking back upon,
One feels how good it is to have a past.
Sometimes God giveth his beloved in sleep
Gifts which the waking and the watching miss ;
And in the quiet of the interval
Between his Azrael's knock and entering in,
He giveth gifts of yet more passing worth,
For those who go and those who stay behind.

And on a day, before this time was o'er,
There came two ladies down to Villiers Keep,
And one of them was old, and one was young,
And both were beautiful to look upon :
The Lady Alice Vere, and Lucy, her niece.
Then Michael watched, with eyes of one who sees
A shining fairer than the morning star's,
As Lucy stood beside his uncle's bed,
And bended down that fairest face of hers
To kiss him on the brow and on the cheek.
And old Sir William took from off his hand
His ring graved with the crest his sires had borne
Long generations back, on battle-field,
The Villiers pelican *in her piety*,
And bad her give it Michael ; and she took
The ring, and kissed, and held, while Michael's hand

Bared itself of the little diamond hoop
Wherewith his father had sealed his mother's troth.
And after this exchanging of the rings,
Sir William held their hands awhile in his,
Smiling as one who is very glad at heart,
With gladness of the future and the now.
And then he let them go, and laid himself
To sleep in that sweet upper chamber, Peace,
Which looketh toward the rising of the sun.

•

XI

Lo, if a man should hear all night in dreams
Music resolving discords of the day
Into the very soul of harmony ;
Behold, 'neath folded lids, the golden sheen
Of a great light wherein is blessedness ;
Would he not sometimes long, of day-work tired,
For the fair blisses which the night would bring?
Would he be grieved for shadows lengthening out
Or sigh at dropping of the evening dews?

But if a man have heard when broad awake
An inexpressive perfect harmony,
And seen with open eyes the rose-red grow
Into the glory and radiance of the dawn,
Will not all things henceforth be changed for him?
Swift-souled, unhurried, will he not pass on
Till day be at the zenith, and the light,
God's fiery chariot, lift him higher yet

Into a farther heaven, beyond the sun's ?
What does he reckon of glory or of shame ?
What does he care though men should give or grudge
Love and belief which are his due and meed ?
Only his soul cries out for men to go
Up to the hills, and see the risen sun :
Only he yearneth sore for men to pluck
The stopping from their ears, and hear the sound
God utters, not for one but all to hear.
Onward and onward yet, with soul that heeds
Nor pain nor death nor hell, so he but prove
Steadfast and faithful to the end, he goes
In love whose yearning passion lends it strength.

O cedar-tree, thou hast heard the voice of God,
And hast not broken 'neath the mighty stress !

XII

‘WELL, what will Michael Villiers do?’ So one
Spoke with another, when some men, his friends,
Talked each and each, a little while gone by
Since William Villiers of Villiers Keep had died.
‘You see, the man’s a mere idealist :
All must be whitely, delicately done,
Or not at all : at least so I suppose,
Who judge from things I have sometimes heard him
say,
And more from things I have known him leave unsaid.
He will not have to do with politics
Because he would not play upon one string
Of self and interest ; all must be so high !
High-flown, I think !’ And then another man ;
‘He’s a good fellow, Villiers ; noble-aimed,
And noble-hearted ; but I think he’ll fail
In life, because his mother gave him birth
Too soon, a thousand years. A man must be

Child of his time, if somewhat in advance,
Nor spread his wings to soar with marvellous flight
Beyond the moon and stars ; and find at last
The wings were only fastened on with wax,
And, the wax melting, down he drops in sloughs
A merely two-legged thing had safe gone by.'

Another said, ' He's half an Irishman,
He says ;—it's arrant nonsense all the same,—
The gallant Home-Rule band would welcome him
To sit upon their benches ; give him share
Of bouncing brogue and royal store of bulls,
(The fattest cattle they are owners of !)
And all those delicate amenities
They've paid their twopence for instruction in.
But once I said, half earnest and half jest,
Something like this :—I did not draw a sketch
Of Irish Parliament and Brehon law,
(What Brehon law may be, I do not know,)
With all the Sassenagh expatriate,
And Irish Yankeedoodledom called home
In resonant triumph of its dynamite—
But blandly I supposed it might be true
That Ireland was a nation after all ;
Adding, " Why don't you help to make her
free ? "'

‘Nay, Leigh,’ said Villiers, ‘I have nought to do
With this, for I am but a doubter here,
And doubter turned to doer makes poor work.
A half conviction acted on becomes
A lie : I touch no Irish politics.
I would do something for my mother’s land,
If so I might, but cannot help her thus,
She being a house divided against itself.’

‘Well, anyhow, Villiers has done his best
Yonder, to keep the English name from shame !
His tenants pay their rents, the rents he’ll take
With more than just abatement for the loss
Of crops and cattle, and badness of the times.
They shoot behind no hedge on his estate—
His uncle’s up to now—it’s all the same—
Nor hough the cattle, nor burn them in their byres.’

‘Why should they ? Michael Villiers loves the men
He calls his countrymen ; and I suppose
They love him, and loved his uncle for his sake,
Who tried to look at them through Michael’s eyes.’

‘He’ll never marry,’ said another man,
‘At least I hear he thinks he may be called
To do some work that likes a bachelor best.’

Idealists being mated must give up
Some of their dangerous hobbies ; as with us
Often a hunting man leaves break-neck jumps,
For the wife's gentle sake who sits at home.—
Unless he marry one who hunts herself !
Villiers may mate with some idealist,
And set the Thames a-fire at source and mouth.'

'No woman was ever an idealist !'
Laughed one ; 'ideals are only for the male :
The female sees them but as he reflects.
A woman would not die for any cause,
Unless it were incarnate in a man.'

'He is too much the thinker,' said a fifth,
'To be the man of action ; for, you know,
The thinker never was the doer yet.
Thought cripples action ; action addles thought ;
Your artist lives an inartistic life ;
Your preacher is no sermon in himself ;
Your poet is no poem ; and the State
Would fare but ill with your philosopher.'

Then Arthur Grey, who hearkened, saying nought,
Gave his goodbye to gossips all, and took
His way across the fields to Villiers Keep,

And met his friend half-way, and turned with him,
Praying for leave to speak his mind in full,
For once at least ; and Michael gave assent.

‘ Michael, it’s possible,’ said Arthur Grey,
‘ For that poor devil, a conservative,
To have a human heart within his breast ;
A pair of eyes set in his muddle head !
It’s also possible that he may see,
Just at the very outer verge, you know,
A struggle, and be sorry for his friend,
And wish his friend to look before he leap
Into perhaps some dark abyss, wherefrom
He cannot reascend. Well, Michael, well,
I say because I like you as I like
No other man, revere you too, perhaps,
And would not have you wreck your life with all
That gallant cargo should enrich the world ;—
Make your life simple as you please, ay, bare
And meagre outside ; sell your uncle’s stud,
If so the thought of horses’ pedigrees,
Black Prince by Scarlet Runner, out of Pearl,
So on, should make you brood too much upon
The pale horse of the rider whose name is
Death :
(One never knows what queer suggestions come

To poets and seers, from ordinary things !)
Or go knight-errant anywhere you like,
Wearing your spurs upon your naked heels,
If you're too good to own a pair of boots !
Stand on a stately butter-tub, and call
Every man brother, minding to except
Poor devils who have money in their purse,
Or know who their grandfathers may have been !
Let 'Arry carve his fate-compelling name
On your wind-breasting oaks of centuries' growth,
Or oust your pelican from her barbarous work
Of tearing her live breast to feed her young !
A stone or two, well shied, will blunt her beak !
Were I a poet, Michael, as I live,
I think I could make something out of that ;
But thank the gods, I'm not poetical !
There, I have quoted Shakespere unaware !
Go your way trying hard to make the State
(You'll not succeed ; my comfort, scarcely yours !)
A big Committee, sitting evermore,
And sitting out all freedom of the will ;
Making all life a heartless, lungless mass ;
Itself an ugly unbulliable thing
Without a body to kick, or a soul to damn.
Be faddist to your very heart's content !
But—do not strip your inward life too bare,

Lest the cold strike upon you, and you die !
You know as well as I do what I mean
In saying, do not cross with Nature ; she
Being thwarted takes a terrible revenge.

‘ Michael, I dare to speak my mind to you !
Forgive the bluntness of my speech. You know
I love you ; let my love be my excuse !
They say you will not marry, and yourself
Have thrown out hints thereof : but is there none
Who loves you, whom you love, and yet would lay
Upon some altar-stone, and sacrifice,
Calling it piety ? If there be such,
Michael, for once do as the world would do,
The world without a call ; the world you scorn ;
The world made up of men like us, poor dogs
Who better like to crunch substantial bones
Than wait beneath your table for the crumbs.
Well, Michael, that’s enough for me to say !
Digest it, if you will ; or strain it out !
But, anyhow, shake hands.’

And Michael gript
The hand that Arthur Grey held out to him ;
And the two men looked in each other’s face,
Until the woman in them brought the tears
Nearer the shedding than was wont to be.

XIII

THEN Michael spoke, and said, 'God bless you,
Grey !
You have meant well, and done well, too, by me.
And I will tell you frankly of my mind,
As much as may be. In the year that's gone,
The quiet year beside my uncle's bed,
My dear old father and my dear old friend,
Whose like again I cannot hope to see ;
Who did so many noble kindnesses,
And would not have the name of doing them,—
Arthur, it is not that the mists of death
Looming about him, make him great to me ;
I knew his greatness long before he died,—
I think my future path has cleared itself
As much at least as I may dare to hope ;
And the light-source gives light from day to day.
One lesson I have learned at least, I think ;
The very essence of martyrdom itself

Is in humility and willingness
To welcome joy as well as welcome pain.

‘For what you say of stripping bare my life,
As once I thought I might be called to do ;
God’s hands, the loving and thrice-bounteous hands
Which know not of the close and bitter thrift
Whereby we rob our gifts of half their worth,
Laid once within my reach, oh, such a gift
As I knew how to value, not to take ;
Then laid it in this very hand of mine !
So we go on together, she and I,
Who think and feel indeed the very same.’

