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VOL. IV.



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# MAY CAROLS

OR

ANCILLA DOMINI

LEGENDS OF THE SAXON SAINTS

BY

AUBREY DE VERE

*NEW EDITION*

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

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1897



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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
CARDINAL MANNING

**This Poem**

IS DEDICATED

WITH

AFFECTION AND RESPECT

1881



# PREFACE

TO

MAY CAROLS.

---

To be rightly understood, this work must be regarded, not as a collection of Hymns, but as a poem on the Incarnation, a poem dedicated to the honour of the Virgin Mother, and preserving ever, as the most appropriate mode of honouring her, a single aim, that of illustrating Christianity, at once as a Theological Truth, and as a living Power, reigning among the Humanities, and renewing the affections and imagination of man. Theism was God's primal Revelation of Himself to the Patriarchal world; and it included the promise of the Messiah. Christianity was that Authentic Theism with the Promises fulfilled. In it the One God revealed Himself in the Trinity, and gave Himself to man in the Incarnation. Of these two mysteries, the latter, comprising the more palpable aspect of Christianity, is the least beyond the range of the Poetic Art. But in Religion, the palpable, and the transcendent, although distinct, are never separated, except where Religion has been materialised. If the Three Parts of the present Poem begin and end with pieces which relate to 'The

Unknown God,' or to the Blessed Trinity, the intermediate portions have ever a reference not the less constant for being indirect to those all-embracing Verities.

We are alike meditating the Incarnation, whether our *direct* theme be Incarnate God, or that Virgin Mother through whom it pleased Him to become incarnate. In either case, our point of view is placed at the centre of Christianity. In the former case, the higher elevation commands a wider field of vision, and one 'sun-clad' with the glory of a stronger light. Yet, for some purposes, the lesser elevation and the fainter light are not without their advantages. We are not thus so much brought face to face with matter too awful for poetry. But in the Incarnation, the Atonement is, of course, included—the sacred Death in the assumption of that Life which subjected the Lord of Life to Death. The blood that trickles from the wound is the same blood that mantles also in the cheek of health. Christian Poetry must ever be a 'Rosa Mystica,' the palest leaf of which has a suffusion from Calvary.

But this is not all; the Incarnation contains within itself all the mysteries of our Lord's Life on earth, His hidden life, His ministering life, His Sacramental life in His Church. That one mystery, 'The Word was made Flesh,' is, as St. John tells us, the test by which we are to 'try the Spirits.' Around it, all doctrines group themselves, and each of them has a special relation with her through whom He became Flesh. Some years ago, this truth could hardly have been illustrated for English readers of Poetry without controversy; and Poetry, though it may be Theological as well as Philosophical, can never be polemical.



But that higher Teaching, of which Wilberforce's work on the Incarnation was an eminent and influential specimen in earlier days, and Keble's 'Eucharistic Adoration' the most striking in later, has left but a narrow field for discussion on this subject among those who are capable of comprehending it. Few would now risk the assertion that the Angel might equally have been missioned to any other Hebrew Maiden as to Mary—that her Sacred Motherhood was but a material Instrumentality—that there was no connection between the Function assigned to her, and that Grace which made her, more perfectly than any beside, hear the words of God and do them. The Consent—'Be it done unto me, according to Thy Word'—the Beatitude—'Blessed is she who believed,' are now well understood: and the contrast drawn by antiquity between the Disobedience of the First Eve and the Obedience of the Second is commonly appreciated. So again, as regards Mary's place in Holy Scripture. Few would now fail to see that she has a part in that first of Prophecies respecting the 'Woman' and her 'Seed,' and in St. John's Vision of the Woman 'clothed with the Sun,' whose Son was ruling on high (whatever else may be referred to also in those passages), or scruple to confess with the Fathers, that from His Cross, our Lord consigned all His brethren to His Mother, in St. John, to be her sons. Apart from other Types or Prophecies, she has thus a place at the beginning, at the close, and at the mid point of the Scriptural Scheme. Among the learned, it is now understood that there is as good reason for the fainter utterances of Holy Scripture, and for its occasional silences, as for its louder voice:—and that the meaning which each man can snatch

for himself from the surface of the Written Word is, compared to its full contents, no more than what Sense without Science can snatch from Nature, when it has cast aside Telescope and Microscope.

Wordsworth, in one of his later Sonnets, measuring the claims on our reverence possessed by Scientific Discovery, makes this the Test of its worth—‘ Help to Virtue does it give?’ This is a test the force of which relatively to other subjects also few would dispute. If Mary holds indeed a peculiar office, relatively to Christian Truth, and the Christian Life, as she held, and ever retains one, relatively to Him Who is the Truth and the Life, this is matter in which virtue is concerned, and therefore the whole Intellect of Man, including his Imagination—that Imagination which, when it works lawlessly or in subjection to Sense, not Truth—is among man’s most fatal seductions. Let us cast a glance round these two fields of thought; and first, as to Revealed Truth.

I. Mary’s place in Theology reminds us then of the Fall, in the most pointed way, because, as the Mother of the Incarnate God, she had an *Instrumental* part in that great Restoration, whereof the Second Adam was the sole *meritorious* cause. In Predestination, her part was also special: for in that original Decree, respecting the Incarnation, the base, as it were, of all subordinate Decrees, He Who ‘ became Flesh,’ and she who clothed Him in Flesh, were both included. Redemption she preaches to us specially, because she was its first-fruits, being redeemed, not only from the punishment of sin, but from sin itself through the foreseen merits of her Son. She tells us of Grace, because it was only in consequence of being ‘ full of grace’ that her soul was so strengthened as to

exclude all corruption from first to last. So again of Mediation. God, Who might have conferred all His Gifts on us *immediately*, has conferred them all through the One Mediator. Throughout the whole economy of Redemption, a vast system of 'Mediation' is carried out, deriving its whole virtue from the one great Mediator; but binding together all His family on earth in offices of Supernatural Love and mutual good, as the domestic and social Ties bind them in offices of natural love and help. In this great System, Mary, assisting us as she does relatively to every part of our being, and as a Mother, has an office that belongs to her alone among the saints, and yet remains wholly distinct from that of the King of Saints. In mediation, regarded as Atonement, even the Mother of the Atoner has no part; in Intercession, another form of mediation, she has incomparably the highest part among all those who are commanded to make intercession one for another. And yet even the highest of creatures has no more a part than the lowest in that which constitutes the incommunicable Intercession of her Son, viz. His perpetual Presence in Heaven, the Regal Presence of that Divine Priest, Who offers there for ever that Human Body which suffered on earth. What else can bring home to us so vividly the remembrance that the Atonement was a Divine Act, and that prayer, too, rests upon a mystery that is more than human? The chief of creatures stood beside her Son's Cross, and offered Him to His Eternal Father:—but this her Offering was not the Atonement. They prayed together on earth. He Who in His unimaginable Humility condescended to be ever learning, in one way of knowledge, what in a higher way He already knew, had

learned from her to pray : yet, even then, between the might of her prayer and of His, there lay an Infinity.

Everywhere we find that the clear conception and familiar contemplation of the highest *Created* Greatness are the preconditions for worthy thoughts respecting that Greatness which is *Uncreated*. This is most felt the higher that Mystery in connection with which we contemplate Created Excellence. It cannot eclipse what is immeasurably above itself :— it can assist in defining it to our intelligence, as the straight line measures the curve. Thus, as to the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity. It is simply impossible, as history has proved, to question that doctrine where Mary is revered at every hearth as Mother of God the Son—Who is given to man by the Eternal Father, in the Love and Power of the Holy Spirit. The Title, ‘Mother of God,’ was accorded to Mary at the General Council of Ephesus, not because there was then any question relatively to her, but solely because when all other Tests had failed, that Title was found the surest vindication of her Son’s Divinity against Nestorian prevarication. So, again, as Cardinal Newman has remarked, her position in Theology obviously excludes the Arian Heresy, which, denying our Lord’s Divinity, leaves Him no place but that of chief among creatures, the exact place which she fills. In any system not *identified with* the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as admitting it, there could be no more room for Mary than there could be room for a colossal statue in a low-roofed cave.

And so of Theism. There is a true, and there is a false, Theism. No one can fail to feel the distinction between the Authentic Idea of God, and an arbitrary abstraction made by Man’s Intelligence, if he has

always known that between Him Who is the Infinite, and her who is the highest of creatures, the interval still remains infinite—that, compared with Him Who is Absolute Being, she who is the crown of all created excellence, remains but a crowned Dependance, the most creaturely of all creatures, the Handmaiden to whose *lowliness* He had regard. We may go farther. The place divinely assigned to Mary is the protection not so much of any doctrine in Religion, however fundamental, as of Religion itself in its essence. Mary is the guardian of all those mysteries which relate to the Sacred Infancy: through her Holy Church keeps a perpetual Christmas; through her the childlike heart lives on in the maturer knowledge, rejoicing in mysteries which thus can never lose their objective character and historical attestation. Through Mary the Palpable is preserved in the Spiritual, and the Truth of Fact holds its own against that subjective habit of the modern mind, which, ‘with error opposite to that of Narcissus,’ to quote Dante, wastes away because it imagines that it sees but its own face in all things, believing in no other reality. This form of Philosophic Hypochondria makes religion itself but a type of good things, not the living bond by which fallen man is bound again (*re-ligatus*) to his Creator through that Truth which alone is Freedom. This is the most dangerous form of unbelief, because the most plausible. It leaves sacred names unchanged. By a sort of evil transubstantiation, it changes into itself the *substance* of Religion, leaving its accidents unaltered. The ‘Species’ remain to give speciousness to a Philosophy whose ambition it is, not to overthrow this or that Religion, but itself to take the place of all Religion. If such a Philosophy were

accepted, it would speedily be worked up into newer forms of thought. 'The earth hath bubbles as the water bath:' but this dusky bubble would soon break. It is not a question as to the best of Religions, but as to Religion, the Last and the Sole, together with all its gifts and bequests—so often insidiously turned against itself.

The chief intellectual dangers are often those of a gradual character. The human mind, insensibly shrivelling up and dwarfing itself, reduces to pettiness its loftiest subjects of thought, without perceiving the change. It is thus with Theism. Nations have believed in a God, and yet come to believe that He created Man without Free-will, although with responsibility. Schools of Philosophy have exulted in that supposed discovery of modern times—a God in whom Sanctity has little part—the Philanthropist, the Mechanist, and Contriver. But conceptions of God more ambitious, are at least as spurious. Thus, there are some who think the system of Reward and Punishment, of Heaven and Hell, unworthy of a Divine Revelation;—not knowing that God is Himself Heaven; and that Hell is the exile from God, self-inflicted by persistent hate of Him. As well might they quarrel with Virtue for being 'its own Reward.' Others would subordinate to His own Creation that Being, Whose Attributes, of which we know so few, exceed in number all the possible combinations of notes on all the harps that praise Him, and Whose Essence stretches illimitably beyond Angelic ken. They have never really taken in the difference between the Creator and the Creature, and their short-comings have arisen, in part, from their having never fixed their attention on a sufficiently

great exemplar of creaturely excellence. The diversity between different grades of being becomes most marked when we contemplate the nobler specimens of each grade. It is easy to confound the lower forms of vegetable, with the lower forms of animal life ; but when we rise to the higher forms of each, their diversities are unmistakable. In reaching towards the Idea of Divinity, we are not helped, and we may be much hindered, by comparisons taken from Pagan Divinities ; for these last were often spurious and arbitrary conceptions, as where Purity is embodied in the same Divinity as Pride. Such creations have no place in the truth of things. The highest idea of the creature, aids us to think worthily of the Creator, because it is a Truth ; and it helps us in the same way as Nature helps us to conceive of the Supernatural ; viz. on the one hand, by analogies, and on the other, by contrasts. Let us illustrate these remarks by an example. Ambitious thinkers often exclaim against the theological statement, that God has made all things for Himself, and for His own glory, on the ground that it attributes to Him selfishness and vanity. This is more than mere confusion of mind. A man that makes himself his own object, doubtless defrauds his neighbour, who is of equal worth with himself ; but, above all, he sins against that true Centre towards Whom all things should gravitate by building up in self a false centre, and so deifying himself. But such statements have not even a meaning when applied to God. He alone is Absolute Being : suns and systems are but as motes in His beam. He is Himself the true Universe ; and the created universe, material and immaterial, was but an overflowing of that Eternal Love which had ever



its infinite Operations and unmeasured Blessedness in the internal universe of the Blessed Trinity, and the relations of the Three Persons, One in the Unity of Godhead. These pretentious negations are but a clumsy attempt to assert in exclusiveness what has always been included in the authentic Confession of God, viz. that the Creator delights in creating the Good of His creatures. But He more than creates that Good. He *is* that Good ; and this He could not be, were He not the Term and End of all things, as well as their Origin and their Life. God is all Love : and God is also His own Divine End. To evade the difficulty in reconciling these two statements—a difficulty which exists for ‘the Mind of the Sense’ alone, and neither for Faith nor for the higher Reason—our ‘advanced thinkers’ substitute, for the vast and manifold Idea of God, a notion alike arbitrary and false. They implicitly assert either that God is not the end of all things—that is, that He is not the Infinite, or else that what He is, He does not know Himself to be—in other words, that He is not the Truth. Their aspiration is to outsoar the anthropomorphism of the vulgar ; their achievement is to create for themselves a God in their own image. They say, ‘*our* God shall not resemble a selfish and vain-glorious man ;’—and say it because their notion of God is but man, magnified and modified.

The humblest peasant’s idea of Mary would of itself preserve him from such debased conceptions. He venerates her more than all other Saints, as he venerates Saints more than Kings ; but he knows that to offer to her the great Christian Sacrifice, would be, at once, as blasphemous and as preposterous as to offer it to the lowest of creatures, since



the oblation ever presented, alike in Heaven and on earth, being Divine, and offered by a Divine Priest, can only be offered to the Holy Trinity. When the child just taught to pray, sees his parents kneel down to pray also, the greatness of the unseen Being, Who also permits Himself to be called Father, comes more closely in upon him than it could come if he only saw other children at their prayers. To witness the adorations of the angels would exalt our own. It is thus that they are exalted also by the thought, and by the daily footsteps in our hearts and lives, of one who, while venerated by the angels themselves as their Queen, bows herself down before God in an adoration, by so much deeper than theirs, by how much that Vision of His Glory accorded to her is higher than theirs—esteeming herself to be a nothing, and Him to be the Fullness of all. Is this, her estimate, an Illusion or a Truth? If it be a Truth, that first and last of Truths must set its seal upon the Idea of God prevalent among those who revere her.

These are but a few illustrations of the mode in which Mary ministers at the Table of her Son, for the solace of His Guests, like the Queenly matron sung of by the best among the Anglican Religious Poets since the days of George Herbert.\* She is qualified thus to give help in the Church by a special characteristic—her resemblance to the Church. Few things can be said of the Mystic Bride which are not applicable to the Mother. Like Mary, the Church is Virgin and Mother; and her fruitfulness is, not in spite of, but in necessary association with her purity. If the Church is ever offering up her Divine Lord, so Mary offered Him at the Presentation, at His death, and at

\* See Archbishop Trench's *Gertrude of Saxony*.

every moment of His Life. If the Church is ever pleading for her children, so is Mary; and the earliest pictorial representation of her is the 'Orante' of the Catacombs, who stands, with outstretched arms, in endless intercession, among tombs still red with the martyrs' blood. If the 'Sword' passed through her heart, the Church, too, has to suffer. If it was a hidden life that our Lord lived with His Mother for thirty years, it is a Sacramental Life that He leads with His Church. If Mary could be suspected, cannot the Church be reviled? The Church is a Teacher, and so is Mary: 'Wisdom doth sit with children round her knees.' Nor is it only as a Mother that Mary has a place at every hearth. Mr. Longfellow's 'Golden Legend' has a passage of rare discernment, which illustrates the confidence reposed in Mary by that of little children in the intercession of an elder Sister. Mary has the elder Sister's teaching office no less. As Faith 'comes by hearing,' and as it is 'with the heart man believeth,' so the best part of what belongs to Religion is learned by us, not like the irksome school-lore of our boyhood, but like our native tongue, that is through sympathy and unconscious imitation. It is here that the elder sister is helpful. We all know how the younger children see through her eyes, and hear through her ears, and how the feeling, ere yet completely revealed in her face, is mirrored in the smile or blush upon theirs. She initiates not their thoughts only, but their perceptions: and out of a thousand germs latent in their minds, her influence vivifies such as are destined to emerge into reality. Mary has such an office among the Children of Adoption. She moves besides us:

she goes in before us. It has been well remarked, that the Hymn 'Stabat Mater' penetrates our hearts because it makes us gaze on the Cross, not so much with our own eyes, as through those of the chief of the Bereft. But Mary assists equally in sunning out every other Christian Affection. In her 'Magnificat' she daily leads forth the triumph of the Meek; and annually her Paschal Anthem, 'Lætare Regina,' helps those that wept to rejoice. To this day the 'Ausonian Shepherds' leave their flocks on the mountains, as Christmas draws near, take their stand beneath the pictures of the Madonna at the corner of every Roman street, and, with those reedpipes that once but made boast of sheepfold or orchard store, gratulate her through whom 'to us a Child is given.' There are lessons without sermons—a lore that calls the sage away from his lamp. Who would not advance more bravely if an Angel held his hand? In our earthly pilgrimage we are given these helps because we have been given instincts which demand them; and the Supernatural does not despise the Natural. To us, too, is extended a hand, all light; and it loosens itself from ours but to beckon to us from the heavenly shore. The thought of Mary amid the heavenly Court, is the thought of our own pilgrimage accomplished, and our rest completed. The Church is ever 'stepping westward,' and her endless evening does not lack its Evening Star. The remoter and full-orbed glory of Mary shines in the eyes of the Militant Church beyond this vale of tears—an image of the Church Triumphant.

Few things are more wonderful than the difference between the relations in which Mary stands to Christian Science, and to the Teaching of that Science.

Her mere position strengthens the Church as with a fortified citadel ; yet her Teaching is of all Teaching the most unpolemical. It leaves a blessing even at the door that will not open to it ; but with the franker natures it leaves the heritage of that Truth which is one with Love. It is in the heart that it lodges Truth—that heart which it ‘ penetrates without a wound,’ knowing that thence it must ascend into the higher Intellect, and diffuse itself through the being. It conquers the Controversial Spirit, that Fury of the Schools, without a battle, by leaving for it no place : and thus Religion remains the soft but mighty Mother of Man, and Truth retains her placid seat in a Temple which attack alone can convert into a Fortress. When the Faith is associated from early days with those unhappy contentions, which are but its accidents, there Religion may either live on as a boast, protected by the Institutes it protects, or it may be trampled out as a cause of offence ; but in either case its essence is ignored. It gives little glory to God, and no peace to men. It bickers on every hearth, sows the Dragon’s teeth in every field, inflames every youthful presumption, and envenoms every sore of age. There is no greatness which the Spirit of Controversy cannot reduce to littleness. We deal with God’s Word as we do with His Works. Half-a-dozen obtrusive white houses, scattered along a range of hills, so arrest the eye, and force it to draw imaginary lines connecting house with house, that in the invisible net-work of this luckless geometry, all the grace and the might of mountain outlines is lost. So fares it with the sacred Scriptures, when favourite Texts have become the entrenched camps of amateur Controversialists :—they may know the Bible by

heart; but for them the Word of God exists not. Never once can they wander through its infinitudes with the reverent eye of the Seer, with the simple wonder, the loving delight, the blameless curiosity of the child. For the love of Truth they have substituted the love of *Knowledge discovered*, and the joy of contention.

But the remedy? Does it lie in disparaging Doctrine? Certainly not; for Revelation not setting forth a Truth would be no Revelation. Does it lie in substituting Love for Truth, as the soul of Christianity? Certainly not; for Christian Love is inseparable from Christian Truth. To love a Divine Redeemer, we must know that He *is* Divine; and all the Councils for successive Centuries were needed but to refute the Errors that assailed that Truth. Such warfare must always be going on. On some far border of the Christian Empire, there will be always eruptions of new Barbarians; and they must ever be repelled, lest they should reach hearth and home. The battle of Truth must last till its last foe is destroyed. The Luminary that lights that battlefield is the Mystery of 'The Word made Flesh:—a sister orb reflects its light:—and to the end the prayer of the Prophet-Chief will ascend—'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the Valley of Ajalon.' Relatively to Christian Science, Mary has a place, so inextricably interwoven with it throughout that she cannot but add force to its most stringent affirmations, and a severer exactitude to its most refined definitions. Religion *is* not a Science; but it *has* its Science, and can never discard it. If, relatively to that Science, as well as to the teaching of it, Mary is a help to the

Christian Church, here, again, we find that she helps her because she resembles her. Mary ‘pondered all these things in her heart.’ This is what the Church is ever doing in her Theological processes. She remembers and she witnesses. Her Science is based upon her profound and secure heart-appreciation of that Truth originally committed to her; and consists in following onward that changeless Truth into clearer light, from Definition to Definition, as the Providence of God suggests, and His Grace permits, through the aid of that Spirit Who was sent to the Apostles, both that He might call all things to their minds, and also that He might lead them on into all Truth. With a method chiefly Deductive, she deals with the great Truths committed to her, as the Mathematician deduces corollary from proposition. Thus, only, could a method of Thought exist in connection with a subject matter to which Induction and Experiment are as obviously inapplicable as a priori reasoning is to Natural Philosophy. But such Theological Thought, what is it? It is a *long Meditation*. It is to ‘ponder all these things in her heart.’ Relatively to our intellects, Mary is thus a Type of the Christian Church’s Unity; and the Type again is a bond, moral, not governmental, which cements that Unity. She is not ‘Rock of the Rock’; but she is a smile from Him who is ‘Light of Light.’

II. We have considered, though most inadequately, Mary’s Office in connection with Christian Truth: let us now turn to the second subject, her office relatively to the Christian Life. It consists largely in ennobling human Affections by elevating our conception of human Ties. If we do not exercise our Affec-

tions as Theologians say, '*in God,*' they must be Idolatries ; since, in that case, the stronger they are, the more they must lead us from God, binding us, not to heaven, but to earth. They must thus become the prisons of Love, or its sepulchral vaults, not its temples or its palaces. But in Mary we have a Love at once the strongest, as a human love, and the most obviously a deliverer from the Idolatries of human love. To her Son, in His Human Nature, Mary stood in the relation, not of a Parent alone, but of Sole Parent ; yet her love for Him not only was consistent with a sovereign love for God, but lived in, and advanced with, her love of God ; for her Son was God. The Affection corresponded with the Tie. All human Ties met in her, in their essential Unity. We venerate the Virginal estate, and we venerate the maternal ; but in Mary these two glories were united, in a union only less wonderful than that of the Two Natures in her Son. It is a revelation of Woman, such as she was created—not as the mere Female of an animal-intellectual Race ; but as one of those two forms in which Humanity, made in the Divine Image, was permitted to mirror its manifold and Infinite Creator. Mary has a peculiar office also relatively to her Son's human character. Parallel mountain ranges help us far more to conceive height, than a single range could do, although the highest : and thus the spotless Humanity of Mary, when duly pondered, is a great assistance to us in conceiving the Human Character of our Lord, the altitudes of which we cannot always measure with entire reverence, and our endeavours fully to realise which, in what seems nearest to ourselves, sometimes fails, to the extent of an implicit, though not explicit,



denial of His Divinity. The Redeemed Humanity, like the Unfallen, has been set forth before us in a twofold Type. The Virgin Maternity has fixed in the heart of that Humanity an Idea never to be dislodged. There it sits, enthroned; and thence it diffuses blessing over those who but dimly apprehend it, and tenfold blessing over those who 'discern' it. This Idea has done for human Life what the most authentic Theism could not by itself have done. Amongst its many gifts, it has lifted to an immeasurable height the Institute of Marriage, which received its first benediction in Paradise; it has consecrated it into a Sacrament, and rendered it irrevocable. It has done this, in no small measure, by giving it the counterweight of the Conventual Life. It was impossible for the married Sister to remember the Sister beneath the veil, without remembering also that the home brightened with children, and the convent home on its lonely height, must alike, though in different fashions, be homes of Reverence and of Worship, of Purity and of Peace. From these two Homes went forth Christian Civilisation. There moved over the earth a conception of Human Character such as the Greek had never dreamed of. It was that of Womanhood. It had not the strut of the Pagan Hero or Demigod; but it was greater than all the gods. And yet how few elements made up that greatness!—only Humility, Purity, and Love. And with how few franchises it was endowed! Only with the joy of one who from childhood had panted for Divinity, as the hart pants for the waterbrooks, and had found Him; and again, with the sorrow inseparable from Love in a world of sin—the Sorrow of a Heart transfixed



at the moment of its most sacred triumph. Mary had entered into the Temple. She had made—she first—the Church's everlasting Offering; and with it she had offered up the tribute of a gratitude such as the earth had never offered before. But she had offered up herself no less, and the answer was that predicted Sword by which her Heart also was to be pierced. From that Heart it never departed. Thenceforth there dawned upon man's thought the Christian Idea of Womanhood. It came from Mary. It stood the Image at once of Lowliness and of Greatness, of Innocence and of Majesty, of Gladness and Holy Sorrow; for to it ever remained the bleeding Heart. It took its place beside that Image of Man associated with the 'Ecce Homo'—the purple robe of regal dignity, and the ensanguined Head crowned with a crown of thorns.

That fair and fruitful Idea which set free the intelligence and the heart of man, raised his Imagination proportionately, and created the Art of the Ages of Faith. It re-revealed Beauty—no longer the Syren's smile, but the radiance on the face of Truth—the sweetness and graciousness of Virtue itself. Everywhere throughout the worlds of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, shone out that nobler Beauty, severe at once and tender, mystic yet simple, gladsome yet pathetic. It was a Spirit, but a Spirit ever embodying itself in sensible form, for the redemption of Sense. Compared with Classic Art, its insight was deep, and its flight was high: but it had one fixed home, the 'Holy Family'—a limit apparently narrow, yet found to be inexhaustible. Again and again the mighty Masters returned to it, and gathered strength from the touch of their native soil. Art grew neither

more heroic nor more beautiful when it abandoned that early Eden, and exchanged the higher for the lower knowledge. Religion, in keeping it central, had kept it human. The Holy Family was the centre at once of things earthly and things heavenly; and Art, when it first saw that Vision, wisely desired to build Tabernacles in its light, and whispered, 'it is good for us to be here.' This was the true preaching of the Incarnation. The Pictured Prophet or Apostle might be honoured though only for the word spoken, or the deed done; but that Infant on His Mother's knee could have significance for one cause alone, viz. because He was God.

These, then, are some of the moral influences which are connected with the love and reverence of Mary, rightly understood, and which are not the less precious, because, like the Bible, the Sacraments, and all else that is good and helpful, they are capable of being abused instead of used. To say depreciatingly, 'But Mary could not but love her Child in God, and as God, since He was God,' leaves the marvel undiminished. That marvel is, that God should have made the creation of a being such as Mary a part of the Redemptive Scheme. The Divine Redeemer might have taken to Himself a human form out of the dust of the earth, as Adam's body was taken; or He might have been born, as Mary was, of earthly marriage, and yet have remained wholly exempt from earthly taint. But He willed it otherwise. He made both the Divine Maternity, and the Virginal Maternity, the means of the Incarnation:—and thus, by necessity, shone out this wondrous Sign in the face of Creation. The Sign grew clearer as it grew nearer. In the earlier dawn of prophecy it was said, 'The

Seed of the *Woman*;' in its later announcements, 'A *Virgin* shall conceive.' Those who understand the Incarnation will not imagine that to gaze in appreciation, as well as in glad affection upon this Sign, has no tendency to draw us nearer to Incarnate God.

There exists a very sublime doctrine respecting the Incarnation, which, though not a matter of defined Faith, has a peculiar interest in our own day. Scientific discovery has made the universe so vast a thing, that the modern Imagination, overpowered by its grandeur, and not weighing in the scales of Faith the comparative worth of Spirit and Matter, sometimes finds a difficulty in the statement that, merely for the sake of a Fallen Race on this petty planet, such an event as the Incarnation took place. Centuries before this difficulty had been felt or fancied, some of the Theological Schools had answered it. They had maintained, as a probable opinion, that, though the Fall doubtless imparted to the Incarnation its *Expiatory* character, and made the God-man, the 'Man of Sorrows,' yet that Incarnation itself would have taken place even if there had been no Fall, and taken place for the exaltation of the whole Creation, not merely for the Redemption of a part of it. According to this opinion, the Creation, without the Incarnation, must ever have been an imperfect work. A *finite* Universe must have remained at an infinite distance from its Infinite Creator, buried far away, as it were, in a perpetual Exile—a Harp without a Harper—a robe with none to wear it. It was part of the Eternal Purpose that the Creator should Himself become a Creature, and thus *assume*

His own Creation. That Creation is twofold, spiritual and material; and Incarnate God therefore assumed it most fitly in assuming the nature of Man, who is made up of soul and body, his soul being the lowest link in the scale of the Spiritual Creation, while his body occupies the highest grade in that of material Nature, as she works up successively through her mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, to her highest work, the frame of man. The 'Good Shepherd' had ever decreed to go forth into the lonely desert of finite things, and bring back Creation, like a lost sheep on His Shoulder, to His Father's Throne. Creation, thus assumed, was at last to find a Divine King to rule it in equity, and a Divine Priest to offer up its Adorations, till then voiceless and dumb. From its Head in heaven to its remotest depths, the Universe, thus taken into alliance with God, was destined to become flooded with His grace. The unction of the great Priest must needs flow down 'to the skirts of His clothing.'

This opinion involves nothing opposed to existing analogies. The visible world exists for the sake of Him Who made it, and stands to Him in manifold relations of which we as yet know but a few. There is, therefore, no difficulty in the thought that, by the Incarnation of its Creator, it may have been indefinitely raised, and drawn closer to Him. It interprets between Him and His Intelligent Creation; and the medium of communication may have been thus rendered fitter for its purpose—a more translucent and musical exponent. A World, once but God's outer Court, may have become His Temple, and may be destined to become His Holy of Holies. The earth was 'cursed for man's sake;'—consequently

the whole material Universe is *capable*, at least, of very different degrees of Blessedness, received by it and by it communicated, in connection with some Act, not human but divine. According to this teaching, the Spiritual part of Creation has had its full part in the Gift. In a Vision of the Divine Infant, and the all-blessed Mother, the Incarnation was presented to the reverence of the Angelic Hierarchies, the First-born of the Creative Love. It was a *Revelation* of God in His Infinite Condescension—nay, in the Humiliation of a Hypostatic union not contracted with the Angelic, but with the later, and humbler, human and material Creation; and this Revelation was made to those who had hitherto but known God in the splendours of His Power, and known Him through their own resplendent Faculties irradiated by His light. Those who turned away in Pride from the ‘enigma,’ and refused to adore with Supreme Worship their God ‘made Flesh,’ fell. Those who stood the test, and welcomed the Revelation, advanced instantaneously into a nearness with God commensurate with their profounder Knowledge of Him, and with that Love which Obedience alone ripens to its Perfection, and so passed at once into the state of Indefectibility. According to this teaching, the Incarnation had three distinct effects, apart from those wholly beyond our ken. To Fallen Man it gave his Restoration—to the Unfallen Angels their Instauration in Glory, endless and complete—to the material Universe, explored by us or unexplored, some more sacred and intimate relation with God, which elevated what had before been the Type of His Being into the Sacrament of His Presence, after a sort that we shall only fully comprehend when we fully comprehend

the Resurrection of our own Bodies, and have ourselves become consummated, alike in Body and Soul.\*

This view of the Incarnation is referred to in many of the following poems, especially in 'Caro factus est,' p. 156, and 'Regina Angelorum,' p. 159; and by it were in no small degree suggested the descriptive pieces interspersed among the meditative. These last are an attempt towards a Christian rendering of external nature. Nature, like Art, needs to be spiritualised, unless it is to remain a fortress in the hands of an adverse Power. The visible world is a passive thing, which ever takes its meaning from something above itself. In Pagan times, it drew its interpretation from Pantheism; and to Pantheism—nay, to that Idolatry which is the popular application of Pantheism—it has still a secret, though restrained tendency, largely betrayed by modern Imaginative Literature, which is constantly dallying with Pagan Myths, though it is too cold to adore them—*our* Idolatries being chiefly those of 'covetousness,' lawless affection, and self-love. A World without Divinity, Matter without Mind, is intolerable to human instincts. Yet, on the other hand, there is much in fallen human nature which shrinks from the sublime thought of a Creator, and rests on that of a sheathed Divinity diffused throughout the universe, its life, not its maker. Mere personified elements, the Wood-God and River-Nymph, captivate the fancy and do not over-awe the soul. For a bias so seductive no cure is to be found, save in authentic Christianity. The whole truth, in

\* This subject is illustrated with depth and eloquence in Father Ventura's Conferences delivered at Paris, in the Rev. A. Hewit's *Problems of the Age*, and in M. Nicolas' profound and beautiful work, *La Vierge Marie*.

the long run, holds its own better than the half truth; and minds repelled by the thought of a God who stands afar off, and created the universe but to abandon it to general laws, fling themselves at the feet of a God made Man. When the 'Word was made Flesh,' a bridge was thrown across that gulf which had else for ever separated the Finite from the Infinite. The same high Truth which brings home to us the doctrine of a Creation consecrates that Creation, reconstituting it into an Eden meet for an unfallen Adam and an unfallen Eve; nay, exalting it into a heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of the Lamb and of the Bride. It does this, in part, through symbols and associations founded on the all-cleansing Blood and the all-sanctifying Spirit—symbols and associations the reverse of those in which an Epicurean mythology took delight.

One word on the *form* of this Poem. Religion is not, as has been proved by a few great examples among many failures, incapable of a treatment poetical, as well as metrical; but Religious Poetry can never be dialectic, especially when lyrical, much less controversial. Poetry—an ideal art—is most ideal in this its most meditative vein. It presents Ideas; but it only suggests their coarser intermediate links, as the early Greek Sculptor but suggested the bridle of his brazen horse. Poetry has habitually a wide-handed synthesis, and can sharpen itself no less to a very keen analysis; but its logic is the inner logic of imaginative Thought. It detects the remote analogy; but it is not careful to point out the obvious connection. It elicits Truths; but it forces them on none. It wings them with image and allusion; and bids them fare forth as they may: but

they have to fare forth separately ; and the complete Poem must often appear to consist of but detached fragments, except so far as it possesses the interior unity of Truth, and the harmony of a common sentiment. This Poem therefore, as regards its form, belongs, by necessity, to that of serial poems, a species of compositions once common in Italy and among our Elizabethan poets, and most happily revived in England in the present century. Its three parts are in some respects dissimilar. Part the First was intended to illustrate chiefly what have been named the 'Joyful mysteries,' and Part the Third the 'Glorious mysteries' ; while Part the Second, while including the 'Sorrowful mysteries,' ventures also to indicate a few of those manifold relations, so helpful and so healing, in which the predicted 'Woman' of primeval Prophecy, in the great 'Protevangelion,' stands to the Human Race, to Human Life, to Visible Nature, and most of all to Christian Theology.



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FOURTH EDITION OF  
'MAY CAROLS ; OR, ANCILLA DOMINI.'

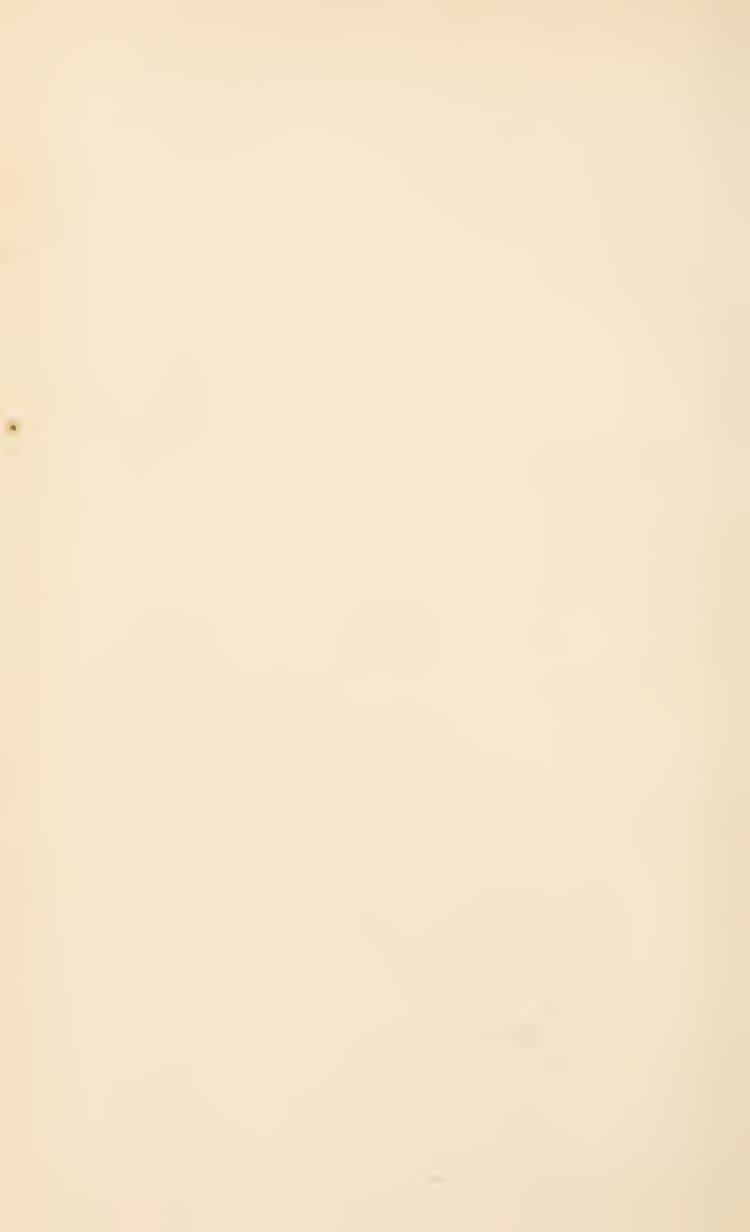
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THE gratitude of Christians has long since dedicated the month of May to the Mother of our Lord, a circumstance to which the present Volume owes its Title of 'May Carols'—for the Carols of Shepherds were accepted at the Bethlehem Crib not less than the tribute of the 'Wise Men' and Kings. I have been told that that Title is not sufficiently characteristic of the Volume's main scope, and that to some persons it may prove misleading. But any such misconception ought to be precluded by the explanatory words added to the last edition, viz. 'Ancilla Domini,' words anticipated indeed by the original Preface. That Preface begins with a remark that the main scope of the Poem can only be comprehended where the work is distinctly understood to be, not a collection of short poems, but a single poem, one 'on the Incarnation, dedicated to the Virgin Mother, and preserving ever, as the most appropriate mode of honouring her, a single aim, that of illustrating Christianity at once as

"The Lord and Mighty Paramount of Truths,"\*

and also as a living Power, reigning among the Humanities, and renewing the affections and imagination of men.'

\* Wordsworth.



## PROLOGUE.



## *PROLOGUE.*

RELIGION, she that stands sublime  
Upon the rock that crowns our globe,  
Her foot on all the spoils of time,  
With light eternal on her robe ;

She, sovereign of the orb she guides,  
On Truth's broad sun may root a gaze  
That deepens onward as she rides,  
And shrinks not from the fontal blaze :

But they—her daughter Arts—must hide  
Within the cleft, content to see  
Dim skirts of glory waving wide  
And steps of parting Deity.

'Tis theirs to watch the Vision break  
In gleams from Nature's frown or smile  
The legend rise from out the lake  
The relic consecrate the isle.

'Tis theirs to adumbrate and suggest ;  
To point toward founts of buried lore,  
Leaving, in type alone expressed,  
What Man must know not, yet adore.

For where her court true Wisdom keeps,  
    'Mid loftier handmaids one there stands  
Dark as the midnight's starry deeps,  
    A Slave, gem-crowned, from Nubia's sands—

O thou whose light is in thy heart,  
    Reverence, love's mother ! without thee  
Science may soar awhile ; but Art  
    Drifts barren o'er a shoreless sea.

# MAY CAROLS.

## *PART I.*

### *THE DIVINE CHILDHOOD.*

‘I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed, and her seed.’—GEN. iii. 15.





*MAY CAROLS.*

I.

Who feels not, when the Spring once more,  
Stepping o'er Winter's grave forlorn  
With winged feet, retreads the shore  
Of widowed Earth, his bosom burn ?

As ordered flower succeeds to flower,  
And May the ladder of her sweets  
Ascends, advancing hour by hour  
From step to step, what heart but beats ?

Some Presence veiled in fields and groves  
That mingles rapture with remorse,  
Some buried joy beside us moves,  
And thrills the soul with such discourse

As they, perchance, that wondering pair  
Who to Emmaus bent their way,  
Hearing, heard not. Like them our prayer  
We make :—' The night is near us . . Stay !'

With Paschal chants the churches ring ;  
Their echoes strike along the tombs ;  
The birds their Hallelujahs sing ;  
Each flower with nature's incense fumes.

Our long-lost Eden seems restored—  
 As on we move with tearful eyes  
 We feel through all the illumined sward  
 Some upward-working Paradise.

---

## II.

UPON Thy Face, O God, Thy world  
 Looks ever up in love and awe ;  
 Thy stars in circles onward hurled  
 Sustain the steadying yoke of Law.

In alternating antiphons  
 Stream sings to stream and sea to sea ;  
 And moons that set and sinking suns  
 Obeisance make, O God, to Thee.

The swallow, winter's rage o'erblown,  
 Again on warm Spring breezes borne  
 Revisiteth her haunts well-known ;  
 The lark is faithful to the morn.

The whirlwind, missioned with its wings  
 To drown the fleet or fell the tower,  
 Obeys Thee as the bird that sings  
 Her love-chant in a fleeting shower.

Amid an ordered universe  
 Man's spirit only dares rebel :—  
 With light, O God, its darkness pierce !  
 With love its raging chaos quell !

## III.

ALL but unutterable Name !  
 Adorable, yet awful, sound !  
 Thee can the sinful nations frame  
 Save with their foreheads to the ground ?

Soul-searching and all-cleansing Fire !  
 To see Thy Countenance were to die :  
 Yet how beyond the bound retire  
 Of Thy serene immensity ?

Thou mov'st beside us, if the spot  
 We change, a noteless, wandering tribe :  
 The planets of our Life and Thought  
 In Thee their little arcs describe.

In the dead calm, at cool of day,  
 We hear Thy voice, and turn, and flee :  
 Thy love outstrips us on our way :  
 From Thee, O God, we fly—to Thee.

## IV.

How came there Sin to world so fair,  
 Where all things seem to bask in God,  
 Where breathes His Love in every air,  
 His life ascends from every sod ?

O happy birds and happy bees,  
 And flowers that flash through matin gems !  
 O happy trees, and happier breeze  
 That sweep'st their dewy diadems !

Why are not all things good and bright ?  
 Why are not all men kind and true ?  
 O World so beauteous, wise, and right,  
 Your Maker is our Maker too !

---

*SANCTA MARIA.*

V.

MARY ! To thee the humble cry.  
 What seek they ? Gifts to pride unknown.  
 They seek thy help—to pass thee by :—  
 They murmur, ‘ Show us but thy Son.’  
 The childlike heart shall enter in :  
 The virgin soul its God shall see :  
 Mother, and maiden pure from sin,  
 Be thou the guide : the Way is He.  
 The mystery high of God made Man  
 Through thee to man is easier made :  
 Pronounce the consonant who can  
 Without the softer vowel’s aid !

---

*FEST. NATIVITATIS B. V. M.*

VI.

WHEN thou wert born the murmuring world  
 Rolled on, nor dreamed of things to be,  
 From joy to sorrow madly whirled,  
 Despair disguised in revelry.

A princess thou of David's line ;  
 The mother of the Prince of Peace,  
 That hour no royal pomps were thine :  
 The earth alone her boon increase

Before thee poured. September rolled  
 Down all the vine-clad Syrian slopes  
 Her robes of purple and of gold ;  
 And birds sang loud from olive tops.

Perhaps old foes, they knew not why,  
 Relented. From a fount long sealed  
 Tears rose, perhaps, to Pity's eye :  
 Love-harvests crowned the barren field.

The respirations of the year,  
 At least, grew soft. O'er valleys wide  
 Pine-roughened crags again shone clear ;  
 And the great Temple, far desiered,

To watchers, watching long in vain,  
 To patriots grey, in bondage nursed,  
 Flashed back their hope—'The Second Fane  
 In glory shall surpass the First !'

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*AB ANGELO SALUTATA.*

VII.

THAT angel's voice is in her ear !  
 Ah, not alone by Mary heard !  
 Like light it cleaves that region drear  
 Where never sang the matin bird !

It thrills the expectant Hades ! They,  
 The pair that once through Eden ranged,  
 Amid their penal shadows grey  
 Stand up and smile, this hour avenged !

They see their queenly daughter grasp  
 The Fruit of Life, her bridal dower :  
 They see its boughs rush up, and clasp  
 The sleeping earth with starry bower.

Once more they tread that Eden bound :  
 Far up—all round—at last, at last  
 They see God's mountain city-crowned ;  
 In every fount they see it glassed.

Why saw they not, the hour they fell,  
 Those hills, that City 'like a Bride' ?  
 Then too it girt that garden dell,  
 Predestined Heaven though undescried !

---

*NIHIL RESPONDIT.*

VIII.

SHE hid her face from Joseph's blame  
 The Spirit's glory-shrouded Bride :  
 The sword comes next ; but first the shame :  
 Meekly she bore it ; nought replied.

In mutual sympathies we live :  
 The insulted heart forgives, but dies :  
 To her that wound was sanative  
 For life to her was sacrifice.

At us no barbless shaft is thrown  
 When charged with deeds by us unwrought ;  
 For sins unchallenged, sins unknown,  
 Worse sins have stained us, act, or thought.

Her humbleness no sin could find  
 To weep for: yet, that hour, no less  
 Deeplier the habitual sense was shrined  
 In her of her own nothingness.

That hour foundations deeper yet  
 God sank in her ; that so more high  
 Her greatness, spire and parapet,  
 Might rise and nearer to the sky ;

That, wholly over-built by grace,  
 Nature might vanish, like some isle  
 In great towers lost—the buried base  
 Of some surpassing fortress pile.

---

*ST. JOSEPH'S DOUBT.*

IX.

‘The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream.’

’TWAS not her tear his doubt subdued ;  
 No word of hers announced her Christ :  
 By him in dream that angel stood  
 With warning hand. A dream sufficed.

Where faith is strong, though light be dim,  
 How faint a beam reveals how much !  
 The Hand that made the worlds on him  
 Descended with a feather’s touch.

‘Blessèd for ever who believed :’—  
 Like Her, through faith his crown he won :  
 His *heart* the Babe divine conceived ;  
 His heart was sire of Mary’s Son.

Hail, Image of the Father’s Might !  
 The Heavenly Father’s human shade !  
 Hail, silent King whose yoke was light !  
 Hail, Foster-sire whom Christ obeyed !

Hail, Warder of God’s Church beneath,  
 Thy vigil keeping at her door  
 Year after year at Nazareth !  
 So guard, so guide it evermore !

*FEST. VISITATIONIS.*

X.

THE hilly region crossed with haste,  
 Its last dark ridge discerned no more,  
 Bright as the bow that spans a waste  
 She stood beside her Cousin’s door ;  
 And spake :—that greeting came from God !  
 Filled with the Spirit from on high  
 Sublime the aged Mother stood,  
 And cried aloud in prophecy,  
 ‘ Soon as thy voice had touched mine ears  
 The child in childless age conceived,  
 Leaped up for joy ! Throughout all years  
 Blessed the Woman who believed.’



Type of Electing Love! 'tis thine  
 To sound God's greeting from the skies!  
 Thou speak'st, and Faith, a babe divine,  
 Leaps up thy Babe to recognise.

Within true hearts the second birth  
 Exults, though blind as yet and dumb.  
 The child of Grace his hands puts forth,  
 And prophesies of things to come.

*AMOR INNOCENTIIUM.*

XI.

ASCENDING from the convent-grates,  
 The children mount the woodland vale.  
 'Tis May-Day Eve; and Hesper waits  
 To light them, while the western gale

Blows softly on their bannered line:  
 And, lo! down all the mountain stairs  
 The shepherd children come to join  
 The convent children at their prayers.

They meet before Our Lady's fane:  
 On yonder central rock it stands,  
 Uplifting, ne'er invoked in vain,  
 That Cross which blesses all the lands.

Before the porch the flowers are flung;  
 The lamp hangs glittering 'neath the Rood;  
 The 'Maris Stella' hymn is sung;  
 Their chant each morn to be renewed.

Ah ! if a secular muse might dare,  
 Far off, the children's song to catch ;  
 To echo back, or burthen bear !—  
 As fitly might she hope to match

The throstle's note as theirs, 'tis true :  
 Yet, now and then, that borrowed tone,  
 Like sunbeams flashed on pine or yew  
 Might shoot a sweetness through her own !

---

*FEST. NATIVITATIS.*

XII.

PRIMEVAL night had repossessed  
 Her empire in the fields of space ;  
 Calm lay the kine on earth's dark breast ;  
 The earth lay calm in heaven's embrace.

That hour, where shepherds kept their flocks,  
 From God a glory sudden fell :  
 The splendour smote the trees and rocks,  
 And lay, like dew, along the dell.

God's Angel close beside them stood :  
 'Fear nought,' that Angel said, and then,  
 'Behold, I bring you tidings good :  
 The Saviour Christ is born to men.'

And straightway round him myriads sang  
 Again that anthem, and again,  
 Till all the hollow valley rang,  
 'Glory to God, and peace to men.'

Thus in the violet-scented grove,  
 The May breeze murmuring softly by them,  
 The children sang. Who Mary love  
 The long year through have Christmas nigh them !

---

*PROTEVANGELION.*

XIII.

WHEN from their lurking place the Voice  
 Of God dragged forth that Fallen Pair  
 Still seemed the garden to rejoice,  
 The sinless Eden still was fair.

They, they alone, whose light of grace  
 But late made Paradise look dim  
 Stood now, a blot upon its face,  
 Before their God, nor gazed on Him.

They glanced not up ; or they had seen  
 In that severe, death-dooming eye  
 Unutterable depths serene  
 Of sadly-piercing sympathy.

Not them alone that Eye beheld,  
 But, by their side, that other Twain  
 In whom the race whose doom was knelled  
 Once more should rise ; once more should reign.

It saw that Infant crowned with blood—  
 And her from whose predestined breast  
 That Infant ruled the worlds. She stood  
 Her foot upon the serpent's crest !

Voice of primeval prophecy !  
 Of all the Gospels head and heart !  
 With Him, her Son and Saviour, she  
 Possessed, that hour, in thee a part !

---

*DEI GENITRIX.*

XIV.

I SEE Him : on thy lap He lies  
 'Mid that Judaean stable's gloom :  
 O sweet, O awful Sacrifice !  
 He smiles in sleep, yet knows the doom.

Thou gav'st Him life ! But was not this  
 That Life which knows no parting breath ?  
 Unmeasured Life ? unwaning Bliss ?  
 Dread Priestess, lo ! thou gav'st Him death !

Beneath the Tree thy Mother stood ;  
 Beneath the Cross thou too shalt stand :—  
 O Tree of Life ! O bleeding Rood !  
 Thy shadow stretches far its hand.

That God who made the sun and moon  
 In swaddling bands lies dumb and bound—  
 Love's Captive ! darker prison soon  
 Awaits Thee in the garden ground.

He wakens. Paradise looks forth  
 Beyond the portals of the grave.  
 Life, life thou gavest ! life to Earth,  
 Not Him ! Thine Infant dies to save.

*ADOLESCENTULÆ AMAVERUNT  
TE NIMIS.*

## XV.

‘BEHOLD! the wintry rains are past;  
The airs of midnight hurt no more:  
The young maids love thee. Come at last!  
Thou lingerest at the garden-door.

‘Blow over all the garden; blow,  
Thou wind that breathest of the south  
Through all the alleys winding low  
With dewy wing and honeyed mouth!

‘But wheresoe’er thou wanderest, shape  
Thy music ever to one Name:  
Thou too, clear stream, to cave and cape  
Be sure thou whisper of the same.

‘By every isle and bower of musk  
Thy crystal clasps as on it curls  
We charge thee, breathe it to the dusk;  
We charge thee, grave it in thy pearls.’

The stream obeyed. That Name he bore  
Far out above the moon-lit tide:  
The breeze obeyed. He breathed it o’er  
The unforgetting Pine; and died.

---

## XVI.

THE infant year with infant freak  
 Intent to dazzle and surprise,  
 Played with us long at hide and seek,  
 Turned on us now, now veiled her eyes.

Between the pines for ever green  
 And boughs by April half attired  
 She glanced ; then sang, once more unseen,  
 'The unbeheld is more desired.'

With footsteps vague, and hard to trace,  
 She crept from whitening bower to bower ;  
 Now bent from heaven her golden face  
 Now veiled her radiance in a shower.

Like genial hopes and thoughts devout  
 That touch some sceptic soul forlorn,  
 And herald clearer faith, and rout  
 The night, and antedate the morn,

Her gifts. But thou, all-beauteous May,  
 Art come at last. O! with thee bring  
 Hearts pure as thine with thee to play,  
 And own the consummated spring.

To hands by deeds unblest defiled  
 In vain the whiteness of thy thorn !  
 Proud souls, where lurks no more the child,  
 For them thy violet is unborn !

For breasts that know nor joy nor hope  
 Thy songstress sings an idle strain :  
 Thy golden-domed laburnums drop  
 O'er loveless hearts their bowers in vain.

*FEST. EPIPHANIÆ.*

## XVII.

A VEIL is on the face of Truth :  
She prophesies behind a cloud ;  
She ministers in robes of ruth  
Nocturnal rites and disallowed.

Eleusis hints, but dares not speak ;  
The Orphic minstrelsies are dumb ;  
Lost are the Sibyl's books, and weak  
Earth's olden faith in Him to come.

But ah, but ah, that Orient Star !  
On straw-roofed shed and large-eyed kine  
It flashes, guiding from afar  
The Magians' long-linked camel-line !

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh they bring—  
Love, Worship, Life severe and hard :  
Their symbol gifts the Infant King  
Accepts ; and Truth is their reward.

Rejoice, O Sion, for thy night  
Is past : the Lord, thy Light, is born :  
The Gentiles shall behold thy light ;  
The kings walk forward in thy morn.

---

*FEST. EPIPHANIÆ.*

## XVIII.

THEY leave the land of gems and gold,  
The shining portals of the East ;  
For Him, ' the Woman's Seed ' foretold,  
They leave the revel and the feast.

To earth their sceptres they have cast  
And crowns by Kings ancestral worn ;  
They track the lonely Syrian waste ;  
They kneel before the Babe new-born.

O happy eyes that saw Him first !  
O happy lips that kissed His feet !  
Earth slakes at last her ancient thirst ;  
With Eden's joy her pulses beat.

True Kings are those who thus forsake  
Their kingdoms for the Eternal King—  
Serpent ! her foot is on thy neck !  
Herod ! thou with'st, but canst not sting !

He, He is King, and He alone,  
Who lifts that Infant hand to bless ;  
Who makes His Mother's knee His Throne,  
Yet rules the starry wilderness.

---



*MATER DEI.*

## XIX.

How many a lonely hermit-maid  
Hath brightened like a dawn-touched isle  
When, on her breast in vision laid,  
That Babe hath lit her with His smile !

How many an aged Saint hath felt,  
So graced, a second spring renew  
Her wintry breast ; with Anna knelt  
And trembled like the matin dew !

How oft th' unbending monk, no thrall  
In youth of mortal smiles or tears,  
Hath felt that Infant's touch through all  
The armour of his hundred years !

But Mary's was no transient bliss ;  
Nor hers a vision's phantom gleam :  
The hourly need, the voice, the kiss—  
That Child was hers ! 'twas not a dream !

At morning hers, and when the sheen  
Of moonrise crept the cliffs along ;  
In silence hers, and hers between  
The pulses of the night-bird's song.

And as the Child, the love. Its growth  
Was, hour by hour, a growth in grace :  
That Child was God ; and love for both  
Advanced perforce with equal pace.

*GAUDIUM ANGELORUM.*

## XX.

‘HE looked on her humility’—

Ah humbler thrice that breast was made  
When Jesus watched His mother’s eye,  
When God each God-born wish obeyed!

In her with seraph seraph strove  
And each the other’s purpose crost :  
And now ’twas Reverence, now ’twas Love  
The peaceful strife that won or lost.

Now to that Infant she extends  
Those hands that mutely say ‘mine own!’  
Now shrinks abashed, or swerves and bends  
As bends a willow backward blown.

And ofttimes, like a roseleaf caught  
By eddying airs from fairy land,  
The kiss a sleeping brow that sought  
Descends upon the unsceptred hand!

O tenderest awe whose sweet excess  
Had ended in a fond despair  
Had not the all-pitying helplessness  
Constrained the boldness of her care!

O holiest strife! The angelic hosts  
That watched it hid their dazzled eyes,  
And lingered from the heavenly coasts  
To bless that heavenlier Paradise!

*LEGENDA.*

## XXI.

O WEARIED Souls, by earth beguiled,  
Round whom the world's enthrallments close  
Look back on her, that three-years' child,  
Who first the life conventual chose !

A nun-like veil was o'er her thrown,  
Her locks by fillet-bands made fast,  
Swiftly she climbed the steps of stone ;  
Into the Temple swiftly passed.

Not once she paused her breath to take ;  
Not once cast back a homeward look :  
As longs the hart his thirst to slake  
When noontide rages, in the brook,

So longed that child to live for God ;  
So pined from earth's enthrallments free,  
To bathe her wholly in the flood  
Of God's abysmal purity !

Anna and Joachim from far  
Their eyes on that white vision raised ;  
And when, like caverned foam, or star  
Cloud-hid, she vanished, still they gazed.

---

*FEST. PRESENTATIONIS.*

## XXII.

TWELVE years had passed, and, still a child  
 In brightness of the unblemished face,  
 Once more she scaled those steps, and smiled  
 On Him who slept in her embrace.

As in she passed there fell a calm  
 On all: each bosom slowly rose  
 Like the long branches of the palm  
 When under them the south wind blows:

The scribe forgot his wordy lore;  
 The chanted psalm was heard far off;  
 Hushed was the clash of golden ore;  
 And hushed the Sadducean scoff.

Type of the Church, the gift was thine!  
 'Twas thine to offer first, that hour,  
 Thy Son—the Sacrifice Divine,  
 The Church's everlasting dower!

Great Priestess! round that aureoled brow  
 Which cloud or shadow ne'er had crossed,  
 Began there not thenceforth to grow  
 A milder dawn of Pentecost?

---

*THE FIRST DOLOUR.*

(Gladio Transfixa.)

## XXIII.

To be the mother of her Lord—

What means it? This; a bleeding heart!  
The pang that woke at Simeon's word  
Worked inward, never to depart.

The dreadful might of Sin she knew  
As Innocence alone can know:  
O'er her its deadliest gloom it threw  
As shades lie darkest on the snow.

Yet o'er her Sorrow's depth no storm  
Of earth's rebellious passion rolled:  
So sleeps some lake no gusts deform  
High on the dark hills' craggy fold.

In that still glass the unmeasured cliff,  
With all its scars and clouds is shown:  
And, mellowed in that mother's grief,  
At times, O Christ, we catch Thine own!

## XXIV.

THE golden rains are dashed against  
Those verdant walls of lime and beech  
Wherewith our happy vale is fenced  
Against the north; yet cannot reach

The stems that lift yon leafy crest  
 High up above their dripping screen :  
 The chestnut fans are downward pressed  
 On banks of bluebell hid in green.

White vapours float along the glen  
 Or rise from every sunny brake ;  
 A pause amid the gusts—again  
 The warm shower sings across the lake.

Sing on, all-cordial showers, and bathe  
 The deepest root of loftiest pine !  
 The cowslip dim, the ‘ primrose rathe ’  
 Refresh ; and drench in nectarous wine

You fruit-tree copse, all blossomed o’er  
 With forest-foam and crimsoned snow—  
 Behold ! above it bursts once more  
 The world-embracing, heavenly bow !



### *LEGENDA.*

#### XXV.

As, flying Herod, southward went  
 That Child and Mother, unamazed,  
 Into Egyptian banishment,  
 The weeders left their work, and gazed.

That bright One spake to them, and said,  
 ‘ When Herod’s messengers demand,  
 Passed not that Infant, Herod’s dread,—  
 Passed not that Infant through your land ?

‘ Then shall ye answer make, and say,  
Behold, since first the corn was green  
No little Infant passed this way ;  
No little Infant we have seen.’

Earth heard ; nor missed the Maid’s intent—  
As on the Flower of Eden passed  
With Eden swiftness up she sent  
A sun-browned harvest ripening fast.

By simplest words and sinless wheat  
The messengers rode back beguiled ;  
And by that truthfullest deceit  
Which saved the little new-born Child !

---

*THE SECOND DOLOUR.*

(Cum Filio Profuga.)

XXVI.

THE fruitful River slides along ;  
The Conqueror’s City glitters nigh ;  
The Palm-groves ring with dance and song ;  
Earth trembles, crimsoned from the sky.

Far down the sunset, lonely stands  
Some temple of a bygone age  
Slow-settling into sea-like sands,  
Long served with prayer and pilgrimage.

Here ruled the Shepherd-Kings, and they  
That race from Sun and Moon which drew  
The unending lines of Priestly sway :  
Here Alexander’s standard flew.

Here last the great Cæsarian star  
 Through Egypt's sunset flashed its beam  
 While pealed the Roman trump afar,  
 And Earth's first Empire like a dream

Dissolved. But who are they—the Three  
 That pierce thus late yon desert wide ?  
 The Babe is on His Mother's knee ;  
 Low-bent an old Man walks beside.

What say'st thou, Egypt? ' Let them come !  
 Of such as little note I keep  
 As of the least of flies that hum  
 Above my deserts, or my deep ! '

---

*SAINTE JOSEPH.*

XXVII.

TRUE Prince of David's line ! thy chair  
 Is set on every poor man's floor :  
 Labour through thee a crown doth wear  
 More rich than kingly crowns of yore !

True Confessor ! thine every deed,  
 While error ruled the world, or night  
 Confessed aright the Christian creed,  
 The Christian warfare waged aright.

Teach us, like thee, our heart to raise,  
 In toil not ease contemplatist ;  
 Like thee, o'er lowly tasks to gaze  
 On her whose eyes are still on Christ.



O teach us, thou whose ebbing breath  
 Was watched by Mary and her Son,  
 To welcome age, await in death  
 True life's true garland, justly won.

‘*JOSEPH, HER HUSBAND.*’

XXVIII.

GLADSOME and pure was Eden's bower—  
 Saint Joseph's house was holier far,  
 More rich in Love's anguster dower,  
 More amply lit by Wisdom's star.

The Queen of Virgins where he sate  
 Beside him stood and watched his hand :  
 His daughter-wife, his angel-mate  
 Submissive to his least command.

Hail, Patriarch blest and sage ! on earth  
 Thine was the bridal of the skies !  
 Thy house was heaven : for by its hearth  
 Thy God reposed in mortal guise.

Hail ! life most sweet in life's decline !  
 Hail death, than life more bright, more blest !  
 The hands of Mary clasping thine,  
 Thy head upon the Saviour's breast !

*SAINT JOSEPH'S PATRONAGE.*

(‘*Constituit eum dominum domus suæ.*’

The Household Saints.)

## XXIX.

THE Apostle's life, the Martyr's death,  
 The all-conquering Word, all-wondrous Sign,  
 Have greatness sense-discerned. By faith,  
 And Faith's strong Love, we reach to thine.

Through lower heavens those others run,  
 Fair planets kenne'd by feebler eyes :  
 Thy loftier light is later won,  
 Serener gleam from lonelier skies.

Thou stand'st within : they move without :  
 More near the God-Man was thy place :  
 It was : it is : we cannot doubt  
 That as thy greatness was thy grace.

No priestly tiar, no prophet rod  
 Were thine : with them thou art who zone  
 The altar of Incarnate God,  
 Who thron'g the white steps of the Throne.

There Anna rests, and Joachim  
 That Great One's Parents ; at their side  
 Elizabeth, not far from Him  
 Her Baptist Son for Right who died.

A hierarchy apart they sit,  
 A Royal House benign yet dread,  
 In Godhead veiled, by Godhead lit—  
 There highest shines thy silver head.

*MATER CHRISTI.*

## XXX.

DAILY beneath His mother's eyes  
 Her Lamb matured His lowliness ;  
 'Twas hers the lovely Sacrifice  
 With fillet and with flower to dress.

Beside that mother's knee He knelt ;  
 With heavenly-human lips He prayed :  
 His Will within her will she felt ;  
 And yet His Will her will obeyed.

Gethsemané ! when day is done  
 Thy flowers with falling dews are wet :  
 Her tears fell never ; for the sun  
 Those tears that brightened never set.

The house was silent as that shrine  
 The priest but entered once a year :  
 There shone His emblem. Light Divine !  
 Thy presence and Thy power were here !

*MATER CHRISTI.*

## XXXI.

HE willed to lack ; He willed to bear ;  
 He willed by suffering to be schooled ;  
 He willed the chains of flesh to wear ;  
 Yet from her arms the worlds He ruled.

As tapers 'mid the noontide glow  
 With merged yet separate radiance burn,  
 With human taste and touch even so  
 The things He knew He willed to learn.

He sat beside the lowly door :  
 His homeless eyes appeared to trace  
 In evening skies remembered lore  
 And shadows of His Father's face.

One only knew Him. She alone  
 Who nightly to His cradle crept  
 And, lying like the moonbeam prone,  
 Worshipped her Maker as He slept.

---

*MATER CREATORIS.*

XXXII.

BUD forth a Saviour, Earth ! fulfil  
 Thy first of functions, ever new !  
 Balm-dropping heaven, for aye distil  
 Thy grace like manna or like dew !

'To us, this day, a Child is born.'  
 Heaven knows not mere historic facts—  
 Celestial mysteries night and morn  
 Live on in ever-present Acts.

Calvary's dread Victim in the skies  
 On God's great altar rests even now :  
 The Pentecostal glory lies  
 For ever round the Church's brow.

From Son and Father, He, the Lord  
 Of Love and Life, proceeds alway :  
 Upon the first Creative Word  
 Creation, trembling, hangs for aye.

Nor less ineffably renewed  
 Than when on earth the tie began,  
 Is that mysterious Motherhood  
 Which re-creates the worlds and man.

---

*MATER SALVATORIS.*

XXXIII.

O HEART with His in just accord !  
 O Soul His echo, tone for tone !  
 O Spirit that heard and kept His word !  
 O Countenance moulded like His Own !

Behold, she seemed on Earth to dwell ;  
 But hid in light she ever sat  
 Beneath the Throne ineffable  
 Chanting her clear Magnificat.

Fed from the boundless heart of God  
 The joy within her rose more high  
 And all her being overflowed,  
 Until that Hour decreed drew nigh.

That hour, there crept her spirit o'er  
 The shadow of that pain world-wide  
 Whereof her Son the substance bore—  
 Him offering, half in Him she died ;

Standing, like that strange Moon whereon  
 The mask of Earth lies dim and dead,  
 An orb of glory, shadow-strewn,  
 Yet girdled with a luminous thread.

---

*HER FOUNDATIONS ARE ON THE  
 HOLY HILLS.*

XXXIV.

HER Child, her God, in Nature's right  
 She loved : we love Him but by Grace :  
 Behold ! our Virtue's proudest height  
 Is lower than her Virtue's base !

*Alone* by holy Nature taught  
 All lesser mothers love their own :  
 Her love was Nature's love, heaven-caught,  
 And lightning-lifted to the Throne.

Her God ! alone through worship she  
 Proportioned love for Him could prove !  
 Her God, and yet her Offspring ! He  
 Both loved her, and was bound to love !

---

*MATER ADMIRABILIS.*

XXXV.

O MOTHER-MAID ! to none save thee  
 Belongs in full a Parent's name ;  
 So fruitful thy Virginity,  
 Thy Motherhood so pure from blame !

All other parents, what are they ?

Thy types ! In them thou stood'st rehearsed  
As they in bird, and bud, and spray.

Thine Antitype ? The Eternal First !

Prime Parent He : and next Him thou !

O'ershadowed by the Father's Might  
Thy ' Fiat ' was thy bridal vow :

Thine offspring He, the ' Light from Light. '

Her Son Thou wert : her Son Thou art

O Christ ! Her substance fed Thy growth :  
Alone, she shaped Thee in her heart—

Thy Mother and Thy Father both.

*MATER AMABILIS.*

XXXVI.

MOTHER of Love ! Thy love to Him

Cherub and Seraph can but guess :  
A mother sees its image dim

In her own breathless tenderness.

That infant touch none else could feel

Vibrates like light through all her sense :  
Far off she hears his cry : her zeal

With lions fights in his defence.

