



POEMS
OF
TENNYSON
EDITED
BY
HENRY
VAN DYKE

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

The Valley of Vision
Fighting for Peace
The Unknown Quantity
The Ruling Passion
The Blue Flower

Out-of-Doors in the Holy Land
Days Off
Little Rivers
Fisherman's Luck

Poems, Collection in one volume

Golden Stars
The Red Flower
The Grand Canyon, and Other Poems
The White Bees, and Other Poems
The Builders, and Other Poems
Music, and Other Poems
The Toiling of Felix, and Other Poems
The House of Rimmon

Studies in Tennyson
Poems of Tennyson

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

POEMS OF TENNYSON



Tennyson

From a photograph from life by Mayall, London.

P O E M S

OF

TENNYSON

CHOSEN AND EDITED WITH

AN INTRODUCTION

BY

HENRY VAN DYKE



NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1920

COPYRIGHT, 1903, 1920, BY HENRY VAN DYKE

THE SCRIBNER PRESS

PREFACE

HEARING and reading of late many hard and disdainful words regarding the so-called Victorian Age,—a remote period of English history running from about 1837 to 1900,—I fell to thinking whether some compensations and consolations might not have been bestowed on that derided era. Something certainly was due to make up for its apparent deficiencies in the matter of architecture, domestic furniture, music, painting, feminine costume, the wild pleasures of revolution, and in particular for its complete deprivation of the uplifting and entrancing influence of moving-pictures. It is difficult to conceive that either Evolution, which is supposedly continuous, or Providence, which is presumably not altogether unjust, could have made such a break as to leave a considerable interval of human life without inheritance from the past or promise for the future, an inane epoch, devoid alike of real emotion and genuine art, the joy of living and the incentives of a noble discontent.

But indeed such a lamentable conclusion is not necessary. Looking back from our present elevated position, and endeavoring for a moment to free our eyes from the dazzling New-Era-Consciousness which pervades the air, we can see that while the fashions have changed, the essential elements and

PREFACE

processes of real human life in the Victorian Age were not altogether different and disconnected from those of the George-the-Fifthian Age. The discoveries made then are applied now. The problems posed then are being worked over now. There has been no fundamental alteration in human nature since the Spanish-American War, the Boer War, or even since the late Kaiser War. Conservatives and radicals, fools and wise men, fanatics and fakirs, contend now as then for the popular favor and following. Even automobiles and airplanes have failed to transport us immediately to the Land of Happy Freedom. The journey to that goal must still be made on foot. And the real helps and comforts of the journey are still good friends, good books, good hopes, and the inward spirit of good will. Even so was it in the Victorian Age.

Whatever may have been its defects in furniture, legislation, and so on, it was rich in one consolation,—good books, the reading of which would make even a plush arm-chair under an Argand lamp, or a wooden rocker beside a stearine candle, quite tolerable. In England and in America during that epoch there were authors who knew how to use good English to good purpose, for the pleasure and the profit of mankind. Dickens and Thackeray, Hawthorne and Poe, Stevenson and Kipling, Carlyle, Emerson and Ruskin, Tennyson

PREFACE

and Browning were all Victorians, of one style or another. What they wrote was excellent when it was new; and it remains excellent today. It is still capable of giving joy and light to readers who come to it with an open mind, immune to the tetanus of literary theory.

Far be it from us to refuse due attention and wonder to "the New Poetry," "the New Era," and all the other Newnesses. But while we inquire respectfully just how new a thing must be in order to be worthy of admiration, and while we wait patiently for these novelties to fulfil their promises, may we not keep with us some things a little less new, to serve as standards, and to cheer us in our waiting? May we not refresh the fire on our hearth with a few logs of well-seasoned wood? Must we accept the dictum of a Chicago poet who says, in his inimitably musical style,

"I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes" ?

Meditating thus, it seemed to me that now might be a good time to commend anew to thoughtful readers, who like to find delight as well as illumination in their reading, the poetry of a great man who was one of the chief writers of the Victorian Age,—Tennyson. He may have been over-praised fifty years ago; but he is certainly undervalued, in some quarters, at this time. It is a pity to have

PREFACE

a path so fair, and affording such wide and beautiful prospects, neglected and forsaken for the *trottoir* of fashion. It would add to the sum of general happiness, it might even clarify the popular idea of the real nature and values of poetic art, if the poetry of Tennyson were more widely read and better understood.

With this thought in mind I have brought together the results of more than thirty years' reading and study of Tennyson and put them, with some additions, into their final form in a pair of companion volumes.

I. The first contains a General Introduction on the life and art of Tennyson, and a group of his Select Poems, so arranged as to show the wonderful variety of his work, the steady unfolding of his powers, and the chief qualities of his poetry.

Books of poetic selections have their disadvantages. They generally include some pieces which the reader personally does not care for and omit others of which he is very fond. I confess that they are no substitute for the "complete works" of an author.

On the other hand, there is a certain gain in presenting in a small compass a body of the best things that a poet has done, disengaged and set apart from the mass of his productions. It simplifies the view

PREFACE

and makes it easier to feel the distinctive qualities of his work. To this end I hope the present selection may serve. It has a hundred and thirty-six selections from all the fields of Tennyson's poetry, except the dramas, from which it was impossible to detach representative scenes. But some of the incidental lyrics are given.

II. The second volume contains a series of "Studies in Tennyson," written at different times, and now revised, enlarged, and reprinted. The doing of this revision has been a curious experience. I find that the youthful enthusiasm of my first passion for his work has cooled a little, so that some of the expressions of it need to be moderated. But my conviction of his lofty rank as a poet has not changed except to grow stronger. And the impression of his personality, so large and noble, so manly, strong, and free, so vigorously alive to all the manifold aspects of human life, so firm in his loyalties and liberal in his sympathies, so great a lover of nature, humanity, and God,—that vivid impression has not faded but deepened, since last I saw him in those late summer days at Aldworth, twenty-seven years ago.

In the long interval what vast mutations have passed upon the surface of earthly things!

*"What hideous warfare hath been waged,
What kingdoms overthrown!"*

PREFACE

But the immortal realm in which Tennyson was a servant and a master has not been shaken. Living now, he would be singing as he sang then,—true to nature, true to art, and true to the highest faith that is in man.

Real poetry has no date. It springs from a moment of vivid experience in time. But it passes, in great things or in little things, into that imperishable region where everything has its meaning to the imagination and the heart.

Tennyson *was* a great man of the Victorian Age. His poetry *is* one of the enduring treasures of English literature.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

AVALON, Oct. 1, 1919.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	PAGE
I. TENNYSON'S PLACE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	xix
II. AN OUTLINE OF TENNYSON'S LIFE	xxv
III. TENNYSON'S USE OF HIS SOURCES	xliii
IV. TENNYSON'S REVISION OF HIS TEXT	lxiii
V. THE CLASSIFICATION OF TENNYSON'S POEMS	lxxix
VI. THE QUALITIES OF TENNYSON'S POETRY	lxxxvi

POEMS

I. MELODIES AND PICTURES

Claribel	3
Song	4
The Thristle	5
Far — Far — Away	5
“Move eastward, happy earth”	6
The Snowdrop	7
A Farewell	7

SONGS FROM THE PRINCESS

The Little Grave	8
“Sweet and low”	8
The Bugle Song	9
“Tears, idle tears”	10
The Swallow's Message	11
The Battle	12
“Sweet, my child, I live for thee”	12
“Ask me no more”	13

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SONGS FROM OTHER POEMS	
The Song of the Brook	13
Cradle-Song	15
Mother-Song	16
Enid's Song	17
Vivien's Song	17
Elaine's Song	18
Milking-Song	18
The Queen's Song	19
Duet of Henry and Rosamund	20
Ode to Memory	21
The Beggar Maid	25
Recollections of the Arabian Nights	26
The Daisy	31
Early Spring	35
The Dying Swan	38
The Eagle	39
The Oak	40
The Sea-Fairies	40
The Lotos-Eaters	42
Isabel	49
Mariana	50
A Dream of Fair Women	53
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere	64
II. BALLADS, IDYLS, AND CHARACTER-PIECES	
BALLADS	
The Lady of Shalott	69
The May Queen	75
In the Children's Hospital	85
The Charge of the Light Brigade	90
The Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava	92
The Revenge	95

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ENGLISH IDYLS	
The Gardener's Daughter	103
Dora	112
CHARACTER-PIECES	
CEnone	119
Ulysses	128
Tithonus	130
Lucretius	133
St. Agnes' Eve	142
Sir Galahad	144
Northern Farmer. Old Style	147
Northern Farmer. New Style	151
Locksley Hall	156
Lady Clara Vere de Vere	169
Selections from Maud ; a Monodrama	172
Rizpah	188
 III. SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS	
The Princess, Book VII	197
Guinevere	207
Morte d'Arthur	230
 IV. PERSONAL AND PHILOSOPHIC POEMS	
OF THE POET AND HIS ART	
The Poet	243
The Poet's Song	245
To ——	245
The Palace of Art	246
Merlin and The Gleam	258
'Frater Ave atque Vale'	263
To Virgil	263
Milton	265

CONTENTS

	PAGE
OF PATRIOTISM	
“Of old sat Freedom on the heights”	266
England and America in 1782	267
To the Queen	268
Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington	269
OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT	
The Vision of Sin	279
The Ancient Sage	288
“Flower in the crannied wall”	298
The Higher Pantheism	298
Will	299
Wages	300
The Deserted House	301
“Break, break, break”	302
In the Valley of Caunteretz	302
Selections from <i>In Memoriam</i>	303
Prefatory Poem to my Brother's Sonnets	337
Vastness	339
Crossing the Bar	342

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

TENNYSON'S PLACE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

*“The voice of him the master and the sire
Of one whole age and legion of the lyre,
Who sang his morning-song when Coleridge still
Uttered dark oracles from Highgate Hill,
And with new launchèd argosies of rhyme
Gilds and makes brave this sombreing tide of time.*

*To him nor tender nor heroic muse
Did her divine confederacy refuse:
To all its moods the lyre of life he strung,
And notes of death fell deathless from his tongue,
Himself the Merlin of his magic strain,
He bade old glories break in bloom again;
And so, exempted from oblivious gloom,
Through him these days shall fadeless break in
bloom.”*

WILLIAM WATSON, 1892.

TENNYSON seems to us, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the most representative poet of the English-speaking world in the Nineteenth Century. Indeed it is doubtful whether any other writer during the last hundred years has reflected, so clearly and so broadly, in verse or prose, the features of that composite age. The history of its aspirations and conflicts, its dreams and disappointments, its æsthetic revivals and scientific discoveries, its questioning spirit in religion and its dogmatic spirit in practical affairs,

INTRODUCTION

its curious learning and social enthusiasms and military reactions, its ethical earnestness, and its ever deepening and broadening human sympathy, may be read in the poetry of Tennyson.

Other poets may reflect some particular feature of the century more fully, but it is because they reflect it more exclusively. Thus Byron stands for the spirit of revolt against tyranny, Shelley for the dream of universal brotherhood, Keats for the passionate love of pure beauty, Matthew Arnold for the sadness of parting with ancient faiths, Robert Browning for the spirit of scientific curiosity and the restless impulse of action, and Rudyard Kipling expresses the last phase of the century, the revival of militant imperialism, perhaps as well as it can be uttered in verse.

Wordsworth, indeed, has a more general range, at least of meditative sympathy, and his work has therefore a broader significance. But his range of imaginative sympathy, the sphere within which he feels intensely and speaks vividly, is limited by his own individuality, deep, strong, unyielding, and by his secluded life among the mountains of Westmoreland. When he moves along his own line his work shines with a singular and unclouded lustre; at other times his genius fails to penetrate his material with the light of poesy. Much of his verse, serious and sincere, represents Wordsworth's reflections upon life, rather than the reflection of life in Wordsworth's poetry. In the metrical art, too, perfect as he is in certain forms, such as the sonnet, the simple lyric, the stately ode, his mastery is far from wide. In narrative poetry he seldom moves with swiftness or certainty; in the use

INTRODUCTION

of dramatic motives to intensify a lyric, a ballad, an idyl, he has little skill.

But Tennyson, at least in the maturity of his powers, has not only a singularly receptive and responsive mind, open on all sides to impressions from nature, from books, and from human life around him, and an imaginative sympathy, which makes itself at home and works dramatically in an extraordinary range of characters: he has also a wonderful mastery of the technics of the poetic art, which enables him to give back in a fitting form of beauty the subject which his genius has taken into itself. No other English poet since the Elizabethan age has used so many kinds of verse so well. None other has shown in his work a sensitiveness to the movements of his own time at once so delicate and so broad. To none other has it been given to write with undimmed eye and undiminished strength for so long a period of time, and thus to translate into poetry so many of the thoughts and feelings of the century in which he lived.

Whether a temperament so receptive, and an art so versatile, as Tennyson's, are characteristic of the highest order of genius, is an open question, which it is not necessary to decide nor even to discuss here. Certainly it would be absurd to maintain that his success in dealing with all subjects and in all forms of verse is equal. His dramas, for instance, do not stand in the first rank. His two epics, *The Princess* and *Idylls of the King*, have serious defects, the one in structure, the other in substance.

But, on the other hand, the broad scope of his poetic interest and the variety as well as the general

INTRODUCTION

felicity of his art, helped to make him the most popular poet of his time and race. Tennyson has something for everybody. He is easy to read. He has charm. Thus he has found a wide audience, and his poetry has not only reflected, but powerfully influenced, the movements of his age. The poet whose words are quoted is a constant, secret guide of sentiment and conduct. The man who says a thing first may be more original; he who says it best is more potent. The characters which Tennyson embodied in his verse became memorable. The ideals which he expressed in music grew more clear and beautiful and familiar to the hearts of men, leading them insensibly forward. The main current of thought and feeling in the Nineteenth Century, at least among the English-speaking peoples,—the slow, steady, onward current of admiration, desire, hope, aspiration, and endeavour,—follows the line which is traced in the poetry of Tennyson.

Now it is just this broad scope, this rich variety, this complex character of Tennyson's work which make it representative; and precisely this is what a book of selections cannot be expected to show completely. For this, one must read all the twenty-six volumes which he published,—lyrical poems, ballads, English idylls, elegiac poems, war-songs, love-songs, dramas, poems of art, classical imitations, dramatic monologues, patriotic poems, idylls of chivalry, fairy tales, character studies, odes, religious meditations, and rhapsodies of faith.

After such a reading it is natural to ask: How much of this large body of verse, so representative in its total effect, is permanent in its poetic value? How

INTRODUCTION

much of it, apart from the interest which it has for the student of literary history, has a direct and intimate charm, a charm which is likely to be lasting, for the simple lover of poetry, the reader who turns to verse not chiefly for an increase of knowledge, but for a gift of pure pleasure and vital power? How much of it is characterized by those qualities which distinguish Tennyson at his best, signed, as we may say, not merely with his name but with the mark of his individuality as an artist, and so entitled to a place in his personal contribution to the art of poetry?

A volume of selections from Tennyson such as I have attempted here, must be made along the general lines to which these questions point. I do not suppose that it would be possible to make a book of this kind which should include all that every admirer of Tennyson would like to find in it. There are fine passages in the dramas, for instance, which cannot well be taken out of their contexts. In choosing a few of the connected lyrics which are woven together in the symphony of *In Memoriam*, one feels a sense of regret at the necessity of leaving out other lyrics almost as rich in melody and meaning, almost as essential to the full harmony of the poem. The underlying unity, the epical interest, of *Idylls of the King* cannot be shown by giving two of them, even though those two be the strongest in substance and the noblest in style.

But after all, making due allowance for the necessary limitations, the inevitable omissions, which every educated person understands, I venture to hope that the selections in this volume fairly present the mate-

INTRODUCTION

rial for a study of Tennyson's method and manner as a poet, and an appreciation of that which is best in the central body of his poetic work. Here, if I am not mistaken, the reader will find those of his poems which best endure the test of comparison with classic and permanent standards. Here, also, is a book of verse which is pervaded, as a whole, by a certain real charm of feeling and expression, and which may be confidently offered to those gentle persons who like to read poetry for its own sake. And here, I am quite sure, is a selection from the mass of Tennyson's writings which includes at least enough of his most characteristic work to illustrate the growth of his mind, to disclose the development of his art, and to make every reader feel the vital and personal qualities which distinguish his poetry.

INTRODUCTION

II

AN OUTLINE OF TENNYSON'S LIFE

*“Brother of the greatest poets, true to nature, true to art,
Lover of Immortal Love, uplifter of the human heart!
Who shall cheer us with high music, who shall sing if
thou depart?”* IN LUCEM TRANSITUS, 1892.

PARENTAGE AND BIRTH.—Alfred Tennyson was born on the 6th of August, 1809, at Somersby, a little village in Lincolnshire. He was the fourth child in a family of twelve, eight boys and four girls, all of whom but two lived to pass the limit of three score years and ten. The stock was a strong one, probably of Danish origin, but with a mingled strain of Norman blood through the old family of d'Eyncourt, both branches of which, according to Burke's Peerage, are represented by the Tennysons.

The poet's father, the Rev. Dr. George Clayton Tennyson, was rector of Somersby and Wood Enderby. His wife, Elizabeth Fytche, was the daughter of the vicar of Louth, a neighbouring town. Dr. Tennyson was the eldest son of a lawyer of considerable wealth, but was disinherited, by some caprice of his father, in favour of a younger brother. The rector of Somersby was a man of large frame, vigorous mind, and variable temper. He had considerable learning, of a broad kind, and his scholarship, if not profound, was practical, for he taught his sons the best of what they knew before they entered the university. A great lover of music and architecture, fond of writing verse, genial and brilliant in social intercourse, excitable,

INTRODUCTION

warm-hearted, stern in discipline, generous in sympathy, he was a personality of overflowing power; but at times he was subject to fits of profound depression and gloom, in which the memory of his father's unkindness darkened his mind, and he seemed almost to lose himself in bitter and despondent moods. Mrs. Tennyson was a gentle, loving, happy character, by no means lacking in strength, but excelling in tenderness, ardent in feeling, vivid in imagination, fervent in faith. It is said that "the wicked inhabitants of a neighbouring village used to bring their dogs to her windows and beat them, in order to be bribed to leave off by the gentle lady, or to make advantageous bargains by selling her the worthless curs." Her son Alfred drew her portrait lovingly in the poem called "Isabel" (p. 49) and in the closing lines of *The Princess* (p. 206).

*Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
And girdled her with music.*

The poet's reverent and loyal love for his father is expressed in the lines "To J. S." Both parents saw in their child the promise of genius, and hoped great things from him.

INTRODUCTION

THE IMITATIVE IMPULSE.—The boy grew up, if not precisely in Milton's "quiet and still air of delightful studies," yet in an atmosphere that was full of stimulus for the imagination and favourable to the unfolding of lively powers of thought and feeling. It was an obscure hamlet of less than a hundred inhabitants where the Tennysons resided, but it was a full home in which they lived,—full of children, full of books, full of music, full of fanciful games and pastimes, full of human interests, full of life. The scenery about Somersby is friendly and consoling; gray hills softly sloping against the sky; wide-branching elms, trembling poplars, and drooping ash-trees; rich gardens, close-embowered, full of trailing roses, crowned lilies, and purple-spiked lavender; long ridges of pasture land where the thick-fleeced sheep are herded; clear brooks purling over ribbed sand and golden gravel, with many a curve and turn; broad horizons, low-hung clouds, mellow sunlight; birds a plenty, flowers profuse. All these sweet forms Nature printed on the boy's mind. Every summer brought a strong contrast, when the family went to spend their holiday in a cottage close beside the sea, on the coast of Lincolnshire, among the tussocked ridges of the sand-dunes, looking out upon

The hollow ocean-ridges, roaring into cataracts.

The boy had an intense passion for the sea, and learned to know all its moods and aspects. "Somehow," he said, later in life, "water is the element I love best of all the four."

When he was seven years old he was sent to the

INTRODUCTION

house of his grandmother at Louth, to attend the grammar-school. But it was a hard school with a rough master, and the boy hated it. After three years he came home to continue his studies under his father.

His closest comrade in the home was his brother Charles, a year older than himself. (*See In Memoriam, lxxix, and "Prefatory Poem to My Brother's Sonnets," p. 337.*) The two lads had many tastes in common, especially their love of poetry. They read widely, and offered the sincerest tribute of admiration to their favourite bards. Alfred's first attempt at writing verse was made when he was eight years old. He covered two sides of a slate with lines in praise of flowers, in imitation of Thomson, the only poet whom he then knew. A little later Pope's *Iliad* fascinated him, and he produced many hundreds of lines in the same style and metre. At twelve he took Scott for his model, and turned out an epic of six thousand lines. Then Byron became his idol. He wrote lyrics full of gloom and grief, a romantic drama in blank verse, and imitations of the *Hebrew Melodies*.

Some of the fruitage of these young labours may be seen in the volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, which was published anonymously by Charles and Alfred Tennyson, at Louth, in 1827, and republished in 1893, with an effort to assign the pieces to their respective authors, by the poet's son, the present Lord Tennyson. The motto on the title-page of the plump, modest little volume is from Martial: *Hæc nos novimus esse nihil*. It is because of this knowledge that the book has value as a document in the history of Tennyson's development. It shows a receptive mind, a quick,

INTRODUCTION

immature fancy, and considerable fluency and variety in the use of metre. It marks a distinct stage of his growth,—the period when his strongest poetic impulse was imitative.

THE ÆSTHETIC IMPULSE.—In 1828 Tennyson, with his brother Charles, entered Trinity College, Cambridge. Almost from the beginning he was a marked man in the undergraduate world. His personal appearance was striking. Tall, large-limbed, deep-chested; with a noble head and abundance of dark, wavy hair; large, brown eyes, dreamy, yet bright; swarthy complexion (“almost like a gypsy,” said Mrs. Carlyle); and a profile like a face on a Roman coin; he gave the immediate impression of rare gifts and power in reserve. “I remember him well,” wrote Edward Fitzgerald, “a sort of Hyperion.” His natural shyness and habits of solitude kept him from making many acquaintances, but his friends were among the best and most brilliant men in the University: Richard Monckton Milnes, Richard Chenevix Trench, W. H. Brookfield, John Mitchell Kemble, James Spedding, Henry Alford, Charles Bul-ler, Charles Merivale, W. H. Thompson, and most intimate of all, Arthur Henry Hallam. This was an extraordinary circle of youths; distinguished for scholarship, wit, eloquence, freedom of thought; promising great things, which most of them achieved. Among these men Tennyson’s strength of mind and character was recognized, but most of all they were proud of him as a coming poet. In their college rooms, with an applauding audience around him, he would chant in his deep, sonorous voice such early poems as “The Hesperides,” “Oriana,” “The Lover’s Tale.”

INTRODUCTION

He did not neglect his studies, the classics, history, and the natural sciences; but his general reading meant more to him. He was a member of an inner circle called the "Apostles," a society devoted to 'religion and radicalism.' (See *In Memoriam*, lxxxvii.) The new spirit, represented in literature by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, took possession of him. He went back to the Elizabethan age, to Milton's early poems, as the fountain-heads of English lyrical poetry. Not now as an imitator, but as a kindred artist, he gave himself to the search for beauty, freedom, delicate truth to nature, romantic charm.

His poem of "Timbuctoo," which won the Chancellor's gold medal in 1829, was only a working-over of an earlier poem on "The Battle of Armageddon," and he thought little of it. But in 1830 he published a slender volume entitled *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, which shows the quality of his work in this period when the æsthetic impulse was dominant in him. Ten of these poems are among the selections in this book. They are marked by freshness of fancy, melody of metre, vivid descriptive touches, and above all by what Arthur Hallam, in his thoughtful review of the volume, called "a strange earnestness in his worship of beauty."

In the summer of 1830, Hallam and Tennyson made a journey together to the Pyrenees, to carry some funds which had been raised in England to the Spanish insurgents who were fighting for liberty. Tennyson was not in sympathy with the conservatism which then, as in Wordsworth's day, made Cambridge seem narrow and dry and heartless to men of free and ardent spirit. In 1831 the illness and death of his father made it

INTRODUCTION

necessary for him to leave college and go home to live with the family at Somersby, where he remained for six years. In 1832 he published his second volume of *Poems*, dated 1833.

The tone and quality of this volume are the same that we find in its predecessor, but the manner is firmer, stronger, more assured. There is also a warmer human interest in such poems as "The Miller's Daughter" and "The May Queen"; and in "The Palace of Art" there is a distinct intimation that the purely æsthetic period of his poetic development is nearly at an end. Six of these poems are among the selections in this book.

The criticism which these two volumes received, outside of the small circle of Tennyson's friends and admirers, was severe and scornful. *Blackwood's Magazine* called the poet the pet of a Cockney coterie, and said that some of his lyrics were "dismal drivel." *The Quarterly Review* sneered at him as "another and a brighter star of that galaxy or *milky way* of poetry, of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger." Tennyson felt this contemptuous treatment deeply. It seemed to him that the English people would never like his work. His æsthetic period closed in gloom and discouragement.

THE RELIGIOUS AND PERSONAL IMPULSE.—But far heavier than any literary disappointment was the blow that fell in 1833 when his dearest friend, Arthur Hallam, to whom his sister Emilia was promised in marriage, died suddenly in Vienna. This great loss, coming to Tennyson at a time when the first joy of youth was already overcast by clouds of loneliness and

INTRODUCTION

despondency, was the wind of destiny that drove him from the pleasant harbour of dreams out upon the wide, strange, uncharted sea of spiritual strife and sorrow,—the sea which seems so bitter and so wild, but on whose farther shore those who bravely make the voyage find freedom and security and peace and the generous joy of a larger, nobler life. The problems of doubt and faith which had been worked out with abstract arguments and fine theories in the Apostles' society at Cambridge, now became personal problems for Tennyson. He must face them and find some answer, if his life was to have a deep and enduring harmony in it,—a harmony in which the discords of fear and self-will and despair would dissolve. The true answer, he felt sure, could never be found in selfish isolation. The very intensity of his grief purified it as by fire, made it more humane, more sympathetic. His conflict with "the spectres of the mind" was not for himself alone, but for others who must wrestle as he did, with sorrow and doubt and death. The deep significance, the poignant verity, the visionary mystery of human existence in all its varied forms, pressed upon him. Like the Lady of Shalott in his own ballad, he turned from the lucid mirror of fantasy, the magic web of art, to the real world of living joy and grief. But it was not a curse, like that which followed her departure from her cloistered tower, that came upon the poet, drawn and driven from the tranquil, shadowy region of exquisite melodies and beautiful pictures. It was a blessing: the blessing of clearer, stronger thought, deeper, broader feeling, more power to understand the world and more energy to move it.

INTRODUCTION

Tennyson's personal sorrow for the loss of Hallam is expressed in the two lyrics, "Break, break, break" and "In the Valley of Caunteretz" (*p.* 302), poems which should always be read together as the cry of grief and the answer of consolation. His long spiritual struggle with the questions of despair and hope, of duty and destiny, which were brought home to him by the loss of his friend, is recorded in *In Memoriam*. The poem was begun at Somersby in 1833 and continued at different places and times, as the interwoven lyrics show, for nearly sixteen years. Though the greater part of it was written by 1842, it was not published until 1850. Mr. Gladstone thought it "the richest oblation ever offered by the affection of friendship at the tomb of the departed." It is that and something more: it is the great English classic on the love of immortality and the immortality of love. Tennyson said, "It was meant to be a kind of *Divina Commedia*, ending with happiness." The central thought of the poem is

*'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.*

Wherein it is better now, and why the poet trusts it will be better still in the long future,—this is the vital question which the poem answers in music.

But apart from these lyrics of personal grief, and this rich, monumental elegy, there are other poems of Tennyson, written between 1833 and 1842, which show the extraordinary deepening and strengthening of his mind during this period of inward crisis. For ten years he published no book. Living with his mother and sisters at Somersby, at High Beech in Epping Forest,

INTRODUCTION

at Tunbridge Wells, at Boxley near Maidstone; caring for the family, as the eldest son at home, and skilfully managing the narrow means on which they had to live; wandering through the country on long walking tours; visiting his friends in London now and then; falling in love finally and forever with Miss Emily Sellwood, to whom he became engaged in 1836, but whom he could not marry yet for want of money; he held fast to his vocation, and though he sometimes doubted whether the world would give him a hearing, he never wavered in his conviction that his mission in life was to be a poet. The years of silence were not years of indolence. Here is a memorandum of a week's work: "*Monday*, History, German. *Tuesday*, Chemistry, German. *Wednesday*, Botany, German. *Thursday*, Electricity, German. *Friday*, Animal Physiology, German. *Saturday*, Mechanics. *Sunday*, Theology. *Next week*, Italian in the afternoon. *Third week*, Greek. *Evenings*, Poetry." Hundreds of lines were composed and never written; hundreds more were written and burned. So far from being "an artist long before he was a poet," as Mr. R. H. Hutton somewhat vacuously says in his essay on Tennyson, he toiled terribly to make himself an artist, because he knew he was a poet. The results of this toil, in the revision of those of his early poems which he thought worthy to survive, and in the new poems which he was ready to publish, were given to the world in the two volumes of 1842.

The changes in the early poems were all in the direction of clearness, simplicity, a stronger human interest. The new poems included "The Vision of Sin," "Two Voices," "Ulysses," "Morte d'Arthur," the con-

INTRODUCTION

clusion of "The May Queen," "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," "Dora," "The Gardener's Daughter," "Locksley Hall," "St. Agnes' Eve," "Sir Galahad." With the appearance of these two volumes, Tennyson began to be a popular poet. But he did not lose his hold upon the elect, the 'fit audience, though few.' *The Quarterly Review*, *The Westminster Review*, Dickens, Landor, Rogers, Carlyle, Edward Fitzgerald, Aubrey de Vere, and such men in England, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, and Poe in America, recognized the charm and the power of his verse. In 1845 Wordsworth wrote to Henry Reed of Philadelphia, "Tennyson is decidedly the first of our living poets, and I hope will live to give the world still better things."

Such was the liberating and ennobling effect of the deeper personal and spiritual impulse which came into his poetry with the experience of sorrow and inward conflict.

THE SOCIAL IMPULSE.—From 1842 onward we find the poet, now better known to the world, coming into wider and closer contact with the general life of men. Not that he ever lost the unconventional freedom of his dress and manner, the independence of his thought and taste, the singular frankness (almost brusquerie) of his talk, which was like thinking aloud. He never became what is called, oddly enough, a "society man." He was incapable of roaring gently at afternoon teas or literary menageries. He was unwilling to join himself to any party in politics as Dryden and Swift and Addison, or even as Southey and Wordsworth, had done. But he had a sincere love for genuine human intercourse, in which real thoughts and feelings are

INTRODUCTION

uttered by real people who have something to say to one another; a vivid sense of the humorous aspects of life (shown in such poems as the two pictures of the "Northern Farmer," "The Spinster's Sweet-Arts," "The Church-Warden"); and a broad interest in the vital questions and the popular movements of his time. If I am not mistaken, this period when his poetry began to make a wider appeal to the people is marked by the presence of a new impulse in his work. We may call it, for the sake of a name, the social impulse, meaning thereby that the poet now looks more often at his work in its relation to the general current of human affairs and turns to themes which have a place in public attention.

There was also at this time an attempt on Tennyson's part to engage in business, which turned out to be a disastrous mistake. He was induced to go into an enterprise for the carving of wood by machinery. Into this he put all his capital; and some of the small patrimony of his brothers and sisters was embarked in the same doubtful craft. In 1843 the ship went down with all its lading, and the Tennysons found themselves on the coast of actual poverty. To add to this misfortune, the poet's health gave way completely, and he was forced to spend a long time in a water-cure establishment, under treatment for hypochondria.

In 1846 the grant of a pension of £200 from the Civil List, on the recommendation of Sir Robert Peel, cordially approved by the Queen, relieved the pressure of pecuniary need under which Tennyson had been left by the failure of his venture in wood. In 1847 he published, perhaps in answer to the demand for a

INTRODUCTION

longer and more sustained poem, *The Princess; A Medley*. It is an epic, complete enough in structure, but in substance half serious and half burlesque. It tells the story of a king's daughter who was fired with the ambition to emancipate, (and even to separate,) her sex from man, by founding a woman's college extraordinary. This design was crossed by the efforts of an amorous, chivalrous, faintly ridiculous prince, who wooed her under difficulties and won her through the pity that overcame her when she saw him wounded almost to death by her brother. The central theme of the poem is the question of the higher education of women, but the style moves so obliquely in its mock heroics that it is hard to tell whether the argument is for or against. The diction is marked by Tennyson's two most frequent faults, over-decoration and indirectness of utterance. It is much admired by girls at boarding-school; but the woman's college of the present day does not regard its academic programme with favour. The poem rises at the close to a very sincere and splendid eloquence in praise of true womanhood (*see p. 204*). The intercalary songs, which were added in 1850, include two or three of Tennyson's best lyrics. They shine like jewels in a setting which is not all of pure gold.

