





THE
POETICAL WORKS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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ROBERT BROWNING.

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DEDICATION.

TO MY FATHER.

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you, who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world : nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that *you*, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that *you*, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them every day,—that *you*, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again ; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavored to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts.

E. B. B.

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POEMS.

THE SERAPHIM.

PART THE FIRST.

It is the time of the Crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two Seraphim, Ador the Strong and Zerah the Bright One.

The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more!
Beside this gate of Heaven we stand alone.

Zerah. Of Heaven!

Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone before.

Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their bands of fire,
Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore.

Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea shore!

Ador. There the shadow from the throne—

Formless with infinity,
Hovers o'er the crystal sea;
Awfuller than light derived,

And red with those primæval heats
Whereby all life has lived.

Zerah. Our visible God, our heavenly seats!

Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent has died
To a still sound, as thunder into rain.

Immeasurable space spreads magnified
With that thick life, along the plane

The worlds slid out on. What a fall
And eddy of wings innumerable, crossed

By trailing curls that have not lost
The glitter of the God-smile shed

On every prostrate angel's head!

What gleaming up of hands that fling
Their homage in retorted rays,

From high instinct of worshipping.

And habitude of praise.

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us.

Pointed palm and wing and hair,
Indistinguishable show us

Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,

As if a new creation heard

Some divine and plastic word,

And trembling at its new found being.

Awakened at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait for seeing.

His voice, it is, that thrills us so

As we our harpstrings, uttered *Go*,

Behold the Holy in his woe—

And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee!

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne

In hierarchical degree,

What time the Voice said *Go*.

And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the tone

Which swept through Heaven the alien
name of *woe*,

Or whether the subtle glory broke
Through my strong and shielding
wings,

Bearing to my finite essence
Incapacious of their presence,
Infinite imaginings,

None knoweth save the Throned who
spoke;

But I, who, at creation, stood upright
And heard the God-Breath move,
Shaping the words that lightened, 'Be
there light,'

Nor trembled but with love,
Now fell down shudderingly,

My face upon the pavement whence I
had towered,

As if in mine immortal overpowered
By God's eternity.

Zerah. Let me wait!—let me wait!—
Ador. Nay, gaze not backward
through the gate.

God fills our heaven with God's own
solitude

Till all the pavements glow :
His Godhead being no more subdued
By itself, to glories low

Which seraphs can sustain,
What if thou, in gazing so,
Should behold but only one
Attribute, the veil undone—

And that to which we dare to press
Nearest, for its gentleness—
Ay, His love!

How the deep ecstatic pain
Thy being's strength would capture!

Without language for the rapture,
Without music strong to come
And set the adoration free,

For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
Amid the general chorus dumb,
God-stricken to seraphic agony!—

Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
In vision bare should rise

The life-fount whence His hand did
gather

With solitary force
Our immortalities!

Straightway how thine own would
wither,

Falter like a human breath,
And shrink into a point like death,
By gazing on its source!

My words have imaged dread.
Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
And dropt thy wings in languishment
Overclouding foot and face ;
As if God's throne were eminent
Before thee, in the place.

Yet not—not so,
O loving spirit and meek, dost thou
fulfil

The Supreme Will,
Not for obeisance but obedience,
Give motion to thy wings. Depart from
hence.

The voice said 'Go.'

Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
His will is as a spirit within my spirit—
A portion of the being I inherit.
His will is mine obedience. I resemble
A flame all undefiled though it trem-
ble ;

I go and tremble. Love me, O be-
loved!

O thou, who stronger art,
And standest ever near the Infinite,
Pale with the light of Light!
Love me, beloved! me, more newly
made.

More feeble, more afraid ;
And let me hear with mine thy pinions
moved,

As close and gentle as the loving are,
That love being near, heaven may not
seem so far.

Ador. I am near thee, and I love
thee.

Where I loveless, from thee gone,
Love is round, beneath, above thee,
God, the omnipresent One.

Spread the wing, and lift the brow.
Well-beloved, what fearest thou ?

Zerah. I fear, I fear—
Ador. What fear ?

Zerah. The fear of earth.
Ador. Of earth, the God-created and
God-praised

In the hour of birth ?
Where every night, the moon in light
Doth lead the waters, silver-faced ?
Where every day, the sun doth lay
A rapture to the heart of all

The leafy and reeded pastoral,
As if the joyous shout which burst
From angel lips to see him first,
Had left a silent echo in his ray ?

Zerah. Of earth—the God-created
and God-curst,
Where man is, and the thorn.
Where sun and moon have borne
No light to souls forlorn.

Where Eden's tree of life no more up-
rears
Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but in-
stead
The yew-tree bows its melancholy
head,
And all the undergrasses kills and
scres.

Ador. Of earth the weak,
Made and unmade,
Where men that faint, do strive for
crowns that fade ?
Where, having won the profit which they
seek,
They lie beside the sceptre and the
gold
With fleshless hands that cannot wield
or hold,
And the stars shine in their unwinking
eyes ?

Zerah. Of earth the bold :
Where the blind matter wrings
An awful potence out of impotence,
Bowing the spiritual things
To the things of sense.
Where the human will replies
With ay and no,
Because the human pulse is quick or
slow.
Where Love succumbs to Change,
With only his own memories, for re-
venge.

And the fearful mystery—
Ador. Called Death ?
Zerah. Nay, death is fearful—but
who saith

'To die,' is comprehensible.
What's fearfuller, thou knowest well,
Though the utterance be not for thee,
Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—
Ay ! the cursed thing that moved
A shadow of ill, long times ago,
Across our heaven's own shining floor,
And when it vanished, some who were
On thrones of holy empire there,
Did reign — were seen — were — never
more.

Come nearer, O beloved !

Ador. I am near thee. Didst thou
bear thee

Ever to this earth ?

Zerah. Before.
When thrilling from His hand along
Its lustrous path with spheric song,
The earth was deathless, sorrowless.
Unfearing, then, pure feet might
press
The grasses brightening with their
feet,
For God's own voice did mix its
sound

In a solemn confluence oft
With the rivers' flowing round
And the-life-tree's waving soft.
Beautiful new earth, and strange !

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—the
change ?

Zerah. Nay, or wherefore should I
fear
To look upon it now ?

I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings
Of angels from an earthly mission,—
Strong one, even upon thy brow,
When, with task completed, given
Back to us in that transition,
I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band,
Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wert not one of
those

Whom the loving Father chose
In visionary pomp to sweep
O'er Judæa's grassy places,
O'er the shepherds and the sheep,
Though thou art so tender?—
dimming
All the stars except one star,
With their brighter kinder faces,
And using heaven's own tune in
hymning,

While deep response from earth's own
mountains ran,

'Peace upon earth—goodwill to man.'
Zerah. "Glory to God !" — I said
Amen afar.

And those who from that earthly mis-
sion are,

Within mine ears have told
That the seven everlasting Spirits did
hold

With such a sweet and prodigal constraint,
The meaning yet the mystery of the song,

What time they sang it, on their natures strong ;

That, gazing down on earth's dark steadfastness,

And speaking the new peace in promises,
The love and pity made their voices faint
Into the low and tender music, keeping
The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping,

Ador. Peace upon earth ! Come down to it.

Zerah. Ah me !

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.

Peace where the tempest—where the sighing is—

And worship of the idol, 'stead of His ?

Ador. Yea, peace, where *He* is.

Zerah. *He !*

Say it again.

Ador. Where *He* is.

Zerah. Can it be

That earth retains a tree

Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed

By the breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade ?

Ador. There is a tree !—it hath no leaf nor root ;

Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit :

Its shadow on His head is laid.

For *He*, the crowned Son,

Has left his crown and throne,

Walks earth in Adam's clay,

Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

Zerah. Walks earth in clay ?

Ador. And walking in the clay which *He* created,

He through it shall touch death.

What do I utter ? what, conceive ? Did breath

Of demon howl it in a blasphemy ?

Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated

By the seven confluent Spirits ?—Speak—answer me !

Who said man's victim was his deity ?

Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from *thee*.

Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light

Above, below, around,
As putting thunder-questions without cloud,

Reverberate without sound,
To universal nature's depth and height.
The tremor of an inexpressive thought
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,
O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips :

And while thine hands are stretched above

As newly they had caught
Some lightning from the Throne—or showed the Lord

Some retributive sword—
Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
And radiance—with contrasted wrath
and love—

As God had called thee to a seraph's part,

With a man's quailing heart.

Ador. O heart—O heart of man !

O ta'en from human clay,

To be no seraph's but *Jehovah's* own !

Made holy in the taking,

And yet unseparate

From death's perpetual ban,

And human feelings sad and passionate !
Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast pain.

O heart of man—of God ! which God hath ta'en

From out the dust, with its humanity
Mournful and weak yet innocent around it,

And bade its many pulses beating lie
Beside that incommunicable stir

Of Deity wherewith *He* interwound it.
O man ! and is thy nature so defiled,
That all that holy Heart's devout law-keeping,

And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
And gushings pitiful of tender weeping
For traitors who consigned it to such woe—

That all could cleanse thee not—without the flow

Of blood—the life-blood—*His*—and streaming *so ?*—

O earth the thundercleft, windshaken ! where

The louder voice of " blood and blood " doth rise—

Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?
 O heaven—O vacant throne!
 O crowned hierarchies, that wear your
 crown

When His is put away!
 Are ye unshamed, that ye cannot dim
 Your alien brightness to be liker Him,—
 Assume a human passion—and down-
 lay
 Your sweet secureness for congenial
 fears—
 And teach your cloudless ever-burning
 eyes

The mystery of His tears?

Zerah. I am strong, I am strong!
 Were I never to see my heaven again,
 I would wheel to earth like the tempest
 rain
 Which sweeps there with an exultant
 sound
 To lose its life as it reaches the ground.
 I am strong, I am strong!
 Away from mine inward vision swim
 The shining seats of my heavenly
 birth—

I see but His, I see but Him—
 The Maker's steps on His cruel earth.
 Will the bitter herbs of earth grow
 sweet

To me, as trodden by His feet?
 Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
 As worn by Him, begin to be
 A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,
 For love, and awe, and ministering?

I am strong, I am strong!
 By our angel ken shall we survey
 His loving smile through his woeful
 clay?

I am swift, I am strong—
 The love is bearing me along.

Ador. One love is bearing us along.

PART THE SECOND.

Mid air, above Judæa. Ador and Zerah are a
 little apart from the visible Angelic Hosts.

Ador. BELOVED! dost thou see?—

Zerah. Thee,—thee.

Thy burning eyes already are
 Grown wild and mournful as a star
 Whose occupation is for aye
 To look upon the place of clay
 Whereon thou lookest now!

The crown is fainting on thy brow
 To the likeness of a cloud—
 The forehead's self a little bowed
 From its aspect high and holy,
 As it would in meekness meet
 Some seraphic melancholy,
 Thy very wings that lately flung
 An outline clear, do flicker here,
 And wear to each a shadow hung
 Dropped across thy feet.

In these strange contrasting glooms
 Stagnant with the scent of tombs,
 Seraph faces, O my brother,
 Show awfully to one another.

Ador. Dost thou see?

Zerah. Even so—I see
 Our empyreal company;
 Alone the memory of their bright
 ness

Left in them, as in thee:
 The circle upon circle, tier on tier—
 Piling earth's hemisphere
 With heavenly infiniteness;
 Above us and around,

Straining the blue horizon like a bow:
 Their songful lips divorced from all
 sound;
 A darkness gliding down their silvery
 glances,—

Bowing their steadfast solemn counte-
 nances,
 As if they heard God speak, and could
 not glow.

Ador. Look downward! dost thou
 see?

Zerah. And wouldst thou press *this*
 vision on my words?

Doth not earth speak enough
 Of change and of undoing,
 Without a seraph's witness? Oceans
 rough

With tempest, pastoral swards
 Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains
 ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,
 That shake their piney heads, as who
 would say

'We are too beautiful for our decay.'

Shall seraphs speak of these things? Let
alone

Earth, to her earthly moan.

Voice of all things. Is there no moan
but hers?

Ador. Hearest thou the attestation
Of the roused Universe,
Like a desert lion shaking
Dews of silence from its mane?
With an irrepresive passion
Uprising at once,
Rising up and forsaking
Its solemn state in the circle of suns
To attest the pain

Of Him who stands (O patience sweet!)
In his own hand-prints of creation,
With human feet?

Voice of all things. Is there no moan
but ours?

Zerah. Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,
O meek, insensate things,
O congregated matters! who inherit
Instead of vital powers,
Impulsions, God-supplied;
Instead of influent spirit,
A clear informing beauty—
Instead of creature-duty,
Submission calm as rest!
Lights, without feet or wings,
In golden courses sliding!
Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,
Whose lustrous heart away was prest
Into the argent stars!

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,
That hold the skyey waters free
From tide or tempest's ecstasy!
Airs universal! thunders lorn,
That wait your lightnings in cloud-
cave

Hewn out by the winds! O brave
And subtle Elements! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice
with folly.*

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its
wound.

Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound!

Ador. Zerah.

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke?

God hath rebuked me, brother.—I am
weak.

Ador. Zerah, my brother Zerah!—
could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

Zerah. Thy look

Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face!
Where shall I seek *Him*?—

I have thrown

One look upon earth—but one—
Over the blue-mountain-lines,
Over the forests of palms and pines;
Over the harvest-lands golden;
Over the valleys that fold in
The gardens and vines—

He is not there!

All these are unworthy

His footsteps to bear;

Before which, bowing down

I would fain quench the stars of my
crown

In the dark of the earthy

Where shall I seek *Him*?

No reply?

Hath language left thy lips, to place

Its vocal in thine eye?

Ador, Ador! are we come

To a double portent, that

Dumb matter grows articulate

And songful spirits dumb?

Ador, Ador!

Ador. I constrain

The passion of my silence. None

Of those places gazed upon

Are gloomy enow to fit His pain.

Unto Him whose forming word

Gave to Nature flower and sward,

She hath given back again,

For the myrtle, the thorn;

For the sylvan calm, the human scorn.

Still, still, reluctant Seraph, gaze beneath!

There is a city—

Zerah. Temple and tower,

Palace and purple would droop like a
flower,

(Or a cloud at our breath)

If He neared in His state

The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so

In the state of a King, did the victim go!

And THOU who hankest mute of speech

"Twixt heaven and earth, with fore-
head yet

Stained by the bloody sweat—

God! man! Thou hast foregone thy
throne in each!

* "His angels He charged with folly."—*Job*,
iv. 18.

Zerah. Thine eyes behold Him ?

Ador. Yea, below.

Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart
That its weakness may depart
And the vision rise.

Seest thou yet, beloved ?

Zerah. I see

Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang thereon,
'Ghast and silent to the sun :

And round them blacken and welter
and press

Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was—whose brows are dark
With his Cain's corroded mark ;
Who curse with looks. Nay—let
me rather

Turn unto the wilderness.

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with
men.

Zerah. Above

He dwells with angels ; and they love.
Can these love ? With the living's pride
They stare at those who die,—who hang
In their sight and die. They bear the
streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,
To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside

When the victims' pang
Makes the dry wood creak,

Ador. The cross—the cross !

Zerah. A woman kneels

The mid cross under—
With white lips asunder,
And motion on each :
They throb, as she feels,
With a spasm, not a speech ;
And her lids, close as sleep,
Are less calm—for the eyes
Have made room there to weep
Drop on drop—

Ador. Weep ? Weep blood,

All women, all men !
He sweated it, He,
For your pale womanhood
And base manhood. Agree,
That these water-tears, then,
Are vain, mocking like laughter !
Weep blood !—Shall the flood

Of salt curses, whose foam is the dark-
ness, on roll

Forward, on, from the strand of the
storm-beaten yeaps,

And back from the rocks of the horrid
hereafter,

And up, in a coil, from the present's
wrath-spring.

Yea, down from the windows of Hea-
ven opening,—

Deep calling to deep as they meet on
His soul,—

And men weep only tears ?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse !

And yet, Ador, perhaps

It is all that they can.

Tears ! the lovingest man

Has no better bestowed

Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all givers need gifts ?

If the Giver said 'Give,' the first motion
would slay

Our Immortals ; the echo would ruin
away

The same worlds which he made. Why,
what angel uplifts

Such a music, so clear,

It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse
weeping ? And thus,

Pity tender as tears, I above thee would
speak,

Thou woman that weepest ! weep un-
scorned of us !

I, the tearless and pure, am but loving
and weak.

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low,—
and not of love,

Or human or angelic ! Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme above,

In whose infinitude the secrecies

Of thine own being lie hid, and lift thine
hand

Exultant, saying 'Lord God I am wise!—
Than utter *here*, 'I love.'

Zerah. And yet thine eyes

Do utter it. They melt in tender light—
The tears of Heaven.

Ador. Of Heaven. Ah me !

Zerah. Ador !

Ador. Say on.

Zerah. The crucified are three.
Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one

Is as a man who sinned, and still

Doth wear the wicked will—

The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's
 disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change
again.

Ador. And one—

Zerah. Has also sinned.

And yet, (O marvel!) doth the spirit-wind
Blow white those waters?—Death upon
his face

Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made.
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and
feet

Than heart-broke by new joy too sud-
den and sweet.

Ador. And ONE!—

Zerah. And ONE—

Ador. Why dost thou pause?

Zerah. God! God!

Spirit of my spirit! who movest
Through seraph veins in burning deity,
To light the quenchless pulses!—

Ador. But hast trod

The depth of love in thy peculiar nature;
And not in any Thou hast made and
lovest

In narrow seraph hearts!—

Zerah. Above, Creator!

Within, upholder!

Ador. And below, below,

The creature's and the upholden's sacri-
fice!

Zerah. Why do I pause?—

Ador. There is a silentness

That answers thee enow;

That, like a brazen sound

Excluding others, doth ensheathe us
round:

Hear it! It is not from the visible skies

Though they are very still,

Unconscious that their own dropped
dews express

The light of heaven on every earthly hill.

It is not from the hills; though calm
and bare

They, since the first creation,

Through midnight cloud or morning's
glittering air

Or the deep deluge blindness, toward
the place

Whence thrilled the mystic word's crea-
tive grace,

And whence again shall come

The word that uncreates;

Have lift their brows in voiceless expect-
ation.

It is not from the places that entomb
Man's dead—though common Silence
there dilates

Her soul to grand proportions, worthily
To fill life's vacant room.

Not there—not there!

Not yet within those chambers lieth He,
A dead One in His living world! His
south

And west winds blowing over earth and
sea;

And not a breath on that creating
Mouth!

But now,—a silence keeps

(Not death's, nor sleep's)

The lips whose whispered word

Might roll the thunders round reverberat-
ed.

Silent art Thou, O my Lord,

Bowing down Thy stricken head!

Fearest Thou, a groan of thine

Would make the pulse of thy creation
fail

As thine own pulse?—would rend the
veil

Of visible things, and let the flood
Of the unseen Light, the essential God,

Rush in to whelm the undivine?—

Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread!

Zerah. O silence!

Ador. Doth it say to thee the NAME,
Slow-learning Seraph?

Zerah. I have learnt.

Ador. The flame

Perishes in thine eyes.

Zerah. He opened His—

And looked. I cannot bear—

Ador. Their agony?

Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in
them.

From his brows

White, terrible in meekness, didst thou
see

The uplifted eyes unclosed?

He is God, seraph! Look no more on
me,

O God; I am not God.

Ador. The loving is

Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.
In heaven we could sustain them.

Zerah. Heaven is dull,
Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light
that burns

In fluent, reflux motion,
Along the crystal ocean;

The springing of the golden harps be-
tween

The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet
sound;

The winding, wandering music that re-
turns

Upon itself, exultingly self-bound

In the great spheric round

Of everlasting praises:

The God-thoughts in our midst that in-
tervene,

Visibly flashing from the supreme throne,
Full in seraphic faces,

Till each astonishes the other, grown
More beautiful with worship and de-
light!

My heaven! my home of heaven! my
infinite

Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this
dust and death,

This cloud, this cold, these tears, this
failing breath,

Where God's immortal love now issueth
In this MAN'S woe?

Ador. His eyes are very deep yet
calm—

Zerah. No more

On me Jehovah-man—

Ador. Calm-deep. They show
A passion which is tranquil. They are
seeing

No earth, no heaven: no men that slay
and curse—

No seraphs that adore.

Their gaze is on the invisible, the
dread—

The things we cannot view or think or
speak,

Because we are too happy, or too weak;
The sea of ill, for which the universe

With all its pilèd space, can find no
shore,

With all its life, no living foot to tread.
But He, accomplished in Jehovah-being,

Sustains the gaze adown,

Conceives the vast despair,

And feels the billowy griefs come up to
drown,

Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails till all be
finished.

Zerah. Thus, do I find thee thus? My
undiminished

And undiminishable God!—My God!
The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the latest
song

Thy manifested glory swept abroad
In rushing past our lips! They echo aye

“Creator, Thou art strong!—

Creator, Thou art blessed over all.”

By what new utterance shall I now re-
call,

Unteaching the heaven-echoes? Dare I
say,

“Creator, Thou art feebler than Thy
work!

Creator, Thou art sadder than thy crea-
ture!

A worm, and not a man,

Yea, no worm—but a curse?”

I dare not, so, mine heavenly phrase re-
verse.

Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-fork
(Whose seed disordered ran

From Eve's hand trembling when the
curse did reach her)

Be garnered darklier in thy soul! the
rod

That smites Thee never blossoming, and
Thou,

Grief-bearer for thy world, with un-
kinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Ichabod!

I have an angel-tongue—I know but
praise.

Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-
bought captives raise

The passion-song of blood.

Zerah. And we, extend

Our holy vacant hands towards the
Throne,

Crying “We have no music!”

Ador. Rather, blend

Both musics into one!

The sanctities and sanctified above

Shall each to each, with lifted looks se-
rene,

Their shining faces lean,

And mix the adoring breath

And breathe the full thanksgiving.

Zerah. But the love—

The love, mine Ador!

Ador. Do we love not?
Zerah. Yea,
 But not as man shall! not with life for
 death,
 New-throbbing through the startled be-
 ing! not
 With strange astonished smiles, that
 ever may
 Gush passionate like tears, and fill their
 place:
 Nor yet with speechless memories of
 what
 Earth's winters were, enverduring the
 green

Of every heavenly palm
 Whose windless, shadeless calm
 Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.
 Oh, not with this blood on us—and this
 face,—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore
 In our behalf, and tender evermore
 With nature all our own, upon us gaz-
 ing!—

Nor yet with these forgiving hands up-
 raising
 Their unreprouchful wounds, alone to
 bless!

Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less
 Than mortals shall?

Ador. Amen! so let it be.
 We love in our proportion—to the bound
 Thine infinite our finite, set around,
 And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite
 And worthy infinite love! And our
 delight

Is watching the dear love poured out to
 Thee,
 From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,
 Who love Thee more than we do!
 blessed we,

Viewing that love which shall exceed
 even this,
 And winning in the sight, a double bliss,
 For all so lost in love's supremacy!

The bliss is better. Only on the sad
 Cold earth there are who say
 It seemeth better to be great than glad.
 The bliss is better! Love Him more,

O man,
 Than sinless seraphs can.
Zerah. Yea, love Him more.
Voices of the angelic multitude.
 Yea, more!

Ador. The loving word
 Is caught by those from whom we stand
 apart:

For Silence hath no deepness in her
 heart

Where love's low name low breathed
 would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic voices. Love him more!
Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
 The music which ye make!

Albeit to love there were not ever given
 A mournful sound when uttered out
 of heaven,

That angel-sadness ye would fitly take.
 Of love, be silent now! we gaze adown
 Upon the incarnate Love who wears
 no crown.

Zerah. No crown! the woe instead
 Is heavy on His head,
 Pressing inward on His brain,
 With a hot and clinging pain,
 Till all tears are prest away,
 And clear and calm His vision may
 Peruse the black abyss.

No rod, no sceptre is
 Hidden in His fingers pale:
 They close instead upon the nail,
 Concealing the sharp dole—

Never stirring to put by
 The fair hair peaked with blood,
 Drooping forward from the rood
 Helplessly—heavily—

On the cheek that waxeth colder,
 Whiter ever,—and the shoulder
 Where the government was laid.
 His glory made the Heavens afraid;

Will He not unearth this cross from its
 hole?

His pity makes His piteous state:

Will He be uncompassionate
 Alone to his proper soul?

Yea, will He not lift up
 His lips from the bitter cup,
 His brows from the dreary weight,
 His hands from the clenching
 cross—

Crying 'My Father, give to me
 Again the joy I had with Thee,
 Or ere this earth was made for loss?'

No stir—no sound—
 The love and woe being interwound
 He cleaveth to the woe;

And putteth forth heaven's strength below—

To bear.

Ador. And that creates His anguish now,

Which made His glory there.

Zerah. Shall it indeed be so?

Awake, thou Earth! behold!

Thou, uttered forth of old

In all thy life-emotion,

In all thy vernal noises;

In the rollings of thine ocean,

Leaping founts, and rivers running;

In thy woods' prophetic heaving

Ere the rains a stroke have given;

In thy winds' exultant voices

When they feel the hills afar:

In the firmamental sunning,

And the tempest which rejoices

Thy full heart with an awful cheer!

Thou, uttered forth of old

And with all thy musics, rolled

In a breath abroad

By the breathing God!

Awake! He is here! behold!

Even thou—

Beseems it good

To thy vacant vision dim,

That the deathly ruin should,

For thy sake, encompass Him?

That the Master-word should lie

A mere silence—while His own,

Processive harmony—

The faintest echo of His lightest tone

sweeping in a choral triumph by?

Awake! emit a cry!

And say, albeit used

From Adam's ancient years

To falls of acrid tears,

To frequent sighs unloosed,

Caught back to press again

On bosoms zoned with pain—

To courses still and sullen

The shine and music dulling

With closed eyes and ears

That nothing sweet can enter—

Commoving thee no less

With that forced quietness,

Than the earthquake in thy centre—

Thou hast not learnt to bear

This new divine despair!

These tears that sink into thee,

These dying eyes that view thee,
This dropping blood from lifted
rod,

They darken and undo thee!

Thou canst not, presently, sustain this
course!

Cry, cry, thou hast not force!

Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep

Thy hopeless charnels deep—

Thyself a general tomb—

Where the first and second Death

Sit gazing face to face

And mar each other's breath,

While silent bones through all the place,

'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten,

And seem to lie and listen

For the tramp of the coming Doom.

Is it not meet

That they who erst the Eden fruit did
eat,

Should champ the ashes?

That they who wrapt them in the thun-
der-cloak,

Should wear it as a shroud,

Perishing by its flashes?

That they who vexed the lion, should
be rent?

Cry, cry—'I will sustain my punish-
ment,

The sin being mine! but take away
from me

This visioned Dread—this Man—
this Deity.'

The Earth. I have groaned—I have
travailed—

I am weary—

I am blind with mine own grief, and
cannot see,

As clear-eyed angels can, His agony;

And what I see I also can sustain,

Because His power protects me from
His pain.

I have groaned—I have travailed—I
am dreary,

Harkening the thick sobs of my child-
ren's heart:

And can I say 'Depart'

To that Atoner making calm and free?

Am I a God as He,

To lay down peace and power as will-
ingly?

Ador. He looked for some to pity.

There is none.

All pity is within Him, and not for Him;

His earth is iron under Him, and o'er
Him

His skies are brass :

His seraphs cry ' Alas '

With hallelujah voice that cannot weep ;
And man, for whom the dreadful work
is done—

Scornful voices from the Earth. If
verily this be the Eternal's son—

Ador. Thou hearest :—man is grate-
ful !

Zerah. Can I hear,
Nor darken into man nor cease for ever

My seraph-smile to wear ?

Was it for such,

It pleased Him to overleap
His glory with His love, and sever
From the God-light and the throne
And all angels bowing down,
From whom His every look did
touch

New notes of joy from the unworn
string

Of an eternal worshipping !

For such He left His heaven ?

There, though never bought by
blood

And tears, we gave Him gratitude !
We loved Him there, though un-
forgiven !

Ador. The light is riven

Above, around,

And down in lurid fragments flung,
That catch the mountain-peak and
stream

With momentary gleam,

Then perish in the water and the ground.

River and waterfall,

Forest and wilderness,

Mountain and city, are together wrung
Into one shape, and that is shapeless-
ness ;

The darkness stands for all.

Zerah. The pathos hath the day un-
done :

The death-look of His eyes

Hath overcome the sun,

And made it sicken in its narrow skies.

Ador. Is it to death ? He dieth.

Zerah. Through the dark,

He still, He only, is discernible—

The naked hands and feet transfixed
stark,

The countenance of patient anguish
white,

Do make themselves a light
More dreadful than the glooms which
round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.

Ador. God ! Father-God !
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant
throne !

Uplift the lids of inward Deity,

Flashing abroad

Thy burning infinite !

Light up this dark, where there is
nought to see,

Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the Son.

Zerah. God, tarry not ! Behold,
enow

Hath He wandered as a stranger,

Sorrowed as a victim : Thou

Appear for Him, O Father !

Appear for Him, Avenger !

Appear for Him, just One and holy One,
For He is holy and just !

At once the darkness and dishonor
rather

To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos
rake,

And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blasphemies
With their made breath ! this earth
and skies

That only grow a little dim,

Seeing their curse on Him !

But Him, of all forsaken,

Of creature and of brother,

Never wilt Thou forsake !

Thy living and Thy loving cannot
slacken

Their firm essential hold upon each
other—

And well Thou dost remember how His
part

Was still to lie upon Thy breast, and be
Partaker of the light that dwelt in Thee

Ere sun or seraph shone ;

And how while silence trembled round
the throne,

Thou countedst by the beatings of His
heart,

The moments of Thine own eternity !

Awaken,

O right Hand with the lightnings !

Again gather
His glory to thy glory! What estrang-
er—

What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust
Between the faithful Father and the
Son?

Appear for Him, O Father!
Appear for Him, Avenger!
Appear for Him, just One and holy
One!

For He is holy and just,
Ador. Thy face, upturned toward
the throne, is dark—

Thou hast no answer, Zerah.
Zerah. No reply,

O forsaking Father?—
Ador. Hark!

Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath!

Zerah. And by a sharper sound than
death,

Mine immortality is riven.
The heavy darkness which doth tent
the sky,

Floats backward as by a sudden wind—
But I see no light behind:

But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad,
Doth fall—doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

Voice from the Cross. MY GOD, MY
GOD,

WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN?

The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me!
the dreadful why!

My sin is, on Thee, sinless One! Thou
art

God-orphaned, for my burden on Thy
head.

Dark sin! white innocence! endurance
dread!

Be still, within your shrouds, my buried
dead—

Nor work with this quick horror round
mine heart!

Zerah. He hath forsaken *Him!* I
perish—

Ador. Hold
Upon His name! We perish not. Of

old

His will—

Zerah. I seek His will. Seek,
Seraphim!

My God, my God! where is it? Doth
that curse

Reverberate spare us, seraph or uni-
verse?

He hath forsaken Him.

Ador. He cannot fail.

Angel voices. We faint—we droop—
Our love doth tremble like fear—

*Voices of Fallen Angels from the
Earth.* Do we prevail?

Or are we lost?—Hath not the ill we
did

Been heretofore our good?

Is it not ill that One, all sinless, should
Hang heavy with all curses on a cross?

Nathless, *that cry!*—with huddled
faces hid

Within the empty graves which men
did scoop

To hold more damnèd dead, we shud-
der through

What shall exalt us or undo,—

Our triumph, or—our loss.

Voice from the Cross. IT IS FINISHED.

Zerah. Hark, again!

Like a victor, speaks the Slain—

Angel voices. Finished be the trem-
bling vain!

Ador. Upward, like a well-loved Son,
Looketh He, the orphaned One—

Angel voices. Finished is the mystic
pain!

Voices of Fallen Angels. His deathly
forehead at the word,

Gleameth like a seraph sword.

Angel voices. Finished is the demon
reign!

Ador. His breath, as living God,
createth—

His breath, as dying man, complet-
eth.

Angel voices. Finished work His
hands sustain!

The Earth. In mine ancient sepul-
chres

Where my kings and prophets
freeze,

Adam dead four thousand years,

Unwakened by the universe's

Everlasting moan,

Aye his ghastly silence, mocking—
Unwakened by his children's knock-

ing

At his old sepulchral stone—

'Adam, Adam! all this curse is
Thine and on us yet!—
Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
Wherewith they made his cere-
ment wet—

'Adam, must thy curse remain?'—
Starts with sudden life, and hears
Through the slow dripping of the caver-
ned eaves,—

Angel voices. Finished is his bane!
Voice from the Cross. FATHER! MY
SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN!

Ador. Hear the wailing winds that
be

By wings of unclean Spirits made!
They, in that last look, surveyed
The love they lost in losing heaven,
And passionately flee,
With a desolate cry that cleaves
The natural storms—though *they* are
lifting

God's strong cedar-roots like leaves;
And the earthquake and the thunder,
Neither keeping neither under,
Roar and hurtle through the glooms,—
And a few pale stars are drifting
Past the Dark, to disappear,
What time, from the splitting tombs,
Gleamingly the Dead arise,
Viewing with their death-calm'd eyes,
The elemental strategies,
To witness, victory is the Lord's!
Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear.

Zerah. I hear alone the memory of
His words,

THE EPILOGUE.

I.

My song is done!
My voice that long hath faltered shall
be still.
The mystic darkness drops from Cal-
vary's hill
Into the common light of this day's sun.

II.

I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain!
I hear no more the horror and the coil

Of the great world's turmoil,
Feeling thy countenance *too still*,—no
yell
Of demons sweeping past it to their
prison.

The skies, that turned to darkness with
Thy pain,

Make now a summer's day,—
And on my changèd ear, that sabbath
bell

Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III.

And I—ah! what am I
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-dark-
ened

Seraphic brows of light
And seraph language never used nor
hearkened?

Ah me! what word that Seraphs say,
could come

From mouth so used to sighs—so soon
to lie

Sightless, because then breathless, in
the tomb?

IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace!—of
grace

Because of God!—whether ye bow
adown

In your own heaven, before the living
face

Of Him who died, and deathless wears
the crown—

Or whether at this hour, ye haply are
Anear, around me, hiding in the night

Of this permitted ignorance your light,
This feebleness to spare,—

Forgive me, that mine earthly heart
should dare

Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
And lay upon their burning lips a

thought
Cold with the weeping which mine earth
inherits;

And though ye find in such hoarse music
wrought

To copy yours, a cadence all the while
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying smile!—

Ye know to pity, well.

V.

I too may haply smile another day
 At the far recollection of this lay,
 When God may call me in your midst
 to dwell,
 To hear your most sweet music's miracle
 And see your wondrous faces. May it
 be,
 For His remembered sake, the Slain on
 rood,
 Who rolled His earthly garment red in
 blood
 (Treading the wine-press) that the weak,
 like me,
 Before His heavenly throne should walk
 in white.

THE POET'S VOW.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS
 MADE.

I.

EVE is a twofold mystery—
 The stillness Earth doth keep ;
 The motion wherewith human hearts
 Do each to either leap,
 As if all souls between the poles,
 Felt 'Parting comes in sleep.'

II.

The rowers lift their oars to view
 Each other in the sea ;
 The landsmen watch the rocking boats,
 In a pleasant company ;
 While up the hill go gladlier still
 Dear friends by two and three.

III.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
 Her cottage door and smiled ;
 For there the peasant drops his spade
 To clasp his youngest child
 Which hath no speech, but its hands
 can reach
 And stroke his forehead mild.

IV.

A poet sate that eventide
 Within his hall alone,
 As silent as its ancient lords
 In the confined place of stone ;
 When the bat hath shrunk from the
 praying monk—
 And the praying monk is gone.

V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
 Beneath the cerement's roll :
 His lips refusing out in words
 Their mystic thoughts to dole,
 His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
 As burning out his soul.

VI.

You would not think that brow could
 e'er
 Ungentle moods express,
 Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
 Too calm for gentleness :
 When the very star, that shines from far,
 Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

VII.

It lacked—all need—the softening light
 Which other brows supply :
 We should conjoin the scathed trunks
 Of our humanity,
 That each leafless spray entwining may
 Look softer 'gainst the sky.

VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face—
 The poet gazed in none :
 He threw a lonely shadow straight
 Before the moon and sun,
 Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling
 creatures,
 With wrong to nature done.

IX.

Because this poet daringly,
 The nature at his heart,
 And that quick tune along his veins
 He could not change by art,
 Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
 To a stagnant place apart.

X.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
 Or grief's fantastic whim ;
 But, weights and shows of sensual
 things
 Too closely crossing him,
 On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid
 And made its vision dim.

XI.

And darkening in the dark he strove
 'Twixt earth and sun and sky,
 To lose in shadow, wave and cloud,
 His brother's haunting cry.
 The winds were welcome as they swept :
 God's five-day work he would accept,
 But let the rest go by.

XII.

He cried—' O touching, patient Earth,
 That weepst in thy glee,
 Whom God created very good,
 And very mournful, we !
 Thy voice of moan doth reach His
 throne,
 As Abel's rose from thee.

XIII.

' Poor crystal sky, with stars astray ;
 Mad winds, that howling go
 From east to west ; perplexed seas,
 That stagger from their blow !
 O motion wild ! O wave defiled !
 Our curse hath made you so.

xiv.

' *We !* and *our* curse ! Do *I* partake
 The desiccating sin ?
 Have *I* the apple at my lips ?
 The money-lust within ?
 Do *I* human stand with the wounding
 hand,
 To the blasting heart akin ?

XV.

' Thou solemn pathos of all things,
 For solemn pomp designed !
 Behold, submissive to your cause,
 An holy wrath I find,
 And, for your sake, the bondage break,
 That knits me to my kind.

XVI.

' Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
 His pleasant yea and no—
 His riot on the piteous earth
 Whereon his thistles grow !
 His changing love—with stars above !
 His pride—with graves below !

XVII.

' Hear me forswear his roof by night,
 His bread and salt by day,
 His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
 His greetings by the way,
 His answering looks, his systemed books,
 All man, for aye and aye.

XVIII.

' That so my purged, once human heart,
 From all the human rent,
 May gather strength to pledge and drink
 Your wine of wonderment,
 While you pardon me, all blessingly,
 The woe mine Adam sent.

XIX.

' And I shall feel your unseen looks
 Innumerable, constant, deep,
 And soft as haunted Adam once,
 Though sadder, round me creep ;
 As slumbering men have mystic ken
 Of watchers on their sleep.

XX.

' And ever, when I lift my brow
 At evening to the sun,
 No voice of woman or of child
 Recording ' Day is done,'
 Your silence shall a love express
 More deep than such an one !'

PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DE-
 CLARED.

I.

The poet's vow was inly sworn—
 The poet's vow was told :
 He shared among his crowding friends

The silver and the gold ;
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand
In a somewhat slacker hold.

II.

They wended forth, the crowding
friends,
With farewells smooth and kind—
They wended forth, the solaced friends,
And left but twain behind :
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

III.

He said—'My friends have wended
forth
With farewells smooth and kind.
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind.
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

IV.

'And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts forgot !
Or alone of all his words recall
The last,—Lament me not.'

V.

She looked upon him silently,
With her large, doubting eyes,
Like a child that never knew but love,
Whom words of wrath surprise ;
Till the rose did break from either cheek,
And the sudden tears did rise.

VI.

She looked upon him mournfully,
While her large eyes were grown
Yet larger with the steady tears ;
Till, all his purpose known,
She turnèd slow, as she would go—
The tears were shaken down.

VII.

She turnèd slow, as she would go,
Then quickly turned again ;
And gazing in his face to seek

Some little touch of pain—
'I thought,' she said,—but shook her
head,—
She tried that speech in vain.

VIII.

'I thought—but I am half a child,
And very sage art thou—
The teachings of the heaven and earth
Did keep us soft and low.
They have drawn *my* tears in early
years,
Or ere I wept—as now.

IX.

'But now that in thy face I read
Their cruel homily,
Before their beauty I would fain
Untouched, unsoftened be,—
If I indeed could look on even
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven
As *thou* canst look on *me*.

X.

'And couldest thou as calmly view
Thy childhood's far abode,
Where little feet kept time with thine
Along the dewy sod ?
And thy mother's look from holy book
Rose, like a thought of God ?

XI.

'O brother,—called so, ere her last
Betrothing words were said !
O fellow-watcher in her room,
With hushèd voice and tread !
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
O friend, O lover, we did stand,
And knew that she was dead ?

XII.

'I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—
That dower I will not hold !
I tread below my feet that go,
These parchments bought and sold.
The tears I weep are mine to keep,
And worthier than thy gold.'

XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood
Alone, each turned to each ;

Till Roland brake the silence left
By that soft-throbbing speech—
'Poor heart!' he cried, 'it vainly tried
The distant heart to reach!

XIV.

And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
That clumbest up so high,
To wrap and blind thee with the snows
That cause to dream and die—
What blessing can from lips of man,
Approach thee with his sigh?

XV.

'Ay! what, from earth—create for man,
And moaning in his moan?
Ay! what from stars—revealed to man,
And man-named, one by one?
Ay, more! what blessing can be given,
Where the Spirits seven do show in
heaven,
A MAN upon the throne?—

XVI.

'A man on earth HE wandered once,
All meek and undefiled:
And those who loved Him said 'He
wept'—
None ever said He smiled;
Yet there might have been a smile un-
seen,
When He bowed his blessed face, I
ween,
To bless that happy child.

XVII.

'And now HE pleadeth up in heaven
For our humanities,
Till the ruddy light on seraph's wings
In pale emotion dies.
They can better bear his Godhead's
glare,
Than the pathos of his eyes.

XVIII.

'I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine for human use
Since earth on axle ran!
To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine—the blood-drop's stain
He left there, MAN for man.

XIX.

'So, for the blood's sake, shed by Him,
Whom angels God declare,
Tears, like it, moist and warm with love,
Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
To see ' the face of Adam's race
The nature God doth share.'

XX.

'I heard,' the poet said, 'thy voice
As dimly as thy breath!
The sound was like the noise of life
To one anear his death;
Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sere leaf they roll beneath.

XXI.

'And still between the sound and me
White creatures like a mist
Did interfloat confusedly,—
Mysterious shapes untwist!
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow
To still the pulse they kist.

XXII.

'The castle and the lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done:
Go, *man*; to love! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone.
The bats along the ceilings cling,
The lizards in the floor do run,
And storms and years have worn and
reft
The stain by human builders left
In working at the stone!'

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

I.

HE dwelt alone, and, sun and moon,
Were witness that he made
Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade.
His face did so; for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone
 With inward glorying ;
 But God's chief angel waiteth for
 A brother's voice, to sing.
 And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
 It is an awful thing.

III.

An awful thing that feared itself
 While many years did roll,
 A lonely man, a feeble man,
 A part beneath the whole—
 He bore by day, he bore by night
 That pressure of God's infinite
 Upon his finite soul.

IV.

The poet at his lattice sate,
 And downward looked he :
 Three Christians wended by to prayers,
 With mute ones in their ee.
 Each turned above a face of love,
 And called him to the far chapelle
 With voice more tuneful than its bell—
 But still they wended three.

V.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
 A bridegroom and his dame :
 She speaketh low for happiness,
 She blusheth red for shame,
 But never a tone of benison
 From out the lattice came.

VI.

A little child with inward song,
 No louder noise to dare,
 Stood near the wall to see at play
 The lizards green and rare—
 Unblessed the while for his childish
 smile
 Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE
 KEEPING OF THE VOW.

I.

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
 As white and still as they ;

And the old nurse that watched her bed.
 Rose up with 'Well-a-day !'
 And opened the casement to let in
 The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
 Which droppeth from the grass and
 bough
 Sans wind and bird—none knoweth
 how—
 To cheer her as she lay.

II.

The old nurse started when she saw
 Her sudden look of woe !
 But the quick wan tremblings round her
 mouth
 In a meek smile did go ;
 And calm she said, 'When I am dead,
 Dear nurse, it shall be so.

III.

'Till then, shut out those sights and
 sounds,
 And pray God pardon me,
 That I without this pain, no more
 His blessed works can see !
 And lean beside me, loving nurse,
 That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
 What thy last love should be.'

IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,
 As white she lay beneath ;
 The old eyes searching, dim with life,
 The young ones dim with death,
 To read their look if sound forsook
 The trying, trembling breath.—

V.

'When all this feeble breath is done,
 And I on bier am laid,
 My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
 My body in shroud arrayed ;
 Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
 As if that still I prayed.

VI.

'And heap beneath mine head the
 flowers
 You stoop so low to pull ;
 The little white flowers from the wood,
 Which grow there in the cool ;
 Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,

Went plucking, knowing not their
names,
And filled thine apron full.

VII.

' Weep not ! I weep not. Death is
strong ;
The eyes of Death are dry ;
But lay this scroll upon my breast
When hushed its heavings lie ;
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently.

VIII.

' And when it shineth, straightway call
Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
All barefaced on the bier—
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear.

IX.

' And up the bank where I used to sit,
And dream what life would be,
Along the brook, with its sunny look
Akin to living glee ;
O'er the windy hill, through the forest
still,
Let them gently carry me.

X.

' And through the piney forest still,
And down the open moorland—
Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland—
And let them chant that hymn I know,
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the old hall of Courland.

XI.

' And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay
My bier before the bolted door,
And leave it for a day ;
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
And not be turned away.'

XII.

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
Whose mutual look was gone :

The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
Whose answering voice was done ;
And nought she heard, till a little bird
Upon the casement's woodbine swing-
ing,

Broke out into a loud sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun.
" Alack ! alack ! " — she watched no
more—
With head on knee she wailèd sore ;
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

I.

THE poet oped his bolted door,
The midnight sky to view.
A spirit feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
Whenever his breath he drew ;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

II.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide ;
Upon the narrow track of beach,
And the murmuring pebbles pied ;
They shine on every lovely place—
They shine upon the corpse's face,
As *it* were fair beside.

III.

It lay before him, humanlike,
Yet so unlike a thing !
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crownèd king :
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying.

IV.

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee :
As if those folded palms could strike,
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,

The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

'I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years :
I come to thee a solemn corpse,
Which neither feels nor fears.
I have no breath to use in sighs ;
They laid the death-weights on mine
eyes,
To seal them safe from tears.

'Look on me with thine own calm look—
I meet it calm as thou !
No look of thine can change *this* smile,
Or break thy sinful vow.
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth . . . thine earth — a
part—
It cannot vex thee now.

'But out, alas ! those words are writ
By a living, loving one,
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life
The warm quick tears do run.
Ah, let the unloved corpse control
Thy scorn back from the loving soul
Whose place of rest is won,

'I have prayed for thee with bursting
sobs,
When passion's course was free :
I have prayed for thee with silent lips,
In the anguish none could see !
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth
soft'—
But I only prayed for thee.

'Go to ! I pray for thee no more—
The corpse's tongue is still :
Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill :
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath license from the sin below
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

'I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silentness,
To wring from out thy soul a cry
Which God shall hear and bless !
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my
hand,

And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless.'

v.

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind !
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind.
'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
For the senseless corpse rocked to and
fro
With the living wail of his mind.

vi.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie ;
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave-out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

vii.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his
wail,
'Twould haunt you in court and mart,
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart.

viii.

O broken heart ! O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature !
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith—'t the presence
high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

ix.

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken
peace
To his dying heart and brain !)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

x.

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass
 For both one dwelling deep :
 To which, when years had mossed the
 stone,
 Sir Roland brought his little son
 To watch the funeral heap.
 And when the happy boy would rather
 Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
 The wood-doves nodding from the tree—
 'Nay, boy, look downward,' said his
 father,
 'Upon this hu man dust asleep :
 And hold it in thy constant ken
 That God's own unity compresses
 One into one, the human many.
 And that His everlastingness is
 The bond which is not loosed by any.
 For thou and I this law must keep,
 If not in love, in sorrow then ;
 Though smiling not like other men,
 Still like them we must weep.'

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

Can my affections find out nothing best,
 But still and still remove ?

QUARLES.

I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
 The yew-tree leaf will suit ;
 But when its shade is o'er you laid,
 Turn round and pluck the fruit !
 Now reach my harp from off the wall
 Where shines the sun aslant :
 The sun may shine and we be cold—
 O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
 Unto my wild romaunt,
 Margret, Margret.

II.

Sitteth the fair ladye
 Close to the river side,

Which runneth on with a merry tone,
 Her merry thoughts to guide.
 It runneth through the trees,
 It runneth by the hill,
 Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
 A way more pleasant still.

Margret, Margret.

III.

The night is in her hair
 And giveth shade to shade,
 And the pale moonlight on her forehead
 white
 Like a spirit's hand is laid :
 Her lips part with a smile
 Instead of speakings done—
 I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
 Albeit uttering none.

Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit
 With heads beneath their wings :
 Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
 Absorbed from her living things.
 That dream by that ladye
 Is certes unpartook,
 For she looketh to the high cold stars
 With a tender human look.

Margret, Margret.

V.

The lady's shadow lies
 Upon the running river :
 It lieth no less in its quietness,
 For that which resteth never :
 Most like a trusting heart
 Upon a passing faith,—
 Or as, upon the course of life,
 The steadfast doom of death.

Margret, Margret.

VI.

The lady doth not move,
 The lady doth not dream,
 Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
 In rest upon the stream !
 It shaketh without wind ;
 It parteth from the tide ;
 It standeth upright in the cleft moon-
 light—
 It sitteth at her side.

Margret, Margret.

VII.

Look in its face, ladye,
 And keep thee from thy swound !
 With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
 And hear its voice's sound !
 For so will sound thy voice,
 When thy face is to the wall ;
 And such will be thy face, ladye,
 When the maidens work thy pall—
 Margret, Margret.

VIII.

' Am I not like to thee ? '—
 The voice was calm and low—
 And between each word you might have
 heard
 The silent forests grow.
 ' *The like may sway the like !*
 By which mysterious lay
 Mine eyes from thine and my lips from
 thine
 The light and breath may draw.
 Margret, Margret,

IX.

' My lips do need thy breath,
 My lips do need thy smile,
 And my pallid eyne, that light in thine
 Which met the stars crewhile ;
 Yet go with light and life,
 If that thou lovest one
 In all the earth, who loveth thee
 As truly as the sun,
 Margret, Margret.'

X.

Her cheek had waxèd white
 Like cloud at fall of snow ;
 Then like to one at set of sun,
 It waxèd red also ;
 For love's name maketh bold,
 Asif the loved were near.
 And then she sighed the deep long sigh
 Which cometh after fear.
 Margret, Margret.

XI.

' Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
 Shall never fear thee now !'
 (And a noble sight was the sudden light
 Which lit her lifted brow.)
 ' Can earth be dry of streams,
 Or hearts of love ? ' she said—

' Who doubteth love, can know not love :
 He is already dead.'
 Margret, Margret.

XII.

' I have' . . . and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile,
 As if they paused in sleep ;—
 ' I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame !
 I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.
 Margret, Margret.

XIII.

' I fed his grey goss hawk,
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound ;
 I sate at home when he might come,
 And caught his horn's far sound ;
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine—
 He looked across the cup and said,
I love thee, sister mine.'
 Margret, Margret.

XIV.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 The sounding river which rolled forever,
 Stood dumb and stagnant after.
 " Brave knight thy brother is ;
 But better loveth he
 Thy chalice wine than thy chanted
 song,
 And better both than thee,
 Margret, Margret.

XV.

The lady did not heed
 The river's silence while
 Her own thoughts still ran at their will,
 And calm was still her smile.
 ' My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore :
 I smooth her locks with a golden comb—
 I bless her evermore.'
 Margret, Margret.

XVI.

' I gave her my first bird,
 When first my voice it knew ;

I made her share my posies rare,
 And told her where they grew :
 I taught her God's dear name
 With prayer and praise, to tell—
 She looked from heaven into my face,
 And said, *I love thee well.*
 Margret, Margret.

xvii.

IT trembled on the grass
 With a low, shadowy laughter ;
 You could see each bird as it woke and
 stared
 Through the shrivelled foliage after.
 Fair child thy sister is ;
 But better loveth she
 Thy golden comb than thy gathered
 flowers,
 And better both than thee,
 Margret, Margret.

xviii.

The lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough :
 Still calm the smile albeit the while
 A little pale her brow.
 'I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls :
 An hundred friends are in his court,
 Yet only me he calls.
 Margret, Margret.

xix.

'An hundred knights are in his court,
 Yet read I by his knee ;
 And when forth they go to the tourney
 show,
 I rise not up to see.
 'Tis a weary book to read—
 My tryst's at set of sun !
 But loving and dear beneath the stars
 Is his blessing when I've done.'
 Margret, Margret.

xx.

IT trembled on the grass
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 And moon and star though bright and
 far
 Did shrink and darken after.
 'High lord thy father is ;
 But better loveth he

His ancient halls than his hundred
 friends,
 His ancient halls, than thee,
 Margret, Margret.'

xxi.

The lady did not heed
 That the far stars did fail :
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while . . .
 Nay, but she is not pale !
 'I have a more than friend
 Across the mountain dim :
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him.*'
 Margret, Margret.

xxii.

'Though louder beats mine heart
 I know his tread again—
 And his far plume aye, unless turned
 away,
 For the tears do blind me then.
 We brake no gold, a sign
 Of stronger faith to be ;
 But I wear his last look in my soul,
 Which said, *I love but thee !*'
 Margret, Margret.

xxiii.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter ;
 And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
 Were sped by church-bell after :
 And shadows, 'stead of light,
 Fell from the stars above,
 In flakes of darkness on her face
 Still bright with trusting love.
 Margret, Margret.

xxiv.

'He loved but only thee !
 That love is transient too.
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true.
 Will he open his dull eyes,
 When tears fall on his brow ?
 Behold, the death-worm to his heart
 Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
 Margret, Margret.

xxv.

Her face was on the ground—
 None saw the agony !

But the men at sea did that night agree
 They heard a drowning cry.
 And when the morning brake,
 Fast rolled the river's tide,
 With the green trees waving overhead,
 And a white corse laid beside.
 Margret, Margret.

xxvi.

A knight's bloodhound and he
 The funeral watch did keep :
 With a thought o' the chase he stroked
 its face
 As it howled to see him weep.
 A fair child kissed the dead,
 But shrank before the cold :
 And alone yet proudly in his hall,
 Did stand a baron old.
 Margret, Margret.

xxvii.

Hang up my harp again—
 I have no voice for song.
 Not song but wail, and mourners pale
 Not bards, to love belong.
 O failing human love !
 O light by darkness known I
 O false the while thou treadest earth !
 O deaf beneath the stone !
 Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

— so find we profit,
 By losing of our prayers.
 SHAKESPEARE.

I.

To rest the weary nurse has gone ;
 An eight-day watch had watchèd
 she,
 Rocking beneath the sun and moon
 The baby on her knee :
 Till Isobel its mother said
 'The fever waneth—wend to bed—
 For now the watch comes round to
 me.'

II.

Then wearily the nurse did throw
 Her pallet in the darkest place
 Of that sick room, and slept and
 dreamed.
 And as the gusty wind did blow
 The night-lamp's flare across her
 face,
 She saw or seemed to see but dream-
 ed,
 That the poplars tall on the oppo-
 site hill,
 The seven tall poplars on the hill,
 Did clasp the setting sun until
 His rays dropped from him, pined and
 still
 As blossoms in frost :
 Till he waned and paled, so weirdly
 crossed,
 To the colour of moonlight which
 doth pass
 Over the dank ridged churchyard
 grass.
 The poplars held the sun, and he
 The eyes of the nurse that they should
 not see,
 Not for a moment, the babe on her
 knee,
 Though she shuddered to feel that it
 grew to be
 Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III.

She only dreamed : for all the while
 'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
 The little baby ; and it slept
 Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
 Laden with love's dewy weight,
 And red as rose of Harpocrate
 Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
 Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

IV.

And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—
 She knew not that she smiled.
 Against the lattice, dull and wild
 Drive the heavy droning drops,
 Drop by drop, the sound being one—
 As momentarily time's segments fall
 On the ear of God who hears through
 all

Eternity's unbroken monotone.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—
 She knew not that she smiled.
 The wind in intermission stops
 Down in the beechen forest,
 Then cries aloud
 As one at the sorest,
 Self-stung, self-driven,
 And rises up to its very tops,
 Stiffening erect the branches bowed ;
 Dilating with a tempest soul
 The trees that with their dark hands
 break
 Through their own outline and heavily
 roll
 Shadows as massive as clouds in
 heaven,
 Across the castle lake.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well ;
 She knew not that she smiled—
 She knew not that the storm was wild,
 Through the uproar drear she could not
 hear
 The castle clock which struck anear—
 She heard the low, light breathing of
 her child.

v.

O sight for wondering look !
 While the external nature broke
 Into such abandonment ;
 While the very mist heart-rent
 By the lightning, seemed to eddy
 Against nature, with a din—
 A sense of silence and of steady
 Natural calm appeared to come
 From things without, and enter in
 The human creature's room.

vi.

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their souls had
 gone
 Away to things inanimate,
 In such to live, in such to moan ;
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change, all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
 In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed—
 And who at once can love and rest ?

vii.

In sooth the smile that then was keeping
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light
 Downward, from the drooping eyes,
 Upward, from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping.
 All smiles come in such a wise,
 Where tears shall fall or have of old—
 Like northern lights that fill the heart
 Of heaven in sign of cold.

viii.

Motionless she sate :
 Her hair had fallen by its weight
 On each side of her smile, and lay
 Very blackly on the arm
 Where the baby nestled warm ;
 Pale as baby carved in stone
 Seen by glimpses of the moon
 Up a dark cathedral aisle :
 But, through the storm, no moonbeam
 fell
 Upon the child of Isobel—
 Perhaps you saw it by the ray
 Alone of her still smile.

ix.

A solemn thing it is to me
 To look upon a babe that sleeps—
 Wearing in its spirit-deeps
 The undeveloped mystery
 Of its Adam's taint and woe,
 Which, when they developed be,
 Will not let it slumber so :
 Lying new in life beneath
 The shadow of the coming death,
 With that soft, low, quiet breath,
 As if it felt the sun !
 Knowing all things by their blooms,
 Not their roots ; yea,—sun and sky,
 Only by the warmth that comes
 Out of each ; earth only by
 The pleasant hues that o'er it run ;
 And human love, by drops of sweet
 White nourishment still hanging round

The little mouth so slumber-bound.
 All which broken sentiencey
 And conclusion incomplete,
 Will gather and unite and climb
 To an immortality
 Good or evil, each sublime,
 Through life and death to life again !
 O little lids, now folded fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears ?
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When the time comes round to die,
 Still from all the whirl of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain ?
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes
 Dilated by great destinies,
 To an endless waking ? Thrones and
 seraphim,
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of
 Heaven's surprise—

But thine alone on *Him* ?—
 Or else, self-willed, to tread the godless
 place,
 (God keep thy will !) feel thine own
 energies
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead
 man's clasp,
 The sleepless deathless life within thee,
 grasp ;
 While myriad faces, like one changeless
 face,
 With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee
 everywhere,
 And overcome thee with thine own des-
 pair ?

x.

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
 Silently as snow :
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayingslow
 And broken—through which came the
 sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,
 Making sad stops ;—'Dear Lord, dear
 Lord !'
 She still had prayed—(the heavenly
 word,

Broken by an earthly sigh),
 'Thou, who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,
 Blessed in the blessed child,
 Which hearkened in meek babyhood
 Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
 To all that music interfused
 In breasts of angels high and good !
 Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
 Oh, take not to thy songful heaven,
 The pretty baby thou hast given,
 Or ere that I have seen him play
 Around his father's knees and know
 That *he* knew how my love hath gone
 From all the world to him.
 Think, God among the cherubim,
 How I shall shiver every day
 In thy June sunshine, knowing where
 The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
 Still cheeks ! and feel at every tread
 His little body which is dead
 And hidden in the turfy fold,
 Doth make thy whole warm earth a-
 cold !

O God, I am so young, so young—
 I am not used to tears at nights
 Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
 With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung :
 Thou knowest all my prayings were
 'I bless thee, God, for past delights—
 Thank God !' I am not used to bear
 Hard thoughts of death. The earth
 doth cover

No face from me of friend or lover :
 And must the first who teacheth me
 The form of shrouds and funerals, be
 Mine own first-born beloved ? he
 Who taught me first this mother-love ?
 Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
 Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
 All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—
 Pierce not my heart, my tender heart,
 Thou madest tender ! Thou who art
 So happy in thy heaven always,
 Take not mine only bliss away !'

xi.

She so had prayed : and God, who hears
 Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,
 From that beloved babe had ta'en
 The fever and the beating pain.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—
 (She knew not that she smiled, I wis,)

Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart the smile en-
wrought,

(Soon strong enough her lips to reach,)
Now soft and slow, itself, did seem
To float along a happy dream,
Beyond it into speech like this.

XII.

'I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God hath heard my prayer!
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together, undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
Upon His earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us twain,
And give Him thankful praise.'

XIII.

Dully and wildly drives the rain :
Against the lattices drives the rain.

XIV.

'I thank Him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mothers' knee,
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off my eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me !'

XV.

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

XVI.

'But now, O baby mine, together,
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and mother !
Two human loves make one divine.'

XVII.

The thunder tears through the wind and
the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

XVIII.

'My little child, what wilt thou choose ?
Let me look at thee and ponder.

What gladness, from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees
Wilt thou lean all day and lose
Thy spirit with the river seen
Interm t ently between
The winding beechen alleys,—
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed among Arcadian valleys
Upon the dewy grass ?'

XIX.

The large white owl that with age is
blind,
That hath sate for years in the old tree
hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind !
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past—
He is borne by the winds ; the rains do
follow :
His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
He hooteth in going,
And still in the lightnings, coldly glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

XX.

'Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise ?
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities,
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within ?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn ?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay ? beneath thy tread
ing,
Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden
And stars, drawn downward by th
looks
To shine ascendant in thy books ?'

XXI.

The tame hawk in the castle yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with its
wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet !
And at the lady's door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound !

XXII.

'But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek !
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between :
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,
Thy looks are very meek !
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,
As these on thine—and let the noise
Of the whole world go on, nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys ;
Or when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound,—to look above
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,
That *He* may hear His name !'

XXIII.

No wind—no rain—no thunder !
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent,
Nor the wind near finishing.
Who would have said that the storm was
diminishing ?
No wind—no rain—no thunder !
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken
wholly—
As life in death ;
And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel
As the tempest could not !
Against the door went panting the breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was still—
And *she*, constrained howe'er she would
not,
Did lift her eyes, and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill,—
A calm of God, made visible
That men might bless it at their will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold.
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place :
Because no moon with silver rack,
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies
Have power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust,

XXV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth !
The mother's looks do shrink away,
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charmed by what paineth.
Is any glamour in the case ?
Is it dream or is it sight ?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements, that signs the night,
Passed upon the child ?
It is not dream but sight !—

XXVI.

The babe hath awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother
Bent over it, lifted another !
Not the baby looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro :
But an earnest gazing deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length,
When, by work and wail of years,
It winneth a solemn strength,
And mourneth as it wears !
A strong man could not brook
With pulse unhurried by fears,
To meet that baby's look
O'erglared by manhood's tears—
The tears of the man full grown,
With the power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child !
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought,
To judgment's prodigy ;
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleant
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving,
Except the speechless cry)
Quickened to mind's expression,

Shaped to articulation—
 Yea, uttering words—yea, naming woe
 In tones that with it strangely went,
 Because so baby-innocent,
 As the child spake out to the mother
 so !—

XXVII.

' O mother, mother, loose thy prayer !
 Christ's name hath made it strong !
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 With its most loving cruelty,
 From floating my new soul along
 The happy heavenly air !
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 In all this dark, upon this dull
 Low earth, by only weepers trod !—
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me !—
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful
 Upon the face of God.*

XXVIII.

' Mother, mother ! can I dream
 Beneath your earthly trees ?
 I had a vision and a gleam—
 I heard a sound more sweet than these
 When rippled by the wind.
 Did you see the Dove with wings
 Bathed in golden glisterings
 From a sunless light behind,
 Dropping on me from the sky
 Soft as mother's kiss until
 I seemed to leap, and yet was still ?
 Saw you how his love-large eye
 Looked upon me mystic calms,
 Till the power of his divine
 Vision was indrawn to mine ?

XXIX.

' Oh, the dream within the dream !
 I saw celestial places even.
 Oh, the vistas of high palms,
 Making finites of delight
 Through the heavenly infinite—
 Lifting up their green still tops
 To the heaven of Heaven !
 Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
 Shade like light across the river
 Glorified in its for ever
 Flowing from the Throne !

* For I say unto you, that in Heaven their
 angels do always behold the face of my Father
 which is in Heaven.—*Mat.* ch. xviii. ver. 10.

Oh the shining holinesses
 Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the thronèd ONE !
 And made intense with such a love,
 That though I saw them turned above,
 Each loving seemed for also me !
 And, oh, the Unspeakable ! the HE,
 The manifest in secrecies,
 Yet of mine own heart partaker !
 With the overcoming look
 Of one who hath been once forsook,
 And blesseth the forsaker.
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Towards the face that looketh so.
 Through the mystic, wingèd Four
 Whose are in ward, outward eyes
 Dark with light of mysteries,
 And the restless evermore
 ' Holy, holy, holy,'—through
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view
 Of cherubim and seraphim ;
 Through the four-and-twenty crowned
 Stately elders, white around,
 Suffer me to go to Him !

XXX.

' Is your wisdom very wise,
 Mother, on the narrow earth ?
 Very happy, very worth
 That I should stay to learn ?
 Are these air-corrupting sighs
 Fashioned by unlearned breath ?
 Do the students' lamps that burn
 All night, illumine death ?
 Mother, albeit this be so,
 Loose thy prayer and let me go
 Where that bright chief angel stands
 Apart from all his brother bands,
 Too glad for smiling ; having bent
 In angelic wilderment
 O'er the depths of God, and brought
 Reeling thence, one only thought
 To fill his whole eternity.
 He the teacher is for me !—
 He can teach what I would know—
 Mother, Mother, let me go !

XXXI.

' Can your poet make an Eden
 No winter will undo ?
 And light a starry fire while heeding
 His hearth's is burning too ?
 Drown in music the earth's din ?
 And keep his own wild soul within

The law of his own harmony?—

Mother! albeit this be so,
Let me to my Heaven go!
A little harp me waits thereby—
A harp whose strings are golden all,
And tuned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life-tree
Where no willows ever be.
Shall I miss that harp of mine?
Mother, no!—the Eye divine
Turned upon it, makes it shine—
And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to an immortal fyttē.
We shall all be poets there,
Gazing on the chiefest Fair!

XXXII.

'And love! earth's love! and *can* we
love

Fixedly where all things move?
Can the shining love each other?

Mother, mother,
I tremble in thy close embrace—
I feel thy tears adown my face—
Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—
O dreary earthly love!

Loose thy prayer and let me go
To the place which loving is
Yet not sad! and when is given
Escape to *thee* from this below,
Thou shalt behold me that I wait
For thee beside the happy gate;
And silence shall be up in heaven
To hear our greeting kiss.'

XXXIII.

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,
And starts to see beside her bed
The lady with a grandeur spread
Like pathos o'er her face; as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone:

The babe upon her arm was dead!
And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—
She was awed by the calm in the
mother's eye.

XXXIV.

'Wake nurse!' the lady said:
'*We* are waking—he and I—
I, on earth, and he, in sky!
And thou must help me to o'erlay

With garment white, this little clay
Which needs no more our lullaby.

XXXV.

'I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and
prayed
That God would do His will! and
thus
He did it, nurse; He parted *us*.
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face:—and *I* am
calm:
And Heaven is hearkening a new
psalm.

XXXVI.

'This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence.'

And a sense of tune,
A satisfièd love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

XXXVII.

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so Named, who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil;
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In his broad, loving will.

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
Stand near the river^t-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
The shadow of the tree.
The moon and earth are face to face,
And earth is slumbering deep;

The wave-voice seems the voice of
dreams
That wander through her sleep.
The river floweth on.

II.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
Beside the river-sea?
They bring that human heart wherein
No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
Nor dryeth with the dew:
Oh, calm it God! *Thy* calm is broad
To cover spirits, too.
The river floweth on.

III.

The maidens lean them over
The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes,
And gaze adown the tide:
For each within a little boat
A little lamp hath put,
And heaped for freight some lily's
weight
Or scarlet rose half shut.
The river floweth on.

IV.

Of a shell of cocoa carven,
Each little boat is made:
Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,
And carries a hope unsaid.
And when the boat hath carried the
lamp
Unquenched, till out of sight,
The maidens are sure that love will
endure,
But love will fail with light.
The river floweth on.

V.

Why, all the stars are ready
To symbolize the soul,
The stars untroubled by the wind,
Unwearied as they roll:
And yet the soul by instinct sad
Reverts to symbols low—
To that small flame, whose very name
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so.
The river floweth on.

VI.

Six boats are on the river,
Seven maidens on the shore;
While still above them steadfastly
The stars shine evermore.
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!—
The boats aright go safe and bright
Across the waters dark.
The river floweth on.

VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth
Where onwardly they float.
That look in her dilating eyes
Might seem to drive her boat;
Her eyes still mark the constant fire,
And kindling unawares
That hopeful while, she lets a smile
Creep silent through her prayers.
The river floweth on.

VIII.

The smile—where hath it wandered?
She riseth from her knee,
She holds her dark, wet locks away—
There is no light to see!
She cries a quick and bitter cry—
'Nuleeni, launch me thine!
We must have light abroad to-night,
For all the wreck of mine.'
The river floweth on.

IX.

'I do remember watching
Beside this river-bed,
When on my childish knee was laid
My dying father's head.
I turned mine own, to keep the tears
From falling on his face—
What doth it prove when Death and
Love
Choose out the self-same place?'
The river floweth on.

X.

'They say the dead are joyful
The death-change here receiving.
Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say
Where joy comes to the living?
Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—
Light up the waters rather!

I weep no faithless lover where
 I wept a loving father.*
 The river floweth on.

XI.

' My heart foretold his falsehood
 Ere my little boat grew dim :
 And though I closed mine eyes to dream
 That one last dream of *him*,
 They shall not now be wet to see
 The shining vision go :
 From earth's cold love I look above
 To the holy house of snow.*
 The river floweth on.

XII.

' Come *thou*—thou never knewest
 A grief, that thou shouldst fear one ;
 Thou wearest still the happy look
 That shines beneath a dear one !
 Thy humming-bird is in the sun,†
 Thy cuckoo in the grove ;
 And all the three broad worlds, for thee
 Are full of wandering love.'
 The river floweth on.

XIII.

' Why, maiden, dost thou loiter ?
 What secret wouldst thou cover ?
 That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
 And I can guess thy lover :
 I heard thee sob his name in sleep
 It was a name I knew—
 Come, little maid, be not afraid—
 But let us prove him true !'
 The river floweth on.

XIV.

The little maiden cometh—
 She cometh shy and slow :
 I ween she seeth through her lids,
 They drop adown so low :
 Her tresses meet her small bare feet—

She stands and speaketh nought,
 Yet blusheth red, as if she said
 The name she only thought.
 The river floweth on.

XV.

She knelt beside the water,
 She lighted up the flame,
 And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
 The fitful radiance came :—
 ' Go, little boat ; go, soft and safe,
 And guard the symbol spark !'
 Soft, safe, doth float the little boat
 Across the waters dark.
 The river floweth on.

XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded ;
 The light they cannot reach :
 She turneth with that sudden smile
 She learnt before her speech—
 ' I do not hear his voice ! the tears
 Have dimmed my light away !
 But the symbol light will last to-night
 The love will last for aye.'
 The river floweth on.

XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her—
 Outspake she bitterly :
 ' By the symbol light that lasts to-night,
 Wilt vow a vow to me ?'—
 Nuleeni gazeth up her face—
 Soft answer maketh she :
 ' By loves that last when lights are past,
 I vow that vow to thee !'
 The river floweth on.

XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti
 Though her voice was deep as prayer :
 ' The rice is gathered from the plains
 To cast upon thine hair !*
 But when *he* comes, his marriage band
 Around thy neck to throw,
 Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
 And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*
When Luti suffers woe.'
 The river floweth on.

* The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tall about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

* The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmeleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

† Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

XIX.

'And when in seasons after,
Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee and ask
What deeds his sire hath done,
Press deeper down thy mother-smile
His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—*There is none denies,
When Luti speaks of wrong.*'
The river floweth on.

XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
Yet softly answered she—
'By loves that last when lights are past,
I vowed that vow to thee;
But why glads it thee that a bride-day
be
By a word of *woe* defiled?
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-
song
From the ear of a sinless child?'—
'*Why!*' Luti said, and her voice was
dread,
And her eyes dilated wild—
'That the fair new love may her bride-
groom prove,
And the father shame the child.'
The river floweth on.

XXI.

'Thou flowest still, O river,
Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
The lily hath not changed a leaf,*
Thy charmèd lute a tune!
He mixed his voice with thine—and *his*
Was all I heard around;
But now, beside his chosen bride,
I hear the river's sound.'
The river floweth on.

XXII.

'I gaze upon her beauty
Through the tresses that enwreath it:
The light above thy wave is hers—
My rest, alone beneath it.
Oh, give me back the dying look

My father gave thy water I
Give back!—and let a little love
O'erwatch his weary daughter!
The river floweth on.

XXIII.

'Give back!' she hath departed—
The word is wandering with her;
And the stricken maidens hear afar
The step and cry together.
Frail symbols? None are frail enow
For mortal joys to borrow!—
While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
She weepeth, dark with sorrow.
The river floweth on.

AN ISLAND.

All goeth but Goddis will.
OLD POET.

I.

My dream is of an island place
Which distant seas keep lonely;
A little island, on whose face
The stars are watchers only.
Those bright still stars! they need not
seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II.

An island full of hills and dells,
All rumpled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight, that always there
The wind is cradled to soft air.

III.

Hills running up to heaven for light
Through woods that half-way ran!
As if the wild earth mimicked right
The wilder heart of man:
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder than hearts ever are.

IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
In falling from the skies—

* The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

Bringing within it all the roots
Of heavenly trees and flowers and
fruits.

v.

For saving where the grey rocks strike
Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
Hoard up some fountain treasure,
(And e'en in them—stoop down and
hear—
Leaf sounds with water in your ear!)

vi.

The place is all awave with trees—
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded ;
Acacias having drunk the lees
Of the night-dew, faint-headed ;
And wan, grey olive-woods, which seem
The fittest foliage for a dream.

vii.

Trees, trees on all sides ! they combine
Their plummy shades to throw ;
Through whose clear fruit and blossom
fine
Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral panes.

viii.

But little needs this earth of ours
That shining from above her,
When many pleiades of flowers
(Not one lost) star her over ;
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being all refracted by the dews.

ix.

Wide-petalled plants, that boldly drink
The Amreeta of the sky ;
Shut bells, that dull with rapture sink,
And lolling buds, half shy ;
I cannot count them ; but between,
Is room for grass and mosses green,

x.

And brooks, that glass in different
strengths
All colours in disorder,
Or gathering up their silver lengths
Beside their winding border

Sleep, haunted through the slumber hid-
den,
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

xi.

Nor think each arched tree with each
Too closely interlaces,
To admit of vistas out of reach,
And broad moon-lighted places,
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

xii.

For all this island's creature-full,
Kept happy not by halves ;
Mild cows that at the vine-wreaths pull,
Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for love.

xiii.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unrul'd by shepherds ;
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers,
mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

xiv.

And birds that live there in a crowd—
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks
proud,
Self-sphered in those grand tails ;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem :
No guns nor springes in my dream !

xv.

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change.
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

xvi.

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it :
So softly does earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves !
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves ;
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII.

Long winding caverns ! glittering far
Into a crystal distance ;
Through clefts of which, shall many a
star
Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

XIX.

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own :
Those who would change man's voice
and use
For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

XX.

Ourselves to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part :
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart ;
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon of ocean ;
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion.
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

XXII.

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead :
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
No earth, a mourner's tread :
We cannot say by stream or shade,
' I suffered *here*—was *here* betrayed.'

XXIII.

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh
To shifting cloud or hour :

And use our only epitaph
To some bud turned a flower :
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
From fairest island birds,
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
Born singing ! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of these prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
Our smile turned lips shall reach :
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth
Shall glide into our speech—
(What music certes can you find
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

XXVI.

And often by the joy without
And in us, overcome,
We through our musing shall let float
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ, if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
He died in, longer knowing ;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
Been lost in Meles flowing ;
Or poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
To make a place for prayer ;
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there.
How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done,—Thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words !—
They lift me from my dream.
The island fadeth with its swards
That did no more than seem !
The streams are dry, no sun could find—
The fruits are fallen, without wind

xxx.

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning light subdueth ;
 And who would murmur or misdoubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him out ?

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
 How often underneath the sun
 With childish bounds I used to run
 To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite ;
 And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
 The greenest grasses Nature laid,
 To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
 For no one entered there but I.
 The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
 And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
 And spread their boughs enough about
 To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
 But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
 I crept beneath the boughs, and found
 A circle smooth of mossy ground
 Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
 Bedropt with roses waxen-white
 Well satisfied with dew and light
 And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
 When all the garden flowers were trim,
 The grave old gardener prided him
 On these the most of all.

Some Lady, stately overmuch,
 Here moving with a silken noise,
 Has blushed beside them at the voice
 That likened her to such.

Or these, to make a diadem,
 She often may have plucked and
 twined ;
 Half-smiling as it came to mind
 That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
 A child would watch her fair white rose,
 When buried lay her whiter brows,
 And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns
 For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
 A child would bring it all its praise,
 By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
 Though never a dream the roses sent
 Of science or love's compliment,
 I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
 The trace of human step departed.
 Because the garden was deserted,
 The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,
 Hath childhood twixt the sun and
 sward :
 We draw the moral afterward—
 We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
 In silence at the rose-tree wall :
 A thrush made gladness musical
 Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
 To peck or pluck the blossoms white—
 How should I know but roses might
 Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-house complete,
 I brought clear water from the spring
 Praised in its own low murmuring—
 And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought my likeness grew
 (Without the melancholy tale)
 To 'gentle hermit of the dale,'
 And Angelina too

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories! till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are :
No more for me !—myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
'The time will pass away.'

And still I laughed and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away ;
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray !

The time *is* past :—and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, mceker thoughts are
given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ἡδη νοερος
Περασαι ταρσοας

SYNESIUS.

I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and hearken while it rolls.
Very sad and very hoarse
Certes is the flow of souls :
Infinitest tendencies
By the finite prest and pent,
In the finite, turbulent
How we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes, with an awful sound,
God's great plummet strikes the
ground !

II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver
bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage
by :
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity.
The trail on the street of the poor man's
broom,
That the lady who walks to her palace-
home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust :
The tread of the business men who
must
Count their per cents. by the paces they
take :
The cry of the babe unheard of its
mother
Though it lie on her breast while she
thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake.
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and
pinks,
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day :
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate :
The cabman's cry to get out of the way ;

The dustman's cry down the area-
grate :
The young maid's jest, and the old
wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall ;
The fight in the street which is backed
for gold,
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster
Hall :
The drop on the stone of the blind man's
staff
As he trades in his own grief's sacred-
ness ;
The brothel shriek and the Newgate
laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's
grinding,
The grinder's face being nevertheless
Dry and vacant of even woe,
While the children's hearts are leaping
so
At the merry music's winding !
The black-plumed funeral's creeping
train
Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and
strain !)
Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either
side,—
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled
and cried :
At many a house, where sitteth a bride
Trying the morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush to-day.
Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living, must go away
To multiply the dead !
Hark ! an upward shout is sent !
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
The bells ring out—
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young Queen goes to her parlia-
ment.
She turneth round her large blue eyes
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people :
On either side she bows her head
Lowly, with a Queenly grace,
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother !
The thousands press before each other

To bless her to her face :
And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—' May the
Queen rejoice
In the people's liberties !'—

III.

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act
and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or
folly :
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
And that is melancholy !—
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd
city,
The blue sky covering thee like God's
great pity.

IV.

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peakèd hill
Out to the last verge of ocean—
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the emo-
tion

Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will,
Faster than the winged steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thunder-
cloud !

Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
Which she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly :
Through her dripping hair.

V.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by.
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear ;
We can hearken and espy
Without either ; we can journey,
Bold and gay as knight to tourney ;

And though we wear no visor down
To cark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI.

I am gone from peopled town !
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound :
For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have.
O'er a hundred valleys deep,
Where the hills' green shadows sleep,
Scarce known, because the valley trees
Cross those upland images—
O'er a hundred hills, each other
Watching to the western wave—
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII.

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur which
Is respectable from the place
Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June :
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral ;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite . . .
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowzed by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet ;
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two :
You can hear them as they greet ;
You can hear that evermore

Distance-softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except the sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you call
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's strength :
And as they touch your soul, they
borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly colour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness away.

X.

Always! always! must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green-visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowzed by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd?—Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
And fit it to our straitest mood?—
O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities,—that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

XI.

God, God!
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God!
Thou knowest eyelids raised not always
up
Unto Thy love, (as none of ours are,)
droop
As ours, o'er many a tear!

Thou knowest, though thy universe is
broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all.
Thou knowest,—Thou, who art so prodigal
Of beauty,—We are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods—that care for
none
Of those delightful flowers they die
upon.

xii.

O blissful Mouth, which breathed the
mournful breath
We name our souls,—self-spoilt!—by
that strong passion
Which paled thee once with sighs,—by
that strong death
Which made thee once unbreathing—
from the wrack
Themselves have called around them,
call them back,
Back to thee in continuous aspiration!
For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly,—vainly
pass
From the city pavement to untrodden
sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the
grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea,
very vain
The greatest speed of all the souls of
men,
Unless they travel upward to the throne
Where sittest THOU the satisfying ONE,
With help for sins and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while the archangel,
raising
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his
wings.

SOUNDS.

ΗΚΟΥΣΑΣ ἢ ΟΥΚ ΗΚΟΥΣΑΣ ; . .
ÆSCHYLUS,

I.

HEARKEN, hearken!
The rapid river carrieth

Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean:
Teaching his solemnity
Sounds of inland life and glee,
Learnt beside the waving tree,
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion
Which rather gladdens earth than
grieves,
Count and visibly rehearse
The pulse of the universe
Upon the Summer leaves—
Learnt among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come—
Learnt among the grasses green,
Where the rustling mice are seen
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun;
And lazy sheep are browsing through,
With their noses trailed in dew;
And the squirrel leaps adown,
Holding fast the filbert brown;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song that suits the earth,
Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky:
While the woodland doves, apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary, not ascetic,
Hidden and yet vocal seem
Joining in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a sighing in a dream.*
All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth

* "While floating up bright forms ideal,
Mistress, or friend, around me stream;
Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream."

John Kenyon.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two
concluding lines mingled, though very uncon-
sciously, with my own "dream," and gave
their form and pressure to the above distich.
The ideas, however, being sufficiently dis-
tinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to
the press after my verses, and with acknow-
ledging another obligation to the valued
friend to whom I already owe so many.

By a burden of his own,
In the ocean's ear.
Ay! and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II.

Hearken, hearken!
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way:
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride,
While, shaking the tower of the ancient
church,
The marriage bells do swing:
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
(Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering,
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear, at the self-same time,
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in the summer air,—
Save when he droppeth his voice adown,
'To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear.
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life
new-found;
And an old man groans,—with his
testament
Only half signed,—for the life that's
spent:
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, 'for aye, for
aye!
And foemen twain, while Earth their
mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other.
A school-boy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree
rooks:
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka! clasping at his shroud,
A beladame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering:
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting stone;
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's
wail;

A gossip coughs in her thrice told tale;
A muttering gamester shakes the dice:
A reaper foretells goodluck from the
skies;
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to
them;
A patriot leaving his native land to
them,
Cries to the world against perjured
state;
A priest disserts upon linen skirts;
A sinner screams for one hope more;
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are
giving,
Because he cannot hear;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enow, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Hearken, hearken!
God speaketh to thy soul;
Using the supreme voice which doth
confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one;
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John,
For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future, turned to
see
The Voice which spake. It speaketh
now—
Through the regular breath of the calm
creation,
Through the moan of the creature's
desolation
Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
The memory of a solemn vow,
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
The cup, with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Hearken, hearken!
God speaketh in thy soul;
Saying, 'O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth o'
mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden
bowl

And spill its purple wine,—
 Look up to heaven and see how like a
 scroll,
 My right hand hath thine immortality
 In an eternal grasping! Thou, that
 lovest
 The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
 And also what change mars and tombs
 pollute—
 I am the end of love!—give love to *me*!
 O thou that sinnest, grace doth more
 abound
 Than all thy sin! sit still beneath my
 rood,
 And count the droppings of my victim-
 blood,
 And seek none other sound!

v.

Hearken, hearken!
 Shall we hear the lapsing river
 And our brother's sighing ever,
 And not the voice of God?

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean?
 Hê, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,
 Lifting his invoking hands,
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light.
 But thy soul out-trembles now
 Many pulses on thy brow!
 Where be all thy laughers clear,
 Others laughed alone to hear?
 Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame?
 Where, thy dances, mixed with game?
 Where, thy festive companies,
 Moonôd o'er with ladies' eyes,
 All more bright for thee, I trow!
 Neath my moon, what doest thou?

THE MERRY MAN.