Unmarked his youth goes by : his hair

Still smooths she down, still strokes apart ;  
The first white thread that meets her there

Glides like a dagger through her heart.

Men praise him : on her matron cheek  
 There dawns once more a maiden red :  
 Of war, of battle-fields they speak :  
 She sees once more his father dead.

In sickness—half in sleep—she hears  
 His foot, ere yet that foot is nigh :  
 Wakes with a smile ; and scarcely fears  
 If he but clasp her hand, to die.

*THE THIRD DOLOUR.*

(Filiū quærens.)

XXXVII.

THREE days she seeks her Child in vain :  
 He who vouchsafed that holy woe  
 And makes the gates of glory pain  
 He, He alone its depth can know.

She wears the garment He must wear ;  
 She tastes His chalice ! From a Cross  
 Unseen she cries, ' Where art Thou, where ?  
 Why hast Thou me forsaken thus ? '

With feebler hand she touches first  
 That sharpest thorn in all His Crown,  
 Worse than the Nails, the Reed, the Thirst,  
 Seeming Desertion's icy frown !

O Saviour ! we, the weak, the blind  
 We lose Thee, snared in Pleasure's bound :  
 Teach us once more Thy Face to find  
 Where only Thou art truly found,



In Thy true Church, its Faith, its Love  
 Its anthemed Rites or Penance mute  
 And that Interior Life whereof  
 Eternal Life is flower and fruit.

---

*MATER FILII.*

XXXVIII.

OTHERS, the hours of youth gone by,  
 A mother's hearth and home forsake ;  
 And, with the need, the filial tie  
 Relaxes, though it does not break.

But Thou wert born to be a Son—  
 God's Son in heaven, Thy will was this,  
 To pass the chain of Sonship on  
 And bind in one whatever is.

Thou eam'st the *Son* of Man to be,  
 That so Thy brethren too might bear  
 Adoptive Sonship, and with Thee  
 Thy Sire's eternal kingdom share.

Transeendently the Son Thou art :  
 In this mysterious bond entwine,  
 As in a single, two-celled heart,  
 Thy natures, human and divine.

---

## XXXIX.

WHEN April's sudden sunset cold  
 Through half-clothed boughs with watery sheen  
 Bursts on the high, new-cowslipped wold  
 And bathes a world half gold half green

Then shakes the illuminated air  
 With din of birds ; the vales far down  
 Grow phosphorescent here and there ;  
 Forth flash the turrets of the town ;

Along the sky thin vapours scud ;  
 Bright zephyrs curl the choral main ;  
 The wild ebullience of the blood  
 Rings joy-bells in the heart and brain :

Yet in that music discords mix ;  
 The unbalanced lights like meteors play ;  
 And, tired of splendours that perplex,  
 The dazzled spirit sighs for May.

## XL.

Nor yet, not yet ! the Season sings  
 Not of fruition yet but hope ;  
 Still holds aloft, like balanced wings  
 Her scales, and lets not either drop.

The white ash, last year's skeleton,  
 Still glares uncheered by leaf or shoot  
 'Gainst azure heavens, and joy hath none  
 In that pure primrose at her foot.

Yet Nature's virginal suspense  
 Is not forgetfulness nor sloth :  
 Where'er we wander soul and sense  
 Discern a blindly working growth.

Her throne once more the daisy takes  
 That white star of our dusky earth ;  
 And the sky-cloistered lark down-shakes  
 Her passion of seraphic mirth.

'Twiixt barren hills and clear cold skies  
 She weaves, ascending high and higher,  
 Songs florid as those traceries  
 Which won their name of old from fire.

Sing ! thou that need'st no ardent clime  
 To sun the sweetness from thy breast  
 And teach us those delights sublime  
 Wherein ascetic spirits rest !

---

### XLI.

THE moon, ascending o'er a mass  
 Of tangled yew and sable pine,  
 What sees she in yon watery glass ?  
 A tearful countenance divine.

Far down, the winding hills between,  
 A sea of vapour bends for miles,  
 Unmoving. Here and there dim-seen  
 The knolls above it rise like isles.

The tall rock glimmers spectre-white ;  
 The cedar in its sleep is stirred ;  
 At times the bat divides the night ;  
 At times the far-off flood is heard.

Above, that shining blue!—below,  
 That shining mist! Oh, not more pure  
 Midwinter's landscape, robed in snow  
 And fringed with frosty garniture!

The fragrance of the advancing year  
 Alone assures us it is May.  
 Make answer! in the heavenlier sphere  
 Must all of earth have passed away?

*NAZARETH.*

XIII.

BEFORE the Saviour's eyes unsealed  
 The Beatific Vision stood—  
 If God from her that splendour veiled  
 Awhile, in Him she gazed on God.

The Eternal Spirit o'er them hung:  
 The Eternal Father moved beside:  
 With hands forth-held the Angelic throng  
 Worshipped their Maker far descried.

Yet neither He who said of yore  
 'Let there be light'—and all was day—  
 Nor she that, still a creature, wore,  
 Creation's crown, and wears for aye,

To casual gazers wondrous seemed:  
 The wanderer sat beside their door,  
 Partook their broken bread, and deemed  
 The donors kindly; nothing more.

In Eden thus that primal Pair  
 Ere sin had marred their first estate  
 Sate side by side in silent prayer,  
 Their earliest sunset fronting, sate ;

And now the lion now the pard  
 Piercing the Cassia bower drew nigh ;  
 Fixed on the twain a mute regard,  
 Half pleased, half vacant ; then passed by.

---

*FÆDERIS ARCA.*

XLIII.

From end to end, O God, Thy Will  
 With swift yet ordered might doth reach :  
 Thy purposes their scope fulfil  
 In sequence, resting each on each.

In Thee is nothing sudden ; nought  
 From harmony and law that swerves :  
 The orbits of Thine act and thought  
 In soft gradation wind their curves.

O then with what a gradual care  
 Must Thou have shaped that Ark and Shrine  
 Ordained the Eternal Word to bear,  
 That Garden of Thy mystic Vine !

How white a gift within her breast  
 Lay stored, for Him a couch to strew !  
 How vast a virtue lined His nest !  
 How many a grace beside Him grew !

Of love on love what sweet excess !  
 How deep a faith ! a hope how high !—  
 Mary ! on earth of thee we guess ;  
 But we shall see thee when we die.

---

*SPIRITUS SPONSA.*

XLIV.

As though, fast-borne the hills along,  
 At dawn some shepherd girl or boy  
 Should wrestle with the lark in song  
 And, shaft for shaft, retort his joy,  
 So walked, the hills of Truth above,  
 The Bride Elect, the sinless Maid ;  
 So, challenged by the all-heavenly Love  
 The all-heavenly Lover's voice repaid.  
 From zenith heights incessant fell  
 On her His Grace like sunny rain :  
 Unvanquished and invincible  
 Her heart repaid that golden grain.  
 Perchance, in many an instant gleam  
 She caught, unscorched and unabashed,  
 That vision of the Face supreme  
 Which on her first-born spirit flashed !  
 Diseased are we : the infectious fire  
 Corrupts our life-blood from our birth :  
 She, she was like the unfallen Sire,  
 Compacted out of virgin earth.

In God she lived : His world she trod :  
 Saw Him and His ; saw nought beside—  
 He only *lives* who lives in God :  
 That hour when Adam fell, he died.

---

*ORANTE.*

XLV.

SHE mused upon the Saints of old ;  
 Rock-like, on rock she stood, foot-bare :  
 On Him she mused, that Child foretold ;  
 To Him she held her hands in prayer,  
 Unwavering hands that, drawing fires  
 Of grace from heaven, our earth endowed  
 With heavenly breath like mountain spires  
 That suck the lightning from the cloud.

No moment passed without its crown ;  
 And each new grace was used so well  
 It dragged some tenfold talent down,  
 Some miracle on miracle.

O golden House ! O boundless store  
 Of wealth by heavenly commerce won !  
 When God Himself could give no more,  
 He gave thee all ; He gave His Son !

---

*RESPEXIT HUMILITATEM.*

## XLVI.

Not all thy Purity, although  
The whitest moon that ever lit  
The peaks of Lebanonian snow  
Shone dusk and dim compared with it ;

Not that great Love of thine whose beams  
Transcended in their virtuous heat  
Those suns that melt the ice-bound streams  
And make earth's pulses newly beat ;

It was not these that from the sky  
Drew down to thee the Eternal Word :  
He looked on thy Humility ;  
He knew thee, ' Handmaid of thy Lord.'

Let no one claim with thee a part,  
Let no one, Mary, name thy name,  
While, aping God, upon his heart  
Pride sits, a Demon robed in flame.

Proud Vices, die ! Where Sin has place  
Be Sin's avenger self-disgust :  
Proud Virtues, doubly die, that Grace  
At last may burgeon from your dust !

---



*MULIER FORTIS.*

## XLVII.

SUPREME among the things create  
God's Image with the downward brow !  
Greatness that know'st not thou art great !  
*Thus* great, Humility art thou.

All strength beside is weakness. Might  
Belongs to God ; and they alone  
Self-emptied souls and seeming-slight  
Are filled with God, and share His throne.

O Mary ! strong wert thou and meek ;  
Thy meekness gave thee strength divine :  
Thyself in nothing didst thou seek ;  
Therefore thy Maker made Him thine.

Through Pride our parents disobeyed ;  
Rebellious Sense avenged the wrong :  
The Soul, the body's captive made,  
No more was fruitful, or was strong.

With barrenness the earth was cursed ;  
Inviolatè she brought forth no more  
Her fruits, nor freely as at first :  
Thou can'st, her Eden to restore !

Low breathes the wind upon the string ;  
The harp, responsive, sounds in turn :  
Thus o'er thy *Soul* the Spirit's wing  
Creative passed ; and Christ was born.



# MAY CAROLS.

## *PART II.*

### *THE SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD.*

‘Behold thy mother.’—JOHN xix. 27.



AGIOS ATHANATOS.

I.

CLOUD-PIERCING Mountains! Chance and Change  
More high than you their thrones advance!  
Self-vanquished Nature's rockiest range  
Gives way before them like the trance

Of one that wakes. From morn to eve  
Through fissured clefts her mists make way;  
At Night's cold touch they freeze, and cleave  
Her crags, and with a Titan's sway

Flake off and peel the rotting rocks,  
And heap the glacier tide below  
With isles of sand and floating blocks  
Like leaves on streams when tempests blow.

Lo, thus the great decree all-just  
O Earth, thy mountains hear; and learn  
Like man its awful import—'dust  
Thou art, and shalt to dust return.'

He only *is* Who ever was;  
The All-measuring Mind; the Will Supreme:  
Rocks, mountains, worlds, like bubbles pass:  
God is; the things not God but seem.

*PASTOR ETERNUS.*

## II.

I SCALED the hills. No murky blot  
 No mist obscured the diamond air :  
 One time, O God, those hills were not !  
 Thou spak'st : at Thy command they were !

O'er ebon meres the ledges hung ;  
 High up were summits white with snow :  
 Some peak athwart the mountains flung  
 A crownéd Shadow creeping slow.

Still crept it onwards. Vague and vast  
 From ridge to ridge the mountains o'er  
 That king-like Semblance slowly passed :  
 A shepherd's crook for staff it bore.

O Thou that ledest like a sheep  
 Thine Israel ! all the earth is Thine !  
 Thy mystic Manhood still must sweep  
 Thy worlds with healing shade divine.

The airy pageant died with day :  
 The hills, the worlds themselves must die :  
 But Thou remainest such always :  
 Thy Love is from Eternity.

---

*JESUM OSTENDE.*

## III.

Who doubts that thou art finite? Who  
 Is ignorant that from Godhead's height  
 To what is loftiest here below  
 The interval is infinite?

O Mary! with that smile thrice-blest  
 Upon their petulance look down;  
 Their dull negation, blind protest:  
 Thy smile will melt away their frown.

Show them thy Son! That hour their heart  
 Will beat and burn with love like thine;  
 Grow large; and learn from thee that art  
 Which communes best with things divine.

The man who grasps not what is best  
 In *creaturely* existence, he  
 Is narrowest in the brain, and least  
 Can grasp the thought of Deity.

*TURRIS EBURNEA.*

## IV.

THIS scheme of worlds which vast we call  
 Is only vast compared with man:  
 Compared with God, the One yet All,  
 Its greatness dwindles to a span.

A Lily with its isles of buds  
 Asleep on some unmeasured sea :—  
 O God, the starry multitudes  
 What are they more than this to Thee?

Yet, girt by Nature's petty pale  
 Each tenant holds the place assigned  
 To each in Being's awful scale :  
 The last of creatures leaves behind

The abyss of Nothingness : the first  
 Into the abyss of Godhead peers  
 Waiting that Vision which shall burst  
 In glory on the eternal years.

Tower of our Hope ! through thee we climb  
 Finite creation's topmost stair ;  
 Through thee from Sion's height sublime  
 Towards God we gaze through clearer air.

Infinite distance still divides  
 Created from Creative Power ;  
 But all which intercepts and hides  
 Lies dwarfed by that surpassing Tower !

---

*CONSERVABAT IN CORDE.*

V.

As every change of April sky  
 Is imaged in the unchangeful brook  
 Her meditative memory  
 Mirrored His every deed and look.



As suns through summer ether rolled  
 Mature each growth the spring has wrought,  
 Her love's calm solstice turned to gold  
 Her harvests of quiescent thought.

Her soul was as a vase, and shone  
 Illumed but with the interior ray ;  
 Her Maker's finger wrote thereon  
 A mystic Bible new each day.

Deep Heart ! In all His sevenfold might  
 The Paraclete with thee abode,  
 And, sacramented there in light,  
 Bare witness of the things of God.

### *THE KINDLY TRANSIENCE.*

#### VI.

‘ LIKE flowers,’ they tell us, ‘ Life must fade !’

Ah flower-faced Friend ! if flowers must die  
 Immortal sweets of these are made :

Thus Time bequeaths Eternity.

‘ Life is a fleeting shade !’ What then ?

The Substance doth the Shadow cast :  
 Essential Life, it recks not when,

Shall crown this seeming Life at last !

Thus, while May breezes whirling caught

Dead leaves poor spoils of winter gone  
 Half-truths, deciduous spoils of Thought,  
 Their clothing from on high put on :

And better far it seemed to plight  
 To earth a transient troth and trust  
 Than with corruption wed, and blight  
 The Spirit's hope with deathless dust.

---

## VII.

STRONGER and steadier every hour  
 The pulses of the season's glee  
 As higher climbs that vernal Power  
 Which rules the azure revelry.

Trees that from winter's grey eclipse  
 Of late but pushed their topmost plume  
 Or felt with green-touched finger-tips  
 For spring, their perfect robes assume.

Like one that reads not one that spells  
 The unvarying rivulet onward runs :  
 And bird to bird from leafier cells  
 Sends forth more leisurely response.

Through gorse-gilt coverts bounds the deer ;  
 The gorse, whose latest splendours won  
 Make all the fulgent wolds appear  
 Bright as the pastures of the sun.

A balmier zephyr curls the wave ;  
 More purple flames o'er ocean dance ;  
 And the white breaker by the cave  
 Falls with more cadenced resonance ;

While, vague no more, the mountains stand  
 With quivering line or hazy hue,  
 But drawn with finer firmer hand,  
 And settling into deeper blue.

*MARIÆ CLIENS.*

## VIII.

A LITTLE longer on the earth  
That aged creature's eyes repose  
Though half their light and all their mirth  
Are gone ; and then for ever close.

She thinks that something done long since  
Ill pleases God : or why should He  
So long delay to take her hence  
Who waits His will so lovingly ?

Whene'er she hears the church-bells toll  
She lifts her head, though not her eyes  
With wrinkled hands, but youthful soul  
Counting her lip-worn rosaries.

And many times the weight of years  
Falls from her in her waking dreams :  
A child her mother's voice she hears :  
To tend her father's steps she seems.

Once more she hears the whispering rains  
On flowers and paths her girlhood trod ;  
Yet of things present nought remains  
Save one abiding sense of God.

Mary ! make smooth her downward way !  
Not dearer to the young thou art  
Than her. Make glad her latest May ;  
And hold her, dying, on thy heart !

*IN MORTE TUTAMEN.*

## IX.

It was the dread last Eucharist :  
 The hopes and fears of earth were gone ;  
 The latest, lingering friend dismissed ;  
 The bed was ashes strewed o'er stone.

It was the dear last Eucharist :  
 The old man lay in silent prayer :  
 His heart was now a shrine ; and Christ  
 Was with His Mother whispering there.

He heard them ; heard within that veil  
 Voices that Angels may not hear,  
 Not he that said to Mary, ' hail,'  
 Not he that watched the Sepulchre ;  
 Voices that met with touch like light ;  
 Murmurs that mixed, as when their breath  
 Two pine trees, side by side, unite :  
 Of Love one whispered ; one of Death.

*SPECULUM JUSTITIÆ.*

## X.

NOT in Himself the Eternal Word  
 Lay hid upon Creation's day :  
 His Loveliness abroad He poured  
 On all the worlds, and pours for aye.

Not in Himself the Incarnate Son  
 In whom Man's race is born again  
 His glory hides. The victory won  
 He rose to send His 'Gifts on Men.'

In sacraments, His dread behests,  
 In Providence, in granted prayer,  
 Before the time He manifests  
 His Presence, far as man may bear.

He shines not from a vault of gloom ;  
 The horizon round His splendour paints :  
 The sphere of Souls His beams illumine ;  
 His light is glorious in His Saints.

He shines upon His Church that Moon  
 Who, in the watches of the night,  
 Transmits to Earth the entrusted boon,  
 A sister orb of sacred light.

And thou, pure mirror of His grace !  
 As sun reflected in a sea,  
 So, Mary, feeblest eyes the face  
 Of Him thou lov'st discern in thee.

---

*AUXILIUM CHRISTIANORUM.*

XI.

NOT for herself doth Mary hold  
 That Mother-Crown, that Queenly Throne ;  
 The loftiest in the Saviour's Fold  
 The least possesses of her own.

Pure thoughts that make to God their quest  
 With her find footing o'er the clouds,  
 Like those sea-crossing birds that rest  
 A moment on the sighing shrouds.

In her our hearts, no longer nursed  
 On dust, for spiritual beauty yearn ;  
 From her our instincts, as at first,  
 An upward gravitation learn.

Through her draw nigh the things remote :  
 For in true love's supernal sphere  
 No more round self the affections float,  
 More near to God, to man more near.

In her, the weary warfare past,  
 The port attained, the exile o'er,  
 We see the Church's bark at last  
 Close-anchored on the eternal shore !

---

## XII.

O COWSLIPS sweetening lawn and vale,  
 O Harebells drenched in noontide dew,  
 O moon-white Primrose, Wind-flower frail !  
 The song should be of her, not you !

The May breeze answered, whispering low,  
 ' Not *thine* : they sing her praises best !  
 The flowers her grace in theirs can show :  
 Her claims they prove not, yet attest.

' Beneath all fair things round thee strewn  
*Her* beauty lurks, by sense unseen :  
 Who lifts their veil uprears a throne  
 In holy hearts to Beauty's Queen.'

AB ETERNO ORDINATA.

XIII.

ETERNAL Beauty, ere the spheres  
 Had rolled from out the gulfs of night,  
 Sparkled, through all the unnumbered years  
 Before the Eternal Father's sight :

Truth's solemn reflex—not a Dream—  
 Created Wisdom's smile unpriced—  
 Before His eyes it hung, a gleam  
 Flashed from the eternal Thought of Christ.

It hung, the unbodied antitype  
 Of all Creation shapes and sings ;  
 That finite world which Time makes ripe,  
 Which Uncreated Light enrings.

Star-like within the depths serene  
 Of that still vision, Mary, thou  
 With Him, thy Son, of God wert seen  
 Millenniums ere the lucid brow

Of Eve o'er Eden founts had bent,  
 Millenniums ere that *second* Pair  
 With shame the hopes of man had blent,  
 Had stained the brightness once so fair.

Eleet of Creatures ! Man in thee  
 Beholds that primal Beauty yet ;  
 Sees all that Man was formed to be,  
 Sees all that Man can ne'er forget !

## XIV.

THREE worlds there are—the first of Sense—

That sensuous earth which round us lies ;  
The next, of Faith's Intelligence ;  
The third, of Glory, in the skies.

The first is palpable, but base ;  
The second heavenly, but obscure ;  
The third is star-like in the face,  
But ah ! remote that world as pure.

Yet, glancing through our misty clime,  
Some sparkles from that loftier sphere  
Make way to earth ; then most what time  
The annual spring-flowers re-appear.

Amid the coarser needs of earth  
All shapes of brightness, what are they  
But wanderers exiled from their birth  
Or pledges of a happier day ?

Yea, what is Beauty, judged aright,  
But some surpassing, transient gleam ;  
Some smile from heaven, in waves of light  
Rippling o'er life's distempered dream ?

Or broken memories of that bliss  
Which rushed through first-born Nature's blood  
When He who ever was, and is  
Looked down, and saw that all was good ?

---



## XV.

ALAS ! not only loveliest eyes  
And brows with lordliest lustre bright  
But Nature's self, her woods and skies  
The credulous heart can cheat or blight.

And why ? Because the sin of man  
'Twixt Fair and Good has made divorce  
And stained, since Evil first began,  
That stream so heavenly at its source.

O perishable vales and groves !  
Your master was not made for you :  
Ye are but creatures ! human loves  
Are to the great Creator due.

And yet, through Nature's symbols dim  
There are with keener sight that pierce  
The outward husk and reach to Him  
Whose garment is the universe.

For this to earth the Saviour came  
In flesh ; in part for this He died ;  
That man might have in soul or frame  
No faculty unsanctified.

That Fancy's self, so prompt to lead  
Through paths disastrous or defiled,  
Upon the Tree of Life might feed ;  
And Sense with Soul be reconciled.

---

*IDOLATRIA.*

## XVI.

THE fancy of an age gone by  
 When Fancy's self to earth declined  
 Still thirsting for Divinity  
 Yet still, through sense, to Godhead blind

Poor mimic of that Truth of old  
 The Patriarchs' Faith—a Faith revealed—  
 Compressed its God in mortal mould  
 Poor prisoner of Creation's field.

Nature and Nature's Lord were one !  
 Then countless gods from cloud and stream  
 Glanced forth ; from sea, and moon, and sun :  
 So ran the Pantheistic dream.

And thus the All-Holy, thus the All-True,  
 The One Supreme, the Good, the Just,  
 Like mist was scattered, lost like dew,  
 And vanished in the wayside dust.

Mary ! through thee the idols fell :  
 When He the Nations longed for\* came—  
 True God yet Man, with man to dwell,  
 The phantoms hid their heads for shame.

His place, or thine, removed, ere long  
 The Bards would push the Sects aside ;  
 And, lifted by the might of song,  
 Olympus stand re-edified !

\* 'The Desire of the Nations.'

*'IN HIM WE HAVE OUR BEING.'*

## XVII.

THE God who lives in those bright flowers  
 That wave and flash from yonder rock  
 O children singing 'mid your bowers  
 In you lives also, pleased to mock

His own unmoved Immensity  
 With you—in you—to sport and play :  
 As ripples on a summer sea  
 Are ye : unchanged that sea for aye !

Thus much of Truth they knew that feigned  
 Of old, their God with Nature one :  
 Another, loftier truth remained  
 For us, which now they read who run.

Half-truths are Falsehood's baits : too near  
 They roam to Error's maze of doubt,  
 And, like some scared, outlying deer,  
 O'er-leap the limit, in and out.

Such quarry, hunter youths, beware !  
 That bourne is demon-haunted ground ;  
 And, bone from bone, the demons tear  
 The man who steps beyond its bound.

*TOTA PULCHRA.*

## XVIII.

A BROKEN gleam on wave and flower,  
 A music that in utterance dies,  
 A redd'ning leaf, a falling shower,  
 Behold that Beauty which we prize !

And ah ! how oft Corruption works  
 Through that brief Beauty's force or wile !  
 How oft a gloom eternal lurks  
 Beneath an evanescent smile !

But thou, serene and smiling light  
 Of every grace to man benign,  
 In thee all harmonies unite ;  
 All minstrelsies of Truth are thine.

Of old whate'er to mind or heart  
 Was dear 'had leave' with thee to rest :  
 The 'little birds' of every Art  
 Hung on thy Fane their procreant nest.

*'AD NIVES.'*

## XIX.

BEFORE the morn began to break  
 The Bright One bent above that pair  
 Whose childless vows aspired to take  
 The Mother of their Lord for heir.

'Twas August : even in midnight shade  
 The roofs were hot, and hot the street :  
 ' Build me a fane,' that Vision said,  
 ' Where first your eyes the snow shall meet.' \*

With snow the Esquiline was strewn  
 At morn !—Fair Legend ! who but thinks  
 Of thee, when first the breezes blown  
 From summer Alp to Alp he drinks ?

He stands : he hears the torrents dash :  
 The sultry valley steams ; and lo !  
 Through chasms of endless azure flash  
 The peaks of everlasting snow !

He stands ; he listens ; on his ear  
 Swells softly forth some virgin hymn,  
 The white procession winding near  
 With glimmering lights in sunshine dim.

Mother of Purity and Peace !  
 They sing the Saviour's name and thine—  
 Clothe them for ever with the fleece  
 Unspotted of thy Lamb divine !

---

*FEST. PURITATIS.*

XX.

FAR down the bird may sing of love ;  
 The honey-bearing blossom blow :  
 But hail ye hills that rise above  
 The limit of perpetual snow !

\* Santa Maria Maggiore, on the Esquiline, at Rome.

O Alpine City, with thy walls  
 Of rock eterne and spires of ice  
 Where torrent still to torrent calls  
 And precipice to precipice ;

How like that holier City thou  
 The heavenly Salem's earthly porch,  
 Which rears among the stars her brow  
 And plants firm feet on earth—the Church !

' Decaying, ne'er to be decayed,'  
 Her woods like thine renew their youth :  
 Her streams, in rocky arms embayed,  
 Are clear as virtue, strong as truth.

At times the lake may burst its dam ;  
 Black pine and rock the valley strew ;  
 But o'er the ruin soon the lamb  
 Its flowery pasture crops anew.

Like thee in regions near the sky  
 She piles her cloistered snows, and thence  
 Diffuses gales of purity  
 O'er fields of consecrated sense.

On those still heights a lovelight glows  
 The plains from them above receive ;  
 Not all the Lily ! There *thy* Rose,  
 O Mary, triumphs, morn and eve !

Through thee Art preached, 'mid change and strife,  
 The eternal Peace, the immortal Love,  
 And o'er the weeping vale of life  
 Her heavenly rainbow Painting wove.

Those pictures, fair as moon or star,  
 The ages dear to Faith brought forth  
 Formed but the illumined calendar  
 Of her that Church which knows thy worth.

Not less doth Nature teach through thee  
 That mystery hid in hues and lines:  
 Who loves thee not hath lost the key  
 To all her sanctuaries and shrines.

---

 XXI.

THE night through yonder cloudy cleft  
 With many a lingering last regard,  
 Withdraws—but slowly—and hath left  
 Her mantle on the darksome sward.

The lawns with silver dews are strewn!  
 The winds lie hushed in cave and tree;  
 Nor stirs a flower, save one alone  
 That bends beneath the earliest bee.

Peace over all the garden broods;  
 Pathetic sweets the thickets throng;  
 Like breath the vapour o'er the woods  
 Ascends, dim woods without a song;

Or hangs, a shining, fleece-like mass  
 O'er half yon lake that winds afar  
 Among the forests, still as glass,  
 The mirror of that Morning Star

Which, halfway wandering from the sky,  
 Amid the glimmering dawn delays,  
 And, large and less alternately,  
 Bends down a lustrous, tearful gaze.

Mother and home of Spirits blest !  
 Bright gate of Heaven and golden bower !  
 Thy best of blessings, love and rest,  
 On earth, ere yet thou leav'st her, shower !

---

*STELLA MATUTINA.*

XXII.\*

SHINE out, O Star, and sing the praise  
 Of that unrisen Sun whose glow  
 Thus feeds thee with thine earlier rays :  
 The secret of thy song we know.

Thou sing'st that Sun of Righteousness,  
 Sole light of this benighted globe  
 Whose beams, from Him reflected, dress  
 His Mother in her shining robe !

Pale Lily, pearled around with dew,  
 Lift high that heaven-illumined vase  
 And sing the glories ever new  
 Of her, God's chalice, ' full of grace.'

Cerulean Ocean fringed with white  
 That wear'st her colours evermore  
 In all thy pureness, all thy might,  
 Resound her name from shore to shore,

Her name, and His, that, like thy rim  
 Of light the dusky lands around,  
 Still girds Creation's shadow dim  
 With Incarnation's shining bound.



Transfigured Earth, disguised too long,  
 It falls—that Pagan mask of Sense!  
 Burst forth, dumb worlds, at last in song  
 Of spiritual Intelligence!

---

*THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.*

XXIII.

MAN'S soul a palace is : therein  
 A kingly senate sits in state :  
 But under-winding caves of Sin  
 A pestilence all round create.

Man's head uptowers in arctic air :  
 O'er temperate zones his heart hath sway :  
 But tropic sands there are ; and there  
 The lions of our nature prey.

Dread Maker of our twofold being  
 In night and day alternate robed,  
 Shine on us, that the monsters, fleeing,  
 May leave Thine Image throned and globed !

Shine on us ;—and thou shinest ! sun-bright  
 Flash back the ransomed fields and meads  
 Trod by that Form compact of light  
 That only mid the lilies feeds.

O earth, partaker of the curse,  
 Thy glory fled when Adam fell :  
 Yet, not her mother but her nurse,  
 Of Mary earth was capable !

*MADE SUBJECT TO VANITY.*

## XXIV.

Poor earthly House of flesh and blood !  
 Imprisoned Spirit's mortal mould  
 What rapture-thrills in fount and flood  
 Are thine, and on the windy wold !

And yet what art thou? Bond and chain !  
 To cheat the whole, thou giv'st the part :  
 The mother clasps her babe—'tis vain ;  
 She cannot hide him in her heart !

The *whole* great Soul would hear, would see :  
 The sense is bound to eye, to ear :  
 Still 'Touch me not,' remains for thee :  
 'Not yet ascended,' still we hear !

O pure in life, O sweet in death  
 O sweet and sinless flesh of flowers  
 I would that life with such light breath  
 Such sweetness born of death, were ours !

## XXV.

*MATER DIVINÆ GRATIÆ.*

THE gifts a mother showers each day  
 Upon her softly-clamorous brood,  
 The gifts they value but for play,  
 The graver gifts of clothes and food,

Whence come they but from him who sows  
 With harder hand, and reaps, the soil ;  
 The merit of his labouring brows,  
 The guerdon of his manly toil ?

From Him the Grace : through her it stands  
 Adjusted, meted, and applied ;  
 And ever, passing through her hands,  
 Enriched it seems, and beautified.

Love's mirror doubles Love's caress :  
 Love's eeho to Love's voice is true :  
 Their Sire the children love not less  
 Because they clasp a Mother too.

---

*MATER DIVINÆ GRATIÆ.*

XXVI.

'THEY have no wine.' The tender guest  
 Was grieved their feast should lack for aught :  
 He seemed to slight her mute request :  
 Not less the grace she wished He wrought.

O great in Love ! O full of Grace  
 That winds in thee a river broad  
 From Christ, with heaven-reflecting face,  
 Gladdening the City of thy God !

Be this thy gift : that man henceforth  
 No more should creep through life content,  
 Draining the springs impure of earth  
 With life's material element.

Let sacraments to sense succeed :

Let nought be winning, nought be good  
Which fails of Him to speak, and bleed  
Once more with His all-cleansing blood !

‘ They have no wine.’ At heaven’s high Feast  
That soft petition still hath place,  
And bathes—so wills that Kingly Priest  
Whose ‘ Hour *is* come ’—the worlds with Grace.

---

*DETACHMENT.*

XXVII.

FROM sin but not alone from sin

That Bright One of the worlds was free ;  
Never there stirred her breast within,  
That downward Creature-Sympathy

Which clouds the strong eyes that discern  
Through all things, One, the All-True, All-just,  
And bids the infirmer instinct yearn  
To beauteous nothings writ in dust.

Clear shines o’er glooming waves afar  
Yon cottage fire, as daylight dies,  
How pure—till comes the evening star  
To shame it from untainted skies !

O Mary, in thy Daughters still  
Thine image pure, if pale, we find ;  
The crystal of the flawless will ;  
The soul irradiating the mind ;

The heart where live, in memory sheathed,  
 But ghosts of mortal joy or grief  
 Like wood-scents through a Bible breathed  
 By some thin-pressed long-cherished leaf ;

The tender strength, the bliss heaven-taught,  
 Unguessed by Time's distempered thrall ;  
 The lucid depth of loving thought,  
 The peace divine encircling all.

In Him, the Unseen, their wealth they hoard :  
 They sit, in self-oblivion sweet  
 The Virgin-Spouses of their Lord,  
 Beside the Virgin-Mother's feet.

---

*THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES.*

XXVIII.

THE water changed to wine she saw :  
 She saw nought else of shapes around :  
 With such a trance of loving awe  
 That first of signs her spirit bound.

She saw in perspective benign  
 Whate'er that first of signs rehearsed,  
 That later chalice, and the wine  
 More changed, that slaked a holier thirst.

She saw calm homes of love and rest  
 The earthly life to heaven allied  
 The deaths sabbatical and blest  
 Of Saints that died as Joseph died.

She saw a world serene, august,  
 A world new-made, whose every part  
 Was fashioned, not of sinful dust,  
 But in, and from the Saviour's Heart.

She saw the stream of human kind  
 So long defiled with weeds and mud  
 In fontal pureness onward wind  
 To meet the eternal ocean flood

Within whose breast a love-star shook  
 More fair than he that from the skies,  
 As home their silent way they took,  
 Illumed her never tearless eyes.

---

*FILIA MARIE.*

XXIX.

ONE thought alone 'mid all this sea  
 Of vernal bliss disturbs my breast :  
 What have I suffered, Lord, for Thee,  
 Or how my love aright confessed ?

Command me tasks that Love may show  
 He needs no violet-scented bowers ;  
 Some pain to bear, some joy forego,  
 Some task, not chos'n, of arduous hours.

I mused upon Thy work and Thee :  
 Hardness I sought, and shunned delights :  
 Where blows the flower and sucks the bee  
 I found Thee not ; I clomb the heights.

Them, too, I feared ; to city-ways  
 I fled ; hot court, and fevered stair :  
 There too were beauty, love, and praise :  
 The Saviour's bleeding steps were there.

---

*EXPECTATIO.*

XXX.

A SWEET exhaustion seems to hold  
 In spells of calm the shrouded eve :  
 The gorse itself a beamless gold  
 Puts forth : yet nothing seems to grieve.

The dewy chaplets hang on air ;  
 The willowy fields are silver-grey ;  
 Sad odours wander here and there ;  
 And yet we feel that it is May.

Relaxed and with a broken flow  
 From dripping bowers low carols swell  
 In mellower, glassier tones, as though  
 They mounted through a bubbling well.

The crimson orchis scarce sustains  
 Upon its drenched and drooping spire  
 The burden of the warm soft rains ;  
 The purple hills grow nigh and nigher.

Nature, suspending lovely toils,  
 On expectations lovelier broods,  
 Listening, with lifted hand, while coils  
 The flooded rivulet through the woods.

She sees, drawn out in vision clear,  
 A world with summer radiance drest  
 And all the glories of that year  
 Still sleeping in her sacred breast.

## XXXI.

WHITENS the green field, daisy-strewn ;  
 A richer fragrance loads the breeze ;  
 Full-flowering meadows sweep, tall-grown,  
 The bending boughs of greener trees.

Whitens the thorn, like yonder snow  
 That crowns, not clothes, the hills aloof :  
 Empurpled skies more darkly glow  
 Through chasms of denser forest roof.

The silver treble of the bird  
 O'erruns her music's graver base  
 That golden murmur always heard  
 That dins the universal space,

Commingled sound of insect swarm  
 And vagrant bee, and wandering stream,  
 And workings of the woodlands warm  
 By summer yearnings touched in dream.

O Nature, make thy children thine !  
 Erase the stain ; burn out the blot ;  
 Like her of Mothers most benign,  
 The sole that, loving, flatters not.



‘*JESUS AND HIS MOTHER  
WERE THERE.*’

XXXII.

Love, youthful love, that mean'st so well,  
And spread'st thy wings to soar so high,  
Yet, backward blown by gusts from hell  
On desert sands so oft dost die !

For thee what help? From pride? from scorn?  
Ah! love alone is love's defence,  
True love, of love celestial born,  
And nursed in caves of Reverence.

Childhood thrice-blest! thine every thought  
Reveres superior mind or power  
That, sown in darkness, may be wrought  
From Reverence love's consummate flower!

A sinless man, a sinless mate  
Walked, linked in God, o'er Eden's sward:  
But He who links holds separate:—  
Between them paced Whom both adored!

O Face so like thy Son's look forth  
Through clouds that blot this mortal scene  
And, teaching woman's spiritual worth,  
The heart of man with fire make clean:

That so once more with spotless feet  
Upon a world-wide Eden's sod  
Humanity may stand complete  
One image, dual-cast from God;

And, dual-crowned—like that fair hill  
 Parnassian, which from summits twain  
 Flashed back the morning bright and still  
 Echoing the Muses' vestal strain—

May sing the Heavenly Lover's praise  
 With voices twain, yet lost in one,  
 And learn that only when we raise  
 Our hearts, they beat in unison.

---

*LUMEN NUPTIARUM.*

XXXIII.

SAY, who is she that walks on air  
 Nor stains her foot with sinful earth?  
 The all-tender Vestal, chaste and fair,  
 In death more blameless than at birth.

Say, who is she serenely blest  
 That walks the dustier ways of life  
 With foot immaculate as her breast?  
 That Woman maid, the Christian Wife!

Her love, a full-blown rose, each hour  
 Its snowy bud regenerates;  
 The star of Eden lights her bower;  
 Her children's laughter cheers its gates.

Yet half she is, that wife—still bride—  
 Owes to that vestal never wed,  
 As Homes through Him are sanctified  
 Who had not where to lay His head.

## XXXIV.

THE golden day is dead at last,  
 And hiding all their blossoms white  
 In one deep shade the bowers are massed,  
 So feebly o'er them plays the light  
 Of those uncertain, moonless skies  
 Bewildered with a silver haze,  
 Through which the unnumbered starry eyes  
 Bend tearful down a trembling gaze.  
 Against the horizon's pallid line  
 Where western heaven with ocean blends,  
 Far seen yon solitary Pine  
 Its cloud-like canopy suspends.  
 Ah! hark, that Convent's chime! It swells  
 From dusky turrets far away:  
 To shepherds half asleep it tells  
 That Mary's daughters watch and pray.

---

## XXXV.

IF God for each fair action wrought  
 On earth, with *wholly* pure intent,  
 Should call an Angel out of nought  
 Thenceforth in heaven its monument,  
 To prove the all-fruitful strength and worth  
 Of pureness perfect; and to show  
 That life in heaven may owe its birth  
 To humblest Virtue tried below;

How often angel choirs would fleet  
 From heaven the shadowy gulf across,  
 Some death-delivered Soul to greet  
 Assoiled, ere death, from mortal dross ;

Some Vestal from the cloister shade  
 Still pale, some village maid as pure,  
 That smiled to see her beauty fade,  
 Worked on for God in age obscure—

‘ Hail, Mother of our Joy ! ’ how oft  
 In hearts that knew not earthly ties  
 That angel Salutation soft  
 Would wake the beautiful surprise,

As forward through the realms of light  
 That Soul, on angel-litter borne,  
 Made way, an eddy silver-bright  
 Through gold seas of the eternal morn !

*‘ WHEN THOU HAST SET MY HEART  
 AT LIBERTY. ’*

XXXVI.

How narrow earthly loves, even those  
 Clouded the least by earthly stain !  
 What bars of Self around them close !  
 Not Death itself can burst that chain.

We love amiss ; we sorrow worse ;  
 Wan vintage of a barren sun  
 We drain around an ill-waked corse  
 In death-vaults of delight foregone.

O thou whose love to Him was knit  
 So near thee, yet so high above ;  
 In whom to love was to submit,  
 In whom Submission meant but Love ;

Whose heart great Love dilated so  
 That by His Cross, a Mother twice,  
 All men thy sons became ; whose Woe  
 But crowned true Love's Self-Sacrifice ;

Make thou the bosom, pure before,  
 Through grief more solid-pure to grow ;  
 The lily vase that shook of yore  
 Make thou the lily filled with snow !

The thought of thee among the Blest  
 O'er earth a bliss snow-pure doth breathe :  
 Thy rest in heaven diffuses rest  
 O'er those who love and mourn beneath.

---

*GRATIÆ PLENA.*

XXXVII.

If he of Angels first and best  
 Chief Ardour of the Seraph fires  
 More graces clasps than all the rest,  
 Perchance than all their ninefold choirs,

(That so proportioned worth and place  
 May wed, nor even war with odd)  
 What plenitude of conquering grace  
 Must fill the Mother of her God !

Their greatness stands in limits curbed  
 Of sequent rank and grade ; but she  
 Is one and whole, a world full-orbed,  
 An Order sole, and Hierarchy :

Of things create both last and first ;  
 Added, that so from Adam's crime  
 Her Son might save the race accursed ;  
 Decreed before the birth of time.

Hail, Full of Grace ! To eyes of men  
 Light shows not mid excess of light :  
 Thy glory mocks the angelic ken,  
 The peerless whiteness of thy white !

And yet 'twixt her and us but small  
 The distance :—finite it must be :  
 'Twixt her and God the interval  
 Is evermore infinity.

---

*VAS INSIGNE DEVOTIONIS.*

XXXVIII.

O STRONG in prayer ! our spirits bind  
 To God : our bodies keep from sin :  
 Live in our hearts that Christ may find  
 An incorrupt abode therein :

That He, the Eternal Spirit, He  
 Who overshadowed with His Grace  
 The depths of thy Humility  
 In us may have a resting-place.

Who love thee prosper ! As a breeze  
 Thou waft'st them o'er the ways divine :  
 Strange heights they reach with magic ease  
 Through music-moulded discipline.

' If I but touch His vesture's hem  
 I shall be healed, and strong, and free'—  
*Thou wert His Vesture, Mary ! them* .  
 His virtue heals that reach to thee.

*THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.*

XXXIX.

How oft that Sadducean fool  
 That impeded with feathers from the jay  
 As hard a heart, a brain as dull  
 As e'er were bubble-blown from elay,

How oft his half-shut eye had roved  
 From sacred page to page, and read  
 Those words that, unaffirming, proved  
 The Resurrection from the Dead ! \*

Words plainer were there : ' I shall go  
 To him ; he cannot come to me '—  
 ' Though worms consume this Body, lo !  
 I in my flesh my God shall see.'

Such words the Saviour challenged not :  
 He willed to prove that at the core  
 Of well-known words to reverent Thought  
 There lurked a mine of unknown lore.

\* ' The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'

‘What texts avouch her greatness?’ Two,  
 For those the Letter’s rind who pierce ;  
 The Ancient Record and the New :  
 In Christ they meet ; and Christ is hers.

---

*THE ‘SINGLE EYE.’*

XL.

THE spirit intricately wise  
 That bends above his ciphered scroll  
 Only to probe and analyse,  
 The self-involved and sunless soul

*Has* not the Truth he holds, though plain ;  
 For Truth divine is gift, not debt :  
 Her living waters wouldst thou drain ?  
 Let down the pitcher, not the net !

But they, the spirits frank and meek,  
 Nor housed in self, nor science-blind,  
 Who welcome Truths they did not seek ;—  
 Truth comes to them in every wind.

Beside his tent’s wide open door  
 With open heart, and open eye  
 The Patriarch sat, when they who wore  
 That triad type of God drew nigh.

The world of Faith around us lies  
 Like nature’s world of life and growth :  
 Seeing to see it needeth eyes  
 And heart, profound and simple both.



*MYSTICA.*

## XLI.

As pebbles flung for sport, that leap  
    Along the superficial tide  
But enter not those chambers deep  
    Wherein the jewel'd beds abide,

Such those light minds that, grazing, spurn  
    The surface text of Sacred Lore,  
Yet ne'er its deeper sense discern  
    Its halls of mystery ne'er explore.

Ah! not for such the unvalued gems!  
    The priceless pearls of Truth they miss:  
Not theirs the starry diadems  
    That light God's temple in the abyss!

Ah! not for such to gaze on her  
    That moves through all that empire pale;  
At every shrine doth minister,  
    Yet never lifts her sacred veil!

'The letter kills.' Make pure thy Will;  
    So shalt thou pierce the Text's disguise:  
Till then, revere the veil that still  
    Hides Truth from truth-affronting eyes.

---

*BEATI QUI AUDIUNT VERBUM DEI.*

## XLII.

WHEN from the crowd that voice was raised  
 That blessed the Mother of the Lord  
 Not her the Son who loved her praised  
 But all who heard, and kept His word.

O answer meet ! to her how dear  
 To her too great her crown to boast !  
 The meek were glad that praise to hear :  
 The meekest, loftiest, joyed the most.

Above her soul's pure mirror crept  
 No mist : no doubt within her stirred :  
 She asked not ' who His words hath kept  
 Like her, the mother of the Word ?'

Her tender heart rejoiced to think  
 That all who say, ' Thy Will be mine,'  
 Without, or with the external link,  
 In heart bring forth the Babe divine.

Chief of the Prophets John might be,  
 Yet, but for that his happier place  
 In Jesus' kingdom, less than he  
 The least one in the realm of Grace.

The mother of Incarnate God  
 Some Prophet's mother *seemed*, alone :  
 His hour not yet was come : abroad  
 To noise her fame had noised his own.

*AUTHENTIC THEISM.*

## XLIII.

A TRIVIAL age with petty sneer  
 Rebukes a creed for it too large  
 And little deems how subtly near  
 To falsehood's blindest is its charge.

The authentic Thought of God at last  
 To it grows pale through Error's mist :  
 Upon that mist Man's image cast  
 Becomes the new God-Mechanist.

The vast *Idea* shrivels up :  
 Truth narrows with the narrowing soul :  
 Men sip it from the acorn's cup :  
 Their fathers drained the golden bowl.

Shrink, spelled and dwarfed, *their* earth, *their* skies ;  
 Shrinks in *their* hand the measuring-rod ;  
 With dim yet microscopic eyes  
 They chase a daily-dwindling God.

His temple, thus to crypt reduced  
 For ancient Faith has space no more  
 Or her, its Queen. To hearts abused  
 By sense, prime truths are true no more.

---

*'TESTE DAVID CUM SIBYLLA.'*

(Plato.)

## XLIV.

O THOU of amplest brow, and eye  
 Resplendent most with piercing beam,  
 Prime Teacher of antiquity  
 That through thy shadowy Academe  
 Didst walk, the boast of Grecian years,  
 Of man conversing and the Soul  
 Until the music of the spheres  
 Around thy listeners seemed to roll ;

Thy theme was still the unsensuous Mind  
 That moulds and makes our worlds of sense,  
 The Truth in fleeting forms enshrined  
 Its own all-conquering evidence :

Olympian fancies, winged with speech  
 Descending lit that arduous theme  
 Like Pindan swans, each following each,  
 Adown some forest-darkened stream.

Ilyssus 'mid the reeds withheld  
 His wave to list a statelier ode  
 Than ever in that holy eld  
 From Sophoclean chorus flowed :

Man, man thou sang'st in strain heaven-taught,  
 Thy State's Exemplar, Type, and Plan,  
 Man, born of God's eternal Thought—  
 Ah, hadst thou heard of God made man !

*'TESTE DAVID CUM SIBYLLA.'*

(Plato.)

## XLV.

HE looked on the transcendent light,  
 And, by the greatness of the fall  
 Measuring the unfallen Spirit's height  
 That Spirit deemed the body's thrall.

He knew the light, but not the love,  
 The sin, but not that Cross of shame  
 Which raised us sinless spheres above !  
 Perhaps in death that knowledge came

In death that vision o'er him stood  
 Which all atoned, and all sufficed,  
 That Vision of Incarnate God,  
 The Mother-maid, the Infant Christ !

Perhaps, where'er the heart is pure  
 In Gentile or in Christian lands,  
 Despite dim clouds of faith obscure  
 By dying beds that Vision stands

To ripen in a moment's space  
 Truth's harvest, slumbering long in seed,  
 And fit—to meet the Judge's face—  
 With love in fear the Spirit freed !

‘*TESTE DAVID CUM SIBYLLA.*’

(Idea Platonica.)

XLVI.

‘**T**HE everlasting hills present  
 God’s Steadfastness to mortal ken :  
 His Ways the trackless firmament :  
 The deep His Counsels hid from men.’

What follows? *All* that meets our eyes  
 Now dimmed by life’s distempered dream  
 Is revelation in disguise ;  
 It shrouds, yet shows, the One supreme !

Throughout all worlds there liveth nought  
 But lived, unmade, unchangeable  
 For aye in God’s creative Thought  
 Which cast Creation’s glistening shell.

Him first, Him most, His works express :  
 But Nature’s myriad-minded plan  
 Hath lesser meanings ; and the less  
 Charm most the petty mind of man.

Poor captive of a sensuous heart,  
 That mind no longer by the whole  
 Interprets Nature’s meaner part—  
 We live in suburbs of the soul !

O Death ! fling back the gates of sense  
 That man, redeemed from thralldom base,  
 With glorified intelligence  
 At last may see his Maker’s Face !

Then type to antitype shall yield :  
 Then Truth no more shall show reversed :  
 The golden side of nature's shield  
 Shall smite our vision as at first

When God His creatures bade to pass  
 Beneath their master's eye, and he,  
 Fresh from the Godhead, as through glass  
 Discerned in each its mystery ;

Descried its supernatural law,  
 Inferred its place in nature's frame,  
 And, in the tongue of Gods, with awe  
 Assigned to each its destined Name.

---

*DEUS ABSCONDITUS.*

XLVII.

HE was no conqueror borne abroad  
 On all the fiery winds of fame  
 That over-sweeps a world o'er-awed  
 In ruin-heaps to write—a Name.

No Act triumphant crushed the foe :  
 No word of power redeemed the thrall :  
 By Suffering He prevailed that so  
 His Father might be all in all.

His Godhead veiled from mortal eyes  
 Showed forth that Father's Godhead still  
 As calm seas mirror starry skies  
 Because themselves invisible.

Thus Mary in the Son was hid :  
 That Son alone that Mother's boast ;  
 She nothing said, she nothing did :  
 Her light in His was merged and lost.

---

*THE VEIL.*

XLVIII.

For thirty years with her He lurked  
 As secret as the unrisen sun :  
 In three short years His Work He worked :  
 That work we know. The victory won,

Once more the veil descends, and shrouds  
 That trance of Love, the Forty Days :  
 Like mountains lost in luminous clouds  
 Their marvels cheat our yearning gaze.

The Saints who rose when Jesus died,  
 Lazarus, twice cast from nature's womb,  
 Hidden their after days abide  
 As Enoch's life or Moses' tomb.

The Work, the Work, no more, is told :  
 The lore man needs not shuns his sight :  
 Thy Work was this, to clothe in mould  
 Of Adam's race the Infinite.

Thy Motherhood thine endless Act  
 In this all lesser praise is drowned :  
 To this to add were to detract :  
 Sole-throned it bideth and self-crowned.



*'THE SECRET OF GOD IS WITH THEM  
THAT FEAR HIM.'*

XLIX.

FLOWER of the darkness that unseen  
With fragrance fill'st the vernal grove  
Where hid'st thou? 'Mid the grasses green,  
Or boughs that bar the blue above?

Thou bird that, darkling, sing'st a song  
That shook the bowers of Paradise  
Thou too art hid thy leaves among ;  
Thou sing'st unseen of mortal eyes.

Of her thou sing'st whose every breath  
Sweetens a world too base to heed ;  
Of Him, Death's Conqueror, who from Death  
Alone would take the crown decreed.

Thou sing'st that secret gifts are best ;  
That only like to God are they  
Who keep God's Secret in their breast  
And hide, as stars are hid by day.

---

*JANUA CÆLI.*

L.

THEY seek not ; or amiss they seek ;  
The coward soul, the captious brain :  
To Love alone those instincts speak  
Whose challenge never yet was vain.

True Gate of Heaven ! As light through glass,  
 That God who might—not born of thee—  
 Have come, was pleased to earth to pass  
 Through thine unstained Virginity :

Lo ! thus aright to *know* thy Son  
 Through knowledge comes of thee in part,  
 Interior Vision, Spirit-won,  
 High wisdom of the virgin heart.

Summed up in thee our hearts behold  
 The glory of *created* things :  
 From His, thy Son's, corporeal mould  
 Looks forth the eternal King of kings !

---

 LI.

If sense of Man's unworthiness  
 With Nature's blameless looks at strife,  
 Should wake with wakening May, and press  
 New-born contentment out of life ;

If thoughts of breed unblest and blind  
 Should stamp upon the springing flower,  
 Or blacker memories haunt the mind  
 As ravens haunt the ruined tower ;

O then how sweet in heart to breathe  
 Those pure Judean gales once more ;  
 From Bethlehem's crib to Nazareth  
 In heart to tread that Syrian shore !

To watch that star-like Infant bring  
 To one of soul as clear and white  
 May-lilies, fresh from Siloa's spring  
 Or Passion-flower with May-dews bright ;

To follow, earlier yet, the feet  
 Of her the 'hilly land' who trod  
 With true love's haste, intent to greet  
 That aged saint beloved of God :

Before her like a stream let loose  
 The long vale's flowerage, winding, ran :  
 Nature resumed her Eden use ;  
 And Earth was reconciled with Man !

*CAUSA NOSTRÆ LÆTITIÆ.*

LII.

WHATE'ER is floral on the earth  
 To thee, O Flower, of right belongs,  
 Whate'er is musical in mirth,  
 Whate'er is jubilant in songs.

Childhood and springtide never cease  
 For him thy freshness keeps from stain :  
 Dew-drenched for him, like Gideon's fleece,  
 The dusty paths of life remain.

For all high thoughts thou bring'st to mind,  
 We love thee :—love thee better yet  
 For all that taint on human kind  
 Thy brightness helps us to forget !

Hope, Hope is Strength ! That smile of thine  
 To us is Glory's earliest ray !  
 Through Faith's dim air, O star benign,  
 Look down, and light our onward way !

---

*STELLA MARIS.*

LIII.

I LEFT at morn that blissful shore  
 O'er which the fruit-bloom fluttered free ;  
 And sailed the wildering waters o'er,  
 Till sunset streaked with blood the sea.

My sleep the hoarse sea-thunders broke—  
 Death-visaged cliffs, with feet foam-hid  
 Leaned forth their brows through vapour-smoke  
 Like tower, and tomb, and pyramid.

In death-black shadow, ghostly white,  
 The breaker raced o'er foaming shoals :  
 From caverns cold as death all night  
 Came wailings as of suffering Souls.

At morn, through clearing mist the star  
 Of ocean o'er the billow rose :  
 Down dropped the elemental war ;  
 Tormented chaos found repose.

Star of the ocean ! dear art thou,  
 Ah ! not to sea-worn men alone :  
 The suffering Church, when shines thy brow  
 Upon her penance, stays her moan :

The Holy Souls draw in their breath :  
 The sea of anguish rests in peace :  
 And from beyond the gates of death  
 Up swell the anthems of release.

---

*AARONIS VIRGA.*

LIV.

BLOSSOM for ever, blossoming Rod !  
 Thou didst not blossom once to die :  
 That Life which, issuing forth from God  
 Thy life enkindled runs not dry.

Without a root in sin-stained earth  
 'Twas thine to bud Salvation's flower :  
 No single soul the Church brings forth  
 But blooms from thee and is thy dower !

Rejoice, O Eve ! thy promise waned ;  
 Transgression nipt thy flower with frost :  
 But, lo ! a Mother man hath gained  
 Holier than she in Eden lost.

---

*UNICA.*

LV.

WHILE all the breathless woods aloof  
 Lie hushed in noontide's deep repose,  
 That dove, sun-warmed on yonder roof,  
 Ah what a grave content she knows !

One note for her ! Deep streams run smooth :  
 The ecstatic song of transience tells :  
 What depth on depth of loving truth  
 In that divine content there dwells !

All day with down-dropt lids I sat  
 In trance ; the present scene forgone :  
 When Hesper rose, on Ararat,  
 Methought, not English hills, he shone.

Back to the ark the waters o'er  
 That primal dove pursued her flight :  
 A branch of that blest tree she bore  
 Which feeds God's Church with holy light.

I heard her rustling through the air  
 With sliding plume—no sound beside  
 Save the sea-sobbings everywhere,  
 And sighs of that subsiding tide.

---

*REGINA PROPHETARUM.*

LVI.

SHE took the timbrel, as the tide  
 Rushed, refluent, down the Red Sea shore :  
 'The Lord hath triumphèd,' she cried :  
 Her song rang out above the roar  
 Of lustral waves that wall to wall  
 Fell back upon that host abhorred :  
 Above the gloomy watery pall  
 As eagles soar her anthem soared.

Miriam, rejoice ! a mightier far  
 Than thou one day shall sing with thee !  
 Who rises, brightening like a star  
 Above yon bright baptismal sea ?

That harp which David touched who rears  
 Heaven-high above those waters wide ?  
 The Prophet-Queen ! Throughout all years  
 She sings the Triumph of the Bride !

## LVII.

STILL on the gracious work proceeds,  
 The good, great tidings preached anew  
 Yearly to green enfranchised meads  
 And fire-topped woodlands flushed with dew.

Yon cavern's mouth we scarce can see ;  
 Yon rock in gathering bloom lies meshed ;  
 And all the wood-anatomy  
 In thickening leaves is over-fleshed.

That hermit oak, which frowned so long  
 Upon the spring with barren spleen,  
 Yields to the sinless Siren's song,  
 And bends above her goblet green.

Young maples, late with gold embossed  
 Lucidities of sun-pierced limes  
 No more surprise us merged and lost  
 Like prelude notes in deepening chimes.

Disordered beauties and detached  
 Demand no more a separate place :  
 The abrupt, the startling, the unmatched,  
 Submit to graduated grace ;

While upward from the ocean's marge  
 The year ascends with statelier tread  
 To where the sun his golden targe  
 Finds, setting, on yon mountain's head.

---

*TURRIS DAVIDICA.*

LVIII.

THE towerèd City loves thee well,  
 Strong Tower of David's House ! In thee  
 She hails the unvanquished citadel  
 That frowns o'er Error's subject sea.

With magic might that Tower repels  
 A host that breaks where foe is none,  
 No foe but statued Saints in cells  
 High-ranged and smiling in the sun.

There stands Augustin ; Leo there ;  
 And Bernard with a maiden face  
 Like John's ; and, strong at once and fair,  
 That Spirit-Pythian, Athanase.



Upon thy star-surrounded height  
 God's Angel keepeth watch and ward ;  
 And sunrise flashes thence ere night  
 Hath left dark street and dewy sward.

---

*' TU SOLA INTEREMISTI OMNES  
 HÆRESES.'*

## LIX.

WHAT tenderest hand uprears on high  
 The standard of Incarnate God ?  
 Successive portents that deny  
 Her Son, who tramples ? She who trod

Long since on Satan ! Who were those  
 That, age by age, their Lord denied ?  
 Their seats they set with Mary's foes :  
 They mocked the Mother as the Bride.

Of such was Arius ; and of such  
 \* He whom the Ephesian Sentence felled :  
 † Her Title triumphed. At the touch  
 Of Truth the insurgent rout was quelled :

Back, back the hosts of Hell were driven  
 As forth that sevenfold thunder rolled :  
 And in the Church's mystic Heaven  
 There was great silence as of old.

\* Nestorius.

† Deipara.

*UT ACIES ORDINATA.*

## LX.

THE watchman watched along the walls :  
 And lo ! an hour or more ere light  
 Loud rang his trumpet. From their halls  
 The revellers rushed into the night.

There hung a terror on the air ;  
 There moved a terror under ground ;  
 The hostile hosts, heard everywhere,  
 Within, without, were nowhere found.

'The Christians to the lions ! Ho !'  
 Alas ! self-tortured crowds, let be !  
 Let go your wrath ; your fears let go :  
 Ye gnaw the net, but cannot flee.

Ye drank from out Orestes' cup ;  
 Orestes' Furies drave you wild.  
 Who conquers from on high ? Look up !  
 A Woman, holding forth a Child !

## LXI.

As children when, with heavy tread,  
 Men sad of face, unseen before,  
 Have borne away their mother dead,  
 So stand the nations thine no more.

From room to room those children roam,  
 Heart-stricken by the unwonted black :  
 Their house no longer seems their home :  
 They search ; yet know not what they lack :

Years pass : Self-Will and Passion strike  
 Their roots more deeply day by day ;  
 Old kinsmen sigh ; and ' how unlike '   
 Is all the tender neighbours say :

And yet at moments, like a dream  
 A mother's image o'er them flits :  
 Like hers their eyes a moment beam ;  
 The voice grows soft : the brow unknits :

Such, Mary, are the realms once thine  
 That know no more thy golden reign :  
 Hold forth from heaven thy Babe divine !  
 O make thine orphans thine again !

---

*SEDES SAPIENTIÆ.*

LXII.

O THAT the wordy war might cease !  
 Self-sentenced Babel's strife of tongues :  
 Loud rings the arena. Athletes, peace !  
 Nor drown the wild-dove's Song of Songs.

Alas, the wanderers feel their loss :  
 With tears they seek—ah, seldom found—  
 That peace whose Volume is the Cross ;  
 That peace which leaves not holy ground.

Mary, the peaceful soul loves thee !  
 A happy child not taught of Scribes  
 He stands beside the Church's knee ;  
 From her the lore of Christ imbibes.

Hourly he drinks it from her face :  
 For there his eyes, he knows not how,  
 The face of Him she loves can trace,  
 And crowned with thorns the sovereign brow.

‘ Behold ! all colours blend in white !  
 Behold ! all Truths have root in Love ! ’  
 So sings, half lost in light of light,  
 Her Song of Songs the mystic Dove.

---

*TRUTH.*

LXIII.

PROFANE are they, and without ruth,  
 Unclean, unholy, and unjust,  
 Who, loving knowledge, love not Truth :  
 Such love is intellectual lust.

He loves not Truth who over-runs  
 Like hunting-ground her harvest store  
 Trampling the birthright of his sons ;  
 Truth's gambler, staking ‘ all ’ on ‘ more.’

Who Truth from Error scorns to sift ;  
 Contemns that Truth enthroned in state,  
 God's Vestal keeping her sweet gift  
 In fruitfulness inviolate ;

Who thirsts for truths of lesser place,  
 Discovered Fact, or Natural Law,  
 Yet spurns the supernatural base  
 Of Truth's whole kingdom without flaw :

For on the adamantine Rock  
 Of Truth, Revealed, and Spirit-proved  
 Stands Faith, and meets the warring shock  
 Of world on world with face unmoved,

Thrice blest because not 'Flesh and Blood'  
 That knowledge certain and serene  
 To Peter taught of old, but God  
 Sole Teacher of the things unseen.

---

*IMPLICIT FAITH.*

'MULTUM NON MULTA.'

LXIV.

OF all great Nature's tones that sweep  
 Earth's resonant bosom, far or near,  
 Low-breathed or loudest shrill or deep  
 How few are grasped by mortal ear !

Ten octaves close our scale of sound :  
 Its myriad grades, distinct or twined,  
 Transcend our hearing's petty bound  
 To us as colours to the blind.

In Sound's unmeasured empire thus  
 The heights, the depths alike we miss :  
 Ah, but in measured sound to us  
 A compensating spell there is !

In holy music's golden speech  
 Remotest notes to notes respond :  
 Each octave is a world ; yet each  
 Vibrates to worlds its own beyond.

Our narrow pale the vast resumes ;  
 Our sea-shell whispers of the sea :  
 Echoes are ours of angel plumes  
 That winnow far infinity.

Clasp thou of Truth the central core !  
 Hold fast that Centre's central sense !  
 An atom there shall fill thee more  
 Than realms on Truth's circumference.

That cradled Saviour, mute and small,  
 Was God—is God while worlds endure !  
 Who holds Truth truly holds it all  
 In essence, or in miniature.

Know what thou know'st ! He knoweth much  
 Who knows not many things : and he  
 Knows most whose knowledge hath a touch  
 Of God's divine simplicity.

---

*MATER VIVENTIUM.*

LXV.

IN vain thine altars do they heap  
 With blooms of violated May  
 Who fail the words of Christ to keep ;  
 Thy Son who love not nor obey.

Their songs are as a serpent's hiss ;  
 Their praise a poniard's poisoned edge ;  
 Their offering taints, like Judas' kiss,  
 The shrine ; their vows are sacrilege.

Sadly from such thy countenance turns :  
 Thou canst not stretch thy Babe to such  
 Albeit for all thy pity yearns  
 As greet Him with a leper's touch.

Who loveth thee must love thy Son :  
 Weak Love grows strong thy smile beneath ;  
 But nothing comes from nothing ; none  
 Can reap Love's harvest out of Death.

-----

*GEUS NON SANCTA.*

LXVI.

I TOILED along the public path :  
 Loud rang the booths with knave and clown ;  
 Now laughter peals, now cries of wrath  
 Assailed the suburb from the town.

Pleasure, the kennel Circe, brimmed  
 Her cup for him that passed. Hard by  
 Sabbathless labour, dust-begrimmed  
 Alternated the curse and sigh.

' Alas,' I said, ' no God is here !  
 The World, the Flesh, rule here confest : '  
 I heard a voice ; an Angel near  
 On sailed ; an altar touched his breast.

He placed it by me, and I knelt ;  
     Clamour and shout and dust were gone ;  
 I prayed, and in my prayer I felt  
     The peace of God, and heard, ' walk on ;  
 ' Walk on : the Lands this hour that sleep  
     A sleep of storm, shall wake to pray  
 And, praying, rest ; her Feasts shall keep ;  
     Their long, sad years thenceforth a May ! '

*MATER VENERABILIS.*

LXVII.

COME from the midnight mountain tops,  
     The mountains where the panthers play :  
 Descend ! the cowl of darkness drops ;  
     Come fair and fairer than the day !

Our hearts are wounded with thine eyes :  
     They stamp thereon in words of light  
 The mystery of the starry skies ;  
     The ' Name o'er every name ' they write.

Come from thy Lebanonian peaks  
     Whose sacerdotal cedars nod  
 Above the world when morning breaks ;  
     The Mountain of the House of God.

Weakness and Dream have passed like night ;  
     Religion claims her ancient bound  
 On-borne in venerable might  
     By lions haled and turret-crowned.



## LXVIII.

THE sunless day is sweeter yet  
Than when the golden sun-showers danced  
On bower new-glazed or rivulet ;  
And Spring her banners first advanced.

By wind unshaken hang in dream  
The wind-flowers o'er their dark green lair ;  
And those ensanguined cups that seem  
Not bodied forms but woven of air.

Nor bird is heard nor insect flits :  
A tear-drop glittering on her cheek  
Composed but shadowed, Nature sits  
Yon primrose not more staid and meek.

The light of pensive hope unquenched  
On those pathetic brows and eyes,  
She sits, by silver dew-showers drenched  
Through which the chill spring odours rise.

Was e'er on human countenance shed  
So sweet a sadness? Once : no more ;  
Then when his charge the Patriarch led  
Dream-warned to Egypt's distant shore :

Down on her Infant Mary gazed ;  
Her face the angels marked with awe ;  
Yet 'neath its dimness, undisplaced,  
Looked forth that smile the Magians saw.

---

*THE FOURTH DOLOUR.*

(The Meeting on Calvary.)

## LXIX.

SHE stands before Him on the Road :  
He bears the Cross ; He climbs the Steep :  
Three times He sinks beneath His load :  
He sinks to earth : she does not weep.

She may not touch that Cross whose weight  
Against His will a stranger bears :  
In heart to bear it, and to wait,  
His upward footsteps, this is hers.

She may not prop that thorn-crowned Head :  
The waves of men between them break :  
Another's hand the veil must spread  
Against that forehead and that cheek.

Her eyes on His are fastened. Lo !  
There stand they, met on Calvary's height,  
Twin mirrors of a single woe  
Made by reflection infinite.

The sons of Sion round them rave :  
The Roman trumpet storms the wind :  
They goad him on with spear and stave :  
He passes by : she drops behind.

---

*REFUGIUM PECCATORUM.*

## LXX.

SAY, who are those that beat with brands  
 Like bandits on our palace-gate?  
 That storm our keep like rebel-bands?  
 That come like Judgment or like Fate?

Say, who are those that spurn by night  
 Our sumptuous floors with brazen shoon  
 And banquet halls whose latest light  
 Is lightning, or a dying moon?

Say, who are those that by our bed  
 Like giants tower in iron mail;  
 That press against the prostrate head  
 Their foot, and wind through heaven the flail?