In 1850 there were three important events in the poet's life: his marriage with Miss Emily Sellwood; the publication of the long-laboured *In Memoriam*; and his appointment as Poet-Laureate, to succeed Wordsworth, who had just died. The three events were closely connected. It was the £300 received in advance for *In Memoriam* that provided a financial

INTRODUCTION

basis for the marriage; and it was the profound admiration of the Prince Consort for this poem that determined the choice of Tennyson for the Laureateship.

The marriage was in every sense happy. The poet's wife was not only of a nature most tender and beautiful; she was also a wise counsellor, a steadfast comrade, as he wrote of her,—

*With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the glow of the heather.*

Their first home was made at Twickenham, and here their oldest and only surviving son, Hallam, was born. In 1852 the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" was published. It was received with some disappointment and unfavourable criticism as the first production of the Laureate upon an important public event. But later and wiser critics incline to the opinion of Robert Louis Stevenson, who thought that the ode had "never been surpassed in any tongue or time."¹

In 1853, increasing returns from his books (about £500 a year) made it possible for Tennyson to lease, and ultimately to buy, the house and small estate of Farringford, near the village of Freshwater on the Isle of Wight. It is a low, rambling, unpretentious, gray house, tree-embowered, ivy-mantled, in a

*careless-ordered garden,
Close to the ridge of a noble down.*

His other home, Aldworth, near the summit of Black Down in Sussex, was not built until 1868. A statelier

¹ *Letters of R. L. Stevenson, Vol. I, p. 220.*

INTRODUCTION

mansion, though less picturesque, its attraction as a summer home lies in the beauty of its terraced rose-garden, the far-reaching view which it commands to the south, and the refreshing purity of the upland air that breathes around it.

In 1854 the famous poem on "The Charge of the Light Brigade" was published in the London *Examiner*. It was included, with the Wellington Ode, in the volume entitled *Maud, and Other Poems*, which appeared in the following year. *Maud* grew out of the dramatic lyric beginning "O that 't were possible," in *The Tribute*, 1837 (p. 184). Sir John Simeon said to Tennyson that something more was needed to explain the story of the lyric. He then unfolded the central idea in a succession of lyrics in which the imaginary hero reveals himself and the tragedy of his life. The sub-title *A Monodrama* was added in 1875. When Tennyson read the poem to me in 1892, he said "It is dramatic,—the story of a man who has a touch of inherited insanity, morbid and selfish. The poem shows what love has done for him. The war is only an episode." This is undoubtedly true and just. Yet the vigour of the long invective against the corruptions of a selfish peace, with which the poem opens, and the enthusiasm of the patriotic welcome to the Crimean war, with which it closes, show something of the way in which the poet's mind was working. This volume together with *The Princess* may be taken as an illustration of the force of the social impulse which had now entered into Tennyson's poetry to coöperate with the æsthetic impulse and the religious impulse in the full labours of his maturity.

INTRODUCTION

MATURITY.—Tennyson was now forty-five years old. But there still lay before him nearly forty years in which he was to bring forth poetry in abundance, a rich, varied, unfailling harvest. It is true that before this wonderful period of maturity ended there were signs of age visible in some of his work,— a slackening of vigour, an uncertainty of touch, a tendency to overload his verse with teaching, a failure to remove the traces of labour from his art, a lack of courage and sureness in self-criticism. But it was long before these marks of decline were visible, and even then, more than any other English poet at an equal age, he kept, and in the hours of happy inspiration he revealed, the quick emotion, the vivid sensibility, the splendid courage of a heart that does not grow gray with years.

In 1859 the first instalment of his most important epic, *Idylls of the King*, appeared. It was followed in 1869, in 1872, in 1885, by the other parts of the complete poem. In 1864 *Enoch Arden* was published. In 1875 *Queen Mary*, the first of the dramas, came out, followed by *Harold* in 1876, and *The Cup* and *The Falcon* and *Becket* in 1884. In 1880 *Ballads, and Other Poems* contained some of his best work, such as “Rizpah,” “The Revenge,” “In the Children’s Hospital.” In 1885 *Tiresias, and Other Poems* appeared; in 1886 “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After”; in 1889 *Demeter, and Other Poems*, including “Romney’s Remorse,” “Vastness,” “The Progress of Spring,” “Merlin and The Gleam,” “The Oak,” “The Throstle,” and that supreme lyric which Tennyson wished to have printed last in every edition of his collected works,—“Cross-

INTRODUCTION

ing the Bar." In 1892 the long list closed with *The Death of Ænone, Akbar's Dream, and Other Poems*.

The life of the man who was producing, after middle age, this great body of poetry, was full, rich, and happy,—though shadowed by the death of his son Lionel on the voyage home from India in 1886. Secluded, as ever, from the busyness of the world, but in no sense separated from its deeper interests, Tennyson studied and wrought, delighting in intercourse with his friends and in

*converse with all forms
Of the many-sided mind,
And those whom passion hath not blinded,
Subtle-thoughted, myriad-minded.*

In 1883 he accepted from the Queen the honour of a peerage (a baronetcy had been offered before and refused), and was gazetted in the following year as Baron of Aldworth and Farringford. For himself, he frankly said, the dignity was one that he did not desire; but he felt that he could not let his reluctance stand in the way of a tribute from the Throne to Literature. When he entered the House of Lords he took his seat on the cross-benches, showing that he did not wish to bind himself to any party. His first vote was cast for the Extension of the Franchise.

At the close of August, 1892, when I visited him at Aldworth, he was already beginning to feel the warning touches of pain which preceded his last illness. But he was still strong and mighty in spirit, a noble shape of manhood, massive, large-browed, his bronzed face like the countenance of an antique seer, his scat-

INTRODUCTION

tered locks scarcely touched with gray. He was working on the final proofs of his last volume and planning new poems. At table his talk was free, friendly, full of humour and common-sense. In the library he read from his poems the things which illustrated the subjects of which he had been speaking, passages from *Idylls of the King*, some of the songs, the "Northern Farmer (New Style)" and, more fully, *Maud* and the Wellington Ode. His voice was deep, rolling, resonant. It sank to a note of tenderness, touched with prophetic solemnity, as he read the last lines of the ode:—

*Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.*

On the 6th of October, 1892, between one and two o'clock in the morning, with the splendours of the full moon pouring in through the windows of the room where his family were watching by his bed, he passed into the world of light. His body was laid to rest on the 12th of October, in Westminster Abbey, next to the grave of Robert Browning, and close beside the monument of Chaucer. The mighty multitude of mourners assembled at the funeral,—scholars, statesmen, nobles, veterans of the Light Brigade, poor boys of the Gordon Home,—told how widely and deeply Tennyson had moved the hearts of all sorts and conditions of men by his poetry, which was, in effect, his life.

INTRODUCTION

III

TENNYSON'S USE OF HIS SOURCES

*Ein Quidam sagt, "Ich bin von keiner Schule!
Kein Meister lebt mit dem ich buhle;
Auch bin ich weit davon entfernt,
Das ich von Todten was gelernt."
Das heisst, wenn ich ihn recht verstand;
"Ich bin ein Narr auf eigne Hand."*

GOETHE.

EMERSON was of the same opinion as Goethe in regard to originality. Writing of Shakespeare he says, "The greatest genius is the most indebted man," and defends the poet's right to take his material wherever he can find it. Shakespeare certainly exercised large liberty in that respect and did not even trouble himself to look for a defence. Wordsworth wrote, "*Multa tulit fecitque* must be the motto of all those who are to last." Most of the men whom the world calls great in poetry have drawn freely from the sources which are open to all, not only in nature, but also in the literature of the past, and in the thoughts and feelings of men around them,—the inchoate literature of the present.

From all these sources Tennyson took what he could make his own, and used it to enrich his verse. The gold thus gathered was not all new-mined; some of it had passed through other hands; but it was all new-minted,—fused in his imagination and fashioned into forms bearing the mark of his own genius. My object in the present writing is to give some idea of

INTRODUCTION

the way in which he collected his material and the method by which he wrought it into poetry.

(1.) With nature Tennyson dealt at first hand. A sensitive, patient, joyful observer, he watched the clouds, the waters, the trees, the flowers, the birds, for new disclosures of their beauty, new suggestions of their symbolic relation to the life of man. In a letter written to Mr. Dawson of Montreal, commenting upon the statement that certain lines of natural description in his work were suggested by something in Wordsworth or Shelley, he demurs, with perceptible warmth, and goes on to say: "There was a period in my life when, as an artist, Turner for instance, takes rough sketches of landskip, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture, so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in nature. I never put these down, and many and many a line has gone away on the north wind, but some remain." Then he gives some illustrations, among them,

A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight,

which was suggested by a night at Torquay, when the sky was covered with thin vapour. The line was afterwards embodied in *The Princess* (i, 244).

But in saying that he never wrote these observations down, the poet misremembers his own custom; for his note-books contain many luminous fragments of recorded vision, like the following:—

(*Babbicombe*.) Like serpent-coils upon the deep.

(*Bonchurch*.) A little salt pool fluttering round a stone
upon the shore. ("Guinevere," l. 50.)

INTRODUCTION

(*The river Shannon, on the rapids.*) Ledges of battling water.

(*Cornwall.*) Sea purple and green like a peacock's neck.

(See "The Daisy," p. 32.)

(*Voyage to Norway.*) One great wave, green-shining past with all its crests smoking high up beside the vessel.

This last passage is transformed, in "Lancelot and Elaine," into a splendid simile:—

*They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger.*

Tennyson was always fond of travel, and from all his journeys he brought back jewels which we find embedded here and there in his verse. The echoes in "The Bugle Song" (p. 9) were heard on the Lakes of Killarney in 1842. The Silver Horns of the Alps and the "wreaths of dangling water-smoke," in the "small sweet idyl" from *The Princess* (p. 201), were seen at Lauterbrunnen in 1846. In "Ænone" (p. 126),

*My tall dark pines that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract,*

were sketched in the Pyrenees in 1830. In the first edition of the poem he brought in a beautiful species

INTRODUCTION

of cicala, with scarlet wings, which he saw on his Spanish journey; though he was conscientious enough to add a footnote explaining that "probably nothing of the kind exists in Mount Ida."

It is true that in later editions he let the cicala and the note go; but this example will serve to illustrate the defect, or at least the danger, which attends Tennyson's method of working up his pictures. There is a temptation to introduce too many details from the remembered or recorded "rough sketches," to crowd the canvas, to use bits of description which, however beautiful in themselves, do not always add to the strength of the picture, and sometimes even give it an air of distracting splendour. Ornateness is a fault from which Tennyson is not free. In spite of his careful revision there are still some red-winged cicalas left in his verse. There are passages in *The Princess*, in "Enoch Arden," and in some of the *Idylls of the King*, for example, which are bewildering in their opulence.

But on the other hand it must be said that very often this richness of detail is precisely the effect which he wishes to produce, and in certain poems, like "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" (p. 26), "The Lotos-Eaters" (p. 42), and "The Palace of Art" (p. 246), it enhances the mystical, dream-like atmosphere in which the subject is conceived. If he sometimes puts in too many touches, he seldom, if ever, makes use of any that is not in harmony with the fundamental tone, the colour-key of his picture. Notice the accumulation of dark images of loneliness and desertion in "Mariana" (p. 50), the cold, gray sadness and weariness of the landscape in "The Dying Swan" (p. 38), and the serene

INTRODUCTION

rapture that clothes the earth with emerald and the sea with sapphire in the song of triumph and love in *Maud*, I. xviii (p. 176).

There are passages in Tennyson's verse where his direct vision of nature is illumined by his memory of the things that other poets have written when looking at the same scene. Thus "Frater Ave atque Vale" (p. 263) is filled, as it should be, with touches from Catullus. But how delicate is the art with which they are blended and harmonized, how exquisite the shimmer of the argent-leaved orchards which Tennyson adds in the last line,

Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

In "The Daisy" (a series of pictures from an Italian journey made with his wife in 1851, recalled to the poet's memory by finding, between the leaves of a book which he was reading in Edinburgh, a daisy plucked on the Splügen Pass), we find literary and historical reminiscences interwoven with descriptions. At Cogolletto he remembers the young Columbus who was born there. On Lake Como, which Virgil praised in the *Georgics*, he recalls

*The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way.*

At Varenna the story of Queen Theodolind comes back to him. There are critics who profess to regard such allusions and reminiscences as indicating a lack of originality in a poet. But why? Tennyson saw Italy not with the eyes of a peasant, but with the enlarged and sensitive vision of a scholar. The associations of the

INTRODUCTION

past entered into his perception of the spirit of place. New colours glowed on

*tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,*

because he remembered the great things that had been done and suffered in the land through which he was passing. Is not the landscape of imagination as real as the landscape of optics? Must a man be ignorant in order to be original? Is true poetry possible only to him who looks at nature with a mind as bare as if he had never opened a book? Milton did not think so.

Tennyson's use of nature as the great source of poetic images and figures was for the most part immediate and direct; but often his vision was quickened and broadened by memories of what the great poets had seen and sung. Yet when he borrowed, here and there, a phrase, an epithet, from one of them, it was never done blindly or carelessly. He always verified his references to nature. The phrase borrowed is sure to be a true one, chosen with a delicate feeling for the best, translated with unflinching skill, and enhanced in beauty and significance by the setting which he gives to it.

(2.) For subjects, plots, and illustrations Tennyson turned often to the literature of the past. His range of reading, even in boyhood, was wide and various, as the notes to *Poems by Two Brothers* show. At the University he was not only a close student of the Greek and Latin classics, but a diligent reader of the English poets and philosophers, and a fair Italian scholar. In

INTRODUCTION

the years after he left college we find him studying Spanish and German. In later life he kept up his studies with undiminished ardour. In 1854 he was learning Persian, translating Homer and Virgil to his wife, and reading Dante with her. In 1867 he was working over *Job*, *The Song of Solomon*, and *Genesis*, in Hebrew. He takes the themes of "The Lotos-Eaters" and "The Sea-Fairies" from Homer; "The Death of Cœnone" from Quintus Calaber; "Tiresias" from Euripides; "Tithonus" from an Homeric Hymn; "Demeter" and "Cœnone" from Ovid; "Lucretius" from St. Jerome; "St. Simeon Stylites" and "St. Telemachus" from Theodoret; "The Cup" from Plutarch; "A Dream of Fair Women" from Chaucer; "Mariana" from Shakespeare; "The Lover's Tale" and "The Falcon" from Boccaccio; "Ulysses" from Dante; "The Revenge" from Sir Walter Raleigh; "The Brook" from Goethe; "The Voyage of Maeldune" from Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*; "Akbar's Dream" from the Persian, and "Locksley Hall" from the Arabic; "Romney's Remorse" from Hayden's *Life of Romney*; "Columbus" from Washington Irving. In the *Idylls of the King* he has drawn upon Sir Thomas Malory, the *Mabinogion* of Lady Charlotte Guest, and the old French romances. His allusions and references to the Bible are many and beautiful. (See *The Poetry of Tennyson*, p. 245, and Appendix.) But he never wrote a whole poem upon a scriptural subject, except a couple of Byronic imitations in *Poems by Two Brothers*.

To understand his method of using a subject taken from literature it may be well to study a few examples.

The germ of "Ulysses" (p. 128) is found in the

INTRODUCTION

following passage from Dante's *Inferno*, xxvi, 90–129, where, in the eighth Bolgia, Ulysses addresses the two poets:—

“When I escaped
From Circe, who beyond a circling year
Had held me near Caieta by her charms,
Ere thus Æneas yet had named the shore;
Nor fondness for my son, nor reverence
Of my old father, nor return of love,
That should have crown'd Penelope with joy,
Could overcome in me the zeal I had
To explore the world, and search the ways of life,
Man's evil and his virtue. Forth I sail'd
Into the deep illimitable main,
With but one bark, and the small faithful band
That yet cleaved to me. As Iberia far,
Far as Marocco, either shore I saw,
And the Sardinian and each isle beside
Which round that ocean bathes. Tardy with age
Were I and my companions, when we came
To the strait pass, where Hercules ordain'd
The boundaries not be overstepp'd by man.
The walls of Seville to my right I left,
On the other hand already Ceuta passed.
‘Oh brothers!’ I began, ‘who to the west
Through perils without number now have reach'd;
To this the short remaining watch, that yet
Our senses have to wake, refuse not proof
Of the unpeopled world, following the track
Of Phœbus. Call to mind from whence ye sprang.
Ye were not form'd to live the life of brutes,
But virtue pursue and knowledge high.’

INTRODUCTION

*With these few words I sharpen'd for the voyage
The mind of my associates, that I then
Could scarcely have withheld them. To the dawn
Our poop we turn'd, and for the witless flight
Made our oars wings, still gaining on the left.
Each star of the other pole night now beheld,
And ours so low, that from the ocean floor
It rose not."*¹

The central motive of the poem is undoubtedly contained in this passage: the ardent longing for action, for experience, for brave adventure, persisting in Ulysses to the very end of life. This Tennyson renders in his poem with absolute fidelity. But he departs from the original in several points. First, he makes the poem a dramatic monologue, or character-piece, spoken by Ulysses at Ithaca to his old companions. Second, he intensifies the dramatic contrast between the quiet narrow existence on the island (*ll.* 1-5; 33-43) and the free, joyous, perilous life for which Ulysses longs (*ll.* 11-32). Third, he adds glimpses of natural scenery in wonderful harmony with the spirit of the poem (*ll.* 2, 44, 45, 54-61). Fourth, he brings out with extraordinary vividness the feeling which he tells us was in his own heart when he wrote the poem, "the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life."

Naturally enough many phrases are used which recall classic writers. "The rainy Hyades" belong to Virgil; the rowers "sitting well in order," to Homer. To "rust unburnish'd" (*l.* 23) is an improved echo from the speech of Shakespeare's Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*. All this adds to the *vraisemblance* of the poem.

¹ *Cary's Translation (1806).*

INTRODUCTION

It is the art by which the poet evokes in our minds the associations with which literature has surrounded the figure of Ulysses, a distinct personality, an enduring type in the world of imagination. The proof of the poet's strength lies in his ability to meet the test of comparison between his own work and that classic background of which his allusions frankly remind us, and in his power to add something new, vivid, and individual to the picture which has been painted from so many different points of view by the greatest artists. This test, it seems to me, Tennyson endures magnificently. His Ulysses is not unworthy to rank with the wanderer of Homer, of Dante, of Shakespeare. No lines of theirs are larger than Tennyson's:—

*Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.*

Nor has any poet embodied "the unconquerable mind of man" more nobly than in the final lines of this poem:—

*Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Mov'd earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

A poem of very different character is "A Dream of Fair Women" (p. 53), written when the æsthetic impulse was strongest in Tennyson. The suggestion came from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. How full and

INTRODUCTION

deep and nobly melancholy are the chords with which Tennyson enriches the dream-music to which Chaucer's poem gives the key-note:—

*In every land
I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.*

*Those far-renowned brides of ancient song
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning stars,
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars.*

Then follows a passage full of fresh and exquisite descriptions of nature, the scenery of his dream.

*Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and lean
Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest green,
New from its silken sheath.*

.
*I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I knew
The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drench'd in dew,
Leading from lawn to lawn.*

*The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
Pour'd back into my empty soul and frame
The times when I remember to have been
Joyful and free from blame.*

This is Tennyson's own manner, recognizable, imitable, but not easily equalled. Now come the fair women who people his visionary forest. Each one speaks to

INTRODUCTION

him and reveals herself by the lyric disclosure of her story. Only in one case—that of Rosamond—does the speaker utter her name. In all the others, it is by some touch of description made familiar to us by “ancient song,” that the figure is recognized. Iphigenia tells how she stood before the altar in Aulis, and saw her sorrowing father, and the waiting ships, and the crowd around her, and the knife which was to shed the victim’s blood. (Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, i, 85 ff.) Cleopatra recalls the nights of revelry with Mark Antony (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act i, sc. iv), his wild love (Act iv, sc. viii), her queenly suicide, robed and crowned, with the bite of the aspic on her breast (Act v, sc. ii). Jephtha’s Daughter repeats the song with which she celebrated Israel’s victory over Ammon (*Judges*, xi). The dream rounds itself into royal splendour, glittering with gems from legend and poetry: then it fades, never to be repeated,—

*How eagerly I sought to strike
Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
But no two dreams are like.*

Yet another type of subject taken from literature is found in “Dora” (p. 112). Mr. J. Churton Collins says: “The whole plot . . . to the minutest details is taken from a prose story of Miss Mitford’s. . . . That the poet’s indebtedness to the novel has not been intimated, is due no doubt to the fact that Tennyson, like Gray, leaves his commentators to track him to his raw material.”¹ To understand the carelessness

¹ J. Churton Collins, *Illustrations of Tennyson*. Chatto and Windus, 1891.

INTRODUCTION

of Mr. Collins as a critic it is only necessary to point out the fact that the reference to Miss Mitford's story was distinctly given in a note to the first edition of the poem in 1842. But to appreciate fully the bold inaccuracy of his general statement one needs to read the pastoral of "Dora Creswell," in *Our Village*, side by side with Tennyson's "Dora." In Miss Mitford's story Dora is a little girl; in Tennyson's poem she is a young woman. Miss Mitford tells nothing of the conflict between the old farmer and his son about the proposed marriage with Dora; Tennyson makes it prominent in the working out of the plot. Miss Mitford makes the son marry the delicate daughter of a school-mistress; but in Tennyson's poem his choice falls on Mary Morrison, a labourer's daughter, and, as the poem implies, a vigorous, healthy, independent girl. In Miss Mitford's story there is no trace of Dora's expulsion from the old farmer's house after she has succeeded, by a stratagem, in making him receive his little grandson, Mary's child; but Tennyson makes this the turning point of the most pathetic part of his poem,—Dora's winning of Mary's love, and their resolve that they will live together and bring up the child free from the influence of the old farmer's hardness. When the old man at last gives way, and takes Mary and Dora and the child home, Tennyson adds the final touch of insight to the little drama:—

*So those four abode
Within one house together; and as years
Went forward Mary took another mate;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.*

INTRODUCTION

The entire poem is written in the simplest language. It does not contain a single simile, nor a word used in an unfamiliar sense. Wordsworth said, "Mr. Tennyson, I have been endeavouring all my life to write a pastoral like your 'Dora,' and have not succeeded." The contrast between the prose story with its abundance of pretty details, and the poem in beauty unadorned, illustrates the difference between neat work and fine work.

The vivifying power of Tennyson's imagination is nowhere shown more clearly than in the great use which he makes of comparatively small hints and phrases from other writers. In his hands they seem to expand. They are lifted up, animated, ennobled.

A good illustration of this kind of work may be seen in the way in which he handles the material taken from Sir Thomas Malory in the *Morte d'Arthur*. In Malory the King's rebuke to the unfaithful knight runs thus: "Ah, traitor untrue, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou that hast been to me so lief and dear? And thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the richness of the sword!" In Tennyson a new dramatic splendour enters into the reproach:—

*'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,*

INTRODUCTION

*Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'*

In Malory the King's parting address, spoken from the barge, is: "Comfort thyself, and do as well as thou may'st, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound: and if thou hear never more of me pray for my soul." In Tennyson these few words become the germ of the great passage beginning

*'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world,'—*

and closing with one of the noblest utterances in regard to prayer that can be found in the world's literature.

Malory says, "And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest." Tennyson makes us see the dark vessel moving away:—

*The barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull*

INTRODUCTION

*Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.*

The difference here is between the seed of poetry and the flower fully unfolded.

Instances of the same enlarging and transforming power of Tennyson's genius may be noted in "The Revenge." Again and again he takes a bare fact given by Sir Walter Raleigh or Froude, and makes it flash a sudden lightning or roar a majestic thunder through the smoke of the wild sea-fight. (*See vi-xi, pp. 97-100.*) The whole poem is scrupulously exact in its fidelity to the historical records, but it lifts the story on strong wings into the realm of vivid imagination. We do not merely hear about it: we see it, we feel it.

Another illustration is found in "The Lotos-Eaters," lines 156-167 (*p. 48*). This is expanded from Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, *iii*, 15. "The divinity of the gods is revealed, and their tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake, nor clouds drench with rains, nor snow congealed by sharp frosts, harms with hoary fall: an ever cloudless ether over-canopies them, and they laugh with light shed largely round. Nature too supplies all their wants, and nothing ever impairs their peace of mind." But the vivid contrast between this luxurious state of *dolce far niente* and the troubles, toils, and conflicts of human life, is added by Tennyson, and gives a new significance to the passage.

We come now to Tennyson's use of the raw material lying close at hand, as yet untouched by the shaping spirit of literature,—newspaper stories, speeches,

INTRODUCTION

tales of the country-side, legends and phrases passing from lip to lip, suggestions from conversations and letters. He was quick to see the value of things that came to him in this way, and at the same time, as a rule, most clear in his discrimination between that which was merely interesting or striking, and that which was available for the purposes of poetry, and more particularly of such poetry as he could write. He did not often make Wordsworth's mistake of choosing themes in themselves trivial like "Alice Fell," or "Goody Blake," or themes involving an incongruous and ridiculous element, like "Peter Bell" or "The Idiot Boy." If the subject was one that had a humorous aspect, he gave play to his sense of humour in treating it. If it was serious, he handled it in a tragic or in a pathetic way, according to the depth of feeling which it naturally involved. Illustrations of these different methods may easily be found among his poems.

The "Northern Farmer (Old Style)" was suggested by a story which his great-uncle told him about a Lincolnshire farm-bailiff who said, when he was dying, "God A'mighty little knows what He's aboot, a-takin' me, an' 'Squire'll be so mad an' all!" From this saying, Tennyson declares, he conjectured the whole man, depicted as he is with healthy vigour and kindly humour. It was the remark of a rich neighbour, "When I canters my 'erse along the ramper L'ears *propully, propully, propully*," that suggested the contrasting character-piece, the "Northern Farmer (New Style)." The poem called "The Church-Warden and the Curate" was made out of a story told to the

INTRODUCTION

poet by the Rev. H. D. Rawnsley.¹ "The Grandmother" was suggested in a letter from Benjamin Jowett giving the saying of an old lady, "The spirits of my children always seem to hover about me." "The Northern Cobbler" was founded on a true story which Tennyson heard in his youth. "Owd Roä" was the poet's version of a report that he had read in a newspaper about a black retriever which saved a child from a burning house. To the end of his life he kept his familiarity with the Lincolnshire variety of English, and delighted to read aloud his verses written in that racy and resonant dialect, which is now, unfortunately, rapidly disappearing in the dull march of improvement.

Turning from these *genre*-pieces, we find two of his most powerful ballads, one intensely tragic, the other irresistibly pathetic, based upon incidents related in contemporary periodicals. In a penny magazine, called *Old Brighton*, he read a story of a young man named Rooke who was hanged in chains for robbing the mail, near the close of the eighteenth century. "When the elements had caused the clothes and flesh to decay, his aged mother, night after night, in all weathers, and the more tempestuous the weather the more frequent the visits, made a sacred pilgrimage to the lonely spot on the Downs, and it was noticed that on her return she always brought something away with her in her apron. Upon being watched, it was discovered that the bones of the hanging man were the objects of her search, and as the wind and rain scattered

¹ *Memories of the Tennysons*, by H. D. Rawnsley, MacLehose, Glasgow, 1900, pp. 113 ff.

INTRODUCTION

them on the ground she conveyed them to her home. There she kept them, and, when the gibbet was stripped of its horrid burden, in the dead silence of the night, she interred them in the hallowed enclosure of Old Shoreham Churchyard." This is the tale. Imagine what Byron would have made of it; or Shelley, if we may judge by the gruesome details of the second part of "The Sensitive Plant." But Tennyson goes straight to the heart of the passion of motherhood, surviving shame and sorrow, conquering fear and weakness in that withered mother's breast. She tells her story in a dramatic lyric, a naked song of tragedy, a solitary, trembling war-cry of indomitable love. Against this second Rizpah, greater in her heroism than even the Hebrew mother whose deeds are told in the Book of Samuel, all the forces of law and church and society are arrayed. But she will not be balked of her human rights. She will hope that somewhere there is mercy for her boy. She will gather his bones from shame and lay them to rest in consecrated ground.

*Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call
it a theft?*

*My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that had
laugh'd and had cried,—*

*Theirs? O no! They are mine—not theirs—they had
moved in my side.*

"In the Children's Hospital" is a poem as tender as "Rizpah" is passionate. The story was told to Tennyson by Miss Mary Gladstone. An outline of it was printed in a parochial magazine under the title

INTRODUCTION

“Alice’s Christmas Day.” The theme is the faith and courage of a child in the presence of pain and death. That the poet at seventy years of age should be able to enter so simply, so sincerely, so profoundly into the sweet secret of a suffering child’s heart, is a marvellous thing. After all, there must be something moral and spiritual in true poetic genius. It is not mere intellectual power. It is temperament, it is sympathy, it is that power to put oneself in another’s place, which lies so close to the root of the Golden Rule.

INTRODUCTION

IV

TENNYSON'S REVISION OF HIS TEXT

Vos, o

*Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite, quod non
Multa dies et multa litura coërcuit, atque
Perfectum decies non castigavit ad unguem.*

HORACE: *De Arte Poetica*, 291-294.

THE changes which a poet makes, from time to time, in the text of his poems may be taken in part as a measure of his power of self-criticism, and in part as a record of the growth of his mind. It is true, of course, that a man may prefer to put his new ideas altogether into new poems and leave the old ones untouched; true also that the creative impulse may be so much stronger than the critical as to make him impatient of the *limæ labor et mora*. This was the case with Robert Browning. There was a time when he made a point of turning out a poem every day. When reproached for his indifference to form, he said that 'the world must take him as it found him.'

But Tennyson was a constant, careful corrector of his own verse. He held that "an artist should get his workmanship as good as he can, and make his work as perfect as possible. A small vessel, built on fine lines, is likely to float further down the stream of time than a big raft." He was keenly sensitive to the subtle effects of rhythm, the associations of words, the beauty of form. The deepening of thought and feeling which came to him with the experience of life did not make him indifferent to the technics of his craft as a poet.

INTRODUCTION

Indeed it seemed to intensify his desire for perfection. The more he had to say the more carefully he wished to say it.

The first and most important revision of his work began in the period of his greatest spiritual and intellectual growth, immediately after the death of his friend Hallam. The results of it were seen in the early poems, republished in the two volumes of 1842. From this time forward there were many changes in the successive editions of his poems. *The Princess*, published in 1847, was slightly altered in 1848, thoroughly revised in 1850 (when the intercalary songs were added), and considerably enlarged in 1851. The "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," printed as a pamphlet in 1852, was immediately revised in 1853, and again much altered when it appeared in the same volume with *Maud* in 1855. As late as August 1892, I heard Tennyson questioning whether the line describing the cross of St. Paul's—

That shines over city and river—

should be changed to read,

That shines upon city and river.

There were general revisions in 1872 (The Library Edition), in 1874 (The Cabinet Edition), in 1884 (The Globe Edition), in 1886 (A New Library Edition, in ten volumes), in 1889, and in 1891. The complete single-volume edition, "with last alterations," was published in 1894.

In Memoriam received less revision after its first pub-

INTRODUCTION

lication than any other of Tennyson's larger poems;¹ probably because it had been so frequently worked over in manuscript. Sixteen years passed between its inception and its appearance in print.

I propose to examine some of Tennyson's changes in his text in order that we may do what none of the critics have yet done,—get a clear idea of their general character and the particular reasons why he made them. These changes may be classified under five heads, descriptive of the different reasons for revision.

1. *For simplicity and naturalness.*—There was a tincture of archaism in the early diction of Tennyson, an occasional use of far-fetched words, an unfamiliar way of spelling, a general flavour of conscious exquisiteness, which seemed to his maturer judgment to savour of affectation. These blemishes, due to the predominance of the æsthetic impulse, he was careful to remove.

At first, he tells us, he had “an absurd antipathy” to the use of the hyphen; and in 1830 and 1832 he wrote, in “*Mariana*,” *flowerplots, casementcurtain, marishmosses, silvergreen*; and in “*The Palace of Art*,” *pleasurehouse, sunnynwarm, torrentbow, clearwalled*. In 1842 the despised hyphen was restored to its place, and the compound words were spelled according to common usage. He discarded also his early fashion of accenting the *ed* in the past participle,—*wreathèd, blenchèd, gleanèd*, etc.