I am digging my warm heart,
 Till I find its coldest part:

I am digging wide and low
 Further than a spade will go;
 Till that, when the pit is deep
 And large enough, I there may heap
 All my present pain and past
 Joy, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight.—Now 'tis done!
 Throw them in, by one and one!
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancies golden
 Treasures which my hands have holden,
 Till the chillness made them ache:
 Of childhood's hopes, that used to wake
 If birds were in a singing strain,
 And for less cause, sleep again:
 Of the moss seat in the wood,
 Where I trysted solitude!
 Of the hill-top, where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,
 Taken gladly in the snare!
 Of the climbing up the rocks,—
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough:
 Of the lying on the grass
 While the clouds did overpass,
 Only they, so lightly driven,
 Seeming betwixt me and heaven!
 Of the little prayers serene,
 Murmuring of earth and sin:
 Of large-leaved philosophy
 Leaning from my childish knee:
 Of poetic book sublime,
 Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
 Greek or English,—ere I knew
 Life was not a poem too!
 Throw them in, by one and one!
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Of the glorious ambitions,
 Yet unquenched by their fruitions;
 Of the reading out the nights;
 Of the straining of mad heights;
 Of achievements, less descried
 By a dear few, than magnified;
 Of praises, from the many earned,
 When praise from love was undiscerned;
 Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
 Softened by itself to sadness.—
 Throw them in by one and one!
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these ? more, more than these !
 Throw in, dear memories !—
 Of voices—whereof but to speak,
 Maketh mine all sunk and weak ?
 Of smiles, the thought of which is
 sweeping
 All my soul to floods of weeping ;
 Of looks, whose absence fain would
 weigh
 My looks to the ground for aye ;
 Of clasping hands—ah me ! I wring
 Mine and in a tremble fling
 Downward, downward, all this paining !
 Partings, with the sting remaining ;
 Meetings, with a deeper throe,
 Since the joy is ruined so ;
 Changes, with a fiery burning—
 (Shadows upon all the turning.)

Thoughts of—with a storm they came—
Them, I have not breath to name !
 Downward, downward be they cast,
 In the pit ! and now at last
 My work beneath the moon is done,
 And I shall laugh, at rising sun,

But let me pause or ere I cover
 All my treasures darkly over.
 I will speak not in thine ears,
 Only tell my beaded tears
 Silently, most silently !

When the last is calmly told,
 Let that same moist rosary,
 With the rest sepulchred be.
 Finished now. The darksome mould
 Sealeth up the darksome pit
 I will lay no stone on it :
 Grasses I will sow instead,
 Fit for Queen Titania's tread ;
 Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
 And *ai ai* written upon none.
 Thus, whenever saileth by
 The Lady World of dainty eye,
 Not a grief shall here remain,
 Silken shoon to damp or stain :
 And while she lisps, ' I have not seen
 Any place more smooth and clean '
 Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who
 Laughs as loud as I can do ?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

I.

THE Earth is old ;
 Six thousand winters make her heart
 a-cold.
 The sceptre slanteth from her palsied
 hold.
 She saith ' 'Las me !—God's word that I
 was ' good '
 Is taken back to heaven,
 From whence when any sound comes, I
 am riven
 By some sharp bolt. And now no angel
 would
 Descend with sweet dew-silence on my
 mountains,
 To glorify the lovely river-fountains
 That gush along their side.
 I see, O weary change ! I see instead
 This human wrath and pride,
 These thrones and tombs, judicial wrong,
 and blood :
 And bitter words are poured upon mine
 head—
 ' O Earth ! thou art a stage for tricks
 unholy,
 A church for most remorseful melan-
 choly !
 Thou art so spoiled, we should forget we
 had
 An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so sad.'
 Sweet children, I am old ! ye, every
 one,
 Do keep me from a portion of my sun :
 Give praise in change for brightness !
 That I may shake my hills in infinite-
 ness
 Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
 To hear Earth's sons and daughters
 praising Earth.'

II.

Whereupon a child began,
 With spirit running up to man,
 As by angel's shining ladder,
 (May he find no cloud above !)
 Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
 All his days than now—
 Sitting in the chestnut grove,
 With that joyous overflow

Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
Leaning tricky from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III.

'O rare, rare Earth!' he saith,

'I will praise thee presently ;

Not to-day ; I have no breath !

I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
Where I could not see nor follow ;
One sits at the top of the filbert tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me.

Presently it shall be done.
When I see which way those two
have run ;

When the mocking one at the filbert
top
Shall leap a-down, and beside me
stop ;

Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy
worth,

To say all good of thee !'

IV.

Next a lover, with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day
Beside a wandering stream ;
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say,—
Shakes slow his pensive head.

'Earth, Earth!' saith he,
'If thy spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,

To share each other's dew ;

If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew
Looking off them I might see

Some one very beauteous too,—

'Then, Earth,' saith he,
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—not
thee !'

V.

Will the pedant name her next ?
Crabbed with a crabbed text,
Sits he in his study nook,

With his elbow on a book,
And with stately crossed knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrud
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs enow
That Plato in 'Parmenides'
Meant the same Spinosa did ;
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer,
Homeros being a misnomer.
What hath *he* to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught ? whene'er the
sloping

Sunbeams through his window daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,
Straightway he draws close the curtain.

May abstraction keep him dumb !

Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain

"Derivatum est" would come.

VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head,
Because he wandered last that way
With that one beneath the clay :
Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
'Cease to weep, beloved !' has gone
Whence returneth comfort none.
The silence breaketh suddenly,—
'Earth, I praise thee !' crieth he :
'Thou hast a grave for also *me*.'

VII.

Ha, a poet ! know him by
The ecstasy-dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man ;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright or sunken wan
With a sense of lonely power ;
By the brow, uplifted higher
Than others, for more low declining
By the lip which words of fire
Overboiling, have burned white,
While they gave the nations light !
Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shading.

VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
 Spreading his impassioned hands.
 'O God's Earth!' he saith, 'the sign
 From the Father-soul to mine
 Of all beauteous mysteries,
 Of all perfect images,
 Which, divine in His divine,
 In my human only are
 Very excellent and fair ;—
 Think not, Earth, that I would raise
 Weary forehead in thy praise,
 (Weary that I cannot go
 Farther from thy region low.)
 If were struck no richer meanings
 From thee than thyself. The leanings
 Of the close trees o'er the brim
 Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
 Have a sound beneath their leaves,
 Not of wind, not of wind,
 Which the poet's voice achieves.
 The faint mountains heaped behind,
 Have a falling on their tops,
 Not of dew, not of dew,
 Which the poet's fancy drops.
 Viewless things his eyes can view :
 Driftings of his dreams do light
 All the skies by day and night :
 And the seas that deepest roll,
 Carry murmurs of his soul.
 Earth, I praise thee I praise thou *me* !
 God perfecteth his creation
 With this recipient poet-passion,
 And makes the beautiful to be.
 I praise thee, O beloved sign,
 From the God-soul unto mine !
 Praise me, that I cast on thee
 The cunning sweet interpretation,
 The help and glory and dilation
 Of mine immortality !'

IX.

There was silence. None did dare
 To use again the spoken air
 Of that far-charming voice, until
 A Christian resting on the hill,
 With a thoughtful smile subdued
 (Seeming learnt in solitude)
 Which a weeper might have viewed
 Without new tears, did softly say,
 And looked up unto heaven away
 While he praised the Earth—

'O Earth,

I count the praises thou art worth,
 By thy waves that move aloud,
 By thy hills against the cloud,
 By thy valleys warm and green,
 By thy copses' elms between ;
 By their birds which, like a sprite
 Scattered by a strong delight
 Into fragments musical,
 Stir and sing in every bush ;
 By thy silver founts that fall,
 As if to entice the stars at night
 To thine heart ; by grass and rush,
 And little weeds the children pull,
 Mistook for flowers !

—Oh, beautiful

Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
 Than in heaven is called good !
 Good to us, that we may know
 Meekly from thy good to go ;
 While the holy, crying Blood
 Puts its music kind and low,
 'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
 And thine ancient curse !

X.

'Praised be the mosses soft
 In thy forest pathways oft,
 And the thorns, which make us think
 Of the thornless river-brink,
 Where the ransomed tread !
 Praised be thy sunny gleams,
 And the storm, that worketh dreams
 Of calm unfinished !
 Praised be thine active days,
 And thy night-time's solemn need,
 When in God's dear book we read
No night shall be therein.
 Praised be thy dwellings warm,
 By household fagot's cheerful blaze,
 Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
 Pauseth oft the merry din,
 Save the babe's upon the arm,
 Who croweth to the crackling wood.
 Yea,—and better understood,
 Praised be thy dwellings cold,
 Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
 Where the bodies of the saints,
 Separate from earthly taints,
 Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
 Waiting for the trumpet's sound
 To free them into blessing ;—none
 Weeping more beneath the sun,

Though dangerous words of human love
Be graven very near, above.

XI.

'Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief, from thee to us!
For thy cradles and thy tombs;
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer-heat; and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine!'

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest.
MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do
not know
A name that seemeth not too high or
low,
Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being
given
By the majestic angel whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to
stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and
head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

II.

And art Thou come for saving, baby-
browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come
for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door is
bowed
By treadings of the low wind from the
south,
A restless shadow through the chamber
waving:
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun;
But Thou, with that close slumber on
thy mouth,

Dost seem of wind and sun already
weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary One?

III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out
the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy
soul
High dreams on fire with God;
High songs that make the pathways
where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs; and
visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To guide the music and the glory
through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad up-
liftings
Of any seraph wing!
Thus, noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my
dreaming One!

IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart; to all
its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie
down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then live
most.
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light un-
lost,
Each forehead with a high thought for
a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware.
Yet throw
No shade against the wall! How mo-
tionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and
outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
Like light's soul in itself! I bear, I
bear,

* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of
the kisses of God's lips.

To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
 Though their external shining testifies
 To that beatitude within, which were
 Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
 I fall not on my sad clay face before ye ;
 I look on His. I know
 My spirit which dilateth with the woe
 Of His mortality,
 May well contain your glory.
 Yea, drop your lids more low.
 Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me !
 Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One !

v.

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.
 The dumb kine from their fodderturning
 them,
 Softened their horned faces
 To almost human gazes
 Towards the newly Born.
 The simple shepherds from the star-lit
 brooks
 Brought visionary looks,
 As yet in their astonished hearing rung
 The strange, sweet angel-tongue.
 The magi of the East, in sandals worn,
 Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
 With long pale beards their gifts upon
 the ground,
 The incense, myrrh and gold,
 These baby hands were inopotent to
 hold.
 So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
 Upon thy royal state !
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

vi.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
 New meeknesses to hear such utterance
 rest
 On mortal lips,—‘ I am not proud ’—*not
 proud !*
 Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed
 As others bow before Him, still mine
 heart
 Bows lower than their knees. O centu-
 ries
 That roll, in vision, your futurities
 My future grave athwart,—
 Whose murmurs seem to reach me while
 I keep
 Watch o’er this sleep,—

Say of me as the Heavenly said,—‘ Thou
 art
 The blessedest of women ! ’—blessedest,
 Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
 Whose height misplaced may pierce me
 like a shame,
 When I sit meek in heaven !

vii.

For me—for me—
 God knows that I am feeble like the
 rest !—
 I often wandered forth, more child than
 maiden,
 Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
 Whose summits looked heaven-laden ;
 Listening to silence as it seemed to be
 God’s voice, so soft yet strong—so fain
 to press
 Upon my heart as Heaven did on the
 height,
 And waken up its shadows by a light,
 And show its vileness by a holiness.
 Then I knelt down most silent like the
 night,
 Too self-renounced for fears,
 Raising my small face to the boundless
 blue
 Whose stars did mix and tremble in my
 tears.
 God heard *them* falling after—with His
 dew.

viii.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
 This Incorruptible now born of me—
 This fair new Innocence no sun did
 chance
 To shine on, (for eeven Adam was no
 child,)
 Created from my nature all defiled,
 This mystery from out mine ignorance—
 Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption,
 more
 Than others do, or I did heretofore ?—
 Can hands wherein such burden pure has
 been,
 Not open with the cry ‘unclean un-
 clean !’
 More oft than any else beneath the
 skies ?
 Ah King, ah Christ, ah son !
 The kine, the shepherds, the abased
 wise,

Must all less lowly wait
Than I, upon thy state!—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

IX.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His
universe,
Come, crown me Him a king!
Pluck rays from all such stars as never
fling
Their light where fell a curse.
And make a crowning for this kingly
brow!—
What is my word?—Each empyreal
star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade:
The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

X.

Unchildlike shade!—no other babe doth
wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—
No small babe-smiles, my watching heart
has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips
between;
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping baby-
hood.
Alas, our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too good
for Thee:
Yet, sleep, my weary One!

XI.

And then the drear sharp tongue of
prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which
shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword—a
sword?—
(That 'smites the Shepherd!') then, I
think aloud
The words 'despised,'—'rejected,'—
every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The DARLING on my knee.
Bright angels,—move not!—lest ye stir
the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity!

I must not die, with mother's work to
do,
And could not live—and see.

XII.

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—
This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer:
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled—
This presence in an infant's face:
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence,
It is so strong to move!
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,
A child, without the heart for play;
Ay, a Creator rent asunder
From his first glory and cast away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying—SON!

XIII.

That tear fell not on THEE
Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in thy slum-
ber!
'Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out of
number
Which through the vibratory palm trees
run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast Thou heard
A tear fall silently?—
Wak'st Thou, O loving One?—

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from
out the ground:
One, where the flashing of Cherubic
sword
Fell sad, in Eden's ward;
And one, from Eden earth, within the
sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,

What time the promise after curse was
said—

'Thy seed shall bruise his head.'

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming
atmosphere

When she was born. Her deep eyes
shine and shone

With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by
year :

With odorous gums, she mixeth things
defiled :

She trampleth down earth's grasses
green and sweet

With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness
killing :

She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round :

She droppeth tears with seed where
man is tilling

The rugged soil in his exhausted hours :
She smileth—ah me ! in her smile doth
go

A mood of deeper woe !

IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw
not wither,

And went a-nodding through the wilder-
ness

With brow that shone no less
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer
by rough weather ;

Searching the treeless rock for fruits of
light ;

Her fair quick feet being armed from
stones and cold,

By slippers of pure gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong
And, while she dreamed, her slippers
stole away ;

But still she wended on with mirth
unheeding,

Although her feet were bleeding ;
Till Memory tracked her on a certain
day,

And with most evil eyes did search her
long

And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that THOU wert
standing near,

Oh Thou, who saidest 'live' to creatures
lying

In their own blood and dying !
For Thou her forehead to thine heart
didst rear

And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened
eyne,

With tender tears from Thine !

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swound, and gazed upon
Thy face ;

And, meeting there that soft subduing
look

Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
Thy piercèd hands and feet with kisses
close,

And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
To 'reach the things before.'

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like
summer lightning,

Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where
she never

From Love and Faith may sever ;
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not
whitening

A time ago, though whitening all the
while,

Reddened with life, to hear the Voice
which talked

To Adam as he walked.

A PORTRAIT.

*One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her :
Ten times have the lilies blown,
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear—
Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encolored faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air :

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things—
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure :

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
Which come softly—just as *she*,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more fair
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—' You have done a
Consecrated little Una !'

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
' 'Tis my angel, with a name !'

And a stranger,—when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleecken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her !'
Ay, and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOTHT.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

I.

NINE years old ! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come :
Yet when I was nine, I said
No such word !—I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought
me
To my childhood's haunted spring :
I had life, like flowers and bees
In betwixt the country trees ;
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow
 Little head leant on the pane,
 Little finger drawing down it
 The long trailing drops upon it,
 And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,
 Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian,
 Though you meet it with a jeer
 If I said it long enough,
 Then the rain hummed dimly off,
 And the thrush with his pure Lydian
 Was left only to the ear :

V.

And the sun and I together
 Went a-rushing out of doors :
 We, our tender spirits, drew
 Over hill and dale in view,
 Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
 In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
 Through the grasses wet and fair,
 Straight I sought my garden-ground.
 With the laurel on the mound,
 And the pear tree oversweeping
 A side-shadow of green air.

VII.

In the garden lay supinely
 A huge giant wrought of spade !
 Arms and legs were stretched at length
 In a passive giant strength,—
 And the meadow turf, cut finely,
 Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
 Such his title and degree.
 With my rake I smoothed his brow ;
 Both his cheeks I weeded through ;
 But a rhymer such as I am,
 Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
 Staring, winking at the skies ;
 Nose of gillyflowers and box ;
 Scented grasses put for locks—
 Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
 Set a-waving round his eyes.

X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
 With a glitter toward the light ;
 Purple violets for the mouth,
 Breathing perfumes west and south.
 And a sword of flashing lilies,
 Holden ready for the fight.

XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,
 Closely fitting, leaf by leaf ;
 Periwinkles interlaced
 Drawn for belt around the waist ;
 While the brown bees, humming praises,
 Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows (I sometimes wondered,
 If the disembodied soul
 Of old Hector, once of Troy,
 Might not take a dreary joy
 Here to enter—if it thundered,
 Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

XIII.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
 In this body rude and rife
 He might enter, and take rest
 'Neath the daisies of the breast—
 They, with tender roots, renewing
 His heroic heart to life.

XIV.

Who could know ? I sometimes started
 At a motion or a sound !
 Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
 With an *otototai* ?
 Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
 Make the daisies tremble round ?

xv.

It was hard to answer, often :
 But the birds sang in the tree—
 But the little birds sang bold
 In the pear-tree green and old ;
 And my terror seemed to soften
 Through the courage of their glee.

xvi.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
 And white blossoms, sleek with rain
 Oh, my garden, rich with pansies !
 Oh, my childhood's bright romances !
 All revive like Hector's body,
 And I see them stir again !

xvii.

And despite life's changes—chances,
 And despite the deathbell's toll,
 They press on me in full seeming !
 Help, some angel ! stay this dream-
 ing !
 As the birds sang in the branches,
 Sing God's patience through my soul !

xviii.

That no dreamer, no neglecter
 Of the present's work unsped,
 I may wake up and be doing,
 Life's heroic ends pursuing,
 Though my past is dead as Hector,
 And though Hector is twice dead.

A VALEDICTION.

GOD be with thee my beloved,—God be
 with thee !
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,
 Moor and pleasure all around thee and
 beneath thee
 Looking equal in one snow !
 While I who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,

With the farewell and the hollo,
 And cannot reach thee so.
 Alas ! I can but teach thee.
 God be with thee my beloved,—God be
 with thee !

Can I teach thee, my beloved—can I
 teach thee ?
 If I said, Go left or right,
 The counsel would be light,
 The wisdom, poor of all that could en-
 rich thee !
 My right would show like left ;
 My raising would depress thee,
 My choice of light would blind thee,
 Of way, would leave behind thee,
 Of end, would leave bereft !
 Alas ! I can but bless thee—
 May God teach thee my beloved,—may
 God teach thee !

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I
 bless thee ?
 What blessing word can I,
 From mine own tears, keep dry ?
 What flowers grow in my field where-
 with to dress thee ?
 My good reverts to ill ;
 My calmnesses would move thee,
 My softnesses would prick thee,
 My bindings up would break thee,
 My crownings, curse and kill.
 Alas ! I can but love thee.
 May God bless thee my beloved,—may
 God bless thee !

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I
 love thee ?
 And is *this* like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,
 When strong as death I fain would watch
 above thee ?
 My love-kiss can deny
 No tears that fall beneath it :
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near thee,—
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And I—I can but die !
 May God love thee my beloved,—may
 God love thee !

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I.

THEY say that God lives very high !
But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God. And why ?

II.

And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold,
Though from Him all that's glory shines.

III.

God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across his face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV.

But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills, through all
things made,
Through sight and sound of every
place :

V.

As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lids, her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night ; and said
' Who kissed you through the dark,
dear guesser ?'

THE SLEEP.

He giveth His beloved sleep.—*Psalm cxxvii. 2.*

I.

OF all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
' He giveth His beloved, sleep ?'

II.

What would we give to our beloved ?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,

The monarch's crown, to light the
brows ?—
' He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

III.

What do we give to our beloved ?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake.
' He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

IV.

' Sleep soft, beloved !' we sometimes
say
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids
creep
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
' He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises !
O men, with wailing in your voices !
O delved gold, the wailers heap !
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall !
God strikes a silence through you all,
And ' giveth His beloved, sleep.'

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap.
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
' He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man,
Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is heard—
' He giveth His beloved, sleep !'

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers
leap,

Would now its wearied vision close,
 Would childlike on *His* love repose,
 Who 'giveth His beloved, sleep!'

IX.

And, friends, dear friends,—when it
 shall be
 That this low breath is gone from me,
 And round my bier ye come to weep,
 Let one, most loving of you all,
 Say, 'Not a tear must o'er her fall—
 He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
 Did look upon the earth and say—

'Purple cloud the hill-top binding;
 Folded hills, the valleys wind in;
 Valleys, with fresh streams among you;
 Streams, with bosky trees along you;
 Trees, with many birds and blossoms;
 Birds, with music-trembling bosoms;
 Blossoms, dropping dews that wreath
 you

To your fellow flowers beneath you;
 Flowers, that constellate on earth;
 Earth, that shakest on the mirth
 Of the merry Titan ocean,
 All his shining hair in motion!
 Why am I thus the only one
 Who can be dark beneath the sun?'

But when the summer day was past,
 He looked to heaven and smiled at last.
 Self answered so—

'Because, O cloud,
 Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
 Heavily on mountain top;
 Hills that almost seem to drop,
 Stricken with a misty death
 To the valleys underneath;
 Valleys, sighing with the torrent;
 Waters, streaked with branches hor-
 rent;
 Branchless trees, that shake your head
 Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
 Where the common flowers are found;
 Flowers, with foreheads to the ground;

Ground, that shriekest while the sea
 With his iron smiteth thee—
 I am, besides, the only one
 Who can be bright *without* the sun.'

A SEA-SIDE WALK.

I.

WE walked beside the sea
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the Princess
 weird
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched
 and seared,
 Uttered with burning breath, 'Ho! vic-
 tory!'
 And sank adown an heap of ashes pale.
 So runs the Arab tale.

II.

The sky above us showed
 An universal and unmoving cloud,
 On which the cliffs permitted us to see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master minds, when gazed at by the
 crowd!
 And, shining with a gloom, the water
 grey
 Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out.
 They did not dare to tread so soon about,
 Though trembling, in the footsteps of the
 sun.
 The light was neither night's nor day's,
 but one
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its
 doubt:
 And Silence's impassioned breathings
 round
 Seemed wandering into sound.

IV.

O solemn-beating heart
 Of nature! I have knowledge that thou
 art
 Bound unto man's by cords he cannot
 sever—
 And, what time they are slackened by
 him ever.

So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and
strong,
The slackened cord along.

v.

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously
were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unfor-
sook ;
And, had we seen each other's face, we
had
Seen haply, each was sad.

 THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. II.

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A forward shade, the only one,
But shadows ever man pursue.

II.

Familiar with the waves and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart upon the heart of ocean
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves
under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder !

v.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsy to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim ;
And when earth's dew around him lay
He thought of ocean's winged spray,
And his eye waxèd sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade :
And drooped his wing, and mourned he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves !) because, alas !
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

 MY DOVES.

O Weisheit ! Du red'st wie eine Taube !
GÖTTE.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea :
For, ever there, the sea-winds go
With sun-lit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,

With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their
right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond ;
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers ! Of living loves,
Theirs hath the calmest fashion ;
Their living voice the likest moves
To lifeless intonation,
Their lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
And tempest-clouded airs.
My little doves !—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue !

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion—
The triumph of the mart—
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold and metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean—
(Their eyes with such a plaintive shine,
Are fastened upwardly to mine !)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest,
Beneath the sunny zone ;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well o' music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories :
All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves ! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street !
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings within !

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless ;
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness ;
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields :
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent dewy fields ;
My spirit and my God shall be
My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea !

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear
thy feet,
Benignant friend ! I will not proudly
say
As better poets use, 'These *flowers* I
lay,'
Because I would not wrong thy roses
sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet,
repeat
Thou, overleaning them this springtime
day,

With heart as open to love as theirs to
May,

'Low-rooted verse may reach some
heavenly heat,

Even like my blossoms, if as nature-
true,

Though not as precious.' Thou art un-
perplexed,

Dear friend, in whose dear writings
drops the dew

And blow the natural airs; thou, who
art next

To nature's self in cheering the world's
view,

To preach a sermon on so known a text!

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

WHEN from thee, weeping I removed,

And from my land for years,

I thought not to return, Beloved,

With those same parting tears.

I come again to hill and lea,

Weeping for thee.

II.

I clasped thy hand when standing last

Upon the shore in sight.

The land is green, the ship is fast,

I shall be there to night!

I shall be there—no longer *we*—

No more with thee.

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,

I might more clearly know,

How heart of thine could turn as chill

As hearts by nature so;

How change could touch the falsehood-

free

And changeless *thee*!

IV.

But now thy fervid looks last-seen

Within my soul remain,

'Tis hard to think that *they* have been.

To be no more again—

That I shall vainly wait—ah me!

A word from thee.

V.

I could not bear to look upon

That mound of funeral clay,

Where one sweet voice is silence,—one

Æthereal brow decay;

Where all thy mortal I may see,

But never thee.

VI.

For thou art where all friends are gone

Whose parting pain is o'er:

And I who love and weep alone,

Where thou wilt weep no more,

Weep bitterly and selfishly,

For *me*, not *thee*.

VII.

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know

That I endure this pain!

For saints in Heaven, the Scriptures

show

Can never grieve again—

And grief known mine, even there,

would be

Still shared by thee!

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,

Thou golden-haired and silver-voiced
child,

With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's
defiled;

With eyes unknowing how tears dim the
sight;

With feet all trembling at the new de-
light

Treaders of earth to be!

II.

Ah no! the lark may bring

A song to thee from out the morning
cloud;

The merry river from its lilies bowed;

The brisk rain from the trees; the lucky
wind,

That half doth make its music, half doth
find :

But I—I may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou
art,

To bring a verse from out a human heart
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary
years

The day-sum of delight ?

IV.

E'en if the verse were said,
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands
to hear

The wind or rain, gay bird or river
clear,

Wouldst, at that sound of sad humani-
ties,

Upturn thy bright uncomprehending
eyes

And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine !
But prayer in place of singing ! prayer
that would

Commend thee to the new-creating God,
Whose gift in childhood's heart without
its stain

Of weakness, ignorance, and changing
vain—

That gift of God be thine !

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining
brow

And pretty winning accents make thee
now !

Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate
sound

(How sweet !) of 'father,' 'mother,'
shall be found

The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each others' shadows, thou wilt less
resemble

Thy fellows of the earth, who toil and
tremble,

Than him thou seest not, thine angel
bold

Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may
feel the heart's decaying.

It is a place where happy saints may
weep amid their praying :

Yet let the grief and humbleness, as
low as silence languish !

Earth surely now may give her calm to
whom she gave her anguish.

II.

O poets ! from a maniac's tongue was
poured the deathless singing !

O Christians ! at your cross of hope, a
hopeless hand was clinging !

O men ! this man in brotherhood your
weary paths beguiling,

Groaned inly while he taught you peace,
and died while ye were smiling !

III.

And now, what time ye all may read
through dimming tears his story,

How discord on the music fell, and
darkness on the glory,

And how when one by one, sweet
sounds and wandering lights departed,

He wore no less a loving face because so
brokenhearted ;

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's
high vocation,

And bow the meekest Christian down
in meeker adoration ;

Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise
or good forsaken ;

Named softly as the household name of
one whom God hath taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I
 learn to think upon him,
 With meekness that is gratefulness to
 God whose heaven hath won him—
 Who suffered once the madness-cloud to
 His own love to blind him ;
 But gently led the blind along where
 breath and bird could find him ;

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain
 such quick poetic senses
 As hills have language for, and stars,
 harmonious influences !
 The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept
 his within its number ;
 And silent shadows from the trees
 refreshed him like a slumber.

VII.

Wild timid hares were drawn from
 woods to share his home-caresses,
 Uplooking to his human eyes with
 sylvan tendernesses :
 'The very world, by God's constraint,
 from falsehood's ways removing,
 its women and its men became beside
 him, true and loving.

VIII.

But though in blindness he remained
 unconscious of that guiding,
 And things provided came without the
 sweet sense of providing,
 He testified this solemn truth, while
 phrenzy desolated—
 Nor man nor nature satisfy whom only
 God created !

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his
 mother while she blesses
 And drops upon his burning brow the
 coolness of her kisses ;
 That turns his fevered eyes around—
 'My mother ! where's my mother ?'—
 As if such tender words and deeds could
 come from any other !—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he
 sees her bending o'er him ;
 Her face all pale from watchful love,
 the unwearied love she bore him !—
 Thus woke the poet from the dream his
 life's long fever gave him,
 Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes,
 which closed in death to save him !

XI.

Thus ? oh, not *thus* ! no type of earth
 can image that awaking,
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of
 seraphs, round him breaking,
 Or felt the new immortal throb of soul
 from body parted ;
 But felt *those eyes alone*, and knew 'My
 Saviour ! not deserted !'

XII.

Deserted ! who hath dreamt that when
 the cross in darkness rested,
 Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love
 was manifested ?
 What frantic hands outstretched have
 e'er the atoning drops averted,
 What tears have washed them from the
 soul, that *one* should be deserted ?

XIII.

Deserted ! God could separate from
 His own essence rather :
 And Adam's sins *have* swept between
 the righteous Son and Father ;
 Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry his
 universe hath shaken—
 It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I
 am forsaken !'

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid
 his lost creation,
 That, of the lost, no son should use those
 words of desolation ;
 That earth's worst phrenzies, marring
 hope, should mar not hope's fruition,
 And I, on Cowper's grave, should see
 his rapture in a vision !

THE MEASURE.

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (שֵׁשׁ)."—*Isaiah xl.*

"Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure (שֵׁשׁ)."—*Psalm lxxx.*

God, the Creator, with pulseless hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man in
one

Measure and by one weight :
So saith His holy book.

Shall *we*, then, who have issued from
the dust,

And there return—shall *we*, who toil for
dust,

And wrap our winnings in this dusty
life,

Say, 'No more tears, Lord God!
The measure runneth o'er?'

Oh, holder of the balance, laughest
Thou?

Nay, Lord! be gentler to our foolish-
ness,

For His sake who assumed our dust and
turns

On Thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears!

And teach us, O our Father, while we
weep,

To look in patience upon earth and
learn—

Waiting in that meek gesture, till at last
These tearful eyes be filled

With the dry dust of death!

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all

Mine heart can ponder?

The sun, a little cloud can pall

With darkness yonder?
The cloud, a little wind can move
Where'er it listeth?
The wind, a little leaf above,
Though sere, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
My days were gladder;
But now, whatever Spring may mean,
I must grow sadder.
Ah me! a leaf with sighs can wring
My lips asunder—
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are
pined
And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind,
The forests wither,
Thou from the darkening deathly curse,
To glory breakest,—
The Strongest of the Universe
Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME.

———the name
Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.
MISS MITFORD'S Dramatic Scenes.

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonored by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did to pages wove
For gay romance, belong.
It never dedicate did move
As 'Sacharissa,' unto love—
'Orinda,' unto song

III.

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none,
And afterward, when I am dead,

* I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread
Across my funeral stone.

IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win.
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes, and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain;
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did
run
As part thereof. The mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear!
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sister's woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee;—

XI.

And voices, which to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keeping!—
To some I never more can say
An answer, till God wipes away
In heaven those drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears;
No murmurs cross my mind;
Now God be thanked for these thick
tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind!

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years en-
wrought
With love which softens yet!
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it has caught
Earth's guerdon of regret!

XIV.

Earth saddens, never shall remove,
Affections purely given;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And brighten it with Heaven.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith hath run,
Through thy lower nature;*
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thine silken ears adown
Either side demurely

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mit'ord, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown.

Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemise its dullness;
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curvetting,
Leaping like a charger.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light;
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness!
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in those drooping ears,
And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hying—
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Called him now to blither choice
Than such a chamber-keeping,
'Come out!' praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favor:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said,
Therefore, and forever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee!

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—

No man break thy purple cup,
Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats aointed flee—
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macarons
Turn to daily rations!

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel

Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature,
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

SONNETS.

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose
eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one
by one
Did leave me dark before the natural
sun,
And I astonished fell, and could not
pray,
A thought within me to myself did say,
'Is God less God that *thou* art left
undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this
sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!'—But I answered,
Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can
loose,
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? can he
choose
But sob in silence with an upward
gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to
bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears, both prayer
and praise.

CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken! there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy
thing,

And tender voices, to make soft the
wind.
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where 'dust to dust' the love from life
disjoined—
And if before these sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary
dearth)
Crying 'Where are ye, O my loved and
loving?'...
I know a Voice would sound, 'Daughter,
I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for
earth?'

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient
sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling
interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and
height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual
ground!
This song of soul I struggle to outbear

Through portals of the sense, sublime
 and whole,
 And utter all myself into the air :
 But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
 Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh would
 perish there,
 Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-one, and in the burning of the
 Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate
 Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's
 breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in
 that nest !
 The poet sings upon the earth
 grave-riven :
 Before the naughty world soon self-
 forgiven
 For wronging him ; and in the darkness
 prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights.
 Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory ! Heaven
 is high—
 Sing, poet with the sorrow ! Earth is
 low.
 The universe's inward voices cry
 'Amen' to either song of joy and wo—
 Sing seraph,—poet,—sing on equally.

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-
 WORTH BY R. B. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let
 the cloud
 Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
 Then break against the rock, and show
 behind
 The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
 The sense with beauty. *He*, with
 forehead bowed
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
 Before the sovran thought of his own
 mind,

And very meek with inspirations
 proud,—
 Takes here his rightful place as
 poet-priest
 By the high-altar, singing prayer and
 prayer
 To the higher Heavens. A noble vision
 free
 Our Haydon's hand has flung out from
 the mist !
 No portrait this, with Academic air—
 This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
 On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully
 done,
 Supernal Will ! I would not fain be
 one
 Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
 Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
 Says no grace after meat. My wine
 hath run
 Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
 To gather up the bread of my repast
 Scattered and trampled ;—yet I find
 some good
 In earth's green herbs and springs that
 bubble up
 Clear from the darkling ground,—
 content until
 I sit with angels before better food.
 Dear Christ ! when thy new vintage
 fills my cup,
 This hand shall shake no more, nor that
 wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
 And gathered there the nosegay that
 you see ;
 Singing within myself as bird or bee
 When such do field-work on a morn of
 May :
 But now I look upon my flowers,—
 decay
 Has met them in my hands more fatally
 Because more warmly clasped ; and
 sobs are free

To come instead of songs. What do
 you say,
 Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I
 should go
 Back straightway to the fields, and
 gather more?
 Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I:
 My heart is very tired—my strength is
 low—
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked
 before,
 Held dead within them till myself shall
 die

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer
 not
 More grief than ye can weep for. That
 is well—
 That is light grieving! lighter, none
 befell,
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
 Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps
 in its cot,
 The mother singing; at her marriage-
 bell
 The bride weeps; and before the oracle
 Of high-faned hills, the poet has forgot
 Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank
 God for grace,
 Ye who weep only! If, as some have
 done,
 Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place,
 And touch but tombs,—look up! Those
 tears will run
 Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
 And leave the vision clear for stars and
 sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passion-
 less—
 That only men incredulous of despair,
 Half-taught in anguish, through the
 midnight air
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud
 access
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desert-
 ness

In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted
 man, express
 Grief for thy Dead in silence like to
 death;
 Most like a monumental statue set
 In everlasting watch and moveless wo,
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
 Touch it: the marble eyelids are not
 wet—
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice that was to
 you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth sud-
 denly,
 And silence against which you dare not
 cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease
 and new—
 What hope? what help? what music
 will undo
 That silence to your sense? Not friend-
 ship's sigh—
 Nor reason's subtle count! Not melody
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus
 blew—
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
 Whose hearts leap upward through the
 cypress trees
 To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric
 laws
 Self-chanted,—nor the angel's sweet All
 hails,
 Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of
 these.
 Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill
 this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and
 sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss thee
 so
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.

Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet—
 And if no precious gums my hands
 bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber, while I
 go
 In reach of thy divinest voice complete
 In humanest affection—thus in sooth,
 To lose the sense of losing! As a child,
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for
 evermore,
 Issuing to in its stead by mother's mouth;
 I'll, sinking on her breast, love-recon-
 ciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand
 Whence harmonies we cannot under-
 stand,
 Of God's will in His worlds, the strain
 unfolds
 In sad perplexed minors. Deathly
 colds
 Fall on us while we hear and counter-
 mand
 Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-
 land
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.
 We murmur,—'Where is any certai
 tune
 Of measured music, in such notes as
 these?'—
 But angels, leaning from the golden
 seat,
 Are not so minded: their fine ear hath
 won
 The issue of completed cadences;
 And, smiling down the stars, they whis-
 per—SWEET.

WORK.

What are we set on earth for? Say,
 to toil—
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the
 vines,
 For all the heat o' day, till it declines,

And Death's mild curfew shall from
 work assail.
 God did anoint thee with his odorous
 oil,
 To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
 All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
 For younger fellow-workers of the soil
 To wear for amulets. So others shall
 Take patience, labor, to their heart and
 hand,
 From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy
 brave cheer,
 And God's grace fructify through thee
 to all.
 The least flower, with a brimming cup,
 may stand
 And share its dew-drop with another
 near.

FUTURITY.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call, because erelong
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of love,
 and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am
 strong,
 Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God
 keeps a niche
 In Heaven to hold our idols: and albeit
 He brake them to our faces and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their
 white,—
 I know we shall behold them, raised
 complete,
 The dust swept from their beauty,—glo-
 rified
 New Memnons singing in the great
 God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures
 beat
 Like pulses in the church's brow and
 breast;

And by them, we find rest in our unrest,
 And heart-deep in salt tears, do yet en-
 treat
 God's fellowship, as if on heavenly seat.
 The first is JESUS WEPT, whercon is
 prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its
 best
 And sweetest waters on the record
 sweet :
 And one is, where the Christ denied
 and scorned
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render
 plain,
 By help of having loved a little and
 mourned,
 That look of sovran love and sovran
 pain
 Which He who could not sin yet suffered,
 turned
 On him who could reject but not sus-
 tain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no
 word—
 No gesture of reproach ! The heavens
 serene
 Though heavy with armed justice, did
 not lean
 Their thunders that way The forsaken
 Lord
 Looked only, on the traitor. None re-
 cord
 What that look was ; none guess : for
 those who have seen
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-
 pang keen,
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a
 sword,
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-
 call.
 And Peter, from the height of blas-
 phemy—
 ' I never knew this man ' did quail and
 fall,
 As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and
 turned free
 And went out speechless from the face
 of all,
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly,

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem
 to say—
 ' Thou Peter ! art thou then a common
 stone
 Which I at last must break my heart
 upon,
 For all God's charge to His high angels
 may
 Guard my foot better ? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they
 should run
 Quick to deny me 'neath the morning-
 sun,
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray ?
 The cock crows coldly.—Go and mani-
 fest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
 For when thy final need's dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here
 My voice, to God and angels, shall
 attest,
 ' Because I KNOW this man, let him be
 clear.'

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY
 DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone,—with none beside thy bed !
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word
 said,
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb
 from thee,—
 Pray then alone—' O Christ, come ten-
 derly !
 By thy forsaken Sonship in the red
 Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness
 outspread,—
 And the lone garden where Thine agony
 Fell bloody from thy brow,—by all of
 those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine !
 No earthly friend being near me, inter-
 pose
 No deathly angel 'twixt my face and
 Thine,
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life's
 rose,
 And smile away my mortal to Divine.'

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION:

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarolle;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of the flax; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
 With quick adjustment, provident control,
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
 To the dear Christian church—that we may do
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
 Thus swift and steadfast; thus intent and strong
 While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
 And drew around it other thoughts like bees
 For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses;
 Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
 Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
 Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
 That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
 My soul so, always. Foolish counter-part
 Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
 The thought I called a flower, grew nettle-rough—
 The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering.
 Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke,)

Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough
 And they will all prove sad enough to sting.

AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
 Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
 That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
 For life than pity, I should yet be slow
 To bring my own heart nakedly below
 The palm of such a friend, that he should press
 Motive, condition, means, appliances,
 My false ideal joy and fickle wo,
 Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear
 Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
 In the free voice . . . O angels, let the flood
 Of bitter scorn dash on me! Do ye hear
 What I say, who bear calmly all the time
 This everlasting face to face with God?

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
 And ruffled without cause; complaining on—
 Restless with rest—until, being overthrown,
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
 Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
 Of our ripe peach: or let the wilful sun
 Shine westward of our window—straight we run
 A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
 But what time through the heart and through the brain

God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved
before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering
weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from
shore ;
And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy
main,
God's chartered judgments walk for
evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

'O DREARY life!' we cry, 'O dreary
life !'

And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks
and herds

Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a
knife

Against which we may struggle. Ocean
girds

Unslackened the dry land : savannah-
swards

Unweary sweep : hills watch, unworn ;
and rise

Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-
trees,

To show above the unwasted stars that
pass

In their old glory. O thou God of old !
Grant me some smaller grace than
comes to *these* ;—

But so much patience as a blade of
grass

Grows by contented through the heat
and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no
hope

Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey bank of sky, we might be
faint

To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls. But since the
scope

Must widen early, is it well to droop
For a few days consumed in loss and
taint ?

O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the
road,

Singing beside the hedge. What if the
bread

Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints ?—At least it may be
said,

'Because the way is *short*, I thank thee,
God !

EXAGGERATION.

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination, given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshone
By God's clear glory,—down our ears
to rake

The dismal snows instead ; flake follow
flake,

To cover all the corn. We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level
thrown,

And pant like climbers. Near the alder
brake

We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would
O brothers ! let us leave the shame and
sin

Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood
The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein
That, by the grief of ONE, came all our
good.

ADEQUACY.

Now by the verdure on thy thousand
hills,
Beloved England,—doth the earth
appear

Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious
wills !

We cannot say the morning sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course : nor that the
clear

Strong stars without significance insphere
Our habitation. We, meantime, our
ills

Heap up against this good ; and lift a
cry

Against this work-day world, this ill-
spread feast,

As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and

High Priest,

I ask thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-
hearted man,

Self-called George Sand! whose soul
amid the lions

Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defi-
ance,

And answers roar for roar as spirits can :
I would some miraculous thunder ran

Above the applauded circus, in appli-
ance

Of thine own nobler nature's strength
and science,

Drawing two pinions, white as wings of
swan,

From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the
place

With holier light! That thou to wo-
man's claim,

And man's, might join beside the angel's
grace

Of a pure genius sanctified from blame ;
Till child and maiden pressed to thine

embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost
deny

Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets
worn

By weaker women in captivity ?

Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice for-
lorn :

Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in
agony,

Disproving thy man's name : and while
before

The world thou burnest in a poet fire,
We see thy woman's heart beat ever-
more

Through the large flame. Beat purer,
heart, and higher,

Till God unsex thee on the heavenly
shore,

Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire.

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and
years,

Since last I felt the green sward under
foot,

And the great breath of all things sum-
mer-mute

Met mine upon my lips. Now earth
appears

As strange to me as dreams of distant
spheres,

Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at.
Nature's lute

Sounds on behind this door so closely
shut,

A strange wild music to the prisoner's
ears,

Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels

too fine ;
While ever, with a visionary pain,

Past the precluded senses, sweep and
shine

Streams, forests, glades,—and many a
golden train

Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs
audibly

Along my pulses, yearning to be free
 And something farther, fuller, higher,
 rehearse,
 To the individual, true, and the universe,
 In consummation of right harmony.
 But, like a wind-exposed, distorted tree,
 We are blown against for ever by the
 curse
 Which breathes through nature. O,
 the world is weak,
 The effluence of each is false to all ;
 And what we best conceive, we fail to
 speak.
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments
 fall !
 And then resume thy broken strains,
 and seek
 Fit peroration, without let or thall.

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

You see this dog. It was but yesterday
 I mused forgetful of his presence here,
 Till thought on thought drew downward
 tear on tear ;
 When from the pillow, where wet-
 cheeked I lay,
 A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its
 way
 Right sudden against my face,—two
 golden-clear
 Great eyes astonished mine,—a drooping
 ear
 Did flap me on either cheek to dry the
 spray !
 I started first, as some Arcadian,
 Amazed by goatly god in twilight
 grove :
 But as my bearded vision closelier ran
 My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose
 above
 Surprise and sadness ; thanking the true
 PAN,
 Who, by low creatures, leads to heights
 of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

The wind sounds only in opposing
 straight,
 The sea, beside the shore ; man's spirit
 rends

Its quiet only up against the ends
 Of wants and oppositions, loves and
 hates,
 Where worked and worn by passionate
 debates,
 And losing by the loss it apprehends,
 The flesh rocks round, and every breath
 it sends,
 Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
 Suppose a straightened place. Jehovah
 Lord,
 Make room for rest, around me ! Out
 of sight
 Now float me, of the vexing land
 abhorred,
 Till, in deep calms of space, my soul
 may right
 Her nature : shoot large sail on length-
 ening cord,
 And rush exultant on the Infinite.

TWO SKETCHES.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
 May take your memory to the perfect
 Greek ;
 But when you front her, you would call
 the cheek
 Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
 That bloom it wears could leave you
 critical,
 And that smile reaching toward the rosy
 streak :
 For one who smiles so, has no need to
 speak
 To lead your thoughts along, as steed to
 stall !
 A smile that turns the sunny side o' the
 heart
 On all the world, as if herself did win
 By what she lavished on an open
 mart :—
 Let no man call the liberal sweetness,
 sin,—
 While friends may whisper, as they
 stand apart,
 " Methinks there's still some warmer
 place within."

II.

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee :
 Her fair superfluous ringlets, without
 check,
 Drop after one another down her neck ;
 As many to each cheek as you might see
 Green leaves to a wild rose. This sign
 outwardly,
 And a like woman-covering seems to
 deck
 Her inner nature. For she will not fleck
 World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
 Must call her in Love's name ! and then,
 I know,
 She rises up, and brightens as she should,
 And lights her smile for comfort, and is
 slow
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
 To smell this flower, come near it ; such
 can grow
 In that sole garden where Christ's brow
 dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

THE simple goatherd, between Alp and
 sky,
 Seeing his shadow in that awful tryst,
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
 Esteems not his own stature larger by
 The apparent image, but more patiently
 Strikes his staff down beneath his
 clenching fist—
 While the snow-mountains lift their
 amethyst
 And sapphire crowns of splendor, far
 and nigh,
 Into the air around him. Learn from
 hence
 Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
 Your way still onward, up to eminence !
 Ye are not great, because creation drew
 Large revelations round your earliest
 sense,
 Nor bright, because God's glory shines
 for you.

THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his
 breast,
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he
 has viewed,
 He views with the first glory. Fair and
 good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
 But stand before him holy and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as
 would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all his heaven
 as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet,
 didst,
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and
 moon !
 And therefore hath He set thee in the
 midst,
 Where men may hear thy wonder's
 ceaseless tune,
 And praise His world for ever as thou
 bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE.

THEY say Ideal Beauty cannot enter
 The house of anguish. On the thresh-
 hold stands
 An alien Image with ensnaked hands,
 Called the Greek Slave : as if the artist
 meant her,
 (That passionless perfection which he
 lent her,
 Shadowed not darkened where the sill
 expands)
 To, so, confront man's crimes in differ-
 ent lands
 With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the
 centre,
 Art's fiery finger!—and break up ere
 long
 The serfdom of this world ! Appeal,
 fair stone,
 From God's pure heights of beauty,
 against man's wrong !
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone

East griefs but west,—and strike and
shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, over-
thrown.

LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in
space :
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a
sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round
In all the countless worlds, with time
and place
For their conditions, down to the central
base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast pro-
found,
In full antiphony, by a common grace !
I think, this sudden joyaunce which
illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may
run
From some soul newly loosened from
earth's tombs :
I think, this passionate sigh, which half-
begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the
plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the
sun.

LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mutually
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life : and when we
bear
Our virtue onward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes, there
We live most life, whoever breathes
most air
And counts his dying years by sun and
sea,
But when a soul, by choice and con-
science, doth
Throw out her full force on another soul,

The conscience and the concentration
both
Make mere life, Love. For Life in
perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole
with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH,

'And there was silence in heaven for the
space of half-an-hour.'—*Revelation*.

GOD, who, with thunders and great
voices kept
Beneath thy throne, and stars most sil-
ver-paced
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
Melodious angels round ;—canst inter-
cept
Music with music ;—yet, at will, has
swept
All back, all back, (said he in Patmos
placed,)
To fill the heavens with silence of the
waste,
Which lasted half-an-hour !—Lo, I who
have wept
All day and night, beseech thee by my
tears,
And by that dread response of curse
and groan
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush
alone,
In compensation for our stormy years !
As heaven has paused from song, let
earth, from moan.

THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own
breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from
their view.
And thus, alas ! since God the maker
drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,

The life beyond us, and our souls in
 pain,
 We miss the prospect which we're called
 unto
 By grief we're fools to use. Be still
 and strong,
 O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing
 breath,
 And keep thy soul's large window pure
 from wrong,—
 That so, as life's appointment issueth,
 Thy vision may be clear to watch along
 The sunset consummation-lights of death

HUGH STUART BOYD.*

HIS BLINDNESS.

God would not let the spheric Lights
 accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the
 earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills, whose
 golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is
 crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not wholly
 lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes
 light-proof,
 To have fair visions rendered full enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished
 ghost:
 And seeing, to sounds of softly turned
 book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's
 spring,
 And Gregory's starlight on Greek-bur-
 nished eyes:

* To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of 'Cyprus Wine.' There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1845; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith, (happier in this than the absent) fulfilling a double filial duty as she sat by the death bed of her father's friend and hers.

Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seem one
 thing
 Viewed from one level;—earth's reapers
 at the sheaves
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on
 the wing!

HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who living many years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to
 the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in
 tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers!
 God has not caught thee to new hemi-
 spheres
 Because thou wast weary of this one:—
 I think thine angel's patience first was
 done,
 And that he spake out with celestial
 tears,
 'Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness!'
 Steadfast friend,
 Who never didst my heart or life mis-
 know,
 Nor either's faults too keenly appre-
 hend,—
 How can I wonder when I see thee go
 To join the Dead found faithful to the
 end?

HUGH STUART BOYD

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me;
 Æschylus,
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
 Chiming the gradual hours out like a
 flock
 Of stars whose motion is melodious.
 The books were those I used to read
 from, thus
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to
 unlock

The darkness of his eyes: now, mine
 they mock,
 Blinded in turn by tears: now, mur-
 murous
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years
 ago
 Entoning from these leaves the Græcian
 phrase,
 Return and choke my utterance. Books,
 lie down
 In silence on the shelf there, within
 gaze!
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's
 pulses on,
 Chime in the day which ends these
 parting days!

LOVED ONCE.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds; the well-a-
 day,

The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome
 mournfuller;—

But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure de-
 spair,

Than these words—'I loved ONCE.'

And who saith 'I loved ONCE?'
 Not angels, whose clear eyes, love, love
 foresee,

Love through eternity,
 And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called LOVE, his noble
 crown-name,—casting

A light too broad for blasting!
 The great God changing not from ever-
 lasting,

Saith never, 'I loved ONCE.'

Oh, never is 'Loved ONCE,'
 Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, mis-
 prized friend

Thy cross and curse may rend;
 But having loved Thou lovest to the
 end!

It is man's saying—man's. Too weak
 to move

One sphered star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word,
 Love
 With his No More, and Once.

How say ye, 'We loved once,'
 Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold
 enow,

Mourners, without that snow?
 Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each
 other so?

And could ye say of some whose love
 is known,

Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose
 smiles have shone

So long,—'We loved them ONCE?'

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
 Say calm of me, sweet friends, when
 out of sight?

When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy
 light?

And when, as flowers kept too long in
 the shade,

Ye find my colors fade,
 And all that is not love in me, de-
 cayed?

Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
 Say cold of me when further put away
 In earth's sepulchral clay?

When mute the lips which deprecate
 to-day?

Not so! not then—*least* then! When
 Life is shriven,

And Death's full joy is given,—
 Of those who sit and love you up in
 Heaven,

Say not, 'We loved them once.'

Say never, ye loved ONCE!
 God is too near above, the grave, be-
 neath,

And all our moments breathe
 Too quick in mysteries of life and
 death,

For such a word. The eternities avenge
 Affections light of range—

There comes no change to justify that
 change,

Whatever comes—loved ONCE!

And yet that same word ONCE
 Is humanly acceptive ! Kings have
 said
 Shaking a discrowned head,
 ' We ruled once,'—dotards, ' We once
 taught and led'—
 Cripples once danced i' the vines--and
 bards approved,
 Were once by scornings, moved :
 But love strikes one hour—LOVE. Those
never loved,
 Who dream that they loved ONCE.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

" Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."
*Poems on Man, by Cornelius Matthews.**

WE are borne into life—it is sweet, it is
 strange !
 We lie still on the knee of a mild Mys-
 tery,
 Which smile with a change !
 But we doubt not of changes, we know
 not of spaces ;
 The Heavens seem as near as our own
 mother's face is,
 And we think we could touch all the
 stars that we see ;
 And the milk of our mother is white on
 our mouth !
 And, with small childish hands, we are
 turning around
 The apple of Life which another has
 found ;
 It is warm with our touch, not with sun
 of the south,
 And we count, as we turn it, the red
 side for four—
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange ever-
 more.

Then all things look strange in the pure
 golden æther :
 We walk through the gardens with
 hands linked together,

And the lilies look large as the trees :
 And as loud as the birds, sing the
 bloom-loving bees,
 And the birds sing like angels, so mys-
 tical fine ;
 And the cedars are brushing the arch-
 angel's feet ;
 And time is eternity,—love is divine,
 And the world is complete.
 Now, God bless the child,—father,
 mother, respond !
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

Then we leap on the earth with the ar-
 mor of youth,
 And the earth rings again :
 And we breathe out, ' O beauty,'—we
 cry out, ' O truth,'
 And the bloom of our lips drops with
 wine ;
 And our blood runs amazed 'neath the
 calm hyaline,
 The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun
 burns to the brain,—
 What is this exultation, and what this
 despair ?—
 The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves
 into pain,
 And we drop from the Fair as we climb
 to the Fair,
 And we lie in a trance at its feet ;
 And the breath of an angel cold-pierc-
 ing the air
 Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon ;
 And we think him so near, he is this
 side the sun ;
 And we wake to a whisper self-mur-
 mured and fond,
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

And the winds and the waters in pasto-
 ral measures
 Go winding around us, with roll upon
 roll,
 Till the soul lies within in a circle of
 pleasures
 Which hideth the soul :
 And we run with the stag, and we leap
 with the horse,
 And we swim with the fish through the
 broad watercourse,

* A small volume, by an American poet—as
 remarkable, in thought and manner, for a vi-
 tal stately vigor, as the right arm of Path-
 etic.

And we strike with the falcon, and hunt
with the hound,
And the joy which is in us, flies out by
a wound ;
And we shout so aloud, ' We exult, we
rejoice,'
That we lose the low moan of our
brothers around.

And we shout so adeep down creation's
profound,

We are deaf to God's voice—

And we bind the rose-garland on fore-
head and ears,

Yet we are not ashamed ;

And the dew of the roses that runneth
unblamed

Down our cheeks, is not taken for
tears.

Help us, God, trust us, man, love us,
woman ! I hold

Thy small head in my hands,—with its
grapelets of gold

Growing bright through my fingers,—
like altar for oath,

'Neath the vast golden spaces like wit-
nessing faces

That watch the eternity strong in the
troth—

I love thee, I leave thee,

Live for thee, die for thee !

I prove thee, deceive thee,

Undo evermore thee !

Help me, God, slay me, man !—one is
mourning for both !

And we stand up though young near
the funeral-sheet

Which covers the Cæsar and old Phar-
amond ;

And death is so nigh us, Life cools from
its heat—

O Life, O Beyond,

Art thou fair,—*art* thou sweet ?

Then we act to a purpose—we spring
up erect—

We will tame the wild mouths of the
wilderness steeds :

We will plough up the deep in the ships
double decked ;

We will build the great cities, and do
the great deeds,

Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul
upon soul.

Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming
the dole,

Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand
thunder-roll !

While the eagle of Thought rides the
tempest in scorn,

Who cares if the lightning is burning
the corn ?

Let us sit on the thrones

In a purple sublimity,

And grind down men's bones

To a pale unanimity !

Speed me, God !—serve me, man !—I
am god over men !

When I speak in my cloud, none shall
answer again—

'Neath the stripe and the bond,

Lie and mourn at my feet !—

O thou Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we grow into thought,—and with
inward ascensions,

Touch the bounds of our Being !

We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly
around

With our sensual relations and social
conventions,

Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of
a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—

Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all
sides

With its infinite tides

About and above us,—until the strong
arch

Of our life creaks and bends as if ready
for falling,

And through the dim rolling, we hear
the sweet calling

Of spirits that speak in a soft under-
tongue

The sense of the mystical march :

And we cry to them softly, ' Come
nearer, come nearer,

And lift up the lap of this Dark, and
speak clearer,

And teach us the song that ye sung.'

And we smile in our thought if they
answer or no,

For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as
to know !

Wonders breathe in our face

And we ask not their name ;

Love takes all the blame
 Of the world's prison-place.
 And we sing back the songs as we guess
 them, aloud ;
 And we send up the lark of our music
 that cuts
 Untired through the cloud,
 To beat with its wings at the lattice
 Heaven shuts :
 Yet the angels look down and the mortals
 look up
 As the little wings beat,
 And the poet is blest with their pity or
 hope
 'Twixt the Heavens and the earth *can* a
 poet despond ?
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we wring from our souls their
 applicative strength,
 And bend to the cord the strong bow of
 our ken,
 And bringing our lives to the level of
 others
 Hold the cup we have filled, to their
 uses at length.
 'Help me, God ! love me, man ! I am
 man among men,
 And my life is a pledge
 Of the ease of another's !'
 From the fire and the water we drive out
 the steam,
 With a rush and a roar and the speed of
 a dream !
 And the car without horses, the car
 without wings
 Roars onward and flies
 On its grey iron edge,
 'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting
 still in our eyes—
 And the hand knots in air, with the
 bridge that it flings,
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and
 skies—
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth flowing
 Thames,
 Draws under the world with its turmoils
 and pother ;
 While the swans float on softly, un-
 touched in their calms
 By Humanity's hum at the root of the
 springs !

And with teachings of Thought we
 reach down to the deeps
 Of the souls of our brothers,
 And teach them full words with our
 slow-moving lips
 'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they
 hearken and think
 And work into harmony, link upon
 link,
 Till the silver meets round the earth
 gelid and dense,
 Shedding sparks of electric response
 intense
 On the dark of Eclipse !
 Then we hear through the silence and
 glory afar,
 As from shores of a star
 In ap helion,—the new generations that
 cry,
 Disenthralled by our voice to harmoni-
 ous reply.
 'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth !'
 We are glorious forsooth—
 And our name has a seat,
 Though the shroud should be donned !
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Help me, God—help me, man ! I am
 low, I am weak—
 Death loosens my sinews and creeps in
 in my veins ;
 My body is cleft by these wedges of
 pains
 From my spirit's serene ;
 And I feel the externe and insensate
 creep in
 On my organized clay.
 I sob not, nor shriek,
 Yet I faint fast away !
 I am strong in the spirit, — deep-
 thoughted, clear eyed,—
 I could walk, step for step, with an angel
 beside,
 On the Heaven-heights of Truth !
 Oh, the soul keeps its youth—
 But the body faints sore, it is tired in
 the race,
 It sinks from the chariot ere reaching
 the goal ;
 It is weak, it is cold,
 The rein drops from its hold—
 It sinks back with the death in its face.

On, chariot—on, soul,
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet !

Love us, God ! love us, man ! We be-
lieve, we achieve—
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond—
We are glorious—and DIE !
And again on the knee of a mild Mys-
tery

That smiles with a change,
Here we lie !
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
For my thoughts to live in :
When for earth too fancy-loose,
And too low for Heaven !
Hush ! I talk my dream aloud—
I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn !
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
Pale and glimmering ;
With a sunbeam hid in each,
And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veined by the lightning.
Use one with an iris-stain
For the door within ;
Turning to a sound like rain
As we enter in.

Build a spacious hall thereby :
Boldly, never fearing.
Use the blue place of the sky
Which the wind is clearing ;
Branched with corridors sublime,
Flecked with winding stairs—

Such as children wish to climb,
Following their own prayers.

In the mutest of the house,
I will have my chamber :
Silence at the door shall use
Evening's light of amber,
Solemnising every mood,
Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
As I turn the key.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
When the sunbeams come here ;
Wandering harper, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
When the heat is sorest ;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

Bring the fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith ;
Range for sculptures round the room
Named as Fancy weeneth ;
Some be Junos, without eyes ;
Naiads, without sources ;
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges :
From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in ;
Whence to form a mirror pure
For love's self-delighting.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing ;
Something of the song at least,
Unlost in the bringing :
That shall be a morning chair,
Poet-dream may sit in,

When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sun!
While he sinketh, catch it.
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest thought
At the curfew-sounding,
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh
'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
As in April weather!
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see—
Gone!—except that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with *thee*!

Let them! Wipe such visionings
From the Fancy's cartel—
Love secures some fairer things
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken,—heaven be
bowed—
But still unchanged shall be,—
Here in my soul,—that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with *THEE*!

CATARINA TO CAMOENS.

*Dying in his absence abroad, and re-
ferring to the poem in which he
recorded the sweetness of her eyes.*

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long—adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
Death is near *mê*,—and not *you*!
Come, O lover!
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours,—

Only saying
In heart-playing,
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, mine have seen!'

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
'Love, I love you,' as before,—
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

Yes! I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew!
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to Beauty's sheen,—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But, ah me! you only see me
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan,—
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale—
O my poet
Come and show it!
Come, of latest love to glean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?

Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

No reply! The fountains warble
In the court-yard sounds alone:
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan,
From love-sighing
To this dying!
Death forerunneth Love, to win
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

Will you come? when I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid—
When thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid,
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry beneath the cypress green—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

When beneath the palace-lattice,
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there—*that* is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you ofty
Murmur softly,
'Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

When the palace ladies sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
'Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,'
Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

Sweetest eyes! How sweet in flowings,
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,

Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'T'wixt my spirit
And the earth noise intervene—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn high than these
Miserere
For the weary—
Oh, no longer for Catrine,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
I have loosed it from my hair;*
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch, unfaintly,
Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
Up to Heaven, they glisten fast:
You may cast away, Beloved,
In your future all my past;
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless—praised am I
If a tear be of your showing,
Drop for any hope of HIS!
Death hath boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

I will look out to his future—
I will bless it till it shine:
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

* She left him the riband from her hair.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

Given to me by H. S. Boyd, Esq., author of "Select Passages from the Greek Fathers," etc., to whom these stanzas are addressed.

If old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By Queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine ;
And some deep-mouthed Greek exem-
plar
Would become your Cyprus wine ;
Cyclops' mouth would plunge aright in,
While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
Drinking rivers down his beard.

Pan might dip his head so deep in
That his ears alone pricked out ;
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat :
While the Naiads like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry—' O earth, that thou wouldst grant
us
Springs to keep, of such a taste !'

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink ;
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink !
Since you heard them speak the last
time,
They have faded from their blooms ;
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the
brow :
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now ?
Who will fetch from garden closes
Some new garlands while I speak ?

That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

Do not mock me ! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed !
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed :
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

Go!—let others praise the Chian !—
This is soft as Muses' string—
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as its spring,
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet !
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly !—
Ah—but, sipping—times and places
Change before me suddenly—
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Græcian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings,
Which my Thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for *ai's* and *oi's*.

Then what golden hours were for us !—
While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air !
How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines :
And the rolling anapaestic
Curled like vapor over shrines !

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous !
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponder-
ous

In the gnarled oak beneath.
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place—
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace.

Our Euripides, the human—
With his droppings of warm tears ;
And his touches of things common,
Till they rose to touch the spheres !
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals !—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light !
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek :
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold ;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old :
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies ;—
Who forged first his linked stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius,
For the fire shot up his odes :
Though the Church was scarce propi-
tious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen,
For the fervid heart and speech :
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

Do you mind that deed of Atè,
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading "De Virginitate,"
From the first line to the last ?
How I said at ending, solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do ?

For we sometimes gently wrangled
Very gently, be it said,
For our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread !
And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean, and the sun.

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake ;
And proud Œdipus, fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow—slower
Till he stood discrowned, resigned !
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND !

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
And more learned, and a man !
Yet that shadow—the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids—ran
Both our spirits to one level ;
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-suns green revel,
To your eyes that *could not see*.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day !
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way !
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sat in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine ?

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus !—it is well—
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better œnometal :
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's 'Götter Griechenlands,' and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch, ('De Oraculorum Defectu,') according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is dead!' swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonoring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds, by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Ethiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corpses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Said the old Hellenic tongue!

Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poet's songs the sweetest sung,
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—
Since Pan is dead?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All along, O Naiades,
While your drenched locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye.
For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye.
For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills.
Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities—
Now Pan is dead!

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail;
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread!
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight golden bed?
Will thy quædom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands;
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!

Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse
And no hero take inspiring
From the God-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own vines!
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'

Ah, Pan is dead.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun.
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
'We *all* now are desolate—'

Now Pan is dead.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art,
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thy heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek
Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves we used to know from
One another,—huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes! Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus!
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?

Nay, Pan is dead.

Crowned Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head:
Roar the lions of her chariot
Towards the wilderness, unfed:
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead!

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!

For Pan is dead.

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign:
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn—
And the Poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

Gods bereaved, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilèd Dark behind:
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place:
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
Pan, Pan is dead.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
 And sank slowly through the air;
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair!
 And they heard the words it said—
 PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
 PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross—
 When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss;
 When his priestly blood dropped down-
 ward,
 And His kingly eyes looked throne-
 ward—
Then, Pan was dead.

By the love He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead stood complete:
 And the false gods fell down moaning,
 Each from off his golden seat—
 All the false Gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity—
 Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine!
 And their darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine:
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely
 Henceforth, to the tempest only.
 Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
 Her lost god's forsaking look!
 Straight her eye-balls filmed with horror,
 And her crispy fillets shook—
 And her lips gasped through their foam,
 For a word that did not come.
 Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
 Ye are silent evermore!
 And I dash down this old chalice,
 Whence libations ran of yore.
 See! the wine crawls in the dust
 Wormlike—as your glories must!
 Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
 By a common doom and track!
 Let no Schiller from the portals

Of that Hades, call you back,
 Or instruct us to weep all
 At your antique funeral.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

By your beauty, which confesses
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
 By our grand heroic guesses,
 Through your falsehood, at the True,—
 We will weep *not*....! earth shall roll
 Heir to each god's aureole—
 And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
 Sung beside her in her youth:
 And those debonaire romances
 Sound but dull beside the truth.
 Phoebus' chariot-course is run!
 Look up, poets, to the sun!
 Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
 And the whole earth and the skies
 Are illumed by altar candles
 Lit for blessed mysteries:
 And a Priest's Hand through creation,
 Waveth calm and consecration—
 And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is His song.
 Sing his Truth out fair and full,
 And secure his beautiful.
 Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be.
 Shame! to stand in His creation
 And doubt Truth's sufficiency!
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling—
 When Pan is dead.

What is true and just and honest,
 What is lovely, what is pure—
 All of praise that hath admonish'd—
 All of virtue shall endure,—
 These are themes for poets' uses,
 Stirring nobler than the Muses,
 Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing ;
 Nor mix falsehood with the whole !
 Look up Godward ! speak the truth in
 Worthy song from earnest soul !
 Hold, in high poetic duty,
 Truest Truth the fairest Beauty !
 Pan, Pan is dead.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

SLEEP on, Baby, on the floor,
 Tired of all the playing,
 Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That you dropped away in !
 On your curls' full roundness, stand
 Golden lights serenely—
 One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
 Folds the dimple inly :
 Little head and little foot
 Heavy laid for pleasure,
 Underneath the lids half shut,
 Slants the shining azure ;—
 Open-soul in noonday sun,
 So, you lie and slumber !
 Nothing evil having done,
 Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
 Shall I sigh to view you ?
 Or sigh further to foretell
 All that may undo you ?
 Nay, keep smiling, little child,
 Ere the sorrow neareth.
I will smile too ! Patience mild
 Pleasure's token weareth,
 Nay, keep sleeping before loss ;
I shall sleep though losing !
 As by cradle, so by cross,
 Sure is the reposing.

And God knows who sees us twain,
 Child at childish leisure,
 I am near as tired of pain
 As you seem of pleasure ;
 Very soon too, by His grace
 Gently wrapt around me,
 Shall I show as calm a face,
 Shall I sleep as soundly !
 Differing in this, that *you*
 Clasp your playthings sleeping,
 While my hand shall drop the few
 Given to my keeping ;

Differing in this, that *I*
 Sleeping shall be colder,
 And in waking presently,
 Brighter to beholder !
 Differing in this beside
 (Sleeper, have you heard me ?
 Do you move, and open wide
 Eyes of wonder towards me ?)—
 That while you, I thus recall
 From your sleep,—I solely,
 Me from mine an angel shall,
 With reveille holy !

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

“ To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.”
 LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever golden !
 Cankered not the whole year long !
 Do you teach us to be strong,
 Howsoever pricked and holden
 Like your thorny blooms, and so
 Trodden on by rain and snow
 Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as
 where ye grow ?

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms !
 Do ye teach us to be glad
 When no summer can be had,
 Blooming in our inward bosoms ?
 Ye, whom God preserveth still,
 Set as lights upon a hill
 Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty
 liveth still !

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
 From that academic chair
 Canopied with azure air,
 That the wisest word Man reaches
 Is the humblest he can speak ?
 Ye, who live on mountain peak,
 Yet live low along the ground, beside
 the grasses meek !

Mountain gorses ! since Linnæus
 Knelt beside you on the sod,
 For your beauty thanking God,—
 For your teaching, ye should see us
 Bowing in prostration new.
 Whence arisen,—if one or two
 Drops be on our cheeks—O world ! they
 are not tears, but dew.

THE CLAIM.

I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed one day :

(Sighing is all her rest !

'Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway !'
As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast . . .

'Ah, wellaway ! . . . ah me ! alas, ah me !'

Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain

That falls on water ; 'Lo,

The Winds have wandered from me ! I remain

Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue,

Till wanted for more dew.

III.

'The Sun has struck my brain to weary peace,

Whereby, constrained and pale,

I spin for him a larger golden fleece

Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail !
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed to thy mind,

Give me a sigh for wind,—

IV.

And let it carry me adown the west !'

But Love, who, prostrated,

Lay at Grief's foot, . . . his lifted eyes possessed

Of her full image, . . . answered in her stead :

'Now nay, now nay ! she shall not give away

What is my wealth, for any Cloud that fieth.

Where Grief makes moan,

Love claims his own !

And therefore do I lie here night and day,

And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth.'

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn face :
To meet the darkness on the deep.

The solemn ship went onward.

I bowed down weary in the place ;

For parting tears and present sleep

Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,

And kept my inner self apart

And quiet from emotion,

Then brake away and left me free,

Made conscious of a human heart

Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight !

The waters round me, turbulent,

The skies impassive o'er me,

Calm in a moonless, sunless light,

Half glorified by that intent

Of holding the day-glory !

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon

The meeting line of sea and sky,

With aspect still and mystic.

I think they did foresee the sun,

And rested on their prophecy

In quietude majestic ;

V.

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,

Like statues by the open tomb

Of shining saints half risen.—

The sun !— he came up to be viewed ;

And sky and sea made mighty room

To inaugurate the vision !

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,

As red wine, through the hills, and break

Through many a mast's inurning :

But, here, no earth profaned the sun !
 Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
 The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with thoughts fantastical !
 I would be humble to my worth,
 Self-guarded as self-doubted.
 Though here no earthly shadows fall,
 I, joying, grieving without earth,
 May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's Sabbath morning sweeps the
 waves :
 I would not praise the pageant high,
 Yet miss the dedicature :
 I, carried towards the sunless graves
 By force of natural things,—should I
 Exult in only nature ?

IX.

And could I bear to sit alone
 'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
 While my warm pulse was moving.
 'Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
 'Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
 To satisfy the loving.

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
 To sit with friends beneath the beech,
 And call them dear and dearer ;
 Or follow children as they go
 In pretty pairs, with softened speech
 As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI.

Love me, sweet friends, this Sabbath
 day,
 The sea sings round me while ye roll
 Afar the hymn unaltered,
 And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
 And bless me deeper in the soul,
 Because the voice has faltered.

XII.

And though this Sabbath comes to me
 Without the stolèd minister
 Or chanting congregation,
 God's spirit brings communion, He
 Who brooded soft on waters drear,
 Creator on creation.

XIII.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
 'Where keep the saints with harp and
 song
 An endless Sabbath morning,
 And on that sea comunixed with fire
 Oft drop their eyelids raised too long
 To the full Godhead's burning.

THE MASK.

I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
 I have a jest for all I meet ;
 I have a garland for my head
 And all its flowers are sweet,—
 And so you call me gay, she said

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
 And Wrong did teach this jesting
 bold ;
 These flowers were plucked from gar-
 den-bed
 While a death-chime was tolled—
 And what now will you say ?—she said.

III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
 Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
 Live captives so uncomforted,
 As souls behind a smile.
 God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
 Such brightness, dying suns diffuse !
 I bear upon my forehead shed
 The sign of what I lose,—
 The ending of my day, she said.

V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
 And take a moan upon my mouth,
 And tie a cypress round my head,
 And let my tears run smooth,—
 It were the happier way, she said.

VI.

And since that must not be, she said,
 I fain your bitter world would leave.
 How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
 Who do not, therefore, grieve!
 The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,
 Face-joy's a costly mask to wear,
 'Tis bought with pangs long nourishèd
 And rounded to despair.
 Grief's earnest makes life's play, she
 said.

VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
 Ah fools! I bid you pass them by;
 Go, weep for those whose hearts have
 bled,
 What time their eyes were dry!
 Whom sadder can I say?—she said.

STANZAS.

I MAY sing; but minstrel's singing
 Ever ceaseth with his playing.
 I may smile; but time is bringing
 Thoughts for smiles to wear away in
 I may view thee, mutely loving;
 But *shall* view thee so in dying!
 I may sigh; but life's removing,
 And with breathing endeth sighing!
 Be it so!

When no song of mine comes near thee,
 Will its memory fail to soften?
 When no smile of mine can cheer thee,
 Will thy smile be used as often?
 When my looks the darkness boundeth,
 Will thine own be lighted after?
 When my sigh no longer soundeth,
 Wilt thou list another's laughter?
 Be it so!

THE YOUNG QUEEN.

This awful responsibility is imposed upon
 me so suddenly and at so early a period of my
 life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed

by the burden, were I not sustained by the
 hope that Divine Providence, which has called
 me to this work, will give me strength for the
 performance of it.

THE QUEEN'S DECLARATION IN COUNCIL.

THE shroud is yet unspread
 To wrap our crownèd dead;
 His soul hath scarcely harkened for the
 thrilling word of doom;
 And death that makes serene
 Ev'n brows where crowns have been,
 Hath scarcely time to meeten his, for
 silence of the tomb.

St. Paul's king-dirging note
 The city's heart hath smote—
 The city's heart is struck with thought
 more solemn than the tone!
 A shadow sweeps apace
 Before the Nation's face,
 Confusing in a shapeless blot, the sepul-
 chre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—
 The courtly dames are pale—
 A widow o'er the purple bows, and
 weeps its splendor dim:
 And we who hold the boon,
 A king for freedom won,
 Do feel eternity rise up between our
 thanks and him.

And while things express
 All glory's nothingness,
 A royal maiden treadeth firm where
that departed trod!
 The deathly scented crown
 Weighs her shining ringlets down;
 But calm she lifts her trusting face, and
 calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within her:
 No outward pageants win her
 From memories that in her soul are
 rolling wave on wave—
 Her palace walls enring
 The dust that was a king—
 And very cold beneath her feet, she
 feels her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she,
 Can scarce forgotten be,—

Who clasped a little infant dead, for all
 a kingdom's worth !
 The mournèd, blessèd One,
 Who views Jehovah's throne,
 Aye smiling to the angels, that she lost
 a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen
 Remembers what has been—
 Her childhood's rest by loving heart,
 and sport on grassy sod—
 Alas ! can others wear
 A mother's heart for her ?
 But calm she lifts her trusting face, and
 calleth upon God.

Yea ! on God, thou maiden
 Of spirit nobly laden,
 And leave such happy days behind, for
 happy-making years !
 A nation looks to thee
 For steadfast sympathy :
 Make room within thy bright clear eyes,
 for all its gathered tears.

And so the grateful isles
 Shall give thee back their smiles,
 And as thy mother joys in thee, in them
 shalt *thou* rejoice ;
 Rejoice to meekly bow
 A somewhat paler brow,
 While the King of kings shall bless thee
 by the British people's voice !

VICTORIA'S TEARS.

Hark ! the reiterated clangor sounds !
 Now murmurs, like the sea or like the storm,
 Or like the flames on forests, move and mount
 From rank to rank, and loud and louder roll,
 Till all the people is one vast applause.
LANDER'S *Gebir*.

"O MAIDEN ! heir of kings !
 A king has left his place !
 The majesty of death has swept
 All other from his face !
 And thou upon thy mother's breast,
 No longer lean adown,

But take the glory for the rest,
 And rule the land that loves thee best !"
 She heard and wept—
 She wept, to wear a crown !

They decked her courtly halls ;
 They reined her hundred steeds ;
 They shouted at her palace gate,
 "A noble Queen succeeds !"
 Her name has stirred the mountain's
 sleep
 Her praise has filled the town !
 And mourners God had stricken deep,
 Looked hearkening up, and did not
 weep.

Alone she wept,
 Who wept, to wear a crown !

She saw no purple shine,
 For tears had dimmed her eyes ;
 She only knew her childhood's flowers
 Were happier pageantries !
 And while her heralds played the part,
 For million shouts to drown—
 "God save the Queen" from hill to
 mart,—
 She heard through all her beating heart,
 And turned and wept—
 She wept, to wear a crown !

God save thee, weeping Queen !
 Thou shalt be well beloved !
 The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
 As those pure tears have moved !
 The nature in thine eyes we see,
 That tyrants cannot own—
 The love that guardeth liberties !
 Strange blessing on the nation lies,
 Whose Sovereign wept—
 Yea ! wept, to wear its crown !

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
 With blessing more divine !
 And fill with happier love than earth's,
 That tender heart of thine !
 That when the thrones of earth shall be
 As low as graves brought down ;
 A pierced hand may give to thee
 The crown which angels shout to see !
 Thou wilt not *weep*,
 To wear that heavenly crown !

ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S
NEST.

So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S 'BEADS FROM A ROSARY.'

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side on the grass ;
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by ;
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses,
Fills the silence like a speech ;
While she thinks what shall be done,—
And the sweetest pleasure chooses,
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooseth . . . 'I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds !
He shall love me without guile ;
And to *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.

'And the steed shall be red-roan
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath,
And the lute he plays upon,
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

'And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind :
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

'But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in ;
And I kneel here for thy grace.'

'Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed ancar him
Which shall seem to understand—
Till I answer, 'Rise and go !
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

'Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say—
Nathless maiden-brave, 'Farewell,'
I will utter and dissemble—
'Light to-morrow with to-day.'

'Then he'll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong :
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

'Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
'Lo ! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ?'

'And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
And the second time a glove :
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—'Pardon—
If he comes to take my love.'

'Then the young foot-page will run—
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee :
'I am a duke's eldest son !
Thousand serfs do call me master,—
But, O Love, I love but *thee* !

'He will kiss me on the mouth
Then ; and lead me as a lover,
Through the crowds that praise his
deeds :

And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.'

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gayly,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe—
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the *two*.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse
Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads—
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops!
Lo! the wild swan had deserted—
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

Ellie went hom: sad and slow :
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not! but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

LOVE me, sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender ;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting!
Taking color from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting ;
Love me with thine heart, that all
The neighbors then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded :
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me ;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur 'Love me!'

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul—
Break it to love-sighing ;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee!
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady :
Love me gaily, fast, and true,
As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—
As a man is able.

PROMETHEUS BOUND.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

PROMETHEUS. HEPHESTUS.
 OCEANUS. Io, daughter of Inachus.
 HERMES. STRENGTH and FORCE.
 CHORUS of Ocean Nymphs.

SCENE.—STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHESTUS
 and PROMETHEUS at the locks.

Strength.

WE reach the utmost limit of the earth,
 The Scythian track, the desert without
 man,
 And now, Hephæstus, thou must needs
 fulfil
 The mandate of our father, and with
 links
 Indissoluble of adamantine chains,
 Fasten against this beetling precipice
 This guilty god! Because he filched
 away

Thine own bright flower, the glory of
 plastic fire,
 And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin
 It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
 Learning to accept the empery of Zeus,
 And leave off his old trick of loving man.

Hephæstus. O Strength and Force,—
 for you, or Zeus's will
 Presents a deed for doing.—No more!
 —but I,

I lack your daring, up this storm-rent
 chasm

To fix with violent hands a kindred god,
 Howbeit necessity compels me so
 That I must dare it,—and our Zeus com-
 mands

With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou!
 High-thoughted son of Themis who is
 sage,

Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in
 chains

Against this rocky height unclomb by
 man,

Where never human voice nor face shall
 find

Out thee who lov'st them!—and thy
 beauty's flower,

Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall
 fade away.

Night shall come up with garniture of
 stars

To comfort thee with shadow, and the
 sun

Disperse with retriect beams the morn-
 ing frosts;

And through all changes, sense of pres-
 ent woe

Shall vex thee sore, because with none
 of them

There comes a hand to free. Such fruit
 is plucked

From love of man!—for in that thou, a
 god,

Didst brave the wrath of gods and give
 away

Undue respect to mortals; for that
 crime

Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless
 rock,

Erect, unslumbering, bending not the
 knee,

And many a cry and unavailing moan
 To utter on the air! For Zeus is stern,

And new-made kings are cruel.

Strength. Be it so.

Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
 A god the gods hate?—one too who be-
 trayed

Thy glory unto men?

Hephæstus. An awful thing
 Is kinship joined to friendship.

Strength. Grant it be;
 Is disobedience to the Father's word

A possible thing? Dost quail not more
 for that?

Hephæstus. Thou, at least, art a
 stern one! ever bold!

Strength. Why, if I wept, it were
 no remedy.

And do not thou spend labor on the air
 To bootless uses.

Hephæstus. Cursed handicraft!
 I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

Strength. Why hate

Thy craft most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

Hephaestus. I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

Strength. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none
free

Except King Zeus.

Hephaestus. I know it very well:
I argue not against it.

Strength. Why not, then,
Hake haste and lock the fetters over
HIM,

Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

Hephaestus. Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.

Strength. Seize him,—strike amain!
Strike with the hammer on each side his
hands—

Rivet him to the rock.

Hephaestus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

Strength. Still faster grapple him,—
Wedge him in deeper,—leave no inch
to stir!

He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

Hephaestus. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.

Strength. Now, then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise one
learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

Hephaestus. Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly!

Strength. Now, straight through the
chest,

Take him and bite him with the clen-
ching tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet
him.

Hephaestus. Alas, Prometheus! what
thou sufferest here
I sorrow over.

Strength. Dost thou flinch again,
And breathe groans for the enemies of
Zeus?

Beware lest thine own pity find thee
out.

Hephaestus. Thou dost behold a spec-
tacle that turns

The sight o' the eyes to pity.

Strength. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.

But lash the thongs about his sides.

Hephaestus. So much,
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.

Strength. Ay, but I will urge!—
and, with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry! Get
thee down

And ring amain the iron round his legs!

Hephaestus. That work was not long
doing.

Strength. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant
gyves!

For He who rates the work has a heavy
hand.

Hephaestus. Thy speech is savage as
thy shape.

Strength. Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untruckling
hate.

Hephaestus. Let us go! He is netted
round with chains.

Strength. Here, now, taunt on! and
having spoiled the gods

Of honors, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out! Why how
could *they*

Draw off from thee one single of thy
griefs?

Methinks the Demons gave thee a wrong
name,

Prometheus, which means Providence—
because

Thou dost thyself need providence to
see

Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom,
Prometheus alone. O holy Æther,

and swift winged Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter innumer-
ous

Of yon Sea-waves! Earth, mother of
us all,

And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on
you!—

Behold me a god, what I endure from
gods!

Behold with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,
I wrestle down the myriad years of
Time!

Behold, how fast around me,
The new King of the happy ones sub-
lime

Has flung the chain he forged, has
shamed and bound me !
Woe, woe ! to day's woe and the com-
ing morrow's,
I cover with one groan ! And where is
found me
A limit to these sorrows ?
And yet what word do I say ? I have
foreknown
Clearly all things that should be—noth-
ing done
Comes sudden to my soul—and I must
bear
What is ordained with patience, being
aware
Necessity doth front the universe
With an invincible gesture. Yet this
curse
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to
brave
In silence or in speech. Because I gave
Honor to mortals, I have yoked my soul
To this compelling fate ! Because I
stole
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles
went
Over the ferule's brim, and manward
sent
Art's mighty means and perfect rudi-
ment,
That sin I expiate in this agony ;
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanch-
ing sky !
Ah, ah me ! what a sound,
What a fragrance sweeps up from a
pinion unseen
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth
has her bound,
To have sight of my pangs,—or some
guerdon obtain—
Lo ! a god in the anguish, a god in the
chain !
The god, Zeus hateth sore
And his gods hate again,
As many as tread on his glorified floor,
Because I loved mortals too much ever-
more !
Alas me ! what a murmur and motion I
hear,
As of birds flying near !
And the air undersings
The light stroke of their wings—

And all life that approaches I wait for
in fear.

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe.