‘Now God be thanked !’ said Arthur Grey, and shook
His friend’s hand in his hearty fellowship ;
And with a smile Michael went on again.
‘Well, for the house and lands my uncle owned
On that dear soil where dear my mother sleeps,
I give them over to the Irish folk,
To use them in the way that all must need,
Whatever be their faith and politics ;
And Lisnagh Castle, lands and tenements,
Will be the William Villiers College ; so
I told him ere he died, and he was glad.

‘ For Villiers Keep ; we think the Keep will be
A help and comfort unto some of those
Who need such help and comfort ; châtelaine
And lord we shall not be, but two that seek
To make the home-light they are blest withal
Shine for a few at least of such as wait
Weary and footsore till the day shall see
The opening of the many-mansioned home.
What comfort in the present, shall we say,
For broken loves, crushed hopes, and ruined faiths?
Shall we cry patience, saying ’twill be well
In the future, near or far ; leave wounds unstaunched
Because some day, we hope, hearts need not bleed
Away their life-blood as they bleed it now ?
Not so ; we say, let each one love so well
That life shall be to all within his sphere
A brighter thing and better. For the rest,
God works upon a scale of infinite size,
And we can trust Him ; yea, and do our work
No whit less nobly for that trust of ours.:

‘ For her and me, our life will shape itself
Simple as fair ; we know what luxury
Means and must mean, however it be said
The rich man’s luxury is the poor man’s good,
Giving the work that brings him daily bread ;

A deathful fallacy ! we know besides,
Simplicity of life is not indeed
An outward ugliness and sordidness,
But getting nearer to the air and light,
Body and soul : you think in this perhaps,
'That I have much to lose, and nought to gain ?
Nay, I have much to gain, and nought to lose.
I do not set my faith on outward change
Unvitalized from within ; but if it come,
As body to the soul which is the form
And makes the body where it wills to dwell,
Justice, not adolescent, but adult,
Oh, then, thrice welcome any outward change
This royal justice may demand and have.
And this I know, that nothing we may do,
And nothing we may give, albeit we give
Our bodies to be burned, our souls to starve,
Avails for lasting good the while we feed
The dreadful passion for supremacy
Which died upon Christ's cross, yet lives and
 thrives
Upon their flesh and blood we call in church
Brethren ; the lower classes, out of it.

' I have no scheme to offer you instead
Of the existent ; if I had 'twere false,

However true I were ; because no State
Is made at once, but follows laws of growth,
And growthful change, and shapes itself at length
In some way its beginners dreamed not of.
We work to make ourselves unneeded ; work
To help the unborn men to help the world
The better that we lived, whose names and schemes
They will not know, or know to smile thereat.

‘I am no seer, Grey, but I discern
Whither the current sets of tendency,
And I go with the current, all my will
Set thither, striving not against, nor yet
Unknowing and uncaring whither I go.
You think we want to make all lives of men
Unbeautiful, because the ugliness
Of some is branded heavily on our hearts ?
Not so ; we would have all lives beautiful :
We would not have men be like beasts of prey,
Prowling about each other’s steps to get
Each other’s blood ; that’s what they’re doing now ;
The strongest gets the most ; the rest—well, well,
I could say bitter things if so I would ;
The easiest thing on earth is to call names !
Of this, enough ; and for the rest, I strive
For entrance to the kingdom, as she said,

She who is one sweet health of body and soul,
Nor maimed nor halt, but sound in every limb.

‘What is your competition which, you say,
Makes men of savages, and then evolves
The higher man from men? ay, so it does,
If you eliminate that awkward thing,
The human heart ; which will not be at rest
Until it lie upon the heart of Love,
That knoweth not what emulation is.—
What is this competition? look and see :
You have no need to leave your native land !
You’ll see it if you look upon the folk
Who go their way, thrust out for evermore
From that fair heaven of heavens they call success.
Is your ear quick enough to hear them curse,
If the curse be but inarticulate?
Ask them what think they of God, if so it be
They care whether there be a God or no—
Nay, do not ask them ; you’re a gentleman,
And might not find your ears robust enough
To stand the shock. Men, ay, and women too,
Such women ! with the womanhood crushed down
Into the merest sex. God help us all !

‘And now look round and see the other ones

Who have success : what has it done for them ?
What is that manhood and that womanhood,
Reared on the flesh and blood of its own kind ?
How looks it, think you, in the eyes of God ?
Oh, better far to lie beneath the wheels
Splashed with our heart-blood, than to sit and urge
The team of hell to drag the chariot on !—
And yet, and yet, *they know not what they do !*

‘ That’s competition, as I hold it, Grey !
Man against man, instead of man for man !
Will you not try at least, and shall I say,
For my sake, Arthur, whom you say you love,
Try to believe it, for it is the truth,
The spring of action is not selfishness :
Men will have nobler aims, do greater deeds,
They needing not to struggle any more.’

‘ And in the days to come, with nought to give,
What room may be for generosity ?
They say, if all men have enough, no more,
No less, where cometh in the hand of Love,
Love, the giftbearer’s hand, laden with gifts ?’

‘ I answer, Love’s dear generousities
Pass never, and can never pass from need :
For ever we shall need to give and take.

"I give myself," saith Love, and bread, or gems,
 Or praise, are only body to that soul
 Informing all ; that soul which leaves a scent
 Sweeter than all the nard of all the East,
 Sweeter than breath of English violet bloom,
 About the meanest place it passes through.
 She has it, love like this ; thrice well for me
 If I could love as she, who makes the ground
 Her feet have trod, her garments' hem hath swept,
 The wholesomer for other feet to tread.

' We do not seek to flee our fellow-men,
 And make, in pride that claims some other name,
 A petty sect, by courtesy a church,
 A narrow little esoteric clan.
 God's kingdom is among you, said the Christ ;
 You, you, each man and woman everywhere.

' I do not let my fair ideal go,
 Brotherhood, freedom, and equality,—
 Equality of chance ; equality
 Of gift not being in any man to give,—
 For any old ideal that bids the rich
 Give amply of their substance to the poor.
 There are sweet souls and noble, hold themselves
 Stewards of God, and strive to use their wealth

In the best fashion ; feed the hungry ; clothe
The naked ; all the hungry and naked ones
They have about them ; weeping for their plight,
And thankful to do somewhat, small though it be,
To ease the weight of human suffering.
Well, while the house is building, dwell in tents
Or booths ; but do not say, " Here is a house
That shall defy the winds to beat thereon,
And breast the tempest's stress for evermore."

'The new ideal is a greater one ;
All men secure of bread to fill their mouths,
All men secure of bread to feed their souls ;
Of time and scope for every power they have
To bear upon the thing they do the best.

'For me, to hark back to the old ideal
Were as if, when one gazing on the dead
With reverent looks, a something comes to cheat
The gazer's sense ; the cold lips white and still
Seem moving just as if a word or kiss
Trembled upon them : but no life is there,
And we must let the coffin-lid be closed,
Upon the dead, and live with those who live.

'The new ideal has yet to be worked out ;
And it is swiftly working out itself.

The things we started at a lustre back
Are the mere commonplaces of to-day.

‘And you who hate the people, or at least,
Despise them surely—is’t not even so?
You like them in their place, whate’er that means—
You love not aitchless words and nails untrimmed—
You, Arthur, know at least as well as I
There’s something worse than lack of breeding is,
And worse than aitchless words, and nails untrimmed ;
That worse I mean to fight, so help me God !
But ill of centuries of ignoble aims
Takes more than a few years wherein to heal.’

‘Nay, Michael, nay ; the poor are not so bad
As you would represent them ! why, even I,
Who have no theories at all, nor views,
Much less a mission to reform the State,
I do not think them such rascality
As you, their friend, would seem to make them out.’

‘I would not speak as if I knew not well—
For I have seen with my own eyes, and heard
With my own ears, and thereto heard and seen
With ears and eyes of others,—how the poor
Have virtues great enough to make ashamed

The men who call themselves their betters ; ay,
The hungry ones will share their pitiful crust
With hungrier ones ; the overcrowded home
Will open wide to take the orphan in,
Who else must die : they do not say, like us,
“ Thy need is more than mine, and yet, forsooth,
I dare not give this draught away to thee :
It were not well to have an empty cup
Should one come by whose cup is always full :
We needs must keep our social standing up,
Nor peril our position as gentlefolk.”

‘ But runs the tendency of extreme want
No other way than this? do we not hear
Of motherhood and fatherhood that slays
Its young to gain a paltry burial fee ?
Ay, paltry, is it? or a precious thing
Meaning a little longer hold on life ?

‘ If any among us think that poverty
Is the best discipline of all for men,
Developing those worthful qualities,
Endurance, patience, and frugality,—
And I have heard it said in table-talk
By men perhaps a trifle more rotund
Than folk so disciplined are wont to be—

Why, let him go and try it for himself !
Let him give up all social privilege,
All land, all gold ; and let it lie beyond
His power to claim them for himself again :
Let him fight hard to win his daily bread,
And win the right to win it in the teeth
Of struggle wherein the weakest needs must fall ;
A poor, bare, forked animal, reduced
To life's essentials ! that's enough to say !

‘ Yes, patience is their virtue ; they will bear
Deep wrongs ; the wrongs we call on them to bear ;
The wrongs we would not bear ourselves one hour.
I bid them rather cease to bear these wrongs !
Let them learn patience in another way,
Some way that wrongs not them, and others too !
By all the manhood in them, all the fire
God's hand hath kindled, man's hath tried to quench ;
By all their duty to the commonweal,
Wherein the hurt of one is hurt of all ;
I bid them cease from patience ! it is time !
He wrongs himself who wrongs another man ;
He wrongs all other men who wrongs himself !

‘ Nay, Arthur, do not start as though I had said
I meant to stir the working-people up

To prove their manhood by the deeds of blood
Which die not barren of other deeds of blood,
Murder begetting murder evermore.
We deal not with a Russian autocrat,
Nor yet with leather-heart bureaucracy ;
We are Englishmen and work by English means,
And would not see justice unjustly done.

‘ But dare to bid them suffer on ! not I !
I tell you we may slay the souls of men
With patience, an ill patience with ill things.
Was the Christ patient when his fiery wrath
Drove the profaning chapmen with a scourge
Forth from his Father’s house ? I will not preach
Patience I would not practise being a man ;
Patience that saps away virility :
But I would tell them, I will tell them, Grey,
That, once afoot, they must go patient on,
Nor ever take their eye from the good aim,
Each man for all, all for the Commonweal.