Archaic elisions, like “*throne o' the massive ore*” in “*Recollections of the Arabian Nights*” (l. 146), and

¹ *Joseph Jacobs, Tennyson and In Memoriam, notes sixty-two verbal changes. Two sections (xxxix, lix) have been added to the poem.*

INTRODUCTION

“up an’ away” in “Mariana” (*l.* 50), and “whither away wi’ the singing sail” in “The Sea-Fairies,” were eliminated.

A purified and chastened taste made him prefer, in the “Ode to Memory,”

With plaited alleys of the trailing rose—

[1842]

to

With pleachéd alleys of the trailing rose.

[1830]

In “The Lady of Shalott” he left out

*A pearl-garland winds her head:
She leaneth on a velvet bed,
Full royally apparellèd.*

In “Mariana” he substituted

*The day
Was sloping toward his western bower,*

[1842]

for

*The day
Downsloped was westering in his bower.*

[1830]

The general result of such alterations as these was to make the poems more simple and straightforward. In the same way we feel that there is great gain in the omission of the stanzas about a balloon which were originally prefixed to “A Dream of Fair Women,” and of the elaborate architectural and decorative details which overloaded the first version of “The Palace of Art,” and in the compression of the last strophe of “The Lotos-Eaters,” with its curious pictures of ‘the

INTRODUCTION

tuskèd seahorse wallowing in a stripe of grassgreen calm,' and 'the monstrous narwhale swallowing his own foamfountains in the sea.' We can well spare these marine prodigies for the sake of such a line as

*Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was
seething free.*

[1842]

2. *For melody and smoothness.*—It was a constant wish of Tennyson to make his verse easy to read, as musical as possible, except when the sense required a rough or broken rhythm. He had a strong aversion to the hissing sound of the letter *s* when it comes at the end of a word and at the beginning of the next word. He was always trying to get rid of this,—“kicking the geese out of the boat,” as he called it,—and he thought that he had succeeded. (*Memoir, II, p. 14.*) But this, of course, was a “flattering unction.” It is not difficult to find instances of the double sibilant remaining in his verse: for example, in “A Dream of Fair Women” (l. 241):—

She lock'd her lips: she left me where I stood,

and “Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere” (l. 23):—

She seem'd a part of joyous Spring.

But for the most part he was careful to remove it, as in the following cases.

“The Lady of Shalott” (l. 156):—

A pale, pale corpse she floated by.

[1833]

A gleaming shape she floated by.

[1842]

INTRODUCTION

“Mariana in the South” (ll. 9–10):—

*Down in the dry salt-marshes stood
That house darklatticed.*

[Omitted, 1842]

“Locksley Hall” (l. 182):—

*Let the peoples spin for ever down the ringing grooves of
change.*

[1842]

*Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves
of change.*

[1845]

Alterations were made in order to get rid of unpleasant assonance in blank verse, as in “CEnone” (l. 19):—

She, leaning on a vine-entwined stone.

[1833]

She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine.

[1842]

Disagreeable alliterations were removed, as in “Mariana” (l. 43):—

For leagues no other tree did dark.

[1830]

For leagues no other tree did mark.

[1842]

“Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington” (l. 5):—

When laurel-garlanded leaders fall.

[1852]

Mourning when their leaders fall.

[1855]

INTRODUCTION

Imperfect rhymes were corrected, as in "Mariana in the South" (l. 85):—

*One dry cicala's summer song
At night filled all the gallery,
Backward the latticeblind she flung
And leaned upon the balcony.*

[1833]

*At eve a dry cicala sung,
There came a sound as of the sea,
Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
And lean'd upon the balcony.*

[1842]

Incongruous and harsh expressions were removed, as in "The Poet" (l. 45):—

*And in the bordure of her robe was writ
WISDOM, a name to shake
Hoar anarchies, as with a thunderfit.*

[1830]

*And in her raiment's hem was traced in flame
WISDOM, a name to shake
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.*

[1842]

Two very delicate and perfect examples of the same kind of improvement are found in the revision of "Claribel" (l. 11):—

At noon the bee low-hummeth.

[1830]

At noon the wild bee hummeth.

[1842]

And (l. 17):—

The fledgling throstle lispeth.

[1830]

INTRODUCTION

The callow throstle lispeth.

[1842]

Some of the alterations in the Wellington Ode are very happy. Line 79 originally read,

And ever-ringing avenues of song.

How much more musical is the present version:—

And ever-echoing avenues of song!

In line 133, "world's earthquake" was changed to "world-earthquake." Line 267,—

Hush, the Dead March sounds in the people's ears,—

[1853]

was wonderfully deepened in 1855, when it was altered to

Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears.

3. *For clearness of thought.*—The most familiar instance of this kind of revision is in "A. Dream of Fair Women." In 1833 the stanza describing the sacrifice of Iphigenia ended with the lines

*One drew a sharp knife thro' my tender throat
Slowly,—and nothing more.*

A critic very properly inquired 'what more she would have.' The lines were changed to

*'The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat;
Touch'd; and I knew no more.'*

There is another curious illustration in "Lady Clara Vere de Vere." In 1842 lines 49–52 read,—

*Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent*

INTRODUCTION

*The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.*

Line 51 was changed, in 1845, to

The grand old gardener and his wife,

which was both weak and ambiguous. One might fancy (as a young lady of my acquaintance did) that the poet was speaking of some fine old gardener on the De Vere estate, who had died and gone to heaven. In 1875 Tennyson restored the original and better reading, "The gardener Adam."

A few more illustrations will suffice to show how careful he was to make his meaning clear.

"Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" (l. 157):—

Of most unbounded reverence and regret. [1852]

But it is hard to see how anything can be more or less unbounded; so the line was changed:—

Of boundless reverence and regret. [1853]

Of boundless love and reverence and regret. [1855]

"The Marriage of Geraint" (l. 70):—

They sleeping each by other. [1859]

They sleeping each by either. [1874]

"Lancelot and Elaine" (l. 45):—

And one of these, the king, had on a crown. [1859]

INTRODUCTION

And he that once was king had on a crown.

[1874]

Line 168:—

Thither he made, and wound the gateway horn.

[1859]

Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.

[1874]

Line 1147:—

Steer'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood.

[1859]

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood.

[1874]

“Guinevere” (l. 470):—

To honour his own word as if his God's:

this line was not in the 1859 version. It enhances the solemnity of the oath of initiation into the Round Table.

“The Passing of Arthur” (ll. 462–469):—

*Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.*

These lines, with others, were added to “Morte d'Arthur,” the original form of this idyll, in order to bring

INTRODUCTION

out the distant gleam of hope which is thrown upon the close of the epic by the vision of Arthur's immortality and the prophecy of his return.

4. *For truth in the description of nature.*—The alterations made for this reason are very many. I give a few examples.

“The Lotos-Eaters” (*l. 7*):—

Above the valley burned the golden moon.
[1833]

But in the afternoon (*l. 3*) the moon is of palest silver; so the line was revised thus:—

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon.
[1842]

Line 16 originally read,

Three thundercloven thrones of oldest snow.
[1833]

But, in the first place, it is the lightning, not the thunder, that cleaves the mountains; and, in the second place, a snow-peak, if struck by lightning, would not remain “cloven” very long, but would soon be covered with snow again. For these reasons, quite as much as for the sake of preserving the quiet and dreamy tone of Lotos-land, Tennyson changed the line to

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow.
[1842]

In “Locksley Hall” (*l. 3*), the first reading was

'T is the place, and round the gables, as of old, the curls call.

[1842]

INTRODUCTION

But the curlews do not fly close to the roofs of houses,
as the swallows do; so the line was changed to

'T is the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call.

[1845]

“Mariana” (ll. 3-4):—

The rusted nails fell from the knots

That held the peach to the gardenwall.

[1830]

This was not quite characteristic of a Lincolnshire garden; so it was altered, in 1863 and 1872, to the present form:—

That held the pear to the gable-wall.

“The Poet’s Song” (l. 9):—

The swallow stopped as he hunted the bee.

[1842]

But swallows do not hunt bees; so the line was changed to

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly.

[1884]

“Lancelot and Elaine” (ll. 652-653):—

No surer than our falcon yesterday,

Who lost the hern we slipt him at.

[1859]

But the female falcon, being larger and fiercer, is the one usually employed in the chase; so *him* was changed to *her*.

There is a very interesting addition to *In Memoriam*, which bears witness to Tennyson’s scrupulous desire to be truthful in natural description. Section ii

INTRODUCTION

is addressed to an old Yew-tree in the graveyard, and contains this stanza:—

*O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
Who changest not in any gale,
Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom.*

But, as a matter of fact, the yew has its season of bloom; and so in Section xxxix, added in 1871, we find these lines:—

*To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;
But Sorrow,—fixt upon the dead,*

*And darkening the dark graves of men,—
What whisper'd from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
And passes into gloom again.*

5. *For deeper meaning and human interest.*—In this respect the revision of “The Palace of Art” is most important. The stanzas added in the later editions of this poem have the effect of intensifying its significance, making the sin of self-centred isolation stand out sharply (*ll.* 197–204), displaying the scornful contempt of the proud soul for common humanity (*ll.* 145–160), and throwing over the picture the Pharisee’s robe of moral self-complacency (*ll.* 205–208). The introduction in 1833 began as follows:—

*I send you, friend, a sort of allegory,
(You are an artist and will understand
Its many lesser meanings.)*

INTRODUCTION

But in 1842 the lines read

*I send you here a sort of allegory,
(For you will understand it.)*

The poet no longer addresses his work to an artist: he speaks more broadly to man as man. For the same reason he omits a great many of the purely decorative stanzas, and concentrates the attention on the spiritual drama.

The addition of the *Conclusion* to "The May Queen" (1842) is another instance of Tennyson's enrichment of his work with warmer human interest. In the first two parts there is nothing quite so intimate in knowledge of the heart as the lines

*O look! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in a glow;
He shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I know.*

There is nothing quite so true to the simplicity of childlike faith as the closing verses:—

*To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast—
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are
at rest.*

The sixth strophe of the Choric Song in "The Lotus-Eaters," beginning

*Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears,—*

was added in 1842.

In the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Welling-

INTRODUCTION

ton," lines 266-270 were added after the first edition:—

*On God and Godlike men we build our trust.
Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears:
The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears:
The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.*

This passage brings a deep note of natural emotion into the poem. The physical effect of the actual interment, the sight of the yawning grave, the rattle of the handful of earth thrown upon the coffin, are vividly expressed.

A noteworthy change for the sake of expressing a deeper human feeling occurs in "The Lady of Shalott." The original form of the last stanza was merely picturesque: it described the wonder and perplexity of "the wellfed wits at Camelot" when they looked upon the dead maiden in her funeral barge and read the parchment on her breast:—

*"The web was woven curiously,
The charm is broken utterly,
Draw near and fear not—this is I,
The Lady of Shalott."*

[1833]

But the revised version makes them "cross themselves for fear," and brings the knight for secret love of whom the maiden died to look upon her face:—

*But Lancelot mused a little space:
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'*

[lxxvii]

INTRODUCTION

The addition of the songs to *The Princess* (1850) must be regarded as evidence of a desire to deepen the meaning of the story. Tennyson said distinctly that he wished to make people see that the child was the heroine of the poem. The songs are a great help in this direction. In the *Idylls of the King* Tennyson took pains, as he went on with the series, to eliminate all traces of the old tradition which made Modred the son of King Arthur and his half-sister Bellicent, thus sweeping away the taint of incest from the story, and revealing the catastrophe as the result of the unlawful love of Lancelot and Guinevere. (See *The Poetry of Tennyson*, pp. 171 ff.) He introduced many allegorical details into the later Idylls. And he endeavoured to enhance the epic dignity and significance of the series by inserting the closing passages of "The Coming of Arthur" and "The Passing of Arthur," which present clearly the idea of a great kingdom rising under Arthur's leadership and falling into ruin with his defeat.

A general study of the changes which Tennyson made in the text of his poems will show, beyond a doubt, not only that he was sensitive to the imperfections in his work and ready to profit, at least to a certain extent, by the suggestions of critics; but also that his skill as an artist was refined by use, and that his thoughts of life and his sympathies with mankind deepened and broadened with advancing years. Thus there was a compensation for the loss of something of the delicate, inimitable freshness, the novel and enchanting charm, which breathed from the lyrics of his youth.

INTRODUCTION

V

THE CLASSIFICATION OF TENNYSON'S POEMS

TENNYSON never attempted to arrange his works on any such formal scheme as Wordsworth used in classifying his poems for the edition of 1815 and followed in all subsequent editions. "Poems," said he, "apparently miscellaneous, may be arranged either with reference to the powers of mind *predominant* in the production of them; or to the mould in which they are cast; or, lastly, to the subjects to which they relate." He determined to use all three of these methods in dividing his poems into classes, and also, as far as possible, to follow "an order of time, commencing with Childhood, and terminating with Old Age, Death, and Immortality."

The disadvantage, one might almost say the absurdity, of such a mixed method is obvious. The real value of classification lies in the unfolding of a single organic principle. Confusion is introduced when a compromise is made. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to understand just which one of several reasons has been allowed to determine any particular feature of the arrangement. One might as well try to classify flowers, at one and the same time, by their structure, their colour, and the order of their appearance.

Tennyson's mind was not possessed by that sharp philosophical distinction between Fancy and Imagination which played so large a part with Coleridge and Wordsworth. He had little of the analytical tem-

INTRODUCTION

per which delights in making programmes. His view of poetry was less theoretical, more practical and concrete,—the view of an artist, who regards his work as the direct and vital expression of his life,—rather than the view of a philosopher, who looks back upon his work as the illustration of a formula, and endeavours to make it fit.

We find, therefore, that in the various editions of his collected works the poems are given, in general, according to the chronological order, beginning with *Juvenilia*, and closing with those which were contained in the last-published volume. From the first, this chronological arrangement involved a certain outline of symmetrical development, following the successive impulses which came into his poetic art, and bringing together, quite naturally, poems in which a certain relation of spirit and manner may be felt. Later it was necessary, for the sake of order, to give a systematic arrangement to pieces which were written at different times, like the *Idylls of the King* and the Dramas. The general result of this method has been to present the longer poems, *The Princess*, *Maud*, *In Memoriam*, and the *Idylls of the King*, in the centre of Tennyson's work, preceded by the miscellaneous poems of youth and followed by the miscellaneous poems of age. The collection begins with "Claribel," a lyric of delicate artistry, and ends with "Crossing the Bar," a lyric of profound meaning.

But for the purposes of the present volume I think something a little different is desirable and possible. For here we have not the full record of his life and work as poet, but a selection of poems chosen to show

INTRODUCTION

his chief characteristics, to represent the best that he has done in the different fields of his art, and to stand, at least approximately, as a measure of his contributions to that which is permanent in the various departments of English poetry. It is natural, therefore, and indeed almost necessary for the end which we have in view, to try to arrange these contributions in general groups.

The principle which I have followed is practical rather than theoretical. The old Greek division—lyric, dramatic, epic—could not well be strictly used because so much of Tennyson's work lies in the borderlands between these three great domains. The purely chronological arrangement was impracticable because it would separate, by long distances, poems which are as closely related as "Break, break, break" and "In the Valley of Caunteretz"; "Morte d'Arthur" and "Guinevere"; and the different sections of *In Memoriam*.

It seems to me better to bring together the poems which are really most alike in their general purpose and effect.

I. Thus, for example, there is a kind of poetry of which the first charm resides in its appeal to the sense of beauty. This is not its only quality, of course, for all verse must have a meaning in order to have a value. But the prevailing effect of the kind of poetry of which I am speaking is the feeling of pleasure in graceful form, rich colour, the clear and memorable vision of outward things, or the utterance of emotion in haunting music. Poems which have this musical and picturesque quality in predominance (whether or not they

INTRODUCTION

carry with them a deeper significance) are first of all *Melodies and Pictures*. With this kind of verse Tennyson began; in it, as his art was developed, he attained a rare mastery; and to it a great deal of his most finely finished work belongs.

For this reason the present volume begins with a selection of lyrics of this general class: first, those in which the melodic element, the verbal music, is the main charm; second, those in which the chief delight comes from the pictorial element, the vivid description of things seen. I do not imagine that this distinction can be closely applied, or that all readers would draw it in the same way. But at least I hope that in both groups of this main division a certain order of advance can be seen: a deeper meaning coming into the melodies, a broader human interest coming into the pictures.

II. In the next general division,—*Ballads, Idyls, and Character-Pieces*,—the significance has become more important than the form. The interest of the poems lies in the story which they tell, in the character which they reveal, in the mood of human experience which they depict. The chief value of the melody lies in its vital relation to the mood. The great charm of the bits of natural description lies in their almost invariable harmony with the central thought of the poem. The idyl is a picture coloured by an emotion and containing a human figure, or figures, in the foreground. It lies in the border-land between the lyric and the epic. The character-piece is a monologue in which a person is disclosed in utterance, mainly, if not altogether, from the side of thought, of

INTRODUCTION

remembrance, of reflection. It lies in the border-land between the epic and the drama. The dramatic lyric is an emotional self-disclosure, not of the poet himself, but of some chosen character, historical or imaginary. It lies in the border-land between the lyric and the drama. The ballad is a story told in song, briefly and with strong feeling. It may receive a dramatic touch by being told in character. But usually it belongs in the border-land between the epic and the lyric.

Turning now to the poems which are brought together in this second division, we find that their controlling purpose is to tell us something about human character and life. They are larger in every way (though not necessarily more perfect) than the *Melodies and Pictures*, but their theme is still confined to a single event, a single character, or a single mood. They are related to the epic as the short story is to the novel. Their dramatic element is fully expressed only in the person who is speaking; the other characters and the plot of the play are implied. *Maud* is, I believe, the unique example of a drama presented in successive lyrics,—a lyrical *Monodrama*.

III. The reason why selections from Tennyson's regular dramas have not been given in this volume is stated in another place. The limitations of space have prevented the use of anything more than fragments of his epics. They will be found in the third general division, *Selections from Epic Poems*, and are to be taken chiefly as illustrations of his manner of dealing with a broader theme. To judge how far he was able to tell a long rich story, how far he understood the architectural principles of epic poetry, one must turn

INTRODUCTION

directly to *The Princess* and *Idylls of the King*, and study them not in fragments but as complete poems.

IV. In the fourth general division, *Personal and Philosophic Poems*, we hear Tennyson speaking to us more directly, delivering his personal message in regard to problems of life and destiny, giving his own answers to questions of faith and duty. I do not mean that these are the only poems in which his personal convictions are expressed; nor that these poems are always and altogether subjective and confessional. Doubtless in some of them (as, for example "The Ancient Sage") there is a dramatic element. But this is what I mean: the chief element of interest in these poems lies in what Matthew Arnold calls "the criticism of life," — not abstract, impersonal, indirect criticism, but the immediate utterance of Tennyson's deepest thoughts and feelings. Here we have what he wishes to say to us, (not as preacher or philosopher or politician, but as poet,) about the right love of country, the true service of art, and the real life of the spirit.

There is room for difference of opinion in regard to the place of particular poems in these general divisions. But I feel sure that the order of the divisions is that which should be followed in trying to estimate the quality and permanent value of Tennyson's work.

The first object of poetry is to impart pleasure through the imagination by the expression of ideas and feelings in metrical language. But there is rank and degree in pleasures. The highest are those in which man's best powers find play: the powers of love and hope and faith which strengthen and ennoble

INTRODUCTION

human nature. Thus from the verbal melodies and pictures which have so delicate an enchantment for the æsthetic sense, we pass onward and upward to the human portraits which have a story to tell, and the larger scenes in which the social life of man is illustrated; and from these we rise again to the region where divine philosophy becomes "musical as is Apollo's lute." The singer whose melodies charm us is a true poet. The bard whose message thrills, uplifts, and inspires us is a great poet.

INTRODUCTION

VI

THE QUALITIES OF TENNYSON'S POETRY

*“His music was the south-wind's sigh,
His lamp, the maiden's downcast eye,
And ever the spell of beauty came
And turned the drowsy world to flame.
By lake and stream and gleaming hall
And modest copse and the forest tall,
Where'er he went, the magic guide
Kept its place by the poet's side.
Said melted the days like cups of pearl,
Served high and low, the lord and the churl,
Loved harebells nodding on a rock,
A cabin hung with curling smoke,
Ring of axe or hum of wheel
Or gleam which use can paint on steel,
And huts and tents; nor loved he less
Stately lords in palaces,
Princely women hard to please,
Fenced by form and ceremony,
Decked by rites and courtly dress
And etiquette of gentillesse.*

*He came to the green ocean's brim
And saw the wheeling sea-birds skim,
Summer and winter, o'er the wave
Like creatures of a skiey mould
Impassible to heat or cold.
He stood before the tumbling main
With joy too tense for sober brain;*

INTRODUCTION

*And he, the bard, a crystal soul
Sphered and concentric with the whole."*

EMERSON: *The Poetic Gift*.

IF an unpublished poem by Tennyson—say an idyll of chivalry, a classical character-piece, a modern dramatic lyric, or even a little song—were discovered, and given out without his name, it would be easy, provided it belonged to his best work, to recognize it as his. But it is by no means easy to define just what it is that makes his poetry recognizable. It is not the predominance of a single trait or characteristic. If that were the case, it would be a simple matter to put one's finger upon the hall-mark. It is not a fixed and exaggerated mannerism. That is the sign of the Tennysonians, rather than of their master. His style varies from the luxuriance of "A Dream of Fair Women" to the simplicity of "The Oak," from the lightness of "The Brook" to the stateliness of "Guinevere." There is as much difference of manner between "The Gardener's Daughter" and "Ulysses," as there is between Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper" and his "Dion."

The most remarkable thing about Tennyson's poetry as a whole is that it expresses so fully and so variously the qualities of a many-sided and well-balanced nature. But when we look at the poems separately we see that, in almost every case, the quality which is most closely related to the subject of the poem plays the leading part in giving it colour and form. There is a singular fitness, a harmonious charm in his work, not unlike that which distinguishes the painting of

INTRODUCTION

Titian. It is not, indeed, altogether spontaneous and unstudied. It has the effect of choice, of fine selection. But it is inevitable enough in its way. The choice being made, it would be hard to better it. The words are the right words, and each stands in its right place.

The one thing that cannot justly be said of it, it seems to me, is precisely what Tennyson says in a certain place:—

*I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing.*

That often seems true of Burns and Shelley, and sometimes of Keats. But it is not true of Spenser, or Milton, or Gray, or Tennyson. They do not pour forth their song

“In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.”

I shall endeavour in the remaining pages of this introduction to describe and illustrate some of the qualities which are found in Tennyson's poetry.

1. His diction is lucid, suggestive, melodious. He avoids, for the most part, harsh and strident words, intricate constructions, strange rhymes, startling contrasts. He chooses expressions which have a natural rhythm, an easy flow, a clear meaning. He has a rare mastery of metrical resources. Many of his lyrics seem to be composed to a musical cadence which his inward ear has caught in some happy phrase.

He prefers to use those metrical forms which are free and fluent, and in which there is room for subtle modulations and changes. In the stricter modes of verse he is less happy. The sonnet, the Spenserian

INTRODUCTION

stanza, the heroic couplet, the swift couplet (octosyllabic),—these he seldom uses, and little of his best work is done in these forms. Even in four-stress iambic triplets, the metre in which “Two Voices” is written, he seems constrained and awkward. He is at his best in the long swinging lines of “Locksley Hall” (eight-stress trochaic couplets); or in a free blank verse (five-stress iambic), which admits all the Miltonic liberty of shifted and hovering accents, grace-notes, omitted stresses, and the like; or in mixed measures like “The Revenge” and the Wellington Ode, where the rhythm is now iambic and now trochaic; or in metres which he invented, like “The Daisy,” or revived, like *In Memoriam*; or in little songs like “Break, break, break” and “The Bugle-Song,” where the melody is as unmistakable and as indefinable as the feeling.

He said, “Englishmen *will* spoil English verses by scanning them when they are reading, and they confound accent with quantity.” “In a blank verse you can have from three up to eight beats; but, if you vary the beats unusually, your ordinary newspaper critic sets up a howl.” (*Memoir*, II, 12, 14.) He liked the “run-on” from line to line, the overflow from stanza to stanza. Much of his verse is impossible to analyze if you insist on looking for regular feet according to the classic models; but if you read it according to the principle which Coleridge explained in the preface to “Christabel,” by “counting the accents, not the syllables,” you will find that it falls into a natural rhythm. It seems as if his own way of reading it aloud in a sort of chant were almost inevitable.

This close relation of his verse to music may be felt

INTRODUCTION

in *Maud*, and in his perfect little lyrics like the autumnal "Song," "The Throstle," "Tears, idle tears," "Sweet and low," and "Far—far—away." Here also we see the power of suggestiveness, the atmospheric effect, in his diction. Every word is in harmony with the central emotion of the song, vague, delicate, intimate, mingled of sweetness and sadness.

The most beautiful illustration of this is "Crossing the Bar" (*p.* 342). Notice how the metre, in each stanza, rises to the long third line, and sinks away again in the shorter fourth line. The poem is in two parts; the first stanza corresponding, in every line, to the third; the second stanza, to the fourth. In each division of the song there is first, a clear, solemn, tranquil note,—a reminder that the day is over and it is time to depart. The accent hovers over the words "sunset" and "twilight," and falls distinctly on "star" and "bell." Then come two thoughts of sadness, the "moaning of the bar," the "sadness of farewell," from which the voyager prays to be delivered. The answer follows in the two pictures of peace and joy,—the full, calm tide bearing him homeward,—the vision of the unseen Pilot who has guided and will guide him to the end of his voyage. Every image in the poem is large and serene. Every word is simple, clear, harmonious.

The movement of a very different kind of music—martial, sonorous, thrilling—may be heard in "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade."

*Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade,—*

INTRODUCTION

reproduces with extraordinary force the breathless, toilsome, thundering assault.

His verse often seems to adapt itself to his meaning with an almost magical effect. Thus, in the Wellington Ode, when the spirit of Nelson welcomes the great warrior to his tomb in St. Paul's,—

*Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
With banner and with music, with soldier and with priest,
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?—*

we can almost hear the funeral march and see the vast, sorrowful procession. In "Locksley Hall,"—

*Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords
with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music
out of sight,—*

what value there is in the word "trembling" and in the slight secondary pause that follows it; how the primary pause in the preceding bar, dividing it, emphasizes the word "Self." In *The Princess* there is a line describing one of the curious Chinese ornaments in which a series of openwork balls are carved one inside of another:—

Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere.

One can almost see the balls turning and glistening. In the poem "To Virgil" there is a verse praising the great Mantuan's lordship over language:—

*All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a
lonely word.*

INTRODUCTION

This illustrates the very quality that it describes. "Flowering" is the magical word.

But it is not so often the "lonely word" that is wonderful in Tennyson, as it is the company of words which blossom together in colour-harmony, the air of lucid beauty that envelops the many features of a landscape and blends them in a perfect picture. This is his peculiar charm; and it is illustrated in many passages, but nowhere better than in *In Memoriam*, lxxxvi,—

*Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow,—*

and in the perfect description of autumn's sad tranquillity, Section xi,—

*Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.*

2. Tennyson's closeness of observation, fidelity of description, and felicity of expression in nature-poetry have often been praised. In spite of his near-sightedness he saw things with great clearness and accuracy. All his senses seem to have been alert and true. In this respect he was better fitted to be an observer than Wordsworth, in whom the colour-sense was not especially vivid, and whose poetry shows little or no evidence of the sense of fragrance, although his ears caught sounds with wonderful fineness and his

INTRODUCTION

eyes were quick to note forms and movements. Bayard Taylor once took a walk with Tennyson in the Isle of Wight, and afterward wrote: "During the conversation with which we beguiled the way I was struck with the variety of his knowledge. Not a little flower on the downs, which the sheep had spared, escaped his notice, and the geology of the coast, both terrestrial and submarine, was perfectly familiar to him. I remembered the remark I once heard from the lips of a distinguished English author [Thackeray], that 'Tennyson was the wisest man he knew,' and could well believe that he was sincere in making it."

But Tennyson's relation to nature differed from Wordsworth's in another respect than that which has been mentioned, and one in which the advantage lies with the earlier poet. Wordsworth had a personal intimacy with nature, a confiding and rejoicing faith in her unity, her life, and her deep beneficence, which made him able to say:—

*"This prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her: 't is her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb*

INTRODUCTION

*Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."*

There is no utterance like this in Tennyson's poetry. He had not a profound and permanent sense of that "something far more deeply interfused" in nature which gives her a consoling, liberating, nourishing power,—a maternal power. In "Enoch Arden" the solitude of nature, even in her richest beauty, is terrible. In "Locksley Hall" the disappointed lover calls not on Mother-Nature, but on his "Mother-Age," the age of progress, of advancing knowledge, to comfort and help him. In *Maud* the unhappy hero says, not that he will turn to nature, but that he will 'bury himself in his books.' Whether it was because Tennyson saw the harsher, sterner aspects of nature more clearly than Wordsworth did, or because he had more scientific knowledge, or because he was less simple and serene, it remains true that he did not have that steady and glad confidence in her vital relation to the spirit of man, that overpowering joy in surrender to her purifying and moulding influence, which Wordsworth expressed in the "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey," in 1798, and in "Devotional Incitements" in 1832, and in many other poems written between these dates. Yet it must be observed that Wordsworth himself, in later life, felt some abatement of his unquestioning and all-sufficing faith in nature, or at least admitted the need of something beside her ministry to satisfy all the wants of the human spirit. For in "An Evening Voluntary" (1834), he writes:—

INTRODUCTION

*“By grace divine,
Not otherwise, O Nature! are we thine.”*

Mr. Stopford Brooke has observed that the poetry of both Scott and Byron contains many utterances of delight in the wild and solitary aspects of nature, and that we find little or nothing of this kind in Tennyson. From this Mr. Brooke infers that he had less real love of nature for her own sake than the two poets named. The inference is not well grounded.

Both Scott and Byron were very dependent upon social pleasure for their enjoyment of life,—much more so than Tennyson. Any one who will read Byron's letters may judge how far his professed passion for the solitudes of the ocean and the Alps was sincere, and how far it was a pose. Indeed, in one place, if I mistake not, he maintains the theory that it is the presence of man's work—the ship on the ocean, the city among the hills—that lends the chief charm to nature.

Tennyson was one of the few great poets who have proved their love of nature by living happily in the country. From boyhood up he was well content to spend long, lonely days by the seashore, in the woods, on the downs. It is true that as a rule his temperament found more joy in rich landscapes and gardens of opulent bloom, than in the wild, the savage, the desolate. But no man who was not a true lover of nature for her own sake could have written the “Ode to Memory,” or this stanza from “Early Spring” :—

*The woods with living airs
How softly fann'd,*

[xcv .]

INTRODUCTION

*Light airs from where the deep,
All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
Heard by the land.*

Nor is there any lack of feeling for the sublime in such a poem as "The Voice and the Peak":—

*The voice and the Peak
Far over summit and lawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones
of dawn!*

It would be easy to fill many pages with illustrations of Tennyson's extraordinary vividness of perception and truthfulness of description in regard to nature. He excels, first of all, in delicate pre-Raphaelite work,—the painting of the flowers in the meadow, the buds on the trees, the movements of waves and streams, the birds at rest and on the wing. Looking at the water, he sees the

*Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.*

[*The Lady of Shalott.*]

With a single touch he gives the aspect of the mill stream:—

*The sleepy pool above the dam,
The pool beneath it never still.*

[*The Miller's Daughter.*]

INTRODUCTION

He shows us

a shoal

*Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower.*

[*Geraint and Enid.*]

He makes us see

the waterfall

*Which ever sounds and shines,
A pillar of white light upon the wall
Of purple cliffs, aloof descried.*

[*Ode to Memory.*]

He makes us hear, through the nearer voice of the
stream,

*The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance,*

[*Geraint and Enid.*]

or

*The scream of a madden'd beach dragg'd down
by the wave.*

[*Maud.*]

Does he speak of trees? He knows the difference
between the poplars'

noise of falling showers,

[*Elaine.*]

and

The dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk,

[*Maud.*]

INTRODUCTION

and the voice of the cedar,

*sighing for Lebanon,
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East.*

[Maud.]

He sees how

A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime,

[Maud.]

and how the chestnut-buds begin

*To spread into the perfect fan
Above the teeming ground.*

[Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere.]

He has watched the hunting-dog in its restless sleep,—

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams,—

[Locksley Hall.]

and noted how the lonely heron, at sundown,

*forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool.*

[Gareth and Lynette.]