Fear nothing ! our troop
Floats lovingly up
With a quick-oaring stroke
Of wings steered to the rock ;
Having softened the soul of our father
below !
For the gales of swift-bearing have sent
me a sound,
And the clank of the iron, the malleted
blow,
Smote down the profound
Of my caverns of old,
And struck the red light in a blush from
my brow,—
Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste to
behold,
And rushed forth on my chariot of
wings manifold.

Prometheus. Alas me !—alas me !
Ye offspring of Tethys who bore at her
breast
Many children ; and eke of Oceanus,—
he,
Coiling still around earth with perpetual
unrest ;
Behold me and see
How transfixed with the fang
Of a fetter I hang
On the high jutting rocks of this fissure,
and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and
the deep.

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.

I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now,
yet now,
A terrible cloud whose rain is tears
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangi-
ble chains !
For new is the hand and the rudder that
steers
The ship of Olympus through surge and
wind—
And of old things passed, no track is
behind.

Prometheus. Under earth, under Hades,

Where the home of the shade is,
 All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
 I would he had hurled me adown !
 I would he had plunged me, fastened
 thus
 In the knotted chain with the savage
 clang,
 All into the dark, where there should be
 none,
 Neither god nor another, to laugh and
 see !
 But now the winds sing through and
 shake
 The hurtling chains wherein I hang—
 And I, in my naked sorrows, make
 Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2d Strophe.

Nay ! who of the gods hath a heart so
 stern
 As to use thy woe for a mock and
 mirth ?
 Who would not turn more mild to learn
 Thy sorrows ? who of the heaven and
 earth,
 Save Zeus ? But he
 Right wrathfully
 Bears on his sceptral soul unbent,
 And rules thereby the heavenly seed ;
 Nor will he pause till he content
 His thirsty heart in a finished deed ;
 Or till Another shall appear,
 To win by fraud, to seize by fear
 The hard-to-be-captured government.

Prometheus. Yet even of *me* he shall
 have need,
 That monarch of the blessed seed ;
 Of me, of me, who now am cursed
 By his fetters dire,—
 To ring my secret out withal
 And learn by whom his sceptre shall
 Be filched from him—as was, at first,
 His heavenly fire !
 But he never shall enchant me
 With his honey-lipped persuasion ;
 Never, never shall he daunt me
 With the oath and threat of passion,
 Into speaking as they want me,
 Till he loose this savage chain,
 And accept the expiation
 Of my sorrow, in his pain.

Chorus, 2d Antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
 And, for all thou hast borne
 From the the stroke of the rod,
 Nought relaxest from scorn !
 But thou speakest unto me
 Too free and unworn—
 And a terror strikes through me
 And festers my soul
 And I fear, in the roll
 Of the storm, for thy fate
 In the ship far from shore—
 Since the son of Saturnius is hard in his
 hate
 And unmoved in his heart evermore.

Prometheus. I know that Zeus is
 stern !

I know he metes his justice by his will !
 And yet his soul shall learn
 More softness when once broken by this
 ill,—
 And curbing his unconquerable vaunt
 He shall rush on in fear to meet with
 me
 Who rush to meet with him in agony,
 To issues of harmonious covenant.

Chorus. Remove the veil from all
 things, and relate
 The story to us !—of what crime accused,
 Zeus smites thee with dishonorable
 pangs.
 Speak ! if to teach us do not grieve thy-
 self.
Prometheus. The utterance of these
 things is torture to me,
 But so, too, is their silence ! each way
 lies
 Woe strong as fate !
 When gods began with wrath,
 And war rose up between their stary
 brows,
 Some choosing to cast Chronos from his
 throne
 That Zeus might king it there ; and
 some in haste
 With opposite oaths that they would
 have no Zeus
 To rule the gods forever,—I, who
 brought
 The counsel I thought meetest, could not
 move

The Titans, children of the Heaven and Earth,
 What time disdainin in their rugged souls
 My subtle machinations, they assumed
 It was an easy thing for force to take
 The mastery of fate. My mother, then,
 Who is called not only Themis but Earth too,
 (Her single beauty joys in many names,)
 Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
 What future should be,—and how conquering gods
 Should not prevail by strength and violence,
 But by guile only. When I told them so
 They would not deign to contemplate the truth
 On all sides round; whereat I deemed it best
 To lead my willing mother upwardly,
 And set my Themis face to face with Zeus
 As willing to receive her! Tartarus,
 With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
 Because I gave that counsel, covers up
 The antique Chronos and his siding hosts;
 And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods
 Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs!
 For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—
 Distrust in friendship. Do ye also ask,
 What crime it is for which he tortures me—
 That shall be clear before you. When at first
 He filled his father's throne, he instantly
 Made various gifts of glory to the gods,
 And dealt the Empire out. Alone of men,
 Of miserable men he took no count,
 But yearned to sweep their track off from the world,
 And plant a newer race there! Not a god
 Resisted such desire except myself!
 I dared it! I drew mortals back to light,
 From meditated ruin deep as hell,—

For which wrong I am bent down in these pangs
 Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,—
 And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
 Unworthy of pity,—while I render out
 Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
 That strikes me thus!—a sight to shame your Zeus!
Chorus. Hard as thy chains, and cold as all these rocks,
 Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
 From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
 To fly this sight—and, now I gaze on it,
 I sicken inwards.
Prometheus. To my friends, indeed,
 I must be a sad sight.
Chorus. And didst thou sin
 No more than so?
Prometheus. I did restrain besides
 My mortals from premeditating death.
Chorus. How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of death?
Prometheus. I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.
Chorus. By that gift, thou didst help thy mortals well.
Prometheus. I gave them also,—fire,
Chorus. And have they now,
 Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?
Prometheus. They have! and shall learn by it many arts.
Chorus. And, truly, for such sins Zeus tortures thee,
 And will remit no anguish? Is there set
 No limit before thee to thine agony?
Prometheus. No other! only what seems good to HIM.
Chorus. And how will it seem good? what hope remains?
 Seest thou not that thou hast sinned?
 But that thou hast sinned
 It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee—
 Then let it pass from both! and seek thyself
 Some outlet from distress.
Prometheus. It is in truth

An easy thing to stand aloof from pain
And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it. I have
known

All in prevision! By my choice, my
choice,

I freely sinned—I will confess my sin—
And helping mortals, found mine own
despair!

I did not think indeed that I should pine
Beneath such pangs against such skiey
rocks,

Doomed to this drear hill and no neigh-
boring

Of any life!—but mourn not *ye* for griefs
I bear to-day!—hear rather, dropping
down

To the plain, how other woes creep on
to me,

And learn the consummation of my
doom.

Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you!—
grieve for me

Who now am grieving!—for grief walks
the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by
turns.

Chorus. We hear the deep clash of
thy words,

Prometheus, and obey!

And I spring with a rapid foot away
From the rushing car and the holy air,

The track of birds—

And I drop to the rugged ground and
there

Await the tale of thy despair

Enter OCEANUS.

Oceanus. I reach the bourne of my
weary road,

Where I may see and answer thee,
Prometheus, in thine agony!

On the back of the quick-winged bird
I glode,

And I bridled him in

With the will of a god,

Behold thy sorrow aches in me,

Constrained by the force of kin.

Nay, though that tie were all undone,

For the life of none beneath the sun,

Would I seek a larger benison

Than I seek for thine!

And thou shalt learn my words are
truth,—

That no fair parlance of the mouth

Grows falsely out of mine!

Now give me a deed to prove my
faith,—

For no faster friend is named in breath
Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

Prometheus. Ha! what has brought
thee? Hast thou also come

To look upon my woe? How hast thou
dared

To leave the depths called after thee,
the caves

Self-hewn and self-roofed with sponta-
neous rock,

To visit Earth, the mother of my chain?
Hast come indeed to view my doom
and mourn

That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on,
and see

How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—
how I

The erector of the empire in his hand,—
Am bent beneath that hand in this
despair!

Oceanus. Prometheus, I behold,—
and I would fain

Exhort thee, though already subtle
enough,

To a better wisdom. Titan, know thy-
self,

And take new softness to thy manners,
since

A new king rules the gods. If words
like these,

Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt
fling abroad,

Zeus haply, though he sit so far and
high,

May hear thee do it; and, so, this wrath
of his

Which now affects thee fiercely, shall
appear

A mere child's sport at vengeance!
Wretched god,

Rather dismiss the passion which thou
hast,

And seek a change from grief. Perhaps
I seem

To address thee with old saws and out-
worn sense,—

Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely
waits

On lips that speak too proudly!—thou,
meantime,

Art none the meeker, nor dost yield
a jot

To evil circumstance, preparing still
To swell the account of grief, with other
griefs

Thou what are borne! Beseech thee,
use me then

For counsel! Do not spurn against the
pricks,—

Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty
Instead of right. And now, I go from
hence,

And will endeavor if a power of mine
Can break thy fetters through. For
thee,—be calm,

And smooth thy words from passion.
Knowest thou not

Of perfect knowledge, thou who know-
est too much,

That where the tongue wags, ruin never
lags?

Prometheus. I gratulate thee who
hast shared and dared

All things with me, except their
penalty!

Enough so! leave these thoughts! It
cannot be

That thou shouldst move HIM. HE
may not be moved!

And thou, beware of sorrow on this
road.

Oceanus. Ay! ever wiser for an-
other's use

Than thine! the event, and not the
prophecy,

Attests it to me. Yet where now I rush,
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me
back;

Because I glory—glory, to go hence
And win for thee deliverance from thy
pangs,

As a free gift from Zeus.

Prometheus. Why there, again,
I give thee gratulation and applause!

Thou lackest no good-will. But, as for
deeds,

Do nought! 'twere all done vainly!
helping nought,

Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather
take rest,

And keep thyself from evil. If I
grieve,

I do not therefore wish to multiply
The griefs of others. Verily, not so!

For still my brother's doom doth vex my
soul,—

My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven
and earth,

A difficult burden! I have also seen,
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred
heads,

(All taken and bowed beneath the
violent Hand,)

Typhon the fierce, who did resist the
gods,

And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful
jaws,

Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes,
As if to storm the throne of Zeus!

Whereat,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight
at him,—

The headlong bolt of thunder breathing
flame,

And struck him downward from his
eminence

Of exultation! Through the very soul,
It struck him, and his strength was

withered up

To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now, he lies
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length

Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into
By roots of Etna,—high upon whose

tops
Hephæstus sits and strikes the flashing
ore.

From thence the rivers of fire shall burst
away

Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily!

Such passion he shall boil back in hot
darts

Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,
Fallen Typhon;—howsoever struck and

charred

By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for thee,
Thou art not so unlearned as to need

My teaching—let thy knowledge save
thyself.

I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his

will in wrath.

Oceanus. Prometheus, art thou ignor-
ant of this,—

That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
With seasonable softness touch the soul,
And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear
them not

By any rudeness.

Oceanus. What a noble aim
To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that* ?
Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

Prometheus. I discern
Vain aspiration,—unresultive work.

Oceanus. Then suffer me to bear the
brunt of this!

Since it is profitable that one who is wise
Should seem not wise at all.

Prometheus. And such would seem
My very crime.

Oceanus. In truth thine argument
Sends me back home.

Prometheus. Lest any lament for me
Should cast thee down to hate.

Oceanus. The hate of Him,
Who sits a new king on the absolute
throne?

Prometheus. Beware of him,—lest
thine heart grieve by him.

Oceanus. Thy doom, Prometheus,
be my teacher!

Prometheus. Go!
Depart—beware!—and keep the mind
thou hast.

Oceanus. Thy words drive after, as
I rush before!

Lo! my four-footed Bird sweeps smooth
and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions,
glad

To bend his knee at home in the ocean-
stall. [*Exit OCEANUS.*]

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus! From my eyes too ten-
der,

Drop after drop incessantly,
The tears of my heart's pity render,
My cheeks wet from their fountains
free,—

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,
Whose law is taken from his breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

1st Antistrophe.

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day!

All the mortal nations,
Having habitations
Near the holy Asia,
Are a dirge eunoting
For thine honor and thy brother's,
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2d Strophe.

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms, stand
In the battle's roar—
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore—

2d Antistrophe.

Yea! Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the beetling town
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to
remain,
By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan!—
'twas Atlas who bears,
In a curse from the gods, by that strength
of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his shoul-
der alone,
While he sighs up the stars!
And the tides of the ocean wail bursting
their bars,—
Murmurs still the profound,—
And black Hades roars up through the
chasm of the ground,—
And the fountains of pure-running riv-
ers moan low
In a pathos of woe.

Prometheus. Beseech, you, think not
I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn! I only gnaw
my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so
wronged.
For so—thy honors to these new-made
gods,

What other gave but I,—and dealt them
 out
 With distribution? Ay—but here I am
 dumb;
 For here, I should repeat your know-
 ledge to you,
 If I spake aught. List rather to the
 deeds
 I did for mortals,—how, being fools be-
 fore,
 I made them wise and true in aim of
 soul.
 And let me tell you—not as taunting
 men,
 But teaching you the intention of my
 gifts;
 How, first beholding, they beheld in
 vain,
 And hearing, heard not, but like shapes
 in dreams,
 Mixed all things wildly down the tedious
 time,
 Nor knew to build a house against the
 sun
 With wicketed sides, nor any woodcraft
 knew,
 But lived, like silly ants, beneath the
 ground
 In hollow caves unsunned. There, came
 to them
 No stedfast sign of winter, nor of spring
 Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full of
 fruit,
 But blindly and lawlessly they did all
 things,
 Until I taught them how the stars do
 rise
 And set in mystery; and devised for
 them
 Number, the inducer of philosophies,
 The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,
 The artificer of all things, Memory,
 That sweet Muse-mother. I was first
 to yoke
 The servile beasts in couples, carrying
 An herdsmen of man's burdens on their
 backs!
 I joined the chariots, steeds, that love
 the bit
 They champ at—the chief pomp of gold-
 en ease,
 And none but I, originated ships,
 The seaman's chariots, wandering on the
 brine

With linen wings! And I—oh, misera-
 ble!—
 Who did devise for mortals all these arts,
 Have no device left now to save myself
 From the woe I suffer.
Chorus. Most unseemly woe
 Thou sufferest and dost stagger from
 the sense,
 Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling
 sick
 Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find
 the drugs
 Required to save thyself.
Prometheus. Harken the rest,
 And marvel further—what more arts
 and means
 I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a man
 Fell sick, there was no cure, nor escu-
 lent
 Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of
 drugs
 Men pined and wasted, till I showed
 them all
 Those mixtures of emollient remedies
 Whereby they might be rescued from
 disease.
 I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
 Discerned the vision from the common
 dream,
 Instructed them in vocal auguries
 Hard to interpret, and defined as plain
 The wayside omens,—flights of crook-
 clawed birds,—
 Showed which are, by their nature, for-
 tunate,
 And which not so, and what the food of
 each,
 And what the hates, affections, social
 needs,
 Of all to one another,—taught what sign
 Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade,
 May charm the genial gods, and what
 fair spots
 Commend the lung and liver. Burn-
 ing so
 The limbs encased in fat, and the long
 chine,
 I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
 And cleared their eyes to the image in
 the fire,
 Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now
 of this.
 For the other helps of man hid under
 ground,

The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
Can any dare affirm he found them out
Before me? None, I know! Unless
he choose

To lie in his vault. In one word learn
the whole,—

That all arts came to mortals from Pro-
metheus.

Chorus. Give mortals now no inex-
pedient help,

Neglecting thine own sorrow! I have
hope still

To see thee, breaking from the fetter
here,

Stand up as strong as Zeus.

Prometheus. This ends not thus,
The oracular Fate ordains. I must be
bowed

By infinite woes and pangs, to escape
this chain.

Necessity is stronger than mine art.

Chorus. Who holds the helm of that
Necessity?

Prometheus. The threefold Fates
and the unforgetting Furies.

Chorus. Is Zeus less absolute than
these are?

Prometheus. Yea,

And therefore cannot fly what is or-
dained.

Chorus. What is ordained for Zeus,
except to be a king forever?

Prometheus. 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

Chorus. Perhaps
'Thy secret may be something holy?

Prometheus. Turn
To another matter! this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil
In silence. For by that same secret
kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonor and its
woe.

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

Never, oh never,
May Zeus, the all-giver,
Wrestle down from his throne
In that might of his own,
To antagonize mine!
Nor let me delay
As I bend on my way
Toward the gods of the shrine,

Where the altar is full
Of the blood of the bull,
Near the tossing brine
Of Ocean my father.

May no sin be sped in the word that is
said,

But my vow to be rather
Consummated,

Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

1st Antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
Life lengthened out
With hopes proved brave
By the very doubt,
Till the spirit enfold

Those manifest joys which were fore-
told!

But I thrill to behold
'Thee, victim doomed,
By the countless cares
And the drear despairs,
Forever consumed.

And all because thou, who art fearless
now

Of Zeus above,
Didst overflow for mankind below,
With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah friend, behold and see!
What's all the beauty of humanity?
Can it be fair?

What's all the strength?—is it strong?
And what hope can they bear,
These dying livers—living one day
long?

Ah seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow,
And like a dream, doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted from
its end?

And how no mortal wranglings can
confuse
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things
From the sorrow in thy face!
Another song did fold its wings
Upon my lips in other days,
When round the bath and round the
bed
The hymeneal chant instead

I sang for thee, and smiled,—
And thou didst lead, with gifts and
vows,
Hesione, my father's child,
To be thy wedded spouse.

Io enters.

Io. What land is this? what people
is here?
And who is he that writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain?
Now what is the crime that hath brought
thee to pain?
And what is the land—make answer
free—
Which I wander through, in my wrong
and fear?
Ah! ah! ah me!
The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail
When my soul descries
The herdsman with the myriad eyes
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty
eye!
Graves hide him not, though he should
die,
But he doggeth me in my misery
From the roots of death, on high—on
high—
And along the sands of the siding deep,
All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth undersound
The waters round,
And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!
Where shall my weary course be
done?
What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's
son?
And in what have I sinned, that I should
go
Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for
ever?
Ah! ah! dost vex me so,
That I madden and shiver,
Stung through with dread?
Flash the fire down, to burn me!
Heave the earth up, to cover me!
Or plunge me in the deep, with the salt
waves over me,
Where the sea-beasts may be fed!
O king, do not spurn me

In my prayer!
For this wandering everlonger, ever-
more,
Hath overworn me,—
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.

Chorus. Hearest thou what the ox-
horned maiden saith?

Prometheus. How could I choose
but hearken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden?—Inachus's
child?—
Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now
is lashed
By Here's hate, along the unending
ways?

Io. Who taught thee to articulate
that name,—
My father's? Speak to his child,
By grief and shame defiled!
Who art thou, victim, thou—who dost
acclaim
Mine anguish in true words, on the wide
air?
And callest too by name, the curse that
came
From Here unaware,
To waste and pierce me with the mad-
ening goad.
Ah—ah—I leap
With the pang of the hungry—I bound
on the road—
I am driven by my doom—
I am overcome
By the wrath of an enemy strong and
deep!
Are any of those who have tasted pain,
Alas!—as wretched as I?
Now tell me plain, doth aught remain
For my soul to endure beneath the sky?
Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be said—
Cry aloud—cry
To the wandering, woeful maid.

Prometheus. Whatever thou wouldst
learn I will declare,—
No riddle upon my lips, but such straight
words,
As friends should use to each other when
they talk.
Thou seest Prometheus, who gave mor-
tals fire.

Io. O common Help of all men,
known of all,

O miserable Prometheus, — for what cause

Dost thou endure thus?

Prometheus. I have done with wail
For my own griefs—but lately—

Io. Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?

Prometheus. Say which thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all.

Io. Speak then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm.

Prometheus. The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephæstus.

Io. And what crime
Dost expiate so?

Prometheus. I have told enough for
thee,

In so much only

Io. Nay—but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the
time

Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.

Prometheus. Why, not to know
Were better than to know,
For such as thou.

Io. Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.

Prometheus. If I do
The reason is not that I grudge the boon.

Io. What reason, then, prevents thy
speaking out?

Prometheus. No grudging! but a
fear to break thine heart.

Io. Less care for me, I pray thee!
Certainty, I count for advantage.

Prometheus. Thou wilt have it
so,

And, therefore, I must speak. Now
hear—

Chorus. Not yet!

Give half the guerdon my way. Let us
learn

First, what the curse is that befel the
maid,—

Her own voice telling her own wasting
woes!

The sequence of that anguish shall await
The teaching of thy lips.

Prometheus. It doth behove
That thou, maid *Io*, shouldst vouchsafe
to these

The grace they pray; the more, because
they are called

Thy father's sisters; since to open out
And mourn out grief where it is possible
To draw a tear from the audience, is a
work

That pays its own price well.

Io. I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all
ye ask,

In clear words—though I sob amid my
speech

In speaking of the storm-curse sent from
Zeus,

And of my beauty, from which height
it took

Its swoop on me, poor wretch! left thus
deformed,

And monstrous to your eyes. For ever-
more

Around my virgin chamber, wandering
went

The nightly visions which entreated me
With syllabled smooth sweetness.—

'Blessed maid,
Why lengthen out thy maiden hours
when fate

Permits the noblest spousal in the world?
When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy
love,

And fain would touch thy beauty.—
Maiden, thou

Despise not Zeus! depart to Lerne's
mead

That's green around thy father's flocks
and stalls,

Until the passion of the heavenly eye
Be quenched in sight.' Such dreams
did all night long

Constrain me — me, unhappy!—till I
dared

To tell my father how they trod the dark
With visionary steps; whereat he sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian
fane,

And also to Dodona, and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please
the gods,

The same returning, brought back ora-
cles

Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret; but at last there
came

To Inachus an answer that was clear,—
'Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken
out.

This—'he should drive me from my home and land,
 And bid me wander to the extreme verge
 Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
 Should have a thunder with a fiery eye
 Leap straight from Zeus to burn up all his race
 To the last root of it.' By which Loxian word
 Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut me out,
 He loth, me loth,—but Zeus's violent bit
 Compelled him to the deed!—when instantly
 My body and soul were changed and distraught,
 And, horned as ye see, and spurred along
 By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap
 I rushed on to Cerchnea's limpid stream
 And Lerne's fountain-water. There, the earth born,
 The herdsman Argus, most immitigable
 Of wrath, did find me out, and track me out
 With countless eyes, yet staring at my steps!—
 And though an unexpected sudden doom
 Drew him from life—I, curse-tormented still,
 And driven from land to land before the scourge
 The gods hold o'er me. So, thou hast heard the past,
 And if a bitter future thou canst tell,
 Speak on! I charge thee, do not flatter me
 Through pity, with false words! for, in my mind,
 Deceiving works more shame than torturing doth.

Chorus.

Ah! silence here!
 Nevermore, nevermore,
 Would I languish for
 The stranger's word
 To thrill mine ear!—
 Nevermore for the wrong and the woe
 and the fear,

So hard to behold,
 So cruel to bear,
 Piercing my soul with a double-edged sword
 Of a sliding cold!
 Ah fate!—ah me!—
 I shudder to see
 This wandering maid in her agony.

Prometheus. Grief is too quick in thee, and fear too full!
 Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest!
Chorus. Speak—teach!
 To those who are sad already, it seems sweet,
 By clear foreknowledge to make perfect, pain.
Prometheus. The boon ye asked me first was lightly won,—
 For first ye asked the story of this maid's grief
 As her own lips might tell it—now remains
 To list what other sorrows she so young
 Must bear from Herè!—Inachus's child,
 O thou!—Drop down thy soul my weighty words,
 And measure out the landmarks which are set
 To end thy wandering. Toward the orient sun
 First turn thy face from mine, and journey on
 Along the desert flats, till thou shalt come
 Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell aloft,
 Perched in wheeled wagons under woven roofs,
 And twang the rapid arrow past the bow—
 Approach them not; but siding in thy course,
 The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the sea,
 Depart that country. On the left hand dwell
 The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
 Of whom beware! for certes they are uncouth,
 And nowise bland to strangers. Reaching so
 The stream Hybristes, (well the *scorner* called),

Attempt no passage ;—it is hard to pass.
 Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
 The highest of mountains,—where the
 river leaps
 The precipice in his strength!—thou
 must toil up
 Those mountain-tops that neighbor with
 the stars,
 And tread the south way, and draw
 near, at last,
 The Amazonian host that hateth man,
 Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
 Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough
 jaw
 Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide
 A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
 A stepdame. They, with reluctant
 hand,
 Shall lead thee on and on, till thou
 arrive
 Just where the ocean gates show narrow-
 est
 On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving
 which,
 Behoves thee swim with fortitude of
 soul
 The strait Mæotis. Ay! and evermore
 That traverse shall be famous on men's
 lips,
 That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned
 one's road,
 So named because of thee, who so wilt
 pass
 From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.
 How think ye, nymphs? the king of
 gods appears
 Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold
 The god desirous of this mortal's love
 Hath cursed her with these wanderings.
 Ah, fair child,
 Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal
 troth!
 For all thou yet hast heard, can only
 prove
 The incompleted prelude of thy doom.
Io. Ah, ah!
Prometheus. Is't thy turn, now, to
 shriek and moan?
 How wilt thou when thou hast heark-
 ened what remains?
Chorus. Besides the grief thou hast
 told, can aught remain?
Prometheus. A sea—of foredoomed
 evil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then? why
 not cast myself
 Down headlong from this miserable
 rock,
 That, dashed against the flats, I may
 redeem
 My soul from sorrow? Better once to
 die,
 Than day by day to suffer.
Prometheus. Verily,
 It would be hard for thee to bear my
 woe,
 For whom it is appointed not to die.
 Death frees from woe: but I before me
 see
 In all my far prevision, not a bound
 To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
 From being a king.
Io. And can it ever be
 That Zeus shall fall from empire?
Prometheus. Thou, methinks,
 Wouldest take some joy to see it.
Io. Could I choose;
I, who endure such pangs, now, by that
 god?
Prometheus. Learn from me, there-
 fore, that the event shall be.
Io. By whom shall his imperial scep-
 tred hand
 Be emptied so?
Prometheus. Himself shall spoil
 himself,
 Through his idiotic counsels.
Io. How? declare;
 Unless the word bring evil.
Prometheus. He shall wed—
 And in the marriage-bond be joined to
 grief.
Io. A heavenly bride—or human?
 Speak it out,
 If it be utterable.
Prometheus. Why should I say
 which?
 It ought not to be uttered, verily.
Io. Then
 It is his wife shall tear him from his
 throne?
Prometheus. It is his wife shall bear
 a son to him,
 More mighty than the father.
Io. From this doom
 Hath he no refuge?
Prometheus. None—or ere that I,
 Loosed from these fetters—

Io Yea—but who shall loose
While Zeus is adverse?

Prometheus. One who is born of
thee,—
(It is ordained so.

Io. What is this thou sayest—
A son of mine shall liberate thee from
woe?

Prometheus. After ten generations,
count three more,
And find him in the third.

Io. The oracle
Remains obscure.

Prometheus. And search it not to
learn

Thine own griefs from it.

Io. Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved,

Prometheus. I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things.

Io. But which two?
Set them before me—grant me power to
choose.

Prometheus. I grant it—choose now!
I shall name aloud
What griefs remain to wound thee, or
what hand

shall save me out of mine.

Chorus. Vouchsafe, O god,
The one grace of the twain to her who
prays,

The next to me—and turn back neither
prayer

Dishonored by denial. To herself
Recount the future wandering of her
feet—

Then point me to the looser of thy
chain—

because I yearn to know it.

Prometheus. Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will
set

No contrary against it, nor keep back
A word of all ye ask for. *Io,* first
To thee I must relate thy wandering
course

Far winding; as I tell it, write it down
In thy soul's book of memories. When
thou hast past

The reflux bound that parts two con-
tinent,

Crack on the footsteps of the orient sun
In his own fire—across the roar of seas,

Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonean
flats

Beside Cisthene—there the Phorcides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape
of swan,

One tooth between them, and one com-
mon eye,

On whom the sun doth never look at all
With all his rays, nor evermore the
moon,

When she looks through the night,
Anear to whom

Are the Gorgon sisters three, enclodeth
with wings,

With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-
abhorred.

There is no mortal gazes in their face,
And gazing can breathe on. I speak of
such

To guard thee from their horror. Ay!
and list

Another tale of a dreadful sight! be-
ware

The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of
Zeus,

Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the
Arimaspian host

Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside
The river of Pluto that runs bright with
gold.

Approach them not, beseech thee. Pre-
sently

Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky
tribe

Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
Whence flows the river Æthiops!—
wind along

Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
Just as the Nile pours from the Bybline
hills,

His holy and sweet wave! his course
shall guide

Thine own to that triangular Nile-
ground

Where, *Io,* is ordained for thee and thine
A lengthened exile. Have I said, in
this,

Aught darkly or incompletely?—now
repeat

The question, make the knowledge
fuller! *Io,*

I have more leisure than I covet, here.

Chorus. If thou canst tell us aught
that's left untold

Or loosely told of her most dreary flight,
 Declare it straight! but if thou hast
 uttered all,
 Grant us that latter grace for which we
 prayed,
 Remembering how we prayed it.

Prometheus. She has heard
 The uttermost of her wandering. There
 it ends.

But that she may be certain not to have
 heard

All vainly, I will speak what she en-
 dured

Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
 To prove my prescience true. And so
 to leave

A multitude of words, and pass at once
 To the subject of thy course!—When
 thou hadst gone

To those Molossian plains which sweep
 around

Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby
 the fane

Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,
 And wonder, past belief, where oaks do
 wave

Articulate adjurations—(ay, the same
 Saluted thee in no perplexed phrase,
 But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus
 That shouldst be, there, some sweetness
 took thy sense!)

Thou didst rush further onward,—stung
 along

The ocean-shore, — toward Rhea's
 mighty bay,

And, tost back from it, was tost to it
 again

In stormy evolution!—and, know well,
 In coming time that hollow of the sea
 Shall bear the name Ionian, and present
 A monument of Io's passage through,
 Unto all mortals. Be these words the
 signs

Of my soul's power to look beyond the
 veil

Of visible things. The rest to you and
 her,

I will declare in common audience,
 nymphs,

Returning thither, where my speech
 brake off.

There is a town Canobus, built upon
 The earth's fair margin, at the mouth of
 Nile,

And on the mound washed up by it!—
 Io, there

Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect
 mind,

And only by the pressure and the touch
 Of a hand not terrible; and thou to
 Zeus

Shalt bear a dusky son, who shall be
 called

Thence, Epaphus, Touched! That son
 shall pluck the fruit

Of all that land wide-watered by the
 flow

Of Nile; but after him, when counting
 out

As far as the fifth full generation, then
 Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,

Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
 To fly the proffered nuptials of their
 kin,

Their father's brothers. These being
 passion-struck,

Like falcons bearing hard on flying
 doves,

Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of love
 They should not hunt — till envious
 Heaven maintain

A curse betwixt that beauty and their
 desire,

And Greece receive them, to be over-
 come

In murderous woman-war, by fierce red
 hands

Kept savage by the night. For every
 wife

Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in
 blood

The sword of a double edge! (I wish
 indeed

As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
 One bride alone shall fail to smite to
 death

The head upon her pillow touched with
 love,

Made impotent of purpose, and im-
 pelled

To choose the lesser evil—shame on her
 cheeks,

The blood-guilt on her hands. Which
 bride shall bear .

A royal race in Argos—tedious speech
 Were needed to relate particulars

Of these things—'tis enough that from
 her seed,

Shall spring the strong He—famous with
the bow,
Whose arm shall break my fetters off !
Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle ;
But how and when, I should be long to
speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain
at all.

Io. Eleleu, eleleu !
How the spasm and the pain
And the fire on the brain
Strike, burning me through !
How the sting of the curse, all aflame
as it flew,
Pricks me onward again !
How my heart in its terror, is spurning
my breast,
And my eyes, like the wheels of a cha-
riot, roll round,—
I am whirled from my course, to the
east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frenzy all madly
inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for anguish
and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild
storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate fate.

Chorus.—Strophe.

Oh ! wise was he, oh, wise was he,
Who first within his spirit knew
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree !
And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light !

Antistrophe.

Oh ! never, never, may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits !—
Nor let me step too near—too near—
To any suitor, bright from heaven—
Because I see—because I fear
This loveless maiden vexed and laden

By this fell curse of Here,—driven
On wanderings dread and drear !

Epode.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
Of nuptial troth to bind me by !—
It will not hurt—I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.
But let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye !
I have no sword to fight that fight—
I have no strength to tread that path—
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear,—I cannot see,
Whither, from Zeus's infinite,
I have the power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus, albeit most
absolute of will
Shall turn to meekness,—such a mar-
riage-rite
He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his
gerent seat
Adown the abysmal void, and so the
curse
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne and
cursed,
Shall be accomplished wholly—no es-
cape
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus
Find granted to him from any of his
gods,
Unless I teach him. I, the refuge, know,
And I, the means—Now, therefore, let
him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix
his faith
On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand, the bolt that breathes
out fire—
For these things shall not help him—
none of them—
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience.—
Such a foe
He doth himself prepare against him-
self,
A wonder of unconquerable Hate,
An organiser of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander
sound

'Than aught the thunder rolls,—out-
thundering it,
With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist
The trident spear, which, while it plagues
the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it. Ay,
and Zeus,
Precipitated thus, shall learn at length
The difference betwixt rule and servi-
tude.

Chorus. Thou makest threats for
Zeus of thy desires.

Prometheus. I tell you all these
things shall be fulfilled,

Even so as I desire them,

Chorus. Must we then
Look out for one shall come to master
Zeus?

Prometheus. These chains weigh
lighter than his sorrows shall.

Chorus. How art thou not afraid to
utter such words?

Prometheus. What should I fear,
who cannot die?

Chorus. But *he*
Can visit thee with dreader woe than
death's.

Prometheus. Why let him do it!—I
am here, prepared
For all things and their pangs.

Chorus. The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia.

Prometheus. Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever
reigns,
Whenever reigning—but for me, your
Zeus

Is less than nothing! Let him act and
reign
His brief hour out according to his
will—

He will not, therefore, rule the gods too
long!

But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
That new-made menial of the new-
crowned king—

He doubtless comes to announce to us
something new.

HERMES enters.

Hermes. I speak to thee, the sophist,
the talker down

Of scorn by scorn,—the sinner against
gods,

The reverencer of men,—the thief of
fire,—

I speak to and adjure thee! Zeus re-
quires

Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereaf-
ter cause

His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy
speech

In riddles, but speak clearly! Never
cast

Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my
feet—

Since Zeus, thou may'st perceive, is
scarcely won

To mercy by such means.

Prometheus. A speech well-mouthed
In the utterance, and full minded in the
sense,

As doth befit a servant of the gods!

New gods, ye newly reign, and think
forsooth

Ye dwell in towers too high for any
dart

To carry a wound there! Have I not
stood by

While two kings fell from thence? and
shall I not

Behold the third, the same who rules
you now,

Fall, shamed to sudden ruin?—Do I
seem

To tremble and quail before your mod-
ern gods?

Far be it from me!—For thyself depart,
Re-tread thy steps in haste! To all
thou hast asked,

I answer nothing.

Hermes. Such a wind of pride
Impelled thee of yore full sail upon
these rocks.

Prometheus. I would not barter—
learn thou soothly that!—

My suffering for thy service! I main-
tain

It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
Than live a faithful slave to father
Zeus—

Thus upon scorners I retort their scorn.

Hermes. It seems that thou dost
glory in thy despair.

Prometheus. I, glory? would my foes
did glory so,
And I stood by to see them!—naming
whom
Thou art not unremembered.

Hermes. Dost thou charge
Me also with the blame of thy mis-
chance?

Prometheus. I tell thee I loathe the
universal gods,
Who for the good I gave them rendered
back
The ill of their injustice.

Hermes. Thou art mad—
I hear thee raving, Titan, at the fever-
height.

Prometheus. If it be madness to
abhor my foes,
May I be mad!

Hermes. If thou wert prosperous,
Thou wouldst be unendurable.

Prometheus. Alas!

Hermes. Zeus knows not that word.
Prometheus. But maturing time
Doth teach all things.

Hermes. Howbeit, thou hast not
learnt
The wisdom yet, thou needest.

Prometheus. If I had,
I should not talk thus with a slave like
thee.

Hermes. No answer thou vouchsaf-
est, I believe,
To the great Sire's requirement.

Prometheus. Verily
I owe him grateful service,—and should
pay it.

Hermes. Why dost thou mock me,
Titan, as I stood
A child before thy face.

Prometheus. No child, forsooth,
But yet more foolish than a foolish
child,
If thou expect that I should answer
aught

Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his
hand,

Nor any machination in the world
Shall force my utterance, ere he loose,
himself,

These cankerous fetters from me! For
the rest,
Let him now hurl his blanching light-
nings down,

And with his white-winged snows, and
mutterings deep
Of subterranean thunders, mix all
things;

Confound them in disorder! None of
this

Shall bend my sturdy will and make me
speak

The name of his dethroner who shall
come.

Hermes. Can this avail thee? Look
to it!

Prometheus. Long ago
It was looked forward to,—precounselled
of.

Hermes. Vain god, take righteous
courage!—dare for once

To apprehend and front thine agonies
With a just prudence!

Prometheus. Vainly dost thou chafe
My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea
Goes beating on the rock. Oh! think
no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's
mind,

Will supplicate him, loathed as he is
With feminine upliftings of my hands,
To break these chains! Far from me be
the thought!

Hermes. I have indeed, methinks,
said much in vain,—

For still thy heart, beneath my showers
of prayers,

Lies dry and hard!—nay, leaps like a
young horse

Who bites against the new bit in his
teeth,

And tugs and struggles against the new-
tried rein,—

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,
Which sophism is,—since absolute will
disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than weak.
Behold,

Unless my words persuade thee, what a
blast

And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee!

For at first
The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted
flame,

And hide thy body where a hinge of
stone

Shall catch it like an arm!—and when
 thou hast passed
 A long black time within, thou shalt
 come out
 To front the sun, while Zeus's winged
 hound,
 The strong carnivorous eagle, shall
 wheel down
 To meet thee,—self-called to a daily
 feast,
 And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear
 off
 The long rags of thy flesh, and batten
 deep
 Upon thy dusky liver! Do not look
 For any end moreover to this curse,
 Or ere some god appear, to accept thy
 pangs
 On his own head vicarious, and descend
 With unreluctant step the darks of hell
 And gloomy abysses around Tartarus!
 'Then ponder this!—this threat is not a
 growth
 Of vain invention: it is spoken and
 meant!
 King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
 Consummating the utterance by the
 act—
 So, look to it, thou!—take heed!—and
 nevermore
 Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will!
Chorus. Our Hermes suits his reasons
 to the times—
 At least I think so!—since he bids thee
 drop
 Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to
 him!
 When the wise err, their wisdom makes
 their shame.
Prometheus. Unto me the foreknow-
 er, this mandate of power
 He cries, to reveal it.
 What's strange in my fate, if I suffer
 from hate
 At the hour that I feel it?
 Let the locks of the lightning, all brist-
 ling and whitening,
 Flash, coiling me round!
 While the ether goes surging 'neath
 thunder and scourging
 Of wild winds unbound!
 Let the blast of the firmament whirl
 from its place
 The earth rooted below,

And the brine of the ocean in rapid
 emotion,
 Be it driven in the face
 Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk
 to and fro!
 Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus—
 on—
 To the blackest degree,
 With Necessity's vortices strangling me
 down!
 But he cannot join death to a fate meant
 for me!
Hermes. Why the words that he
 speaks and the thoughts that he
 thinks,
 Are maniacal—add,
 If the Fate who hath bound him, should
 loose not the links,
 He were utterly mad.
 Then depart ye who groan with him,
 Leaving to moan with him—
 Go in haste! lest the roar of the thun-
 der anearing
 Should blast you to idiocy, living and
 hearing.
Chorus. Change thy speech for an-
 other, thy thought for a new,
 If to move me and teach me, indeed
 be thy care!
 For thy words swerve so far from the
 loyal and true,
 That the thunder of Zeus seems more
 easy to bear.
 How! couldst teach me to venture such
 vileness?
 Behold!
 I choose, with this victim, this anguish
 foretold!
 I recoil from the traitor in hate and dis-
 dain,—
 And I know that the curse of the trea-
 son is worse
 Than the pang of the chain.
Hermes. Then remember, O nymphs,
 what I tell you before,
 Nor, when pierced by the arrows that
 Atè will throw you,
 Cast blame on your fate and declare
 evermore
 That Zeus thrust you on anguish he
 did not foreshow you.
 Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon
 For your deed—by your choice!—by
 no blindness of doubt,

No abruptness of doom!—but by madness alone,

In the great net of Atè, whence none cometh out,

Ye are wound and undone!

Prometheus. Ay! in act, now—in word, now, no more!

Earth is rocking in space!

And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar—

And the eddying lightnings flash fires in my face,

And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round—

And the blasts of the winds universal, leap free

And blow each upon each, with a passion of sound,

And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea!

Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread,

From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along!

O my mother's fair glory! O, Æther, enringing,

All eyes, with the sweet common light of thy bringing.

Dost thou see how I suffer this wrong?

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM BION.

I.

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead!

Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves are lamenting.

Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-strewed bed!

Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat thy breast unrelenting,

And shriek to the worlds, 'Fair Adonis is dead.'

II.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

He lies on the hills, in his beauty and death,—

The white tusk of a boar has transfixed his white thigh;

Cytheria grows mad at his thin gasping breath,

While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,

And his eye-balls lie quenched with the weight of his brows,

The rose fades from his lips, and upon them just parted

The kiss dies the goddess consents not to lose,

Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-hearted—

He knows not who kisses him dead in the dews.

III.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

Deep, deep in the thigh, is Adonis's wound;

But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting—

The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,

And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,

And the poor Aphrodite, with tresses unbound,

All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill

Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,

Each footstep she takes; and the valleys repeat

The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian; on him

Her own youth; while the dark blood spreads over his body—

The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,

And the bosom once ivory, turning to ruddy.

IV.

Ah, ah, Cytheria! the Loves are lamenting:

She lost her fair spouse, and so lost her fair smile—

When he lived she was fair by the whole
 world's consenting,
 Whose fairness is dead with him I woe
 worth the while!
 All the mountains above and the oak-
 lands below
 Murmur, ah, ah Adonis! the streams
 overflow
 Aphrodite's deep wail,—river-fountains
 in pity
 Weep soft in the hills; and the flow-
 ers as they blow,
 Redden outward with sorrow; while all
 hear her go
 With the song of her sadness, through
 mountain and city.

v.

Ah, ah, Cytheria! Adonis is dead!
 Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers,
 Adonis!
 Who weeps not for Cypris, when bow-
 ing her head,
 She stares at the wound where it
 gapes and aponies?
 —When, ah, ah!—she saw how the
 blood ran away
 And empurpled the thigh; and, with
 wild hands flung out,
 Said with sobs, 'Stay, Adonis! unhappy
 one, stay,
 Let me feel thee once more—let me
 ring thee about
 With the clasp of my arms, and press
 kiss into kiss!
 Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me
 again,
 For the last time, beloved; and but so
 much of this
 That the kiss may learn life from the
 warmth of the strain!
 —Till thy breath shall exude from thy
 soul to my mouth;
 To my heart; and, the love-charm I
 once more receiving,
 May drink thy love in it, and keep of a
 truth
 That one kiss in the place of Adonis
 the living.
 Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me
 far,
 My Adonis; and seekest the Acheron
 portal,—

To Hell's cruel King goest down with a
 scar,
 While I weep and live on like a
 wretched immortal,
 And follow no step;—O Persephone,
 take him,
 My husband!—thou'rt better and
 brighter than I
 So all beauty flows down to thee! I
 cannot make him
 Look up at my grief; there's despair
 in my cry,
 Since I wail for Adonis, who died to me
 . . . died to me . . .
 —Then, I fear *thee!*—Art thou dead,
 my Adored?
 Passion ends like a dream in the sleep
 that's denied to me.—
 Cypris is widowed; the Loves seek
 their lord
 All the house through in vain! Charm
 of cestus has ceased
 With thy clasp!—O too bold in the
 hunt, past preventing;
 Ay, mad; thou so fair . . . to have strife
 with a beast!—
 Thus the Goddess wailed on—and the
 loves are lamenting.

vi.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead.
 She wept tear after tear, with the blood
 which was shed;
 And both turned into flowers for the
 earth's garden-close;
 Her tears, to the wind-flower,—his blood
 to the rose.

vii.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
 Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea,
 thy lover!
 So, well; make a place for his corpse in
 thy bed,
 With the purples thou sleepest in, un-
 der and over.
 He's fair though a corpse—a fair corpse . . .
 like a sleeper—
 Lay him soft in the silks he had plea-
 sure to fold,
 When, beside thee at night, holy dreams
 deep and deeper

Enclosed his young life on the couch
made of gold !
Love him still, poor Adonis ! cast on
him together
The crowns and the flowers ! since he
died from the place,
Why let all die with him—let the blos-
soms go wither ;
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on
his face :
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is
best fall apining,
For the myrrh of his life from thy
keeping is sweet !—
—Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples
reclining,—
The Loves raised their voices around
him and wept.
They have shorn their bright curls off
to cast on Adonis :
One treads on his bow,—on his arrows,
another,—
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver ;
and one is
Bent low at a sandal, untying the
strings ;
And one carries the vases of gold from
the springs,
While one washes the wound ; and be-
hind them a brother
Fans down on the body sweet air
with his wings.

VIII.

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are
lamenting.
Each torch at the door Hymenæus
blew out ;
And the marriage-wreath dropping its
leaves as repenting,
No more ' Hymen, Hymen,' is chant-
ed about,
But the *ai ai* instead—' ai alas ' is begun
For Adonis, and then follows ' ai
Hymenæus !'
The Graces are weeping for Cinyris' son
Sobbing low, each to each, ' His fair
eyes cannot see us !'
Their wail strikes more shrill than the
sadder Dione's ;
The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,
Adonis,

Deep chanting ! he hears not a word
that they say :
He *would* hear, but Persephone has
him in keeping.
—Cease moan, Cytherea—leave pomps
for to-day,
And weep new when a new year
refits thee for weeping.

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

PUT the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done !
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on,
Though the clock stands at the noon
I am weary ! I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet !
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat !
No one standeth in the street ?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

Lean thy face down ! drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold.
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth !

Thou art younger by seven years—
Ah !—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise ?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such—
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much ?

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear ?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
' Child, be mother to this child !'

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
 Stand up on the jasper sea,
 And be witness I have given
 All the gifts required of me,—
 Hope that blessed me, bliss that
 crowned,
 Love, that left me with a wound,
 Life itself, that turneth round !

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
 Thou art standing in the room,
 In a molten glory shrined,
 That rays off into the gloom !
 But thy smile is bright and bleak
 Like cold waves—I cannot speak ;
 I sob in it, and grow weak.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
 One hour longer from my soul—
 For I still am thinking of
 Earth's warm-beating joy and dole :
 On my finger is a ring
 Which I still see glittering,
 When the night hides everything.

Little sister, thou art pale !
 Ah, I have a wandering brain—
 But I lose that fever-bale,
 And my thoughts grow calm again.
 Lean down closer—closer still !
 I have words thine ear to fill,—
 And would kiss thee at my will.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
 Thee and Robert—through the trees—
 When we all went gathering
 Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
 Do not start so ! think instead
 How the sunshine overhead
 Seemed to trickle through the shade.

What a day it was, that day !
 Hills and vales did openly
 Seem to heave and throb away
 At the sight of the great sky.
 And the Silence, as it stood
 In the Glory's golden flood,
 Audibly did bud—and bud.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
 How we wandered, I and you,—
 With the bowery tops shut in,
 And the gates that showed the view—
 How we talked there ! thrushes soft

Sang our pauses out—or oft
 Bleatings took them, from the croft.

Till the pleasure grown too strong
 Left me muter evermore ;
 And, the winding road being long,
 I walked out of sight, before,
 And so, wrapt in musings fond,
 Issued (past the wayside pond)
 On the meadow-lands beyond.

I sate down beneath the beech
 Which leans over to the lane,
 And the far sound of your speech
 Did not promise any pain ;
 And I blessed you full and free,
 With a smile stooped tenderly
 O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

But the sound grew into word
 As the speakers drew more near—
 Sweet, forgive me that I heard
 What you wished me not to hear.
 Do not weep so—do not shake—
 Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
 Good true answers for my sake.

Yes, and HE too ! let him stand
 In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
 Could he help it, if my hand
 He had claimed with hasty claim ?
 That was wrong perhaps—but then
 Such things be—and will, again !
 Women cannot judge for men.

Had he seen thee when he swore
 He would love but me alone.
 Thou wert absent,—sent before
 To our kin in Sidmouth town.
 When he saw thee who art best
 Past compare, and loveliest,
 He but judged thee as the rest.

Could we blame him with grave words,
 Thou and I, Dear, if we might ?
 Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
 Flying straightway to the light :
 Mine are older.—Hush !—look out—
 Up the street ! Is none without ?
 How the poplar swings about !

And that hour—beneath the beech,
 When I listened in a dream,
 And he said, in his deep speech,

That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain—

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
'There was night,—I saw the moon :
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

And I walked as if apart
From myself when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a 'Póor thing' negligence.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door ;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor :
And the flowers I bade you see.
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth for me.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm !
It was best as it befell !
If I say he did me harm,
I speak it wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me ! Only blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballads sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.
I had died, Dear, all the same—
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I ; that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant, verily, to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root !
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
'Treads the crocus underfoot—
I, like May-bloom on thorn tree—
Thou, like merry summer-bee !
Fit, that *I* be plucked for *thee*.

Yet who plucks me ?—no one mourns—
I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry ! How the light
Comes and goes ! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

Are there footsteps at the door ?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay ?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay ? So best !—So angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

Colder grow my hands and feet—
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,
That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, sweet !) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the Dark up, day and night.

On that grave, drop not a tear !
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessed one,
Thinking of me in the sun—
Or forget me—smiling on !

Art thou near *mé* ? nearer ? so.
Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly as it used to rise,
When I watched the morning-gray
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

So,—no more vain words be said !
 The hosannas nearer roll—
 Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
 I am death-strong in my soul.
 Mystic Dove alit on cross,
 Guide the poor bird of the snows
 Through the snow-wind above loss !

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
 Love's divine self-abnegation,
 Cleanse my love in self-spending,
 And absorb the poor libation !
 Wind my thread of life up higher,
 Up, through angels' hands of fire !—
 I aspire while I expire !

THAT DAY.

I STAND by the river where both of us
 stood,
 And there is but one shadow to darken
 the flood ;
 And the path leading to it, where both
 used to pass,
 Has the step but of one, to take dew
 from the grass,—
 One forlorn since that day.

The flowers of the margin are many to
 see,
 For none stoops at my bidding to pluck
 them for me ;
 The bird in the alder sings loudly and
 long,
 For my low sound of weeping disturbs
 not his song,
 As thy vow did that day

I stand by the river—I think of the
 vow—
 Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker
 be *thou* !
 I leave the flower growing—the bird,
 unreprieved,—
 Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*,
 my beloved,
 And my lover that day ?

Go! be sure of my love—by that trea-
 son forgiven ;
 Of my prayers—by the blessings they
 win thee from Heaven :

Of my grief—(guess the length of the
 sword by the sheath's)
 By the silence of life, more pathetic
 than death's !
 Go,—be clear of that day !

LIFE AND LOVE.

I.
 FAST this life of mine was dying,
 Blind already and calm as death ;
 Snowflakes on her bosom lying
 Scarcely heaving with the breath.

II.
 Love came by, and having known her
 In a dream of fabled lands,
 Gently stooped, and laid upon her
 Mystic chrism of holy hands •

III.
 Drew his smile across her folded
 Eyelids, as the swallow dips,
 Breathed as finely as the cold did,
 Through the locking of her lips.

IV.
 So, when Life looked upward, being
 Warmed and breathed on from above,
 What sight could she have for seeing,
 Evermore . . . but only LOVE ?

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE

AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.
 I STAND on the mark beside the shore
 Of the first white pilgrim's bended
 knee,
 Where exile turned to ancestor,
 And God was thanked for liberty.
 I have run through the night, my skin is
 as dark
 I bend my knee down on this mark . . .
 I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim souls, I speak to you!
I see you come out proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as
dew . .

And round me and round me you go!
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
Who in your names works sin and
woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would come
And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black;
And yet God made me, they say.
But if he did so, smiling back
He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creatures,
With a look of scorn,—that the dusky
features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He ha: made dark things
To be glad and merry as light.
There's a little dark bird, sits and sings;
There's a dark stream ripples out of
sight;
And the dark frogs chant in the safe
morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!
Ah God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars:
The poor souls crouch so far behind,
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth Hand of God
stretched out

On all His children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and
doubt
Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
They make us hot, they make us cold,
And if we were not black and lost:
And the beasts and birds, in wood and
fold,
Do fear and take us for very men!
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of
-the glen
Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!—
But, once I laughed in girlish glee;
For one of my color stood in the track
Where the drivers drove, and looked
at me—
And tender and full was the look he
gave:
Could a slave look *so* at another
slave?—
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
To conquer the world we thought!
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way
And no better a freedom sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
He said 'I love you' as he passed;
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with
the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook he smiled in the hut
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-
nut
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song;
Over and over I sang his name—

Upward and downward I drew it along
 My various notes; the same, the
 same!
 I sang it low, that the slave girls near
 Might never guess from aught they
 could hear,
 It was only a name—a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea—
 We were two to love, and two to
 pray,—
 Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
 Though nothing didst Thou say.
 Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!
 And now I cry who am but one,
 Thou wilt speak to-day.—

XIV.

We were black, we were black!
 We had no claim to love and bliss:
 What marvel, if each went to wrack?
 They wrung my cold hands out of
 his,—
 They dragged him . . . where? . . . I
 crawled to touch
 His blood's mark in the dust! . . . not
 much,
 Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain as
this!

XV.

Wrong followed by a deeper wrong!
 Mere grief's too good for such as I.
 So the white men brought the shame ere
 long
 To strangle the sob of my agony.
 They would not leave me for my dull
 Wet eyes!—it was too merciful .
 To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black!
 I wore a child upon my breast . . .
 An amulet that hung too slack,
 And, in my unrest, could not rest:
 Thus we went moaning, child and
 mother
 One to another, one to another,
 Until all ended for the best:

XVII.

For hark! I will tell you low . . . low . . .
 I am black, you see,—
 And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
 Was far too white . . . too white for
 me;
 As white as the ladies who scorned to
 pray
 Beside me at church but yesterday:
 Though my tears had washed a place
 for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear
 To look in his face, it was so white.
 I covered him up with a kerchief there;
 I covered his face in close and tight;
 And he moaned and struggled, as well
 might be,
 For the white child wanted his liberty—
 Ha, ha! he wanted the master right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and
 feet,
 His little feet that never grew—
 He struck them out, as it was meet,
 Against my heart to break it through.
 I might have sung and made him mild—
 But I dared not sing to the white-faced
 child
 The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:
 He could not see the sun, I swear
 More, then, alive, than now he does
 From between the roots of the man-
 go . . . where?
 I know where. Close! a child and
 mother
 Do wrong to look at one another,
 When one is black and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance, had
 Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
 I saw a look that made me mad . . .
 The *master's* look, that used to fall
 On my soul like his lash . . . or worse!—
 And so, to save it from my curse,
 I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot
to head,

He shivered from head to foot ;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt beside a stiffening cold . .
I dared to lift up just a fold, . .
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . ha, ha !—there had been
(I laugh to think on't at this hour ! . .)
Your fine white angels, who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power, . .
And plucked my fruit to make them
wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of
mine,
As the humming-bird sucks the soul
of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,
I carried the body to and fro ;
And it lay on my heart like a stone . .
as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he
will :
I am cold, though it happened a
month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the
black man's hut,
I carried the little body on.
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run :
They asked no question as I went,—
They stood too high for astonishment,—
They could see God sit on his throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest . . on :
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon.
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white shape finger from every
star,
Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, . .
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby,
strewed, . .
All changed to black earth, . . nothing
white, . .
A dark child in the dark,—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew
young :
I sate down smiling there and sung
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
The white child and black mother,
thus :
For, as I sang it soft and wild
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate !
It was the dead child singing that,
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky !
Where the pilgrims' ships first an-
chored lay,
The free sun rideth gloriously ;
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.
My face is black, but it glares with a
scorn
Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah !—in their 'stead, their hunter sons !
Ah, ah ! they are on me—they hunt
in a ring—
Keep off ! I brave you all at once—
I throw off your eyes like snakes that
sting !
You have killed the black eagle at nest,
I think :
Did you never stand still in your tri-
umph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded
wing ?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to
lift !—)
I wish you who stand there five
abreast,

Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
 A little corpse as safely at rest
 As mine in the mangoes!—Yes, but *she*
 May keep live babies on her knee,
 And sing the song she liketh best.

XXXII.

I am not mad : I am black.
 I see you staring in my face—
 I know you staring, shrinking back—
 Ye are born of the Washington-race :
 And this land is the free America :
 And this mark on my wrist . . (I prove
 what I say)
 Ropes tied me up here to the flog-
 ging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a
 sound!
 I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
 I only cursed them all around,
 As softly as I might have done
 My very own child!—From these sands
 Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
 O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses ; those must answer those !
 For in this UNION, you have set
 Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
 Each loathing each : and all forget
 The seven wounds in Christ's body fair ;
 While He sees gaping everywhere
 Our countless wounds that pay no
 debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white
 men
 Are, after all, not gods indeed,
 Nor able to make Christs again
 Do good with bleeding. *We* who
 bleed
 (Stand off!) *we* help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
 And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky :
 The clouds are breaking on my brain ;
 I am floated along as if I should die

Of liberty's exquisite pain—
 In the name of the white child waiting
 for me
 In the death-dark where we may kiss
 and agree,
 White men, I leave you all curse-free
 In my broken heart's disdain !

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN JULY, 1848. DIED NOVEMBER, 1849.

I.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth, . .
 What country should we give her ?
 Instead of any on the earth,
 The civic Heavens receive her.

II.

And here, among the English tombs,
 In Tuscan ground we lay her,
 While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
 Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child!—how long she lived,
 By months, not years, is reckoned :
 Born in one July, she survived
 Alone to see a second.

IV.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
 Her little face still played in,
 And splendours, with her birth begun,
 Had had no time for fading.

V.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
 No wonder we should call her :
 She looked such kinship to the flowers,
 Was but a little taller.

VI.

A Tuscan Lily, only white . .
 As Dante, in abhorrence
 Of red corruption, wished aright
 The lilies of his Florence.

VII.

We could not wish her whiter, . . . Her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house!—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom!

VIII.

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming:
She sate upon her parents' laps,
And mimicked the gnat's humming;

IX.

. . . Said 'Father,' 'Mother!'—then left
off;
For tongues celestial, fitter.
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

X.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them:
'Let little children come to me,
And do not thou forbid them.'

XI.

So, unforbidding we have met,
And gently here have laid her;
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread
her.

XII.

We should bring pansies quick with
spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave
exacts . . .
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
With calm renunciations.

XIV.

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, 'The angels have thee, sweet,
Because we are not worthy.'

XV.

But winter kills the orange-buds,
The gardens in the frost are;
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her!

XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart!—too weak, too
weak,
To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we
speak,
When God speaks of resigning!

XVII.

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel thy Heaven too distant!

XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
Has ruffled all our vesture:
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture;

XIX.

To us, us also—open straight!
The outer life is chilly—
Are *we* too, like the earth to wait
Till next year for our Lily?

XX.

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close, with stronger pressure!

XXI.

Too well my own heart understands . . .
At every word beats fuller . . .
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour!

XXII.

—But God gives patience, Love learns
strength,
And Faith remembers promise;
And hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer
 Death,
 Though struggle, made more glorious :
 This mother stills her sobbing breath,
 Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,
 With spirit unbereaven—
 ' God will not all take back His gifts :
 My Lily's mine in Heaven !

XXV.

Still mine, maternal rights serene
 Not given to another !
 The crystal bars shine faint between
 The souls of child and mother.

XXVI.

' Meanwhile,' the mother cries, ' content !
 Our love was well divided ;
 Its sweetness following where she went,
 Its anguish stayed where I did.

XXVII.

' Well done of God, to halve the lot,
 And give her all the sweetness !
 To us the empty room and cot,—
 To her, the Heaven's completeness :

XXVIII.

To us, this grave—to her, the rows
 The mystic palm trees spring in :

To us, the silence in the house,—
 To her, the choral singing !

XXIX.

' For her to gladden in God's view,—
 For us to hope and bear on !
 Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
 Beside the Rose of Sharon.

XXX.

' Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily
 clipped,
 In love more calm than this is,—
 And may the angels dewy-lipped
 Remind thee of our kisses !

XXXI.

' While none shall tell thee of our tears,
 These human tears now falling ;
 Till, after a few patient years,
 One home shall take us all in :

XXXII.

' Child, father, mother—who, left out ?
 Not mother, and not father !—
 And when, their dying couch about,
 The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII.

' Some smiling angel close shall stand
 In old Correggio's fashion,
 And bear a LILY in his hand,
 For death's ANNUNCIATION.'

TRANSLATIONS.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had
 sung
 Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-
 for years,
 Who each one in a gracious hand
 appears
 To bear a gift for mortals, old or young :
 And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
 I saw in gradual vision through my
 tears,
 The sweet, sad years, the melancholy
 years,
 Those of my own life, who by turns had
 flung
 A shadow across me. Straightway I
 was 'ware,
 So weeping, how a mystic Shape did
 move
 Behind me, and drew me backward by
 the hair ;
 And a voice said in mastery while I
 strove, . . .
 ' Guess now who holds thee ?—' Death !'
 I said. But there,
 The silver answer rang . . . ' Not Death,
 but Love.'

II.

BUT only three in all God's universe
 Have heard this word thou hast said :
 Himself, beside
 Thee speaking and me listening I and
 replied
 One of us . . . *that* was God ! . . . and laid
 the curse
 So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce
 My sight from seeing thee,—that if I
 had died,
 The deathweights placed there, would
 have signified
 Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay is
 worse
 From God than from all others, O my
 friend !

Men could not part us with their worldly
 jars,
 Nor the seas change us, nor the tem-
 pests bend :
 Our hands would touch for all the
 mountain-bars :—
 And, heaven being rolled between us
 at the end,
 We should but vow the faster for the
 stars.

III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely
 Heart !
 Unlike our uses and our destinies.
 Our ministering two angels look sur-
 prise
 On one another, as they strike athwart
 Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink
 thee, art
 A guest for queens to social pageantries,
 With gazes from a hundred brighter
 eyes
 Than tears even can make mine, to ply
 thy part
 Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to
 do
 With looking from the lattice-lights at
 me,
 A poor, tired, wandering singer ? . . .
 singing through
 The dark, and leaning up a cypress
 tree ?
 The chrisim is on thine head,—on mine,
 the dew,—
 And death must dig the level where
 these agree.

IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some palace
 floor,
 Most gracious singer of high poems |
 where
 The dancers will break footing from the
 care

Of watching up thy pregnant lips for
more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too
poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think
and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush! call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps. . as thou must sing. . alone
aloof.

v.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in
me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly
burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy
foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness
utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if in-
stead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to
blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on
thine head,
O My beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch
and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off
then! Go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall
stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Never-
more
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before.
Without the sense of that which I for-
bore, . . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest
land

Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart
in mine
With pulses that beat double. (What I
do
And what I dream include thee, as the
wine
Must taste of its own grapes.) And when
I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of
thine,
And sees within my eyes, the tears of
two.

VII.

THE face of all the world is changed, I
think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy
soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me; as they
stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I who thought
to sink
Was caught up into love and taught the
whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of
dole
God gave for baptism, I ~~to~~ vain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, sweet, with
thee anear.
The name of country, heaven, are
changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or
here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved
yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only
dear,
Because thy name moves right in what
they say.

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, . . . who has brought
the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained,
untold,
And laid them on the outside of the
wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most mani-
fold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?

Not so. Not cold!—but very poor instead!
 Ask God who knows! for frequent tears have run
 The colours from my life, and left so dead
 And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
 To give the same as pillow to thy head.
 Go farther! Let it serve to trample on.

IX.

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
 As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
 Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
 For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
 So to be lovers; and I own and grieve
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love . . . which were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X.

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax! An equal light
 Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed.
 And love is fire: and when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee! . . .
 in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures

Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI.

AND therefore if to love can be desert,
 I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
 As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
 To bear the burden of a heavy heart,
 This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
 To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
 To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
 A melancholy music! . . . why advert
 To these things? O Beloved, it is plain
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy place:
 And yet because I love thee, I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating grace,
 To live on still in love and yet in vaim, . . .
 To bless thee yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII.

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
 And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
 Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
 To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost, . . .
 This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
 I should not love withal, unless that thou
 Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
 When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
 And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
 Of love even, as a good thing of my own.
 Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
 And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—

And that I love, (O soul, we must be
meek !)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into
speech
The love I bear thee, finding words
enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds
are rough,
Between our faces to cast light on
each ?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself . . . me . . . that I should
bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy be-
lief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however
wooed,
And rend the garment of my life in
brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its
grief.

XIV.

IF thou must love me, let it be for
nought
Except for love's sake only. / Do not
say
'I love her for her smile . . . her look . . .
her way
Of speaking gently, . . . for a trick of
thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes
brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a
day'—
For these things in themselves, Beloved,
may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and
love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love
me for
'Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks
dry ;
A creature might forget to weep, who
hore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love
thereby.

But love me for love's sake, that ever-
more
Thou may'st love on through love's eter-
nity.

XV.

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that I
wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of
thine ;
For we two look two ways, and cannot
shine
With the same sunlight on our brow
and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubting
care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
For sorrow hath shut me safe in love's
divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer-
air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee . . . on
thee . . .
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory . . .
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a
king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and
fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart
shall grow
Too close against thine heart, henceforth
to know
How it shook when alone. Why, con-
quering
May prove as lordly and complete a
thing
In lifting upward as in crushing low :
And as a vanquished soldier yields his
sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody
earth,—
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me
forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my
worth.

XVII.

MY poet, thou canst touch on all the
 notes
 God set between His After and Before,
 And strike up and strike off the general
 roar
 Of the rushing worlds, a melody that
 floats
 In a serene air purely. Antidotes
 Of medicated music, answering for
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst
 pour
 From thence into their ears. God's will
 devotes
 Thine to such ends and mine to wait on
 thine!
 How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for
 most use?
 A hope, to sing by gladly? . . . or a fine
 Sad memory, with thy songs to inter-
 fuse?
 A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm
 or pine?
 A grave, on which to rest from singing?
 . . . Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
 To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
 Which now upon my fingers thought-
 fully
 I ring out to the full brown length and
 say
 'Take it.' My day of youth went yes-
 terday;
 My hair no longer bounds to my foot's
 glee,
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
 As girls do, any more. It only may
 Now shade on two pale cheeks, the
 mark of tears,
 Taught drooping from the head that
 hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the
 funeral shears
 Would take this first; but Love is
 justified:
 Take it thou, . . . finding pure, from all
 those years,
 The kiss my mother left here when she
 died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart;
 And from my poet's forehead to my
 heart,
 Receive this lock which outweighs ar-
 gosies,—
 As purple black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
 The dim purpleal tresses gloomed
 athwart
 The nine white Muse-brows. For this
 counterpart,
 The bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I
 surmise,
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
 Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing
 breath,
 I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
 And lay the gift where nothing hin-
 dereth,
 Here on my heart as on thy brow, to
 lack
 No natural heat till mine grows cold in
 death.

XX.

BELOVED, my Beloved, when I think
 That thou wast in the world a year ago,
 What time I sate alone here in the snow
 And saw no footprint, heard the silence
 sink
 No moment at thy voice, . . . but link by
 link
 Went counting all my chains as if that so
 They never could fall off at any blow
 Struck by thy possible hand . . . why,
 thus I drink
 Of life's great cup of wonder. Won-
 derful,
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever
 cull
 Some prescience of thee with the blos-
 soms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as
 dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of
 sight.

XXI.

SAY over again and yet once over again
 That thou dost love me. Though the
 word repeated

Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou
 dost treat it,
 Remember never to the hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-
 strain,
 Comes the fresh Spring in all her green
 completed!
 Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's
 pain
 Cry .. speak once more .. thou lovest!
 Who can fear
 Too many stars, though each in heaven
 shall roll—
 Too many flowers, though each shall
 crown the year?
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love me
 —toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding,
 Dear,
 To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

XXII.

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and
 strong,
 Face to face, drawing nigh and nigher,
 Until the lengthening wings break into
 fire
 At either curvèd point,—What bitter
 wrong
 Can the earth do to us, that we should
 not long
 Be here contented? Think. In mount-
 ing higher,
 The angels would press on us, and aspire
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
 Rather on earth, Beloved,—where the
 unfit
 Contrarious moods of men recoil away
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit
 A place to stand and love in for a day,
 With darkness and the death-hour
 rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
 Would'st thou miss any life in losing
 mine,
 And would the sun for thee more coldly
 shine,
 Because of grave-damps falling round
 my head?

I marvelled, my Beloved, when I read
 Thy thought so in the letter. I am
 thine—
 But .. so much to thee? Can I pour
 thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then my
 soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower
 range!
 Then, love me, Love! look on me ..
 breathe on me!
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
 For love, to give up acres and degree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and
 exchange
 My near sweet view of Heaven, for
 earth with thee!

XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness like a clasping
 knife
 Shut in upon itself and do no harm
 In this close hand of Love, now soft and
 warm;
 And let us hear no sound of human strife
 After the click of the shutting. Life to
 life—
 I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
 And feel as safe as guarded by a charm,
 Against the stab of worldlings who if rife
 Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
 The lilies of our lives may reassure
 Their blossoms from their roots! acces-
 sible
 Alone to heavenly dews that drop not
 fewer;
 Growing straight, out of man's reach, on
 the hill.
 God only, who made us rich, can make
 us poor.

XXV.

A HEAVY heart, Beloved, have I borne
 From year to year until I saw thy face,
 And sorrow after sorrow took the place
 Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
 As the stringed pearls .. each lifted in
 its turn
 By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes
 apace
 Were changed to long despairs, .. till
 God's own grace
 Could scarcely lift above the world
 forlorn

My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid
me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it medi-
ating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccom-
plished fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor
thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to
me.
But soon their trailing purple was not
free
Of this world's dust,—their lutes did
silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind be-
low
Their vanishing eyes. Then *THOU* didst
come . . . to *be*,
Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their
shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours . . . (better,
yet the same,
As water-river hallowed into fountains . . .)
Met in thee, and from out thee over-
came
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best
dreams to shame.

XXVII.

My own Beloved, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was
thrown,
And in betwixt the languid ringlets,
blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my
own,
Who camest to me when the world was
gone,
And I who only looked for God, found
thee!
I find thee: I am safe, and strong, and
glad,
As one who stands in dewless asphodel

Looks backward on the tedious time he
had
In the upper life . . . so I, with bosom-
swell,
Make witness here between the good
and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves
as well.

XXVIII.

My letters all dead paper, . . . mute and
white!—
And yet they seem alive and quiver-
ing
Against my tremulous hands which
loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-
night.
This said, . . . He wished to have me in
his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in
spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a sim-
ple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's
light . . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee*: and I sank and
quailed
As if God's future thundered on my
past:
This said *I am thine*—and so its ink has
paled
With lying at my heart that beat too
fast:
And this . . . O Love, thy words have
ill availed,
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX.

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine
and bud
About thee, as wild vines about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's
nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides
the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of
thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather in-
stantly
Renew thy presence! As a strong tree
should

Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all
bare,
And let these bands of greenery which
insphere thee,
Drop heavily down, . . . burst, shattered,
everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear
thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new
air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near
thee.

XXX.

I SEE thy image through my tears to-
night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling.
How
Refer the cause?—Beloved, is it thou
Or I? Who makes me sad? The
acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,
May so fall flat with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice
and vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou'rt out
of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's
amen!
Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted
when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal
For my soul's eyes? Will that light
come again,
As now these tears come . . . falling hot
and real?

XXXI.

THOU comest! all is said without a
word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble
through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy, Behold, I
erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion . . . that
we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near
and close,

Thou dovelike help! and, when my
fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose!
Brood down with thy divine sufficien-
cies
These thoughts which tremble when
bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on thine
oath
To love me, I looked forward to the
moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed
too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting
troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may
quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not
one
For such man's love!—more like an out-
of tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be
wroth
To spoil his song with, and which,
snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding
note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on thee. For perfect strains
may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments
defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do
and doat.

XXXIII.

YES, call me by my pet-name! let me
hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cow-
slips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved
me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the
clear
Fond voices, which, being drawn and
reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God . . . call God!—So let
thy mouth

Be heir to those who are now exani-
mate :
Gather the north flowers to complete
the south,
And catch the early love up in the late !
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in
truth,
With the same heart, will answer and
not wait.

XXXIV.

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer
thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by
my name—
Lo, the vain promise ! Is the same, the
same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy ?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers, or brake off from
a game,
To run and answer with the smile that
came
At play last moment, and went on with
me
Through my obedience. When I answer
now,
I drop a grave thought ;—break from
solitude :—
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . pon-
der how . . .
Not as to a single good but all my good !
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as
this blood.

XXXV.

IF I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And *be* all to me ? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing, and the com-
mon kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it
strange.
When I look up to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors . . . another home
than this ?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me
which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know
change ?
That's hardest ! If to conquer love, has
tried,
To conquer grief tries more . . . as all
things prove,

For grief indeed is love and grief be-
side.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to
love—
Yet love me—wilt thou ? Open thine
heart wide,
And fold within, the wet wings of thy
dove.

XXXVI.

WHEN we first met and loved, I did not
build
Upon the event with marble. Could it
mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow ? Nay, I rather
thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to
gild
The onward path, and feared to over-
lean
A finger even. And though I have
grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God
has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O
troth . . .
Lest these enclasped hands should never
hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us
both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being
cold,
And Love be false ! if *he*, to keep one
oath,
Must lose one joy by his life's star fore-
told.

XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should
make
Of all that strong divineness which I
know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and
break.
It is that distant years which did not
take
Thy sovereignty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to un-
dergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to
forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distort

Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit.

As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills
a-snort,
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only
kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I
write,
And ever since it grew more clean and
white, . . .
Slow to world-greetings . . quick with
its 'Oh, list,'
When the angels speak, A ring of
amethyst
I could not wear here plainer to my
sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed
in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and
half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond
meed!
That was the chrisin of love with love's
own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did pre-
cede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state! since when,
indeed,
I have been proud and said, 'My Love,
my own.'

XXXIX.

BECAUSE thou hast the power and own'st
the grace
To look through and behind this mask
of me,
(Against which years have beat thus
blanchingly
With their rains!) and beheld my soul's
true face,
The dim and dreary witness of life's
race:—
Because thou hast the faith and love to
see,
Through that same soul's distracting
lethargy,

The patient angel waiting for his place
In the new Heavens: because nor sin
nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neigh-
borhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to
go, . . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all,
self-viewed, . . .
Nothing repels thee, . . Dearest, teach
me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost,
good!

XL.

OH, yes! they love through all this
world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love for-
sooth.
I have heard love talked in my early
youth,
And since, not so long back but that the
flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussul-
mans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no
ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white
tooth
Slips on the nut, if after frequent show-
ers
The shell is oversmooth; and not so
much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to
hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not
such
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring
souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry 'Too
late.'

XLI.

I THANK all who have loved me in their
hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep
thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to the
mart's
Or temple's occupations, beyond all.

But thou, who in my voice's sink and fall,
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy
 foot,
 To hearken what I said between my
 tears, . . .
 Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to
 shoot
 My soul's full meaning into future years,
 That *they* should lend it utterance, and
 salute
 Love that endures! with Life that dis-
 appears!

XLII.

How do I love thee? Let me count
 the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth
 and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of
 sight
 For the ends of Being and Ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of everyday's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for
 Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from
 Praise;
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my child-
 hood's faith;
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints,—I love thee with
 the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if
 God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

XLII.

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many
 flowers
 Plucked in the garden, all the summer
 through
 And winter, and it seemed as if they
 grew
 In this close room, nor missed the sun
 and showers.
 So, in the like name of that love of ours,
 Take back these thoughts which here
 unfolded too,

And which on warm and cold days I
 withdrew
 From my heart's ground. Indeed, those
 beds and bowers
 Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
 And wait thy weeding: yet here's
 eglantine,
 Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
 Thy flowers, and keep them where they
 shall not pine;
 Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours
 true,
 And tell thy soul, their roots are left in
 mine.

XLIV.

My future will not copy fair my past.
 I wrote that once; and thinking at my
 side
 My ministering life-angel justified
 The word by his appealing look upcast
 To the white throne of God, I turned at
 last.
 And there, instead, saw *thee*; not un-
 allied
 To angels in thy soul! Then I, long
 tried
 By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
 While budding at thy sight, my pilgrim's
 staff
 Gave out green leaves with morning
 dews imperaled.
 —I seek no copy now of life's first half!
 Leave here the pages with long musing
 curled,
 And write me new my future's epigraph,
 New angel mine, unhopd for in the
 world!

PARAPHRASES ON HEINE.

ROME, 1860.

I.

I.

OUT of my own great woe
 I make my little songs,
 Which rustle their feathers in throngs,
 And beat on her heart even so.

II

They found their way, for their part,
Ye come again and complain,
Complain, and are not fain
To say what they saw in her heart.

II.

I.

ART thou indeed so adverse ?
Art thou so changed indeed ?
Against the woman who wrongs me
I cry to the world in my need.

II.

O recreant lips unthankful,
How could ye speak evil, say,
Of the man who so well has kissed you
On many a fortunate day ?

III.

I.

My child, we were two children,
Small, merry by childhood's law ;
We used to crawl to the hen-house,
And hide ourselves in the straw.

II.

We crowed like cocks, and whenever
The passers near us drew—
Cock-a-doodle ! they thought
'Twas a real cock that crew.

III.

The boxes about our courtyard
We carpeted to our mind,
And lived there both together—
Kept house in a noble kind.

IV.

The neighbor's old cat often
Came to pay us a visit ;

We made her a bow and curtsy,
Each with a compliment in it,

V.

After her health we asked,
Our care and regard to evince—
(We have made the very same speeches
To many an old cat since).

VI.

We also sate and wisely
Discoursed, as old folks do,
Complaining how all went better
In those good times we knew,—

VII.

How love and truth and believing
Had left the world to itself,
And how so dear was the coffee,
And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII.

The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the good
times,
The belief, and the love, and the truth.

IV.

I.

THOU lovest me not, thou lovest me not !
'Tis scarcely worth a sigh :
Let me look in thy face, and no king in
his place
Is a gladder man than I.

II.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me
well—
Thy little red mouth has told :
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V.

I.

MY own sweet Love, if thou in the
grave,

The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side, and
crave

Love-room for thee and me.

II.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white!

I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the right.

III.

The Dead stand up, the midnight calls
They dance in airy swarms—

We two keep still where the grave-
shade falls,

And I lie on in thine arms.

IV.

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-day
Bids such to weal or woe—

But nought shall trouble us where we
stay

Embraced and embracing below.

VI.

I.

THE years they come and go,
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which in my heart I have.

II.

Could I see thee but once, one day
And sink down so on my knee,

And die in thy sight while I say,
'Lady, I love but thee!'

THESE Translations were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered; but as two of the original series (the "Adonis:" of Bion, and "Song to the Rose," from Achilles Tatius) had already been included in these poems, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly appear. A single recent version is added.

PARAPHRASE ON THEOCRITUS.

THE CYCLOPS.

(Idyl XI.)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
The ancient Polyphemus, who in
youth

Loved Galatea, while the manhood grew
Adown his cheeks and darkened round
his mouth.

No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses;
Love made him mad: the whole
world was neglected,

The very sheep went backward to their
closes

From out the fair green pastures, self-
directed.

And singing Galatea, thus, he wore
The sunrise down along the weedy
shore,

And pined alone, and felt the cruel
wound

Beneath his heart, which Cypris's
arrow bore,

With a deep pang; but, so, the cure was
found;

And sitting on a lofty rock he cast
His eyes upon the sea, and sang at
last;—

'O whitest Galatea, can it be

That thou shouldst spurn me off who
love thee so?

More white than curds, my girl, thou
art to see,

More meek than lambs, more full of
leaping glee

Than kids, and brighter than the
early glow

On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like thee!

Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,

And with the fragrant sleep thou goest from me;

Thou fliest . . . fliest, as a frightened sheep
Flies the gray wolf!—yet Love did overcome me,

So long;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all

When down the hills (my mother fast beside thee)

I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall

Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to guide thee:

And since my eyes have seen thee, they can leave thee

No more, from that day's light! But thou . . . by Zeus,

Thou wilt not care for *that* to let it grieve thee!

I know thee, fair one, why thou springest loose

From my arm round thee. Why? I tell thee, Dear!

One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudging road

Straight through my ample front, from ear to ear,—

One eye rolls underneath; and yawning, broad

Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.

Yet . . . ho, ho!—*I*,—whatever I appear,—

Do feed a thousand oxen! When I have done,

I milk the cows, and drink the milk that's best!

I lack no cheese, while summer keeps the sun;

And after, in the cold, it's ready prest!

And then, I know to sing, as there is none

Of all the Cyclops can, . . . a song of thee.

Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,

And of myself who love thee . . . till the West

Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.
I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair does,

And all in fawn; and four tame whelps of bears.

Come to me, Sweet! thou shalt have all of those

In change for love! I will not halve the shares.

Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms extended

To the dry shore; and in my cave's recess,

Thou shalt be gladder for the noonlight ended,—

For here be laurels, spiral cypresses, Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves enfold

Most luscious grapes; and here is water cold,

The wooded Ætna pours down through the trees

From the white snows,—which gods were scarce too bold

To drink in turn with nectar. Who with these

Would choose the salt wave of the lukewarm seas?

Nay, look on me? If I am hairy and rough,

I have an oak's heart in me; there's a fire

In these gray ashes which burns hot enough;

And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge the pyre

No fuel . . . not my soul, nor this one eye,—

Most precious thing I have, because thereby

I see thee, Fairest! Out, alas! I wish My mother had borne me finned like a fish,

That I might plunge down in the ocean near thee,

And kiss thy glittering hand between the weeds,

If still thy face were turned; and I would bear thee

Each lily white, and poppy fair that bleeds

Its red heart down its leaves!—one gift, for hours

Of summer, . . . one, for winter; since, to cheer thee,

I could not bring at once all kinds of flowers.

Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn
to swim,
If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I
wis,—
That I may know how sweet a thing
it is
To live down with you in the Deep and
Dim !
Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,
And having come, forget again to go !
As I, who sing out here my heart's
emotion,
Could sit forever. Come up from
below !
Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk
my kine,—
Come, press my cheese, distrain my
whey and curd !
Ah, mother ! she alone . . . that mother
of mine . . .
Did wrong me sore ! I blame her !—
Not a word
Of kindly intercession did she address
Thine ear with for my sake ; and ne'er-
theless
She saw me wasting, wasting, day by
day !
Both head and feet were aching, I
will say,
All sick for grief, as I myself was sick !
O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou
sent
Thy soul on fluttering wings ? If thou
wert bent
On turning bowls, or pulling green and
thick
The sprouts to give thy lambkins,—thou
wouldst make thee
A wiser Cyclops than for what we
take thee.
Milk dry the present ! Why pursue too
quick
That future which is fugitive aright ?
Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,—
Or else a maiden fairer and more
kind ;
For many girls do call me through the
night,
And, as they call, do laugh out silver-
ly.
I, too, am something in the world, I
see !

While thus the Cyclops love and
lambs did fold,
Ease came with song, he could not buy
with gold.

 PARAPHRASES ON APULEIUS.

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

 (*Metamorph.*, Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,
put on
The cruelty of Fate, in place of
strength :
She raised the lamp to see what should
be done,
And seized the steel, and was a man
at length
In courage, though a woman ! Yes, but
when
The light fell on the bed whereby she
stood
To view the 'beast' that lay there,—
certes, then,
She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast
in wood—
Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god !
more beauteous
For that sweet sleep across his eyelids
dim !
The light, the lady carried as she
viewed,
Did blush for pleasure as it lighted
him,
The dagger trembled from its aim un-
duteous ;
And *she* . . . oh, *she*—amazed and soul
distraught,
And fainting in her whiteness like a
veil,
Slid down upon her knees, and, shud-
dering thought
To hide—though in her heart—the dag-
ger pale !
She would have done it, but her hands
did fail
To hold the guilty steel, they shiv-
ered so,—
And feeble, exhausted, unawares she
took

To gazing on the god,—till, look by
 look
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and
 glow.
 She saw his golden head alight with
 curls,—
 She might have guessed their bright-
 ness in the dark
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly
 mark !
 She saw the milky brow, more pure
 than pearls,
 The purple of the cheeks, divinely
 sundered
 By the globed ringlets, as they glided
 free,
 Some back, some forwards,—all so ra-
 diantly,
 That, as she watched them there, she
 never wondered
 To see the lamplight, where it touched
 them, tremble ;
 On the god's shoulders, too, she marked
 his wings
 Shine faintly at the edges and resem-
 ble
 A flower that's near to blow. The poet
 sings
 And lover sighs, that Love is fugi-
 tive ;
 And certes, though these pinions lay re-
 posing,
 The feathers on them seemed to stir
 and live
 As if by instinct closing and unclosing.
 Meantime the god's fair body slum-
 bered deep,
 All worthy of Venus, in his shining
 sleep ;
 While at the bed's foot lay the quiv-
 er, bow,
 And darts,—his arms of godhead.
 Psyche gazed
 With eyes that drank the wonders in,
 —said—' Lo,
 Be these my husband's arms?'—and
 straightway raised
 An arrow from the quiver-case, and
 tried
 Its point against her finger,—trembling
 till
 She pushed it in too deeply (foolish
 bride !)