The Sins are these! Sin-pasturing Past!  
 How in thy darkness they have grown  
 That seemed to die! How we at last  
 To pigmy size have shrunk, self-known!

Help, sinless Mother! Bid Him spare!  
 He loves us more—that Judge benign—  
 Than thou. 'Tis He that wills thy prayer:  
 From Him it comes, that love of thine!

*THE FIFTH DOLOUR.*

(Beside the Cross.)

## LXXI.

SHE stood in silence. Slowly passed  
 The hours whose moments dropped in blood :  
 Its frown the Darkness further cast :  
 She moved not : silently she stood.

No human sympathy she sought :  
 Her help was God, and God alone ;  
 Not even the instinctive respite caught  
 From passionate gesture, sigh or moan.

Her silence listened. On the air  
 Like death-bells tolled that prime Decree  
 Which bade the Eternal Victim bear  
 Man's Sin primeval. Let it be !

The Women round her heard all day  
 The clash of arms, the scoffing tongue :  
 She heard the breaking of that spray  
 Whereon the fruit of Knowledge hung.

Behold the Babe of Bethlehem ! Ay !  
 The Infant slumbered on thy breast ;  
 And thou that heard'st His earliest cry  
 Must hear His ' Consummatum est.'

---

*STABAT MATER.*

## LXXII.

SHE stood : she sank not. Slowly fell  
 Adown the Cross the atoning blood :  
 In agony ineffable  
 She offered still His own to God.

No pang of His her bosom spared ;  
 She felt in Him its several power :  
 But she in heart His Priesthood shared :  
 She offered Sacrifice that hour.

‘ Behold thy Son ! ’ Ah, last bequest !  
 It breathed His last farewell ! The sword  
 Predicted pierced that hour her breast :  
 She stood : she answered not a word.

His own in John He gave. She wore  
 Thenceforth the Mother-crown of Earth.  
 O Eve ! thy sentence too she bore ;  
 That hour in sorrow she brought forth.

*REGINA MARTYRUM.*

## LXXIII.

THAT tie, the closest ever twined,  
 That linked a Creature with her God  
 All ties of man in one combined  
 When by His Cross that Creature stood.

In both, one Will all wishes quelled :  
 On one great Sire were fixed their eyes :  
 From sister hearts the death-stream welled :—  
 Twins of a single Sacrifice.

In death her Spouse, her Son in life,  
 Her wedding-garment was His blood :  
 It clasped her close enough a wife  
 To wear the crown of Widowhood.

O Love ! alone thy topmost height  
 They tread who stand—thy clouds above—  
 Where *all* the rock-hewn paths unite  
 That branch from God, and lead to love !

---

### *THE SIXTH DOLOUR.*

(Taken down from the Cross.)

#### LXXIV.

THE Saviour from the Cross they took :  
 Across His Mother's knee He lies :  
 She wept not but a little shook  
 As with dead hand she closed dead eyes.

The surface wave of grief we know :  
 By us its depths are unexplored :  
 She treads the still abyss below  
 Following the footsteps of her Lord.

Above her head the great floods roll :  
 Before her still He moves—her Hope :  
 And calm in heart of storm her Soul,  
 Calm as the whirlpool's central drop.

The Saviour from the Cross they took :  
 Across His Mother's knee He lay :  
 O passers by ! be still and look !  
 That Twain compose one Cross for aye.

---

*THE SEVENTH DOLOUR.* .

(Before the Tomb.)

LXXV.

BEFORE the Tomb the Mother sate  
 Amid the new-delved garden ground :  
 Her eyes upon its stony gate  
 Were fixed, while darkness closed around.

A wind above the olives crept :  
 It seemed the world's collected sigh :  
 That Mother's eyes their vigil kept :  
 She felt but this ; her Lord was nigh.

Behind her leaning each on each  
 The Holy Women waited near :  
 Nor any spake of comfort : speech  
 Was slain by sorrow and by fear.

From realm to realm of night He passed,  
 That Soul which smote the dark to-day :  
 That Mother's eyes were settled fast  
 Upon the Tomb where Jesus lay.

---

*MATER DOLOROSA.*

## LXXVI.

FROM her He passed ; yet still with her  
The endless thought of Him found rest,  
A sad but sacred branch of myrrh  
For ever folded in her breast.

A Boreal winter void of light—  
Such seemed her widowed days forlorn :  
She slept ; but in her breast all night  
Her heart lay waking till the morn.

Sad flowers on Calvary that grew ;  
Sad fruits that ripened from the Cross ;  
These were the only joys she knew :  
Yet all but these she counted loss.

Love strong as Death ! She lived through thee  
That mystic life whose every breath  
From Life's low harpstring amorously  
Draws out the sweetened name of Death.

Love stronger far than Death or Life !  
Thy martyrdom was o'er at last :  
Her eyelids dropped ; and without strife  
To Him she loved her spirit passed.



# MAY CAROLS.

## *PART III.*

### *MARLE IN CÆLIS.*

‘And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

. . . . .

‘And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod: and her son was taken up to God, and to His throne.’—*APOCALYPSE* xii. 1, 5.



*THE 'UNKNOWN' GOD.*

I.

BEHIND this vast and wondrous frame  
Of worlds whereof we nothing know  
Except their aspect and their name,  
Beneath this blind, bewildering show

Of shapes that on the darkness trace  
Transitions fair and fugitive  
Lies hid that Power upon whose Face  
No child of man shall gaze and live.

Like one on purple heights that stands  
While mountain echoes round him roll  
Screening his forehead with his hands  
And following far through gulfs of soul

Some thought that still before him flies—  
Thus, Power eternal and unknown,  
We muse on Thine immensities  
Yet find Thee in Thy Son alone.

Emanuel, God with us, in Him  
We see the Unmeasured, and the Vast  
Like mountain outlines, large and dim,  
On lifted mists at sunrise cast.

‘The Word made Flesh!’ O Power Divine  
 Through Him alone we guess at Thee,  
 And deepliest feel that He is Thine  
 When throned upon His Mother’s knee.

---

*ASCENSIO DOMINI.*

II.

REJOICE, O Earth, thy crown is won!  
 Rejoice, rejoice, ye heavenly host!  
 And thou, the Mother of the Son,  
 Rejoice the first; rejoice the most!

Who captive led captivity,  
 From Hades’ void circumference  
 Who raised the Patriarch Band on high,  
 There rules, and sends us graces thence.

Rejoice, glad Earth, o’er winter’s grave  
 With altars wreathed and clarions blown;  
 And thou, the Race Redeemed, out-brave  
 The rites of Nature with thine own!

Rejoice, O Mary! thou that long  
 Didst lean thy breast upon the Sword—  
 Sad nightingale, the Spirit’s song  
 That sang’st all night! He reigns, restored!

Rejoice! He goes, the Paraclete  
 To send! Rejoice! He reigns on high!  
 That Sword lies broken at thy feet!  
 His triumph is thy victory.

*ASCENSIO DOMINI.*

## III.

I TAKE this reed—I know the hand  
 That wields it must ere long be dust—  
 And write upon the fleeting sand  
 Each tide o'er-sweeps, the words 'I trust.'

And if that sand one day was stone  
 And stood in courses near the sky  
 For towers by earthquake overthrown  
 Or mouldering piecemeal, what care I?

Things earthly perish : life to death  
 And death to life in turn succeeds :  
 The Spirit never perisheth :  
 The chrysalis its Psyche breeds.

True life alone is that which soars  
 To Him who triumphed o'er the grave :  
 With Him on life's eternal shores  
 I trust one day a part to have.

Ah, hark ! above the springing corn  
 That chime ! in every breeze it swells !  
 Ye bells that wake the Ascension morn,  
 Ye give us back our Paschal bells !

---

## IV.

A SUDDEN sun-burst in the woods  
But late sad Winter's palace dim !  
O'er quickening boughs and bursting buds  
Pacific glories shoot and swim.

As when some heart, grief-darkened long  
Conclusive joy by force invades,  
So swift the new-born splendours throng ;  
Such lustre swallows up the shades.

The sun we see not ; but his fires  
From stem to stem obliquely smite  
Till all the forest aisle respire  
The golden-tongued and myriad light :

The caverns blacken as their brows  
With floral fire are fringed : but all  
Yon sombre vault of meeting boughs  
Turns to a golden fleece its pall

As o'er it breeze-like music rolls :  
O Spring, thy limit-line is crossed !  
O Earth, some orb of singing Souls  
Brings down to thee *thy* Pentecost !

---

*DOMINICA PENTECOSTES.*

## V.

CLEAR as those silver trumps of old  
 That woke Judea's jubilee ;  
 Strong as the breeze of morning, rolled  
 O'er answering woodlands from the sea

That Evangelic anthem vast  
 Which winds, like sunrise, round the globe,  
 Following that sunrise, far and fast  
 And trampling on his fiery robe.

Once more the Pentecostal torch  
 Lights on the courses of the year :  
 The ' Upper Chamber ' of the Church  
 Is thrilled once more with joy and fear.

Who rears her brow from out the dust ?  
 Who fixes on a world restored  
 A gaze like Eve's, but more august ?  
 Who lifts it heaven-ward on her Lord ?

It is the Birthday of the Bride !  
 The new begins ; the ancient ends :  
 From all the gates of Heaven flung wide  
 The promised Paraclete descends.

He who o'ershadowed Mary once  
 O'ershades Humanity to-day ;  
 And bids her fruitful prove in sons  
 Co-heritors with Christ for aye.

*DOMINICA PENTECOSTES.*

## VI.

THE Form decreed of tree and flower  
 The Shape susceptible of life  
 Without the infused, vivific Power  
 Were but a slumber or a strife.

He whom the plastic Hand of God  
 Himself created out of earth  
 Remained a statue and a clod  
 Till Spirit infused to life gave birth.

So till that hour the Church. In Christ  
 Her awful structure, nerve and bone,  
 Though founded, shaped, and organized  
 Existed but in skeleton

Till down on that predestined frame,  
 Complete through all its sacred mould  
 That Pentecostal Spirit came,  
 The self-same Spirit Who of old

Creative o'er the waters moved :  
 Thenceforth the Church, made One and Whole,  
 Arose in Him, and lived, and loved ;  
 His Temple she, and He her Soul.

---



## VII.

HERE, in this paradise of light,  
 Superfluous were both tree and grass :  
 Enough to watch the sunbeams smite  
 Yon white flower sole in the morass !

From his cold nest the skylark springs  
 Soars, pauses, sings ; shoots up anew ;  
 Attains his topmost height, then sings  
 Quiescent in his vault of blue.

With eyes half-closed I watch that lake  
 Flashed from whose plane the sun-sparks fly  
 Like Souls new-born that shoot and break  
 From thy deep sea, Eternity !

Ripplings of sunlight from the wave  
 Ascend the white rock high and higher ;  
 Soft gurglings fill the satiate cave ;  
 Soft airs amid the reeds expire.

All round the lone and luminous meer  
 The dark world stretches far and free  
 That skylark's song alone I hear ;  
 That flashing wave alone I see.

O myriad Earth ! Where'er a Word  
 Of thine makes way into the soul  
 An echo million-fold is stirred :  
 Of thee the part is as the whole !

---

*REGINA CÆLI.*

## VIII.

IN some celestial realm we know  
     The God-man keeps His court sublime  
 As Adam ruled the sphere below  
     In that first Eden's sinless prime.

He too, that second Adam, hears  
     Those rivers four engird His bound ;  
 Serene advance of sleepless years  
     With God's accomplished Counsels crowned,

Around Him, close as Eden leaves,  
     The Souls consummate hang in trance :  
 Like wind the Spirit among them weaves  
     Eternal song, or through the expanse

On-wafts, like snowy clouds high-piled  
     Those pilgrims of God's trackless Will,  
 The white hosts of the Undeiled  
     Whom love divine alone could fill.

The lustral mist for aye ascends :  
     All creatures mix secure from strife :  
 At last the Tree of Knowledge blends  
     Its branches with the Tree of Life.

An Eve partakes that Eden. She  
     Who decked His cradle shares His throne :—  
 The Solitudes of Deity  
     These, these are His, and His alone.

*FEST. SS. TRINITATIS.*

## IX.

FALL back, all worlds, into the abyss  
 That man may contemplate once more  
 That which He ever was Who is ;  
 The Eternal Essence we adore.

Angelic hierarchies ! recede  
 Beyond extinct Creation's shade—  
 What were ye at the first ? Decreed :  
 Decreed, not fashioned ! thought, not made !

Like wind the untold Millenniums passed :  
 Sole-throned He sat ; yet not alone :  
 Godhead in Godhead still was glassed ;  
 The Spirit was breathed from Sire and Son.

Prime Virgin, separate and sealed ;  
 Nor less of social Love the root !  
 Dimly in lowliest shapes revealed ;  
 Entire in every Attribute :

Thou liv'st in all things and around ;  
 To Thee external is there nought ;  
 Thou of the boundless art the bound ;  
 And still Creation is Thy Thought.

In vain, O God, our wings we spread ;  
 So distant art Thou—yet so nigh.  
 Remains but this when all is said  
 For Thee to live ; in Thee to die.

*FESTUM SS. TRINITATIS.*

## X.

LIKE some broad flood whose conquering course  
 Shakes the dim forests night and day  
 On sweeps the prime Creative Force,  
 And re-creates the worlds alway.

The eternal Mind, the sole-born Thought  
 Shape-entering matter's stamp and mould,  
 Through all the spaces wonder-fraught  
 Speaks Law and Order as of old.

That Love which, ere it overflowed  
 And beat on lone Creation's shore  
 Issuing from Both with Both abode  
 Proceeds, abides, for evermore.

Yet man who—not in brow or breast  
 But soul, and reason, and free-will—  
 Imaged his Maker and expressed  
 Ignored that Triune Mystery still!

Here failed his science, failed as sight  
 Earth's motion fails to mark! Ah me!  
 Our eye can track the swallow's flight;  
 The circling sphere it cannot see!

And yet as Sense, abashed, down kneels  
 And wins from Science lore sublime  
 To kneeling science Faith reveals  
 Mysteries transcending space and time.

The Infinite remains unknown  
 Too vast for man to *understand* :  
 In Him, the 'Woman's Seed,' alone  
 We trace God's footprint in the sand.

*THRONUS TRINITATIS.*

## XI.

EACH several Saint the Church reveres,  
 What is he but an altar whence  
 Some separate Virtue ministers  
 To God a separate frankincense ?

Each beyond each, not made of hands  
 They rise, a ladder angel-trod :  
 Star-bright the last and loftiest stands :  
 That altar is the Throne of God.

Lost in the uncreated light  
 A Form all Human rests thereon :  
 His shade from that surpassing height  
 Beyond Creation's verge is thrown.

Him 'Lord of lords, and King of kings,'  
 The chorus of all worlds proclaim :  
 'He took from her,' one angel sings  
 At intervals, 'His human frame.'

*REGINA SANCTORUM OMNIUM.*

## XII.

HE seemed to linger with them yet :  
 But late ascended to the skies  
 They saw—ah, how could they forget ?—  
 The form they loved, the hands, the eyes.

From anchored boat, in lane or field  
 He taught ; He blessed, and brake the bread ;  
 The hungry filled ; the afflicted healed ;  
 And wept, ere yet He raised, the dead.

But when, like some supreme of hills  
 Whose feet shut out its summit's snow  
 That, hid no longer, heavenward swells  
 As further from its base we go,

Abroad His perfect Godhead shone  
 Each hour more plainly kened on high  
 And clothed His Manhood with the sun  
 And, lifting, cleansed the adoring eye ;

Then fixed His Church a deepening gaze  
 Upon His Saints. With Him they sate  
 And, burning in that Godhead's blaze,  
 They seemed that Manhood to dilate.

His were they : of His likeness each  
 Had grace some fragment to present  
 And nearer brought to mortal reach  
 Some imitable lineament.

---

*ADVOCATA.*

XIII.

I SAW, in visions of the night  
 Creation like a sea outspread  
 With surf of stars and storm of light  
 And movements manifold and dread.

Then lo, within a Human Hand  
 A Sceptre moved that storm above :  
 Thereon, as on the golden wand  
 Of kings new-crowned, there sat a Dove.

Beneath her gracious weight inclined  
 That Sceptre drooped. The waves had rest :  
 And Sceptre, Hand, and Dove were shrined  
 Within a glassy ocean's breast.

His Will it was that placed her there !  
 He at whose word the tempests cease  
 Upon that Sceptre planted fair  
 That peace-bestowing type of Peace !

*EXALTAVIT HUMILES.*

XIV.

THE Chief of Creatures lived unknown  
 Sharing her Maker's sacred cloud  
 Like some fair headland flower-bestrewn  
 That sleeps within its sea-born shroud.

The Brethren sought precedence : Christ  
 To them gave titles. He, their God,  
 For Him 'the Son of Man' sufficed :  
 The hidden way with Him she trod.

She died : the idols sank, and they  
 Those four great Heresies, whose pride  
 Successive blurred the fount of day  
 Her Son's Divinity denied :

As God, as Man, secure He reigned :  
 Then came her hour : then shone her crown  
 And theirs, that Saintly Court unstained  
 While guests of earth, by earth's renown.

Humility was crowned though late :  
 That boastful, pagan greatness fell :  
 And on their thrones the Meek ones sate  
 'Judging the tribes of Israel.'

---

 XV.

WHERE is the crocus now that first  
 When earth was dark and heaven was grey  
 A prothalamion flash, up burst ?  
 Ah, then we thought not of the May !

The clear stream stagnates in its course ;  
 Narcissus droops in pallid gloom ;  
 Far off the hills of golden gorse ;  
 A dusk Saturnian face assume.

The seeded dandelion dim  
 Casts loose its air-globe on the breeze ;  
 Along the grass the swallows skim ;  
 The cattle couch among the trees.

Yet ever lordlier loveliness  
 Succeeds the charm that cheats our hold :  
 The thorn assumes her snowy dress ;  
 Laburnum bowers their robes of gold.

Down waves successive of the year  
 The season slides ; but sinks to rise  
 With ampler view, as on we steer,  
 Of lovelier lights and loftier skies.



## XVI.

A low ground-mist, the hills between  
Measuring their intervals, distends  
Ridge beyond ridge, the sylvan scene ;  
Far off the reddening river bends

From bridge to town. On hueless air  
The moon suspends her pearly shell  
Above the eastern ledges bare ;  
But sunset throngs yon western dell

That pants through amethystine mist  
And gleams as though the Sons of God  
Through golden ether stooped, and kissed  
Some Syrian vale the Saviour trod !

The beatific Splendours wane :  
The hills, of all that sweetness gone,  
A roseate memory still retain :  
Thou compline chime, peal on, peal on !

Of Him thou sing'st whose Blood erased  
Earth's ancient stain by power divine ;  
Of them, that second Pair, who paced  
That second Eden, Palestine.

---

*IN CIVITATE SANCTIFICATA  
REQUIEVI.*

XVII.

IN silence, like a ridge of snows  
 Slow reared in lands for ever calm,  
 On Sion's brow the Temple rose ;  
 In stillness grew as grows the palm.

Far off, on ridges vapour-draped,  
 Was hewn and carved each destined stone :  
 Far off the axe the cedars shaped  
 Upon their native Lebanon.

So rose that Temple holier far  
 Incarnate Godhead's sacred shrine :  
 Round her there swelled no din of war :  
 The peace that girt her was divine.

The deep foundations of that fane  
 Were laid ere lived the hills and seas  
 In many a dread, unquarried vein  
 Of God's deep Will, and fixed Decrees.

High Queen of Peace ! Her God possessed,  
 Her heart could feel no earthly want :  
 His kingdom, 'stablished in her breast,  
 Triumphant was, not militant :

And day by day more amply played  
 His love about its raptured thrall  
 Like some eternal sunset stayed  
 On cliff rich-veined, or mountain wall.

*QUASI CEDRUS EXALTATA SUM  
IN LIBANO.\**

XVIII.

BEHOLD ! I sought in all things rest :  
My Maker called me : I obeyed :  
On me He laid His great behest :  
In me His tabernacle made.

The world's Creator thus bespake  
‘ My Salem be thy heritage :  
Thy rest within mine Israel make :  
In Sion root thee, age by age.’

Within the City well-beloved  
Thenceforth I grew from flower to fruit :  
And in an ancient race approved  
Behold thenceforth I struck my root.

Like Carmel's cedar, or the palm  
That gladdens 'mid Engaddi's dew  
Or Plane-tree set by waters calm  
I stood, and round my fragrance threw.

Behold ! I live where dwells not sin :  
I breathe in climes no foulness taints :  
I reign in God's fair Court, and in  
The full assembly of His Saints.

\* Ecclesiasticus xxiv.

*SAPIENTIA.\**

## XIX.

MY flowers are flowers of gladness : mine  
 The boughs of honour and of grace :  
 Pure as the first bud of the vine  
 My fragrance freshens all the place.

The Mother of fair Love am I :  
 With me is Wisdom's name and praise :  
 With me are Hope, and Knowledge high,  
 And sacred Fear, and peaceful days.

Through garden plots my course I took  
 To bathe the beds of herb and tree :  
 Then to a river swelled my brook :  
 Anon that river was a sea.

More high that sea shall rise and shine  
 Far off, a prophet-beam of morn ;  
 Because my doctrine is not mine  
 But light of God for Seers unborn.

---

*BEATI MITES.*

## XX.

THY song is not the song of morn  
 O thrush, but calmer and more strong ;  
 While sunset woods around thee burn  
 And echoing stems thy strain prolong.

\* Ecclesiasticus xxiv.

O songstress of the thorn whereon  
 As yet the white but streaks the green  
 Sing on ! sing on ! Thou sing'st as one  
 That sings of what his eyes have seen !

In thee some Seraph's rapture tells  
 Of joys we guess not ! Heaven draws near :  
 I hear the immortal City's bells :  
 The triumph of the Blest I hear.

The whole wide earth, to God heart-bare  
 Basks like some happy Umbrian vale  
 By Franeis trodden and by Clare  
 When anthems sweetened every gale

When Greatness thirsted to be good  
 When faith was meek and love was brave  
 When hope by every cradle stood  
 And rainbows spanned each new-made grave.

---

*SINE LABE ORIGINALI CONCEPTA.*

XXI.

HER foot is on the Lord of Night :  
 On Heaven, not him, are fixed her eyes :  
 That foot is, as a lily, light ;  
 Not less that Serpent writhes and dies !

O Eve, he dies, that tempter fell !  
 O Earth, that pest whose poison-spume  
 Exasperate with the fires of hell  
 Thy blood envenomed, meets his doom !

But whence the conquering puissance? Lo!  
 That Woman clasps the 'Woman's Seed':  
 That Infant quells the infernal foe:  
 Messiah triumphs: His the deed!

The weight she feels not she transmits:  
 The weight of worlds her arms sustain:  
 Who made the worlds—in heaven Who sits—  
 Through her that foe hath touched and slain!

---

*SINE LABE ORIGINALI CONCEPTA.*

XXII.

COULD she, that Destined One, could she  
 On whom His gaze was stayed for aye  
 Transgress like Eve, partake that Tree  
 Become, like her, the Dragon's prey?

Had He no Pythian shaft that hour  
 Her Son—her God—to pierce that Foe  
 Which strove her greatness to devour,  
 Eclipse her glories? Deem not so!

He saw her in that First Decree:  
 He saw the Assailant; sent the aid:—  
 Filial it was, His love for thee  
 Ere thou wert born; ere worlds were made.

---

*SINE LABE ORIGINALI CONCEPTA.*

## XXIII.

WHEN man gives up the ghost, behold,  
 Honouring his God's Decree august  
 His body melts : the mortal mould  
 Revisiteth its native dust.

The bulwarks of the breast give way :  
 Those eyes that glorying watched the sun :  
 Each atom-speck of mortal clay  
 Foregoes its nature—all save one.

A something—germ or power—survives,  
 That seed which linked, from birth to death,  
 The structure's myriad cyclic lives  
 That remnant never perisheth !

That seed reserved, too fine, too small  
 For eye to scan, for chance to mar  
 Shall soar to meet God's trumpet-call,  
 Re-clad, and glittering like a star.

With Man so fared it at the Fall :  
 The Race lay dead : She did not die :  
 One seed survived—the hope of all—  
 Thy pledge, Redeemed Humanity !

---

*SINE LABE ORIGINALI CONCEPTA.*

## XXIV.

MET in a point\* the circles twain  
 Of temporal and eternal things  
 Embrace, close linked. Redemption's chain  
 Drops thence to earth its myriad rings.

In either circle, from of old  
 That point of meeting stood decreed ;  
 Twin mysteries cast in one deep mould  
 'The Woman,' and 'the Woman's Seed.'

Mary, long ages ere thy birth  
 Resplendent with Salvation's Sign  
 In thee a stainless hand the earth  
 Put forth, to meet the Hand Divine !

The Word made Flesh ; the Way ; the Door ;  
 The link that dust with Godhead blends !  
 Through Him the worlds their God adore :  
 Through thee that God to man descends.

*SINE LABE ORIGINALI CONCEPTA.*

## XXV.

A SOUL-LIKE sound, subdued yet strong,  
 A whispered music, mystery-rife,  
 A sound like Eden airs among  
 The branches of the Tree of Life—

\* The Incarnation.



At first no more than this ; at last  
 The voice of every land and clime  
 It swept o'er Earth a clarion blast :  
 Earth heard, and shook with joy sublime.

Mary ! thy triumph was Earth's own !  
 In thee she saw her prime restored :  
 She saw ascend a spotless Throne  
 For Him, her Saviour, and her Lord.

First trophy of all-conquering Grace  
 First victory of that Blood all pure  
 Of man's once fair, but fallen Race,  
 Thou stood'st, the monument secure.

The Church had spoken. She that dwells  
 Sun-clad with beatific light,  
 From Truth's uncounted citadels  
 From Sion's Apostolic height

Had stretched her sceptred hands, and pressed  
 The seal of Faith, defined and known,  
 Upon that Truth till then confessed  
 By Love's instinctive sense alone.

---

*FREMUERUNT GENTES.*

XXVI.

THE sordid World, insane through pride  
 Masking her sin in virtue's name  
 Rejects, usurps, self-deified,  
 The Immaculate Mother's sacred claim.

‘The Earth is mine, and Earth’s desires :  
 My Science reigns from zone to zone :  
 I warm my hands o’er Nature’s fires ;  
 I reap the fields those hands have sown :

‘From depths unknown I crept unseen  
 Through worm and beast to Man’s estate :  
 My hands are clean : I rule, a Queen  
 Immortal and Immaculate.’

Thus boasteth Pride with brazen brow ;  
 That Pride which still ‘believes a lie’ :—  
 The counter-boast of Grace art thou,  
 Immaculate Humility !

Therefore, like Western hill that flings  
 O’er sunset vales its gradual shade  
 Thy power shall wax while sensuous things  
 Dissolve, and earthly grandeurs fade.

In the world’s eve thy Star shall flash  
 Through reddening skies that cease to weep  
 While kings to earth their sceptres dash  
 And angel bands the harvest reap.

---

*THE RAINBOW.*

XXVII.

ALL-GLORIOUS shape that fleet’st wind-swept  
 Athwart the empurpled pine-girt steep,  
 That, sinless, from thy birth hast wept,  
 All-gladdening, till thy death must weep ;

That in eterne ablution still  
 Thine innocence in shame dost shroud  
 And, washed where stain was none, dost fill  
 With light thy penitential cloud ;

Illume with peace our glooming glen  
 O'er-arch with hope yon distant sea  
 To angels whispering and to men  
 Of her whose lowlier sanctity

In God's all-cleansing freshness shrined  
 Renounced all pureness of her own,  
 And aye her lucent brow inclined  
 God's ' Handmaid ' meek, before His throne.

---

*ANCILLA DOMINI.*

XXVIII.

THE crown of Creatures, first in place,  
 Was, of all creatures, creature most :  
 By nature nothing ; all by grace ;  
 Redemption's first and loftiest boast.

Handmaid of God in heart and will  
 Without His life she seemed a death  
 A void that He alone could fill  
 A word suspended on His breath.

Yet—void and nothing—she in Him  
 The Creature's sole perfection found ;  
 She was the great Rock's shadow dim ;  
 She was the silence not the sound.

On golden airs, by Him upheld,  
 She knelt, a soft Subjection mute  
 A hushed Dependance, tranced and spelled,  
 Still yearning towards the Absolute.

She was a sea-shell from the deep  
 Of God ; her function this alone  
 Of Him to whisper as in sleep,  
 In everlasting undertone.

This hour on Him her eyes are set !  
 And those who tread the earth she trod  
 Like her themselves in her forget  
 And her remember but in God.

---

 XXIX.

BROW-BOUND with myrtle and with gold  
 Spring, sacred now from blasts and blights,  
 Lifts high in firm, untrembling hold  
 Her chalice of fulfilled delights.

Confirmed around her queenly lip  
 The smile late wavering, on she moves ;  
 And seems through deepening tides to step  
 Of steadier joys and larger loves.

The stony Ash itself relents,  
 Into the blue embrace of May  
 Sinking, like old impenitents  
 Heart-touched at last ; and, far away,

The long wave yearns along the coast  
 With sob suppressed, like that which thrills,  
 Whilst o'er the altar mounts the Host,  
 Some chapel on the Irish hills.

*CORPUS CHRISTI.*

## XXX.

REJOICE, thou Church of God ! be glad,  
 This day triumphant here below !  
 He cometh, in lowliest emblems clad ;  
 Himself He cometh to bestow !

That Body which thou gav'st, O Earth  
 He gives thee back—that Flesh, that Blood—  
 Born of the Altar's mystic birth ;  
 At once thy Worship and thy Food.

He who of old on Calvary bled  
 On all thine altars lies to-day  
 A bloodless Sacrifice, but dread  
 The Lamb in heaven adored for aye.

His Godhead on the Cross He veiled ;  
 His Manhood here He veileth too :  
 But Faith has eagle eyes unscaled,  
 And Love to Him she loves is true.

' I will not leave you orphans. Lo !  
 While lasts the world with you am I.'  
 Saviour ! we see Thee not ; but know  
 With burning hearts that Thou art nigh !

He cometh ! Blue Heaven, thine incense breathe  
 O'er all the consecrated sod ;  
 And thou, O Earth, with flowers enwreath  
 The steps of thine advancing God !

*CORPUS CHRISTI.*

## XXXI.

WHAT music swells on every gale ?

What heavenly Herald speedeth past ?  
Vale sings to vale, ' He comes ; all hail !'  
Sea sobs to sea, ' He comes at last.'

The Earth bursts forth in choral song ;  
Aloft her ' *Lauda Sion* ' soars ;  
Her myrtle boughs at once are flung  
Before a thousand Minster doors.

Far on the white processions wind  
Through wood and plain and street and court :  
The kings and prelates pace behind  
The King of kings in seemly sort.

The incense floats on Grecian air  
Old Carmel echoes Calpè's chant,  
In every breeze the torches flare  
That curls the waves of the Levant.

On Ramah's plain in Bethlehem's bound  
Is heard to-day a gladsome voice :  
' Rejoice,' it cries, ' the Lost is found !'  
With Mary's joy, O Earth, rejoice !'

---

*THE TWO LAST GIFTS.*

## XXXII.

‘BEHOLD thy Mother!’ From the Cross  
 He gave her—not to one alone :  
 We are His Brethren ; unto us  
 He gave a Mother as to John.

Behold the greatest gift of Christ  
 Save that wherein Himself He gives,  
 The wonder-working Eucharist,  
 Sole life of each that truly lives :

Mysterious Bread not joined and knit  
 With him that eats, like mortal food,  
 But, fire-like, joining him with It  
 And blending with the Church of God !

Mary ! from thee the Saviour took  
 That Flesh He gives ! The mercies twain  
 Like streams of a divided brook  
 But separate to meet again.

---

*DOMUS AUREA.*

## XXXIII.

‘WISDOM hath built herself a House,  
 And hewn her out her pillars seven :’ \*  
 Her wine is mixed : her guests are those  
 Who share the harvest-home of heaven.

\* Proverbs ix. 1.

The fruits upon her table piled  
 Are gathered from the Tree of Life :  
 Around are ranged the undefiled,  
 And those that conquered in the strife.

Who tends the guests? Who smiles away  
 Sad memories? bids misgiving cease?  
 A crowned one countenanced like the day  
 The Mother of the Prince of Peace!

## XXXIV.

PLEASANT the swarm about the bough ;  
 The meadow-whisper round the woods ;  
 And for their coolness pleasant now  
 The murmur of the falling floods.

Pleasant beneath the thorn to lie  
 And let a summer fancy loose ;  
 To hear the cuckoo's double cry ;  
 To make the noontide sloth's excuse.

Panting, but pleased, the cattle stand  
 Knee-deep in water-weed and sedge  
 And scarcely crop that greener band  
 Of osiers round the river's edge.

But hark ! Far off the south wind sweeps  
 The golden-foliaged groves among  
 Renewed or lulled, with rests and leaps—  
 Ah ! how it makes the spirit long

To drop its earthly weight and drift  
 Like yon white cloud, on pinions free  
 Beyond that Mountain's purple rift  
 And o'er that scintillating sea !



*FEST. ASSUMPTIONIS.*

## XXXV.

THE mother of the heavenly Child

Who made the worlds, and who redeemed,  
The maid and mother undefiled  
She died : or else to die she seemed.

Once more above the late-entombed

They bent. What found they ? Vacant space :  
To heaven had Mary been assumed  
And only flowers were in the place.

O happy earth ! Elected sphere !

Hope of that starry host above !  
Thou too thy Maker's voice shalt hear ;  
Thou too thy great Assumption prove !

The earth shall be renewed : the skies

Shall bloom with glories unrevealed :  
Each season new but typifies  
The wonders then to be unsealed.

Revives, each spring, a world that died :

A world by summer's store increased  
Shall hear ere long that mandate wide  
' Prepare the glad Assumption Feast ! '

---

*ELIAS AND ENOCH.*

## XXXVI.

O THOU that rodest up the skies,  
 Assumed ere death, on steeds of fire  
 That, rapt from earth in mortal guise  
 Some air immortal dost respire ;

That, ambushed in the enshrouding sheen,  
 In quiet lulled of soul and flesh,  
 With one great thought of Him, the Unseen,  
 Thy ceaseless vigil dost refresh ;

Old lion of Carmelian steeps !  
 Upon God's mountain, where, O where,  
 Or couchant by His unknown deeps,  
 Mak'st thou thine everlasting lair ?

Hast thou, that earlier Seer beside  
 Who 'walked with God, and was not,' him  
 By contemplation glorified  
 When faith, in shallower hearts, grew dim,

Hast thou—despite corporeal bars—  
 A place among those Hierarchies,  
 Who fix on Mary's Throne, like stars,  
 The light of never-closing eyes ?

Behold, there is a debt to pay !  
 With Enoch hid thou art on high :  
 Yet both shall back return one day,  
 To gaze once more on earth, and die.

*FEST. DE MONTE CARMELO.*

## XXXVII.

CARMEL, with Alp and Apennine

Low whispers in the wind that blows  
Beneath the Eastern stars, ere shine  
The lights of morning on their snows.

Of thee, Elias, Carmel speaks,  
And that white cloud so small at first  
Her Type, that neared the mountain peaks  
To quench a dying nation's thirst.

On Carmel like a sheathed sword  
Thy monks abode till Jesus came ;  
On Carmel then they served their Lord ;  
Then Carmel rang with Mary's name.

Blow over all the garden ; blow  
O'er all God's garden of the West  
Balm-breathing Orient ! Whisper low  
The secret of thy spicy nest !

' Who from the Desert upward moves  
Like cloud of incense onward borne ?  
Who moving, rests on Him she loves ?  
Who mounts from regions of the Morn ?

' Behold ! The apple-tree beneath—  
There where of old thy Mother fell,  
I raised thee up. More strong than Death  
Is Love ; more strong than Death or Hell.' \*

\* Cant. viii. 5, iii. 6.

*VAS SPIRITUALE.*

## XXXVIII.

HIGH, wingèd Heart, and crowned with fire !

O winged with pinions of the morn  
O crowned with flames whose every spire  
Bears witness to that crown of thorn !

Fair Dove of God, that, still at rest,  
On speed'st in never wavering flight  
Winging the illimitable Breast—  
The Omnipresent Infinite ;

We stagnate as in seas of lead,  
Ice-cold, or warmed with earthly fires :  
O that like thine our souls were fed  
With sun-like yet serene desires !

A vase of quenchless love thou art  
Drawn from that boundless Breast divine :—  
O that in thee, on-rushing Heart,  
Might rest, one hour, this heart of mine !

## XXXIX.

SING on, wide winds, your anthem vast !  
Man's ear is richer than his eye :  
Upon the eye no shape can cast  
Such impress of Infinity.

And thou, my Soul, thy wings of might  
Put forth : thou too, one day shalt soar  
And, onward borne in heavenward flight,  
The starry universe explore ;

Breasting that breeze which waves the bowers  
 Of Heaven's bright forest never mute  
 Whereof perchance this earth of ours  
 Is but the feeblest forest-fruit.

Of all those worlds unnumbered none  
 There lives but from that Blood all pure  
 Ablution, or its crown, hath won ;  
 Its state redeemed, or state secure.

'The Spirit bloweth where He wills'—  
 O Effluence of that Life Divine  
 Which wakes the Universe, and stills,  
 In Thy strong refluxence make us Thine !

*COELI ENARRANT.*

XL.

SOLE Maker of the Worlds ! They lay  
 A barren blank a void a nought  
 Beyond the ken of solar ray  
 Or reach of archangelic thought.

Thou spak'st ; and they were made ! Forth sprang  
 From every region of the abyss  
 Whose deeps, fire-clov'n, with anthems rang,  
 The spheres new-born and numberless.

Thou spak'st : upon the winds were found  
 The astonished Eagles. Awed and hushed  
 Subsiding seas revered their bound ;  
 And the strong forests upward rushed.

Before that Vision angels fell  
 As though the Face of God they saw ;  
 And all the panting Miracle  
 Found rest within the arms of Law.

Perfect, O God, Thy primal plan,  
 That scheme frost-bound by Adam's sin :  
 Create, within the heart of Man,  
 Worlds meet for Thee ; and dwell therein.

From Thy bright realm of Sense and Nature  
 Which flowers enwreath and stars begem,  
 Shape Thou Thy Church ; the crownèd Creature ;  
 The Bride ; the New Jerusalem !

---

*CARO FACTUS EST.*

XLI.

WHEN from beneath the Almighty Hand  
 The suns and systems rushed abroad  
 Like coursers which have burst their band  
 Or torrents when the ice is thawed ;

When round in luminous orbits flung  
 The great stars gloried in their might ;  
 Still, still a bridgeless gulf there hung  
 'Twixt Finite things and Infinite.

That crown of light Creation wore  
 Was girdled by the abysmal black ;  
 And all of natural good she bore  
 Confessed her supernatural lack.

For what is Nature at the best ?

An arch suspended in its spring ;  
An altar step without a priest ;  
A throne whereon there sits no king.

As one stone-blind that fronts the morn  
The World before her Maker stood  
Uplifting suppliant hands forlorn,  
God's creature yet how far from God !

O Shepherd Good ! The trackless deep  
He pierced, that Lost One to restore !  
His Universe, a wildered sheep,  
Upon His shoulder home He bore !

That Universe His Priestly robe,  
The Kingly Pontiff raised on high  
The worship of the starry globe :—  
The gulf was bridged, and God was nigh.

---

*CONDESCENSIO.*

XLII.

WHEN was it that in act began  
That Condescension from on high  
Consummated in God made Man,  
Its shrine for all eternity ?

'Twas when the Eternal Father spake,  
The Eternal Son in act replied :  
When sudden forth from darkness brake  
The new-shaped worlds on every side.

Instant that All-Creative Power  
 A meek, sustaining Power became,  
 A Ministration hour by hour  
 From death preserving Nature's frame.

Instant into Creation's breast  
 Nor merged nor mixed He passed, and gave  
 Continuance to the quivering guest  
 That else had found at birth its grave.

In finite mansions He, the Immense,  
 In service reigning, made abode,  
 Bore up—a Law, a Providence—  
 The weight of worlds, 'His people's load.'

He came once more—not then to reign ;  
 In servant's form to serve, and die  
 The 'Lamb before the ages slain,'  
 'The Woman's Seed' of prophecy.

---

*THE CREATED WISDOM.\**

XLIII.

CREATED Wisdom at the gate  
 Of Heaven's eternal House, I played :  
 The Eternal Wisdom Uncreate  
 Beheld me ere the worlds were made.

I danced the void abyss above :  
 Of lore unwrit the characters  
 I traced with wingèd feet, and wove  
 The orbits of the unshaped stars.

\* Proverbs viii. 27—34.



I flashed—a Thought in light arrayed—  
 Beneath the Eternal Wisdom's ken :  
 When came mine hour I lived, and played  
 Among the peopled fields of men.

Blessed is he that keeps my ways,  
 That stands in reverence on my floor,  
 That seeks my praise, my word obeys,  
 That waits and watches by my door.

---

*REGINA ANGELORUM.*

(Evangelism in Cœla.)

XLIV.

ERE yet mankind was made ; ere yet  
 The sun and she that rules the night  
 Were in their heavenly stations set,  
 God's Sons were playing in His sight.

Age after age those armies vast  
 In winding line had upward flown  
 Yet ne'er their shadows higher cast  
 Than on the first step of the Throne

And downward through the unsounded space  
 If those had sunk who soared above  
 They ne'er had found the buried base  
 Of Godhead's Condescending Love.

Then He, the God Who made them, proved :  
 For, high and higher as they soared  
 Hymning the Eternal Son beloved  
 The God from God, and Lord from Lord,

He showed them, in that Form decreed,  
 Their God made man—man's hope and trust—  
 'The Woman,' and 'The Woman's Seed,'  
 He showed ; the Unbounded bound in dust.

As when from some world-conquering height  
 The shepherd sees, ere risen the sun,  
 His advent clothe the cloud with light  
 Before them thus that Vision shone :

And while, in wonder half half fear,  
 That Child, that Mother fixed their eye,  
 He bade those heavenward hosts revere  
 Their God in His Humility.

Set was that Infant as a sign :—  
 In endless bliss confirmed were they  
 Who hailed that hour the Babe Divine ;  
 Self-sentenced those who turned away.

---

*REGINA ANGELORUM.*

(Spes Cœlestis.)

XLV.

THEIR Trial past, more near the Throne,  
 And rapt thenceforth to holier skies,  
 Still on that Maid and Babe foreshown  
 The Elect of Angels fixed their eyes.

A Spirit-galaxy they hung ;  
 A Cross unmeasured, limned in fire  
 And instinct-shaped, that swayed and swung  
 On winds of unfulfilled desire.

They worshipped Him, that God made Man ;  
 To Him they spread their hands in power :  
 Unmarked the exhausted centuries ran :  
 That trance millennial seemed an hour.

'Twixt Finite things and Infinite  
 They saw the Patriarch's Ladder thrown ;  
 Saw One Who o'er it moved in light :  
 They saw, and knelt with foreheads prone.

Make answer, sinless Angels, say  
 Ye who that hour your God adored  
 Less strong, less dear, is she this day,  
 That Mother of your destined Lord ?

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*REGINA ANGELORUM.*

(In Cælo Coronata.)

XLVI.

ANGELIC City in the skies  
 Not built of stones but Spirits pure  
 Irradiate by the Eternal Eyes,  
 And in the Eternal Love secure ;

Angelic City, selfless chaste  
 By Him thou watch'st upholden still,  
 That neither Future know'st, nor Past  
 Tranced in thy God's all-present Will ;

Thy mind a mirror sphered of gold  
 Wherein alone His splendours shine ;  
 Thy heart a vase His Hand doth hold  
 That yields to Him alone its wine ;

For one brief moment proved and tried ;  
 Thenceforth man's help in trial's stress ;  
 Bright Sister of the Church—the Bride—  
 The elder Sister, yet the less :

O like, unlike ! O crownèd Twain !  
 Celestial both, yet one terrene ;  
 Behold, ye sing the same glad strain ;  
 Ye glory in the self-same Queen !

---

*MULIER AMICTA SOLE.*

XLVII.

A WOMAN 'clothèd with the sun,' \*  
 Yet fleeing from the Dragon's rage !  
 The strife in Eden-bowers begun  
 Swells upward to the latest age.

That Woman's Son is throned on high ; †  
 The angelic hosts before Him bend :  
 The sceptre of His empery  
 Subdues the worlds from end to end.

Yet still the sword goes through her heart  
 For still on earth His Church survives :  
 In her that Woman holds a part :  
 In her she suffers, and she strives.

Around her head the stars are set ;  
 A dying moon beneath her wanes :  
 By Death hath Death been slain : and yet  
 The Power accurst awhile remains.

\* Rev. xii. 1.

† 'And her Child was caught up 'unto God, and to His Throne' (Apoc. xiv. 5).

Break up, strong Earth, thy stony floors  
 And snatch to penal caverns dun  
 That Dragon from the pit that wars  
 Against the Woman and her Son !

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 XLVIII.

REGENT of Change, thou waning Moon  
 Whom they, the sons of night, adore  
 Her foot is on thee ! Late or soon  
 Heap up upon the expectant shore

The tides of Man's Intelligence ;  
 Or backward to the blackening deep  
 Remit them ! Knowledge won from Sense  
 But sleeps to wake and wakes to sleep.

Where are the hands that reared on high  
 Heaven-threat'ning Babel ? where the might  
 Of them, that giant progeny  
 The Deluge dealt with ? Lost in night.

The child who knows his creed doth stretch  
 A sceptred hand o'er Space and hold  
 The end of all those threads that catch  
 In wisdom's net the starry fold.

The Sabbath comes : the work-days six  
 Go by. Meantime, of things to be  
 O Salutary Crucifix  
 We clasp the burning heart in thee :

We clasp the end that knows no end ;  
 The Love that fears no lessening moon ;  
 The Truth wherein all mysteries blend ;  
 His Truth, His word—the One Triune.

*OTHER SHEEP I HAVE.*

## XLIX.

FIRE-BREATHING concourse of the Stars  
 That tremble as with Love's delight  
 How dungeon-girt by custom's bars  
 How wrapped and swathed in error's night  
 His soul must be who nightly lifts  
 On you his wide and wandering eyes  
 Yet doubts that ye partake the gifts  
 Bequeathed by Calvary's Sacrifice !  
 Lift up your heads, Eternal Gates  
 Of God's great Temple in the sky !  
 That Blood your lintels consecrates :—  
 The Avenging Angel passes by !  
 The King of Glory issues forth :  
 The King of Glory enters in :  
 That Blood which cleansed from sin our earth  
 Or cleansed your spheres, or kept from sin.

## L.

Is this, indeed, our ancient earth ?  
 Or have we died in sleep and risen ?  
 Has earth, like man, her second birth ?  
 Rises the palace from the prison ?  
 Hills beyond hills ascend the skies ;  
 O'er winding valleys heaven-suspended,  
 Huge forests rich as sunset's dyes  
 With rainbow-braided clouds are blended.

What means it? Glory, sweetness, might?  
 Not these but something holier far;  
 Shadows of Him, that Light of Light  
 Whose priestly vestment all things are.

The veil of sense transparent grows:  
 God's Face shines out that veil behind  
 Like yonder sea-reflected snows—  
 Here man must worship, or be blind.

## LI.

No ray of all their silken sheen  
 The leaves first fledged have lost as yet:  
 Unfaded, near the advancing queen  
 Of flowers, abides the violet.

The rose succeeds; her month is come;  
 The flower with sacred passion red:  
 She sings the praise of martyrdom  
 And Him for whom His martyrs bled.

The perfect work of May is done:  
 Hard by, a new perfection waits:  
 The twain, a sister and a nun,  
 A moment parley at the grates.

The whiter Spirit turns in peace  
 To hide her in the cloistral shade:  
 'Tis time that you should also cease,  
 Slight carols in her honour made.

## *EPILOGUE.*

### *THE SON OF MAN.*

I GAZED—it was the Paschal night—

In vision on the starry sphere :  
Like suns the stars made broad their light :  
Then knew I Earth to Heaven drew near.

The Thrones of Darkness down were hurled ;  
The veil was rent ; the bond was riven :  
Then knew I that Man's little world  
Had reached its home—the heart of heaven.

Made strong by God, mine eyes with awe  
Still roved from star-changed sun to sun  
That ringed the earth in ranks, and saw  
A Spirit o'er each, that stood thereon.

And, clasped by every Spirit, stood  
More high, the Venerable Sign :  
Then knew I that the Atoning Blood  
Had reached that sphere ; the Blood Divine.

From orb to orb an anthem passed ;  
'The Blessing of the Lord of All  
Hath reached us from the least and last  
Of stars that light the Heavenly Hall ;

'For He, that Greatest, loves the Least ;  
Puts down the mighty ; lifts the low :  
On Earth began His Bridal Feast :  
Our Triumph is its overflow !'



Then Earth, that great 'New Earth' \* foretold,  
 Assumed those glories long her due :  
 Or were they hers indeed of old  
 Though veiled till then from mortal view ?

While—with her changing—far and wide  
 Those worlds around her, blent in one,  
 Became that 'City of the Bride'  
 Which needs no light of moon or sun.

Their splendour had not suffered change  
 As, kened through myriad senses new,  
 Self-radiant street, and columned range  
 To one unmeasured Temple grew.

Ere long through all that throbbing frame  
 Of things beheld and things unseen  
 Rolled forth that Name which none can name  
 Save those that breathe not clime terrene.

And down that luminous Infinito  
 I saw an Altar and a Throne ;  
 And, near to each, a Form, all light  
 That, resting, moved, and moved Alone :

But if He filled that Throne or knelt  
 That Altar nigh, or Lamb-like lay,  
 I saw not. This I saw and felt  
 That Son of Man was God for aye.

That Son of God was Man and stood,  
 And from His Vest, more white than snow,  
 Slowly there dawned a Cross of Blood  
 That through the glory seemed to grow :

\* 'There shall be New Heavens, and a New Earth,'

Above the heavens His Hands He raised  
To bless those Worlds whose race was run ;  
And lo ! in either palm there blazed  
The blood-red sign of Victory won ;

That Blood the Bethlehem Shepherds eyed  
Warming His cheek Who slept apart :  
That Blood He drew—the Crucified—  
Far-fountained from His Mother's Heart.

LEGENDS  
OF  
THE SAXON SAINTS.

TO THE

*VENERABLE BEDE*

'Mid quiet vale or city lulled by night  
Well-pleas'd the wanderer, wakeful on his bed,  
Hears from far Alps on fitful breeze the sound  
Of torrents murmuring down their rocky glens,  
Strange voice from distant regions, alien climes :—  
Should these far echoes from thy legend-roll  
Delight of loftier years, these echoes faint,  
Thus waken, thus make calm, one restless heart  
In our distemper'd day, to thee the praise  
Voice of past times O Venerable Bede !

## PREFACE.

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MANY YEARS AGO my friend Miss Fenwick remarked to me on the strange circumstance that the chief event in a nation's history, its conversion to Christianity, largely as it is often recorded in national legends, has never been selected as a theme for poetry. That event may indeed not supply the materials necessary for an Epic or a Drama, yet it can hardly fail to abound in details significant and pathetic, which especially invite poetic illustration. With the primary interest of that great crisis many others, philosophical, social, and political, generally connect themselves. Antecedent to a nation's conversion the events of centuries have commonly either conduced to it, or thrown obstacles in its way ; while the history as well as the character of that nation in the subsequent ages is certain to have been in a principal measure modified by that event. Looking back consequently on that period in which the moral influences of ages, early and late, are imaged, a people recognises its own features as in a mirror, but sees them such as they were when their expression was still undetermined ; and it may well be struck by the resemblance at once to what now exists, and also by the dissimilitude. Many countries have unhappily

lost almost all authentic records connected with their conversion. Such would have been the fate of England also, had it not been for a single book, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. In the following poems my aspiration was to walk humbly in the footsteps of that great master. Their scope will best be indicated by some remarks upon the character of that wonderful age which he records.

St. Augustine landed in the Isle of Thanet A. D. 597, and Bede died A. D. 735. The intervening period, that of his chronicle, is the golden age of Anglo-Saxon sanctity. Notwithstanding some twenty or thirty years of pagan reaction, it was a time of rapid though not uninterrupted progress, and one of an interest the more touching when contrasted with the calamities which followed so soon. Between the death of Bede and the first Danish invasion, were eighty years, largely years of decline, moral and religious. Then followed eighty years of retribution, those of the earlier Danish wars, till, with the triumph of Alfred, England's greatest king, came the Christian restoration. Once more periods of relaxed morals and sacrilegious princes alternated with intervals of reform ; for again and again the Northmen over-swept the land. The 460 years of Anglo-Saxon Christianity constituted a period of memorable achievements and sad vicissitudes ; but that period included more than a hundred years of high sanctity, belonging for the most part to the seventh century, a century to England as glorious as was the thirteenth to Mediæval Europe.

Within that century the kingdoms of the Heptarchy successively became Christian, and those among them

which had relapsed returned to the Faith. Sovereigns, many of whom had boasted a descent from Odin himself, stood as interpreters beside the missionaries when they preached, and rivalled each other in the zeal with which they built churches, some of which were founded on the sites of ancient temples, though, in other cases, with a charitable prudence, the existing fanes were spared, purified, and adapted to Christian worship. At Canterbury and York, cathedrals rose, and on many a site besides; and when the earlier had been destroyed by fire, or had fallen through decay, fabrics on a vaster scale rose above their ruins, and maintained a succession which lasts to this day. Monasteries unnumbered lifted their towers above the forests of a land in which the streams still ran unstained and the air of which had not yet been dimmed by smoke—imparting a dignity to fen and flat morass. Round them ere long cities gathered, as at St. Albans, Malmesbury, Sherborne, and Wimborne; the most memorable of those monasteries being that at Canterbury, and that at Westminster, dedicated to St. Peter, as the cathedral church near it had been dedicated to St. Paul. In the North they were at least as numerous. The University of Oxford is also associated with that early age. It was beside the Isis that St. Frideswida raised her convent, occupied at a later date by canons regular, and ultimately transformed into Christ Church by Cardinal Wolsey—becoming thus the chief, as it had been the earliest, among the schools in that great seat of learning which within our own days has exercised a religious influence over England not less remarkable than that which belonged to its most palmy preceding period.

During that century England produced most of

those saintly kings and queens whose names still enrich the calendar of the Anglo-Saxon Church, sovereigns who ruled their kingdoms with justice, lived in mortification, went on pilgrimages, died in cloisters. The great missionary work had also begun. Within a century from the death of St. Augustine, apostles from England had converted multitudes in Germany, and St. Wilfrid had preached to the inhabitants of Friesland. Something, moreover, had been done to retrieve the past. The Saxon kings made amends for the wrongs inflicted by their ancestors upon the British Celts, endowing with English lands the churches and convents founded by them in Brittany. King Kenwalk of Wessex showed thus also a royal munificence to the Celtic monastery of Glastonbury, only stipulating in return that the British monks there, condoning past injuries, should offer a prayer for him when they knelt at the tomb of King Arthur.

The England of the seventh century had been very gradually prepared for that drama of many ages which had then its first rehearsal. In it three races had a part. They were those of the native Britons, the Saxons who had over-run the land, and the Irish missionaries. Rome, the last and greatest of the old-world empires, had exercised more of an enfeebling and less of an elevating influence among the British than among her other subject races ; but her great military roads still remained the witnesses of her military genius ; and many a city, some in ruin, were records of her wealth and her arts. The Teutonic race in England, which for centuries had maintained its independence against Rome, could not forgive the Britons for having submitted to their hated foe, and



trampled on them the more ruthlessly because they despised them. Yet they at least might well have learned to respect that race. It has been well remarked that if the Britons submitted easily to Rome, yet of all her subject races they made far the most memorable fight against that barbaric irruption which swept over the ruins of her empire. For two centuries that race had fought on. It still retained the whole of Western Britain, Cornwall, Wales, and Strathclyde; while in other parts of England it possessed large settlements. On the other hand, in matters of spiritual concern the British race contrasted unfavourably with the other races subjected by the barbarians. In France, Spain, and Italy, the conquered had avenged a military defeat by a spiritual victory, bringing over their conquerors to Christianity; and, as a consequence, they had often risen to equality with them. In those parts of England, on the contrary, where the British had submitted to the Pagan conquerors, they by degrees abandoned their Christian faith;\* and where they retained their independence, they hated the Saxon conquerors too much to share their Christianity with them. Far from desiring their conversion, they resisted all the overtures made to them by the Roman missionaries who ardently desired their aid; and as a consequence of that refusal, they eventually lost their country. The chief cause of that refusal was hatred of the invader. The Irish as well as the British had a

\* See Montalembert's *Moines de l'Occident*, vol. iii. p. 343; and also Burke: 'On the Continent the Christian religion, after the northern irruptions, not only remained but flourished. . . . In England it was so entirely extinguished that when Augustine undertook his mission, it does not appear that among all the Saxons there was a single person professing Christianity.'

passionate devotion to their own local traditions in a few matters not connected with doctrine ; but they notwithstanding worked cordially with the Benedictines from St. Gregory's convent for the spread of the Christian Faith. Had the Britons converted the Anglo-Saxon race they would probably have blended with them, as at a later time that race blended with their Norman conquerors. Three successive waves of the Teuton-Scandinavian race swept over their ancient land, the Anglo-Saxon, the Danish, and the Norman : against them all the British Celts fought on. They fell back toward their country's western coasts, like the Irish of a later day ; and within their Cambrian mountains they maintained their independence for eight centuries.

Yet the Anglo-Saxons' victory was not an unmixed one. Everywhere throughout England they maintained during the seventh century two different battles, a material and a spiritual one, and with opposite results. Year by year that race pushed further its military dominion ; but yearly the Christian Faith effected new triumphs over that of Odin. For this there were traceable causes. The character of the Teutonic invader included two very different elements, and the nobler of these had its affinities with Christianity. If, on the one hand, that character was fierce, reckless, and remorseless, and so far in natural sympathy with a religion which mocked at suffering and till the ninth century offered up human sacrifices, it was marked no less by robustness, simplicity, honesty, sincerity, an unexcitable energy and an invincible endurance. It possessed also that characteristic which essentially contradistinguishes the *ordo equestris* from the *ordo pedestris* in human

character, viz., the spirit of reverence. It had aspirations; and, as a background to all its musings and all its hopes there remained ever the idea of the Infinite. As a consequence, it retained a large measure of self-respect, purity, and that veneration for household ties attributed to it by the Roman historian \* at a time when that virtue was no longer a Roman one. Such a character could not but have its leanings toward Christianity; and, when brought under its influences, it put forth at once new qualities, like a wild flower which, on cultivation, acquires for the first time a perfume. Its spirit of reverence developed into humility, and its natural fortitude into a saintly patience; while its fierceness changed into a loyal fervour; and the crimes to which its passions still occasionally hurried it were voluntarily expiated by penances as terrible. Even King Penda, the hater of Christianity, hated an insincere faith more. 'Of all men,' he said, 'he that I have ever most despised is the man who professes belief in some God and yet does not obey his laws.' Such was that character destined to produce under the influences of faith such noble specimens of Christian honour and spiritual heroism. From the beginning its greatness was one

True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home;

and in later ages it became yet more eminently domestic, combining household ties with the pursuit of letters and science in colleges which still preserved a family life. Its monks had no vocation to the life of the desert; in this unlike the Irish saints, who,

\* Tacitus. The German's wife might well be called his 'helpmate.' His wedding gift to his bride consisted of a horse, a yoke of oxen, a lance and a sword.

like those of Eastern lands, delighted in the forest hermitage and the sea-beat rock.

The Anglo-Saxon race was but a branch of that great Teuton-Scandinavian race, generically one whether it remained in the German forests or wandered on to the remoter coasts of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. It was the race which the Romans called 'the Barbarians,' but which they could never conquer. A stern history had trained it for a wonderful destiny. Christianity in mastering the Greek had possessed itself of the intellect of the world, and in mastering Rome had found access to all those vast regions conquered by Roman arms, opened out by Roman roads, governed by Roman law, and by it helped to the conception of a higher law. But the Greek and the Roman civilisations had, each of them, corrupted its way, and yielded to the seductions of pride, sense, and material prosperity; and, as a consequence, both had become incapable of rendering full justice to much that is highest in Christianity. That which they lacked the 'Barbaric' race alone was capable of supplying. In its wanderings under darkened skies and amid pitiless climates it had preserved an innocence and simplicity elsewhere lost. Enriched by the union of the new element, thus introduced, with what it had previously derived from Greek thought and Roman law, that authentic Religion which had been prospectively sown within the narrow precinct of Judea extended its branches over the world. Had the Barbaric race shared in the Greek sciences and arts, and clothed itself in the Roman civilisation, it must have learned their corruptions. The larger destiny of man could thus, humanly speaking, never have been accomplished, and neither the mediæval

world, the modern world, nor that yet higher order of human society which doubtless lies beyond both, could have existed. It was necessary that in some region, exacting, yet beneficent, civilisation should be retarded, that a remedy might be found for the abuses of civilisation; and races whose present backward condition we are accustomed to deplore may likewise be intended for a similar purpose. Plants are thus kept in the dark in order to reserve their fruitage for a fitter season.

But what had been the earlier history of a race before which such destinies lay? What training had prepared it for its work—the last that might have been expected from it? On this subject there remains a tradition, the profoundly significant character of which ought to have made it more widely known. Mallet, in his *Northern Antiquities*, translated by Bishop Percy, to whom our ballad literature is so deeply indebted, records it thus:—‘A celebrated tradition, confirmed by the poems of all the northern nations, by their chronicles, by institutions and customs, some of which subsist to this day, informs us that an extraordinary person named Odin formerly reigned in the north. . . . All their testimonies are comprised in that of Snorri, the ancient historian of Norway, and in the commentaries and explications which Torphæus added to his narrative. The Roman Commonwealth was arrived at the highest pitch of power, and saw all the then known world subject to its laws, when an unforeseen event raised up enemies against it from the very bosom of the forests of Scythia and on the banks of the Tanais. Mithridates by flying had drawn Pompey after him into those deserts. The King of Pontus sought there for refuge

and new means of vengeance. He hoped to arm against the ambition of Rome all the barbarous nations his neighbours, whose liberty she threatened. He succeeded in this at first, but all those peoples, ill united as allies, ill armed as soldiers, and still worse disciplined, were forced to yield to the superior genius of Pompey. Odin is said to have been of their number. . . . Odin commanded the Æsir, whose country must have been situated between the Pontus Euxinus and the Caspian Sea. Their principal city was Asgard. The worship there paid to their supreme God was famous throughout the circumjacent countries. Odin, having united under his banners the youth of the neighbouring nations, marched towards the north and west of Europe, subduing, as we are told, all the races he found in his passage, and giving them to one or other of his sons for subjects. Many sovereign families of the North are said to be descended from these princes. Thus Horsa and Hengist, the chiefs of those Saxons who conquered Britain in the fifth century, counted Odin or Wodin in the number of their ancestors; it was the same with the other Anglo-Saxon princes as well as the greatest part of those of lower Germany and the North.\*

Gibbon refers to this ancient tradition, though not as accepting it for a part of ascertained history, yet in a spirit less sceptical than was usual to him. He writes thus: 'It is supposed that Odin was chief of a tribe of barbarians which dwelt on the banks of the lake Mæotis, till the fall of Mithridates and the arms

\* Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 79, 80. (Bell and Daldy, 1873.) Burke records this tradition with an entire credence. See note in p. 288.

of Pompey menaced the north with servitude. That Odin, yielding with indignant fury to a power which he was unable to resist, conducted his tribe from the frontiers of the Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden, with the great design of forming, in that inaccessible retreat of freedom, a religion and a people which, in some remote age, might be subservient to his immortal revenge; when his invincible Goths, armed with martial fanaticism, should issue in numerous swarms from the neighbourhood of the Polar circle to chastise the oppressors of mankind. . . . Notwithstanding the mysterious obscurity of the Edda, we can easily distinguish two persons confounded under the name of Odin; the god of war, and the great legislator of Scandinavia. The latter, the Mahomet of the north, instituted a religion adapted to the climate and to the people. Numerous tribes on either side of the Baltic were subdued by the invincible valour of Odin, by his persuasive eloquence, and by the fame which he acquired of a most skilful magician. The faith that he had propagated during a long and prosperous life he confirmed by a voluntary death. Apprehensive of the ignominious approach of disease and infirmity, he resolved to expire as became a warrior. In a solemn assembly of the Swedes and Goths he wounded himself in nine mortal places, hastening away (as he asserted with his dying voice) to prepare the feast of heroes in the palace of the great god of war.\*

In a note Gibbon adds, referring to the Roman and Oriental part of the legend: 'This wonderful expedition of Odin, which, by deducing the enmity of the Goths and Romans from so memorable a cause,

\* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. x.

might supply the noble groundwork of an epic poem, cannot safely be received as authentic history. According to the obvious sense of the Edda, and the interpretation of the most skilful critics, Asgard, instead of denoting a real city of the Asiatic Sarmatia, is the fictitious appellation of the mystic abode of the gods, the Olympus of Scandinavia.' Whether the emigration of the 'Barbaric race from the East be or be not historical, certainly the grounds upon which Gibbon bases his distrust of it are slender. He forgot that there might well have been both an earthly Asgard and also, according to the religion of the north, an Asgard in heaven, the destined abode of warriors faithful to Odin. Those who after his death changed their king into a god would, by necessity, have provided him with a celestial mansion; nor could they have assigned to it a name more acceptable to a race which blended so closely their religion with their patriotic love than that of their ancient capital, from which their great deliverer and prophet had led them forth in pilgrimage. Let us hope that Gibbon's remark as to the fitness of this grand legend for the purposes of epic poetry may yet prove prophecy. It has had one chance already: for we learn from the first book of *The Prelude* that the theme was one of those on which the imagination of Wordsworth rested in youth, when he was seeking a fit subject for epic song.

It is difficult to imagine a historical legend invested with a greater moral weight or dignity than belongs to this one. The mighty Republic was soon to pass into an Empire mightier and more ruthless still, the heir of all those ancient empires which from the earliest had represented a dominion founded on the



pride of this world, and had trampled upon human right. A race is selected to work the retribution. It is qualified for its work by centuries of adversity, only to be paralleled by the prosperity of its rival. Yet when at last that retribution comes, it descends more in mercy than in judgment! Great changes had prepared the world for a new order of things. The centre of empire had moved eastward from Rome to Constantinople: the spiritual centre had moved westward from Jerusalem to Rome. The empire had herself become Christian, and was allowed after that event nearly a century more of gradual decline. The judgment was not thus averted; but it was ennobled. Her children were enabled to become the spiritual instructors of those wild races by which the 'State Universal' had been overwhelmed. That empire indeed, was not so much destroyed as transformed and extended, a grace rendered possible by her having submitted to the yoke of Christ; the new kingdoms which constituted the Christian '*Orbis Terrarum*' being, for the most part, fragments of it, while its laws made way into regions wider far, and exercised over them a vast though modified authority not yet extinct. Here, if anywhere, we catch glimpses of a hand flashing forth between the clouds, pointing their way to the nations, and conducting Humanity forward along its arduous and ascending road. There is a Providence or there could be no Progress.

For the fulfilment of that part assigned to the 'Barbarians' in this marvellous drama of the ages, it was necessary that many things should combine; an exemption from the temptations which had materialised the races of the south; the severe life that perfects strength; a race endowed with the physical

strength needed to render such sufferings endurable ; and lastly, an original spiritual elevation inherent in that race, and capable of making them understand the lesson, and accept their high destiny. The last and greatest of these qualifications had not been wanting. Much as the religion of the Barbaric race had degenerated by the time when it deified its great deliverer, it had inherited the highest traditions of the early world. Mallet thus describes their religion in its purity : ‘It taught the being of a “Supreme God, master of the universe, to whom all things are submissive and obedient.” Such, according to Tacitus, was the supreme God of the Germans. The ancient Icelandic mythology calls him “the Author of everything that existeth ; the eternal, the ancient, the living and awful Being, the searcher into concealed things, the Being that never changeth.” This religion attributed to the Supreme Deity “an infinite power, a boundless knowledge, an incorruptible justice,” and forbade its followers to represent Him under any corporeal form. They were not even to think of confining Him within the enclosure of walls, but were taught that it was within woods and consecrated forests that they could serve Him properly. There He seemed to reign in silence, and to make Himself felt by the respect which He inspired.\* . . . From this Supreme God were sprung (as it were emanations from His divinity) an infinite number of subaltern deities and genii, of which every part of the visible world was the seat and the temple. . . . To serve this divinity with sacrifices and prayers, to do no wrong to others, and to be brave and intrepid in themselves, were all the moral consequences they

\* Mallet’s *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 88, 89.

derived from these doctrines. Lastly, the belief of a future state cemented and completed the whole building.\* . . . Perhaps no religion ever attributed so much to a Divine Providence as that of the northern nations.' †

It was not among the Scandinavians only that the religion of the North retained long these vestiges of its original purity, and elevation. 'All the Teutonic nations held the same opinions, and it was upon these that they founded the obligation of serving the gods, and of being valiant in battle. . . . One ought to regard in this respect the Icelandic mythology as a precious monument, without which we can know but very imperfectly this important part of the religion of *our fathers*.' ‡

The earlier and purer doctrine seems to have long survived the incrustations of later times in the case of a select few. Harold Harfraga, the first king of all Norway, thus addressed an assembly of his people: 'I swear and protest in the most sacred manner that I will never offer sacrifice to any of the gods adored by the people, but to Him only who hath formed this world, and everything we behold in it.' A belief in the divine Love, as well as the divine power, knowledge and justice, though probably not held by the many at a later day, is yet distinctly expressed, as well as the kindred belief in an endless reign of peace, by the earliest and most sacred document of the Northern religion, viz. the 'Völuspá Prophecy.' That prophecy, after foretelling the destruction of all things, including the Odin gods themselves, by the Supreme God and His ministers,

\* Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, p. 89.