‘ We say, “ The time is not yet ripe ! ” Perhaps ;
And yet, delay may find it over-ripe ;
And after over-ripeness, rottenness.
We say, “ All progress must be gradual ! ”
Gradual ; but need the gradual be the slow ?

A cripple's foot will rest upon one rung
 While a strong man's hath gained the ladder's top.
 The progress of the twain is gradual.

'There is no one can find the people's heart,
 He standing all the while aloof from them ;
 And I will try to find their heart, who stand
 In no aloofness, and would fain sit down
 With them if they would bid me to their hearth.

'Arthur, there's much to do, and much to bear ;
 Then let us do and bear it, man with man.'

And once again Michael and Arthur clasped
 Each other's hand, and stood in silentness,
 Till Arthur said, 'Well, Michael, I suppose
 If God has made a seer, his work's *To see* ;
 But seers have no perspective, good my friend ;
 They see the near and far upon one plane !
 God bless you, anyhow, howe'er that be.'

And Michael stood alone beneath the stars,
 How long he knew not.

Of the sons of men,
 The greatest, strongest, is too small, too weak,
 To hold one star, one life, in palms a-curve.
 O great, strong God, Thou hold'st the universe.

XIV

'BURD LUCY, who have put your hand in mine, (
And laid that head of yours upon my breast ;
Burd Lucy, who have crowned me on the brows
With a fair crown which once I feared to wear ;
We stand together, my beloved, we two,
And front the future with unfearing eyes.
We have not solved the mystery of our world,
But yet have seen the heaving of its breast
With the great love which throbs for aye beneath :
And we trust God and man, and we go on
To live out what we think to be the truth.
We who believe in man, ay, and in men ;
We who would work as if upon our work
Hung the supremest issue ; and would wait
As if our patience had the key of heaven.
We who have clasped this faith unto our hearts,
God never wastes, but only spends ; although
Man's eyes unpurged discern not use from waste.

And, for the day which we believe will be,
We love and work for that ; and go in faith
That He who comes will come, whate'er the time.

‘The world that’s gravid with a truth may go
Centuries of centuries ere her travailing ;
Or, in the twinkling of an eye, her throes
May come upon her, and the child be born.’

POEMS

AUTOGRAPHS

PROEM

MARGARET, the lady he cherished, our poet who sang
 Goldenmouthed, so that we hearkened entranced to
 the sound ;

Margaret, who saw him go hence, while with clash and
 with clang

Triumph rang high for the one we anointed and
 crowned ;

Margaret, his jewel of jewels, his lady and love,

She who was heart of his heart, who was soul of his
 soul ;

She with the delicate hands and the eyes of a dove ;

She whom the world should have guarded from trouble
 and dole ;

Reft of her love, and uncared for by kindred or friend,
 Toiled twenty years ere the time of her rest might
 arrive ;
Flinching not, steadily fought for her life to the end ;
 Strove through her weakness and pain as the resolute
 strive.

Woman and lady, untrained for the strife, unprepared,
 What could she do to keep body and spirit untwinned ?
Brave was the woman, and fared as a coward had
 fared ;
 Good was the woman, and suffered as if she had
 sinned.

So after twenty years gone, she was left to the drear
 Facing of famine and cold, meagre-limbed, white of
 face ;
Under the Three Golden Balls all her poor little gear ;—
 Then, on a morning in winter, one came to the place ;

Came to her mean little dwelling, and offered her gold,
 Gold in abundance instead of her loveletters signed
 with his name ;
Loveletters yellowed a little and twenty years old ;
 Autograph notes of a poet ensphered in his fame.

One of the letters of Keats to his lady had brought
Guineas, he told her, a score, yestermmonth at a sale ;
Nought to the sum he would give did she grant what he
sought ;
Would she give up her possession, so might he prevail.

Scarcely a word did she say, but he knew it was vain ;
Past through the door as he came, and half murmured,
' Forgive ! '
Went from her presence with something that bordered
on pain ;
Thought of the woman, and said, ' Will she die ? can
she live ? '

A face where there glowed such a soul as a dreamer may
see
Fair in the land where shut eyelids are gates of desire,
Calm in its wrath, for the queen of her passion was she,
Haunted by day at his desk, and by night at his fire.

So when a se'nnight was over he could not refrain ;
Went to the room that was fair from some radiancy shed
From a spirit close clasped to the bosom of love we call
pain ;—
Entered, and knelt on the floor by the side of the dead.

MARGARET

I

‘ A loveletter, written by dead John Keats,
Was sold for twenty guineas, I have heard :
Ah, did the buyer gloat upon each word,
Pause lingeringly, as near a nest of sweets,
Aflame to catch the self-same rapturous beats
Of the dear heart of that brave singing-bird,
When, all his being breathed upon and stirred,
The very lady of his heart he greets ?
Or did he look upon it, all unthrilled
Save by the pleasure of possessing what
So very few could get, and he had got ;
A thing of market-value if he willed,
Some profit on a future day to yield ?
Oh, let him be ; it matters not one jot.

II

‘ ‘Twas but a little week ago, one came,
Came praying me to sell letters of *his* !
I know not what I answered him, ywis ;
I knew I would die first ; and one wild flame,

Mine outraged womanhood leapt up to shame
 The asker, and he left me ; me who miss
 Living a little longer. What is this ?
 I think that God will hold me not to blame.

I knew the end was drawing very nigh ;—
 By famine done to death at forty-five !
 One would suppose I might have kept alive
 In Kensington a little longer ; why,
 I think I am over young like this to die.
 I strove good strife ; but what avails to strive ?

III

‘ Ay, one would think that, here in Kensington,
 It had not been so hard to keep from death !
 Plenty the people here of gentle breath,
 And gentle heart, who, had they only known
 His love, their idol’s love, so lean had grown,
 As one the Shade of shades o’ershadoweth,
 Had come with all the care which comforteth,
 And prayed her, made her, for his sake live on. —

For he who loved me twenty years ago
 Is dear to all to-day, and far and wide,
 They tell of him who, crowned with glory, died
 In youth which high maturity did know.
 True songs of life from him did freely flow,
 True English singer by the Thames’s side.

IV

‘He was a man with men, yet was apart
 Even from the very highest and the best ;
 Too great to care if greatest or if least
 They hailed him ; great in life, in thought, in art,
 He took the critics’ ear, the people’s heart,
 And bore himself even as the lowliest ;
 Wept at men’s woe, and smiled at their gay jest,
 And lived true life in closet and in mart.

His fount of song in clearest beauty sprang ;
 I was so near, my head received the boon,
 And little drops of his Castalian tune
 Upon the locks he loved awhile did hang ;
 And thus I sang of him, my love who sang
 Sweetest of all the singers under moon.

“ *How shall I keep this wondrous festival,
 The pleasure of God, more dreadful than his ire ?
 Than the high stars my God hath set me higher ;
 Have mercy, Lord, my handgrasp is but small,
 Yet he thou honourest lays within it all
 His heart of wonder, and his soul of fire ;
 And, of all women, I am the desire
 Of that white soul thou hast made so great and tall.*

*Yesterday I was like an ungrown soul
 In a pale limbo set, being unbaptized ;
 Painless and joyless, lacking bliss and dole ;
 By some adult magnificence surprised,
 Plunged in love's sea of fire, and in the whole
 Love-mystery for aye imparadised.*

*" I kiss you on the brow of noble thought ;
 I kiss you on the eyes which truly see ;
 I kiss you on the lips of melody,
 With tender, clinging kisses rapture-fraught ;
 I kiss you on the heart whose beats have caught
 All the world's joy and all its agony ;
 And, till God shut the gates of memory,
 This hour is mine, this perfect hour love-wrought.*

*Petrarca's Laura never thus did kiss
 Her lover-poet ; never so there fell
 On Beatrice's mouth such dew from his
 Who knew the heights of heaven, the depths of hell.
 Far happier I than she and she in this,
 Who keep a memory ineffable.*

*" O flower of flowers, whose petals warm and white
 Enfold me, body and soul ; O perfect star,
 Absolute in the radiance nought can mar,
 Nor pain nor time ; O sun of quenchless light,*

*And heat and glory, looser of the flight
 Of winged joys, and breaker of winter's bar ;
 O peace, deep set upon all strife and war ;
 O love, O liege, how can I hymn thee aright ?*

*I love thee, as I lie upon thine heart,
 And drink thy beauty in with ravished eyne ;
 I love thee, as I go from thee apart,
 Thou near me still, in timeless joy divine ,
 I love thee, love thee, love thee, O love, who art
 Soul of my soul, life of this life of mine."*

v

'O love, my love, how dared they think that I
 Would sell your letters for the sake of bread ?
 Nay, my soul's king, mine own beloved dead !
 Women have died for body's chastity ;
 Is it so much a stranger thing to die
 For the soul's chastity ? shall it be said
 Souls have no right to save their cleanlihead,
 Their sacredness, in face of earth and sky ?
 I take you in my lean hand, little match ;
 I strike you, and anon your flame has leapt
 On to his letters, my beloved's, kept

Not for the world ; I feared they might not catch,
Your flamelet was so tiny ; I have wept
My last ; I sit dry-eyed and watch and watch.'

.

The flame is out ; small, thin, the ashes go,
Blown lightly by the wind along the floor ;
The woman has laid her down ; the strife is o'er,
She waits the victor's coming ; does she know
How sweet to find the end of toil and woe,
How blessed not to struggle any more ?
Oh, long, long day ! six hours of twenty-four
To sleep, and all the rest to suffer so !

Nay ! for her soul to royal presence boweth,
Then lifts itself to mystic power and will :
Sweet dew has come to heal the fever-drouth ;
One draws anear ; there comes a rapturous thrill,
And the air quivers like a lover's mouth
To a lover's kiss. And all is very still.

BY LETHE AND EUNOE

*L' acqua che vedi non surge di vena
 Che ristori vapor che giel converta,
 Come fiume ch' acquista o perde lena ;
 Ma esce di fontana salda e certa,
 Che tanto dal voler di Dio riprende,
 Quant' ella versa da duo parti aperta.
 Da questa parte con virtù discende,
 Che toglie altrui memoria del peccato ;
 Dall' altra, d' ogni ben fatto la rende.
 Quinci Letè, così dall' altro lato
 Eunoè si chiama, e non adopra
 Se quinci e quindi pria non è gustato.
 Purgatorio, XXVIII.*

LETHE

Two, bound by joy and woe,
 Went hand in hand ;
 Where mystic waters flow
 I saw them stand.