And made her blood some dewdrops
 small distil,
 And learnt to love Love, of her own
 goodwill.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock for-
 saken,
 Alone, despairing, dreading,—grad-
 ually
 By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and tak-
 en
 Still trembling,—like the lilies planted
 high,—
 Through all her fair white limbs. Her
 vesture spread,
 Her very bosom eddying with sur-
 prise,—
 He drew her slowly from the mountain-
 head,
 And bore her down the valleys with
 wet eyes,
 And laid her in the lap of a green dell
 As soft with grass and flowers as any
 nest,
 With trees beside her, and a limpid
 well :
 Yet Love was not far off from all that
 Rest.

PYSCHÉ AND PAN.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honor,
 Because he used to warm the very
 wave,
 Did ripple aside, instead of closing on
 her,
 And cast up Psyche, with a reflucence
 brave,
 Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and
 sinning.
 Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was
 leaning
 Along the brow of the waters as they
 wound,
 Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank
 to the ground,

And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,

To run her voice in music after his
Down many a shifting note ; (the goats
around,

In wandering pasture and most leap-
ing bliss,
Drawn on to crop the river's flowery
hair.)

And as the hoary god beheld her there,
The poor, worn, fainting Psyche !—
knowing all

The grief she suffered, he did gently
call
Her name, and softly comfort her des-
pair :—

' O wise, fair lady, I am rough and
rude,
And yet experienced through my weary
age !

And if I read aright, as soothsayer
should,
Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrim-
age,

Thy paleness, deep as the snow we
cannot see
The roses through,—thy sighs of quick
returning,

Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two
souls in mourning,—
Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bitter-
ly !

But hear me : rush no more to a head-
long fall :

Seek no more deaths ! leave wail, lay
sorrow down,
And pray the sovran god ; and use
withal

Such prayer as best may suit a tender
youth,
Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from
mouth,

And feel them stir the myrtle of his
crown.'

—So spake the shepherd-god ; and
answer none

Gave Psyche in return : but silently
She did him homage with a bended
knee,

And took the onward path.—

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld
her,

While Psyche touched, with reverent
fingers meek,

The temple's scythes ; and with a cry
compelled her :

' O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to
seek

Thy wandering footsteps round the
weary earth,

Anxious and maddened, and adjures
thee forth

To accept the imputed pang, and let
her wreak

Full vengeance with full force of deity !
Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple
here,

Touching my scythes, assuming my
degree,

And daring to have thoughts that are
not fear !

—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as
they moved

Rained tears along their track, tear
dropped on tear,

And drew the dust on in her trailing
locks,

And still, with passionate prayer, the
charge disproved :—

' Now, by thy right hand's gathering
from the shocks

Of golden corn,—and by thy gladsome
rites

Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights
Shut safe and mute in chests,—and by
the course

Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driving
force

Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes pro-
found,—

By thy swift chariot,—by thy steadfast
ground,—

By all those nuptial torches that departed
With thy lost daughter,—and by those
that shone

Back with her, when she came again
glad-hearted,—

And by all other mysteries which are
done

In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee,

O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain
From giving to my soul extremest pain
Who am the wretched Psyche! Let
me teach thee

A little mercy, and have thy leave to
spond

A few days only in thy garnered corn,
Until that wrathful goddess, at the
end,
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer
bourne,—

Or till, alas!—this faintness at my breast
Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend
From life-long woe a breath-time hour
of rest!

—But Ceres answered, 'I am moved
indeed

By prayers so moist with tears, and
would defend

The poor beseecher from more utter
need:

But where old oaths, anterior ties,
commend,

I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,
As Venus is to *me*. Depart with speed!

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious bird, the
regal

High percher on the lightning, the great
eagle

Drove down with rushing wings; and,
—thinking how,

By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow
A cup-boy for his master,—he inclined
'To yield, in just return, an influence
kind;

The god being honored in his lady's woe.
And thus the bird wheeled downward
from the track,

Gods follow gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack
—'Now fie, thou simple girl!' the Bird
began;

'For if thou think to steal and carry back
A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,
No simpler thought, methinks, were
found in man.

What! knowest thou not these Stygian
waters be

Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on
earth,

Men swear by gods, and by the thun-
der's worth,

Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth
Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?

And yet, one little urnful, I agree
To grant thy need! Whereat, all
hastily,

He takes it, fills it from the willing wave,
And bears it in his beak, incarnadined

By the last Titan-prey he screamed to
have;

And, striking calmly out, against the
wind,

Vast wings on each side,—there, where
Psyche stands,

He drops the urn down in her lifted
hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY Dog with three colossal necks,
And heads in grand proportion; vast
as fear,

With jaws that bark the thunder out
that breaks

In most innocuous dread for ghosts
anear,

Who are safe in death from sorrow: he
reclines

Across the threshold of queen Proser-
pine's

Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for
Pluto's spouse,

Doth guard the entrance of the empty
house.

When Psyche threw the cake to him,
once amain

He howled up wildly from his hunger-
pain,

And was still, after.—

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine
In the dark house, and straightway did
decline

With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome stran-
gers spread,

But sate down lowly at the dark queen's
 feet,
 And told her tale, and brake her oaten
 bread.
 And when she had given the pyx in
 humble duty,
 And told how Venus did entreat the
 queen
 To fill it up with only one day's beauty
 She used in Hades, star-bright and
 serene,
 To beautify the Cyprian, who had been
 All spoilt with grief in nursing her
 sick boy,—
 Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
 Smiled in the shade, and took the pyx,
 and put
 A secret in it; and so, filled and shut,
 Gave it again to Pysche. Could she
 tell
 It held no beauty, but a dream of hell?

PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(Metamorph., Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what was
 sent
 By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that she
 went
 So low to seek it, down the dark descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO OLYMPUS.

(Metamorph., Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god Mer-
 cury
 To float up Psyche from the earth. And
 she
 Sprang at the first word, as the fountain
 springs,
 And shot up bright and rustling through
 his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID.

(Metamorph., Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right-hand approached the
 ambrosial bowl
 To Pysche's lips, that scarce dared
 yet to smile,—
 'Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint
 thy soul

With deathless uses, and be glad the
 while!
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely
 side;
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never-
 ending.'
 While yet he spake,—the nuptial feast
 supplied,—
 The bridegroom on the festive couch
 was bending
 O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the
 same
 On Juno, and the other deities,
 Alike ranged round. The rural cup-boy
 came
 And poured Jove's nectar out with
 shining eyes,
 While Bacchus, for the others, did as
 much,
 And Vulcan spread the meal; and all
 the Hours,
 Made all things purple with a sprinkle
 of flowers,
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch
 Of their sweet fingers; and the
 Graces glided
 Their balm around, and the Muses,
 through the air
 Struck out clear voices, which were
 still divided
 By that divinest *scilicet* Apollo there
 Intoned to his lute; while Aphrodite
 fair
 Did float her beauty along the tune, and
 play
 The notes right with her feet. And
 thus, the day
 Through every perfect mood of joy was
 carried,
 The Muses sang their chorus; Satyrus
 Did blow his pipes; Pan touched his
 reed;—and thus
 At last were Cupid and Psyche married.

PARAPHRASES ON NONNUS.

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE SLEEPING.

(Dionysiaca, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the deso-
 late
 And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight

Was mixed with love in his great golden eyes ;
 He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise,
 And said with guarded voice,—‘ Hush !
 strike no more
 Your brazen cymbals ; keep those voices
 still
 Of voice and pipe ; and since ye stand
 before
 Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she
 will !
 And yet the cestus is not here in proof.
 A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen
 aloof ;
 In which case, as morning shines in
 view,
 Wake this Aglaia !—yet in Naxos, who
 Would veil a Grace so ? Hush ! And
 if that she
 Were Hebe, which of all the gods can
 be
 The pourer-out of wine ? or if we think
 She’s like the shining moon by ocean’s
 brink,
 The guide of herds,—why, could she
 sleep without
 Endymion’s breath on her cheek ? or if
 I doubt
 Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
 These shores,—even *she* (in reverence
 be it said)
 Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep
 With the blue waves. The Loxian
 goddess might
 Repose so from her hunting-toil aright
 Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to
 sleep,
 But who would find her with her tunic
 loose,
 Thus ? Stand off, Thracian ! stand off !
 Do not leap,
 Not this way ! Leave that piping, since
 I choose,
 O dearest Pan, and let Athene rest !
 And yet if she be Pallas .. truly
 guessed. .
 Her lance is—where ? her helm and ægis
 —where ?
 —As Bacchus closed, the miserable
 Fair
 Awoke at last, sprang upward from the
 sands,
 And gazing wild on that wild throng
 that stands

Around, around her, and no Theseus
 there !—
 Her voice went moaning over shore and
 sea,
 Beside the halcyon’s cry ; she called
 her love ;
 She named her hero, and raged mad-
 deningly
 Against the brine of waters ; and
 above,
 Sought the ship’s track and cursed the
 hours she slept ;
 And still the chiefest execration swept
 Against queen Paphia, mother of the
 ocean ;
 And cursed and prayed by times in her
 emotion
 The winds all round.

 Her grief did make her glorious ; her
 despair
 Adorned her with its weight. Poor
 wailing child !
 She looked like Venus when the goddess
 smiled
 At liberty of godship, debonair ;
 Poor Ariadne ! and her eyelids fair
 Hid looks beneath them lent her by
 Persuasion
 And every Grace, with tears of Love’s
 own passion.
 She wept long ; then she spake :—
 ‘ Sweet sleep did come
 While sweetest Theseus went. O, glad
 and dumb,
 I wish he had left me still ! for in my
 sleep
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
 My new bride-state within my ‘ Theseus’
 hall ;
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and
 the call
 Of ‘ Ariadne, Ariadne,’ sung
 In choral joy ; and there, with joy I
 hung
 Spring-blossoms round love’s altar !—ay,
 and wore
 A wreath myself ; and felt *him* ever-
 more,
 Oh, evermore beside me, with his
 mighty
 Grave head bowed down in prayer to
 Aphrodite !

Why, what sweet, sweet dream! *He*
 went with it,
 And left me here unwedded where I
 sit!
 Persuasion help me! The dark night
 did make me
 A brideship, the fair morning takes
 away;
 My *Love* had left me when the Hour did
 wake me;
 And while I dreamed of marriage, as
 I say,
 And blest it well, my blessed *Theseus*
 left me;
 And thus the sleep, I loved so, has be-
 reft me.
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell my grief
 to-day,
 Who stole my love of Athens?' . . .

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.

(*Dionysiaca*, Lib. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow
 crossed:—
 'O maiden, dost thou mourn for having
 lost
 The false Athenian heart? and dost thou
 still
 Take thought of *Theseus*, when thou
 may'st at will
 Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus
 bright
 A god in place of mortal! Yes, and
 though
 The mortal youth be charming in thy
 sight,
 That man of Athens cannot strive be-
 low,
 In beauty and valor, with my deity!
 Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine
 dweller,
 The fierce man-bull, he slew: I pray
 thee, be,
 Fair *Ariadne*, the true deed's true
 teller,
 And mention thy clue's help! because,
 forsooth,
 Thine armed Athenian hero had not
 found
 A power to fight on that prodigious
 ground,
 Unless a lady in her rosy youth

Had lingered near him: not to speak
 the truth
 Too definitely out till names be known—
 Like *Paphia's*—*Love's*—and *Ariadne's*
 own.
 Thou wilt not say that Athens can com-
 pare
 With *Æther*, nor that *Minos* rules like
Zeus,
 Nor yet that *Gnossus* has such golden
 air
 As high *Olympus*. Ha! for noble use
 We came to *Naxos*! *Love* has well in-
 tended
 To change thy bridegroom! Happy
 thou, defended
 From entering in thy *Theseus'* earthly
 hall,
 That thou mayst hear the laughers rise
 and fall
 Instead, where *Bacchus* rules! Or wilt
 thou choose
 A still-surpassing glory?—take it all,—
 A heavenly house, *Kronion's* self for
 kin,—
 A place where *Cassiopea* sits within
 Inferior light, for all her daughter's
 sake,
 Since *Perseus*, even amid the stars, must
 take
Andromeda in chains ætherial!
 But *I* will wreathe thee, sweet, an astral
 crown,
 And as my queen and spouse thou shalt
 be known—
 Mine, the crown-lover's! Thus, at
 length, he proved
 His comfort on her; and the maid was
 moved;
 And casting *Theseus'* memory down the
 brine,
 She straight received the troth of her
 divine
 Fair *Bacchus*; *Love* stood by to close
 the rite:
 The marriage-chorus struck up clear and
 light,
 Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber
 green,
 And with spring-garlands on their
 heads, I ween,
 The *Orchomenian* dancers came along,
 And danced their rounds in *Naxos* to
 the song.

A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
Right shrilly : and a Naiad sate beside
A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous
bride,
Whom thus the god of grapes had dei-
fied.

Ortygia sang out, louder than her wont,
An ode which Phœbus gave her to be
tried,

And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast
front,

While prophet Love, the stars have
called a brother,

Burnt in his crown, and twined in one
another,

His love-flower with the purple roses,
given

In type of that new crown assigned in
heaven.

PARAPHRASE ON HESIOD.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(*Theog.*, 947.)

THE golden-haired Bacchus did espouse
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,
And made her wifehood blossom in the
house ;

Where such protective gifts Kronion
brought her,

Nor Death nor Age could find her
when they sought her.

PARAPHRASE ON EURIPIDES.

ANTISTROPHE.

(*Troades*, 853.)

LOVE, Love who once didst pass the
Dardan portals,

Because of Heavenly passion !

Who once didst lift up Troy in exulta-
tion,

To mingle in thy bond the high Immor-
tals !—

Love, turned from his own name

To Zeus' shame,
Can help no more all.
And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded
morning,—

Her light which blesses other lands, re-
turning,

Has changed to a gloomy pall !
She looked across the land with eyes of
amber,—

She saw the city's fall,—
She, who, in pure embraces,
Had held there, in the hymeneal cham-
ber,

Her children's father, bright Tithonus
old,

Whom the four steeds with starry brows
and paces

Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of
gold,

And with him, all the land's full hope of
joy !

The love-charms of the gods are vain
for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges's reading,
in some respects—not quite all.

PARAPHRASES ON HOMER.

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(*Iliad*, Lib. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him : the nurse fol-
lowing

Bore on her bosom the unsaddened
child,

A simple babe, prince Hector's well-
loved son,

Like a star shining when the world is
dark.

Scamandrius, Hector called him, but the
rest

Named him Astyanax, the city's prince,
Because that Hector only, had saved
Troy.

He, when he saw his son, smiled silently ;
While, dropping tears, Andromache
pressed on,

And clung to his hand, and spake, and
named his name.

' Hector, my best one,—thine own noble-
ness

Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou
 none
 For this young child, and this most sad
 myself,
 Who soon shall be thy widow—since
 that soon
 The Greeks will slay thee in the general
 rush—
 And then, for me, what refuge, rest of
thee,
 But to go graveward? Then, no com-
 fort more
 Shall touch me, as in the old sad times
 thou know'st—
 Grief only—grief! I have no father
 now,
 No mother mild! Achilles the divine.
He slew my father, sacked his lofty
 Thebes,
 Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king,
 Eëtion—father, did not spoil the corse,
 Because the Greek revered him in his
 soul,
 But burnt the body with its dædal arms,
 And poured the dust out gently. Round
 that tomb
 The Orcads, daughters of the goat-
 nursed Zeus,
 Tripped in a ring, and planted their
 green elms.
 There were seven brothers with me in
 the house,
 Who all went down to Hades in one
 day,—
 For *he* slew all, Achilles the divine,
 Famed for his swift feet,—slain among
 their herds
 Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking
 sheep!
 My mother too, who queened it o'er the
 woods
 Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,
 Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed
 too late,—
 Since, as she went home, arrowy Arte-
 mis
 Met her and slew her at my father's
 door.
 But—oh, my Hector,—thou art still to
 me
 Father and mother!—yes, and brother
 dear,
 O thou, who art my sweetest spouse
 beside!

Come now, and take me into pity!
 Stay
 I' the town here with us! Do not make
 thy child
 An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor wife!
 Call up the people to the fig-tree, where
 The city is most accessible, the wall
 Most easy of assault!—for thrice there-
 by
 The boldest Greeks have mounted to
 the breach,—
 Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus
 Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one
 Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some
 wise seer,
 Or by their own souls prompted and
 inspired.'

Great Hector answered:—'Lady, for
 these things
 It is my part to care, And I fear most
 My Trojans, and their daughters, and
 their wives,
 Who through their long veils would
 glance scorn at me,
 If, coward-like, I shunned the open war.
 Nor doth my own soul prompt me to
 that end!
 I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
 And to fight foremost where my Trojans
 fight,
 And vindicate my father's glory and
 mine—
 Because I know, by instinct and my
 soul,
 The day comes that our sacred Troy
 must fall,
 And Priam and his people. Knowing
 which,
 I have no such grief for all my Trojan's
 sake,
 For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,
 Not for my brothers', who so many and
 brave
 Shall bite the dust before our enemies,—
 As, sweet, for *thee*!—to think some
 mailèd Greek
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive thy
 life
 Of the free sun-sight—that, when gone
 away
 To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff
 there
 Not for thy uses—or shalt carry instead

Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy a
doom,
The water of Greek wells—Messeis'
own,
Or Hyperæa's!—that some stander-by,
Marking thy tears fall, shall say, 'This
is she,
The wife of that same Hector who
fought best
Of all the Trojans, when all fought for
'Troy—'
Ay!—and, so speaking, shall renew thy
pang
That, reft of him so named, thou shouldst
survive
To a slave's life! But earth shall hide
my corse
Ere that shriek sound, wherewith thou
art dragged from 'Troy.'

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his
arms to his child.
Against the nurse's breast, with childly
cry,
The boy clung back, and shunned his
father's face,
And feared the glittering brass and
waving hair
Of the high helmet, nodding horror
down.
The father smiled, the mother could not
choose
But smile too. Then he lifted from his
brow
The helm, and set it on the ground to
shine:
Then, kisse! his dear child—raised him
with both arms,
And thus invoked Zeus and the general
gods:—

'Zeus, and all godships! grant this boy
of mine
To be the 'Trojans' help, as I myself,—
To live a brave life and rule well in
'Troy!
Till men shall say, 'The son exceeds
the sire
By a far glory.' Let him bring home
spoil
Heroic, and make glad his mother's
heart'
With which prayer, to his wife's ex-
tended arms

He gave the child; and she received
him straight
To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up
her tears.
Hector gazed on her till his soul was
moved;
Then softly touched her with his hand
and spake.
'My best one—'ware of passion and
excess
In any fear. There's no man in the
world
Can send me to the grave apart from
fate,—
And no man . . . Sweet, I tell thee . . .
can fly fate—
No good nor bad man. Doom is self-
fulfilled.
But now, go home, and ply thy woman's
task
Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens
haste
Their occupation. War's a care for
men—
For all men born in Troy, and chief for
me.'

Thus spake the noble Hector, and re-
sumed
His crested helmet, while his spouse
went home;
But as she went, still looked back
lovingly,
Dropping the tears from her reverted
face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(Odys., Lib. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
The whirlwinds took. The gods had
slain their kin:
They were left orphans in their father's
house.
And Aphrodite came to comfort them
With incense, luscious honey, and fra-
grant wine;
And Here gave them beauty of face and
soul
Beyond all women; purest Artemis
Endowed them with her stature and
white grace;
And Pallas taught their hands to flash
along

Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
 Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went
 To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
 And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
 How best to crown those other gifts with love
 And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
 The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
 And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
 To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall—
 The gods slew their parents; the orphans were left in the hall.
 And there came, to feed their young lives, Aphrodite divine,
 With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine;
 Here brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face;
 And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have grace:
 And Athens instructed their hands in her works of renown;
 Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphrodite moved on:
 To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
 She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of fate,
 Whether mortals have good chance or ill! But the Harpies alate
 In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them to wait,
 With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.

PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON.

ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

THOU indeed, little Swallow,
 A sweet yearly comer,
 Art building a hollow
 New nest every summer,

And straight dost depart
 Where no gazing can follow,
 Past Memphis, down Nile!
 Ay! but love all the while
 Builds his nest in my heart,
 Through the cold winter-weeks:
 And as one Love takes flight,
 Comes another, O Swallow,
 In an egg warm and white,
 And another is callow.
 And the large gaping beaks
 Chirp all day and all night:
 And the Loves who are older
 Help the young and the poor Loves,
 And the young Loves grown bolder
 Increase by the score Loves—
 Why, what can be done?
 If a noise comes from one,
 Can I bear all this rout of a hundred
 and more Loves?

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

IF Zeus chose us a King of the flowers
 in his mirth,
 He would call to the rose, and would
 royally crown it;
 For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace
 of the earth,
 Is the light of the plants that are
 growing upon it!
 For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye of
 the flowers,
 Is the blush of the meadows that feel
 themselves fair,—
 Is the lightning of beauty that strikes
 through the bowers
 On pale lovers that sit in the glow un-
 aware.
 Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the
 rose lifts the cup
 To the red lips of Cypris invoked for
 a guest!
 Ho, the rose having curled its sweet
 leaves for the world
 Takes delight in the motion its petals
 keep up,
 As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs
 from the west.

From Achilles Tatius.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

When ye stood up in the house
 With your little childish feet,
 And in touching Life's first shows,
 First the touch of Love did meet,—
 Love and Nearness seeming one,
 By the heart-light cast before,
 And, of all Beloveds, none
 Standing farther than the door—
 Not a name being dear to thought,
 With its owner beyond call,
 Nor a face, unless it brought
 Its own shadow to the wall,
 When the worst recorded change
 Was of apple dropt from bough,
 When love's sorrow seemed more
 strange

Than love's treason can seem now ;
 Then, the Loving took you up
 Soft, upon their elder knees,—
 Telling why the statues droop
 Underneath the churchyard trees,
 And how ye must lie beneath them
 Through the winters long and deep,
 Till the last trump overbreathe them,
 And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
 Oh ye lifted up your head, and it seemed
 as if they said

A tale of fairy ships
 With a swan-wing for a sail !—
 Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
 For the merry, merry tale !—
 So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
 Of the men of long ago—
 Of the pale bewildering glories
 Shining farther than we know.
 Of the heroes with the laurel,
 Of the poets with the bay,
 Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
 For that beauteous Helena.
 How Achilles at the portal
 Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh
 And his strong heart, half-immortal,
 Met the *keitai* with a cry,—
 How Ulysses left the sunlight
 For the pale eidola race
 Blank and passive through the dun
 light,
 Staring blindly on his face ;

How that true wife said to Pœtus,
 With calm smile and wounded
 heart,
 'Sweet, it hurts not !'—how Admetus
 Saw his blessed one depart.
 How King Arthur proved his mission,
 And Sir Rowland wound his horn,
 And at Sangreal's moonly vision
 Swords did bristle round like corn.
 Oh ! ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed the while ye read,
 That this death, then, must be found
 A Valhalla for the crowned—
 The heroic who prevail.
 None, be sure can enter in
 Far below a paladin
 Of a noble, noble tale !—
 So awfully ye thought upon the Dead.

Ay ! but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
 As a child that wakes at night
 From a dream of sisters speaking
 In a garden's summer-light,—
 That wakes, starting up and bounding,
 In a lonely, lonely bed,
 With a wall of darkness round him,
 Stifling black about his head !—
 And the full sense of your mortal
 Rushed upon you deep and loud,
 And ye heard the thunder hurtle
 From the silence of the cloud—
 Funeral-torches at your gateway
 Threw a dreadful light within ;
 All things changed ! you rose up
 straightway
 And saluted Death and Sin.
Since,—your outward man has rallied
 And your eye and voice grown
 bold—
 Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
 With her saddest secret told.
 Happy places have grown holy :
 If ye went where once ye went,
 Only tears would fall down slowly,
 As at solemn sacrament :
 Merry books, once read for pastime,
 If ye dared to read again,
 Only memories of the last time
 Would swim darkly up the brain.
 Household *names*, which used to
 flutter
 Through your laughter unawares,—

God's Divinest ye could utter
 With less trembling in your prayers !
 Ye have dropt adown your head, and it
 seems as if ye tread
 On your own hearts in the path
 Ye are called to in His wrath,—
 And your prayers go up in wail !
 —'Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
 O 'Thou agonized on cross ?
 Art Thou reading all its tale ?
 So, mournfully ye think upon the Dead

Pray, pray, *thou* who also weapest,
 And the drops will slacken so ;
 Weep, weep :—and the watch thou
 keepest,
 With a quicker count will go.
 Think :—the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone,
 Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun :
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres,—

Learn : the spirit's gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear's.
 Hope : with all the strength thou
 usest
 In embracing thy despair :
 Love : the earthly love thou locest
 Shall return to thee more fair.
 Work : make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land :
 Trust : the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, ' Sabbath hours at hand !'
 By the heart's wound when most gory
 By the longest agony,
 Smile !—Behold, in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee* !
 And ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed as if He said,
 ' My Beloved, is it so ?
 Have ye tasted of my wo ?
 Of my heaven ye shall not fail !'—
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there ends the mournful tale :—
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead.

A DRAMA OF EXILE.

SCENE—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance, flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, *alone.*

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna.
 My exiled, my host !
 Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
 Heaven's empire was lost.
 Through the seams of her shaken founda-
 tions,
 Smoke up in great joy !
 With the smoke of your fierce exulta-
 tions
 Deform and destroy !
 Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
 And darken the face
 Of the white heavens, and taunt them
 with changes

From glory and grace.
 We, in falling, while destiny strangles,
 Pull down with us all.
 Let them look to the rest of their angels !
 Who's safe from a fall ?
 HE saves not. Where's Adam ? Can
 pardon
 Requicken that sod ?
 Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
 The image of God.
 Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—
 More curse has been hurled.
 Come up, O my locusts, and feed in
 The green of the world.
 Come up ! we have conquered by evil.
 Good reigns, not alone
 I prevail now, and, angel or devil,
 Inherit a throne.

[*In sudden apparition a watch of in-
 numerable angels, rank above rank,
 slopes up from around the gate to*

the zenith. The angel GABRIEL descends.]

Lucifer. Hail Gabriel, the keeper of the gate!

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,
I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.

Gabriel. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear
light

Which rounds the rebel's work with
Maker's wrath,—

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls;
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages; whence to mark
despair

And measure out the distances from
good!

Go from us straightway.

Lucifer. Wherefore?

Gabriel. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place trod sorrow up.
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this
sword.

Lucifer. Angels are in the world—
wherefore not I?

Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?
The cursed are in the world—wherefore
not I?

Gabriel. Depart.

Lucifer. And where's the logic of
'depart'?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
To fix my postulate better. Dost thou
dream

Of guarding some monopoly in heaven
Instead of earth? Why I can dream
with thee

To the length of thy wings.

Gabriel. I do not dream.

This is not Heaven, even in a dream,
nor earth,

As earth was once,—first breathed
among the stars,

Articulate glory from the mouth divine,
To which the myriad spheres thrilled
audibly

Touched like a lute-string,—and the sons
of God

Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this

Is earth not new created but new
cursed—

This, Eden's gate not opened but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I
dream?

Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword
(This sword alive with justice and with
fire!)

That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel! Wherefore, angel, go . . .
depart—

Enough is sinned and suffered.

Lucifer. By no means.

Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on!
It holds fast still—it cracks not under
curse;

It holds like mine immortal. Presently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves as
green

Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-
tree—

We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
More eminent for shadow—for the rest
We'll build it dark with towns and pyr-
amids,

And temples, if it please you:—we'll
have feasts

And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run
along

Right o'er the edges. And, good Ga-
briel,

(Ye like that word in Heaven! *I* too
have strength—

Strength to behold Him and not wor-
ship Him;

Strength to fall from Him and not cry
on Him;

Strength to be in the universe and yet
Neither God nor his servant. The red
sign

Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt
me with,

Is God's sign that it bows not unto God;
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the
earth

Can bear more curse.

Gabriel. O miserable earth,

O ruined angel!

Lucifer. Well! and if it be,

I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it

Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitent, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back
to Heaven;

And leave me to the earth, which is
mine own

In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
In virtue of my revolt! turn those from
both

That bright, impassive, passive angel-
hood;

And spare to read us backward any more
Of the spent hallelujahs.

Gabriel. Spirit of scorn!
I might say, of unreason! I might say,
That who despairs, acts; that who acts,
connives

With God's relations set in time and
space;

That who elects, assumes a something
good

Which God made possible; that who
lives, obeys

The law of a Life-maker . . .

Lucifer. Let it pass!
No more, thou Gabriel! What if I
stand up

And strike my brow against the crys-
talline

Roofing the creatures,—shall I say for
that,

My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou*.

Gabriel. I kneel.

Lucifer. A heavenly answer. Get
thee to thy Heaven,
And leave my earth to me.

Gabriel. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely; and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love; His lightnings go
abroad,

His pity may do so; His angels must
Whene'er He gives them charges.

Lucifer. Verily,
I and my demons—who are spirits of
scorn—

Might hold this charge of standing with
a sword

'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benignest angel of you all.

Gabriel. Thou speakest in the shad-
dow of thy change.

If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst
known

That only pity can fitly chastise.

While hate avenges.

Lucifer. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in
Heaven,

And my sword grew too heavy for my
grasp,

Stabbing through matter which it could
not pierce

So much as the first shell of,—toward
the throne;

When I fell back, down,—staring up as
I fell,—

The lightnings holding open my scathed
lids,

And thought of the infinite of God
Hurled after to precipitate descent;

When countless angel faces still and
stern

Pressed out upon me from the level
heavens,

Adown the abysmal spaces; and I fell
Trampled down by your stillness, and
struck blind

By the sight within your eyes;—'twas
then I knew

How ye could pity, my kind angel-
hood!

Gabriel. Alas, discrowned one, by
the truth in me

Which God keeps in me, I would give
away

All,—save that truth and His love keep-
ing it,—

To lead thee home again into the light,
And hear thy voice chant with the morn-
ing stars;

When their rays tremble round them
with much song

Sung in more gladness!

Lucifer. Sing, my morning star!
Last beautiful—last heavenly—that I
loved!

If I could drench thy golden locks with
tears,

What were it to this angel?

Gabriel. What love is!
And now I have named God.

Lucifer. Yet Gabriel
By the lie in me which I keep myself
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it oth-
erwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender
thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—
which,
Thou and I have not solved the prob-
lem yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam
there,—

That red-clay and a breath! who must,
forsooth,

Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his
trees

And running in his rivers to make glad
His soul made perfect; is it not for hope,
A hope within thee deeper than thy
truth,

Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and
mine,

Which affront heaven with their vacu-
ity?

Gabriel. Angel, there are no vacant
thrones in Heaven

To suit thy empty words. Glory and
life

Fulfil their own depletions: and if God
Sighed you far from Him, His next
breath drew in

A compensative splendour up the vast,
Flushing the starry arteries!

Lucifer. With a change!
So let the vacant thrones and gardens
too

Fill as may please you!—and be piti-
ful,

As ye translate that word, to the de-
throned

And exiled, man or angel. The fact
stands,

That I, the rebel, the cast out and
down,

Am here, and will not go; while there,
along

The light to which ye flash the desert out
Flies your adopted Adam! your red
clay

In two kinds, both being flawed. Why,
what is this?

Whose work is this? Whose hand was
in the work?

Against whose hand? In this last strife,
methinks,

I am not a fallen angel!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?

Lucifer. Ay: I know they have fled
Silent all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear for burdens on their
backs,

The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cherubim
Shining against, not for them! and I
know

They dare not look in one another's face,
As if each were a cherub!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?

Lucifer. Only as much as this:
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gabriel. Nothing more?
Lucifer. Why so the angels taunt!

What should be more?

Gabriel. God is more.

Lucifer. Proving what?

Gabriel. That he is God,
And capable of saving. *Lucifer,*

I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere he created,—leave the earth to
God!

Lucifer. My foot is on the earth,
firm as my sin!

Gabriel. I charge thee by the mem-
ory of Heaven

Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to
God!

Lucifer. My sin is on the earth, to
reign thereon.

Gabriel. I charge thee by the choral
song we sang

When up against the white shore of our
feet,

The depths of the creation swelled and
broke,—

And the new worlds, the beaded foam
and flower

Of all that coil, roared outward into
space

On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to
God.

Lucifer. My woe is on the earth, to
curse thereby.

Gabriel. I charge thee by that
mournful morning star
Which trembles

Lucifer. Enough spoken. As the
pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of
snows

By a night's growth, so, growing to-
ward my ends,
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel !
Watch out thy service ; I achieve my
will.

And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend their
spacious brows

Upon the storm and strife seen every-
where.

To ruffle their smooth manhood and
break up

With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they
may discern

The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS,

(*Chanting from Paradise, while
Adam and Eve fly across the sword-
glare.*)

Harken, oh harken ! let your souls be-
hind you

Turn, gently moved !

Our voices feel along the Dread to find
you,

O lost, beloved !

Through the thick-shielded and strong-
marshalled angels,

They press and pierce :

Our requiems follow fast on our evan-
gels,—

Voice throbs in verse !

We are but orphaned spirits left in
Eden,

A time ago—

God gave us golden cups : and we were
bidden

To feed you so !

But now our right hand hath no cup
remaining,

No work to do ;

The mystic hydromel is spilt and
staining

The whole earth through :
Most ineradicable stains for showing
(Not interfused !)

That brighter colours were the world's
foregoing,

Than shall be used.

Harken, oh, oh harken ! ye shall harken
surely

For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping coldly,
purely,

Of spirits' tears !

The yearning to a beautiful denied you,
Shall strain your powers :

Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours !

In all your music our pathetic minor

Your ears shall cross ;

And all good gifts shall mind you of
diviner,

With sense of loss !

We shall be near you in your poet-lan-
guors

And wild extremes ;

What time ye vex the desert with vain
angers,

Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after roan-
ing,

Death's seal is put,

By the foregone ye shall discern the
coming,

Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,

Slow and solemn in your hearing !

Oak and linden, palm and fir,

Tamarisk and juniper,

Each still throbbing in vibration

Since that crowning of creation,

When the God breath spake abroad,

Let us make man like to God !

And the pine stood quivering

As the awful word went by ;

Like a vibrant music-string

Stretched from mountain-peak to sky !

And the platan did expand

Slow and gradual, branch and head

And the cedar's strong black shade

Fluttered brokenly and grand !

Grove and wood were swept aslant

In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
 In dim movements to the leaves
 Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
 In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
 In the sunlight and the moonlight
 Greenly sifted through the trees.
 Ever wave the Eden trees
 In the nightlight and the noonlight,
 With a ruffling of green branches
 Shaded off to resonances ;
 Never stirred by rain or breeze !
 Fare ye well, farewell !
 The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye
 heard before :
 Farewell ! the trees of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

River Spirits.

Hark ! the flow of the four rivers—
 Hark the flow !
 How the silence round you shivers,
 While our voices through it go,
 Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little while ye hear,
 Of the banks
 Where the willows and the deer
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,
 As if all would drink at once
 Where the living water runs !
 Of the fishes' golden edges
 Flashing in and out the sedges :
 Of the swans on silver thrones,
 Floating down the winding streams
 With impassive eyes turned shore-
 ward,
 And a chant of undertones,—
 And the lotos leaning forward
 To help them into dreams.
 Fare ye well, farewell !
 The river-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye
 heard before :
 Farewell ! the streams of Eden,
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
 That singeth in Eden after you ;
 And I am singing loud and true,
 And sweet,—I do not fail !
 I sit upon a cypress bough,
 Close to the gate ; and I fling my
 song
 Over the gate and through the mail
 Of the warden angels marshalled
 strong,—
 Over the gate and after you !
 And the warden angels let it pass,
 Because the poor brown bird, alas !
 Sings in the garden sweet and true.
 And I build my song of high pure
 notes.
 Note over note, height over height,
 Till I strike the arch of the Infinite ;
 And I bridge abysmal agonies
 With strong, clear calms of harmo-
 nies,—
 And something abides, and something
 floats,
 In the song which I sing after you :
 Fare ye well, farewell !
 The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some cadence which ye
 heard before :
 Farewell ! the birds of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
 The last of the throng !
 Like the tones of a singer
 Who loves his own song
 We are spirit-aromas
 Of blossom and bloom :
 We call your thoughts home as
 Ye breathe our perfume ;
 To the amaranth's splendor
 Afire on the slopes ;
 To the lily-bells tender,
 And grey heliotropes !
 To the poppy-plains keeping
 Such dream-breath and blee
 That the angels there stepping
 Grew whiter to see !
 To the nook, set with moly,
 Ye jested one day in,

Till your smile waxed too holy
 And left your lips praying !
 To the rose in the bower-place,
 That dripped o'er you sleeping ;
 To the asphodel flower-place,
 Ye walked ankle deep in !
 We pluck at your raiment,
 We stroke down your hair,
 We faint in our lament
 And pine into air.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some fragrance which ye
 knew before :

Farewell ! the flowers of Eden,
 Ye shall smell nevermore.

There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark ANGEL passing quickly, is cast upon the sword-glare.

SCENE—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this
 outer edge

Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in
 light
 The dark exterior desert,—hast thou
 strength,

Beloved, to look behind us to the gate ?

Eve. Have I not strength to look up
 to thy face ?

Adam. We need to be strong : yon
 spectacle of cloud

Which seals the gate up to the final
 doom,

Is God's seal manifest. There seem to
 lie

A hundred thunders in it, dark and
 dead :

The unmolten lightnings vein it motion-
 less ;

And outward from its depth, the self-
 moved sword

Swings slow its awful gnomon of red
 fire

From side to side,—in pendulous [slow]
 horror

Across the stagnant, ghastly glare
 thrown flat

On the intermediate ground from that
 to this,

The angelic hosts, the archangelic
 pomps,

Thrones, dominations, principdoms, rank
 on rank,

Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
 On either side and overhead the gate,

Show like a glittering and sustained
 smoke

Drawn to an apex. That their faces
 shine

Betwixt the solemn clasplings of their
 wings

Clasped high to a silver point above their
 heads,—

We only guess from hence and not dis-
 cern.

Eve. Though we were near enough
 to see them shine,

The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
 To me, at least,—to me—than all their
 light.

Adam. What is this, Eve ? thou
 droppest heavily

In a heap earthward : and thy body
 heaves

Under the golden floodings of thy hair !

Eve. O Adam, Adam ! by that name
 of Eve—

Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me
 little now,

Seeing that I now confess myself thy
 death

And thine undoer, as the snake was
 mine,—

I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
 Together with my name. Sweet, pun-
 ish me !

O Love, be just ! and ere we pass be-
 yond

The light cast outward by the fiery
 sword,

Into the dark, which earth must be to
 us,

Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the
 curse said

My seed shall be the first tempter's :
 strike with curse,

As God struck in the garden ! and as
 HE,

Being satisfied with justice and with
 [wrath]

Did roll His thunder gentler at the
close,—

Thou, peradventure, may'st at last re-
coil

To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my
lord!

I, also, after tempting, writhe on the
ground;

And I would feed on ashes from thy
hand,

As suits me, O my tempted.

Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other
name

For thee or for the sun than what ye
are,

My utter life and light! If we have
fallen,

It is that we have sinned,—we : God is
just ;

And since His curse doth comprehend us
both,

It must be that His balance holds the
weights

Of first and last sin on a level. What I
Shall I who had not virtue to stand
straight

Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,

By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
Might take thee into grace for scorning
me ;

Thy wrath against the sinner giving
proof

Of inward abrogation of the sin!

And also the blessed angels might come
down

And walk with thee as erst,—I think
they would,—

Because I was not near to make them
sad,

Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deep-
est in the guilt

If last in the transgression.

Eve. THOU!

Adam. If God
Who gave the right and joyance of the
world

Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to
me,

The best gift last ; the last sin was the

Which sinned against more comple-
ment of gifts

And grace of giving. God! I render
back

Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal feeble lips, (as incense-
smoke,

Out of a little censer, may fill heaven,)

That Thou, in striking my benumbed
hands

And forcing them to drop all other
boons

Of beauty and dominion and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this
life

Within life—this best gift between their
palms,

In gracious compensation!

Eve. Is it thy voice?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!

I, standing here between the glory and
dark,—

The glory of thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall ; the dark of our dis-
tress

Which settles a step off in that drear
world—

Lift up to Thee the hands from whence
hath fallen

Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with
her

Than left me lorn of her in Paradise ;
With angel looks and angel songs

around

To show the absence of her eyes and
voice,

And make society full desertness,
Without her use in comfort!

Eve. Where is loss?
Am I in Eden? can another speak

Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,

And look away from heaven which doth
accuse,

And look away from earth which doth
convict,

Into her face ; and crown my dis-
crowned brow

Out of her love ; and put the thought of
Around me, for an Eden full of birds ;

And lift her body up—thus—to my heart ;
 And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
 Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath
 Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides
 But overtops this grief !

Eve. I am renewed :

My eyes grow with the light which is in thine ;
 The silence of my heart is full of sound.
 Hold me up—so ! Because I comprehend

This human love, I shall not be afraid
 Of any human death ; and yet because
 I know this strength of love, I seem to know

Death's strength by that same sign.
 Kiss on my lips,

To shut the door close on my rising soul,—

Lest it pass outwards in astonishment
 And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
 Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,

Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay ! and the tears
 Running as it might seem, my life from me ;

They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,

And weep so,—as if in a dream or prayer,

Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought

Which clipped my heart and showed me evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,

And as the pure ones loathe our sin.
 To-day,

All day, beloved, as we fled across
 This desolating radiance cast by swords

Not suns, my lips prayed soundless to myself,

Striking against each other—O Lord God !

('Twas so I prayed) I ask Thee by my sin,

And by thy curse, and by thy blameless heavens,

Make dreadful haste to hide me from thy face

And from the face of my beloved here,
 For whom I am no helpmate, quick away

Into the new dark mystery of death !

I will lie still there ; I will make no plaint ;

I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,

Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun

Where peradventure I might sin anew
 Against thy mercy and his pleasure.

Death,

Oh, death, whate'er it be, is good enough
 For such as I am.—While for Adam here

No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,

It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,

My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives ?

If I am exiled, must I be bereaved ?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer : it shall be prayed no more ;

And God did use it like a foolishness,
 Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown

Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer :

Love makes it strong ; and since I was the first

In the transgression, with a steady foot
 I will be first to tread from this sword-glare

Into the outer darkness of the waste,—

And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
 As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds !

I feel a music which comes straight from Heaven,

As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
 That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—

But the love-angels who came erst to us,
 And when we said ' God,' fainted un-
 awares

Back from our mortal presence unto God,

(As if he drew them inward in a breath)
His name being heard of them,—I think
that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly
towers,
Invisible but gracious. Hark — how
soft !

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

(*Faint and tender.*)

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel !
Heaven assist the human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the golden ?
Do ye guess our choice is,
Being un beholden,
To be harkened by you, yet again ?
This pure door of opal,
God hath shut between us ;
Us, his shining people,
You who once have seen us,
And are blinded new !
Yet across the doorway,
Past the silence reaching,
Farewells evermore may,
Blessing in the teaching,
Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
Day on day succeeding,
With our presence glowed.
We came as if the Heavens were bowed
To a milder music rare !
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
Treading down the steps of cloud ;
While our wings outspreading
Double calms of whiteness,
Dropped superfluous brightness
Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Oft, abrupt though tender,
While ye gazed on space,
We flashed our angel-splendor
In either human face !
With mystic lilies in our hands,
From the atmospheric bands
Breaking with a sudden grace,

We took you unaware !
While our feet struck glories
Outward, smooth and fair,
Which we stood on floorwise,
Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,
Stood we in your wondering sight
In a mute apocalypse !
With dumb vibrations on our lips
From hosannas ended ;
And grand half-vanishings
Of the empyreal things
Within our eyes belated !
Till the heavenly Infinite
Falling off from the Created,
Left our inward contemplation
Opened into ministration.

Chorus.

Then upon our axle turning
Of great joy to sympathy,
We sang out the morning
Broadening up the sky.
Or we drew
Our music through
The noontide's hush and heat and
shine,
Informed with our intense Divine
Interrupted vital notes
Palpitating hither, thither,
Burning out into the æther,
Sensible like fiery motes.
Or, whenever twilight drifted
Through the cedar masses,
The globed sun we lifted,
Trailing purple, trailing gold
Out between the passes
Of the mountains manifold,
To anthems slowly sung !
While he, aweary, half in swoon,
For joy to hear our climbing tune
Transpierce the stars' concentric
rings,—
The burden of his glory flung
In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The Chant dies away confusedly,
and LUCIFER appears.*

Lucifer. Now may all fruits be pleas-
ant to thy lips

Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed

Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree;

Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve Adam! hold My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer— And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God, Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer! And leave us to the desert thou hast made

Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime

Athwart this path kept holy to our tears, Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

Lucifer. Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this Eve Who thought me once part worthy of her ear,

And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—

Drawing together her large globes of eyes,

The light of which is throbbing in and out

Their steadfast continuity of gaze,— Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,

And, down from her white heights of womanhood,

Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear

To wager such an apple as she plucked, Against one riper from the tree of life, That she could curse too—as a woman may—

Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly! I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—

For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt:

Trench on the forms of good by open ill—

For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn;

Scorning myself for ever trusting thee As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust, He could speak wisdom.

Lucifer. Our new gods, it seems Deal more in thunders than in courtesies:

And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon

I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery From all the wandering visions of the world,

May show worse railing than our lady Eve

Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.

But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardoned both!

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

Lucifer. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,

As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,

In like wise, fellow temptress, the poor snake—

Who stung there, not so poorly!

Eve. Hold thy wrath, Beloved Adam! let me answer him;

For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,

And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,

In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!

And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer, As freely as the streams of Eden flowed

When we were happy by them. So depart;

Leave us to walk the remnant of our time

Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek To harm us any more or scoff at us

Or ere the dust be laid upon our face

To find there the communion of the dust

And issue of the dust.—Go.

Adam. At once, go, *Lucifer.* Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,

Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?

What words are these to use? By what a thought

Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!

To-day, what? *Adam.* A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel,—
Who shall say?

Lucifer. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. *Thou!* The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes
Which comprehend the heights of some
great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn a
crown

Under the eyes of God.

Lucifer. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else!
Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely; but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin.

Lucifer. A crown by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I know
more than I knew.

Now I know thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

Lucifer. Because?

Adam. Because

A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million
years,

Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

Lucifer. Who is high and bold—

Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong
lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden.
Soh!

Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that
spirits should rise

Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.

The Highest being the Holy and the
Glad,

Whoever rises must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Lucifer. Ha, my clay king!

Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very
long

The after generations. Earth, me-
thinks,

Will disinherit thy philosophy

For a new doctrine suited to thine
heirs;

And class these present dogmas with the
rest

Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits
And Saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with
him.

Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no
more:

We have no pardon which thou dost
not scorn,

Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being be-
rest,

We would be alone.—Go.

Lucifer. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and
depart!

In Heaven they said so; and at Eden's
gate,—

And here, reiterant, in the wilderness!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face
is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice
is sweet!

And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
Look on me, woman! Am I beauti-
ful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Lucifer. Nothing more?

Eve. I think no more.

Lucifer. False Heart—thou thinkest
more!

Thou canst not choose but think, as I
praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
Were fashioned very good at best, so

we

Sprang very beauteous from the creant
Word

Which thrilled behind us—God Him-
self being moved

When that august work of a perfect
shape,

His dignities of sovran angel-hood

Swept out into the universe,—divine

With thundrous movements, earnest
looks of gods,

And silver-solemn clash of cymbal
wings.

Whereof was I in motion and in form,

A part not poorest. And yet,—yet,
perhaps,

This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
As God's voice is not here; nor even my crown—

I do not know. What is this thought or thing

Which I call beauty? is it thought or thing?

Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext?—a word?

Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath: my perceptions reel

For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it were too holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colorless,

Is nothing to the eye; that pine tree there,

Without its black and green, being all a blank;

So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,

And what collateral love moves on with thee;

Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Lucifer. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and love!
I darken to the image. Beauty—Love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*]

Adam. Thou art pale, *Eve.*

Eve. The precipice of ill
Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—
And, hark! the starry harmony remote
Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen so. By the hope
And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death!

Adam. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God!

How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself into uncertain articulation.*]

Eve. It throbs in on u like a plaintive heart,

Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,

To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet and strange! With every note

That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,

Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stands afar—a shade.

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

He fades utterly away, and vanishes, as it proceeds.

Mine orb'd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,

As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.

O my light bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
I loved thee with the fiery love of stars
Who love by burning, and by loving

move,
Too near the throned Jchovah not to love.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
Their brows flash fast on me from
gliding cars,

Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orb'd heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old

Down from me, down from me,
O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer

Won to thee, won to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,

Known to thee, known to thee.

Ah, ah!

'Thou, breathing thy communicable
grace

Of life into my light,

Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
Hast inly fed,

And flooded me with radiance over-
much

From thy pure height.

Ah, ah!

'Thou, with calm, floating pinions both
ways spread,

Erect, irradiated,

Didst sting my wheel of glory

On, on before thee

Along the Godlight by a quickening
touch!

Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental ocean
I swam expanding with delirious fire!

Around, around, around, in blind desire
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the mo-
tion

To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,
To a blind whirl of languor and delight,

I wound in girant orbits smooth and
white

With that intense rapidity!

Around, around,

I wound and interwound,

While all the cyclic heavens about me
spun!

Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated
broad,

Then flashed together into a single sun,

And wound, and wound in one;

And as they wound I wound,—around,
around,

In a great fire I almost took for God!

Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks

Down from me, down from me—

My beauty falls, methinks,

Down from thee, down from thee!

O my light-bearer,

O my path-preparer,

Gone from me, gone from me!

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I cannot kindle underneath the brow

Of this new angel here, who is not

Thou:

All things are altered since that time
ago,—

And if I shine at eve, I shall not know—

I am strange—I am slow!

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,

With tears between the looks raised up
to me,

Ah, ah!

When, having wept all night, at break
of day

Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.

Ah, ah!

And gazing on me, such shall compre-
hend,

Through all my piteous pomp at morn-
or even,

And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change

or end,

That love may close in loss'

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE—*Farther on. A wild open
country seen vaguely in the ap-
proaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and mel-
ancholy earth

Gather her hills around us, grey and
ghast,

And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?

Eve.

Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the
junipers

Rock slowly through the mist, without
a sound;

And shapes which have no certainty of
shape

Drift duskly in and out between the
pines,

And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open

ground—

Shadows without a body, which con-
tract

And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve.

O Life

Which is not man's nor angel's ! What is this ?

Adam. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life Contains all life beside.

Eve. I think the earth Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense

Of those first laws affixed to form and space

Or ever she knew sin !

Adam. We will not fear : We were brave sinning.

Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit With eyes upturned to Heaven and seeing there

Our god-thrones, as the tempter said— not GOD.

My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun has sunk

Out of sight with our Eden.

Adam. Night is near.

Eve. And God's curse nearest. Let us travel back

And stand within the sword-glare till we die ;

Believing it is better to meet death Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved ! We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,

As erst we plucked the apple : we must wait

Until He gives death as He gave life ; Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift, Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah ! Dost thou discern what I behold ?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes

From their dilated orbits bound before To meet the spectral Dread !

Eve. I am afraid— Ah, ah ! The twilight bristles wild with shapes

Of intermittent motion, aspect vague And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,

Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.

How near they reach . . . and far ! how gray they move—

Treading upon darkness without feet,

And fluttering on the darkness without wings !

Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground ;

Some keep one path, like sheep ; some rock like trees,

Some glide like a fallen leaf ; and some flow on

Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire— And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah ! Dost thou pause to say Like what ?—coil like the serpent when he fell

From all the emerald splendor of his height

And writhed,—and could not climb against the curse,

Not a ring's length. I am afraid— afraid—

I think it is God's will to make me afraid,

Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place

Of His beloved angels—gone from us Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of

God,

That didst permit the angels to go home And live no more with us who are not pure ;

Save us too from a loathly company— Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,

As we are in the purest ! Pity us— Us too ! nor shut us in the dark, away

From verity and from stability, Or what we name such through the pre-

cedence

Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not To doubt betwixt our senses and our souls,

Which are the most distraught and full of pain

And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, sweet ! The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop

With slow concentric movement, each on each,—

Expressing wider spaces, and collapsed In lines more definite for imagery

And clearer for relation ; till the throng Of shapeless spectra merge into a few

Distinguishable phantasms vague and grand,

Which sweep out and around us vastly,
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale
shadow! there are twelve.

Thou who didst name all lives, hast
names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac
of the earth,

Which rounds us with its visionary
dread,

Responding with twelve shadowy signs
of earth,

In fantasmic opposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction. At this
hour,

Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of
heaven!

But, girdling close our nether wilder-
ness,

The zodiac-figures of the earth loom
slow,—

Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and
time,

In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mys-
tery

Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting
scope,

Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,

Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And from the top of sense, looked over
sense,

To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the
creature-life

As earth contains it. Gaze on them,
beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall as-
suage

Thy terror of the shadows:—what is
known

Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phan-
tasm, there,

Presents a lion,—albeit twenty times

As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his
mane!

And, there, a pendulous shadow seems
to weigh—

Good against ill, perchance; and there,
a crab

Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all
the ground,

Crawled over by it, seems to crawl it-
self;

A bull stands horned here with gibbous
glooms;

And a ram likewise: and a scorpion
writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the
dark!

This way a goat leaps with wild blank
of beard;

And here fantastic fishes duskly float,
Using the calm for waters, while their
fins

Throb out slow rhythms along the
shallow air!

While images more human—

Eve. How he stands,

That phantasm of a man—who is not
thou!

Two phantasms of two men.

Adam. One that sustains,

And one that strives!—resuming, so, the
ends

Of manhood's curse of labor.* Dost
thou see

That phantasm of a woman?—

Eve. I have seen—

But look off to those small humanities,†
Which draw me tenderly across my
fear,—

Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,
Or yet thy manhood—with strange in-
nocence

* Adam recognizes in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labor. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of *Aries*, *Taurus*, *Cancer*, *Leo*, *Libra*, *Scorpio*, *Capricornus*, and *Pisces*, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Set in the misty lines of head and hand
They lean together! I would gaze on
them

Longer and longer, till my watching
eyes,
As the stars do in watching anything,
Should light them forward from their
outline vague
To clear configuration—

Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic nature, arise from the ground.

But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,
And thrust me into horror back from
hope?

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran
images,

With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces!—with no
look,

And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound!
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin
sound!

How it comes, wheeling as the pale
moth wheels,

Wheeling and wheeling in continuous
wail,

Around the cyclic zodiac; and gains
force,

And gathers, settling coldly like a
moth,

On the wan faces of these images
We see before us; whereby modified

It draws a straight line to articulate
song

From out that spiral faintness of la-
ment—

And, by one voice, expresses many
griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth;
God spake me softly out among the
stars,

As softly as a blessing of much worth,
And then, His smile did follow un-
wares,

That all things fashioned so for use and
duty

Might shine anointed with His chrism
of beauty—

Yet I wail!

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's grad-
ual fall—

Individual aspect and complexity

Of gyratory orb and interval

Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being beyond
sight—

Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping things,
and swimming;

Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the gob-
let brimming,

And tasted, in each drop within the
measure

The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's
good pleasure—

Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life around His
lips,

Bore witness to the fulness of crea-
tion!

How all the grand words were full-la-
den ships;

Each sailing onward from enuncia-
tion,

To separate existence,—and each bear-
ing

The creature's power of joying, hoping,
fearing!

Yet I wail!

Eve. They wail, beloved! they
speak of glory and God,

And they wail—wail. That burden of
the song

Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily
falls

Into the lap of silence!

Adam. Hark, again!

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,

My joy stood up within me bold to
add

A word to God's, and when His work
was full,

To 'very good,' responded very glad!
 Filtered through roses, did the light en-
 close me;
 And bunches of the grape swam blue
 across me—
 Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers! I re-
 joiced
 In my young tumbling lions rolled
 together!
 My stag—the river at his fetlocks—
 poised,
 Then dipped his antlers through the
 golden weather
 In the same ripple which the alligator
 Left in his joyous troubling of the water!
 Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,
 What wordless triumph did your voices
 render!
 O mountain-summits, where the angels
 stood
 And shook from head and wing thick
 dews of splendor;
 How with a holy quiet, did your
 Earthy
 Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye
 were worthy!
 Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood dogs, with your listen-
 ing eyes!
 My horses—my ground eagles, for
 swift fleeing!
 My birds, with viewless wings of har-
 monies,
 My calm cold fishes of a silver being,
 How happy were ye, living and possess-
 ing,
 O fair half-souls capacious of full bless-
 ing.
 Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge
 to-day,
 Thou man, thou woman, marked as
 the misdoers

By God's sword at your backs! I lent
 my clay
 To make your bodies, which had
 grown more flowers:
 And now, in change for what I lent, ye
 give me
 The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to
 cleave me—
 And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I fasten
 My sorrow's fang upon your souls
 dishonored?
 Accursed transgressors! down the steep
 ye hasten,—
 Your crown's weight on the world, to
 drag it downward
 Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions, scenting
 The blood of wars, roar hoarse and un-
 relenting—
 And I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I wail?
 I had no part in your transgression—
 none!
 My rose on the bough did bud not pale—
 My rivers did not loiter in the sun.
 I was obedient. Wherefore in my
 centre
 Do I thrill at this curse of death and
 winter!—
 And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
 Of undeserved perdition, sorely
 wounded!
 My nightingales sang sweet without a
 fault,
 My gentle leopards innocently
 bounded;
 We were obedient—what is this con-
 vulses
 Our blameless life with pangs and fever
 pulses?
 And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His
 angels' swords
 To die by, Adam, rather than such
 words.
 Let us pass out and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and
drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit,

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners,
strike
A sense of death to me, and undug
graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trem-
bling like
The ragged foam along the ocean-
waves:
The restless earthquakes rock against
each other;
The elements moan 'round me—' Moth-
er, mother'—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me
through;
Corruption swathes the paleness of
your beauty.
Why have ye done this thing? What
did we do
That we should fall from bliss as ye
from duty?
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for
their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the wilder-
nesses—
And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the
harmless earth—

To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless
lives—

Inferior creatures but still innocent—
Be salutation from a guilty mouth
Yet worthy of some audience and re-
spect

From you who are not guilty. If we
have sinned,

God hath rebuked us, who is over us,
To give rebuke or death; and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such
peace

As we have left you, to enjoy revenge

Such as the Heavens have made you.

Verily,
There must be strife between us, large
as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us
not stand high

Upon the wrong we did to reach dis-
dain,

Who rather should be humbler ever-
more

Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall
I speak—

I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once
was proud?

I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my
king—

My king, if not the world's?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus then—my hand in thine—
. . . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!

I pray you humbly in the name of God;
Not to say of these tears, which are im-
pure—

Grant me such pardoning grace as can
go forth

From clean volitions toward a spotted
will,

From the wronged to the wronger; this
and no more;

I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
That absolute pardon is impossible

From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
And that I cannot evermore, as once,

With worthy acceptance of pure joy,
Behold the trances of the holy hills

Beneath the leaning stars; or watch the
vales

Dew-pallid with their morning ec-stasy;
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace

between
Two grassy uplands,—and the river-
wells

Work out their bubbling mysteries
under ground—

And all the birds sing, till for joy of
song,

They lift their trembling wings as if to
heave

The too-much weight of music from
their heart

And float it up the æther! I am 'ware

That these things I can no more comprehend

With a full organ into a full delight,
The sense of beauty and of melody
Being no more aided in me by the sense
Of personal adjustment to those heights
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,

But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed

By the percipiency of sin and fall
In melancholy of humilient thoughts.
But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this

Your accusation must confront my soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze

Must evermore subdue me; be content—

Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
Not to say loving! let my tears fall thick

As watering dews of Eden, unapproached;

And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,

Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,

And peradventure better while more sad.
For look to it sweet Spirits—look well to it—

It will not be amiss in you who kept
The law of your own righteousness, and keep

The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—

To pity me twice fallen,—from that, and this,

From joy of place, and also right of wail,

'I wail' being not for me—only 'I sin.'
Look to it, O sweet Spirits!—

For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs

Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God

Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,

The lady of the world, princess of life,
Mistress of feast and favor? Could I touch

A rose with my white hand, but it became

Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely

Along our swarded garden, but the grass

Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside

A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as alive
With songs of fifty birds who were made glad

Because I stood there? Could I turn to look

With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,

Now good for only weeping—upon man,
Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced

Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
And is not this much wo, to cry 'alas!'
Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,

To have made the wo myself, from all that joy?

To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree,

And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this

Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,

And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,

Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?
Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Harken, Spirits!

Our God, who is the enemy of none,
But only of their sin,—hath set your hope

And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.

Show reverence, then,—and never bruise her more

With unpermitted and extreme reproach;

Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down

Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us,

Of sovranity by reason and freewill!

Sinning against the province of the Soul

To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate:

And pass out from her presence with
no words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience
with my heart,

O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of rev-
erence,

And let me speak : for, not being inno-
cent,

It little doth become me to be proud ;
And I am prescient by the very hope
And promise set upon me, that hence-
forth

Only my gentleness shall make me
great,

My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spir-
its,

Be witness that I stand in your reproof
But one sun's length off from my happi-
ness—

Happy, as I have said, to look around—
Clear to look up!—and now! I need
not speak—

Ye see me what I am ; ye scorn me so,
Because ye see me what I have made
myself

From God's best making! Alas,—peace
foregone,

Love wronged,—and virtue forfeit, and
tears wept

Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that
best,

Fairest and sweetest, to this wretched-
est,

Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast
down—

What word metes absolute loss? let ab-
solute loss

Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who
lived

Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless
world!

I, reigning the earth's empress yester-
day,

Put off from me, to-day, your hate with
prayers!

I, yesterday, who answered the Lord
God,

Composed and glad as singing-birds the
sun,

Might shriek now from our dismal des-
ert, 'God,'

And hear Him make reply, 'What is
thy need,

Thou whom I cursed to-day?'

Adam.

Eve!

Eve.

I, at last,

Who yesterday was helpmate and de-
light

Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him! And, so, pity
us,

Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and
me,

And let some tender peace, made of our
pain,

Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might
grow

With boughs on both sides. In the
shade of which,

When presently ye shall behold us
dead,—

For the poor sake of our humility,
Breathe out your pardon on our breath-
less lips,

And drop your twilight dews against
our brows ;

And stroking with mild airs our harm-
less hands

Left empty of all fruit, perceive your
love

Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER rises in the circle.

Lucifer. Who talks here of a com-
plement of grief?

Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? *Eve?*

Take counsel from thy counsellor the
snake,

And boast no more in grief, nor hope
from pain,

My docile *Eve!* I teach you to des-
pond,

Who taught you disobedience. Look
around;—

Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you
talk unmoved,

As if ye were red clay again and talked!
What are your words to them? your
griefs to them?

Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the
hand pause

For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
That they should pause for *you*, in hating you;
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
Bring change upon their final doom?
Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. That is true.

Lucifer. Ay, it is true. The clay-
king testifies
To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—
very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. And certes, *that* is true.
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou uni-
verse,

'That holdest sin and wo,—more room
for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ah, ah, Heosphorus!
Heosphorus!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes
awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from
grief to God
And could not see Him;—wretched Lu-
cifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an an-
gel!

Earth Spirits. We all wail

Lucifer, (after a pause.) Dost thou
remember,

Adam, when the curse
Took us in Eden? On a mountain-
peak
Half-sheathed in primal woods and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour
A lion couched,—part raised upon his
paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full
on thine,
And his mane listening. When the
ended curse
Left silence in the world,—right sud-
denly
He sprang up rampant and stood straight
and stiff,
As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes,—and
roared so fierce

(Such thick carnivorous passion in his
throat

Tearing a passage through the wrath
and fear)

And roared so wild, and smote from all
the hills

Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down
the vales

Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
Of savage and of sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges. Then,
at once,

He fell back, and rolled crashing from
the height

Into the dust of pines.

Adam. It might have been
I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. That lion is the type of
what I am!

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced
hate,

And roared, O Adam—comprehending
doom;

So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here between the heavens and
earth

My conscience of this sin, this wo, this
wrath,

Which damn me to this depth!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail O God!

Lucifer. I Scorn you that ye wail,
Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from with-
out,

And deal in pathos of antithesis

Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye
are;—

I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry
I, too, would drive up like a column
erect,

Marble to marble, from my heart to
Heaven,

A monument of anguish to transpierce
And overtop your vapory complaints
Expressed from feeble woes!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. For, O ye heavens, ye are
my witnesses,

That I, struck out from nature in a blot,
The outcast and the mildew of things
good,

The leper of angels, the excepted dust
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
To whom the highest and the lowest
alike

Say, Go from us—we have no need of
thee,—

Was made by God like others. Good
and fair,

He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair;
Ask, if I caught not fair and silvery
His blessing for chief angels on my head
Until it grew there, a crown crystallized!
Ask, if He never called me by my
name,

Lucifer—kindly said as ‘Gabriel’—

Lucifer—soft as ‘Michael!’ While
serene

I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
Answered ‘my father,’ innocent of
shame

And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye
think,

White angels in your niches,—I repent,
And would tread down my own offences
back

To service at the footstool! *That’s* read
wrong:

I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so
deep

Against the side of this prodigious pit,
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of
wail

On each side, to meet anguish every-
where,

And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a wo sustained
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny
griefs

In transitory shapes, be henceforth
dwarfed

To your own conscience by the dread
extremes

Of what I am and have been. If ye
have fallen,

It is a step’s fall,—the whole ground
beneath

Strewn woolly soft with promise; if ye
have sinned,

Your prayers tread high as angels! if ye
have grieved,

Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
The power to die disproves the right to
grieve.

Go to! ye call this ruin. I half-scorn
The ill I did you! Were ye wronged
by me,

Hated and tempted and undone of me,—
Still, what’s your hurt to mine of doing
hurt,

Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
This sword’s *hilt* is the sharpest, and
cuts through

The hand that wields it.

Go—I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can;
I would not certes cut you short in hate—
Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!

I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry
leaves

And lifting up their brownness, show
beneath

The branches very bare.—Beseech you,
spirits, give

To Eve, who beggarly entreats your
love

For her and Adam when they shall be
dead,

An answer rather fitting to the sin
Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I
trow,

For justice’ sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,

Adam and Eve! Say grace as after
meat,

After my curses. May your tears fall
hot

On all the hissing scorns o’ the creatures
here,—

And yet rejoice. Increase and multi-
ply,

Ye and your generations, in all plagues,
Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
And hideous forms of life and fears of
death;

The thought of death being always emi-
nent

Immoveable and dreadful in your life,
And deathly and dumbly insignificant
Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,

Whichever of you lieth dead the first,
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
My curse catch at you strongly, body
and soul,

And HE find no redemption—nor the
 wing
 Of seraph move your way—and yet re-
 joice !
 Rejoice,—because ye have not set in you
 This hate which shall pursue you—this
 fire-hate
 Which glares without, because it burns
 within—
 Which kills from ashes—this potential
 hate,
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
 To God and his reflex beatitudes,
 Moan ever in the central universe
 With the great wo of striving against
 Love—
 And gasp for space amid the infinite—
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
 To kingship of resistant agony
 Toward the Good round me—hating
 good and love.
 And willing to hate good and to hate
 love,
 And willing to will on so evermore,
 Scorning the Past, and damning the To
 come—
 Go and rejoice ! I curse you !

LUCIFER *vanishes*.

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you ! there's no pardon
 Which can lean to you aright !
 When your bodies take the guerdon
 Of the death-curse in our sight,
 Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall
 transcend you,
 Then ye shall not move an eyelid
 Though the stars look down your
 eyes ;
 And the earth which ye defiled,
 Shall expose you to the skies,—
 ' Lo ! these kings of ours—who sought to
 comprehend you.'

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
 All your dust to dust constrain ;
 Unresistedly and coldly
 I will smite you with my rain !
 From the slowest of my frosts is no re-
 ceding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
 To assume a royal part,
 He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
 O'er the noble human heart !
 Give him counsel against losing of that
 Eden !
Adam. Do ye scorn us ? Back your
 scorn
 Toward your faces gray and lorn,
 As the wind drives back the rain,
 Thus I drive with passion-strife ;
 I who stand beneath God's sun,
 Made like God, and, though undone,
 Not unmade for love and life.
 Lo ! ye utter threats in vain !
 By my free will that chose sin,
 By mine agony within
 Round the passage of the fire ;
 By the pinings which disclose
 That my native soul is higher
 Than what it chose,
 We are yet too high, O spirits, for your
 disdain
Eve. Nay, beloved ! if these be low,
 We confront them with no height ;
 We have stooped down to their level
 By infecting them with evil,
 And their scorn that meets our blow
 Scathes aright.
 Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly
 When ye lie beneath the sward !
 There, our lily shall grow stately
 Though ye answer not a word—
 And with fragrance shall be scornful of
 your silence.
 While your throne ascending calmly
 We, in heirdom of your soul,
 Flash the river, lift the palm tree,
 The dilated ocean roll
 By the thoughts that throbb'd within
 you—round the islands.
 Alp and torrent shall inherit
 Your significance of will :
 With the grandeur of your spirit
 Shall our broad savannahs fill—
 In our winds, your exultations shall be
 springing.
 Even your parlance which inveigles,
 By our rudeness shall be won :

Hearts poetic in our eagles
 Shall beat up against the sun,
 And strike downward in articulate clear
 singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth
 With his thunderous jaw shall
 wield !

Your high fancies shall our Mammoth
 Breathe sublimely up the shield
 Of St. Michael at God's throne, who
 waits to speed him !

Till the heavens' smooth-grooved
 thunder
 Spinning back, shall leave them
 clear ;

And the angels smiling wonder
 With dropt looks from sphere to
 sphere,

Shall cry, 'Ho, ye heirs of Adam ! ye
 exceed him !'

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet,
 from the dreary ground.

Beloved, we may be overcome by God.
 But not by *these*.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in *these*.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God
 foredoomed despair,

He had not spoken hope. He may de-
 stroy

Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose !
 I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
 This morning as I went forth ; and my
 heart

Hath beat against its petals all the day.
 I thought it would be always red and
 full

As when I plucked it.—*Is* it?—Ye may
 see !

I cast it down to you that ye may see,
 All of you !—count the petals lost of
 it—

And note the colors faded ! ye may
 see :

And I am as it is, who yesterday
 Grew in the same place. O ye spirits
 of earth !

I almost, from my miserable heart,
 Could here upbraid you for your cruel
 heart,

Which will not let me, down the slope
 of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,

Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
 As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indis-
 tinct human voices, spins around
 the earth-zodiac : and filling the
 circle with its presence, and then
 wailing off into the east, carries
 the rose away with it. EVE falls
 upon her face. ADAM stands erect.*

Adam. So, verily,

The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
 And Life both. Love said to me, 'Do
 not die,'

And I replied, 'O Love, I will not die.
 I exiled and I will not orphan Love.'
 But now it is no choice of mine to
 die—

My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.

Death's consummation crowns com-
 pleted life,

Or comes too early. Hope being set
 on thee

For others ; if for others then for thee,—
 For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and
 round again to the east, perfumed
 by the Eden-rose, and full of voices
 which sweep out into articulation
 as they pass.*

Let thy soul shake its leaves
 To feel the mystic wind—Hark !

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we receive
 Is a warm thing and a new,
 Which we softly bud into
 From the heart and from the brain,
 Something strange that overmuch is
 Of the sound and of the sight,
 Flowing round in trickling touches,
 With a sorrow and delight,—
 Yet is it all in vain ?

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we achieve

Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which with pulses manifold
Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,
Though the vessel's prow will quiver
At the lifting of the anchor :
Yet do we strive in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air
That its beauty may be plain :
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprieve
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain !
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—

Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine ;—
For is all laughed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life
like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave
speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward
main.

I hear life—life !

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have
snatched
Scarlet to paleness ; and thine eye drink
fast
Of glory from full cups ; and thy moist
lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with
earnest doubts
Whether to utter words or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the com-
ing life ?

Hear the steep generations, how they
fall

Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far yet
near ;
Sowing their fiery echoes through the
hills.

Am I a cloud to these—mother to these ?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

EVE sinks down again.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily
To view God without a stain :
Till recoiling where the shade is,
We retreat our steps again,
And descend the gloomy Hades
To resume man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Lest it be all in vain.

Rock us softly,

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart,
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.
'Wilt thou be one with me?'
'I will be one with thee!'
'Ha, ha!—we love and live!'
Alas! ye love and die!
Shriek—who shall reply?
For is it not loved in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Though it be all in vain.

Rock us softly,

Aged voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would survive,
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain.
Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Though it be *all* in vain.

Rock us softly,

Voices die away.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Hu-
manity

Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right
hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

Eve. O spirits! by the gentleness
ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds at
noon,

In gliding waters under lily leaves,
In chirp of crickets, and the settling
hush

A bird makes in her nest with feet and
wings,—

Fulfil your natures now!

Earth Spirits.

Agreed; allowed!

We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus,
and thus!

Hearken, O hearken to us!

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly from
the norland,
As the snow-wind beats blindly on the
moorland,
As the simoon drives hot across the
desert,
As the thunder roars deep in the Un-
measured,
As the torrent tears the ocean-world to
atoms,
As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms below
fathoms,
Thus,—and thus!

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison
chilly,
As the tiger, in the jungle crouching
stilly,
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of
anger,
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering
clangour,
As the vultures that scream against the
thunder,
As the owlets that sit and moan asunder,
Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting Spirits!
By the power in me of the sovran soul
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the
angel's march,

I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you!

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha! thou art king!

With a sin for a crown,

And a soul undone:

Thou, the antagonized,

Tortured and agonized,

Held in the ring

Of the zodiac!

Now, king, beware!

We are many and strong

Whom thou standest among.—

And we pass on the air,
 And we stifle thee back,
 And we multiply where
 Thou wouldst trample us down
 From rights of our own
 To an utter wrong—
 And, from under the feet of thy scorn,

O forlorn !

We shall spring up like corn,
 And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee !
 I make appeal

Unto thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,
 O sinned against, great God !—My seed,
 my seed,
 There is hope set on THEE—I cry to
 thee,

Thou mystic seed that shalt be !—leave
 us not

In agony beyond what we can bear,
 Fallen in debasement below thunder-
 mark

A mark for scorning—taunted and per-
 plext

By all these creatures we ruled yester-
 day,

Whom thou, Lord, rulest always. O my
 seed,

Through the tempestuous years that rain
 so thick

Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy face,
 Let me have token ! for my soul is
 bruised

Before the serpent's head is.

[*A vision of CHRIST appears in the
 midst of the zodiac, which pales be-
 fore the heavenly light. The Earth
 Spirits grow grayer and fainter.*

CHRIST. I AM HERE !

Adam. This is God !—Curse us not,
 God, any more.

Eve. But gazing so—so—with omni-
 fic eyes,
 Lift my soul upward till it touch thy
 feet !

Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud, —
 To the low height of some good angel's
 feet—

For such to tread on when he walketh
 straight

And thy lips praise him.

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
 I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
 And cruel and unmitigated blame
 Ye cast upon your masters. True, they
 have sinned ;

And true their sin is reckoned into loss
 For you the sinless. Yet, your inno-
 cence,

Which of you praises ? since God made
 your acts

Inherent in your lives, and bound your
 hands

With instincts and imperious sanctities
 From self-defacement ? Which of you
 disdains

These sinners who in falling proved their
 height

Above you by their liberty to fall ?
 And which of you complains of loss by
 them,

For whose delight and use ye have your
 life

And honor in creation ? Ponder it !
 This regent and sublime Humanity,

Though fallen, exceeds you ! this shall
 film your sun,

Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of
 cloud,

Turn back your rivers, footpath all your
 seas,

Lay flat your forests, master with a look
 Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
 Your eagle flying. Nay, without this
 law

Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by
 beast

Devouring ; tree by tree, with stran-
 gling roots

And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would
 gaze on God

With imperceptive blankness up the
 stars,

And mutter, 'Why, God, hast thou
 made us thus ?'

And pining to a sallow idiocy
 Stagger up blindly against the ends of
 life ;

Then stagnate into rottenness and drop
 Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal
 down

The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
 Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you
 Receive man's sceptre,—therefore be
 content

To minister with voluntary grace
 And melancholy pardon, every rite
 And function in you, to the human hand.
 Be ye to man as angels are to God,
 Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
 Suggesters to his soul of higher things
 Than any of your highest. So at last,
 He shall look round on you with lids too
 straight

To hold the grateful tears, and thank you
 well ;

And bless you when he prays his secret
 prayers,

And praise you when he sings his open
 songs

For the clear song-note he has learnt in
 you

Of purifying sweetness ; and extend
 Across your head his golden fantasies
 Which glorify you into soul from sense !
 Go serve him for such price. That not
 in vain

Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
 My word here for an oath, mine oath
 for act

To be hereafter. In the name of which
 Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
 I bless you through the hope and through
 the peace

Which are mine,—to the Love, which is
 myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit
 thou bless me not

In set words, I am blessed in hearkening
 thee—

Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the
 woman, man—

It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
 Take heart before this Presence. Lo !
 my voice,

Which, naming erst the creatures, did
 express,

God breathing through my breath,—the
 attributes

And instincts of each creature in its
 name ;

Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and
 heaves

Like a water-weed that opens to a
 wave,

A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,

Out fairly and wide. Henceforward,
 rise, aspire

To all the calms and magnanimities,
 The lofty uses and the noble ends,
 The sanctified devotion and full work,
 To which thou art elect forevermore,
 First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of
 the Seed

Whereby sin dieth ! Raise the majes-
 ties

Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-be-
 loved,

And front with level eyelids the To
 come,

And all the dark o' the world. Rise,
 woman, rise

To thy peculiar and best altitudes
 Of doing good and of enduring ill,
 Of comforting for ill, and teaching
 good,

And reconciling all that ill and good
 Unto the patience of a constant hope,—

Rise with thy daughters ! If sin come
 by thee,

And by sin, death,—the ransom-right-
 eousness,

The heavenly life and compensative
 rest

Shall come by means of thee. If wo by
 thee

Had issued to the world, thou shalt go
 forth

An angel of the wo thou didst achieve ;
 Found acceptable to the world instead

Of others of that name, of whose bright
 steps

Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be
 satisfied ;

Something thou hast to bear through
 womanhood—

Peculiar suffering answering to the sin :
 Some pang paid down for each new hu-
 man life ;

Some weariness in guarding such a
 life—

Some coldness from the guarded ; some
 mistrust

From those thou hast too well served ;
 from those beloved

Too loyally some treason : feebleness
 Within thy heart, and cruelty without :

And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love

Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child's
kiss

Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee
glad :

A poor man served by thee, shall make
thee rich ;

A sick man helped by thee, shall make
thee strong ;

Thou shalt be served thyself by every
sense

Of service which thou renderest. Such
a crown

I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep
thee clear

Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I
clasp close ;

Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I
kiss close,

I bless thee in the name of Paradise
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost ; by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we
came out ;

And by the blessed nightingale which
threw

Its melancholy music after us ;—

And by the flowers, whose spirits full of
smells

Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal
bowers

And four-fold river-courses :—by all
these,

I bless thee to the contraries of these ;
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to this

END

Of Death and the hereafter !

Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this high
part

Which lowly shall be counted. Noble
work

Shall hold me in the place of garden-
rest ;

And in the place of Eden's lost delight
Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;
While on my longest patience there shall
wait

Death's speechless angel, smiling in the
east

Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow
myself

Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the
shade.

Shall it be so ? Shall I smile, saying so ?
O seed ! O king ! O God, who *shall* be
seed,—

What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains
swelled

Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells
my soul

Betwixt Thy love and power !

And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first
time

Since God said ' Adam,' walking through
the trees,

I dare to pluck you as I plucked ere-
while

The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope,
So pluck I you—so largely—with both
hands,

And throw you forward on the outer
earth

Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.
Adam. As thou, Christ, to illumine it,
holdest Heaven

Broadly above our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured
during the following phrases of dia-
logue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the
sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence,
Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with
a forecast wo,—

Diviner, with th' possible of Death !
We worship in thy sorrow, Saviour
Christ.

Adam How do thy clear, still eyes
transpierce our souls,

As gazing *through* them toward the
 Father-throne
 In a pathological, full Deity,
 Serenely as the stars gaze through the
 air

Straight on each other.

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
 Thou standest mute in glory, like the
 moon.

CHRIST. Eternity stands always front-
 ing God ;

A stern colossal image, with blind eyes
 And grand dim lips that murmur ever-
 more

God, God, God! While the rush of
 life and death,

The roar of act and thought, of evil and
 good,

The avalanches of the ruining worlds
 Tolling down space,—the new world's
 genesis

Budding in fire,—the gradual humming
 growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms of
 earth,

The slow procession of the swathing seas
 And firmamental waters,—and the noise

Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
 All these flow onward in the intervals

Of that reiterated sound of—GOD!
 Which word, innumerable angels
 straightway lift

Wide on celestial altitudes of song
 And choral adoration, and then drop

The burden softly, shutting the last notes
 In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon

of time

Eternity shall wax as dumb as Death,
 While a new voice beneath the spheres

shall cry,
 'God! Why hast thou forsaken me,
 my God?'

And not a voice in heaven shall answer
 it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in
 silence.*]

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heav-
 enlies; yet, O Christ,

Awfully human are thy voice and face!
Eve. My nature overcomes me from
 thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time, shall
 one from Heaven,

An angel fresh from looking upon God,
 Descend before a woman, blessing her
 With perfect benediction of pure love,
 For all the world in all its elements;
 For all the creatures of earth, air, and
 sea;

For all men in the body and in the soul,
 Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I wor-
 ship thee!

I thank thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,
 I, wrapping round me your humanity,
 Which being sustained, shall neither

break nor burn

Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread
 earth,

And ransom you and it, and set strong
 peace

Betwixt you and its creatures. With
 my pangs

I will confront your sins: and since
 those sins

Have sunken to all nature's heart from
 yours,

The tears of my clean soul shall follow
 them

And set a holy passion to work clear
 Absolute consecration. In my brow

Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned
 anew

Your discrowned human nature. Look
 on me!

As I shall be uplifted on a cross
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,

So shall I lift up in my pierced hands,
 Not into dark, but light—not unto death,

But life, beyond the reach of guilt and
 grief,

The whole creation. Henceforth in my
 name

Take courage, O thou woman,—man,
 take hope!

Your grave shall be as smooth as Eden's
 sward,

Beneath the steps of your prospective
 thoughts;

And one step past it a new Eden-gate
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony,

And let you through to mercy. Ye
 shall fall

No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
 Any more from it. In which hope, move

on,

First sinners and first mourners. Live
and love,—
Doing both nobly, because lowly ;
Live and work, strongly,—because pa-
tiently !
And for the deed of death, trust it to
God,
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence with con-
stant prayers
Fasten your souls so high, that con-
stantly
The smile of your heroic cheer may
float
Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain !

*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM
and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The
earth-zodiac pales away, shade by
shade, as the stars, star by star,
shine out in the sky ; and the fol-
lowing chant from the two Earth-
spirits (as they sweep back into the
zodiac and disappear with it) ac-
companies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We, our homage-oath once broken,
Fasten back again in sighing ;
And the creatures and the elements
renew their covenanting.
Here, forgive us all our scorning ;
Here, we promise milder duty ;
And the evening and the morning
Shall re-organize in beauty
A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for uni-
versal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us ;
If this mortal and unholy
We still fail to cast out from us,—
And we turn upon you, unaware, your
own dark influences ;
If ye tremble when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm trees ;
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our gum-trees and our balm-
trees,
And if your souls all mournfully sit
down among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,
We are gentle in our languor ;
And more good ye shall have near us
Than any pain or anger :
And our God's refracted blessing in our
blessing shall be given !
By the desert's endless vigil
We will solemnize your passions ;
By the wheel of the black eagle
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the
white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature ;
And our hands shall stroke the curse's
Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in
death, and straight and slumber-
ful :
Then, a couch we will provide you
Where no summer heat shall daz-
zle ;
Strewing on you and beside you
'Thyme and rosemary and basil—
And the yew-tree shall grow overhead
to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chism around us running,
Whereby, newly-consecrated
We shall leap up in God's sunning,
To join the spheric company which
purer worlds assemble ;
While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glorious,
Ye shall brighten past the angels—
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious ;
And the rays around His feet beneath
your sobbing lips, shall tremble.

*[The phantastic vision has all passed ;
the earth-zodiac has broken like a
belt, and dissolved from the desert.
The Earth Spirits vanish ; and the
stars shine out above.*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

*While ADAM and EVE advance into
the desert, hand in hand.*
Hear our heavenly promise
Through your mortal passion !
Love ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation !

As a fish or bird —
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We unseen are heard
 To live on by loving.
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen! we are loving!
 Listen, through man's ignorances—
 Listen, through God's mysteries—
 Listen down the heart of things,
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Murmurous with loving!
 Through the opal door,
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving!

First semichorus.