† P. 100.

‡ P. 103.

proceeds : ‘There will arise out of the sea, another earth most lovely and verdant with pleasant fields where the grain shall grow unsown. Vidar and Vali, shall survive ; neither the flood nor Surtur’s fire shall harm them ; they shall dwell on the plain of Ida *where Asgard formerly stood*. . . . Baldur and Hödur shall also repair thither from the abode of death. There they shall sit and converse together, and call to mind their former knowledge and the perils they underwent.’ \*

The similarity between the higher doctrines of the northern faith and the religion of ancient Persia is at once accounted for by the tradition of the Odin migration from the East. A writer the reverse of credulous expresses himself thus on that subject : ‘We know that the Scandinavians came from some country of Asia. . . . This doctrine was in many respects the same with that of the Magi. Zoroaster had taught that the conflict between Ormuzd and Ahriman (*i. e.* light and darkness, the Good and Evil Principle) should continue to the last day ; and that then the Good Principle should be reunited to the Supreme God, from whom it had first issued ; the Evil should be overcome and subdued ; darkness should be destroyed ; and the world, purified by a universal conflagration, should become a luminous and shining abode, into which evil should never be permitted to enter.’ † The same writer continues thus : ‘Odin and the Æsir may be compared to Ormuzd and the Amshaspands ; Loki and his evil progeny, the Wolf Fenrir and the Midgard Serpent, together with the giants and monsters of Jötunheim

\* *The Prose Edda*.

† *Northern Antiquities* : the Editor, T. A. Blackwell.

and Hvergelmir, to Ahriman and the Devs.\* . . . We will not deny that some of these doctrines may have been handed down by oral tradition to the pontiff-chieftains of the Scandinavian tribes, and that the Skalds who composed the mystic poems of the Edda may have had an obscure and imperfect knowledge of them. Be this as it may, we must not forget that the higher doctrines of the Scandinavian system were confined to the few, whereas those of the Zendavesta were the religious belief of the whole nation.† . . . The Persian system was calculated to form an energetic, intellectual and highly moral people; the Scandinavian a semi-barbarous troop of crafty and remorseless warriors. . . . Yet, such as they were, these Scandinavians seemed to have been destined by the inscrutable designs of Providence to invigorate at least one of the nations of which they were for centuries the scourge, in order, as we previously had occasion to observe, that the genial blending of cognate tribes might form a people the most capable of carrying on the great work of civilisation, which in some far distant age may finally render this world that abode of peace and intellectual enjoyment dimly shadowed forth in ancient myths as only to be found in a renovated and fresh emerging universe.' ‡

The inferiority of the later Scandinavian to the earlier Persian religion may be sufficiently accounted for by the common process of gradual degeneration. That degeneration was not confined to the great emigrant race. Centuries before Odin had left the East, the Persian religion had degenerated upon

\* T. A. Blackwell. See Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, p. 474.

† P. 475.

‡ P. 476.

its native soil. Its Magi retained a pure doctrine, which led them later to the Bethlehem crib; but its vulgar had in part yielded to the seduction of Greek poets, and worshipped in temples like theirs. It is remarkable that that 'one of the nations' with which the hopes of the future are so singularly connected is that one upon which the discipline of adversity had fallen with double force. When the ancient enemy of the 'Barbaric races,' Rome, had passed away, a new enemy, and one to it more formidable, rose up against England in her own kinsfolk, the Scandinavian branch of the same stock. The Danish invaders expected to set kingdom against kingdom throughout the Heptarchy, and subject them all to the sceptre of Odin. On the contrary, it united them in one; and that union was facilitated by the bond of a common Christianity.\*

That the belief of the Anglo-Saxons, though less developed by poetry and romance, was substantially the same as that recorded in the Scandinavian Edda, appears to be certain. It is thus that Mr. Kemble speaks:

'On the Continent as well as in England, it is only by the collection of minute and isolated facts—often preserved to us in popular superstitions, legends and even nursery tales—that we can render probable the prevalence of a religious belief identical in its most characteristic features with that which we know to have been entertained in Scandinavia. Yet whatsoever we can thus recover proves that, in all main points, the faith of the Island

\* 'This (Christianity), as it introduced great mildness into the tempers of the people, made them less warlike, and consequently prepared the way to their forming one body.'—Burke, *An Abridgment of English History*, book ii. chap. iii.

Saxons was that of their Continental brethren.' 'The early period at which Christianity triumphed in England, adds to the difficulties which naturally beset the subject. Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, had entered into public relations with the rest of Europe long before the downfall of their ancient creed; here the fall of heathendom, and the commencement of history were contemporaneous. We too had no Iceland to offer a refuge to those who fled from the violent course of a conversion.' \*

Among the proofs of identity between the Anglo-Saxon and the Scandinavian religion, Mr. Kemble refers to the fact that 'genealogies of the Anglo-Saxon kings contain a multitude of the ancient gods, reduced indeed into the family relations, but still capable of identification with the deities of the North, and of Germany. In this relation we find Odin, Bældæg, Géat, Wig, and Frea. The days of the week, also dedicated to gods, supply us further with the names of Tiw, Dunor, Friege, and Sætere; and the names of places in all parts of England attest the wide dispersion of the worship.' †

Mr. Kemble shows also that among the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians there existed a common belief respecting monsters, especially the wolf Fenrir, the Midgard snake, evil spirits and giants; respecting Loki, the accursed spirit, and Hela, the queen of Hades. To the same effect Mr. Sharon Turner speaks: 'The *Völuspá* and the *Edda* are the two great repositories of the oldest and most venerated traditions of pagan Scandinavia. The *Völuspá* opens abruptly, and most probably represents many of the

\* *Saxons in England*, vol. i. p. 330.

† *Ibid.* p. 335.

ancient *Saxon* traditions or imaginations.'\* The authority of these eminent writers accounts for and justifies the frequent references to the Scandinavian mythology in the following 'Saxon Legends.'

We have thus seen that in the religion of the 'Barbaric' race there were blended two different elements: a higher one derived from its eastern origin, and a lower one the result of gradual degeneration. We had previously seen that a remarkable duality was to be found in the character of that race; and without understanding this duality and its root in their religion, no just conception can be formed of the relations of that race with Christianity. Had the 'Barbarians' possessed nothing deeper than is indicated by their fiercer traits, the history of the seventh century in England must have been very different. It was characterised by rapid conversions to Christianity on a large scale, and often, after the lapse of a few years, by sanguinary revolts against the Faith. The chief reason of such fluctuation seems to have been this, viz. because all that was profound, and of venerable antiquity in the Northern religion, was in sympathy with Christianity, as the religion of sanctity and self-sacrifice; while all that was savage in it opposed itself to a religion of humility and of charity. The Northern religion was an endless warfare, and so was that early Persian religion from which its higher element was derived; but by degrees that warfare had, for the many, ceased to be the warfare between light and darkness, between Good and Evil. To the speculative it had become a conflict between all the wild and illimitable forces of Nature

\* *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. i. p. 241.



and some unknown higher Law ; but to the common herd it meant only an endless feud between race and race. Thus understood it could have no affinities with Christianity, either in her militant character, or as the religion of peace.

In explanation of the frequent outbreaks against Christianity on the part of the Anglo-Saxons, after their conversion, Montalembert assigns another cause, viz. that the Roman missionaries had sometimes relied too much upon the converted kings, and their authority over their subjects. The work had in such cases to be done again ; and it was largely done by Irish missionaries, who had left Iona only to seek as lonely a retreat in Lindisfarne. They shunned cities, drew the people to them, and worked upwards through that people to the great.

The Irish mission in England during the seventh century was one among the great things of history, and has met with an inadequate appreciation. The ancient name of the Irish, 'Seoti,' commemorative of their supposed Scythian origin, the name by which Bede always designates them, had been frequently translated 'Scottish' by modern historians ; and those who did not know that an Irish immigrant body had entered Scotland, then called Alba, about the close of the second century, had conquered its earlier inhabitants, the Picts, after a war of centuries, and had eventually given to that heroic land, never since subdued, its own name and its royal house, naturally remained ignorant that those 'Scottish' missionaries were Irish. . A glance at Bede,\* or such

\* 'In process of time, Britain, besides the Britons and Picts, received a third nation, the Scots, who migrating from Ireland, under their leader Reuda, either by fair means or by force of

well-known recent works as Sir W. Scott's *History of Scotland*,\* makes this matter plain ; yet the amount of work done in England by those Irish missionaries is still known to few.

They came from a country the fortunes, the character, and the institutions of which were singularly unlike those of England ; one in which ancient Rome had had no part ; which, in the form of clan-life, retained as its social type the patriarchal customs of its native East, all authority being an expansion of domestic authority, and the idea of a family, rather than that of a state, ruling over the hearts of men. About two centuries previously, Ireland had become Christian ; and an image of its immemorial clan-

arms secured to themselves those settlements among the Picts which they still possess.'—Bede's *Ecclesiastical Hist.* book. i. cap. i.

\* 'In the fifth century there appear in North Britain two powerful and distinct tribes, who are not before named in history. These are the Picts and the Scots. . . . The Scots, on the other hand, were of Irish origin ; for, to the great confusion of ancient history, the inhabitants of Ireland, those at least of the conquering and predominating caste, were called Scots. A colony of these Irish Scots distinguished by the name of Dalriads, or Dalreudini, natives of Ulster, had early attempted a settlement on the coast of Argyleshire ; they finally established themselves there under Fergus, the son of Eric, about the year 503, and, recruited by colonies from Ulster, continued to multiply and increase until they formed a nation which occupied the western side of Scotland.'—Sir Walter Scott's *History of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 7. Scott proceeds to record the eventual triumph of the Irish or Scotie race over the Pictish in the ninth century. 'So complete must have been the revolution that the very language of the Picts is lost. . . . The country united under his sway (that of Kenneth Mac Alpine) was then called for the first time Scotland.' The same statement is made by Burke : 'The principal of these were the Scots, a people of ancient settlement in Ireland, and who had thence been transplanted into the northern part of Britain, which afterwards derived its name from that colony.'—Burke, *Abridgment of English History*, book i. cap. iv.

system was reproduced in the vast convents which ere long covered the land, and sent forth their missionaries over a large part of Europe. It might well have been thought doubtful whether these were likely to work successfully among a race so dissimilar as the Anglo-Saxon; but the event proved that in this instance dissimilar qualities meant qualities complementary to each other, and that sympathy was attracted by unlikeness.

The Irish mission in England began at a critical time, just when the reaction against the earlier successes of the Roman mission had set in. At York, under Paulinus, Christianity had triumphed; but eight years after that event Edwin, the Christian king of Dēira, perished in battle, and northern England was forced back by king Penda into paganism. Southern England, with the exception of Canterbury and a considerable part of Kent, had also lost the Gospel, after possessing it for thirty years. Nearly at the same time East Anglia and Essex, at the command of pagan-kings, had discarded it likewise. It was then that Oswald, on recovering his kingdom of Northumbria, besought the Irish monks of Iona to reconvert it, or rather to complete a conversion which had been but begun. Their work prospered; by degrees the largest kingdom of the Heptarchy became solidly and permanently Christian, its See being fixed in the Island of Lindisfarne, whence the huge diocese of the north was ruled successively by three of St. Columba's order, Aidan, Finan, and Colman. But the labours of St. Columba's sons were not confined to the north. In East Anglia an Irish monk, St. Fursey, founded on the coast of Suffolk the monastery of Burgheastle, in which King

Sigebert became a monk. An Irish priest, Maidulphus, built that of Malmesbury in Wessex. Glastonbury was an older Celtic monastery inhabited partly by Irish monks, and partly by British. Peada, king of Mercia, son of the terrible Penda, was baptized by St. Finan close to the Roman Wall, as was also Sigebert, king of the East Saxons. Diama, an Irish monk, was first bishop of all Mercia, its second, Céoloch, being Irish also, and also its fourth.

Montalembert, in his *Moines d'Occident*, has given us the most delightful history that exists of the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England, a work combining the depth of a Christian philosopher with the sagacity of a statesman, and a dramatist's appreciation of character, while in it we miss nothing of that picturesque vividness and engaging simplicity which belong to our early chroniclers; thus conferring upon England a boon if possible greater than that bestowed upon Ireland in his lives of St. Columba, St. Columbanus and other saints. It is thus that he apportions the share which the Irish missionaries and the Roman had in that great enterprise.

‘En résumant l'histoire des efforts tentés pendant les soixante ans écoulés depuis le débarquement d'Augustin jusqu'à la mort de Penda, pour introduire le Christianisme en Angleterre, on constate les résultats que voici. Des huit royaumes de la confédération Anglo-Saxonne, celui de Kent fut seul exclusivement conquis et conservé par les moines romains, dont les premières tentatives, chez les Est-Saxons et les Northumbriens, se terminèrent par un échec. En Wessex et en Est-Anglie les Saxons à l'ouest et les Angles à l'est furent convertis par l'action combinée de missionnaires continentaux et de

moines celtiques. Quant aux deux royaumes Northumbriens' (Dëira and Bernicia), 'à l'Essex et à la Mercie, comprenant à eux seuls plus de deux tiers du territoire occupé par les conquérants germains, ces quatre pays durent leur conversion définitive exclusivement à l'invasion pacifique des moines celtiques, qui n'avaient pas seulement rivalisé de zèle avec les moines romains, mais qui, une fois les premiers obstacles surmontés, avaient montré bien plus de persévérance et obtenu bien plus de succès.'\* The only effort made at that early period to introduce Christianity into the kingdom of the South-Saxons was that of an Irish monk, Dicul, who founded a small monastery at Bosham. It did not however prove successful.

There is something profoundly touching in the religious ties which subsisted between England and Ireland during the seventh century, when compared with the troubled relations of those two countries during many a later age. If the memory of benefits received produces a kindly feeling on the part of the recipient, that of benefits conferred should exert the same influence on the heart of the bestower. To remember the past, however disastrous or convulsed, is a nation's instinct, and its duty no less, since a tribute justly due is thus paid to great actions and to great sufferings in times gone by; nor among the wise and the generous can the discharge of that patriotic duty ever engender an enmity against the living: but there is a special satisfaction in turning to those recollections with which no human infirmity can connect any feeling save that of good will; and it is

\* *Moines d'Occident*, vol. iv. pp. 127-8. Par le Comte de Montalembert.

scarcely possible to recall them in this instance without a hope that the sacred bonds which united those two countries at that remote period may be a pledge for reciprocated benefits in the ages yet before us. For both countries that early time was a time of wonderful spiritual greatness. In noble rivalry with Ireland England also sent her missionaries to far lands: and a child of Wessex, St. Boniface, brought the Faith to Germany, by which it was eventually diffused over Scandinavia, thus, by anticipation, bestowing the highest of all gifts on that terrible race the Northmen, in later centuries the scourge of his native land.

At home both islands were filled with saints whose names have ever since resounded throughout Christendom. Both islands, as a great writer \* has told us, 'had been the refuge of Christianity, for a time almost exterminated in Christendom, and the centres of its propagation in countries still heathen. Secluded from the rest of Europe by the stormy waters in which they lay, they were converted just in time to be put in charge with the sacred treasures of Revelation, and with the learning of the old world, in that dreary time which intervened between Gregory and Charlemagne. They formed schools, collected libraries, and supplied the Continent with preachers and teachers.' He remarks also that 'There was a fitness in the course of things that the two peoples who had rejoiced in one prosperity should drink together the same cup of suffering: *Amabiles, et decori in vitâ suâ, in morte non divisi;*' and he proceeds to remind us that, immediately after their

\* Cardinal Newman's *Historical Sketches*, vol. i. p. 226: *The Northmen and Normans in England and Ireland*.

participation in that common religious greatness, they partook also a tragic inheritance. In England for two centuries and a half, in Ireland for a longer period, the Northmen were repulsed but to reappear. Again and again the sons of Odin blackened the river-mouths of each land with their fleets; whenever they marched they left behind them the ashes of burned churches and monasteries, till, in large parts of both, Christianity and learning had well-nigh perished, and barbarism had all but returned. In both countries domestic dissensions had favoured the invader; eventually in both the Danish power broke down; but in both and in each case claiming a spiritual sanction—another branch of the same Scandinavian stock succeeded to the Dane, viz. the only one then Christianised, the Norman. In that seventh century how little could Saxon convert or Irish missionary have foreseen that the destinies of their respective countries should be at once so unlike yet so like, so antagonistic yet so interwoven!

The aim of the 'Legends of Saxon Saints,' as the reader will perhaps have inferred from the preceding remarks, is to illustrate England, her different races and predominant characteristics, during the century of her conversion to Christianity, and in doing this to indicate what circumstances had proved favourable or unfavourable to the reception of the Faith. It became desirable thus to revert to the early emigration of that 'Barbaric' race of which the Anglo-Saxon was a scion, making the shadow of Odin pass in succession over the background of the several pictures presented (the Heroic being thus the unconscious precursor of the Spiritual), and to show how the religion

which bore his name was fitted at once to predispose its nobler votaries to Christianity and to infuriate against it those who but valued their faith for what it contained of degenerate. It seemed also expedient to select for treatment not only those records most abounding in the picturesque and poetic, but likewise others useful as illustrating the chief representatives of a many-sided society; the pagan king and the British warrior, the bard of Odin and the prophetess of Odin, the Gaelic missionary and the Roman missionary, the poet and the historian of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. In a few instances, as in the tales of Oswald and of Oswy, where the early chronicle was copious in detail, it has been followed somewhat closely; but more often, where the original record was brief, all except the fundamental facts had to be supplied. On these occasions I found encouragement in the remark of a writer at once deep and refined. 'Stories to be versified should not be already nearly complete, having the beauty in themselves, and gaining from the poet but a garb. They should be rough, and with but a latent beauty. The poet should have to supply the features and limbs as well as the dress.'\*

Bede has been my guide. His records are, indeed, often 'rough,' as rough as the crab-tree, but, at the same time, as fresh as its blossom. Their brief touches reveal all the passions of the Barbaric races; but the chief human affections, things far deeper than the passions, are yet more abundantly illustrated by them.† It was a time when those affections were not

\* Sara Coleridge.

† As the illustration of an Age, Bede's *History* has been well compared by Cardinal Manning with the *Fioretti di S. Francesco*, that exquisite illustration of the thirteenth century.



frozen by conventionalities and forced to conceal themselves until they forgot to exist. In the narrative of Bede we find also invaluable illustrations of a higher but not less real range of human affections, viz. the affections of 'Christianised Humanity,' affections grounded on divine truths and heavenly hopes, and yet in entire harmony with affections of a merely human order, which lie beneath them in a parallel plane. Occasionally the two classes enter into conflict, as in the case of the monks of Bardene who found it so difficult to reconcile their reverence for a Saint with their patriotic hatred of a foreign invader; but almost invariably the earthly and the heavenly emotions are mutually supplemental, as in those tender friendships of monk with monk, of king and bishop, grounded upon religious sympathy and co-operation; so that the lower sentiment without the higher would present, compared with the pictures now bequeathed to us, but an unfinished and truncated image of Humanity. Here, again, the semi-barbaric age described by Bede rendered the delineation more vivid. In ages of effeminate civilisation the Christian emotions, even more than those inherent in unassisted human nature, lose that ardour which belongs to them when in a healthy condition—an ardour which especially reveals itself during that great crisis, a nation's conversion, when beside a throng of new feelings and new hopes, a host of new Truths has descended upon the intelligence of a whole people, and when a sense of new knowledge and endless progress is thus communicated to it, far exceeding that which is the boast of nations devoted chiefly to physical science. The sense of progress, indeed, when such a period reaches its highest, is a rapture. It is as though the motion

of the planet which carries us through space, a motion of which we are cognisant but which we yet cannot feel, could suddenly become, like the speed of a race-horse, a thing brought home to our consciousness.

Such ardours are scarcely imaginable in the later ages of a nation; but in Bede's day a people accepting the 'glad tidings' was glad; and, unambitious as his style is of the ornamental or the figurative, it is brightened by that which it so faithfully describes. His chronicle is often poetry, little as he intended it to be such; nay, it is poetry in her 'humanities' yet more than in her distinctively spiritual province, and better poetry than is to be found in the professed poetry of a materialistic age, when the poet is tempted to take refuge from the monotony of routine life, either amid the sensational accidents to be found on the byeways, not the high-ways, of life, or in some sickly dreamland that does not dare to deal with life, and belongs neither to the real nor to the ideal. In nothing is Bede's history of that great age, to which our own owes all that it possesses of real greatness, more striking than in that spirit of unconscious elevation and joyousness which belongs to the Christian life it records, a joyousness often so strikingly contrasted with the sadness—sometimes a heroic sadness—to be found in portions of his work describing pagan manners. With all its violences and inconsistencies, the seventh century was a noble age—an age of strong hearts which were gentle as well as strong, of a childhood that survived in manhood, of natures that had not lost their moral unity, of holy lives and of happy deaths. Bede's picture of it is a true one; and for that reason it comes home to us.

To some it may seem a profaneness to turn those old legends into verse. I should not have attempted the enterprise if they were much read in prose. The verse may at least help to direct the attention of a few readers to them. From them the thoughtful will learn how to complete a 'half-truth' often reiterated. Those who have declared that 'the wars of the Heptarchy are as dull as the battles of kites and crows,' have not always known that the true interest of her turbulent days belonged to peace, not to war, and that it is to be found in the spiritual development of the Anglo-Saxon race.



## PROLOGUE.

### *ODIN THE MAN.*

Odin, a Prince who reigned near the Caspian Sea, after a vain resistance to the Roman arms, leads forth his people to the forests north of the Danube, that, serving God in freedom on the limits of the Roman Empire, and being strengthened by an adverse climate, they may one day descend upon that empire in just revenge ; which destiny was fulfilled by the sack of Rome, under Alaric, Christian King of the Goths, a race derived, like the Saxon, from that Eastern people.

FORTH with those missives, Chiron, to the Invader !  
Hence, and make speed : they scathe mine eyes like  
fire :

Pompeius, thou hast conquered ! What remains ?  
Vengeance ! Man's race has never dreamed of such ;  
So slow, so sure. Pompeius, I depart :  
I might have held these mountains yet four days :  
The fifth had seen them thine—  
I look beyond the limit of this night :  
Four centuries I need ; then comes mine hour.

What saith the Accursed One of the Western  
World ?

I hear even now her trumpet ! Thus she saith :  
' I have enlarged my borders : iron reaped  
Earth's field all golden. Strenuous fight we fought :

I left some sweat drops on that Carthage shore,  
 Some blood on Gallic javelins. That is past !  
 My pleasant days are come : my couch is spread  
 Beside all waters of the Midland Sea ;  
 By whispers lulled of nations kneeling round ;  
 Illumed by light of balmiest climes ; refreshed  
 By winds from Atlas and the Olympian snows :  
 Henceforth my foot is in delicious ways ;  
 Bathe it, ye Persian fountains ! Syrian vales,  
 All roses, make me sleepy with perfumes !  
 Caucasian cliffs, with martial echoes faint  
 Flatter light slumbers ; charm a Roman dream !  
 I send you my Pompeius ; let him lead  
 Odin in chains to Rome ! ' Odin in chains !  
 Were Odin chained, or dead, that God he serves  
 Could raise a thousand Odins—  
 Rome's Founder-King beside his Angur standing  
 Noted twelve ravens borne in sequent flight  
 O'er Alba's crags. They emblem'd centuries twelve,  
 The term to Rome conceded. Eight are flown ;  
 Remain but four. Hail, sacred brood of night !  
 Hencefore my standards bear the Raven Sign,  
 The bird that hoarsely haunts the ruined tower ;  
 The bird sagacious of the field of blood  
 Albeit far off. Four centuries I need :  
 Then comes my day. My race and I are one.  
 O Race beloved and holy ! From my youth  
 Where'er a hungry heart impelled my feet,  
 Whate'er I found of glorious, have I not  
 Claimed it for thee, deep-musing ? Ignorant, first,  
 For thee I wished the golden ingots piled  
 In Susa and Ecbatana :—ah fool !  
 At Athens next, treading where Plato trod,  
 For thee all triumphs of the mind of man,

And Phidian hand inspired ! Ah fool, that hour  
 Athens lay bound, a slave ! Later to Rome  
 In secrecy by Mithridates sent  
 To search the inmost of his hated foe,  
 For thee I claimed that discipline of Law  
 Which made her State one camp. Fool, fool once  
 more !

Soon learned I what a heart-pollution lurked  
 Beneath that mask of Law. As Persia fell,  
 By softness sapped, so Rome. Behold, this day,  
 Following the Pole Star of my just revenge,  
 I lead my people forth to clearer fates  
 Through cloudier fortunes. They are brave and  
 strong :

'Tis but the rose-breath of their vale that rots  
 Their destiny's bud unblown. I lead them forth,  
 A race war-vanquished, not a race of slaves ;  
 Lead them, not southward to Euphrates' bank,  
 Not Eastward to the realms of rising suns,  
 Nor West to Rome, and bondage. Hail, thou North !  
 Hail, boundless woods, by nameless oceans girt,  
 And snow-robed mountain islets, founts of fire !

Four hundred years ! I know that awful North :  
 I sought it when the one flower of my life  
 Fell to my foot. That anguish set me free :  
 It dashed me on the iron side of life :  
 I woke, a man. My people too shall wake :  
 They shall have icy crags for myrtle banks,  
 Sharp rocks for couches. Strength ! I must have  
 strength ;

Not splenetic sallies of a woman's courage,  
 But hearts to which self-pity is unknown :  
 Hard life to them must be as mighty wine  
 Gladdening the strong : the death on battle-fields

Must seem the natural, honest close of life ;  
 Their fear must be to die without a wound  
 And miss Life's after-banquet. Wooden shield  
 Whole winter nights shall lie their covering sole :  
 Thereon the boy shall stem the ocean wave ;  
 Thereon the youth shall slide with speed of winds  
 Loud-laughing down the snowy mountain-slope :  
 To him the Sire shall whisper as he bleeds,  
 ' Remember the revenge ! Thy son must prove  
 More strong, more hard than thou ! '

Four hundred years !

Increase is tardy in that icy clime,  
 For Death is there the awful nurse of Life :  
 Death rocks the cot. Why meet we there no wolf  
 Save those huge-limbed ? Because weak wolf-cubs die.  
 'Tis thus with man ; 'tis thus with all things strong :—  
 Rise higher on thy northern hills, my Pine !  
 That Southern Palm shall dwindle.

House stone-walled—

Ye shall not have it ! Temples cedar-roofed—  
 Ye shall not build them ! Where the Temple stands  
 The City gathers. Cities ye shall spurn :  
 Live in the woods ; live singly, winning each,  
 Hunter or fisher by blue lakes, his prey :  
 Abhor the gilded shrine : the God Unknown  
 In such abides not. On the mountain's top  
 Great Persia sought Him in her day of strength ;  
 With her ye share the kingly breed of Truths,  
 The noblest inspirations man hath known,  
 Or can know—ay, unless the Lord of all  
 Should come, Man's Teacher. Pray as Persia prayed ;  
 And see ye pray for Vengeance ! Leave till then  
 To Rome her Idol fanes and pilfered Gods.



I see you, O my People, year by year  
 Strengthened by sufferings ; pains that crush the weak,  
 Your helpers. Men have been that, poison-fed,  
 Grew poison-proof : on pain and wrong feed ye !  
 The wild-beast rage against you ! frost and fire  
 Rack you in turn ! I'll have no gold among you ;  
 With gold come wants ; and wants mean servitude.  
 Edge, each, his spear with fish-bone or with flint,  
 Leaning for prop on none. I want no Nations !  
 A Race I fashion, playing not at States :  
 I take the race of Man, the breed that lifts  
 Alone its brow to heaven : I change that race  
 From clay to stone, from stone to adamant  
 Through slow abrasion, such as leaves sea-shelves  
 Lustrous at last and smooth. *To be, not have,*  
 A man to be ; no heritage to clasp  
 Save that which simple manhood, at its will,  
 Or conquers or re-conquers, held meanwhile  
 In trust for Virtue ; this alone is greatness.  
 Remain ye Tribes, not Nations ; led by Kings,  
 Great onward-striding Kings, above the rest  
 High towering, like the keel-compelling sail  
 That takes the topmost tempest. Let them die,  
 Each for his people ! I will die for mine  
 Then when my work is finished ; not before.  
 That Bandit King who founded Rome, the Accursed,  
 Vanished in storm. My sons shall see me die,  
 Die, strong to lead them till my latest breath,  
 Which shall not be a sigh ; shall see and say,  
 'This Man far-marching through the mountainous  
     world,  
 No God, but yet God's Prophet of the North,  
 Gave many crowns to others : for himself  
 His people were his crown.'

Four hundred years—

Ye shall find savage races in your path :  
 Be ye barbaric, ay, but savage not :  
 Hew down the baser lest they drag you down ;  
 Ye cannot raise them : they fulfil their fates :  
 Be terrible to foes, be kind to friend :  
 Be just ; be true. Revere the Household Hearth ;  
 This knowing, that beside it dwells a God :  
 Revere the Priest, the King, the Bard, the Maid,  
 The Mother of the heroic race—five strings  
 Sounding God's Lyre. Drive out with lance for goad  
 That idiot God by Rome called Terminus,  
 Who standing sleeps, and holds his reign o'er fools.  
 The earth is God's, not Man's : that Man from Him  
 Holds it whose valour earns it. Time shall come,  
 It may be, when the warfare shall be past,  
 The reign triumphant of the brave and just  
 In peace consolidated. Time may come  
 When that long winter of the Northern Land  
 Shall find its spring. Where spreads the black morass  
 Harvest all gold may glitter ; cities rise  
 Where roamed the elk ; and nations set their thrones ;  
 Nations not like those empires known till now,  
 But wise and pure. Let such their temples build  
 And worship Truth, if Truth should e'er to Man  
 Show her full face. Let such ordain them laws  
 If Justice e'er should mate with laws of men.  
 Above the mountain summits of Man's hope  
 There spreads, I know, a land illimitable,  
 The table land of Virtue trial-proved,  
 Whereon one day the nations of the world  
 Shall race like emulous Gods. A greater God  
 Served by our sires, a God unknown to Rome,  
 Above that shining level sits, high-towered :

Millions of Spirits wing His flaming light,  
 And fiery winds among His tresses play :  
 When comes that hour which judges Gods and men  
 That God shall plague the Gods that filched His name  
 And cleanse the Peoples.

When ye hear, my sons,  
 That God uprising in His judgment robes  
 And see their dreadful crimson in the West,  
 Then know ye that the knell of Rome is nigh  
 Then stand, and listen ! When His Trumpet sounds  
 Forth from your forests and your snows, my sons,  
 Forth over Ister, Rhenus, Rhodanus,  
 To Mæsia forth, to Thrace, Illyricum,  
 Iberia, Gaul ; but, most of all, to Rome !  
 Who leads you thither leads you not for spoil :  
 A mission hath he, fair though terrible ;  
 He makes a pure hand purer, washed in blood :  
 On, Scourge of God ! the Vengeance Hour is come.

I know that hour, and wait it. Odin's work  
 Stands then consummate. Odin's name thenceforth  
 Goes down to darkness.

Farewell, Ararat !

How many an evening, still and bright as this,  
 In childhood, youth, or manhood's sorrowing years,  
 Have I not watched the sunset hanging red  
 Upon thy hoary brow ! Farewell for ever !  
 A legend haunts thee that the race of man  
 In earliest days, a sad and storm-tossed few,  
 From thy wan heights descended making way  
 Into a ruined world. A storm-tossed race,  
 But not self-pitying, once again thou seest  
 Into a world all ruin making way  
 Whither they know not, yet without a fear.  
 This hour—lo, there, they pass yon valley's verge !—

In sable weeds that pilgrimage moves on,  
Moves slowly like thy shadow, Ararat,  
That eastward creeps. Phantom of glory dead !  
Image of greatness that disdains to die  
Move Northward thou ! Whate'er thy fates decreed  
At least that shadow shall be shadow of Man,  
And not of beast gold-weighted ! On, thou Night  
Cast by my heart ! Thou too shalt meet thy morn !

LEGENDS.



*KING ETHELBERT OF KENT AND  
SAINT AUGUSTINE.*

Ethelbert, King of Kent, converses first with his Pagan Thanes, and next with Saint Augustine, newly landed on the shores of Thanet Island. The Saint, coming in sight of Canterbury, rejoices greatly, and predicts the future greatness of that city.

FAR through the forest depths of Thanet Isle  
That never yet had heard the woodman's axe,  
Rang the glad clarion on the May-day morn  
Blent with the cry of hounds. The rising sun  
Flamed on the forest's dewy jewelry,  
While, under rising mists, a host with plumes  
Rode down a broad oak alley t'wards the sea.

King Ethelbert rode first : he reigned in Kent  
Least kingdom of the Seven yet Head of all  
Through his desert. That morn the royal train,  
While sang the invisible lark her song in heaven,  
Pursued the flying stag. At times the creature  
As though he too had pleasure in the sport,  
Vaulted at ease through sunshine and through shade,  
Then changed his mood, and left the best behind him.  
Five hours they chased him ; last, upon a rock  
High up in scorn he held his antlered front,  
Then took the wave and vanished.

Many a frown  
Darkened that hour on many a heated brow ;  
And many a spur afflicted that poor flank

Which panted hard and smoked. The King alone  
 Laughed at mischance. 'The stag, with God to aid,  
 Has left our labour fruitless! Give him joy!  
 He lives to yield us sport some later morn:  
 So be it! Waits our feast, and not far off:  
 On to the left 'twixt yonder ash and birch!'

He spake, and anger passed: they praised their  
 sport;  
 And many an outblown nostril seemed to snuff  
 That promised feast. They rode through golden furze  
 So high the horsemen only were descried;  
 And glades whose centuried oaks their branches laid  
 O'er violet banks; and fruit trees, some snow-veiled  
 Like bridesmaid, others like the bride herself  
 Behind her white veil blushing. Glad, the thrush  
 Carolled; more glad, the wood-dove moaned; close by  
 A warbling runnel led them to the bay:  
 Two chestnuts stood beside it snowy-coned:  
 The banquet lay beneath them.

Feasting o'er

The song succeeded. Boastful was the strain  
 Each Thane his deeds extolling, or his sire's;  
 But one, an aged man, among them scoffed:  
 'When I was young; when Sigbert on my right  
 To battle rode, and Sefred on my left;  
 That time men stood not worsted by a stag!  
 Not then our horses swerved from azure strait  
 Scared by the ridged sea-wave!' Next spake a chief,  
 Pirate from Denmark late returned: 'Our skies,  
 Good friends, are all too soft to build the man!  
 We fight for fame: the Northman fights for sport;  
 Their annals boast they fled but once:—'twas thus:  
 In days of old, when Rome was in her pride,



Huge hosts of hers had fallen on theirs, surprised,  
 And way-worn : long they fought : a remnant spent,  
 Fled to their camp. Upon its walls their wives  
 Stood up, black-garbed, with axes heaved aloft,  
 And fell upon the fugitives and slew them ;  
 Slew next their little ones ; slew last themselves,  
 Cheating the Roman Triumph. Never since then  
 Hath Northman fled the foemen.'

Egfrid rose :

'Who saith our kinsfolk of the frozen North  
 One stock with us, one faith, one ancient tongue  
 Pass us in valour ? Three days since I saw  
 Crossing the East Saxon's border and our own  
 Two boys that strove. The Kentish wounded fell ;  
 The East Saxon on him knelt ; then made demand :  
 " My victim art thou by the laws of war !  
 Yonder my dagger lies ;—till I return  
 Wilt thou abide ? " The vanquished answered, " Yea ! "  
 A minute more, and o'er that dagger's edge  
 His life-blood rushed.' The pirate chief demurred ;  
 ' A gallant boy ! Not less I wager this,  
 The glitter of that dagger ere it smote  
 Made his eye blink. Attend ! Three years gone by,  
 Sailing with Hakon on Norwegian fiords  
 We fought the Jomsburg Rovers, at their head  
 Sidroc, oath-pledged to marry Hakon's child  
 Despite her father's best. In mist we met :  
 Instant each navy at the other dashed  
 Like wild beast, instinct-taught, that knows its foe ;  
 Chained ship to ship, and clashed their clubs all day,  
 Till sank the sun : then laughed the white peaks forth,  
 And reeled, methought, above the reeling waves !  
 The victory was with us. Hakon, next morn,  
 Bade slay his prisoners. Thirty on one bench

Waited their doom : their leader died the first ;  
 He winked not as the sword upon him closed !  
 No, nor the second ! Hakon asked the third  
 " What think'st thou, friend, of Death ? " He tossed  
 his head :

" My Father perished ; I fulfil my turn."

The fourth, " Strike quickly, Chief ! An hour this  
 morn

We held contention if, when heads are off  
 The hand can hold its dagger : I would learn."

The dagger and the head together fell.

The fifth, " One fear is mine—lest yonder slave  
 Finger a Prince's hair ! Command some chief  
 Thy best beloved, to lift it in his hands ;

Then strike and spare not ! " Hakon struck. That  
 youth,

Sigurd by name, his forehead forward twitched,  
 Laughing, so deftly that the downward sword  
 Shore off those luckless hands that raised his hair.  
 All laughed ; and Hakon's son besought his sire  
 To loosen Sigurd's bonds : but Sigurd cried,  
 " Unless the rest be loosed I will not live !"  
 Thus all escaped save four.'

In graver mood

That chief resumed : ' A Norland King dies well !

His bier is raised upon his stateliest ship ;

Piled with his arms ; his lovers and his friends

Rush to their monarch's pyre, resolved with him

To share in death, and with becoming pomp

Attend his footsteps to Valhalla's Hall.

The torch is lit : forth sails the ship, black-winged,

Facing the midnight seas. From beach and cliff

Men watch all night that slowly lessening flame :

Yet no man sheds a tear.'

Earconwald,

An aged chief, made answer, 'Tears there be  
 Of divers sorts : a wise and valiant king  
 Deserves that tear which praises, not bewails  
 Greatness gone by.' The pirate shouted loud  
 'A land it is of laughter, not of tears !  
 Know ye the tale of Harald ? He had sailed  
 Round southern coasts and eastern ; sacked or burned  
 A hundred Christian cities. One he found  
 So girt with giant walls and brazen gates  
 His sea-kings vainly dashed their ships against them ;  
 And died beneath them, frustrate. Harald sent  
 A herald to that city proffering terms :  
 "Harald is dead : Christian was he in youth :  
 He sends you spoils from many a city burnt  
 And craves interment in your chiefest church."  
 Next day the masked procession wound in black  
 Through streets defenceless. When the church was  
 reached  
 They laid their chief before the altar-lights :  
 Anon to heaven rang out the priestly dirge,  
 And incense-smoke upcurled. Forth from its cloud  
 Sudden upheaped the dead man, club in hand,  
 Spurning his coffin's gilded walls, and smote  
 The hoary pontiff down, and brake his neck ;  
 And all those maskers doffed their weeds of woe  
 And showed the mail beneath, and raised their swords  
 And drowned that pavement in a sea of blood,  
 While raging rushed their mates through portals wide,  
 And, since that city seemed but scant of spoil  
 Fired it and sailed. Ofttimes old Harald laughed  
 That tale recounting.'

Many a Kentish chief  
 Re-echoed Harald's laugh ;—not Ethelbert :

The war-scar reddening on his brow he rose  
 And spake : ‘ My Thanes, ye laugh at deeds accurst !  
 An old King I, and make my propheey  
 One day that northern race which smites and laughs,  
 Our kith and kin albeit, shall smite our coasts :  
 That day ye will not laugh ! ’ Earconwald  
 Not rising, likewise answer made, heart-grieved :  
 ‘ Six sons had I : all these are slain in war ;  
 Yet I, an unrejoicing man forlorn,  
 Find solace oft-times thinking of their deeds :  
 They laughed not when they smote. No God, be sure,  
 Smiles on the jest red-handed.’ Egfrid rose,  
 And three times cried with lifted sword unsheathed,  
 ‘ Behold my God ! No God save him I serve ! ’

While thus they held discourse, where blue waves danced  
 Not far from land, behold, there hove in sight  
 Seen ’twixt a great beech silky yet with Spring  
 And pine broad-crested, round whose head old storms  
 Had wov’n a garland of his own green boughs,  
 A bark both fair and large ; and hymn was heard.  
 Then laughed the King, ‘ The stag-hunt and our songs  
 So drugged my memory, I had nigh forgotten  
 Why for our feast I chose this heaven-roofed hall :  
 Missives I late received from friends in France ;  
 They make report of strangers from the South  
 Who, tarrying in their coasts have learned our tongue  
 And northward wend with tidings strange and new  
 Of some celestial Kingdom by their God  
 Founded for men of Faith. Nor churl am I  
 To frown on kind intent, nor child to trust  
 This sceptre of Seven Realms to magic snare  
 That puissance hath—who knows not ?—greater thrice  
 In house than open field. I therefore chose

For audience hall this precinct.'

Muttered low

Murdark, the scoffer with the cave-like mouth  
 And sidelong eyes, 'Queen Bertha's voice was that!  
 A woman's man! Since first from Gallic shores  
 That dainty daughter of King Charibert  
 Pressed her small foot on England's honest shore  
 The whole land dwindles!'

Mid seraphic hymns

Ere long that serpent hiss was lost: for soon  
 In raiment white, circling a rocky point  
 O'er sands still glistening with a tide far-ebbed,  
 On drew, preceded by a silver Cross,  
 A long Procession. Music as it moved  
 Floated on sea-winds inland, deadened now  
 By thickets, echoed now from cliff or cave:  
 Ere long before them that Procession stood.  
 The King addressed them: 'Welcome, Heralds sage!  
 If sent from God I welcome you the more,  
 Since great is God, and therefore great His gifts:  
 God grant He send them daily, heaped and huge!  
 Speak without fear, for him alone I hate  
 Who brings ill news, or makes inept demand  
 Unmeet for Kings. I know the Cross ye bear;  
 And in my palace sits a Christian wife,  
 Bertha, the sweetest lady in this land;  
 Most gracious in her ways, in heart most leal.  
 I knew her yet a child: she knelt whene'er  
 The Queen, her mother, entered: then I said,  
 A maid so reverent will be reverent wife,  
 And wedded her betimes. Morning and eve  
 She in her wood-girt chapel sings her prayer,  
 Which wins us kindlier harvest, and, some think,  
 Success in war. She strives not with our Gods:

Confusion never wrought she in my house,  
 Nor minished Hengist's glory. Had her voice,  
 Clangorous or strident, drawn upon my throne  
 Deserved opprobrium'—here the monarch's brows  
 Flushed at the thought, and fire was in his eyes—  
 'The hand that clasps this sceptre had not spared  
 To hunt her forth an outcast in the woods,  
 Thenceforth with beasts to herd! More lief were I  
 To take the lioness to my bed and board  
 Than house a rebel wife.' Remembering then  
 The mildness of his Queen, King Ethelbert  
 Resumed, appeased, for placable his heart;  
 'But she no rebel is, and this I deem  
 Fair auspice for her Faith.'

A little breeze  
 Warm from the sea that moment softly waved  
 The standard from its staff, and showed thereon  
 The Child Divine. Upon His mother's knee  
 Sublime He stood. His left hand clasped a globe  
 Crowned with a golden Cross; and with His right  
 Two fingers heavenward raised, o'er all the earth  
 He sent His blessing.

Of that band snow-stoled  
 One taller by the head than all the rest  
 Obeisance made; then, pointing to the Cross,  
 And forward moving t'ward the monarch's seat,  
 Opened the great commission of the Faith:  
 'Behold the Eternal Maker of the worlds!  
 That hand which shaped the earth and blesses earth  
 Must rule the race of man!'

Majestic then  
 As when, far winding from its mountain springs,  
 City and palm-grove far behind it left,  
 Some Indian river rolls while mists dissolved

Leave it in native brightness unobscured,  
And kingly navies share its sea-ward sweep,  
Forward on-flowed in Apostolic might  
Augustine's strong discourse. With God beginning  
He showed the Almighty all-compassionate  
Down drawn from distance infinite to man  
By the Infinite of Love. Lo, Bethlehem's crib !  
There lay the Illimitable in narrow bound :  
Thence rose that triumph of a world redeemed !  
Last, to the standard pointing, thus he spake :  
' Yon standard tells the tale ! Six hundred years  
Westward it speeds from subject realm to realm ;  
First from the bosom of God's Race Elect,  
His people, till they slew Him, mild it soared :  
Rejected, it returned. Above their walls  
While ruin rocked them, and the Roman fire,  
Dreadful it hung. When Rome had shared that guilt  
Mocking that Saviour's Brethren and His Bride,  
Above the conquered conqueror of all lands  
In turn this Standard flew. Who raised it high ?  
A son of this your island, Constantine !  
In these, thine English oakwoods, Helena,  
'Twas thine to nurse thy warrior. He had seen  
Star-writ in heaven the words this Standard bears,  
"Through Me is victory." Victory won, he raised  
High as his empire's queenly head, and higher,  
This Standard of the Eternal Dove thenceforth  
To fly where eagle standard never flew,  
God's glory in its track, goodwill to man.  
Advance for aye, great Emblem ! Light as now  
Famed Asian headlands, and Hellenic isles !  
O'er snow-crowned Alp and citted Apennine  
Send forth a breeze of healing ! Keep thy throne  
For ever on those western peaks that watch

The setting sun descend the Hesperian wave,  
 Atlas and Calpe ! These, the old Roman bound,  
 Build but the gateway of the Rome to be—  
 Till Christ returns thou Standard, hold them fast :  
 But never till the North, that, age by age,  
 Dashed back the Pagan Rome, with Christian Rome  
 Partakes the spiritual crown of man restored  
 From thy strong flight above the world surcease,  
 And fold thy wings in rest !'

Upon the sod  
 He knelt, and on that standard gazed, and spake,  
 Calm-voiced, with hand to heaven : ' I promise thee,  
 Thou Sign, another victory, and thy best—  
 This island shall be thine !'

Augustine rose  
 And took the right hand of King Ethelbert,  
 And placed therein the Standard's staff, and laid  
 His own above the monarch's, speaking thus :  
 ' King of this land, I bid thee know from God  
 That kings have higher privilege than they know,  
 The standard-bearers of the King of kings.'

Long time he clasped that royal hand ; long time  
 The King, that patriarch's hand at last withdrawn,  
 His own withdrew not from that Standard's staff  
 Committed to his charge. His hand he deemed  
 Thenceforth its servant vowed. With large, meek eyes  
 Fixed on that Maid and Babe, he stood as child  
 That, gazing on some reverent stranger's face  
 Nor loosening from that stranger's hold his palm,  
 Listens his words attent.

The Man of God  
 Meantime as silent gazed on Thanet's shore  
 Gold-tinged, with sunset spray to crimson turned  
 In league-long crescent. Love was in his face,



That love which rests on Faith. He spake : ' Fair  
land,

I know thee what thou art, and what thou lack'st !  
The Master saith, " I give to him that hath :"  
Thy harvest shall be great.' Again he mused,  
And shadow o'er him crept. Again he spake :  
' That harvest won, when centuries have gone by,  
What countenance wilt thou wear ? How oft on  
brows

Brightened by Baptism's splendour, sin more late  
Drags down its cloud ! 'The time may come when thou  
This day, though darkling, yet so innocent,  
Barbaric, not depraved, on greater heights  
May'st sin in malice—sin the great offence,  
Changing thy light to darkness, knowing God,  
Yet honouring God no more : that time may come  
When, rich as Carthage, great in arms as Rome,  
Keen-eyed as Greece, this isle, to sensuous gaze  
A sun all gold, to angels may present  
Aspect no nobler than a desert waste,  
Some blind and blinding waste of sun-scorched sands,  
Trod by a race of pigmies not of men,  
Pigmies by passions ruled !'

Once more he mused ;  
Then o'er his countenance passed a second change ;  
And from it flashed the light of one who sees,  
Some hill-top gained, beyond the incumbent night  
The instant foot of morn. With regal step,  
Martial yet measured, to the King he strode,  
And laid a strong hand on him, speaking thus :  
' Rejoice, my son, for God hath sent thy Land  
This day Good Tidings of exceeding joy,  
And planted in her Breast a Tree divine  
Whose leaves shall heal far nations. Know besides



Marsh-land more late ; beyond the ford there wound  
 A path through flowery meads ; and, as they passed,  
 Not herdsmen only, but the broad-browed kine  
 Fixed on them long their meditative gaze ;  
 And oft some blue-eyed boy with flaxen locks  
 Ran, fearless, forth, and plucked them by the sleeve,  
 Some boy clear-browed as those Saint Gregory  
     marked,

Poor slaves, new-landed from the quays of Rome,  
 That drew from him that saying, “ *Angli* ” !—nay,  
 Call them henceforward “ *Angels* ” !’

From a wood

Issuing, before them lustrous they beheld  
 King Ethelbert’s chief city Canterbury,  
 Strong-walled, with winding street, and airy roofs,  
 And high o’er all the monarch’s palace pile  
 Thick-set with towers. Then fire from God there fell  
 Upon Augustine’s heart : and thus he sang  
 Advancing ; and the brethren sang ‘ *Amen* ’ :

‘ Hail, City loved of God, for on thy brow  
 Great Fates are writ. Thou cumberest not His earth  
 For petty traffic reared, or petty sway ;  
 I see a heavenly choir descend, thy crown  
 Henceforth to bind thy brow. Forever hail !

‘ I see the basis of a kingly throne  
 In thee ascending ! High it soars and higher,  
 Like some great pyramid o’er Nilus kenned  
 When vapours melt—the Apostolic Chair !  
 Doctrine and Discipline thence shall hold their course,  
 Like Tigris and Euphrates, through all lands  
 That face the Northern Star. Forever hail !

‘ Where stands yon royal keep, a church shall rise

Like Incorruption clothing the Corrupt  
 On the resurrection morn ! Strong House of God,  
 To him exalt thy walls, and nothing doubt  
 For lo ! from thee like lions from their lair  
 Abroad shall pace the Primates of this land :  
 They shall not lick the hand that gives and smites  
 Doglike, nor snakelike on their bellies creep  
 In indirectness base. They shall not fear  
 The people's madness nor the rage of kings  
 Reddening the temple's pavement. They shall lift  
 The strong brow mitred, and the crosiered hand  
 Before their presence sending Love and Fear  
 To pave their steps with greatness. From their  
 fronts

Stubborned with marble from Saint Peter's Rock  
 The sunrise of far centuries forth shall flame :  
 He that hath eyes shall see it, and shall say,  
 " Blessed who cometh in the name of God ! " ' "

Thus sang the Saint, advancing ; and, behold,  
 At every pause the brethren sang ' Amen ! '   
 While down from window and from roof the throng  
 Eyed them in silence. As their anthem ceased  
 Before them stood the palace clustered round  
 By many a stalwart form. Midway the gate  
 On the first step, like angel newly lit  
 Queen Bertha stood. Back from her forehead meek  
 The meeker for its crown, a veil descended,  
 While streamed the red robe to the foot snow-white  
 Sandalled in gold. The morn was on her face,  
 The star of morn within those eyes upraised  
 That flashed all dewy with the grateful light  
 Of many a granted prayer. O'er that sweet shape  
 Augustine signed the Venerable sign ;

The lovely vision sinking, hand to breast,  
Received it ; while, by sympathy surprised  
Or taught of God, the monarch and his thanes  
Knelt as she knelt, and bent like her their heads,  
Sharing her blessing. Like a palm the Faith  
Thenceforth o'er England rose, those saintly men  
Preaching by life severe, not words alone,  
The doctrine of the Cross. Some Power divine  
Stronger than patriot love, more sweet than Spring,  
Made way from heart to heart, and daily God  
Joined to His Church the souls that should be saved,  
Thousands, where Medway mingles with the Thames,  
Rushing to Baptism. In his palace cell  
High-nested on that Vaticanian Hill  
Which o'er the Martyr-gardens kens the world  
Gregory, that news receiving, or from men  
Or haply from that God with whom he walked  
The Spirit's whisper ever in his ear,  
Rejoiced that hour, and cried aloud, ' Rejoice,  
Thou Earth ! that North which from its cloud but  
flung  
The wild beasts' cry of anger or of pain  
Redeemed from wrath, its Hallelujahs sings ;  
Its waves by Roman galleys feared, this day  
Kiss the bare feet of Christ's Evangelists ;  
That race whose oak-clubs brake our Roman swords  
Glories now first in bonds—the bond of Truth :  
At last it fears ; but fears alone to sin,  
Striving through Faith for Virtue's heavenly crown.'

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*THE CONSECRATION OF WESTMINSTER  
ABBEY.*

Sebert, King of the East Saxons, having built the great church of Saint Peter at Westminster, Mellitus the Bishop prepares to consecrate it, but is warned in a vision that it has already been consecrated by one greater than he.

As morning brake, Sebert, East Saxon king,  
 Stood on the winding shores of Thames alone,  
 And fixed a sparkling eye upon Saint Paul's :  
 The sun new-risen had touched its roofs that laughed  
 Their answer back. Beyond it London spread ;  
 But all between the river and that church  
 Was slope of grass and blossoming orchard copse  
 Glittering with dews dawn-reddened. Bertha here,  
 That church begun had thus besought her Lord  
 ' Spare me this bank which God has made so fair !  
 Here let the little birds have leave to sing  
 The bud to blossom ! Here, the vespers o'er,  
 Lovers shall sit ; and here, in later days,  
 Children shall question, " Who was he—Saint Paul ?  
 What taught, what wrought he that his name should  
 shine  
 Thus like the stars in heaven ? "'

As Sebert stood  
 The sweetness of the morning more and more  
 Made way into his heart. The pale blue smoke  
 Rising from hearths by woodland branches fed,  
 Dimmed not the crystal matin air ; not yet

From clammy couch had risen the mist sun-warmed :  
 All things distinctly showed ; the rushing tide  
 The barge, the trees, the long bridge many-arched,  
 And countless huddled gables, far away,  
 Lessening, yet still descried.

A voice benign

Dispersed the Prince's trance : ' I marked, my King,  
 Your face in yonder church ; you took, I saw,  
 A blessing thence ; and Nature's here you find :  
 The same God sends them both.' The man who spake  
 Though silver-tressed, was countenanced like a child ;  
 Smooth-browed, clear-eyed. That still and luminous  
 mien

Predicted realms where Time shall be no more ;  
 Where gladness, like some honey-dew divine,  
 Freshens an endless present. Mellitus,  
 From Rome late missioned and the Cœlian Hill  
 Made thus his greeting.

Westward by the Thames

The King and Bishop paced, and held discourse  
 Of him whose name that huge Cathedral bore,  
 Israel's great son, the man of mighty heart,  
 The man for her redemption zealous more  
 Than for his proper crown. Not task for her  
 God gave him : to the Gentiles still he preached  
 And won them to the Cross. ' That Faith once  
 spurned,'  
 Thus cried the Bishop with a kindling eye,  
 ' Lo, how it raised him as on eagle's wings  
 And past the starry gates ; The Spirit's Sword  
 He wielded well ! Save him who bears the Keys,  
 Save him who made confession, " Thou art Christ,"  
 Saint Paul had equal none ! Hail, Brethren crowned !  
 Hail, happy Rome, that guard'st their mingled dust !'

Next spake the Roman of those churches twain  
 By Constantine beside the Tyber built  
 To glorify their names. With sudden turn  
 Sebert, the crimson mounting to his brow,  
 Made question, 'Is your Tyber of the South  
 Ampler than this, our Thames?' The old man smiled;  
 'Tyber to Thames is as that willow-stock  
 To yonder oak.' The Saxon cried with joy:  
 'How true thy judgment is! how just thy tongue!  
 What hinders, O my Father, but that Thames,  
 Huge river from the forests rolled by God,  
 Should image, like that Tyber, churches twain,  
 Honouring those Princes of the Apostles' Band?  
 King Ethelbert, my uncle, built Saint Paul's;  
 Saint Peter's Church be mine!'

An hour's advance

Left them in thickets tangled. Low the ground,  
 Well-nigh by waters clipt, a savage haunt  
 With briar and bramble thick, and 'Thorny Isle'  
 For that cause named. Sebert around him gazed,  
 A maiden blush upon him thus he spake:  
 'I know this spot; I stood here once, a boy:  
 'Twas winter then: the swoll'n and turbid flood  
 Rustled the sallows. Far I fled from men:  
 A youth had done me wrong, and vengeful thoughts  
 Burned in my heart: I warred with them in vain:  
 I prayed against them; yet they still returned:  
 O'erspent at last, I cast me on my knees  
 And cried, "Just God, if Thou despise my prayer,  
 Faithless, thence weak, not less remember well  
 How many a man in this East Saxon land  
 Stands up this hour, in wood, or field, or farm,  
 Like me sore tempted, but with loftier heart:  
 To these be helpful—yea, to one of these!"



And lo, the wrathful thoughts, like routed fiends,  
Left me, and came no more !'

Discoursing thus,

The friends a moment halted in a space  
Where stood a flowering thorn. Adown it trailed  
In zigzag curves erratic here and there  
Long lines of milky bloom, like rills of foam  
Furrowing the green back of some huge sea wave  
Refluent from cliffs. Ecstatic minstrelsy  
Swelled from its branches. Birds as thick as leaves  
Thronged them; and whether joy was theirs that hour  
Because the May had come, or joy of love,  
Or tenderer gladness for their young new-fledged,  
So piercing was that harmony, the place  
Eden to Sebert looked, while brake and bower  
Shone like the Tree of Life. 'What minster choir,'  
The Bishop cried, 'could better chant God's praise?  
Here shall your church ascend:—its altar rise  
Where yonder thorn tree stands!' The old man  
spake;

Yet in him lived a thought unbreathed: 'How oft  
Have trophies risen to blazon deeds accursed!  
Angels this church o'er-winging, age on age  
Shall see that boy at prayer!'

In peace, in war,

Daily the work advanced. The youthful King  
Kneeling, himself had raised the earliest sod,  
Made firm the corner stone. Whate'er of gold  
Sun-ripened harvests of the royal lands  
Yielded from Thames to Stour, or tax and toll  
From quays mast-thronged to loud-resounding sea,  
Save what his realm required by famine vexed  
At times, or ravage of the Mercian sword,  
Went to the work. His Queen her jewels brought,

Smiling, huge gift in slenderest hands up-piled ;  
 His thanes their store ; the poor their labour free.  
 Some clave the quarry's ledges : from its depths  
 Some haled the blocks ; from distant forests some  
 Dragged home the oak-beam on the creaking wain :  
 Alas, that arms in noble tasks so strong  
 Should e'er have sunk in dust ! Ere ten years passed  
 Saint Peter's towers above the high-roofed streets  
 Smiled on Saint Paul's. That earlier church had risen  
 Where stood, in Roman days, Apollo's fane :  
 Upon a site to Dian dedicate  
 Now rose its sister. Erring Faith had reached  
 In those twin Powers that ruled the Day and Night,  
 To Wisdom witnessing and Chastity,  
 Her loftiest height, and perished. Phoenix-like,  
 From ashes of dead rites and Truth abused  
 Now soared unstained Religion.

What remained ?

The Consecration. On its eve, the King  
 Held revel in its honour, solemn feast,  
 And wisely-woven dance, where beauty and youth,  
 Through loveliest measures moving, music-winged,  
 And winged not less by gladness, interwreathed  
 Brightness with brightness, glance turned back on  
 glance,  
 And smile on smile—a courtseying graciousness  
 Of stateliest forms that, winding, sank or rose  
 As if on heaving seas. In groups apart  
 Old warriors clustered. Eadbald discussed  
 And Snorr, that truce with Wessex signed, and said,  
 ' Fear nought : it cannot last ! ' A shadow sat  
 That joyous night upon one brow alone,  
 Redwald's East Anglia's King. In generous youth  
 He, guest that time with royal Ethelbert,

Had gladly bowed to Christ. From shallowest soil  
 Faith springs apace, but springs to die. Returned  
 To plains of Ely, all that sweetness past  
 Seemed but a dream while scornful spake his wife,  
 Upon whose brow beauty from love divorced  
 Made beauty's self unbeauteous: 'Lose—why not?—  
 Thwarting your liegeful subjects, lose at will  
 Your Kingdom; you that might have reigned ere now  
 Bretwalda of the Seven!' In hour accursed  
 The weak man with his Faith equivocated:  
 Fraudful, beneath the self-same roofs he raised  
 Altars to Christ and idols. By degrees  
 That Truth he mocked forsook him. Year by year  
 His face grew dark, and barbed his tongue though  
 smooth,  
 Manner and mind like grass-fields after thaw,  
 Silk-soft above, yet iron-hard below:  
 Spleenful that night at Sebert's blithe discourse  
 He answered thus, with seeming-careless eye  
 Wandering from wall to roof:

'I like your Church:

Would it had rested upon firmer ground,  
 Adorned some airier height: its towers are good,  
 Though dark the stone: three quarries white have I;  
 You might have used them gratis had you willed:  
 At Ely, Elmham, and beside the Cam  
 Where Felix rears even now his cloistral Schools,  
 I trust to build three churches soon: my Queen,  
 That seconds still my wishes, says, "Beware  
 Lest overhaste, your people still averse,  
 Frustrate your high intent." A woman's wit—  
 Yet here my wife is wiser than her wont.  
 I miss your Bishop: grandly countenanced he,  
 Save for that mole. He shuns our revel:—ay!

Monastic virtue never feels secure  
 Save when it skulks in corners !' As he spake,  
 Despite that varnish on his brow clear-cut,  
 Stung by remembrance, from the tutored eye  
 Forth flashed the fire barbaric : race and heart  
 A moment stood confessed.

Old Mellitus,  
 That night how fared he ? In a fragile tent  
 Facing that church expectant, low he knelt  
 On the damp ground. More late, like youthful knight  
 In chapel small watching his arms untried,  
 He kept his consecration vigil still,  
 With hoary hands screening a hoary head,  
 And thus made prayer : 'Thou God to Whom all  
 worlds

Form one vast temple : Thou Who with Thyself,  
 Ritual eterne, dost consecrate *that* Church,  
 For aye creating, hallowing it forever ;  
 Thou Who in narrowest heart of man or child  
 Makest not less Thy dwelling, turn Thine eyes  
 To-morrow on our rite. The work we work  
 Work it Thyself ! Thy storm shall try it well ;  
 Consummate first its strength in righteousness ;  
 So shall beginning just, whate'er befall,  
 Or guard it, or restore.'

So prayed the man,  
 Nor ever raised his head—saw nought—heard  
 nought—

Nor knew that on the night had come a change,  
 Ill Spirits, belike, whose empire is the air,  
 Grudging its glories to that pile new raised,  
 And, while they might, assailing. Through the  
 clouds  
 A panic-stricken moon stumbled and fled,

And wildly on the waters blast on blast  
 Ridged their dark floor. A spring-tide from the sea  
 Breasted the flood descending. Woods of Shene  
 And Hampton's groves had heard that flood all day,  
 No more a whisperer soft ; and meadow banks  
 Not yet o'er-gazed by Windsor's crested steep  
 Or Reading's tower, had yielded to its wave  
 Blossom and bud. More high, near Oxenford,  
 Isis and Cherwell with precipitate stream  
 Had swelled the current. Gathering thus its strength  
 Far off and near, allies and tributaries  
 That night by London onward rolled the Thames  
 Beauteous and threatening both.

Its southern bank

Fronting the church had borne a hamlet long  
 Where fishers dwelt. Upon its verge that night  
 Perplexed the eldest stood : his hand was laid  
 Upon the gunwale of a stranded boat ;  
 His knee was crooked against it. Shrinking still  
 And sad, his eye pursued that racing flood,  
 Here black like night, dazzled with eddies there,  
 Eddies by moonshine glazed. In doubt he mused :  
 Sudden a Stranger by him stood and spake :  
 ' Launch forth, and have no fear.' The fisher gazed  
 Once on his face ; and launched. Beside the helm  
 That Stranger sat. Then lo ! a watery lane  
 Before them opening, through the billows curved,  
 Level, like meadow-path. As when a weed  
 Drifts with the tide, so softly o'er that lane  
 Oarless the boat advanced, and instant reached  
 The northern shore, dark with that minster's shade ;—  
 Before them close it frowned.

' Where now thou stand'st  
 Abide thou : ' thus the Stranger spake ; anon

Before the church's southern gate he stood :—  
 Then lo ! a marvel. Inward as he passed,  
 Its threshold crossed, a splendour as of God  
 Forth from the bosom of that dusky pile  
 Through all its kindling windows streamed, and blazed  
 From wave to wave, and spanned that downward tide  
 With many a fiery bridge. The moon was quenched ;  
 But all the edges of the headlong clouds  
 Caught up the splendour till the midnight vault  
 Shone like the noon. The fisher knew, that hour,  
 That with vast concourse of the Sons of God  
 That church was thronged ; for in it many a head  
 Sun-bright, and hands lifted like hands in prayer,  
 High up he saw : meantime harmonic strain,  
 As though whatever moves in earth or skies,  
 Winds, waters, stars, had joined in one their song,  
 Above him floated like a breeze from God  
 And heaven-born incense. Louder swelled that  
 strain ;

And still the Bride of God, that church late dark,  
 Glad of her saintly spousals, laughed and shone  
 In radiance ever freshening. By degrees  
 That vision waned. At last the fisher turned :  
 The matin star shook on the umbered wave ;  
 Along the East there lay a pallid streak,  
 That streak which preludes dawn.

Beside the man

Once more that Stranger stood :—‘ Seest thou yon tent ?  
 My Brother kneels within it. Thither speed  
 And bid him know I sent thee, speaking thus,  
 “ He whom the Christians name ‘ the Rock ’ am I :  
 My Master heard thy prayer : I sought thy church,  
 And sang myself her Consecration rite :  
 Close thou that service with thanksgiving psalm.” ’

Thus spake the Stranger, and was seen no more :  
 But whether o'er the waters, as of old  
 Footing that Galilean Sea, with faith  
 Not now infirm he reached the southern shore,  
 Or passed from sight as one whom crowds conceal  
 The fisher knew not. At the tent arrived,  
 Before its little door he bent, and lo !  
 Within, there knelt a venerable man  
 With hoary hands screening a hoary head,  
 Who prayed, and prayed. His tale the fisher told :  
 With countenance unamazed, yet well content  
 That kneeler answered, 'Son, thy speech is true !  
 Hence, and announce thy tidings to the King,  
 Who leaves his couch but now.'

'How beautiful'—

That old man sang, as down the Thames at morn'  
 In multitudinous pomp the barges dropped,  
 Following those twain that side by side advanced,  
 One royal, one pontific, bearing each  
 The Cross in silver blazoned or in gold—  
 'How beautiful, O Sion, are thy courts !  
 Lo, on thy brow thy Maker's name is writ :  
 Fair is this place and awful ; porch of heaven :  
 Behold, God's Church is founded on a rock :  
 It stands, and shall not fall : the gates of Hell  
 Shall not prevail against it.'

From the barge

Of Sebert and his Queen, antiphonal  
 Rapturous response was wafted : 'I beheld  
 Jerusalem, the City sage and blest ;  
 From heaven I saw it to the earth descending  
 In sanctity gold-vested, as a Bride  
 Decked for her Lord. I heard a voice which sang,  
 Behold the House where God will dwell with men :

And God shall wipe the tears from off their face ;  
And death shall be no more.'

Old Thames that day

Brightened with banners of a thousand boats  
Winnowed by winds flower-scented. Countless hands  
Tossed on the brimming river chaplets wov'n  
On mead or hill, or branches lopped in woods  
With fruit-bloom red, or white with clustering  
    cone,  
Changing clear stream to garden. Mile on mile  
Now song was heard, now bugle horn that died  
Gradual 'mid sedge and reed. Alone the swan  
High on the western waters kept aloof ;  
Remote she eyed the scene with neck thrown back,  
Her ancient calm preferring, and her haunt  
Crystalline still. Alone the Julian Tower  
Far down the eastern stream, though tap'stries waved  
From every window, every roof o'er-swarmed  
With anthem-echoing throngs, maintained, unmoved,  
Roman and Stoic, her Cæsarean pride :  
On Saxon feasts she fixed a cold, grey gaze ;  
'Mid Christian hymns heard but the old acclaim—  
' Consul Romanus.'