Fires they had gladly known
That cleanse and heal ;
And past beyond the moan,
To quiet weal.

But higher yet and higher
They still should go,
Where love fulfils desire,
Where faith shall know.

And first above their head,
As well they wist,
Must pass the stream unfed
Of rain or mist.

The stream which rolls along
In twofold flood ;
Where souls forget their wrong,
Recall their good.

Sin's memory in the tide
Of Lethe drowned ;
Lost good on yonder side,
In Eunoe found.

By Lethe stood the two
I tell you of ;
(Not yet awhile they knew
How great is love.)

I heard them, her and him,
Speak, each and each ;
As tones of seraphim
Sweet was their speech.

‘ Shall we dip beneath the wave,
And so arise ;
The peace God’s pardoned have
Within our eyes ?

‘ Our old sin’s ghost hath walked
For all these years,
Where’er we two have talked
With smiles or tears.

‘ It looked upon us twain,
With eyes that said,
‘ *Never on earth again*
Shall I be laid.

“ *I am the sin which drove
From Eden dear ;
Though ye should hate or love,
Still I am here.*

“ *Though to forget ye seek,
It is but vain ;
Ye may grow old and weak,
But I remain.*

“ *I live for ever on,
Ghost of your sin ;
My body is dead and gone,
But ye cannot win*

“ *From the ghost at all release ,
And, day by day,
It is vain to whisper peace,
For I must stay.’*

‘ So did it stay, my dear,
Until we died
And past the waters clear
Of Tiber’s tide ;

‘ Glad in the purging fire
 To slay the wrong ;
Waiting with great desire
 The triumph-song.

‘ Before our lips respond
 To its great tone,
Before we go beyond
 This quiet zone,

‘ God’s angel saith, “ *See where
 This river rolls ;
Thereinto, without fear,
 Plunge you, dear souls ;*

“ *Plunge you, and cease to rue
 Sin’s weary debt ;
Its memory past from you,
 Ye shall forget.*”

‘ Beloved, must we go
 Under the stream ?
Shall memory pass, as though
 After a dream ?

‘ Must we forget it all,

Let it all pass

Under oblivion’s pall ?

Alas, alas,

‘ Would we not rather keep

The bitterness

Where sweet was drunken deep ?

How else but yes ?

‘ Would we forgo the joy

To lose the pain ?

Must we indeed destroy

Both boot and bane ?

‘ Up through that sin we rose,

I dare to say,

To heights more fair than those

Of olden day.

‘ It held us bound, and yet

Freedom it gave—

Oh, shall we then forget ?

Let us be brave,

‘ Turn from the stream, and gain
Through what we miss ;
Keeping our bitterest bane,
Our sweetest bliss.

‘ Nay, for God’s angel saith
We must, we must.—
Well, love is strong as death,
And God is just.’

Softly the waters clave,
And took them in,
To leave beneath the wave
Memory of sin.

EUNOE

‘ The waters lap us round,
You, dear, and me :
Great bliss we two have found
In Eunoe.

‘Never a doubt again !
 We leave the stream.
Where is the old, old pain ?
 It did but seem.

‘Bathed in this healing wave,
 Now we arise,
The joy God’s pardoned have-
 Within our eyes.

‘O light ! O radiancy !
 O good, whereof
None knoweth till he see
 How great is love.

‘Here, as we stand to-day,
 We are quite sure
All wrong must pass away,
 All right endure.

‘Evil shall truly die ;
 Good’ only sleeps ;
For all eternity
 To life it leaps.

‘ We kiss each other here,
 On breast and brow ;
Our love that casts out fear
 Made perfect now.

‘ O Lethe ! O Eunoe !
 With happy eyes
The light beyond we see,
 Of Paradise.’

CUCKOO SONG

*'In April
Come he will.'*

'Who doth roam?
Who will come?
Who? Who?'
'Cuckoo!'

Is it only cuckoo? Why
Do you long so eagerly
For the coming of the cuckoo by-and-by?

*'In April
Come he will.'*

*'In May
He sings all day.'*

'Whose the song
All day long?
Whose? Whose?'
'Cuckoo's!'

CUCKOO SONG

Is it only cuckoo's? Oh,
 That is not for me to know !
 Dearest music of all music loud or low.

*' In May
 He sings all day.'*

*' In June
 He changes his tune.'*

' Who doth sing,
 Varying ?
 Who ? Who ?'
 ' Cuckoo !'

Has the joyous cuckoo-strain
 That was echoed in your brain,
 Caught the trouble of the coming loss
 and pain ?

*' In June
 He changes his tune.'*

*' In July
 Away he'll fly.'*

(' Ruth is it
 Infinite !)
 Who ? Who ?'
 ' Cuckoo !'

Oh, the summer goeth fast,
And the cuckoo-time is past ;
Every day you hear him now may be the last.

*' In July
Away he'll fly.'*

*' In August
Go he must.'*

(' What avail
Tears and wail ?)
Who ? Who ?'
' Cuckoo !'

Only cuckoo ! and your face,
As you stand in your old place,
Wears the wonder of love's agony, love's grace.

*' In August
Go he must.'*

A PRIMROSE

'Twas a primrose of spring,
 Abloom on a bank where the winter-time's loss
 Had scarcely been known for the veiling of moss ;
 And the birds with new gladness, new life, were astir,
 And the sweet air came full of their music to her,
 Till she, too, fain, would sing ;
 And the song she outpoured on the rhythmical air
 Was a perfume so tender, a beauty so fair,
 The birds, in their turn,
 Fain would learn
 The secret of scent and the secret of hue
 Which the spring-blossom knew.

Then a poet came by,
 And he sang of the spring-time, this poet true-voiced,
 Till it seemed how the soul of the spring-time rejoiced
 To hear him, who carolled so clear and so sweet ;
 The primrose gave out all her scent at his feet,
 And the birds' melody

Chimed in with the poet's ; and poet and birds
Sang on sweetest notes in the sweetest accords,
 And the sky's happy blue
 Fairer grew ;
And the young leaves brake soft through their sheltering
 sheath,
 At the wonderful breath.

 And the poet sang on ;
But no more of the spring and the glory that broods
At the heart of the colours that come to the woods
With the stirrings of sap ; or the joy at the breast
Of the mate-birds that sing ; and the life in the nest,
 And the love-rapture won :
He sang of the summer, he sang of the rose,
The passionate colour, the passionate glows :
 Oh, the rose ! oh, the rose !
 How she knows
The terrible raptures, the depth and the height,
 And the sun in his might !

 And the little spring flower,
That was born in the time of the singing of birds,
Gave ear to the poet, and hearkened his words,

Till the noontime drank up all her bliss of the morn,
For her soul it was mad with desire and with scorn ;—

With desire for the power

Of the sun and his splendour ; desire for the sight
Of the queen of the summer, the rose in her might ;—

* With scorn for her lot

Which knew not

The glory, the ardour, the sheen, and the heat,
So dreadful, so sweet !

For, oh ! to behold

These glories ; to feed on the light of the sun ;

To drink in the life of the beautiful one ;

To be the great rose that can bear to be blest

With the strength of his kiss on the depth of her breast,

And unfold and unfold

All sweetness for him, her beloved, for him,

In the sheen of whose face all her being doth swim

As in seas of delight,

Warm and bright,

Till in death all the scent of the joy she has met

Doth cling to her yet !

So the primrose was fain

For the blisses the poet had sung while she heard ;

For the joyaunce that breathed through his beautiful
word ;

For the heights and the depths that she never might
know,
Whose birth was too near to the last of the snow :
 And the fret and the pain,
They withered her delicate beauty and slew,
And she died ere the time of her dying was due :
 And the rose of July,
 By-and-by,
Lived and died in the glory and joy of the sun,
 By the primrose unwon.

 O Love, sun of suns !
Didst thou shine in thy zenithal glory on high,
Down on us, even us, should we live, should we die ?
Are we as the primrose of spring? would the sheer
White splendour of thee, coming near and more near,
 Just slay us at once?
Dare we bid thee approach in thy light and thy heat,
Till, responsive, we breathe out all fragrancy meet,
 All life, and be thine,
 O Divine?
Then quicken, or slay us, whichever it be,
 So we look upon thee !

*A WEAK-MINDED WOMAN'S
COMPARISONS*

WELL, with whom shall I compare you, seeing, O my
lief and dear,

How to one (weak-minded !) woman you are just without
a peer ?

Nay, there is no need to tell me ; for I know you depre-
cate,

Proving thus at least your greatness, anyone should call
you great.

What, sir ? 'tis the sheerest nonsense, well I know ?

I'll not contradict your worship ! Be it so !

Only I have caught you now, and do not mean to let you
stir

Till I've told you things that, maybe, you will laugh at,
frown at, sir.

Ay, comparisons are odious ! so, in very sooth, they are !
You shall be compared with—whom then? no one in
particular !

Just another—quite impersonal, you know—
For convenience, any other ; be it so !

I would rather have your tempest than another's radiant
calm ;

I would rather you should wound me than another bring
me balm ;

I would rather take your blame than praise from any other
one ;

Rather go in the dark with you than with another in the
sun.

It's the very height of foolishness, I know ;
But (consider I'm weak-minded !) it is so.

I would rather have your weakness than their strength
men call the strong :

Let them do their rightest right, and I would rather have
your wrong :

Wrong or right, my soul's beloved, yea, whatever you
may do,

All my faith is clasped around you, and my whole soul
loveth you.

That's the height of immorality, I know ;
All the same, and notwithstanding, it is so !

But away with over-earnest ; let us back to dainty jest !
Is the jest, or is the earnest, tell me, dear my lord, the
best ?

Is it very gracious fooling, or the way of love to me,
Who am no enfranchised woman of the twentieth century,
But a poor weak-minded creature, and, you know,
'Tis no more, as some one says, *no more but so*.

HER DREAM

FOLD your arms around me, Sweet,
As against your heart my heart doth beat.

Kiss me, Love, till it fade, the fright
Of the dreadful dream I dreamt last night.