When your bodies therefore,
 Reach the grave their goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul
 Softly and unlothly
 Through the door of opal
 Toward the Heavenly people.
 Floated on a minor fire
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,—
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner:
 Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

There a sough of glory
 Shall breathe on you as you come,
 Ruffling round the doorway
 All the light of angeldom.
 From the empyrean centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat—
 'Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter;
 For the chrism on you is sweet.'
 And every angel in the place
 Lowly shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He images his Master's wounds:
 Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin!
 Their wings shall stream upon the flame
 As if incorporate of the same

In elemental fusion;
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought,
 And a steadfast looking of desire
 From out between the clefts of fire,—
 While they cry, in the Holy's name.
 To the final Restitution!
 Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accompted;
 Awaking the dead bodies,
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split and shatter the earth
 To the roots of the grave
 Which never before were slackened
 And quicken the charnel birth
 With his blast so clear and brave;
 Till the Dead shall start and stand
 erect
 And every face of the burial-place
 Shall the awful, single look reflect,
 Wherewith he them awakened.
 Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death!
 He will leap up wild at the clamour
 Above and beneath;
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth, Ha, ha!
 To the trumpet's blare,
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,
 And ghastrily champeth the last moon-
 ray,—
 What angel there
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the Dead?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
 One more bright than seraph crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold;
 Elder, too, than angel old,
 By his gray eternities,
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death.
 For He is strong, and He is fain:
 He shall quell him with a breath,
 And shall lead him where He will,

With a whisper in the ear,
Full of fear—
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades where the
souls assemble
HE will guide the Death-steed calm
between their ranks;
While, like beaten dogs, they a little
moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the
horse's glittering flanks.
Through the flats of Hades, where the
dreary shade is,
Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer
guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles—circle above
circle,
We who count the ages, shall count the
tolling tread—
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder,
blanker sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show
as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed with toil-
ing hoofs shall travel,
Ashen gray the planets shall be motion-
less as stones;
Loosely shall the systems eject their parts
coeval,—
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the
pallid moons;
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling
from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in wild,
low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal
ceiling,
From the horse's nostrils shall steam the
blurting breath;
Up between the angels pale with silent
feeling,
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse
of death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all
that glory,

Will the Tamer lead him straightway to
the Throne;
'Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring
before Thee
With a hand nail-pierced,—I who am
thy Son.'
Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deep-
est, flaming,
On the mystic courser, shall look out in
fire:
Blind the beast shall stagger where It
overcame him,
Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in
desire—
Down the beast shall shiver—slain amid
the taming—
And, by Life essential, the phantasm
Death expire.

Chorus.

Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the
breath,
Listen down the heart of things!
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving.
A Voice from below. Gabriel, thou
Gabriel!
A Voice from above. What wouldst
thou with me?
First Voice. I heard thy voice sound
in the angels' song;
And I would give thee question.
Second Voice. Question me.
First Voice. Why have I called thrice
to my Morning-star
And had no answer? All the stars are
out,
And answer in their places. Only in
vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of my star, shut in light behind the sun.
No more reply than from a breaking
string,
Breaking when touched. Or is she *not*
my star?
Where *is* my star—my star? Have ye
cast down
Her glory like my glory? Has she
waxed
Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt to
hate
Like any angel?
Second Voice. She is sad for thee:

All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

Chorus. Live, work on, O Earthy !
By the Actual's tension,
Speed the arrow worthy
Of a pure ascension.

From the low earth round you,
Reach the heights above you ;
From the stripes that wound you,
Seek the loves that love you !
God's divinest burneth plain
Through the crystal diaphane
Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel !

Second Voice. What wouldst thou
with me ?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Ga-
briel, that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another
claims ?

That HE claims THAT too ?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an
exile from His Heaven,
To lead those exiles homeward ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an
exile by His will,
As I by mine election !

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That I shall stand sole
exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel !
Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. It is true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient star will
give

Her name of 'Bright and Morning-Star'
to HIM,—

And take the fairness of his virtue back,
To cover loss and sadness ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Untrue, Untrue ! O
Morning-star ! O MINE !

Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say,—Untrue !

Speak but so loud as doth a wasted
moon

To Tyrrhene waters ! I am Lucifer—
[A pause. Silence in the stars.]

All things grow sadder to me, one by
one.

Angel chorus.

Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's,
God is the Discharger ;
And the Actual prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden,
In a light exceeding :
What their rays have measured,
Let your feet fulfil !
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden ;
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still.

Chorus. Future joy and far light

Working such relations,
Hear us singing gently

Exiled is not lost !

God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,

Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost.

Patiently enduring,

Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you—

Hope the uttermost—

Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded,

Hear us sing above you—

EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

*The stars shine on brightly, while
ADAM and EVE pursue their way
into the far wilderness. There is a
sound through the silence, as of the
falling tears of an angel.*

THE LOST BOWER.

IN the pleasant orchard closes,
'God bless all our gains,' say we ;
But 'May God bless all our losses,'
Better suits with our degree.

Listen gentle—ay, and simple ! Listen
children on the knee !

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played—
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade ;
Summer-snow of apple blossoms running
up from glade to glade.

There is one hill I see nearer,
In my vision of the rest ;
And a little wood seems clearer,
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to
the airy upland crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun
dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement ;
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth
quickly through content.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound :
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground :
You may walk beneath them smiling,
glad with sight and glad with sound.

For you hearken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all ;
And the squirrels crack the filberts,
through their cheerful madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale ;
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the hills
look you their ' All hail !'

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise ;
Close as brother leans to brother,
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from
the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted

Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions,
through the sunshine and the snow.*

Yet in childhood little prized I
That fair walk and far survey :
'Twas a straight walk, unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay—
Up and down—as dull as grammar on
the eve of holiday.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a
glamour past dispute.

Few and broken paths showed through
it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They with silly thorn-pricked noses,
bleated back into the sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow :
I could pierce them ! I could longer
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children
climb and creep where they would go.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude !
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sat to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out
pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving, in
their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me,
and the barrier branches strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonaire,
Under-crawling, overleaping,
Thorns that prick and boughs that
bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was glad-
dened unaware.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close ;
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence
signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightening
All adown its silver rind ;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from
the sky where it was shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of beauty
which I sing of thus to you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide.
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,
as by garden-cunning plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music, than for
footsteps on the walk.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place !
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the
summit from the base.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was inwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild-hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion, did
right sylvanly entwine.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lythe and growing tall ;
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, lean-
ing, nodding at the wall.

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence, very rare
and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made before
me,
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which
slanted overhead.

'Is such a pavement in a palace ?'
So I questioned in my thought :
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an
answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward
winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of
sight yet blessing well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling,
Quick I turned my childish face ;
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place,
To the trees which surely knew it, in
partaking of the grace.

Where's no foot of human creature,
How could reach a human hand ?
And if this be work of nature,

Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild work? It
was hard to understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender ruing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the
sudden mildness worn?

Or could the same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong;
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the
last true poet's song?

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on
the blessed Sabbath days?

So, young muser, I sat listening
To my fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which
was rather felt than heard.

Softly, finely, it enwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting
smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who know-
eth?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed,
Which has sucked the milk of waters
at the oldest riverhead.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-*evanished* dark
Cast his singing to their singing, like an
arrow to the mark.

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet song she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she
sings it not to me.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the
bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to
the summer heavens complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seemed
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamed,
While it sat in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing
nigh her silent mouth.

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'Yea' or give me 'Nay'—
Though my soul were nympholeptic,
As I heard that virelay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon,
for my sin is far away.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet,
Like a garment rustling downwards!—
such a silence followed it.

Heart and head beat through the
quiet,
Full and heavily, though slower;
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless,
then returned me to the Hour.

In a child-*abstraction* lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past;
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all
consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains,
I stood silently and still;

Drawing strength for fancy's daunt-
ings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and
most debonair goodwill.

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things with praises
To the beauty of the truth:
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing
joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will
nevermore missay.

Henceforth I will be the fairy
Of this bower, not built by one;
I will go there sad or merry,
With each morning's benison:
And the bird shall be my harper in the
dream-hall I have won.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning!
This is truth in its pure grace;)
The next morning, all had vanished, or
my wandering missed the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew—
By the advent of the snow-drop—by the
rosemary and rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore upon it, turned my
mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair—
Never garden-creeper crossed it,
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw
and heard them there.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith—
Under leaf and over briar—
Through the thickets, out of breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty
from the sleep as long as death.

But his sword of mettle clashed,
And his arm smote strong, I ween;
And her dreaming spirit flashed
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him
up the cedar alleys green.

But for me, I saw no splendor—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as *Cædipus's* grave-place, 'mid *Co-*
lone's olives swart.

As *Aladdin* sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four and twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun;
So, in wilderment of gazing I looked up,
and I looked down.

Years have vanished since as wholly
As the litle bower did then;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again?
Ah! I cannot change this sighing for
your smiling, brother-men!

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigor,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than
an arbor in a wood.

I have lost—oh many a pleasure—
Many a hope and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure—
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the
losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the
face of what is won—

Exhalations in the far light,
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet,
for the very shame of bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break ;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the stagelike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the
road it ought to take.

Some respect to social fictions
Hath been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our
false Humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look away ;—
Ye would answer me, 'Farewell !
you
Make sad company to-day ;
And your tears are falling faster than
the bitter words you say.'

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground, with power ;
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower !
And I suffered many losses ; and my
first was of the bower.

Laugh you ? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-
tree,
The young children laugh thereat ;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and
the tempest shall be great !

One who knew me in my childhood,
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where
those changes overcame.

On this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—

Through the fingers which, still sigh-
ing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I
behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind—
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined,
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they
have neither grown nor pined.

From those overblown faint roses,
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
For the winters and the summers which
have passed me overhead.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, and sylvan eaves :
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth ?
Fay or Faunus—who believes ?
But my heart still trembles in me, to the
trembling of the leaves.

Is the bower lost, then ? Who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost ?
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to
the last and uttermost—

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne ;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees,
singing—'ALL IS LOST . . and won !'

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer, and told for
beads
The dews of the eventide.

'O young page,' said the knight,
 'A noble page art thou!
 Thou fearest not to steep in blood
 The curls upon thy brow;
 And once in the tent, and twice in the
 fight,
 Didst ward me a mortal blow—'

'O brave knight,' said the page,
 'Or ere we hither came,
 We talked in tent, we talked in field
 Of the bloody battle game:
 But here, below this greenwood bough,
 I cannot speak the same.

'Our troop is far behind,
 The woodland calm is new;
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled
 hoofs,
 Tread deep the shadows through;
 And in my mind, some blessing kind
 Is dropping with the dew.

'The woodland calm is pure—
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought from these, o' the beechen-
 trees
 Which in our England wave;
 And of the little finches fine
 Which sang there, while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

'Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard my mother pray!
 I heard, sir knight, the prayer for *me*
 Wherein she passed away;
 And I know the Heavens are leaning
 down
 To hear what I shall say.'

The page spake calm and nigh
 As of no mean degree;
 Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
 Full heart, his own was free
 And the knight looked up to his lifted
 eye,
 Then answered smilingly:—

'Sir Page, I pray your grace!
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow;
 But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
 I ween, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow.

'And this, I meant to say.—
 My lady's face shall shine
 As ladies' faces use, to greet
 My Page from Palestine:
 Or, speak she fair, or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine.

'And this I meant to fear,—
 Her bower may suit thee ill!
 For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still;
 And fitter thy hand for thy knightly
 spear,
 Than thy tongue for my lady's will.'

Slowly and thankfully
 'The young page bowed his head:
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
 Until he blushed instead;
 And no lady in her bower pardie,
 Could blush more sudden red—
 'Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me,
 Is suited well,' he said.

Beati, beati mertui!
 From the convent on the sea,
 One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
 Swells the dirge as clear and high
 As if that, over brake and lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St Mary,
 And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
 And the lady Abbess dead before it,
 And the chanting nuns whom yester-
 week

Her voice did charge and bless—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the Dead than upon death!

Beati, beati, mortui!
 Now the vision in the sound
 Wheeleth on the wind around—
 Now it sleepeth back, away—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,
 Or ere the page's blush is past!
 And the knight heard all, and the page
 heard none.

'A boon, thou noble knight,
 If ever I served thee!
 Though thou art a knight and I am a
 page,

Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye.'

Gloomily looked the knight ;
' As a son thou hast served me ;
And would to none I had granted boon,
Except to only thee !
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.

' Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon :
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down :
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame : I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.

' Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend ;
And while I rode the lists at court
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.

' O, calm, below the marble gray
My father's dust was strown !
Oh, meek, above the marble gray
His image prayed alone !
The slanderer lied—the wretch was
brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

' But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it !
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit :
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon that traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

' I would my hand had fought that fight
And justified my father !
I would my heart had caught that wound
And slept beside him rather !

I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend and marriage-
ring
Forced on my life together.

' Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier :
Till—' Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
' And bring the avengèd son anear !
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee :
For white of blee with waiting for me'
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

' I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife—
' My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wert not here
His own and eke my life.
A boon ! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

' I said, ' My steed neighs in the court ;
My bark rocks on the brine ;
And the warrior's vow I am under now
To free the pilgrim's shrine :
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
And call that daughter of thine ;
And rule she wide from my castle on
Nyde
While I am in Palestine.'

' In the dark chambère, if the bride was
fair,
Ye wis, I could not see ;
But the steed thrice neighed, and the
priest fast prayed
And wedded fast were we.
Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed ;
And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother
dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

' My page, my page, what grieves thee
so,
That the tears run down thy face ?'
' Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr
Was in thy lady's case !
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,

Disguised as his true servitor,
'To the very battle-place.'

And wept the page, but laughed the
knight,

A careless laugh laughed he :
'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
But not for my ladye !

My love, so please you shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be.'

The page stopped weeping, and smiled
cold—

'Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear :
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well—I dare to hold—
By truth, or by despair.'

He smiled no more—he wept no more—
But passionately he spake,—

'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake !
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
For one belovèd's sake !—

And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
Most woman-pure did make !'

'Well done it were for thy sistèr
Thou tellest well her tale !

But for my lady, she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale—

Not dread for me but love for me
Shall make my lady pale :
No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman's veil.'

'But what if she mistook thy mind
And followed thee to strife ;
Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
As Paynims ask for life ?'

'I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

'Look up—there is a small bright cloud
Alone amid the skies !

So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's honor lies.'

The page looked up—the cloud was
sheen—

A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes :

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welken unto hill—

Ha ! who rides there ?—the page is
'ware,

Though the cry at his heart is still !
And the page seeth all and the knight
seeth none

Though banner and spear do fleck the
sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—

'Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide !'
'Yea, fast, my page ; I will do so ;
And keep thou at my side.'

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede !
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed ;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride !
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side.'

The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's
face,

No smile the word had won !
Had the knight looked up in the page's
face,

I ween he had never gone :
Had the knight looked back to the
page's geste,

I ween he had turned anon :
 For dread was the wo in the face so
 young ;
 And wild was the silent geste that flung
 Casque, sword to earth—as the boy
 down-sprung,
 And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands as if to hold
 His soul's great agony—
 'Have I renounced my womanhood,
 For wifehood unto *thee* ?
 And is this the last, last look of thine
 That ever I shall see ?

'Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
 A lady to thy mind ;
 More woman-proud and half as true
 As one thou leav'st behind !
 And God me take with HIM to dwell—
 For HIM I cannot love too well,
 As I have loved my kind.'

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
 The hopeful Heavens to seek :
 That little cloud still floateth there,
 Whereof her Loved did speak.
 How bright the little cloud appears !
 Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
 And the tears down either cheek.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
 The Paynims round her coming !
 The sound and sight have made her
 calm,—
 False page, but truthful woman !
 She stands amid them all unmoved :
 The heart once broken by the loved
 Is strong to meet the foeman.

'Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,
 From pouring wine cups resting ?'—
 'I keep my master's noble name,
 For warring, not for feasting :
 And if that here Sir Hubert were,
 My master brave, my master dear,
 Ye would not stay to question.'

'Where is thy master, scornful page,
 That we may slay or bind him ?'—
 'Now search the lea and search the
 wood,
 And see if ye can find him !
 Nathless, as hath been often tried,
 Your Paynim heroes faster ride
 Before him than behind him.'

'Give smoother answers, lying page,
 Or perish in the lying,'—
 'I trow that if the warrior brand
 Beside my foot, were in my hand,
 'Twere better at replying.'
 They cursed her deep, they smote her
 low,
 They cleft her golden ringlets through :
 The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
 And met it from beneath
 With smile more bright in victory
 Than any sword from sheath,—
 Which flashed across her lip serene,
 Most like the spirit-light between
 The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco !
 From the convent on the sea,
 Now it sweepeth solemnly !
 As over wood and over lea
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
 And the weary nuns with hearts that
 faintly

Beat along their voices saintly—
Ingemisco, ingemisco !
 Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
 Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
 Page or lady, as we said,
 With the dews upon her head,
 All as sad if not as loud :
Ingemisco, ingemisco !
 Is ever a lament begun
 By any mourner under sun,
 Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one* ?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

PART FIRST.

'ONORA, ONORA'—her mother is calling—

She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling

Drop after drop from the sycamores laden

With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden—

'Night cometh, Onora.'

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,

To the limes at the end where the green arbor is—

'Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,

While forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her—

Night cometh, Onora!'

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on

Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done,

And the choristers sitting with faces aslant

Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—

'Onora, Onora!'

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—

'Onora, art coming?'—what is it she seeth?

Nought, nought, but the gray border-stone that is wist

To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—

'My daughter!'—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,

She is 'ware of her little son playing below;

'Now where is Onora?'—He hung down his head

And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet red,—

'At the tryst with her lover.'

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,

'As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?

When we know that her lover to battle is gone,

And the saints know above that she loveth but one

And will ne'er wed another?'

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight yet sad

To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:

He stamped with his foot, said—'The saints know I lied

Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide!

Must I utter it, mother?'

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,

And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;

But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—

'Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosarie,

At nights in the ruin!

'The old convent ruin the ivy rots off, Where the owl hoots by day, and the

toad is sun-proof;

Where no singing-birds build; and the trees gaunt and gray

As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—

But is *this* the wind's doing?

'A nun in the east wall was buried alive, Who mocked at the priest when he called

her to shrive,—

And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,

The old abbess fell backward and
swooned unto death
With an ave half-spoken.

'I tried once to pass it, myself and my
hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shiver-
ed to ground!
A brave hound, my mother! a brave
hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same with his
fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken.

'At dawn and at eve, mother, who
sitteth there,
With the brown rosarie never used for
a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went
there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that west
wall must be
At dawn and at even!

'Who meet there, my mother, at dawn
and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking
to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with
thee,
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosarie,
And a face turned from heaven?

'St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams;
and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the
warmth of her smile—
But last night, as a sadness like pity
came o'er her,
She whispered—' Say *two* prayers at
dawn for Onora!
The Tempted is sinning.'

Onora, Onora! they heard her not com-
ing—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice
through the gloaming:
But her mother looked up, and she stood
on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came
there before,
And a smile just beginning:

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of
her eyes:
And the large musing eyes, neither joy-
ous nor sorry
Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-
colored, till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with
a word:
While—O soft!—her speaking is so inter-
wound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight
of sound
And floats through the chamber.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair
mother,' said she,
'I count on thy priesthood for marrying
of me:
And I know by the hills that the battle
is done—
That my lover rides on—will be here
with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee!'

Her mother sat silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dy-
ing to kiss;
But the boy started up pale with tears,
passion-wrought,—
'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter
nought!
If he cometh, who told thee?'

'I know by the hills,' she resumed calm
and clear,
'By the beauty upon them, that HE is
anear:
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me
adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother,
is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping.'

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy
did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell
on his cheek:
She bowed down to kiss him—Dear
saints, did he see

Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSA-
RIE—
That he shrank away weeping?

PART SECOND.

A bed—ONORA sleeping. Angels, but
not near.

First Angel.
Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.
And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits when

They meeken, not to God, but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing,
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep :
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—

God's love—for man's :

First Angel.

We may reprove

The world for this! not only her :
Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before :
While, in a mother undefiled
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word : Is she redeemed ?

Second Angel.

No more !

THE PLACE IS FILLED.

[Angels vanish.]

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forebear that
dream! too near to Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis
but a dream, sweet fiend !

Evil Spirit.

It is a thought.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent
of good—

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend !
it cannot, if it would.

I say in it no holy hymn,—I do no holy
work ;

I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that
chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forebear that dream—forebear that
dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me dream at least :
That far-off bell, it may be took for viol
at a feast—

I only walk among the fields, beneath
the autumn-sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand, as
I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forebear that dream—forebear that
dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with him, O
nevermore but so :

Oh, deep and straight ; oh, very straight !
they move at nights alone :

And then he calleth through my dreams,
he calleth tenderly,

'Come forth, my daughter, my beloved,
and walk the fields with me !'

Evil Spirit.

Forebear that dream, or else disprove its
pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my
word shall answer thine.

I hear a bird which used to sing when I
a child was praying ;

I see the poppies in the corn I used to
sport away in.

What shall I do—tread down the dew,
and pull the blossoms blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the
finches from the rowen ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still :
stand up where thou dost stand

Among the fields of Dreamland with
thy father hand in hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—
declare its cause and kind,

Which, not to break, in sleep or wake,
thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for
mournful cause :

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the
spirits laughed applause :

The spirits trailed along the pines low
laughter like a breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops
the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me,
why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death,
and I shrank back afraid :

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I
did not fear to die ;

I wish I were a young dead child, and
had thy company !

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried
three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon
my lips that smiled !

The linden tree that covers thee might
so have sheltered twain—

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love
that makes the pain.

Love feareth death. I was no child—I
was betrothed that day ;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could
not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and still
beneath a stone,

And feel mine own Betrothed go by—
alas ! no more mine own,—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some
lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red as rose,
while mine were white in grave ?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on
e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her* ! that
else he loveth none ?

Though e'er so high I sate above, though
e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the
new oath he might take—

That *hers*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes,
—ah, me ! while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven !)
would darken down to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wast called to death ?
Onora in sleep.

I sat all night beside thee—

The gray owl on the ruined wall shut
both his eyes to hide thee ;

And ever he flapped his heavy wing all
brokenly and weak,

And the long grass waved against the
sky, around his gasping beak.

I sate beside thee all the night, while the
moonlight lay forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's
shroud, in ghastly fragments torn.

And through the night, and through the
hush, and over the flapping wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate
the angels murmuring :—

We heard them say, 'Put day to day,
and count the days to seven,

'And God will draw Onora up the gold-
en stairs of Heaven :

'And yet the evil ones have leave that
purpose to defer,

'For if she has no need of HIM, He has
no need of *her*'—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.
Onora in sleep

And then I heard thee say,—

'I count upon my rosarie brown the
hours thou hast to stay !

'Yet God permits us evil ones to put by
that decree,

'Since if thou hast no need of HIM, he
has no need of *thee*—

'And if thou wilt forego the sight of an-
gels, verily

'Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall
guess what angels be—

Nor bride shall pass save thee' . . .

Alas ! my father's hand's acold—

The meadows seem. . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told !

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown, this string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds—

This rosarie brown which is thine own,—lost soul of buried nun,

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike undone ;—

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown,—and, till such vow should break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my neck—

I vowed to thee on rosarie, (Dead father, look not so !)

I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my wo.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love ! I felt him near again ! I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain !

Was this no weal for me to feel ?—is greater weal than this ?

Yet when he came, I wept his name— and the angels heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done !

Onora in sleep.

Ay me ! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—

Ay me ! how dread can look the Dead ! —Aroint thee, father mine !

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,

And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through the night :

There is nought. The great willow, her lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor ;

But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and free

From the death-clasp, close over—the

BROWN ROSARIE.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal ; the merry bride-bell

Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle ;

And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,

And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair company,

The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once

All the maids sigh demurely, and think for the nonce,

'And so endeth a wooing !'

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,

With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say :

Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,

And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,

When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware

From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,

Till in nearing the chapel, and glancing before,

She seeth her little son stand at the door. Is it play that he seeketh ?

Is it play ? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,

And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child !

He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,

And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun

On his head like a glory.

'O fair-featured maids, ye are many !' he cried,—

'But, in fairness and vileness, who
matcheth the bride ?

O brave-hearted youths, ye are many,
but whom,

For the courage and woe, can ye match
with the groom,

As ye see them before ye ?'

Out spake the bride's mother—'The
vileness is thine,

If thou shame thine own sister, a bride
at the shrine !'

Out spake the bride's lover—'The vile-
ness be mine,

If he shame mine own wife at the hearth
or the shrine,

And the charge be unprovèd.

'Bring the charge, prove the charge,
brother ! speak it aloud—

Let thy father and liers, hear it deep in
his shroud !'

—'O father, thou seest—for dead eyes
can see—

How she wears on her bosom *a brown
rosarie,*

O my father beloved !'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and
outlaughed withal

Both maidens and youths, by the old
chapel wall—

'So she weareth no love-gift, kind
brother,' quoth he,

'She may wear an she listeth, a brown
rosarie,

Like a pure-hearted lady !'

Then swept through the chapel the long
bridal train :

Though he spake to the bride she re-
plied not again :

On, as one in a dream, pale and stately
she went

Where the altar-lights burn o'er the
great sacrament,

Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between
them and her,

And calmly knelt down on the high-
altar stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to the
view,

That the priest could not smile on the
child's eyes of blue

As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured
and white,

That seems kneeling to pray on the
tomb of a knight,

With a look taken up to each iris of
stone

From the greatness and death where he
kneeleth, but none

From the face of a mother.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have wed-
ded and shriven

Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sin-
ners for Heaven !

But this fairest my sister, ye think now
to wed,

Bid her kneel where she standeth, and
shrive her instead—

O shrive her and wed not !'

In tears, the bride's mother,—'Sir priest,
unto thee

Would he lie, as he lied to this fair com-
pany !'

In wrath, the bride's lover,—The lie
shall be clear !

Speak it out, boy ! the saints in their
niches shall hear—

Be the charge proved or said not !'

Then serene in his childhood he lifted
his face,

And his voice sounded holy and fit for
the place—

'Look down from your niches, ye still
saints, and see

How she wears on her bosom *a brown
rosarie !*

Is it used for the praying ?'

The youths looked aside—to laugh there
were a sin—

And the maidens' lips trembled with
smiles shut within :

Quoth the priest—'Thou art wild, pret-
ty boy ! Blessed she

Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosa-
rie

To a worldly arraying !'

The bridegroom spake low and led on-
ward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood
side by side:

The rite-book is opened, the rite is be-
gun—

They have knelt down together to rise
up as one—

Who laughed by the altar ?

The maidens looked forward, the youths
looked around.

The bridegroom's eye flashed from his
prayer at the sound ;

And each saw the bride, as if no bride
she were,

Gazing cold at the priest without ges-
ture of prayer,

As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so,
but still

He felt a power on him too strong for
his will ;

And whenever the Great Name was
there to be read,

His voice sank to silence—THAT could
not be said,

Or the air could not hold it.

'I have sinned,' quoth he, 'I have sin-
ned, I wot'—

And the tears ran adown his old cheeks
at the thought ;

They dropped fast on the book ; but he
read on the same,

And aye was the silence where should
be the NAME,

As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite
being done,

They who knelt down together, arise
up as one :

Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride
is she,—

But, for all (think the maidens) that
brown rosarie,

No saint at her praying !

What aileth the bridegroom ? He glares
blank and wide—

Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the
bride—

His lip stung her with cold : she glanced
upwardly mute :

'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark
at her foot

In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head
sinks away,

And his face showeth bleak in the sun-
shine and gray.

Leave him now where he lieth—for oh,
nevermore

Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a
floor !

Let his bride gaze upon him !

Long and still was her gaze, while they
chafed him there,

And breathed in the mouth whose last
life had kissed her :

But when they stood up—only *they!*
with a start

The shriek from her soul struck her
pale lips apart—

She has lived, and foregone him !

And low on his body she droppeth
adown—

'Didst call me thine own wife, beloved
—thine own ?

Then take thine own with thee ! thy
coldness is warm

To the world's cold without thee ! Come,
keep me from harm

In a calm of thy teaching !'

She looked in his face earnest long, as
in sooth

There were hope of an answer,—and
then kissed his mouth ;

And with head on his bosom, wept, wept
bitterly,—

'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on
me !—

God, hear my beseeching !'

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed
where she lay ;

She was 'ware of a presence that with-
er'd the day—

Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I surren-
der to *thee*

The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed
rosarie,—

I am ready for dying !'

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-
paved ground,
Where it fell mute as snow; and a
weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long
and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the chor-
ister's hymn
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the gar-
den walk :

'I am weary, O my mother, of thy ten-
der talk !

I am weary of the trees a-waving to and
fro—

Of the steadfast skies above, the running
brooks below ;

All things are the same but I ;—only I
am dreary ;

And, mother, of my dreariness behold
me very weary.

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I
planted in the spring,
And smiled to think I should smile more
upon their gathering.

The bees will find out other flowers—
oh, pull them dearest mine,

And carry them and carry me before St.
Agnes' shrine.'

—Whereat they pulled the summer flow-
ers she planted in the spring,

And her and them all mournfully to
Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and
gently shook her head—

'The picture is too calm for *me*—too
calm for *me*,' she said :

'The little flowers we brought with us,
before it we may lay,

For those are used to look at heaven,—
but I must turn away—

Because no sinner under sun can dare or
bear to gaze

On God's or angel's holiness, except in
Jesu's face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—
'And were it wisely done,

If we who cannot gaze above, should
walk the earth alone ?

If we whose virtue is so weak, should
have a will so strong,

And stand blind on the rocks, to choose
the right path from the wrong ?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, in-
stead of love and Heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose-tree, which
beareth seven times seven ?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that
fadeth in the breast,

Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn
what is the best !'

Then breaking into tears,—'Dear God,'
she cried, 'and must we see

All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere
we go to THEE ?

We cannot guess thee in the wood, or
hear thee in the wind ?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we
see the light behind ?

Ay, sooth, we feel too strong in weal, to
need thee on that road ;

But wo being come, the soul is dumb
that crieth not on 'God.'

Her mother could not speak for tears ;
she ever mused thus—

'The bees will find out other flowers,—
but what is left for *us* ?

But her young brother stayed his sobs
and knelt beside her knee,

Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast
never a word for me ?'

She passed her hand across his face, she
pressed it on his cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed
not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that
day, at vespers bloomed no more—

The woman fair who placed it there,
had died an hour before.

Both perished mute, for lack of root,
earth's nourishment to reach ;

O reader breathe (the ballad saith) some
sweetness out of each !

A VISION OF POETS.

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stifle thy great power?

Echo. Power.
Power! but of whence? under the greenwood sprays?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.

Echo. In Heavens aye.
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By alms, by lastings, prayer,—by paine?

Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
I to my end will still go on.

Echo. Go on.
BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night:

And thus he rose disquieted
With sweet rhymes ringing through his
head,
And in the forest wandered;

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colounades,
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver: pavement fair,
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would
dare
To footprint o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,
With tears in their large eyes to see
The consecrated sight. But HE

The poet—who with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A Beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-
ment,

Nor jarred it with his humor as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then—as rhyme to
rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from Heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim—

Much less a lady riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face—
'What, ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night, in ghostly chase

'Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
Who chants between the nightingales,
And over sleep by song prevails?'

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone: 'Now, nay,'
He answered,—'slumber passed away.

Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.'

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake:—'The moon's regality
Will hear no praise! she is as I.

'She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom—I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.'

He brake in with a voice that mourned—
'To their worth, lady! They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

'To their worth! Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold; and love re-
finéd
Ambitions make the world unkind.

'The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

'Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets!—Why should I be moved
In saying both are more beloved?

'The south can judge not of the north;'
She resumed calmly—'I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

'Yea, verily, and to anoint them all
With blessed oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall.'

'As sweet,' the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, 'as flowers are, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young.

'As sweet as window eglantine—
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign.

'As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud.'

The lady answered, 'Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance as I measure it.

'Since sweet the death-clothes and the
knell
Of him who having lived, dies well,—
And holy sweet the asphodel

'Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this!

'Since sweet the tears, dropped at the
door
Of tearless Death,—and even before:
Sweet, consecrated evermore!

'What! dost thou judge it a strange
thing,
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring!

'Come on with me, come on with me;
And learn in coming! Let me free
'Thy spirit into verity.'

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went,
'I was a bee's hum—a little scent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did, far and spare
O'er-swim the masses everywhere:

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon
shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently.
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with
night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that arc
The conduits of God's life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings, blank as
death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood;

Since thunder stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree . . . alone,
That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

'Drink,' said the lady, very still—
'Be holy and cold.' He did her will,
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto,
Was bare of trees; there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies just a few,

Which sullen on the waters sat
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

'Drink,' said the lady, grave and slow,
'*World's use* behoveth thee to know.'
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and
rushes
That winds sang through in mournful
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime : the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

'Drink,' said the lady, sad and slow—
'*World's love* behoveth thee to know.'
He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-
cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop
Into his heart the chill strikes up :

He hears a silent gliding coil—
The snakes strain hard against the soil—
His foot slips in their slimy oil :

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Right in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek ;
'Must I drink *here*?' he seemed to seek
The lady's will with utterance meek.

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'it so must be'
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
'Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*.'

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth,
As if from rivers of the south.

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like—rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream,
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven
so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this :
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair disspread.
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold ;
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold.

But SHE was holy, pale, and high—
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

'Rise up!' said she, with voice where
 ^{song}
Eddied through speech—'rise up! be
 strong:
And learn how right avengeth wrong.'

The poet rose up on his feet:
He stood before an altar set
Forsacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altarlights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or
 pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and towards its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace.

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,

Broke full against the arched roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off,
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
Then, poisoning the white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave.

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering
 white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they
 showed,
In that pale shifting insense-cloud
Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend ;

The arches, like a giant's bow,
To bend and slacken,—and below
The niched saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw,
Grand-made and strong as Sinai's Law.

They could enunciate and refrain
From vibratory after-pain ;
And his brows height was sovereign—

On the vast background of his wings
Arose his image, and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes :
While at his side, 'twixt lights and
 glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left way bent,
The poet's sigh grew sentient

Of a strange company around,
And toward the altar,—pale and bound
With bay above the eye profound.

Deathful their faces were ; and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified :

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirit seemed to sink in him,
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current—These were poets true
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For truth—the ends being scarcely two,

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were—of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakspeare ! on whose forehead
climb
The crowns o' the world ! Oh, eyes sub-
lime—
With tears and laughters for all time !

Here, Æschylus,—the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did,—he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which down the
trees,
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who somewhat blind and deaf and
cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And
bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul:
And Sappho, with that glorie

Of ebon hair on calmed brows—
O poet-woman none foregoes
The leap attaining the repose !

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes : who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-
struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high.
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed death-
lessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood :
Who dropped his plummet down the
broad
Deep universe, and said 'No God,'

Finding no bottom : he denied
Divinely the Divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber side

By grace of God ! his face is stern,
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he could not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed :
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spencer drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one :—The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri ; and fancy-willed
Boiardo,—who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield,

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm : And not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso : bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Corneille,
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch
pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were
thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,

With murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon :

And bold De Vega, — who breathed
quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't—
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim :
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them and granted him

God for sole vision ! Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonaire
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they
drew
From outward Nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—
Whese fire-hearts sowed our furrows
when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue blind ; and Keats, the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and
sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave
And salt as life : forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

The poets faced, and many more,
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule :

All still as stone, and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved, and not by
sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to
their feet.

Drop after drop—dropped heavily
As century follows century
Into the deep cternity.

Then said the lady,—and her word
Came distant,—as wide waves were
stirred
Between her and the ear that heard :

' *World's use* is cold, *World's love* is
vain,
World's cruelty is bitter bane ;
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

' Harken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood ! Dismissing dread.
Now hear this angel in my stead :

' His organ's clavier strikes along
These poet's hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of wrong--

' A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from those who died,
An anthem fully glorified :

' Whereat God's blessing . . . IBARAK
Breathes back this music—folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack,

' And men walk in it, crying ' Lo !
' The world is wider, and we know
' The very heavens look brighter so.

' 'The stars move statelier round the
edge
' Of the silver spheres, and give in
pledge
' Their light for nobler privilege.

' 'No little flower but joys or grieves,
' Full life is rustling in the sheaves ;
' Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.'

' So works this music on the earth :
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To another worth to worth—

' A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

' Now harken !' Then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and
swound
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys — the tones were
mixed,
Dim, faint ; and thrilled and throbbled
betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,—

A Harmony that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward ! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse :

A Harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplexed chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves, as
It passed to God : The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass :

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of Nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapor-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
Like nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which
fell,

Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand and spake out sovranly—
'Tried poets, hearken and reply!

' Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the Jubilant,—

' If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance; and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

' If as two colors must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good,—

' If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

' If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Python, to make just
Their oracles, and merit trust,—

' If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world, must pale their lips,
And leave their own souls in eclipse—

' If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the
curse,—
Because that bolt (in man's reverse,)

' Was shot to the heart of the wood and
lies
Wedged deepest in the best :—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

' From influent angels, must shut down
Their lids first, upon sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

' If ONE who did redeem you back,
By HIS own loss from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

' Those temporal sorrows, till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

' If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

' What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labor loose?

' Or, oh ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me,
To make the world this harmony,

Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?"—
The Spirits bent
Their awful brows and said—"Content!"

Content! it sounded like *Amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men—
An affirmation full of pain

And patience :—ay, of glorying
And adoration,—as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad, until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—' Lo! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

' This pedal strikes out in the air :
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter,

' Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

' What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift!

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile :

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed—
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—an as he should faint!
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralized on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink
‘The salt rheum to the eyelid’s brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If *they* walked to instead of fro.

And some with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot for harmony.

And some composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear.

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O’ the lid—the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So, mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer’s forehead—though he
lacked
An inch of any. And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
A Pindar’s rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it. One, his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate,
Like Æschylus—and tried to prate
On trolling tongue, of fate and fate:

One set her eyes like Sappho’s—or
Any light woman’s! one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard shut lips, And one that drew
Sour humors from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd,
To speak for all—in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—‘ Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,—

‘ Fit service from sufficient soul—
Hand-service, to receive world’s dole—
Lip-service, in world’s ear to roll

‘ Adjusted concord—soft enow
To hear the wine cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show.

‘ Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o’er
The window-sill of metaphor.

‘ To give our hearts up! fie!—That rage
Barbaric antedates the age:
It is not done on any stage.

‘ Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back—must ours be bent?

‘ We are not pilgrims, by your leave,
No, nor yet martyrs! if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to . . . summer eve.

‘ And if we labor, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie.’

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair fed,
Each separate phrase till finished ;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flushed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them
worn—

Ay, jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth ! A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely—they had passed

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe,—
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying—' If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it.

' For where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay shortcomings evermore.

' Accept me therefore—Not for price,
And not for pride my sacrifice
Is tendered ! for my soul is nice

And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

' I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud : So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

' I ask no wages—seek no fame :
Sew me, for shroud round face and
name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

' I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use.

' I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain.

' Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound.

' Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste
And light God's future with my past.

The angel's smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking—ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below ;
But what he said I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was
laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son.

My soul, which might have seen, grew
blind

By what it looked on : I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze—And so as
erst

A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ and outburst.

With giant march, from floor to roof
Rose the full notes ; now parted off
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders ; now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and mind ;

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off to a low song

Fell upon minors,—wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Eularging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close,
Survived in confluent underflows,
Symphonious with the next that rose :

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backward (as a wind might
wave

A Brocken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall.

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought : and as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits solemnized and crowned,—
While the freed clouds of incense
wound

Ascending, following in their track
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him
first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory, with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed : the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted, as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted—slow :

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory :

Then he looked round : he was alone—
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being
wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that seared the
ground,—

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pools yew anear him drips—
World's cruelty attaints his lips ;

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill !

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
And mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the
wood,
And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—‘O God, my God !’

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bow-
ings,
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the
wood,
He prayed along the solitude,—
‘Thou, Poet-God, art great and good !’

‘And though we must have, and have
had
Right reason to be earthly sad,—
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad.’

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart—
We press too close in church and mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps: From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way; and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and
bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark! a distant sound that grows!
A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
A rustling murmur, not of those!

A breezy noise, which is not breeze!
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees;

Fair little children, morning-bright
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within
reach,

And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed—but the laugh
flew

From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
'Hush! keep this morning undefiled.'

His eyes rebuked them from calm
spheres;

His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
'What are your palms for?'—'To be
spread,'
He answered, 'on a poet dead.

'The poet died last month; and now
The world, which had been somewhat
slow

In honoring his living brow,

'Commands the palms—They must be
strown

On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town.'

I sighed and said, 'Did he foresee
Any such honor?' 'Verily
I cannot tell you,' answered he,

'But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

'A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked;

'Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

'With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad,
The images of things bestowed

'By the chief Poet,—God!' he cried,
'Be praised for anguish, which has tried;
For beauty, which has satisfied:—

'For this world's presence, half within
And half without me—sound and scene—
This sense of Being and of Having been.

'I thank thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world! Both guests may
come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb!

'I am content to be so weak,
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

'I am content to be so bare
Before the archers! everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly
air.

'I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

'I am content to feel the step
Of each pure Image!—let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep.

'I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

'Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind
And I am blessed to my mind.

'Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive!
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

'In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

'I know—is all the mourner saith,
(Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And life is perfected by Death!')

The child spake nobly. Strange to hear
His infantine soft accents clear,
Charged with high meanings, did ap-
pear,

And fair to see, his form and face,
Winged out with whiteness and pure
grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew;
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown.

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

'And so he died,' I whispered;—'Nay,
Not so,' the childish voice did say—
'That poet turned him, first, to pray

'In silence; and God heard the rest,
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the
west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

'Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—
'Come,'
He said, 'come nearer! Let the bloom

'Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not
wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

'Come, kiss me!' So the one in truth
Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to
mouth.

'And, in that kiss of Love, was won
Life's manumission: All was done—
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

'But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness.'

The child's voice trembled—his lips
shook
Like a rose leaning over a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

'And who,' I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, 'was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behooved?'

'I,' softly said the child; and then,
'I,' said he louder, once again.
'His son,—my rank is among men.

'And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

'He did not die alone; nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World praisers—a worse solitude.

'Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and
bloom,
Saying, *come nearer!*—and I come.

'Glory to God!' resumed he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and
chin

'That poet now hath entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

'And while he rests, his songs in troops
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companied by diviner Hopes.'

'But *thou*,' I murmured,—to engage
The child's speech farther—'hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage.'

'Glory to God—to God!' he saith—
KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENDURETH
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH!

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

WHEN last before her people's face her
own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade
she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips,
which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to
childhood still in sight—
To erase it with a solemn vow—a prince
ly vow—to rule—
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God
the pitiful,
A very god-like vow—to rule in right
and righteousness,
And with the law and for the land!—so
God the vower bless!
The minster was alight that day, but
not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown
that mighty aisled scene:
The priests stood stoled in their pomp,
the sworded chiefs in theirs,
And so, the collared knights,—and so,
the civil ministers,
And so, the waiting lords and dames—
and little pages best
At holding trains—and legates so, from
countries east and west—
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-
born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the queen's new
crowned, flashed coronets to light!
And so, the people at the gates, with
priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all
legal majesty.
And so the DEAD—who lie in rows be-
neath the minster floor,
There, verily an awful state maintain-
ing evermore—
The statesman whose clean palm will
kiss no bribe whate'er it be—
The courtier, who, for no fair queen
will rise up to his knee—
The court-dame who, for no court-tire,
will leave her shroud behind—
The laureate who no courtlier rhyme
than 'dust to dust' can find—
The kings and queens who having made
that vow and worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and dark-
er, deep adown!

Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them?
 what meaning can it have?—
 The King of kings, the right of death—
 God's judgment and the grave!
 And when betwixt the quick and dead
 the young fair queen had vowed,
 The living shouted 'May she live!
 Victoria, live!' aloud—
 And as the loyal shouts went up, true
 spirits prayed between,
 'The blessings happy monarchs have
 be thine, O crowned queen!'
 But now before her people's face she
 bendeth hers anew,
 And calls them, while she vows, to be
 her witness thereunto.
 She vowed to rule, and in that oath, her
 childhood put away—
 She doth maintain her womanhood, in
 vowing love to-day.
 O, lovely lady!—let her vow!—such lips
 become such vows,
 And fairer goeth bridal wreath than
 crown with vernal brows!
 O, lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let
 her vow to love!—
 And though she be no less a queen—
 with purples hung above,
 The pageant of a court behind, the
 royal kin around,
 And woven gold to catch her looks
 turned maidenly to ground,
 Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a
 little of that state,
 While loving hopes, for retinues, about
 her sweetness wait:
 SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—
 the chosen at her side
 Let none say, God preserve the queen!
 —but rather, Bless the bride!
 None blow the trump; none bend the
 knee, none violate the dream
 Wherein no monarch but a wife, she to
 herself may seem:
 Or, if ye say, Preserve the queen!—oh,
 breathe it inward low—
 She is a *woman* and *beloved*!—and 'tis
 enough but so!
 Count it enough, thou noble prince, who
 tak'st her by the hand,
 And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady
 of the land!
 And since, Prince Albert, men have
 called thy spirit high and rare,

And true to truth and brave for truth,
 as some at Augsburg were,—
 We charge thee, by thy lofty thoughts,
 and by thy poet-mind,
 Which not by glory and degree takes
 measure of mankind,
 Esteem that wedded hand less dear for
 sceptre than for ring,
 And hold her uncrowned womanhood
 to be the royal thing:
 And now, upon our queen's last vow,
 what blessings shall we pray?
 None straitened to a shallow crown,
 will suit our lips to-day.
 Behold, they must be free as love—they
 must be broad as free,
 Even to the borders of heaven's light
 and earth's humanity.
 Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—
 and true hearts pray between,—
 'The blessings happy PEASANTS have,
 be thine, O crowned queen!'

 CROWNED AND BURIED.

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great
 word
 Compact of human breath in hate and
 dread
 And exaltation, skied us overhead—
 An atmosphere whose lightning was the
 sword
 Scathing the cedars of the world,
 drawn down
 In burnings, by the metal of a crown.
 Napoleon! Nations, while they cursed
 that name,
 Shook at their own curse; and while
 others bore
 Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
 Brass-fronted legions justified its fame—
 And dying men, on trampled battle-
 sods,
 Near their last silence, uttered it for
 God's.
 Napoleon! Sages, with high heads
 drooped,
 Did use it for a problem; child in small
 Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's
 call:

Priests blessed it from their altars over-
stooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows
with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sat
alone.

That name consumed the silence of the
snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid :
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's
did,
And over-rushed her mountainous re-
pose
In search of eyries : and the Egyptian
river
Mingled the same word with its grand
'for ever.'

That name was shouted near the pyra-
midal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habi-
tants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness : Shouts
as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and
spice
Which swathed last glories round the
Ptolemies.

The world's face changed to hear it.
Kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewilder-
ment
From autocratic places—each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing :—
then
The people laughed or wondered for the
nonce,
To see one throne a composite of
thrones.

Napoleon ! Even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous
blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh
in blood !
Napoleon—from the Russias, west to
Spain !
And Austria trembled—till we heard her
chain.

And Germany was 'ware and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-
locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing unin-
voked,—
Did crumble her own ruins with her
knee,
To serve a newer :—Ay ! but French-
men cast
A future from them nobler than her
past.

For, verily, though France augustly
rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume
by such
The purple of the world,—none gave so
much
As she in purchase—to speak plain, in
loss—
Whose hands, to freedom stretched,
dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

King's crown to a great man's head.
And though along
Her Paris's streets, did float on fre-
quent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled
dreams,
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone
wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

Napoleon ! 'twas a high name lifted
high !
It met at last God's thunder sent to
clear
Our compassing and covering atmos-
phere,
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire : this of earth's was
done—
And kings crept out again to feel the
sun.

The kings crept out—the peoples sat at
home,
And finding the long-invoked peace
A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine, too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn
that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose—
 The nations stood up mute to count their dead—
 And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
 Through silence,—Trusting to his noblest foes
 When earth was all too grave for chivalry—
 Died of their mercies, 'mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,
 With a green willow for all pyramid,—
 Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
 A little more, if pilgrims overwept him
 Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
 Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

Nay! not so long!—France kept her old affection
 As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
 Until dilated by such love's remorse
 To a new angel of the resurrection,
 She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I would have
 The dead whereof thou wottest from that grave.'

And England answered in the courtesy
 Which ancient foes, turned lovers, may befit,—
 'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
 Throw in all former strife 'twixt thee and me.'
 Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim—
 But ask a little room too . . . for thy shame!

Because it was not well, it was not well,
 Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
 Among the Oceanides,—that heart
 To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.

I would, my noble England, men might seek
 All crimson stains upon thy breast—not check!

I would that hostile fleets had scarred
 'Torbay,
 Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
 Until thy princely purpose was assured.
 Then left a *shadow*—not to pass away—
 Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun!
 Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

And since it *was* done,—in the sepulchral dust
 We fain would pay back something of our debt
 To France, if not to honor, and forget
 How through much fear we falsified the trust
 Of a fallen foe and exile:—We return
 Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
 Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
 To-day a four-years child might carry it
 Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the burden 'bide!'
 Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
 Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

And run back in the chariot-marks of Time,
 When all the people shall come forth to meet
 The passive victor, death-still in the street
 He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
 And martial music,—under eagles which
 Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz.

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
 Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
 Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
 Majestically moaning. Give him room!

Room for the dead in Paris! welcome
solemn
And grave deep, 'neath the cannon-
moulded column!*

There, weapon spent and warrior spent
may rest

From roar of fields: provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—And this he *may*. For, dis-
possessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do
harm.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recover-
ered name
Shakes the old casements of the world!
and we

Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his
claim

To a French grave,—another kingdom
won,

The last—of few spans—by Napoleon.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise
—sooth!

But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—
granted!

But the *autos* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French: he
magnified

The image of the freedom he denied.

And if they asked for rights, he made
reply,

'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing
round them

His ample purple, glorified and bound
them

In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but
none

Were ruled like slaves! Each felt Na-
poleon!

I do not praise this man: the man was
flawed

For Adam—much more, Christ!—his
knee unbent—

His hand unclean—his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but
since he had

The genius to be loved, why let him
have

The justice to be honored in his grave.

I think this nation's tears poured thus
together,

Better than shouts: I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope
bless all:

I think this grave stronger than thrones:
But whether

The crowned Napoleon or the buried
clay

Be worthier, I discern not—Angels may.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free

By summer's earliest duty;
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
To pull the least in beauty.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
That learnt, by gazing on the sun,

To counterfeit his shining—
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, hath won anew
A glory . . . in declining.

Red roses used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song.

The nightingale's being over:
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

Deep violets you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal;

And cactuses, a queen might don,
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss

A jewel in the mirror:
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

Love's language may be talked with
these

To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter,
And such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing ;
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
Too earnestly for seeing.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
A type which seemeth worthy
Of that fair body hid below
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy.

And such being wreathed for worldly
feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colors viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature made,—renewing

No flowers our gardened England hath,
To match with these in bloom and breath
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
The elements presiding.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding ;
For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden.

But, *here*, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshtne :
And every Wind with stoled feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine :

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses, that
No harm shall touch his daughters)

Gives quite away the rushing sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do,
But make the leaves more brightly show
In posies newly gathered ?
I look away from all your best ;
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
A little flower half-withered.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened :
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows :
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of Heaven !

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on.

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh ! if her face she *turned then*,
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies—warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your
eyes,
Beloved friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters of a Child.*

I.

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight
With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will,
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still ?

II.

Before his shrine to doom thee
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
For the first time, won from thee,
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,
Save at his feet and o'er his head.

III.

Digging thine heart and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
His spirit's overflowing.
For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
Their channel in the heart have found.

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight !
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed ?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight !
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope came back to thee

Without a leaf. Art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly ?

VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight !
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye ;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

VIII.

Where's childhood ? where is Goethe ?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY
ON THAT POETESS.

I.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er
the bay-crowned Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow
the vital shadow throwing ;
And o'er the sighless songless lips the
wail and music wedding ;
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes, the
tears not of their shedding !—

II.

Take music from the silent Dead, whose
meaning is completer ;
Reserve thy tears for living brows,
where all such tears are meeter ;
And leave the violets in the grass to
brighten where thou treadest !
No flowers for her ! no need of flowers—
albeit "bring flowers," thou saidest

III.

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute!" since both may come to breaking:
 Or flowers, to greet the 'bride!' the heart's own beating works its aching:
 Or flowers, to soothe the 'captive's' sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,
 Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered!

IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse, a type of human seeming!
 Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming.
 And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,
 Her spherèd soul shall look on *them*, with eyes more bright and holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning.
 Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning?—
 The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod, for the afflated
 Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her brow was wreathing,
 But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in all her breathing;
 Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions high and moving—
 Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Saviour she descrieth,
 And little reck *who* wreathed the brow which on His bosom lieth.
 The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments flowing,
 There, learneth she the sweet 'new song,' she will not mourn in knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and, as thy dust decayeth,
 May thine own England say for thee, what now for her it sayeth—
 * Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
 The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her singing!

MY HEART AND I.

I.

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart and I.
 We sit beside the headstone thus,
 And wish that name were carved for us.
 The moss reprints more tenderly
 The hard types of the mason's knife,
 As heaven's sweet life renews earth's life
 With which we're tired, my heart and I.

II.

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
 We dealt with books, we trusted men,
 And in our own blood drenched the pen,
 As if such colors could not fly.
 We walked too straight for fortune's end,
 We loved too true to keep a friend:
 At last we're tired, my heart and I.

III.

How tired we feel, my heart and I!
 We seem of no use in the world;
 Our fancies hang gray and uncur ed
 About men's eyes indifferently;
 Our voice which thrilled you so, will let
 You sleep; our tears are only wet:
 What do we here, my heart and I.

IV.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
 It was not thus in that old time
 When Ralph sat with me neath the lime

To watch the sunset from the sky.

'Dear love, you're looking tired,' he said ;

I, smiling at him, shook my head :
'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

V.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !

Though now none takes me on his arm

To fold me close and kiss me warm
Till each quick breath end in a sigh

Of happy languor. Now, alone,
We lean upon this graveyard stone,
Uncheered, unloved, my heart and I.

VI.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.

Suppose the world brought diadems
To tempt us, crusted with loose gems
Of powers and pleasures ? Let it try.

We scarcely care to look at even
A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
We feel so tired, my heart and I.

VII.

Yet who complains ? My heart and I ?

In this abundant earth no doubt
Is little room for things worn out :
Disdain them, break them, throw them
by !

And if before the days grew rough
We *once* were loved, used,—well
enough,

I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wings to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die.

II.

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer hath a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III.

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold-I see
Could delve from roses easily ;

IV.

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich, and leave me
poor.

V.

If I were thou, O Eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud ;

VI.

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,
Which the next storm may trample
down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed ;

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut up window heard,
Like Love's sweet Yes too long de-
ferred ;

X.

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said :

XII.

" If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others : and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong ;

XIII.

'I would not waste my cares and
choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

'I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above and judge within.

XV.

'I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*.—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI.

'I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,
But takes God's freedom using it.

XVII.

'I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*; but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

'Then sing, O singer!—but allow
Beast, fly and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!'

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

'THERE is no God,' the foolish saith,
But none, 'There is no sorrow ;'
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow :
Eyes which the preacher could not
school,
By wayside graves are raised ;
And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'
Who ne'er said, 'God be praised.'
Be pitiful, O God !

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming ;
The beasts grow tame, and near us
creep,
As help were in the human :
Yet while the cloud-wheels roll and
grind

We spirits tremble under !—
The hills have echoes ; but we find
No answer for the thunder.
Be pitiful, O God !

The battle hurtles on the plains—
Earth feels new scythes upon her :
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest . . honor,—
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.
Be pitiful, O God !

The plague runs festering through the
town,
And never a bell is tolling :
And corpses jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling.
The young child calleth for the cup—
The strong man brings it weeping ;
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God !

The plague of gold strides far and near,
And deep and strong it enters :
This purple chimar which we wear,
Makes madder than the centaur's.
Our thoughts grow blank, our words
grow strange ;
We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God !

The curse of gold upon the land,
The lack of bread enforces—
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's White Horses !
The rich preach 'rights' and future
days,
And hear no angel scoffing :
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God !

We meet together at the feast—
To private mirth betake us—
We stare down in the winecup lest
Some vacant chair should shake us !
We name delight, and pledge it round—
'It shall be ours to-morrow !'

God's seraphs do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow ?
Be pitiful, O God !

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us :
We look into each other's eyes,
'And how long will you love us ?'
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices low and breathless—
'Till death us part !'—O words, to be
Our best for love the deathless !
Be pitiful, dear God !

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lids that said
Last night, 'Be stronger hearted !'
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely !—
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only !
Be pitiful, O God !

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces :
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places ?
We cannot speak :—we see anew
The hills we used to live in ;
And feel our mother's smile press
through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God !

We pray together at the kirk,
For mercy, mercy, solely—
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy !
The corpse is calm below our knee—
Its spirit bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest of glory !
Be pitiful, O God !

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions ;
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations.
Are we so brave ?—The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors ;
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.
Be pitiful, O God !

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding :
The sun strikes through the farthest
mist,
The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,
When hope and health were strong-
gest,
But now it is the churchyard grass,
We look upon the longest.
Be pitiful, O God !

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
Men whisper, 'He is dying :'
We cry no more, 'Be pitiful !'
We have no strength for crying :
No strength no need ! Then, Soul of
mine,
Look up and triumph rather—
Lo ! in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjures the Father—
BE PITIFUL, O GOD !

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

—Discordance that can accord.
ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate,
On a tall bough and straight !
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty guests did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
'Till time for roses be,—
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

'What glory then for me
In such company ?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty !

'Nay, let me in,' said she,
'Before the rest are free,—
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand,
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine?
What addressing, what caressing!
And what thank and praise and blessing!

'A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently;
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud;
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntime.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntime,
Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me,
With my starry aspect dreamy!

'And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green;
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so;
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the happy islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both;
Doing honor, doing honor,
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down,
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—'Ha, snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wast enthroned stately
All along my mountains lately?

'Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee!'

—Poor Rose to be misknown!
Would, she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say—
 Some *no . . . ah, wellaway!*
 But the passion did o'ercome her,
 And the fair frail leaves dropped from
 her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
 Close to a poet's foot,
 Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
 As at something sad yet holy :

Said, ' Verily and thus
 It chanceth too with *us*
 Poets singing sweetest snatches,
 While that deaf men keep the watches—

' Vaunting to come before
 Our own age evermore,
 In a loneliness, in a loneliness,
 And the nobler for that oneness !

' Holy in voice and heart,
 To high ends, set apart !
 All unmated, all unmated,
 Just because so consecrated.

' But if alone we be,
 Where is our empery ?
 And if none can reach our stature,
 Who can mete our lofty nature ?

' What bell will yield a tone,
 Swung in the air alone ?
 If no brazen clapper bringing,
 Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

' What angel, but would seem
 To sensual eyes, ghost-dim ?
 And without assimilation,
 Vain is inter-penetration.

' And thus, what can we do,
 Poor rose and poet too,
 Who both antedate our mission
 In an unprepared season ?

' Drop leaf—be silent song—
 Cold things we come among.
 We must warm them, we must warm
 them,
 Ere we ever hope to charm them.

' Howbeit' (here his face
 Lightened round the place,—

So to mark the outward turning
 Of his spirit's inward burning.)

' Something it is, to hold
 In God's worlds manifold,
 First revealed to creature-duty,
 Some new form of His mild Beauty !

' Whether that form respect
 The sense or intellect,
 Holy be in mood or meadow,
 The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow !

' Holy, in me and thee,
 Rose fallen from the tree,—
 Though the world stand dumb around
 us,
 All unable to expound us.

' Though none us deign to bless,
 Blessed are we, nathless :
 Blessed still and consecrated,
 In that, rose, we were created.

' Oh, shame to poet's lays
 Sung for the dole of praise,—
 Hoarsely sung upon the highway
 With that *obulum da mihi*.

Shame, shame to poet's soul,
 Pining for such a dole,
 When Heaven-chosen to inherit
 The high throne of a chief spirit !

' Sit still upon your thrones,
 O ye poetic ones !
 And if, sooth, the world decry you,
 Let it pass unchallenged by you !

' Ye to yourselves suffice,
 Without its flatteries.
 Self-contentedly approve you
 Unto HIM who sits above you,—

' In prayers that upward mount
 Like to a fur-sunned fount
 Which, in gushing back upon you,
 Hath an upper music won you.

' In faith—that still perceives
 No rose can shed her leaves,
 Far less, poet fall from mission—
 With an unfulfilled fruition !

' In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends ;
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly !

' In thanks—for all the good,
By poets understood—
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

' For life, so lovely-vain,
For death which breaks the chain,—
For this sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness !'

' For sights of things away,
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,
And the oldest ringer said, ' Ours is music for the Dead,
When the Rebecks are all done.' *Toll slowly.*

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the northside in a row,
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below. *Toll slowly.*

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,
And between the river flowing and the fair green trees a growing
Do the dead lie at their rest. *Toll slowly.*

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow gray :
Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low hill-ranges,
And the river on its way. *Toll slowly.*

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,
While the trees and river's voices flowed between the solemn noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to me. *Toll slowly.*

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the time
And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime. *Toll slowly.*

THE RHYME.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged—
And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart having prayed. *Toll slowly.*

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest. *Toll slowly.*

Down the sun dropt large and red, on the towers of Linteged.—
Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade. *Toll slowly.*

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,— *Toll slowly.*
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
 When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall, *Toll slowly.*
 And castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood,
 And to-night was near its fall

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,— *Toll slowly.*
 One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the doors,
 'May good angels bless our home.'

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,— *Toll slowly.*
 Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of youth
 Did light outward its own sighs.

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the Earl *Toll slowly.*
 Who betrothed her, twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,
 To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood, *Toll slowly.*
 Unto both those Lords of Leigh, spake she out right sovranly,
 My will runneth as my blood

'And while this same blood makes red this same right hand's veins,' she said,— *Toll slowly.*
 'Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
 But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth.— *Toll slowly.*
 'Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and small,
 For so large a will, in sooth.'

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,— *Toll slowly.*
 'Little hand clasps muckle gold ; or it were not worth the hold
 Of thy son, good uncle mine !'

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth, *Toll slowly.*
 'He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him, and she loathed,
 Let the life come or the death.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise, *Toll slowly.*
 'Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,' quoth she,
 'And he moans not where he lies,

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward !— *Toll slowly.*
 'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and dowered lady,
 I deny you wife and ward.'

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty tread. *Toll slowly.*
 Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
 Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm ro'e amain : *Toll slowly.*
 Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the turf,
 In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued amain— *Toll slowly.*
 Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling hoof on hoof,
 In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of might, *Toll slowly.*
 And the bride lay on his arm, still as if she feared no harm,
 Smiling out into the night.

Dost thou fear ?' he said at last ;—' Nay !' she answered him in haste,—
Toll slowly.
 'Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind—
 Ride on fast as fear—ride fast !'

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks spread,—
Toll slowly.
 Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered—down the banks,
 To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly.
 In the courtyard rose the cry—' Live the Duchess and Sir Guy !'
 But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed his mane and kissed his neck,—
Toll slowly.
 'I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,'
 Were the first words she did speak.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day, *Toll slowly.*
 When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall,
 To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.
 And a fortnight's siege is done—and, except the Duchess, none
 Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so gray of blee, *Toll slowly.*
 And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold, white gnashing of his teeth,
 Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud—' So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess May !—
Toll slowly.
 Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's one,
 'Twill be through a foot of clay.

' Ha, fair bride ! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning of the hound ?—
Toll slowly.

Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance oath,
 And the other may come round.

' Ha ! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,— *Toll slowly.*
 Yet thine old love's falchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
 As the will of lady fair.

' Peck on blindly, netted dove !—if a wife's name thee behove, *Toll slowly*
 Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
 Of thy last ill-mated love.

' O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back troth, *Toll slowly*
 He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
 I forbid you,—I am loath !'

' I will wring my fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail, *Toll slow*
 ' Little hand and muckle gold ' close shall lie within my hold,
 As the sword did to prevail.'

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slow*
 O, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
 All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,— *Toll slowly.*
 ' Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my Lord of Leigh,
 But thou boasteth little wit.'

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly. *Toll slowly.*
 She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so plain,
 —' Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh !'

Straight she called her maidens in—' Since ye gave me blame herein, *Toll slowly.*
 That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
 Come and shrive me from that sin.

' It is three months gone to-day, since I gave mine hand away. *Toll slowly.*
 Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride state in them,
 While we keep the foe at bay.

' On your arms I loose my hair ;—comb it smooth and crown it fair, *Toll slowly.*
 I would look in purple-pall from this lattice down the wall,
 And throw scorn to one that's there !'

O, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly.*
 On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
 With an anguish in his breast.

- With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean down passionate. *Toll slowly.*
 They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there withal,
 With no knocking at the gate.
- Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the stone,—
Toll slowly.
- ‘Sword,’ he thought, with inward laugh, ‘ill thou servest for a staff
 When thy nobler use is done !
- ‘Sword, thy nobler use is done !—tower is lost, and shame begun ;
Toll slowly.
- If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
 We should die there, each for one.
- ‘If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,—
Toll slowly.
 But if I die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
 And die nobly for them all.
- ‘Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the brake,—
Toll slowly.
- Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast,
 And not one of these will wake.
- ‘And no more of this shall be !—heart-blood weighs too heavily—
Toll slowly.
 And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
 Heaped around and over me.
- ‘Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,
Toll slowly.
 Since my pale young sister’s cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
 Albeit never a word she saith—
- ‘These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily :
Toll slowly.
 And if I die here apart,—o’er my dead and silent heart
 They shall pass out safe and free.
- ‘When the foe hath heard it said—‘Death holds Guy of Linteged,’—
Toll slowly.
- ‘That new corse new peace shall bring ; and a blessed, blessed thing,
 Shall the stone be at its head.
- ‘Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,—
Toll slowly.
 Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride
 Whose sole sin was love of me.
- ‘With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat
Toll slowly.
 And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head
 While her tears drop over it.

'She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's prayers,—
Toll slowly.
 But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
 By the suntime of her years.

'Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,
Toll slowly.
 That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!
 Now my May-day seemeth brief.'

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange and dim,—
Toll slowly.
 Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face to face
 With the foe instead of him.

'One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do and dare!—
Toll slowly.
 Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service worth the cost,
 —Bold they stood around to swear.

'Each man clasp my hand and swear, by the deed we failed in there,
Toll slowly.
 Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night!
 Pale they stood around—to swear.

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do and dare!
Toll slowly.
 Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all,
 Guide him up the turret stair.

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height!
Toll slowly.
 Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and far,
 He shall bear me far to-night.'

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so.
Toll slowly.
 —'Las! the noble heart,' they thought,—'he in sooth is grief-distraught.
 Would, we stood here with the foe!'

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply,—
Toll slowly.
 'Have ye so much time to waste! We who ride here, must ride fast,
 As we wish our foes to fly.'

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,
Toll slowly.
 Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors;
 But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May repair. *Toll slowly.*
 'Tell me now what is your need,' said the lady, 'of this steed,
 That ye goad him up the stair?'

- Calm she stood ; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe,—
Toll slowly.
- And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
 Had not time enough to go.
- Get thee back, sweet Duchess May ! hope is gone like yesterday,—
Toll slowly.
- One half-hour completes the breach ; and thy lord grows wild of speech,
 Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.
- In the east tower, high'st of all,—loud he cries for steed from stall.
Toll slowly.
- He would ride as far,' quoth he, ' as for love and victory,
 Though he rides the castle wall.'
- And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall.—
Toll slowly.
- Wifely prayer meets deathly need ! may the sweet Heavens hear thee plead,
 If he rides the castle-wall.'
- Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,—
Toll slowly.
- And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word
 Which you might be listening for.
- Get thee in, thou soft ladie !—here is never a place for thee !—
Toll slowly.
- Braid thy hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
 May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'
- She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet stately face,
Toll slowly.
- Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to look
 Right against the thunder-place.
- And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—
Toll slowly.
- Go to, faithful friends, go to !—Judge no more what ladies do,—
 No, nor how their lords may ride !'
- Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke :
Toll slowly.
- Soft he neighed to answer her ; and then followed up the stair,
 For the love of her sweet look.
- Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,—
Toll slowly
- Oh, and closely speeding, step by step beside her treading,
 Did he follow, meek as hound.
- On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly
- Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely lady,
 Calm as if in bower or stall !

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently,—
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her eyes
Which he could not bear to see. *Toll slowly.*

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints bless thy life!—
In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
But no more of my noble wife.' *Toll slowly.*

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun :
But by all my womanhood,—which is proved so true and good,
I will never do this one. *Toll slowly.*

'Now by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's verity,
In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*. *Toll slowly.*

'By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardie,
If this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*. *Toll slowly.*

'So the sweet saints with me be' did she utter solemnly,
'If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*.' *Toll slowly.*

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter well,—
Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
'To hear chime a vesper bell?' *Toll slowly.*

She clang closer to his knee—'Ay, beneath the cypress tree!—
Mock me not; for otherwhere than along the green-wood fair,
Have I ridden fast with thee! *Toll slowly.*

'Fast I rode with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house!
What! and would you men should wreck that I dared more for love's sake
As a bride than as a spouse? *Toll slowly.*

'What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,
That a bride may keep your side while through castlegate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall?' *Toll slowly.*

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,—
With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing! *Toll slowly.*

Twice he wrung her hands in twain; but the small hands closed again.
Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track
With a frantic clasp and strain! *Toll slowly.*

Evermore the foeman pour through the crash of window and door,—
Toll slowly.
 And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of 'kill!' and 'flee!'
 Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—but they closed and clung again,—
Toll slowly.
 Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,
 In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shuddering lips half-shut,
Toll slowly.
 Her head fallen as half in swoond,—hair and knee swept on the ground,
 She clung wild to stirrup and feet.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery coping-stone.
Toll slowly.
 Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind,
 Whence a hundred feet went down.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank bestrode, *Toll slowly.*
 'Friends and brothers, save my wife!—Pardon, sweet, in change for life,—
 But I ride alone to God.'

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a flame, *Toll slowly.*
 She upsprang, she rose upright,—in his selle she sat in sight;
 By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at rest,—
Toll slowly.
 'Ring,' she cried, 'O vesper-bell, in the beach-wood's old chapelle!
 But the passing-bell rings best.'

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose—in vain,
Toll slowly.
 For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
 On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between—and his nostrils curdle in,—
Toll slowly.
 And he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall off;
 And his face grows fierce and thin!

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go, *Toll slowly.*
 And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
 Of the headlong death below,—

And 'Ring, ring,—thou passing-bell,' still she cried, 'i' the old chapelle!—
Toll slowly.
 Then Back-toppling, crushing back, a dead weight flung out to wrack,
 Horse and riders overfell!

Oh, the little birds sang east, and little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
 And I read this ancient Rhyme in the churchyard, while the chimne
 Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run, *Toll slowly.*
 And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,
 Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree, I a little grave did see, *Toll slowly.*
 Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,
 EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE.

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,— *Toll slowly.*
 Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with their holy winnowings,
 Keep beside you all the way ?

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy crash. *Toll slowly.*
 Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—
 Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilling—now your pulses are all stilled,— *Toll slowly.*
 Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
 Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now, *Toll slowly.*
 And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from your mould
 Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in spring, *Toll slowly.*
 Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
 Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong ; cold and heat ye take not wrong : *Toll slowly.*
 When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
 Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly.*
 And I said in underbreath,—all our life is mixed with death,
 And who knoweth which is best ?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly.*
 And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,—
 Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LADY'S 'YES.'

'YES!' I answered you last night ;
 'No!' this morning, Sir, I say,
 Colours seen by candle-light
 Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above, and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No*.

Call me false or call me free—
 Vow, whatever lights may shine,
 No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both—
 Time to dance is not to woo—
 Wooing light makes fickle troth—
 Scorn of *me* recoils on *you* :

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly, as the thing is high ;

Bravely, as for life and death—
With loyal gravity

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true—
Ever true, as wives of yore—
And her *Yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be *Yes* for evermore.

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

FROM HER POEM WRITTEN DURING THE VOYAGE
TO THE CAPE.

'Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?'—She said it
from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy;
While, under brighter skies than erst
she knew,
Her heart grew dark, — and groped
there as the blind,
To reach across the waves friends left
behind—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

It seemed not much to ask—As *I of you?*
We all do ask the same. No eyelids
cover
Within the meekest eyes, that question
over.
And little in the world the Loving do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen
for
The echo of their own love evermore—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

Love-learned, she had sung of love and
love,—
And like a child that, sleeping with dropt
head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him
move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbu-
lence,—

Even so, suggestive to her inward sense
All sounds of life assumed one tune of
love.

And when the glory of her dream with-
drew,
When knightly guests and courtly pa-
geantries

Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her
hand,

She asked not,—Do you praise me, O
my land?—
But,—'Think ye of me, friends, as I of
you?'

Hers was the hand that played for many
a year
Love's silver phrase for England,—
smooth and well!

Would God, her heart's more inward
oracle
In that lone moment, might confirm her
dear!

For when her questioned friends in
agony
Made passionate response—'We think
of *thee*,'

Her place was in the dust, too deep to
hear.

Could she not wait to catch their ans-
wering breath?

Was she content—content—with ocean's
sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite
around

One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
Those stars content,—where last her
song had gone,—

They mute and cold in radiant life,—as
soon

Their singer was to be, in darksome
death?*

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We
think of *thee*!'

How think ye of her? warm in long
ago
Delights?—or crowned with budding
bays? Not so.

* Her lyric on the polar star came home with
her latest papers.

None smile and none are crowned
where lieth she,
With all her visions unfulfilled save
one—

Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in
the sun—

And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—
O friends,—O kindred,—O dear brother-
hood

Of all the world! what are we, that we
should

For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other when the
touch

Is barred by graves? Not much, and
yet too much,

Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us
die,

A vocal pathos rolls! and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all, tasted
death,

By death and life and love, appealing,
saith,

Do you think of me as I think of you?

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

SAID a people to a poet—'Go out from
among us straightway!

While we are thinking earthly things,
thou singest of divine.

There's a little fair brown nightingale,
who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear, than any
song of thine!

The poet went out weeping—the night-
ingale ceased chanting;

'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale,
is all thy sweetness done?'

'I cannot sing my earthly things, the
heavenly poet wanting,

Whose highest harmony includes the
lowest under sun.'

The poet went out weeping,—and died
abroad, bereft there—

The bird flew to his grave and died
amid a thousand wails!

And, when I last came by the place, I
swear the music left there

Was only of the poet's song, and not
the nightingale's!

A CHILD ASLEEP.

How he sleepeth! having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore,
From his pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for more—
Sleeping near the withered nosegay
which he pulled the day before.

Nosegays! leave them for the wak-
ing.

Throw them earthward where they
grew:

Dim are such beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto—

Folded eyes see brighter colors than the
open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows
golden

From the palms they sprang be-
neath

Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath—

We may think so from the quickening
of his bloom and of his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth,

While the young child dreameth
on:

Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth

With the glory thou hast won!

Darker wert thou in the garden, yester-
morn by summer sun.

We should see the spirits ringing

Round thee,—were the clouds away

'Tis the child-heart draws them,
singing

In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing!—Stars that seem the mutest, go
in music all the way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapor,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if
drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
With their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee
While thou smilest, . . . not in sooth
Thy smile, . . . but the overfair one, dropt
from some ethereal mouth.

Haply it is angel's duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down his childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or
the tomb shall see it fade.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb—
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room—
Now he muses deep the meaning of the
Heaven-words as they come.

Speak not! he is consecrated—
Breathe no breath across his eyes:
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching,—held
in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him—father—mother?
Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping,
and confess yourselves too weak?

He is harmless—ye are sinful,
Ye are troubled,—he at ease:
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase—
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by
his peace—and go in peace.

THE LITTLE FRIEND.

—το δ' ἤδη ἐξ οφθαλμον ἀπηλυθεν.

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE
MADE AND SENT TO ME.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
Shall bear thy dearer name;
And many a word the leaves shall touch,
For thee who form'dst the same!
And on them, many a thought shall grow
'Neath memory's rain and sun,
Of thee, glad child, who dost not know
That thought and pain are one!

Yes! thoughts of thee who satest oft,
A while since, at my side—
So wild to tame,—to move so soft,
So very hard to chide:
The childish vision at thine heart,
The lesson on the knee;
The wandering looks which *would* de-
part
Like gulls across the sea!

The laughter, which no half-belief
In wrath could all suppress;
The falling tears, which looked like
grief,
And were but gentleness;
The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
As Eden's were not done—
Mistaking still the cherub's sword
For shining of the sun!

The sportive speech with wisdom in't—
'The question strange and bold—
The childish fingers in the print
Of God's creative hold:
The praying words in whispers said,
The sin with sobs confest;
The leaning of the young meek head
Upon the Saviour's breast!

The gentle consciousness of praise
With hues that went and came;
The brighter blush, a word could raise,
Were *that*—a father's name!
The shadow on thy smile for each
That on his face could fall!
So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,
What soon it teacheth all.

Sit still as erst beside his feet !
 The future days are dim,—
 But those will seem to thee most sweet,
 Which keeps thee nearest *him* !
 Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
 And let him see arise
 A clearer sun and greener earth
 Within thy loving eyes !—

Ah loving eyes ! that used to lift
 Your childhood to my face—
 That leave a memory on the gift
 I look on in your place—
 May bright-eyed hosts your guardians
 be
 From all but thankful tears,—
 While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
 Ye meet th' advancing years !

THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND.)

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
 For thy blind boy in the grave ?
 That no more with each other
 Sweet counsel ye can have ?—
 That *he*, left dark by nature,
 Can never more be led
 By thee, maternal creature,
 Along smooth paths instead ?
 That thou canst no more show him
 The sunshine, by the heat ;
 The river's silver flowing,
 By murmurs at his feet ?
 The foliage, by its coolness ;
 The roses, by their smell ;
 And all creation's fulness,
 By Love's invisible ?
 Weepst thou to behold not
 His meek blind eyes again,—
 Closed doorways which were folded,
 And prayed against in vain—
 And under which, sat smiling
 The child-mouth evermore,
 As one who watcheth, wiling
 The time by, at the door ?
 And weepst thou to feel not
 His clinging hand on thine—
 Which now, at dream time, will not
 Its cold touch disentwine ?
 And weepst thou still offer
 Oh, nevermore to mark

His low soft words, made softer
 By speaking in the dark ?
 Weep on, thou mourning mother !

But since to him when living,
 Thou wert both sun and moon,
 Look o'er his grave, surviving,
 From a high sphere alone !
 Sustain that exaltation—
 Expand that tender light ;
 And hold in mother passion
 Thy Blessed in thy sight.
 See how he went out straightway
 From the dark world he knew,—
 No twilight in the gateway
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—
 Into the sudden glory,
 Out of the dark he trod,
 Departing from before thee
 At once to Light and GOD !—
 For the first face, beholding
 The Christ's in its divine,—
 For the first place, the golden
 And tideless hyaline :
 With trees, at lasting summer,
 That rock to songful sound,
 While angels, the new-comer,
 Wrap a still smile around.
 Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
 His happy voice he tries,
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
 Than others, o'er his eyes.
 Yet still, in all the singing,
 Thinks haply of thy song
 Which, in his life's first springing,
 Sang to him all night long,
 And wishes it beside him,
 With kissing lips that cool
 And soft did overglide him,
 To make the sweetness full.

Look up, O mourning mother ;
 Thy blind boy walks in light !
 Ye wait for one another,
 Before God's infinite !
 But *thou* art now the darkest,
 Thou mother left below,—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
 Content that it be so :—
 Until ye two have meeting
 Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in
 As once thou ledest *his*.
 Wait on, thou mourning mother.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

I.

FREE Heart, that singest to-day,
Like a bird on the first green spray;
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wings un-
furled

To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer, thine own will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free
behind?

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Free hearts are better so.'

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand.
The world goes riding it fair and grand,

While the truth is bought and sold!
World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, heart, from thine early
rest,

'Come hither, come hither and be our
guest.'

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Good hearts are calmer so.'

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's
Strife,

With a golden heft to his knife:
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine

Her blood-red plans of life:
World's Gain, with a brow knit down:
World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves turn
brown—

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Calm hearts are wiser so.'

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—

And that the tears ran fast on her
feet

To think how the sun shone yester-
day?

With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth, which
fell

From her lap when the wild car drave
to hell.

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Wise hearts are warmer so.'

V.

And what is this place not seen,
Where hearts may hide serene?

'Tis a fair still house well-kept,
Which humble thoughts have swept,
And holy prayers made clean.

There, I sit with Love in the sun,
And we two never have done
Singing sweeter songs than are guessed
by one.'

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Warm hearts are fuller so.'

VI.

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
That Love may be kept too near.

Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a heart once holden dear?

—'But this true Love of mine
Clings fast as the clinging vine,
And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.'

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Full hearts beat higher so.'

VII.

O Heart, O Love, beware!—
Look up, and boast not there.

For who has twirled at the pin?
'Tis the world, between Death and
Sin,—

The world, and the world's De-
spair!

And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place—

Heart, wilt thou go?

'Still, no!

High hearts must grieve even so.'

VIII.

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn, prickt through to the
song :

If summer doeth no wrong
The winter will, they say.

Sing, Heart ! what heart replies ?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears un-kissed stand in our eyes.

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—' Ah, no !

Grieved hearts must break even so.

IX.

Howbeit all is not lost :
The warm noon ends in frost,
The worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells, die off from us

On the desert hills cloud-crossed I
Yet, through the silence, shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And 'Come up hither,' recover all.

Heart, wilt thou go ?

—' I go !

Broken hearts triumph so.'

HUMAN LIFE'S MISERY.

I.

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may
rest ;

And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Enquiring wherefore we were born . . .
For earnest, or for jest ?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond ;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat !

While, freshening upward to his feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

IV.

And in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.

V.

God keeps his holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream !
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eye,
Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
Of His great beauty ?—exaltations
From His great glory ?—strong pre-
visions
Of what we shall be ?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
Beyond our peace and passions ?

VII.

Things nameless ! which, in passing so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, 'Who passes ?'—they are
dumb :
We cannot see them go or come :
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

VIII.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heaven's
unknown—
Our daily joy and pain, advance
To a divine significance,—
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own !

IX.

And, sometimes, horror chills our blood
To be so near such mystic Things ;
And we wrap round us, for defence,

Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels, from the face of God,
Stand hidden in their wings.

x.

And, sometimes, through Life's heavy
swound,
We grope for them!—with strangled
breath
We stretch our hands abroad and try
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life-wound,
Which soon is large enough for death.

 INCLUSIONS.

I.

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to
lie along in thine?
As a little stone in a running stream, it
seems to lie and pine!
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . .
unfit to plight with thine.

II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear,
drawn closer to thine own?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn,
by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, Dear, . . lest
it should wet thine own.

III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear
commingled with thy soul?—
Red grows the cheek, and warm the
hand, . . the part is in the whole! . .
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate,
when soul is joined to soul.

 INSUFFICIENCY.

I.

THERE is no one beside thee, and no
one above thee;
Thou standest alone, as the nightin-
gale sings!

Yet my words that would praise thee
are impotent things,
For none can express thee though all
should approve thee!
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can
love thee.

II.

Say, what can I do for thee? . . weary
thee . . grieve thee?
Lean on my shoulder . . . new bur-
dens to add?
Weep my tears over thee . . making
thee sad?
Oh, hold me not—love me not? let me
retrieve thee!
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can
leave thee.

 A DEAD ROSE.

I.

O ROSE! who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor
sweet;
But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-
wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer—thy
titles shame thee.

II.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedge-row thorns, and take
away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now, — unsweetened
would forego thee.

III.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn,
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower
to burn,—
If shining now,—with not a hue would
light thee.

IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined be-
cause

It lay upon thee where the crimson was,
If dropping now,—would darken
where it met thee.

v.

The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If lighting now,—would coldly over-
run thee.

vi.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his
hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce
alive,—
If passing now,—would blindly over-
look thee.

vii.

The heart doth recognise thee,
Alone, alone ! The heart doth smell
thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee
most complete—
Perceiving all those changes that dis-
guise thee.

viii.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose ! than to such
roses bold
As Julia wears at dances, smiling cold !—
Lie still upon this heart—which breaks
below thee.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

i.

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed !
She has counted six and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well
tried—
Oh, each a worthy lover !
They 'give her time ;' for her soul must
slip
Where the world has set the grooving :
She will lie to none with her fair red
lip—
But love seeks truer loving.

ii.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness
dumb,
As her thoughts were beyond recall-
ing ;
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for
some.
From her eyelids rising and falling.
—Speaks common words with a blush-
ful air ;
—Hears bold words, unreprieving :
But her silence says—what she never
will swear—
And love seeks better loving.

iii.

Go, lady ! lean to the night-guitar,
And drop a smile to the bringer ;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an in-door singer !
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes ;
Glance lightly, on their removing ;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
But dare not call it loving !

iv.

Unless you can think, when the song is
done,
No other is soft in the rhythm ;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
That all men else go with him ;
Unless you can know, when upraised by
his breath,
That your beauty itself wants prov-
ing ;
Unless you can swear—'For life, for
death !'—
Oh, fear to call it loving !

v.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
On the absent face that fixed you ;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt
you ;
Unless you can dream that his faith is
fast,
Through behooving and unbehooving ;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is
past—
Oh, never call it loving !

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

I.

HE listened at the porch that day
 To hear the wheel go on, and on,
 And then it stopped—ran back a way—
 While through the door he brought
 the sun :
 But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sate beside me, with an oath
 That love ne'er ended, once begun ;
 I smiled believing for us both,
 What was the truth for only one.
 And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
 A young man's wooing as I spun.
 Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,
 For I have, since, a harder known !
 And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought—O God !—my first-born's cry
 Both voices to my ear would drown :
 I listened in mine agony—
 It was the *silence* made me groan !
 And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
 Who cursed me on her death-bed lone,
 And my dead baby's—(God it save !)
 Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
 And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
 But no name written on the stone !
 Sweet neighbours ! whisper low instead,
 ' This sinner was a loving one—
 And now her spinning is all done.'

VII.