When the sun had reached

Its noonday height, a people and its king  
Around their minster pressed. With measured tread  
And Introit chanted, up the pillared nave  
Reverent they moved : then knelt. Between their  
    ranks  
Their Bishop last advanced with mitred brow  
And in his hand the Cross, at every step  
Signing the benediction of his Lord.  
The altar steps he mounted. Turning then  
Westward his face to that innumerable host,



Thus spake he unastonished : ‘Sirs, ere now  
 This Church’s Consecration rite was sung :—  
 Be ours to sing thanksgiving to our God,  
 “Ter-Sanctus,” and “Te Deum.”’

### *THE PENANCE OF SAINT LAURENCE.*

Eadbald, King of Kent, persecuting the Church, Laurence the Bishop deems himself the chief of sinners because he has consented, like the neighbouring bishops, to depart ; but, being consoled by a wonderful reprimand, faces the King, and offers himself up to death. The King reproves them that gave him evil counsel.

THE day was dying on the Kentish downs  
 And in the oakwoods by the Stour was dead,  
 While sadly shone o’er snowy plains of March  
 Her comfortless, cold star. The daffodil  
 That year was past its time. The leaden stream  
 Had waited long that lamp of river-beds  
 Which, when the lights of Candlemas are quenched,  
 Looks forth through February mists. A film  
 Of ice lay brittle on the shallows : dark  
 And swift the central current rushed : the wind  
 Sighed through the tawny sedge.

‘So fleets our life—

Like yonder gloomy stream ; so sighs our age—  
 Like yonder sapless sedge !’ Thus Laurence mused  
 Standing on that sad margin all alone,  
 His twenty years of gladsome English toil  
 Ending at last abortive. ‘Stream well-loved,  
 Here on thy margin standing saw I first,  
 My head by chance uplifting from my book,

King Ethelbert's strong countenance ; he is dead ;  
 And, next him, riding through the April gleams,  
 Bertha, his Queen, with face so lit by love  
 Its lustre smote the beggar as she passed  
 And changed his sigh to song. She too is dead ;  
 And half their thanes that chased the stag that day,  
 Like echoes of their own glad bugle-horn,  
 Have passed and are not. Why must I abide ?  
 And why must age, querulous and coward both,  
 Past days lamenting, fear not less that stroke  
 Which makes an end of grief ? Base life of man !  
 How sinks thy slow infection through our bones ;  
 Then when you fawned upon us, high-souled youth  
 Heroic in its gladness, spurned your gifts,  
 Yearning for noble death. In age, in age  
 We kiss the hand that nothing holds but dust,  
 Murmuring, " Not yet ! "

A tear, ere long ice-glazed,  
 Hung on the old man's cheek. ' What now remains ?'  
 Some minutes passed ; then, lifting high his head,  
 He answered, ' God remains.' His faith, his heart,  
 Were unsubverted. 'Twas the weight of grief,  
 The exhausted nerve, the warmthless blood of age,  
 That pressed him down like sin, where sin was none—  
 Not sin, but weakness only. Long he mused,  
 Then slowly walked, and feebly, through the woods  
 Towards his house monastic. Vast it loomed  
 Through ground-fog seen ; and vaster, close beside,  
 That convent's church by great Augustine reared  
 Where once old woodlands clasped a temple old,  
 Vaunt of false Gods. To Peter and to Paul  
 That church was dedicate, albeit so long  
 High o'er the cloudy rack of fleeting years  
 It bore, and bears, its founder's name, not theirs.

Therein that holy founder slept in Christ,  
 And Ethelbert, and Bertha. All was changed :  
 King Eadbald, new-crowned and bad of life  
 Who still, whate'er was named of great or good,  
 Made answer, 'Dreams ! I say the flesh rules all !'  
 Hated the Cross. His Queen, that portent crowned,  
 She that with name of wife was yet no wife,  
 Abhorred that Cross and feared. A Baptist new  
 In that Herodian court had Laurence stood,  
 Commanding, 'Put the evil thing away !'  
 Since then the woman's to the monarch's hate  
 Had added strength—the serpent's poison-bag  
 Venoming the serpent's fang. 'Depart the realm !'  
 With voice scarce human thus the tyrant cried,  
 'Depart or die !' and gave the Church's goods  
 To clown and boor.

Upon the bank of Thames  
 Settled like ruin. Holy Seburt dead,  
 In that East Saxon kingdom monarch long,  
 Three sons unrighteous now their riot held.  
 Frowning upon the Christian Church they strode,  
 Full-armed, and each, with far-stretched foot firm set  
 Watching the Christian rite. 'Give us,' they cried,  
 While knelt God's children at their Paschal Feast,  
 'Give us those circlets of your sacred bread :  
 Ye feed therewith your beggars ; kings are we !'  
 The Bishop answered, 'Be, like them, baptized,  
 Sons of God's Church, His Sacrament with man,  
 For that cause Mother of Christ's Sacraments,  
 So shall ye share her Feast.' With lightning speed  
 Their swords leaped forth ; contemptuous next they  
 cried,  
 'For once we spare to sweep a witless head  
 From worthless shoulders. Ere to-morrow's dawn

Hence, nor return !' He sped to Rochester :  
 Her bishop, like himself, was under ban :  
 The twain to Canterbury passed, and there  
 Resolved to let the tempest waste its wrath,  
 And crossed the seas. By urgency outworn,  
 'Gainst that high judgment of his holier will  
 Laurence to theirs deferred, but tarried yet  
 For one day more to cast a last regard  
 On regions loved so long.

As compline ceased

He reached the abbey gates, and entered in :  
 Sadly the brethren looked him in the face,  
 Yet no one said, 'Take comfort !' Sad and sole  
 He passed to the Scriptorium : round he gazed,  
 And thought of happy days, when Gregory,  
 One time their Abbot, next their Pope, would send  
 Some precious volume to his exiled sons,  
 While they in reverence knelt, and kissed its edge,  
 And, kissing, heard once more, as if in dream,  
 Gregorian chants through Roman palm trees borne  
 With echoes from the Coliseum's wall  
 Adown that Cœlian Hill ; and saw God's poor  
 At feast around that humble board which graced  
 That palace senatorial once. He stood :  
 He raised a casket from an open chest,  
 And from that casket drew a blazoned scroll,  
 And placed it on the window-sill up-sloped  
 Breast-high, and faintly warmed by sinking sun ;  
 Then o'er it bent a space.

With sudden hands

The old man raised that scroll ; aloud he read :  
 'I, Ethelbert the King, and all my Thanés,  
 Honouring the Apostle Peter, cede to God  
 This Abbey and its lands. If heir of mine

Cancel that gift, when Christ with angels girt  
 Makes way to judge the Nations of this world,  
 His name be cancelled from the Book of Life.'  
 The old man paused ; then read the signatures,  
 ' I, Ethelbert, of Kent the King.' Who next ?  
 ' I, Eadbald, his son ;' to these succeeding,  
 ' I, Hennigisil, Duke ;' ' I, Hocca, Earl.'—  
 ' Can such things be ?' Around the old man's brow  
 The veins swelled out ; dilated nostril, mouth  
 Working as mouth of him that tasteth death,  
 With what beside is wiselier unrevealed,  
 Witnessed that agony which spake no more ;  
 He dashed the charter on the pavement down ;  
 Then on it gazed a space.

Remembering soon  
 Whose name stood first on that dishonoured list,  
 Contrite he raised that charter to his breast,  
 And pressed it there in silence. Hours went by ;  
 Then dark was all that room, and dark around  
 The windy corridors and courts stone-paved ;  
 And bitter blew the blast : his unlooped cloak  
 Fell loose : the cold he noted not. At last  
 A brother passed the door with lamp in hand :  
 Dazzled, he started first : then meekly spake,  
 ' Beseech the brethren that they strew my bed  
 Within the church. Until the second watch  
 There must I fast, and pray.'

The brethren heard,  
 And strewed his couch within the vast, void nave,  
 A mat and deer-skin, and, more high, that stone  
 The old head's nightly pillow. Echoes faint  
 Ere long of their receding footsteps died  
 While from the dark fringe of a rainy cloud  
 An ice-cold moon, ascending, streaked the church

With gleam and gloom alternate. On his knees  
 Meantime that aged priest was creeping slow  
 From stone to stone, as when on battle-plain,  
 The battle lost, some warrior wounded sore  
 By all forsaken, or some war-horse maimed  
 Drags a blind bulk along the fields in search  
 Of thirst-assuaging spring. Glittered serene  
 That light before the Sacrament of Love :  
 Thither he bent his way, and long time prayed :  
 Thence onward crept to where King Ethelbert  
 Slept, marble-shrined—his ashes, not the King,  
 Yet ashes kingly since God's temple once,  
 And waiting God's great day. Before that tomb,  
 Himself as rigid, with lean arms outspread,  
 Thus made the man his moan :

‘ King Ethelbert !

Hear'st thou in glory ? Ofttimes on thy knees  
 Thou mad'st confession of thine earthly sins  
 To me, a wounded worm this day on earth :  
 Now comforted art thou, and I brought low :  
 Yet, though I see no more that beaming front  
 And haply for my sins may see it never  
 Yet inwardly I gladden, knowing this  
 That thou art glad. Perchance thou hear'st me not  
 For thou wert still a heedless man of mirth,  
 Though sage as strong at need. If this were so,  
 Not less thy God would hear my prayer to thee  
 And grant it in thy reverence. Ethelbert !  
 Thou had'st thy trial time, since, many a year  
 All shepherdless thy well-loved people strayed  
 What time thyself, their shepherd, knew'st not Christ,  
 Sole shepherd of man's race. King Ethelbert !  
 Rememberest thou that day in Thanet Isle ?  
 That day the Bride of God on English shores

Set her pure foot ; and thou didst kneel to kiss it :  
 Thou gav'st her meat and drink in kingly wise ;  
 Gav'st her thy palace for her bridal bower ;  
 This Abbey build'dst—her fortress ! O those days  
 Crowned with such glories, with such sweetness winged !  
 Thou saw'st thy realm made one with Christ's : thou  
     saw'st

Thy race like angels ranging courts of Heaven :  
 This day, behold, thou seest the things thou seest !  
 If there be any hope, King Ethelbert  
 Help us this day with God !'

Upon his knees

Then crept that exile old to Bertha's tomb,  
 And there made moan : 'Thou tenderest Queen and  
     sweetest,

Whom no man ever gazed on save with joy  
 Or spake of, dead, save weeping ! Well I know  
 That on thee in thy cradle Mary flung  
 A lily whiter from her hand, a rose  
 Warm from her breath and breast, for all thy life  
 Was made of Chastities and Charities :  
 This hour thine eyes are on that Vision bent  
 Whercof the radiance, ere by thee beheld,  
 Gave thee thine earthly brightness. Mirrored there,  
 Seest thou, like moat in sunbeam well-nigh lost,  
 Our world of temporal anguish ? See it not !  
 For He alone, the essential Peace Eterne  
 Could see it unperturbed. In Him rejoice !  
 Yet, 'mid thy heavenly triumph, plead, O plead  
 For hearts that break below !'

Upon the ground

Awhile that man sore tried his forehead bowed ;  
 Then raised it till the frore and foggy beam  
 Mixed with his wintry hair. Once more he crept

Upon his knees through shadow ; reached at length  
 His toilsome travel's last and dearest bourn,  
 The grave of Saint Augustine. O'er it lay  
 The Patriarch's statued semblance as in sleep :  
 He knew it well, and found it, though to him  
 In darkness lost and veil beside of tears,  
 With level hands grazing those upward feet  
 Oft kissed, yet ne'er as now.

'Farewell forever !

Farewell, my Master, and farewell, my friend !  
 Since ever thou in heaven abid'st—and I——  
 Gregory the Pontiff from that Roman Hill  
 Sent thee to work a man's work far away,  
 And manlike didst thou work it. Prince, yet child,  
 Men saw thee, and obeyed thee. O'er the earth  
 Thy step was regal, meekness of thy Christ  
 Weighted with weight of conquerors and of kings :  
 Men saw a man who toiled not for himself  
 Yet never ceased from toil ; who warred on Sin ;  
 Had peace with all beside. In happy hour  
 God laid his holy hand upon thine eyes :  
 I knelt beside thy bed : I leaned mine ear  
 Down to thy lips to catch their last ; in vain :  
 Yet thou perchance wert murmuring in thy heart  
 " I leave my staff within no hireling's hand ;  
 Therefore my work shall last." Ah me ! Ah me !  
 There was a Laurence once on Afric's shore :  
 He with his Cyprian died. I too, methinks,  
 Had shared—how gladly shared—my Bishop's doom.  
 Father, with Gregory pray this night ! That God  
 Who promised, " for my servant David's sake,"  
 Even yet may hear thy prayer.'

Thus wept the man,  
 Till o'er him fell half slumber. Soon he woke



And, from between that statue's marble feet  
 Lifting a marble face, in silence crept  
 To where far off his bed was strewn, and drew  
 The deer-skin covering o'er him. With its warmth  
 Deep sleep, that solace of lamenting hearts  
 Which makes the waking bitterer, o'er him sank,  
 Nor wholly left him, though in sleep he moaned  
 When from the neighbouring farm, an hour ere dawn,  
 The second time rang out that clarion voice  
 Which bids the Christian watch.

As thus he lay

T'wards him there moved in visions of the Lord  
 A Venerable Shape, compact of light,  
 And loftier than our mortal. Near arrived,  
 That mild, compassionate Splendour shrank his beam,  
 Or healed with strengthening touch the gazer's eyes  
 Made worthier of such grace ; and Laurence saw  
 Princedom not less than his, the Apostles' Chief,  
 To whom the Saviour answered, ' Rock art thou,'  
 And later—crowning Love, not less than Faith—  
 ' Feed thou My Sheep, My Lambs !' He knew that  
 shape

For oft, a child 'mid catacombs of Rome  
 And winding ways girt by the martyred dead  
 His eyes had seen it. Pictured on those vaults  
 Stood Peter, Moses of the Christian Law,  
 Figured in one that by the Burning Bush  
 Unsandalled knelt, or drew with lifted hand  
 The torrent from the rock, yet wore not less  
 In aureole round his head the Apostle's name  
 'Petros,' and in his hand sustained the Keys:  
 Such shape once more he saw.

' And comest thou then  
 Long-awaited, or with sceptre-wielding hand!

Earthward to smite the unworthiest head on earth,  
 Or with the darker of those Keys thou bearest  
 Him from the synod of the Saints to shut  
 Who fled as flies the hireling? Let it be!  
 Not less in that bright City by whose gate  
 Warder thou sitt'st, my Master thou shalt see  
 Pacing the diamond terraces of God  
 And bastions jacinth-veined, my great Augustine,  
 When all who wrought the ill have passed to doom,  
 And all who missed the good. Nor walks he sole :  
 By him forever and forever pace  
 My Ethelbert, my Bertha! Who can tell  
 But in the on-sweeping centuries thrice or twice  
 These three may name my name?' He spake and wept.

To whom the Apostolic Splendour thus :  
 'Live, and be strong : for those thou lovest in Christ  
 Not only in far years shall name thy name ;  
 This day be sure that name they name in Christ :  
 Else wherefore am I here? Not thou alone  
 Much more in grief's bewilderment than fear  
 Hast from the right way swerved. Was I not strong?  
 I, from the first Elect and named anew?  
 I who received at first divine command  
 The Brother-band to strengthen ; last to rule?  
 I who to Hebrew and to Gentile both  
 Flung wide the portals of the heavenly realm?  
 Was I not strong? Behold, thou know'st my fall!  
 A second fall was near. At Rome the sword  
 Against me raged. Forth by the Appian Way  
 I fled ; and, past the gateway, face to face,  
 Him met Who up the steep of Calvary bare  
 For man's behoof the Cross. "Where goest Thou,  
 Lord?"

I spake ; then He : "I go to Rome, once more

To die for him who fears for Me to die.”  
 To Rome returned I ; and my end was peace.  
 Return thou too. Thy brethren have not sinned :  
 They fled, consentient with the Will Supreme :  
 Their names are written in the Book of Life :  
 Enough that He Who gives to each his part  
 Hath sealed thy sons and thee to loftier fates  
 Therefore more sternly tries. Be strong ; be glad :  
 For strength from joyance comes.’

The Vision passed :

The old man, seated on his narrow bed,  
 Rolled thrice his eyes around the vast, dim church,  
 Desiring to retain it. Vain the quest !  
 Yet still within his heart that Radiance lived :  
 The sweetness of that countenance fresh from God  
 Would not be dispossessed, but kindled there  
 Memorial dawn of brightness, more and more  
 Growing to perfect day : inviolate peace,  
 Such peace as heavenly visitants bequeath,  
 O'er-spread his spirit, gradual, like a sea :  
 Forth from the bosom of that peace upsoared  
 Hope, starry-crowned, and winged, that liberates oft  
 Faith, unextinct, though bound by Powers accursed  
 That o'er her plant the foot, and hold the chain—  
 Terror and Sloth. To noble spirits set free  
 Delight means gratitude. Thus Laurence joyed :  
 But soon, remembering that unworthy past,  
 Remorse succeeded, sorrow born of love,  
 Consoled by love alone. ‘ Ah ! slave,’ he cried,  
 ‘ That, serving such a God, could'st dream of flight :  
 How many a babe too weak to lift his head  
 Is strong enough to die ! ’ While thus he mused  
 The day-dawn reaching to his pallet showed  
 That Discipline, wire-woven, in ancient days

Guest of monastic bed. He snatched it thence :  
 Around his bending neck and shoulders lean  
 In dire revenge he hurled it. Spent at last,  
 Though late, those bleeding hands down dropped : the  
     cheek

Sank on the stony pillow. Little birds,  
 Low-chirping ere their songs began, attuned  
 Slumber unbroken. In a single hour  
 He slept a long night's sleep.

The rising sun

Woke him : but in his heart another sun,  
 New-risen serene with healing on its wings,  
 Outshone that sun in brightness. 'Mid the choir  
 His voice was loudest while they chanted lauds :  
 Brother to brother whispered, issuing forth,  
 'He walks in stature higher by a head  
 Than in the month gone by !'

That day at noon

King Eadwald, intent to whiten theft  
 And sacrilege with sanctitudes of law,  
 Girt by his warriors and his Witena,  
 Enthronèd sat. 'What boots it ?' laughed a thane ;  
 'Laurence has fled ! we battle with dead men !'  
 'Ay, ay,' the King replied, 'I told you oft  
 Sages can brag ; your dreamer weaves his dream :  
 But honest flesh rules all !' While thus they spake  
 Confusion filled the hall : through guarded gates  
 A priest advanced with mitre and with Cross,  
 A monk that seemed not monk, but prince disguised :  
 It was Saint Laurence. As he neared the throne  
 The fashion of the tyrant's face was changed :  
 'Dar'st thou ?' he cried, 'I deemed thee fled the realm—  
 What seek'st thou here ?' The Saint made answer,  
     'Death.'

Calmly he told his tale ; then ended thus :  
 ‘ To me that sinful past is sin of one  
 Buried in years gone by. All else is dream  
 Save that last look the Apostle on me bent  
 Ere from my sight he ceased. I saw therein  
 The reflex of that wondrous last Regard  
 Cast by the sentenced Saviour of mankind  
 On one who had denied Him, standing cold  
 Beside the High Priest’s gate. Like him, I wept ;  
 His countenance wrought my penance, not his hand :  
 I scarcely felt the scourge.’

King Eadbald

Drove back the sword half drawn, and round him stared ;  
 Then sat as one amazed. He rose ; he cried,  
 ‘ Ulf ! Kathnar ! Strip his shoulders bare ? If true  
 His tale, the brand remains !’

Two chiefs stepped forth :  
 They dragged with trembling hand, and many a pause,  
 The external garb pontific first removed,  
 Dark, blood-stained garment from the bleeding flesh,  
 The old man kneeling. Once, and only once,  
 The monarch gazed on that disastrous sight,  
 Muttering, ‘ and yet he lives !’ A time it was  
 Of swift transitions. Hearts, how proud soe’er,  
 Made not that boast—consistency in sin,  
 Though dark and rough accessible to Grace  
 As earth to vernal showers. With hands hard-  
 clenched

The King upstarted : thus his voice rang out :  
 ‘ Beware, who gave ill counsel to their King !  
 The royal countenance is against them set,  
 Ill merchants trafficking with his lesser moods !  
 Does any say the King wrought well of late,  
 Warring on Christ, and chasing hence His priests ?

The man that lies shall die ! This day, once more  
I ratify my Father's oath, and mine,  
To keep the Church in peace : and though I swear  
To push God's monks from yonder monastery  
And lodge therein the horses of the Queen,  
Those horses, and the ill-persuading Queen,  
Shall flee my kingdom, and the monks abide !  
Brave work ye worked, my loose-kneed Witena,  
This day, Christ's portion yielding to my wrath !  
See how I prize your labours !' With his sword  
He clave the red seal from the statute scroll  
And stamped it under foot. Once more he spake,  
Gazing with lion gaze from man to man :  
'The man that, since my Father, Ethelbert,  
Though monarch, stooped to common doom of men,  
Hath filched from Holy Church fee-farm, or grange,  
Sepulchral brass, gold chalice, bell or book,  
See he restore it ere the sun goes down ;  
If not, he dies ! Not always winter reigns ;  
May-breeze returns, and bud-releasing breath,  
When hoped the least :—'tis thus with royal minds !'  
He spake : from that day forth in Canterbury  
Till reigned the Norman, crowned on Hastings' field,  
God's Church had rest. In many a Saxon realm  
Convulsion rocked her cradle : altars raised  
By earlier kings by later were o'erthrown :  
One half the mighty Roman work, and more,  
Fell to the ground : Columba's Irish monks  
The ruin raised. From Canterbury's towers,  
'Rome of the North' long named, from them alone  
Above sea-surge still shone that vestal fire  
By tempest fanned, not quenched ; and at her breast  
For centuries six were nursed that Cœlian race,  
The Benedictine Primates of the Land.

*KING SIGEBERT OF EAST ANGLIA,  
AND HEIDA THE PROPHETESS.*

Sigebert, King of East Anglia, moved by what he has heard from a Christian priest, consults the Prophetess Heida. In the doctrine he reports Heida recognises certain sacred traditions from the East, originally included in the Northern religion, and affirms that the new Faith is the fulfilment of the great Voluspá prophecy, the earliest record of that religion, which foretold the destruction both of the Odin-Gods and the Giant race, the restoration of all things, and the reign of Love.

LONG time upon the late-closed door the King  
Kept his eyes fixed. The wondrous guest was gone ;  
Yet, seeing that his words were great and sage  
Compassionate for the sorrowful state of man  
Yet sparing not man's sin, their echoes lived  
Thrilling large chambers in the monarch's breast  
Silent for many a year. Exiled in France  
The mystery of the Faith had reached his ear  
In word but not in power. The westering sun  
Lengthened upon the palace floor its beam  
Yet the strong hand which propped that thoughtful  
head  
Sank not, nor moved. Sudden, King Sigebert  
Arose and spake : ' I go to Heida's Tower :  
Await ye my return.'

The woods ere long  
Around him closed. Upon the wintry boughs  
An iron shadow pressed ; and as the wind  
Increased beneath their roofs an iron sound

Clangoured funereal. Down their gloomiest aisle  
With snow flakes white, the monarch strode till now  
Before him, and not distant, Heida's Tower,  
The Prophetess by all men feared yet loved  
Smit by a cold beam from the yellowing west,  
Shone like a tower of brass. Her ravens twain  
Crested the turrets of its frowning gate  
Unwatched by warder. Sigebert passed in :  
Beneath the stony vault the queenly Scer  
Sat on her ebony throne.

With pallid lips  
The King rehearsed his tale ; how one with brow  
Lordlier than man's, and visionary eyes  
Which, wander where they might, saw Spirits still  
Had told him many marvels of some God  
Mightier than Odin thrice. He paused awhile :  
A warning shadow came to Heida's brow :  
Nathless she nothing spake. The King resumed :  
' He spake—that stranger—of the things he saw :  
For he, his body tranced, it may be dead,  
In spirit oft hath walked the Spirit-Land :  
Thence, downward gazing, once he saw our earth  
A little vale obscure ; above it hung,  
Those four great Fires that desolate mankind :  
The Fire of Falsehood first ; the Fire of Lust,  
Ravening for weeds and scum ; the Fire of Hate,  
Hurling on war-fields brother-man 'gainst man ;  
The Fire of tyrannous Pride. While yet he gazed,  
Behold, those Fires, widening, commixed, then soared  
Threatening the skies. A Spirit near him cried  
" Fear nought ; for breeze-like pass the flames o'er him  
In whom they won no mastery there below :  
But woe to those who, charioted therein  
Rode forth triumphant o'er the necks of men,



And had their day on earth. Proportioned flames  
 Of other edge shall try their work and them !”  
 Thus spake my guest : the frost wind smote his brows,  
 While on that moonlit crag we sat ice-cold  
 Yet down them, like the reaper’s sweat at noon,  
 The drops of anguish streamed. Till then, methinks,  
 That thing Sin is I knew not.

Calm of voice

Again he spake. He told me of his God :  
 That God, like Odin, is a God of War :  
 Who serve Him wear His armour day and night :  
 The maiden, nay, the child, must wield the sword ;  
 Yet none may hate his neighbour. Thus he spake  
 That Prophet from far regions : “ Wherefore wreck  
 Thy brother man ? upon his innocent babes  
 Drag down the ruinous roof ? Seek manlier tasks !  
 The death in battle is the easiest death :  
 Be yours the daily dying ; lifelong death ;  
 Death of the body that the soul may live.  
 War on the Spirits unnumbered and accurst  
 Which, rulers of the darkness of this world,  
 Drive, hour by hour, their lances through man’s soul  
 That wits not of the wounding !”

Heida turned

A keen eye on the King : ‘ Whence came your guest ?  
 Not from those sun-bright southern shores, I ween ? ’  
 He answered, ‘ Nay, from western isle remote  
 That Prophet came.’ Then Heida’s countenance fell :  
 ‘ The West ! the West ! it should have been the East !  
 Conclude your tale : what saith your guest of God ? ’  
 The King replied : ‘ His God so loved mankind  
 That, God remaining, He became a man ;  
 So hated sin that, sin to slay, He died.  
 One tear of His had paid the dreadful debt :—

Not so He willed it : thus He willed, to wake  
 In man, His lost one, quenchless hate of sin  
 Proportioned to the death-pang of a God ;  
 Nor chose He lonely majesty of death :  
 'Twixt Sinners paired He died.'

In Heida's eye

Trembled a tear. ' A dream was mine in youth,  
 When first the rose of girlhood warmed my cheek,  
 A dream of some great Sacrifice that claimed  
 Not praise—not praise—it only yearned to die  
 Helping the Loved. A maid alone, I thought,  
 Such sacrifice could offer.' As she spake,  
 She pressed upon the pale cheek, warmed once more,  
 Her cold, thin hand a moment.

' Maiden-born

Was He, my guest revealed,' the King replied :  
 ' Then from that Angel's " Hail," and her response,  
 " So be it unto me," when sinless doubt  
 Vanished in world-renewing, free consent,  
 He told the tale ;—the Infant in the crib ;  
 The shepherds o'er Him bowed'—with widening eyes  
 Heida, bent forward, saw like them that Child—  
 ' The Star that lead the Magians from the East :'  
 ' The East, the East ! It should have been the East !'  
 Once more she cried ; ' our race is from the East :  
 The Persian worshipped t'ward the rising sun :  
 You said, but now, the West.' The King resumed :  
 ' God's priest was from the West ; but in the East  
 The great Deliverer sprang.' Next, step by step,  
 Like herald panting forth in leaguered town  
 Tidings unhop'd for of deliverance strange  
 Through victory on some battle-field remote,  
 The King rehearsed his theme, from that first Word,  
 ' The Woman's Seed shall bruise the Serpent's head,'

Prime Gospel, ne'er forgotten in the East,  
 To Calvary's Cross, the Resurrection morn,  
 Lastly the great Ascension into heaven :  
 And ever as he spake on Heida's cheek  
 The red spot, deepening, spread ; within her eyes  
 An unastonished gladness waxed more large :  
 Back to the marble woman came her youth :  
 Once more within her heaving breast it lived,  
 Once more upon her forehead shone, as when  
 The after-glow returns to Alpine snows  
 Left death-like by dead day. Question at times  
 She made, yet seemed the answer to foreknow.  
 That tale complete, low-toned at last she spake :  
 ' Unhappy they to whom these things are hard !'  
 Then silent sat, and by degrees became  
 Once more that dreaded prophet, stern and cold.  
 The silence deeper grew : the sun, not set,  
 Had sunk beneath the forest's western ridge ;  
 And jagged shadows tinged that stony floor  
 Whereon the monarch knelt. Slowly therefrom  
 He raised his head ; then slowly made demand :  
 ' Is he Apostate who discards old Faith ?'

Long time in musings Heida sat, then spake :  
 ' Yea, if that Faith discarded be the Truth :  
 Not so, if it be falsehood. God is Truth ;  
 God-taught, true hearts discern that Truth, and  
     guard it ;  
 Whom God forsakes forsake it. O thou North,  
 That beat'st thy brand so loud against thy shield  
 Hearing nought else, what Truth one day was thine !  
 Behold within corruption's charnel vaults  
 It sleeps this day. What God shall lift its head ?  
 We came from regions of the rising sun :

Scorning the temples built by mortal hand,  
 We worshipp'd God—one God—the Immense, All-  
 Just :

That worship was the worship of great hearts :  
 Duty was worship then : that God received it :  
 I know not if benignly He received it ;  
 If God be Love I know not. This I know,  
 God loves not priest that under roofs of gold  
 Lifts, in his right hand held, the Sacrifice ;  
 The left, behind him, fingering for the dole.  
 King of East Anglia's realm, the primal Truths  
 Are vanished from our Faith : the ensanguined rite,  
 The insane carouse survive !'

Thus Heida spake,  
 Heida, the strong one by the strong ones feared ;  
 Heida the sad one by the mourners loved,  
 Heida, the brooder on the sacred Past,  
 The nursling of a Prophet House, the child  
 Of old traditions sage !

She paused, and then  
 Milder, resumed : ' What moved thee to believe ?'  
 And Sigebert made answer thus : ' The Sword :  
 For as a sword that Truth the stranger preached  
 Ran down into my heart.' Heida to him,  
 ' Well saidst thou " as a Sword : " a Sword is Truth ;—  
 As sharp a sword is Love : and many a time  
 In youth, but not the earliest, happiest youth,  
 When first I found that grief was in the world  
 Had learned how deep its root, an infant's wail  
 Went through me like a sword. Man's cry it seemed  
 The blindfold, crownèd creature's cry for Truth  
 His spirit's sole deliverer.'

Once again  
 She mused and then continued, ' Truth and Love

Are gifts too great to give themselves for nought,  
 Exacting Gods. Within man's bleeding heart,  
 If e'er to man conceded, both shall lie  
 Crossed, like two swords—

Behold thine image, crowned Humanity !  
 ' Better such dower than life exempt from woe :  
 Our Fathers knew to suffer ; joyed in pain ;  
 They knew not this—how deep its root !'

Once more

The Prophetess was mute : again she spake :  
 ' How named thy guest his God ?' The King replied :  
 ' The Warrior God Who comes to judge the world ;  
 The Lord of Love ; the God Who wars on Sin,  
 And ceases not to war.' ' Ay, militant '  
 Heida rejoined, with eyes that shone like stars :  
 ' The Persian knew Him. Ormuzd was His name :  
 Unpitying Light against the darkness warred ;  
 Against the Light the Darkness. Could the Light  
 Remit, one moment's length, to pierce that gloom,  
 Himself in gloom were swallowed.'

Yet again

In silence Heida sat ; then cried aloud  
 ' Odin, and all his radiant Æsir Gods  
 Forth thronging daily from the golden gates  
 Of Asgard City, their supernal house  
 War on that giant brood of Jötunheim,  
 Lodged 'mid their mountains of eternal ice  
 Which circles still that sea surrounding earth  
 Man's narrow home. I know that mystery now !  
 That warfare means the war of Good on Ill :  
 We shared that warfare once ! This day, depraved,  
 Warring, we war alone for rage and hate ;  
 Men fight as fight the lion and the pard :  
 For them the sanctity of war is lost

Lost like that kindred sanctity of Love,  
 Our household boast of old. The Father-God  
 Vowed us to battle but as Virtue's proof,  
 High test of softness scorned. *His* warrior knew  
 'Twas Odin o'er the battle field who sent  
 Pure-handed maiden Goddesses, the Norns,  
 Not vulture-like, but dove-like, mild as dawn,  
 To seal the foreheads of his sons elect  
 Seal them to death, the bravest with a kiss :  
*His* warrior, arming, cried aloud, "This day  
 I speed five Heroes to Valhalla's Hall :  
 To-morrow night in love I share their Feast !"  
 He honoured whom he slew.'

To her the King :

' That Stranger with severer speech than thine,  
 Sharp flail and stigma, charged the world with sin,  
 The vast, wide world, and not one race alone :  
 Each nation, he proclaimed, from Man's great stem  
 Issuing, had with it borne one Word divine  
 Rapt from God's starry volume in the skies,  
 Each word a separate Truth, that, angel-like,  
 Before them winging, on their faces flung  
 Splendour of destined morn, and led man's race  
 Triumphant long on virtue's road. Themselves  
 Had changed that True to False. The Judge had come ;  
 That Power Who both beginning is and end  
 Had stooped to earth to judge the earth with fire ;  
 A fire of Love, He came to cleanse the just ;  
 A fire of Vengeance, to consume the impure :  
 His fan is in His hand : the chaff shall burn ;  
 The grain be garnered. " Fall, high palace roofs "  
 He cried, " for ye have sheltered dens of sin :  
 Fall, he that, impious, scorned the First and Last ;  
 Fall, he that bowed not to the hoary head ;

Fall, he that loosed by fraud the maiden zone ;  
 Fall, he that lusted for the poor man's field ;  
 Fall, rebel Peoples ; fall, disloyal Kings ;  
 And fall " dread Mother, is the word offence ?—  
 " False Gods, long served ; for God Himself is nigh." "

The monarch ceased : on Heida's face that hour  
 He feared to look ; but when she spake, her voice  
 Betrayed no passion of a soul perturbed :  
 Austere it was ; not wrathful ; these her words :  
 ' Son, as I hearkened to thy tale this day  
 Memory returned to me of visions three  
 That lighted three great junctures of my life :  
 And thrice thy words were echoes strange of words  
 That shook my tender childhood slumbering half  
 Half-waked by matin beams—"The Gods must die."  
 Three times that awful sound was in mine ear :  
 Later I learned that voice was nothing new.  
 My Son, the earliest record of our Faith,  
 So sacred that on Runic stave or stone  
 None dared to grave it, lore from age to age  
 Transmitted by white lips of trembling seers  
 Spared not to wing, like arrow sped from God  
 That word to man, "Valhalla's Gods must die !"  
 The Gods and Giant Race that strove so long,  
 Met in their last and mightiest battle-field,  
 Must die, and die one death. That prophet-voice  
 The Gods have heard. Therefore they daily swell  
 Valhalla's Hall with heroes rapt from earth  
 To aid them in that fight.'

On Heida's face  
 At last the King, his head uplifting, gazed.  
 There where the inviolate calm had dwelt alone  
 A million thoughts, each following each, on swept,

That calm beneath them still, as when some grove  
 O'er-run by sudden gust of summer storm  
 With inly-working panic thrills at first,  
 Then springs to meet the gale while o'er it rush  
 Shadows with splendours mixed. Upon her breast  
 Came down the fire divine. With lifted hands  
 She stood : she sang a death-song centuries old  
 The dirge prophetic both of Gods and men :

‘The iron age shall make an iron end :  
 The men who lived in hate, or impious love,  
 Shall meet in one red battle-field. That day  
 The forests of the earth, blackening, shall die ;  
 The stars down-fall ; the Wingèd Hound of Heaven  
 That chased the Sun from age to age shall close  
 O'er it at last ; the Ash Tree, Ygdrasil  
 Whose boughs o'er-roof the skies, whose roots descend  
 To Hell, whose leaves are lives of men, whose boughs  
 Are destined empires that o'er-awe the world,  
 Shall drop its fruit unripe. The Midgard Snake  
 Circling that sea which girds the orb of earth,  
 Shall wake, and turn, and ocean in one wave  
 O'er-sweep all lands. Thereon shall Naglfar ride,  
 The skeleton ship all ribbed with bones of men,  
 Whose sails are woven of night, and by whose helm  
 Stand the Three Fates. When heaves that ship in  
 sight

Then know the end draws nigh.’

She ceased ; then spake :

‘ If any doubt, the Voluspá tells all,  
 The song the mystic maiden, Vola, sang,  
 Our first of prophets she, as I the last :  
 She sang that song no Prophet dared to write.’

But Sigebert made answer where he knelt,



Old Faith back rushing blindly on his heart :  
 'Though man's last nation lay a wreath of dust,  
 Though earth were sea, not less in heaven the Gods  
 Would hold their revels still ; Valhalla's Halls  
 Resound the Heroes' triumph !'

Once again

Heida arose : once more her pallid face  
 Shone lightning-like, wan cheeks and flashing eyes ;  
 Once more she sang : 'The Warder of the Gods,  
 Soundeth the Gjallar Trumpet, never heard  
 Before by Gods or mortals : from their feast  
 The everlasting synod of the Gods  
 Rush forth, gold-armed, with chariot and with horse :  
 First rides the Father of the flock divine,  
 Odin, our King, and, at his right hand, Thor  
 Whose thunder hammer splits the mountain crags  
 And level lays the summits of the world ;  
 Heimdall and Bragi, Uller, Njord, and Tyr,  
 Behind them throng ; with these the concourse huge  
 Of lesser Gods, and Heroes snatched from earth  
 Since man's first battle, part to bear with Gods  
 In this their greatest. From their halls of ice  
 To meet them stride the mighty Giant-Brood  
 The moving mountains of old Jötunheim,  
 Strong with all strengths of Nature, flood or fire,  
 Glacier, or stream volcanic from red hills  
 Cutting its way through billows ;—on they throng  
 Topping the clouds, and, leagues before them, flinging  
 Huge shade, like shade of mountains east o'er wastes  
 When sets the sun.' A little time she ceased ;  
 Then fiercelier sang : 'Flanking that Giant-Brood  
 I see two Portents terrible as Sin :—  
 The Midgard Snake primeval at the right  
 With demon-crest as haughtily upheaved

As though all ocean curled into one wave,  
 A million rainbows braid that glooming arch ;  
 And Death therein is mirrored. At the left,  
 On moves that brother Terror, wolf in shape,  
 Which, bound till now by craft of prescient Gods,  
 Weltered in Hell's abyss. Till came the hour  
 A single hair inwoven by heavenly hand  
 Sufficed to chain that monster to his rock ;  
 His fast is over now ; his dusky jaws  
 At last the Eternal Hunger lifts distent  
 As far as heaven from earth.'

The Prophetess

One moment pressed her palms upon her eyes  
 Then flung them wide. 'The Father of the Gods  
 Our Odin, at that Portent hurls his lance ;  
 And Thor, though bleeding fast, with hammer raised  
 Deals with that Serpent's scales.'

'The Gods shall win,'

Shouted the King, forgetting at that hour  
 All save the strife, while on his brow there burned  
 Hue of the battle at the battle's height  
 When no man staunches wound. With voice serene  
 (The storm had left her) Heida made reply :  
 'If any doubt, the Voluspá tells all.  
 Ere yet Valhalla's lower heaven was shaped  
 Muspell, the great Third Heaven immeasurable,  
 Above it towered, throne of that God Supreme  
 Who knew beginning none and knows no end :  
 High on its southern cliff that dread One sits,  
 Nor ever from the South withdraws His gaze,  
 Nor ever drops that bright, sky-pointing Sword  
 Whose splendour dims the noontide sun. That God—  
 He, and the Spirit-Host that wing His light  
 When shines the Judgment Sign, shall stand on earth

And judge the earth with fire. Nor men nor Gods  
Shall face that fire and live.'

As Heida spake

The broad full moon above the forest soared  
And changed her form to light. With hands out-  
stretched

She sang her last of songs : 'The Hour is come :  
Bifrost, the rainbow-bridge 'twixt heaven and earth  
Shatters ; the crystal walls of heaven roll in :  
Above the ruins ride the Sons of Light.

That dread One first—

Forth from His helm the intolerable beam  
Strikes to the battle-field ; the Giant-Brood  
Die in that flame ; and Odin, and his Gods :  
Valhalla falls, and with it Jötunheim,  
Its ice-piled mountains melting into waves :  
In fire are all things lost !'

Then wept the King :

'Alas for Odin and his brethren Gods  
That in their great hands stayed the Northern Land !  
Alas for man !' But Heida, with fixed face  
Whereon there sat its ancient calm, replied :  
'Nothing that lived but shall again have life,  
Such life as Virtue claims. Ill-working men  
With Loki and with Hela, evil Gods,  
Shall dwell far down in Náströnd's death-black pile  
Compact of serpent scales, whose thousand gates  
Face to the North, blinded by endless storm ;  
But from the sea shall rise a happier earth,  
Holier and happier. There the good and true  
Secure shall gladden, and the fiery flame  
Harm them no more. Another Asgard there  
Where stood that earlier, ere our fathers left  
Their native East, shall lift sublimer towers

Dawn-lighted by a loftier Ararat :  
Just men and pure shall pace its palmy steeps  
With him of race divine yet human heart,  
Baldur upon whose beaming front the Gods  
Gazing, exulted ; from whose lips mankind  
Shall gather counsel. Hand in hand with him  
Shall stand the blind God, Hödur, now not blind,  
That, witless, slew him with the mistletoe,  
Yet loved him well. Others, both men and Gods  
That dread Third Heaven attained, shall make abode  
With Him Who ever is, and ever was,  
Enthroned like Him upon its southern cliff,  
Drinking the light immortal. From beneath  
Like winds from flowery wildernesses borne,  
The breath of all good deeds and virtuous thoughts  
Their own, or others', since the worlds were made  
All generous sufferings, o'er their hearts shall hang,  
Fragrance perpetual ; and, where'er they gaze  
The Vision of their God shall on them shine.'

Thus Heida spake, and ceased ; then added, ' Son,  
Our Faith shall never suffer wreck : fear nought !  
Fulfilment, not Destruction, is its end.  
But thou return, and bid thy herald guest  
Who sought thee, wandering from his westward Isle  
Approach my gates at dawn, and in mine ear  
Divulge his message to this land. Farewell !'

Then from his knees the monarch rose, and took  
Through the huge moonlit woods his homeward way.

*KING SIGEBERT OF ESSEX, OR A FRIEND  
AT NEED.*

Sigebert, King of Essex, labours with Cedd the Bishop for the conversion of his people ; but he feasts with a certain impious kinsman ; and it is foretold to him that for that sin, though pardoned, he shall die by that kinsman's hand. This prophecy having been accomplished, Cedd betakes himself to Lastingham, there to pray with his three brothers for the King's soul. His prayer is heard, and in a few days he dies. Thirty of Cedd's monks, issuing from Essex to pray at his grave, die also, and are buried in a circle round it.

‘ AT last, resolve, my brother, and my friend !  
Fling from you, as I fling this cloak, your Gods  
And cleave to Him the Eternal, One and Sole,  
The All-Wise, All-Righteous and Illimitable,  
Who made us, and will judge.’ Thus Oswy spake  
To Sigebert, his friend, of Essex King  
Essex once Christian. Royal Sebert dead,  
The church of God had sorrow by the Thames :  
Three Pagan brothers in his place held sway :  
They warred upon God's people ; for which cause  
God warred on them and by the Wessex sword  
In one day hewed them down. King Sigebert  
Throned in their place, to Oswy thus replied :  
‘ O friend, I saw the Truth, yet saw it not !  
’Twas like the light forth flashed from oar remote,  
Now vivid, vanished now. Not less, methinks  
Thy Christ ere now had won me save for this ;  
I feared that in my bosom love for thee  
Not Truth alone, prevailed. I left thy court ;

I counselled with my wisest ; by degrees,  
 Though grieving thus to outrage loyal hearts  
 Reached my resolve : henceforth I serve thy God :  
 My kingdom may renounce me if it will.'  
 Then came the Bishop old, and nigh that Wall  
 Which spans the northern land from sea to sea  
 Baptized him to the God Triune. At night  
 The King addressed him thus : ' My task is hard ;  
 Yield me four priests of thine from Holy Isle  
 To shape my courses.' Finan gazed around  
 And made election—Cedd and others three ;  
 He consecrated Cedd with staff and ring ;  
 And by the morning's sunrise Sigebert  
 Rode with them, face to south.

The Spring, long checked,  
 Fell, like God's Grace, or fire, or flood, at once  
 O'er all the land : it swathed the hills in green ;  
 It fringed with violets cleft and rock ; illumed  
 The stream with primrose tufts : but mightier far  
 That Spring which triumphed in the monarch's breast,  
 All doubt dispelled. That smile which knew not  
 cause

Looked like his angel's mirrored on his face :  
 At times he seemed with utter gladness dazed ;  
 At times he laughed aloud. ' Father,' he cried,  
 ' That darkness from my spirit is raised at last :  
 Ah fool ! ah fool ! to wait for proof so long !  
 Unseal thine eyes, and all things speak of God :  
 The snows on yonder thorn His pureness show ;  
 Yon golden iris bank His love. But now  
 I marked a child that by its father ran :  
 Some mystery they seemed of love in heaven  
 Imaged in earthly love.' With sad, sweet smile  
 The old man answered : ' Pain there is on earth—

Bereavement, sickness, death.' The King replied :  
 ' It was by suffering, not by deed, or word  
 God's Son redeemed mankind.' Then answered Cedd:  
 ' God hath thee in His net ; and well art thou !  
 That Truth thou seest this day and feelest, live !  
 So shall it live within thee. If, more late,  
 Rebuke should come, or age, remember then  
 This day-spring of thy strength and answer thus,  
 " With me God feasted in my day of youth :  
 So feast He now with others ! " "

Years went by,  
 And Cedd in work and word was mighty still  
 And throve with God. The strong East Saxon race  
 Grew gentle in his presence : they were brave  
 And faith is courage in the things divine,  
 Courage with meekness blent. The heroic heart  
 Beats to the spiritual cognate, paltering not  
 Fraudulent with Truth once known. Like winds from  
 God

God's message on them fell. Old bonds of sin  
 Snapt by the vastness of the growing soul  
 Burst of themselves ; and in the heart late bound  
 Virtue had room to breathe. As when that Voice  
 Primeval o'er the formless chaos rolled,  
 And, straight, confusions ceased, the greater orb  
 Ruling the day, the lesser, night ; even so,  
 Born of that Bethlehem Mystery, Order lived :  
 Divine commandments fixed a firmament  
 Betwixt man's lower instincts and his mind :  
 From unsuspected summits of his Spirit  
 The morning shone. The nation with the man  
 Partook the joy : from duty freedom flowed ;  
 And there where tribes had roved a People lived.  
 A pathos of strange beauty hung thenceforth

O'er humblest hamlet : he who passed it prayed  
 ' May never sword come here ! ' Bishop and King  
 Together laboured : well that Bishop's love  
 Repaid that royal zeal. If random speech  
 Censured the King, though justly, sudden red  
 Circling the old man's silver-tressed brow  
 Showed, though he spake not, that in saintly breast  
 The human heart lived on.

In Ithancester

He dwelt, and toiled : not less to Lindisfarne,  
 His ancient home in spirit oft he yearned  
 Longing for converse with his God alone ;  
 And made retreat there often, not to shun  
 Labour allotted, but to draw from heaven  
 Strength for his task. One year, returning thence,  
 Dēira's King addressed him as they rode :  
 ' My father, choose the richest of my lands  
 And build thereon a holy monastery ;  
 So shall my realm be blessed, and I, and mine.'  
 He answered : ' Son, no wealthy lands for us !  
 Spake not the prophet : " There where dragons roamed,  
 In later days the grass shall grow—the reed " ?  
 I choose those rocky hills that, on our left  
 Drag down the skiey waters to the woods :  
 Such loved I from my youth ; to me they said,  
 " Bandits this hour usurp our heights, and beasts  
 Cumber our caves : expel the seed accurst,  
 And yield us back to God ! " ' "

The King gave ear ;  
 And Cedd within those mountains passed his Lent,  
 Driving with prayer and fast the Spirits Accurst  
 With ignominy forth. Foundations next  
 He laid with sacred pomp. Fair rose the walls :  
 All day the March sea blew its thunder blasts



Through wide-mouthed trumpets of ravine or rift  
 On winding far to where in wooden cell  
 The old man prayed, while o'er him rushed the cloud  
 Storm borne from crag to crag. Serener breeze,  
 With alternation soft in Nature's course,  
 Following ere long, great Easter's harbinger,  
 Thus spake he ; ' I must keep the Feast at home ;  
 My children there expect me.' Parting thence,  
 He left his brothers three to consummate  
 His work begun, Celin, and Cynabil,  
 And Chad at Lichfield Bishop ere he died.  
 Thus Lastingham had birth.

Beside the Thames

Meantime dark deeds were done. There dwelt two  
 thanes,  
 The kinsmen of the King, his friends in youth,  
 Of meanest friend unworthy. Far and wide  
 They ravined, and the laws of God and man  
 Despised alike. Three times, in days gone by,  
 A warning hand their Bishop o'er them raised ;  
 The fourth like bolt from heaven on them it fell,  
 And clave them from God's Church. They heeded  
 not :

And now the elder kept his birthday feast,  
 Summoning his friends around him, first the King.  
 Doubtful and sad, the o'er-gentle monarch mused :  
 ' To feast with sinners is to sanction sin,  
 A deed abhorred ; the alternative is hard :  
 Must then their sovereign shame with open scorn  
 Kinsman and friend ? I think they mourn the past,  
 And, were our Bishop here, would pardon sue.'  
 Boding, yet self-deceived, he joined that feast :  
 Thereat he saw scant sign of penitence :  
 Ere long he bade farewell.

That self-same hour  
 Cedd from his northern pilgrimage returned ;  
 The monarch met him at the offenders' gate,  
 And, instant when he saw that reverend face,  
 His sin before him stood. Down from his horse  
 Leaping, he told him all, and penance prayed.  
 Long time the old man on that royal front  
 Fixed a sad eye. 'Thy sin was great, my son,  
 Shaming thy God to spare a sinner's shame:  
 That sin thy God forgives and I remit:  
 But those whom God forgives He chastens oft :  
 My son, I see a sign upon thy brow !  
 Ere yonder lessening moon completes her wane  
 Behold, the blood-stained hand late clasped in thine  
 Shall drag thee to thy death.' The King replied :  
 ' A Sigebert there lived, East Anglia's King,  
 Whose death was glorious to his realm. May mine,  
 Dark and inglorious, strengthen hearts infirm,  
 And profit thus my land.'

A time it was  
 When Christian mercy judged by Pagan hearts  
 Not virtue seemed but sin. That sin's reproach  
 The King had long sustained. Ere long it chanced  
 That, near the stronghold of that impious feast,  
 A vanquished rebel, long in forests hid  
 Drew near, and knelt to Sigebert for grace  
 And won his suit. The monarch's kinsmen twain,  
 Those men of blood, forth-gazing from a tower  
 Saw all ; heard all. Upon them fury fell,  
 As when through cloudless skies there comes a blast  
 From site unknown, that, instant, finds its prey,  
 Circling some white-sailed bark or towering tree  
 And, with a touch, down-wrenching ; all things  
 else

Unharm'd, though near. They snatch'd their daggers  
 up,  
 And rush'd upon their prey, and, shouting thus  
 'White-liver'd slave, that mak'st thy throne a jest  
 And mock'st great Odin's self, and us thy kin,  
 To please thy shaveling' struck him through the heart;  
 Then, spurring through the woodlands to the sea,  
 Were never heard of more.

Throughout the land  
 Lament was made; lament in every house,  
 As though in each its eldest-born lay dead;  
 Lament far off and near. The others wept:  
 Cedd, in long vigils of the lonely night,  
 Not wept alone, but lifted strength of prayer  
 And, morn by morn, that Sacrifice Eterne,  
 Mightier tenfold in impetrative power  
 Than prayers of all man's race, from Adam's first  
 To his who latest on the Judgment Day  
 Shall raise his hands to God. Four years went by:  
 That mourner's wound they staunch'd not. Oft in  
 sleep  
 He murmured low, 'Would I had died for thee!'—  
 And once, half-waked by rush of morning rains,  
 'Why saw I on his brow that fatal sign?—  
 He might have lived till now!' Within his heart  
 At last there rose a cry, 'To Lastingham!  
 Pray with thy brothers three, for saints are they:  
 So shall thy friend, who resteth in the Lord  
 With perfect will submiss, the waiting pass'd,  
 Gaze on God's Vision with an eye unscaled,  
 In glory everlasting.' At that thought  
 Peace on the old man settled. Staff in hand  
 Forth on his way he fared. Nor horse he rode  
 Nor sandals wore. He walk'd with feet that bled,

Paying, well pleased, that penance for his King ;  
 And murmured oft-times, ' Not my blood alone !  
 Nay, but my life, my life ! '

Yet penance pain

Like pain of suffering Souls at peace with God,  
 Quelled not that gladness which, from secret source  
 Rising, o'erflowed his heart. Old times returned :  
 Once more beside him rode his King in youth  
 Southward to where his realm—his duty—lay,  
 Exulting captive of the Saviour Lord,  
 With face love-lit. As then, the vernal prime  
 Hourly with ampler respiration drew  
 Delight of purer green from balmier airs :  
 As then the sunshine glittered. By their path  
 Now hung the woodbine ; now the hare-bell waved ;  
 Rivulets new-swollen by melted snows, and birds  
 'Mid echoing boughs with rival rapture sang :  
 At times the monks forgot their Christian hymns,  
 By humbler anthems charmed. They gladdened more  
 Beholding oft in cottage doors cross-crowned  
 Angelic faces, or in lonely ways ;  
 Once as they passed there stood a little maid,  
 Some ten years old, alone 'mid lonely pines,  
 With violet crowned and primrose. Who were those,  
 The forest's white-robed guests, she nothing knew ;  
 Not less she knelt. With hand uplifted Cedd  
 Signed her his blessing. Hand she kissed in turn ;  
 Then waved, yet ceased not from her song, ' Alone  
 Two lovers sat at sunset.'

Every eve

Some village gave the wanderers food and rest,  
 Or half-built convent with its church thick-walled  
 And polished shafts, great names in after times  
 Ely, and Croyland, Southwell, Medeshamstede,

Adding to sylvan sweetness holier grace  
 Or rising lonely o'er morass and mere  
 With bowery thickets isled where dogwood brake  
 Retained, though late, its red. To Boston near  
 Where Ouse, and Aire, and Derwent join with Trent,  
 And salt sea waters mingle with the fresh  
 They met a band of youths that o'er the sands  
 Advanced with psalm, cross-led. The monks rejoiced,  
 Save one from Ireland—Dieul. He, quick-eared  
 Had caught that morn a war-cry on the wind  
 And, sideway glancing from his Office-book,  
 Descried the cause. From Mercia's realm a host  
 Had crossed Northumbria's bound. His thin, worn  
 face

O'er-flamed with sudden anger, thus he cried :  
 ' In this, your land, men say, "Who worketh prayeth,"  
 In mine we say, "Well prays who fighteth well :"  
 A Pagan race treads down your homesteads! Slaves,  
 That close not with their throats !'

Advancing thus,

On the tenth eve they came to Lastingham :  
 Forth rushed the brethren, watching long far off  
 To meet them, first the brothers three of Cedd  
 Who kissed him, cheek and mouth. Gladly that night  
 Those foot-worn travellers laid them down and slept  
 Save one alone. Old Cedd his vigil made  
 And, kneeling by the tabernacle's lamp  
 Prayed for the man he mourned for, ending thus :  
 ' Thou Lord of Souls, to Thee the Souls are dear !  
 Thou yearn'st toward them as they yearn to Thee ;  
 Behold, not prayer alone for him I raise :  
 I offer Thee my life.' When morning's light  
 In that great church commingled with its gloom,  
 The monks, slow-pacing, by that kneeler knelt,

And prayed for Sigebert, beloved of God ;  
 And lastly offered Mass : and it befell  
 That when, the Offering offered, and the Dead  
 Rightly remembered, he who sang that Mass  
 Had reached the ‘Nobis quoque famulis,’  
 There came to Cedd an answer from the Lord  
 Heard in his heart ; and he beheld his King  
 Throned ’mid the Saints Elect of God who keep  
 Perpetual triumph, and who see that Face  
 Which to its likeness hourly more compels  
 Those faces t’ward It turned. That function o’er,  
 Thus spake the Bishop : ‘Brethren, sing “Te Deum ;”’  
 They sang it ; while within him he replied,  
 ‘ Lord, let Thy servant now depart in peace.’

A week passed by with gladness winged and prayer.  
 In wonder Cedd beheld those structures new  
 From small beginnings reared, though many a gift  
 Sent for that work’s behoof, had fed the poor  
 In famine time laid low. Moorlands he saw  
 By cornfields vanquished ; marked the all-beauteous  
 siege  
 Of pasture yearly threatening loftier erags  
 Loud with the bleat of lambs. Their shepherd once  
 Had roved a bandit, next had toiled a slave,  
 Now with both hands he poured his weekly wage  
 Down on his young wife’s lap, his pretty babes  
 Gambolling around for joy. A hospital  
 Stood by the convent’s gate. With moistened eye  
 Musing on Him Who suffers in His sick,  
 The Bishop paced it. There he found his death :  
 That year a plague had wasted all the land :  
 It reached him. Late that night he said, ‘ ’Tis well ! ’  
 In three days more he lay with hands death-cold

Crossed on a peaceful breast.

Like winter cloud

Borne through dark air, that portent feared of man  
 Ill tidings, making way with mystic speed,  
 Shadowed ere long the troubled bank of Thames,  
 And spread a wailing round its Minsters twain  
 Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's. Saint Alban's caught  
 That cry, and northward echoed. Southward soon  
 Forlorn it rang 'mid towers of Rochester ;  
 Then seaward died. But in that convent pile  
 Wherein so long the Saint had made abode  
 A different grief there lived, a deeper grief,  
 That grief which part hath none in sobs or tears—  
 Which needs must act. There thirty monks arose  
 And, taking each his staff, made vow thenceforth  
 To serve God's altar where their father died  
 Or share his grave. Through Ithancester's gate  
 As forth they paced between two kneeling crowds,  
 A little homeless boy, who heard their dirge  
 (Late orphaned, at its grief he marvelled not),  
 So loved them that he followed, shorter steps  
 Doubling 'gainst theirs. At first the orphan wept :  
 That mood relaxed : before them now he ran  
 To pluck a flower ; as oft he lagged behind  
 The wild bird's song so aptly imitating  
 That, by his music drawn, or by his looks,  
 That bird at times forgot her fears, and perched  
 Pleased on his arm. As flower and bird to him  
 Such as those monks the child. Better each day  
 He loved them ; yet, revering, still he mocked,  
 And though he mocked, he kissed. The westering sun  
 On the eighth eve from towers of Lastingham  
 Welcomed those strangers. In another hour,  
 Well-nigh arrived, they saw that grave they sought

Sole on the church's northern slope. As when,  
 Some father, absent long, returns at last,  
 His children rush loud-voiced from field to house,  
 And cling about his knees; and they that mark—  
 Old reaper, bent no more, with hook in hand,  
 Or ploughman leaning 'gainst the old blind horse  
 Beholding wonder not; so to that grave  
 Rushed they; so clung. Around that grave ere long  
 Their own were ranged. That plague which smote  
 the sire

Spared not his sons. With ministering hand  
 From pallet still to pallet passed the boy,  
 Now from the dark spring wafting colder draught  
 Now moistening fevered lips, or on the brow  
 Spreading the new-bathed cincture. Him alone  
 The infection reached not. When the last was gone  
 He felt as though the earth, man's race—yea, God  
 Himself—were dead. Around he gazed and spake  
 'Why then do I remain?'

From hill to hill,

The monks on reverend offices intent,  
 All solitary oft that boy repaired,  
 From each in turn forth gazing, fain to learn  
 If friend were t'wards him nighing. Many a hearth  
 More late, bereavement's earlier anguish healed,  
 Welcomed the creature: many a mother held  
 The milk-bowl to his mouth in both hands stayed,  
 With smile the deeper for the draught prolonged,  
 And lodged, as he departed, in his hand  
 Her latest crust. With children of his age  
 Seldom he played. That convent gave him rest;  
 Nor lost he aught surviving thus his friends,  
 Since childhood's sacred innocence he kept  
 While life remained, unspotted. When mature



Five years he lived there monk, and reverence drew  
 To that high convent through his saintly ways ;  
 Then died. Within that cirque of thirty graves  
 They laid him, close to Cedd. In later years,  
 Because they ne'er could learn his name or race,  
 Nor yet forget his gentle looks, the name  
 Of Deodatus graved they on his tomb.

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*KING OSWALD OF NORTHUMBRIA,  
 OR THE BRITON'S REVENGE.*

Northumbria having been subdued by Pagan Mercia, Oswald raises there again the Christian standard. Penda wages war against him, in alliance with Cadwallon, a Cambrian prince who hates the Saxon conquerors the more bitterly when become Christians. Encouraged by St. Columba in a vision, Oswald with a small force vanquishes the hosts of Cadwallon, who is slain. He sends to Iona for monks of St. Columba's order, converts his country to the Faith, and dies for her. The earlier British race expiates its evil revenge.

THE agony was over which but late  
 Had shook to death Northumbria's realm new-raised  
 By Edwin, dear to God. The agony  
 At last was over ; but the tear flowed on :  
 The Faith of Christ had fallen once more to dust  
 That Faith which spoused with golden marriage ring  
 The land to God, when Coiffi, horsed and mailed,  
 Chief Priest himself, hurled at the Temple's wall  
 His lance, and quivering left it lodged therein.  
 The agony had ceased ; yet Rachael's cry  
 Still pierced the childless region. Penda's sword  
 Had swept it, Mercia's Christian-hating King ;

Fiercelier Cadwallon's, Cambria's Christian Prince,  
 Christian in vain. The British wrong like fire  
 Burned in his heart. Well-nigh two hundred years  
 That British race, they only of the tribes  
 By Rome subdued, sustained unceasing war  
 'Gainst those barbaric hordes that, nursed long since  
 'Mid Teuton woods, when Rome her death-wound felt,  
 And '*Habet*' shrilled from every trampled realm,  
 Rushed forth in ruin o'er her old domain :—  
 That race against the Saxon still made head ;  
 Large remnant yet survived. The Western coast  
 Was theirs ; old sea-beat Cornwall's granite cliffs,  
 And purple hills of Cambria ; northward thence  
 Strathclyde, from towered Carnegia's winding Dee  
 To Morecambe's shining sands, and those fair vales  
 Since loved by every muse, where silver meres  
 Slept in the embrace of yew-clad mountain walls ;  
 With tracts of midland Britain and the East.  
 Remained the memory of the greatness lost ;  
 The Druid circles of the olden age ;  
 The ash-strewn cities radiant late with arts  
 Extinct this day ; bath, circus, theatre  
 Mosaic-paved ; the Roman halls defaced ;  
 The Christian altars crushed. That last of wrongs  
 The vanquished punished with malign revenge :  
 Never had British priest to Saxon preached ;  
 And when that cry was heard, 'The Saxon King  
 Edwin hath bowed to Christ,' on Cambrian hills  
 Nor man nor woman smiled.

They had not lacked

The timely warning. From his Kentish shores  
 Augustine stretched to them paternal hands :  
 Later, he sought them out in synod met,  
 Their custom, under open roof of heaven.

‘The Mother of the Churches,’ thus he spake  
 ‘Commands—implores you! Seek from her, and win  
 The Sacrament of Unity Divine!  
 Thus strengthened, be her strength! With her con-  
 joined

Subdue your foe to Christ!’ He sued in vain.  
 The British bishops hurled defiance stern  
 Against his head, while Cambrian peaks far off  
 Darkened, and thunder muttered. From his seat,  
 Slowly and sadly as the sun declined  
 At last, though late, that Roman rose and stretched  
 A lean hand t’ward that circle, speaking thus:  
 ‘Hear then the sentence of your God on sin!  
 Because ye willed not peace, behold the sword!  
 Because ye grudged your foe the Faith of Christ  
 Nor help to lead him on the ways of life,  
 For that cause from you by the Saxon hand  
 Your country shall be taken!’

Edwin slain,

Far off in exile dwelt his nephews long  
 Oswald and Oswy. Alba gave them rest,  
 Alba, not yet called Scotland. Ireland’s sons,  
 Then Scoti named, had warred on Alba’s Picts:  
 Columba’s Gospel vanquished either race;  
 Won both to God. It won not less those youths  
 In boyhood Oswald, Oswy still a child.  
 That child was wild and hot, and had his moods,  
 Despotie now, now mirthful. Mild as Spring  
 Was Oswald’s soul, majestic and benign;  
 Thoughtful his azure eyes, serene his front;  
 He of his ravished sceptre little recked;  
 The shepherds were his friends: the mountain deer  
 Would pluck the ivy fearless from his hand:  
 In gladness walked he till Northumbria’s cry

Smote on his heart. ‘Why rest I here in peace,  
 Thus mused he, ‘while my brethren groan afar?’  
 By night he fled with twelve companion youths  
 Christians like him and reached his native land.  
 Too fallen it seemed to aid him. On he passed;  
 The ways were desolate, yet evermore  
 A slender band around his footsteps drew  
 Less seeking victory than an honest death.  
 Oft gazed their King upon them; murmured oft,  
 ‘Few hands—true hearts!’ Sudden aloud he cried  
 ‘Plant here the royal Standard, friends, and hence  
 Let sound the royal trumpet.’

Stern response

Reached him ere long: not Mercia’s realm alone;  
 Cambria that heard the challenge joined the war:  
 Cambria, upon whose heart the ancestral woe  
 For ever with the years, like letters graved  
 On growing pines, grew larger and more large;—  
 To Penda forth she stretched a hand blood-red;  
 Christian with Pagan joined, an unblest bond,  
 A league accursed. The indomitable hate  
 Compelled that league. Still from his cave the Seer  
 Admonished, ‘Set the foe against the foe;  
 Slay last the conqueror!’ and from rock and hill  
 The Bard cried, ‘Vengeance!’ In the bardic clan  
 That hatred of their country’s ancient bane  
 Lived like a faith. One night it chanced a tarn  
 Secreted high ’mid cold and moonless hills  
 Bursting its bank down burst. That valley’s Bard  
 Clomb to the church-roof from his buried house:  
 Thence rang his song,—’twas ‘Vengeance!—Ven-  
 geance’ still!  
 That torrent reached the roof: he clomb the tower:  
 The torrent mounted: on the bleak hill-side

All night the dalesmen, wailing o'er their drowned  
Amid the roar of winds and downward rocks  
Still heard that war-song, 'Vengeance! Blood for  
blood!'

At last the tower fell flat, and winter morn  
Shone on the waters only.

Three short weeks  
Dinned with alarums passed; in Mercia still  
Lay Penda, sickness-struck, when, face to face  
The Cambrian host and Oswald's little band  
Exulting met at sunset near a height  
Then 'Heaven-Field' named, but later 'Oswald's Field,'  
Backed by that Wall the Roman built of old  
His fence from sea to sea. There Oswald stood:  
There raised with hands outstretched a mighty Cross,  
Strong-based, and deep in earth: his comrades twelve  
Around it heaped the soil, while priests white-stoled  
Chanted 'Vexilla Regis.' Work and rite  
Complete, the King knelt down and made his prayer,  
'True God Eternal, look upon this Cross,  
The sole now standing on Northumbria's breast  
And help Thine own, though few, who trust in Thee!'

That night before his tent the wanderer sate  
Listening the circling sentinel, or bay  
Of wakeful hound remote, or downward course  
Of streams from moorland hills. Before his view  
His whole life rose: his father's angry brow;  
The eyes all-wondrous, and all-tender hand  
Of her, his mother, striving evermore  
To keep betwixt her husband and her sire  
Unbroken bond: his exiled days returned,  
The kind that pitied them, the rude that jeered;  
Lastly, that monk whose boast was evermore

Columba of Iona, Columkille ;  
That monk who made him Christian. ‘Come what  
may,’

Thus Oswald mused, ‘I have not lived in vain :  
Lose I or win, a kingdom there remains ;  
Though not on earth !’ A tear the vision dimmed  
As thus he closed, ‘My mother will be there !’  
Then sank his lids in slumber.

On his sleep

Was this indeed but dream ?—a glory brake :  
Columba, dear to Oswald from his youth  
Columba, clad in glory as the sun  
Beside him stood and spake : ‘Be strong ! On earth  
There lives not who can guess the might of prayer :  
What then is prayer on high ?’ The saintly Shape  
Heavenward his hands upraised while rose to heaven  
His stature, towering ever high and higher,  
Warlike and priestly both. As morning cloud  
Blown by a mighty wind his robe ran forth,  
Then stood, a golden wall that severance made  
’Twi’ Oswald’s band and that unnumbered host.  
Again he spake, ‘Put on thee heart of man  
And fight : though few, thy warriors shall not die  
In darkness of an unbelieving land  
But live, and live to God.’ The vision passed :  
By Oswald’s seat his warriors stood and cried  
‘The Bull-horn ! Hark !’ The monarch told them all :  
They answered, ‘Let thy God sustain thy throne :  
Thenceforth our God is He.’