There is a line in *In Memoriam*,—

Flits by the sea-blue bird of March,—

which Tennyson meant to describe the kingfisher. A friend criticised it and said that some other bird must have been intended, because “the kingfisher shoots by, flashes by, but never flits.” But, in fact, to *flit*, which means “to move lightly and swiftly,” is precisely the word for the motion of this bird, as it darts along the stream with even wing-strokes, shifting its

INTRODUCTION

place from one post to another. Tennyson gives both the colour and the flight of the kingfisher with absolute precision.

But it is not only in this pre-Raphaelite work that his extraordinary skill is shown. He has also the power of rendering vague, wide landscapes, under the menacing shadow of a coming storm, in the calm of an autumnal morning, or in the golden light of sunset. Almost always such landscapes are coloured by the prevailing emotion or sentiment of the poem. Tennyson holds with Coleridge that much of what we see in nature is the reflection of our own life, our inmost feelings:—

“Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud.”

In “The Gardener’s Daughter,” Tennyson describes the wedding-garment:—

*All the land in flowery squares,
Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud
Drew downward; but all else of heaven was pure
Up to the sun, and May from verge to verge,
And May with me from head to heel.*

But in “Guinevere,” it is the shroud:—

*For all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.*

3. The wide range of human sympathy in Tennyson’s work is most remarkable. The symbolic poem, “Merlin and The Gleam” (p. 258), describes his po-

INTRODUCTION

etic life. Following the Gleam,—“the higher poetic imagination,”—he passes from fairy-land into the real world and interprets the characters and conflicts, the labours and longings, of all sorts and conditions of men. He speaks for childhood in “The May Queen” and “In the Children’s Hospital”; for motherhood in “Rizpah” and “Demeter”; for seamen in “The Revenge” and “Columbus” and “The Voyage of Mael-dune” and “Enoch Arden”; for soldiers in “The Charge of the Light Brigade” and “The Charge of the Heavy Brigade” and “The Defence of Lucknow”; for philosophers in “Lucretius” and “The Ancient Sage”; for the half-crazed ascetic in “St. Simeon Stylites,” and for the fearless reformer in “Sir John Oldcastle”; for the painter in “Romney’s Remorse”; for the rustic in the “Northern Farmer”; for religious enthusiasm, active, in “Sir Galahad,” and passive, in “St. Agnes’ Eve”; for peasant life in “Dora,” and for princely life in “The Day Dream”; for lovers of different types in “Maud,” and “Locksley Hall,” and “Aylmer’s Field,” and “Love and Duty,” and “Happy,” and “Ænone,” and “The Lover’s Tale,” and “Lady Clare.”

He is not, it must be admitted, quite as deep, as inward, as searching as Wordsworth is in some of his peasant portraits. There is a revealing touch in “Michael,” in “Margaret,” in “Resolution and Independence,” to which Tennyson rarely, if ever, attains. Nor is there as much individuality and intensity in his pictures as we find in the best of Browning’s *dramatis personæ*, like “Saul” and “Rabbi Ben Ezra,” and “Andrea del Sarto,” and “The Flight of the Duch-

INTRODUCTION

ess." Tennyson brings out in his characters that which is most natural and normal. He does not delight, as Browning does, in discovering the strange, the eccentric. Nor has he Browning's extraordinary acquaintance with the technical details of different arts and trades, and with the singular features of certain epochs of history, like the Renaissance.

But, on the other hand, if Tennyson has less intellectual curiosity in his work, he has more emotional sympathy. His characters are conceived on broader lines; they are more human and typical. Even when he finds his subject in some classic myth, it is the human element that he brings out. This is the thing that moves him. He studies the scene, the period, carefully and closely in order to get the atmosphere of time and place. But these are subordinate. The main interest, for him, lies in the living person into whose place he puts himself and with whose voice he speaks. Thus in "Tithonus" he dwells on the loneliness of one who must "vary from the kindly race of men" since the gift of "cruel immortality" has been conferred upon him. In "Demeter and Persephone" the most beautiful passage is that in which the goddess-mother tells of her yearning for her lost child.

4. Tennyson's work is marked by frequent reference to the scientific discoveries and social movements of his age. Wordsworth's prophetic vision of the time "when the discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed," because these things and the relations under which they are contemplated will be so familiarized that we shall see

INTRODUCTION

that they are "parts of our life as enjoying and suffering beings," — this prediction of the advent of science, transfigured by poetry, as "a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man," was fulfilled, at least in part, in the poetry of Tennyson.

In "The Two Voices" Tennyson alludes to modern osteology:—

*Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course, till thou wert also man.*

In the twenty-first section of *In Memoriam* he probably alludes to the discovery of the satellite of Neptune:—

*'When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon.'*

In the twenty-fourth section he speaks of sun-spots:—

*The very source and fount of Day
Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.*

In the thirty-fifth section he alludes to the process of denudation:—

*The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be.*

The nebular hypothesis of Laplace and the theory of evolution are conceived and expressed with wonderful imaginative power in the one hundred and eighteenth section. In the fourth section a subtle fact

INTRODUCTION

of physical science is translated into an image of poetic beauty:—

*Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost!*

“Locksley Hall” is full of echoes of the scientific inventions and the social hopes of the mid-century. In “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After” the old man speaks, with disenchanting spirit, of the failure of many of these hopes and the small value of many of these inventions, but he still holds to the vision of human progress guided by a divine, unseen Power:—

*When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier,—all for each and each for all?*

*All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love,
and Truth;*

All the millions one at length with all the visions of my youth?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue—

I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?

*Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,*

*Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.*

INTRODUCTION

5. As in its form, so in its spirit, the poetry of Tennyson is marked by a constant and controlling sense of law and order. He conceives the universe under the sway of great laws, physical and moral, which are in themselves harmonious and beautiful, as well as universal. Disorder, discord, disaster, come from the violation of these laws. Beauty lies not in contrast but in concord. The noblest character is not that in which a single faculty or passion is raised to the highest pitch, but that in which the balance of the powers is kept, and the life unfolds itself in a well-rounded fulness:—

*That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.*

Such is the character which is drawn from memory in the description of Arthur Hallam in *In Memoriam*; and from imagination in the picture of King Arthur in the *Idylls*.

Tennyson belongs in the opposite camp from the poets of revolt. To him such a vision of the swift emancipation of society as Shelley gives in "Prometheus Unbound," or "The Revolt of Islam," was not merely impossible; it was wildly absurd, a dangerous dream. His faith in the advance of mankind rested on two bases; first, his intuitive belief in the benevolence of the general order of the universe:—

*Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill:—*

and second, his practical confidence in the success—

INTRODUCTION

or at least in the immediate usefulness — of the efforts of men to make the world around them better little by little. Evolution, not revolution, was his watch-word.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
is his cry in the first "Locksley Hall"; and in the second he says,

*Follow Light, and do the Right — for man can half-control his doom —
Till you see the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.*

In the patriotic poems we find that Tennyson's love of country is sane, sober, steadfast, thoughtful. He dislikes the "blind hysterics of the Celt," and fears the red "fool-fury of the Seine." He praises England as

*A land of settled government,
A land of old and just renown,
Where freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.*

His favourite national heroes are of the Anglo-Saxon type, sturdy, resolute, self-contained, following the path of duty. He rejoices not only in the service which England has rendered to the cause of law-encircled liberty, but in the way in which she has rendered it:—

*Whatever harmonies of law
The growing world assume,
Thy work is thine — The single note
From that deep chord which Hampden smote
Will vibrate to the doom.*

INTRODUCTION

He praises the peaceful reformer as the chief benefactor of his country:—

*Not he that breaks the dams, but he
That thro' the channels of the State
Convoys the people's wish, is great;
His name is pure, his fame is free.*

[Contributed to the *Shakespearean Show-Book*, 1884.]

He is a republican at heart, holding that the Queen's throne must rest

Broad-based upon her people's will,

[*To the Queen.*]

and he does not hesitate to express his confidence in

*our slowly-grown
And crown'd Republic's crowning common-sense.*

[*Epilogue to Idylls of the King.*]

But he has no faith in the unguided and ungoverned mob. He calls Freedom

*Thou loather of the lawless crown
As of the lawless crowd.*

[*Freedom*, 1884.]

It has been said that his poetry shows no trace of sympathy with the struggles of the people to resist tyranny and defend their liberties with the sword. This is not true. In one of his earliest sonnets he speaks with enthusiasm of Poland's fight for freedom, and in one of his latest he hails the same spirit and the same effort in Montenegro. In "The Third of February, 1852," he expresses his indignation at the *coup d'état* by which Louis Napoleon destroyed the

INTRODUCTION

French Republic, and praises the revolutions which overthrew Charles I and James II. He dedicates a sonnet to Victor Hugo, the "stormy voice of France." With the utmost deliberation and distinctness he justifies the cause of the colonies in the American Revolution: once in "England and America in 1782," and again in the ode for the "Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition," 1886.

It has been said that he has no sympathy with the modern idea of the patriotism of humanity,—that his love of his own country hides from him the vision of universal liberty and brotherhood. This is not true. He speaks of it in many places,—in "Locksley Hall," in "Victor Hugo," in "The Making of Man,"—and in the "Ode sung at the Opening of the International Exhibition," 1861, he urges free commerce and peaceful coöperation among the nations:—

*Till each man find his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood,
Breaking their mailed fleets and armed towers,
And ruling by obeying Nature's powers,
And gathering all the fruits of earth and crown'd
with all her flowers.*

It may be, as the Rev. Stopford Brooke says in his book on Tennyson, that this view of things is less "poetic" than that which is presented by the poets of revolt, that it "lowers the note of beauty, of fire, of aspiration, of passion." But after all, it was Tennyson's real view and he could not well deny or conceal it. The important question is whether it is true and just. And that is the first question which a great poet

INTRODUCTION

asks. He does not lend himself to the proclamation of follies and falsehoods, however fiery, merely for the sake of being more "poetic."

In Tennyson's love poems, while there is often an intensity of passion, there is also a singular purity of feeling, a sense of reverence for the mystery of love, and a profound loyalty to the laws which it is bound to obey in a harmonious and well-ordered world. True, he takes the romantic, rather than the classical, attitude towards love. It comes secretly, suddenly, by inexplicable ways. It is irresistible, absorbing, the strongest as well as the most precious thing in the world. But he does not therefore hold that it is a thing apart from the rest of life, exempt, uncontrollable, lawless. On the contrary, it should be, in its perfection, at once the inspiration and the consummation of all that is best in life. In love, truth and honour and fidelity and courage and unselfishness should come to flower.

There is none of the iridescence of decadent erotomania in Tennyson's love poetry. The fatal shame of that morbid and consuming fever of the flesh is touched in the description of the madness of Lucretius, in "Balin and Balan," and in "Merlin and Vivien"; but it is done in a way that reveals the essential hatefulness of lubricity.

There is no lack of warmth and bright colour in the poems which speak of true love; but it is the glow of health instead of the hectic flush of disease; not the sickly hues that mask the surface of decay, but the livelier iris that the spring-time brings to the neck of the burnished dove.

INTRODUCTION

He does not fail to see the tragedies of love. There is the desperate ballad of "Oriana," the sombre story of "Aylmer's Field," the picture of the forsaken Mariana in her moated grange, the pathetic idyll of Elaine who died for love of Lancelot. But the tragic element in these poems comes from the thwarting of love by circumstance, not from anything shameful or lawless in the passion itself.

In "The Gardener's Daughter" the story of a pure and simple love is told with a clean rapture that seems to make earth and sky glow with new beauty, and with a reticence that speaks not of shallow feeling, but of reverent emotion, refusing to fling open

the doors that bar

The secret bridal chambers of the heart.

In *The Princess*, at the end, triumphant love rises to the height of prophecy, foretelling the harmony of manhood and womanhood in the world's great weddings:—

*'Dear, but let us type them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life.'*

There are two of Tennyson's poems in which the subject of love is treated in very different ways, but

INTRODUCTION

with an equally close and evident relation to the sense of harmony and law which pervades his poetry. In one of them, it seems to me, the treatment is wonderfully successful; the poet makes good his design. In the other, I think, he comes a little short of it and leaves us unsatisfied and questioning.

Maud is among the most purely impassioned presentations of a love-story since Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It not only tells in music the growth of a deep, strong, absorbing love, victorious over obstacles, but it shows the redeeming, ennobling power of such a passion, which leads the selfish hero out of his bitterness and narrowness and makes him able at the last to say,

*Comfort her, comfort her, all things good,
While I am over the sea!*

*Let me and my passionate love go by,
But speak to her all things holy and high,
Whatever happen to me!*

*Me and my harmful love go by;
But come to her waking, find her asleep,
Powers of the height, Powers of the deep,
And comfort her tho' I die.*

The tragedy of the poem is wrought not by love, but by another passion, lawless, discordant, uncontrolled, — the passion of proud hatred which brings about the quarrel with Maud's brother, the fatal duel, her death, the exile and madness of her lover. But the poem does not end in darkness, after all, for he awakes again to "the better mind," and the love whose earthly consummation his own folly has marred abides with him

INTRODUCTION

as the inspiration of a nobler life. The hero may be wrong in thinking that the Crimean War is to be a blessing to England and to the world. But he is surely right in saying,

It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill.

In the *Idylls of the King* there are two main threads of love running through the many-figured tapestry: Arthur's love for Guinevere, loyal, royal, but somewhat cold and ineffectual: Guinevere's love for Lancelot, disloyal and untrue, but warm and potent. It is the secret influence of this lawless passion, infecting the court, that breaks up the Round Table, and brings the kingdom to ruin and the King to his defeat. In "Guinevere" Tennyson departs from the story as it is told by Malory and introduces a scene entirely of his own invention: the last interview between Arthur, on his way to "that great battle in the west," and the fallen Queen, hiding in the convent at Almesbury. It is a very noble scene; noble in its setting in the moon-swathed pallor of the dead winter night; noble in its austere splendour of high diction and slow-moving verse, intense with solemn passion, bare to the heart; noble in its conception of the King's god-like forgiveness and of Guinevere's remorse and agony of shame, too late to countervail the harm that she had done on earth, though not too late to win the heavenly pardon. All that Arthur says of the evil wrought by unlawful and reckless love is true:—

*The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws.*

INTRODUCTION

All that he says of the crime that it would be to condone the Queen's sin, for the sake of prudence and peace, reseating her in her place of light,

The mockery of my people and their bane,

is also true, though it seems at the moment a little too much like preaching. But there is one thing lacking,—one thing that is necessary to make the scene altogether convincing: some trace of human sympathy in Arthur's "vast pity," some consciousness of fault or failure on his part in not giving Guinevere all that her nature needed to guard her from the temptations of a more vivid though a lower passion. Splendid as his words of pardon are, and piercingly pathetic as is that last farewell of love, still loyal though defrauded; yet he does not quite win us. He is more god-like than it becomes a man to be. He is too sure that he has never erred, too conscious that he is above weakness or reproach. We remember the lonely Lancelot in his desolate castle; we think of his courtesy, his devotion, his splendid courage, his winning tenderness, his ardour, the unwavering passion by force of which

*His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.*

Was it wonder that Guinevere, seeing the King absorbed in affairs of state, remote, abstracted, inaccessible, yielded to this nearer and more intimate joy? Sin it was: shame it was: that Tennyson makes us see clearly. But how could it have been otherwise? Was not the breaking of the law the revenge that

INTRODUCTION

nature herself took for a need unsatisfied, a harmony uncompleted and overlooked? This is the question that remains unanswered at the close of the *Idylls of the King*. And therefore I think the poem unsatisfactory in its treatment of love.

But though Tennyson avoids this question, and lets Lancelot slip out of the poem at last without a word, disappearing like a shadow, he never falters in his allegiance to his main principle,—the supremacy of law and order. This indeed is the central theme of the epic: the right of soul to rule over sense and the ruin that comes when the relation is reversed. The poem ends tragically. But above the wreck of a great human design the poet sees the vision of a God who “fulfils Himself in many ways”; and after earth’s confusions and defeats he sees the true-hearted King enthroned in the spiritual city and the repentant Queen passing

To where beyond these voices there is peace.

6. A religious spirit pervades and marks the poetry of Tennyson. His view of the world and of human life—his view even of the smallest flower that blooms in the world—is illumined through and through by his faith in the Divine presence and goodness and power. This faith was not always serene and untroubled. It was won after a hard conflict with doubt and despondency, the traces of which may be seen in such poems as “The Two Voices” and “The Vision of Sin.” But the issue was never really in danger. He was not a doubter seeking to win a faith. He was a believer defending himself against misgivings, fighting to hold

INTRODUCTION

fast that which he felt to be essential to his life. The success of his struggle is recorded in *In Memoriam*, which rises through suffering and perplexity to a lofty and unshaken trust in

*The truths that never can be proved,
Until we close with all we loved
And all we flow from, soul in soul.*

It is not difficult to trace in his religious poems of this period the influence of the theology of the Rev. F. D. Maurice, who was one of his closest friends. The truths which Maurice presented most frequently, such as the immanence of God in nature, man's filial relation to Him, the reality of human brotherhood, the final victory of Love; the difficulties which he recognized in connection with these truths, such as the disorders and conflicts in nature, the apparent reckless waste of life, the sins and "miseries of mankind; and the way in which he met and overcame these difficulties, not by abstract reasoning, nor by a reference to authority, but by an appeal to the moral and spiritual necessities and intuitions of the human heart,—all these are presented in Tennyson's poetry.

In later life there seems to have been a recurrence of questionings, shown in such poems as "Despair," "De Profundis," "The Ancient Sage," "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," "Vastness," "By an Evolutionist." But this was not so much a conflict arising from within, as a protest against the tendencies of what he called "a terrible age of unfaith," an effort to maintain the rights of the spirit against scientific materialism. Later still the serene, triumphant mood

INTRODUCTION

of the poem to *In Memoriam* was repeated in "Crossing the Bar," "Silent Voices," "Faith," "The Death of the Duke of Clarence," and he reposed upon

*that Love which is and was
My Father and my Brother and my God.*

In spite of his declared unwillingness to formulate his creed, arising partly from his conviction that humility was the right intellectual attitude in the presence of the great mysteries, and partly from the feeling that men would not understand him if he tried to put his belief into definite forms, it is by no means impossible to discover in his poetry certain clear and vivid visions of religious truths from which his poetic life drew strength and beauty. Three of these truths stand out distinct and dominant.

The first is the real, personal, conscious life of God. "Take that away," said he, "and you take away the backbone of the Universe." Tennyson is not a theological poet like Milton or Cowper, nor even like Wordsworth or Browning. But hardly anything that he has written could have been written as it is, but for his underlying faith that God lives, and knows, and loves. This faith is clearly expressed in "The Higher Pantheism." It is not really pantheism at all, for while the natural world is regarded as "the Vision of Him who reigns," it is also the sign and symbol that the human soul is distinct from Him. All things reveal Him, but man's sight and hearing are darkened so that he cannot understand the revelation. God is in all things: He is with all souls, but He is not to be identified with the human spirit, which has "power

INTRODUCTION

to feel 'I am I.' Fellowship with Him is to be sought and found in prayer.

*Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit
can meet—*

*Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and
feet.*

This confidence in the reality of prayer is expressed in many of Tennyson's deeper poems. We find it in "Enoch Arden," in "St. Agnes' Eve," in "The Palace of Art," in *In Memoriam*, in "The Two Voices," in the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," in "Doubt and Prayer," in "Lancelot and Elaine," in "Guinevere," in "Morte d'Arthur":—

*Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.*

Tennyson's optimism was dependent upon his faith in a God to whom men can pray. It was not a matter of temperament, like Browning's optimism. Tennyson inherited from his father a strain of gloomy blood, a tendency to despondency. He escaped from it only by learning to trust in the Divine wisdom and love:—

*That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.*

The second truth which stands out in the poetry of Tennyson is the freedom of the human will. This is a mystery:—

Our wills are ours we know not how.

INTRODUCTION

It is also an indubitable reality:—

*This main miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thine own act and on the world.*

[*De Profundis.*]

The existence of such liberty of action in created beings implies a self-limitation on the part of God, but it is essential to moral responsibility and vital communion with the Divine. If man is only a "magnetic mockery," a "cunning cast in clay," he has no real life of his own, nothing to give back to God. The joy of effort and the glory of virtue depend upon freedom. This is the meaning of Enid's Song, in "The Marriage of Geraint":—

For man is man and master of his fate.

This is the central thought of that strong little poem called "Will":—

*O well for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong.*

This is the theme of the last lyric of *In Memoriam*:—

*O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure.*

The third truth which is vitally embodied in Tennyson's poems is the assurance of Life after Death. This he believed in most deeply and uttered most passionately. He felt that the present life would be poor and pitiful, almost worthless and unendurable, without

INTRODUCTION

the hope of Immortality. The rolling lines of "Vastness" are a long protest against the cold doctrine that death ends all. "Wages" is a swift utterance of the hope which inspires Virtue:—

Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

The second "Locksley Hall," the Wellington Ode, "The May Queen," "Guinevere," "Enoch Arden," "The Deserted House," "The Poet's Song," "Happy," the lines on "The Death of the Duke of Clarence," "Silent Voices,"—it is not possible to enumerate the poems in which the clear faith in a future life finds expression. *In Memoriam* is altogether filled and glorified with the passion of Immortality: not a vague and impersonal survival in other forms, but a continuance of individual life beyond the grave:—

*Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside,
And I shall know him when we meet.*

It is a vain and idle thing for men who are themselves indifferent to the spiritual aspects of life, or perhaps hostile and contemptuous toward a religious view of the universe, to declare that there is no place in poetry for such subjects, and to sneer at every poem in which they appear as "a disguised sermon." No doubt there are many alleged poems dealing with religion which deserve no better name: versified expositions of theological dogma: creeds in metre: moral admonitions tagged with rhyme; a weariness to the flesh. But so there are alleged poems which deal with the facts of the visible world and of human history

INTRODUCTION

in the same dreary, sapless manner: catalogues of miscellaneous trifles, records of unilluminating experiences, confused impressions of the insignificant, and unmelodious rhapsodies on subjects as empty as an old tin-can in a vacant city lot.

It is not the presence of religion that spoils religious verse. It is the absence of poetry. Poetry is vision. Poetry is music. Poetry is an overflow of wonder and joy, pity and love. Truths which lie in the spiritual realm have as much power to stir the heart to this overflow as truths which lie in the physical realm. There is an imaginative vision of the meaning of religious truths—a swift flashing of their significance upon the inward eye, a sudden thrilling of their music through the inward ear—which is as full of beauty and wonder, as potent to “surprise us by a fine excess,” as any possible human experience. It is poetic in the very highest sense of the word. There may be poetry, and very admirable poetry, without it. But the poet who never sees it, nor sings of it, in whose verse there is no ray of light, no note of music, from beyond the range of the five senses, has never reached the heights nor sounded the depths of human nature.

The influence of Tennyson's poetry in revealing the reality and beauty of three great religious beliefs—the existence of the Divine Spirit who is our Father, the freedom of the human will, and the personal life after death—was deep, far-reaching, and potent. He stood among the doubts and conflicts of the last century as a witness for the things that are invisible and eternal: the things that men may forget if they will, but if they forget them their hearts wither, and the

INTRODUCTION

springs of inspiration run dry. His rich and musical verse brought a message of new cheer and courage to the young men of that questioning age who were fain to defend their spiritual heritage against the invasions of a hard and fierce materialism. In the vital conflict for the enlargement of faith to embrace the real discoveries of science, he stood forth as a leader. In the great silent reaction from the solitude of a consistent skepticism, his voice was a clear-toned bell calling the unwilling exiles of belief to turn again and follow the guidance of the Spirit. No new arguments were his. But the sweetness of a poet's persuasion, the splendour of high truths embodied in a poet's imagination, the convincing beauty of noble beliefs set forth in clear dream and solemn vision,—these were the powers that he employed.

In using them he served not only his own day and generation but ours and those that are to come.

I

MELODIES AND PICTURES

CLARIBEL

A MELODY

I

WHERE Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall:
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

II

At eve the beetle boometh
Athwart the thicket lone:
At noon the wild bee hummeth
About the moss'd headstone:
At midnight the moon cometh,
And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
The callow throstle lispeth,
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
The babbling runnel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

SONG

I

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:
 To himself he talks;
For at eventide, listening earnestly,
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh
 In the walks;
 Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
Of the mouldering flowers:
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

II

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
 An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
 And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose.
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

THE THROSTLE

THE THROSTLE

‘SUMMER is coming, summer is coming.

I know it, I know it, I know it.

Light again, leaf again, life again, love again,’

Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.

Last year you sang it as gladly.

‘New, new, new, new!’ Is it then *so* new

That you should carol so madly?

‘Love again, song again, nest again, young again,’

Never a prophet so crazy!

And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend,

See, there is hardly a daisy.

‘Here again, here, here, here, happy year!’

O warble unchidden, unbidden!

Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,

And all the winters are hidden.

FAR—FAR—AWAY

(FOR MUSIC)

WHAT sight so lured him thro’ the fields he knew
As where earth’s green stole into heaven’s own hue,

Far—far—away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells

Far—far—away.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain or joy,
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,
Far—far—away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death
Far—far—away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of Birth,
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far—far—away?

What charm in words, a charm no words could give?
O dying words, can Music make you live
Far—far—away?

“MOVE EASTWARD, HAPPY EARTH”

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
Yon orange sunset waning slow:
From fringes of the faded eve,
O, happy planet, eastward go;
Till over thy dark shoulder glow
Thy silver sister-world, and rise
To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
Dip forward under starry light,
And move me to my marriage-morn,
And round again to happy night.

THE SNOWDROP

THE SNOWDROP

MANY, many welcomes
February fair-maid,
Ever as of old time,
Solitary firstling,
Coming in the cold time,
Prophet of the gay time,
Prophet of the May time,
Prophet of the roses,
Many, many welcomes
February fair-maid!

A FAREWELL

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver:
No more by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea,
A rivulet, then a river:
No where by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree,
And here thine aspen shiver;
And here by thee will hum the bee,
For ever and for ever.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

A thousand suns will stream on thee
A thousand moons will quiver;
But not by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

SONGS FROM THE PRINCESS

∴

The Little Grave

As thro' the land at eve we went,
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,
We fell out, my wife and I,
O we fell out I know not why,
And kiss'd again with tears.
And blessings on the falling out
That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears!
For when we came where lies the child
We lost in other years,
There above the little grave,
O there above the little grave,
We kiss'd again with tears.

"Sweet and low"

SWEET and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!

SONGS FROM THE PRINCESS

Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
 Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon:
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

The Bugle Song

THE splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

“Tears, idle tears”

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

SONGS FROM THE PRINCESS

The Swallow's Message

O SWALLOW, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

The Battle

THY voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands:
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

"Sweet my child, I live for thee"

HOME they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:
All her maidens, watching, said,
'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

THE SONG OF THE BROOK

"Ask me no more"

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the
shape

With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?

I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:

Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!

Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd:

I strove against the stream and all in vain:

Let the great river take me to the main:

No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;

Ask me no more.

SONGS FROM OTHER POEMS

The Song of the Brook

(FROM THE BROOK)

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,

I make a sudden sally,

And sparkle out among the fern,

To bicker down a valley.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddyng bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel

CRADLE-SONG

With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,
And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

Cradle-Song

(FROM SEA DREAMS)

WHAT does little birdie say
In her nest at peep of day?

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Let me fly, says little birdie,
Mother, let me fly away.
Birdie, rest a little longer,
Till the little wings are stronger.
So she rests a little longer,
Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,
In her bed at peep of day?
Baby says, like little birdie,
Let me rise and fly away.
Baby, sleep a little longer,
Till the little limbs are stronger.
If she sleeps a little longer,
Baby too shall fly away.

Mother-Song

(FROM ROMNEY'S REMORSE)

BEAT upon mine, little heart! beat, beat!
Beat upon mine! you are mine, my sweet!
All mine from your pretty blue eyes to your feet,
My sweet.

Sleep, little blossom, my honey, my bliss!
For I give you this, and I give you this!
And I blind your pretty blue eyes with a kiss!
Sleep!

Father and Mother will watch you grow,
And gather the roses whenever they blow,
And find the white heather wherever you go,
My sweet.

ENID'S SONG

Enid's Song

(FROM THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT)

TURN, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

Vivien's Song

(FROM MERLIN AND VIVIEN)

IN Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

The little rift within the lover's lute
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

It is not worth the keeping: let it go:
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all.

Elaine's Song

(FROM LANCELOT AND ELAINE)

SWEET is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.

Milking-Song

(FROM QUEEN MARY, ACT III, SCENE 5)

SHAME upon you, Robin,
Shame upon you now!
Kiss me would you? with my hands
Milking the cow?

THE QUEEN'S SONG

Daisies grow again,
Kingcups blow again,
And you came and kiss'd me milking the cow.

Robin came behind me,
Kiss'd me well I vow;
Cuff him could I? with my hands
Milking the cow?
Swallows fly again,
Cuckoos cry again,
And you came and kiss'd me milking the cow.

Come, Robin, Robin,
Come and kiss me now;
Help it can I? with my hands
Milking the cow?
Ringdoves coo again,
All things woo again.
Come behind and kiss me milking the cow!

The Queen's Song

(FROM QUEEN MARY, ACT V, SCENE 2)

HAPLESS doom of woman happy in betrothing!
Beauty passes like a breath and love is lost in loathing:
Low, my lute; speak low, my lute, but say the world
is nothing—

Low, lute, low!

Love will hover round the flowers when they first
awaken;

Love will fly the fallen leaf, and not be overtaken;

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Low, my lute! oh low, my lute! we fade and are forsaken—

Low, dear lute, low!

Duet of Henry and Rosamund

(FROM BECKET, ACT II, SCENE 1)

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead?
2. No; but the voice of the deep as it hollows the cliffs of the land.
1. Is there a voice coming up with the voice of the deep from the strand,
One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering red?
2. Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.
1. Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled?
2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.
1. Keep him away from the lone little isle. Let us be, let us be.
2. Nay, let him make it his own, let him reign in it—
—he, it is he,
Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.

ODE TO MEMORY

ODE TO MEMORY

ADDRESSED TO ———

I

THOU who stealest fire,
From the fountains of the past,
To glorify the present; oh, haste,
Visit my low desire!
Strengthen me, enlighten me!
I faint in this obscurity,
Thou dewy dawn of memory.

II

Come not as thou camest of late,
Flinging the gloom of yesternight
On the white day; but robed in soften'd light
Of orient state.
Whilome thou camest with the morning mist,
Even as a maid, whose stately brow
The dew-impearled winds of dawn have kiss'd,
When she, as thou,
Stays on her floating locks the lovely freight
Of overflowing blooms, and earliest shoots
Of orient green, giving safe pledge of fruits,
Which in wintertide shall star
The black earth with brilliance rare.

III

Whilome thou camest with the morning mist,
And with the evening cloud,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Showering thy gleaned wealth into my open breast
(Those peerless flowers which in the rudest wind
 Never grow sere,
When rooted in the garden of the mind,
 Because they are the earliest of the year).
 Nor was the night thy shroud.
In sweet dreams softer than unbroken rest
Thou leddest by the hand thine infant Hope.
The eddying of her garments caught from thee
The light of thy great presence; and the cope
 Of the half-attain'd futurity,
 Tho' deep not fathomless,
Was cloven with the million stars which tremble
O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy.
Small thought was there of life's distress;
For sure she deem'd no mist of earth could dull
Those spirit-thrilling eyes so keen and beautiful:
Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,
Listening the lordly music flowing from
 The illimitable years.
 O strengthen me, enlighten me!
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

IV

Come forth, I charge thee, arise,
Thou of the many tongues, the myriad eyes!
Thou comest not with shows of flaunting vines
 Unto mine inner eye,
 Divinest Memory!
Thou wert not nursed by the waterfall

ODE TO MEMORY

Which ever sounds and shines
A pillar of white light upon the wall
Of purple cliffs, aloof descried:
Come from the woods that belt the gray hill-side,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
 In every elbow and turn,
The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland,
 O! hither lead thy feet!
Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat
Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds,
 Upon the ridged wolds,
When the first matin-song hath waken'd loud
Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
What time the amber morn
Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung cloud.

v

Large dowries doth the raptured eye
To the young spirit present
When first she is wed;
 And like a bride of old
In triumph led,
 With music and sweet showers
Of festal flowers,
Unto the dwelling she must sway.
Well hast thou done, great artist Memory,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

In setting round thy first experiment
With royal frame-work of wrought gold;
Needs must thou dearly love thy first essay,
And foremost in thy various gallery
Place it, where sweetest sunlight falls
Upon the storied walls;
For the discovery
And newness of thine art so pleased thee,
That all which thou hast drawn of fairest
Or boldest since, but lightly weighs
With thee unto the love thou bearest
The first-born of thy genius. Artist-like,
Ever retiring thou dost gaze
On the prime labour of thine early days:
No matter what the sketch might be;
Whether the high field on the bushless Pike,
Or even a sand-built ridge
Of heaped hills that mound the sea,
Overblown with murmurs harsh,
Or even a lowly cottage whence we see
Stretch'd wide and wild the waste enormous marsh,
Where from the frequent bridge,
Like emblems of infinity,
The trenched waters run from sky to sky;
Or a garden bower'd close
With plaited alleys of the trailing rose,
Long alleys falling down to twilight grotts,
Or opening upon level plots
Of crowned lilies, standing near
Purple-spiked lavender:
Whither in after life retired

THE BEGGAR MAID

From brawling storms,
From weary wind,
With youthful fancy re-inspired,
 We may hold converse with all forms
Of the many-sided mind,
And those whom passion hath not blinded,
Subtle-thoughted, myriad-minded.