And let the door ajar remain,
 In case he should pass by anon ;
 And leave the wheel out very plain,
 That HE, when passing in the sun,
 May *see* the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,
 The lilies bloomed within the sedge ;
 And we were lingering to and fro,—
 Where none will track thee in this snow,
 Along the stream, beside the hedge.
 Ah, sweet, be free to love and go !
 For if I do not hear thy foot,
 The frozen river is as mute,
 The flowers have dried down to the
 root ;
 And why, since these be changed since
 May,
 Shouldst *thou* change less than *they*?

II.

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,
 The tears have drifted to mine eyes ;
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
 Set blushing at thy praises so,
 Put paleness on for a disguise.
 Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go !
 For if my face is turned to pale,
 It was thine oath that first did fail,—
 It was thy love proved false and frail !
 And why, since these be changed
 enow,
 Should *I* change less than *thou* ?

A REED.

I

I AM no trumpet, but a reed :
 No flattering breath shall from me lead
 A silver sound, a hollow sound !
 I will not ring, for priest or king,
 One blast that in re-echoing
 Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
 A broken reed, the wind indeed
 Left flat upon a dismal shore :
 Yet if a little maid, or child,
 Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
 This reed will answer evermore.

III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed :
 Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
 Their nets along the river's edge,
 I will not tear their nets at all,
 Nor pierce their hands if they should fall :
 Then let them leave me in the sedge.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

[THIS POEM contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. "From a window," the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative, nor exposition of political philosophy, is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country; and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from all partizanship.

Of the two parts of this Poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic "falling sickness" of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancy we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature . . . the discrepancy between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.

"Oh trusted, broken prophecy,
 Oh richest fortune sourly crost,
 Born for the future, to the future lost!"

Nay, not lost to the future in this case. The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.—FLOWENCE, 1851.]

PART I.

I.

I HEARD last night a little child go sing-
 ing
 'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the
 church,
 "O bella liberta, O bella!" stringing
 The same words still on notes he went
 in search
 So high for, you concluded the upspring-
 ing
 Of such a nimble bird to sky from
 perch
 Must leave the whole bush in a tremble
 green;

And that the heart of Italy must beat,
 While such a voice had leave to rise
 serene
 'Twixt church and palace of a Flor-
 ence street!
 A little child, too, who not long had been
 By mother's finger steadied on his
 feet;
 And still *O bella liberta* he sang.

II.

Then I thought, musing, of the innu-
 merous
 Sweet songs which still for Italy out-
 rang

From older singers' lips, who sang not
thus

Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
Sheathed into music, touched the heart
of us

So finely that the pity scarcely pained I
I thought how Filicaja led on others,
Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
And how they called her childless
among mothers,

Widow of empires, ay, and scarce re-
frained
Cursing her beauty to her face as bro-
thers

Might a shamed sister's—'Had she
been less fair
She were less wretched,'—how, evoking
so

From congregated wrong and heaped
despair
Of men and women writhing under
blow,

Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,
Some personating Image, wherein woe
Was wrapt in beauty from offending
much,

They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for
such,

Where all the world might drop for Italy
Those cadenced tears which burn not
where they touch,—

'Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we?
And was the violet crown that crowned
thy head

So over large, though new buds made it
rough,

It slipped down and across thine eye-
lids dead,

O sweet, fair Juliet?' Of such songs
enough;

Too many of such complaints! Be-
hold, instead,

Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough!*

As void as that is, are all images
Men set between themselves and actual
wrong,

To catch the weight of pity, meet the
stress

Of conscience;—since 'tis easier to gaze
long

On mournful masks, and sad effigies,
Than on real, live, weak creatures
crushed by strong.

III.

For me who stand in Italy to-day
Where worthier poets stood and sang
before,

I kiss their footsteps, yet their words
gainsay.

I can but muse in hope upon this shore
Of golden Arno as it shoots away
Through Florence's heart beneath her
bridges four!

Bent bridges, seeming to strain off
like bows,
And tremble while the arrowy under-
tide

Shoots on and cleaves the marble as
it goes,
And strikes up palace-walls on either
side,

And froths the cornice out in glitter-
ing rows,
With doors and windows quaintly mul-
tiplied,

And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon
all,

By whom if flower or kerchief were
thrown out

From any lattice there, the same
would fall

Into the river underneath no doubt,
It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall
and wall.

How beautiful! The mountains from
without

In silence listen for the word said
next,

What word will men say,—here where
Giotto planted

His campanile, like an unperplexed
Fine question Heaven-ward touching
the things granted

A noble people who, being greatly
vexed

In act, in aspiration keep undaunted!
What word will God say? Michel's
Night and Day

And Dawn and Twilight wait in the
marble scorn,*

* They show at Verona an empty trough of
stone as the tomb of Juliet.

* These famous statues recline in the Sagres-
tia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Me-
dicci, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and

Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched
 on clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp's
 outworn,
 The final putting off of all such sway
 By all such hands, and freeing of the
 unborn
 In Florence and the great world outside
 Florence
 Three hundred years his patient statues
 wait
 In that small chapel of the dim St. Law-
 rence !
 Day's eyes are breaking bold and pas-
 sionate
 Over his shoulder, and will flash ab-
 horrence
 On darkness and with level looks meet
 fate,
 When once loose from that marble
 film of theirs ;
 The Night has wild dreams in her sleep ;
 the Dawn
 Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight
 wears
 A sort of horror ; as the veil withdrawn
 'Twixt the artist's soul and works had
 left them heirs
 Of speechless thoughts which would not
 quail nor fawn,
 Of angers and contempts, of hope and
 love ;
 For not without a meaning did he
 place
 Princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face ;
 While the slow dawns and twilights
 disapprove
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race,
 Which never more shall clog the feet
 of men.

IV.

I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour Via Larga, when,
 They bade thee build a statue up in
 snow,*

Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson. Strozzi's
 epigram on the Night, with Michael Angelo's
 rejoinder, is well known.

* This mocking task was set by Pietro, the
 unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnifi-
 cent.

And straight that marvel of thine art
 again
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian
 glow,
 Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic
 passion,
 Thawing too, in drops of wounded man-
 hood, since,
 To mock alike thine art and indigna-
 tion,
 Laughed at the palace-window the new
 prince,—
 ('Aha ! this genius needs for exalta-
 tion,
 When all's said, and howe'er the proud
 may wince,
 A little marble from our princely
 mines !')

I do believe that hour thou laughedst
 too,
 For the whole sad world and for thy
 Florentines
 After these few tears—which were only
 few !
 That as, beneath the sun, the grand
 white lines
 Of thy snow statue trembled and with-
 drew,—
 Thy head, erect as Jove's, being
 palsied first,
 The eyelids flattened, the full brow
 turned blank,—
 The right hand, raised but now as if
 it cursed,
 Dropt, a mere snowball, (till the people
 sank
 Their voices, though a louder laugh-
 ter burst
 From the royal window,) thou couldst
 proudly thank
 God and the prince for promise and
 presage,
 And laugh the laugh back, I think
 verily,
 Thine eyes being purged by tears of
 righteous rage
 To read a wrong into a prophecy,
 And measure a true great man's heri-
 tage
 Against a mere great duke's posterity.
 I think thy soul said then, 'I do not
 need
 A principedom and its quarries after all ;

For if I write, paint, carve a word,
indeed,
On book or board or dust, on floor or
wall,

The same is kept of God who taketh
heed

That not a letter of the meaning fall,
Or ere it touch and teach His world's
deep heart

Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships,
Sir!

So keep your stone, beseech you, for
your part,

To cover up your grave-place and refer
The proper titles! / live by my art!
The thought I threw into this snow shall
stir

This gazing people when their gaze
is done;

And the tradition of your act and mine,
When all the snow is melted in the
sun,

Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign
Of what is the true principedom! ay,
and none

Shall laugh that day, except the drunk
with wine.'

v.

Amen, great Angelo! the day's at
hand.

If many laugh not on it, shall we weep?
Much more we must not, let us under-
stand.

Through rhymers sonnetearing in their
sleep,

And archaists mumbling dry bones up
the land,

And sketchers lauding ruined towns
a-heap,—

Through all that drowsy hum of
voices smooth,

The hopeful oird mounts carolling from
brake;

The hopeful child, with leaps to catch
his growth,

Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet
sake;

And I, a singer also, from my youth,
Prefer to sing with these who are awake,

With birds, with babes, with men who
will not fear

The baptism of the holy mountain dew,

(And many of such wakers now are
here,

Complete in their anointed manhood,
who

Will greatly dare and greatlier per-
severe,)

Than join those old thin voices with my
new,

And sigh for Italy with some safe
sigh

Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah!
Nay, hand in hand with that young
child, will I

Go singing rather '*Bella liberta*,'
Than, with those poets, croon the
dead or cry

'*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!*'

vi.

'Less wretched if less fair.' Perhaps
a truth

Is so far plain in this—that Italy,
Long trammelled with the purple of
her youth

Against her age's ripe activity,
Sits still upon her tombs, without
death's ruth,

But also without life's brave energy.
'Now tell us what is Italy?' men ask. .

And others answer, 'Virgil, Cicero,
Catullus, Cæsar. What beside? to
task

The memory closer—'Why, Boccaccio,
Dante, Petrarca,'—and if still the flask
Appears to yield its wine by drops too
slow,—

Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,'—all
Whose strong hearts beat through stone,
or charged again

The paints with fire of souls electrical,
Or broke up heaven for music. What
more then?

Why, then, no more. The chaplet's
last beads fall

In naming the last saintship within ken,
And, after that, none prayeth in the
'land.

Alas, this Italy has too long swept
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
Of her own past, impassioned nympho-
lept!

Consenting to be nailed here by the
hand

To the very bay-tree under which she
stepped
A queen of old, and plucked a leafy
branch.
And, licensing the world too long in-
deed
To use her broad phylacteries to
staunch
And stop her bloody lips, she takes no
heed
How one clear word would draw an
avalanche
Of living sons around her, to succeed
The vanished generations. Can she
count
The oil-eaters, with large, live, mobile
mouths
Agape for macaroni, in the amount
Of consecrated heroes of her south's
Bright rosary? The pitcher at the
fount,
The gift of gods, being broken, she
much loathes
To let the ground-leaves of the place
confer
A natural bowl. So henceforth she
would seem
No nation, but the poet's pensioner,
With alms from every land of song and
dream;
While aye her pipers sadly pipe of
her,
Until their proper breaths, in that ex-
treme
Of sighing, split the reed on which
they played!
Of which, no more: but never say 'no
more'
To Italy's life! Her memories un-
dismayed
Still argue 'evermore'—her graves im-
plore
Her future to be strong and not afraid;
Her very statues send their looks before!

VII.

We do not serve the dead—the past
is past!
God lives, and lifts his glorious morn-
ings up
Before the eyes of men, awake at last,
Who put away the meats they used to
sup,

And down upon the dust of earth out-
cast
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,
Then turn to wakeful prayer and
worthy act.
The dead, upon their awful 'vantage
ground,
The sun not in their faces,—shall ab-
stract
No more our strength: we will not be
discrowned
As guardians of their crowns; nor
deign transact
A barter of the present, for a sound
Of good, so counted in the foregone
days.
O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us
With rigid hands of desiccating praise,
And drag us backward by the garment
thus,
To stand and laud you in long-
drawn viarelays!
We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye lived
before,
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well:
We thank you that ye first unlatched
the door—
But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any
more.
We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger
hope, and God's
Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
Die also! and, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to mem-
ory,
As smoothly as on our graves the
burial-sods,
We now must look to it to excel as ye,
And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark! so, to be in-
voked
By future generations, as their Dead.

VIII.

'Tis true that when the dust of death
has choked
A great man's voice, the common
words he said
Turn oracles,—the common thoughts he
yoked

Like horses, draw like griffins!—this
is true
And acceptable. I, too, should desire,
When men make record with the
flowers they strew,
Savonarola's soul went out in fire
Upon our Grand-duke's piazza, and
burned through
A moment first, or ere he did expire,
The veil betwixt the right and wrong,
and showed
How near God sate and judged the
judges there;—*
Upon the self-same pavement over-
strewed,
To cast my violets with as reverent
care.
And prove that all the winters which
have snowed
Cannot snow out the scent from stones
and air,
Of a sincere man's virtues. This was
he,
Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
With his whole boat-load, called cour-
ageously
'Wake Christ, wake Christ!'—who, hav-
ing tried the tank
Of old church-waters used for bap-
tistry
Ere Luther came to spill them, swore
they stank!
Who also by a princely death-bed
cried
'Loose Florence, or God will not loose
thy soul'
Then fell back the Magnificent and
died
Beneath the star-look, shooting from the
cowl,
Which turned to wormwood bitter-
ness the wide
Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
To grudge Savonarola and the rest
Their violets! rather pay them quick
and fresh!
The emphasis of death makes mani-
fest

The eloquence of action in our flesh ;
And men who, living, were but dimly
guessed,
When once free from life's entangled
mesh,
Show their full length in graves, or
oft indeed
Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
To noble admirations which exceed
Most nobly, yet will calculate in that
But accurately. We, who are the
seed
Of buried creatures, if we turned and
spat
Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
Bring violets rather. If these had not
walked
Their furlong, could we hope to walk
our mile ?
Therefore bring violets! Yet if we,
self-baulked,
Stand still a-strewing violets all the
while,
These moved in vain, of whom we have
vainly talked.
So rise up henceforth with a cheerful
smile,
And having strewn the violets, reap the
corn,
And, having reaped and garnered,
bring the plough
And draw new furrows 'neath the
healthy morn,
And plant the great Hereafter in this
Now.

ix.

Of old 'twas so. How step by step was
worn
As each man gained on each, se-
curely!—how
Each by his own strength sought his
own ideal,
The ultimate Perfection leaning bright
From out the sun and stars, to bless the
leal
And earnest search of all for Fair and
Right,
Through doubtful forms, by earth
accounted real!
Because old Jubal blew into delight
The souls of men, with clear-piped mel-
odies.

* Savonarola was burnt in martyrdom for his
testimony against Papal corruptions as early
as March, 1498: and, as late as our own day, it
is a custom in Florence to strew violets on
the pavement where he suffered, in grateful
recognition of the anniversary.

If youthful Asaph were content at
 most
 To draw from Jubal's grave, with listen-
 ing eyes,
 Traditional music's floating ghost
 Into the grass-grown silence? were it
 wise?
 And wasn't not wiser, Jubal's breath
 being lost,
 That Miriam clashed her cymbals to
 surprise
 The sun between her white arms flung
 apart
 With new, glad, golden sounds? that
 David's strings
 O'erflowed his hand with music from
 his heart?
 So harmony grows full from many
 springs,
 And happy accident turns holy art.

x.

You enter, in your Florence wanderings,
 The church of St. Maria Novella.
 Pass
 The left stair, where at plague-time
 Macchiavel*
 Saw one with set fair face as in a
 glass,
 Dressed out against the fear of death and
 hell,
 Rustling her silks in pauses of the
 mass,
 To keep the thought off how her hus-
 band fell,
 When she left home, stark dead
 across her feet—
 The stair leads up to what the Orgagnas
 save
 Of Dante's dæmons; you, in passing
 it,
 Ascend the right stair from the farther
 nave,
 To muse in a small chapel scarcely
 lit
 By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and
 brave,
 That picture was accounted, mark, of
 old!
 A king stood bare before its sovran
 grace; †

A reverent people shouted to behold
 The picture, not the king; and even the
 place
 Containing such a miracle, grew bold,
 Named the Glad Borgo from that beau-
 teous face,
 Which thrilled the artist, after work,
 to think
 His own ideal Mary-smile should stand
 So very near him!—he, within the
 brink
 Of all that glory, let in by his hand
 With too divine a rashness! Yet
 none shrink
 Who come to gaze here now—albeit
 'twas planned
 Sublimely in the thought's simplicity.
 The Lady, throned in empyreal state,
 Minds only the young babe upon her
 knee;
 While sidelong angels bear the royal
 weight,
 Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly
 Oblivion of their wings! the Child
 thereat
 Stretches its hand like God. If any
 should,
 Because of some stiff draperies and
 loose joints,
 Gaze scorn down from the heights of
 Raffaellood,
 On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints
 The head of no such critic, and his
 blood
 The poet's curse strikes full on, and ap-
 points
 To ague and cold spasms for ever-
 more.
 A noble picture! worthy of the shout
 Wherewith along the streets the peo-
 ple bore
 Its cherub faces, which the sun threw
 out
 Until they stooped and entered the
 church door!—
 Yet rightly was young Giotto talked
 about,

through Florence, Cimabue allowed to see this picture while yet in his 'Bottega.' The populace followed the royal visitor, and in the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in a triumph to the church and deposited there.

* See his description of the plague in Florence.

† Charles of Anjou, whom, in his passage

Whom Cimabue found among the sheep,*
 And knew, as gods know gods, and carried home
 To paint the things he had painted, with a deep
 And fuller insight, and so overcome
 His chapel-lady with a heavenlier sweep
 Of light. For thus we mount into the sun
 Of great things known or acted. I hold, too,
 That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,
 At the first stroke which passed what he could do,—
 Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
 Such sweetness in't. All great men who foreknew
 Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad,
 And bent their old white heads as if uncrowned,
 Fanatics of their pure ideals still
 Far more than of their triumphs, which were found
 With some less vehement struggle of the will.
 If old Margheritone trembled, swooned,
 And died despairing at the open sill
 Of other men's achievements, (who achieved,
 By loving art beyond the master!) he
 Was old Margheritone and conceived
 Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,
 A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
 The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully
 Margheritone sickened at the smell
 Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!—
 For Cimabue stood up very well
 In spite of Giotto's—and Angelico,
 The artist-saint, kept smiling in his cell
 The smile with which he welcomed the
 sweet slow

* How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is a pretty story told by Vasari,—who also relates how the elder artist Margheritone died "infastidito" of the successes of the new school.

Inbreak of angels, (whitening through the dim
 That he might paint them!) while the sudden sense
 Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
 By force of his own fair works' competence.
 The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
 Suggest the Tritons. Through the blue Immense
 Strike out all swimmers! cling not in the way
 Of one another, so to sink; but learn
 The strong man's impulse, catch the fresh'ning spray
 He throws up in his motions, and discern
 By his clear, westering eye, the time of day.
 Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to earn,
 Besides thy heaven and Thee! and when I say
 There's room here for the weakest man alive
 To live and die,—there's room too, I repeat,
 For all the strongest to live well and strive,
 Their own way, by their individual heat,—
 Like a new bee-swarm leaving the old hive,
 Despite the wax which tempts so violet-sweet.
 Then let the living live, the dead retain
 Their grave-cold flowers!—though honour's best supplied,
 By bringing actions, to prove theirs not vain.

XI.

Cold graves, we say? it shall be testified
 That living men who burn in heart and brain,
 Without the dead, were colder. If we tried
 To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure
 The future would not stand. Precipitate

This old roof from the shrine—and, insecure,
 The nestling swallows fly off, mate
 from mate.
 How scant the gardens, if the graves
 were fewer!
 The tall green poplars grew no longer
 straight,
 Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would
 any fight
 For Athens, and not swear by Marath-
 on?
 Who dared build temples, without tombs
 in sight?
 Or live, without some dead man's
 benison?
 Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive
 for right,
 If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
 Some angel of the martyrs all day long
 Standing and waiting? your last
 rhythm will need
 Your earliest key-note. Could I sing
 this song,
 If my dead masters had not taken
 heed
 To help the heavens and earth to make
 me strong,
 As the wind ever will find out some
 reed,
 And touch it to such issues as belong
 To such a frail thing! None may
 grudge the dead
 Libations from full cups. Unless we
 choose
 To look back to the hills behind us
 spread,
 The plains before us sadden and con-
 fuse;
 If orphaned, we are disinherited.

xii.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,
 And pour fresh oil in from the olive
 grove,
 To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I
 say
 What made my heart beat with exult-
 ing love,
 A few weeks back?

xiii.

. . . . The day was such a day
 As Florence owes the sun. The sky
 above,

Its weight upon the mountains seemed
 to lay,
 And palpitate in glory, like a dove
 Who has flown too fast, full-hearted!—
 take away
 The image! for the heart of man beat
 higher
 That day in Florence, flooding all her
 streets
 And piazzas with a tumult and desire.
 The people, with accumulated heats,
 And faces turned one way, as if one
 fire
 Both drew and flushed them, left their
 ancient beats
 And went up toward the palace-Pitti
 wall,
 To thank their Grand-duke, who, not
 quite of course
 Had graciously permitted, at their call,
 The citizens to use their civic force
 To guard their civic homes. So one
 and all,
 The Tuscan cities streamed up to the
 source
 Of this new good at Florence; taking
 it
 As good so far, presageful of more
 good,—
 The first torch of Italian freedom, lit
 To toss in the next tiger's face who
 should
 Approach too near them in a greedy
 fit,—
 The first pulse of an even flow of blood,
 To prove the level of Italian veins
 Toward rights perceived and granted.
 How we gazed
 From Casa Guidi windows, while, in
 trains
 Of orderly procession—banners raised,
 And intermittent bursts of martial
 strains
 Which died upon the shouts, as if
 amazed
 By gladness beyond music—they
 passed on!
 The magistracy, with insignia, passed;
 And all the people shouted in the sun,
 And all the thousand windows which
 had cast
 A ripple of silks, in blue and scarlet,
 down,
 As if the houses overflowed at last,

Seemed growing larger with fair
heads and eyes.
The lawyers passed; and still arose the
shout,
And hands broke from the windows to
surprise
Those grave calm brows with bay-leaves
thrown out.
The priesthood passed: the friars,
with worldly-wise
Keen sidelong glances from their beards
about
The street to see who shouted! many
a monk
Who takes a long rope in the waist, was
there!
Whereat the popular exultation drunk
With indrawn 'vivas,' the whole sunny
air,
While through the murmuring win-
dows rose and sunk
A cloud of kerchiefed hands! 'The
church makes fair
Her welcome in the new Pope's name.'
Ensued
The black sign of the 'martyrs!' name
no name,
But count the graves in silence. Next
were viewed
The artists; next the trades; and after
came
The people,—flag and sign, and rights
as good,—
And very loud the shout was for that
same
Motto, 'Il popolo,' IL POPOLO,—
The word means dukedom, empire,
majesty,
And kings in such an hour might read
it so.
And next, with banners, each in his
degree,
Deputed representatives a-row
Of every separate state of Tuscany;
Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the fold
Of the first flag preceded Pisa's hare;
And Massa's lion floated calm in
gold,
Pienza's following with his silver stare;
Arezzo's steed pranced clear from
bridle-hold,—
And well might shout our Florence,
greeting there

These, and more brethren! Last,
the world had sent
The various children of her teeming
flanks—
Greeks, English, French—as if to a
parliament
Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
Each bearing its land's symbols rever-
ent;
At which the stones seemed breaking
into thanks
And rattling up the sky, such sounds
in proof
Arose! the very house-walls seemed to
bend,
The very windows, up from door to
roof,
Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to
mend
With passionate looks, the gesture's
whirling off
A hurricane of leaves! Three hours
did end
While all these passed; and ever in
the crowd,
Rude men, unconscious of the tears that
kept
Their beards moist, shouted; some
few laughed aloud,
And none asked any why they laughed
and wept:
Friends kissed each other's cheeks,
and foes long vowed
Did it more warmly: two-months'
babies leapt
Right upward in their mothers' arms,
whose black
Wide, glittering eyes looked elsewhere;
lovers pressed
Each before either, neither glancing
back;
And peasant maidens, smoothly 'tired
and tressed,
Forgot to finger on their throats the
slack
Great pearl-strings; while old blind men
would not rest,
But pattered with their staves and slid
their shoes
Along the stones, and smiled as if they
saw.
O Heaven! I think that day had
noble use

Among God's days. So near stood,
 Right and Law,
 Both mutually forborne! Law would
 not bruise,
 Nor Right deny: and each in reverent
 awe
 Honoured the other. What if, ne'er-
 theless,
 That good day's sun delivered to the
 vines
 No charta, and the liberal Duke's
 excess
 Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibel-
 line's
 In any special actual righteousness
 Of what that day he granted; * still the
 signs
 Are good, and full of promise, we
 must say,
 When multitudes approach their kings
 with prayers
 And kings concede their people's
 right to pray,
 Both in one sunshine! Grievs are not
 despairs,
 So uttered; nor can royal claims dis-
 may
 When men from humble homes and
 ducal chairs,
 Hate wrong together. It was well to
 view
 Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face,
 Inscribed, 'Live freedom, union, and
 all true
 Brave patriots who are aided by God's
 grace!'
 Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew
 His little children to the window-place
 He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They too should govern as the people
 willed.
 What a cry rose then! some, who
 saw the best,
 Declared his eyes filled up and over-
 filled
 With good warm human tears which
 unrepressed
 Ran down. I like his face: the fore-
 head's build

Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
 Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,
 And careful nobly,—not with care
 that wraps
 Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make
 mad,
 But careful with the care that shuns a
 lapse
 Of faith and duty,—studious not to add
 A burden in the gathering of a gain.
 And so, God save the Duke, I say with
 those
 Who that day shouted it, and while
 dukes reign,
 May all wear in the visible overflows
 Of spirit, such a look of careful pain!
 For God must love it better than repose.

xiv.

And all the people who went up to let
 Their hearts out to that Duke, as has
 been told—
 Where guess ye that the living people
 met,
 Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose lead-
 ers, first unrolled
 Their banners?
 In the Loggia? where is set
 Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze—or
 gold—
 (How name the metal, when the statue
 flings
 Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow
 and sword
 Superbly calm, as all opposing things
 Slain with the Gorgon, were no more
 abhorred
 Since ended?
 No! the people sought no wings
 From Perseus in the Loggia, nor im-
 plored
 An inspiration in the place beside,
 From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged
 and grand,
 Where Buonarotti passionately tried
 From out the close-clenched marble
 to demand
 The head of Rome's sublimest homi-
 cide,
 Then dropt the quivering mallet from
 his hand,
 Despairing he could find no model stuff

* Since when the constitutional concessions
 have been complete in Tuscany, as all the
 world knows. The event breaks in upon the
 meditation, and is too fast for prophecy in
 these strange times.—E. B. B.

Of Brutus, in all Florence, where he
found
The gods and gladiators thick enough.
Not there? the people chose still
holier ground!
The people, who are simple, blind, and
rough,
Know their own angels, after looking
round.
What chose they then? where met
they?

xv.

On the stone
Call'd Dante's,—a plain flat stone,
scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—where-
upon
He used to bring his quiet chair out,
turned
To Brunelleschi's church and pour alone
The lava of his spirit when it
burned—
It is not cold to-day. O passionate
Poor Dante, who, a banished Floren-
tine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great,
And muse upon this far-off stone of
thine,
And think how oft some passer used to
wait
A moment, in the golden day's de-
cline,
With 'good night, dearest Dante!'—
well, good-night!
I muse now, Dante, and think, verily,
Though chapelled in the byeway, out of
sight,
Ravenna's bones would thrill with
ecstasy,
Could'st know thy favorite stone's
elect'd right
As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to fore-
see

Their earliest chartas from. Good night,
good morn,
Henceforward, Dante! now my soul
is sure
That thine is better comforted of scorn,
And looks down earthward in com-
pleter cure,
Than when, in Santa Croce church for-
lorn

Of any corpse, the architect and
hewer
Did pile the empty marbles as thy
tomb! *
For now thou art no longer exiled,
now
Best honored!—we salute thee who art
come
Back to the old stone with a softer
brow
Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for
some
Good lovers of our age to track and
plough
Their way to, through Time's ordures
stratified, †
And startle broad awake into the
dull
Bargello chamber. Now, thou'rt milder
eyed,
Now, Beatrix may leap up glad to
cull
Thy first smile, even in heaven and at
her side,
Like that which, nine years old, look-
ed beautiful
At May-game. What do I say? I
only meant
That tender Dante loved his Florence
well,
While Florence, now, to love him is
content;
And, mark ye, that the piercingest
sweet smell
Of love's dear incense by the living sent
To find the dead, is not accessible
To lazy livers! no narcotic,—not
Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—
But trod out in the morning air, by hot
Quick spirits, who tread firm to ends
foreshown,
And use the name of greatness unforgot,
To meditate what greatness may be
done.

* The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese denied the body of Dante which was asked of them in a "late remorse of love," have given a cenotaph to their divine poet in this church. Something less than a grave!

† In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's well-known discovery of Giotto's fresco-portrait of Dante.

xvi.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye stand here,
 And more remains for doing, all must feel,
 Than trysting on his stone from year to year
 To shift processions, civic toe to heel,
 The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer
 For what was felt that day? A chariot wheel
 May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.
 But if that day suggested something good,
 And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul,—
 Better means freer. A land's brotherhood
 Is most puissant! Men, upon the whole,
 Are what they can be,—nations what they would.

xvii.

Will, therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!
 Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich
 Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree;
 And thine is like the lion's when the thick
 Dews shudder from it, and no man would be
 The stroker of his mane, much less would prick
 His nostril with a reed. When nations roar
 Like lions, who shall tame them, and defraud
 Of the due pasture by the river-shore?
 Roar, therefore! shake your dew-laps dry abroad—
 The amphitheatre with open door
 Leads back upon the benchers who applaud
 The last spear-thruster!

xviii.

Yet the Heavens forbid
 That we should call on passion to confront
 The brutal with the brutal, and, amid

This ripening world, suggest a lion-hunt
 And lion-vengeance for the wrongs men did
 And do now, though the spears are getting blunt.
 We only call, because the sight and proof
 Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and to show
 A lion-heart, and measure paw with hoof,
 Helps something, even, and will instruct a foe
 Well as the onslaught, how to stand aloof!
 Or else the world gets past the mere brute blow
 Given or taken. Children use the fist
 Until they are of age to use the brim:
 And so we needed Cæsars to assist
 Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
 God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed,
 Until our generations should attain
 Christ's stature nearer. Not that we, alas!
 Attain already; but a single inch
 Will raise to look down on the sinner's pass.
 As knightly Roland on the coward's flinch;
 And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
 We find out slowly what the bee and finch
 Have ready found, through Nature's lamp in each,
 How to our races we may justify
 Our individual claims, and, as we reach
 Our own grapes, bend the top vines to supply
 The children's uses: how to fill a breach
 With olive branches; how to quench a lie
 With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
 With Christ's most conquering kiss!
 Why, these are things
 Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
 The 'glorious arms' of military kings!

And so with wide embrace, my Eng-
land, seek

To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
Of this world's false and nearly ex-
pended fire!

Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
And twang abroad thy high hopes, and
thy higher

Resolves, from that most virtuous alti-
tude,

Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
By looking up to thee, and learn that
good

And glory are not different. Announce
law

By freedom; exalt chivalry by peace;
Instruct how clear calm eyes can over-
awe,

And how pure hands, stretched simply
to release

A bond-slave, will not need a sword to
draw

To be held dreadful. O my Eng-
land, cease

Thy purple with no alien agonies!

No struggles toward encroachment,
no vile war!

Disband thy captains, change thy vic-
tories,

Be henceforth prosperous as the angels
are—

Helping, not humbling.

XIX.

Drums and battle cries

Go out in music of the morning star—
And soon we shall have thinkers in the

place
Of fighters; each found able as a
man

To strike electric influence through a
race,

Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
The poet shall look grander in the face

Than even of old, when he of Greece
began

To sing that 'Achilleian wrath which
slew

So many heroes,'—seeing he shall
treat

The deeds of souls heroic toward the
true—

The oracles of life—previsions sweet

And awful, like divine swans gliding
through

White arms of Ledas, which will
leave the heat

Of their escaping godship to endure
The human medium with a heavenly
flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
Not popular passion, to arise and
crush,

But popular conscience, which may cov-
enant

For what it knows. Concede without
a blush—

To grant the 'civic guard' is not to
grant

The civic spirit, living and awake.

Those lappets on your shoulders, citi-
zens,

Your eyes strain after sideways till
they ache,

While still, in admirations and amens,
The crowd comes up on festa-days, to
take

The great sight in— are not intelli-
gence,

Not courage even—alas, if not the
sign

Of something very noble, they are
nought;

For every day ye dress your sallow
kine

With fringes down their cheeks, though
unbesought

They loll their heavy heads and drag
the wine,

And bear the wooden yoke as they
were taught

The first day. What ye want is light—
indeed

Not sunlight—(ye may well look up
surprised

To those unfathomable heavens that
feed

Your purple hills!—but God's light
organised

In some high soul, crowned capable
to lead

The conscious people,—conscious and
advised,—

For if we lift a people like mere clay,
It falls the same. We want thee, O

unfound

And sovran teacher!—if thy beard be
 grey
 Or black, we bid thee rise up from the
 ground
 And speak the word God giveth thee
 to say,
 Inspiring into all this people round,
 Instead of passion, thought, which
 pioneers
 All generous passion, purifies from sin,
 And strikes the hour for. Rise up
 teacher! here's
 A crowd to make a nation!—best begin
 By making each a man, till all be peers
 Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs
 in
 Knowing and daring. Best unbar the
 doors
 Which Peter's heirs keep locked so
 overclose
 They only let the mice across the
 floors,
 While every churchman dangles as he
 goes
 The great key at his girdle, and abhors
 In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide
 the house—
 Concede the entrance with Christ's
 liberal mind,
 And set the tables with His wine and
 bread.
 What! commune in 'both kinds?' In
 every kind—
 Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, un-
 limited,
 Nothing kept back. For when a man
 is blind
 To starlight, will he see the rose is red?
 A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's
 foot—
 'Væ! meâ culpâ!' is not like to stand
 A freedman at a despot's, and dispute
 His titles by the balance in his hand,
 Weighing them 'suo jure.' Tend the
 root,
 If careful of the branches; and expand
 The inner souls of men before you
 strive
 For civic heroes.

xx.

But the teacher, where?
 From all these crowded faces, all
 alive,

Eyes, of their own lids flashing them-
 selves bare,
 And brows that with a mobile life
 contrive
 A deeper shadow—may we now dare
 To point a finger out, and touch a man,
 And cry 'this is the leader.' What, all
 these!—
 Broad heads, black eyes,—yet not a
 soul that ran
 From God down with a message? All,
 to please
 The donna waving measures with her
 fan,
 And not the judgment-angel on his
 knees—
 The trumpet just an inch off from
 his lips—
 Who when he breathes next, will put
 out the sun?
 Yet mankind's self were foundered in
 eclipse,
 If lacking doers, with great works to be
 done,
 And lo, the startled earth already dips
 Back into light—a better day's begun—
 And soon this leader, teacher, will
 stand plain,
 And build the golden pipes and synthe-
 size
 This people-organ for a holier strain.
 We hold this hope, and still in all these
 eyes,
 Go sounding for the deep look which
 shall drain
 Suffused thought into channelled enter-
 prise!
 Where is the teacher? What now
 may he do.
 Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird
 his waist
 With a monk's rope, like Luther? or
 pursue
 The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in
 haste,
 Like Masaniello when the sky was
 blue?
 Keep house like other peasants, with in-
 laced
 Bare, brawny arms about a favourite
 child,
 And meditative looks beyond the door.
 (But not to mark the kidling's teeth
 have filed

The green shoots of his vine which last
year bore
Full twenty bunches;) or, on triple-
piled
Throne-velvets sits at ease, to bless the
poor,
Like other pontiffs, in the Poorest's
name,
The old tiara keeps itself aslope
Upon his steady brows, which, all the
same,
Bend mildly to permit the people's hope?

XXI.

Whatever hand shall grasp this ori-
flamme,
Whatever man (last peasant or first Pope
Seeking to free his country!) shall
appear,
Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses,
fill
These empty bladders with fine air,
insphere
These wills into a unity of will,
And make of Italy a nation—dear
And blessed be that man! the Heavens
shall kill
No leaf the earth shall grow for him;
and Death
Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life,
To live more surely, in a clarion-
breath
Of hero-music! Brutus, with the knife,
Rienzi, with the fasces, throb beneath
Rome's stones; and more, who threw
away joy's life
Like Pallas, that the beauty of their
souls
Might ever shine untroubled and entire!
But if it can be true that he who rolls
The Church's thunders will reserve her
fire
For only light; from eucharistic bowls
Will pour new life for nations that ex-
pire,
And rend the scarlet of his Papal vest
To gird the weak loins of his country-
men—
I hold that he surpasses all the rest
Of Romans, heroes, patriots,—and that
when
He sat down on the throne, he dispos-
sessed

The first graves of some glory. See
again,
This country-saving is a glorious
thing!
And if a common man achieved it?
Well!
Say, a rich man did? Excellent! A
king?
That grows sublime! A priest? Im-
probable!
A Pope? Ah, there we stop and can-
not bring
Our faith up to the leap, with history's
bell
So heavy round the neck of it—albeit
We fain would grant the possibility
For *thy* sake, Pio Nono!

XXII.

Stretch thy feet
In that case—I will kiss them reverently
As any pilgrim to the Papal seat!
And, such proved possible, thy throne to
me
Shall seem as holy a place as Pelli-
co's
Venetian dungeon; or as Spielberg's
grate,
At which the Lombard woman hung
the rose
Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy
weight,
To feel the dungeon round her sun-
shine close
And pining so, died early, yet too late
For what she suffered! Yea, I will
not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the
spot
Marked red for ever spite of rains and
dews
Where two fell riddled by the Austrian's
shot—
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and face,
(that what
They speak may be invincible,) the
sins
Of earth's tormentors before God, the
just,
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt
begins to loosen in His grasp.

XXIII.

And yet we must
 Beware, and mark the natural kiths
 and kins
 Of circumstance and office, and distrust
 A rich man reasoning in a poor man's
 hut ;
 A poet who neglects pure truth to
 prove
 Statistic fact ; a child who leaves a
 rut
 For a smoother road ; the priest who
 vows his glove
 Exhales no grace ; the prince who
 walks a-foot ;
 The woman who has sworn she will not
 love ;
 And this Ninth Pius in Seventh Greg-
 ory's chair,
 With Andrea Doria's forehead !

XXIV.

Count what goes
 To make up a pope before he wear
 That triple crown. We pass the world-
 wide throes
 Which went to make the popedom,—
 the despair
 Of free men, good men, wise men ; the
 dread shows
 Of women's faces, by the fagot's flash,
 Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb
 O' the white lips, the least tremble of a
 lash,
 To glut the red stare of a licensed mob !
 The short mad cries down oubliettes,
 and plash
 So horribly far off ! priests, trained to
 rob,
 And kings that, like encouraged night-
 mares, sate
 On nations' hearts most heavily dis-
 tressed
 With monstrous sights and apoph-
 thegms of fact !—
 We pass these things, — because ' the
 times ' are prest
 With necessary charges of the weight
 Of all this sin, and ' Calvin, for the rest,
 Made bold to burn Servetus — Ah,
 men err !'
 And so do *churches* ? which is all we
 mean

To bring to proof in any register
 Of theological fat kine and lean—
 So drive them back into the pens !
 refer
 Old sins (with pourpoint, ' quotha ' and
 ' I ween,')
 Entirely to the old times, the old
 times ;
 Nor ever ask why this preponderant,
 Infallible, pure Church could set her
 chimcs
 Most loudly then, just then,—most jubi-
 lant,
 Precisely then—when mankind stood
 in crimes
 Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judg-
 ments were not scant.
 Inquire still less, what signifies a
 church
 Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,
 Who burns the first man with a brim-
 stone-torch,
 And grinds the second, bone by bone,
 because
 The times, forsooth, are used to rack
 and scorch !
 What *is* a holy Church, unless she awes
 The times down from their sins ? Did
 Christ select
 Such amiable times, to come and teach
 Love to, and mercy ? The whole
 world were wrecked,
 If every mere great man, who lives to
 reach
 A little leaf of popular respect,
 Attained not simply by some special
 breach
 In the age's customs, by some preced-
 ence
 In thought and act, which, having
 proved him higher
 Than those he lived with, proved his
 competence
 In helping them to wonder and aspire.

XXV.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's
 sense !
 My soul has fire to mingle with the fire
 Of all these souls, within or out of
 doors
 Of Rome's Church or another. I be-
 lieve

In one priest, and one temple, with its
 floors
 Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and
 eve
 By countless knees of earnest audit-
 ors ;
 And crystal walls, too lucid to perceive,
 That none may take the measure of
 the place
 And say, 'so far the porphyry ; then,
 the flint—
 To this mark, mercy goes, and there,
 ends grace,'
 Though still the permeable crystals hint
 At some white starry distance, bathed
 in space !
 I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the
 dint
 Of undersprings of silent Deity ;
 I hold the articulated gospels, which
 Show Christ among us, crucified on
 tree ;
 I love all who love truth, if poor or rich
 In what they have won of truth pos-
 sessively !
 No altars and no hands defiled with
 pitch
 Shall scare me off, but I will pray and
 eat
 With all these—taking leave to choose
 my ewers
 And say at last, ' Your visible
 Churches cheat
 Their inward types ; and if a Church
 assures
 Of standing without failure and de-
 feat,
 The same both fails and lies !'

xxvi.

To leave which lures
 Of wider subject through past years,
 —behold,
 We come back from the Popedom to
 the Pope,
 To ponder what he *must* be, ere we
 are bold
 For what he *may* be, with our heavy
 hope
 To trust upon his soul. So, fold by
 fold,
 Explore this mummy in the priestly
 cope

Transmitted through the darks of
 time, to catch
 The man within the wrappage, and dis-
 cern
 How he, an honest man, upon the
 watch
 Full fifty years, for what a man may
 learn,
 Contrived to get just there ; with
 what a snatch
 Of old world oboli he had to earn
 The passage through ; with what a
 drowsy sop
 To drench the busy barkings of his
 brain ;
 What ghosts of pale tradition, wreath-
 ed with hop
 'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to
 entertain
 For heavenly visions ; and consent to
 stop
 The clock at noon, and let the hour re-
 main
 (Without vain windings up) inviolate,
 Against all chimings from the belfry.
 Lo !
 From every given pope you must
 abate,
 Albeit you love him, some things—good,
 you know—
 Which every given heretic you hate
 Assumes for his, as being plainly so.
 A pope must hold by popes a little,—
 yes,
 By councils,—from Nicæa up to Trent,
 By hierocratic empire, more or less
 Irresponsible to men,—he must resent
 Each man's particular conscience, and
 repress
 Inquiry, meditation, argument,
 As tyrants faction. Also, he must not
 Love truth too dangerously, but pre-
 fer
 'The interests of the Church,' be-
 cause a blot
 Is better than a rent in miniver,—
 Submit to see the people swallow hot
 Husk - porridge which his chartered
 churchmen stir,
 Quoting the only true God's epigraph,
 'Feed my lambs, Peter!'—must con-
 sent to sit
 Attesting with his pastoral ring and
 staff,

To such a picture of our Lady, hit
 Off well by artist angels, though not
 half
 As fair as Giotto would have painted it ;
 To such a vial, where a dead man's
 blood
 Runs yearly warm beneath a church-
 man's finger ;
 To such a holy house of stone and
 wood,
 Whereof a cloud of angels was the
 bringer
 From Bethlehem to Loreto !—Were it
 good
 For any pope on earth to be a flinger
 Of stones against those high-niched
 counterfeits ?
 Apostates only are iconoclasts.
 He dares not say, while this false
 thing abets
 That true thing, 'this is false!' he
 keeps his fasts
 And prayers, as prayer and fast were
 silver frets
 To change a note upon a string that
 lasts,
 And make a lie a virtue. Now, if he
 Did more than this,—higher hoped and
 braver dared,
 I think he were a pope in jeopardy,
 Or no pope rather! for his truth had
 barred
 The vaulting of his life. And cer-
 tainly
 If he do only this, mankind's regard
 Moves on from him at once, to seek
 some new
 Teacher and leader! He is good and
 great
 According to the deeds a pope can
 do ;
 Most liberal, save those bonds ; affection-
 ate,
 As princes may be ; and, as priests
 are, true—
 But only the ninth Pius after eight,
 When all's praised most. At best and
 hopefullest,
 He's pope—we want a man! his heart
 beats warm,
 But, like the prince enchanted to the
 waist.
 He sits in stone, and hardens by a
 charm

Into the marble of his throne high-
 placed!
 Mild benediction waves his saintly
 arm—
 So good! but what we want's a per-
 fect man,
 Complete and all alive: half traver-
 tine
 Half-suits our need, and ill subserves
 our plan.
 Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies di-
 vine
 Were never yet too much for men who
 ran
 In such hard ways as must be this of
 thine,
 Deliver whom we seek, whoe'er thou
 art,
 Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed,
 the first,
 The noblest, therefore! since the
 heroic heart
 Within thee must be great enough to
 burst
 Those trammels buckling to the baser
 part
 Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed
 and cursed
 With the same finger.

XXVII.

Come, appear, be found,
 If Pope or peasant come! we hear the
 cock,
 The courtier of the mountains when
 first crowned
 With golden dawn ; and orient glories
 flock
 To meet the sun upon the highest
 ground
 Take voice and work! we wait to hear
 thee knock
 At some one of our Florentine nine
 gates,
 On each of which was imaged a sub-
 lime
 Face of a Tuscan genius, which for
 hate's
 And love's sake both, our Florence in
 her prime
 Turned boldly on all comers to her
 states,
 As heroes turned their shields in antique
 time,

Blazoned with honourable acts. And though
 The gates are blank now of such images,
 And Petrarch looks no more from
 Nicolo
 Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia
 trees,
 Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we
 know.
 Despite the razing of the blazonries,
 Remains the consecration of the
 shield,—
 The dead heroic faces will start out
 On all these gates, if foes should take
 the field,
 And blend sublimely, at the earliest
 shout,
 With living heroes who will scorn to
 yield
 A hair's-breadth ev'n, when, gazing
 round about,
 They find in what a glorious company
 They fight the foes of Florence! Who
 will grudge
 His one poor life, when that great man
 we see
 Has given five hundred years, the world
 being judge,
 To help the glory of his Italy?
 Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will
 budge,
 When Dante stays, when Ariosto
 stays,
 When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye bring
 swords,
 My Tuscans? Why, if wanted in
 this haze,
 Bring swords, but first bring souls!—
 bring thoughts and words
 Unrusted by a tear of yesterday's,
 Yet awful by its wrong, and cut these
 cords
 And mow this green lush falseness to
 the roots,
 And shut the mouth of hell below the
 swathe!
 And if ye can bring songs too, let the
 lute's
 Recoverable music softly bathe
 Some poet's hand, that, through all
 bursts and bruits
 Of popular passion—all unripe and rathe
 Convictions of the popular intellect—
 Ye may not lack a finger up the air,

Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,
 To show which way your first Ideal
 bare
 The whiteness of its wings, when,
 sorely pecked
 By falcons on your wrists, it unaware
 Arose up overhead, and out of sight.

XXVIII.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the
 world
 Breathe back the deep breath of their
 old delight,
 To swell the Italian banner just un-
 furled.
 Help, lands of Europe! for, if Aus-
 tria fight,
 The drums will bar your slumber. Had
 ye curled
 The laurel for your thousand artists'
 brows,
 If these Italian hands had planted
 none?
 Can any sit down idle in the house,
 Nor hear appeals from Buonarrotti's
 stone
 And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to
 rouse?
 Where's Poussin's master? Gallic Avig-
 non
 Bred Laura, and Vacluse's fount has
 stirred
 The heart of France too strongly,—as it
 lets
 Its little stream out, like a wizard's
 bird
 Which bounds upon its emerald wing,
 and wets
 The rocks on each side—that she
 should not gird
 Her loins with Charlemagne's sword
 when foes beset
 The country of her Petrarch. Spain
 may well
 Be minded how from Italy she caught,
 To mingle with her tinkling Moorish
 bell,
 A fuller cadence and a subtler thought;
 And even the New World, the re-
 ceptacle
 Of freemen, may send glad men, as it
 ought,
 To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door;

While England claims, by trump of
poetry,
Verona, Venice, the Ravenna shore,
And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
Than Langlande's Malvern with the
stars in flower.

XXIX.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
Last June, beloved companion,—where
sublime
The mountains live in holy families,
And the slow pinewoods ever climb
and climb
Half up their breasts; just stagger as
they seize
Some gray crag—drop back with it
many a time,
And straggle blindly down the precipice!
The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn
as thick
That June-day, knee-deep, with dead
beechen leaves,
As Milton saw them ere his heart
grew sick,
And his eyes blind. I think the monks
and beeves
Are all the same too: scarce they
have changed the wick
On good St. Gualbert's altar, which re-
ceives
The convent's pilgrims; and the pool
in front
Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast,
to wait
The beatific vision and the grunt
Used at refectory, keeps its weedy state,
To baffle saintly abbots who would
count
The fish across their breviary, nor 'bate
The measure of their steps. O water-
falls
And forests! sound and silence! moun-
tains bare,
That leap up peak by peak, and catch
the palls
Of purple and silver mist to rend and
share
With one another, at electric calls
Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot
dare
Fix your shapes, count your number!
we must think

Your beauty and your glory helped to
fill
The cup of Milton's soul so to the
brink
He never more was thirsty when God's
will
Had shattered to his sense the last
chain-link
By which he had drawn from Nature's
visible
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by
this,
He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa. There-
fore is
The place divine to English man and
child—
And pilgrims leave their souls here in
a kiss.

XXX.

For Italy's the whole earth's treasury,
piled
With reveries of gentle ladies, flung
Aside, like ravelled silk, from the life's
worn stuff—
With coins of scholars' fancy, which,
being rung
On work-day counter, still sound silver-
proof—
In short, with all the dreams of
dreamers young,
Before their heads have time for slip-
ping off
Hope's pillow to the ground. How
oft, indeed,
We've sent our souls out from the rigid
north,
On bare white feet which would not
print nor bleed
To climb the Alpine passes and look
forth,
Where booming low the Lombard
rivers lead
To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is
worth,—
Sights, thou and I, Love, have seen
afterward
From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide
awake,*

* Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on
an eminence called Bellosguardo.

When, standing on the actual blessed
 sward
 Where Galileo stood at nights to take
 The vision of the stars, we have found
 it hard,
 Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to
 make
 A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all
 Refreshed in England or in other land,
 By visions, with their fountain-rise
 and fall
 Of this earth's darling,—we, who under-
 stand
 A little how the Tuscan musical
 Vowels do round themselves as if they
 plann'd
 Eternities of separate sweetness,—we
 Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-
 book,
 Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith
 or glee—
 Who loved Rome's wolf, with demi-
 gods at suck,
 Or ere we loved truth's own divini-
 ty,—
 Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and
 brook,
 And Ovid's dreaming tales, and Pe-
 trarch's song,
 Or ere we loved Love's self even!—let
 us give
 The blessing of our souls, and wish
 them strong
 To bear it to the height where prayers
 arrive,
 When faithful spirits pray against a
 wrong ;
 To this great cause of southern men,
 who strive
 In God's name for man's rights, and
 shall not fail!

xxxI.

Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts
 ascend
 Above the shrieks, in Naples, and
 prevail.
 Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the
 end
 Of burial, seem to smile up straight
 and pale

Into the azure air, and apprehend
 That final gun-flash from Palermo's
 coast,
 Which lightens their apocalypse of
 death.
 So let them die! The world shows
 nothing lost ;
 Therefore, not blood! above or under-
 neath,
 What matter, brothers, if ye keep
 your post
 On duty's side? As sword returns to
 sheath,
 So dust to grave, but souls find place
 in Heaven.
 Heroic daring is the true success,
 The eucharistic bread requires no
 leaven ;
 And though your ends were hopeless,
 we should bless
 Your cause as holy! Strive—and,
 having striven,
 Take, for God's recompense, that right-
 eousness!

PART II.

I.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,
 Hearing a little child sing in the street
 I leant upon his music as a theme,
 Till it gave way beneath my heart's
 full beat,
 Which tried at an exultant prophecy
 But dropped before the measure was
 complete—
 Alas, for songs and hearts! O Tuscany,
 O Dante's Florence, is the type too
 plain?
 Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
 As little children take up a high strain
 With unintentioned voices, and break
 off
 To sleep upon their mothers' knees
 again?
 Could'st thou not watch one hour? Then,
 sleep enough—
 That sleep may hasten manhood, and
 sustain
 The faint pale spirit with some muscular
 stuff.

ii.

But we who cannot slumber as thou dost,
 We thinkers, who have thought for thee and failed,
 We hoppers, who have hoped for thee and lost,
 We poets, wandered round by dreams,* who hailed
 From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-post
 Which still drips blood,—the worst part hath prevailed)
 The fire-voice of the beacons, to declare
 Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened through
 A crimson sunset in a misty air,—
 What now remains for such as we, to do?
 —God's judgments, peradventure, will he bare
 To the roots of thunder, if we kneel and sue?

iii.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked forth,
 And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines
 Flash back the triumph of the Lombard north,—
 Saw fifty banners, freighted with the signs
 And exultations of the awakened earth,
 Float on above the multitude in lines,
 Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision went.
 And so, between those populous rough hands
 Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold out-leant,
 And took the patriot's oath, which henceforth stands
 Among the oaths of perjurers, eminent
 To catch the lightnings ripened for these lands.

iv.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke Leopold?

* Referring to the well-known opening passage of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus.

What need to swear? What need to boast thy blood
 Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart unsold
 Away from Florence? It was understood
 God made thee not too vigorous or too bold,
 And men had patience with thy quiet mood,
 And women, pity, as they saw thee pace
 Their festive streets with premature grey hairs:
 We turned the mild dejection of thy face
 To princely meanings, took thy wrinkling cares
 For ruffling hopes, and called thee weak, not base.
 Nay, better light the torches for more prayers
 And smoke the pale Madonnas at the shrine,
 Being still 'our poor Grand-duke,' 'our good Grand-duke,'
 'Who cannot help the Austrian in his line,'
 Than write an oath upon a nation's book
 For men to spit at with scorn's blurring brine!
 Who dares forgive what none can overlook?

v.

For me, I do repent me in this dust
 Of towns and temples, which makes Italy,—
 I sigh amid the sighs which breathe a gust
 Of dying century to century,
 Around us on the uneven crater-crust
 Of the old worlds,—I bow my soul and knee,
 Absolve me, patriots, of my woman's fault
 That ever I believed the man was true.
 These sceptred strangers shun the common salt
 And, therefore, when the general board's in view,
 And they stand up to carve for blind and halt,

The wise suspect the viands which ensue.
And I repent that in this time and
place,

Where many corpse-lights of experience
burn

From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's festering
race,

To enlighten groping reasoners, I could
learn

No better counsel for a simple case
Than to put faith in princes, in my turn.

Had all the death-piles of the ancient
years

Flared up in vain before me? Knew I
not

What stench arises from some purple
gears—

And how the sceptres witness whence
they got

Their briar-wood, crackling through
the atmosphere's

Foul smoke, by princely perjuries, kept
hot?

Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—
Brutus, thou,

Who trailest downhill into life again
Thy blood-weighted cloak, to indict
me with thy slow

Reproachful eyes!—for being taught in
vain

That while the illegitimate Cæsars
show

Of meaner stature than the first full
strain,

(Confessed incompetent to conquer
Gaul)

They swoon as feebly and cross Rubi-
cons

As rashly as any Julius of them all.
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which
runs

Through absolute races, too unsepti-
cal!

I saw the man among his little sons,
His lips were warm with kisses while
he swore,—

And I, because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming life
before

The prescience of my soul, and held
faith high,

I could not bear to think, whoever
bore,

That lips, so warmed, could shape so
cold a lie.

VI.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked
out,

Again looked, and beheld a different
sight.

The Duke had fled before the peo-
ple's shout

'Long live the Duke!' A people, to
speak right,

Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest a
doubt

Should curdle brows of gracious sover-
eigns, white

Moreover that same dangerous shout-
ing meant

Some gratitude for future favours,
which

Were only promised;—the Constitu-
ent

Implied;—the whole being subject to
the hitch

In motu proprios, very incident
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulo-
vitch.

Whereat the people rose up in the
dust

Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted
still

And loudly, only, this time, as was
just,

Not 'Live the Duke,' who had fled, for
good or ill,

But 'Live the People,' who remained
and must,

The unrenounced and unrenounceable.

VII.

Long live the people! How they
lived! and boiled

And bubbled in the cauldron of the
street!

How the young blustered, nor the old
recoiled,

And what a thunderous stir of tongues
and feet

Trod flat the palpitating bells, and
foiled

The joy-guns of their echo, shattering
it!

How they pulled down the Duke's
arms everywhere !
How they set up new café-signs, to
show
Where patriots might sip ices in pure
air—
(The fresh paint smelling somewhat.)
To and fro
How marched the civic guard, and
stopped to stare
When boys broke windows in a civic
glow.
How rebel songs were sung to loyal
tunes,
And Bishops cursed in ecclesiastical me-
tres !
How all the Circoli grew large as
moons,
And all the speakers, moonstruck !—
thankful greeters
Of prospects which struck poor the
ducal boons,
A mere free press, and chambers !—
frank repeaters
Of great Guerazzi's praises . . .
'There's a man,
The father of the land !—who, truly
great,
Takes off that national disgrace and
ban,
The farthing-tax upon our Florence-
gate,
And saves Italia as he only can.'
How all the nobles fled, and would not
wait,
Because they were most noble ! which
being so,
How liberals vowed to burn their pal-
aces,
Because free Tuscans were not free to
go.
How grown men raged at Austria's
wickedness,
And smoked,—while fifty striplings in
a row
Marched straight to Piedmont for the
wrong's redress !
You say we failed in duty, we who
wore
Black velvet like Italian democrats,
Who slashed our sleeves like patriots,
nor forswore
The true republic in the form of hats ?

We chased the archbishop from the
duomo door—
We chalked the walls with bloody ca-
veats
Against all tyrants. If we did not fight
Exactly, we fired muskets up the air,
To show that victory was ours of
right.
We met, had free discussion every-
where,
Except, perhaps, i' the chambers, day
and night :
We proved the poor should be employed,
. . . that's fair,—
And yet the rich not worked for
anywise,—
Pay certified, yet prayers abrogated,
Full work secured, yet liabilities
To over-work excluded,—not one bated
Of all our holidays, that still at twice
Or thrice a-week, are moderately rated.
We proved that Austria was dis-
lodged, or would
Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
Should, would, dislodge her, ending the
old feud ;
And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and
farms,
For the bare sake of fighting, was not
good.
We proved that also—'Did we carry
charms
Against being killed ourselves, that
we should rush
On killing others ? What ! desert here-
with
Our wives and mothers !—was that
duty ? Tush !'
At which we shook the sword within the
sheath,
Like heroes—only louder ! and the
flush
Ran up the cheek to meet the future
wreath.
Nay, what we proved, we shouted—
how we shouted,
(Especially the boys did) boldly planting
That tree of liberty whose fruit is
doubted,
Because the roots are not of nature's
granting—
A tree of good and evil !—none, with-
out it,

Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men are wanting.

VIII.

O holy knowledge, holy liberty,
O holy rights of nations! If I speak
These bitter things against the jugglery
Of days that in your names proved
blind and weak,
It is that tears are bitter. When we see
The brown skulls grin at death in
churchyards bleak,
We do not cry, 'This Yorick is too
light,'
For death grows deathlier with that
mouth he makes.
So with my mocking. Bitter things
I write,
Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,
O freedom! O my Florence!

IX.

Men who might

Do greatly in a universe that breaks
And burns, must ever *know* before
they do.
Courage and patience are but sacrifice;
A sacrifice is offered for and to
Something conceived of. Each man
pays a price
For what himself counts precious,
whether true
Or false the appreciation it implies.
But here,—no knowledge, no concep-
tion, nought!
Desire was absent, that provides great
deeds
From out the greatness of prevenient
thought;
And action, action, like a flame that
needs
A steady breath and fuel, being
caught
Up, like a burning reed from other
reeds,
Flashed in the empty and uncertain
air.
Then wavered, then went out. Behold,
who blames
A crooked course, when not a goal is
there,

To round the fervid striving of the
games?

An ignorance of means may minister
To greatness, but an ignorance of aims
Makes it impossible to be great at all.

So with our Tuscans! Let none dare to
say,

Here virtue never can be national,
Here fortitude can never cut its way
Between the Austrian muskets, out of
thrall.

I tell you rather that whoever may
Discern true ends here, shall grow
pure enough

To love them, brave enough to strive for
them,

And strong enough to reach them,
though the roads be rough:

That having learnt—by no mere apoph-
thegm—

Nor just the draping of a graceful
stuff

About a statue, broidered at the hem,—
Not just the trilling on an opera stage,
Of 'libertà' to bravos—(a fair word,

Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
And breathless sobs, for singing, though
the cord

Were deeper than they struck it!)—
but the guage

Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs
abhorred,—

The serious, sacred meaning and full
use.

Of freedom for a nation,—then, indeed,
Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody
dews

Of some new morning, rising up agreed
And bold, will want no Saxon souls
or thews,

To sweep their piazzas clear of Austria's
breed.

X.

Alas, alas! it was not so this time.
Conviction was not, courage failed, and
'truth

Was something to be doubted of.
The mime

Changed masks, because a mime; the
tide as smooth

In running in as out; no sense of
crime

Because no sense of virtue. Sudden ruth
Seized on the people . . . they would
have again

Their Grand-duke, and leave Guerazzi,
though

He took that tax from Florence :—
Much in vain

He takes it from the market-carts, we
trow,

While urgent that no market-men re-
main,

But all march off and leave the spade
and plough

To die among the Lombards. Was it
thus

The dear paternal Duke did ? ' Live the
Duke !'

At which the joy-bells multitudinous,
Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly
shook,

Recall the mild Archbishop to his
house,

To bless the people with his frightened
look.

He shall not yet be hanged, you com-
prehend.

Seize on Guerazzi ; guard him in full
view,

Or else we stab him in the back, to end.
Rub out those chalked devices ! Set up
new

The Duke's arms ; doff your Phry-
gian caps ; and mend

The pavement of the piazzas broke into
By barren poles of freedom ! Smooth
the way

For the ducal carriage, lest his highness
sigh

' Here trees of liberty grew yester-
day.'

Long live the Duke !—How roared the
cannonry,

How rocked the bell-towers, and
through thickening spray

Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs
tossed on high,

How marched the civic guard, the
people still

Being good at shouts,—especially the
boys.

Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will
Most fitly expressed by such a callow
voice !

Alas, still poorer duke, incapable
Of being worthy even so much noise !

XI.

You think he came back instantly,
with thanks

And tears in his faint eyes, and hands
extended

To stretch the franchise through their
utmost ranks ?

That having, like a father, apprehended,
He came to pardon fatherly those
pranks

Played out, and now in filial service
ended ?—

That some love token, like a prince,
he threw,

To meet the people's love-call, in re-
turn ?

Well, how he came I will relate to
you ;

And if your hearts should burn, why,
hearts *must* burn,

To make the ashes which things old
and new

Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke
will learn.

XII.

From Casa Guidi windows gazing,
then,

I saw and witness how the Duke came
back.

The regular tramp of horses and tread
of men

Did smite the silence like an anvil
black

And sparkless. With her wide eyes
at full strain,

Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, ' Alack,
alack,

Signora ! these shall be the Austrians,'
' Nay,

Be still,' I answered, ' do not wake the
child !'

For so, my two-months' baby sleep-
ing lay

In milky dreams upon the bed and
smiled ;

And I thought, ' he shall sleep on
while he may,

Through the world's baseness. Not
being yet defiled,

Why should he be disturbed by what
is done ?

Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn
street

Live out, from end to end, full in the
sun,

With Austria's thousands. Sword and
bayonet,

Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons roll-
ing on,

Like blind, slow storm-clouds gestant
with the heat

Of undeveloped lightnings, each be-
strode

By a single man, dust-white from head
to heel,

Indifferent as the dreadful thing he
rode,

Like a sculptored Fate serene and terri-
ble !

As some smooth river which has over-
flowed,

Will slow and silent down its current
wheel

A loosened forest, all the pines erect—
So, swept, in mute significance of storm,

The marshalled thousands,—not an
eye deflect

To left or right, to catch a novel form
Of Florence city adorned by architect

And carver, or of beauties live and
warm

Scared at the casements,—all, straight-
forward eyes

And faces, held as steadfast as their
swords,

And cognisant of acts, not imageries.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the

wards !
Ye asked for mimes ; these bring you
tragedies—

For purple ; these shall wear it as your
lords.

Ye played like children : die like in-
nocents !

Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch :
the crack

Of the actual bolt, your pastime, cir-
cumvents.

Ye called up ghosts, believing they were
slack

To follow any voice from Gilboa's
tents, . . .

Here's Samuel !—and, so, Grand-dukes
come back.

XIII.

And yet they are no prophets though
they come.

That awful mantle they are drawing
close,

Shall be searched, one day, by the
shafts of Doom,

Through double folds now hoodwinking
the brows,

Resuscitated monarchs disentomb
Grave-reptiles with them, in their new

life-throes :
Let such beware. Behold, the people

waits,
Like God. As He, in his serene of

might,
So they, in their endurance of long

straits.
Ye stamp no nation out, though day and

night
Ye tread them with that absolute heel

which grates
And grinds them flat from all attempted

height.
You kill worms sooner with a garden-
spade

Than you kill peoples : peoples will not
die ;

The tail curls stronger when you lop
the head ;

They writhe at every wound and mul-
tiply,

And shudder into a heap of life that's
made

Thus vital from God's own vitality.
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of

God's
Once fixed for judgment : 'tis hard to

change
The people's, when they rise beneath

their loads
And heave them from their backs with

violent wrench,
'To crush the oppressor. For that

judgment rod's
The measure of this popular revenge.

XIV.

Meantime, from Casa Guidi windows
we

Beheld the armament of Austria flow
 Into the drowning heart of Tuscany.
 And yet none wept, none cursed ; or, if
 'twas so,

They wept and cursed in silence. Silently
 Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading
 foe ;

They had learnt silence. Pressed
 against the wall
 And grouped upon the church-steps
 opposite,

A few pale men and women stared at
 all.
 God knows what they were feeling, with
 their white

Constrained faces !—they, so prodigal
 Of cry and gesture when the world
 goes right,

Or wrong indeed. But here, was
 depth of wrong,
 And here, still water : they were silent
 here :

And through that sentient silence,
 struck along
 That measured tramp from which it
 stood out clear

Distinct the sound and silence, like a
 gong
 At midnight, each by the other awfuller,
 While every soldier in his cap dis-
 played
 A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing !
 Was such plucked at Novara, is it
 said ?

xv.

A cry is up in England, which doth ring
 The hollow world through, that for
 ends of trade

And virtue, and God's better worship-
 ping,

We henceforth should exalt the name
 of Peace,
 And leave those rusty wars that eat the
 soul,—

Besides their clippings at our golden
 fleece.
 I, too, have loved peace, and from bole
 to bole

Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,
 Would write, as lovers use, upon a scroll
 The holy name of Peace, and set it
 high

Where none could pluck it down. On
 trees, I say,—

Not upon gibbets !—With the green-
 ery

Of dewy branches and the flowery May,
 Sweet meditation betwixt earth and
 sky

Providing, for the shepherd's holiday !
 Not upon gibbets ! though the vul-
 ture leaves

The bones to quiet, which he first picked
 bare.

Not upon dungeons ! though the
 wretch who grieves
 And groans within, stirs less the outer
 air

Than any little field-mouse stirs the
 sheaves.

Not upon chain-bolts ! though the
 slave's despair

Has dulled his helpless, miserable
 brain,
 And left him blank beneath the free-
 man's whip,

To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.
 Nor yet on starving homes ! where
 many a lip

Has sobbed itself asleep through
 curses vain !

I love no peace which is not fellowship,
 And which includes not mercy. I
 would have

Rather, the raking of the guns across
 The world, and shrieks against Hea-
 ven's architrave.

Rather, the struggle in the slippery fosse
 Of dying men and horses, and the
 wave

Blood-bubbling. . . Enough said !—
 By Christ's own cross,

And by the faint heart of my woman-
 hood,

Such things are better than a Peace
 which sits

Beside the hearth in self-commended
 mood,

And takes no thought how wind and
 rain by fits

Are howling out of doors against the
 good

Of the poor wanderer. What ! your
 peace admits

Of outside anguish while it keeps at
 home ?

I loathe to take its name upon my tongue—
 'Tis nowise peace. 'Tis treason, stiff with doom,—
 'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate wrong,
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
 Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
 And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
 The life from these Italian souls, in brief.
 O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of Righteousness,
 Constrain the anguished worlds from sin and grief,
 Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
 And give us peace which is no counterfeit!

xvi.

But wherefore should we look out any more
 From Casa Guidi windows? Shut them straight;
 And let us sit down by the folded door
 And veil our saddened faces, and so, wait
 What next the judgment-heavens make ready for.
 I have grown weary of these windows.
 Sights
 Come thick enough and clear enough in thought,
 Without the sunshine; souls have inner lights:
 And since the Grand-duke has come back and brought
 This army of the North which thus requites
 His filial South, we leave him to be taught.
 His South, too, has learnt something certainly,
 Whereof the practice will bring profit soon;
 And peradventure other eyes may see,
 From Casa Guidi windows, what is done

Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they be,
 Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

xvii.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—it shall top
 Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock, so named;
 Shall lure no vessel any more to drop
 Among the breakers. Peter's chair is shamed
 Like any vulgar throne the nations lop
 To pieces for their firewood unreclaimed;
 And, when it burns too, we shall see as well
 In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.
 The cross, accounted still adorable,
 Is Christ's cross only!—if the thief's would earn
 Some stealthy genuflexions, we rebel;
 And here the impenitent thief's has had its turn,
 As God knows; and the people on their knees
 Scoff and toss back the croziers, stretched like yokes
 To press their heads down lower by degrees.
 So Italy, by means of these last strokes,
 Escapes the danger which preceded these,
 Of leaving captured hands in cloven oaks . . .
 Of leaving very souls within the buckle
 Whence bodies struggled outward . . . of supposing
 That freemen may like bondsmen kneel and truckle,
 And then stand up as usual, without losing
 An inch of stature.
 Those whom she-wolves suckle
 Will bite as wolves do, in the grapple-closing
 Of adverse interests: this, at last, is known,
 (Thank Pius for the lesson) that albeit
 Among the Popedom's hundred heads of stone

Which blink down on you from the
roof's retreat

In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral,—
Joan

And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may
greet,

A harlot and a devil, you will see
Not a man, still less angel, grandly
set

With open soul to render man more
free.

The fishers are still thinking of the net,
And if not thinking of the hook too,
we

Are counted somewhat deeply in their
debt :

But that's a rare case—so, by hook and
crook

They take the advantage, agonizing
Christ

By rustier nails than those of Cedron's
brook,

I' the people's body very cheaply
priced ;

And quote high priesthood out of
Holy book,

While buying death-fields with the
sacrificed.

xviii.

Priests, priests!--there's no such name,
God's own, except
Ye take most vainly. Though Heaven's
lifted gate

The priestly ephod in sole glory swept,
When Christ ascended, entered in, and
sate

With victor face sublimely overwept,
At Deity's right hand, to mediate,

He alone, He for ever. On his breast
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with
fire

From the full Godhead, flicker with
the unrest

Of human, pitiful heartbeats Come up
higher,

All Christians! Levi's tribe is dis-
possessed!

That solitary alb ye shall admire,
But not cast lots for. The last chrism,
poured right,

Was on that Head, and poured for
burial

And not for domination in men's
sight.

What are these churches? The old
temple wall

Doth overlook them juggling with the
sleight

Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-pall.
East church and west church, ay,

north church and south,
Rome's church and England's—let them

all repent,
And make concordats 'twixt their soul
and mouth,

Succeed St. Paul by working at the tent,
Become infallible guides by speaking

truth,
And excommunicate their pride that
bent

And cramped the souls of men.
Why, even here,

Priestcraft burns out ; the twined linen
blazes,

Not, like asbestos, to grow white and
clear,

But all to perish!--while the fire-smell
raises

To life some swooning spirits who,
last year,

Lost breath and heart in these church-
stified places.

Why, almost, through this Pius, we
believed

The priesthood could be an honest thing,
he smiled

So saintly while our corn was being
sheaved

For his own granaries. Showing now
defiled

His hireling hands, a better help's
achieved

Than if he blessed us shepherd-like and
mild.

False doctrine, strangled by its own
amen,

Dies in the throat of all this nation.
Who

Will speak a pope's name, as they
rise again?

What woman or what child will count
him true?

What dreamer praise him with the
voice or pen?

What man fight for him?—Pius has his
due.

XIX.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—Yes, but
 first
 Set down thy people's faults:—set down
 the want
 Of soul-conviction; set down aims
 dispersed,
 And incoherent means, and valour
 scant
 Because of scanty faith, and schisms
 accursed
 That wrench these brother-hearts from
 covenant
 With freedom and each other. Set
 down this
 And this, and see to overcome it when
 'The seasons brings the fruits thou
 wilt not miss
 If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
 Distract thee from the stern analysis
 Of masses who cry only: keep thy kin
 Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes'
 blood
 Splashed up against thy noble brow in
 Rome.—
 Let such not blind thee to an inter-
 lude
 Which was not also holy, yet did come
 'Twixt sacramental actions:—brother-
 hood,
 Despised even there,—and something
 of the doom
 Of Remus, in the trenches, Listen
 now—
 Rossi died silent near where Cæsar
 died.
 HE did not say, 'My Brutus, is it
 thou?'
 But Italy unquestioned testified,
 'I killed him!—I am Brutus.—I
 avow.'
 At which the whole world's laugh of
 scorn replied,
 'A poor maimed copy of Brutus!'
 Too much like,
 Indeed, to be so unlike. Too unskilled
 At Philippi and the honest battle-
 pike,
 To be so skilful where a man is killed
 Near Pompey's statue, and the dag-
 gers strike
 At unawares i' the throat. Was thus
 fulfilled

An omen once of Michel Angelo,—
 When Marcus Brutus he conceived com-
 plete,
 And strove to hurl him out by blow
 on blow
 Upon the marble, at Art's thunderheat,
 Till haply some pre-shadow rising
 slow
 Of what his Italy would fancy meet
 To be called BRUTUS, straight his plas-
 tic hand
 Fell back before his prophet soul, and
 left
 A fragment . . . a maimed Brutus,—
 but more grand
 Than this so named of Rome, was!
 Let thy west
 Present one woof and warp, Maz-
 zini!—stand
 With no man hankering for a dagger's
 heft,—
 No, not for Italy!—nor stand apart,
 No, not for the republic!—from those
 pure
 Brave men who hold the level of thy
 heart
 In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
 Albeit they will not follow where thou
 art
 As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust
 fewer;
 And so bind strong and keep unstained
 the cause
 Which (God's sign granted,) war-trumps
 newly blown
 Shall yet annunciate to the world's
 applause.

XX.

But now, the world is busy; it has
 grown
 A Fair-going world. Imperial Eng-
 land draws
 The flowing ends of the earth, from
 Fez, Canton,
 Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and
 Madrid,
 The Russias and the vast Americas,
 As if a queen drew in her robes
 amid
 Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,
 Capes, continents, far inland coun-
 tries hid

By jasper-sands and hills of chrysopras,
All trailing in their splendours through
the door

Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every
nation,

To every other nation strange of yore,
Gives face to face the civic salutation,
And holds up in a proud right hand
before

That congress, the best work which she
can fashion

By her best means—'These corals,
will you please

To match against your oaks? They
grow as fast

Within my wilderness of purple
seas.—

'This diamond stared upon me as I
passed

(As a live god's eye from a marble
frieze)

Along a dark of diamonds. Is it
classed?'—

'I wove these stuffs so subtly that the
gold

Swims to the surface of the silk like
cream,

And curdles to fair patterns. Ye be-
hold!'—

'These delicatest muslins rather seem
Than be, you think? Nay, touch

them and be bold,

Though such veiled Chakhi's face in
Hafiz' dream.'—

'These carpets—you walk slow on
them like kings,

Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
Dips deep in velvet roses and such
things.'—

'Even Apollonius might commend this
flute.*

The music winding through the stops,
upsprings

To make the player very rich. Com-
pute.'—

Here's goblet-glass, to take in with
your wine

* Philostratus relates of Apollonius that he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, its incompetence to enrich and beautify. The history of music in our day, would, upon the former point, sufficiently confute the philosopher.

The very sun its grapes were ripened
under.

Drink light and juice together, and
each fine.'—

'This model of a steamship moves you
wonder?

You should behold it crushing down
the brine,

Like a blind Jove who feels his way
with thunder.'—

'Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live too
Why not throw

Our life into our marbles! Art ha
place

For other artists after Angelo.'

'I tried to paint out here a natural face—
For nature includes Raffael, as we

know?'

Not Raffael nature. Will it help my
case?'—

'Methinks you will not match this
steel of ours!'—

'Nor you this porcelain! One might
dream the clay

Retained in it the larvæ of the
flowers,

They bud so, round the cup, the old
spring way.'—

'Nor you these carven woods, where
birds in bowers

With twisting snakes and climbing cu-
pids, play.'

XXI.

O Magi of the east and of the west,
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are

excellent.—

What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye
with the rest?

Your hands have worked well. Is your
courage spent

In handwork only? Have you nothing
best,

Which generous souls may perfect and
present,

And He shall thank the givers for
No light

Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor
Who sit in darkness when it is no
night?

No cure for wicked children? Christ
—no cure!

No help for women sobbing out of sight
 Because men made the laws? No
 brothel-lure
 Burnt out by popular lightnings?—
 Hast thou found
 No remedy, my England, for such woes?
 No outlet, Austria, for the scourged
 and bound,
 No entrance for the exiled? No re-
 pose,
 Russia, for knouted Poles worked
 underground,
 And gentle ladies bleached among the
 snows?—
 No mercy for the slave, America?—
 No hope for Rome, free France, chival-
 ric France?—
 Alas, great nations have great shames,
 I say.
 No pity, O world, no tender utterance
 Of benediction, and prayers stretched
 this way
 For poor Italia baffled by mischance?—
 O gracious nations, give some ear to
 me!
 You all go to your Fair, and I am one
 Who at the roadside of humanity
 Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be
 done,
 So, prosper!

XXII.

In the name of Italy,
 Meantime, her patriot dead have beni-
 zion!
 They only have done well; and what
 they did
 Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let
 them slumber
 No king of Egypt in a pyramid
 Is safer from oblivion, though he num-
 ber
 Full seventy cerements for a coverlid.
 These Dead be seeds of life, and shall
 encumber
 The sad heart of the land until it
 loose
 The clammy clods and let out the spring-
 growth
 In beatific green through every bruise.
 The tyrant should take heed to what he
 doth,

Since every victim-carrion turns to
 use,
 And drives a chariot, like a god made
 wroth,
 Against each piled injustice. Ay,
 the least
 Dead for Italia, not in vain has died,
 Though many vainly, ere life's strug-
 gle ceased.
 To mad dissimilar ends have swerved
 aside.
 Each grave her nationality has pierced
 By its own noble breadth, and fortified,
 And pinned it deeper to the soil. For-
 lorn
 Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of these
 graves!
 Not hers,—who, at her husband's side,
 in scorn,
 Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing
 waves,
 Until she felt her little babe unborn
 Recoil, within her, from the violent
 staves
 And bloodhounds of the world: at
 which, her life
 Dropt inward from her eyes and follow-
 ed it
 Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife
 And child died so. And now, the sea-
 weeds fit
 Her body like a proper shroud and
 coif,
 And murmurously the ebbing waters grit
 The little pebbles while she lies in-
 terred
 In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying
 thus,
 She looked up in his face which never
 stirred
 From its clenched anguish, as to make
 excuse
 For leaving him for his, if so she erred.
 Well he remembers that she could not
 choose.
 A memorable grave! Another is
 At Genoa. There a king may fitly lie,
 Who bursting that heroic heart of his
 At lost Novara, that he could not die,
 Though thrice into the cannon's eyes
 for this
 He plunged his shuddering steed, and
 felt the sky

Reel back between the fire-shocks ;—
 stripped away
 The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had
 cleared,
 And naked to the soul, that none
 might say
 His kingship covered what was base and
 bleared
 With treason, went out straight, an
 exile, yea,
 An exiled patriot! Let him be revered.

XXIII.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died
 well :
 And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,
 The sin pass softly with the passing
 bell.
 For he was shriven, I think, in cannon
 smoke,
 And taking off his crown, made visible
 A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's
 yoke
 He shattered his own hand and heart.
 'So best,'
 His last words were upon his lonely bed,
 'I do not end like popes and dukes at
 least—
 Thank God for it.' And now that he is
 dead,
 Admitting it is proved and manifest
 That he was worthy, with a discrowned
 head,
 To measure heights with patriots, let
 them stand
 Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
 And each vouchsafe to take him by
 the hand,
 And kiss him on the cheek, and say
 aloud,
 Thou, too, hast suffered for our native
 land!
 'My brother, thou art one of us. Be
 proud.'

XXIV.

Still, graves, when Italy is talked
 upon!
 Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the stran-
 ger's hate.
 Still Niobe! still fainting in the sun
 By whose most dazzling arrows violate
 Her beauteous offspring perished!
 Has she won

Nothing but garlands for the graves
 from Fate?
 Nothing but death-songs?—Yet, be it
 understood,
 Life throbs in noble Piedmont! while
 the feet
 Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft
 in blood,
 Grow fat with dissolution, and, as meet,
 Will soon be shovelled off like other
 mud,
 To leave the passage free in church and
 street.
 And I, who first took hope up in this
 song,
 Because a child was singing one....be-
 hold,
 The hope and omen were not, haply,
 wrong!
 Poets are soothsayers still, like those of
 old
 Who studied flights of doves,—and
 creatures young
 And tender, mighty meanings, may un-
 fold.

XXV.

The sun strikes through the windows,
 up the floor :
 Stand out in it, my own young Floren-
 tine,
 Not two years old, and let me see
 thee more!
 It grows along thy amber curls to shine
 Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look
 straight before,
 And fix thy brave blue English eyes on
 mine,
 And from thy soul, which fronts the
 future so,
 With unabashed and unabated gaze,
 Teach me to hope for, what the An-
 gels know,
 When they smile clear as thou dost.
 Down God's ways,
 With just alighted feet between the
 snow
 And snowdrops, where a little lamb
 may gaze
 Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about
 the road,
 Albeit in our vain-glory we assume
 That, less than we have, thou hast
 learnt of God.

Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet!—
 thou, to whom
 The earliest world-day light that ever
 flowed,
 Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced
 to come!
 Now shake the glittering nimbus of
 thy hair,
 And be God's witness—that the ele-
 mental
 New springs of life are gushing
 everywhere
 To cleanse the water courses, and pre-
 vent all
 Concrete obstructions which infest the
 air!
 —That earth's alive, and gentle or un-
 gentle
 Motions within her, signify but
 growth:
 The ground swells greenest o'er the la-
 bouring moles.
 Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed
 and wroth,
 Young children, lifted high on parent
 souls,
 Look round them with a smile upon
 the mouth,
 And take for music every bell that
 tolls.
 WHO said we should be better if like
 these?
 And *we* sit murmuring for the future
 though
 Posterity is smiling on our knees,
 Convicting us of folly? Let us go—
 We will trust God. The blank inter-
 stices
 Men take for ruins, He will build into
 With pillared marbles rare, or knit
 across
 With generous arches, till the fane's
 complete.
 This world has no perdition, if some
 loss.

XXVI.

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling
 Sweet!
 The self same cherub faces which
 emboss
 The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-
 seat.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

Φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσέρκεσθε

μ' ὀμμασιν, τέκνα ΜΕΔΕΑ.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O
 my brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with years?
 They are leaning their young heads
 against their mothers,
 And *that* cannot stop their tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in the
 meadows:
 The young birds are chirping in their
 nest:
 The young fawns are playing with the
 shadows:
 The young flowers are blowing to-
 ward the west—
 But the young, young children, O my
 brothers,
 They are weeping bitterly!
 They are weeping in the playtime of
 the others,
 In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in
 the sorrow,
 Why their tears are falling so?
 The old man may weep for his to-
 morrow
 Which is lost in Long Ago—
 The old tree is leafless in the forest—
 The old year is ending in the frost—
 The old wound, if stricken, is the
 sorest—
 The old hope is hardest to be lost:
 But the young, young children, O my
 brothers,
 Do you ask them why they stand
 Weeping sore before the bosoms of their
 mothers,
 In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and
 sunken faces,
 And their looks are sad to see,
 For the man's hoary anguish draws
 and presses
 Down the cheeks of infancy—
 'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very
 dreary:
 Our young feet,' they say, 'are very
 weak!

Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—

Our grave-rest is very far to seek :
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,

For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old :

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen

That we die before our time :
Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her—

Was no room for any work in the close clay :
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'

If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,

With your ear down, little Alice never cries!

Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,

For the smile has time for growing in her eyes,

And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in

The shroud by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens,' say the children,

'That we die before our time!'
Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking

Death in life as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking.

With a cément from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city—

Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do—

Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty—

Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!

But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows

Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,

And we cannot run or leap—
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely

To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping—

We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,

The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark underground,
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

'For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—

Their wind comes in our faces,—
Till our hearts turn,—our heads, with pulses burning,

And the walls turn in their places—
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling—

Turns the long light that drops adown the wall—

Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—

All are turning, all the day, and we with all!

And all day the iron wheels are droning;

And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning.)

'Stop! be silent for to-day!'

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing

For a moment, mouth to mouth—
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing

Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion

Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—

Let them prove their living souls against
the notion
That they live in you, or under you,
O wheels!—
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark ;
And the children's souls, which God is
calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O
my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray—
So the blessed One who blesseth all the
others,
Will bless them another day.

They answer, 'Who is God that He
should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels
is stirred ?
When we sob aloud, the human crea-
tures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not
a word!

And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their
resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door :
Is it likely God, with angels singing
round Him,
Hears our weeping any more ?

'Two words, indeed, of praying we re-
member ;
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the
chamber,
We say softly for a charm.*

We know no other words, except 'Our
Father,'
And we think that, in some pause
of angel's song,

God may pluck them with the silence
sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand
which is strong.