The sun arose :

Ere long the battle joined. Three dreadful hours  
Doubtful the issue hung. Fierce Cambria’s sons  
With chief and clan, with harper and with harp,  
Though terrible yet mirthful in their mood,

Rushed to their sport. Who mocked their hope that  
day?

Did Angels help the just? Their falling blood,  
Say, leaped it up once more, each drop a man  
Their phalanx to replenish? Backward driven,  
Again that multitudinous foe returned  
With clangour dire; futile, again fell back  
Down dashed, like hailstone showers from palace halls  
Where princes feast secure. Astonishment  
Smote them at last. Through all those serried ranks,  
Compact so late, sudden confusions ran  
Like lines divergent through a film of ice  
Stamped on by armèd heel, or rifts on plains  
Prescient of earthquake underground. Their chiefs  
Sounded the charge;—in vain: Distrust, Dismay,  
Ill Gods, the darkness lorded of that hour:  
Panic to madness turned. Cadwallon sole  
From squadron on to squadron speeding still  
As on a wingèd steed—his snow-white hair  
Behind him blown—a mace in either hand,  
Stayed while he might the inevitable rout;  
Then sought his death, and found. Some fated Power  
Mightier than man's that hour dragged back his hosts  
Against their will and his: as when the moon  
Shrouded herself, drags back the great sea-tides  
That needs must follow her receding wheels  
Though wind and wave gainsay them, breakers wan  
Thundering indignant down nocturnal shores,  
And city-brimming floods against their will  
Down drawn to river-mouths.

In after days

Who scaped made oath that in the midmost fight  
The green earth sickened with a brazen glare  
While darkness held the skies. They saw besides

On Heaven-Field height a Cross, and, at its foot,  
 A sworded warrior vested like a priest  
 Who still in stature high and higher towered  
 As raged the battle. Higher far that Cross  
 Above him rose, barring with black the stars  
 That bickered through the eclipse's noonday night,  
 And ever from its bleeding arms sent forth  
 Thick-volleyed lightnings, azure fork and flame,  
 Through all that headlong host.

At eventide,

Where thickest fight had mingled, Oswald stood  
 With raiment red as his who treads alone  
 The wine-vat when the grapes are all pressed out,  
 Yet scathless and untouched. His mother's smile  
 Was radiant on his pure and youthful face,  
 Joyous, but not exulting. At his foot  
 Cadwallon lay, with four-score winters white,  
 A threatening corse : not death itself could shake  
 The mæe from either rigid hand close-clenched,  
 Or smooth his brow. Above him Oswald bent,  
 Then spake : ' He also loved his native land :  
 Bear him with honour hence to hills of Wales,  
 And lay him with his Fathers.'

Thus was raised

In righteousness King Oswald's throne. But he,  
 Mindful in victory of Columba's word,  
 Thus mused, ' The Master is as he that serves :  
 How shall I serve this people ? ' O'er the waves  
 Then sent he of his Twelve the eldest three :  
 They to Iona sailed, and standing there  
 In full assembly of Iona's Saints  
 Addressed them : ' To Columba Oswald thus :  
 Let him that propped the King on Heaven-Field's  
 height,



That held the battle-balance high that day,  
Unite my realm to Christ !' The monks replied,  
'Such mission should be Aidan's.' Aidan went.  
With gladness Oswald met him, and with gifts :  
But Aidan said, 'Entreat me not to dwell  
There where Paulinus dwelt, the man of God,  
In thy chief city, York. Thy race is fierce ;  
And meekness only can subdue the proud :  
Thy people first I want ; through them the great.  
Grant me some island 'mid the raging main  
Humble and low, not cheered by smiling meads,  
Where with my brethren I may watch with God,  
Henceforth my only aid.' Oswald replied  
'Let Lindisfarne be thine. That rock-based keep  
Built by my grandsire Ida o'er it peers :  
I shall be near thee though I see thee not.'

Then Aidan on the Isle of Lindisfarne  
Upreared that monastery which ruled in Christ  
So long the Northern realm. A plain rock-girt  
Level it lies and low : nor flower nor fruit  
Gladdens its margin : thin its sod, and bleak :  
Twice, day by day, the salt sea hems it round :  
And twice a day the melancholy sands,  
O'er-wailed by sea-bird, and with sea-weed strewn,  
Replace the lonely ocean. Sacred Isles  
That westward, eastward, guard the imperial realm,  
Iona ! Lindisfarne ! With you compared  
How poor that lilyed Delos of old Greece  
For all its laurel bowers and nightingales !  
England's great hands were ye to God forth stretched  
Through adverse climes, beneath the Boreal star,  
That took His Stigmata. In sanctity  
Were her foundations laid. Her later crowns

Of Freedom first, of Science, and of Song  
She owes them all to you !

In Lindisfarne

Aidan, and his, rejoicing dwelt with God :  
Amid the winter storm their anthems rose ;  
And from their sanctuary lamp the gleam  
Far shone from wave to wave. On starless nights  
From Bamborough's turret Oswald watched it long,  
Before his casement kneeling—first alone,  
Companioned later. Kineburga there  
Beside him knelt ere long, his tender bride,  
Young, beauteous, modest, noble. 'Not for them,'  
Thus spake the newly wedded, 'not for them,  
For man's sake severed from the world of men,  
In ceaseless vigil warring upon sin,  
Ah, not for them the flower of life, the harp,  
High feast, or bridal torch !' Purer perchance  
*Their* bridal torch burned on because from far  
That sacred lamp had met its earliest beam !

There Aidan lived, and wafted issuing thence  
O'er wilds Bernician and fierce battle-fields  
The strength majestic of his still retreat,  
The puissance of a soul whose home was God.  
'What man is this,' the warriors asked, 'that moves  
Unarmed among us ; lifts his crucifix,  
And says, "Ye swords, lie prone"?' The revelling  
crew

Rose from their cups : 'He preaches abstinence :  
Behold, the man is mortified himself :  
The moonlight of his watchings and his fasts  
He carries on his face.' When Princes forced  
Largess upon him, he replied, 'I want  
Not yours but you ;' and with their gifts redeemed

The orphan slave. The poor were as his children :  
 He to the beggar stinted not his hand  
 Nor, giving, said ' Be brief.' Such seed bare fruit :  
 God in the dark, primeval woods had reared  
 A race whose fierceness had its touch of ruth  
 Brave, cordial, chaste, and simple. Reverence  
 That race preserved : Reverence advanced to Love :  
 The ties of life it honoured : lit from heaven  
 They wore a meaning new. The Faith of Christ  
 Banished the bestial from the heart of man ;  
 Restored the Hope divine.

In all his toils  
 Oswald with Aidan walked. Impartial law  
 Not licence, not despotic favour, stands  
 To Truth auxiliar true. Such laws were his :  
 Yet not through such alone he worked for Truth ;  
 Function he claimed more high. When Aidan  
 preached ;  
 In forest depths when thousands girt him round ;  
 When countless eyes, a clinging weight, were bent  
 Upon his lips—all knew they spake from God,—  
 The King, with monks from Ireland knit of old  
 Beside the Bishop stood ; each word he spake  
 Changed to the Saxon tongue.

Earth were not earth,  
 If reign like Oswald's lasted. Penda lived ;  
 Nor e'er from Oswald turned for eight long years  
 An eye like some swart planet feared of man,  
 Omen of wars or plague. Cadwallon's fate,  
 Ally ill-starred, that fought without his aid  
 O'er-flushed old hatred with a fiery shame :  
 Cadwallon nightly frowned above his dreams.  
 The tyrant watched his time. At Maserfield  
 The armies met. There on Northumbria's day

Settled what seemed, yet was not, endless night ;  
 There Faith and Virtue, deathless seemed to die :  
 There holy Oswald fell. For God he fought,  
 Fought for his country. Walled with lances round,  
 A sheaf of arrows quivering in his breast,  
 One moment yet he stood. ' Preserve,' he cried,  
 ' My country, God ! ' then added, gazing round,  
 ' And these my soldiers : make their spirits Thine ! '

Thus perished good King Oswald, King and Saint ;  
 Saint by acclaim of nations canonised  
 Ere yet the Church had spoken. Year by year  
 The Hexham monks to Heaven-Field, where of old  
 Had stood that ' Cross which conquered,' made repair,  
 With chanted psalm ; and pilgrims daily prayed  
 Where died the just and true. Not vain their vows :  
 In righteousness foundations had been laid :  
 The earthquake reached them not. The Dane passed  
 by ;  
 High up the Norman glittered : but beneath,  
 On Faith profounder based and gentler Law  
 The Saxon realm lived on.

But never more  
 From Heaven-Field's wreck the Briton raised his head ;  
 Britain thenceforth was England. His the right ;  
 The land was his of old ; and in God's House  
 His of the island races stood first-born :  
 Not less he sinned through hate, esteeming more  
 Memories of wrong than forward-looking hopes  
 And triumphs of the Truth. For that cause God  
 His face in blessing to the younger turned,  
 More honouring Pagans who in ignorance erred  
 Than those who, taught of God, concealed their gift  
 Divorcing Faith from Love. Natheless they clung,  
 That remnant spared, to rocky hills of Wales

With eagle clutch, whoe'er in England ruled  
From Horsa's day to Edward's. Centuries eight  
In gorge or vale sea-lulled they held their own,  
By native monarchs swayed, while native harps  
Rang out from native cliffs defiant song  
Wild as their singing pines. Heroic Land!  
Freedom was thine; the torrent's plunge; the peak;  
The pale mist past it borne! Heroic Race!  
Caractacus was thine, and Galgacus,  
And Boadicea greater by her wrongs  
Than by her lineage. Battle-axe of thine  
Rang loud and long on Roman helms ere yet  
Hengist had trod the island. Thine that King  
World-famed, who led to fifty war-fields forth  
'Gainst Saxon hosts his sinewy, long-haired race  
Unmailed, yet victory-crowned; that King who left  
Tintagel, Camelot, and Lyonesse,  
Immortal names, though wild as elfin notes  
From phantom rocks echoed in fairy land—  
Great Arthur! Year by year his deeds were sung  
While he in Glastonbury's cloister slept,  
First by the race he died for, next by those  
Their children, exiles in Armoric Gaul,  
By Europe's minstrels then, from age to age;  
But ne'er by ampler voice, or richer toned  
Than England lists to-day. Race once of Saints!  
Thine were they, Ninian thine and Kentigern,  
Iltud and Beino, yea and David's self,  
Thy crown of Saints, and Winifred, their flower  
Who fills her well with healing virtue still.  
Cadoc was thine, who to his Cambrian throne  
Preferred that western convent at Lismore,  
Yet taught the British Princes thus to sing:  
'None loveth Song that loves not Light and Truth:

None loveth Light and Truth that loves not Justice :  
 None loveth Justice if he loves not God :  
 None loveth God that lives not blest and great.'

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*CEADMON THE COWHERD, THE FIRST  
 ENGLISH POET.*

Ceadmon, a cowherd, being at a feast, declares when the harp reaches him, that he cannot sing. As he sleeps, a divine Voice commands him to sing. He obeys, and the gift of song is imparted to him. Hilda, Abbess of Whitby, enrolls him among her monks ; and in later years he sings the revolt of the Fallen Angels, and many Christian mysteries, thus becoming the first English poet.

ALONE upon the pleasant bank of Esk  
 Ceadmon the Cowherd stood. The sinking sun  
 Reddened the bay, and fired the river-bank,  
 And flamed upon the ruddy herds that strayed  
 Along the marge, clear-imagined. None was nigh :  
 For that cause spake the Cowherd, 'Praise to God !  
 He made the worlds ; and now, by Hilda's hand  
 Planteth a crown on Whitby's holy crest :  
 Daily her convent towers more high aspire :  
 Daily ascend her Vespers. Hark that strain !'  
 He stood and listened. Soon the flame-touched herds  
 Sent forth their lowings, and the cliffs replied,  
 And Ceadmon thus resumed : 'The music note  
 Rings through their lowings dull, though heard by  
     few !  
 Poor kine, ye do your best ! Ye know not God,  
 Yet man, His likeness, unto you is God,

And him ye worship with obedience sage,  
 A grateful, sober, much-enduring race  
 That o'er the vernal clover sigh for joy,  
 With winter snows contend not. Patient kine,  
 What thought is yours, deep-musing? Haply this,  
 "God's help! how narrow are our thoughts, and few  
 Not so the thoughts of that slight human child  
 Who daily drives us with her blossomed rod  
 From lowland valleys to the pails long-ranged!"  
 Take comfort, kine! God also made your race!  
 If praise from man sureceased, from your broad chests  
 That God would perfect praise, and, when ye died  
 Resound it from yon rocks that gird the bay:  
 God knoweth all things. Let that thought suffice!'

Thus spake the ruler of the deep-mouthed kine:  
 They were not his; the man and they alike  
 A neighbour's wealth. He was contented thus:  
 Humble he was in station, meek of soul,  
 Unlettered, yet heart-wise. His face was pale;  
 Stately his frame, though slightly bent by age:  
 Slow were his eyes, and slow his speech, and slow  
 His musing step; and slow his hand to wrath;  
 A massive hand, but soft, that many a time  
 Had succoured man and woman, child and beast  
 And yet could fiercely grasp the sword. At times  
 As mightily it clutched his ashen goad  
 When like an eagle on him swooped some thought:  
 Then stood he as in dream, his pallid front  
 Brightening like eastern sea-cliffs when a moon  
 Unrisen is near its rising.

Round the bay  
 Meantime, as twilight deepened, many a fire  
 Up-sprang, and horns were heard. Around the steep

With bannered pomp and many a tossing plume  
 Advancing slow a cavalcade made way.  
 Oswy, Northumbria's king, the foremost rode,  
 Oswy triumphant o'er the Mercian host,  
 Invoking favour on his sceptre new ;  
 With him an Anglian prince, student long time  
 In Bangor of the Irish, and a monk  
 Of Frankish race far wandering from the Marne :  
 They came to look on Hilda, hear her words  
 Of far-famed wisdom on the Interior Life ;  
 For Hilda thus discoursed : ' True life of man  
 Is life within : inward immeasurably  
 The being winds of all who walk the earth ;  
 But he whom sense hath blinded nothing knows  
 Of that wide greatness : like a boy is he,  
 A boy that clambers round some castle's wall  
 In search of nests, the outward wall of seven,  
 Yet nothing knows of those great courts within,  
 The hall where princes banquet, or the bower  
 Where royal maids discourse with lyre and lute,  
 Much less its central church, and sacred shrine  
 Wherein God dwells alone.' Thus Hilda spake ;  
 And they that gazed upon her widening eyes  
 Low whispered, each to each, ' She speaks of things  
 Which she hath seen and known.'

On Whitby's height

The royal feast was holden : far below,  
 A noisier revel dinned the shore ; therein  
 The humbler guests made banquet. Many a tent  
 Gleamed on the yellow sands by ripples kissed ;  
 And many a savoury dish sent up its steam ;  
 The farmer from the field had brought his calf ;  
 Fishers that increase scaled which green-gulfed seas  
 From womb crystalline, teeming, yield to man ;



And Jock, the woodsman, from his oaken glades  
 The tall stag, arrow-pierced. In gay attire  
 Now green, now crimson, matron sat and maid :  
 Each had her due : the elder, reverence most,  
 The lovelier that and love. Beside the board  
 The beggar lacked not place.

When hunger's rage,  
 Sharpened by fresh sea-air, was quelled, the jest  
 Succeeded, and the tale of foreign lands ;  
 Yet, boast who might of distant chief renowned,  
 His battle-axe, or fist that felled an ox,  
 The Anglian's answer was 'our Hilda' still :  
 'Is not her prayer trenchant as sworded hosts ?  
 Her insight more than wisdom of the seers ?  
 What birth like hers illustrious ? Edwin's self,  
 Dēira's exile, next Northumbria's king,  
 Her kinsman was. Together bowed they not  
 When he of holy hand, missioned from Rome,  
 Paulinus, o'er them poured the absolving wave  
 And joined to Christ ? Kingliest was she, that maid  
 Who spurned earth-crowns !' More late the miller  
 rose—

He ruled the feast, the miller old, yet blithe—  
 And cried, 'A song !' So song succeeded song,  
 For each man knew that time to chant his stave,  
 But no man yet sang nobly. Last the harp  
 Made way to Ceadmon, lowest at the board :  
 He pushed it back, answering, 'I cannot sing :'  
 The rest around him flocked with clamour, 'Sing !'  
 And one among them, voluble and small,  
 Shot out a splenetic speech : 'This lord of kine,  
 Our herdsman, grows to ox ! Behold, his eyes  
 Move slow, like eyes of oxen !'

Slowly rose

Ceadmon, and spake : ' I note full oft young men  
 Quick-eyed, but small-eyed, darting glances round  
 Now here, now there, like glance of some poor bird,  
 That light on all things and can rest on none :  
 As ready are they with their tongues as eyes ;  
 But all their songs are chirpings backward blown  
 On winds that sing God's song by them unheard :  
 My oxen wait my service : I depart.'

Then strode he to his cow-house in the mead,  
 Displeased though meek, and muttered, ' Slow of eye !  
 My kine are slow : if rapid I, my hand  
 Might tend them worse.' Hearing his step, the kine  
 Turned round their horned fronts ; and angry thoughts  
 Went from him as a vapour. Straw he brought,  
 And strewed their beds ; and they, contented well  
 Laid down ere long their great bulks, breathing  
 deep

Amid the glimmering moonlight. He, with head  
 Propped on a favourite heifer's snowy flank,  
 Rested, his deer-skin o'er him drawn. Hard days  
 Bring slumber soon. His latest thought was this :  
 ' Though witless things we are, my kine and I,  
 Yet God it was who made us.'

As he slept

Beside him stood a Man Divine, and spake :  
 ' Ceadmon, arise, and sing.' Ceadmon replied,  
 ' My Lord, I cannot sing, and for that cause  
 Forth from the revel came I. Once, in youth,  
 I willed to sing the bright face of a maid,  
 And failed, and once a gold-faced harvest-field,  
 And failed, and once the flame-eyed face of war,  
 And failed again.' To him the Man Divine,  
 ' Those themes were earthly. Sing !' And Ceadmon  
 said,

‘What shall I sing, my Lord?’ Then answer came,  
‘Ceadmon, stand up, and sing thy song of God.’

At once obedient, Ceadmon rose, and sang ;  
And help was with him from great thoughts of old  
Yearly within his silent nature stored,  
That swelled, collecting like a flood which bursts  
In spring its icy bar. The Lord of all  
He sang ; that God beneath whose hand eterne,  
Then when He willed forth-stretched athwart the  
abyss,

Creation like a fiery chariot ran,  
Forth-borne on wheels of ever-living stars :  
Him first he sang. The builder, here below,  
From fair foundations rears at last the roof ;  
But Song, a child of heaven, begins with heaven,  
The archetype divine, and end of all ;  
More late descends to earth. He sang that hymn  
‘Let there be light, and there was light ;’ and lo !  
On the void deep came down the seal of God  
And stamped immortal form. Clear laughed the  
skies ;

From circumambient deeps the strong earth brake,  
Both continent and isle ; while downward rolled  
The sea-surge summoned to his home remote.  
Then came a second vision to the man  
There standing ’mid his oxen. Darkness sweet,  
He sang, of pleasant frondage clothed the vales,  
And purple glooms ambrosial cast from hills  
Now by the sun deserted, which the moon,  
A glory new-created in her place,  
Silvered with virgin beam, while sang the bird  
Her first of love-songs on the branch first-flower’d—  
Not yet the lion stalked. And Ceadmon sang

O'er-awed, the Father of all humankind  
 Standing in garden planted by God's hand,  
 And girt by murmurs of the rivers four,  
 Between the trees of Knowledge and of Life,  
 With eastward face. In worship mute of God  
 Eden's Contemplative he stood that hour,  
 Not her Ascetic, since, where sin is none,  
 No need for spirit severe.

And Ceadmon sang  
 God's Daughter, Adam's Sister, Child, and Bride,  
 Our Mother Eve. Lit by the matin star  
 That nearer drew to earth and brighter flashed  
 To meet her gaze, that snowy Innocence  
 Stood up with queenly port : she turned ; she saw  
 Earth's King, mankind's great Father : taught by  
 God,  
 Immaculate, unastonished, undismayed,  
 In love and reverence to her Lord she drew  
 And, kneeling, kissed his hand : and Adam laid  
 That hand, made holier, on that kneeler's head,  
 And spake ; ' For this shall man his parents leave  
 And to his wife cleave fast.'

When Ceadmon ceased  
 Thus spake the Man Divine : ' At break of day  
 Seek out some prudent man, and say that God  
 Hath loosed thy tongue ; nor hide henceforth thy  
 gift.'

Then Ceadmon turned, and slept among his kine  
 Dreamless. Ere dawn he stood upon the shore  
 In doubt : but when at last o'er eastern seas  
 The sun, long wished for, like a god upsprang  
 Once more he found God's song upon his mouth  
 Murmuring high joy ; and sought an ancient friend,  
 And told him all the vision. At the word

He to the Abbess with the tidings sped,  
And she made answer, 'Bring me Ceadmon here.'

Then clomb the pair that sea-beat mount of God  
Fanned by sea-gale nor trod, as others used,  
The curving way, but faced the abrupt ascent  
And halted not, so worked in both her will,  
Till now between the unfinished towers they stood  
Panting and spent. The portals open stood :  
Ceadmon passed in alone. Nor ivory decked,  
Nor gold, the walls. That convent was a keep  
Strong 'gainst invading storm or demon hosts,  
And naked as the rock whereon it stood,  
Yet, as a church, august. Dark, high-arched roofs  
Slowly let go the distant hymn. Each cell  
Cinctured its statued saint, the peace of God  
On every stony face. Like caverned grot  
Far off the western window frowned : beyond,  
Close by, there shook an autumn-blazoned tree :  
No need for gems beside of storied glass.

He entered last that hall where Hilda sat  
Begirt with a great company, the chiefs  
Far ranged from end to end. Three stalls cross-  
crowned  
Stood side by side, the midmost hers. The years  
Had laid upon her brows a hand serene :  
There left alone a blessing. Levelled eyes  
Sable, and keen, with meditative might  
Conjoined the instinct and the claim to rule :  
Firm were her lips and rigid. At her right  
Sat Finan, Aidan's successor, with head  
Snow-white, and beard that rolled adown a breast  
Never by mortal passion heaved in storm,

A cloister of majestic thoughts that walked  
 Humbly with God. High in the left-hand stall  
 Oswy was throned, a man in prime, with brow  
 Less youthful than his years. Exile long past,  
 Or deepening thought of one disastrous deed,  
 Had left a shadow in his eyes. The strength  
 Of passion held in check looked lordly forth  
 From head and hand : tawny his beard ; his hair  
 Thick-curl'd and dense. Alert the monarch sat  
 Half turned, like one on horseback set that bears,  
 And he alone, the advancing trump of war.  
 Down the long gallery strangers thronged in mass,  
 Dane or Norwegian, huge of arm through weight  
 Of billows oar-subdued, with stormy looks  
 Wild as their waves and crags ; Southerners keen-  
     browed ;  
 Pure Saxon youths, fair-fronted, with mild eyes,  
 These less than others strove for nobler place,  
 And Pilgrim travel-worn. Behind the rest  
 And higher-ranged in marble-arched arcade,  
 Sat Hilda's sisterhood. Clustering they shone,  
 White-veiled, and pale of face, and still and meek,  
 An inly-bending curve, like some young moon  
 Whose crescent glitters o'er a dusky strait.  
 In front were monks dark-stoled : for Hilda ruled  
 Though feminine, two houses, one of men :  
 Upon two chasm-divided rocks they stood,  
 To various service vowed though single Faith :  
 Not ever, save at rarest festival,  
 Their holy inmates met.

‘ Is this the man  
 Favoured, though late, with gift of song ? ’ thus spake  
 Hilda with gracious smile. Severer then  
 She added : ‘ Son, the commonest gifts of God

He counts His best, and oft temptation blends  
 With ampler boon. Yet sing ! That God who lifts  
 The violet from the grass could draw not less  
 Song from the stone hard by. That strain thou  
     sang'st,  
 Once more rehearse it.'

Ceadmon from his knees

Arose and stood. With princely instinct first  
 The strong man to the Abbess bowed, and next  
 To that great twain the bishop and the king  
 Last to that stately concourse each side ranged  
 Down the long hall ; then, dubious, answered thus :  
 ' Great Mother, if that God who sent the song  
 Vouchsafe me to recall it, I will sing ;  
 But I misdoubt it lost.' Slowly his face  
 Down-drooped, and all his body forward bent  
 While brooding memory, step by step, retraced  
 Its backward way. Vainly long time it sought  
 The starting-point. Then Ceadmon's large, soft  
     hands  
 Opening and closing worked ; for wont were they,  
 In musings when he stood, to clasp his goad,  
 And plant its point far from him, thereupon  
 Propping his stalwart weight. Customed support  
 Now finding not, unwittingly those hands  
 Reached forth, and on Saint Finan's crosier-staff  
 Settling, withdrew it from the old bishop's grasp ;  
 And Ceadmon leant thereon, while passed a smile  
 From chief to chief to see earth's meekest man  
 The spiritual sceptre claim of Lindisfarne.  
 They smiled ; he triumphed : soon the Cowherd found  
 That first fair corner-stone of all his song ;  
 Thence rose the fabric heavenward. Lifting hands,  
 Once more his lordly music he rehearsed,

The void abyss at God's command forth-flinging  
 Creation like a Thought : where night had reigned,  
 The universe of God.

The singing stars

Which with the Angels sang when earth was made  
 Sang in his song. From highest shrill of lark  
 To ocean's moaning under cliffs low-browed,  
 And roar of pine-woods on the storm-swept hills,  
 No tone was wanting ; while to them that heard  
 Strange images looked forth of worlds new-born,  
 Fair, phantom mountains, and, with forests plumed  
 Heaven-topping headlands, for the first time glassed  
 In waters ever calm. O'er sapphire seas  
 Green islands laughed. Fairer, the wide earth's flower  
 Eden, on airs unshaken yet by sighs  
 From bosom still inviolate forth poured  
 Immortal sweets that sense to spirit turned  
 In part those noble listeners *made* that song !  
 Their flashing eyes, their hands, their heaving breasts,  
 Tumult self-stilled, and mute, expectant trance,  
 'Twas these that gave their bard his twofold might—  
 That might denied to poets later born  
 Who, singing to soft brains and hearts ice-hard,  
 Applauded or contemned, alike roll round  
 A vainly-seeking eye, and, famished, drop  
 A hand clay-cold upon the unechoing shell  
 Missing their inspiration's human half.

Thus Ceadmon sang, and ceased. Silent awhile  
 The concourse stood, for all had risen, as though  
 Waiting from heaven its echo. Each on each  
 Gazed hard and caught his hands. Fiercely ere long  
 Their gratulating shout aloft had leaped  
 But Hilda laid her finger on her lip



Or provident lest praise might stain the pure,  
 Or deeming song a gift too high for praise.  
 She spake: 'Through help of God thy song is sound:  
 Now hear His Holy Word, and shape therefrom  
 A second hymn, and worthier than the first.'

She spake, and Finan standing bent his head  
 Above the sacred tome in reverence stayed  
 Upon his kneeling deacon's hands and brow,  
 And sweetly sang five verses, thus beginning,  
 '*Cum esset desponsata,*' and was still  
 And next rehearsed them in the Anglian tongue:  
 Then Ceadmon took God's Word into his heart  
 And ruminating stood, as when the kine  
 Their flowery pasture ended, ruminatè;  
 And was a man in thought. At last the light  
 Shone from his dubious countenance and he spake:  
 'Great Mother, lo! I saw a second Song!  
 T'wards me it sailed; but with averted face  
 And borne on shifting winds. A man am I  
 Sluggish and slow that needs must muse and brood;  
 Therefore those verses till the sun goes down  
 Will I revolve. If song from God be mine  
 Expect me here at morn.'

The morrow morn  
 In that high presence Ceadmon stood and sang  
 A second song, and worthier than his first;  
 And Hilda said, 'From God it came, not man;  
 Thou therefore live a monk among my monks,  
 And sing to God.' Doubtful he stood—'From youth  
 My place hath been with kine; their ways I know,  
 And how to cure their griefs.' Smiling she spake,  
 'Our convent hath its meads, and kine; with these  
 Consort each morn: at noon to us return.'

Then Ceadmon knelt, and bowed, and said, 'So be it :'  
 And aged Finan, and Northumbria's king  
 Oswy, approved ; and all that host had joy.

Thus in that convent Ceadmon lived, a monk,  
 Humblest of all the monks, save him that knelt  
 In cell close by, who once had been a prince.  
 Seven times a day he sang God's praises, first  
 When earliest dawn drew back night's sable veil  
 With trembling hand, revisiting the earth  
 Like some pale maid that through the curtain peers  
 Round her sick mother's bed, misdoubting half  
 If sleep lie there, or death ; latest when eve  
 Through nave and chancel stole from arch to arch,  
 And laid upon the snowy altar-step  
 At last a brow all gold. In later years  
 By ancient yearnings driven through wood and vale  
 He tracked Dēirean or Bernician glades  
 To holy Ripon, or late-sceptred York,  
 Not yet great Wilfred's seat, or Beverley :  
 The children gathered round him, crying, 'Sing !'  
 They gave him inspiration with their eyes,  
 And with his conquering music he returned it.  
 Oftener he roamed that strenuous eastern coast  
 To Jarrow and to Wearmouth, sacred sites  
 The well-beloved of Bede, or northward more  
 To Bamborough, Oswald's keep. At Coldingham  
 His feet had rest ; there where St. Ebba's Cape  
 That ends the lonely range of Lammermoor,  
 Sustained for centuries o'er the wild sea-surge  
 In region of dim mist and flying bird,  
 Fronting the Forth, those convent piles far-kenned  
 The worn-out sailor's hope.

Fair English shores,

Despite those blinding storms of north and east,  
 Despite rough ages blind with stormier strife,  
 Or froz'n by doubt, or sad with worldly care,  
 A fragrance as of Carmel haunts you still  
 Bequeathed by feet of that forgotten Saint  
 Who trod you once sowing the seed divine !  
 Fierce tribes that kenned him distant round him  
     flocked ;

On sobbing sands the fisher left his net  
 His lamb the shepherd on the hills of March  
 Sung for song. With wrinkled face all smiles,  
 Like that blind Scian circling Grecian coasts  
 If God the song accorded, Ceadmon sang ;  
 If God denied it, after musings deep  
 He answered, ' I am of the kine and dumb ;'  
 The man revered his art and fraudulent song  
 Esteemed as fraudulent coin.

Music denied,

He solaced them with tales wherein, so seemed it,  
 Nature and Grace, inwoven, like children played  
 Or like two sisters o'er one sampler bent,  
 Braided one text. Ever the sorrowful chance  
 Ending in joy, the human craving still,  
 Like creeper circling up the Tree of Life,  
 Lifted by hand unseen, witnessed that He,  
 Man's Maker, is the Healer too of man,  
 And life His school parental. Parables  
 He shewed in all things. ' Mark,' one day he cried,  
 ' Yon silver-breasted swan that stems the lake  
 Taking nor chill nor moisture ! Such the soul  
 That floats o'er waters of a world corrupt,  
 Itself immaculate still.'

Better than tale

They loved their minstrel's harp. The songs he sang

Were songs to brighten gentle hearts ; to fire  
Strong hearts with holier courage ; hope to breathe  
Through spirits despondent, o'er the childless floor  
Or widowed bed, flashing from highest heaven  
A beam half faith, half vision. Many a tear,  
His own, and tears of those that listened, fell  
Oft as he sang that hand, lovely as light,  
Forth stretched, and gathering from forbidden boughs  
That fruit fatal to man. He sang the Flood  
Sin's doom that quelled the impure, yet raised to height  
Else inaccessible, the just. He sang  
That patriarch facing at divine command  
The illimitable waste—then, harder proof,  
Lifting his knife o'er him, the Seed foretold :  
He sang of Israel loosed, the ten black seals  
Down pressed on Egypt's testament of woe,  
Covenant of pride with penance ; sang the face  
Of Moses glittering from red Sinai's rocks,  
The Tables twain and Mandements of God.  
On Christian nights he sang that jubilant star  
Which led the Magians to the Bethlehem crib  
By Joseph watched, and Mary. Pale, in Lent,  
Tremulous and pale, he told of Calvary,  
Nor added word, but, as in trance rehearsed  
That Passion fourfold of the Evangelists  
Which, terrible and swift—not like a tale—  
With speed of things which must be done, not said,  
A river of bale from guilty age to age  
Along the astonished shores of common life  
Annual makes way, the history of the world,  
Not of one day, one People. To its fount  
That stream he tracked, that primal mystery sang  
Which, chanted later by a thousand years  
Music celestial, though with note that jarred,

Some wandering orb troubling its starry chime,  
 Amazed the nations, 'There was war in heaven :  
 Michael and they, his angels warfare waged  
 With Satan and his angels.' Brief that war,  
 That ruin total. Brief was Ceadmon's song :  
 Therein the Eternal Face was undivulged :  
 Therein the Apostate's form no grandeur wore :  
 The grandeur was elsewhere. Who hate their God  
 Change not alone to vanquished but to vile.  
 On Easter morn he sang the Saviour Risen,  
 Eden Regained. Since then on England's shores  
 Though many sang, yet no man sang like him.

O holy House of Whitby ! on thy steep  
 Rejoice howe'er the tempest night or day  
 Afflict thee, or the hand of Time to earth  
 Drag down thine airy arches long suspense ;  
 Rejoice, for Ceadmon in thy cloisters knelt,  
 And singing paced beside thy sounding sea !  
 Long years he lived ; and with the whitening hair  
 More youthful grew in spirit and more meek ;  
 Yea, those that saw him said he sang within  
 Then when the golden mouth but seldom breathed  
 Sonorous strain, and when—that fulgent eye  
 No longer bright—still on his forehead shone  
 Not flame but purer light like that last beam  
 Which, when the sunset woods no longer burn  
 Maintains high place on Alpine throne remote,  
 Or utmost beak of promontoried cloud  
 And heavenward dies in smiles. Esteem of men  
 Daily he less esteemed, through single heart  
 More knit with God. To please a sickly child  
 He sang his latest song, and, ending, said,  
 'Song is but body, though 'tis body winged :

The soul of song is love : the body dead,  
 The soul should thrive the more.' That Patmian Sage  
 Whose head had lain upon the Saviour's breast,  
 Who in high vision saw the First and Last,  
 Who heard the harpings of the Elders crowned,  
 Who o'er the ruins of the Imperial House  
 And ashes of the twelve great Cæsars dead  
 Witnessed the endless triumph of the Just,  
 To humbler life restored, and, weak through age,  
 But seldom spake, and gave but one command,  
 The great '*Mandatum Novum*' of his Lord,  
 'My children, love each other !' Like to his  
 Was Ceadmon's age. Weakness with happy stealth  
 Increased upon him : he was cheerful still :  
 He still could pace, though slowly, in the sun,  
 Still gladsomely converse with friends who wept,  
 Still lay a broad hand on his well-loved kine.

The legend of the last of Ceadmon's days :—  
 That hospital wherein the old monks died  
 Stood but a stone's throw from the monastery :  
 'Make there my couch to-night,' he said, and smiled :  
 They marvelled, yet obeyed. There, hour by hour,  
 The man, low-seated on his pallet bed,  
 In silence watched the courses of the stars,  
 Or casual spake at times of common things,  
 And three times played with childhood's days, and  
 twice  
 His father named. At last, like one that, long  
 Compassed with good, is smit by sudden thought  
 Of greater good, thus spake he : 'Have ye, sons,  
 Here in this house the Blessed Sacrament ?'  
 They answered, wrathful, 'Father, thou art strong ;  
 Shake not thy children ! Thou hast many days !'

' Yet bring me here the Blessed Sacrament,'  
 Once more he said. The brethren issued forth  
 Save four that silent sat waiting the close.  
 Ere long in grave procession they returned,  
 Two deacons first, gold-vested ; after these  
 That priest who bare the Blessed Sacrament,  
 And acolytes behind him lifting lights.  
 Then from his pallet Ceadmon slowly rose  
 And worshipped Christ, his God, and reaching forth  
 His right hand, cradled in his left, behold !  
 Therein was laid God's Mystery. He spake :  
 ' Stand ye in flawless charity of God  
 T'ward me, my sons ; or lives there in your hearts  
 Memory the least of wrong ?' The monks replied :  
 ' Father, within us lives nor wrong, nor wrath,  
 But love, and love alone.' And he : ' Not less  
 Am I in charity with you, my sons,  
 And all my sins of pride, and other sins,  
 Humbly I mourn.' Then bending the old head  
 O'er the old hand, Ceadmon received his Lord  
 To be his soul's viaticum, in night  
 Leading from life that seems to life that is ;  
 And long, unpropped by any, kneeling hung  
 And made thanksgiving prayer. Thanksgiving made,  
 He sat upon his bed, and spake : ' How long  
 Ere yet the monks begin their matin psalms ?'  
 ' That hour is nigh,' they answered ; he replied,  
 ' Then let us wait that hour,' and laid him down  
 With those kine-tending and harp-mastering hands  
 Crossed on his breast, and slept.

Meanwhile the monks,  
 The lights removed in reverence of his sleep,  
 Sat mute nor stirred such time as in the Mass  
 Between '*Orate Fratres*' glides away,

And '*Hoc est Corpus Meum.*' Northward far  
The great deep, seldom heard so distant, roared  
Round those wild rocks half way to Bamborough  
Head ;

For now the mightiest spring-tide of the year  
Following the magic of a maiden moon  
Approached its height. Nearer, that sea which sobbed  
In many a cave by Whitby's winding coast  
Or died in peace on many a sandy bar  
From river-mouth to river-mouth outspread,  
They heard, and mused upon eternity  
That circles human life. Gradual arose  
A softer strain and sweeter making way  
O'er that sea-murmur hoarse ; and they were ware  
That in the black far-shadowing church whose bulk  
Up-towered between them and the moon, the monks  
Their matins had begun. A little sigh  
That moment reached them from the central gloom  
Guarding the sleeper's bed ; a second sigh  
Succeeded : neither seemed the sigh of pain :  
And some one said, 'He wakens.' Large and bright  
Over the church-roof sudden rushed the moon  
And smote the cross above that sleeper's couch,  
And smote that sleeper's face. The smile thereon  
Was calmer than the smile of life. Thus died  
Ceadmon, the earliest bard of English song.

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*KING OSWY OF NORTHUMBRIA, OR  
THE WIFE'S VICTORY.*

Oswy, King of Bernicia, being at war with his kinsman Oswin, slays him unarmed. He refuses to repent of this sin; yet at last, subdued by the penitence, humility, and charity of Eanfleda, his wife, repents likewise, and builds a monastery over the grave of Oswin. Afterwards he becomes a great warrior and dies a saint.

YOUNG, beauteous, brave—the bravest of the brave—  
Who loved not Oswin? All that saw him loved:  
Aidan loved most, monk of Iona's Isle,  
Northumbria's bishop next from Lindisfarne  
Ruling in things divine. One morn it chanced  
That Oswin, noting how with staff in hand  
Old Aidan roamed his spiritual realm, footbare,  
Wading deep stream and piercing thorny brake,  
Sent him a horse, his best. The Saint was pleased;  
But, onward while he rode, and, musing, smiled  
To think of these his honours in old age,  
A beggar claimed his alms. 'Gold have I none,'  
Aidan replied; 'this horse be thine!' The King,  
Hearing the tale, was grieved. 'Keep I, my lord,  
No meaner horses fit for beggar's use  
That thus my best should seem a thing of naught?'  
The Saint made answer: 'Beggar's use, my King!  
What was that horse? The foal of some poor mare!  
The least of men—the sinner—is God's child!'  
Then dropped the King on both his knees, and cried:  
'Father, forgive me!' As they sat at meat

Oswin was mirthful, and at jest and tale  
 His hungry thanes laughed loud. But great, slow tears  
 In silence trickled down old Aidan's face :  
 These all men marked ; yet no man question made.  
 At last to one beside him Aidan spake  
 In Erin's tongue unknown to all save them  
 ' God will not leave such meekness long on earth.'

Who loved not Oswin ? Not alone his realm,  
 Dēira, loved him, but Bernician lords  
 Whose monarch, Oswy, was a man of storms,  
 Fierce King albeit in youth baptized to Christ ;  
 At heart half pagan. Swift as northern cloud  
 Through summer skies he swept with all his host  
 Down on the rival kingdom. Face to face  
 The armies stood. But Oswin, when he marked  
 His own a little flock 'mid countless wolves,  
 Addressed them thus : ' Why perish, friends, for me ?  
 From exile came I : for my people's sake  
 To exile I return, or gladlier die :  
 Depart in peace.' He rode to Gilling Tower ;  
 And waited there his fate. Thither next day  
 King Oswy marched, and slew him.

Twelve days passed ;  
 Then Aidan, while through green Northumbria's woods  
 Pensive he paced, steadying his doubtful steps,  
 Felt death approaching. Giving thanks to God,  
 The old man laid him by a church half raised  
 Amid great oaks and yews, and leaning there  
 His head against the buttress passed to God.  
 They made their bishop's grave at Lindisfarne ;  
 But Oswin rested at the mouth of Tyne  
 Within a wave-girt, granite promontory  
 Where sea and river meet. For many an age

The pilgrim from far countries came in faith  
 To that still shrine—they called it 'Oswin's Peace,'—  
 Thither the outcast fled for sanctuary:  
 The sick man there found health. Thus Oswin lived  
 Though dead, a benediction in the land.

What tenderest form kneels on the rain-washed  
 ground  
 From Gilling's keep a stone's-throw? Whose those  
 hands  
 Now pressed in anguish on a bursting heart  
 Now o'er a tearful countenance spread in shame?  
 What purest mouth, but roseless for great woe,  
 With zeal to youthful lovers never known  
 Presses a new-made grave, and through the blades  
 Of grass wind-shaken breathes her piteous prayer?  
 Save from remorse came ever grief like hers?  
 Yet how could ever sin, or sin's remorse,  
 Find such fair mansion? Oswin's grave it is;  
 And she that o'er it kneels is Eanfleda  
 Kinswoman of the noble dead, and wife  
 To Oswin's murderer, Oswy.

Saddest one

And sweetest! Lo, that cloud which overhung  
 Her cradle swathes once more in deeper gloom  
 Her throne late won, and new-decked bridal bed.  
 This was King Edwin's babe, whose natal star  
 Shone on her father's pathway doubtful long  
 Shone there a line of light, from pagan snares  
 Leading to Christian baptism. Penda heard—  
 Penda, that drew his stock from Odin's stock,  
 Penda, that drank his wine from skulls of foes,  
 Penda, fierce Mercia's king. He heard, and fell  
 In ruin on the region. Edwin dead,

Paulinus led the widow and her babe  
 Back to that Kentish shore whereon had reigned  
 Its grandsire Ethelbert.

The infant's feet

Pattered above the pavement of that church  
 In Canterbury by Augustine raised ;  
 The child grew paler when Gregorian chants  
 Shook the dim roofs. Gladly the growing girl  
 Harkened to stories of her ancestress  
 Clotilda, boast of France, but weeping turned  
 From legends whispered by her Saxon nurse  
 Of Loke, the Spirit accursed that slanders gods,  
 And Sinna, Queen of Hell. The years went by ;  
 The last had brought King Oswy's embassy  
 With suit obsequious, ' Let the princess share  
 With me her father's crown.' To simple hearts  
 Changes come gently. Soon, all trust, she stood  
 Before God's altar with her destined lord :  
 Adown her finger while the bride-ring ran  
 So slid into her heart a true wife's love :  
 Rooted in faith, it ripened day by day ;  
 And now the end was this !

There as she knelt

A strong foot clanged behind her. ' Weeping still !  
 Up, wife of mine ! If Oswin had not died  
 His gracious ways had filched from me my realm,  
 The base so loved his meekness ! ' Turning not  
 She answered low : ' He died an unarmed man : '  
 And Oswy : ' Fool that fought not when he might ;  
 At least his slaughtered troop had decked his grave !  
 I scorned him for his grief that men should die ;  
 And, scorning him, I hated ; yea, for that  
 His blood is on my sword ! '

The priests of God

Had faced the monarch and denounced his crime :  
 They might as well have preached to ocean waves :  
 He felt no anger : he but deemed them mad  
 And smiling went his way. Thus autumn passed :  
 The queen, he knew it, when alone wept on ;  
 Near him the pale face smiled ; the voice was sweet ;  
 Loving the service ; the obedience full :  
 Neither by words, by silence, nor by looks  
 She chid him. Like some penitent she walked  
 That mourns her own great sin.

Yet Oswy's heart,  
 Remorseless thus, had moods of passionate love :  
 A warrior of his host, Tosti by name,  
 Lay low, plague-stricken : kith and kin had fled ;  
 Whole days the king sustained upon his knees  
 The sufferer's head, and cheered his heart with songs  
 Of Odin, strangely blent with Christian hymns  
 While ofttimes stormy bursts of tears descended  
 Upon that face upturned. Ministering he sat  
 Till death the vigil closed.

One winter night  
 From distant chase belated he returned,  
 And passed by Oswin's grave. The snow, new-fallen,  
 Whitened the precinct. In the blast she knelt,  
 While coldly glared the broad and bitter moon  
 Upon those flying flakes that on her hair  
 Settled, or on her thin light raiment clung.  
 She heard him not draw nigh. She only beat  
 Her breast, and, praying, wept : ' Our sin, our sin !'  
 There as the monarch stood a change came o'er him :  
 Old, exiled days in Alba as a dream  
 Redawned upon his spirit, and that look  
 In Aidan's eyes when, binding first that cross  
 Long by his pupil craved around his neck

He whispered : ‘ He who serveth Christ, his Lord,  
Must love his fellow-man.’ As when a stream  
The ice dissolved, grows audible once more  
So came to him those words. They dragged him  
down :

He knelt beside his wife, and beat his breast,  
And said, ‘ My sin, my sin ! ’ Till earliest morn  
Glimmered through sleet that twain wept on, prayed  
on :

Was it the rising sun that lit at last  
The fair face upward lifted ;—kindled there  
A lovelier dawn than o’er it blushed when first  
Dropped on her bridegroom’s breast ? Aloud she cried :  
‘ Our prayer is heard : our penitence finds grace : ’  
Then added : ‘ Let it deepen till we die !

A monastery build we on this grave :  
So from this grave while fleet the years, that prayer  
Shall rise both day and night, till Christ returns  
To judge the world, a prayer for him who died,  
A prayer for one who sinned, but sins no more.’

Where Gilling’s long and lofty hill o’erlooks  
For leagues the forest-girdled plain, ere long  
A monastery stood. That self-same day  
In tears the penitential work began ;  
In tears the sod was turned. The rugged brows  
Of March relaxed ’neath April’s flying kiss :  
Again the violet rose, the thrush was loud ;  
Mayday had come. Around that hallowed spot  
Full many a warrior met ; some Christians vowed ;  
Some muttering low of Odin. Near to these  
Stood one of lesser stature, keener eye,  
More fiery gesture. Splenetic, he marked,  
Christian albeit himself, those Christian walls

By Saxon converts raised :—he was a Briton.  
 Invisibly that morn a dusky crape  
 O'erstretched the sky ; and slowly swayed the bough  
 Heavy with midnight rains. Through mist the woods  
 Let out the witchery of their young fresh green  
 Backed by the dusk of ruddy oaks that still  
 Reserved at heart the old year's stubbornness,  
 Yet blent it with that purple distance glimpsed  
 Beyond the forest alleys.

In a tent

Finan sang Mass : his altar was that stone  
 Which told where Oswin died. Before it knelt  
 The king, the queen : alone their angels know  
 Their thoughts that hour ! The sacred rite complete,  
 They raised their brows, and, hand-in-hand, made way  
 To where, beyond the portal, shone blue skies  
 Nature's long-struggling smile at last divulged.  
 The throng—with passion it had prayed for each—  
 Divided as they passed. In either face  
 They saw the light of that conceded prayer,  
 The peace of souls forgiven.

From that day forth

Hourly in Oswy's spirit soared more high  
 The one true greatness. Flaming heats of soul,  
 Through faith subjected to a law divine,  
 Like fire, man's vassal, mastering iron ore  
 Learned their true work. The immeasurable strength  
 Had found at once its master and its end,  
 And, balanced thus while weighted, soared to God.  
 In all his ways he prospered, work and work  
 Yoked to one end. Till then the Kingdoms Seven,  
 Opposed in interests as diverse in name  
 Had looked on nothing like him. Now, despite  
 Mercia that frowned, they named him king of kings,

Bretwalda ; and the standard of the Seven  
 In peace foreran his feet. The Spirits of might  
 Before his vanguard winged their way in war,  
 Scattering the foe ; and in his peacefuller years  
 Upon the aerial hillside high and higher  
 The golden harvest clomb, waving delight  
 On eyes upraised from winding rivers clear  
 That shone with milky sails. His feet stood firm,  
 For with his growing greatness ever grew  
 His penitence. Still sang the cloistered choir,  
 Year after year pleading o'er Oswin's tomb,  
 'To him who perished grant thy Vision, Lord ;  
 To him the slayer, penitence and peace ;  
 Let Oswin pray for Oswy :' Oswin prayed.

What answered Penda when the tidings came  
 Of Oswy glorying in the yoke of Christ,  
 Of Oswy's victories next ? Grinding his teeth,  
 He spake what no man heard. Then rumour rose  
 Of demon-magic making Oswy's tongue  
 Fell as his sword. 'Within the sorcerer's court,'  
 It babbled, 'stood the brave East Saxon king :  
 Upon his shoulder Oswy laid a hand  
 Accursed and whispered in his ear. The king,  
 Down sank, perforce, a Christian !' Lightning  
 flashed  
 From under Penda's grey and shaggy brows ;  
 'Forth to Northumbria, son,' he cried, 'and back ;  
 And learn if this be true.'

That son obeyed,  
 Peada, to whose heart another's heart,  
 Alfrid's, King Oswy's son, was knit long since  
 As David's unto Jonathan's. One time  
 A tenderer heart had leaned, or seemed to lean,



Motioning that way, Alflæda's Alfrid's sister,  
 Younger than he six years. 'Twas so no more :  
 No longer on Peada's eyes her eyes  
 Rested well-pleased : not now the fearless hand  
 Tarried in his contented. 'Sir and king,'  
 Peada thus to Oswy spake, 'of old  
 Thy child, then child indeed, would mount my  
 knee;

Now, when I seek her, like a swan she fleets  
 That arches back its neck 'twixt snowy wings  
 And, swerving, sideway drifts. My lord and king,  
 The child is maiden : give her me for wife !'  
 Oswy made answer : 'He that serves not Christ  
 Can wed no child of mine.' Alflæda then  
 Dropping her broidery lifted on her sire  
 Gently the dewy light of childlike eyes  
 And spake, 'But he in time will worship Christ !'  
 Then, without blush or tremor, to her work  
 Softly returned. Silent her mother smiled.  
 That moment, warned of God, from Lindisfarne  
 Finan, unlooked for, entered. Week by week  
 Reverend and mild he preached the Saviour-Lord :  
 Grave-eyed, with listening face and forehead bowed  
 The prince gave ear, not like that trivial race  
 Who catch the sense ere spoken, smile assent,  
 And in a moment lose it. On his brow  
 At times the apprehension dawned, at times  
 Faded. Oft turned he to his Mercian lords :  
 'How trow ye, friends ? He speaks of what he  
 knows !

Good tidings these ! Each evening while I muse  
 Distinct they shine like yonder mountain range ;  
 Each morning, mists conceal them.' Passed a month ;  
 Then suddenly, as one that wakes from dream,

Peada rose : ‘ Far rather would I serve  
 Thy Christ,’ he said, ‘ and thus Alflæda lose,  
 Than win Alflæda, and reject thy Christ.’  
 He spake : old Finan first gave thanks to God,  
 Who grants the true heart valour to believe,  
 Then took his hand and led him to that Cross  
 On Heaven-Field raised beneath the Roman Wall,  
 That Cross King Oswald’s standard in the fight,  
 That Cross Cadwallon’s sentence as he fell,  
 ‘ That Cross which conquered ;’—there to God baptized ;  
 Likewise his thanes and earls.

Meantime, far off

In Penda’s palace-keep the revel raged,  
 High feast of rites impure. At banquet sat  
 The monarch and his chiefs ; chant followed chant  
 Bleeding with wars foregone. The day went by,  
 And, setting ere its time, a sanguine sun  
 Dipped into tumult vast of gathering storm  
 That soon incumbent leant from tower to tower  
 And shook them to their base. As high within  
 The gladness mounted, meeting storm with storm,  
 Till cried that sacrificial priest whose knife  
 Had pierced the warrior victim’s willing throat  
 That morn, ‘ Already with the gods we feast !  
 Hark ! round Valhalla swell the phantom wars !’  
 Ere ceased the shout applausive, from his seat  
 Uprose the warrior Saxo, in his hand  
 The goblet, in the other Alp, his sword,  
 Pointing to heaven. ‘ To Odin health !’ he cried ;  
 ‘ Would that this hour he rode into this hall !  
 He should not hence depart till blood of his  
 Had reddened Sleipner’s flank, his snow-white steed :  
 This sword would shed that blood !’ Warriors sixteen  
 Leaped up in wrath, and for a moment rage

Roaked the huge hall. But Saxo waved his sword,  
 And, laughing, shouted, 'Odin's sons, be still!  
 Count it no sin to battle with high gods!  
 Great-hearted they! They give the blow and take!  
 To Odin who was ever leal as I?'  
 As sudden as it rose the tumult fell:  
 So ceased the storm without: but with it ceased  
 The rapture and the madness, and the shout:  
 The wine-cup still made circuit; but the song  
 Froze in mid-air. Strange shadow hung o'er all:  
 Neighbour to neighbour whispered: courtiers slid  
 Through doors scarce open. Rumour had arrived,  
 If true or false none knew.

The morrow morn

From Penda's court the bravest fled in fear,  
 Questioning with white lips, 'Will he slay his son?'  
 Or skulked at distance. Penda by the throat  
 Catching a white-cheeked courtier, cried: 'The truth!  
 What whisper they in corners?' On his knees  
 That courtier made confession. Penda then,  
 'Live, since my son is yet a living man!  
 A Christian, say'st thou? Let him serve his Christ!  
 That man whom ever most I scorned is he  
 Who vows him to the service of some god,  
 Yet breaks his laws; for that man walks, a lie.  
 My son shall live, and after me shall reign:  
 Northumbria's realm shall die!'

Thus Penda spake

And sent command from tower and town to blow  
 Instant the trumpet of his last of wars,  
 Fanning from Odin's hall with airs ice-cold  
 Of doom the foes of Odin. 'Man nor child,'  
 He sware, 'henceforth shall tread Northumbrian soil,  
 Nor hart nor hind: I spare the creeping worm:

My scavenger is he.' The Mercian realm  
 Rose at his call, innumerable mass  
 Of warriors iron-armed. East Anglia sent  
 Her hosts in aid. Apostate Ethelwald,  
 Through Oswy's nephew, joined the hostile league,  
 And thirty chiefs besides that ruled by right  
 Princedom or province. Mightier far than these  
 Old Cambria, brooding o'er ancestral wrong,  
 The Saxon's sin original, met his call,  
 And vowed her to the vengeance.

Bravest hearts

Hate most the needless slaughter. Oswy mused :  
 ' Long since too much of blood is on this hand :  
 Shall I for pride or passion risk once more  
 Northumbria, my mother ;—rudely stain  
 Her pretty babes with blood ? ' To Penda then,  
 Camped on the confines of the adverse realms,  
 He sent an embassy of reverend men,  
 Warriors and priests. Before them, staff in hand,  
 Peaceful, with hoary brows and measured tread,  
 Twelve heralds paced. Twelve caskets bare they  
 heaped

With gems and gold, and thus addressed the King :  
 ' Lord of the Mercian realm, renowned in arms !  
 Our lord, Northumbria's monarch, bids thee hail :  
 He never yet in little thing or great  
 Hath wronged thy kingdom ; yet thy peace he woos :  
 Accept the gifts he sends thee, and, thus crowned,  
 Depart content.' Penda with backward hand  
 Waved them far from him, and vouchsafed no word.  
 In sadness they returned : but Oswy smiled  
 Hearing their tale, and said : ' My part is done :  
 Let God decide the event.' He spake, and took  
 The caskets twelve, and placed them, side by side,

Before the altar of his chiefest church  
 And vowed to raise to God twelve monasteries,  
 In honour of our Lord's Apostles Twelve,  
 On greenest upland, or in sylvan glade  
 Where purest stream kisses the richest mead.  
 His vow recorded, sudden through the church  
 Ran with fleet foot a lady mazed with joy,  
 Crying, 'A maiden babe! and lo, the queen  
 Late dying lives and thrives!' That eve the king  
 Bestowed on God the new-born maiden babe,  
 Laying her cradled 'mid those caskets twelve,  
 Six at each side; and said: 'For her nor throne  
 Nor marriage bower! She in some holy house  
 Shall dwell the Bride of Christ. But thou, just God,  
 This day avenge my people!'

Windwaed field  
 Heard, distant still, that multitudinous foe  
 Trampling the darksome ways. With pallid face  
 Morning beheld their standards, raven-black—  
 Penda had thus decreed, before him sending  
 Northumbria's sentence. On a hill, thick-set  
 Stood Oswy's army, small, yet strong in faith,  
 A wedge-like phalanx, fenced by rocks and woods;  
 A river in its front. His standards white  
 Sustained the Mother Maid and Babe Divine:  
 From many a crag his altars rose, choir-girt  
 And crowned by incense wreath.

An hour ere noon,  
 That river passed, in thunder met the hosts;  
 But Penda, straitened by that hilly tract,  
 Could wield not half his force. Sequent as waves  
 On rushed they: Oswy's phalanx like a cliff  
 Successively down dashed them. Day went by:  
 At last the clouds dispersed: the westering sun

Glared on the spent eyes of those Mercian ranks  
Which in their blindness each the other smote,  
Or, trapped by hidden pitfalls, fell on stakes  
And died blaspheming. Little help that day  
Gat they from Cambria. She on Heaven-Field height  
Had felt her death-wound, slow albeit to die.  
The apostate Ethelwald in panic fled :  
The East Anglians followed. Swollen by recent rains,  
And choked with dead, the river burst its bound,  
And raced along the devastated plain  
Till cry of drowning horse and shriek of man  
Rang far and farther o'er that sea of death,  
A battle-field but late. This way and that  
Briton or Mercian where he might escaped  
Through flood or forest. Penda scorned to fly :  
Thrice with extended arms he met and cursed  
The fugitives on rushing. As they passed  
He flung his crownèd helm into the wave  
And bit his brazen shield, above its rim  
Levelling a look that smote with chill like death  
Their hearts that saw it. Yet one moment more  
He sat like statue on some sculptured horse  
With upraised hand, close-clenched, denouncing  
Heaven :  
Then burst his mighty heart. As stone he fell  
Dead on the plain. Not less in after times  
Mercian to Mercian said, ' Without a wound  
King Penda died, although on battle-field,  
Therefore with Odin Penda shares not feast.'  
Thus pagan died old Penda as he lived :  
Yet Penda's sons were Christian, kindlier none ;  
His daughters nuns ; and lamb-like Mercia's House,  
Lion one while, made end. King Oswy raised  
His monasteries twelve : benigner life

Around them spread : wild waste, and robber bands  
Vanished : the poor were housed, the hungry fed :  
And Oswy sent his little new-born babe  
Dewed with her mother's tear-drops, Eanfleda,  
Like some young lamb with fillet decked and flower  
Yet dedicated not to death, but life,  
To Hilda sent on Whitby's sea-washed hill,  
Who made her Bride of Christ. The years went by,  
And Oswy, now an old king, glory-crowned,  
His country from the Mercian thralldom loosed  
And free from north to south, in heart resolved  
A pilgrim, Romeward faring with bare feet,  
To make his rest by Peter's tomb and Paul's.  
God willed not thus : within his native realm  
The sickness unto death clasped him with hold  
Gentle but firm. Long sleepless, t'ward the close  
Amid his wanderings smiling, from the couch  
He stretched a shrivelled hand, and pointing said,  
' Who was it fabled she had died in age ?  
In all her youthful beauty holy and pure,  
Lo, where she kneels upon the wintry ground,  
The snow-flakes circling round her, yet with face  
Bright as a star ! ' so spake the king, and taking  
Into his heart that vision, slept in peace.  
His daughter, abbess then on Whitby's height,  
Within her church interred her father's bones  
Beside her grandsire's, Edwin. Side by side  
They rested, one Bernicia's king, and one  
Dëira's—great Northumbria's sister realms ;  
Long foes, yet blended by that mingling dust.

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*THE VENGEANCE OF THE MONKS  
OF BARDENEY*

Osthryda, Queen of Mercia, translates the relics of her uncle, Oswald of Northumberland, to the Abbey of Bardeneý. The monks refuse them admittance because King Oswald had conquered and kept for one year Lindsay, a province of Mercia. Though hourly expecting the destruction of their Abbey, they will yield neither to threats nor to supplications, nor even to celestial signs and wonders. At last, being convinced by the reasoning of a devout man, they repent of their anger.

SILENT, with gloomy brows in conclave sat  
The monks of Bardeneý, nigh the eastern sea ;  
Rumour, that still outruns the steps of ill  
Smote on their gates with news : ‘Osthryda comes  
To bury here her royal uncle’s bones,  
Northumbrian Oswald.’ Oswald was a Saint ;  
Had loosed from Pagan bonds that Christian land  
His own by right. But Oswald had subdued  
Lindsay, a Mercian province ; and the monks  
Were sons of Mercia leal and true. Osthryda,  
Northumbrian born, had wedded Mercia’s King ;  
Therefore the monks of Bardeneý pondered thus :  
‘This Mercian Queen spurns her adopted country !  
Must Mercia therefore build her conqueror’s tomb ?  
Though earth and hell cried “Ay,” it should not be !’

Thus mused the brethren till the sun went down :  
Then lo ! beyond a vista in the woods  
Drew nigh a Bier, black-plumed, with funeral train :  
Thereon the stern monks gazed, and gave command  
To close the Abbey’s gate. Beside that gate



Tent-roofed that Bier remained.

Before them soon

Stood up the royal herald. Thus he spake :

‘ Ye sacred monks of Bardeney’s Abbey, hail !  
 Osthryda, wife of Ethelred our King,  
 Prays that God’s peace may keep this House forever.  
 The Queen has hither brought, by help of God  
 King Oswald’s bones, and sues for them a grave  
 Within this hallowed precinct.’ Answer came :

‘ King Oswald, living, was Northumbria’s King ;  
 King Oswald, by the pride of life seduced  
 Wrested from Mercia’s sceptre Lindsay’s soil ;  
 Therefore in Lindsay’s soil King Oswald, dead,  
 May never find repose.’

Before them next

Three earls advanced full-armed, and spake loud-voiced :

‘ Our Queen is consort of the Mercian King ;  
 Ye, monks, are Mercian subjects ! Sirs, beware !  
 Our King and Queen have loved you well till now,  
 And ranked your abbey highest in their realm :  
 But hearts ingrate can sour the mood of love ;  
 And Ethelred, though mild as summer skies  
 When mildly used, once angered ’——Answer came :

‘ We know it, and await our doom, content :  
 If Mercia’s King contemns his realm, more need  
 That Mercia’s priests her confessors should die :  
 In Bardeney’s church King Oswald ne’er shall rest :  
 Ye have your answer, Earls !’

Through that dim hall

Ere long a gentler embassy made way,  
 Three priests ; arrived, they knelt, and, reverent,  
 spake :

‘ Fathers and brethren, Oswald was a Saint !  
 He loosed his native land from pagan thrall :

Churches and convents everywhere he built :  
 His relics, year by year, grow glorious more  
 Through miracles and signs. Fathers revered,  
 Within this sanctuary beloved of God  
 Vouchsafe his dust interment !' They replied :  
 ' We know that Oswald is a Saint with God :  
 We know he freed his realm from pagan thrall ;  
 We know that churches everywhere he built ;  
 We know that from his relics Grace proceeds  
 As light from sun and moon. In heaven a crown  
 Rests on Saint Oswald's head : yet here on earth  
 King Oswald's foot profaned our Mercian bound :  
 Therefore in Mercian earth he finds not grave.'

Silent those priests withdrew. An hour well-nigh  
 Went by in silence. Then with forehead crowned  
 And mourner's veil, and step of one that mourns,  
 The Queen advanced, a lady at each side,  
 And 'mid the circle stood, and thus implored :  
 ' Not as your Sovereign come I, holy Sirs,  
 Since all are equal in the House of God ;  
 Nor stand I here a stranger. Many a day  
 In this your church, I knelt, while yet a child ;  
 Then too, as now, within my breast there lived  
 The tenderest of its ardours and the best,  
 Zeal for my kinsman's fame. That time how oft  
 I heard my Father, Oswy, cry aloud,  
 " O Brother, had I walked but in thy ways  
 My foot had never erred ! " In maiden youth  
 I met with one who shared my loyal zeal,  
 Mercian himself : 'twas thus he won my heart :  
 My royal husband shared it ; shares this hour  
 My trust that 'mid the altars reared by us  
 To grace this chiefest Minster of our realm  
 May rest the relics of our household Saint—

To spurn them from your threshold were to shame.'

She spake : benign and soft the answering voice :  
 ' Entreat us not, thou mourner true and kind,  
 Lest we, by pity from the straight path drawn,  
 Sin more than thou. Thou know'st what thing love is,  
 Thus loving one who died before thy birth !  
 Up to the measure of high love and fit  
 Thou lov'st him for this cause, because thy heart  
 Hath never rested on base love and bad :  
 Lady, a sterner severance monks have made :  
 Not base and bad alone do they reject,  
 But lesser good for better and for best :  
 Therefore what yet remains they love indeed :  
 A single earthly love is theirs unblamed,  
 Their Country ! Lo, the wild-bird loves her nest,  
 Lions their caves :—to us God gave a Country.  
 What heart of man but loves that mother-land  
 Whose omnipresent arms are round him still  
 In vale and plain ; whose voice in every stream ;  
 Whose breath his forehead cools ; whose eyes with joy  
 Regard her offspring issuing forth each morn  
 On duteous tasks ; to rest each eve returning ?  
 And who that loves her but must hate her foes ?  
 Lady, accept God's Will, nor strive by prayer  
 To change it. In our guest-house rest this night,  
 Thou, and thy train.'

Severe the Queen replied :

' Yea in thy guest-house I will lodge this night,  
 Unvanquished, undiscouraged, not to cease  
 From prayer : of that be sure. I make henceforth  
 My prayer to God, not man. To Him I pray,  
 That Lord of all, Who changes at His will  
 The stony heart to flesh.'

She spake : then turned

On those old faces, keenlier than before,  
 Her large slow eyes ; and instant in her face  
 The sadness deepened : but the wrath was gone.  
 That sadness said, ' Love then as deep as mine,  
 And grief like mine, in other breasts may spring  
 From source how different ! ' Long she gazed, like  
 child

That knows not she is seen to gaze, with looks  
 As though she took that hoary-headed band  
 Into her sorrowing heart. Silent she sighed ;  
 Then passed into the guest-house with her train :  
 There prayed all night for him, that Saint in heaven  
 Ill-honoured upon earth.

Within their church  
 Meantime the monks the ' Dies Iræ ' sang,  
 The yellow tapers ranged as round a corse,  
 And Penitential Psalms in order due.  
 Their rite was for the living : ere the time  
 They sang the obsequies of sentenced men,  
 Foreboding wrath to come. Sad Fancy heard  
 The flames up-rushing o'er their convent home,  
 The ruin of their church late-built, the wreck  
 It might be of their Order. Fierce they knew  
 That Mercian royal House ! Against their King  
 They hurled no ban : venial they deemed his crime :  
 ' He moves within the limits of his right,  
 Though wrongly measuring right. He sees but this,  
 His subjects break his laws. Some sin of youth  
 It may be hides from him a right more high : '  
 Thus spake they in their hearts.

While rival thus  
 The brethren and the Queen sent up their prayer,  
 And sacred night hung midway in her course,  
 Behold, there fell from God tempest and storm

Buffeting that abbey's walls. The woods around  
Devastated by stress of blast on blast,  
Howled like the howling of wild beasts when fire  
Invests their ambush, and their cubs late-born  
Blaze in red flame. Trembling, the strong-built towers  
Echoed the woodland moans. All night the Queen,  
Propped by those two fair Seraphs, Faith and Love,  
Prayed on in hope, or hearing not that storm,  
Or mindful that where danger most abounds  
There God is nearest still. Meantime the Tent  
Covering that royal Bier, unshaken stood  
Beside the unyielding abbey-gates close-barred,  
Like something shielded by a heavenly charm :  
When morning came, shattered all round it lay  
Both trunk and bough ; but in the rising sun  
The storm-drop shook not on that snowy shrine.