My friend, with you to live alone,
Were how much better than to own
A crown, a sceptre, and a throne!

O strengthen me, enlighten me!
I faint in this obscurity,
Thou dewy dawn of memory.

THE BEGGAR MAID

HER arms across her breast she laid;
 She was more fair than words can say:
Bare-footed came the beggar maid
 Before the king Cophetua.
In robe and crown the king stepped down,
 To meet and greet her on her way;
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
 'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
 She in her poor attire was seen:
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,
 One her dark hair and lovesome mien.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been:
Cophetua sware a royal oath:
'This beggar maid shall be my queen!'

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

WHEN the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow'd back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling thro'
The low and bloomed foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue:
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering thro' lamplight dim,
And broider'd sofas on each side:
In sooth it was a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

Often, where clear-stemm'd platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moon-lit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.

A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop thro' the star-strown calm,
Until another night in night
I enter'd, from the clearer light,
Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stay'd beneath the dome
Of hollow boughs. — A goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward; and the clear canal
Is rounded to as clear a lake.
From the green rivage many a fall
Of diamond rillets musical,
Thro' little crystal arches low
Down from the central fountain's flow
Fall'n silver-chiming, seemed to shake

MELODIES AND PICTURES

The sparkling flints beneath the prow.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Above thro' many a bowery turn
A walk with vary-colour'd shells
Wander'd engrain'd. On either side
All round about the fragrant marge
From fluted vase, and brazen urn
In order, eastern flowers large,
Some dropping low their crimson bells
Half-closed, and others studded wide
With disks and tiars, fed the time
With odour in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon grove
In closest coverture upsprung,
The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulbul as he sung;
Not he: but something which possess'd
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,
Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumber'd: the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwoo'd of summer wind:

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

A sudden splendour from behind
Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,
Grew darker from that under-flame:
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came
Upon me, as in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
Entranced with that place and time,
So worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Thence thro' the garden I was drawn—
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

With dazed vision unawares
From the long alley's latticed shade
Emerged, I came upon the great
Pavilion of the Caliphat.

Right to the carven cedarn doors,
Flung inward over spangled floors,
Broad-based flights of marble stairs
Ran up with golden balustrade,
 After the fashion of the time,
 And humour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
As with the quintessence of flame,
A million tapers flaring bright
From twisted silvers look'd to shame
The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
Upon the mooned domes aloof
In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
Hundreds of crescents on the roof
 Of night new-risen, that marvellous time
 To celebrate the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancedly
Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
Serene with argent-lidded eyes
Amorous, and lashes like to rays
Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
Tressed with redolent ebony,
In many a dark delicious curl,
Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;

THE DAISY

The sweetest lady of the time,
Well worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side,
Pure silver, underpropt a rich
Throne of the massive ore, from which
Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
Engarlanded and diaper'd
With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd
With merriment of kingly pride,
Sole star of all that place and time,
I saw him—in his golden prime,
THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.

THE DAISY

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine;
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbia show'd
In ruin, by the mountain road;
How like a gem, beneath, the city
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
The torrent vineyard streaming fell

MELODIES AND PICTURES

To meet the sun and sunny waters,
That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;
Where, here and there, on sandy beaches
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
Now watching high on mountain cornice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim;
Till, in a narrow street and dim,
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
Not the clipt palm of which they boast;
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

THE DAISY

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours;
What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,
Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we crost the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain;
Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma;
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles;
Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
The height, the space, the gloom, the glory!
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
To Como; shower and storm and blast
Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded; and how we past

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,
The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
As on the Lariano crept
To that fair port below the castle
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
A cypress in the moonlight shake,
The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
One tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
And up the snowy Splugen drew,
But ere we reach'd the highest summit
I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

EARLY SPRING

It told of England then to me,
And now it tells of Italy.

O love, we two shall go no longer
To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold
Whose crying is a cry for gold:

Yet here to-night in this dark city,
When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,
This nurseling of another sky

Still in the little book you lent me,
And where you tenderly laid it by:

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
The gloom that saddens Heaven and Earth,
The bitter east, the misty summer
And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
My fancy fled to the South again.

EARLY SPRING

I

ONCE more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And domes the red-plow'd hills

MELODIES AND PICTURES

With loving blue;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The throistles too.

II

Opens a door in Heaven;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass,
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

III

Before them fleets the shower,
And burst the buds,
And shine the level lands,
And flash the floods;
The stars are from their hands
Flung thro' the woods,

IV

The woods with living airs
How softly fann'd,
Light airs from where the deep,
All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
Heard by the land.

V

O follow, leaping blood,
The season's lure!

EARLY SPRING

O heart, look down and up
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snowdrops, pure!

VI

Past, Future glimpse and fade
Thro' some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
Some far blue fell,
And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell!

VII

Till at thy chuckled note,
Thou twinkling bird,
The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirr'd,
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.

VIII

For now the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And thaws the cold, and fills
The flower with dew;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The poets too.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

THE DYING SWAN

I

THE plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
 An under-roof of doleful gray.
With an inner voice the river ran,
Adown it floated a dying swan,
 And loudly did lament.
 It was the middle of the day.
Ever the weary wind went on,
 And took the reed-tops as it went.

II

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
 One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh;
Above in the wind was the swallow,
 Chasing itself at its own wild will,
 And far thro' the marish green and still
 The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.

III

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow: at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full and clear;

THE EAGLE

And floating about the under-sky,
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole
Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear;
But anon her awful jubilant voice,
With a music strange and manifold,
Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold;
As when a mighty people rejoice
With shawms, and with cymbals, and harps of gold,
And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd
Thro' the open gates of the city afar,
To the shepherd who watcheth the evening star.
And the creeping mosses and clambering weeds,
And the willow-branches hoar and dank,
And the wavy swell of the souging reeds,
And the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,
And the silvery marish-flowers that throng
The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song.

THE EAGLE

FRAGMENT

HE clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

MELODIES AND PICTURES

THE OAK

LIVE thy Life,
Young and old,
Like yon oak,
Bright in spring,
Living gold;

Summer-rich
Then; and then
Autumn-changed,
Soberer-hued
Gold again.

All his leaves
Fall'n at length,
Look, he stands,
Trunk and bough,
Naked strength.

THE SEA-FAIRIES

SLOW sail'd the weary mariners and saw,
Betwixt the green brink and the running foam,
Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms prest
To little harps of gold; and while they mused
Whispering to each other half in fear,
Shrill music reach'd them on the middle sea.

Whither away, whither away, whither away? fly no
more.

THE SEA-FAIRIES

Whither away from the high green field, and the
happy blossoming shore?

Day and night to the billow the fountain calls:

Down shower the gambolling waterfalls

From wandering over the lea:

Out of the live-green heart of the dells

They freshen the silvery-crimson shells,

And thick with white bells the clover-hill swells

High over the full-toned sea:

O hither, come hither and furl your sails,

Come hither to me and to me:

Hither, come hither and frolic and play;

Here it is only the mew that wails;

We will sing to you all the day:

Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,

For here are the blissful downs and dales,

And merrily, merrily carol the gales,

And the spangle dances in bight and bay,

And the rainbow forms and flies on the land

Over the islands free;

And the rainbow lives in the curve of the sand;

Hither, come hither and see;

And the rainbow hangs on the poising wave,

And sweet is the colour of cove and cave,

And sweet shall your welcome be:

O hither, come hither, and be our lords,

For merry brides are we:

We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak sweet words:

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten

With pleasure and love and jubilee:

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten

MELODIES AND PICTURES

When the sharp clear twang of the golden chords
Runs up the ridged sea.
Who can light on as happy a shore
All the world o'er, all the world o'er?
Whither away? listen and stay: mariner, mariner, fly
no more.

THE LOTOS-EATERS

'COURAGE!' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down

THE LOTOS-EATERS

Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, 'We will return no more;'
And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.'

CHORIC SONG

I

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentler on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful
skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
'There is no joy but calm!'
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon

THE LOTOS-EATERS

Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease: '
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful
ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!

MELODIES AND PICTURES

To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There is confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,

THE LOTOS-EATERS

Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the
pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone:
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-
dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge
was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-
fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined

MELODIES AND PICTURES

On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are
hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are
lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleam-
ing world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring
deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of
wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whis-
per'd—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the
shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave
and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

ISABEL

ISABEL

I

EYES not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed
With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
Pure vestal thoughts in the translucent fane
Of her still spirit; locks not wide-dispread,
Madonna-wise on either side her head;
Sweet lips whereon perpetually did reign
The summer calm of golden charity,
Were fixed shadows of thy fixed mood,
Revered Isabel, the crown and head,
The stately flower of female fortitude,
Of perfect wifehood and pure lowlihead.

II

The intuitive decision of a bright
And thorough-edged intellect to part
Error from crime; a prudence to withhold;
The laws of marriage character'd in gold
Upon the blanched tablets of her heart;
A love still burning upward, giving light
To read those laws; an accent very low
In blandishment, but a most silver flow
Of subtle-paced counsel in distress,
Right to the heart and brain, tho' undescried,
Winning its way with extreme gentleness
Thro' all the outworks of suspicious pride;
A courage to endure and to obey;
A hate of gossip parlance, and of sway,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Crown'd Isabel, thro' all her placid life,
The queen of marriage, a most perfect wife.

III

The mellow'd reflex of a winter moon;
A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
Till in its onward current it absorbs
With swifter movement and in purer light
The vexed eddies of its wayward brother:
A leaning and upbearing parasite,
Clothing the stem, which else had fallen quite
With cluster'd flower-bells and ambrosial orbs
Of rich fruit-bunches leaning on each other—
Shadow forth thee:—the world hath not another
(Tho' all her fairest forms are types of thee,
And thou of God in thy great charity)
Of such a finish'd chasten'd purity.

MARIANA

'Mariana in the moated grange.'

Measure for Measure

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,

MARIANA

He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!'

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.

After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!'

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
The cock sung out an hour ere light:
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her: without hope of change,
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.

She only said, 'The day is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!'

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!'

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then, said she, 'I am very dreary,
He will not come,' she said;
She wept, 'I am weary, weary,
Oh God, that I were dead!'

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
'*The Legend of Good Women*,' long ago
Sung by the morning-star of song, who made
His music heard below;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art
Held me above the subject, as strong gales

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho' my heart,
Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In every land
I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient song
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning stars,
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging hoofs;
And I saw crowds in column'd sanctuaries;
And forms that pass'd at windows and on roofs
Of marble palaces;

Corpses across the threshold; heroes tall
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall;
Lances in ambush set;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with heated blasts
That run before the fluttering tongues of fire;
White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and masts,
And ever climbing higher;

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,
And hush'd seraglios.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

So shape chased shape as swift as, when to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self-same way,
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand,
Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove to speak,
As when a great thought strikes along the brain,
And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,
That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town;
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing thought
Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and did creep
Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd, and brought
Into the gulfs of sleep.

At last methought that I had wander'd far
In an old wood: fresh-wash'd in coolest dew
The maiden splendours of the morning star
Shook in the stedfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and lean
Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest
green,
New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey done,
And with dead lips smiled at the twilight plain,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Half-fall'n across the threshold of the sun,
Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,
Not any song of bird or sound of rill;
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine turn'd
Their humid arms festooning tree to tree,
And at the root thro' lush green grasses burn'd
The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I knew
The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drench'd in dew,
Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
Pour'd back into my empty soul and frame
The times when I remember to have been
Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone
Thrill'd thro' mine ears in that unblissful clime,
'Pass freely thro': the wood is all thine own,
Until the end of time.'

At length I saw a lady within call,
Stillter than chisell'd marble, standing there;
A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
And most divinely fair.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

Her loveliness with shame and with surprise
Froze my swift speech: she turning on my face
The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
Spoke slowly in her place.

‘I had great beauty: ask thou not my name:
No one can be more wise than destiny.
Many drew swords and died. Where’er I came
I brought calamity.’

‘No marvel, sovereign lady: in fair field
Myself for such a face had boldly died,’
I answer’d free; and turning I appeal’d
To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,
To her full height her stately stature draws;
‘My youth,’ she said, ‘was blasted with a curse:
This woman was the cause.

‘I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
Which men call’d Aulis in those iron years:
My father held his hand upon his face;
I, blinded with my tears,

‘Still strove to speak: my voice was thick with sighs
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish eyes,
Waiting to see me die.

‘The high masts flicker’d as they lay afloat;
The crowds, the temples, waver’d, and the shore;

MELODIES AND PICTURES

The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat;
Touch'd; and I knew no more.'

Whereto the other with a downward brow:
'I would the white cold heavy-plunging foam,
Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep below,
Then when I left my home.'

Her slow full words sank thro' the silence drear,
As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea:
Sudden I heard a voice that cried, 'Come here,
That I may look on thee.'

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,
One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd;
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,
Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:
'I govern'd men by change, and so I sway'd
All moods. 'T is long since I have seen a man.
Once, like the moon, I made

'The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humour ebb and flow.
I have no men to govern in this wood:
That makes my only woe.

'Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not bend
One will; nor tame and tutor with mine eye
That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prythee, friend,
Where is Mark Antony?

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

‘The man, my lover, with whom I rode sublime
On Fortune’s neck: we sat as God by God:
The Nilus would have risen before his time
And flooded at our nod.

‘We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and lit
Lamps which out-burn’d Canopus. O my life
In Egypt! O the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

‘And the wild kiss, when fresh from war’s alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die!

‘And there he died: and when I heard my name
Sigh’d forth with life I would not brook my fear
Of the other: with a worm I balk’d his fame.
What else was left? look here!’

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polish’d argent of her breast to sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,
Showing the aspick’s bite.)

‘I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found
Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,
A name for ever!—lying robed and crown’d,
Worthy a Roman spouse.’

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance

MELODIES AND PICTURES

From tone to tone, and glided thro' all change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for delight;
Because with sudden motion from the ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest darts;
As once they drew into two burning rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming thro' the lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn.

'The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and soon,
Sound all night long, in falling thro' the dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

'The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams divine:
All night the splinter'd crags that wall the dell
With spires of silver shine.'

As one that museth where broad sunshine laves
The lawn by some cathedral, thro' the door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and tied
To where he stands,—so stood I, when that flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow;

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth: 'Heaven heads the count of
crimes
With that wild oath.' She render'd answer high:
'Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

'Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower; but ere my flower to fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

'My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love
Down to a silent grave.

'And I went mourning, "No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

'Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

‘The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken’d glen,

‘Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

‘When the next moon was roll’d into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall’d my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

‘It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father’s will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

‘Moreover it is written that my race
Hew’d Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth.’ Here her face
Glow’d, as I look’d at her.

She lock’d her lips: she left me where I stood:
‘Glory to God,’ she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

Losing her carol I stood pensively,
As one that from a casement leans his head,
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,
And the old year is dead.

‘Alas! alas!’ a low voice, full of care,
Murmur’d beside me: ‘Turn and look on me:
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.

‘Would I had been some maiden coarse and poor!
O me, that I should ever see the light!
Those dragon eyes of anger’d Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night.’

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and trust:
To whom the Egyptian: ‘Oh, you tamely died!
You should have clung to Fulvia’s waist, and thrust
The dagger thro’ her side.’

With that sharp sound the white dawn’s creeping beams,
Stol’n to my brain, dissolved the mystery
Of folded sleep. The captain of my dreams
Ruled in the eastern sky.

Morn broaden’d on the borders of the dark,
Ere I saw her, who clasp’d in her last trance
Her murder’d father’s head, or Joan of Arc,
A light of ancient France;

Or her who knew that Love can vanquish Death,
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king,

MELODIES AND PICTURES

Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,
Sweet as new buds in Spring.

No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden ore
That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain
Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to strike
Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years,
In yearnings that can never be express
By sighs or groans or tears;

Because all words, tho' cull'd with choicest art,
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

SIR LAUNCELOT AND QUEEN GUINEVERE

A FRAGMENT

LIKE souls that balance joy and pain,
With tears and smiles from heaven again
The maiden Spring upon the plain
Came in a sun-lit fall of rain.
In crystal vapour everywhere

SIR LAUNCELOT AND QUEEN GUINEVERE

Blue isles of heaven laugh'd between,
And far, in forest-deeps unseen,
The topmost elm-tree gather'd green
 From draughts of balmy air.

Sometimes the linnet piped his song:
Sometimes the throstle whistled strong:
Sometimes the sparrowhawk, wheel'd along,
Hush'd all the groves from fear of wrong:
 By grassy capes with fuller sound
In curves the yellowing river ran,
And drooping chestnut-buds began
To spread into the perfect fan,
 Above the teeming ground.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere
Rode thro' the coverts of the deer,
With blissful treble ringing clear.
 She seem'd a part of joyous Spring;
A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
Buckled with golden clasps before;
A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
 Closed in a golden ring.

Now on some twisted ivy-net,
Now by some tinkling rivulet,
In mosses mixt with violet
Her cream-white mule his pastern set:
 And fleetly now she skimm'd the plains
Than she whose elfin prancer springs
By night to eery warblings,

When all the glimmering moorland rings
 With jingling bridle-reins.

As fast she fled thro' sun and shade,
 The happy winds upon her play'd,
 Blowing the ringlet from the braid:
 She look'd so lovely, as she sway'd
 The rein with dainty finger-tips,
 A man had given all other bliss,
 And all his worldly worth for this,
 To waste his whole heart in one kiss
 Upon her perfect lips.

II
BALLADS, IDYLS
AND CHARACTER-PIECES

BALLADS

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

PART I

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.

Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?

BALLADS

Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers 'T is the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot:
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd

BALLADS

To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;

BALLADS

The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

THE MAY QUEEN

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott.'

THE MAY QUEEN

You must wake and call me early, call me early,
 mother dear;
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad
 New-year;
Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest merri-
 est day;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
 Queen o' the May.

There's many a black black eye, they say, but none
 so bright as mine;
There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caro-
 line:
But none so fair as little Alice in all the land they say,
So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
 Queen o' the May.

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never
 wake,

BALLADS

If you do not call me loud when the day begins to
break:

But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and gar-
lands gay,

For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
Queen o' the May.

As I came up the valley whom think ye should I see,
But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-
tree?

He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him
yesterday,

But I'm to be Queen o' the May; mother, I'm to be
Queen o' the May.

He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in
white,

And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of
light.

They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they
say,

For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
Queen o' the May.

They say he's dying all for love, but that can never
be:

They say his heart is breaking, mother—what is that
to me?

There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any summer
day,

And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
Queen o' the May.

THE MAY QUEEN

Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,
And you 'll be there, too, mother, to see me made the
Queen;
For the shepherd lads on every side 'ill come from far
away,
And I 'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I 'm to be
Queen o' the May.

The honeysuckle round the porch has wov'n its wavy
bowers,
And by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet
cuckoo-flowers;
And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in
swamps and hollows gray,
And I 'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I 'm to be
Queen o' the May.

The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the
meadow-grass,
And the happy stars above them seem to brighten as
they pass;
There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the live-
long day,
And I 'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I 'm to be
Queen o' the May.

All the valley, mother, 'ill be fresh and green and still,
And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,
And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily glance
and play,
For I 'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I 'm to be
Queen o' the May.

BALLADS

So you must wake and call me early, call me early,
mother dear,
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad
New-year:
To-morrow 'ill be of all the year the maddest merriest
day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be
Queen o' the May.

NEW-YEAR'S EVE

If you're waking call me early, call me early, mother
dear,
For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year.
It is the last New-year that I shall ever see,
Then you may lay me low i' the mould and think no
more of me.

To-night I saw the sun set: he set and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my
peace of mind;
And the New-year's coming up, mother, but I shall
never see
The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.

Last May we made a crown of flowers: we had a merry
day;
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me
Queen of May;
And we danced about the may-pole and in the hazel
copse,
Till Charles's Wain came out above the tall white
chimney-tops.

THE MAY QUEEN

There's not a flower on all the hills: the frost is on
the pane:

I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again:

I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on
high:

I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

The building rook 'ill caw from the windy tall elm-
tree,

And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,

And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer
o'er the wave,

But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering
grave.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of
mine,

In the early early morning the summer sun 'ill
shine,

Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the
hill,

When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the world
is still.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the
waning light

You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at
night;

When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow
cool

On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush
in the pool.

BALLADS

You 'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the haw-
thorn shade,
And you 'll come sometimes and see me where I am
lowly laid.
I shall not forget you, mother, I shall hear you when
you pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and plea-
sant grass.

I have been wild and wayward, but you 'll forgive me
now;
You 'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere
I go;
Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be wild,
You should not fret for me, mother, you have another
child.

If I can I 'll come again, mother, from out my resting-
place;
Tho' you 'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your
face;
Tho' I cannot speak a word, I shall harken what you say,
And be often, often with you when you think I 'm
far away.

Goodnight, goodnight, when I have said goodnight
for evermore,
And you see me carried out from the threshold of the
door;
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be grow-
ing green:
She 'll be a better child to you than ever I have been.

THE MAY QUEEN

She 'll find my garden-tools upon the granary floor:
Let her take 'em: they are hers: I shall never garden
more:

But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rosebush
that I set

About the parlour-window and the box of mignonette.

Goodnight, sweet mother: call me before the day is
born.

All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn;
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-
year,

So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother
dear.

CONCLUSION

I THOUGHT to pass away before, and yet alive I am;
And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the
lamb.

How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the
year!

To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violet's
here.

O sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the
skies,

And sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that
cannot rise,

And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers
that blow,

And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to
go.

BALLADS

It seem'd so hard at first, mother, to leave the blessed
sun,
And now it seems as hard to stay, and yet His will
be done!
But still I think it can't be long before I find release;
And that good man, the clergyman, has told me words
of peace.

O blessings on his kindly voice and on his silver
hair!
And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet
me there!
O blessings on his kindly heart and on his silver head!
A thousand times I blest him, as he knelt beside my
bed.

He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me all the
sin.
Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there 's One will
let me in:
Nor would I now be well, mother, again if that could
be,
For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for
me.

I did not hear the dog howl, mother, or the death-
watch beat,
There came a sweeter token when the night and morn-
ing meet:
But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand in
mine,
And Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign.

THE MAY QUEEN

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call;
It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was
over all;

The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
And in the wild March-morning I heard them call my
soul.

For lying broad awake I thought of you and Effie dear;
I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here;
With all my strength I pray'd for both, and so I felt
resign'd,

And up the valley came a swell of music on the wind.

I thought that it was fancy, and I listen'd in my bed,
And then did something speak to me—I know not
what was said;

For great delight and shuddering took hold of all my
mind,

And up the valley came again the music on the wind.

But you were sleeping; and I said, 'It's not for them:
it's mine.'

And if it come three times, I thought, I take it for a
sign.

And once again it came, and close beside the window-
bars,

Then seem'd to go right up to Heaven and die among
the stars.

So now I think my time is near. I trust it is. I know
The blessed music went that way my soul will have
to go.

BALLADS

And for myself, indeed, I care not if I go to-day.
But, Effie, you must comfort *her* when I am passed
away.

And say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to
fret;
There's many a worthier than I, would make him
happy yet.
If I had lived—I cannot tell—I might have been his
wife;
But all these things have ceased to be, with my desire
of life.

O look! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in a
glow;
He shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I
know.
And there I move no longer now, and there his light
may shine—
Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine.

O sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day
is done
The voice, that now is speaking, may be beyond the
sun—
For ever and for ever with those just souls and true—
And what is life, that we should moan? why make we
such ado?

For ever and for ever, all in a blessed home—
And there to wait a little while till you and Effie
come—

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your
breast—
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary
are at rest.

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

EMMIE

I

OUR doctor had call'd in another, I never had seen
him before,
But he sent a chill to my heart when I saw him come
in at the door,
Fresh from the surgery-schools of France and of other
lands—
Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big merciless
hands!
Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but they said
too of him
He was happier using the knife than in trying to save
the limb,
And that I can well believe, for he look'd so coarse
and so red,
I could think he was one of those who would break
their jests on the dead,
And mangle the living dog that had loved him and
fawn'd at his knee—
Drench'd with the hellish oorali—that ever such things
should be!

BALLADS

II

Here was a boy—I am sure that some of our children
would die
But for the voice of Love, and the smile, and the com-
forting eye—
Here was a boy in the ward, every bone seem'd out
of its place—
Caught in a mill and crush'd—it was all but a hope-
less case:
And he handled him gently enough; but his voice
and his face were not kind,
And it was but a hopeless case, he had seen it and
made up his mind,
And he said to me roughly 'The lad will need little
more of your care.'
'All the more need,' I told him, 'to seek the Lord
Jesus in prayer;
They are all his children here, and I pray for them all
as my own.'
But he turn'd to me, 'Ay, good woman, can prayer set
a broken bone?'
Then he mutter'd half to himself, but I know that I
heard him say
'All very well—but the good Lord Jesus has had his
day.'

III

Had? has it come? It has only dawn'd. It will come
by and by.
O how could I serve in the wards if the hope of the
world were a lie?

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

How could I bear with the sights and the loathsome
smells of disease
But that He said 'Ye do it to me, when ye do it to
these'?

IV

So he went. And we past to this ward where the
younger children are laid:
Here is the cot of our orphan, our darling, our meek
little maid;
Empty you see just now! We have lost her who loved
her so much—
Patient of pain tho' as quick as a sensitive plant to
the touch;
Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often moved me to
tears,
Hers was the gratefulest heart I have found in a child
of her years—
Nay, you remember our Emmie; you used to send her
the flowers;
How she would smile at 'em, play with 'em, talk to
'em hours after hours!
They that can wander at will where the works of the
Lord are reveal'd
Little guess what joy can be got from a cowslip out
of the field;
Flowers to these 'spirits in prison' are all they can
know of the spring,
They freshen and sweeten the wards like the waft of
an Angel's wing;
And she lay with a flower in one hand and her thin
hands crost on her breast—

BALLADS

Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire, and we thought
her at rest,
Quietly sleeping—so quiet, our doctor said ‘Poor little
dear,
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow; she ’ll never live thro’
it, I fear.’

V

I walk’d with our kindly old doctor as far as the head
of the stair,
Then I return’d to the ward; the child did n’t see I
was there.

VI

Never since I was nurse, had I been so grieved and so
vext!
Emmie had heard him. Softly she call’d from her cot
to the next,
‘He says I shall never live thro’ it, O Annie, what
shall I do?’
Annie consider’d. ‘If I,’ said the wise little Annie, ‘was
you,
I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to help me, for,
Emmie, you see,
It’s all in the picture there: “Little children should
come to me.”’
(Meaning the print that you gave us, I find that it
always can please
Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with children about
his knees.)
‘Yes, and I will,’ said Emmie, ‘but then if I call to the
Lord,

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

How should he know that it's me? such a lot of beds
in the ward!

That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she consider'd and
said:

'Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave 'em
outside on the bed—

The Lord has so *much* to see to! but, Emmie, you tell
it him plain,

It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the
counterpane.'

VII

I had sat three nights by the child—I could not watch
her for four—

My brain had begun to reel—I felt I could do it no
more.

That was my sleeping-night, but I thought that it
never would pass.

There was a thunderclap once, and a clatter of hail
on the glass,

And there was a phantom cry that I heard as I tost
about,

The motherless bleat of a lamb in the storm and the
darkness without;

My sleep was broken besides with dreams of the dread-
ful knife

And fears for our delicate Emmie who scarce would
escape with her life;

Then in the gray of the morning it seem'd she stood
by me and smiled,

And the doctor came at his hour, and we went to see
to the child.

BALLADS

VIII

He had brought his ghastly tools: we believed her
asleep again—
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on the
counterpane;
Say that His day is done! Ah why should we care
what they say?
The Lord of the children had heard her, and Emmie
had past away.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

I

HALF a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not—
Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,

BALLADS

Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA

OCTOBER 25, 1854

I

THE charge of the gallant three hundred, the Heavy
Brigade!
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands of Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the valley—and
stay'd;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred were rid-
ing by
When the points of the Russian lances arose in the sky;

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

And he call'd 'Left wheel into line!' and they wheel'd
and obey'd.

Then he look'd at the host that had halted he knew
not why,

And he turn'd half round, and he bade his trumpeter
sound

To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as he waved his
blade

To the gallant three hundred whose glory will never
die—

'Follow,' and up the hill, up the hill, up the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge, and the might
of the fight!

Thousands of horsemen had gather'd there on the
height,

With a wing push'd out to the left and a wing to the
right,

And who shall escape if they close? but he dash'd up
alone

Thro' the great gray slope of men,

Sway'd his sabre, and held his own

Like an Englishman there and then;

All in a moment follow'd with force

Three that were next in their fiery course,

Wedged themselves in between horse and horse,

Fought for their lives in the narrow gap they had made—

Four amid thousands! and up the hill, up the hill,

Gallopt the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade.

BALLADS

III

Fell like a cannonshot,
Burst like a thunderbolt,
Crash'd like a hurricane,
Broke thro' the mass from below,
Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
Plunged up and down, to and fro,
Rode flashing blow upon blow,
Brave Inniskillens and Greys
Whirling their sabres in circles of light!
And some of us, all in amaze,
Who were held for a while from the fight,
And were only standing at gaze,
When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
Folded its wings from the left and the right,
And roll'd them around like a cloud,—
O mad for the charge and the battle were we,
When our own good redcoats sank from sight,
Like drops of blood in a dark-gray sea,
And we turn'd to each other, whispering, all dismay'd,
'Lost are the gallant three hundred of Scarlett's
Brigade!'

IV

'Lost one and all' were the words
Mutter'd in our dismay;
But they rode like Victors and Lords
Thro' the forest of lances and swords
In the heart of the Russian hordes,
They rode, or they stood at bay—
Struck with the sword-hand and slew,

THE REVENGE

Down with the bridle-hand drew
The foe from the saddle and threw
Underfoot there in the fray—
Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
In the wave of a stormy day;
Till suddenly shock upon shock
Stagger'd the mass from without,
Drove it in wild disarray,
For our men gallopt up with a cheer and a shout,
And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and reel'd
Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out of the field,
And over the brow and away.

v

Glory to each and to all, and the charge that they made!
Glory to all the three hundred, and all the Brigade!

THE REVENGE

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from
far away:
'Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-
three!'
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: 'Fore God I am
no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of
gear,

BALLADS

And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.

We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?’

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: ‘I know you are no coward;

You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.

But I’ve ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.

I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,

To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain.’

III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that day,

Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;

But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land

Very carefully and slow,

Men of Bideford in Devon,

And we laid them on the ballast down below;

For we brought them all aboard,

And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,

To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,

THE REVENGE

And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard
came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather
bow.

‘Shall we fight or shall we fly?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!
There ’ll be little of us left by the time this sun be
set.’

And Sir Richard said again: ‘We be all good English
men.

Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the
devil,

For I never turn’d my back upon Don or devil yet.’

v

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh’d, and we roar’d a
hurrah, and so

The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the
foe,

With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety
sick below;

For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left
were seen,

And the little Revenge ran on thro’ the long sea-lane
between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look’d down from their
decks and laugh’d,

Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad
little craft

BALLADS

Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning
tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above us
like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself
and went
Having that within her womb that had left her ill
content;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought
us hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and
musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that
shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

THE REVENGE

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far
over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and
the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built
galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-
thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with
her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so
could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the
world before?

X

For he said 'Fight on! fight on!'
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer
night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly
dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and
the head,
And he said 'Fight on! fight on!'

XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far
over the summer sea,

BALLADS

And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us
all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd
that we still could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate
strife;
And the sick men down in the hold were most of
them stark and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder
was all of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the
side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
'We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her
in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of
Spain!'