'Our Father!' If He heard us, He
would surely

(For they call him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world
very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

'But, no!' say the children, weeping
faster,
'He is speechless as a stone ;
And they tell us, of His image is the
master

Who commands us to work on.
'Go to!' say the children—'Up in Hea-
ven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are
all we find :

Do not mock us ; grief has made us un-
believing,—
We look up for God, but tears have
made us blind.'

Do you hear the children weeping and
disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach ?
For God's possible is taught by His
world's loving—
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before
you ;

They are weary ere they run ;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor
the glory

Which is brighter than the sun :
They know the grief of man, without
his wisdom ;

They sink in man's despair, without
its calm—

Are slaves, without the liberty in Chris-
tendom,

Are martyrs, by the pang without
the palm,—

Are worn as if with age, yet unretriev-
ingly

The harvest of its memories cannot
reap,—

Are orphans of the earthly love and
heavenly :

Let them weep ! let them weep !
They look up, with their pale and sunk-
en faces,

And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in
high places,

With eyes turned on Deity ;—
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O
cruel nation,

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's Report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me (with other noble instances) that we have some noble poetic heat still in our literature,—though open to the reproach, on certain points, of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.

Will you stand, to move the world,
 on a child's heart,—
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpi-
 tation,
 And tread onward to your throne
 amid the mart ?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-
 heaper,
 And your purple shows your path ;
 But the child's sob in the silence curses
 deeper
 Than the strong man in his wrath !

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

[THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from " Casa Guidd windows " in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people, and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand meme*, " more than Plato " and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country.]

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely a courtier, which I am not, though I have written " Napoleon III. in Italy." It is time to limit the significance of certain terms, or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place ; and the instinct of self love is the *root* of a man, which will develop into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses ; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankst species of corruption reserved for the most noble organizations. For instance, non-intervention in the affairs of neighboring states is a high political virtue ; but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbor falls among thieves,—or Phariseism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege ; but freedom of the seas does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land brigandage ; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to edgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interest,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, of family interests or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the little Pedlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea ?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage, in the face of his countrymen, to assert of some suggestive policy,—" This is good for your trade ; this is necessary for your domination ; but it will vex a people hard by ; it will hurt a people farther off ; it will profit nothing to the general humanity ; therefore, away with it !—it is not for you or for me." When a British minister dares to speak so, and when a British public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered, and from the populations she has saved.

And poets, who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment imputable to their rhymes.

ROME, February, 1860.]

I.

EMPEROR, Emperor !
 From the centre to the shore,
 From the Seine back to the Rhine,
 Stood eight millions up and swore,
 By their manhood's right divine
 So to elect and legislate,

This man should renew the line
 Broken in a strain of fate
 And leagued kings at Waterloo,
 When the people's hands let go.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

ii.

With a universal shout
 They took the old regalia out
 From an open grave that day ;
 From a grave that would not close,
 Where the first Napoleon lay
 Expectant, in repose,
 As still as Merlin, with his conquering
 face,
 Turned up in its unquenchable appeal
 To men and heroes of the advancing
 race,
 Prepared to set the seal
 Of what has been on what shall be.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

iii.

The thinkers stood aside
 To let the nation act.
 Some hated the new constituted fact
 Of empire, as pride treading on their
 pride,
 Some quailed, lest what was poisonous
 in the past
 Should graft itself in that Druidic bough
 On this green now.
 Some cursed, because at last
 The open heavens to which they had
 look'd in vain
 For many a golden fall of marvellous
 rain
 Were closed in brass ; and some
 Wept on because a gone thing could
 not come ;
 And some were silent, doubting all things
 for
 That popular conviction—evermore
 Emperor.

iv.

That day I did not hate
 Nor doubt, nor quail, nor curse.
 I, reverencing the people, did not bate
 My reverence of their deed and oracle,
 Nor vainly prate
 Of better and of worse
 Against the great conclusion of their will.
 And yet, O voice and verse,
 Which God set in me to acclaim and
 sing
 Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
 We gave no music to the patent thing,

Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and
 swim
 About the name of him
 Translated to the sphere of domination
 By democratic passion !
 I was not used, at least,
 Nor can be, now or then,
 To stroke the ermine beast
 On any kind of throne,
 (Though builded by a nation for its
 own,)
 And swell the surging choir for kings of
 men—
 ' Emperor
 Evermore.'

v.

But now, Napoleon, now
 That, leaving far behind the purple
 throng
 Of vulgar monarchs, thou
 Tread'st higher in thy deed
 Than stair of throne can lead
 To help in the hour of wrong
 The broken hearts of nations to be
 strong,—
 Now, lifted as thou art
 To the level of pure song,
 We stand to meet thee on these Alpine
 snows !
 And while the palpitating peaks break
 out
 Ecstatic from somnambular repose
 With answers to the presence and the
 shout,
 We, poets of the people, who take part
 With elemental justice, natural right,
 Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
 We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this
 height
 At last, and find thee great enough to
 praise.
 Receive the poet's chrism, which smells
 beyond
 The priest's, and pass thy ways ;—
 An English poet warns thee to maintain
 God's word, not England's :—let His
 truth be true
 And all men liars ! with His truth re-
 spond
 To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and
 smite
 On that long anvil of the Apennine
 Where Austria forged the Italian chain
 in view

Of seven consenting nations, sparks of
fine

Admonitory light,
Till men's eyes wink before convictions
new.

Flash in God's justice to the world's
amaze,

Sublime Deliverer!—after many days
Found worthy of the deed thou art come
to do—

Emperor
Evermore.

VI

But Italy, my Italy
Can it last, this gleam?
Can she live and be strong,
Or is it another dream
Like the rest we have dreamed so long?
And shall it, must it be,

That after the battle-cloud has broken
She will die off again
Like the rain,

Or like a poet's song
Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy—
Die and count no friend?
It is true—may it be spoken,
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a gravestone under her head,

While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand
And flout her with pity and scorn,
Saying, 'She is at rest,
She is fair, she is dead,

And, leaving room in her stead
To Us who are later born,
This is certainly best!
Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,
Very fair, but dead,
And so we have room for the race.'

—Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew?
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?—is it true
That she has not moved in a trance,
As in Forty-eight?

When her eyes were troubled with blood
Till she knew not friend from foe,
Till her hand was caught in a strait
Of her cerement and baffled so

From doing the deed she would;
And her weak foot stumbled across
The grave of a king,
And down she dropt at heavy loss,
And we gloomily covered her face and
said,

'We have dreamed the thing;
She is not alive, but dead.'

VII.

Now, shall we say
Our Italy lives indeed?
And if it were not for the beat and bray
Of drum and trump of martial men,
Should we feel the underground heave
and strain,

Where heroes left their dust as a seed
Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic march
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,

Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book and stone
That Italy is not dead at all?

Ay, if it were not for the tears in our eyes
These tears of a sudden passionate joy
Should we see her arise

From the place were the wicked are
overthrown,

Italy, Italy! loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag is
brave,

And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown

Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII.

Ay, it is so, even so,
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed
her way

Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.
And each man stands with his face in
the light

Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,

As a man and patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadeast with blood to spare
To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To beat the Piedmont's drum,
With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.

'Emperor
Evermore.'

IX.

Out of the dust where they ground
them,
Out of the holes where they dogged
them,
Out of the hulks where they wound
them
In iron, tortured and flogged them ;
Out of the streets where they chased
them,
Taxed them and then bayoneted
them,—
Out of the homes, where they spied on
them,
(Using their daughters and wives,)
Out of the church where they fretted
them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their
prayers!—
Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved them,
lied on them ;
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its
road
The stronger into the open plain ;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,

Serving better the ends of the plotter ;
Or like a restrained word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to hinder
'Emperor
Evermore.'

X.

Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring.
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the council and charge !
Shout for the head of Cavour ;
And shout for the heart of a King
That's great with a nation's joy.
Shout for France and Savoy !

XI.

Take up the child, MacMahon, though
Thy hand be red
From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
In the dust of the whirlwind of war
Through the gate of the city of Milan,
stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-
bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower
Of his smile as clear as a star !
Thou hast a right to the child, we say,
Since the women are weeping for joy
as those
Who, by thy help and from this day,
Shall be happy mothers indeed.
They are raining flowers from terrace
and roof :
Take up the flower in the child.
While the shout goes up of a nation
freed
And heroically self-reconciled,
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
And all those cold white marble fires
Of mounting saints on the Duomo spires
Flicker against the Blue.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

XII.

Ay, it is He,
Who rides at the King's right hand !

Leave room for his horse and draw to
the side,
Nor press too near in the ecstasy
Of a newly delivered impassioned land.

He is moved, you see,
He who has done it all.
They call it a cold stern face ;
But this is Italy
Who rises up to her place !—
For this he fought in his youth,
For this he dreamed in the past ;
The lines of the resolute mouth
Tremble a little at last.
Cry, he has done it all !
' Emperor
Evermore.'

XIII.

It is not strange that he did it,
Though the deed may seem to strain
To the wonderful, unpermitted,
For such as lead and reign.
But he is strange, this man :
The people's instinct found him
(A wind in the dark that ran
Through a chink where was no door),
And elected him and crowned him
Emperor
Evermore.

XIV.

Autocrat ! let them scoff,
Who fail to comprehend
That a ruler incarnate of
The people must transcend
All common king-born kings.
These subterranean springs
A sudden outlet winning,
Have special virtues to spend.
The people's blood through him,
Dilates from head to foot,
Creates him absolute,
And from this great beginning
Evokes a greater end
To justify and renew him—
Emperor
Evermore

XV.

What ! did any maintain
That God or the people (think !)
Could make a marvel in vain ?—

Out of the water-jar there,
Draw wine that none could drink ?
Is this a man like the rest,
This miracle made unaware
By a rapture of popular air,
And caught to the place that was best ?
You think he could barter and cheat
As vulgar diplomats use,
With the people's heart in his breast ?
Prate a lie into shape
Lest truth should cumber the road ;
Play at the fast and loose
Till the world is strangled with tape ;
Maim the soul's complete
To fit the hole of a toad ;
And filch the dogman's meat
To feed the offspring of God ?

XVI.

Nay, but he, this wonder,
He cannot palter nor prate,
Though many around him and under,
With intellects trained to the curve,
Distrust him in spirit and nerve
Because his meaning is straight.
Measure him ere he depart
With those who have governed and led ;
Larger so much by the heart,
Larger so much by the head,
Emperor
Evermore.

XVII.

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
Nations must move with the time ;
Assumes that crime with a precedent
Doubles the guilt of the crime :
—Denies that a slaver's bond
Or a treaty signed by knaves,
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
Was one of an honest name)
Gives an inexpugnable claim
To abolishing men into slaves.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVIII.

He will not swagger nor boast
Of his country's meeds, in a tone
Missuited a great man most
If such should speak of his own :
Nor will he act, on her side,

From motives baser, indeed,
 Than a man of a noble pride
 Can avow for himself at need ;
 Never, for lucre or laurels,
 Or custom, though such should be
 rife,

Adapting the smaller morals
 To measure the larger life.
 He, though the merchants persuade,
 And the soldiers are eager for strife,
 Finds not his country in quarrels
 Only to find her in trade,—
 While still he accords her such honor
 As never to flinch for her sake
 Where men put service upon her,
 Found heavy to undertake
 And scarcely like to be paid :
 Believing a nation may act
 Unselfishly—shiver a lance
 (As the least of her sons may, in fact)
 And not for a cause of finance.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XIX.

Great is he
 Who uses his greatness for all.
 His name shall stand perpetually
 As a name to applaud and cherish,
 Not only within the civic wall
 For the loyal, but also without
 For the generous and free.
 Just is he,
 Who is just for the popular due
 As well as the private debt.
 The praise of nations ready to perish
 Fall on him,—crown him in view
 Of tyrants caught in the net,
 And statesmen dizzy with fear and
 doubt!
 And though, because they are many,
 And he is merely one,
 And nations selfish and cruel
 Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
 To kill the body of high intents,
 And burn great deeds from their place,
 Till this, the greatest of any,
 May seem imperfectly done ;
 Courage, whoever circumvents !
 Courage, courage, whoever is base !
 The soul of a high intent, be it known,
 Can die no more than any soul

Which God keeps by him under the
 throne ;
 And this, at whatever interim,
 Shall live, and be consummated
 In the being of deeds made whole.
 Courage, courage ! happy is he,
 Of whom (himself among the dead
 And silent,) this word shall be said ;
 —That he might have had the world
 with him,
 But chose to side with suffering men,
 And had the world against him when
 He came to deliver Italy.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

THE DANCE.

I.

You remember down at Florence our
 Cascine,
 Where the people on the feast-days
 walk and drive,
 And through the trees, long-drawn in
 many a green way,
 O'er roofing hum and murmur like a
 hive,
 The rivers and mountains look alive ?

II.

You remember the piazzone there, the
 stand-place
 Of carriages a-brim with Florence
 Beauties,
 Who lean and melt to music as the band
 plays,
 Or smile and chat with some one who
 afoot is,
 Or on horseback, in observance of
 male duties ?

III.

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of sum-
 mer,
 So many gracious faces brought to-
 gether !
 Call it rout, or call it concert, they have
 come here,

In the floating of the fan and of the
feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine
weather.

IV.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays
(because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every car-
riage-door ;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed
away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying
score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V.

And last season, when the French camp
had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quick-
ened and grew gayer
Through the mingling of the liberating
nation
With this people ; groups of French-
men everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly, . .
' who was fair.'

VI.

Then the noblest lady present took upon
her
To speak nobly from her carriage for
the rest ;
' Pray these officers from France to do
us honor
By dancing with us straightway.'—
The request
Was gravely apprehended as ad-
dressed.

VII.

And the men of France, bareheaded,
bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the
space
Which the startled crowd had rounded
for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his
face,
Not presuming, through the symbol,
on the grace.

VIII.

There was silence in the people : some
lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music at
a glance :
And the daughters of our princes, thus
assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant
sons of France.
Hush ! it might have been a Mass,
and not a dance.

IX.

And they danced there till the blue that
overskied us
Swooned with passion, though the
footing seemed sedate ;
And the mountains, heaving mighty
hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dil-
ate,
And touched the holy stone where
Dante sate.

X.

Then the sons of France, bareheaded,
lowly bowing,
Led the ladies back where kinsmen of
the south
Stood, received them ;—till, with burst
of overflowing
Feeling . . . husbands, brothers, Flor-
ence's male youth,
Turned, and kissed the martial stran-
gers mouth to mouth.

XI.

And a cry went up, a cry from all that
people !
—You have heard a people cheering
you suppose,
For the Member, mayor . . . with chorus
from the steeple ?
This was different : scarce as loud
perhaps, (who knows ?)
For we saw wet eyes around us ere
the close.

XII.

And we felt as if a nation, too long borne
in
By hard wrongers, comprehending in
such attitude

That God had spoken somewhere since
the morning,
That men were somehow brothers, by
no platitude,
Cried exultant in great wonder and
free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.

TOLD IN TUSCANY.

I.

MY little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight ;
And why your Florence of delight
Mourning as you see.

II.

A great man (who was crowned one day)
Imagined a great Deed :
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower : from heart and
brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

III.

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face :
' O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base !
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace.'

IV.

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and
south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
' What monster have we here ?
A great Deed at this hour of day ?
A great just Deed—and not for pay ?
Absurd,—or insincere.

V.

' And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed "status quo,"
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair ?'

VI.

Some muttered that the great Deed
meant
A great pretext to sin ;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of 'great' and 'just ?'
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law falls in.

VII.

A great Deed in this world of ours ?
Unheard of the pretence is :
It threatens plainly the great powers—
Is fatal in all senses.
A just deed in the world ?—call out
The rifles ! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII.

And many murmured, ' From this source
What red blood must be poured !'
And some rejoined, ' 'Tis even worse ;
What red tape is ignored !'
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord !

IX.

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused ;
And others, ' Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed,'
And all cried, ' Crush it, maim it, gag it !
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced !'

X.

But HE stood sad before the sun,
(The peoples felt their fate).
' The world is many,—I am one ;
My great Deed was too great.

God's fruit of justice ripens slow :
Men's souls are narrow ; let them grow.
My brothers, we must wait.'

XI.

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English : it may be :
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
At Venice by the sea.

XII.

Ah, child ! ah, child ! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah, child, look up into the sky !
In this low world, where great Deeds
die,
What matter if we live ?

 AN AUGUST VOICE.

"UNA VOCE AUGUSTA."—
MONITORE TORCANO.

I.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
I made the treaty upon it.
Just venture a quiet duke,
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet ;
Ricasoli gently explain
Some need of the constitution :
He'll swear to it over again,
Providing an 'easy solution.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

II.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
I promised the Emperor Francis
To argue the case by his book,
And ask you to meet his advances.
The ducal cause, we know,
(Whether you or he be the wronger)
Has very strong points ;—although
Your bayonets there have stronger.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

III.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
He is not pure altogether.
For instance, the oath which he took
(In the Forty-eight rough weather)
He'd 'nail your flag to his mast,'
Then softly scuttled the boat you
Hoped to escape in at last,
And both by a 'Proprio motu.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

IV.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
The scheme meets nothing to shock it
In this smart letter, look,
We found in Radetsky's pocket ;
Where his Highness in sprightly style
Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,
'These heads be the hottest in file ;
Pray shoot them the quickest.' Quote,
And call back the Grand Duke.

V.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
There *are* some things to object to.
He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,
Then called in the foe to protect you.
He taxed you for wines and for meats
Throughout that eight years' pastime
Of Austria's drum in yours streets—
Of course you remember the last time
You called back your Grand Duke.

VI.

You'll take back the Grand Duke ?
It is not race he is poor in,
Although he never could brook
The patriot cousin at Turin.
His love of kin you discern,
By his hate of your flag and me—
So decidedly apt to turn
All colors at sight of the Three.*
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
'Twas weak that he fled from the
Pitti.
But consider how little he shook

* The Italian tricolor : red, green, and white.

At thought of bombarding your city !
 And, balancing that with this,
 The Christian rule is plain for us ;
 . . Or the Holy Father's Swiss
 Have shot his Perugians in vain for us.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VIII.

Pray take back your Grand Duke.
 —I, too, have suffered persuasion.
 All Europe, raven and rook,
 Screeched at me armed for your na-
 tion.
 Your cause in any heart struck spurs ;
 I swept such warnings aside for you.
 My very child's eyes, and Hers,
 Grew like my brother's who died for
 you.

You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

IX.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
 My French fought nobly with rea-
 son—
 Left many a Lombardy nook
 Red as with wine out of season.
 Little we gruded what was done there,
 Paid freely your ransom of blood
 Our heroes stark in the sun there,
 We would not recall if we could.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

X.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
 His son rode fast as he got off
 That day on the enemy's hook,
 When *I* had an epaulette shot off.
 Though splashed (as I saw him afar, no,
 Near) by those ghastly rains,
 The mark, when you've washed him in
 Arno,
 Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

XI.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
 'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful :
 The shepherd recovers his crook,
 . . If you should be sheep and dutiful.
 I spoke a word worth chalking
 On Milan's wall—but stay,
 Here's Poniatowsky talking,—
 You'll listen to *him* to-day,
 And call back the Grand Duke.

XII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
 Observe, there's no one to force it,—
 Unless the Madonna, St. Luke
 Drew for you, choose to endorse it.
 I charge you by St. Martino
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,
 Remember your dead on Ticino ;
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong.
 —Bah!—call back the Grand Duke ! !

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλει, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

I.

THE Pope on Christmas day
 Sits in St. Peter's Chair ;
 But the people murmur, and say,
 ' Our souls are sick and forlorn,
 And who will show us where
 Is the stable where Christ was born ?'

II.

The star is lost in the dark ?
 The manger is lost in the straw ;
 The Christ cries faintly . . hark !
 Through bands that swaddle and
 strangle—
 But the Pope in the chair of awe
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

III.

The magi kneel at his foot,
 Kings of the east and west,
 But instead of the angels, (mute
 Is the ' Peace on earth' of their song,)
 The peoples, perplexed and opprest,
 Are sighing, ' How long, how long ?'

IV.

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
 Shadow of aisle and dome,
 The bear who tore up the children,
 The fox who burnt up the corn,
 And the wolf who suckled at Rome
 Brothers to slay and to scorn.

V.

Cardinals left and right of him,
 Worshippers round and beneath,

The silver trumpets at sight of him
 Thrill with a musical blast :
 But the people say through their teeth,
 'Trumpets? we wait for the Last!'

VI.

He sits in the place of the Lord,
 And asks for the gifts of the time?
 Gold, for the haft of a sword,
 To win back Romagna averse,
 Incense, to sweeten a crime,
 And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

VII.

Then a king of the west said, 'Good!—
 I bring thee the gifts of the time;
 Red, for the patriot's blood,
 Green, for the martyr's crown,
 White, for the dew and the rime,
 When the morning of God comes
 down.'

VIII.

—O mystic tricolor bright!
 The Pope's heart quailed like a man's,
 The cardinals froze at the sight,
 Bowing their tonsures hoary;
 And the eyes of the peacock-fans
 Winked at the alien glory.

IX.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
 'Now blessed be he who has brought
 These gifts of the time to the Pope,
 When our souls were sick and forlorn.
 —And *here* is the star we sought,
 To show us where Christ was born!'

ITALY AND THE WORLD.

I.

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena,
 When you named them a year ago,
 So many graves reserved by God, in a
 Day of judgment, you seemed to
 know,
 To open and let out the resurrection.

II.

And meantime (you made your reflection
 If you were English) was naught to
 be done
 But sorting sables, in predilection
 For all those martyrs dead and gone
 Till the new earth and heaven made
 ready.

III.

And if your politics were not heady,
 Violent, . . . 'Good,' you added, 'good
 In all things! mourn on sure and steady.
 Churchyard thistles are wholesome
 food
 For our European wandering asses.

IV.

'The date of the resurrection passes
 Human foreknowledge: men unborn
 Will gain by it, (even in the lower
 classes),
 But none of these. It is not the morn
 Because the cock of France is crowing.

V.

'Cocks crow at midnight, seldom know-
 ing
 Starlight from dawn-light: 'tis a mad
 Poor creature.' Here you pause by
 growing
 Scornful, . . . suddenly, let us add,
 The trumpet sounded, the graves were
 open.

VI.

Life and life and life! agroped in
 The dusk of death, warm hands,
 stretched out
 For swords, proved more life still to
 hope in,
 Beyond and behind. Arise with a
 shout,
 Nation of Italy, slain and buried!

VII.

Hill to hill and turret to turret
 Flashing the tricolor—newly created
 Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
 Rise heroic and renovated,
 Rise to the final restitution.

VIII.

Rise ; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms—
Statesmen draping self-love's conclu-
sion

In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

IX.

Bring us the higher example ; release
us

Into the larger coming time :
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X.

No more Jew or Greek then—taunting
Nor taunted ; no more England nor
France !

But one confederate brotherhood,
planting

One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity.

XI.

For fully developed Christianity
Is civilization perfected.
' Measure the frontier,' shall be said,
' Count the ships,' in national vanity ?
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

XII.

For, though behind by a cannon or
schooner,

That nation still is predominant,
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to
oppugn or

Succor another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and abhor-
rence.

XIII.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way !
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Law-
rence

Your Michael Angelo's g. ant Day,
With the grandeur of this Day breaking
o'er us !

XIV.

Ye who restrained as an ancient chorus,
Mute while the coryphæus spake,

Hush your separate voices before us,
Link your separate lives for the sake
Of one sole Italy's living forever !

XV.

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
Grudging that purple of yours at the
best,—

By your heroic will and endeavor
Each sublimely dispossessed,
That all may inherit what each sur-
renders !

XVI.

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders
On egotist nations ! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow new
splendors

Into the furrow of things, for seed,—
Ever the richer for what ye have given.

XVII.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and
heaven

Grow larger around us and higher
above.

Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leav-
en ;

We bait our traps with the name of
love,

Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

XVIII.

Oh, this world : this cheating and
screening

Of cheats ! this conscience for candle-
wicks,

Not beacon-fires ! this over-weening
Of under-hand diplomatic tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned
for the counter !

XIX.

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,
And oh, this malice to make them trip
Rather quenching the fire there, drying
the fount here,

To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbor their ministra-
tion.

XX.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,

Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.

I loved her more in her ancient fashion :
She carries her rifles too thick for me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a
brother.

XXI

Suspicion, panic ? end this pother.

The sword, kept sheathless at peace-
time, rusts.

None fears for himself while he feels for
another :

The brave man either fights or trusts,
And wears no mail in his private cham-
ber.

XXII.

Beautiful Italy ! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and
traitor !

Thou who hast drawn us on to remem-
ber,

Draw us to hope now : let us be
greater

By this new future than that old story,

XXIII.

Till truer glory replaces all glory,

As the torch grows blind at the dawn
of day ;

And the nations rising up, their sorry

And foolish sins shall put away,

As children their toys when the teacher
enters.

XXIV.

Till Love's one centre devour these
centres

Of many self-loves ; and the patriot's
trick

To better his land by egotist ventures,

Defamed from a virtue, shall make
men sick,

As the scalp at the belt of some red
hero.

XXV.

For certain virtues have dropped to zero

Left by the sun on the mountain's
dewy side ;

Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved hollow :

XXVI.

And Heptarchy patriotism must follow,
—National voices, distinct yet de-
pendent,

Enspiring each other, as swallow does
swallow,

With circles still widening and ever
ascendant,

In multiform life to united progression,—

XXVII.

These shall remain. And when, in the
session

Of nations, the separate language is
heard,

Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscre-
tion,

To help with a thought or exalt with
a word

Less her own than her rival's honor.

XXVIII.

Each Christian nation shall take upon
her

The law of the Christian man in vast :
The crown of the getter shall fall to the
donor,

And last shall be first while first shall
be last,

And to love best shall still be, to reign
unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION.

PROLOGUE.

I HEARD an angel speak last night,

And he said, ' Write !

Write a nation's curse for me,

And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word :

' Not so, my lord !

If curses must be, choose another

To send thy curse against my brother.

For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to me.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou
write
My curse to-night.
From the summits of love a curse is
driven,
As lightning is from the tops of heaven.'

Not so,' I answered. 'Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins : for little feet
Of children bleeding along the street :

For parked-up honors that gainsay
The right of way :
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to kiss:

For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits :
For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion :

For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.
What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of
mine ?'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou
write
My curse to-night.
Because thou hast strength to see and
hate
A foul thing done *within* thy gate.'

'Not so,' I answered once again.
'To curse, choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run
down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou
write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say
(And no one marvels,) night and day,

'And thou shalt take their part to-night
Weep and write.
A curse from the depths of womanhood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote and mourned indeed,
What all may read.
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE.

I.

BECAUSE ye have broken your own
chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a nation's
height,
Yet thence bear down with brand and
thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bond-slaves, — for this
crime
This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim
To honor in the old world's sight,
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
This is the curse. Write.

II.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame !
To utter the thought into flame
'Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds, die or survive,
Drop faint from their jaws,
Or throttle them backward to death,
And only under your breath

Shall favor the cause.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law
To strangle the weak,
And, counting the sin for a sin,
Your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word ye shall speak.
This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the
phrase,
As if carried too far.

When ye boast your own charters kept
true,
Ye shall blush ;—for the thing which ye
do
Derides what ye are.
This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall,
For your conscience, tradition, and
name
Explode with a deadlier blame
Than the worst of them all.
This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,
Go, plant your flag in the sun
Beside the ill-doers !
And recoil from clenching the curse
Of God's witnessing Universe
With a curse of yours.
THIS is the curse. Write.

A COURT LADY.

I.

HER hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless spark.

II.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name and in race ;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

III.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners and life.

IV.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her maidens, ' Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of the king

V.

' Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the small at the throat.

VI.

Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to fasten the sleeves
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow from the eaves.'

VII.

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight, which gathered her up in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hospital came.

VIII.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
'Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place of a friend.'

IX.

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a young man's bed :
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of his head.

X.

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother ? Happy art thou,' she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him : he dreamed in her face and died.

XI.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a second ;
He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons were reckoned.

XII.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life were sorer,
'Art thou a Romagnole ?' Her eyes drove the lightnings before her.

XIII.

Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten the cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one—free by the stroke of a sword.

XIV.

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in glooms of the past.'

XV.

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like a girl's
Young, and pathetic with dying—a deep black hole in the curls.

XVI.

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother ? and seest thou, dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the list of the slain ?'

XVII.

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with her hands :
'Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she should weep as she stands.'

XVIII.

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off by a ball :
Kneeling . . 'O more than my brother ! how shall I thank thee for all ?'

XIX.

'Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine.

XX.

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dispossessed,
But blessed are those among nations, who dare to be strong for the rest !'

XXI.

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out of mind.

XXII.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and came.

XXIII.

Only a tear for Venice ?—she turned as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were kissing the cross.

XXIV.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. 'And dost thou suffer, my brother ?'

XXV.

Holding his hands in hers :—'Out of the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom ! sweetest to live on or to die on.'

XXVI.

Holding his cold rough hands—'Well, oh well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble alone.'

XXVII.

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with a spring—
'That was Piedmontese ! and this is the Court of the King.'

CONFESSIONS.

I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her !
God and she and I only, .. there, I sate down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession. .. Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do at the last.'

'My cup is blood-red

With my sin,' she said,

'And I pour it out to bitter lees,

As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last,

Or as thou wert as these !'

II.

When God smote His hands together, and struck out thy soul as a spark
 Into the organized glory of things, from deeps of the dark,—
 Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour the power in the form,
 As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little ground worm?

‘I have sinned,’ she said,

‘For my seed-light shed

Has smouldered away from His first decrees!

The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth the worm:

I am viler than these!

III.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample thee straight
 With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light found inadequate;
 When He only sent thee the north-winds, a little searching and chill,
 To quicken thy flame. . . didst thou kindle and flash to the heights of His will?

‘I have sinned,’ she said,

‘Unquickened, unspread

My fire dropt down; and I wept on my knees!

I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank from their chill, . .

What delight is in these?’

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as such,
 But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the world to thy touch;
 At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to prove it afar,
 Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it out like a star?

‘I have sinned,’ she said,

‘And not merited

The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!

The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth the star:

I am viler than these.’

V.

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . unthankful and impotent creature,
 To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in thy beggarly nature!
 If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly, what then
 Hast thou done to the weak and the false, and the changing, . . thy fellows of
 men?

‘I have *loved*,’ she said,

(Words bowing her head

As the wind the wet acacia-tree!)

‘I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . I sate among men,

And I have loved these.’

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
 The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
 On the air with it solemn and clear,—‘Behold! I have sinned not in this!
 Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have verily loved not amiss.

‘ Let the living,’ she said,
 ‘ Enquire of the Dead,
 In the house of the pale-fronted Images,
 My own true dead will answer for me, that I have not loved amiss
 In my love for all these.

VII.

‘ The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by day and by night :
 Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs through me, if ever so light :
 Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off, in the long-ago years,
 Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystals of tears.

‘ Dig the snow,’ she said
 ‘ For my churchyard bed ;
 Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
 If one only of these my beloveds, shall love me with heart-warm tears,
 As I have loved these !

VIII.

‘ If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own life was sore ;
 If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their memory more :
 Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called sweet :
 And whenever their heart was refused me, I fell down straight at their feet.

‘ I have loved,’ she said,—
 ‘ Man is weak, God is dread ;
 Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
 Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the Saviour’s feet,
 As I lavished for these.’

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the Divine !
 Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their wild berry-wine ?
 Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers approach thee with blame,
 Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee the same ?

But she shrunk and said,
 ‘ God, over my head,
 Must sweep in the wrath of His judgment seas,
 If *He* deal with me sinning, but only indeed the same
 And no gentler than these.’



AURORA LEIGH.

FIRST BOOK.

OF writing many books there is no end ;
And I have written much in prose and
verse
For others' uses, will write now for
mine,—
Will write my story for my better self,
As when you paint your portrait for a
friend,
Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it
Long after he has ceased to love you,
just
To hold together what he was and is.

I, writing thus, am still what men call
young ;
I have not so far left the coasts of life
To travel inland, that I cannot hear
That murmur of the outer Infinite
Which unweaned babies smile at in their
sleep
When wondered at for smiling ; not so
far,
But still I catch my mother at her post
Beside the nursery-door, with finger up,
'Hush, hush—here's too much noise !'
while her sweet eyes
Leap forward, taking part against her
word
In the child's riot. Still I sit and feel
My father's slow hand, when she had
left us both,
Stroke out my childish curls across his
knee ;
And hear Assunta's daily jest (she knew
He liked it better than a better jest)
Inquire how many golden scudi went
To make such ringlets. O my father's
hand,
Stroke heavily, heavily the poor hair
down,
Draw, press the child's head closer to thy
knee !
I'm still too young, too young, to sit
alone.

I write. My mother was a Florentine,
Whose rare blue eyes were shut from
seeing me
When scarcely I was four years old ; my
life
A poor spark snatched up from a failing
lamp
Which went out therefore. She was
weak and frail ;
She could not bear the joy of giving
life—
The mother's rapture slew her. If her
kiss
Had left a longer weight upon my lips,
It might have steadied the uneasy breath,
And reconciled and fraternised my soul
With the new order. As it was, indeed,
I felt a mother-want about the world,
And still went seeking, like a bleating
lamb
Left out at night in shutting up the
fold,—
As restless as a nest-deserted bird
Grown chill through something being
away, though what
It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was
born
To make my father sadder, and myself
Not overjoyous, truly. Women know
The way to rear up children, (to be just,)
They know a simple, merry, tender
knack
Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
And stringing pretty words that make
no sense,
And kissing full sense into empty words ;
Which things are corals to cut life upon,
Although such trifles : children learn by
such,
Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,
And get not over-early solemnised,
But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's
Divine,
Which burns and hurts not,—not a sin-
gle bloom,—

Become aware and unafraid of Love.
 Such good do mothers. Fathers love as
 well
 —Mine did, I know,—but still with
 heavier brains,
 And wills more consciously responsible,
 And not as wisely, since less foolishly ;
 So mothers have God's license to be
 missed.

My father was an austere Englishman,
 Who, after a dry life-time spent at home
 In college-learning, law, and parish talk,
 Was flooded with a passion unaware,
 His whole provisioned and complacent
 past
 Drowned out from him that moment.
 As he stood
 In Florence, where he had come to
 spend a month
 And note the secret of Da Vinci's
 drains,
 He musing somewhat absently perhaps
 Some English question . . . whether men
 should pay
 The unpopular but necessary tax
 With left or right hand—in the alien
 sun
 In that great square of the Santissima,
 There drifted past him (scarcely marked
 enough
 To move his comfortable island-scorn.)
 A train of priestly banners, cross and
 psalm,
 The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens
 holding up
 Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists,
 aslant
 To the blue luminous tremor of the air,
 And letting drop the white wax as they
 went
 To eat the bishop's wafer at the church ;
 From which long trail of chanting priests
 and girls
 A face flashed like a cymbal on his face,
 And shook with silent clangour brain
 and heart,
 Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even
 thus,
 He too received his sacramental gift
 With eucharistic meanings ; for he
 loved.
 And thus beloved, she died. I've heard
 it said

That but to see him in the first surprise
 Of widower and father, nursing me,
 Unmothered little child of four years
 old,
 His large man's hands afraid to touch
 my curls,
 As if the gold would tarnish,—his grave
 lips
 Contriving such a miserable smile,
 As if he knew needs must, or I should
 die,
 And yet 'twas hard,—would almost make
 the stones
 Cry out for pity. There's a verse he set
 In Santa Croce to her memory,
 ' Weep for an infant too young to weep
 much
 When death removed this mother'—
 stops the mirth
 To-day on women's faces when they
 walk
 With rosy children hanging on their
 gowns,
 Under the cloister to escape the sun
 That scorches in the piazza. After
 which
 He left our Florence and made haste to
 hide
 Himself, his prattling child, and silent
 grief,
 Among the mountains above Pelago ;
 Because unmothered babes, he thought,
 had need
 Of mother nature more than others use,
 And Pan's white goats, with udders
 warm and full
 Of mystic contemplations, come to feed
 Poor milkless lips of orphans like his
 own—
 Such scholar-scrap he talked, I've heard
 from friends,
 For even prosaic men, who wear grief
 long,
 Will get to wear it as a hat aside
 With a flower stuck in't. Father, then,
 and child,
 We lived among the mountains many
 years,
 God's silence on the outside of the house,
 And we, who did not speak too loud
 within :
 And old Assunta to make up the fire,
 Crossing herself whenever a sudden flame
 Which lightened from the firewood, made
 alive

That picture of my mother on the wall.
 The painter drew it after she was dead ;
 And when the face was finished, throat
 and hands,
 Her cameriera carried him, in hate
 Of the English-fashioned shroud, the
 last brocade
 She dressed in at the Pitti. ' He should
 paint
 No sadder thing than that,' she swore,
 ' to wrong
 Her poor signora.' Therefore very
 strange
 The effect was. I, a little child, would
 crouch
 For hours upon the floor with knees
 drawn up,
 And gaze across them, half in terror,
 half
 In adoration. at the picture there,—
 That swan-like supernatural white life,
 Just sailing upward from the red stiff
 silk
 Which seemed to have no part in it, nor
 power
 To keep it from quite breaking out of
 bounds :
 For hours I sate and stared. Assunta's
 awe
 And my poor father's melancholy eyes
 Still pointed that way. That way, went
 my thoughts
 When wandering beyond sight. And as
 I grew
 In years, I mixed, confused, uncon-
 sciously,
 Whatever I last read or heard or dreamed
 Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
 Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,
 With still that face . . . which did not
 therefore change,
 But kept the mystic level of all forms
 And fears and admirations, was by turns
 Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and
 sprite,
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful
 Fate,
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love,
 A still Medusa, with mild milky brows
 All curdled and all clothed upon with
 snakes
 Whose slime falls fast as sweat will ; or,
 anon,
 Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with
 swords

Where the Babe sucked ; or, Lamia in
 her first
 Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk and
 blinked,
 And, shuddering, wriggled down to the
 unclean ;
 Or, my own mother, leaving her last
 smile
 In her last kiss, upon the baby-mouth
 My father pushed down on the bed for
 that,—
 Or my dead mother, without smile or
 kiss,
 Buried at Florence. All which images,
 Concentred on the picture, glassed them-
 selves
 Before my meditative childhood, . . as
 The incoherencies of change and death
 Are represented fully, mixed and merg-
 ed,
 In the smooth fair mystery of perpetual
 Life.

And while I stared away my childish
 wits
 Upon my mother's picture, (ah, poor
 child !)
 My father, who through love had sud-
 denly
 Thrown off the old conventions, broken
 loose
 From chin-bands of the soul, like Laza-
 rus,
 Yet had no time to learn to talk and
 walk
 Or grow anew familiar with the sun,—
 Who had reached to freedom, not to
 action, lived,
 But lived as one entranced, with
 thoughts, not aims,—
 Whom love had unmade from a common
 man
 But not completed to an uncommon
 man,—
 My father taught me what he had learnt
 the best
 Before he died and left me,—grief and
 love.
 And, seeing we had books among the
 hills,
 Strong words of counselling souls cou-
 federate
 With vocal pines and waters,—out of
 books
 He taught me all the ignorance of men,

And how God laughs in heaven when
any man

Says 'Here I'm learned; this, I under-
stand;

In that, I am never caught at fault or
doubt.'

He sent the schools to school, demon-
strating

A fool will pass for such through one
mistake,

While a philosopher will pass for such,
Through said mistakes being ventured
in the gross

And heaped up to a system.

I am like,
They tell me, my dear father. Broader
brows

Howbeit, upon a slenderer undergrowth
Of delicate features,—paler, near as
grave;

But then my mother's smile breaks up
the whole,

And makes it better sometimes than
itself.

So, nine full years, our days were hid
with God

Among his mountains. I was just thir-
teen,

Still growing like the plants from unseen
roots

In tongue-tied Springs,—and suddenly
awoke

To full life and life's needs and agonies,
With an intense, strong, struggling
heart beside

A stone-dead father. Life, struck sharp
on death,

Makes awful lightning. His last word
was, 'Love—'

'Love, my child, love, love!'—(then he
had done with grief)

'Love, my child.' Ere I answered he
was gone,

And none was left to love in all the
world.

There, ended childhood: what suc-
ceeded next

I recollect as, after fevers, men
Thread back the passage of delirium,
Missing the turn still, baffled by the
door;

Smooth endless days, notched here and
there with knives;

A weary, wormy darkness, spurred ?
the flank

With flame, that it should eat and end
itself

Like some tormented scorpion. Then,
at last,

I do remember clearly, how there came
A stranger with authority, not right,
(I thought not) who commanded, caught
me up

From old Assunta's neck; how, with a
shriek,

She let me go,—while I, with ears too
full

Of my father's science, to shriek back a
word,

In all a child's astonishment at grief
Stared at the wharf-edge where she
stood and moaned,

My poor Assunta, where she stood and
moaned!

The white walls, the blue hills, my Italy,
Drawn backward from the shuddering
steamer-deck,

Like one in anger drawing back her
skirts

Which suppliants catch at. Then the
bitter sea

Inexorably pushed between us both,
And sweeping up the ship with my de-
spair

Threw us out as a pasture to the stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged on the
deep;

Ten nights and days without the com-
mon face

Of any day or night; the moon and sun
Cut off from the green reconciling earth,

To starve into a blind ferocity
And glare unnatural; the very sky

(Dropping its bell-net down upon the sea
As if no human heart should 'scape
alive,)

Bedraggled with the desolating salt,
Until it seemed no more that holy heaven

To which my father went. All new, and
strange—

The universe turned stranger, for a child.

Then, land!—then, England! oh, the
frosty cliffs

Looked cold upon me. Could I find a
home

Among those mean red houses through
the fog?

And when I heard my father's language
first

From alien lips which had no kiss for
mine,

I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept,
then wept,

And some one near me said the child was
mad

Through much sea-sickness. The train
swept us on.

Was this my father's England? the great
isle?

The ground seemed cut up from the fel-
lowship

Of verdure, field from field, as man from
man;

The skies themselves looked low and
positive,

As almost you could touch them with a
hand,

And dared to do it they were so far off
From God's celestial crystals; all things
blurred

And dull and vague. Did Shakespeare
and his mates

Absorb the light here?—not a hill or
stone

With heart to strike a radiant colour up
Or active outline on the indifferent air!

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-house

To give me welcome. She stood straight
and calm,

Her somewhat narrow forehead braided
tight

As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses; brown hair prick-
ed with gray

By frigid use of life, (she was not old
Although my father's elder by a year)

A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate
lines;

A close mild mouth, a little soured about
The ends, through speaking unrequited
loves,

Or peradventure niggardly half-truths; &
Eyes of no color,—once they might have
smiled,

But never, never have forgot themselves
In smiling; cheeks in which was yet a
rose

Of perished summers, like a rose in a

Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if
past bloom,

Past fading also.

She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,

A quiet life, which was not life at all,
(But that, she had not lived enough to
know)

Between the vicar and the county squires,
The lord-lieutenant looking down some-
times

From the empyrean to assure their souls
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in the
abyss,

The apothecary looked on once a year,
To prove their soundness of humility.

The poor-club exercised her Christian
gifts

Of knitting stockings, stitching petti-
coats,

Because we are of one flesh after all
And need one flannel, (with a proper
sense

Of difference in the quality)—and still
The book-club, guarded from your mod-
ern trick

Of shaking dangerous questions from
the crease,

Preserved her intellectual. She had
lived

A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to
perch

Was act and joy enough for any bird.
Dear heaven, how silly are the things
that live

In thicketts, and eat berries!

I, alas,

A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought
to her cage.

And she was there to meet me. Very
kind.

Bring the clean water; give out the fresh
seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome
me,

Calm, in black garb. I clung about her
neck,—

Young babes, who catch at every shred
of wool

To draw the new light closer, catch and
cling

Less blindly. In my ears, my father's
word

Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,
 'Love, love, my child.' She, black
 there with my grief,
 Might feel my love—she was his sister
 once—

I clung to her. A moment she seemed
 moved,

Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me to
 cling,

And drew me feebly through the hall into
 The room she sate in.

There, with some strange spasm
 Of pain and passion, she wrung loose
 my hands

Imperiously, and held me at arm's
 length,

And with two gray-steel naked-bladed
 eyes

Searched through my face,—ay, stabbed
 it through and through,

Through brows and cheeks and chin, as
 if to find

A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
 If not here, there perhaps. Then,
 drawing breath,

She struggled for her ordinary calm,
 And missed it rather,—told me not to
 shrink,

As if she had told me not to lie or
 swear,

'She loved my father and would love me
 too

As long as I deserved it.' Very kind.

I understood her meaning afterward ;
 She thought to find my mother in my
 face,

And questioned it for that. For she,
 my aunt,

Had loved my father truly, as she
 could,

And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,
 My Tuscan mother who had fooled
 away

A wise man from wise courses, a good
 man

From obvious duties, and, depriving her,
 His sister, of the household precedence,
 Had wronged his tenants, robbed his
 native land,

And made him mad, alike by life and
 death,

In love and sorrow. She had pored for
 years

What sort of woman could be suitable

To her sort of hate, to entertain it with
 And so, her very curiosity
 Became hate too, and all the idealism
 She ever used in life, was used for hate,
 Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at
 last

The love from which it grew, in strength
 and heat,

And wrinkled her smooth conscience
 with a sense

Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
 When Christian doctrine was enforced
 at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me
 My mother's hater. From that day, she
 did

Her duty to me, (I appreciate it
 In her own word as spoken to herself)

Her duty, in large measure, well-pressed
 out,

But measured always. She was gener-
 rous, bland,

More courteous than was tender, gave
 me still

The first place,—as if fearful that God's
 saints

Would look down suddenly and say,
 'Herein

You missed a point, I think, through
 lack of love.'

Alas, a mother never is afraid
 Of speaking angerly to any child,
 Since love, she knows, is justified of love.

And I, I was a good child on the whole,
 A meek and manageable child. Why
 not ?

I did not live, to have the faults of life :
 There seemed more true life in my fath-
 er's grave

Than in all England. Since *that* threw
 me off

Who fain would cleave, (his latest will,
 they say,

Consigned me to his land) I only thought
 Of lying quiet there where I was thrown
 Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer-
 ing her

To prick me to a pattern with her pin,
 Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,
 And dry out from my drowned anatomy
 The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my head

In braids, because she liked smooth-ordered hair.

I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words
Which still at any stirring of the heart
Came up to float across the English
phrase,

As lilies, (*Bene* . . . or *che che*) because
She liked my father's child to speak his
tongue.

I learnt the collects and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to
Nice,

The Articles . . . the Tracts *against* the
times,

(By no means Buonaventure's 'Prick of
Love,')

And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,
Because she liked instructed piety.

I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism,)

And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not
books.

I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with ex-
treme flounce

The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.

I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire, . . . by how
many feet

Mount Chimborazo outsoars Teneriffe,
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year
five

Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because she
liked

A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would
have been

As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished—fine sleights
of hand

And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of
notes [tumes

To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . . cos-
From French engravings, nereids neatly
draped,

With smirks of simmering godship,—I
washed in

Landscapes from nature (rather say,
washed out.)

I danced the polka and Cellarius,
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled
flowers in wax,

Because she liked accomplishments in
girls.

I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking, (to a maiden-
aunt

Or else the author)—books that boldly
assert

Their right of comprehending husband's
talk

When not too deep, and even of answer-
ing

With pretty 'may it please you,' or 'so
it is,'—

Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
Particular worth and general missionari-
ness,

As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say 'no' when the world say
'ay,'

For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
And fatten household sinners,—their, in
brief,

Potential faculty in everything
Of abdicating power in it: she owned
She liked a woman to be womanly,
And English women, she thanked God
and sighed,

(Some people always sigh in thanking
God)

Were models to the universe. And last
I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not
like

To 'see me wear the night with empty
hands,

A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
Was something after all, (the pastoral
saints

Be praised for't) leaning lovelorn with
pink eyes

To match her shoes, when I mistook the
silks;

Her head uncrushed by that round weight
of hat

So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell
Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way,

The works of women are symbolical.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our
sight,

Producing what? A pair of slippers,
 sir,
 To put on when you're weary—or a
 stool
 To tumble over and vex you . . . 'curse
 that stool!'
 Or else at best, a cushion, where you
 lean
 And sleep, and dream of something we
 are not,
 But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
 This hurts most, this . . . that, after all,
 we are paid
 The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down

Those years of education, (to return)
 I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more
 In the water torture, . . . flood succeed-
 ing flood
 To drench the incapable throat and split
 the veins . . .
 Than I did. Certain of your feebler
 souls
 Go out in such a process; many pine
 To a sick, inodorous light; my own en-
 dured:
 I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
 The elemental nutriment and heat
 From nature, as earth feels the sun at
 nights,
 Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark,
 I kept the life thrust on me, on the out-
 side
 Of the inner life with all its ample room
 For heart and lungs, for will and intel-
 lect,
 Inviolable by conventions. God,
 I thank thee for that grace of thine!

At first,

I felt no life which was not patience,—
 did
 The thing she bade me, without heed to
 a thing
 Beyond it, sate in just the chair she
 placed,
 With back against the window, to ex-
 clude
 The sight of the great lime-tree on the
 lawn,
 Which seemed to have come on purpose
 from the woods
 To bring the house a message,—ay, and
 walked
 Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,

As if I should not, harkening my own
 steps,
 Misdoubt I was alive. I read her books,
 Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
 Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
 And heard them whisper, when I changed
 a cup,
 (I blushed for joy at that)—'The Italian
 child,
 For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
 Thrives ill in England; she is paler yet
 Than when we came the last time; she
 will die.'

'Will die.' My cousin, Romney Leigh,
 blushed too,
 With sudden anger, and approaching
 me
 Said low between his teeth—'You're
 wicked now!
 You wish to die and leave the world a-
 dusk
 For others, with your naughty light
 blown out?'
 I looked into his face defyingly.
 He might have known that, being what
 I was,
 'Twas natural to like to get away
 As far as dead folk can; and then indeed
 Some people make no trouble when they
 die.
 He turned and went abruptly, slammed
 the door
 And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.

I have not named my cousin hitherto,
 And yet I used him as a sort of friend;
 My elder by few years, but cold and sly
 And absent . . . tender when he thought
 of it,
 Which scarcely was imperative, grave
 betimes,
 As well as early master of Leigh Hall,
 Whereof the nightmare state upon his
 youth
 Repressing all its seasonable delights,
 And agonising with a ghastly sense
 Of universal hideous want and wrong
 To incriminate possession. When he
 came
 From college to the country, very oft
 He crossed the hill on visits to my aunt,
 With gifts of blue grapes from the hot-
 houses,

A book in one hand,—mere statistics, (if
I chanced to lift the cover) count of all
The goats whose beards grow sprouting
down toward hell,
Against God's separative judgment-
hour.
And she, she almost loved him,—even
allowed
That sometimes he should seem to sigh
my way ;
It made him easier to be pitiful,
And sighing was his gift. So, undis-
turbed
At whiles she let him shut my music up
And push my needles down, and lead
me out
To see in that south angle of the house
The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan
rock,
On some light pretext. She would turn
her head
At other moments, go to fetch a thing,
And leave me breath enough to speak
with him,
For his sake ; it was simple.
Sometimes too
He would have saved me utterly, it
seemed,
He stood and looked so
Once, he stood so near
He dropped a sudden hand upon my
head
Bent down on woman's work, as soft as
rain—
But then I rose and snook it off as fire,
The stranger's touch that took my
father's place
Yet dared seem soft.
I used him for a friend
Before I ever knew him for a friend.
'Twas better, 'twas worse also, after-
ward :
We came so close, we saw our differences
Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh
Was looking for the worms, I for the
gods.
A godlike nature his ; the gods look
down,
Incurious of themselves ; and certainly
'Tis well I should remember, how, those
days,
I was a worm too, and he looked on me.
A little by his act perhaps, yet more
By something in me, surely not my will,

I did not die. But slowly, as one in
swoon,
To whom life creeps back in the form of
death,
With a sense of separation, a blind pain
Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the
ears
Of visionary chariots which retreat
As earth grows clearer . . slowly, by de-
grees,
I woke, rose up . . where was I? in the
world ;
For uses therefore I must count worth
while.

I had a little chamber in the house,
As green as any privet-hedge a bird
Might choose to build in, though the
nest itself
Could show but dead-brown sticks and
straws ; the walls
Were green, the carpet was pure green,
the straight
Small bed was curtained greenly, and
the folds
Hung green about the window, which
let in
The out-door world with all its greenery.
You could not push your head out and
escape
A dash of dawn-dew from the honey-
suckle,
But so you were baptised into the grace
And privilege of seeing. . .
First, the lime,
(I had enough, there, of the lime, be
sure,—
My morning-dream was often hummed
away
By the bees in it ;) past the lime, the
lawn,
Which, after sweeping broadly round
the house,
Went trickling through the shrubberies
in a stream
Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself
'Among the acacias, over which, you saw
The irregular line of elms by the deep
lane
Which stopped the grounds and dammed
the overflow
Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight
The lane was ; sunk so deep, no foreign
tramp
Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales

Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's
 lodge
 Dispensed such odours,—though his
 stick well crooked
 Might reach the lowest trail of blossom-
 ing briar
 Which dipped upon the wall. Behind
 the elms,
 And through their tops, you saw the
 folded hills
 Striped up and down with hedges, (burly
 oaks
 Projecting from the line to show them-
 selves)
 Through which my cousin Romney's
 chimneys smoked
 As still as when a silent mouth in frost
 Breathes—showing where the woodlands
 hid Leigh Hall;
 While, far above, a jut of table-land,
 A promontory without water, stretched,—
 You could not catch it if the days were
 thick,
 Or took it for a cloud; but, otherwise
 The vigorous sun would catch it up at
 eve
 And use it for an anvil till he had filled
 The shelves of heaven with burning
 thunderbolts,
 Protesting against night and darkness:—
 then,
 When all his setting trouble was re-
 solved
 To a trance of passive glory, you might
 see
 In apparition on the golden sky
 (Alas, my Giotto's background!) the
 sheep run
 Along the fine clear outline, small as
 mice
 That run along a witch's scarlet thread.

 Not a grand nature. Not my chestnut-
 woods
 Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the spurs
 To the precipices. Not my headlong
 leaps
 Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear
 In leaping through the palpitating pines,
 Like a white soul tossed out to eternity
 With thrills of time upon it. Not in-
 deed
 My multitudinous mountains, sitting in
 The magic circle, with the mutual touch

Electric, panting from their full deep
 hearts
 Beneath the influent heavens, and wait-
 ing for
 Communion and commission. Italy
 Is one thing, England one.
 On English ground
 You understand the letter . . . ere the
 fall
 How Adam lived in a garden. All the
 fields
 Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-
 like;
 The hills are crumpled plains,—the plains
 parterres,
 The trees, round, woolly, ready to be
 clipped;
 And if you seek for any wilderness
 You find, at best, a park. A nature
 tamed
 And grown domestic like a barn-door
 fowl,
 Which does not awe you with its claws
 and beak,
 Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up,
 But which, in cackling, sets you think-
 ing of
 Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in the
 pause
 Of finer meditation.
 Rather say,
 A sweet familiar nature, stealing in
 As a dog might, or child, to touch your
 hand
 Or pluck your gown, and humbly mine
 you so
 Of presence and affection, excellent
 For inner uses, from the things without.

I could not be unthankful, I who was
 Entreated thus and holpen. In the room
 I speak of, ere the house was well awake
 And also after it was well asleep,
 I sat alone, and drew the blessing in
 Of all that nature. With a gradual step
 A stir among the leaves, a breath, a ray
 It came in softly, while the angels made
 A place for it beside me. The moon
 came,
 And swept my chamber clean of foolish
 thoughts.
 The sun came, saying, ' Shall I lift this
 light
 Against the lime-tree, and you will no
 look?

I make the birds sing—listen! . . . but,
for you,
God never hears your voice, excepting
when
You lie upon the bed at nights and
weep.

Then, something moved me. Then, I
wakened up
More slowly than I verily write now,
But wholly, at last, I wakened, opened
wide

The window and my soul, and let the
airs

And out-door sights sweep gradual gos-
pels in,

Regenerating what I was. O life,
How oft we throw it off and think,—
'Enough,

Enough of life in so much!—here's a
cause

For rupture;—herein we must break
with Life,

Or be ourselves unworthy; here we are
wronged,

Maimed, spoiled for aspiration: farewell
Life!

—And so, as froward babes, we hide
our eyes

And think all ended.—Then, Life calls
to us

In some transformed, apocalyptic voice,
Above us, or below us, or around:

Perhaps we name it Nature's voice, or
Love's,

Tricking ourselves, because we are more
ashamed

To own our compensations than our
griefs:

Still, Life's voice!—still, we make our
peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sullen.
Soon

I used to get up early, just to sit
And watch the morning quicken in the
gray.

And hear the silence open like a flower,
Leaf after leaf,—and stroke with listless
hand

The woodbine through the window, till
at last

I came to do it with a sort of love,
At foolish unaware: whereat I smiled,—

A melancholy smile, to catch myself

Smiling for joy.

Admits temptation. It seemed, next,
worth while

To dodge the sharp sword set against my
life;

To slip down stairs through all the sleepy
house,

As mute as any dream there, and escape
As a soul from the body, out of doors,

Glide through the shrubberies, drop into
the lane,

And wander on the hills an hour or two,
Then back again before the house should
stir.

Or else I sat on in my chamber green,
And lived my life, and thought my
thoughts, and prayed

My prayers without the vicar; read my
books,

Without considering whether they were
fit

To do me good. Mark, there. We get
no good

By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits . . . so much help

By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and
plunge

Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's
profound,

Impassioned for its beauty and salt of
truth—

'Tis then we get the right good from a
book.

I read much. What my father taught
before

From many a volume, Love re-empha-
sised

Upon the self-same pages: Theophrast
Grew tender with the memory of his
eyes,

And Ælian made mine wet. The trick
of Greek

And Latin, he had taught me, as he
would

Have taught me wrestling or the game
of fives

If such he had known,—most like a ship-
wrecked man

Who heaps his single platter with goats'
cheese

And scarlet berries; or like any man

Who loves but one, and so gives all at
 once,
 Because he has it, rather than because
 He counts it worthy. Thus, my father
 gave ;
 And thus, as did the women formerly
 By young Achilles, when they pinned
 the veil
 Across the boy's audacious front, and
 swept
 With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted
 rocks.
 He wrapt his little daughter in his large
 Man's doublet, careless did it fit or no.

But, after I had read for memory,
 I read for hope. The path my father's
 foot
 Had trod me out, which suddenly broke
 off,
 (What time he dropped the wallet of the
 flesh
 And passed) alone I carried on, and set
 My child-heart 'gainst the thorny under-
 wood,
 To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.
 Ah, babe i' the wood, without a brother-
 babe !
 My own self-pity, like the red-breast
 bird,
 Flies back to cover all that past with
 leaves.

Sublimest danger, over which none
 weeps,
 When any young wayfaring soul goes
 forth
 Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,
 The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,
 To thrust his own way, he an alien,
 through
 The world of books ! Ah, you !—you
 think it fine,
 You clap hands—' A fair day ! '—you
 cheer him on,
 As if the worst, could happen, were to
 rest
 Too long beside a fountain. Yet, be-
 hold,
 Behold !—the world of books is still the
 world :
 And worldlings in it are less merciful
 And more puissant. For the wicked
 there

Are winged like angels. Every knife
 that strikes,
 Is edged from elemental fire to assail
 A spiritual life. The beautiful seems
 right
 By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong
 Because of weakness. Power is justi-
 fied,
 Though armed against St. Michael.
 Many a crown
 Covers bald foreheads. In the book-
 world, true,
 There's no lack, neither, of God's saints
 and kings,
 That shake the ashes of the grave aside
 From their calm locks, and undiscomfited
 Look steadfast truths against Time's
 changing mask.
 True, many a prophet teaches in the
 roads ;
 True, many a seer pulls down the flam-
 ing heavens
 Upon his own head in strong martyr-
 dom,
 In order to light men a moment's space.
 But stay !—who judges?—who distin-
 guishes
 'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first
 sight,
 And leaves king Saul precisely at the
 sin,
 To serve king David? who discerns at
 once
 The sound of the trumpets, when the
 trumpets blow
 For Alaric as well as Charlemagne?
 Who judges wizards, and can tell true
 seers
 From conjurors? The child, there?
 Would you leave
 That child to wander in a battle-field
 And push his innocent smile against the
 guns?
 Or even in a catacomb . . . his torch
 Grown ragged in the fluttering air, and
 all
 The dark a-mutter round him? not a
 child.
 I read books bad and good—some bad
 and good
 At once: (good aims not always make
 good books ;
 Well-tempered spades turn up ill-smell-
 ing soils

In digging vineyards, even) books, that
 prove
 God's being so definitely, that man's
 doubt
 Grows self-defined the other side the line,
 Made Atheist by suggestion; moral
 books,
 Exasperating to license; genial books,
 Discounting from the human dignity;
 And merry books, which set you weep-
 ing when
 The sun shines,—ay, and melancholy
 books,
 Which make you laugh that any one
 should weep
 In this disjointed life for one wrong
 more.

The world of books is still the world, I
 write,
 And both worlds have God's providence,
 thank God,
 To keep and hearten: with some strug-
 gle, indeed,
 Among the breakers, some hard swim-
 ming through
 The deeps—I lost breath in my soul
 sometimes,
 And cried, 'God save me if there's any
 God,'
 But, even so, God saved me; and being
 dashed
 From error on to error, every turn
 Still brought me nearer to the central
 truth.

I thought so. All this anguish in the
 thick
 Of men's opinions . . . press and coun-
 terpress,
 Now up, now down, now underfoot, and
 now
 Emergent . . . all the best of it, perhaps,
 But throws you back upon a noble trust
 And use of your own instinct,—merely
 proves
 Pure reason stronger than bare infer-
 ence
 At strongest. Try it,—fix against heav-
 en's wall
 Your scaling ladders of school logic—
 mount
 Step by step!—Sight goes faster; that
 still ray

Which strikes out from you, how, you
 cannot tell,
 And why, you know not—(did you elim-
 inate,
 That such as you, indeed, should ana-
 lyse?)
 Goes straight and fast as light, and high
 as God.

The cygnet finds the water; but the
 man
 Is born in ignorance of his element,
 And feels out blind at first, disorganised
 By sin i' the blood,—his spirit-insight
 dulled
 And crossed by his sensations. Pres-
 ently
 He feels it quicken in the dark some-
 times;
 When mark, be reverent, be obedient,—
 For such dumb motions of imperfect life
 Are oracles of vital Deity
 Attesting the Hereafter. Let who says
 'The soul's a clean white paper,' rather
 say,
 A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph
 Defined, erased and covered by a
 monk's,—
 The apocalypse, by a Longus! poring
 on
 Which obscene text, we may discern
 perhaps
 Some fair, fine trace of what was written
 once,
 Some upstroke of an alpha and omega
 Expressing the old Scripture.

Books, books, books I
 I had found the secret of a garret-room
 Piled high with cases in my father's
 name;
 Piled high, packed large,—where, creep-
 ing in and out
 Among the giant fossils of my past,
 Like some small nimble mouse between
 the ribs
 Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and
 there
 At this or that box, pulling through the
 gap,
 In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,
 The first book first. And how I felt it
 beat
 Under my pillow, in the morning's dark,

An hour before the sun would let me read!

My books!

At last, because the time was ripe,
I chanced upon the poets.

As the earth
Plunges in fury, when the internal fires
Have reached and pricked her heart,
and, throwing flat

The marts and temples, the triumphal
gates

And towers of observation, clears her-
self

To elemental freedom—thus, my soul,
At poetry's divine first finger touch,
Let go conventions and sprang up sur-
prised,

Convicted of the great eternities
Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,
You write so of the poets, and not laugh?
Those virtuous liars, dreamers after
dark,

Exaggerators of the sun and moon,
And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so
Of the only truth-tellers, now left to
God,

The only speakers of essential truth,
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths; the only holders
by

His sun-skirts, through conventional
grey glooms;

The only teachers who instruct mankind,
From just a shadow on a charnel wall,
To find man's veritable stature out,
Erect, sublime,—the measure of a man,
And that's the measure of an angel,
says

The apostle. Ay, and while your com-
mon men

Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads, reign,
reap, dine,

And dust the flaunty carpets of the world
For kings to walk on, or our president,
The poet suddenly will catch them up
With his voice like a thunder . . . ' This
is soul,

' This is life, this word is being said in
heaven,

Here's God down on us! what are you
about?'

How all those workers start amid their
work,

Look round, look up, and feel, a mo-
ment's space,

That carpet-dusting, though a pretty
trade,

Is not the imperative labour after all.

My own best poets, am I one with you,
That thus I love you,—or but one
through love?

Does all this smell of thyme about my
feet

Conclude my visit to your holy hill
In personal presence, or but testify
The rustling of your vesture through my
dreams

With influent odours? When my joy
and pain,

My thought and aspiration, like the
stops

Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb
Unless melodious, do you play on me,
My pipers,—and if, sooth, you did not
blow,

Would no sound come? or is the music
mine,

As a man's voice or breath is called his
own,

Imbreathed by the Life-breather?
There's a doubt

For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high
When first I felt my pulses set them-
selves

For concord; when the rhythmic turbu-
lence

Of blood and brain swept outward upon
words,

As wind upon the alders, blanching
them

By turning up their under-natures till
They trembled in dilation. O delight
And triumph of the poet,—who would
say

A man's mere 'yes,' a woman's common
'no,'

A little human hope of that or this,
And says the word so that it burns you
through

With a special revelation, shakes the
heart

Of all the men and women in the world,
As if one came back from the dead and
spoke,

With eyes too happy, a familiar thing

Become divine i' the utterance! while
for him
The poet, speaker, he expands with
joy ;
The palpitating angel in his flesh
Thrills inly with consenting fellowship
To those innumerable spirits who sun
themselves
Outside of time.

O life, O poetry,
—Which means life in life ! cognisant of
life
Beyond this blood-beat,—passionate for
truth
Beyond these senses,—poetry, my life,
My eagle, with both grappling feet still
hot
From Zeus's thunder, who has ravished
me
Away from all the shepherds, sheep, and
dogs,
And set me in the Olympian roar and
round
Of luminous faces, for a cup-bearer,
To keep the mouths of all the godheads
moist
For everlasting laughters,—I, myself
Half drunk across the beaker with their
eyes !
How those gods look !

Enough so, Ganymede.
We shall not bear above a round or
two—
We drop the golden cup at Heré's foot
And swoon back to the earth,—and find
ourselves
Face-down among the pine-cones, cold
with dew,
While the dogs bark, and many a shep-
herd scoffs,
'What's come now to the youth?' Such
ups and downs
Have poets.

Am I such indeed? The name
Is royal, and to sign it like a queen,
Is what I dare not,—though some royal
blood
Would seem to tingle in me now and
then,
With sense of power and ache,—with
imposthumes
And manias usual to the race. How-
beit
I dare not: 'tis too easy to go mad,
And ape a Bourbon in a crown of straws ;

The thing's too common.

Many fervent souls
Strike rhyme on rhyme, who would strike
steel on steel
If steel had offered, in a restless heat
Of doing something. Many tender souls
Have strung their losses on a rhyming
thread,
As children, cowslips :—the more pains
they take,
The work more withers. Young men,
ay, and maids,
Too often sow their wild oats in tame
verse,
Before they sit down under their own
vine
And live for use. Alas, near all the
birds
Will sing at dawn,—and yet we do not
take
The chaffering swallow for the holy lark.

In those days, though, I never analysed,
Not even myself. Analysis comes late.
You catch a sight of Nature, earliest,
In full front sun-face, and your eyelids
wink
And drop before the wonder of 't ; you
miss
The form, through seeing the light. I
lived, those days,
And wrote because I lived—unlicensed
else :
My heart beat in my brain. Life's vio-
lent flood
Abolished bounds,—and, which my
neighbour's field,
Which mine, what mattered? It is thus
in youth
We play at leap-frog over the god Term ;
The love within us and the love without
Are mixed, confounded ; if we are loved
or love,
We scarce distinguish : thus with other
power ;
Being acted on and acting seem the
same :
In that first onrush of life's chariot-
wheels,
We know not if the forests move or we.
And so, like most young poets, in a
flush
Of individual life I poured myself
Along the veins of others, and achieved

Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,
 And made the living answer for the
 dead,
 Profaning nature. 'Touch not, do not
 taste,
 Nor handle,'—we're too legal, who write
 young:
 We beat the phorminx till we hurt our
 thumbs,
 As if still ignorant of counterpoint;
 We call the Muse . . . 'O Muse, benig-
 nant Muse!'—
 As if we had seen her purple-braided
 head
 With the eyes in it, start between the
 boughs
 As often as a stag's. What make-be-
 lieve,
 With so much earnest! what effete re-
 sults,
 From virile efforts! what cold wire-
 drawn odes,
 From such white heats!—bucolics, where
 the cow
 Would scare the writer if they splashed
 the mud
 In lashing off the flies,—didactics, driv-
 en
 Against the heels of what the master
 said;
 And counterfeiting epics, shrill with
 trumps
 A babe might blow between two strain-
 ing cheeks
 Of bubbled rose, to make his mother
 laugh;
 And elegiac griefs, and songs of love.
 Like cast-off nosegays picked up on the
 road,
 The worse for being warm: all these
 things, writ
 On happy mornings, with a morning
 heart,
 That leaps for love, is active for re-
 solve,
 Weak for art only. Oft, the ancient
 forms
 Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the young
 blood.
 The wine-skins, now and then, a little
 warped,
 Will crack even, as the new wine gurgles
 in.
 Spare the old bottles!—spill not the new
 wine.

By Keat's soul, the man who never
 stepped
 In gradual progress like another man,
 But, turning grandly on his central self,
 Ensphered himself in twenty perfect
 years,
 And died, not young,—(the life of a long
 life,
 Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a
 tear
 Upon the world's cold cheek to make it
 burn
 For ever;) by that strong excepted soul,
 I count it strange, and hard to under-
 stand
 That nearly all young poets should write
 old;
 That Pope was sexagenary at sixteen,
 And beardless Byron academical,
 And so with others. It may be, per-
 haps,
 Such have not settled long and deep
 enough
 In trance, to attain to clairvoyance,—and
 still
 The memory mixes with the vision,
 spoils,
 And works it turbid.
 Or perhaps, again
 In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx,
 The melancholy desert must sweep
 round,
 Behind you as before.—
 For me, I wrote
 False poems, like the rest, and thought
 them true,
 Because myself was true in writing them.
 I peradventure have writ true ones since
 With less complacence.
 But I could not hide
 My quickening inner life from those at
 watch.
 They saw a light at a window now and
 then,
 They had not set there. Who had set it
 there?
 My father's sister started when she
 caught
 My soul agaze in my eyes. She could
 not say
 I had no business with a sort of soul.
 But plainly she objected.—and demurred
 That souls were dangerous things to
 carry straight

Through all the spilt saltpetre of the world.

She said sometimes, 'Aurora, have you done

Your task this morning?—have you read that book?

And are you ready for the crochet here?'—

As if she said, 'I know there's something wrong;

I know I have not ground you down enough

To flatten and bake you to a wholesome crust

For household uses and proprieties, Before the rain has got into my barn

And set the grains a-sprouting. What, you're green

With out-door impudence? you almost grow?'

To which I answered, 'Would she hear my task,

And verify my abstract of the book?

Or should I sit down to the crochet work?

Was such her pleasure?' . . . Then I sate and teased

The patient needle till it spilt the thread Which oozed off from it in meandering lace

From hour to hour. I was not, therefore, sad;

My soul was singing at a work apart Behind the wall of sense, as safe from harm

As sings the lark when sucked up out of sight,

In vortices of glory and blue air.

And so, through forced work and spontaneous work,

The inner life informed the outer life, Reduced the irregular blood to settled rhythms,

Made cool the forehead with fresh-sprinkling dreams,

And, rounding to the spheric soul the thin

Pined body, struck a colour up the cheeks,

Though somewhat faint. I clenched my brows across

My blue eyes greatening in the looking-glass,

And said, 'We'll live, Aurora! we'll be strong.

The dogs are on us—but we will not die.

Whoever lives true life, will love true love.

I learnt to love that England. Very oft,

Before the day was born, or otherwise Through secret windings of the after-

noons,

I threw my hunters off and plunged myself

Among the deep hills, as a hunted stag Will take the waters, shivering with the fear

And passion of the course. And when at last

Escaped,—so many a green slope built on slope

Betwixt me and the enemy's house behind,

I dared to rest, or wander,—in a rest Made sweeter for the step upon the grass,—

And view the ground's most gentle dimplement,

(As if God's finger touched but did not press

In making England) such an up and down

Of verdure,—nothing too much up or down,

A ripple of land; such little hills, the sky

Can stoop to tenderly and the wheatfields climb;

Such nooks of valleys, lined with orchises,

Fed full of noises by invisible streams;

And open pastures, where you scarcely tell

White daisies from white dew,—at intervals

The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out

Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade,— I thought my father's land was worthy too

Of being my Shakspeare's.

Very oft alone, Unlicensed; not unfrequently with leave

To walk the third with Romney and his friend

The rising painter, Vincent Carrington,

Whom men judge hardly as bee-bonneted,
 Because he holds that, paint a body well,
 You paint a soul by implication, like
 The grand first. Master. Pleasant walks! for if
 He said . . . 'When I was last in Italy' . . .
 It sounded as an instrument that's played
 Too far off for the tune—and yet it's fine
 To listen.

Offer we walked only two,
 If cousin Romney pleased to walk with me.
 We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as it chanced:
 We were not lovers, nor even friends well-matched,
 Say rather, scholars upon different tracks,
 And thinkers disagreed; he, overfull
 Of what is, and I, haply, overbold
 For what might be.

But then the thrushes sang,
 And shook my pulses and the elms' new leaves,—
 At which I turned, and held my finger up,
 And bade him mark that, howsoe'er the world
 Went ill, as he related, certainly
 The thrushes still sang in it. At the word
 His brow would soften,—and he bore with me
 In melancholy patience, not unkind,
 While breaking into voluble ecstasy
 I flattered all the beauteous country round,
 All poets use . . . the skies, the clouds,
 the fields,
 The happy violets hiding from the roads
 The primroses run down to, carrying gold.
 The tangled hedgerows, where the cows push out
 Impatient horns and tolerant churning mouths
 'Twixt dripping ash-boughs,—hedgerows all alive
 With birds and gnats and large white butterflies

Which look as if the May-flower had caught life
 And palpitated forth upon the wind,
 Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver mist,
 Farms, granges, doubled up among the hills,
 And cattle grazing in the watered vales,
 And cottage chimneys smoking from the woods,
 And cottage-gardens smelling everywhere,
 Confused with smell of orchards. 'See,' I said,
 'And see! is God not with us on the earth?
 And shall we put him down by aught we do?
 Who says there's nothing for the poor and vile
 Save poverty and wickedness? behold!' And ankle-deep in English grass I leaped,
 And clapped my hands, and called all very fair.

In the beginning when God called all good,
 Even then was evil near us, it is writ.
 But we indeed who call things good and fair,
 The evil is upon us while we speak;
 Deliver us from evil, let us pray.

SECOND BOOK.

TIMES followed one another. Came a morn
 I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
 And looked before and after, as I stood
 Woman and artist,—either incomplete,
 Both credulous of completion. There I held
 The whole creation in my little cup,
 And smiled with thirsty lips before I drank
 'Good health to you and me, sweet neighbour mine,
 And all these peoples.'

I was glad, that day:
 The June was in me, with its multitudes
 Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
 And rosebuds reddening where the calyx split.

I felt so young, so strong, so sure of
God!

So glad. I could not choose be very wise !
And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull
My childhood backward in a childish
jest

To see the face of't once more, and fare-
well !

In which fantastic mood I bounded forth
At early morning,—would not wait so
long

As even to snatch my bonnet by the
strings,

But, brushing a green trail across the
lawn

With my gown in the dew, took will and
way

Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air

And keep my birthday, till my aunt
awoke

To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I
murmured on

As honeyed bees keep humming to them-
selves ;

'The worthiest poets have remained un-
crowned

Till death has bleached their foreheads to
the bone,

And so with me it must be, unless I
prove

Unworthy of the grand adversity,

And certainly I would not fail so much.

What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,

Before my brows be numbed as Dante's
own

To all the tender pricking of such
leaves?

Such leaves ! what leaves ?'

I pulled the branches down,
To choose from.

'Not the bay ! I choose no bay ;
The fates deny us if we are overbold :

Nor myrtle—which means chiefly love ;
and love

Is something awful which one dares not
touch

So early o' mornings. This verbena
strains

The point of passionate fragrance ; and
hard by,

This guelder rose, at far too slight a beck
Of the wind, will toss about her flower-
apples.

Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy on the
wall.

That headlong ivy ! not a leaf will grow
But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves,
smooth leaves,

Serrated like my vines, and half as green.
I like such ivy ; bold to leap a height

'Twas strong to climb ! as good to grow
on graves

As twist about a thyrsus ; pretty too,
(And that's not ill) when twisted round a
comb.'

Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,
Because some thoughts are fashioned
like a bell

To ring with once being touched, I drew
a wreath

Drenched, blinding me with dew, across
my brow

And fastening it behind so, . . turning
faced

. . My public !—cousin Romney—with
a mouth

Twice graver than his eyes.

I stood there fixed—

My arms up, like the caryatid, sole
Of some abolished temple, helplessly

Persistent in a gesture which derides

A former purpose. Yet my blush was
flame,

As if from flax, not stone.

'Aurora Leigh,
The earliest of Aurora's !'

Hand stretched out
I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp

a hand,
Indifferent to the sort of palm. The
tide

Had caught me at my pastime, writing
down

My foolish name too near upon the sea
Which drowned me with a blush as fool-
ish. 'You,

My cousin !'

The smile died out in his eyes
And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead
weight,

For just a moment . . 'Here's a book
I found !

No name writ on it—poems, by the
form ;

Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's
Greek,

Without the accents. Read it? Not a
word.

I saw at once the thing had witchcraft
in't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous
spirits ;
I rather bring it to the witch.'

'My book I
You found it' . . .

'In the hollow by the stream
That beach leans down into—of which
you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart
And pines for waters.'

'Thank you.'
'Thanks to you,
My cousin ! that I have seen you not too
much

Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the
rest,
To be a woman also.'

With a glance
The smile rose in his eyes again, and
touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air.
I answered gravely, 'Poets needs must
be

Or men or women—more's the pity.'

'Ah,
But men, and still less women, happily,
Scarce need be poets. Keep to the
green wreath.

Since even dreaming of the stone and
bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and
defiles

The clean white morning dresses.'

'So you judge !
Because I love the beautiful, I must
Love pleasure chiefly, and be over-
charged

For ease and whiteness. Well—you
know the world,

And only miss your cousin ; 'tis not
much.

But learn this : I would rather take my
part

With God's Dead, who afford to walk in
white

Yet spread his glory, than keep quiet
here,

And gather up my feet from even a
step,

For fear to soil my gown in so much
dust.

I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if
heads

That hold a rhythmic thought, must act
perforce

For my part I choose headaches,—and
to-day's
My birthday.'

'Dear Aurora, choose instead
To cure them. You have balsams.'

'I perceive
The headache is too noble for my sex.

You think the heartache would sound
decenter,

Since that's the woman's special, proper
ache,

And altogether tolerable, except
To a woman.'

Saying which, I loosed my wreath,
And swinging it beside me as I walked,
Half petulant, half playful, as we walked,
I sent a sidelong look to find his
thought,—

As falcon set on falconer's finger may,
With sidelong head, and startled, braving
eye,

Which means, 'You'll see—you'll see !
I'll soon take flight—

You shall not hinder.' He, as shaking
out

His hand and answering, 'Fly then,' did
not speak,

Except by such a gesture. Silently
We paced, until, just coming into sight

Of the house-windows, he abruptly
caught

At one end of the swinging wreath, and
said,

Aurora ! There I stopped short, breath
and all.

'Aurora, let's be serious, and throw by
This game of head and heart. Life
means, be sure,

Both heart and head,—both active, both
complete,

And both in earnest. Men and women
make

The world, as head and heart make
human life.

Work man, work woman, since there's
work to do

In this beleaguered earth, for head and
heart,

And thought can never do the work of
love :

But work for ends, I mean for uses :
not

For such sleek fringes (do you call them
ends?
Still less God's glory) as we sew our-
selves
Upon the velvet of those baldaquins
Held 'twixt us and the sun. That book
of yours,
I have not read a page of; but I toss
A rose up—it falls calyx down, you see!
The chances are that, being a woman,
young,
And pure, with such a pair of large, calm
eyes,
You write as well . . . and ill . . . upon the
whole,
As other women. If as well, what then?
If even a little better, . . . still what then?
We want the Best in art now, or no art.
The time is done for facile settings up
Of minnow gods, nymphs here and
tritons there;
The polytheists have gone out in God,
That unity of Bests. No best, no God!
And so with art, we say. Give art's
divine,
Direct, indubitable, real as grief,—
Or leave us to the grief we grow our-
selves
Divine by overcoming with mere hope
And most prosaic patience. You, you
are young
As Eve with nature's daybreak on her
face;
But this same world you are come to,
dearest coz,
Has done with keeping birthdays, saves
her wreaths
To hang upon her ruins,—and forgets
To rhyme the cry with which she still
beats back
Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt her
down
To the empty grave of Christ. The
world's hard pressed;
The sweat of labour in the early curse
Has (turning acrid in six thousand years)
Become the sweat of torture. Who has
time,
An hour's time . . . think! . . . to sit up-
on a bank
And hear the cymbal tinkle in white
hands?
When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam
sing!—
Before . . . where's Moses?'

'Ah—exactly that
Where's Moses?—is a Moses to be
found?
You'll seek him vainly in the bulrushes,
While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet
concede,
Such sounding brass has done some ac-
tual good
(The application in a woman's hand,
If that were credible, being scarcely
spoil,.)
In colonising beehives.'
'There it is!—
You play beside a death-bed like a child,
Yet measure to yourself a prophet's
place
To teach the living. None of all these
things,
Can women understand. You generalise
Oh, nothing!—not even grief! Your
quick-breathed hearts,
So sympathetic to the personal pang,
Close on each separate knife-stroke,
yielding up
A whole life at each wound; incapable
Of deepening, widening a large lap of
life
To hold the world-full woe. The human
race
To you means, such a child, or such a
man,
You saw one morning waiting in the
cold,
Beside that gate, perhaps. You gather
up
A few such cases, and when strong some-
times
Will write of factories and of slaves, as
if
Your father were a negro, and your son
A spinner in the mills. All's yours and
you,
All, coloured with your blood, or other-
wise
Just nothing to you. Why, I call you
hard
To general suffering. Here's the world
half blind
With intellectual light, half brutalised
With civilisation, having caught the
plague
In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east, and
west
Along a thousand railroads, mad with
pain

And sin too! . . . does one woman of you
all,

(You who weep easily) grow pale to see
This tiger shake his cage?—does one of
you

Stand still from dancing, stop from
stringing pearls,

And pine and die because of the great
sum

Of universal anguish?—Show me a tear
Wet as Cordelia's, in eyes bright as
yours,

Because the world is mad! You cannot
count,

That you should weep for this account,
not you!

You weep for what you know. A red-
haired child

Sick in a fever, if you touch him once,
Though but so little as with a finger-tip,
Will set you weeping; but a million
sick . . .

You could as soon weep for the rule of
three,

Or compound fractions. Therefore, this
same world

Uncomprehended by you, must remain
Uninfluenced by you. Women as you
are,

Mere women, personal and passionate,
You give us doating mothers, and perfect
wives,

Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!
We get no Christ from you,—and verily
We shall not get a poet, in my mind.'

'With which conclusion you conclude' . . .
'But this—

That you, Aurora, with the large live
brow

And steady eyelids, cannot condescend
To play at art, as children play at
swords,

To show a pretty spirit, chiefly admired
Because true action is impossible.

You never can be satisfied with praise
Which men give women when they judge
a book

Not as mere work, but as mere woman's
work,

Expressing the comparative respect
Which means the absolute scorn. 'Oh,
excellent!

'What grace! what facile turns! what
fluent sweeps!

'What delicate discernment . . . almost
thought!

'The book does honour to the sex, we
hold.

'Among our female authors we make
room

'For this fair writer, and congratulate

'The country that produces in these
times

'Such women, competent to . . . spell.'
'Stop there!'

I answered—burning through his thread
of talk

With a quick flame of emotion,—'You
have read

My soul, if not my book, and argue
well

I would not condescend . . . we will not
say

To such a kind of praise, (a worthless
end

Is praise of all kinds) but to such a use
Of holy art and golden life. I am
young,

And peradventure weak—you tell me
so—

Through being a woman. And, for all
the rest,

Take thanks for justice. I would rather
dance

At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies
dropped

Their gingerbread for joy,—than shift
the types

For tolerable verse, intolerable
To men who act and suffer. Better far

Pursue a frivolous trade by serious
means,

Than a sublime art frivolously.'
'You

Choose nobler work than either, O moist
eyes

And hurrying lips, and heaving heart!
We are young,

Aurora, you and I. The world . . . look
round . . .