Things wondrous more that Legend old records :  
An hour past sunrise from the meads and moors  
Came wide-eyed herdsmen thronging, with demand,  
' What means this marvel ? All the long still night,  
While heaven and earth were dark, and peaceful sleep  
Closed in her arms the wearied race of men,  
Keeping our herds on meads and moorlands chill,  
We saw a glittering Tent beside your gates :  
Above it, and not far, a pillar stood,  
All light, and high as heaven !' The abbot answered,  
' Fair Sirs, ye dreamed a dream ; and sound your sleep  
Untroubled by the terror of the storm  
Whereof those woodland fragments witness still,  
And many a forest patriarch prostrate laid :  
There rose no pillar by our gates : you Tent  
Stood there, and stood alone.' In two hours' space  
Shepherds arrived, from hills remoter sped,

Making the same demand. With eye ill pleased  
 Thus answered brief the prior : ‘ Friends, ye jest !’  
 And they in wrath departed. Once again  
 Came foresters from Lindsay’s utmost bound,  
 On horses blown, and spake : ‘ O’er yonder Tent,  
 Through all the courses of the long still night,  
 Behold, a shining pillar hovering stood :  
 It rained a glory on your convent walls :  
 It flung a trail of splendour o’er your woods :  
 We watched it hour by hour. Like Oswald’s Cross  
 On Heaven-Field planted in the days of old,  
 It waxed in height :—the stars were quenched.’

Replied

With reddening brows the youngest of those monks,  
 ‘ Sirs, ye have had your bribe, and told your tale :  
 Depart !’ and they departed great in scorn.

Long time the brethren sat ; discoursed long time  
 Each with his neighbour. ‘ Craft of man would force  
 Dishonest deed on this our holy House,  
 By miracles suborned ;’ thus spake the first :  
 The second answered, ‘ Ay, confederates they !  
 The good Queen knew not of it :’ then the third,  
 ‘ Not so ! these men are simple folks, I ween :  
 Nor time for fraud had they. What sail is yon  
 So weather-worn that nears the headland ?’ Soon  
 A pilot stood before them ; at his side  
 A priest, long years an inmate of their House,  
 But late a pilgrim in the Holy Land.  
 Their greetings over, greetings warm and kind,  
 Thus spake the Pilgrim : ‘ Brothers mine, rejoice ;  
 Our God is with us ! For our House I prayed  
 Three times with forehead on the Tomb of Christ ;  
 Last night there came to me, in visible form,

An answer to that prayer. All day our ship,  
 Before a great wind rushed t'ward Mercian shores :  
 To them I turned not : on the East I gazed :  
 "O happy East," I mused, "O Land, true home  
 Of every Christian heart ! The Saviour's feet  
 Thy streets, thy cornfields trod ! With these compared  
 Our country's self seems nothing !" In my heart  
 Imaged successive, rose once more those sites  
 Capernaum, Nain, Bethsaida, Bethlehem—  
 Where'er my feet had strayed. At midnight, cries  
 Of wonder rang around me, and I turned :  
 I saw once more our convent on its hill :  
 I saw beside its gate a Tent snow-white ;  
 I saw a glittering pillar o'er that Tent  
 'Twixt heaven and earth suspense ! Serene it shone,  
 Such pillar as led forth the Chosen Race  
 By night from Egypt's coasts. From wave to wave  
 Moon-like it paved a path ! I cried, "Thank God !  
 For who shall stay yon splendour till it reach  
 That Syrian shore ? England," I said, "my country,  
 Shall lay upon Christ's Tomb a hand all light,  
 Whatever tempest shakes the world of men,  
 Thenceforth His servant vowed !"

When ceased that voice

There fell upon the monks a crisis strange ;  
 And where that Pilgrim looked for joy, behold,  
 Doubt, wrath, and anguish ! Faces old long since  
 Grew older, stricken as by hectic spasm,  
 So fierce a pang had clutched them by the throat ;  
 While drops of sweat on many a wrinkled brow  
 Hung large like dewy beads condensed from mist  
 On cliffs by torrents shaken. Mute they sat ;  
 Then sudden rose, uplifting helpless hands,  
 As when from distant rock sore-wounded men,

Who all day long have watched some dreadful fight,  
 Behold it lost, or else foresee it lost,  
 And with it lost their country's hearths and homes,  
 And yet can bring no succour. Thus with them :  
 They knew themselves defeated ; deemed the stars  
 Of heaven had fought against them in their course ;  
 Yet still believed, and could not but believe  
 Their cause the cause of Justice, and its wreck  
 The wreck of priestly honour, patriot faith :  
 At last the youngest of the brethren spake ;  
 ' Come what come may, God's monks must guard the  
 Right.'

Death-like a silence on that conclave fell.  
 Then rose a monk white-headed, well-nigh blind,  
 Esteemed a Saint, who had not uttered speech  
 Since came the tidings of the Queen's resolve :  
 Low-voiced he spake, with eyes upon the ground  
 And inward smile that dimly reached his lips :  
 ' Brethren, be wary lest ye strive with God  
 Through wrath, that blind incontinence of age,  
 For what He wills He works. By passion warped  
 Ye deem this trial strange, this conflict new,  
 Yourselves doomed men that stand between two Fates,  
 On one side right, on one side miracles !  
 Brethren, the chief of miracles is this,  
 That knowing what ye know ye know no more :  
 Ye know long since that Oswald is a Saint :  
 Ye know the sins of Saints are sins forgiven :  
 What then ? Shall man revenge where God forgives ?  
 Be wroth with those He loves ? Ye, seeing much,  
 See not the sun at noontide ! God last night  
 Sent you in love a miracle of love  
 To quell in you a miracle of wrath :—  
 Discern its import true !



Sum up the past !

Thus much is sure : we heard those thunder peals  
 Unheard by hind or shepherd, near or far :  
 'Tis sure not less that light the shepherds saw  
 We saw not ; neither we nor yet the Queen.  
 What then ? Is God not potent to divulge  
 The thing He wills, or hide it ? Brethren, God  
 Shrouding from us that beam far dwellers saw  
 Admonished us perchance that far is near ;  
 That ofttimes distance makes intelligible  
 What, nigh at hand, is veiled. This too He taught,  
 That when Northumbrian foot our Mercia spurned  
 The men who saw that ruin saw not all :  
 The light of Christ drew near us in that hour ;  
 His pillar o'er us stood, and in our midst :  
 The pang, the shame, were transient. See the whole !'

The old man paused a space, and then resumed :  
 'Brethren, that day our country suffered wrong :  
 One day she may inflict it. Years may bring  
 The aggressor of past time a penitent grief ;  
 The wronged may meet her penitence with scorn  
 Guiltier through malice than her foe's worst rage :  
 Were it not well to leave that time unborn  
 Magnanimous ensample ? Hard it were  
 To lay in Mercian earth the unforgiven :  
*Wholly* to pardon—that I deem not hard.  
 My voice is this : forgive we Oswald's sin,  
 And lay his relics in our costliest shrine !'

Thus spake the aged man. That self-same eve,  
 The western sun descending, while the church,  
 Grey shaft transfigured by the glow divine,  
 Grey wall in flame of light pacific washed,  
 Shone out all golden like that flower all gold  
 Which shoots through sunset airs an arrowy beam,

In charity perfected moved the monks,  
No longer sad, a long procession forth,  
With foreheads smoothed as by the kiss of death  
And eyes like eyes of Saints from death new risen,  
Bearing the relics of Northumbria's King,  
Oswald, the man of God. Behind them paced  
Warriors and chiefs; Osthryda last, the Queen,  
With face whereon that great miraculous light,  
By her all night unseen, appeared to rest,  
And foot that might have trod the ocean waves  
Unwetted save its palm. A shrine gem-wrought  
Received the royal relics. O'er them drooped  
Northumbria's standard, guest of Mercian airs  
Through which it once had sailed, a portent dire :  
And whosoe'er in after centuries knelt  
On Oswald's grave, and, praying, wooed his prayer,  
Departed, in his heart the peace of God,  
Passions corrupt expelled, and demon snares,  
Irreverent love, and anger past its bound.

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*HOW SAINT CUTHBERT KEPT HIS  
PENTECOST AT CARLISLE.*

Saint Cuthbert while a boy wanders among the woods of Northumbria, bringing solace to all. Later he lives alone in the island of Farne. Being made bishop, many predict that he will be able neither to teach his people nor to rule his diocese. His people flock to him gladly, but require that he should teach them by parable and tale. This he does, and likewise rules his diocese with might. He discourses concerning common life. Keeping his Pentecost at Carlisle, he preaches on that Feast and the Resurrection from the Dead. Herbert, an eremite, beseeching him that the two may die the same day, he prays accordingly, and they die the same hour.

SAINT CUTHBERT, yet a youth, for many a year  
Walked up and down the green Northumbrian vales  
Well loving God and man. The rockiest glens  
And promontories shadowing loneliest seas,  
Where lived the men least cared for, most forlorn,  
He sought, and brought to each the words of peace.  
Where'er he went he preached that God all Love :  
For, as the sun in heaven, so flamed in him  
That love which later fired Assisi's Saint :  
Yea, rumour ran that every mountain beast  
Obeyed his loving call ; that when all night  
He knelt upon the frosty hills in prayer  
The hare would couch her by his naked feet  
And warm them with her fur. To manhood grown  
He dwelt in Lindisfarne ; there, year by year  
Prospering yet more in vigil and in fast ;  
And paced its shores by night, and blent his hymns  
With din of waves. Yet ofttimes o'er the strait

He passed, once more in search of suffering men  
 Wafting them solace still. Where'er he went  
 Those loved as children first, again he loved  
 As youth and maid, and in them nursed that Faith  
 Through which pure youth passes o'er passion's waves  
 Like Him Who trod that Galilean sea :  
 He clasped the grey-grown sinner in his arms  
 And won from him repentance long delayed,  
 Then with him shared the penance he enjoined.  
 O heart both strong and tender ! offering Mass  
 Awe-struck he stood as though on Calvary's height :  
 The men who marked him shook.

Twelve winters passed :

Then mandate fell upon the Saint from God,  
 Or breathed upon him from the heavenly height,  
 Or haply from within. It drave him forth  
 A hermit into solitudes more stern.  
 'Farewell,' he said, 'my brethren and my friends !  
 No holier life than yours, pure Cœnobites  
 Pacing one cloister, sharing one spare meal,  
 Chanting to God one hymn ! yet I must forth—  
 Farewell, my friends, farewell !' On him they gazed  
 And knew that God had spoken to his soul  
 And silent stood though sorrowing.

Long that eve

The brethren grieved noting his vacant stall,  
 Yet thus excused their sadness : 'Well for him,  
 And high his place in heaven ; but woe to those  
 Henceforth of services like his amerced !  
 Here lived he in the world ; here many throng ;  
 To him in time some lesser bishopric  
 Might well have fallen, behoof of countless souls !  
 Such dream is past forever.'

Forth he fared

To Farne, a little rocky islet nigh,  
 Where man till then had never dared to dwell  
 By dreadful rumours scared. In narrow cave  
 Worn from the rock, and roughly walled around,  
 The anchoret made abode, with lonely hands  
 Raising from one poor strip his daily food  
 Barley thin-grown, and coarse. He saw by day  
 The clouds on-sailing, and by night the stars ;  
 And heard the eternal waters. Thus recluse  
 The man lived on in vision still of God  
 Through contemplation known : and as the shades  
 Each other chase all day o'er steadfast hills,  
 Even so, athwart that Vision unremoved  
 Forever rushed the tumults of this world,  
 Man's fleeting life, the rise and fall of states,  
 While changeless measured change ; the spirit of prayer  
 Fanning that wondrous picture oft to flame  
 Until the glory grew insufferable.  
 Long years thus lived he. As the Apostle Paul  
 Though raised in raptures to the heaven of heavens,  
 Not therefore loved his brethren less, but longed  
 To give his life—his all—for Israel's sake  
 So Cuthbert, loving God, loved man the more,  
 His wont of old. To him the mourners came,  
 And sinners bound by Satan. At his touch  
 Their chains fell from them light as summer dust :  
 Each word he spake was as a Sacrament  
 Clothed with God's grace ; beside his feet they sat,  
 And in their perfect mind ; thence through the world  
 Bare their deliverer's name.

So passed his life :

There old he grew, and older yet appeared,  
 By fasts outworn, though ever young at heart ;  
 When lo ! before that isle a barge there drew

Bearing the royal banner. Egfrid there  
 With regal sceptre sat, and many an earl,  
 And many a mitred bishop at his side.  
 Northumbria's see was void : a council's voice  
 Joined with a monarch's called him to its throne :  
 In vain he wept, and knelt, and sued for grace :  
 Six months' reprieve alone he won ; then ruled  
 In Lindisfarne, chief bishop of the North.

But certain spake who deemed that they were wise,  
 Fools all beside : 'Shall Cuthbert crosier lift ?  
 A child, 'tis known he herded flocks for hire,  
 Housed in old Renspid's hut, his Irish nurse,  
 Who told him tales of Leinster Kings, his sires  
 And how her hands, their palace wrecked in war  
 Had snatched him from its embers. Yet a boy  
 He rode to Melrose and its wondering monks,  
 A mimic warrior, in his hand a lance,  
 With shepherd youth for page, and spake : "'Tis  
 known

Christ's kingdom is a kingdom militant :  
 A son of Kings I come to guard His right  
 And battle 'gainst his foes !" For lance and sword  
 A book they gave him ; and they made him monk :  
 Savage since then he couches on a rock  
 As fame reports, with birds' nests in his beard !  
 Can dreamers change to Bishops ? Vision-dazed  
 Move where he may that slowly wandering eye  
 Will see in man no more than kites or hawks ;  
 Men, if they note, will flee him.' Thus they buzzed,  
 Self-praised, and knowing not that simpleness  
 Is sacred soil, and sown with royal seed  
 The heroic seed and saintly.

Mitred once

Such gibes no more assailed him : one short month

Sufficed the petty cavil to confute ;  
One month well chronicled in book which verse  
Late born, alas, in vain would emulate.  
At once he called to mind the days that were ;  
His wanderings in Northumbrian glens ; the hearths  
That welcomed him so joyously ; at once  
Within his breast the heart parental yearned ;  
He longed to see his children, scattered wide  
From Humber's bank to Tweed, from sea to sea,  
And cried to those around him : ' Let us forth,  
And visit all my charge : and since Carlisle  
Remotest sits upon its western bound,  
Keep there this year our Pentecost ! ' Next day  
He passed the sands left hard by ebbing tide  
His cross-bearer and brethren six in front  
And trod the mainland. Reverent, first he sought  
His childhood's nurse, and 'neath her humble roof  
Abode one night. To Melrose next he fared  
Honouring his master old.

Southward once more  
Returning, scarce a bow-shot from the woods  
There rode to him a mighty thane, one-eyed,  
With warriors circled, on a jet-black horse,  
Barbaric shape and huge, yet frank as fierce  
Who thus made boast : ' A Jute devout am I !  
What raised that convent-pile on yonder rock ?  
This hand ! I wrenched the hillside from a foe  
By force, and gave it to thy Christian monks  
To spite yet more those Angles ! Island Saint,  
Unprofitable have I found thy Faith !  
Behold, those priests, thy thralls, are savage men,  
Unrighteous, ruthless ! For a sin of mine  
They laid on me a hundred days of fast !  
A man am I keen-witted : friend and liege

I summoned, shewed my wrong, and ended thus :  
 "Sirs, ye are ninety-nine, the hundredth I ;  
 I counsel that we share this fast among us !  
 To-morrow from the dawn to evening's star  
 No food as bulky as a spider's tongue  
 Shall pass our lips ; and thus in one day's time  
 My hundred days of fast shall stand fulfilled."  
 Wrathful they rose, and sware by Peter's keys  
 That fight they would, albeit 'gainst Peter's self ;  
 But fast they would not save for personal sins.  
 Signal I made : then backward rolled the gates,  
 And, captured thus, they fasted without thanks,  
 Cancelling my debt—a hundred days in one !  
 Beseech you, Father, chide your priests who breed  
 Contention thus 'mid friends !' The Saint replied  
 'Penance is irksome, Thane : to 'scape its scourge  
 Ways are there various ; and the easiest this,  
 Keep far from mortal sin.'

Where'er he faced  
 The people round him pressed—the sick, the blind,  
 Young mothers sad because a babe was pale ;  
 Likewise the wives of fishers praying loud  
 Their husbands' safe return. Rejoiced he was  
 To see them, hear them, touch them ; wearied never :  
 Whate'er they said delighted still he heard :  
 The rise and fall of empires touched him less,  
 The book rich-blazoned, or the high-towered church :  
 'We have,' he said 'God's children, and their God :  
 The rest is fancy's work.' Him too they loved ;  
 Loved him the more because, so great and wise  
 He stumbled oft in trifles. Once he said,  
 'How well those pine-trees shield the lamb from  
 wind !'

A smile ran round ; at last the boldest spake



‘Father, these are not pine-trees—these are oaks.’  
 And Cuthbert answered, ‘Oaks, good sooth, they are!  
 In youth I knew the twain apart: the pine  
 Wears on his head the Cross.’ Instruction next  
 He gave them, how the Cross had vanquished sin:  
 Then first abstruse to some appeared his words.  
 ‘Father,’ they answered, ‘speak in parables!  
 For pleasant is the tale, and, onward passed,  
 Keeps in our heart thy lesson.’

While they spake  
 A youth rich-vested tossed his head and cried:  
 ‘Father, why thus converse with untaught hinds?  
 Their life is but the life of gnats and flies:  
 They think but of the hour. Behold yon church!  
 I reared it both for reverence of thy Christ  
 And likewise that through ages yet to come  
 My name might live in honour!’ At that word  
 Cuthbert made answer: ‘Hear the parable!  
 My people craved for such.

A monk there lived  
 Holiest of men reputed. He was first  
 On winter mornings in the freezing stall;  
 Meekest when chidden; fervent most in prayer:  
 And, late in life, when heresies arose,  
 That book he wrote, like tempest winged from God,  
 Drove them to darkness back. Grey-haired he died;  
 With honour was interred. The years went by;  
 His grave they opened. Peacefully he slept,  
 Unchanged, the smile of death upon his lips:  
 O’er the right hand alone, for so it seemed,  
 Had Death retained his power: five little lines,  
 White ashes, showed where once the fingers lay.  
 All saw it—simple, learned, rich and poor:  
 None might divine the cause. That night, behold!

A Saintly Shape beside the abbot stood,  
 Bright like the sun except one lifted palm :  
 Thereon there lay a stain. " Behold that hand !"  
 The Spirit spake, " that, toiling twenty years  
 Sent forth that book which pacified the world ;  
 For it the world would canonise me Saint !  
 See that ye do it not ! Inferior tasks  
 I wrought for God alone. Building that book  
 Too oft I mused, ' Far years will give thee praise.'  
 I expiate that offence."'

Another day

A sweet-faced woman raised her voice, and cried,  
 ' Father ! those sins denounced by God I flee ;  
 Yet tasks imposed by God too oft neglect :  
 Stands thus a soul imperilled ?' Cuthbert spake :  
 ' Ye sued for parables ; I speak in such  
 Though ill, a language strange to me, and new.  
 There lived a man who shunned committed sin,  
 Yet daily by omission sinned and knew it :  
 In his own way, not God's, he served his God ;  
 And there was with him peace ; yet not God's peace.  
 So passed his youth. In age he dreamed a dream :  
 He dreamed that, being dead, he raised his eyes,  
 And saw a mountain range of frozen snows,  
 And heard " Committed sins innumerable  
 Though each one small, so small thou knew'st them  
     not,  
 Uplifted, flake by flake as sin by sin,  
 Yon barrier 'twixt thy God and thee ! Arise,  
 Remembering that of sins despair is worst :  
 Be strong, and scale it !" Fifty years he scaled  
 Those hills ; so long it seemed. A cavern next  
 Entering, with mole-like hands he scooped his way,  
 And reached at last the gates of morn. Ah me !

A stone's cast from him rose the tree of Life :  
 He heard its sighs ecstatic : Full in view  
 The Beatific River rolled ; beyond  
 All-glorious shone the City of the Saints  
 Clothed with God's light ! And yet from him that  
 realm

Was severed by a gulf ! Not wide that strait ;  
 It seemed a strong man's leap twice told—no more ;  
 But, as insuperably soared that cliff,  
 Unfathomably thus its sheer descent  
 Walled the abyss. Again he heard that Voice :  
 "Henceforth no place remains for active toils,  
 Penance for acts perverse. Inactive sloth  
 Through passive suffering meets its due. On earth  
 That sloth a nothing seemed ; a nothing now  
 That chasm whose hollow bars thee from the Blest,  
 Poor slender film of insubstantial air.  
 Self-help is there denied thee : for that cause  
 A twofold term thou need'st of pain love-taught  
 To expiate Love that lacked." That term complete  
 An angel caught him o'er that severing gulf :  
 Thenceforth he saw his God.'

With such discourse

Progress, though slow and interrupted oft,  
 The Saint of God, by no delay perturbed,  
 Made daily through his sacred charge. One eve  
 He walked by pastures arched along the sea,  
 With many companied. The on-flowing breeze  
 Glazed the green hill-tops, bending still one way  
 The glossy grasses ; limitless below  
 The ocean mirror, clipped by cape or point  
 With low trees inland leaning, lay like lakes  
 Flooding rich lowlands. Southward far, a rock  
 Touched by a rainy beam, emerged from mist,

And shone, half green, half gold. That rock was  
Farne :

Though strangers, those that kenned it guessed its  
name :

‘Doubtless ’twas there,’ they said, ‘our Saint abode !’  
Then pressed around him, questioning : ‘Rumour goes,  
Father beloved, that in thine island home  
Thou sat’st all day with hammer small in hand,  
Shaping, from pebbles veined, miraculous beads  
That save their wearers still from sword and lance :—  
Are these things true ?’ Smiling the Saint replied :  
‘True, and not true ! That isle in part is spread  
With pebbles divers-fashioned, some like beads :  
I gathered such, and gave to many a guest,  
Adding, “Such beads shall count thy nightly prayers ;  
Pray well ; then fear no peril !”’

Others came

And thus demanded : ‘Rumour fills the world,  
Father, that birds miraculous crowned thine isle,  
And awe-struck let thee lift them in thy hand,  
Though scared by all beside.’ Smiling once more  
The Saint made answer, ‘True, and yet not true !  
Sea-birds elsewhere beheld not throned that isle ;  
A breed so loving and so firm in trust  
That, yet unharmed by man, they flee not man ;  
Wondering they gaze ; who wills may close upon them !  
I signed a league betwixt that race and man :  
Pledging the mariners who sought my cell  
To reverence still that trust.’ He ended thus :  
‘My friends, ye seek me still for parables ;  
Seek them from Nature rather :—here are two !  
Those pebble-beads are words from Nature’s lips  
Exhorting man to pray ; those fearless birds  
Teach him that trust to innocence belongs

By right divine, and more avails than craft  
 To shield us from the aggressor.' Some were glad  
 Hearing that doctrine ; others cried, ' Not so !  
 Our Saint—all know it—makes miraculous beads ;  
 But, being humble, he conceals his might : '  
 And many an age, when slept that Saint in death,  
 Passing his isle by night the sailor heard  
 Saint Cuthbert's hammer clinking on the rock ;  
 And age by age men cried, ' Our Cuthbert's birds  
 Revere the Saint's command.'

While thus they spake

A horseman over moorlands near the Tweed  
 Made hasty way, and thus addressed the Saint :  
 ' Father, Queen Ermenburga greets thee well,  
 And this her message :—“ Queen am I forlorn,  
 Long buffeted by many a storm of State,  
 And worn at heart besides ; for in our house  
 Peace lived not inmate, but a summer guest ;  
 And now, my lord, the King is slain in fight ;  
 And changed the aspect now things wore of old :  
 Thou therefore, man of God, approach my gates  
 With counsel sage. This further I require ;  
 Thy counsel must be worthy of a Queen,  
 Nor aught contain displeasing.” ’ Cuthbert spake :  
 ' My charge requires my presence at Carlisle ;  
 Beseech the Queen to meet me near its wall  
 On this day fortnight.'

Thitherwards thenceforth  
 Swiftlier he passed, while daily from the woods  
 The woodmen flocked, and shepherds from the hills,  
 Concourse still widening. These among there moved  
 A hermit meek as childhood, calm as eld,  
 Long years Saint Cuthbert's friend. Recluse he lived  
 Within a woody isle of that fair lake

By Derwent lulled and Greta. Others thronged  
Round Cuthbert's steps ; that hermit stood apart  
With large dark eyes upon his countenance fixed  
And pale cheek dewed with tears. The name he bore  
Was 'Herbert of the Lake.'

Two weeks went by,  
And Cuthbert reached his journey's end. Next day  
God sent once more His Feast of Pentecost  
To gladden men ; and all His Church on earth  
Shone out, irradiate as by silver gleams  
Flashed from her whiter Sister in the skies ;  
And every altar laughed, and every hearth ;  
And many a simple hind in spirit heard  
The wind which through that 'upper chamber' swept  
Careering through the universe of God,  
New life through all things poured. Cuthbert that day,  
Borne on by wingèd winds of rapturous thought,  
Forth from Carlisle had fared alone, and reached  
Ere long a mead tree-girded ;—in its midst  
Swift-flowing Eden raced from fall to fall,  
Showering at times her spray on flowers as fair  
As graced that earlier Eden ; flowers so light  
Each feeblest breath impalpable to man  
Now shook them and now swayed. Delighted eye  
The Saint upon them fixed. Ere long he gazed  
As glad on crowds thronging the river's marge,  
For now the high-walled city poured abroad  
Her children rich and poor. At last he spake :  
'Glory to Him Who made both flowers and souls !  
He doeth all things well ! A few weeks past  
Yon river rushed by wintry banks forlorn ;  
What decks it thus to-day ? The voice of Spring !  
She called those flowers from darkness forth ; she  
flashed

Her life into the snowy breast of each :  
 This day she sits enthroned on each and all :  
 The thrones are myriad ; but the Enthroned is One !'  
 He paused ; then, kindling, added thus : ' O friends !  
 'Tis thus with human souls through faith re-born :  
 One Spirit calls them forth from darkness ; shapes  
 One Christ, in each conceived, its life of life ;  
 One God finds rest enthroned on all. Once more  
 The thrones are many ; but the Enthroned is One !'  
 Again he paused, and mused ; again he spake :  
 ' Yea, and in heaven itself, a hierarchy  
 There is that glories in the name of "Thrones :"  
 The high cherubic knowledge is not theirs :  
 Not theirs the fiery flight of Seraph's love,  
 But all their restful beings they dilate  
 To make a single, myriad throne for God—  
 Children, abide in unity and love !  
 So shall your lives be one long Pentecost,  
 Your hearts one throne for God !'

As thus he spake

A breeze, wide-wandering through the woodlands near,  
 Illumed their golden roofs, while louder sang  
 The birds on every bough. Then horns were heard  
 Resonant from stem to stem, from rock to rock,  
 While moved in sight a stately cavalcade  
 Flushing the river's crystal. Of that host  
 Foremost and saddest Ermenburga rode,  
 A Queen sad-eyed, with large imperial front  
 By sorrow seamed : a lady rode close by ;  
 Behind her earls and priests. Though proud to man  
 Her inborn greatness made her meek to God :  
 She signed the Saint to stay not his discourse,  
 And placed her at his feet.

His words were great

He spake of Pentecost ; no transient grace,  
No fugitive act, consummated, then gone,  
But God's perpetual presence in that Church  
O'er-shadowed still, like Mary, by His Spirit,  
Fecundated in splendour by His Truth,  
Made loving through His Love. The reign of Love  
He showed, though perfected in Christ alone,  
Not less co-eval with the race of man :  
For what is man ? Not mind : the beasts can think :  
Not passions ; appetites : the beasts have these :  
Nay, but Affections ruled by Laws Divine :  
These make the life of man. Of these he spake ;  
Proclaimed of these the glory. These to man  
Are countless loves revealing Love Supreme :  
These and the Virtues, warp and woof, enweave  
A single robe—that sacrificial garb  
Worn from the first by man, whose every act  
Of love in spirit was self-sacrifice,  
And prophesied the Sacrifice Eterne :  
Through these the world becomes one household vast ;  
Through these each hut swells to a universe  
Traversed by stateliest energies wind-swift,  
And planet-crowned, beneath their Maker's eye.  
All hail, Affections, angels of the earth !  
Woe to that man who boasts of love to God,  
And yet his neighbour scorns ! While Cuthbert spake  
A young man whispered to a priest, ' Is you  
That Anchoret of the rock ? Where learned he then  
This loving reverence for the hearth and home ?  
Mark too that glittering brow ! ' The priest replied :  
' What ! shall a bridegroom's face alone be bright ?  
He knows a better mystery ! This he knows,  
That, come what may, all o'er the earth forever  
God keeps His blissful Bridal-feast with man :



Each true heart there is guest !'

Once more the Saint

Arose and spake : 'O loving friends, my children,  
Christ's sons, His flock committed to my charge !  
I spake to you but now of humbler ties,  
Not highest, with intent that ye might know  
How pierced are earthly bonds by heavenly beam ;  
Yet, speaking with lame tongue in parables,  
I showed you but similitudes of things—  
Twilight, not day. Make question then who will ;  
So shall I mend my teaching.'

Prompt and bright

As children issuing forth to holyday,  
Then flocked to Cuthbert's school full many a man  
Successive : each with simpleness of heart  
His doubt propounded ; each his question asked,  
Or, careless who might hear, confessed his sins,  
And absolution won. Among the rest,  
A little seven years' boy, with sweet, still face,  
Yet strong not less, and sage, drew softly near,  
His great calm eyes upon the patriarch fixed  
And silent stood. From Wessex came that boy :  
By chance Northumbria's guest. Meantime a chief  
Demanded thus : 'Of all the works of might,  
What task is worthiest ?' Cuthbert made reply :  
' His who to land barbaric fearless fares,  
And open flings God's palace gate to all,  
And cries "Come in !"' That concourse thrilled for  
joy :

Alone that seven years' child retained the word :  
The rest forgot it. 'Winifrede' that day  
Men called him ; later centuries, 'Boniface,'  
Because he shunned the ill, and wrought the good :  
In time the Teuton warriors knew that brow,

Their great Apostle he : they knew that voice :  
 And happy Fulda venerates this day  
 Her martyr's gravestone.

Next, to Cuthbert drew  
 Three maidens hand in hand, lovely as Truth,  
 Trustful, though shy : their thoughts, when hidden  
 most,

Wore but a semilucid veil, as when  
 Through gold-touched crystal of the lime new-leaved  
 On April morns the symmetry looks forth  
 Of branch and bough distinct. Smiling, they put  
 At last their question : 'Tell us, man of God,  
 What life, of lives that women lead, is best ;  
 Then show us forth in parables that life !'

He answered : 'Three ; for each of these is best :  
 First comes the Maiden's : she who lives it well  
 Serves God in marble chapel white as snow,  
 His priestess—His alone. Cold flowers each morn  
 She culls ere sunrise by the stainless stream,  
 And lays them on that chapel's altar-stone  
 And sings her matins there. Her feet are swift  
 All day in labours 'mid the vales below,  
 Cheering sad hearts : each evening she returns  
 To that high fane, and there her vespers sings ;  
 Then sleeps, and dreams of heaven.'

With witching smile  
 The youngest of that beauteous triad cried :  
 'That life is sweetest ! I would be that maid !'  
 Cuthbert resumed : 'The Christian Wife comes next :  
 She drinks a deeper draught of life : round her  
 In ampler sweep its sympathies extend :  
 An infant's cry has knocked against her heart,  
 Evoking thence that human love wherein  
 Self-love hath least. Through infant eyes a spirit

Hath looked upon her, crying, "I am thine!  
 Creature from God; dependent yet on thee!"  
 Thenceforth she knows how greatness blends with  
 weakness;

Reverence, thenceforth, with pity linked, reveals  
 To her the pathos of the life of man  
 A thing divine, and yet at every pore  
 Bleeding from crownèd brows. A heart thus large  
 Hath room for many sorrows. What of that?  
 Its sorrow is its dowry's noblest part.  
 She bears it not alone. Such griefs, so shared  
 Sickness, and fear, and vigils lone and long  
 Waken her heart to love sublimer far  
 Than ecstasies of youth could comprehend;  
 Lift her perchance to heights serene as those  
 The Ascetic treadeth.'

'I would be that wife;'

Thus cried the second of those maidens three:  
 Yet who that gazed upon her could have guessed  
 Creature so soft could bear a heart so brave?  
 She seemed that goodness which was beauteous too;  
 Virtue at once and Virtue's bright reward;  
 Delight that lifts, not lowers us; made for heaven;  
 Made too to change to heaven some brave man's hearth.  
 She added thus: 'Of lives that women lead  
 Tell us the third!'

Gently the Saint replied:

'The third is Widowhood—a wintry sound;  
 And yet, for her who widow is indeed  
 That winter something keeps of autumn's gold,  
 Something regains of Spring's first flower snow-white,  
 Snow-cold, and colder for its rim of green.  
 She feels no more the warmly-greeting hand;  
 The eyes she brightened rest on her no more;

Her full-orbed being now is cleft in twain :  
 Her past is dead : daily from memory's self  
 Dear things depart ; yet still she is a wife,  
 A wife the more because of bridal bonds  
 Lives but their essence, waiting wings in heaven ;  
 More wife ; and yet, in that great loneliness,  
 More maiden too than when first maidenhood  
 Lacked what it missed not. Like that other maid  
 She too a lonely Priestess serves her God ;  
 Yea, though her chapel be a funeral vault,  
 Its altar black like Death ; the flowers thereon,  
 Tinct with the Blood Divine. Above that vault  
 She hears the anthems of the Spouse of Christ,  
 Widowed like her, though Bride.'

' O fair, O sweet,

O beauteous lives all three ; fair lot of woman !'  
 Thus cried again the youngest of those Three,  
 Too young to know the touch of grief or cause it,  
 A plant too lightly leaved to cast a shade.  
 The eldest with pale cheek, and lids tear-wet,  
 Made answer sad : ' I would not be a widow.'

Then Cuthbert spake once more with smile benign :  
 ' I said that each of these three lives is best :—  
 There are who live those three conjoined in one :  
 The nun thus lives ! What maid is maid like her  
 Who, free to choose, has vowed a maidenhood  
 Secure 'gainst chance or choice ? What bride like her  
 Whose Bridegroom is the spouse of vestal souls ?  
 What widow lives in such austere retreat,  
 Such hourly thought of him she ne'er can join  
 Save through the gate of death ? If those three lives  
 In separation lived are fair and sweet,  
 How show they, blent in one ?'

Of those who heard

The most part gladdened ; those who knew how high  
Virtue, renouncing all besides for God,  
Hath leave to soar on earth. Yet many sighed,  
Jealous for happy homesteads. Cuthbert marked  
That shame-faced sadness, and continued thus :  
‘To praise the nun reproaches not, O friends,  
But praises best that life of hearth and home  
At Cana blessed by Him who shared it not.  
The uncloistered life is holy too, and oft  
Through changeful years in soft succession links  
Those three fair types of woman ; holds, diffused,  
That excellence severe which life detached  
Sustains in concentration.’ Long he mused ;  
Then added thus : ‘When last I roved these vales  
There lived, not distant far, a blessed one  
Revered by all : her name was Ethelreda :  
I knew her long, and much from her I learned.  
Beneath her Pagan father’s roof there sat  
Ofttimes a Christian youth. With him the child  
Walked, calling him “her friend.” He loved the  
maid :

Still young, he drew her to the fold of Christ ;  
Espoused her three years later ; died in war  
Ere three months passed. For her he never died !  
Immortalised by faith that bond lived on ;  
And now close by, and now ’mid Saints of heaven  
She saw her husband walk. She never wept ;  
That fire which lit her eye and flushed her cheek  
Dried up, it seemed, her tears : the neighbours round  
Called her “the lady of the happy marriage.”  
She died long since, I doubt not.’ Forward stepped  
A slight, pale maid, the daughter of a bard,  
And answered thus : ‘Two months ago she died.’  
Then Cuthbert : ‘Tell me, maiden, of her death ;

And see you be not chary of your words,  
 For well I loved that woman.' Tears unfelt  
 Fast streaming down her pallid cheek, the maid  
 Replied, yet often paused : ' A sad, sweet end !  
 A long night's pain had left her living still :  
 I found her on the threshold of her door :  
 Her cheek was white ; but, trembling round her lips  
 And dimly o'er her countenance spread, there lay  
 Something that, held in check by feebleness,  
 Yet tended to a smile. A cloak tight-drawn  
 From the cold March wind screened her, save one hand  
 Stretched on her knee, that reached to where a beam  
 Thin slip of watery sunshine, sunset's last,  
 Slid through the branches. On that beam, methought,  
 Rested her eyes half-closed. It was not so :  
 For when I knelt, and kissed that hand ill-warmed,  
 Smiling she said : " The small, unwedded maid  
 Has missed her mark ! You should have kissed the  
 ring !

Full forty years upon a widowed hand  
 It holds its own. It takes its latest sunshine."  
 She lived through all that night and died while dawned  
 Through snows Saint Joseph's morn.'

The Queen, with hand  
 Sudden and swift, brushed from her cheek a tear ;  
 And many a sob from that thick-crowding host  
 Confessed what tenderest love can live in hearts  
 Defamed by fools as barbarous. Cuthbert sat  
 In silence long. Before his eyes she passed  
 The maid, the wife, the widow, all in one ;  
 With these, through these, he saw once more the  
 child,

Yea, saw the child's smile on the lips of death,  
 That magic, mystic smile ! O heart of man,

What strange capacities of grief and joy  
 Are thine ! How vain, how ruthless such, if given  
 For transient things alone ! O life of man !  
 What wert thou but some laughing demon's scoff  
 If prelude only to the eternal grave !  
 ' Deep cries to deep ' ; ay, but the deepest deep  
 Crying to summits of the Mount of God  
 Drags forth for echo, ' Immortality.'  
 It was the Death Divine that vanquished death !  
 Shorn of that Death Divine the Life Divine,  
 Albeit its feeblest tear had cleansed all worlds  
 Cancelled all guilt, had failed to reach and sound  
 The deepest in man's nature, Love and Grief,  
 Profoundest each when joined in penitent woe ;  
 Failed thence to wake man's hope. The loftiest light  
 Flashed from God's Face on Reason's orient verge  
 Answers that bird-cry from the *Heart* of man—  
 Poor Heart that, darkling, kept so long its watch  
 The auspice of the dawn.

Like one inspired

The Saint arose, and raised his hands to God ;  
 Then to his people turned with such discourse  
 As mocks the hand of scribe. No more he spake  
 In parables ; adumbrated no more  
 ' Dimly as in a glass ' his doctrine high,  
 But placed it face to face before men's eyes,  
 Essential Truth, God's image, meet for man  
 Himself God's image. Worlds he showed them new,  
 Worlds countless as the stars that roof our night,  
 Fair fruitage of illimitable boughs  
 Pushed from that Tree of life from Calvary sprung  
 That over-tops and crowns the earth and man,  
 Preached the Resurgent, the Ascended God  
 Dispensing ' gifts to men.' The tongue he spake

Seemed Pentecostal—grace of that high Feast—  
 For all who heard, the simple and the sage,  
 Heard still a single language sounding forth  
 To all one Promise. From that careworn Queen  
 Who doffed her crown, and placed it on the rock  
 Murmuring, ‘ Farewell forever, foolish gaud,’  
 To him the humblest hearer, all made vow  
 To live thenceforth for God. The form itself  
 Of each was changed to saintly and to sweet ;  
 Each countenance beamed as though with rays cast  
 down

From fiery tongues, or angel choirs unseen.

Thus like high gods on mountain-tops of joy  
 Those happy listeners sat. The body quelled—  
 With all that body’s might usurped to cramp  
 Through ceaseless, yet unconscious weight of sense  
 Conceptions spiritual, might more subtly skilled  
 Than lusts avowed, to sap the spirit’s life—  
 In every soul its nobler Powers released  
 Stood up, no more a jarring crowd confused  
 Each trampling each and oft the worst supreme,  
 Not thus, but grade o’er grade, in order due,  
 And pomp hierarchical. Yet hand in hand,  
 Not severed, stood those Powers. To every Mind  
 That Truth new learned was palpable and dear,  
 Not abstract nor remote, with cordial strength  
 Enclasped as by a heart ; through every Heart  
 Serene affections swam ’mid seas of light  
 Reason’s translucent empire without bound,  
 Fountained from God. Silent those listeners sat  
 Parleying in wordless thought. For them the world  
 Was lost—and won ; its sensuous aspects quenched ;  
 Its heavenly import grasped. The erroneous Past  
 Lay like a shrivelled scroll before their feet ;



And sweet as some immeasurable rose,  
 Expanding leaf on leaf, varying yet one,  
 An Everlasting Present round them glowed.  
 Dead was desire, and dead not less was fear—  
 The fear of change—of death.

An hour went by ;

The sun declined : then rising from his seat  
 Herbert, the anchoret of the lonely lake,  
 Made humble way to Cuthbert's feet with suit :  
 ' O Father, and O friend, thou saw'st me not ;  
 Yet day by day thus far I tracked thy steps  
 At distance, for my betters leaving place,  
 The great and wise that round thee thronged ; the  
 young

Who ne'er till then had seen thy face ; the old  
 Who saw it then yet scarce again may see it.  
 Father, a happier lot was mine, though late,  
 Or had been save for sin of mine : each year  
 I sought thy cell, thy words of wisdom heard ;  
 Yet still, alas ! lived on like sensual men  
 Who yield their hearts to creatures—fixing long  
 A foolish eye on gold-touched leaf, or flower—  
 Not Him, the great Creator. Father and Friend,  
 The years run past. I crave one latest boon :  
 Grant that we two may die the self-same day !'  
 Then Cuthbert knelt, and prayed. At last he spake :  
 ' Thy prayer is heard ; the self-same day and hour  
 We two shall die.'

That promise was fulfilled ;

For two years only on exterior tasks  
 God set His servant's hands, the man who ' sought  
 In all things rest,' nor e'er had ceased from rest  
 Then when his task was heaviest. Two brief years  
 He roamed on foot his spiritual realm :

The simple still he taught : the sad he cheered :  
Where'er he went he founded churches still  
And convents ; yea, and, effort costlier far,  
Spared not to scan defect with vigilant eye :  
That eye the boldest called not ' vision-dazed ' ;  
That Saint he found no ' dreamer ' : sloth or greed  
' Scaped not his vengeance : scandals hid he not,  
But dragged them into day, and smote them down :  
Before his face he drave the hireling priest  
The bandit thane : unceasing cried, ' Ye kings,  
Cease from your wars ! Ye masters, loose your slaves !'  
Two years sufficed ; for all his earlier years  
Had trained the Ascetic for those works of might  
Beyond the attempt of all but boundless love,  
And in him kept unspent the fire divine.  
Never such Bishop walked till then the North,  
Nor ever since, nor ever, centuries fled,  
So lived in hearts of men. Two years gone by,  
His strength decayed. He sought once more his cell  
Sea-lulled ; and lived alone with God ; and saw  
Once more, like lights that sweep the unmoving hills,  
God's Providences girdling all the world,  
With glory following glory. Tenderer-souled  
Herbert meantime within his isle abode,  
At midnight listening Derwent's gladsome voice  
Mingling with deep-toned Greta's, ' Mourner ' named ;  
Pacing, each day, the shore ; now gazing glad  
On gold-touched leaf, or bird that cut the mere,  
Now grieved at wandering thoughts. For men he  
prayed ;  
And ever strove to raise his soul to God ;  
And God, Who venerates still the pure intent,  
Forgot not his ; and since his spirit and heart  
Holy albeit, were in the eyes Divine

Less ripe than Cuthbert's for the Vision Blest,  
Least faults perforce swelling where gifts are vast,  
That God vouchsafed His servant sickness-pains  
Virtue to perfect in a little space,  
That both might pass to heaven the self-same hour.

It came : that sun which flushed the spray up-hurled  
In cloud round Cuthbert's eastern rock, while he  
Within it dying chanted psalm on psalm,  
Ere long enkindled Herbert's western lake :  
The splendour waxed ; mountain to mountain laughed,  
And, brightening nearer drew, and, nearing, clasped  
That heaven-dropp'd beauty in more strict embrace :  
The cliffs successive caught their crowns of fire ;  
Bleneathara last. Slowly that splendour waned ;  
And from the glooming gorge of Borrodale,  
Her purple cowl shadowing her holy head  
O'er the dim lake twilight with silent foot  
Stepped like a spirit. Herbert from his bed  
Of shingles watched that sunset till it died ;  
And at one moment from their distant isles  
Those friends, by death united, passed to God.

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*SAINT FRIDESWIDA, OR THE FOUNDATIONS OF OXFORD.*

Frideswida flies from the pursuit of a wicked king, invoking the Divine aid and the prayers of St. Catherine and St. Cecilia. She escapes; and at the hour of her death those Saints reveal to her that in that place, near the Isis, where she had successively opened a blind man's eyes and healed a leper, God will one day raise up a seat of Learning, the light and the health of the realm.

‘ONE love I ; One : within His bridal bower  
 My feet shall tread : One love I, One alone :  
 His Mother is a Virgin, and His Sire  
 The unfathomed fount of pureness undefiled :  
 Him love I Whom to love is to be chaste :  
 Him love I touched by Whom my forehead shines :  
 Whom she that clasps grows spotless more and more :  
 Behold, to mine His spirit He hath joined :  
 And His the blood that mantles in my cheek :  
 His ring is on my finger.’

Thus she sang ;

Then walked and plucked a flower : she sang again :  
 ‘That which I longed for, lo, the same I see :  
 That which I hoped for, lo, my hand doth hold :  
 At last in heaven I walk with Him conjoined  
 Whom, yet on earth, I loved with heart entire.’

Thus carolled Frideswida all alone,  
 Treading the opens of a wood far spread  
 Around the upper waters of the Thames.  
 Christian almost by instinct, earth to her  
 Was shaped but to sustain the Cross of Christ.

Her mother lived a saint : she taught her child,  
 From reason's dawn, to note in all things fair  
 Their sacred undermeanings. 'Mark, my child,  
 In lamb and dove, not fleshly shapes,' she said,  
 'But heavenly types : upon the robin's breast  
 Revere that red which bathed her from the Cross  
 With slender bill striving to loose those Nails !'  
 Dying, that mother placed within her hand  
 A book of saintly legends. Thus the maid  
 Grew up with mysteries clothed, with marvels fed,  
 A fearless creature swift as wind or fire :  
 But fires of hers were spirit-fires alone,  
 All else like winter moon. The Wessex King  
 Had gazed upon the glory of her face  
 And deemed that face a spirit's. He had heard  
 Her voice ; it sounded like an angel's song ;  
 But wonder by degrees declined to love  
 Such love as Pagans know. The unworthy suit  
 She scorned, from childhood spoused in heart to Christ :  
 She fled : upon the river lay a boat :  
 She rowed it on through forests many a mile ;  
 A month had passed since then.

Midsummer blazed

On all things round : the vast, unmoving groves  
 Stretched silent forth their immemorial arms  
 Arching a sultry gloom. Within it buzzed  
 Feebly the insect swarm : the dragon-fly  
 Stayed soon his flight : the streamlet scarce made way :  
 In shrunken pools, panting, the cattle stood,  
 Languidly browsing on the dried-up sprays :  
 No bird-song shook the bower. Alone that maid  
 Glided light-limbed, as though some Eden breeze  
 Hers only, charioted the songstress on,  
 Like those that serve the May. Beneath a tree

Low-roofed at last she sank, with eyes up-raised  
 On boughs that, ivy-twined and creeper-trailed  
 Darkened the shining splendour of the sky :  
 Between their interspaces, here and there,  
 It flashed in purple stars.

Enraptured long,  
 For admiration was to her as love,  
 The maiden raised at last her mother's book,  
 And lit upon her childhood's favourite tale,  
 Catherine in vision wed to Bethlehem's Babe  
 Who from His Virgin-Mother leaning, dropped  
 His ring adown her finger. Princely pride  
 And pride not less of soaring intellect  
 At once in her were changed to pride of love :  
 In vain her country's princes sued her grace ;  
 Kingdoms of earth she spurned. Around her seat  
 The far-famed Alexandrian Sages thronged,  
 Branding her Faith as novel. Slight and tall,  
 'Mid them, keen-eyed the wingless creature stood  
 Like daughter of the sun on earth new-lit :—  
 That Faith she shewed to be of all things greatest,  
 All lesser truths its prophets. Swift as beams  
 Forth flashed such shafts of high intelligence  
 That straight their lore sophistic shrivelled up,  
 And Christians they arose. The martyr's wheel  
 Was pictured in the margin, dyed with red,  
 And likewise, azure-tinct on golden ground,  
 Her queenly throne in heaven. ' Ah shining Saint !'  
 Half weeping, smiling half, the virgin cried ;  
 ' Yet dear not less thy sister of the West ;  
 For never gaze I on that lifted face,  
 Or mark that sailing angel near her stayed,  
 But straight her solemn organs round me swell ;  
 All discords cease.' Then with low voice she read

Of Rome's Cecilia, her who won to Christ  
 (That earlier troth inviolably preserved)  
 Her Roman bridegroom wondering at that crown  
 Invisible itself that round her breathed  
 Rose-breath celestial ; her that to the Church  
 Gave her ancestral house ; and, happier gift,  
 Devotion's heavenliest instrument of praise ;  
 Her that, unfearing, dared that Roman sword ;  
 And when its work was done, for centuries lay  
 Like marble, 'mid the catacombs unchanged  
 In sleep-resembling death.

From earliest dawn  
 That maiden's eyes had watched : wearied at noon  
 Their silver curtains closed. Huge mossy roots  
 Pillowed her head, that slender book wide-leaved  
 In stillness, like some brooding white-winged dove  
 Spread on her bosom : 'gainst its golden edge  
 Rested, gold-tinged, the dimpled ivory chin—  
 Loud thunders broke that sleep ; the tempest blast  
 Came up against the woods, while bolt on bolt  
 Ran through them sheer. She started up : she saw  
 That Pagan prince and many a sworded serf  
 Rushing towards her. Fleeter still she fled ;  
 But, as some mountain beast tender and slight  
 That, pasturing spring-fed lilies of Cashmere,  
 Or slumbering where its rock-nursed torrents fall,  
 Sudden not distant hears the hunter's cry  
 And mocks pursuit at first, but slackens soon  
 Breathless and spent, so failed her limbs ere long ;  
 A horror of great faintness o'er her crept ;  
 More near she heard their shout. She staggered on ;  
 To threat'ning phantoms all things round were  
 changed ;  
 About her towered in ruin hollow trunks

Of spiked and branchless trees, survivors sole  
Of woods that, summer-scorched, then lightning-struck  
A century past, for one short week had blazed  
And blackened ever since. She knelt : she raised  
Her hands to God : she sued for holier prayer  
Saint Catherine, Saint Cecilia. At that word  
Behind her close a cry of anguish rang :  
Silence succeeded. As by angels' help  
She reached a river's bank : sun-hardened clay  
Retained the hoof-prints of the drinking herd ;  
And, shallower for long heats, the oxen's ford  
Challenged her bleeding feet. She crossed unharmed,  
And soon in green-gold pastures girt by woods  
Stood up secure. Then forth she stretched her hands,  
Like Agnes praising God amid the flame :  
' Omnipotent, Eternal, Worshipful,  
One God, Immense, and All-compassionate,  
Thou from the sinner's snare hast snatched the feet  
Of her that loved Thee. Glory to Thy name.'

Thenceforth secure she roamed those woods and  
meads ;  
The dwellers in that region brought her bread,  
Upon that countenance gazing, some with awe  
But all with love. To her the maidens came :  
' Tell us,' they said, ' what mystery hast thou learned  
So sweet and good ;—thy Teacher, who was he ;  
Grey-haired, or warrior young ?' To them in turn  
Ceaseless she sang the praises of her Christ,  
His Virgin Mother and His heavenly court,  
Warriors on earth for justice. They for her  
Renounced all else, the banquet and the dance,  
And nuptial rites revered. A low-roofed house  
Inwoven of branches 'mid the woods they raised ;  
There dwelt, and sang her hymn, and prayed her prayer,



And loved her Saviour-Sovereign. Year by year  
More high her bright feet scaled the heavenly mount  
Of lore divine and knowledge of her God,  
And with sublimer chant she hymned His praise ;  
While oft some bishop, tracking those great woods  
In progress to his charge, beneath their roof  
Baptizing or confirming made abode,  
And all that lacked supplied, nor discipline  
Withheld, nor doctrine high. The outward world  
To them a nothing, made of them its boast :  
A Saint, it said, within that forest dwelt  
A Saint that helped their people. Saint she was  
And therefore wrought for heaven her holy deeds ;  
Immortal stand they on the heavenly roll ;  
Yet fewest acts suffice for heavenly crown ;  
And two of hers had consequence on earth  
Like water circles widening limitless,  
For man still helpful. Hourly acts of hers  
Interior acts invisible to men,  
Perchance were worthier. Humblest faith and prayer  
Are oft than miracle miraculous more :  
To us the exterior marks the interior might :  
These two alone record we.

Years had passed :

One day when all the streams were dried by heat  
And rainless fields had changed from green to brown,  
T'wards her there drew, by others led, a man  
Old, worn, and blind. He knelt, and wept his prayer :  
' Help, Saint of God ! That impious King am I,  
That King abhorred, his people's curse and bane,  
Who chased thee through these woods with fell resolve,  
Worst vengeance seeking for insulted pride :  
Rememberest thou that, near thee as I closed  
Kneeling thou mad'st thy prayer ? Instant from God

Blindness fell on me. Forward still I rushed,  
 Ere long amid those spiked and branded trunks  
 To lie as lie the dead. If hope remains  
 For me if any hope survives on earth  
 It rests with thee ; thee only !' On her knees  
 She sank in prayer ; her fingers in the fount  
 She dipped ; then o'er him signed the Saviour's cross,  
 And thrice invoked that Saviour. At her word  
 Behold, that sightless King arose, and saw,  
 And rendered thanks to God.

The legend saith  
 Saint Catherine by her stood that night, and spake :  
 'Once more I greet thee on thy dying day.'

Again the years went by. That sylvan lodge  
 Had changed to convent. Beautiful it stood  
 Not far from Isis, though on loftier ground :  
 Sad outcasts knew it well : whate'er their need  
 There found they solace. One day toward it moved,  
 Dread apparition and till then unknown,  
 Like one constrained, with self-aborrent steps,  
 A leper long in forest caverns hid.  
 Back to their cells the nuns had shrunk, o'erawed :  
 Remained but Frideswida. Thus that wretch  
 With scarce organic voice, and aiding sign,  
 Wailed out the supplication of despair :  
 'Fly not, O saintly virgin ! Yet, ah me !  
 What help though thou remainest ? Warned from  
 heaven,  
 I know that not thy fountain's healing wave  
 Could heal my sorrow : not those spotless hands :  
 Not even thy prayer. To me the one sole aid  
 Were aid impossible—a kiss of thine.'  
 A moment stood she : not in doubt she stood :

First slowly, swiftly then to where he knelt  
 She moved : with steadfast hand she raised that cloth  
 Which veiled what once had been a human face :  
 O'er it she signed in faith the cross of Christ ;  
 She wept aloud, ' My brother ! ' Folding then  
 Stainless to stained, with arms about him wound  
 In sacred silence mouth to mouth she pressed  
 A long, long sister's kiss. Like infant's flesh  
 The blighted and the blasted back returned :  
 That leper rose restored.

The legend saith  
 That Saint Cecilia by her stood that night :  
 ' Once more I greet thee on thy dying day.'

It came at last, that day. Her convent grew  
 In grace with God and man : the pilgrim old  
 Sought it from far ; the gifts of kings enlarged it :  
 It came at last, that day. There are who vouch  
 The splendour of that countenance never waned :  
 Thus much is sure ; it waxed to angels' eyes :—  
 Welcomed it came, that day desired, not feared.  
 By humbleness like hers those two fair deeds  
 Were long forgotten : each day had its task :  
 Not hardest that of dying. Why should sobs  
 Trouble the quiet of a holy house  
 Because its holiest passes ? Others wept ;  
 The sufferer smiled : ' Ah, little novices,  
 How little of the everlasting lore  
 Your foolish mother taught you if ye shrink  
 From trial light as this ! ' She spake ; then sank  
 In what to those around her seemed but sleep,  
 The midnight August sunshine on her hair  
 In ampler radiance lying than that hour  
 When, danger near her yet to her unknown,

Beneath that forest tree her eyelids closed—  
Her book upon her bosom.

Near her bed

Not danger now but heralds ever young,  
Saint Catherine, Saint Cecilia, stood once more,  
Linked hand in hand, with aureoles interwreathed :  
One gazing stood as though on radiance far  
With widening eyes : a listener's look intent  
The other's, soft with pathos more profound.  
The Roman sister spake : ' Rejoice, my child,  
Rejoice, thus near the immeasurable embrace  
And breast expectant of the unnumbered Blest  
That swells to meet thee ! Yea, and on the earth  
For thee reward remaineth. Happy thou  
Through prayer his sight restoring to thy foe,  
Sole foe that e'er thou knew'st though more his own !  
Child ! darkness is there worse than blindness far  
Wherein erroneous wanders human Pride ;  
That prayer of thine from age to age shall guard  
A realm against such darkness. Where yon kine  
Stand in mid ford, quenching their noontide thirst,  
Thy footsteps crossed of old the waters. God  
In the unerasing current sees them still !  
Close by, a nation from a purer flood  
Shall quench a thirst more holy, quaffing streams  
Of Knowledge loved as Truth. Majestic piles  
Shall rise by yonder Isis, honouring, each,  
My clear-eyed sister of the sacred East  
That won to Christ the Alexandrian seers,  
Winning, herself, from chastity her lore :  
High on their fronts in statued grandeur ranged  
With face to East, and cincture never loosed,  
All Sciences shall stand, daughters divine  
Of Him that Truth eterne and boon to man

Holding in reverent hand, not lamp alone,  
 But lamp and censer both, and both alike  
 From God's great Altar lighted.'

Spake in turn

That Alexandrian with the sunlike eyes :  
 ' Beside those Sciences shall stand a choir  
 As fair as they ; as tall ; those sister Arts,  
 High daughters of celestial Harmony,  
 Diverse yet one, that bind the hearts of men  
 To steadfast Truth by Beauty's sinuous cords ;  
 She that to marble changes mortal thought ;  
 She that with rainbow girds the cloud of life ;  
 She that above the morning mist exalts  
 Rock-rooted domes of prayer ; and she that rears  
 With words auguster temples. Happy thou  
 Healing that leper with thy virgin kiss !  
 A leprosy there is more direful, child !—  
 Therein the nations rot when flesh is lord  
 And spirit dies. Such ruin Arts debased  
 Gender, or, gendered long, exasperate more.  
 But thou, rejoice ! From this pure centre Arts  
 Unfallenshall breathe their freshness through the land,  
 With kiss like thine healing a nation's wound  
 Year after year successive ; listening, each,  
 My sister's organ music in the skies,  
 Prime Art that, challenging not eye but ear,  
 To Faith is nearest, and of Arts on earth  
 For that cause, living soul.'

That prophecy  
 Found its accomplishment. In later years,  
 There where of old the Oxen had their Ford,  
 The goodliest city England boasts arose,  
 Mirrored in sacred Isis ; like that flood  
 Its youth for aye renewing. Convents first

Through stately groves levelled their placid gleam,  
With cloisters opening dim on garden gay  
Or moonlit lawn dappled by shadowing deer ;  
Above them earliest soared the chapel's bulk  
With storied window whence, in hues of heaven,  
Martyrs looked down, or Confessor, or Saint  
On tomb of Founder with its legend meek  
' Pro animâ orate.' Night and day  
Mounted the Church's ever-varying song  
Sustained on organ harmonies that well  
Might draw once more to earth, with wings outspread  
And heavenly face made heavenlier by that strain  
Cecilia's Angel. Of those convents first  
Was Frideswida's, ruled in later years  
By Canons Regular, later yet rebuilt  
By him of York, that dying wept, alas,  
' Had I but served my Maker as my king !'  
To colleges those convents turned ; yet still  
The earlier inspiration knew not change :  
The great tradition died not : near the bridge  
From Magdalen's tower still rang the lark-like hymn  
On May-day morn : high ranged in airy cells,  
Facing the East, all Sciences, all Arts,  
And greater far than these all Virtues stood,  
Best imaged there in no ideal forms,  
Craft unhistoric of some dreamer's brain,  
But life-like shapes of plain heroic men  
Who in their day had fought the fight of Faith,  
Warriors and sages, poets, saints, and kings,  
And earned their rest : the long Procession paced,  
Up winding slow the college-girded street  
To where in high cathedral slept the Saint,  
Singing its ' Alma Redemptoris Mater,'  
On August noons, what time the Assumption Feast

From purple zenith of the Christian heaven  
 Brightened the earth. That hour not bells alone  
 Chiming from countless steeples made reply :  
 Laughed out that hour high-gabled roof and spire ;  
 Kindling shone out those Sciences, those Arts  
 Pagan one time, now confessors white-robed ;  
 And all the holy City gave response,  
 'Deus illuminatio mea est.'\*

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*THE BANQUET HALL OF WESSEX, OR  
 THE KING WHO COULD SEE.*

Kenwalk, King of Wessex, is a Pagan, but refuses to persecute Christians. He is dethroned by the Mercian King, and lives an exile in a Christian land. There he boasts that he never accords faith to what he hears, and believes only what he sees ; yet, his eye being single, he sees daily more of the Truth. Wessex is delivered, and a great feast held at which the Pagan nobles, priests, and bards all conspire for the destruction of the Faith. Birinus, the bishop, having withstood them valiantly, Kenwalk declares himself a Christian. Birinus prophesies of England's greatest King.

KING CYNEGILS lay dead, who long and well  
 Had judged the realm of Essex. By his bier  
 The Christians standing smote their breasts, and said,  
 'Ill day for us : ' but all about the house  
 Clustering in smiling knots of twos and threes  
 The sons of Odin whispered, or with nods  
 Gave glad assent. Christ's bishop sent from Rome  
 Birinus, to the king had preached for years  
 The Joyous Tidings. Cynegils believed

\* The motto of the University of Oxford.

And with him many ; but the most refrained :  
 With these was Kenwalk ; and, his father dead,  
 Kenwalk was king.

A valiant man was he  
 A man of stubborn will, but yet at heart  
 Magnanimous and just. To one who said  
 ‘ Strike, for thine hour is come ! ’ the king new-crowned  
 Made answer, ‘ Never ! Each man choose his path !  
 My father chose the Christian, Odin’s I.  
 I crossed my father oft a living man ;  
 I war not on him dead.’

That giant hand  
 Which spared Religion ruled in all beside :  
 He harried forth the robbers from the woods  
 And wrecked the pirates’ ships. He burned with fire  
 A judge unjust, and thrice o’er Severn drave  
 The invading Briton. Lastly, when he found  
 That woman in his house intolerable,  
 From bed and realm he hurled her forth though  
     crowned,  
 Ensuing thence great peace.

Not long that peace :  
 The Mercian king, her brother, heard her tale  
 With blackening brow. The shrill voice stayed at last,  
 Doubly incensed the monarch made reply :  
 ‘ Sister, I never loved you ;—who could love ?  
 But him who spurned you from his realm I hate :  
 Fear nought ! your feast of vengeance shall be full ! ’  
 He spake ; then cried, ‘ To arms ! ’

In either land,  
 Like thunders low and far, or windless plunge  
 Of waves on coasts long silent that proclaim,  
 Though calm the sea for leagues, tempest far off  
 That shoreward swells, thus day by day was heard



The direful preparation for a war  
 Destined no gladsome tournament to prove  
 But battle meet for ancient foes resolved  
 To clear old debts ; make needless wars to come.  
 Not long that strife endured ; on either side  
 Valour was equal ; but on one, conjoined,  
 The skill most practised and the heavier bones :  
 The many fought the few. On that last field  
 'Twas but the fury of a fell despair  
 Not hope, that held the balance straight so long :  
 Ere sunset all was over. From the field  
 A bleeding remnant dragged their king half dead :  
 The Mercian host pursued not.

Many a week

Low lay the broken giant nigh to death :  
 At last, like creeping plant down-dragged, not crushed,  
 That, washed by rains, and sunshine-warmed, once more  
 Its length uplifting feels along the air,  
 And gradual finds its 'customed prop, so he,  
 Strengthening each day, with dubious eyes at first  
 Around him peered, but raised at length his head,  
 And, later, question made. His health restored  
 He sought East Anglia, where King Anna reigned,  
 His chief of friends in boyhood. Day by day  
 A spirit more buoyant to the exile came  
 And winged him on his way : his country's bound  
 Once passed, his darker memories with it sank :  
 Through Essex hastening stronger grew his step ;  
 East Anglian breezes from the morning sea  
 Fanned him to livelier pulse : wild April growths  
 Gladdened his spirit with glittering green. More fresh  
 He walked because the sun outfaced him not,  
 Veiled, though not his. That shrouded sun had ta'en  
 Its passion from the wild bird's song, but left

Quiet felicities of notes low-toned  
 That kept in tune with streams too amply brimmed  
 To chatter o'er their pebbles. Kenwalk's soul  
 Partook not with the poet's. Loveliest sights  
 Like music brightening those it fails to charm,  
 Roused but his mirthful mood. To each that passed  
 He tossed his jest : he scanned the labourer's task ;  
 Reviled the luckless boor that ploughed awry  
 And beat the smith that marred the horse's hoof :  
 At times his fortunes thus he moralised :  
 ' Here walk I, crownless king, and exiled man :  
 My Mercian brother lists his sister's tongue :  
 Say, lark ! which lot is happiest ? '

Festive streets

Tapestries from windows waving, banners borne  
 By white-clad children chanting anthems blithe ;  
 With these East Anglia's king received his friend  
 Entering the city gate. In joyous sports  
 That day was passed. At banquet Christian priests  
 Sat with his thanes commingled. Anna's court  
 Was Christian, and, for many a league around,  
 His kingdom likewise. As the earth in May  
 Glistens with vernal flowers, or as the face  
 Of one whose love at last has found return  
 Irradiate shines so shone King Anna's house  
 A home of Christian peace. Fair sight it was—  
 Justice and Love, the only rivals there  
 O'er-ruled it, and attuned. Majestic strength  
 Looked forth in every glance of Anna's eye  
 Too great for pride to dwell there: Tender-souled  
 As that first streak the harbinger of dawn  
 Revealed through cloudless ether, such the queen  
 All charity, all humbleness, all grace  
 All womanhood. Harmonious was her voice,

Dulcet her movements, undisguised her thoughts  
 As though they trod an Eden land unfallen  
 And needed raiment none. Some heavenly birth  
 Their children seemed, blameless in word and act,  
 The sisters as their brothers frank, and they  
 Though bolder, not less modest. Kenwalk marked,  
 And marking, mused in silence, ' Contrast strange  
 These Christians with the pagan races round !  
 Something those pagans see not these have seen :  
 Something those pagans hear not these have heard :  
 Doubtless there's much in common. What of that ?  
 'Tis thus 'twixt man and dog ; yet knows the dog  
 His master walks in worlds by him not shared—  
 Perchance for me there may be worlds unknown !'

Thus God to Kenwalk shewed the things that bear  
 Of God true witness, seeing in his soul  
 Justice and Judgment, and, with these conjoined,  
 Valour and Truth : for as the architect  
 On tower four-square and solid plants his spire  
 And not on meads below though gay with flowers  
 On those four virtues God the fabric rears  
 Of virtues loftier yet—those three, heaven-born,  
 And pointing heavenward.

To those worlds unknown  
 Kenwalk ere long stood nigh. In three short months  
 The loveliest of those children, and last born,  
 Lay cold in death. Old nurses round her wailed :  
 The mighty heart of Kenwalk shook for dread  
 Entering the dim death-chamber. On a bier  
 The maiden lay, the cross upon her breast :  
 Close by, the mother sat, pale as the child,  
 Yet calm as pale. When Kenwalk near her drew  
 She lifted from that bier a slender book

And read that record of the three days' dead  
 Raised by the Saviour from that death-cave sealed  
 A living man. Once more she read those words,  
 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,'  
 Then added, low, with eyes up cast to heaven,  
 'With Him my child awaits me.' Kenwalk saw ;  
 And, what he saw believing, half believed—  
 Not more—the things he heard.