Oh, thank God, it is you, it is you,
My own love, fair and strong and true.

We two are the same that, yesterday,
Played in the light and tost the hay.

My hair you stroke, O dearest one,
Is alive with youth and bright with the sun.

Tell me again, Love, how I seem
'The prettiest queen of curds and cream.'

Fold me close and kiss me again ;
Kiss off the shadow of last night's pain.

I dreamt last night, as I lay in bed,
That I was old and that you were dead.

I knew you had died long time ago,
And I well recalled the moan and woe.

You had died in your beautiful youth, my sweet ;
You had gone to rest with untired feet ;

And I had prayed to come to you,
To lay me down and slumber too.

But it might not be, and the days went on,
And I was all alone, alone.

The women came so neighbourly,
And kissed my face and wept with me ;

And the men stood still to see me pass,
And smiled grave smiles, and said, '*Poor lass !*'

Sometimes I seemed to hear your feet,
And my grief-numbed heart would wildly beat ;

And I stopt and named my darling's name —
But never a word of answer came.

The men and women ceased at last
To pity pain that was of the past ;

For pain is common, and grief, and loss ;
And many come home by Weeping Cross.

Why do I tell you this, my dear ?
Sorrow is gone now you are here.

You and I we sit in the light,
And fled is the horror of yesternight.

The time went on, and I saw one day
My body was bent and my hair was grey.

But the boys and girls a-whispering
Sweet tales in the sweet light of the spring,

Never paused in the tales they told
To say, '*He is dead and she is old.*'

There's a place in the churchyard where, I thought,
Long since my lover had been brought :

It had sunk with years from a high green mound
To a level no stranger would have found :

But I, I always knew the spot ;
How could I miss it, know it not ?

Darling, darling, draw me near,
For I cannot shake off the dread and fear.

Fold me so close I scarce can breathe ;
And kiss me, for, lo, above, beneath,

The blue sky fades, and the green grass dries,
And the sunshine goes from my lips and eyes.

O God—that dream—it has not fled—
One of us old, and one of us dead!

HAREBELLS

BLUE BELLS, on blue hills, where the sky is blue,
 Here's a little blue-gowned maid come to look at you ;
 Here's a little child would fain, at the vesper time,
 Catch the music of your hearts, hear the harebells chime.

‘ Little hares, little hares,’ softly prayeth she,
 ‘ Come, come across the hills, and ring the bells
 for me.’

When do hares ring the bells, does my lady say ?
 Is it when the sky is rosed with the coming day ?
 Is it in the strength of noon, all the earth aglow ?
 Is it when at eventide sweet dew falleth slow ?
 Any time the bells may ring, morn, or noon, or even ;
 Lovebells, joybells, earthbells heard in heaven.
 Any time the happy hills may be lightly swept
 By the ringers' little feet ; any time, except

When, by horse and hound and man chased and frighted
sore,

Weak and panting, little hares care to ring no more.

It must be upon the hills where the hunt comes ne'er,

Chimes of bells ring out to greet touch of little hare.

Harebells, blue bells, ring, ring again !

Set a-going, little hares, the joyaunce of the strain.

Not a hare to ring the bells on the whole hillside?

Could she make the harebells ring, if my darling tried?

Harebells, harebells, a little child blue-gowned

Stands and listens longingly ; little hands embrowned

Touch you ; rose mouth kisses you : ring out !

Is a little child a thing any flower should flout?

Child's hand on poet's heart makes it bloom in song :

Let her hear your fairy chimes, delicate ding-dong.

Let her hear what poet's voice never caught nor sung :

Let a child ring the bells little hares have rung !

Soft she whispers to the flowers, bending o'er them
there,

' Let me ring your bonny bells ! I'm a little hare !

No, I'm only a little child, but I love you so !

Let me ring your little bells, just to say, you know.'

Harebells, blue bells, ring, ring again !

Set a-going, little child, the joyaunce of the strain.

Oh, the look upon her face for the music heard !
Is it wind in fairy soughs ? Is it far-off bird ?
Does the child hear melody grown folk cannot hear ?
Is the harebells' music now chiming on her ear ?
Father, give this little child, as she goeth on,
Evermore to keep the gift by this music won ;
Gift which makes this earth of ours very Paradise
For delight of opened ears, joy of opened eyes.
 Harebells, joybells, lovebells, dear and blest,
 Ring in the sacredness of her happy breast.

*IN WHAT HIGH BLISS ABIDETH
LOVE?*

In what high bliss abideth Love?
Lives he in golden sunshine fair,
Flooding the heart of broad blue air,
Green grass beneath his feet, above
His head the trees that ever bear
Blossom and fruit and leafage rare?
In such high bliss abideth Love?

In what deep pain abideth Love?
Sits he in dreary darkness where
The meeting hands of grief and care
Draw curtains close that will not move;
'Mid bitter sighs and cryings there
Of all earth's passion and despair?
In such deep pain abideth Love?

High bliss, deep pain, alike, for Love
Are dwelling-place, and he being there
Dark groweth bright, and fair thrice fair :
He brings the gifts that best behove ;
He teacheth strength to do and bear,
And weakness how in grace to fare ;
For everywhere abideth Love.

POLLY, A GOVERNESS

THE mice are away, and the cat will play ;
The children are out for the livelong day,
So Polly will have it all her own way.

Polly is barely turned nineteen ;
She hasn't at all a cat-like mien ;
The sweetest smile that ever was seen

Plays on her lips, that are dainty red ;
And brown is the hair of her bonny head,
And light is the little lady's tread,

And low is the little teacher's speech ;
So gladly she'll learn, so gladly teach,
It is good to be within her reach.

There's plenty of fun at her command ;
She doesn't look proud at all nor grand ;
But you rarely find a firmer hand.

The children, that others used to say
Could not, or would not, learn to obey,
Do Polly's bidding day by day.

Small wonder it is how this should be,
For strong as gentle, indeed, is she,
And they know she loves them heartily,

Their little griefs and little joys
She knows, and she mends their broken toys,
And she likes to hear their merry noise.

Full many a dear delicious thing
She tells them of birds upon the wing,
And the brooding-time when sweet they sing.

She knows the haunts of wild flowers rare ;
She has climbed full many a sea-rock where
Was a chance to find wild maidenhair.

They say she's 'a brick,' and it ne'er disturbs
That faith when little Polly curbs
Their glee with 'horrid irregular verbs.'

(Does Polly feel, or does she know,
How from man's heart, in the long ago,
Words came for his need in their heat and glow?)

Oh, life, to her, is full of delight,
A rapture and wonder of dark and bright,
Of things past worth for the ear and sight.

To-day they have left her all alone ;
The children are gone to London town ;
They'll not come back till the sun goes down.

'Good-bye, little cat !' did the children say,
When they kissed her that morn and went away ;
'When the mice are away the cat will play.'

What will the little pussy do ?
'Tis something very strange and new
To be all alone, for a long time too.

Perhaps she will turn out drawers to see
Where pretty stuffs and ribbons be,
And look them through, Miss Vanity,

And ply her needle and thread a space,
Till a brand-new hat is ready to grace
Her pretty head and her sunny face.

Or will she think it shame to press
This day's delicious loneliness
Into the service even of dress?

Perhaps she will write a home-letter
To the ones who love to hear from her,
And say she could not be happier,

Unless the good time were to come
When, once again a child at home,
No more from them she would ever roam :

Or gather the ready-ripened seed,
Or tend to the pigeons' hunger or greed,
Then take her book for a lovely read,

And under the ash where long boughs all
Droop green and fair, in a shady hall,
Miss Polly will have a delicious sprawl.

She scarce will think and she scarce will muse,
But lie as thinkers and dreamers use,
Until the time of the evening dews.

But the carriage-wheels will be heard at last,
And the little cat's play be over and past,
For the day will have slidden by so fast.

Oh, in the happiest life 'tis well
To be all alone for a little spell,
As many and many a one can tell :

And Polly will work the better, we say,
To-morrow, because of this to-day,
When the mice were away and the cat could play.

A LAY OF LONDON TOWN

WHAT THE HEART OF THE OLD MAN SAYETH

OH, I came to London Town, in the days of long ago,
With the springtide on my head, and a heart with spring
aglow ;

Glad of soul and blithe was I, who had oftentimes been
told

How the streets of London Town they are surely paved
with gold ;

I should bask in Fortune's smile, I should never see her
frown

In the heart of London Town.

Then the life of youth was mine, and I dreamt the
dreams of youth,

And I thought of beauty's self, and the very truth of
truth ;

I should fight and I should win, I should strive and I
should gain ;

Yea, a goodly life were mine, and a mastery o'er pain ;

I should do as strong ones do, and my brow should wear
the crown

Of true work in London Town.

I should keep my heart of love for the dear old country
folk ;

I should stand erect and strong as the stalwart ash and
oak ;

In the gold-paved city's heart I should pile up heaps of
gold

For my well-beloved ones ; they should have and they
should hold ;

Broadcloth brave should father don, mother wear a silken
gown,

Gained for them in London Town.

Now a many years are gone, and a many dreams are
fled,

And a many hopes are lost, and a many friends are dead.

Have I proved all vanity, as the world-sick preacher
saith,

In the bitterness of loss, and the bitterness of death?

Have all splendid hopes that grew in the field of youth
died down

On thy heart, O London Town?

'Twas for London Town, long since, I gave up the
country sweet,

Gracious air about my head, gracious grass about my
feet ;

Voice of woodland, torrents' rush, mountain summits
grand and proud,

Songs of birds that cannot sing 'mid the cry and throng
and crowd,

For the busy traffic's roar, and the fogdom heavy and
brown

Of thy streets, O London Town.

Loss, and nought but loss, ye say, and ye say I ne'er
shall know

Any beautiful delight like the joy of long ago ;

Never more the tranquil sweets of the country dear and
fair,

Never any coolness like mountain breath upon my hair :

Oh, the glory is gone for aye, do ye say, life's end and
crown

As I sit in London Town?

What, ye think the aim of all should be peace and
quietude,

Little brooklets running soft, never mighty roar and
flood?

What, ye think that none is blest save who lifteth happy
eyes

To the green of woodland trees and the blue of country
skies?

Nay, but your philosophy has not dreamt or guessed or
known

That which bides in London Town.