XII

And the gunner said 'Ay, ay,' but the seamen made
reply:

THE REVENGE

‘We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to
let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow.’
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the
foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore
him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard
caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly
foreign grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
‘I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant
man and true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do:
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!’
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant
and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap
That he dared her with one little ship and his English
few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they
knew,
But they sank his body with honour down into the
deep,

BALLADS

And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien
crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her
own:
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke
from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to
moan,
And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earth-
quake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their
masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shat-
ter'd navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the
island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

ENGLISH IDYLS

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER;

OR, THE PICTURES

THIS morning is the morning of the day,
When I and Eustace from the city went
To see the gardener's daughter; I and he,
Brothers in Art; a friendship so complete
Portion'd in halves between us, that we grew
The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules;
So muscular he spread, so broad of breast.
He, by some law that holds in love, and draws
The greater to the lesser, long desired
A certain miracle of symmetry,
A miniature of loveliness, all grace
Summ'd up and closed in little;—Juliet, she
So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she
To me myself, for some three careless moons,
The summer pilot of an empty heart
Unto the shores of nothing! Know you not
Such touches are but embassies of love,
To tamper with the feelings, ere he found
Empire for life? but Eustace painted her,
And said to me, she sitting with us then,
'When will *you* paint like this?' and I replied,
(My words were half in earnest, half in jest,)
'T is not your work, but Love's. Love, unperceived,
A more ideal Artist he than all,

IDYLS

Came, drew your pencil from you, made those eyes
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of March.'
And Juliet answer'd laughing, 'Go and see
The gardener's daughter: trust me, after that,
You scarce can fail to match his masterpiece.'
And up we rose, and on the spur we went.

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.
News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells;
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear
The windy clanging of the minster clock;
Although between it and the garden lies
A league of grass, wash'd by a slow broad stream,
That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
Crown'd with the minster-towers.

The fields between
Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-udder'd kine,
And all about the large lime feathers low,
The lime a summer home of murmurous wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,
Grew, seldom seen; not less among us lived
Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not heard
Of Rose, the gardener's daughter? Where was he,
So blunt in memory, so old at heart,
At such a distance from his youth in grief,
That, having seen, forgot? The common mouth,

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER

So gross to express delight, in praise of her
Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,
And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,
Would play with flying forms and images,
Yet this is also true, that, long before
I look'd upon her, when I heard her name
My heart was like a prophet to my heart,
And told me I should love. A crowd of hopes,
That sought to sow themselves like winged seeds,
Born out of everything I heard and saw,
Flutter'd about my senses and my soul;
And vague desires, like fitful blasts of balm
To one that travels quickly, made the air
Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,
That verged upon them, sweeter than the dream
Dream'd by a happy man, when the dark East,
Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds
For ever in itself the day we went
To see her. All the land in flowery squares,
Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud
Drew downward: but all else of heaven was pure
Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge,
And May with me from head to heel. And now,
As tho' 't were yesterday, as tho' it were
The hour just flown, that morn with all its sound,
(For those old Mays had thrice the life of these,)
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,

IDYLS

And, where the hedge-row cuts the pathway, stood,
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,
But shook his song together as he near'd
His happy home, the ground. To left and right,
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm;
The redcap whistled; and the nightingale
Sang loud, as tho' he were the bird of day.

And Eustace turn'd, and smiling said to me,
'Hear how the bushes echo! by my life,
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think you they sing
Like poets, from the vanity of song?
Or have they any sense of why they sing?
And would they praise the heavens for what they
have?'

And I made answer, 'Were there nothing else
For which to praise the heavens but only love,
That only love were cause enough for praise.'

Lightly he laugh'd, as one that read my thought,
And on we went; but ere an hour had pass'd,
We reach'd a meadow slanting to the North;
Down which a well-worn pathway courted us
To one green wicket in a privet hedge;
This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk
Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned;
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume, blew
Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER

The garden stretches southward. In the midst
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade.
The garden-glasses glanced, and momentarily
The twinkling laurel scatter'd silver lights.

'Eustace,' I said, 'this wonder keeps the house.'
He nodded, but a moment afterwards
He cried, 'Look! look!' Before he ceased I turn'd,
And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm aloft—
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the shape—
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side: the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade—and still went wavering down,
But, ere it touch'd a foot, that might have danced
The greensward into greener circles, dipt,
And mix'd with shadows of the common ground!
But the full day dwelt on her brows, and sunn'd
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man young.

So rapt, we near'd the house; but she, a Rose
In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,

IDYLS

Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance turn'd
Into the world without; till close at hand,
And almost ere I knew mine own intent,
This murmur broke the stillness of that air
Which brooded round about her:

‘Ah, one rose,
One rose,—but one, by those fair fingers cull'd,
Were worth a hundred kisses press'd on lips
Less exquisite than thine.’

She look'd: but all
Suffused with blushes—neither self-possess'd
Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and that,
Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,
And dropt the branch she held, and turning, wound
Her looser hair in braid, and stirr'd her lips
For some sweet answer, tho' no answer came,
Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,
And moved away, and left me, statue-like,
In act to render thanks.

I, that whole day,
Saw her no more, altho' I linger'd there
Till every daisy slept, and Love's white star
Beam'd thro' the thicken'd cedar in the dusk.

So home we went, and all the livelong way
With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.
‘Now,’ said he, ‘will you climb the top of Art.
You cannot fail but work in hues to dim
The Titianic Flora. Will you match
My Juliet? you, not you,—the Master, Love,
A more ideal Artist he than all.’

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER

So home I went, but could not sleep for joy,
Reading her perfect features in the gloom,
Kissing the rose she gave me o'er and o'er,
And shaping faithful record of the glance
That graced the giving—such a noise of life
Swarm'd in the golden present, such a voice
Call'd to me from the years to come, and such
A length of bright horizon rimn'd the dark.
And all that night I heard the watchman peal
The sliding season: all that night I heard
The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy hours.
The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,
O'er the mute city stole with folded wings,
Distilling odours on me as they went
To greet their fairer sisters of the East.

Love at first sight, first-born, and heir to all,
Made this night thus. Henceforward squall nor storm
Could keep me from that Eden where she dwelt.
Light pretexts drew me; sometimes a Dutch love
For tulips: then for roses, moss or musk,
To grace my city rooms; or fruits and cream
Served in the weeping elm; and more and more
A word could bring the colour to my cheek;
A thought would fill my eyes with happy dew;
Love trebled life within me, and with each
The year increased.

The daughters of the year,
One after one, thro' that still garden pass'd;
Each garlanded with her peculiar flower
Danced into light, and died into the shade;

IDYLS

And each in passing touch'd with some new grace
Or seem'd to touch her, so that day by day,
Like one that never can be wholly known,
Her beauty grew; till Autumn brought an hour
For Eustace, when I heard his deep 'I will,'
Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to hold
From thence thro' all the worlds: but I rose up
Full of his bliss, and following her dark eyes
Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reach'd
The wicket-gate, and found her standing there.

There sat we down upon a garden mound,
Two mutually enfolded; Love, the third,
Between us, in the circle of his arms
Enwound us both; and over many a range
Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,
Across a hazy glimmer of the west,
Reveal'd their shining windows: from them clash'd
The bells; we listen'd; with the time we play'd,
We spoke of other things; we coursed about
The subject most at heart, more near and near,
Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round
The central wish, until we settled there.

Then, in that time and place, I spoke to her,
Requiring, tho' I knew it was mine own,
Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,
Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,
A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved;
And in that time and place she answer'd me,
And in the compass of three little words,
More musical than ever came in one,

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER

The silver fragments of a broken voice,
Made me most happy, faltering, 'I am thine.'

Shall I cease here? Is this enough to say
That my desire, like all strongest hopes,
By its own energy fulfill'd itself,
Merged in completion? Would you learn at full
How passion rose thro' circumstantial grades
Beyond all grades develop'd? and indeed
I had not staid so long to tell you all,
But while I mused came Memory with sad eyes,
Holding the folded annals of my youth;
And while I mused, Love with knit brows went by,
And with a flying finger swept my lips,
And spake, 'Be wise: not easily forgiven
Are those who, setting wide the doors that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day.' Here, then, my words have end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of farewells—
Of that which came between, more sweet than each,
In whispers, like the whispers of the leaves
That tremble round a nightingale—in sighs
Which perfect Joy, perplex'd for utterance,
Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I not tell
Of difference, reconciliation, pledges given,
And vows, where there was never need of vows,
And kisses, where the heart on one wild leap
Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above
The heavens between their fairy fleeces pale
Sow'd all their mystic gulfs with fleeting stars;
Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,

IDYLS

Spread the light haze along the river-shores,
And in the hollows; or as once we met
Unheedful, tho' beneath a whispering rain
Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind,
And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.

But this whole hour your eyes have been intent
On that veil'd picture—veil'd, for what it holds
May not be dwelt on by the common day.
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy soul;
Make thine heart ready with thine eyes: the time
Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,
My first, last love; the idol of my youth,
The darling of my manhood, and, alas!
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

DORA

With farmer Allan at the farm abode
William and Dora. William was his son,
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,
And often thought, 'I'll make them man and wife.'
Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,
And yearn'd toward William; but the youth, because
He had been always with her in the house,
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day
When Allan call'd his son, and said, 'My son:
I married late, but I would wish to see

DORA

My grandchild on my knees before I die:
And I have set my heart upon a match.
Now therefore look to Dora; she is well
To look to; thrifty too beyond her age.
She is my brother's daughter: he and I
Had once hard words, and parted, and he died
In foreign lands; but for his sake I bred
His daughter Dora: take her for your wife;
For I have wish'd this marriage, night and day,
For many years.' But William answer'd short:
'I cannot marry Dora; by my life,
I will not marry Dora.' Then the old man
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands, and said:
'You will not, boy! you dare to answer thus!
But in my time a father's word was law,
And so it shall be now for me. Look to it;
Consider, William: take a month to think,
And let me have an answer to my wish;
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall pack,
And never more darken my doors again.'
But William answer'd madly; bit his lips,
And broke away. The more he look'd at her
The less he liked her; and his ways were harsh;
But Dora bore them meekly. Then before
The month was out he left his father's house,
And hired himself to work within the fields;
And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and wed
A labourer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing, Allan call'd
His niece and said: 'My girl, I love you well;
But if you speak with him that was my son,

IDYLS

Or change a word with her he calls his wife,
My home is none of yours. My will is law.'
And Dora promised, being meek. She thought,
'It cannot be: my uncle's mind will change!'

And days went on, and there was born a boy
To William; then distresses came on him;
And day by day he pass'd his father's gate,
Heart-broken, and his father help'd him not.
But Dora stored what little she could save,
And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know
Who sent it; till at last a fever seized
On William, and in harvest time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and thought
Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said:

'I have obey'd my uncle until now,
And I have sinn'd, for it was all thro' me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone,
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,
And for this orphan, I am come to you:
You know there has not been for these five years
So full a harvest: let me take the boy,
And I will set him in my uncle's eye
Among the wheat; that when his heart is glad
Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone.'

And Dora took the child, and went her way
Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound

DORA

That was unsown, where many poppies grew.
Far off the farmer came into the field
And spied her not; for none of all his men
Dare tell him Dora waited with the child;
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,
But her heart fail'd her; and the reapers reap'd,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and took
The child once more, and sat upon the mound;
And made a little wreath of all the flowers
That grew about, and tied it round his hat
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field
He spied her, and he left his men at work,
And came and said: 'Where were you yesterday?
Whose child is that? What are you doing here?'
So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,
And answer'd softly, 'This is William's child!'
'And did I not,' said Allan, 'did I not
Forbid you, Dora?' Dora said again:
'Do with me as you will, but take the child,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone!'
And Allan said, 'I see it is a trick
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
I must be taught my duty, and by you!
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared
To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy;
But go you hence, and never see me more.'

So saying, he took the boy, that cried aloud
And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell

IDYLS

At Dora's feet. She bowed upon her hands,
And the boy's cry came to her from the field,
More and more distant. She bow'd down her head,
Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bow'd down
And wept in secret; and the reapers reap'd,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood
Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise
To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.
And Dora said, 'My uncle took the boy;
But, Mary, let me live and work with you:
He says that he will never see me more.'
Then answer'd Mary, 'This shall never be,
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself:
And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,
For he will teach him hardness, and to slight
His mother; therefore thou and I will go,
And I will have my boy, and bring him home;
And I will beg of him to take thee back:
But if he will not take thee back again,
Then thou and I will live within one house,
And work for William's child, until he grows
Of age to help us.'

So the women kiss'd
Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.
The door was off the latch: they peep'd, and saw
The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,
Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,
And clapt him on the hands and on the cheeks,

DORA

Like one that loved him: and the lad stretch'd out
And babbled for the golden seal, that hung
From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.
Then they came in: but when the boy beheld
His mother, he cried out to come to her:
And Allan set him down, and Mary said:

'O Father!—if you let me call you so—
I never came a-begging for myself,
Or William, or this child; but now I come
For Dora: take her back; she loves you well.
O Sir, when William died, he died at peace
With all men; for I ask'd him, and he said,
He could not ever rue his marrying me—
I had been a patient wife: but, Sir, he said
That he was wrong to cross his father thus:
"God bless him!" he said, "and may he never know
The troubles I have gone thro'!" Then he turn'd
His face and pass'd—unhappy that I am!
But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you
Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight
His father's memory; and take Dora back,
And let all this be as it was before.'

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face
By Mary. There was silence in the room;
And all at once the old man burst in sobs:—

'I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill'd my
son:
I have kill'd him—but I loved him—my dear son.
May God forgive me!—I have been to blame.

IDYLS

Kiss me, my children.'

Then they clung about
The old man's neck, and kiss'd him many times.
And all the man was broken with remorse;
And all his love came back a hundred-fold;
And for three hours he sobb'd o'er William's child
Thinking of William.

So those four abode
Within one house together; and as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

CHARACTER-PIECES

∴

ŒNONE

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning: but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Iliion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:

CHARACTER-PIECES

The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops: the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown’d snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather’d shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn’d, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call’d me from the cleft:
Far up the solitary morning smote

ÆNONE

The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's:
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

“My own Ænone,
Beautiful-brow'd Ænone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n
'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.”

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added “This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 't were due:
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,

CHARACTER-PIECES

Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnight: one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, "from many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,

ŒNONE

Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore.
Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll,
From many an island town and haven large,
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
"Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

CHARACTER-PIECES

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: “I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,

If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure,
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.”

‘Here she ceas'd,

And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, “O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!” but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

ŒNONE

Idalian Aphroditè beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.

She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whisper'd in his ear, “I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.”
She spokè and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

‘Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.

Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest

CHARACTER-PIECES

Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther’s roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone CEnone see the morning mist
Sweep thro’ them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,

ŒNONE

Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth;
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth

CHARACTER-PIECES

Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known: cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

ULYSSES

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with
me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,

CHARACTER-PIECES

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

TITHONUS

THE woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream

TITHONUS

The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,

CHARACTER-PIECES

Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilium like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold

LUCRETIUS

Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

LUCRETIUS

LUCILIA, wedded to Lucretius, found
Her master cold; for when the morning flush
Of passion and the first embrace had died
Between them, tho' he lov'd her none the less,
Yet often when the woman heard his foot
Return from pacings in the field, and ran
To greet him with a kiss, the master took
Small notice, or austere, for—his mind
Half buried in some weightier argument,
Or fancy-borne perhaps upon the rise
And long roll of the Hexameter—he past
To turn and ponder those three hundred scrolls
Left by the Teacher, whom he held divine.
She brook'd it not; but wrathful, petulant,
Dreaming some rival, sought and found a witch
Who brew'd the philtre which had power, they said,
To lead an errant passion home again.
And this, at times, she mingled with his drink,

CHARACTER-PIECES

And this destroy'd him; for the wicked broth
Confused the chemic labour of the blood,
And tickling the brute brain within the man's
Made havock among those tender cells, and check'd
His power to shape: he loathed himself; and once
After a tempest woke upon a morn
That mock'd him with returning calm, and cried:

‘Storm in the night! for thrice I heard the rain
Rushing; and once the flash of a thunderbolt—
Methought I never saw so fierce a fork—
Struck out the streaming mountain-side, and show'd
A riotous confluence of watercourses
Blanching and billowing in a hollow of it,
Where all but yester-eve was dusty-dry.

‘Storm, and what dreams, ye holy Gods, what dreams!
For thrice I waken'd after dreams. Perchance
We do but recollect the dreams that come
Just ere the waking: terrible! for it seem'd
A void was made in Nature; all her bonds
Crack'd; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
And torrents of her myriad universe,
Ruining along the illimitable inane,
Fly on to clash together again, and make
Another and another frame of things
For ever: that was mine, my dream, I knew it—
Of and belonging to me, as the dog
With inward yelp and restless forefoot plies
His function of the woodland: but the next!
I thought that all the blood by Sylla shed
Came driving rainlike down again on earth,

LUCRETIUS

And where it dash'd the reddening meadow, sprang
No dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth,
For these I thought my dream would show to me,
But girls, Hetairai, curious in their art,
Hired animalisms, vile as those that made
The mulberry-faced Dictator's orgies worse
Than aught they fable of the quiet Gods.
And hands they mixt, and yell'd and round me drove
In narrowing circles till I yell'd again
Half-suffocated, and sprang up, and saw —
Was it the first beam of my latest day?

'Then, then, from utter gloom stood out the breasts,
The breasts of Helen, and hoveringly a sword
Now over and now under, now direct,
Pointed itself to pierce, but sank down shamed
At all that beauty; and as I stared, a fire,
The fire that left a roofless Ilion,
Shot out of them, and scorch'd me that I woke.

'Is this thy vengeance, holy Venus, thine,
Because I would not one of thine own doves,
Not ev'n a rose, were offer'd to thee? thine,
Forgetful how my rich proœmion makes
Thy glory fly along the Italian field,
In lays that will outlast thy Deity?

'Deity? nay, thy worshippers. My tongue
Trips, or I speak profanely. Which of these
Angers thee most, or angers thee at all?
Not if thou be'st of those who, far aloof
From envy, hate and pity, and spite and scorn,

CHARACTER-PIECES

Live the great life which all our greatest fain
Would follow, centr'd in eternal calm.

‘Nay, if thou canst, O Goddess, like ourselves
Touch, and be touch'd, then would I cry to thee
To kiss thy Mavors, roll thy tender arms
Round him, and keep him from the lust of blood
That makes a steaming slaughter-house of Rome.

‘Ay, but I meant not thee; I meant not her,
Whom all the pines of Ida shook to see
Slide from that quiet heaven of hers, and tempt
The Trojan, while his neat-herds were abroad;
Nor her that o'er her wounded hunter wept
Her Deity false in human-amorous tears;
Nor whom her beardless apple-arbiter
Decided fairest. Rather, O ye Gods,
Poet-like, as the great Sicilian called
Calliope to grace his golden verse —
Ay, and this Kypris also — did I take
That popular name of thine to shadow forth
The all-generating powers and genial heat
Of Nature, when she strikes thro' the thick blood
Of cattle, and light is large, and lambs are glad
Nosing the mother's udder, and the bird
Makes his heart voice amid the blaze of flowers:
Which things appear the work of mighty Gods.

‘The Gods! and if I go *my* work is left
Unfinish'd — *if* I go. The Gods, who haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,

LUCRETIUS

Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
 Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
 Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
 Their sacred everlasting calm! and such,
 Not all so fine, nor so divine a calm,
 Not such, nor all unlike it, man may gain
 Letting his own life go. The Gods, the Gods!
 If all be atoms, how then should the Gods
 Being atomic not be dissoluble,
 Not follow the great law? My master held
 That Gods there are, for all men so believe.
 I prest my footsteps into his, and meant
 Surely to lead my Memmius in a train
 Of flowery clauses onward to the proof
 That Gods there are, and deathless. Meant? I meant?
 I have forgotten what I meant: my mind
 Stumbles, and all my faculties are lamed.

‘Look where another of our Gods, the Sun,
 Apollo, Delius, or of older use
 All-seeing Hyperion—what you will—
 Has mounted yonder; since he never sware,
 Except his wrath were wreak’d on wretched man,
 That he would only shine among the dead
 Hereafter; tales! for never yet on earth
 Could dead flesh creep, or bits of roasting ox
 Moan round the spit—nor knows he what he sees;
 King of the East altho’ he seem, and girt
 With song and flame and fragrance, slowly lifts
 His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
 That climb into the windy halls of heaven:
 And here he glances on an eye new-born,

CHARACTER-PIECES

And gets for greeting but a wail of pain;
And here he stays upon a freezing orb
That fain would gaze upon him to the last;
And here upon a yellow eyelid fall'n
And closed by those who mourn a friend in vain,
Not thankful that his troubles are no more.
And me, altho' his fire is on my face
Blinding, he sees not, nor at all can tell
Whether I mean this day to end myself,
Or lend an ear to Plato where he says,
That men like soldiers may not quit the post
Allotted by the Gods: but he that holds
The Gods are careless, wherefore need he care
Greatly for them, nor rather plunge at once,
Being troubled, wholly out of sight, and sink
Past earthquake—ay, and gout and stone, that break
Body toward death, and palsy, death-in-life,
And wretched age—and worst disease of all,
These prodigies of myriad nakednesses,
And twisted shapes of lust, unspeakable,
Abominable, strangers at my hearth
Not welcome, harpies miring every dish,
The phantom husks of something foully done,
And fleeting thro' the boundless universe,
And blasting the long quiet of my breast
With animal heat and dire insanity?

‘How should the mind, except it loved them, clasp
These idols to herself? or do they fly
Now thinner, and now thicker, like the flakes
In a fall of snow, and so press in, perforce
Of multitude, as crowds that in an hour

LUCRETIUS

Of civic tumult jam the doors, and bear
The keepers down, and throng, their rags and they
The basest, far into that council-hall
Where sit the best and stateliest of the land?

‘Can I not fling this horror off me again,
Seeing with how great ease Nature can smile,
Balmier and nobler from her bath of storm,
At random ravage? and how easily
The mountain there has cast his cloudy slough,
Now towering o’er him in serenest air,
A mountain o’er a mountain,—ay, and within
All hollow as the hopes and fears of men?’

‘But who was he, that in the garden snared
Picus and Faunus, rustic Gods? a tale
To laugh at—more to laugh at in myself—
For look! what is it? there? yon arbutus
Totters; a noiseless riot underneath
Strikes through the wood, sets all the tops quivering—
The mountain quickens into Nymph and Faun;
And here an Oread—how the sun delights
To glance and shift about her slippery sides,
And rosy knees and supple roundedness,
And budded bosom-peaks—who this way runs
Before the rest—A satyr, a satyr, see,
Follows; but him I proved impossible;
Twy-natured is no nature: yet he draws
Nearer and nearer, and I scan him now
Beastlier than any phantom of his kind
That ever butted his rough brother-brute
For lust or lusty blood or provender:

CHARACTER-PIECES

I hate, abhor, spit, sicken at him; and she
Loathes him as well; such a precipitate heel,
Fledged as it were with Mercury's ankle-wing,
Whirls her to me: but will she fling herself,
Shameless upon me? Catch her, goat-foot: nay,
Hide, hide them, million-myrtled wilderness,
And cavern-shadowing laurels, hide! do I wish—
What?—that the bush were leafless? or to whelm
All of them in one massacre? O ye Gods,
I know you careless, yet, behold, to you
From childly wont and ancient use I call—
I thought I lived securely as yourselves—
No lewdness, narrowing envy, monkey-spite,
No madness of ambition, avarice, none:
No larger feast than under plane or pine
With neighbours laid along the grass, to take
Only such cups as left us friendly-warm,
Affirming each his own philosophy—
Nothing to mar the sober majesties
Of settled, sweet, Epicurean life.
But now it seems some unseen monster lays
His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
Wrenching it backward into his; and spoils
My bliss in being; and it was not great;
For save when shutting reasons up in rhythm,
Or Heliconian honey in living words,
To make a truth less harsh, I often grew
Tired of so much within our little life,
Or of so little in our little life—
Poor little life that toddles half an hour
Crown'd with a flower or two, and there an end—

LUCRETIUS

And since the nobler pleasure seems to fade,
Why should I, beastlike as I find myself,
Not manlike end myself?—our privilege—
What beast has heart to do it? And what man,
What Roman would be dragg'd in triumph thus?
Not I; not he, who bears one name with her
Whose death-blow struck the dateless doom of kings,
When, brooking not the Tarquin in her veins,
She made her blood in sight of Collatine
And all his peers, flushing the guiltless air,
Spout from the maiden fountain in her heart.
And from it sprang the Commonwealth, which breaks
As I am breaking now!

‘And therefore now
Let her, that is the womb and tomb of all,
Great Nature, take, and forcing far apart
Those blind beginnings that have made me man,
Dash them anew together at her will
Thro' all her cycles—into man once more,
Or beast or bird or fish, or opulent flower:
But till this cosmic order everywhere
Shatter'd into one earthquake in one day
Cracks all to pieces,—and that hour perhaps
Is not so far when momentary man
Shall seem no more a something to himself,
But he, his hopes and hates, his homes and fanes,
And even his bones long laid within the grave,
The very sides of the grave itself shall pass,
Vanishing, atom and void, atom and void,
Into the unseen for ever,—till that hour,
My golden work in which I told a truth

CHARACTER-PIECES

That stays the rolling Ixionian wheel,
And numbs the Fury's ringlet-snake, and plucks
The mortal soul from out immortal hell,
Shall stand: ay, surely: then it falls at last
And perishes as I must; for O Thou,
Passionless bride, divine Tranquillity,
Yearn'd after by the wisest of the wise,
Who fail to find thee, being as thou art
Without one pleasure and without one pain,
Howbeit I know thou surely must be mine
Or soon or late, yet out of season, thus
I woo thee roughly, for thou carest not
How roughly men may woo thee so they win—
Thus—thus: the soul flies out and dies in the air.'

With that he drove the knife into his side:
She heard him raging, heard him fall; ran in,
Beat breast, tore hair, cried out upon herself
As having fail'd in duty to him, shriek'd
That she but meant to win him back, fell on him,
Clasp'd, kiss'd him, wail'd: he answer'd, 'Care not
thou!
Thy duty? What is duty? Fare thee well!'

ST. AGNES' EVE

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon:
My breath to heaven like vapour goes:
May my soul follow soon!
The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,

ST. AGNES' EVE

Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord:
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee;
So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin.
The sabbaths of Eternity,
One sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with his bride!

CHARACTER-PIECES

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel:
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall:
But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns:

SIR GALAHAD

Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the holy Grail:
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
Thro' dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;

CHARACTER-PIECES

But blessed forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odours haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And thro' the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:
'O just and faithful knight of God!
Ride on! the prize is near.'
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
Until I find the holy Grail.

NORTHERN FARMER

NORTHERN FARMER

OLD STYLE

I

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän?
Noorse? thourt nowt o' a noorse: whoy, Doctor's abeän
an' agoän:

Says that I moänt 'a naw moor aäle: but I beänt a fool:
Git ma my aäle, fur I beänt a-gawin' to breäk my rule.

II

Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says what 's nawways
true:

Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the things that a do.
I've 'ed my point o' aäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere.
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty
year.

III

Parson 's a beän loikewise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
'The amoighty 's a taäkin o' you¹ to 'issén, my friend,'
a said,

An' a towd ma my sins, an's toithe were due, an' I
gied it in hond;

I done moy duty boy 'um, as I 'a done boy the lond.

IV

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
But a cast oop, thot a did, 'bout Bessy Marris's barne.

¹ *ou as in hour.*

CHARACTER-PIECES

Thaw a knaws I hallus voäted wi' Squoire an' choorch
an' staäte,
An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

V

An' I hallus coom'd to 's chooch afoor moy Sally wur
deäd,
An' 'eärd 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock¹
ower my 'eäd,
An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad
summut to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd
awaäy.

VI

Bessy Marris's barne! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
Mowt a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
'Siver, I kep 'um, I kep 'um, ma lass, tha mun under-
stand;
I done moy duty boy 'um as I 'a done boy the lond.

VII

But Parson a cooms an' a goäs, an' a says it eäsy an'
freeä
'The amoighty 's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend,
says 'eä.
I weänt saäy men be loiars, thaw summun said it in
'aäste:
But 'e reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd
Thurnaby waäste.

¹ *Cockchafer.*

NORTHERN FARMER

VIII

D' ya moind the waäste, my lass? naw, naw, tha was
not born then;
Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eärd 'um mysen;
Moäst loike a butter-bump,¹ fur I 'eärd 'um about an'
about,
But I stabb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an'
rembled 'um out.

IX

Keäper's it wur; fo' they fun 'um theer a-laäid of 'is
faäce
Down i' the woild 'enemies² afoor I coom'd to the
plaäce.
Noäks or Thimbleby—toäner³ 'ed shot 'um as deäd as
a naäil.
Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—but git ma my
aäle.

X

Dubbut looök at the waäste: theer warn't not feeäd
for a cow;
Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looök at it now—
Warn't worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer 's lots o'
feeäd,
Fourscoor⁴ yows upon it an' some on it down i' seeäd.⁵

XI

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stabb'd
it at fall,
Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an'
all,

¹ *Bittern.* ² *Anemones.* ³ *One or other.* ⁴ *ou as in hour.*
⁵ *Clover.*

CHARACTER-PIECES

If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
Meä, wi' haäte hoonderd haäcre o' Squire's, an' lond
o' my oän.

XII

Do godamoighty knaw what a 's doing a-täakin' o' meä?
I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä;
An' Squire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear!
And I 'a managed for Squire coom Michaelmas thutty
year.

XIII

A mowt 'a taäen owd Joänes, as 'ant not a 'ääpoth o'
sense,
Or a mowt 'a taäen young Robins—a niver mended
a fence:
But godamoighty a moost taäke meä an' taäke ma
now
Wi' aäf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby hoälms to plow!

XIV

Looök 'ow quoloty smoiles when they seeäs ma a
passin' boy,
Says to thessén naw doubt 'what a man a beä sewer-
loy!'
Fur they knaws what I beän to Squire sin fust a
coom'd to the 'All;
I done moy duty by Squire an' I done moy duty boy
hall.

XV

Squire's i' Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to
wrote,
For whoä 's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles
ma quoit;

NORTHERN FARMER

Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
Naw, nor a moänt to Robins—a niver rembles the
stoäns.

XVI

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle
o' steäm

Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Divil's
oän teäm.

Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they says is sweet,
But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abear to
see it.

XVII

What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the
aäle?

Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a 's hallus i' the owd taäle;
I weänt breäk rules fur Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor
a floy;

Git ma my aäle I tell tha, an' if I mun doy I mun doy.

NORTHERN FARMER

NEW STYLE

I

Dosn't thou' ear my 'erse's legs, as they canters awaäy?
Proputty, proputty, proputty—that 's what I 'ears 'em
saäy.

Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou 's an ass for
thy paaïns:

Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs nor in all thy
braaïns.

CHARACTER-PIECES

II

Woä—theer 's a craw to pluck wi' tha, Sam: yon 's
parson's 'ouse—

Dosn't thou know that a man mun be eäther a man
or a mouse?

Time to think on it then; for thou'll be twenty to
weeäk.¹

Proputty, proputty—woä then woä—let ma 'ear my-
sén speak.

III

Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän a-talkin' o' thee;
Thou 's beän talkin' to muther, an' she beän a tellin'
it me.

Thou'll not marry for munny—thou 's sweet upo'
parson's lass—

Noä—thou'll marry for luvv—an' we boäth on us
thinks tha an ass.

IV

Seeä'd her todaäy goä by—Saäint's-daäy—they was
ringing the bells.

She 's a beauty thou thinks—an' soä is scoors o' gells,
Them as 'as munny an' all—wot 's a beauty?—the
flower as blaws.

But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty, proputty
graws.

V

Do'ant be stunt²: taäke time: I knows what maäkes
tha sa mad.

Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when I wur a
lad?

¹ *This week.* ² *Obstinate.*

NORTHERN FARMER

But I knaw'd a Quaäker feller as often 'as tow'd ma this:
'Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny
is!'

VI

An' I went wheer munny war: an' thy muther coom
to 'and,
Wi' lots o' munny laaïd by, an' a nicetish bit o' land.
Maäybe she warn't a beauty:— I niver giv it a thowt—
But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss as a lass as
'ant nowt?

VII

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt 'a nowt when
'e's deäd,
Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and addle¹ her
breäd:
Why? fur 'e's nobbut a curate, an' weänt niver git
hissén clear,
An' 'e maäde the bed as 'e ligs on afoor 'e coom'd to
the shere.

VIII

An' thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots o' Varsity debt,
Stook to his taaïl they did, an' 'e 'ant got shut on 'em yet.
An' 'e ligs on 'is back i' the grip, wi' noän to lend 'im
a shuvv,
Woorse nor a far-welter'd² yowe: fur, Sammy, 'e mar-
ried fur luvv.

IX

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass an' 'er
munny too,
Maakin' 'em goä togither as they 've good right to do.

¹ Earn. ² Or *fow-welter'd*, — said of a sheep lying on its back.

CHARACTER-PIECES

Couldn I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er munny laaïd
by?

Naäy—fur I luvv'd 'er a vast sight moor fur it: reä-
son why.