Yes, half believed ;

Yet, call it obduracy, call it pride  
 Call it self-fear, or fear of priestly craft  
 He closed his ear against the Word Divine :  
 The thing he saw he trusted ; nought beyond.  
 Three years went by. Once, when his friend had named  
 The Name all-blessed, Kenwalk frowned. Since then  
 That Name was named no more. In later days  
 They chased the wild deer ; on the billow breathed  
 Inspiring airs ; in hall of joyance trod  
 The mazes of the dance. Then war broke out :  
 Reluctant long King Anna sought the field ;  
 Hurl'd back aggression. Kenwalk, near him still,  
 Watched him with insight keener than his wont  
 And, wondering, marked him least to pagans like  
 Inly, when like perforce in outward deed.  
 The battle frenzy took on him no hold :  
 Severe his countenance grew ; austere and sad ;  
 Fatal, not wrathful. Vicar stern he seemed  
 Of some dread, judgment-executing Power,  
 Against his yearnings ; not despite his will.  
 Once, when above the faithless town far off  
 The retributive smoke leaped up to heaven,  
 He closed with iron hand on Kenwalk's arm  
 And slowly spake—a whisper heard afar—  
 'See you that town? Its judgment is upon it !

I gave it respite twice. This day its doom  
Is irreversible.'

The invader quelled  
Anna and Kenwalk on their homeward way  
Rode by the grave of saintly Sigebert,  
King Anna's predecessor. Kenwalk spake :  
' Some say the people keep but memory scant  
Of benefits : I trust the things I see :  
I never passed that tomb but round it knelt  
A throng of supplicants ! King Sigebert  
Conversed, men say, with prophet and with seer :  
I never loved that sort :—who wills can dream—  
Yet what I see I see.'

' They pray for him,'  
Anna replied, ' who perished for their sake :  
Long years he lived recluse at Edmondsbury,  
A tonsured monk : around its walls one day  
Arose that cry, "The Mercian, and his host !  
Forth, holy King, and lead, as thou wert wont  
Thy people to the battle, lest they die !"  
Again I see him riding at their head  
Lifting a cross, not sword. The battle lost  
Again I see him fall.' With rein drawn tight  
King Kenwalk mused ; then smote his hands, and  
cried

' My father would have died like Sigebert !  
He lacked but the occasion !' After pause,  
Sad-faced, with bitter voice he spake once more :  
' Such things as these I might have learned at home !  
I shunned my father's house lest fools might say,  
" He thinks not his own thoughts."'

Thus month by month,  
Though Faith which ' comes by hearing ' had not come  
To Kenwalk yet, no less since sight he used

In honest sort and resolute to learn,  
 God shewed him memorable things and great  
 Which sight unblest discerns not, tutoring thus  
 A kingly spirit to a kingly part :  
 Before him near Faith lay.

The morrow morn  
 Great tidings came : in Wessex war was raised :  
 Kenwalk, departing thus to Anna spake,  
 To Anna, and his consort : ‘ Well I know  
 What thanks are those the sole your hearts could  
 prize : ’

With voice that shook he added : ‘ Man am I  
 That make not pledge : yet, if my father’s God  
 Sets free my father’s realm——’ again he paused ;  
 Then westward rode alone.

Well planned, fought well  
 For Kenwalk, of the few reverse makes wise,  
 From him had put his youth’s precipitance,  
 That virtuous warfare triumphed. Swift as fire  
 The news from Sherburne and from Winbourne flashed  
 To Sarum, Chertsey, Malmsbury. That delight  
 On earth the nearest to religious joy,  
 The rapture of a trampled land set free,  
 Swelled every breast : the wounded in their wounds  
 Rejoiced, not grieved : the sick forgot their pains :  
 The mourner dashed away her tear and cried  
 ‘ Wessex is free ! ’ Remained a single doubt :  
 Christians crept forth from cave and hollow tree :  
 Once more the exiled monk was seen ; and one  
 Who long in minstrel’s garb with harp in hand  
 Old, poor, half blind, had sat beside a bridge  
 And, charming first the wayfarer with song,  
 Had won him next with legends of the Cross,  
 Stood up before his altar. Rumour ran

‘Once more Birinus lifts his crosier-staff !’  
 Then muttered priests of Odin, ‘Cynegils  
 We know was Christian. Kenwalk holds—or held  
 Ancestral Faith, yet warred not on the new :  
 Tolerance means still connivance.’

Peace restored

Within King Kenwalk’s echoing palace hall,  
 The hall alike of council and of feast,  
 The Great Ones of the Wessex realm were met :  
 Birinus sat among them, eyed from far  
 With anger and with hatred. Council o’er  
 Banquet succeeded, and to banquet song,  
 The Saxon’s after-banquet. Many a harp  
 That day by flying hand entreated well  
 Divulged its secret, amorous, or of war ;  
 And many a warrior sang his own great deeds  
 Or dirge of ancient friend Valhalla’s guest ;  
 Nor stinted foeman’s praise. Silent meanwhile  
 Far down the board a son of Norway sat,  
 Ungenial guest with clouded brows and stern,  
 And eyes that flashed beneath them : bard was he,  
 Warrior and bard. Not his the song for gold !  
 He sang but of the war-fields and the gods ;  
 He lays of love despised. ‘Thy turn is come,  
 Son of the ice-bound North,’ thus spake a thane :  
 ‘Sing thou ! The man who sees that face, already  
 Half hears the tempest singing through the pines  
 That shade thy gulfs hill-girt.’ The stranger guest  
 Answered, not rising : ‘Yea, from lands of storm  
 And seas cut through by fiery lava floods  
 I come, a wanderer. Ye, meantime, in climes  
 Balm-breathing, gorge the fat, and smell the sweet :  
 Ye wed the maid whose sire ye never slew  
 And bask in unearned triumph. Feeble spirits !

Endless ye deem the splendours of this hour,  
 And call defeat opprobrious ! Sirs, our life  
 Is trial. Victory and Defeat are Gods  
 That toss man's heart, their plaything, each to each :  
 Great Mercia knows that truth—of all your realms  
 Faithfullest to Odin far !'

‘Nay, minstrel, sing,’

Once more, not wroth, they clamoured. He replied :  
 ‘Hear then my song ; but not those songs ye sing :  
 I have against you somewhat, Wessex men !  
 Ye are not as your fathers, when, in youth,  
 I trod your coasts. That time ye sang of Gods  
 Sole theme for manlike song. On Iceland's shores  
 We keep our music's virtue undefiled :  
 While summer lasts we fight : by winter hearths  
 Or ranged in sunny coves by winter seas,  
 Betwixt the snow-plains and the hills of fire,  
 Singing we feed on legends of the Gods :  
 Ye sing but triumphs of the hour that fleets ;  
 Ye build you kingdoms : next ye dash them down :  
 Ye bow to idols ! O that song of mine  
 Might heal this people's wound !'

Then rose the bard

And took his harp, and smote it like a man ;  
 And sang full-blooded songs of Gods who spurn  
 Their heaven to war against that giant race  
 Throned 'mid the mountains of old Jötunheim  
 That girdle still the unmeasured seas of ice  
 With horror and strange dread. Innumerable  
 In ever-winding labyrinths glacier-thronged  
 Those mountains raise their heads among the stars,  
 That palsied glimmer 'twixt their sunless bulks  
 O'er-shadowing seas and lands. O'er Jötunheim  
 The glittering car of day hath never shone :



There endless twilight broods. Beneath it sit  
 The huge Frost-Giants, sons of Örgelmir,  
 Themselves like mountains, solitary now,  
 Now grouped, with knees drawn up and heads low  
 bent

Plotting new wars. Those wars the Northman sang ;  
 And thunder-like rang out the vast applause.  
 That hour Birinus whispered one close by :  
 ‘ Not casual this ! Ill spirits, be sure, this day  
 And impious men will launch their fiercest bolts  
 To crush Christ’s Faith for ever ! ’

Jocund songs

That bard sang next : how Thor had roamed disguised  
 Through Jötunheim, and found the giant-brood  
 Feasting ; and how their king gave challenge thus :  
 ‘ Sir, since you deign us visit, show us feats !  
 Behold yon drinking horn ! with us a child  
 Drains it at draught.’ The God inclined his head  
 And swelled his lips ; and three times drank : yet lo !  
 Nigh full that horn remained, the dusky mead  
 In mockery winking ! Spake once more the king :  
 ‘ Behold my youngest daughter’s chief delight,  
 Yon wild-cat grey ! She lifts it : lift it thou ! ’  
 The God beneath it slipped his arm and tugged,  
 And tugging, ever higher rose and higher ;  
 The wild cat arched her back and with him rose ;—  
 But one foot left the ground ! Last, forward stept  
 A haggard, lame, decrepid, toothless crone,  
 And cried, ‘ Canst wrestle, friend ? ’ He closed upon  
 her :

Firm stood she as a mountain : she in turn  
 Closed upon Thor, and brought him to one knee :  
 Lower she could not bend him. Thor for rage  
 Clenched both his fists until his finger-joints

Grew white as snow late fallen !

Loud and long

The laughter rose : the minstrel frowned dislike :  
 ‘ I have against you somewhat, Wessex men !  
 In laughter spasms ye reel, or shout applause  
 Music surceased. Like rocks your fathers sat ;  
 In every song they knew some mystery lay,  
 Mystery of man or nature. Greater God  
 Is none than Thor, whom, clamouring, thus ye flout.  
 That Giant-King his greatness knew : at morn,  
 While vexed at failure through the gates he passed,  
 Addressed him reverent : “ Lift thy head, great Thor !  
 Disguised thou cam’st : not less we knew thee well :  
 Brave battle fought’st thou, seeming still to fail :  
 Thy foes were phantoms ! Phantasies I wove  
 To snare thine eyes because I feared thy hand,  
 And pledged thy strength to tasks impossible.  
 That horn thou could’st not empty was the sea !  
 At that third draught such ebb-tide stripp’d the shore  
 As left whole navies stranded ! What to thee  
 Wild-cat appeared was Midgard’s endless snake  
 Whose infinite circle elaps the ocean round :  
 Then when her foot thou liftedst, tremour went  
 From iron vale to vale of Jötunheim :  
 Hadst thou but higher raised it one short span,  
 The sea had drowned the land ! That toothless crone  
 Was Age, that drags the loftiest head to earth :  
 She bent thy knee alone. Come here no more !  
 On equal ground thou fight’st us in the light :  
 In this, our native land, the stronger we,  
 And mock thee by Illusions ! ” ’

After pause,

With haughty eye cast round, the minstrel spake :  
 ‘ Now hear ye mysteries of the antique song,

Though few shall guess their import !' Then he sang  
 Legends primeval of that Northern race  
 And dread beginnings of the heavens and earth,  
 When, save the shapeless chaos, nothing was :  
 Of Ymer first, by some named Örgelmir,  
 The giant sire of all the giant brood :—  
 Him for his sins the sons of Bör destroyed ;  
 Then fashioned of his blood the seas and streams  
 And of his bones the mountains ; of his teeth  
 The cliffs firm set against the aggressive waves ;  
 Last, of his skull the vast, o'er-hanging heaven  
 And of his brain the clouds.

'Sing on,' they cried :

Next sang he of that mystic shape, earth-born,  
 The wondrous cow, Auhumla. Herb that hour  
 Was none, nor forest growth ; yet on and on  
 She wandered by the vapour-belted seas,  
 And, wandering, from the stones and icebergs cold  
 That creaked forlorn against the grey sea-crag  
 She licked salt spray, and hoary frost, and lived ;  
 And ever where she licked sprang up, full-armed,  
 Men fair and strong !

Once more they cried 'Sing on !'

Last sang the minstrel of the Night and Day :  
 Car-borne they sweep successive through the heaven :  
 First rides the dusky maid by men called Night ;  
 Sleep-bringing, pain-assuaging, kind to man ;  
 With dream-like speed cleaving the starry sphere :  
 Hrimfaxi is her horse : his round complete  
 Foam from his silver bit bespangles earth,  
 And mortals call it 'Morn.' Day follows fast,  
 Her brother white : Skinfaxi is his horse :  
 When forth he flings the splendours from his mane  
 Both Gods and men rejoice.

Thus legends old

The Northman sang, till, fleeting from men's eyes  
 The present lived no longer. In its place  
 He fixed that vision of the world new formed  
 Which on the childhood of the Northern mind  
 Like endless twilight lay;—spaces immense;  
 Unmeasured energies of fire and flood;  
 Great Nature's forces terrible yet blind  
 In ceaseless strife alternately supreme,  
 Or breast to breast with dreadful equipoise  
 In conflict pressed. Once more o'er those that heard  
 He hung that old world's low, funereal sky:  
 Before their eyes he caused its cloud to stream  
 Shadowing infinitude. He spake no word  
 Like Heida of that war 'twixt Good and Ill;  
 That peace which crowns the just; that God Unknown:  
 Enough to him his Faith without its soul!  
 With glorying eye he marked that panting throng;  
 Then, sudden, changed his note. Again of war  
 He sang, but war no more of Gods on Gods;  
 He sang the honest wars of man on man;  
 Of Odin, king of men, ere yet, death past,  
 He flamed abroad in godhead. Field on field  
 He sang his battles; traced from realm to realm  
 His conquering pilgrimage: then ended, fierce:  
 'What God was this—that God ye honoured once?  
 What man was this—your half-forgotten king?  
 Your law-giver he was; he framed your laws!  
 Your poet he: he shaped your earliest song!  
 Your teacher he: he taught you first your runes!  
 Your warrior—yours! His warfare consummate,  
 For you he died! Old age at last, sole foe  
 Unvanquished, found him throned in Gylfin's land:  
 Summoning his race around him thus he spake:

“ My sons, I scorn that age should cumber youth !  
Ye have your lesson—see ye keep it well !  
I taught you how to conquer ; how to live ;  
Now learn to die ! ” His dagger high he raised ;  
Nine times he plunged it through his bleeding breast,  
Then sheathed it in his heart. Ere from his lips  
The kingly smile had vanished he was dead ! ’

So sang the bard and rose : his work was done :  
Abroad the tempest burst. ’Twas not his songs  
Alone that raised it ! Memories which they waked  
Memories of childhood, fainter year by year,  
Tripled his might. Meantime a Saxon priest  
Potential there, bent low, with eye-brow arched,  
O’er Eardulf’s ear, Eardulf old warrior famed,  
And whispered long, and as he whispered glanced  
Oft at Birinus. Keen of eye the King  
The action noting well, the aim divined,  
And thus to Offa near him spake, low-toned :  
‘ The full-fed priest of Odin sends a sword  
To slay that naked babe he hates so sore  
The Faith of Christ ! ’

Rising with fiery face  
And thundering hand that shook the banquet board  
Eardulf began : “ Ye are not what ye were ! ”  
So saith our stranger kinsman from the North,  
A man plain-tongued ; I would that all were such !  
Lords, and my King, this stranger speaks the truth !  
I tell you too, we are not what we were :  
Nor lengthened trail he hunts who seeks the cause.  
Lo, there the cause among us ! Man from Rome !  
I ask who sent thee hither ? From the first  
Rome and our native races stand at war ;  
Her hope was this, to make our sons like hers

Liars and slaves, our daughters false and vile,  
 And, thus subverted, rule our land and us.  
 Frustrate in war, now sends she forth her priests  
 In peaceful gown to sap the manly hearts  
 Her sword but manlier made. Ho, Wessex men !  
 You see your foe ! My counsel, Lords, is this :  
 The worm that sting us tread we to the earth  
 Then spurn it from our coasts !'

Ere ceased the acclaim

Subdued and soft the Pagan pontiff rose,  
 And three times half retired, as one who yields  
 His betters place ; and thrice, answering the call  
 Advanced, and leaning stood : at last he spake  
 Sweet-voiced, not loud ; ' Ye Wessex Earls and  
 Thanes,

I stand here but as witness not as judge ;  
 Ye are the judges. Late ye heard—yea, twice—  
 Words strange and new ; " Ye are not what ye were !"  
 I witness this ; things are not what they were ;  
 For round me as I roll these sorrowing eyes  
 Now old and dim—perchance the fault is theirs—  
 They find no longer, ranged along your walls  
 Amid the deep-dyed trophies of old time,  
 That chiefest of your Standards, lost, men say,  
 In that ill-omened battle lost which wrecked  
 But late our Wessex kingdom. Odin's wrath—  
 I spare to task your time and patience, Lords,  
 Enforcing truth which every urchin knows—  
 'Twas Odin shamed his foe ! Ah Cynegils !  
 What made thee Odin's foe ? Our friend was he !  
 Base tolerance first, connivance next, then worse,  
 Favoured that Faith perfidious ! Stood and stands  
 A bow-shot hence that church the strangers built ;  
 Their church, their font ! The strangers, who are they ?

Snake-like and supple, winding on and on  
 Through courtly chambers darkling still they creep,  
 Nor dare to face a people front to front ;  
 Let them stand up in light and all is well !  
 And who their converts ? Late, to please a king  
 They donned his novel worship like a robe ;  
 When dead he lay they doffed it ! Earls and Thanes,  
 A nobler day is come ; a sager king ;  
 In him I trust ; in you ; in Odin most,  
 Our nation's strength, the bulwark of our throne.  
 I proffer nought of counsel. Ye have eyes :  
 The opprobrium sits among you !'

From the floor

The storm of iron feet rang loud, and swords  
 Leaped flashing from their sheaths. In silence some  
 Waited the event : the larger part by far  
 Clamoured for vengeance on the outlandish Faith,  
 The loudest they, the apostates of past time.  
 Then stately from his seat Birinus rose,  
 And stood in calm marmorean. Long he stood  
 Not eager though expectant. By degrees  
 That tumult lessening, with a quiet smile  
 And hand extended, far commanding peace,  
 Thus he addressed that concourse.

' Earls and Thanes,

Among so many here I stand alone,  
 Why peaceful ? why untroubled ? In your hands  
 I see a hundred swords against me bent :  
 Sirs, should they slay me, Truth remains unpierced.  
 A thousand wheat ears swayed by summer gust  
 Affront one oak ; it slights the mimic threat :  
 So slight I, strong in faith, whose swords that err—  
 Your ignorance, not your sin. The Truth of God,  
 The Heart of man against you fight this day

And, with his heart, his hope. In every land  
 Through all the unnumbered centuries yet to come  
 The cry of women wailing for their babes  
 Restored through Christ alone, the cry of men  
 Who know that all is lost if earth is all,  
 The cry of children still unstained by sin,  
 The sinners' cry redeemed from yoke of sin,  
 Thunder against you. Pass to lesser themes.

‘Eardulf, that raged against me, told you, Lords,  
 That Rome was still the hater of your race  
 And warred thereon. She warred much more on mine  
 Roman but Christian likewise! Ye were foes;  
 Warring on you she warred on hostile tribes:  
 In us she tore her proper flesh and blood:  
 Mailed men were you that gave her blow for blow;  
 We were her tender children; on her hearths  
 We dwelt, or delved her fields and dressed her vines:  
 What moved her hatred? This. We loved a God  
 All love to man. With every God beside  
 Rome made her traffic: fellowship with such  
 Unclean we deemed: thenceforth Rome saw in us  
 Her destined foe.

‘Three centuries, Earls and Thanes,  
 Her hand was red against us. Vengeance came:  
 Who wrought it? Who avenged our martyred Saints  
 That, resting 'neath God's altar, cried, “How long?”  
 Alaric, and his, the Goths! And who were they?  
 Your blood, your bone, your spirit and your soul!  
 They with your fathers roamed four hundred years  
 The Teuton waste; they swam the Teuton floods,  
 They pointed with the self-same hand of scorn  
 At Rome, their common foe! Great Odin's sons  
 Together came ye from the shining East:



True man was he : ye changed him to false god !  
 That Odin, when the destined hour had pealed  
 Beckoned to Alaric, marched by Alaric's side  
 Invisibly to Rome !

‘ Ye know the tale :

Her senate-kings their portals barred ; they deemed  
 That awe of Rome would drive him back amazed ;  
 And sat secure at feast. But he that slew  
 Remus, his brother, on the unfinished wall,  
 A bitter expiation paid that night !  
 The wail went up : the Goths were lords of Rome !  
 Alaric alone in that dread hour was just  
 And with his mercy tempered justice. Why ?  
 Alaric that day was Christian : of his host  
 The best and bravest Christian. Senators  
 In purple nursed lived on, thenceforth in rags ;  
 To Asian galleys and Egyptian marts  
 The rich were driven ! the mighty. Gold in streams  
 Ran molten from the Capitolian roofs :  
 The idol statues choked old Tyber's wave :  
 But life and household honour Alaric spared ;  
 And round the fanes of Peter and of Paul  
 His soldiers stood on guard. Upon the grave  
 Of that bad Empire sentenced, nay of all  
 The Empires of this world absorbed in one  
 In one condemned, they throned the Church of Christ ;  
 His Kingdom's seat established.

‘ Since that hour  
 That kingdom spreads o'er earth. In Eastern Gaul  
 Long since your brave Burgundians kneel to Christ ;  
 Pannonia gave Him to the Ostro-Goths  
 Barbaric named ; and to the Suevi Spain :  
 The Vandals o'er the Mauritanian shores  
 Exalt His Cross with joy. Your pardon, sirs :

These lands to you are names ; but Odin knew them ;  
 A living man he trod them in his youth ;  
 Hated their vices ; bound his race to spurn  
 Their bait, their bond ! That day he saw hath dawned ;  
 O'er half a world the vivifying airs  
 Launched from your northern forests chaste and cold  
 Have blown, and blow this hour ! The Saxon race  
 Alone its destiny knows not. Ye have won  
 Here in this Isle the old Roman heritage :  
 Perfect your victory o'er that Pagan Rome  
 With Christian Rome partaking !

‘ Earls and Thanes,

But one word more. Your pontiff late averred  
 That kings to us are gods ; through them we conquer :  
 I answer thus : That Kingdom God hath raised  
 Is sovereign and is one ; kingdoms of earth,  
 How great soe'er, to it are provinces  
 In spiritual things. If princes turn to God  
 They save their souls. If kingdoms war on God  
 Their choice is narrow, and their choice is this :  
 To break, like that which falleth on a stone ;  
 Or else, like that whereon that stone doth fall,  
 To crumble into dust.’

The Pagan priest

Whispered again to Eardulf, ‘ Praise to Thor !  
 He flouts our king ! The boaster’s chance is gone !’  
 Then rose that king and spake in careless sort :  
 ‘ Earls and my Thanes, I came from exile late :  
 It may be that to exile I return :  
 Not less my arm is long ; my sword is sharp :  
 Let him that hates me fear me !

‘ Earls and Thanes,

I passed that exile in a Christian realm :  
 There of the Christian greatness, Christian right,

I somewhat heard, and hearing, disbelieved ;  
 Saw likewise somewhat, and believed in part :  
 Saw more, till nigh that part had grown to whole :  
 I saw that war itself might be a thing  
 Though stern, yet stern in mercy ; saw that peace  
 Might wear a shape dearest to manliest heart,  
 Peace based on fearless justice militant  
 'Gainst wrong alone and riot. Earls and Thanes  
 Returned this day and in this regal hall  
 A spectacle I saw, if grateful less,  
 Not therefore less note-worthy—countless swords  
 In judgment drawn against a man unarmed ;  
 Yea, and a man unarmed with brow unmoved  
 Confronting countless swords. These things I saw ;  
 Fair sight that tells me how to act, and when ;  
 For I was minded to protract the time  
 Which strangles oft best purpose. At the font  
 Of Christ—it stands a bow-shot from this spot  
 As late we learned—at daybreak I and mine  
 Become henceforth Christ's lieges.

‘ Earls and Thanes

I heard but late a railer who affirmed  
 That kings were tyrants o'er the faiths of men  
 Flexile to please them : thus I made reply ;  
 The meanest of my subjects, like his king,  
 Shall serve his God in freedom : if the chief  
 Questions the equal freedom of his king  
 That man shall die the death ! Through Christian  
 Faith—

I hide not this—one danger threatens the land :  
 It threatens as much, nay more my royal House :  
 That danger must be dared since truth is truth :  
 That danger ye shall learn to-morrow noon :  
 Till comes that hour, farewell !’

The matin beam,

God's wingèd messenger from loftier worlds,  
 Through the deep window of the baptistry  
 Glittered on eddies of the bath-like font  
 Not yet quiescent since its latest guest  
 Had thence arisen ; beside its marge the king  
 In snowy raiment stood ; upon his right,  
 Alfred, his first-born, boy of seven years old,  
 And, close beside, in wonder not in dread,  
 Mildrede, his sister, younger by one year,  
 Holding her brother's hand. From either waist  
 Flowed a white kirtle to the small snow feet  
 With roses tinged. Above it all was bare,  
 And with the fontal dew-drops sparkling still ;  
 While from each head with sacred unction sealed  
 Floated the chrismal veil. That eye is blind  
 Which sees not beauty save on female brows :  
 On either face that hour the lustre lay ;  
 But hers was lustre passive, lustre pale ;  
 The boy's was active, daring, penetrating—  
 Keen as the Morning Star's. With dewy eyes  
 The strong king on them gazed, and inly mused,  
 'To God I gave them up : yet ne'er till now  
 Seemed they so wholly mine !'

Birinus spake :

'Ye have been washed in baptism, though no sin  
 Hath yet been yours save Adam's, and confirmed ;  
 And houselled ye shall be at Mass seven days  
 Since Christ in infant bosoms loves to dwell.  
 Pray, day by day, that Christ would keep you pure :  
 Pray for your Father : likewise pray for me  
 Old sinner soon to die.' Then raised those babes  
 Their baptism tapers high, and fixing eyes

That moved not on their backward-fluttering flames,  
 Led the procession to their palace home,  
 Their father pacing last.

That day at noon

The monarch sat upon his royal throne  
 Birinus near him standing : at his feet  
 His children played ; while round him silent thronged  
 Warriors and chiefs. The king addressed them thus ;  
 ‘ Birinus and the rest, I hold it meet  
 A king should hide a secret from his foes  
 But with his friends be open. Yestereve  
 I, Christian now, unflinchingly avouched  
 That in the victory of the Christian Faith,  
 True though it be, one danger I discerned :  
 That danger, and its root, I now divulge.  
 Saw ye the scorn within that Northman’s eye  
 Last eve, when, praising Thor, in balance stern  
 He weighed what now we are with what we were  
 When first he trod our shores ! He spake the truth :  
 His race and ours are kin ; but his retain  
 Stronglier their manly virtue, frost and snow  
 Like whetstones sharpening still that virtue’s edge ;  
 We soften with the years. Beggars this day  
 Sue us for bread ! Sirs, in a famine once  
 I saw, then young, a hundred at a time  
 That, linking hand in hand, loud singing rushed,  
 Like hunters chasing hart to sea-beat cliffs  
 And o’er them plunged ! Now comes this Faith of  
 Christ !

That Faith to which, because that Faith is true,  
 I pledged this morn my word, my seal, my soul,  
 The fate and fortunes of our native land  
 And all my royal House well knowing this  
 The king who loves his kingdom more than God

Better than both loves self—no king at heart.  
 Now comes this Christian Faith ! That Faith, be sure,  
 Is not a hardening faith : gentle it makes :  
 I told you, Lords, we soften day by day ;  
 I might have added that with growing years  
 Hardness we doubly need. When Rome was great  
 Our race, however far diffused, was one,  
 Made one by hate of Rome. When Rome declined  
 That bond dissolved. A second bond remained  
 In Odin's Faith :—Northmen alone retain it.  
 In them a new Rome rises ! Earls and Thanes !  
 The truth be ours though for that truth we die !  
 Hold fast that truth ; yet hide not what it costs.  
 Through fog and sea-mist of the days to come  
 I see huge navies with the raven flag  
 Steering to milder borders Christian half,  
 Brother 'gainst brother ranging. Kingdoms Seven  
 Of this still fair and once heroic land  
 I say, beware that hour ! If come it must  
 Then fall the thunder while I walk this earth  
 Not when I skulk in crypts !'

The others mute  
 From joy malicious some, some vexed with doubt,  
 Birinus made reply : ' My Lord and King  
 Inly this day I gladden, certain now  
 That neither fancy-drawn nor anger-spurred,  
 Nor seeking crowns for others or thyself,  
 Nor shunning woes the worst that earth can know  
 For others or thyself, but urged by faith,  
 God's greatest gift to man, thou mad'st this day  
 Submission true to Christ. So be it, King !  
 So rest content ! God with a finger's touch  
 Could melt that cloud which threatens thy realm well-  
 loved ;

That threat I deem nor trivial nor obscure  
 Not thus He wills. Danger, distress, reverse,  
 Are heralds sent from God like peace and joy  
 To nations as to men. Happy that land  
 Which worketh darkling ; worketh without wage ;  
 And worketh still for God ! If God desired  
 A people for His sacrificial lamb  
 Happiest of nations should that nation be  
 Which died His willing victim !

‘ King and Son,’

With voice a moment troubled he resumed,  
 ‘ Thy future rests with God ! Yet shake, oh shake  
 One boding brief, ’tis causeless, from thy breast,  
 Deeming thy race less valiant than the North :  
 Faithfuller they stand and nearer to their sires !  
 Remorseless less to others and to self  
 I grant them ; that implies not valiant less :  
 The brave are still in spirit the merciful ;  
 Far down within their being stirs a sense  
 Of more than race or realm. Some claim world-wide,  
 Whereof the prophet is the wailing babe  
 Smites on their hearts, a cradle decks therein  
 For Him they know not yet, the Bethlehem Babe.  
 That claim thy fathers felt ! Through Teuton woods  
 Dead Rome’s historian saw what he records,\*  
 Moved forth of old in cyclic pilgrimage  
 Thick-veiled, the sacred image of the Earth,  
 All reverend Mother, crowned Humanity !  
 Not war-steeds haled her car but oxen meek ;  
 And, as it passed oppugnant bounds, the trump  
 Ceased from its blare ; the lance, the war-axe fell ;  
 Grey foes shook hands ; their children played together.  
 Beyond the limit line of dateless wars

\* Tacitus.

Looked forth the vision thus of endless peace.  
 Think'st thou that here was lack of manly heart?  
 King, this was manhood's self!

While thus he spake,

Alfred, and Mildrede, children of the king,  
 That long time, by that voice majestic charmed,  
 Had turned from distant sports, upon their knees  
 Softly and slowly to Birinus crept,  
 Their wide eyes from his countenance moving not  
 And so knelt on; Alfred, the star-eyed boy  
 Supported by his father's sceptre-staff  
 His plaything late, now clasped in hands high-held.  
 Him with a casual eye Birinus marked  
 At first; then stood with upward brow in trance—  
 Sudden, as though with Pentecostal flame  
 His whole face brightened; on him fell from God  
 Spirit Divine; and thus the prophet cried:

‘Who speaks of danger when the Lord of all  
 Decrees high triumph? Victory's chariot winged  
 Up-climbs the frowning mountains of Dismay,  
 As when above the sea's nocturnal verge  
 Twin beams, divergent horns of orient light  
 Announce the ascending sun. Whatever cloud  
 Protracts the conflict victory comes at last.

‘What ho! ye sons of Odin and the North!  
 Far off your galleys tarry! English air  
 Reafen, your raven standard, darkened long,  
 Woven of enchantments in the moon's eclipse:  
 It rains its plague no more! The Kingdoms Seven  
 Ye came to set a ravening each on each:  
 Lo, ye have pressed and soldered them in one!



‘Behold, a Sceptre rises—not o’er Kent  
The first-born of the Faith ; nor o’er those vales  
Northumbrian, trod so long by crownèd Saints ;  
Nor Mercia’s plains invincible in war :  
O’er Wessex, barbarous late, and waste, and small  
The Hand that made the worlds that Sceptre lifts ;  
Hail tribe elect, the Judah of the Seven !

‘Piercing the darkness of an age unborn  
I see a King that hides his royal robe  
Assumes the minstrel’s garb. Where meet the floods  
That King abides his time. I see him sweep  
Disguised, his harp within the Northmen’s camp ;  
In fifty fights I see him victory-crowned ;  
I see the mighty and the proud laid low  
The humble lifted. God is over all.

‘The ruined cities ’mid their embers thrill :  
A voice went forth : they heard it. They shall rise,  
Their penance done, and cities worthier far  
With Roman vices ne’er contaminate.  
These shall not boast mosaic floor gem-wrought  
And trod by sinners. In the face of heaven  
Their minster turrets these shall lift on high  
Inviting God’s great angels to descend  
And chaunt with them God’s City here on earth.

‘Who through the lethal forest cleaves a road  
Healthful and fresh ? Who bridges stream high-  
swollen ?  
Who spreads the harvest round the poor man’s cot ;  
Sets free the slave ? On justice realms are built :  
Who makes his kingdom great through equal laws  
Not based on Pagan right, but rights in Christ,

First just, then free? Who from her starry gates  
Beckons to Heavenly Wisdom—her who played  
Ere worlds were shaped, before the eyes of God?  
Who bids her walk the peopled fields of men  
The reverend street with college graced and church?  
Who sings the latest of the Saxon songs?  
Who tunes to Saxon speech the Tome Divine?

‘Sing, happy land! The Isle that, prescient long  
Long waiting, hid her monarch in her heart,  
Shall look on him and cry, “My flesh, my bone,  
My son, my king!” To him shall Cambria bow,  
And Alba’s self. His strength is in his God;  
The third part of his time he gives to prayer,  
And God shall hear his vows. Hail, mighty King!  
For aye thine England’s glory! As I gaze,  
Methinks I see a likeness on thy brow,  
A likeness not to Warrior, Priest, or Chief,  
But Him, that child who kneels beside my feet!  
The sceptre comes to him who sceptre spurned;  
Through him it comes who sceptre clasped in sport;  
From Wessex’s soil shall England’s hope be born  
Two centuries hence; and Alfred is his name!’

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## EPILOGUE.

### BEDE'S LAST MAY.

Bede issues forth from Jarrow, and visiting certain villagers in a wood, expounds to them the Beatitudes of our Lord. Wherever he goes he seeks records of past times, and promises in return that he will bequeath to his fellow-countrymen translations from divers Sacred Scriptures, and likewise a history of God's Church in their land. Having returned to his monastery, he dies a most happy death on the feast of the Ascension, while finishing his translation of St. John's gospel.

THE ending of the Book of Saxon Saints.  
With one lay-brother only blessed Bede  
In after times 'The Venerable' named,  
Passed from his convent, Jarrow. Where the Tyne  
Blends with the sea all beautiful it stood  
Bathed in the sunrise. At the mouth of Wear  
A second convent, Wearmouth rose. That hour  
The self-same matin splendour gilt them both ;  
And in some speech of mingling lights not words  
Both sisters praised their God.

'Apart, yet joined'—

So mused the old man gazing on the twain :  
Then onward paced with head above his book  
Murmuring his office. Algar walked behind,  
A youth of twenty years with tonsured head  
And face, though young, forlorn. An hour had passed ;  
They reached a craggy height ; and looking back  
Beheld once more beyond the forest roof

Those two fair convents glittering—at their feet  
 Those two clear rivers winding! Bound by rule  
 Again the monk addressed him to his book;  
 Lection and psalm recited, thus he spake:

‘Why placed our holy Founder thus so near  
 His convents? Why, albeit a single rule  
 At last a single hand had sway o’er both,  
 Placed them at distance? Hard it were to guess:  
 I know but this that severance here on earth  
 Is strangely linked with union of the heart,  
 Union with severance. Thou hast lost, young friend,  
 But lately lost thy boyhood’s dearest mate  
 Thine earliest friend, a brother of thy heart  
 True Christian soul though dwelling in the world;  
 Fear not such severance can extinguish love  
 Here or hereafter! He whom most I loved  
 Was severed from me by the tract of years:  
 A child of nine years old was I when first  
 Jarrow received me: pestilence ere long  
 Swept from that house her monks save one alone  
 Ceolfrid, then its abbot. Man and child  
 We two the lonely cloisters paced; we two  
 Together chaunted in the desolate church:  
 I could not guess his thoughts; to him my ways  
 Were doubtless as the ways of some sick bird  
 Watched by a child. Not less I loved him well:  
 Me too he somewhat loved. Beneath one roof  
 We dwelt, and yet how severed! Save in God  
 What know men, one of other? Here on earth,  
 Perhaps ’tis wiser to be kind to all  
 In large goodwill of helpful love yet free  
 Than link to one our heart—  
 Poor youth! that love which walks in narrow ways

Is tragic love, be sure.'

With gentle face

The novice spake his gratitude. Once more,  
 His hand upon the shoulder of the youth,  
 For now they mounted slow a bosky dell  
 The old man spake—yet not to him—in voice  
 Scarce louder than the murmuring pines close by ;  
 For, by his being's law he seemed, like them,  
 At times when pensive memories in him stirred,  
 Vocal not less than visible : ' How great  
 Was he, our Founder ! In that ample brow  
 What brooding weight of genius ! In his eye  
 How strangely was the pathos edged with light !  
 How oft, his churches roaming, flashed its beam  
 From pillar on to pillar resting long  
 On carven imagery of flower or fruit  
 Or deep-dyed window whence the heavenly choirs,  
 Gave joy to men below ! With what a zeal  
 He drew the cunningest craftsmen from all climes  
 To express his thoughts in form ; while yet his hand  
 Like meanest hand among us patient toiled  
 In garden and in bakehouse, threshed the corn  
 Or drave the calves to milk-pail ! Earthly rule  
 Had proved to him a weight intolerable ;  
 In spiritual beauty, there and there alone  
 Our Bennett Biscop found his native haunt,  
 The lucent planet of his soul's repose :  
 And yet—O wondrous might of human love—  
 One was there, one, to whom his heart was knit,  
 Siegfried, in all unlike him save in worth.  
 His was plain purpose, rectitude unwarped  
 Industry, foresight. On his friend's behalf  
 He ruled long years those beauteous convents twain,  
 Yet knew not they were beauteous ! An abyss

Severed in spirit those in heart so near :  
 More late exterior severance came : three years  
 In cells remote they dwelt by sickness chained :  
 But once they met—to die. I see them still :  
 The monks had laid them on a single bed ;  
 Weeping, they turned them later each to each :  
 I saw the snowy tresses softly mix ;  
 I saw the faded lips draw near and meet ;  
 Thus gently interwreathed I saw them die—  
 Strange strength of human love !'

Still walked they on :

As high the sun ascended woodlands green  
 Shivered all golden ; and the old man's heart  
 Brightened like them. His ever active mind  
 Inquisitive took note of all it saw ;  
 And as some youth enamoured lifts a tress  
 Of her he loves, and wonders, so the monk,  
 Well loving Nature loved her in detail  
 Now pleased with nestling bird, anon with flower  
 Now noting how the beech from dewy sheath  
 Pushed forth its silken leaflets fringed with down,  
 Exulting next because from sprays of lime  
 The little fledgeling leaves, like creatures winged  
 Brake from their ruddy shells. Jesting, he cried :  
 ' Algar ! but hear those birds ! Men say they sing  
 To fire their darkling young with gladsome news,  
 And bid them seek the sun ! ' Sadly the youth  
 With downward front replied : ' My friend is dead ;  
 For me to gladden were to break a troth.'  
 Upon the brow of Bede a shadow fell ;  
 Silent he paced, then stopped : ' Forgive me, Algar !  
 Old men grow hard. Yet boys and girls salute  
 The May : like them the old must have their "maying" ;  
 This is perchance my last.'

As thus he spake

They reached the summit of a grassy hill ;  
 Beneath there wound a stream upon its marge  
 A hamlet nestling lonely in the woods :  
 Its inmates saw the Saint and t'wards him sped  
 Eager as birds that, when the grain is flung  
 In fountained cloister-court of Eastern church  
 From all sides flock with sudden rush of wings  
 Darkening the pavement. Youths and maids came  
 first ;

Their elders followed : some his garments kissed  
 And some his hands. The venerable man  
 Stretched forth his arms, as though to clasp them all :  
 Above them next he signed his Master's cross ;  
 Then, while the tears ran down his aged face,  
 Brake forth in grateful joy ; ' To God the praise !  
 When, forty years ago, I roamed this vale  
 A haunt it was of rapine and of wars ;  
 Now see I pleasant pastures, peaceful homes  
 And faces peacefuller yet. That God Who walked  
 With His disciples 'mid the sabbath fields  
 While they the wheat-ears bruised, His sabbath keeps  
 Within your hearts this day ! His harvest ye !  
 Once more a-hungred are His holy priests ;  
 They hunger for your souls ; with reverent palms  
 Daily the chaff they separate from the grain ;  
 Daily His Church within her heart conceives you,  
 Yea, with her heavenly substance makes you one ;  
 Ye grow to be her eyes that see His truth ;  
 Her ears that hear His voice ; her hands that pluck  
 His tree of life ; her feet that walk His ways.  
 Honouring God's priests ye err not O my friends  
 Since thus ye honour God. In Him rejoice !'

So spake he, and his gladness kindled theirs,  
 With it their courage. One her infant brought  
 And sued for him a blessing. One, bereaved,  
 Cried out: 'Your promised peace has come at last;  
 No more I wish him back to earth!' Again  
 Old foes shook hands; while now, their fears forgot,  
 Children that lately nestled at his feet  
 Clomb to his knee. Then called from out that crowd  
 A blind man; 'Read once more that Book of God!  
 For, after you had left us, many a month  
 I, who can neither see the sun nor moon  
 Saw oft the God-Man walking farms and fields  
 Of that fair Eastern land!' He spake, and lo!  
 All those around that heard him clamoured, 'Read!'

Then Bede, the Sacred Scriptures opening, lit  
 Upon the 'Sermon on the Mount,' and read:  
 'The Saviour lifted up His holy eyes  
 On His disciples, saying, Blessed they;'  
 Expounding next the sense. 'Why fixed the Lord  
 His eyes on them that listened? Friends, His eyes  
 Go down through all things, searching out the heart;  
 He sees if heart be sound to hold His Word  
 And bring forth fruit in season, or as rock  
 Naked to bird that plucks the random seed.  
 Friends, with the heart alone we understand;  
 Who doth His will shall of the doctrine know  
 If His it be indeed. When Jesus speaks  
 Fix first your eyes upon His eyes divine  
 There reading what He sees within your heart:  
 If sin He sees, repent!'

With hands upheld  
 A woman raised her voice, and cried aloud,  
 'Could we but look into the eyes of Christ



Nought should we see but love !' And Bede replied :  
 ' From babe and suckling God shall perfect praise !  
 Yea, from His eyes looks forth the Eternal Love,  
 Though oft through sin of ours in sadness veiled :  
 But when He rests them on disciples true  
 Not on the stranger, love is love alone !  
 O great, true hearts that love so well your Lord !  
 That heard so trustingly His tidings good  
 So long, by trial proved, have kept His Faith,  
 To you He cometh—cometh with reward  
 In heaven, and here on earth.'

With brightening face

As one who flingeth largess far abroad,  
 Once more he raised the sacred tome, and read  
 Read loud the Eight Beatitudes of Christ ;  
 Then ceased, but later spake : ' In ampler phrase  
 Those Blessings ye shall hear once more rehearsed  
 And deeplier understand them. Blessed they  
 The poor in spirit ; for to humble hearts  
 Belongs the kingdom of their God in heaven ;  
 Blessed the meek—nor gold they boast nor power  
 Yet theirs alone the sweetness of this earth ;  
 Blessed are they who mourn, for on their hearts  
 The consolation of their God shall fall ;  
 Blessed are they who hunger and who thirst  
 For righteousness ; they shall be satisfied ;  
 Blessed the merciful, for unto them  
 The God of mercy mercy shall accord ;  
 Blessed are they, the pure in heart ; their eyes  
 Shall see their God : Blessed the peacemakers ;  
 This title man shall give them—Sons of God ;  
 Blessed are they who suffer for the cause  
 Righteous and just : a throne is theirs on high :  
 Blessed are ye when sinners cast you forth,

And brand your name with falsehood for my sake ;  
Rejoice, for great is your reward in heaven.'

Once more the venerable man made pause,  
Giving his Master's Blessings time to sink  
Through hearts of those who heard. Anon with speech  
Though fervent, grave, he shewed the glory and grace  
Of those majestic Virtues crowned by Christ  
While virtues praised by worldlings passed unnamed ;  
How wondrously consentient each with each  
Like flowers well matched or music notes well joined :  
Then changed the man to deeper theme ; he shewed  
How these high virtues, ere to man consigned,  
Were warmed and moulded in the God-Man's heart ;  
Thence born, and in its sacred blood baptized.  
' What are these virtues but the life of Christ ?  
The poor in spirit ; must not they be lowly  
Whose God is One that stooped to wear our flesh ?  
The meek ; was He not meek Whom sinners mocked ?  
The mourners ; sent not He the Comforter ?  
Zeal for the good ; was He not militant ?  
The merciful ; He came to bring us mercy ;  
The pure in heart ; was He not virgin-born ?  
Peacemakers ; is not He the Prince of Peace ?  
Sufferers for God ; He suffered first for man.  
O Virtues blest by Christ, high Doctrines ye !  
Dread Mysteries ; royal records ; standards red  
Wrapped by the warrior King His warfare past,  
Around His soldiers' bosoms ! Recognise,  
O man, that majesty in lowness hid !  
Put on Christ's garments. Fools shall call them  
rags—  
Heed not their scoff ! A prince's child is Man,  
Born in the purple ; but his royal robes

None other are than those the Saviour dyed,  
Treading His Passion's wine-press all alone :  
Of such alone be proud !'

The old man paused ;  
Then stretched his arms abroad, and said : 'This day  
Like eight great angels making way from Heaven  
Each following each, those Eight Beatitudes,  
Missioned to earth by Him Who made the earth  
Have sought you out ! What welcome shall be theirs ?'  
In silence long he stood ; in silence watched,  
With faded cheek now flushed and widening eyes,  
The advance of those high tidings. As a man  
Who, when the sluice is cut, with beaming gaze  
Pursues the on-rolling flood from fall to fall,  
Green branch adown it swept, and showery spray  
Silvering the berried copse, so followed Bede  
The progress of those high Beatitudes  
Brightening, with visible beams of faith and love,  
That host in ampler circles, speechless some  
And some in passionate converse. Saddest brows  
Most quickly caught, that hour, the glory-touch,  
Reflected it the best.

In such discourse

Peaceful and glad the hours went by, though Bede  
Had sought that valley less to preach the Word  
Than see once more his children. Evening nigh  
He shared their feast ; and heard with joy like theirs  
Their village harp ; and smote that harp himself.  
In turn become their scholar, hour by hour  
Forth dragged he records of their chiefs and kings,  
Untangling ravelled evidence, and still  
Tracking traditions upwards to their source,  
Like him, that Halicarnassean sage,  
Of antique history sire. 'I trust, my friends,

To leave your sons, for lore by you bestowed  
 Fair recompense, large measure well pressed down,  
 Recording still God's kingdom in this land  
 History which all may read, and gentle hearts  
 Loving, may grow in grace. Long centuries passed  
 If wealth should make this nation's heart too fat  
 And things of earth obscure the things of heaven  
 Haply such chronicle may prompt high hearts  
 Wearied with shining nothings, back to east  
 Remorseful gaze through mists of time, and note  
 That rock whence they were hewn. From youth to age  
 Inmate of yonder convent on the Tyne,  
 I question every pilgrim, priest, or prince,  
 Or peasant grey, and glean from each his sheaf :  
 Likewise the Bishops here and Abbots there  
 Still send me deed of gift, or chronicle  
 Or missive from the Apostolic See :  
 Praise be to God Who fitteth for his place  
 Not only high but mean ! With wisdom's strength  
 He filled our mitred Wilfred, born to rule ;  
 To saintly Cuthbert gave the spirit of prayer ;  
 On me, as one late born, He lays a charge  
 Slender, yet helpful still.'

Then spake a man  
 Burly and big, that last at banquet sat,  
 ' Father, is history true ? ' and Bede replied ;  
 ' The man who seeks for Truth like hidden gold,  
 And shrinks from falsehood as a leper's touch  
 Shall write true history ; not the truth unmixed  
 With fancies, base or high ; not truth entire ;  
 Yet truth beneficent to man below.  
 One Book there is that errs not : ye this day  
 Have learned therefrom your Lord's Beatitudes :  
 That book contains its histories—like them none

Since written none from standing point so high,  
 With insight so inspired, such measure just  
 Of good and ill ; high fruit of aid divine.  
 The slothful spurn that Book ; the erroneous warp :  
 But they who read its page, or hear it read  
 Their guide God's Spirit, and the Church of God  
 Shall hear the voice of Truth for ever nigh,  
 Shall see the Truth, now sunlike, and anon  
 Like dagger-point of light from dewy grass  
 Flashed up, a word that yet confutes a life,  
 Pierces, perchance a nation's heart : shall see  
 Far more—the Truth Himself in human form  
 Walking not farms and fields of Eastern lands  
 Alone, but these our English fields and farms ;  
 Shall see Him on the dusky mount at prayer ;  
 Shall see Him in the street and by the bier ;  
 Shall see Him at the feast, and at the grave ;  
 Now from the boat discoursing, and anon  
 Staying the storm, or walking on its waves ;  
 Thus shall our land become a holy land  
 And holy those who tread her !' Lifting then  
 Heavenward that tome, he said, ' The Book of God !  
 As stands God's Church, 'mid kingdoms of this world  
 Holy alone, so stands, 'mid books, this Book !  
 Within the " Upper Chamber " once that Church  
 Lived in small space ; to-day she fills the world :  
 This Book which seems so narrow is a world :  
 It is an Eden of mankind restored ;  
 It is a heavenly City lit with God :  
 From it the Spirit and the Bride say " Come :"  
 Blessed who reads this Book !'

Above the woods

Meantime the stars shone forth ; and came that hour  
 When to the wanderer and the toiling man

Repose is sweet. Upon a leaf-strewn bed  
 The venerable man slept well that night :  
 Next morning young and old pursued his steps  
 As southward he departed. From a hill  
 O'er-looking far that sea-like forest tract  
 And many a church far-kenned through smokeless air,  
 He blessed that kneeling concourse, adding thus  
 'Pray still, O friends, for me, since spiritual foes  
 Threat most the priesthood :—pray that holy death,  
 Due warning given, may close a life too blest !  
 Pray well, since I for you have laboured well,  
 Yea, and will labour till my latest sigh ;  
 Not only seeking you in wilds and woods  
 Year after year, but in my cell at night  
 Changing to accents of your native tongue  
 God's Book Divine. Farewell, my friends, farewell !'  
 He left them ; in his heart this thought, 'How like  
 The great death-parting every parting seems !'  
 But deathless hopes were with him, and the May ;  
 His grief went by.

So passed a day of Bede's ;  
 And many a studious year were stored with such ;  
 Enough but one for sample. Two glad weeks  
 He and his comrade onward roved. At eve  
 Convent or hamlet, known long since and loved,  
 Gladly received them. Bede with heart as glad  
 Renewed with them the memory of old times,  
 Recounted benefits by him received  
 Then strong in youth, from just men passed away,  
 And preached his Master still with power so sweet  
 The listeners ne'er forgot him. Evermore,  
 Parting, he planted in the ground a cross,  
 And bade the neighbours till their church was built  
 Round it to pray. Meanwhile his youthful mate

Changed by degrees. The ever varying scene  
 The biting breath and balmy breast of spring  
 And most of all that old man's valiant heart  
 Triumphed above his sadness, fancies gay  
 Pushing beyond it like those sunnier shoots  
 That gild the dark vest of the vernal pine.  
 He took account of all things as they passed ;  
 He laughed ; he told his tale. With quiet joy  
 His friend remarked that change. The second week  
 They passed to Durham ; next to Walsingham ;  
 To Gilling then ; to stately Richmond soon  
 High throned above her Ouse ; to Ripon last :  
 Then Bede made pause, and spake ; ' Not far is York ;  
 Egbert who fills Paulinus' saintly seat  
 Would see me gladly : such was mine intent,  
 But something in my bosom whispers, " Nay,  
 Return to that fair river crossed by night,  
 The Tees, the fairest in this Northern land :  
 Beside its restless wave thine eye shall rest  
 On vision lovelier far and more benign  
 Than all it yet hath seen." ' Northward once more  
 They faced, and, three days travelling, reached at eve  
 Again those ivied cliffs that guard the Tees :  
 There as they stood a homeward dove, with flight  
 Softer for contrast with that turbulent stream,  
 Sailed through the crimson eve. ' No sight like that !'  
 Thus murmured Bede ; ' ever to me it seems  
 A Christian soul returning to its rest.'  
 A shade came o'er his countenance as he mused ;  
 Algar remarked that shade, though what it meant  
 He knew not yet. The old man from that hour  
 Seemed mirthful less, less buoyant, beaming less,  
 Yet not less glad.

At dead of night, while hung

The sacred stars upon their course half way,  
 He left his couch, and thus to Egbert wrote,  
 Meek man—too meek—the brother of the king,  
 With brow low bent, and onward sweeping hand,  
 Great words, world-famed : ‘ Remember thine account !  
 The Lord’s Apostles are the salt of earth ;  
 Let salt not lose its savour ! Flail and fan  
 Are given thee. Purge thou well thy threshing floor !  
 Repel the tyrant ; hurl the hireling forth ;  
 That so from thy true priests true hearts may learn  
 True faith, true love, and nothing but the truth !’

Before the lark he rose the morrow morn,  
 And stood by Algar’s bed, and spake : ‘ Arise !  
 Playtime is past ; the great, good work returns ;  
 To Jarrow speed we !’ Homeward, day by day,  
 Thenceforth they sped with foot that lagged no more,  
 That youth, at first so mournful, joyous now,  
 That old man oft in thought. Next day, while eve  
 Descended dim, and clung to Hexham’s groves,  
 He passed its abbey, silent. Wonder-struck  
 Algar demanded, ‘ Father, pass you thus  
 That church where holy John \* ordained you priest ?  
 Pass you its Bishop, Acca, long your friend ?  
 Yearly he woos your visit ; tells you tales  
 Of Hexham’s saintly Wilfred ; shows you still  
 Chalice or cross new-won from distant shores :  
 Nor these alone :—glancing from such last year  
 A page he read you of some Pagan bard  
 With smiles ; yet ended with a sigh, and said :  
 “ Where is he now ?”’ The man of God replied :  
 ‘ Desire was mine to see mine ancient friend ;  
 For that cause came I hither :—time runs short ’ :—

\* St. John of Beverley.



Then, Algar sighing, thus he added mild,  
 'Let go that theme; thy mourning time is past:  
 Thy gladsome time is now.' As on they walked,  
 Later he spake: 'It may be I was wrong;  
 Old friends should part in hope.'

On Jarrow's towers,  
 Bright as that sunrise while that pair went forth  
 The sunset glittered when, their wanderings past,  
 Bede and his comrade by the bank of Tyne  
 Once more approached the gates. Six hundred monks  
 Flocked forth to meet them. 'They had grieved, I  
 know,'

Thus spake, low-voiced, the venerable man,  
 'If I had died remote. To spare that grief  
 Before the time intended I returned.'  
 Sadly that comrade looked upon his face,  
 Yet saw there nought of sadness. Silent each  
 Advanced they till they met that cowlèd host:  
 But three weeks later on his bed the boy  
 Remembered well those words.

Within a cell  
 To Algar's near that later night a youth  
 Wrote thus to one far off, his earliest friend:  
 'O blessed man! was e'er a death so sweet!  
 He sang that verse, "A dreadful thing it is  
 To fall into the hands of God, All-Just;"  
 Yet awe in him seemed swallowed up by love;  
 And ofttimes with the Prophets and the Psalms  
 He mixed glad minstrelsies of English speech,  
 Songs to his childhood dear!

'O blessed man!  
 The Ascension Feast of Christ our Lord drew nigh;  
 He watched that splendour's advent; sang its hymn:  
 "All-glorious King, Who, triumphing this day,

Into the heaven of heavens didst make ascent,  
 Forsake us not, poor orphans! Send Thy Spirit,  
 The Spirit of Truth, the Father's promised Gift,  
 To comfort us, His children : Hallelujah."

And when he reached that word, "Forsake us  
 not,"

He wept—not tears of grief. With him we wept ;  
 Alternate wept ; alternate read our rite ;  
 Yea, while we wept we read. So passed that day,  
 The sufferer thanking God with labouring breath,  
 "God scourges still the son whom He receives."

'Undaunted, unamazed, daily he wrought  
 His daily task ; instruction daily gave  
 To us his scholars round him ranged, and said,  
 "I will not have my pupils learn a lie,  
 Nor, fruitless, toil therein when I am gone."  
 Full well he kept an earlier promise, made  
 Ofttimes to humble folk, in English tongue  
 Rendering the Gospels of the Lord. On these,  
 The last of these, the Gospel of Saint John,  
 He laboured till the close. The days went by,  
 And still he toiled, and panted, and gave thanks  
 To God with hands uplifted ; yea, in sleep  
 He made thanksgiving still. When Tuesday came  
 Suffering increased ; he said, "My time is short ;  
 How short it is I know not." Yet we deemed  
 He knew the time of his departure well.

'On Wednesday morn once more he bade us write :  
 We wrote till the third hour, and left him then  
 To pace, in reverence of that Feast all-blest,  
 Our cloister court with hymns. Meantime a youth,  
 Algar by name, there was who left him never ;

The same that hour beside him sat and wrote :  
 More late he questioned : " Father well-beloved,  
 One chapter yet remaineth ; have you strength  
 To dictate more ? " He answered : " I have strength ;  
 Make ready, son, thy pen, and swiftly write."  
 When noon had come he turned him round and  
 said,

" I have some little gifts for those I love ;  
 Call in the Brethren ; " adding with a smile,  
 " The rich man makes bequests, and why not I ? "  
 Then gifts he gave, incense or altar-cloth,  
 To each, commanding, " Pray ye for my soul ;  
 Be strong in prayer and offering of the Mass,  
 For ye shall see my face no more on earth :  
 Blessed hath been my life ; and time it is  
 That unto God God's creature should return ;  
 Yea, I desire to die, and be with Christ."  
 Thus speaking, he rejoiced till evening's shades  
 Darkened around us. That disciple young  
 Once more addressed him, " Still one verse remains ; "  
 The master answered, " Write, and write with speed ; "  
 And dictated. The young man wrote ; then said,  
 " 'Tis finished now." The man of God replied :  
 " Well say'st thou, son, 'tis finished.' In thy  
 hands

Receive my head, and move it gently round,  
 For comfort great it is, and joy in death,  
 Thus, on this pavement of my little cell,  
 Facing that happy spot whereon so oft  
 In prayer I knelt, to sit once more in prayer,  
 Thanking my Father." " Glory," then he sang,  
 " To God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; "  
 And with that latest Name upon his lips  
 Passed to the Heavenly Kingdom.'

Thus with joy

Died holy Bede upon Ascension Day  
In Jarrow Convent. May he pray for us,  
And all who read his annals of God's Church .  
In England housed, his great bequest to man !

## NOTES.

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Page 191. *The Irish Mission in England during the seventh century was one of the great things of history.*

THE following expressions of Dr. von Döllinger respecting the Irish Church are more ardent than any I have ventured to use :—

‘During the sixth and seventh centuries the Church of Ireland stood in the full beauty of its bloom. The spirit of the Gospel operated amongst the people with a vigorous and vivifying power: troops of holy men, from the highest to the lowest ranks of society, obeyed the counsel of Christ, and forsook all things that they might follow Him. There was not a country in the world, during this period, which could boast of pious foundations or of religious communities equal to those that adorned this far distant island. Among the Irish the doctrines of the Christian religion were preserved pure and entire; the names of heresy or of schism were not known to them; and in the Bishop of Rome they acknowledged and venerated the Supreme Head of the Church on earth, and continued with him, and through him with the whole Church, in a never interrupted communion. The schools in the Irish cloisters were at this time the most celebrated in the West . . . The strangers who visited the island, not only from the neighbouring shores of Britain, but also from the most remote nations of the Continent, received from the Irish people the most hospitable reception, a gratuitous entertainment, free instruction, and even the books that were necessary for the studies. . . . On the other hand, many holy and learned Irishmen left their own country to proclaim the Faith, to establish or to reform monasteries in distant lands, and thus to become the benefactors of almost every country in Europe . . . The foundation of many of the English Sees is due to Irishmen. . . . These holy men served God, and not the world; they possessed neither gold nor silver, and all that they received from the rich passed through their hands into the hands of the

poor. Kings and nobles visited them from time to time only to pray in their churches, or to listen to their sermons; and as long as they remained in the cloisters they were content with the humble food of the brethren. Wherever one of these ecclesiastics or monks came, he was received by all with joy; and whenever he was seen journeying across the country, the people streamed around him to implore his benediction, and to hearken to his words. The priests entered the villages only to preach or to administer the Sacraments: and so free were they from avarice, that it was only when compelled by the rich and noble that they would accept lands for the erection of monasteries.'

Page 196. *For both countries that early time was a period of wonderful spiritual greatness.*

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting the following passage, illustrating the religious greatness both of the Irish and the English at the period referred to:

'The seventh and eighth centuries are the glory of the Anglo-Saxon Church, as the sixth and seventh are of the Irish. As the Irish missionaries travelled down through England, France, and Switzerland, to Lower Italy, and attempted Germany at the peril of their lives, converting the barbarian, restoring the lapsed, encouraging the desolate, collecting the scattered, and founding churches, schools, and monasteries as they went along; so amid the deep pagan woods of Germany, and round about, the English Benedictine plied his axe, and drove his plough, planted his rude dwelling, and raised his rustic altar upon the ruins of idolatry; and then, settling down as a colonist upon the soil, began to sing his chants and to copy his old volumes, and thus to lay the slow but sure foundations of the new civilisation. Distinct, nay antagonistic, in character and talents, the one nation and the other, Irish and English—the one more resembling the Greek, the other the Roman—open from the first perhaps to jealousies as well as rivalries, they consecrated their respective gifts to the Almighty Giver, and, labouring together for the same great end, they obliterated whatever there was of human infirmity in their mutual intercourse by the merit of their common achievements. Each by turn could claim pre-eminence in the contest of sanctity and learning. In the schools of science England has no name to rival Erigena in originality, or St. Virgil in freedom of thought; nor (among its canonised women) any saintly virgin to compare with St. Bridget; nor, although it has 150 saints in its calendar, can it pretend to equal that Irish multitude which the Book of Life alone is large enough to contain. Nor can Ireland, on the other hand, boast of a doctor such as St. Bede, or of an apostle equal to St. Boniface, or of a martyr like St. Thomas; or of so

long a catalogue of royal devotees as that of the thirty male or female Saxons who, in the course of two centuries, resigned their crowns; or as the roll of twenty-three kings, and sixty queens and princes, who, between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, gained a place among the saints.'—Cardinal Newman, *Historic Sketches*, 'The Isles of the North,' pp. 128-9.

## Page 215.

*Instant each navy at the other dashed  
Like wild beast, instinct-taught.*

This image will be found in the description of a Scandinavian sea-fight in a remarkable book less known than it deserves to be, *The Invasion*, by Gerald Griffin, author of *The Collegians*.

The Saxons were, however, in early times as much pirates as the Danes were at a later.

Page 217. The achievement of Hastings had been rehearsed at a much earlier period by Harald.

Page 233. *At Ely, Elmham, and beside the Cam.*

In the reign of Sigebert, Felix, Bishop of East Anglia, founded schools respecting which Montalembert remarks: 'Plusieurs ont fait remonter à ces écoles monastiques l'origine de la célèbre université de Cambridge.'

Page 237. *How beautiful, O Sion, are thy courts!*

The following hymns are from the Office for the Consecration of a Church.

## St. Fursey. Page 254.

*How one with brow  
Lordlier than man's, and visionary eyes.*

'Whilst Sigebert still governed the kingdom there came out of Ireland a holy man named Fursey, renowned both for his words and actions, and remarkable for singular virtues, being desirous to live a stranger for Our Lord, wherever an opportunity should offer. . . . He built himself the monastery (Burghcastle in Suffolk) wherein he might with more freedom indulge his heavenly studies. There falling sick, as the book about his life informs us, he fell into a trance, and, quitting his body from the evening till the cockcrow, he was found worthy to behold the choirs of angels, and hear the praises which are sung in heaven. . . . He not only saw the greater joys of the Blessed, but also extraordinary combats of Evil Spirits.'—Bede, *Hist.*, book iii. cap. xix. 'C'était un moine irlandais nommé Fursey, de très-noble naissance et célèbre depuis sa jeunesse

dans son pays par sa science et ses visions. . . . Dans la principale de ses visions Ampère et Ozanam se sont accordés à reconnaître une des sources poétiques de la *Divine Comédie*.—Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident*, tome iv. pp. 93-4.

Page 291. 'None loveth Song that loves not Light and Truth.'

This is one of the poetic aphorisms of Cadoc, a Cambrian prince and saint, educated in the Irish monastery of Lismore, and afterwards the founder of the great Welsh monastery of Llancarvan, in which he gave religious instruction to the sons of the neighbouring princes and chiefs.

Page 294.

*True life of man*

*Is life within.*

This thought is taken from one of St. Teresa's beautiful works.

Page 310. *Ceadmon, the earliest bard of English song.*

'A part of one of Ceadmon's poems is preserved in King Alfred's Saxon version of Bede's *History*.' (Note to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, edited by Dr. Giles, p. 218.)

Page 340. *Who told him tales of Leinster Kings, his sires.*

'L'origine irlandaise de Cuthbert est affirmé sans réserve par Reeves dans ses *Notes sur Wattenbach*, p. 5. Lanigan (c. iii. p. 88) constate qu'Usher, Ware, Colgan, en ont eu la même opinion. . . . Beaucoup d'autres anciens auteurs irlandais et anglais en font un natif de l'Irlande.'—Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident*, tome ii. pp. 391-2.

Page 349. *The thrones are myriad, but the Enthroned is One.*

'Oft as Spring

Decks on thy sinnous banks her thousand thrones,  
Seats of glad instinct, and love's carolling.'

Wordsworth (addressed to the river Greta).

Page 362. *Saint Frideswida, or the Foundations of Oxford.*

Saint Frideswida died in the same year as the Venerable Bede, viz. A.D. 735. Her story is related by Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident*, vol. v. pp. 298—302, with the following references, viz. Leland, *Collectanea*, ap. Dugdale, t. i. p. 173; cf. Bolland, t. viii. October, p. 535 à 568. I learn from a Catholic prayer-book published in 1720 that the Saint's Feast used to be kept on the 19th of October. Her remains, as is commonly believed, still exist in the Cathedral of Oxford.



Page 386. *Your teacher he: he taught you first your Runes.*

‘The Icelandic chronicles point out Odin as the most persuasive of men. They tell us that nothing could resist the force of his words; that he sometimes enlivened his harangues with verses, which he composed extempore; and that he was not only a great poet, but that it was he who first taught the art of poesy to the Scandinavians. He was also the inventor of the Runic characters.’—*Northern Antiquities*, p. 83. Mallet asserts that it was to Christianity that the Scandinavians owed the practical use of those Runes which they had possessed for centuries:—‘nor did they during so many years ever think of committing to writing those verses with which their memories were loaded; and it is probable that they only wrote down a small quantity of them at last. . . . Among the innumerable advantages which accrued to the Northern nations from the introduction of the Christian religion, that of teaching them to apply the knowledge of letters to useful purposes is not the least valuable. Nor could a motive less sacred have eradicated that habitual and barbarous prejudice which caused them to neglect so admirable a secret.’—P. 234. Mallet’s statement respecting the Greek emigration of the Northern ‘Barbarians’ from the East is thus confirmed by Burke. ‘There is an unquestioned tradition among the Northern nations of Europe importing that all that part of the world had suffered a great and general evolution by a migration from Asiatic Tartary of a people whom they call Asers. These everywhere expelled or subdued the ancient inhabitants of the Celtick or Cimbrick original. The leader of this Asiatic army was called Odin, or Wodin; first their general, afterwards their tutelary deity. . . . The Saxon nation believed themselves the descendants of those conquerors.’—Burke, *Abridgment of English History*, book ii. cap. i.

Page 395. *Like hunters chasing hart to sea-beat cliffs.*

This is recorded by Lingard and Burke.

Page 401. *Bede’s Last May.*

This narrative of the death of Bede is closely taken from a letter written by Cuthbert, a pupil of his, then residing in Jarrow, to a fellow-pupil at a distance. An English version of that letter is prefixed to Dr. Giles’s translation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*. (Henry G. Bohn.) The death of Bede took place on Wednesday, May 26, A.D. 735, being Ascension Day.

Page 405. *They hunger for your souls ; with reverent palms.*

‘But in a mystical sense the disciples pass through the corn-fields when the holy Doctors look with the care of a pious solicitude upon those whom they have initiated in the Faith, and who, it is implied, are hungering for the best of all things—the salvation of men. But to pluck the ears of corn means to snatch men away from the eager desire of earthly things. And to rub with the hands is, by examples of virtue, to put from the purity of their minds the concupiscence of the flesh, as men do husks. To eat the grains is when a man, cleansed from the filth of vice by the mouths of preachers, is incorporated amongst the members of the Church.’—Bede, quoted in the *Catena Aurea*.—*Commentary on St. Mark*, cap. ii. v. 23.

END OF VOL. IV.





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