It was true what country folk long ago to me had told,
How the streets of London Town they are surely paved
with gold ;

Of that paving, by God's grace, some small portion have
I won,

Better than the share that fell to the lot of Whittington,
When the song o' the bells came true, bells that hailed
him, country clown,

Thrice Lord Mayor of London Town !

Oh, the streets of London Town are alive with all the
glow

Of the glorious feet that walked up and down so long
ago ;

And we know of things that pass all the power of voice
and speech,

By the stately eloquence of the city's sweep and reach ;
Splendid strength and fairest grace, from whose shadow
light drops down

On thy head, O London Town !

Oh, the beat of eager hearts ! Oh, the glory of life's
great race !

Ever on and onward yet, with a never-slackening pace !
And the rushing sound is like swirl of some mysterious
seas,

And one glows to feel one's heart just a-beat with hearts
like these.

Oh, delight of strenuous life, past all speech and all re-
nown,

In thy heart, great London Town !

'Nay, but hush !' ye say, 'or else lift thy voice and cry
aloud,

Do not sing a triumph-song ; sit as one in darkness
bowed ;

How should any poet dare to be glad and proud who
knows

Of the horror brooding thick, of the bitter deathly
throes—

Mad injustice, rampant sin, keeping state and grinding
down

Body and soul in London Town !

‘ Splendid things hath London Town? Dreadful things
she knoweth too ;

Dost thou dare, O poet, turn eyes away, nor face their
view ?

Sin and horror sitting throned, over thousands holding
sway,

Deadly foulness stifling close, blotting out the gracious
day.

Will the Light that lighteth men ever pierce this fogdom
brown

Brooding over London Town ?’

And I answer, ‘ Brothers, yea, in my heart I know this
thing,

Yet I lift my heart to praise, and I lift my voice to
sing ;

For I know however dark be the cloud, the sun is
there,

And I know the hope of God, and I cast aside despair ;

Yes, the deathly fog will lift, and the Light of lights pierce
down

To the heart of London Town.’

I have lost the hopes of youth, but a better hope is
mine ;

I have lost old blind belief, but I cling to faith divine ;
Spilt the cup of youth's bright wine, but my soul hath
drunken deep

Of the awful river of life, stream whose waters never sleep.
Little vessels may brim o'er with the self-same floods
which drown

In their greatness, London Town !

Yes, I see the wrong that's piled on the wrong of
centuries,

Till redressing seems to mean slaying those to quicken
these ;

English women pined and starved till despair has bid
them meet,

Face to face and hand to hand, death, or life upon the
street ;

English men in manhood's prime, soul and body
trampled down

In the depth of London Town.

This I see, and more I see ; yea, I see the hearts that
burn

With the flame that nigh consumes, and my heart on them
doth yearn ;

And I clasp their loyal hands, bless them as they go
along,
Great hearts, loving much the right, therefore hating
much the wrong ;
Going on for no reward, caring not to win renown
As they work in London Town.

Oh, I see them dare the plunge ; oh, I watch them breast
the flood,
Stretch their hands abroad to swim, these our gallant
ones and good ;
And I see the heavy surge of the great wan water rise,
Till it dash above their heads, till it hide them from my
eyes.
Will they reach the sinking ones, whom the floods are
fain to drown ?

Yes, and save in London Town !

Ay, because of such as these, I am glad that I can say
I have lived in London Town, as I stand and breathe to-
day ;
And I glow to look on those who would give the rights
of men
To the men who suffer so, having lost them, once again ;
And I think that God doth smile on their work, to bless
and crown

This their work in London Town.

*SAINT SWITHUN'S DAY*¹

THREE little noses are flattened against the pane ;
 Three little rosy mouths are bemoaning the rain ;
 Saint Swithun is christening the apples with might and
 with main.

‘ O Saint Swithun, Saint Swithun,’ the children say,
 ‘ Surely you’ve christened the apples enough to-day.’

‘ Rain, rain,’ say the children, ‘ be off to Spain !
 Never, never, we charge you, come back again !
 We want to run in the garden, and down comes the
 rain !

O Saint Swithun, Saint Swithun,’ the children plead,
 ‘ We want our run in the garden, we do indeed.

¹ Hone mentions a saying current in some parts of the country when rain falls on St. Swithun’s Day ; ‘ St. Swithun is christening the apples.’

' Dear Saint Swithun, our lessons have been so long ;
Dreadful sums, Saint Swithun, that would come wrong !
We wanted to dance a little, or sing a song,

And now we are free, Saint Swithun, we're kept
indoors,

For, because you are christening the apples, it pours
and pours.

' Good Saint Swithun, our lessons are over and done ;
Kind Saint Swithun, we're longing to take a run ;
When you were young, Saint Swithun, you liked some fun.

O Saint Swithun, Saint Swithun,' the children cry,
' Why should you christen the apples in mid July ?

' Leggies get cramped, Saint Swithun, indeed, if they
stay

Out of the orchard and garden the live-long day :

It's all very well in winter to play house-play,

But, oh, in the summer, with birdies and blossoms
and bees,

Who could in the house be contented, Saint
Swithun, please ?

' *We* don't mind the rain, not an atom : away we should
get

From the schoolroom, bare-headed, bare-footed, out into
the wet,

If only they'd let us—but that they have never done
yet ;

And you might as well ask them to—cook us and
eat us, you see,

For in some things grown-up folk and children can't
ever agree.'

Now hurrah for Saint Swithun ! The rain is o'er ;
Out comes the sun in his glory—they make for the
door—

Six little feet a-patter, a joyous uproar ;

'Hey ! for Saint Swithun, Saint Swithun,' the chil-
dren shout ;

'Hats and boots—not a moment to lose till we're
out.'

Hark at the birds and the children ! Oh, merry and
sweet

Rings out the laugh of the children, and quick are their
feet.

Hey ! for the sunshine of summer, its light and its heat.

Where are ye now, little children ? Oh, far away,

Though Saint Swithun is christening the apples
again to-day.

*'AS A DREAM WHEN ONE
AWAKETH'*

Is it all a dream ? will the coming of day surprise
Us lying prone, with slumber sealing our eyes ?

Will the great red dawn smite sharp on our eyeballs
then,
And pierce like a sword the souls of women and men ?

Shall we utter a sudden cry, and bewildered spring
From the couch whereon we sleep, when the glorious
thing,

The sword of the daylight's flame, shall come to rive
The marrow and joints, not slaying, but making alive ?

Alive from the death of sleep in the coffin-bed,
With the shadows of truths and lies at our feet and
head ;

And the thing with hopeless eyes and lips of unfaith,
We know for the ghost of our past and our future's
wraith.

The shadowy truths and lies will fade away
In the light of eternal Truth who maketh it day ;

And Past and Future alike will cease to be ;
For all is Now in the day of eternity.

Shall we mourn the things which in sleep we thought
were good,
And weep that nothing shall come to cheat or illude ?

The pleasant shams God's eyes will have blasted for
aye,
And the glosses and dear deceits of our dream's pale
day ?

Shall we moan for the sweets of the night with their
blisses and stings,
And cry for shadows to hide from the blaze of Things ?

Will the light of the eyes of God, so terrible-fair,
Be more than soul can endure or life can bear ?

'Not yet, not yet, is the flush in the eastern sky ;
Let us dream that we eat and drink, that tomorrow we
die ;

'Let us dream of the bitten gold with its core of dust ;
Let us dream of wisdom and folly, of love and of lust ;

'Let us dream of beauty and foulness ; of heaven and
hell ;
Of heights and depths ; and of things no tongue can
tell.'

Nay ; he that cometh will come, though he seem to
delay ;
The countless aeons with him are but as a day.

At last, at last, the morn of his life will break,
And the sleepers hear the call of God, and awake.

UTOPIA

WHERE is the land of Utopia,
The good, the fair ?
How shall we bask in its sunshine,
Breathe in its air ?
Say, is that wonderful country,
Indeed, nowhere ?

Where the love of men for their fellows
Is deep and strong ;
Where the trust of men in their fellows
Is broad and long ;
Where the voices of man and nature
Make one great song.

Where they ever seek the ideal
With hearts unashamed ;
And the search for good and beauty
Is all unblamed ;
And the name of falsehood never
So much as named.

All of the folk in Utopia
Are free of the sod ;
They know no fetters of slavedom,
No tyrant's nod ;
They may not be dragged or driven,
Were it even to God.

Are all in Utopia equal ?
They all are free ;
They have room to breathe and grow in,
To hear and see ;
And they never think of claiming
Equality.

Work and honour and pleasure
Are all they claim ;
For spirit differs from spirit
As frame from frame ;
And fair degree is better
Than same and same.

They sometimes go wrong in Utopia,
And err likewise ;
But the light of a loyal purpose
Is in their eyes ;
And if they stumble in going,
Again they rise.

They cleave not to old for old's sake,
Nor new for new
They seek, but are eager-willing
God's will to do ;
So shall they one day, surely,
Know what is true.

Whenever one steppeth forward
New ways to try,
There is none to hiss him and scorn him,
Or raise the cry,
'Bring stones wherewith to stone him
For blasphemy !'

They know the eternal Spirit
Hath many a guise
Of body for high revealing
To seeking eyes ;
They love the spirit truly,
And so are wise.

The worn-out body they gently
Lay in its rest,
The dark and quickening glory
Of earth's dear breast.
From good there comes the better,
From better, the best.

They are never afraid in Utopia
 To try and to prove ;
Each follows a loyal impulse,
 However it move,
And doeth whatever he pleaseth,
 Because all love.

They know the wonderful secrets
 That lie soft curled
Round the heart of the mystic being
 We call the world ;
The home of life and quickening,
 With light imperled.

They have watched her all the daytime,
 Know every heave
And fall of her bosom's beauty,
 And softly cleave
To her side, and laugh with her laughter,
 And with her grieve.

They have gazed on her in the night-time,
 In lucid rest ;
They have seen her lovely body
 By sleep caressed ;
They know of the mole cinque-spotted
 Upon her breast.

Their eyes are open for seeing,
 Their ears can hear
The blare of the great wind's trumpet,
 Its flute-song clear ;
The music of spirit voices,
 Afar, anear.

Alive they are, and responsive
 To every touch ;
Nor dull, nor morbid ; for Nature
 Bestows on such
Her healthy measure, which knows not
 Too little, too much.