X

Ay, an' thy muther says thou wants to marry the lass,
Cooms of a gentleman burn: an' we boäth on us thinks
tha an ass.

Woä then, proputtu, wiltha?—an ass as near as mays
nowt¹—

Woä then, wiltha? dangtha!—the bees is as fell as
wot.²

XI

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'eäd, lad, out o' the
fence!

Gentleman burn! what 's gentleman burn? is it shillins
an' pence?

Proputtu, proputtu 's ivrything 'ere, an', Sammy, I 'm
blest

If it is n't the saäme oop yonder, fur them as 'as it 's
the best.

XII

Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into'ouses an' steäls,
Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes their regu-
lar meäls.

Noä, but it 's them as niver knaws wheer a meäl 's to
be 'ad.

Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is
bad.

¹ *Makes nothing.* ² *The flies are as fierce as anything.*

NORTHERN FARMER

XIII

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun 'a beän a laäzy
lot,
Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whiniver munny
was got.
Feyther 'ad ammost nowt; leästways 'is munny was 'id.
But 'e tued an' moil'd 'issén deäd, an' 'e died a good
un, 'e did.

XIV

Looök thou theer wheer Wrigglesby beck cooms out
by the 'ill!
Feyther run oop to the farm, an' I runs oop to the
mill;
An' I'll run oop to the brig, an' that thou'll live to
see;
And if thou marries a good un I'll läve the land to
thee.

XV

Thim's my noätions, Sammy, wheerby I means to
stick;
But if thou marries a bad un, I'll läve the land to
Dick. —
Coom oop, propuppy, propuppy—that's what I 'ears
'im saäy—
Propuppy, propuppy, propuppy—canter an' canter
awaäy.

CHARACTER-PIECES

LOCKSLEY HALL

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet 't is
early morn:

Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon
the bugle-horn.

'T is the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews
call,

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locks-
ley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the
sandy tracts,

And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went
to rest,

Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mel-
low shade,

Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth
sublime

With the fairy tales of science, and the long result
of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land re-
posed;

When I clung to all the present for the promise that
it closed:

LOCKSLEY HALL

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could
see;
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that
would be. —

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's
breast;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself an-
other crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd
dove;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to
thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be
for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute obser-
vance hung.

And I said, 'My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the
truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to
thee.'

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and
a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern
night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden
storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel
eyes—

CHARACTER-PIECES

Saying, 'I have hid my feelings, fearing they should
do me wrong;'

Saying, 'Dost thou love me, cousin?' weeping, 'I have
loved thee long.'

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his
glowing hands;

Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden
sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the
chords with might;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in
music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the
copses ring,

And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fullness
of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the
stately ships,

And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the
lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no
more!

O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren
shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs
have sung,

Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish
tongue!

LOCKSLEY HALL

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—
to decline

On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart
than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by
day,

What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise
with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with
a clown,

And the grossness of his nature will have weight to
drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent
its novel force,

Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his
horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are
glazed with wine.

Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand in
thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is over-
wrought:

Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy
lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to under-
stand—

Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee
with my hand!

CHARACTER-PIECES

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's
disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last em-
brace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength
of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living
truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Na-
ture's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead
of the fool!

Well—'t is well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou
less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever
wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but
bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at
the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years
should come
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging
rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the
mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew
her, kind?

LOCKSLEY HALL

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did she speak
and move:

Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to
love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love
she bore?

No—she never loved me truly: love is love for ever-
more.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is truth the
poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering hap-
pier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart
be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on
the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring
at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows
rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his
drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that
thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whisper'd by the
phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of
thine ears;

CHARACTER-PIECES

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness
on thy pain.

Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get thee to thy
rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice
will cry.

'T is a purer life than thine; a lip to drain thy trouble
dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest rival brings
thee rest.

Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the
mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness
not his due.

Half is thine and half is his: it will be worthy of the
two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a
daughter's heart.

'They were dangerous guides the feelings—she her-
self was not exempt—

Truly, she herself had suffer'd'—Perish in thy self-
contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should
I care?

I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

LOCKSLEY HALL

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon
days like these?

Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden
keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets
overflow.

I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I should
do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's
ground,

When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds
are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that
Honour feels,

And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each
other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous
Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the
strife,

When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of
my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming
years would yield,

Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his fa-
ther's field,

CHARACTER-PIECES

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer
drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary
dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him
then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs
of men:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping
something new:
That which they have done but earnest of the things
that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that
would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic
sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with
costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd
a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central
blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind
rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the
thunder-storm;

LOCKSLEY HALL

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-
flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful
realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal
law.

So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro' me left
me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the
jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out
of joint:
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from
point to point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping
nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-
dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose
runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the pro-
cess of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youth-
ful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a
boy's?

CHARACTER-PIECES

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger
on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more
and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears
a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness
of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the
bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for
their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moul-
der'd string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight
a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's plea-
sure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a
shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd
with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto
wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for
some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began
to beat;

LOCKSLEY HALL

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-
starr'd;—

I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's
ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far
away,

On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and
happy skies,

Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots
of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the
trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-
fruited tree—

Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of
sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this
march of mind,

In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that
shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope
and breathing space;

I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my
dusky race.

CHARACTER-PIECES

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they
shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances
in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows
of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable
books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words
are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Chris-
tian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glori-
ous gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with
lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun
or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of
time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by
one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's
moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward
let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing
grooves of change.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the
younger day:

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as when
life begun:

Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings,
weigh the Sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy
yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locks-
ley Hall!

Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the
roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over
heath and holt,

Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thun-
derbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire
or snow;

For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE

LADY Clara Vere de Vere,

Of me you shall not win renown:

You thought to break a country heart

For pastime, ere you went to town.

CHARACTER-PIECES

At me you smiled, but unbeguiled
I saw the snare, and I retired:
The daughter of a hundred Earls,
You are not one to be desired.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
I know you proud to bear your name,
Your pride is yet no mate for mine,
Too proud to care from whence I came.
Nor would I break for your sweet sake
A heart that dotes on truer charms.
A simple maiden in her flower
Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
Some meeker pupil you must find,
For were you queen of all that is,
I could not stoop to such a mind.
You sought to prove how I could love,
And my disdain is my reply.
The lion on your old stone gates
Is not more cold to you than I.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
You put strange memories in my head.
Not thrice your branching limes have blown
Since I beheld young Laurence dead.
Oh your sweet eyes, your low replies:
A great enchantress you may be;
But there was that across his throat
Which you had hardly cared to see.

LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
When thus he met his mother's view,
She had the passions of her kind,
She spake some certain truths of you.
Indeed I heard one bitter word
That scarce is fit for you to hear;
Her manners had not that repose
Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
There stands a spectre in your hall:
The guilt of blood is at your door:
You changed a wholesome heart to gall.
You held your course without remorse,
To make him trust his modest worth,
And, last, you fix'd a vacant stare,
And slew him with your noble birth.

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent
The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'T is only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

I know you, Clara Vere de Vere,
You pine among your halls and towers:
The languid light of your proud eyes
Is wearied of the rolling hours.

CHARACTER-PIECES

In glowing health, with boundless wealth,
But sickening of a vague disease,
You know so ill to deal with time,
You needs must play such pranks as these.

Clara, Clara Vere de Vere,
If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands?
Oh! teach the orphan-boy to read,
Or teach the orphan-girl to sew,
Pray heaven for a human heart,
And let the foolish yeoman go.

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD;

A MONODRAMA.

PART I

V

I

A VOICE by the cedar tree
In the meadow under the Hall!
She is singing an air that is known to me,
A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
A martial song like a trumpet's call!
Singing alone in the morning of life,
In the happy morning of life and of May,
Singing of men that in battle array,
Ready in heart and ready in hand,
March with banner and bugle and fife
To the death, for their native land.

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

II

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her grace,
Singing of Death, and of Honour that cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and mean,
And myself so languid and base.

III

Silence, beautiful voice!
Be still, for you only trouble the mind
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
A glory I shall not find.
Still! I will hear you no more,
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a choice
But to move to the meadow and fall before
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,
Not her, not her, but a voice.

XI

I

O let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet;
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

CHARACTER-PIECES

II

Let the sweet heavens endure,
Not close and darken above me
Before I am quite quite sure
That there is one to love me;
Then let come what come may
To a life that has been so sad,
I shall have had my day.

XII

I

Birds in the high Hall-garden
When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
They were crying and calling.

II

Where was Maud? in our wood;
And I, who else, was with her,
Gathering woodland lilies,
Myriads blow together.

III

Birds in our wood sang
Ringing thro' the valleys,
Maud is here, here, here
In among the lilies.

IV

I kiss'd her slender hand,
She took the kiss sedately;

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

V

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour!
O Maud were sure of Heaven
If lowliness could save her.

VI

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touch'd the meadows
And left the daisies rosy.

VII

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?
One is come to woo her.

VIII

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charley snarling,
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

XVII

Go not, happy day,
From the shining fields,
Go not, happy day,
Till the maiden yields.

CHARACTER-PIECES

Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth
When the happy Yes
 Falters from her lips,
Pass and blush the news
 Over glowing ships;
Over blowing seas,
 Over seas at rest,
Pass the happy news,
 Blush it thro' the West;
Till the red man dance
 By his red cedar-tree,
And the red man's babe
 Leap, beyond the sea.
Blush from West to East,
 Blush from East to West,
Till the West is East,
 Blush it thro' the West.
Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth.

XVIII

I

I have led her home, my love, my only friend.
There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on,

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

II

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk
Seem'd her light foot along the garden walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes once more;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

III

There is none like her, none,
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
Sighing for Lebanon,
Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,
Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed
With honey'd rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she came.

IV

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,
And you fair stars that crown a happy day

CHARACTER-PIECES

Go in and out as if at merry play,
Who am no more all so forlorn,
As when it seem'd far better to be born
To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand,
Than nursed at ease and brought to understand
A sad astrology, the boundless plan
That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

v

But now shine on, and what care I,
Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl
The countercharm of space and hollow sky,
And do accept my madness, and would die
To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

VI

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death may give
More life to Love than is or ever was
In our low world, where yet 't is sweet to live.
Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
It seems that I am happy, that to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII

Not die; but live a life of truest breath,
And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.
O, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs,
Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death?

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

Make answer, Maud my bliss,
Maud made my Maud by that long loving kiss,
Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?
'The dusky strand of Death inwoven here
With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear.'

VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
And hark the clock within, the silver knell
Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal white,
And died to live, long as my pulses play;
But now by this my love has closed her sight
And given false death her hand, and stol'n away
To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell
Among the fragments of the golden day.
May nothing there her maiden grace affright!
Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell.
My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart, my ownest own, farewell;
It is but for a little space I go:
And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?
I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,
Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
That seems to draw—but it shall not be so:
Let all be well, be well.

CHARACTER-PIECES

XXII

I

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.

II

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light, and to die.

III

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirr'd
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

IV

I said to the lily, 'There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play.'
Now half to the setting moon are gone,

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

v

I said to the rose, 'The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine,' so I sware to the rose,
'For ever and ever, mine.'

VI

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

VII

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

VIII

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;

CHARACTER-PIECES

But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

IX

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

X

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is near;'
And the white rose weeps, 'She is late;'
The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear;'
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

XI

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

PART II

II

I

SEE what a lovely shell,
Small and pure as a pearl,
Lying close to my foot,
Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well
With delicate spire and whorl,
How exquisitely minute,
A miracle of design!

II

What is it? a learned man
Could give it a clumsy name.
Let him name it who can,
The beauty would be the same.

III

The tiny cell is forlorn,
Void of the little living will
That made it stir on the shore.
Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Thro' his dim water-world?

IV

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand,

CHARACTER-PIECES

Small, but a work divine,
Frail, but of force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three decker's oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock,
Here on the Breton strand!

III

Courage, poor heart of stone!
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone:
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply:
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

IV

*(In this section the text is that of the first edition,
as found in "Stanzas" from The Tribute, 1837.)*

Oh! that 't were possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true-love
Round me once again!

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
Of the land that gave me birth,
We stood tranced in long embraces,

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

Mixt with kisses sweeter, sweeter,
Than any thing on earth.

A shadow flits before me—
Not thou, but like to thee.
Ah God! that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

It leads me forth at Evening,
It lightly winds and steals
In a cold white robe before me,
When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
And the roaring of the wheels.

Half the night I waste in sighs,
In a wakeful doze I sorrow
For the hand, the lips, the eyes—
For the meeting of to-morrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.

Do I hear the pleasant ditty,
That I heard her chant of old?
But I wake—my dream is fled.
Without knowledge, without pity—
In the shuddering dawn behold,
By the curtains of my bed,
That abiding phantom cold.

CHARACTER-PIECES

Then I rise: the eave-drops fall
And the yellow-vapours choke.
The great city sounding wide;
The day comes—a dull red ball,
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke,
On the misty river-tide.

Thro' the hubbub of the market
I steal, a wasted frame;
It crosseth here, it crosseth there—
Thro' all the crowd, confused and loud,
The shadow still the same;
And on my heavy eyelids
My anguish hangs like shame.

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call—
Came glimmering thro' the laurels
At the quiet even-fall,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old Manorial Hall.

Then the broad light glares and beats,
And the sunk eye flits and fleets,
And will not let me be.
I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me;
Always I long to creep
To some still cavern deep,
And to weep and weep and weep
My whole soul out to thee.

SELECTIONS FROM MAUD

Get thee hence, nor come again
Pass and cease to move about—
Pass, thou death-like type of pain,
Mix not memory with doubt.
'T is the blot upon the brain
That *will* show itself without.

Would the happy Spirit descend
In the chamber or the street
As she looks among the blest;
Should I fear to greet my friend,
Or to ask her, "Take me, sweet,
To the region of thy rest."

But she tarries in her place,
And I paint the beauteous face
Of the maiden, that I lost,
In my inner eyes again,
Lest my heart be overborne
By the thing I hold in scorn,
By a dull mechanic ghost
And a juggle of the brain.

I can shadow forth my bride
As I knew her fair and kind,
As I woo'd her for my wife;
She is lovely by my side
In the silence of my life—
'T is a phantom of the mind.

'T is a phantom fair and good;
I can call it to my side,
So to guard my life from ill,

CHARACTER-PIECES

Tho' its ghastly sister glide
And be moved around me still
With the moving of the blood,
That is moved not of the will.

Let it pass, the dreary brow,
Let the dismal face go by.
Will it lead me to the grave?
Then I lose it: it will fly:
Can it overlast the nerves?
Can it overlive the eye?
But the other, like a star,
Thro' the channel windeth far
Till it fade and fail and die,
To its Archetype that waits,
Clad in light by golden gates—
Clad in light the Spirit waits
To embrace me in the sky.

RIZPAH

17—

I

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and
sea—

And Willy's voice in the wind, 'O mother, come out
to me.'

Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that
I cannot go?

For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon
stares at the snow.

RIZPAH

II

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out
of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing
over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the
creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself
drenched with the rain.

III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to
fall?
I have taken them home, I have number'd the bones,
I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you come
as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so
must it lie.

IV

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what
have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a
word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their
spies—
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to
darken my eyes.

CHARACTER-PIECES

V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you*
know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost
and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only
made for the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and now you may
go your way.

VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an old
dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour
of life.
I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he went out to die.
'They dared me to do it,' he said, and he never has
told me a lie.
I whipt him for robbing an orchard once when he was
but a child—
'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said; he was al-
ways so wild—
And idle—and could n't be idle—my Willy—he
never could rest.
The King should have made him a soldier, he would
have been one of his best.

VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never
would let him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he swore
that he would;

RIZPAH

And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when
all was done
He flung it among his fellows—I'll none of it, said
my son.

VIII

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers. I told
them my tale,
God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they kill'd him
for robbing the mail.
They hang'd him in chains for a show—we had always
borne a good name—
To be hang'd for a thief—and then put away—is n't
that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set
him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at him,
passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls
of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who kill'd him
and hang'd him there.

IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last
goodbye;
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. 'O mother!'
I heard him cry.
I could n't get back tho' I tried, he had something
further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me
away.

CHARACTER-PIECES

X

Then since I could n't but hear that cry of my boy
that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they fasten'd me
down on my bed.
'Mother, O mother!'—he call'd in the dark to me
year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that
I could n't but hear;
And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid
and still
They let me abroad again—but the creatures had
worked their will.

XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was
left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you
call it a theft?—
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that
had laugh'd and had cried—
Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they had
moved in my side.

XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd 'em,
I buried 'em all—
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the church-
yard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judge-
ment 'ill sound;
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy
ground.

RIZPAH

XIII

They would scratch him up—they would hang him
again on the cursed tree.

Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good will
toward men—

'Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord'—let me
hear it again;

'Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering.' Yes,
O yes!

For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Saviour
lives but to bless.

He'll never put on the black cap except for the worst
of the worst,

And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—
and the last may be first.

Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must
know,

Year after year in the mist and the wind and the
shower and the snow.

XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never
repented his sin.

How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you* of
his kin?

Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the
downs began,

The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that
'ill moan like a man?

CHARACTER-PIECES

XV

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him
in Hell.

For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has
look'd into my care,
And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy,
I know not where.

XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your
desire:

Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone
to the fire?

I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may
leave me alone—

You never have borne a child—you are just as hard
as a stone.

XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean
to be kind,

But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice
in the wind—

The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call
in the dark,

And he calls to me now from the church and not
from the gibbet—for hark!

Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shak-
ing the walls—

Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am
going. He calls.

III
SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

THE PRINCESS

BOOK VII

So was their sanctuary violated,
So their fair college turn'd to hospital;
At first with all confusion: by and by
Sweet order lived again with other laws:
A kindlier influence reign'd; and everywhere
Low voices with the ministering hand
Hung round the sick: the maidens came, they talk'd,
They sang, they read: till she not fair began
To gather light, and she that was, became
Her former beauty treble; and to and fro
With books, with flowers, with Angel offices,
Like creatures native unto gracious act,
And in their own clear element, they moved.

But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,
And hatred of her weakness, blent with shame.
Old studies fail'd; seldom she spoke: but oft
Clomb to the roofs, and gazed alone for hours
On that disastrous leaguer, swarms of men
Darkening her female field: void was her use,
And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main, and sees a great black cloud
Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of night,
Blot out the slope of sea from verge to shore,
And suck the blinding splendour from the sand,
And quenching lake by lake and tarn by tarn
Expunge the world: so fared she gazing there;
So blacken'd all her world in secret, blank

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

And waste it seem'd and vain; till down she came,
And found fair peace once more among the sick.

And twilight dawn'd; and morn by morn the lark
Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres, but I
Lay silent in the muffled cage of life:
And twilight gloom'd; and broader-grown the bowers
Drew the great night into themselves, and Heaven,
Star after star, arose and fell; but I,
Deeper than those weird doubts could reach me, lay
Quite sunder'd from the moving Universe,
Nor knew what eye was on me, nor the hand
That nursed me, more than infants in their sleep.

.

But I lay still, and with me oft she sat:
Then came a change; for sometimes I would catch
Her hand in wild delirium, gripe it hard,
And fling it like a viper off, and shriek
'You are not Ida;' clasp it once again,
And call her Ida, tho' I knew her not,
And call her sweet, as if in irony,
And call her hard and cold which seem'd a truth:
And still she fear'd that I should lose my mind,
And often she believed that I should die:
Till out of long frustation of her care,
And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,
And watches in the dead, the dark, when clocks
Throbb'd thunder thro' the palace floors, or call'd
On flying Time from all their silver tongues—
And out of memories of her kindlier days,
And sidelong glances at my father's grief,

THE PRINCESS, BOOK VII

And at the happy lovers heart in heart—
And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
And lonely listenings to my mutter'd dream,
And often feeling of the helpless hands,
And wordless broodings on the wasted cheek—
From all a closer interest flourish'd up,
Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
But such as gather'd colour day by day.

Last I woke sane, but well-nigh close to death
For weakness: it was evening: silent light
Slept on the painted walls, wherein were wrought
Two grand designs; for on one side arose
The women up in wild revolt, and storm'd
At the Oppian law. Titanic shapes, they cramm'd
The forum, and half-crush'd among the rest
A dwarf-like Cato cower'd. On the other side
Hortensia spoke against the tax; behind,
A train of dames: by axe and eagle sat,
With all their foreheads drawn in Roman scowls,
And half the wolf's-milk curdled in their veins,
The fierce triumvirs; and before them paused
Hortensia pleading: angry was her face.

I saw the forms: I knew not where I was:
They did but look like hollow shows; nor more
Sweet Ida: palm to palm she sat: the dew
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape
And rounder seem'd: I moved: I sigh'd: a touch

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Came round my wrist, and tears upon my hand:
Then all for languor and self-pity ran
Mine down my face, and with what life I had,
And like a flower that cannot all unfold,
So drench'd it is with tempest, to the sun,
Yet, as it may, turns toward him, I on her
Fixt my faint eyes, and utter'd whisperingly:

‘If you be, what I think you, some sweet dream,
I would but ask you to fulfil yourself:
But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
I ask you nothing: only, if a dream,
Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.
Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die.’

I could no more, but lay like one in trance,
That hears his burial talk'd of by his friends,
And cannot speak, nor move, nor make one sign,
But lies and dreads his doom. She turn'd; she paused;
She stoop'd; and out of languor leapt a cry;
Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of death;
And I believed that in the living world
My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;
Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose
Glowing all over noble shame; and all
Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
Than in her mould that other, when she came
From barren deeps to conquer all with love;
And down the streaming crystal dropt; and she
Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,
Naked, a double light in air and wave,

THE PRINCESS, BOOK VII

To meet her Graces, where they deck'd her out
For worship without end; nor end of mine,
Stateliest, for thee! but mute she glided forth,
Nor glanced behind her, and I sank and slept,
Fill'd thro' and thro' with Love, a happy sleep.

Deep in the night I woke: she, near me, held
A volume of the Poets of her land:
There to herself, all in low tones, she read.

'Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:
The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake:
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.'

I heard her turn the page; she found a small
Sweet Idyl, and once more, as low, she read:

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

‘Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air:
So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro’ the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.’

THE PRINCESS, BOOK VII

So she low-toned; while with shut eyes I lay
Listening; then look'd. Pale was the perfect face;
The bosom with long sighs labour'd; and meek
Seem'd the full lips, and mild the luminous eyes,
And the voice trembled and the hand. She said
Brokenly, that she knew it, she had fail'd
In sweet humility; had fail'd in all;
That all her labour was but as a block
Left in the quarry; but she still were loth,
She still were loth to yield herself to one
That wholly scorn'd to help their equal rights
Against the sons of men, and barbarous laws.
She pray'd me not to judge their cause from her
That wrong'd it, sought far less for truth than power
In knowledge: something wild within her breast,
A greater than all knowledge, beat her down.
And she had nursed me there from week to week:
Much had she learnt in little time. In part
It was ill counsel had misled the girl
To vex true hearts: yet was she but a girl—
'Ah fool, and made myself a Queen of farce!
When comes another such? never, I think,
Till the Sun drop, dead, from the signs.'

Her voice

Choked, and her forehead sank upon her hands,
And her great heart thro' all the faultful Past
Went sorrowing in a pause I dared not break;
Till notice of a change in the dark world
Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird,
That early woke to feed her little ones,
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light:
She moved, and at her feet the volume fell.

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

‘Blame not thyself too much,’ I said, ‘nor blame
Too much the sons of men and barbarous laws;
These were the rough ways of the world till now.
Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know
The woman’s cause is man’s: they rise or sink
Together, dwarf’d or godlike, bond or free:
For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more alone!
Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till at the last she set herself to man,

THE PRINCESS, BOOK VII

Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other ev'n as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men:
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm:
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be!

Sighing she spoke, 'I fear
They will not.'

'Dear, but let us type them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life.'

And again sighing she spoke: 'A dream
That once was mine! what woman taught you this?'

'Alone,' I said, 'from earlier than I know,
Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world,
I loved the woman: he, that doth not, lives
A drowning life, besotted in sweet self,
Or pines in sad experience worse than death,
Or keeps his wing'd affections clipt with crime:

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Yet was there one thro' whom I loved her, one
Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the Gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
And girdled her with music. Happy he
With such a mother! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay.'

‘But I,’

Said Ida, tremulously, ‘so all unlike—
It seems you love to cheat yourself with words:
This mother is your model. I have heard
Of your strange doubts: they well might be: I seem
A mockery to my own self. Never, Prince;
You cannot love me.’

‘Nay but thee,’ I said,
‘From yearlong poring on thy pictured eyes,
Ere seen I loved, and loved thee seen, and saw
Thee woman thro' the crust of iron moods
That mask'd thee from men's reverence up, and forced
Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood: now,
Giv'n back to life, to life indeed, thro' thee,
Indeed I love: the new day comes, the light
Dearer for night, as dearer thou for faults

GUINEVERE

Lived over: lift thine eyes; my doubts are dead,
My haunting sense of hollow shows: the change,
This truthful change in thee has kill'd it. Dear,
Look up, and let thy nature strike on mine,
Like yonder morning on the blind half-world,
Approach and fear not; breathe upon my brows;
In that fine air I tremble, all the past
Melts mist-like into this bright hour, and this
Is morn to more, and all the rich to-come
Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds. Forgive me,
I waste my heart in signs: let be. My bride,
My wife, my life. O we will walk this world.
Yoked in all exercise of noble end,
And so thro' those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee: come,
Yield thyself up: my hopes and thine are one:
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me.'

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been, their wont, a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best
Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd with dust,
He; reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn; for in those days

GUINEVERE

No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,
Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
And he was answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries
'I shudder, some one steps across my grave;'
Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye:
Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd
An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made at her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—
When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
And all this trouble did not pass but grew;
Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,
And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane; and at the last she said,
'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
And if we meet again, some evil chance
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
Before the people, and our lord the King.'
And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
And still they met and met. Again she said,
'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'
And then they were agreed upon a night
(When the good King should not be there) to meet
And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat

GUINEVERE

Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice
'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,' aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell
Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still: then she, 'The end is come,
And I am shamed for ever;' and he said,
'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
And fly to my strong castle overseas:
There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world.'
She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,
For I will draw me into sanctuary,
And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse,
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past,
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:
And in herself she moan'd, 'Too late, too late!'
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a field of death;
For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,
Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine enemies
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it, till her time
To tell you:' and her beauty, grace, and power,
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns;
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lured her from herself; but now,
This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the realm,
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,
'With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering, 'Late! so late!
What hour, I wonder, now?' and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum

GUINEVERE

An air the nuns had taught her, 'Late, so late!'
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,
'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.'
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!
O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.
Then said the little novice prattling to her,

'O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words, the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow
From evil done; right sure am I of that,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
And weighing find them less; for gone is he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
And Modred whom he left in charge of all,
The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King's grief
For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,
Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great.
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done.
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King, it could not be.'

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen,
'Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?'
But openly she answer'd, 'Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's grief,
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life

GUINEVERE

Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders, there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself again,
'Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?'
But openly she spake and said to her,
'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,
Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously,
'Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it;
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turning—there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west:
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he passed the dim-lit woods,
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed:
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and broke
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dream'd; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the butts
While the wine ran: so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,
'Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,
Spirits and men: could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again,
'Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,

GUINEVERE

Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame:
So said my father—and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at those
Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois:
For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea;
And that was Arthur; and they foster'd him
Till he by miracle was approven King:
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth; and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have fall'n,
But that they stay'd him up; nor would he tell
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they have set her on,
Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me,' and bow'd her head nor spake.

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
Full often, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me too
Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?'

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd her,
'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold
Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

GUINEVERE

To which a mournful answer made the Queen:
'O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,
What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,
And weep for her who drew him to his doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where she would
heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,
'Such as thou art be never maiden more
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
And play upon, and harry me, petty spy
And traitress.' When that storm of anger brake
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
White as her veil, and stood before the Queen
As tremulously as foam upon the beach
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
And when the Queen had added 'Get thee hence,'
Fled frightened. Then that other left alone.
Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,
Saying in herself, 'The simple, fearful child

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.
For what is true repentance but in thought—
Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:
And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

And ev'n in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the time
Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dream'd,)
Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth,
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

GUINEVERE

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,
'Not like my Lancelot'—while she brooded thus
And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King.' She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet
Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And grovell'd with her face against the floor:
There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King:
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed, the King's:

'Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea;
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come—from
him,
From waging bitter war with him: and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a knight was slain;
And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The Knighthood-errant of this realm and all

GUINEVERE

The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, "lo mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us, who might be left, could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vext with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:
For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!

GUINEVERE

Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseeded in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their bane.'

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death,
(When first I learnt thee hidden here), is past.
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
"I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,
Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—
Farewell!

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

GUINEVERE

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: 'peradventure,' so she thought,
'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud
'O Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid-air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—
Went on in passionate utterance:

'Gone — my lord!
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world.
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God. Ah, great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb—
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air

GUINEVERE

That pure severity of perfect light—
I yearn'd for warmth and colour which I found
In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest:
It surely was my profit had I known:
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand

Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,
'Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?'
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying "shame."
I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.'

She said: they took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing, 'is it yet too late?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,

MORTE D'ARTHUR

King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king:
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey, then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,

MORTE D'ARTHUR

Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
‘Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho’ I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look’d again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish’d him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.’

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
‘My end draws nigh; ’t is time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.’

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro’ his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O’er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro’ the place of tombs.

But, as he walk’d, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh’d the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, ‘Quick, quick!

MORTE D'ARTHUR

I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them
rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his
lips.

So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

MORTE D'ARTHUR

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
 And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within Himself make pure! but thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere

SELECTIONS FROM EPIC POEMS

Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

IV

PERSONAL AND PHILOSOPHIC POEMS

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

THE POET

THE poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above;
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,
He saw thro' his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,

Before him lay: with echoing feet he threaded
The secretest walks of fame:
The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed
And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,
And of so fierce a flight,
From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore
Them earthward till they lit;
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,
The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew
Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew
A flower all gold,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
The winged shafts of truth,
To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with beams,
Tho' one did fling the fire.
Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many dreams
Of high desire.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world
Like one great garden show'd,
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd,
Rare sunrise flow'd.

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow,
When rites and forms before his burning eyes
Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden robes
Sunn'd by those orient skies;
But round about the circles of the globes
Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was traced in flame
WISDOM, a name to shake
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.
And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,
And as the lightning to the thunder
Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,
Making earth wonder,

THE POET'S SONG

So was their meaning to her words. No sword
Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his* word
She shook the world.

THE POET'S SONG

THE rain had fallen, the Poet arose,
He pass'd by the town and out of the street,
A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,
And waves of shadow went over the wheat,
And he sat him down in a lonely place,
And chanted a melody loud and sweet,
That made the wild-swan pause in her cloud,
And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly,
The snake slipt under a spray,
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,
And stared, with his foot on the prey,
And the nightingale thought, 'I have sung many songs,
But never a one so gay,
For he sings of what the world will be
When the years have died away.'

TO ———

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM

I SEND you here a sort of allegory,
(For you will understand it) of a soul,
A sinful soul possess'd of many gifts,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
That did love Beauty only (Beauty seen
In all varieties of mould and mind),
And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,
Good only for its beauty, seeing not
That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters
That dote upon each other, friends to man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sunder'd without tears.
And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie,
Howling in outer darkness. Not for this
Was common clay ta'en from the common earth
Moulded by God, and temper'd with the tears
Of angels to the perfect shape of man.

THE PALACE OF ART

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well.'

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd brass
I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf
The rock rose clear, or winding stair.

THE PALACE OF ART

My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.

And 'While the world runs round and round,' I said,
'Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his stedfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring.'

To which my soul made answer readily:
'Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal-rich and wide.'

* * * * *
* * * * *

Four courts I made, East, West and South and North,
In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran a row
Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
That lent broad verge to distant lands,
Far as the wild swan wings, to where the sky
Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one swell
Across the mountain stream'd below

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

In misty folds, that floating as they fell
Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd
To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, 'And who shall gaze upon
My palace with unblinded eyes,
While this great bow will waver in the sun,
And that sweet incense rise?'

For that sweet incense rose and never fail'd,
And, while day sank or mounted higher,
The light aërial gallery, golden-rail'd,
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd and traced,
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
From shadow'd grotts of arches interlaced,
And tipt with frost-like spires.

* * * * *

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
Thro' which the livelong day my soul did pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
All various, each a perfect whole

THE PALACE OF ART

From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and blue,
Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter blew
His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry waves.
You seem'd to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
And hoary to the wind.

And one a foreground black with stones and slags,
Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
All barr'd with long white cloud the scornful crags,
And highest, snow and fire.

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

And one, an English home—gray twilight pour'd
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there
Not less than truth design'd.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
An angel look'd at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise
A group of Houris bow'd to see
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watch'd by weeping queens.