They know not our anguish-billows
 On oceans wild :
The needs of the sense and the spirit
 Are reconciled :
The strength of the man has wedded
 The heart of the child.

Are there ever tears in Utopia ?
 Ah, who may say ?
Is the fire of pain still burning
 There day by day ?
—Well, tears and fire may be lustral,
 May heal, not slay.

When shall the sight of that country

Crown wish and prayer ?

Oh ! shall we ever find it,

The dear, the fair ?

Or is the land of Utopia,

Indeed, nowhere ?

' *THANK YOU* '

Do you thank your eyes that see
Or your ears that hear?
Then why give thanks to me,
My dear, my dear ?

Do you know that you, yes, you,
Are light to mine eyes?
I love you, love you true,
How otherwise?

You let me into your heart,
Do you not know?
You made me of life a part,
A while ago.

What matters what I may do,
Or what I may give?
You know I would die for you,
As for you I live.

Then let me breathe with your breath,
To your need respond,
Till we come to the gates of death,
And the strange beyond.

MOTHERING SUNDAY

ON the trees the tender leafage thrills for glory to be
 won,
 Perfectness of strength and colour, from the touches of
 the sun ;
 In the hedges breath of violets, for the spring-time has
 begun.

On the bosom of the willow sheen of golden down is
 spread ;
 Little hazel catkins—children call them lambs' tails—
 overhead ;
 Aspen blossom swaying, dancing, in a mirth of living
 red.

All the country-side a-triumph, from the winter-bonds
 releast,
 Breaks from march of grave iambus into bounding
 anapaest,
 With the gladness of the blossom, mating bird and
 youngling beast.

Mother Nature, all thy sweetness, all thy wonder, taketh
hold
Of the spirit till we pause not to remember heat or
cold ;
All forgetful of the pain and knowing not the growing
old.

Long ago when earth was thrilling with the rapture of
the spring,
And the lovely hope and promise every heart was
quickenning,
'Prentice boys in merry England used to go a-mothering.

They would bring their gladsome mothers dainty simnels
rich and sweet,
And in many a country hedgerow would those lads a-
mothering meet
With the bloom of early violets, by the wayside, at their
feet.

O my mother, sweet my mother, may I come to you
to-day ?
Bring my little song to greet you ? Are you very far
away ?
Can you hear me in my singing ? Can you hearken
what I say ?

It is Mothering Sunday, darling ; sunshine beats through
gloom of Lent ;
And a greater, sweeter sunshine to the mourning heart is
sent
That has kept Love's awful vigil and received its
sacrament.

Where you are I know not, mother, but am fain to
think you dwell
In the beauty and the quiet which you waited for so
well—
Whitest sheen and warmth and comfort ; God's own
peace unspeakable.

In the by-and-by, O mother, will the Master let me
bring
Some sweet gift by Love made worthy, (Love makes
worthy poorest thing)
My beloved, my beloved, when I go a-mothering?

COMRADES

THERE were three :
Red their radiant lips with laughter of the young gods'
 holy glee ;
Sweet their speech, exceeding sweeter than all singers'
 melody ;
And their hair had dewy brightness of the morning of
 the world,
Like the delicate glow of spring woods all bemavised
 and bernerled.
In the glory of their manhood, in the splendour of their
 youth,
Deep they vowed a vow that nothing would they love
 before the truth ;
They would grapple with the horror of the monsters of
 the fen ;
They would fight for truth and set her throned upon the
 hearts of men.

You had said, to look upon them, oh, so fair and strong
were they,
They had bathed them, soul and body, in the ocean of
God's day :
Sin and death could never touch them, time and chance
could never mar,
Any more than marish-vapours quench or dim the
morning star :
For these three, these lovely comrades, with God's clean-
ness in their glance,
Came to earth to work their fellows comfort and
deliverance.
In your strength, and in your beauty, in your health of
body and soul,
Go ye forward, light the darkness, heal the sick and bless
the whole !

There were twain :

One was going as he goeth who is king o'er time and
pain,
Strong in tested might and proven, after heavy stress and
strain.
One was going as he goeth who is weak of heart and
limb ;
Wind and rain and sun had beaten sore upon the head
of him.

Brave the cheer his comrade gave him, he whose arm he
 leant upon ;
Oft they thought, and spake but seldom, of the comrade
 who was gone :
Never could I hear his hap, but knew that somehow he
 had failed—
Failed his comrades and the world ; perchance his soul
 had sometime quailed
For the power of dread illusion born of an imperfect
 faith,
Cowered and hid her face, and so was phantom-slain by
 phantom death.
Did he, could he fail because of lust for pleasure, fame,
 or pelf,
Or ignobly kiss the ground before the image of himself?
Howsoever were the failure, oh, the pity, the pity of it !
Was the lamp gone out for ever once the hand of God
 had lit ?

 There is one :
Mountains climbed and rivers forded, there he standeth
 all alone,
And upon his forehead glows the splendour of the risen
 sun.
Glorious-browed and stalwart-shouldered, chested deep
 and mighty-thewed ;

Eyes untired as the king-eagle's in his pride of youth
renewed.

Yet the deep clear orbs are tender, and the firmness of
the lip

Has the sweetness of the joyaunce and the ruth of
comradeship.

Open wide, ye gates of glory, open wide to let him in,
To the Beatific Vision of the souls that fight and win !
Crown the forehead of the victor none nor nought could
foil or worst !

First thou art, O glorious brother, and the first shall still
be first.

There were three :

Only one comes in triumphant? Only one the light
shall see?

O my brothers, O my brothers, what is this for you
and me?

O my brothers, O my brothers, leave the victor to his
gain,

Kiss the foreheads of the vanquished in their numbness
and their pain ;

One who failed, and one who mourned him, and himself
must now be mourned,

Did he stumble, being weary? were his footsteps back-
ward turned?

Oh, the vanquished ! oh, the erring ! let the victor bear
his crest—

We are glad for those that win, if those that lose we love
the best.

What of them, and how, O singer ? tell us somewhat of
the twain ;

Did they never rise from falling ? did they nevermore
attain ?

Did they see the glorious vision ? did they only dream
the dream ?

Did they gain the things that be, or rest in those that
only seem ?

In the horror of the furnace sevenfold heated were they
tried,

And the dross consumed for ever, and the true gold
purified ?

Gloria Deo for the victor, but for these the vanquished
ones,

Speak the word of hope and comfort, *love forgives as
death condones.*

Is infinitude love's measure, and its span eternity ?

There is one, you say, O singer ; and I tell you, there
are three.—

Tears are on your cheek, O singer ; answer give you
none, nor durst.—

Must the last be last for ever, as the first for ever first ?

UNA AND DUESSA

DUESSA hath scarlet raiment,
 And gold and gem ;
She weareth upon her forehead
 A diadem ;
The kings of the earth are kissing
 Her garment's hem.

Una is clad in vesture
 Of stately white ;
Her locks uncrowned are morning's
 Own rays of light ;
But the stole she wears around her
 Is black as night.

Duessa goes laughing lightly,
 As free of care ;
Duessa within the bosom
 That looks so fair,
The very form of foulness
 Indeed doth bear.

Una goes mourning inly,
Fair face, fair soul ;
Not yet is the time for casting
Away her dole ;
Not yet is the time for loosing
Her sable stole.

Full many a time and often,
The hearts that err
Have looked on Duessa, unknowing
The lovelier ;
Have taken Duessa for Una,
And worshipped her.

Yet once a knight of Faery
Stript the dame
Of all her royal apparel
And crown of fame ;
And showed her bald and naked,
A thing of shame.

And under the stole of sable,
The snow-pure dress,
The body of Una shineth
In loveliness
The holy know,—and the striving
Perhaps may guess.

But yet Duessa goeth
In bravery ;
And yet will live and queen it,
O'er mean and high ;
As long as the heart of Christdom
Loveth a lie.

And few to Una, the only,
Will bend the knee,
Until the eyes of Christdom,
Clean-purged to see,
Discern things only seeming
From things that be.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS EVE

I

THERE was no room within the inn for them.
 The woman who beneath her girdle bare
 Sweet comfort for the world, a stranger there
 Lay all that solemn night in Bethlehem
 Within a manger ; Jesse's Root and Stem
 Should spring the very morrow strong and fair,
 And all the slumbering world was unaware.
 We who still slumber, how shall we condemn ?

 She lies, alone with God, this holy eve ;
 She, whose glad eyes will look to-morrow morn
 With rapture on the blessed Man-child born ;
 She, who in three-and-thirty years will grieve,
 Pierced to the heart ; she, who will yet receive
 The garland of the Rose without a thorn.

II

Oh, was there never a woman there to say,
‘Behold, this woman is nigh her travailing,’
And take her by the hand, and gently bring
Into a room, and softly speak, and lay
The woman down, and watch by her till day?
Until the shadows fled, and light should spring,
And with the springing light the Holy Thing?
We, blind and cold, nor dare to blame, nor may.

And yet, if men had felt the throbbing breast
Of night alive with wonder and the fair
Great Dawn, they had left their beds all empty there,
Nor cared a whit for any sleep or rest.
We, have not we rejected any guest ;
Dismissed the more than angel unaware ?

THE REFUSAL

I. HEDONIST

‘OPEN to him who standeth at thy door,
 To him whose travail hath been sore and hard,
 To him whose visage is so greatly marred ;
 Open to him, dear soul, he doth implore.
 Lo, one may track him by the drops of gore
 His wounded feet have shed on stone and sward ;
 Keep not thy door against him closely barred ;
 Open to him, once and for evermore.’

‘Nay, for blithe music and the dancers’ feet
 Are in my house, and all is beauty and light ;
 Why should I suffer anguish of the night
 To enter in and spoil the fair, the sweet ?
 He would not dance to any pipings meet ;—
 Hence, pilgrim, hence, and trouble not my sight !’

II. ASCETIC

‘Open to him who standeth at thy door,
To him who wears a crown with jewels starred,
To him whose locks are bright with odorous nard ;
Open to him, sweet soul, he doth implore.
His garments drop with all love’s fragrant store,
His heart of hearts is joy by pain unmarred ;
His form is beauty’s self ; put key to ward,
Open to him, once and for evermore.’

‘How should I dare undo my door to greet
The pride of lust and revelry to-night ?
Hell’s worm breeds at the heart of such delight,
Hell’s fire the only end its raptures meet.
O bitterness, be thou alone my sweet !
Blind me, my God, that so I see aright !’

*THE LAST COMBAT IN THE
COLISEUM*

I

A FOLK that called itself a Christian folk
Still kept the blood-lust of its heathendom,
Men slaying men to make fair mirth for Rome ;
And one, aflame with anger and pity, spoke
His heart out in the eloquent speech that broke
Against the mob's hard will, and fell therefrom
Like a strong wave, whose heart beneath its foam
Beating in vain, sobs back from some hard rock.

Another took his life within his hand,
Saying, '*No longer shall this evil be.*'
They smote him that he died upon the sand,
Having fulfilled love's whole supreme command.
But in his death love gained its victory,
For never again did Rome such combat see.

II

Now many a year since then is past and o'er,
But men not yet to love's high law subdued ;
The evil still is fain to blast the good ;
Wrong wrestles still with right at all things' core ;
And some, who guess the secret of love's lore,
Speak, very mighty in their voice and mood ;
And some, who know that secret's plenitude,
Lay down their lives, as men lay down their store.

Wilt thou, O man, deliver men from wrong,
'Tis not enough thy substance to bestow ;
And not enough to send thy heart along
Upon the rhythmic tide of passionate song ;
Thyself, thy soul, thy body, all must go :—
Thou knowest not the rest, but God doth know.

DE PROFUNDIS

GOD my Father, and dare I say,
 'Out of the deeps I cry to-day?'

Are they not shallows, these deeps of mine ;
 Shallows wherein all unafraid,
 A little ungrown soul might wade
 Over to gain that rest of Thine?

Shallows or deeps, whichever they be,
 I am whelmed in their horror verily,
 And beaten upon by their wild salt foam ;
 Only sometimes, behind, behind,
 And not in my face, is the master wind
 Which blows me nearer the shore of home.

Oh, shall I ever gain that shore ?
 Will the wind set, and for evermore
 Beat me back, till at last I fall
 To rise not again, and the ebbing tide
 Bear me away, who in vain have cried
 To Thee, who seest and knowest all?

THE BABIES' MYSTERY PLAY

THE children talked, and one who would not grieve
 Their little hearts by laughing look or nod,
 They being in right earnest, softly trod,
 And listened, deeming they did aptly weave
 Some great new game. 'You shall be Adam and Eve,'
 Said Charley, 'You shall kneel, and I'll be God,
 And frown on you, and lift my angry rod,
 And tell you both my Eden bower to leave.'

And Muriel answered, eager of voice and soul,
 'No, you be Adam and Eve, and God I'll be !'
 But Charley would not take the lesser rôle ;
 Each would be God,—and what a God ! Ah me,
 We grown-up folk fight too for high control,
 And play at being God continually.

*A DREAM OF SPINNING AND
WEAVING*

A BEAUTIFUL dream came once to me ;
I set it down for thee and thee.

I wandered away from mist which spoke
Of a distant city's murk and smoke ;

To seek for linen clean and fair
(Such the king's daughter of old did wear),

So fair that my soul the search refused
Where the workers' hearts were broken and bruised,

Or shut away from the light of home
In the factory's noise and dust and gloom.

‘ Is there never a place,’ said my heart to my heart,
‘ Where labour and joy are not apart ?

‘Where hand and brain delight can take
In true work done for true work’s sake?’

And I dreamt the good northcountry men
Said, ‘Here will ye find the white linen,

‘Made from the blue-flowered plant which grew
Fed by our English sun and dew.’

I would have my thread, I told them, spun
Where the light of the happy English sun

Through window or open door shines clear
On grandam, mother, or maiden dear.

I would have the thread spun strong and smooth
By the hands of age or the hands of youth ;

Which, it would matter not a whit,
So the women were glad a-spinning it ;

So hand and foot the pleasure knew
Of work that is happiness to do ;

That shuts not away from home and hearth,
And the sweetest joys of all the earth.

The girls should sing and the grandams croon
Dear words which go to familiar tune :

And the web should be woven by hands that know
To fling the shuttle to and fro,

Nor fear to pause with a smile, and say,
' God give you, neighbour of mine, good-day ;'

Nor fear to leave the loom alone
Before the golden day had gone.

I would have the linen laid to bleach,
In sound of children's laugh and speech,

In the dear green fields around the home,
Where crisp breath of the wind should come ;

And the dew should fall at morn, at night,
And the sun shine down in his lovely might,

Till white it grew and whiter still
As wind, dew, sun, should work their will.

The good linen should wear and last
When my time on earth were over and past ;

And win fair praises verily
In the good days coming by-and-by.

And where should the spinning and weaving be?
Oh, where but in the north country,

Where Ruskin's feet tread wood and hill,
And Wordsworth's spirit broodeth still?

And, because in my dream it seemed I knew
That one was at work to make it true,

Asleep or awake, my heart did say,
'*God bless you, Master Fleming, to-day!*'

'M.' TO 'N.'

How sweet are you to me? As sweet
 As dewy turf to wayworn feet ;
 As cooling draught of water given
 To lips athirst from morn to even ;
 As bread and wine at Sacrament
 To soul of blessed penitent.

How true are you to me? As true
 As swallow to the roadless blue
 When spring hath wakened in his breast
 Life's rapture of the brooding west :
 Or as the sea in his response
 To that still call which is the moon's.

How near are you to me? As near
 As to the earth her atmosphere ;
 As warp to woof when web is wove ;
 As strength to hope ; as light to love ;
 As my own blood, my flesh, my breath ;
 As near as life, as near as death.

How far are you from me? As far
As glory of the morning-star
From Lucifer ; as far as bliss
Of comradeship from Judas kiss ;
As day from night : indeed more far
From me than heaven from hell you are.

IT IS WELL

No more I see thee, O sun of flame and glow !
 Yet feel the grey days' pallor all unsweet ;
 I have had pain ; I need some gladness now ;
 No more I see thee, O sun of flame and glow !
 But I have thy heat.

No more I see the splendour of the rose,
 But God hath chosen each one's lot—content !
 Not sheen, but soul of things for me He chose ;
 No more I see the splendour of the rose,
 But I have her scent.

I see it not, thy look that loveth me ;
 The look I feel is on me. What of this ?
 It matters not ; regret were blasphemy ;
 I see it not, thy look that loveth me,
 But I have thy kiss.

Closed are mine eyes, but what of shadow or gloom ?

Oh, too much light have I around, above,
For any darkness on my life to come !

Closed are mine eyes, but what of shadow or gloom,
When I have love ?

From the French (' Qu'importe ? ') of Berthe de Calonne.

FOR THEE

IF there be a turf sweet wet
 With dew and shower ;
Season by season bright for some
 Unfolded flower ;
Where lilies in all abundance blow,
 With honeysuckle and jasmine there ;
I am fain to make it the pathway where
 Thy foot shall go.

If there be a breast of love
 Where honour sways ;
Where deep devotion knoweth not
 Sour thoughts, hard ways ;
If evermore this loyal breast
 For some great cause beat strong and fair,
I am fain to make it the pillow where
 Thy head shall rest.

If there be a love-dream quick
 Wi' the rose's breath,
A dream where the heart for every day
 Sweet things findeth ;
A dream God blesseth verily ;
 Where soul with soul doth union win ;
I am fain to make it the nest wherein
 Thy heart shall lie.

From the French of Victor Hugo.

NOTES

1. p. 14. 'Tormented with the perilous desire

To tell the true.'

'Infiammato d' un pericoloso desio di dire il vero.' Said by Paolo Giovio of Savonarola.

2. p. 36. By Section 2 of the Statute of Kilkenny it was ordained that 'No alliance by marriage, gossiped, fostering of children, concubinage, or by amour, nor in any other manner, be henceforth made between the English and Irish of one part, or of the other part; and that no Englishman, nor other person, being at peace, do give or sell to any Irishman, in time of peace or war, horses or armour, nor any manner of victuals in time of war; and if any shall do to the contrary, and thereof be attained, he shall have judgment of life and member, as a traitor to our lord the King.'

I use the translation given in Mr. Richey's *Lectures on Irish History* (1869).

3. p. 36. After the battle of Aughrim, 'an eyewitness who looked from the hill the next day said that the country for miles around was whitened with the naked bodies of the slain. It looked, he remarked with grim vividness, like an immense pasture covered with flocks of sheep!'

Ireland, in 'The Story of the Nations' series.

4. p. 41. 'They scarce have heard at all of God or Christ;
They are mere heathens;'

Lest I should be suspected of what looks like a grotesque misrepresentation, I may say that a short time ago a lady called on a near relative of mine, at Brighton, requesting a subscription for the purpose of helping forward missionary work in Ireland. She

informed him that the Irish were mere heathens, and had never heard of God or Christ !

5. p. 41. 'Ye gete no more of me,' &c.

Chaucer : *Legende of Good Women*.

6. p. 45. 'In that blind life' &c.

See *Inferno*, iii. 22-69.

7. p. 49. 'Who did such gallant deeds at Joyous Gard.'

See *Faery Queene*, Book III.

8. p. 53. 'Into the wilderness for Azazel.'

'But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before the Lord, to make atonement for him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.'

Leviticus, xvi. 10. (Revised Version.)

8. p. 99. 'One of the letters of Keats,' &c. 'Among the autograph letters was a love-letter from Keats to Fanny Browne. . . . This was sold for 21l.'

Report of a sale in one of the literary papers, 1889.

9. p. 180. *A Dream of Spinning and Weaving* was inspired by the delightful account of the Langdale Industry, given by Mr. Albert Fleming, its founder, in the *Leisure Hour* for February, 1890.

Nearly all the shorter poems in this volume have appeared in various magazines, within the last two years. In the case of such of them as I had not a pre-arranged right to reprint, I owe the privilege of doing so to the courtesy of the publishers. I acknowledge with thanks the permission of Messrs. LONGMAN to republish *A Lay of London Town*, and *Polly, a Governess*, which appeared in *Longman's Magazine*; that of Messrs. SMITH, ELDER, & CO. to republish *Her Dream* from the *Cornhill Magazine*; and a similar courtesy on the part of the proprietors of *Good Words*, in which *Utopia* and *Comrades* have been published.

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