THE PALACE OF ART

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw
The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian king to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd
A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne:
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one hand grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky
Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, design'd.

* * * * *

Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
The royal dais round.

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and stings;
Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod: and those great bells
Began to chime. She took her throne:

THE PALACE OF ART

She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost Oriels' coloured flame
Two godlike faces gazed below;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion were
Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd fair
In diverse raiment strange:

Thro' which the lights, rose, amber, emerald, blue,
Flush'd in her temples and her eyes,
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon, drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echo'd song
Throb thro' the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five;

Communing with herself: 'All these are mine,
And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me.' She—when young night divine
Crown'd dying day with stars,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and cried,
'I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,
Be flatter'd to the height.

'O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
O shapes and hues that please me well!
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

'O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

'In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.'

Then of the moral instinct would she prate
And of the rising from the dead,
As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate;
And at the last she said:

'I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.

THE PALACE OF ART

I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.'

* * * * *

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prosper'd: so three years
She prosper'd: on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
Struck thro' with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of Personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turn'd her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, 'Mene, mene,' and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
Laughter at her self-scorn.

'What! is not this my place of strength,' she said,
'My spacious mansion built for me,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
Since my first memory?’

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades, enclosing hearts of flame,
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,
That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem’d my soul,
’Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock’d in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
Join’d not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Roll’d round by one fix’d law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curl’d.
‘No voice,’ she shriek’d in that lone hall,
‘No voice breaks thro’ the stillness of this world:
One deep, deep silence all!’

THE PALACE OF ART

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,
Inwraught tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
And all alone in crime:

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
With blackness as a solid wall,
Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound
Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,
In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, 'I have found
A new land, but I die.'

She howl'd aloud, 'I am on fire within.
There comes no murmur of reply.'

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die?’

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.
‘Make me a cottage in the vale,’ she said,
‘Where I may mourn and pray.

‘Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built:
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.’

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

I

O YOUNG Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician
With eyes of wonder,
I am Merlin,
And *I* am dying,
I am Merlin
Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard
Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

And learn'd me Magic!
Great the Master,
And sweet the Magic,
When over the valley,
In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Floated The Gleam.

III

Once at the croak of a Raven who crost it,
A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic,
And deaf to the melody,
Snarl'd at and cursed me.
A demon vext me,
The light retreated,
The landskip darken'd,
The melody deaden'd,
The Master whisper'd,
'Follow The Gleam.'

IV

Then to the melody,
Over a wilderness
Gliding, and glancing at
Elf of the woodland,
Gnome of the cavern,
Griffin and Giant,
And dancing of Fairies

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

In desolate hollows,
And wraiths of the mountain,
And rolling of dragons
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitted The Gleam.

v

Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river,
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,
Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Of lowly labour,
Slided The Gleam—

VI

Then, with a melody
Stronger and statelier,
Led me at length
To the city and palace
Of Arthur the king;
Touch'd at the golden
Cross of the churches,

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

Flash'd on the Tournament,
Flicker'd and bicker'd
From helmet to helmet,
And last on the forehead
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness
Closed upon Camelot;
Arthur had vanish'd
I knew not whither,
The king who loved me,
And cannot die;
For out of the darkness
Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry glimmer
On icy fallow
And faded forest,
Drew to the valley
Named of the shadow,
And slowly brightening
Out of the glimmer,
And slowly moving again to a melody
Yearningly tender,
Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,
Would break into blossom;
And so to the land's
Last limit I came ——
And can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers The Gleam.

IX

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,

‘FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE’

And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

‘FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE’

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!
So they row'd, and there we landed—‘O venusta
Sirmio!’
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer
glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple
flowers grow,
Came that ‘Ave atque Vale’ of the Poet's hopeless
woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hundred years
ago,
‘Frater Ave atque Vale,’—as we wander'd to and
fro,
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake be-
low,
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

TO VIRGIL

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE MANTUANS FOR
THE NINETEENTH CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH

I
ROMAN Virgil, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

II

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

III

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;

IV

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

V

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

VI

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

MILTON

VII

Light among the vanish'd ages;
 star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
 kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

VIII

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
 fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
 sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

IX

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
 and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
 sunder'd once from all the human race,

X

I salute thee, Mantovano,
 I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
 ever moulded by the lips of man.

MILTON

ALCAICS

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,
 Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,

OF THE POET AND HIS ART

Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrëan
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Edèn mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

OF PATRIOTISM

“OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS”

OF old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet:
Above her shook the starry lights:
She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro' town and field
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men reveal'd
The fullness of her face—

ENGLAND AND AMERICA

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown:

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes!

ENGLAND AND AMERICA IN 1782

O THOU, that sendest out the man
To rule by land and sea,
Strong mother of a Lion-line,
Be proud of those strong sons of thine
Who wrench'd their rights from thee!

What wonder, if in noble heat
Those men thine arms withstood,
Retaught the lesson thou hadst taught,
And in thy spirit with thee fought—
Who sprang from English blood!

But Thou rejoice with liberal joy,
Lift up thy rocky face,
And shatter, when the storms are black,

OF PATRIOTISM

In many a streaming torrent back,
The seas that shock thy base!

Whatever harmonies of law
The growing world assume,
Thy work is thine—The single note
From that deep chord which Hampden smote
Will vibrate to the doom.

TO THE QUEEN

REVERED, beloved—O you that hold
A nobler office upon earth
Than arms, or power of brain, or birth
Could give the warrior kings of old,

Victoria,—since your Royal grace
To one of less desert allows
This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that utter'd nothing base;

And should your greatness, and the care
That yokes with empire, yield you time
To make demand of modern rhyme
If aught of ancient worth be there;

Then—while a sweeter music wakes,
And thro' wild March the throstle calls,
Where all about your palace-walls
The sun-lit almond-blossom shakes—

Take, Madam, this poor book of song;
For tho' the faults were thick as dust

ODE ON THE DEATH OF WELLINGTON

In vacant chambers, I could trust
Your kindness. May you rule us long,

And leave us rulers of your blood

As noble till the latest day!

May children of our children say,
'She wrought her people lasting good;

'Her court was pure; her life serene;

God gave her peace; her land reposed;

A thousand claims to reverence closed

In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen;

'And statesmen at her council met

Who knew the seasons when to take

Occasion by the hand, and make

The bounds of freedom wider yet

'By shaping some august decree,

Which kept her throne unshaken still,

Broad-based upon her people's will,

And compass'd by the inviolate sea.'

· *March, 1851*

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

PUBLISHED IN 1852

I

BURY the Great Duke

With an empire's lamentation,

Let us bury the Great Duke

[269]

OF PATRIOTISM

To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the Past.
No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,

ODE ON THE DEATH OF WELLINGTON

Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good gray head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!
Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

v

All is over and done:
Render thanks to the Giver,
England, for thy son.
Let the bell be toll'd.
Render thanks to the Giver,
And render him to the mould.
Under the cross of gold
That shines over city and river,
There he shall rest for ever
Among the wise and the bold.
Let the bell be toll'd:
And a reverent people behold
The towering car, the sable steeds:
Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
Dark in its funeral fold.

OF PATRIOTISM

Let the bell be toll'd:
And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;
And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd
Thro' the dome of the golden cross;
And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;
He knew their voices of old.
For many a time in many a clime
His captain's-ear has heard them boom
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom:
When he with those deep voices wrought,
Guarding realms and kings from shame;
With those deep voices our dead captain taught
The tyrant, and asserts his claim
In that dread sound to the great name,
Which he has worn so pure of blame,
In praise and in dispraise the same,
A man of well-attemper'd frame.
O civic muse, to such a name,
To such a name for ages long,
To such a name,
Preserve a broad approach of fame,
And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
With banner and with music, with soldier and with
priest,
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?
Mighty Seaman, this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea.
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,

ODE ON THE DEATH OF WELLINGTON

The greatest sailor since our world began.
Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
To thee the greatest soldier comes;
For this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea;
His foes were thine; he kept us free;
O give him welcome, this is he
Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
And worthy to be laid by thee;
For this is England's greatest son,
He that gain'd a hundred fights,
Nor ever lost an English gun;
This is he that far away
Against the myriads of Assaye
Clash'd with his fiery few and won;
And underneath another sun,
Warring on a later day,
Round affrighted Lisbon drew
The treble works, the vast designs
Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
Where he greatly stood at bay,
Whence he issued forth anew,
And ever great and greater grew,
Beating from the wasted vines
Back to France her banded swarms,
Back to France with countless blows,
Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
Follow'd up in valley and glen
With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,

OF PATRIOTISM

And England pouring on her foes.
Such a war had such a close.
Again their ravening eagle rose
In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,
And barking for the thrones of kings;
Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down;
A day of onsets of despair!
Dash'd on every rocky square
Their surging charges foam'd themselves away;
Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;
Thro' the long-tormented air
Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
And down we swept and charged and overthrew.
So great a soldier taught us there,
What long-enduring hearts could do
In that world-earthquake, Waterloo!
Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
If aught of things that here befall
Touch a spirit among things divine,
If love of country move thee there at all,
Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine!
And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
In full acclaim,
A people's voice,
The proof and echo of all human fame,
A people's voice, when they rejoice
At civic revel and pomp and game,

ODE ON THE DEATH OF WELLINGTON

Attest their great commander's claim
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
Eternal honour to his name.

VII

A people's voice! we are a people yet.
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers;
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
His Briton in blown seas and storming showers,
We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
Of boundless love and reverence and regret
To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.
And keep it ours, O God, from brute control;
O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom sown
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings;
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts;
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall;
His voice is silent in your council-hall
For ever; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent; even if they broke

OF PATRIOTISM

In thunder, silent; yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke;
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;
Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
Thro' either babbling world of high and low;
Whose life was work, whose language rife
With rugged maxims hewn from life;
Who never spoke against a foe;
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
All great self-seekers trampling on the right:
Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named;
Truth-lover was our English Duke;
Whatever record leap to light
He never shall be shamed.

VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
He, on whom from both her open hands
Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
Yea, let all good things await
Him who cares not to be great,
But as he saves or serves the state.
Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory:
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,

ODE ON THE DEATH OF WELLINGTON

He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outred
All voluptuous garden-roses.
Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory:
He, that ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevail'd,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.
Such was he: his work is done.
But while the races of mankind endure,
Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land,
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure:
Till in all lands and thro' all human story
The path of duty be the way to glory:
And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame
For many and many an age proclaim
At civic revel and pomp and game,
And when the long-illumined cities flame,
Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung
By some yet unmoulded tongue
Far on in summers that we shall not see:

OF PATRIOTISM

Peace, it is a day of pain
For one about whose patriarchal knee
Late the little children clung:
O peace, it is a day of pain
For one, upon whose hand and heart and brain
Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
Ours the pain, be his the gain!
More than is of man's degree
Must be with us, watching here
At this, our great solemnity.
Whom we see not we revere;
We revere, and we refrain
From talk of battles loud and vain,
And brawling memories all too free
For such a wise humility
As befits a solemn fane:
We revere, and while we hear
The tides of Music's golden sea
Setting toward eternity,
Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
Until we doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo,
And Victor he must ever be.
For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will;
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?

THE VISION OF SIN

On God and Godlike men we build our trust.
Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears:
The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears:
The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
He is gone who seem'd so great.—
Gone; but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here, and we believe him
Something far advanced in State,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that men can weave him.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.

1852

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

· · ·

THE VISION OF SIN

I

I HAD a vision when the night was late:
A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.
He rode a horse with wings, that would have flown,
But that his heavy rider kept him down.
And from the palace came a child of sin,
And took him by the curls, and led him in,
Where sat a company with heated eyes,
Expecting when a fountain should arise:

[279]

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

A sleepy light upon their brows and lips—
As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse,
Dreams over lake and lawn, and isles and capes—
Suffused them, sitting, lying, languid shapes,
By heaps of gourds, and skins of wine, and piles of
grapes.

II

Then methought I heard a mellow sound,
Gathering up from all the lower ground;
Narrowing in to where they sat assembled
Low voluptuous music winding trembled,
Wov'n in circles: they that heard it sigh'd,
Panted hand-in-hand with faces pale,
Swung themselves, and in low tones replied;
Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail;
Then the music touch'd the gates and died;
Rose again from where it seem'd to fail,
Storm'd in orbs of song, a growing gale;
Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,
As 't were a hundred-throated nightingale,
The strong tempestuous treble throb'd and palpitated;
Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
Flung the torrent rainbow round:
Then they started from their places,
Moved with violence, changed in hue,
Caught each other with wild grimaces,
Half-invisible to the view,
Wheeling with precipitate paces

THE VISION OF SIN

To the melody, till they flew,
Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces,
Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
Like to Furies, like to Graces,
Dash'd together in blinding dew:
Till, kill'd with some luxurious agony,
The nerve-dissolving melody
Flutter'd headlong from the sky.

III

And then I look'd up toward a mountain-tract,
That girt the region with high cliff and lawn:
I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
Unheeded: and detaching, fold by fold,
From those still heights, and, slowly drawing near,
A vapour heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
Came floating on for many a month and year,
Unheeded: and I thought I would have spoken,
And warn'd that madman ere it grew too late:
But, as in dreams, I could not. Mine was broken,
When that cold vapour touch'd the palace gate,
And link'd again. I saw within my head
A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death,
Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
And lighted at a ruin'd inn, and said:

IV

'Wrinkled ostler, grim and thin!
Here is custom come your way;

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Take my brute, and lead him in,
Stuff his ribs with mouldy hay.

‘Bitter barmaid, waning fast!
See that sheets are on my bed;
What! the flower of life is past:
It is long before you wed.

‘Slip-shod waiter, lank and sour,
At the Dragon on the heath!
Let us have a quiet hour,
Let us hob-and-nob with Death.

‘I am old, but let me drink;
Bring me spices, bring me wine;
I remember, when I think,
That my youth was half divine.

‘Wine is good for shrivell’d lips,
When a blanket wraps the day,
When the rotten woodland drips,
And the leaf is stamp’d in clay.

‘Sit thee down, and have no shame,
Cheek by jowl, and knee by knee:
What care I for any name?
What for order or degree?

‘Let me screw thee up a peg:
Let me loose thy tongue with wine:
Callest thou that thing a leg?
Which is thinnest? thine or mine?

THE VISION OF SIN

‘Thou shalt not be saved by works:

Thou hast been a sinner too:
Ruin’d trunks on wither’d forks,
Empty scarecrows, I and you!

‘Fill the cup, and fill the can:

Have a rouse before the morn:
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.

‘We are men of ruin’d blood;

Therefore comes it we are wise.
Fish are we that love the mud,
Rising to no fancy-flies.

‘Name and fame! to fly sublime

Thro’ the courts, the camps, the schools,
Is to be the ball of Time,
Banded by the hands of fools.

‘Friendship!—to be two in one—

Let the canting liar pack!
Well I know, when I am gone,
How she mouths behind my back.

‘Virtue!—to be good and just—

Every heart, when sifted well,
Is a clot of warmer dust,
Mix’d with cunning sparks of hell.

‘O! we two as well can look

Whited thought and cleanly life

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

As the priest, above his book
Leering at his neighbour's wife.

'Fill the cup, and fill the can:
Have a rouse before the morn:
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.

'Drink, and let the parties rave:
They are fill'd with idle spleen;
Rising, falling, like a wave,
For they know not what they mean.

'He that roars for liberty
Faster binds a tyrant's power;
And the tyrant's cruel glee
Forces on the freer hour.

'Fill the can, and fill the cup:
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

'Greet her with applausive breath,
Freedom, gaily doth she tread;
In her right a civic wreath,
In her left a human head.

'No, I love not what is new;
She is of an ancient house:
And I think we know the hue
Of that cap upon her brows.

THE VISION OF SIN

‘Let her go! her thirst she slakes
Where the bloody conduit runs,
Then her sweetest meal she makes
On the first-born of her sons.

‘Drink to lofty hopes that cool
Visions of a perfect State:
Drink we, last, the public fool,
Frantic love and frantic hate.

‘Chant me now some wicked stave,
Till thy drooping courage rise,
And the glow-worm of the grave
Glimmer in thy rheumy eyes.

‘Fear not thou to loose thy tongue;
Set thy hoary fancies free;
What is loathsome to the young
Savours well to thee and me.

‘Change, reverting to the years,
When thy nerves could understand
What there is in loving tears,
And the warmth of hand in hand.

‘Tell me tales of thy first love
April hopes, the fools of chance;
Till the graves begin to move,
And the dead begin to dance.

‘Fill the can, and fill the cup:
All the windy ways of men

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

‘Trooping from their mouldy dens
The chap-fallen circle spreads:
Welcome, fellow-citizens,
Hollow hearts and empty heads!

‘You are bones, and what of that?
Every face, however full,
Padded round with flesh and fat,
Is but modell’d on a skull.

‘Death is king, and Vivat Rex!
Tread a measure on the stones,
Madam—if I know your sex,
From the fashion of your bones.

‘No, I cannot praise the fire
In your eye—nor yet your lip:
All the more do I admire
Joints of cunning workmanship.

‘Lo! Gbd’s likeness—the ground-plan—
Neither modell’d, glazed, nor framed:
Buss me, thou rough sketch of man,
Far too naked to be shamed!

‘Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,
While we keep a little breath!
Drink to heavy Ignorance!
Hob-and-nob with brother Death!

THE VISION OF SIN

‘Thou art mazed, the night is long,
And the longer night is near:
What! I am not all as wrong
As a bitter jest is dear.

‘Youthful hopes, by scores, to all,
When the locks are crisp and curl’d;
Unto me my maudlin gall
And my mockeries of the world.

‘Fill the cup, and fill the can:
Mingle madness, mingle scorn!
Dregs of life, and lees of man:
Yet we will not die forlorn.’

v

The voice grew faint: there came a further change:
Once more uprose the mystic mountain-range:
Below were men and horses pierced with worms,
And slowly quickening into lower forms;
By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of dross,
Old splash of rains, and refuse patch’d with moss.
Then some one spake: ‘Behold! it was a crime
Of sense avenged by sense that wore with time.’
Another said: ‘The crime of sense became
The crime of malice, and is equal blame.’
And one: ‘He had not wholly quench’d his power;
A little grain of conscience made him sour.’
At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, ‘Is there any hope?’
To which an answer peal’d from that high land,

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

But in a tongue no man could understand;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

THE ANCIENT SAGE

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of Christ
From out his ancient city came a Seer
Whom one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand
A scroll of verse—till that old man before
A cavern whence an affluent fountain pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is higher,
Yon summit half-a-league in air—and higher,
The cloud that hides it—higher still, the heavens
Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout
The cloud descended. Force is from the heights.
I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills.
What hast thou there? Some deathsong for the Ghouls
To make their banquet relish? let me read.

“How far thro' all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard!

What power but the bird's could make
This music in the bird?

How summer-bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue!

THE ANCIENT SAGE

And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue?
But man to-day is fancy's fool
As man hath ever been.
The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen."

If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.

And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.

And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

"And since—from when this earth began—
The Nameless never came

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Among us, never spake with man,
And never named the Name"—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!
She reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No,'
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd 'Mirage'!

“What Power? aught akin to Mind,
The mind in me and you?
Or power as of the Gods gone blind
Who see not what they do?”

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this house of ours,

THE ANCIENT SAGE

So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man,
A beauty with defect——till That which knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

“What Power but the Years that make
And break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
The bloom that fades away?
What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?”

The days and hours are ever glancing by,
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain;
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour;
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to
thought,
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now:
This double seeming of the single world!—
My words are like the babblings in a dream
Of nightmare, when the babblings break the dream.
But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

“The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air
Would loose him from his hold;
His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while”—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow life
Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

“The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile.”

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

“The statesman's brain that sway'd the past
Is feebler than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas;
The warrior hath forgot his arms,

THE ANCIENT SAGE

The Learned all his lore;
The changing market frets or charms
The merchant's hope no more;
The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
And now is lost in cloud;
The plowman passes, bent with pain,
To mix with what he plow'd;
The poet whom his Age would quote
As heir of endless fame—
He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
Not even his own name.
For man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
Had set the lily and rose
By all my ways where'er they ran,
Have ended mortal foes;
My rose of love for ever gone,
My lily of truth and trust—
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.
O rosetree planted in my grief,
And growing, on her tomb,
Her dust is greening in your leaf,
Her blood is in your bloom.
O slender lily waving there,
And laughing back the light,

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'
When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness is in man?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then
Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory in all
The splendours and the voices of the world!
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
As laughter over wine,
And vain the laughter as the tears,
O brother, mine or thine,
For all that laugh, and all that weep,
And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends! and set
The lamps alight, and call

THE ANCIENT SAGE

For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my son——
But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the heavens
Her shadow crown'd with stars—and yonder—out
To northward—some that never set, but pass
From sight and night to lose themselves in day.
I hate the black negation of the bier,
And wish the dead, as happier than ourselves
And higher, having climb'd one step beyond
Our village miseries, might be borne in white
To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence
With songs in praise of death, and crown'd with flowers!

"O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings!"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the Past.'
The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and gone!'
A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy?
I know not and I speak of what has been.

And more, my son! for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

“And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain;”

The clouds themselves are children of the Sun.

“And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign.”

And Day and Night are children of the Sun,
And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
Some say, the Light was father of the Night,
And some, the Night was father of the Light,
No night no day!—I touch thy world again—
No ill no good! such counter-terms, my son,
Are border-races, holding, each its own

THE ANCIENT SAGE

By endless war: but night enough is there
In yon dark city: get thee back: and since
The key to that weird casket, which for thee
But holds a skull, is neither thine nor mine,
But in the hand of what is more than man,
Or in man's hand when man is more than man,
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
A dying echo from a falling wall;
Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous looms;
Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine;
Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness;
And more—think well! Do-well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood;
But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire,
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—be-
yond

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!

So, farewell.

“FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL”

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and
the plains—

Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He
seems?

Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live
in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from
Him?

Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but that which has power to feel 'I
am I'?

WILL

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy
doom
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour
and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with
Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands
and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent
in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man
cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it
not He?

WILL

I

O WELL for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong:
For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
Who seems a promontory of rock,
That, compass'd round with turbulent sound,
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crown'd.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

II

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,
Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,
And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,
Or seeming-genial venial fault,
Recurring and suggesting still!
He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
Toiling in immeasurable sand,
And o'er a weary sultry land,
Far beneath a blazing vault,
Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,
The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

WAGES

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an end-
less sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the
wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.
The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be
dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the
worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the
just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer
sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

THE DESERTED HOUSE

I

LIFE and Thought have gone away
Side by side,
Leaving door and windows wide:
Careless tenants they!

II

All within is dark as night:
In the windows is no light;
And no murmur at the door,
So frequent on its hinge before.

III

Close the door, the shutters close,
Or thro' the windows we shall see
The nakedness and vacancy
Of the dark deserted house.

IV

Come away: no more of mirth
Is here or merry-making sound.
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground.

V

Come away: for Life and Thought
Here no longer dwell;
But in a city glorious—
A great and distant city—have bought
A mansion incorruptible.
Would they could have stayed with us!

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

“BREAK, BREAK, BREAK”

BREAK, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest white,
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

SELECTIONS FROM

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII

PROLOGUE

STRONG SON of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest Life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me;
What seem'd my worth since I began;
For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

I

I held it truth, with him who sings
 To one clear harp in divers tones,
 That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
 And find in loss a gain to match?
 Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
 Let darkness keep her raven gloss:
 Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
 The long result of Love, and boast,
 'Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn.'

VII

Dark house, by which once more I stand
 Here in the long unlovely street,
 Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
 And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

He is not here; but far away
 The noise of life begins again,
 And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

IX

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
 Sailed the placid ocean-plains
 With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
 In vain; a favourable speed
 Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
 Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
 As our pure love, thro' early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
 Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
 Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
 Till all my widow'd race be run;
 Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

XI

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
And sometimes harshly will he speak:
'This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men.'

Another answers, 'Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth: 'Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

‘A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?’

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol’n away.

XXIII

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
Or breaking into song by fits,
Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloak’d from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
I wander, often falling lame,
And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it ran
Thro’ lands where not a leaf was dumb;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan:

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
And all was good that Time could bring,
And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXXI

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house return'd,

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave?

‘Where wert thou, brother, those four days?’
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

XXXII

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

XXXIII

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good:
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.

XXXVI

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin;

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

XLV

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that 'this is I:'

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'
And finds 'I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
Which else were fruitless of their due,

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

Had man to learn himself anew
Beyond the second birth of Death.

XLVII

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good:
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'

L

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

LIV

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.
Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

So runs my dream: but what am I?
 An infant crying in the night:
 An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

LV

The wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
 That Nature lends such evil dreams?
 So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
 Her secret meaning in her deeds,
 And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
 And falling with my weight of cares
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
 And gather dust and chaff, and call
 To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

LXX

I cannot see the features right,
 When on the gloom I strive to paint
 The face I know; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
 A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
 A hand that points, and palled shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
 And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;
 Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will
 I hear a wizard music roll,
 And thro' a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

LXXIV

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
 To those that watch it more and more,
 A likeness, hardly seen before,
Comes out—to some one of his race:

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
 I see thee what thou art, and know
 Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

But there is more than I can see,
 And what I see I leave unsaid,
 Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
His darkness beautiful with thee.

LXXVIII

Again at Christmas did we weave
 The holly round the Christmas hearth;
 The silent snow possess'd the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve:

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
 No wing of wind the region swept,
 But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
 Again our ancient games had place,
 The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who show'd a token of distress?
 No single tear, no mark of pain:
 O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
 No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
 Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

LXXXII

I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth:
I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, elsewhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart:
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

LXXXIII

Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year delaying long;
Thou doest expectant nature wrong;
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud
And flood a fresher throat with song.

LXXXV

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
'T is better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all—

O true in word, and tried in deed,
Demanding, so to bring relief
To this which is our common grief,
What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above
Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;
And whether love for him have drain'd
My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
A faithful answer from the breast,
Thro' light reproaches, half exprest,
And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,
Till on mine ear this message falls,

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

That in Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
That range above our mortal state,
In circle round the blessed gate,
Received and gave him welcome there;

And led him thro' the blissful climes,
And show'd him in the fountain fresh
All knowledge that the sons of flesh
Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
Whose life, whose thoughts were little worth,
To wander on a darken'd earth,
Where all things round me breathed of him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,
O heart, with kindest motion warm,
O sacred essence, other form,
O solemn ghost, O crowned soul!

Yet none could better know than I,
How much of act at human hands
The sense of human will demands
By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine;

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM.

A life that all the Muses deck'd
 With gifts of grace, that might express
 All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilising intellect:

And so my passion hath not swerved
 To works of weakness, but I find
 An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
 That loved to handle spiritual strife,
 Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
 For other friends that once I met;
 Nor can it suit me to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love: I count it crime
 To mourn for any overmuch;
 I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had master'd Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
 Eternal, separate from fears:
 The all-assuming months and years
Can take no part away from this:

But Summer on the steaming floods,
 And Spring that swells the narrow brooks,

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,
That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave
Recalls, in change of light or gloom,
My old affection of the tomb,
And my prime passion in the grave:

My old affection of the tomb,
A part of stillness, yearns to speak:
'Arise, and get thee forth and seek
A friendship for the years to come.

'I watch thee from the quiet shore;
Thy spirit up to mine can reach;
But in dear words of human speech
We two communicate no more.'

And I, 'Can clouds of nature stain
The starry clearness of the free?
How is it? Canst thou feel for me
Some painless sympathy with pain?'

And lightly does the whisper fall;
'T is hard for thee to fathom this;
I triumph in conclusive bliss,
And that serene result of all.'

So hold I commerce with the dead;
Or so methinks the dead would say;
Or so shall grief with symbols play
And pining life be fancy-fed.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

Now looking to some settled end,
 That these things pass, and I shall prove
 A meeting somewhere, love with love,
I crave your pardon, O my friend;

If not so fresh, with love as true,
 I, clasping brother-hands, aver
 I could not, if I would, transfer
The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart
 The promise of the golden hours?
 First love, first friendship, equal powers,
That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,
 That beats within a lonely place,
 That yet remembers his embrace,
But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, tho' widow'd, may not rest
 Quite in the love of what is gone,
 But seeks to beat in time with one
That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,
 Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
 The primrose of the later year,
As not unlike to that of Spring.

LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
 That rollest from the gorgeous gloom

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odour streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

LXXXVIII

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

XC

He tasted love with half his mind,
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
Where nighest heaven, who first could fling
This bitter seed among mankind;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes
Were closed with wail, resume their life,
They would but find in child and wife
An iron welcome when they rise:

'T was well, indeed, when warm with wine,
To pledge them with a kindly tear,
To talk them o'er, to wish them here,
To count their memories half divine;

But if they came who past away,
Behold their brides in other hands;
The hard heir strides about their lands,
And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, tho' their sons were none of these,
Not less the yet-loved sire would make
Confusion worse than death, and shake
The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me:
Whatever change the years have wrought,
I find not yet one lonely thought
That cries against my wish for thee.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

XCVI

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

CIV

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CVI

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CXI

The churl in spirit, up or down
Along the scale of ranks, thro' all,
To him who grasps a golden ball,
By blood a king, at heart a clown;

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons thro' the gilded pale:

For who can always act? but he,
 To whom a thousand memories call,
 Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seem'd to be,

Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
And native growth of noble mind;

Nor ever narrowness or spite,
 Or villain fancy fleeting by,
 Drew in the expression of an eye,
Where God and Nature met in light;

And thus he bore without abuse
 The grand old name of gentleman,
 Defamed by every charlatan,
And soil'd with all ignoble use.

CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
 Now burgeons every maze of quick
 About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,
 And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

CXIX

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps
I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

CXX

I trust I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was *born* to other things.

CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

SELECTIONS FROM IN MEMORIAM

CXXIV

That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

CXXVI

Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

CXXXI

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquer'd years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

PREFATORY POEM
TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS

MIDNIGHT, JUNE 30, 1879

I

MIDNIGHT—in no midsummer tune
The breakers lash the shores:
The cuckoo of a joyless June
Is calling out of doors:

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

And thou hast vanish'd from thine own
To that which looks like rest,
True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

II

Midnight—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark:

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,
True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

III

And, now to these unsummer'd skies
The summer bird is still,
Far off a phantom cuckoo cries
From out a phantom hill;

And thro' this midnight breaks the sun
Of sixty years away,
The light of days when life begun,
The days that seem to-day,

When all my griefs were shared with thee,
As all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me,
May all thou art be mine!

VASTNESS

VASTNESS

I

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after many
a vanish'd face,
Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust
of a vanish'd race.

II

Raving politics, never at rest—as this poor earth's
pale history runs,—
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a
million million of suns?

III

Lies upon this side, lies upon that side, truthless vio-
lence mourn'd by the Wise,
Thousands of voices drowning his own in a popular
torrent of lies upon lies;

IV

Stately purposes, valour in battle, glorious annals of
army and fleet,
Death for the right cause, death for the wrong cause,
trumpets of victory, groans of defeat;

V

Innocence seethed in her mother's milk, and Charity
setting the martyr aflame;
Thralldom who walks with the banner of Freedom, and
recks not to ruin a realm in her name.

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

VI

Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the gloom of
doubts that darken the schools;
Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand, follow'd
up by her vassal legion of fools;

VII

Trade flying over a thousand seas with her spice and
her vintage, her silk and her corn;
Desolate offing, sailorless harbours, famishing popu-
lace, wharves forlorn;

VIII

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise; gloom of
the evening, Life at a close;
Pleasure who flaunts on her wide down-way with her
flying robe and her poison'd rose;

IX

Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of Pleasure, a
worm which writhes all day, and at night
Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper, and stings
him back to the curse of the light;

X

Wealth with his wines and his wedded harlots; honest
Poverty, bare to the bone;
Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty; Flattery gilding the
rift in a throne;

VASTNESS

XI

Fame blowing out from her golden trumpet a jubilant
challenge to Time and to Fate;
Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on all the
laurel'd graves of the Great;

XII

Love for the maiden, crown'd with marriage, no re-
grets for aught that has been,
Household happiness, gracious children, debtless com-
petence, golden mean;

XIII

National hatreds of whole generations, and pigmy
spites of the village spire;
Vows that will last to the last death-ruckle, and vows
that are snapt in a moment of fire;

XIV

He that has lived for the lust of the minute, and died
in the doing it, flesh without mind;
He that has nail'd all flesh to the Cross, till Self died
out in the love of his kind;

XV

Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, and all
these old revolutions of earth;
All new-old revolutions of Empire — change of the tide
— what is all of it worth?

OF THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

XVI

What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, varying voices of prayer?
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy with all that is fair?

XVII

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-coffins at last,
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the deeps of a meaningless Past?

XVIII

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's anger of bees in their hive?—

.
Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever: the dead are not dead but alive.

CROSSING THE BAR

SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

CROSSING THE BAR

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 046 722 5