The world, we're come too late, is swol-
len hard

With perished generations and their
sins:

The civiliser's spade grinds horribly
On dead men's bones, and cannot turn

up soil

'That's otherwise than fetid. All suc-
cess

Proves partial failure ; all advance implies
 What's left behind ; all triumph, something crushed
 At the chariot-wheels ; all government, some wrong ;
 And rich men make the poor, who curse the rich,
 Who agonise together, rich and poor,
 Under and over, in the social spasm
 And crisis of the ages. Here's an age,
 That makes its own vocation ! here, we have stepped
 Across the bounds of time ! here's nought to see,
 But just the rich man and 'just Lazarus,
 And both in torments ; with a mediate gulph,
 Though not a hint of Abraham's bosom.
 Who,
 Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly by
 And view these things, and never tease his soul
 For some great cure ? No physic for this grief,
 In all the earth and heavens too ?'
 ' You believe
 In God, for your part ?—ay ? that He who makes,
 Can make good things from ill things, best from worst,
 As men plant tulips upon dunghills when
 They wish them finest ?'
 ' True. A death-heat is
 The same as life-heat, to be accurate ;
 And in all nature is no death at all,
 As men account of death, as long as God
 Stands witnessing for life perpetually,
 By being just God. That's abstract truth, I know,
 Philosophy, or sympathy with God :
 But I, I sympathise with man, not God,
 I think I was a man for chiefly this ;
 And when I stand beside a dying bed,
 It's death to me. Observe,—it had not much
 Consoled the race of mastodons to know
 Before they went to fossil, that anon
 Their place would quicken with the elephant ;
 They were not elephants but mastodons :
 And I, a man, as men are now and not
 As men may be hereafter, feel with men
 In the agonising present.'

' Is it so,'
 I said, ' my cousin ? is the world so bad,
 While I hear nothing of it through the trees ?
 The world was always evil,—but so bad ?'
 ' So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is grey
 With poring over the long sum of ill :
 So much for vice, so much for discontent,
 So much for the necessities of power,
 So much for the connivances of fear,
 Coherent in statistical despairs
 With such a total of distracted life, . . .
 To see it down in figures on a page,
 Plain, silent, clear . . . as God sees
 through the earth
 The sense of all the graves . . . that's terrible
 For one who is not God, and cannot right
 The wrong he looks on. May I choose indeed
 But vow away my years, my means, my aims,
 Among the helpers, if there's any help
 In such a social strait ? The common blood
 That swings along my veins, is strong enough
 To draw me to this duty.'
 Then I spoke.
 ' I have not stood long on the strand of life,
 And these salt waters have had scarcely time
 To creep so high up as to wet my feet.
 I cannot judge these tides—I shall, perhaps.
 A woman's always younger than a man
 At equal years, because she is disallowed
 Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,
 And kept in long-clothes past the age to walk.
 Ah well, I know you men judge otherwise !
 You think a woman ripens as a peach,
 In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me now ;
 I'm young in age, and younger still, I think.
 As a woman. But a child may say amen
 To a bishop's prayer, and feel the way it goes ;
 And I, incapable to loose the knot

Of social questions, can approve, applaud
August compassion, christian thoughts
that shoot

Beyond the vulgar white of personal
aims.

Accept my reverence.'

'There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. 'No other
help?'

Said he—'no more than so?'

'What help?' I asked,
'You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's self,
you say,

Has scorned to put her music in my
mouth

Because a woman's. Do you now turn
round

And ask for what a woman cannot give?'

'For what she only can,' I turn and ask.
He answered, catching up my hands in
his,

And dropping on me from his high-eaved
brow

The full weight of his soul,—'I ask for
love,

And that, she can; for life in fellowship
Through bitter duties—that, I know she
can;

For wifehood . . . will she?'

'Now,' I said, 'may God
Be witness 'twixt us two!' and with the
word,

Meseemed I floated into a sudden light
Above his stature,—'am I proved too
weak

To stand alone, yet strong enough to
bear

Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to
think,

Yet rich enough to sympathise with
thought?

Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,
Yet competent to love, like HIM?'

I paused:
Perhaps I darkened, as the light house
will

That turns upon the sea. 'It's always
so!

Anything does for a wife.'

'Aurora, dear,
And dearly honored' . . . he pressed in
at once

With eager utterance,—'you translate
me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you—
Which is most reverent, with another
thought

Found less so. If your sex is weak for
art,

(And I who said so, did but honour you
By using truth in courtship) it is strong
For life and duty. Place your second
heart

In mine, and let us blossom for the world
That wants love's colour in the grey of
time.

My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you, ay,
Since all my talk can only set you where
You look down coldly on the arena-
heaps

Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!
The Judgment-Angel scarce would find
his way

Through such a heap of generalised dis-
tress

To the individual man with lips and
eyes—

Much less Aurora. Ah my sweet, come
down,

And hand in hand we'll go where yours
shall touch

These victims, one by one! till one by
one,

The formless, nameless trunk of every
man

Shall seem to wear a head with hair you
know.

And every woman catch your mother's
face

To melt you into passion.'

'I am a girl,'
I answered slowly; 'you do well to name
My mother's face. Though far too ear-
ly, alas,

God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and
me,

I know so much of love, as used to shine
In that face and another. Just so much:
No more indeed at all. I have not seen
So much love since, I pray you pardon
me,

As answers even to make a marriage
with

In this cold land of England. What you
love,

Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir,
A wife to help your ends . . . in her ne
end!

Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,
But I, being most unworthy of these and
that,
Do otherwise conceive of love. Fare-
well.'

'Farewell, Aurora? you reject me thus?'
He said.

'Sir, you were married long ago,
You have a wife already whom you love,
Your social theory. Bless you both, I
say.

For my part, I am scarcely meek enough
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.
Do I look a Hagar, think you?'

'So you jest!'
Nay so, I speak in earnest,' I replied.
You treat of marriage too much like, at
least,

A chief apostle; you would bear with
you
A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we speak it
out?

A sister of charity.'
'Then, must it be
indeed farewell? And was I so far
wrong

In hope and in illusion, when I took
The woman to be nobler than the man,
Myself the noblest woman,—in the
use

and comprehension of what love is,—
love,

That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far wrong,
In saying bluntly, venturing truth on
love,

Come, human creature, love and work
with me,'—

Instead of 'Lady, thou art wondrous
fair,

And, where the Graces walk before, the
Muse

Will follow at the lighting of the eyes,
And where the Muse walks, lovers
need to creep:

'Turn round and love me, or I die of
love.'

With quiet indignation I broke in.

You misconceive the question like a
man,

Who sees a woman as the complement
Of his sex merely. You forget too much
That every creature, female as the male,

Stands single in responsible act and
thought,

As also in birth and death. Whoever
says

To a loyal woman, 'Love and work with
me,'

Will get fair answers if the work and
love,

Being good themselves, are good for her
—the best

She was born for. Women of a softer
mood,

Surprised by men when scarcely awake
to life,

Will sometimes only hear the first word,
love,

And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent, so that dear love go with it:

I do not blame such women, though, for
love,

They pick much oakum; earth's fanatics
make

Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me*,
your work

Is not the best for,—nor your love the
best,

Nor able to commend the kind of work
For love's sake merely. Ah, you force
me, sir,

To be over-bold in speaking of myself,
I too have my vocation,—work to do,

The heavens and earth have set me,
since I changed

My father's face for theirs,—and, though
your world

Were twice as wretched as you represent,
Most serious work, most necessary work

As any of the economists'. Reform,
Make trade a Christian possibility,

And individual right no general wrong;
Wipe out earth's furrows of the 'Thine

and Mine,
And leave one green for men to play at

bowls;
With innings for them all! . . . what then,
indeed,

If mortals are not greater by the head
Than any of their prosperities? what
then,

Unless the artist keep up open roads
Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting
through

The best of your conventions with his
best,

The speakable, imaginable best

God bids him speak, to prove what lies
 beyond
 Both speech and imagination? A starved
 man
 Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter,
 sir,
 The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
 I hold you will not compass your poor
 ends
 Of barley-feeding and material ease,
 Without a poet's individualism
 To work your universal. It takes a
 soul
 To move a body: it takes a high-souled
 man
 To move the masses . . . even to a cleaner
 sty:
 It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth
 off
 The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Four-
 iers failed,
 Because not poets enough to understand
 That life develops from within.—For
 me,
 Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
 Of work like this . . . perhaps a woman's
 soul
 Aspires, and not creates: yet we aspire,
 And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir;
 And if I fail . . . why, burn me up my
 straw
 Like other false works—I'll not ask for
 grace,
 Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I
 Who love my art, could never wish it
 lower
 To suit my stature. I may love my art.
 You'll grant that even a woman may love
 art,
 Seeing that to waste true love on any-
 thing
 Is womanly, past question?
 I retain
 The very last word which I said that
 day,
 As you the creaking of the door, years
 past,
 Which let upon you such disabling news
 You ever after have been graver. He,
 His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth,
 Were fiery points on which my words
 were caught,
 Transfixed for ever in my memory
 For his sake, not their own. And yet I
 know

I did not love him . . . nor he me . . . that's
 sure . . .
 And what I said, is unrepented of,
 As truth is always. Yet . . . a princely
 man!—
 If hard to me, heroic for himself!
 He bears down on me through the slant-
 ing years,
 The stronger for the distance. If he
 had loved,
 Ay, loved me, with that retributive
 face, . . .
 I might have been a common woman
 now,
 And happier, less known and less left
 alone;
 Perhaps a better woman after all,—
 With chubby children hanging on my
 neck
 To keep me low and wise. Ah me, the
 vines
 That bear such fruit, are proud to stoop
 with it.
 The palm stands upright in a realm of
 sand.
 And I, who spoke the truth then, stand
 upright,
 Still worthy of having spoken out the
 truth,
 By being content I spoke it, though it set
 Him there, me here.—O woman's vile
 remorse,
 To hanker after a mere name, a show,
 A supposition, a potential love!
 Does every man who names love in our
 lives,
 Become a power for that? is love's true
 thing
 So much best to us, that what personates
 love
 Is next best? A potential love, for-
 sooth!
 I'm not so vile. No, no—he cleaves, I
 think,
 This man, this image, . . . chiefly for the
 wrong
 And shock he gave my life, in finding me
 Precisely where the devil of my youth
 Had set me, on those mountain-peaks of
 hope
 All glittering with the dawn-dew, all
 erect
 And famished for the noon,—exclaiming,
 while

ooked for empire and much tribute,
 'Come,
 have some worthy work for thee below.
 me, sweep my barns and keep my
 hospitals,
 and I will pay thee with a current coin
 which men give women.'

As we spoke, the grass
 as trod in haste beside us, and my
 aunt,
 with smile distorted by the sun,—face,
 voice,
 much at issue with the summer-day
 if you brought a candle out of doors,
 oke in with, 'Romney, here!—My
 child, entreat
 our cousin to the house, and have your
 talk,
 girls must talk upon their birthdays.
 Come.'

She answered for me calmly, with pale
 lips
 that seemed to motion for a smile in
 vain.
 The talk is ended, madam, where we
 stand.
 Our brother's daughter has dismissed
 me here;
 and all my answer can be better said
 beneath the trees, than wrong by such a
 word
 our house's hospitalities. Farewell.'

With that he vanished, I could hear
 his heel
 going bluntly in the lane, as down he
 leapt
 the short way from us.—Then a measured
 speech
 withdrew me. 'What means this, Aurora
 Leigh?
 My brother's daughter has dismissed my
 guests?'

The lion in me felt the keeper's voice,
 through all its quivering dewlaps: I was
 quelled
 before her,—meekened to the child she
 knew:
 I prayed her pardon, said, 'I had little
 thought
 to give dismissal to a guest of hers,
 and letting go a friend of mine who came

To take me into service as a wife,—
 No more than that, indeed.'

'No more, no more?'
 Pray Heaven,' she answered, 'that I was
 not mad.

I could not mean to tell her to her face
 That Romney Leigh had asked me for a
 wife,
 And I refused him?'

'Did he ask?' I said;
 'I think he rather stooped to take me up
 For certain uses which he found to do
 For something called a wife. He never
 asked.'

'What stuff!' she answered; 'are they
 queens, these girls?
 They must have mantles, stitched with
 twenty silks,
 Spread out upon the ground, before
 they'll step
 One footstep for the noblest lover born.'

'But I am born,' I said with firmness,
 'I,
 To walk another way than his, dear
 aunt.'

'You walk, you walk! A babe at thir-
 teen months

Will walk as well as you,' she cried in
 haste,

'Without a steadying finger Why, you
 child,

God help you, you are groping in the
 dark,

For all this sunlight. You suppose, per-
 haps,

That you, sole offspring of an opulent
 man,

Are rich and free to choose a way to
 walk?

You think, and it's a reasonable thought,
 That I beside, being well to do in life,

Will leave my handful in my niece's
 hand

When death shall paralyse these fingers?
 Pray,

Pray, child,—albeit, I know you love me
 not,

As if you loved me, that I may not die!
 For when I die and leave you, out you

go,
 (Unless I make room for you in my
 grave)

Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor brother's lamb,
 (Ah heaven,—that pains!)—without a right to crop
 A single blade of grass beneath these trees,
 Or cast a lamb's small shadow on the lawn,
 Unfed, unfolded! Ah, my brother, here's
 The fruit you planted in your foreign loves!—
 Ay, there's the fruit he planted! never look
 Astonished at me with your mother's eyes,
 For it was they who set you where you are,
 An undowered orphan. Child, your father's choice
 Of that said mother, disinherited
 His daughter, his and hers. Men do not think
 Of sons and daughters, when they fall in love,
 So much more than of sisters; otherwise
 He would have paused to ponder what he did,
 And shrunk before that clause in the entail
 Excluding offspring by a foreign wife
 (The clause set up a hundred years ago
 By a Leigh who wedded a French dancing-girl
 And had his heart danced over in return)
 But this man shrank at nothing, never thought
 Of you, Aurora, any more than me—
 Your mother must have been a pretty thing,
 For all the coarse Italian blacks and browns,
 To make a good man, which my brother was,
 Uncharly of the duties to his house;
 But so it fell indeed. Our cousin Vane,
 Vane Leigh, the father of this Romney,
 wrote
 Directly on your birth, to Italy,
 'I ask your baby daughter for my son
 In whom the entail now merges by the law.
 Betroth her to us out of love, instead

Of colder reasons, and she shall not lose
 By love or law from henceforth'—so he wrote;
 A generous cousin, was my cousin Vane.
 Remember how he drew you to his knee
 The year you came here, just before he died,
 And hollowed out his hands to hold your cheeks,
 And wished them redder,—you remember Vane?
 And now his son who represents our house
 And holds the fiefs and manors in his place,
 To whom reverts my pittance when I die,
 (Except a few books and a pair of shawls)
 The boy is generous like him, and prepared
 To carry out his kindest word and thought
 To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young man
 Is Romney Leigh; although the sun of youth
 Has shone too straight upon his brain, I know,
 And fevered him with dreams of doing good
 To good-for-nothing people. But wife
 Will put all right, and stroke his temples cool
 With healthy touches' . . .
 I broke in at that.
 I could not lift my heavy heart to breathe
 Till then, but then I raised it, and it fell
 In broken words like these—'No need to wait.
 The dream of doing good to . . . me, at least,
 Is ended, without waiting for a wife
 To cool the fever for him. We've escaped
 That danger . . . thank Heaven for it.'
 'You,' she cried.
 'Have got a fever. What, I talk and talk
 An hour long to you,—I instruct you how
 You cannot eat or drink or stand or sit,
 Or even die, like any decent wretch
 In all this unroofed and unfurnished world,

Without your cousin,—and you still
 maintain
 There's room 'twixt him and you, for
 flirting fans
 And running knots in eyebrows! You
 must have
 A pattern lover sighing on his knee:
 You do not count enough a noble heart,
 Above book-patterns, which this very
 morn
 Unclosed itself in two dear fathers'
 names
 To embrace your orphaned life! fie, fie!
 But stay,
 I write a word, and counteract this sin.'

She would have turned to leave me, but
 I clung.
 'O sweet my father's sister, hear my
 word

Before you write yours. Cousin Vane
 did well,
 And cousin Romney well,—and I well
 too,
 In casting back with all my strength and
 will

The good they meant me. O my God,
 my God!
 God meant me good, too, when he hin-
 dered me
 From saying 'yes' this morning. If you
 write

A word, it shall be 'no.' I say no, no!
 I tie up 'no' upon His altar-horns,
 Quite out of reach of perjury! At least
 My soul is not a pauper; I can live
 At least my soul's life, without alms from
 men;
 And if it must be in heaven instead of
 earth,
 Let heaven look to it,—I am not afraid.'

She seized my hands with both hers,
 strained them fast,
 And drew her probing and unscrupulous
 eyes
 Right through me, body and heart. 'Yet,
 foolish Sweet,
 You love this man. I have watched you
 when he came,
 And when he went, and when we've
 talked of him;
 I am not old for nothing; I can tell
 The weather-signs of love—you love this
 man.'

Girls blush sometimes because they are
 alive,
 Half wishing they were dead to save the
 shame.
 The sudden blush devours them, neck
 and brow;
 They have drawn too near the fire of life,
 like gnats,
 And flare up bodily, wings and all. What
 then?
 Who's sorry for a gnat . . . or girl?

I blushed.
 I feel the brand upon my forehead now
 Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless men
 may feel
 The felon's iron, say, and scorn the
 mark
 Of what they are not. Most illogical
 Irrational nature of our womanhood,
 That blushes one way, feels another
 way,
 And prays, perhaps, another! After all,
 We cannot be the equal of the male,
 Who rules his blood a little.

For although
 I blushed indeed, as if I loved the man,
 And her incisive smile, accrediting
 That treason of false witness in my
 blush,
 Did bow me downward like a swathe of
 grass
 Below its level that struck me,—I attest
 The conscious skies and all their daily
 suns,
 I think I loved him not . . . nor then,
 nor since . . .
 Nor ever. Do we love the schoolmas-
 ter,
 Being busy in the woods? much less,
 being poor,
 The overseer of the parish? Do we
 keep
 Our love to pay out debts with?

White and cold!
 I grew next moment. As my blood re-
 coiled
 From that imputed ignominy, I made
 My heart great with it. Then, at last, I
 spoke,
 Spoke veritable words but passionate,
 Too passionate perhaps . . . ground up
 with sobs
 To shapeless endings. She let fall my
 hands,

And took her smile off, in sedate disgust,
As peradventure she had touched a snake,—
A dead snake, mind!—and, turning round,
replied,
'We'll leave Italian manners, if you please.

I think you had an English father, child,
And ought to find it possible to speak
A quiet 'yes' or 'no,' like English girls,
Without convulsions. In another month
We'll take another answer . . . no, or yes,
With that, she left me in the garden-walk.

I had a father! yes, but long ago—
How long it seemed that moment. Oh,
how far,
How far and safe, God, dost thou keep
thy saints
When once gone from us! We may call
against
The lighted windows of thy fair June-
heaven
Where all the souls are happy,—and not
one,
Not even my father, look from work or
play
To ask, 'Who is it that cries after us,
Below there, in the dusk?' Yet formerly
He turned his face upon me quick
enough,
If I said 'father.' Now I might cry
loud;
The little lark soared higher with his
song
Than I with crying. Oh, alone, alone,—
Not troubling any in heaven, nor any on
earth,
I stood there in the garden, and looked
up
The deaf blue sky that brings the roses
out
On such June mornings.

You who keep account
Of crisis and transition in this life,
Set down the first time Nature says
plain 'no'
To some 'yes' in you, and walks over
you
In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all be-
gin

By singing with the birds and running
fast
With June-days, hand in hand : but once,
for all,
The birds must sing against us, and the
sun
Strike down upon us like a friend's
sword caught
By an enemy to slay us, while we read
The dear name on the blade which bites
at us!—
That's bitter and convincing; after that,
We seldom doubt that something in the
large
Smooth order of creation, though no
more
Than haply a man's footstep, has gone
wrong.

Some tears fell down my cheeks, and
then I smiled,
As those smile who have no face in the
world
To smile back to them. I had lost a
friend
In Romney Leigh; the thing was sure—
a friend,
Who had looked at me most gently now
and then,
And spoken of my favourite books . . .
'our books' . . .
With such a voice! Well, voice and
look were now
More utterly shut out from me, I felt,
'Than even my father's. Romney now
was turned
To a benefactor, to a generous man,
Who had tied himself to marry . . . me,
instead
Of such a woman, with low timorous lids
He lifted with a sudden word one day,
And left, perhaps, for my sake.—Ah,
self-tied
By a contract,—male Iphigenia bound
At a fatal Aulis for the winds to change,
(But loose him—they'll not change;) he
well might seem
A little cold and dominant in love!
He had a right to be dogmatical,
This poor, good Romney. Love, to him,
was made
A simple law-clause. If I married him,
I would not dare to call my soul my own,
Which so he had bought and paid for:
every thought

And every heart-beat down there in the
bill,
Not one found honestly deductible
From any use that pleased him! He
might cut
My body into coins to give away
Among his other paupers; change my
sons,
While I stood dumb as Griseld, for black
babes
Or piteous foundlings; might unquestion-
tioned set
My right hand teaching in the Ragged
Schools,
My left hand washing in the Public
Baths,
What time my angel of the Ideal
stretched
Both his to me in vain! I could not
claim
The poor right of a mouse in a trap, to
squeal,
And take so much as pity from myself.

Farewell, good Romney! if I loved you
even,
I could but ill afford to let you be
So generous to me. Farewell, friend,
since friend
Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a
word
So heavily overladen. And, since help
Must come to me from those who love
me not,
Farewell, all helpers—I must help my-
self,
And am alone from henceforth.—Then I
stooped,
And lifted the soiled garland from the
earth,
And set it on my head as bitterly
As when the Spanish monarch crowned
the bones
Of his dead love. So be it. I preserve
That crown still,—in the drawer there!
'twas the first;
The rest are like it;—those Olympian
crowns,
We run for, till we lose sight of the sun
In the dust of the racing chariots!

After that,
Before the evening fell, I had a note
Which ran,—*Aurora, sweet Chaldean,*
you read

My meaning backward like your eastern
books,
While I am from the west, dear. Read
me now
A little plainer. Did you hate me quite
But yesterday? I loved you for my part;
I love you. If I spoke untenderly
This morning, my beloved, pardon it;
And comprehend me that I love you so
I set you on the level of my soul,
And overwashed you with the bitter
brine
Of some habitual thoughts. Henceforth,
my flower,
Be planted out of reach of any such,
And lean the side you please, with all
your leaves!
Write woman's verses and dream wo-
man's dreams;
But let me feel your perfume in my
home,
To make my sabbath after working-
days;
Bloom out your youth beside me,—be my
wife.'

I wrote in answer—'We, Chaldeans, dis-
cern
Still farther than we read. I know your
heart,
And shut it like the holy book it is,
Reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore
upon
Betwixt their prayers at vespers. Well,
you're right,
I did not surely hate you yesterday;
And yet I do not love you enough to-
day
To wed you, ccusin Romney. Take this
word,
And let it stop you as a generous man
From speaking farther. You may tease,
indeed,
And blow about my feelings, or my
leaves,—
And here's my aunt will help you with
east winds,
And break a stalk, perhaps, tormenting
me;
But certain flowers grow near as deep as
trees,
And, cousin, you'll not move my root,
not you,
With all your confluent storms. Then
let me grow

Within my wayside hedge, and pass your way!

This flower has never as much to say to you

As the antique tomb which said to travellers, 'Pause,

'Siste, viator.' Ending thus, I signed.

The next week passed in silence, so the next,

And several after: Romney did not come,

Nor my aunt chide me. I lived on and on,

As if my heart were kept beneath a glass.

And everybody stood, all eyes and ears, To see and hear it tick. I could not sit,

Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it down,

Not sew on steadily, nor drop a stitch And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks

Still cleaving to me, like the sucking asp

To Cleopatra's breast, persistently Through the intermittent pantings. Being

observed, When observation is not sympathy,

Is just being tortured. If she said a word,

A 'thank you,' or an 'if it please you, dear,'

She meant a commination, or, at best, An exorcism against the devildom

Which plainly held me. So with all the house.

Susannah could not stand and twist my hair,

Without such glancing at the looking-glass

To see my face there, that she missed the plait.

And John,—I never sent my plate for soup,

Or did not send it, but the foolish John Resolved the problem, 'twixt his nap-

kin'd thumbs, Of what was signified by taking soup

Or choosing mackerel. Neighbors who dropped in

On morning visits, feeling a joint wrong, Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,

And talked with measured, emphasised reserve,

Of parish news, like doctors to the sick,

When not called in,—as if, with leave to speak,

They might say something. Nay, the very dog

Would watch me from his sun patch on the floor,

In alternation with the large black fly Not yet in reach of snapping. So I

lived.

A Roman died so: smeared with honey, teased

By insects, stared to torture by the noon:

And many patient souls 'neath English roofs

Have died like Romans. I, in looking back,

Wish only, now, I had borne the plague of all

With meeker spirits than were rife in Rome.

For, on the sixth week, the dead sea broke up,

Dashed suddenly through beneath the heel of Him

Who stands upon the sea and earth, and swears

Time shall be nevermore. The clock struck nine

That morning too—no lark was out of tune;

The hidden farms among the hills breathed straight

Their smoke toward the heaven: the lime-tree scarcely stirred

Beneath the blue weight of the cloudless sky,

Though still the July air came floating through

The woodbine at my window, in and out,

With touches of the out-door country-news

For a bending forehead. There I sate, and wished

That morning-truce of God would last till eve,

Or longer. 'Sleep,' I thought, 'late sleepers,—sleep.

And spare me yet the burden of your eyes.'

Then, suddenly, a single ghastly shriek

Tore upwards from the bottom of the
house.

Like one who wakens in a grave and
shrieks,

The still house seemed to shriek itself
alive,

And shudder through its passages and
stairs

With slam of doors and clash of bells.—I
sprang,

I stood up in the middle of the room,
And there confronted at my chamber-

door,
A white face,—shivering, ineffectual lips.

'Come, come,' they tried to utter, and I
went;

As if a ghost had drawn me at the point
Of a fiery finger through the uneven dark,

I went with reeling footsteps down the
stair,

Nor asked a question.

There she sate, my aunt,—
Bolt upright in the chair beside her bed,

Whose pillow had no dint! She had
used no bed

For that night's sleeping . . . yet slept
well. My God,

The dumb derision of that grey, peaked
face

Concluded something grave against the
sun,

Which filled the chamber with its July
burst

When Susan drew the curtains, ignorant
Of who sate open-eyed behind her.

There
She sate . . . it sate . . . we said 'she'
yesterday . . .

And held a letter with unbroken seal
As Susan gave it to her hand last night:

All night she had held it. If its news re-
ferred

To duchies or to dunghills, not an inch
She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such

worthless odds,
Nor, though the stars were suns and

overburned
Their spheric limitations, swallowing up

Like wax the azure spaces, could they
force

Those open eyes to wink once. What
last sight

Had left them blank and flat so,—drawing
out

The faculty of vision from the roots,
As nothing more, worth seeing, remained
behind?

Were those the eyes that watched me,
worried me?

That dogged me up and down the hours
and days,

A beaten, breathless, miserable soul?
And did I pray, a half hour back, but so,

To escape the burden of those eyes . . .
those eyes?

'Sleep late,' I said.—

Why now, indeed, they sleep.
God answers sharp and sudden on some

prayers,
And thrusts the thing we have prayed for

in our face,
A gauntlet with a gift in't. Every wish

Is like a prayer . . . with God.

I had my wish,
To read and meditate the thing I would,

To fashion all my life upon my thought,
And marry or not marry. Henceforth,

none
Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper
me.

Full ground-room, in this desert newly
made,

For Babylon or Balbec,—when the
breath,

Now choked with sand, returns for build-
ing towns.

The heir came over on the funeral day,
And we two cousins met before the dead,

With two pale faces. Was it death or
life

That moved us? When the will was
read and done,

The official guest and witnesses with-
drawn,

We rose up in a silence almost hard,
And looked at one another. Then I

said,

'Farewell, my cousin.'

But he touched, just touched
My hatstrings tied for going, (at the

door
The carriage stood to take me) and said

low,
His voice a little unsteady through his

smile,
'Siste, viator.'

'Is there time,' I asked,

'In these last days of railroads, to stop
 short
 Like Cæsar's chariot (weighing half a
 ton)
 On the Appian road for morals?'
 'There is time,'
 He answered grave, 'for necessary
 words,
 Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph
 On man or act, my cousin. We have
 read
 A will, which gives you all the personal
 goods
 And funded monies of your aunt.'
 'I thank
 Her memory for it. With three hundred
 pounds
 We buy in England even, clear standing-
 room
 To stand and work in. Only two hours
 since,
 I fancied I was poor.'
 'And cousin, still
 You're richer than you fancy. The will
 says,
*Three hundred pounds, and any other
 sum
 Of which the said testatrix dies pos-
 sessed.*
 I say she died possessed of other sums.'
 'Dear Romney, need we chronicle the
 pence?
 I'm richer than I thought—that's evi-
 dent.
 Enough so.'
 'Listen rather. You've to do
 With business and a cousin,' he resum-
 ed,
 'And both, I fear, need patience. Here's
 the fact.
 The other sum (there *is* another sum,
 Unspecified in any will which dates
 After possession, yet bequeathed as
 much
 And clearly as those said three hundred
 pounds)
 Is thirty thousand. You will have it
 paid
 When? where? My duty troubles you
 with words.'
 He struck the iron when the bar was
 hot;

No wonder if my eyes sent out some
 sparks.
 'Pause there! I thank you. You are
 delicate
 In glosing gifts;—but I, who share your
 blood,
 Am rather made for giving, like your-
 self,
 Than taking, like your pensioners. Fare-
 well.'
 He stopped me with a gesture of calm
 pride.
 'A Leigh,' he said, 'gives largesse and
 gives love,
 But gloses never: if a Leigh could glose.
 He would not do it, moreover, to a
 Leigh,
 With blood trained up along nine centu-
 ries
 To hound and hate a lie from eyes like
 yours.
 And now we'll make the rest as clear;
 your aunt
 Possessed these monies.'
 'You will make it clear,
 My cousin, as the honour of us both,
 Or one of us speaks vainly—that's not I.
 My aunt possessed this sum,—inherited
 From whom, and when? bring documents,
 prove dates.'
 'Why now indeed you throw your bon-
 net off,
 As if you had time left for a logarithm!
 The faith's the want. Dear cousin, give
 me faith,
 And you shall walk this road with silken
 shoes,
 As clean as any lady of our house
 Supposed the proudest. Oh, I compre-
 hend
 The whole position from your point of
 sight.
 I oust you from your father's halls and
 lands,
 And make you poor by getting rich—
 that's law;
 Considering which, in common circum-
 stance,
 You would not scruple to accept from me
 Some compensation, some sufficiency
 Of income—that were justice; but alas,
 I love you . . . that's mere nature; you
 reject

My love . . . that's nature also ; and at
 once,
 You cannot, from a suitor disallowed,
 A hand thrown back as mine is, into
 yours
 Receive a doit, a farthing, . . . not for the
 world !
 That's woman's etiquette, and obviously
 Exceeds the claim of nature, law, and
 right,
 Unanswerable to all. I grant, you see,
 'The case as you conceive it,—leave you
 room
 To sweep your ample skirts of woman-
 hood ;
 While, standing humbly squeezed against
 the wall,
 I own myself excluded from being just,
 Restrained from paying indubitable
 debts,
 Because denied from giving you my
 soul—
 'That's my misfortune !—I submit to it
 As if, in some more reasonable age,
 'Twould not be less inevitable. Enough.
 You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman,
 To keep your honour, as you count it,
 pure,
 Your scruples (just as if I thought them
 wise)
 Safe and inviolate from gifts of mine.'

I answered mild but earnest. 'I
 believe
 In no one's honour which another keeps,
 Nor man's nor woman's. As I keep,
 myself,
 My truth and my religion, I depute
 No father, though I had one this side
 death,
 Nor brother, though I had twenty, much
 less you,
 Though twice my cousin, and once Rom-
 ney Leigh,
 To keep my honour pure. You face, to-
 day,
 A man who wants instruction, mark me,
 not
 A woman who wants protection. As to
 a man,
 Show manhood, speak out plainly, be
 precise
 With facts and dates. My aunt inherited
 This sum, you say—'
 'I said she died possessed

Of this, dear cousin.'

'Not by heritage.
 Thank you : we're getting to the facts at
 last.
 Perhaps she played at commerce with a
 ship
 Which came in heavy with Australian
 gold?
 Or touched a lottery with her finger-end,
 Which tumbled on a sudden into her lap
 Some old Rhine tower or principality?
 Perhaps she had to do with a marine
 Sub-transatlantic railroad, which pre-pays
 As well as pre-supposes ? or perhaps
 Some stale ancestral debt was after-paid
 By a hundred years, and took her by
 surprise ?—
 You shake your head, my cousin ; I guess
 ill.'

'You need not guess, Aurora, nor de-
 ride,—
 The truth is not afraid of hurting you.
 You'll find no cause, in all your scruples,
 why
 Your aunt should cavil at a deed of gift
 'Twi'x her and me.'
 'I thought so—ah ! a gift.'

'You naturally thought so,' he resumed.
 'A very natural gift.'
 'A gift, a gift !
 Her individual life being stranded high
 Above all want, approaching opulence,
 Too haughty was she to accept a gift
 Without some ultimate aim ; ah, ah, I
 see,—
 A gift intended plainly for her heirs,
 And so accepted . . . if accepted . . . ah,
 Indeed that might be ; I am snared per-
 haps,
 Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon
 you,
 If thus you have caught me with a cruel
 springe ?'

He answered gently, 'Need you tremble
 and pant
 Like a netted lioness ? is't my fault, mine,
 That you're a grand wild creature of the
 woods,
 And hate the stall built for you ? Any
 way,
 Though triply netted, need you glare at
 me ?'

I do not hold the cords of such a net;
You're free from me, Aurora!

Now may God
Deliver me from this strait! This gift
of yours

Was tendered . . . when? accepted . . .
when?' I asked.

'A month . . . a fortnight since? Six
weeks ago

It was not tendered. By a word she
dropped

I know it was not tendered nor received.
When was it? bring your dates.'

What matters when?
A half-hour ere she died, or a half-year,

Secured the gift, maintains the heritage
Inviolable with law. As easy pluck

The golden stars from heaven's embroi-
dered stole,

To pin them on the grey side of this
earth,

As make you poor again, thank God.'

Not poor
Nor clean again from henceforth, you
thank God?

Well, sir—I ask you . . . I insist at
need . . .

Vouchsafe the special date, the special
date.'

'The day before her death-day,' he re-
plied,

'The gift was in her hands. We'll find
that deed,

And certify that date to you.'

As one
Who has climbed a mountain-height and
carried up

His own heart climbing, panting in his
throat

With the toil of the ascent, takes breath
at last,

Looks back in triumph—so I stood and
looked:

'Dear cousin Romney, we have reached
the top

Of this steep question, and may rest, I
think.

But first,—I pray you pardon, that the
shock

And surge of natural feeling and event
Had made me oblivious of acquainting
you

That this, this letter . . . unread, mark,—
still sealed,

Was found enfolded in the poor dead
hand:

That spirit of hers had gone beyond the
address.

Which could not find her though you
wrote it clear,—

I know your writing, Romney,—recog-
nise

The open-hearted *A*, the liberal sweep
Of the *G*. Now listen,—let us under-
stand;

You will not find that famous deed of
gift,

Unless you find it in the letter here,
Which, not being mine, I give you back.

—Refuse

To take the letter? well then—you and
I,

As writer and as heiress, open it

Together by your leave.—Exactly so:
The words in which the noble offering's

made,

Are nobler still, my cousin; and, I own,
The proudest and most delicate heart

alive,

Distracted from the measure of the gift
By such a grace in giving, might accept

Your largesse without thinking any
more

Of the burthen of it, than King Solomon
Considered, when he wore his holy ring

Charactered over with the ineffable spell,
How many carats of fine gold made up

Its money-value. So, Leigh gives to
Leigh—

Or rather, might have given, observe!—
for that's

The point we come to. Here's a proof
of gift,

But here's no proof, sir, of acceptancy,
But rather, disproof. Death's black dust,

being blown.

Infiltrated through every secret fold
Of this sealed letter by a puff of fate,

Dried up for ever the fresh-written ink,
Annulled the gift, disutilised the grace,

And left these fragments.'

As I spoke, I tore
The paper up and down, and down and

up

And crosswise, till it fluttered from my
hands,

As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly and
rapt

By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop again,

Drop slow, and strew the melancholy
ground
Before the amazed hills . . . why, so, in-
deed,
I'm writing like a poet, somewhat large
In the type of the image, — and exagger-
ate
A small thing with a great thing, topping
it! —
But then I'm thinking how his eyes look-
ed . . . his,
With what despondent and surprised re-
proach!
I think the tears were in them, as he look-
ed —
I think the manly mouth just trembled.
Then
He broke the silence.

‘I may ask, perhaps,
Although no stranger . . . only Romney
Leigh,
Which means still less . . . than Vincent
Carrington
You plans in going hence, and where you
go.
This cannot be a secret.’

‘All my life
Is open to you, cousin. I go hence
To London, to the gathering-place of
souls,
To live mine straight out, vocally, in
books;
Harmoniously for others, if indeed
A woman's soul, like man's, be wide
enough
To carry the whole octave (that's to
prove)
Or, if I fail, still purely by myself.
Pray God be with me, Romney.’

‘Ah, poor child,
Who fight against the mother's 'tiring
hand,
And choose the headsman's! May God
change his world
For your sake, sweet, and make it mild
as heaven,
And juster than I have found you!’

But I paused.
‘And you, my cousin?’ —
I, he said, — ‘you ask?
You care to ask? Well, girls have curi-
ous minds,
And fain would know the end of every-
thing,

Of cousins, therefore, with the rest. For
me,
Aurora, I've my work: you know my
work;
And having missed this year some per-
sonal hope,
I must beware the rather that I miss
No reasonable duty. While you sing
Your happy pastorals of the meads and
trees,
Bethink you that I go to impress and
prove
On stifled brains and deafened ears, stun-
ned deaf,
Crushed dull with grief, that nature sings
itself,
And needs no mediate poet, lute or voice,
To make it vocal. While you ask of
men
Your audience, I may get their leave
perhaps
For hungry orphans to say audibly
‘We're hungry, see,’ — for beaten and
bullied wives
To hold their unweaned babies up in
sight,
Whom orphanage would better; and for
all
To speak and claim their portion . . . by
no means
Of the soil, . . . but of the sweat in till-
ing it,
Since this is now-a-days turned privilege,
To have only God's curse on us, and not
man's.
Such work I have for doing, elbow-
deep
In social problems, — as you tie your
rhymes,
To draw my uses to cohere with needs
And bring the uneven world back to its
round;
Or, failing so much, fill up, bridge at
least
To smother issues, some abysmal
cracks
And fiends of earth, intestine heats have
made
To keep men separate, — using story
shifts
Of hospitals, almshouses, infant schools,
And other practical stuff of partial good,
You lovers of the beautiful and whole,
Despise by system.’

‘I despise? The scoru

Is yours, my cousin. Poets become such,
Through scorning nothing. You decry
them for
The good of beauty sung and taught by
them,
While they respect your practical partial
good
As being a part of beauty's self. Adieu !
When God helps all the workers for his
world,
The singers shall have help of Him, not
last.'

He smiled as men smile when they will
not speak
Because of something bitter in the
thought ;
And still I feel his melancholy eyes
Look judgment on me. It is seven years
since :
I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas scorn
Has made them so far-reaching ; judge
it ye
Who have had to do with pity more than
love,
And scorn than hatred. I am used,
since then,
To other ways, from equal men. But so,
Even so, we let go hands, my cousin
and I,
And, in between us, rushed the torrent-
world
To blanch our faces like divided rocks,
And bar for ever mutual sight and touch
Except through swirl of spray and all
that roar.

THIRD BOOK.

' TO-DAY thou girdest up thy loins thy-
self,
And goest where thou wouldest : pres-
ently
Others shall gird thee,' said the Lord,
' to go
Where thou would'st not.' He spoke to
Peter thus,
To signify the death which he should die
When crucified head downwards.
If He spoke
To Peter then, He speaks to us the
same ;
The word suits many different martyr-
dom.

And signifies · multiform of death,
Although we scarcely die apostles, we,
And have mislaid the keys of heaven and
earth.

For 'tis not in mere death that men die
most ;
And, after our first girding of the loins
In youth's fine linen and tair broidery
To run up hill and meet the rising sun,
We are apt to sit tired, patient as a fool,
While others gird us with the violent
bands
Of social figments, feints, and formal-
isms,
Reversing our straight nature, lifting up
Our base needs, keeping down our lofty
thoughts,
Head downward on the cross-sticks of
the world.
Yet He can pluck us from that shameful
cross.
God, set our feet low and our forehead
high,
And show us how a man was made to
walk !

Leave the lamp, Susan, and go to bed.
The room does very well ; I have to
write
Beyond the stroke of midnight. Get
away ;
Your steps, for ever buzzing in the room,
'Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters ! throw
them down
At once, as I must have them, to be
sure,
Whether I bid you never bring me such
At such an hour, or bid you. No ex-
cuse.
You choose to bring them, as I choose
perhaps
To throw them in the fire. Now get to
bed,
And dream, if possible, I am not cross.
Why what a pettish, petty thing I grow,—
A mere, mere woman,—a mere flaccid
nerve,
A kerchief left out all night in the rain,
Turned soft so,—overtasked and over-
strained
And overlived in this close London life!
And yet I should be stronger.

Never burn

Your letters, poor Aurora! for they stare
 With red seals from the table, saying
 each,
 'Here's something that you know not.'
 Out alas,
 'Tis scarcely that the world's more good
 and wise
 Or even straighter and more conse-
 quent
 Since yesterday at this time—yet, again,
 If but one angel spoke from Ararat,
 I should be very sorry not to hear:
 So open all the letters! let me read.
 Blanche Ord, the writer in the 'Lady's
 Fan,
 Requests my judgment on . . . that, after-
 wards.
 Kate Ward desires the model of my
 cloak,
 And signs, 'Elisha to you.' Pringle
 Sharpe
 Presents his work on 'Social Conduct,'
 . . . craves
 A little money for his pressing debts . . .
 From me, who scarce have money for my
 needs,
 Art's fiery chariot which we journey in
 Being apt to singe our singing-ropes to
 holes.
 Although you ask me for my cloak, Kate
 Ward!
 Here s Rudgey knows it,—editor and
 scribe—
 He's 'forced to marry where his heart is
 not,
 Because the purse lacks where he lost
 his heart.'
 Ah,—lost it because no one picked it
 up!
 That's really loss! (and passable impu-
 dence)
 My critic Hammond flatters prettily,
 And wants another volume like the last.
 My critic Belfair wants another book,
 Entirely different, which will sell, (and
 live?)
 A striking book, yet not a startling book,
 The public blames originalities,
 (You must not pump spring-water una-
 wares
 Upon a gracious public, full of nerves—)
 Good things, not subtle, new yet ortho-
 dox,
 As easy reading as the dog-eared page
 That's fingered by said public fifty years,

Since first taught spelling by its grand-
 mother,
 And yet a revelation in some sort:
 That's hard, my critic Belfair! So—
 what next?
 My critic Stokes objects to abstract
 thoughts;
 'Call a man, John, a woman, Joan,' says
 he,
 'And do not prate so of humanities:'
 Whereat I call my critic simply Stokes.
 My critic Jobson recommends more
 mirth
 Because a cheerful genius suits the times,
 And all true poets laugh unquenchably
 Like Shakspeare and the gods. That's
 very hard.
 The gods may laugh, and Shakspeare;
 Dante smiled
 With such a needy heart on two pale
 lips,
 We cry, 'Weep rather, Dante.' Poems
 are
 Men, if true poems: and who dares ex-
 claim
 At any man's door, 'Here, 'tis under-
 stood
 The thunder fell last week and killed a
 wife,
 And scared a sickly husband—what of
 that?
 Get up, be merry, shout and clap your
 hands,
 Because a cheerful genius suits the
 times—?'
 None says so to the man,—and why in-
 deed
 Should any to the poem? A ninth
 seal;
 The apocalypse is drawing to a close.
 Ha,—this from Vincent Carrington,—
 'Dear friend,
 I want good counsel. Will you lend me
 wings
 To raise me to the subject, in a sketch
 I'll bring to-morrow—may I? at eleven?
 A poet's only born to turn to use;
 So save you! for the world . . . and Car-
 rington.'
 (Writ after.) 'Have you heard of Rom-
 ney Leigh
 Beyond what's said of him in newspa-
 pers,
 His phalansteries there, his speeches
 here,

His pamphlets, pleas, and statements,
 everywhere
 He dropped *me*, long ago; but no one
 drops
 A golden apple—though indeed one day
 You hinted that, but jested. Well, at
 least
 You know Lord Howe who sees him . .
 whom he sees
 And *you* see, and I hate to see,—for
 Howe
 Stands high upon the brink of theories,
 Observes the swimmers and cries ‘Very
 fine,’
 But keeps dry linen equally,—unlike
 That gallant breaster, Romney. Strange
 it is,
 Such sudden madness seizing a young
 man
 To make earth over again,—while I’m
 content
 To make the pictures. Let me bring
 the sketch.
 A tiptoe Danae, over bold and hot;
 Both arms a flame to meet her wishing
 Jove
 Halfway, and burn him faster down; the
 face
 And breasts upturned and straining, the
 loose locks
 All glowing with the anticipated gold.
 Or here’s another on the self-same theme.
 She lies here—flat upon her prison-floor,
 The long hair swathed about her to the
 heel
 Like wet sea-weed. You dimly see her
 through
 The glittering haze of that prodigious
 rain,
 Half blotted out of nature by a love
 As heavy as fate. I’ll bring you either
 sketch.
 I think, myself, the second indicates
 More passion.’
 Surely. Self is put away,
 And calm with abdication. She is Jove,
 And no more Danae—greater thus. Per-
 haps
 The painter symbolises unawares
 Two states of the recipient artist-soul
 One, forward, personal, wanting rever-
 ence,
 Because aspiring only. We’ll be calm,
 And know that, when indeed our Joves
 come down

We all turn stiller than we have ever
 been.
 Kind Vincent Carrington. I’ll let him
 come.
 He talks of Florence,—and may say a
 word
 Of something as it chanced seven years
 ago,
 A hedgehog in the path, or a lame bird,
 In those green country walks, in that
 good time,
 When certainly I was so miserable . .
 I seem to have missed a blessing ever
 since.
 The music soars within the little lark,
 And the lark soars. It is not thus with
 men.
 We do not make our places with our
 strains,—
 Content, while they rise, to remain be-
 hind,
 Alone on earth instead of so in heaven.
 No matter—I bear on my broken tale.
 When Romney Leigh and I had parted
 thus,
 I took a chamber up three flights of
 stairs
 Not far from being as steep as some larks
 climb,
 And there in a certain house in Kensing-
 ton,
 Three years I lived and worked. Get
 leave to work
 In this world,—’tis the best you get at
 all;
 For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts
 Than men in benediction. God says,
 ‘Sweat
 For foreheads ’ men say ‘crowns;’ and
 so we are crowned,—
 Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle of
 steel
 Which snaps with a secret spring Get
 work; get work:
 Be sure ’tis better than what you work
 to get.
 Serene and unafraid of solitude
 I worked the short days out,—and watch-
 ed the sun
 On lurid morns or monstrous afternoons
 Like some Druidic idol’s fiery brass

With fixed inflickering outline of dead
 heat,
 From which the blood of wretches pent
 inside
 Seems oozing forth to incarnadine the
 air,
 Push out through fog with his dilated
 disk,
 And startle the slant roofs and chimney-
 pots
 With splashes of fierce colour. Or I
 saw
 Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,
 Involve the passive city, strangle it
 Alive, and draw it off into the void,
 Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as
 if a sponge
 Had wiped out London,—or as noon and
 night
 Had clapped together and utterly struck
 out
 The intermediate time, undoing them-
 selves
 In the act. Your city poets see such
 things
 Not despicable. Mountains of the
 south,
 When, drunk and mad with elemental
 wines
 They rend the seamless mist and stand
 up bare,
 Make fewer singers, haply. No one
 sings,
 Descending Sinai; or Parnassus-mount
 You take a mule to climb and not a muse,
 Except in fable and figure: forests chant
 Their anthems to themselves, and leave
 you dumb.
 But sit in London at the day's decline,
 And view the city perish in the mist
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep
 Red Sea,
 The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all the
 host,
 Sucked down and choked to silence—
 then, surprised
 By a sudden sense of vision and of tune,
 You feel as conquerors though you did
 not fight,
 And you and Israel's other singing-girls,
 Ay, Miriam with them, sing the song you
 choose.

 I worked with patience which means al-
 \ most power.

I did some excellent things indifferently,
 Some bad things excellently. Both were
 praised,
 The latter loudest. And by such a time
 That I myself had set them down as sins
 Scarce worth the price of sackcloth, week
 by week
 Arrived some letter through the sedulous
 post,
 Like these I've read, and yet dissimilar,
 With pretty maiden seals, — initials
 twined
 Of lilies, or a heart marked *Emily*,
 (Convicting Emily of being all heart;))
 Or rarer tokens from young bachelors,
 Who wrote from college with the same
 goosequill,
 Suppose, they had just been plucked of,
 and a snatch
 From Horace, 'Collegisse juvat,' set
 Upon the first page. Many a letter
 signed
 Or unsigned, showing the writers at
 eighteen
 Had lived too long, although a muse
 should help
 Their dawn by holding candles,—com-
 pliments,
 To smile or sigh at. Such could pass
 with me
 No more than coins from Moscow cir-
 culate
 At Paris. Would ten roubles buy a tag
 Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a
 sou?
 I smiled that all this youth should love
 me,—sighed
 That such a love could scarcely raise them
 up
 To love what was more worthy than my-
 self;
 Then sighed again, again, less gener-
 ously,
 To think the very love they lavished so,
 Proved me inferior. The strong loved
 me not,
 And he . . . my cousin Romney . . . did
 not write.
 I felt the silent finger of his scorn
 Prick every bubble of my frivolous fame
 As my breath blew it, and resolve it back
 To the air it came from. Oh, I justified
 The measure he had taken of my height:
 The thing was plain—he was not wrong
 a line;

To work with one hand for the book-
 sellers
 While working with the other for my-
 self
 And art. You swim with feet as well as
 hands,
 Or make small way. I apprehended
 this,—
 In England, no one lives by verse that
 lives;
 And, apprehending, I resolved by prose
 To make a space to sphere my living
 verse.
 I wrote for cyclopædias, magazines,
 And weekly papers, holding up my name
 To keep it from the mud. I learnt the
 use
 Of the editorial 'we' in a review,
 As courtly ladies the fine trick of trains,
 And swept it grandly through the open
 doors
 As if one could not pass through doors
 at all
 Save so encumbered. I wrote tales be-
 side,
 Carved many an article on cherry-stones
 To suit light readers,—something in the
 lines
 Revealing, it was said, the mallet-hand,
 But that, I'll never vouch for. What
 you do
 For bread, will taste of common grain,
 not grapes.
 Although you have a vineyard in Cham-
 pagne,—
 Much less in Nephelococcygia,
 As mine was, peradventure.
 Having bread
 For just so many days, just breathing
 room
 For body and verse, I stood up straight
 and worked
 My veritable work. And as the soul
 Which grows within a child makes the
 child grow,—
 Or as the fiery sap, the touch from
 God,
 Careering through a tree, dilates the
 bark
 And roughs with scale and knob, before
 it strikes
 The summer foliage out in a green
 flame—
 So life, in deepening with me, deepened
 all

The course I took, the work I did. In-
 deed
 The academic law convinced of sin ;
 The critics cried out on the falling off,
 Regretting the first manner. But I felt
 My heart's life throbbing in my verse to
 show
 It lived, it also—certes incomplete,
 Disordered with all Adam in the blood,
 But even its very tumors, warts, and
 wens,
 Still organised by and implying life.
 A lady called upon me on such a day.
 She had the low voice of your English
 dames,
 Unused, it seems, to need rise half a
 note
 To catch attention,—and their quiet
 mood,
 As if they lived too high above the earth
 For that to put them out in anything :
 So gentle, because verily so proud ;
 So wary and afraid of hurting you,
 By no means that you are not really vile,
 But that they would not touch you with
 their foot
 To push you to your place ; so self-
 possessed
 Yet gracious and conciliating, it takes
 An effort in their presence to speak
 truth :
 You know the sort of woman,—brilliant
 stuff,
 And out of nature. ' Lady Waldemar.'
 She said her name quite simply, as if it
 meant
 Not much indeed, but something,—took
 my hands,
 And smiled as if her smile could help
 my case,
 And dropped her eyes on me and let
 them melt.
 ' Is this,' she said, ' the Muse ?'
 ' No sybil even,'
 I answered, ' since she fails to guess the
 cause
 Which taxed you with this visit, madam.'
 ' Good,'
 She said, ' I value what's sincere at
 once ;
 Perhaps if I had found a literal Muse,
 The visit might have taxed me. As it is,
 You wear your blue so chiefly in your
 eyes,

My fair Aurora, in a frank good way,
It comforts me entirely for your fame,
As well as for the trouble of ascent
To this Olympus.'

There, a silver laugh
Ran rippling through her quickened little
breaths

The steep stair somewhat justified.

'But still
Your ladyship has left me curious why
You dared the risk of finding the said
Muse?'

'Ah,—keep me, notwithstanding to the
point,

Like any pedant. Is the blue in eyes
As awful as in stockings after all,
I wonder, that you'd have my business
out

Before I breathe—exact the epic plunge
In spite of gasps? Well, naturally you
think

I've come here as the lion-hunters go
To deserts, to secure you with a trap,
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms
On zoologic soirées? Not in the least.
Roar softly at me; I am frivolous,
I dare say; I have played at wild-beasts
shows,

Like other women of my class,—but
now

I meet my lion simply as Androcles
Met his . . . when at his mercy.'

So, she bent
Her head, as queens may mock,—then
lifting up

Her eyelids with real grave queenly look,
Which ruled and would not spare, not
even herself,—

'I think you have a cousin:—Romney
Leigh.'

'You bring a word from *him*?—my eyes
leapt up

To the very height of hers,—'a word
from *him*?'

'I bring a word about him, actually.
But first,—she pressed me with her ur-
gent eyes—

'You do not love him,—you?'

'You're frank at least
In putting questions, madam,' I replied.
'I love my cousin cousinly—no more.'

'I guessed as much. I'm ready to be
frank

In answering also, if you'll question me,
Or even with something less. You stand
outside,

You artist women, of the common sex;
You share not with us, and exceed us so
Perhaps by what you're mulcted in, your
hearts

Being starved to make your heads: so
run the old

Traditions of you. I can therefore
speak,

Without the natural shame which crea-
tures feel

When speaking on their level, to their
like.

There's many a papist she, would rather
die

Than own to her maid she put a ribbon
on

To catch the indifferent eye of such a
man,—

Who yet would count adulteries on her
beads

At holy Mary's shrine and never blush;
Because the saints are so far off, we lose
All modesty before them. Thus, to-day.
'Tis I, love Romney Leigh.'

'Forbear,' I cried.
'If here's no Muse, still less is any saint;
Nor even a friend, that Lady Waldemar
Should make confessions'

That's unkindly said.

If no friend, what forbids to make a
friend

To join to our confession ere we have
done?

I love your cousin. If it seems unwise
To say so, it's still foolisher (we're
frank)

To feel so. My first husband left me
young,

And pretty enough, so please you, and
rich enough,

To keep my booth in May-fair with the
rest

To happy issues. There are marquises
Would serve seven years to call me wite,
I know;

And, after seven, I might consider it,
For there's some comfort in a marqui-
sate

When all's said,—yes, but after the seven
years;

I, now, love Romney. You put up your lip,
So like a Leigh I so like him I—Pardon me,

I am well aware I do not derogate
I loving Romney Leigh. The name is good,

The means are excellent; but the man;
the man—

Heaven help us both,—I am near as mad
as he,

In loving such an one.'

She slowly wrung

Her heavy ringlets till they touched her
smile,

As reasonably sorry for herself;
And thus continued,—

'Of a truth, Miss Leigh,
I have not, without struggle come to
this.

I took a master in the German tongue,
I gamed a little, went to Paris twice;
But, after all, this love! . . . you eat of
love,

And do as vile a thing as if you ate
Of garlic—which, whatever else you eat,
Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach
Reminds you of your onion! Am I
coarse?

Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse—ah,
there's the rub!

We fair fine ladies, who park out our
lives

From common sheep-paths, cannot help
the crows

From flying over,—we're as natural still
As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly
In Lyons' velvet,—we are not, for that,
Lay-figures, like you: we have hearts
within,

Warm, live, improvident, indecent
hearts,

As ready for outrageous ends and acts
As any distressed sempstress of them all
That Romney groans and toils for. We
catch love

And other fevers, in the vulgar way.
Love will not be outwitted by our wit,
Nor outrun by our equipages:—mine
Persisted, spite of efforts. All my cards
Turned up but Romney Leigh; my Ger-
man stopped

At germane Wertheism; my Paris
rounds

Returned me from the Champs Elysées
just

A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I
came home

Uncured,—convicted rather to myself
Of being in love . . . in love! That's
coarse you'll say.

I'm talking garlic.'

Coldly I replied.

'Apologise for atheism, not love!

For me, I do believe in love, and God.

I know my cousin: Lady Waldemar

I know not: yet I say as much as this—

Whoever loves him, let her not excuse

But cleanse herself, that, loving such a
man,

She may not do it with such unworthy
love

He cannot stoop and take it.'

'That is said

Austerely, like a youthful prophetess,

Who knits her brows across her pretty
eyes

To keep them back from following the
grey flight

Of doves between the temple-columns.

Dear,

Be kinder with me. Let us two be
friends.

I'm a mere woman,—the more weak
perhaps

Through being so proud; you're better;
as for him,

He's best. Indeed he builds his good-
ness up

So high, it topples down to the other
side,

And makes a sort of badness; there's
the worst

I have to say against your cousin's best!

And so be mild, Aurora, with my worst,

For his sake, if not mine.'

'I own myself,

Incredulous of confidence like this

Availing him or you.'

'And I, myself,

Of being worthy of him with any love:

In your sense I am not so—let it pass.

Let that pass too.'

'Pass, pass! we play police

Upon my cousin's life, to indicate

What may or may not pass.' I cried.

'He knows

What's worthy of him; the choice re-
mains with *him*;

And what he chooses, act or wife, I think
 I shall not call unworthy, I, for one.'
 'Tis somewhat rashly said,' she answered slow.
 'Now let's talk reason, though we talk of love.
 Your cousin Romney Leigh's a monster: there,
 The word's out fairly; let me prove the fact.
 We'll take, say, that most perfect of antiques
 They call the Genius of the Vatican,
 Which seems too beauteous to endure itself
 In this mixed world, and fasten it for once
 Upon the torso of the Dancing Fawn,
 (Who might limp surely, if he did not dance,)
 Instead of Buonarroti's mask: what then?
 We show the sort of monster Romney is,
 With god-like virtue and heroic aims
 Subjoined to limping possibilities
 Of mismade human nature. Grant the man
 Twice godlike, twice heroic,—still he limps,
 And here's the point we come to.'
 'Pardon me,
 But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the thing
 We never come to.'
 'Caustic, insolent
 At need! I like you'—(there, she took my hands)
 'And now my lioness, help Androcles,
 For all your roaring. Help me! for myself
 I would not say so—but for him. He limps
 So certainly, he'll fall into the pit
 A week hence,—so I lose him—so he is lost!
 For when he's fairly married, he a Leigh,
 To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful birth,
 Starved out in London till her coarse-grained hands
 Are whiter than her morals,—even you
 May call his choice unworthy.'
 'Married! lost!
 He, . . . Romney!'

'Ah, you're moved at last,' she said.
 'These monsters, set out in the open sun,
 Of course throw monstrous shadows: those who think
 Awry, will scarce act straightly. Who but he?
 And who but you can wonder? He has been mad,
 The whole world knows, since first, a nominal man,
 He soured the proctors, tried the gownsmen's wits,
 With equal scorn of triangles and wine,
 And took no honours, yet was honourable.
 They'll tell you he lost count of Homer's ships
 In Melbourne's poor-bills, Ashley's factory bills.—
 Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to praise,
 For other women, dear, we could not name
 Because we're decent. Well, he had some right
 On his side probably; men always have,
 Who go absurdly wrong. The living boor
 Who brews your ale, exceeds in vital worth
 Dead Cæsar who 'stops bungholes' in the cask;
 And also, to do good is excellent,
 For persons of his income, even to boors;
 I sympathise with all such things. But he
 Went mad upon them . . . madder and more mad,
 From college times to these,—as, going down hill,
 The faster still, the farther! you must know
 Your Leigh by heart; he has sown his black young curls
 With bleaching cares of half a million men
 Already. If you do not starve, or sin,
 You're nothing to him. Pay the income-tax,
 And break your heart upon't . . . he'll scarce be touched;
 But come upon the parish, qualified
 For the parish stocks, and Romney will be there

o call you brother, sister, or perhaps
tenderer name still. Had I any chance
with Mister Leigh, who am Lady Wal-
demar,
nd never committed felony?'
'You speak
oo bitterly,' I said, 'for the literal
truth.'

The truth is bitter. Here's a man who
looks
or ever on the ground! you must be
low;
r ease a pictured ceiling overhead,
ood painting thrown away. For me,
I've done
hat women may, we're somewhat lim-
ited,
e modest women, but I've done my
best.
How men are perjured when they
swear our eyes
ave meaning in them! they're just
blue or brown,
hey just can drop their lids a little.
And yet
line did more, for I read half Fourier
through,
roudhon, Considerant, and Louis
Blanc,
With various other of his socialists;
nd if I had been a fathom less in love,
had cured myself with gaping. As it
was,
quoted from them prettily enough
erhaps, to make them sound half ra-
tional
o a saner man than he whene'er we
talked,
For which I dodged occasion)—learnt
by heart
his speeches in the Commons and else-
where
pon the social question; heaped re-
ports
of wicked women and penitentiaries,
on all my tables, with a place for Sue;
and gave my name to swell subscription-
lists
oward keeping up the sun at night in
heaven,
and other possible ends. All things I
did,
Except the impossible . . . such as wear-
ing gowns

Provided by the Ten Hours' movement :
there,
I stopped—we must stop somewhere.
He, meanwhile,
Unmoved as the Indian tortoise 'neath
the world,
Let all that noise go on upon his back :
He would not disconcert or throw me
out ;
'Twas well to see a woman of my class
With such a dawn of conscience. For
the heart,
Made firewood for his sake, and flaming
up
To his face,—he merely warmed his feet
at it ;
But deigned to let my carriage stop him
short
In park or street,—he leaning on the door
With news of the committee which sate
last
On pickpockets at suck.'
'You jest—you jest.'

'As martyrs jest, dear, (if you read their
lives)
Upon the axe which kills them. When
all's done
By me, . . . for him—you'll ask him pres-
ently
The colour of my hair—he cannot tell,
Or answers 'dark' at random,—while,
be sure,
He's absolute on the figure, five or ten,
Of my last subscription. Is it bearable,
And I a woman ?'

'Is it reparable,
Though I were a man ?'
'I know not. That's to prove.
But first, this shameful marriage.'
'Ay ?' I cried,
'Then really there's a marriage ?'

'Yesterday
I held him fast upon it. 'Mister Leigh,'
Said I, 'shut up a thing, it makes more
noise.
'The boiling town keeps secrets ill ; I've
known
'Yours since last week. Forgive my
knowledge so
'You feel I'm not the woman of the
world
'The world thinks ; you have borne with
me before

'And used me in your noble work, our
 work,
 'And now you shall not cast me off
 because
 'You're at the difficult point, the *join*.
 'Tis true
 'Even I can scarce admit the cogency
 'Of such a marriage . . . where you do
 not love,
 '(Except the class) yet marry and throw
 your name
 'Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape
 'To future generations! 't is sublime,
 'A great example,—a true Genesis
 'Of the opening social era. But take
 heed;
 'This virtuous act must have a patent
 weight,
 'Or loses half its virtue. Make it tell,
 'Interpret it, and set in the light,
 'And do not muffle it in a winter cloak
 'As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if, at best,
 'A Leigh had made a misalliance and
 blushed
 'A Howard should know it.' Then, I
 pressed him more—
 'He would not choose,' I said, 'that
 even his kin . . .
 'Aurora Leigh, even . . . should conceive
 his act . . .
 'Less sacrifice, more fantasy.' At
 which
 He grew so pale, dear, . . . to the lips I
 knew,
 I had touched him. 'Do you know her,'
 he inquired,
 'My cousin Aurora?' 'Yes,' I said,
 and lied,
 (But truly we all know you by your
 books)
 And so I offered to come straight to
 you,
 Explain the subject, justify the cause,
 And take you with me to St. Margaret's
 Court
 To see this miracle, this Marian Erle,
 This drover's daughter (she's not pretty,
 he swears)
 Upon whose finger, exquisitely pricked
 By a hundred needles, we're to hang the
 tie
 'Twixt class and class in England,—thus
 indeed
 By such a presence, yours and mine, to
 lift

The match up from the doubtful place.
 At once
 He thanked me sighing . . . murmured
 to himself
 'She'll do it perhaps; she's noble,'—
 thanked me, twice,
 And promised, as my guerdon, to put off
 His marriage for a month.'

I answered then.
 'I understand your drift imperfectly.
 You wish to lead me to my cousin's be-
 trothed,
 To touch her hand if worthy, and hold
 her hand
 If feeble, thus to justify his match.
 So be it then. But how this serves your
 ends,
 And how the strange confession of your
 love
 Serves this, I have to learn—I cannot
 see.'

She knit her restless forehead. 'Then,
 despite,
 Aurora, that most radiant morning
 name,
 You're dull as any London afternoon.
 I wanted time,—and gained it,—wanted
^{you,}
 And gain you! You will come and see
 the girl
 In whose most prodigal eyes the linear
 pearl
 And pride of all your lofty race of Leighs
 Is destined to solution. Authorised
 By sight and knowledge, then, you'll
 speak your mind,
 And prove to Romney, in your brilliant
 way,
 He'll wrong the people and posterity
 (Say such a thing is bad for me and you
 And you fail utterly,) by concluding thus
 An execrable marriage. Break it up.
 Disroot it—peradventure presently,
 We'll plant a better fortune in its place
 Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me less
 For saying the thing I should not. Well
 I know
 I should not. I have kept, as others
 have,
 The iron rule of womanly reserve
 In lip and life, till now: I wept a week
 Before I came here.'—Ending, she wa-
 pale;

The last words, haughtily said, were
tremulous.

This palfrey pranced in harness, arched
her neck,

And, only by the foam upon the bit,
You saw she champed against it.

Then I rose.
I love love: truth's no cleaner thing
than love.

I comprehend a love so fiery hot
It burns its natural veil of august shame,
And stands sublimely in the nude, as
chaste

As Medicean Venus. But I know,
A love that burns through veils will burn
through masks

And shrivel up treachery. What, love
and lie!

Nay—go to the opera! your love's cura-
ble.'

I love and lie? she said—'I lie, for-
sooth?'

And beat her taper foot upon the floor,
And smiled against the shoe,—'You're
hard, Miss Leigh,

Unversed in current phrases,—Bowling-
greens

Of poets are fresher than the world's
highways;

Forgive me that I rashly blew the dust
Which dims our hedges even, in your
eyes,

And vexed you so much. You find, prob-
ably,

No evil in this marriage,—rather good
Of innocence, to pastoralise in song:

You'll give the bond your signature, per-
haps.

Beneath the lady's mark,—indifferent
That Romney chose a wife, could write
her name,

In witnessing he loved her.'

'Loved!' I cried;
'Who tells you that he wants a wife to
love?'

He gets a horse to use, not love, I think:
There's work for wives as well,—and af-
ter, straw,

When men are liberal. For myself, you
err

Supposing power in me to break this
match.

I could not do it to save Romney's life;
And would not, to save mine.'

'You take so it.'

She said; 'farewell then. Write your
books in peace,

As far as may be for some secret stir
Now obvious to me,—for, most obvious-
ly,

In coming hither I mistook the way.'
Whereat she touched my hand, and bent
her head,

And floated from me like a silent cloud
That leaves the sense of thunder.

I drew breath
Oppressed in my deliverance. After all
This woman breaks her social system up
For love, so counted—the love possible
To such,—and lilies are still lilies, pulled
By smutty hands, though spotted from
their white;

And thus she is better haply of her kind,
Than Romney Leigh, who lives by dia-
grams,

And crosses out the spontaneities
Of all his individual, personal life,
With formal universals. As if man
Were set upon a high stool at a desk

To keep God's books for Him in red and
black,

And feel by millions! What, if even
God

Were chiefly God by living out Himself
To an individualism of the Infinite,
Eterne, intense, profuse,—still throwing
up

The golden spray of multitudinous
worlds

In measure to the proclive weight and
rush

Of His inner nature,—the spontaneous
love

Still proof and outflow of spontaneous
life?

Then live, Aurora.

Two hours afterward,
Within St. Margaret's Court I stood
alone,

Close-veiled. A sick child, from an ague-
fit,

Whose wasted right hand gamboled
'gainst his left

With an old brass button in a blot of
sun,

Jeered weakly at me as I passed across
The uneven pavement; while a woman,
rouged

Upon the angular cheek-bones, kerchief
 torn,
 Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivious
 mouth,
 Cursed at a window both ways, in and
 out,
 By turns some bed-rid creature and my-
 self,—
 'Lie still there, mother! liker the dead
 dog
 You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick
 our way,
 Fine madam, with those damnable small
 feet!
 We cover up our face from doing good,
 As if it were our purse! What brings
 you here,
 My lady? 'is't to find my gentleman
 Who visits his tame pigeon in the
 eaves?
 Our cholera catch you with its cramps
 and spams.
 And tumble up your good clothes, veil
 and all,
 And turn your whiteness dead-blue.' I
 looked up;
 I think I could have walked through
 hell that day,
 And never flinched. 'The dear Christ
 comfort you,'
 I said, 'you must have been most miser-
 able
 To be so cruel.'—and I emptied out
 My purse upon the stones: when, as I
 had cast
 The last charm in the cauldron, the whole
 court
 Went boiling, bubbling up, from all its
 doors
 And windows, with a hideous wail of
 laughs
 And roar of oaths, and blows perhaps. . .
 I passed
 Too quickly for distinguishing . . . and
 pushed
 A little side-door hanging on a hinge,
 And plunged into the dark, and groped
 and climbed
 The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt brok-
 en rail
 And mildewed wall that let the plaster
 drop
 To startle me in the blackness. Still,
 up, up!

So high lived Romney's bride. I paused
 at last
 Before a low door in the roof, and
 knocked;
 There came an answer like a hurried
 dove,
 'So soon? can that be Mister Leigh? so
 soon?'
 And as I entered, an ineffable face
 Met mine upon the threshold. 'Oh, not
 you,
 Not you!' . . . the dropping of the
 voice implied,
 'Then, if not you, for me not any one.'
 I looked her in the eyes, and held her
 hands,
 And said, 'I am his cousin,—Romney
 Leigh's;
 And here I'm come to see my cousin
 too.'
 She touched me with her face and with
 her voice,
 This daughter of the people. Such soft
 flowers,
 From such rough roots? the people, un-
 der there,
 Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so . . .
 faugh!
 Yet have such daughters?
 No wise beautiful
 Was Marian Erle. She was not white
 nor brown,
 But could look either, like a mist that
 changed
 According to being shone on more or
 less.
 The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls
 In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left
 you clear
 To name the colour. Too much hair
 perhaps
 (I'll name a fault here) for so small a
 head,
 Which seemed to droop on that side and
 on this,
 As a full-blown rose uneasy with its
 weight
 Though not a wind should trouble it.
 Again,
 The dimple in the cheek had better
 gone
 With redder, fuller rounds: and some-
 what large
 The mouth was, though the milky little
 teeth

Dissolved it to so infantine a smile.
 For soon it smiled at me; the eyes
 smiled too,
 But 'twas as if remembering they had
 wept,
 And knowing they should, some day,
 weep again.

We talked. She told me all her story out,
 Which I'll re-tell with fuller utterance,
 As coloured and confirmed in afortimes
 By others and herself too. Marian
 Erle

Was born upon the ledge of Malvern
 Hill

To eastward, in a hut built up at night
 To evade the landlord's eye, of mud and
 turf,

Still liable, if once he looked that way,
 To being straight levelled, scattered by
 his foot,

Like any other anthill. Born, I say;
 God sent her to His world, commissioned
 right,

Her human testimonials fully signed,
 Not scant in soul—complete in linea-
 ments;

But others had to swindle her a place
 To wail in when she had come. No
 place for her,

By man's law: born an outlaw, was this
 babe.

Her first cry in our strange and strang-
 ling air,

When cast in spasms out by the shudder-
 ing womb,

Was wrong against the social code,—
 forced wrong.

What business had the baby to cry
 there?

I tell her story and grow passionate.
 She, Marian, did not tell it so, but used
 meek words that made no wonder of
 herself

For being so sad a creature. 'Mister
 Leigh

Considered truly that such things should
 chafe.

They *will*, in heaven—but meantime, on
 the earth,

'There's none can like a nettle as a pink,
 Except himself. We're nettles, some
 of us,

And give offence by the act of springing
 up;

And, if we leave the damp side of the
 wall,

The hoës, of course, are on us.' So she
 said.

Her father earned his life by random
 jobs

Despised by steadier workmen—keeping
 swine

On commons, picking hops, or hurrying
 on

The harvest at wet seasons,—or, at need,
 Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a
 drove

Of startled horses plunged into the mist
 Below the mountain-road, and sowed the
 wind

With wandering neighings. In between
 the gaps

Of such irregular work, he drank and
 slept,

And cursed his wife because, the pence
 being out,

She could not buy more drink. At
 which she turned

(The worm) and beat her baby in re-
 venge

For her own broken heart. There's not
 a crime

But takes it's proper change out still in
 crime,

If once rung on the counter of this
 world;

Let sinners look to it.

Yet the outcast child,
 For whom the very mother's face fore-
 went

The mother's special patience, lived and
 grew;

Learnt early to cry low, and walk alone,
 With that pathetic vacillating roll

Of the infant body on the uncertain feet,
 (The earth being felt unstable ground so
 soon)

At which most women's arms unclosed at
 once

With irrepresive instinct. Thus, at
 three,

This poor weaned kid would run off from
 the fold,

This babe would steal off from the moth-
 er's chair,

And, creeping through the golden walls
 of gorse,

Would find some keyhole toward the se-
 crecy
 Of Heaven's high blue, and, nestling
 down, peer out—
 Oh, not to catch the angels at their
 games,
 She had never heard of angels,—but to
 gaze
 She knew not why, to see she knew not
 what,
 A-hungering outward from the barren
 earth
 For something like a joy. She liked, she
 said,
 To dazzle black her sight against the
 sky,
 For then, it seemed, some grand blind
 Love came down,
 And groped her out, and clasped her
 with a kiss ;
 She learnt God that way, and was beat
 for it
 Whenever she went home,—yet came
 again,
 As surely as the trapped hare, getting
 free,
 Returns to his form. This grand blind
 Love, she said,
 This skyeey father and mother both in
 one,
 Instructed her and civilised her more
 Than even Sunday-school did afterward,
 To which a lady sent her to learn books,
 And sit upon a long bench in a row
 With other children. Well, she laughed
 sometimes
 To see them laugh and laugh and maul
 their texts ;
 But after she was sorrowful with noise,
 And wondered if their mothers beat them
 hard
 That ever they should laugh so. There
 was one
 She loved indeed,—Rose Bell, a seven
 years' child.
 So pretty and clever, who read syllables
 When Marian was at letters ; *she* would
 laugh
 At nothing—hold your finger up, she
 laughed,
 Then shook her curls down over eyes
 and mouth
 To hide her make-mirth from the school-
 master.
 And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as rain

On cherry-blossoms, brightened Marian
 too,
 To see another merry whom she loved.
 She whispered once (the children side by
 side,
 With mutual arms entwined about their
 necks)
 'Your mother lets you laugh so?' 'Ay,'
 said Rose,
 'She lets me. She was dug into the
 ground
 Six years since, I being but a yearling
 wean.
 Such mothers let us play and lose our
 time,
 And never scold nor beat us ! don't you
 wish
 You had one like that?' 'There, Marian
 breaking off
 Looked suddenly in my face. 'Poor
 Rose,' said she,
 'I heard her laugh last night in Oxford
 Street.
 I'd pour out half my blood to stop that
 laugh.
 Poor Rose, poor Rose !' said Marian.
 She resumed.
 It tried her, when she had learnt at
 Sunday-school
 What God was, what he wanted from us
 all,
 And how in choosing sin we vexed the
 Christ,
 To go straight home and hear her father
 pull
 The name down on us from the thunder-
 shelf,
 Then drink away his soul into the dark
 From seeing judgment. Father, mother,
 home,
 Were God and heaven reversed to her :
 the more
 She knew of Right, the more she guessed
 their wrong.
 Her price paid down for knowlegde, was
 to know
 The vileness of her kindred : through
 her heart,
 Her filial and tormented heart, hence-
 forth,
 They struck their blows at virtue. Oh,
 'tis hard
 To learn you have a father up in heaven
 By a gathering certain sense of being,
 on earth,

Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too heavy
 a grief,
 The having to thank God for such a joy !

And so passed Marian's life from year to
 year.
 Her parents took her with them when
 they tramped,
 Dodged lanes and heaths, frequented
 towns and fairs,
 And once went farther and saw Man-
 chester,
 And once the sea, that blue end of the
 world,
 That fair scroll-finis of a wicked book,—
 And twice a prison, back at intervals,
 Returning to the hills. Hills draw like
 heaven,
 And stronger sometimes, holding out
 their hands
 To pull you from the vile flats up to
 them ;
 And though perhaps these strollers still
 strolled back,
 As sheep do, simply that they knew the
 way,
 They certainly felt bettered unaware
 Emerging from the social smut of towns
 To wipe their feet clean on the mountain-
 turf.
 In which long wanderings, Marian lived
 and learned,
 Endured and learned. The people on
 the roads
 Would stop and ask her how her eyes
 outgrew
 Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge
 the birds
 In all that hair; and then they lifted her,
 The miller in his cart, a mile or twain,
 The butcher's boy on horseback. Often
 too
 The pedlar stopped, and tapped her on
 the head
 With absolute forefinger, brown and
 ringed,
 And asked if peradventure she could
 read ;
 And when she answered 'ay,' would toss
 her down
 Some stray odd volume from his heavy
 pack,
 A Thomson's Seasons, mulcted of the
 Spring,

Or half a play of Shakspeare's, torn
 across :
 (She had to guess the bottom of a page
 By just the top sometimes,—as difficult,
 As, sitting on the moon, to guess the
 earth !)

Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small
 Ruth's
 Small gleanings) torn out from the heart
 of books,
 From Churchyard Elegies and Edens
 Lost,
 From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk, and
 Tom Jones.
 'Twas somewhat hard to keep the things
 distinct,
 And oft the jangling influence jarred the
 child
 Like looking at a sunset full of grace
 Through a pothouse window while the
 drunken oaths
 Went on behind her; but she weeded
 out
 Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves
 that hurt,
 (First tore them small, that none should
 find a word)

And made a nosegay of the sweet and
 good
 To fold within her breast, and pore upon
 At broken moments of the noontide
 glare,
 When leave was given her to untie her
 cloak
 And rest upon the dusty highway's bank
 From the road's dust. Or oft, the jour-
 ney done,
 Some city friend would lead her by the
 hand
 To hear a lecture at an institute :
 And thus she had grown, this Marian
 Erle of ours,
 To no book-learning,—she was ignorant
 Of authors,—not in earshot of the things
 Out-spoken o'er the heads of common
 men
 By men who are uncommon,—but with-
 in
 The cadenced hum of such, and capable
 Of catching from the fringes of the wind
 Some fragmentary phrases, here and
 there,
 Of that fine music,—which, being carried
 in
 To her soul, had reproduced itself afresh

In finer motions of the lips and lids.

She said, in speaking of it, 'if a flower
Were thrown you out of heaven at inter-
vals,

You'd soon attain to a trick of looking
up,—

And so with her.' She counted me her
years,

Till I felt old; and then she counted me
Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt
ashed.

She told me she was fortunate and calm
On such and such a season; sate and
sewed;

With no one to break up her crystal
thoughts;

While rhymes from lovely poems span
around

Their ringing circles of ecstatic tune,
Beneath the moistened finger of the
Hour.

Her parents called her a strange, sickly
child,

Not good for much, and given to sulk
and stare,

And smite into the hedges and the clouds,
And tremble if one shook her from her
fit

By any blow or word even. Out-door
jobs

Went ill with her; and household quiet
work

She was not born to. Had they kept
the north,

They might have had their pennyworth
out of her

Like other parents, in the factories:
(Your children work for you, not you for
them,

Or else they better had been choked with
air

The first breath drawn;) but, in this
tramping life,

Was nothing to be done with such a
child

But tramp and tramp. And yet she
knitted hose

Not ill, and was not dull at needlework;
And all the country people gave her
pence

For darning stockings past their natural
age,

And patching petticoats from old to new,

And other light work done for thrifty
wives.

One day, said Marian,—the sun shone
that day—

Her mother had been badly beat, and
felt

The bruises sore about her wretched
soul,

(That must have been:) she came in
suddenly,

And snatching in a sort of breathless
rage

Her daughter's headgear comb, let down
the hair

Upon her like a sudden waterfall
Then drew her drenched and passive by
the arm

Outside the hut they lived in. Where
the child

Could clear her blinded face from all that
stream

Of tresses . . . there, a man stood, with
beasts' eyes

That seemed as they would swallow her
alive

Complete in body and spirit, hair and
all,—

With burning stertorous breath that
hurt her cheek,

He breathed so near. The mother held
her tight,

Saying hard between her teeth—'Why
wench, why wench,

The squire speaks to you now—the
squire's too good;

He means to set you up, and comfort
us.

Be mannerly at least.' The child turned
round

And looked up piteous in the mother's
face,

(Be sure that mother's death-bed will
not want

Another devil to damn, than such a
look)

'Oh, mother!' then, with desperate
glance to heaven,

'God, free me from my mother,' she
shrieked out,

'These mothers are too dreadful.' And
with force

As passionate as fear, she tore her hand:
Like lilies from the rocks, from hers and

his,

And sprang down, bounded headlong
 down the steep,
 Away from both—away, if possible,
 As tir as God,—away! They yelled at
 her,
 As famished hounds at a hare. She
 heard them yell,
 She felt her name hiss after her from the
 hills,
 Like shot from guns. On, on. And
 now she had cast
 The voices off with the uplands. On.
 Mad fear
 Was running in her feet and killing the
 ground;
 The white roads curled as if she burnt
 them up,
 The green fields melted, wayside trees
 fell back
 To make room for her. Then her head
 grew vexed,
 Trees, fields, turned on her and ran after
 her;
 She heard the quick pants of the hills
 behind,
 Their keen air pricked her neck. She
 had lost her feet,
 Could run no more, yet somehow went
 as fast,
 The horizon red 'twixt steeples in the
 east
 So sucked her forward, forward, while
 her heart
 Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled so
 big
 It seemed to fill her body; when it burst
 And overflowed the world and swamped
 the light,
 'And now I am dead and safe,' thought
 Marian Erle—
 She had dropped, she had fainted.
 As the sense returned,
 The night had passed—not life's night.
 She was 'ware
 Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking
 wheels,
 The driver shouting to the lazy team.
 That swung their rankling bells against
 her brain;
 While, through the waggon's coverture
 and chinks,
 The cruel yellow morning pecked at her
 Alive or dead upon the straw inside,—
 At which her soul ached back into the
 dark

And prayed, 'no more of that.' A wag-
 goner
 Had found her in a ditch beneath the
 moon,
 As white as moonshine save for the oo-
 zing blood.
 At first he thought her dead; but when
 he had wiped
 The mouth and heard it sigh, he raised
 her up,
 And laid her in his waggon in the straw,
 And so conveyed her to the distant town
 'To which his business called himself, and
 left
 That heap of misery at the hospital.
 She stirred;—the place seemed new and
 strange as death.
 The white strait bed, with others strait
 and white,
 Like graves dug side by side at measured
 lengths,
 And quiet people walking in and out
 With wonderful low voices and soft steps
 And apparitional equal care for each,
 Astonished her with order, silence, law:
 And when a gentle hand held out a cup,
 She took it, as you do at sacrament,
 Half awed, half melted,—not being used,
 indeed,
 To so much love as makes the form of
 love
 And courtesy of manners. Delicate
 drinks
 And rare white bread, to which some
 dying eyes
 Were turned in observation. O my
 God,
 How sick we must be, ere we make men
 just!
 I think it frets the saints in heaven to
 see
 How many desolate creatures on the
 earth
 Have learned the simple dues of fellow-
 ship
 And social comfort, in a hospital,
 As Marian did. She lay there, stunned,
 half tranced,
 And wished, at intervals of growing
 sense,
 She might be sicker yet, if sickness
 made
 The world so marvellous kind, the air so
 hushed,

And all her wake-time quiet as a sleep ;
 For now she understood, (as such things
 were)
 How sickness ended very oft in heaven
 Among the unspoken raptures. Yet
 more sick,
 And surelier happy. Then she dropped
 her lids,
 And, folding up her hands as flowers at
 night,
 Would lose no moment of the blessed
 time.

She lay and seethed in fever many
 weeks ;
 But youth was strong and overcame the
 test :
 Revolted soul and flesh were reconciled
 And fetched back to the necessary day
 And daylight duties. She could creep
 about
 The long bare rooms, and stare out
 drearily
 From any narrow window on the street,
 Till some one, who had nursed her as a
 friend
 Said coldly to her, as an enemy,
 ' She had leave to go next week, being
 well enough,'
 While only her heart ached. ' Go next
 week,' thought she,
 ' Next week ! how would it be with her
 next week,
 Let out into that terrible street alone
 Among the pushing people, . . to go . .
 where ?'

One day, the last before the dreaded last,
 Among the convalescents, like herself
 Prepared to go next morning, she sate
 dumb,
 And heard half absently the women talk,
 How one was famished for her baby's
 cheeks—
 ' The little wretch would know her ! a
 year old
 And lively, like his father !' one was
 keen
 To get to work, and fill some clamorous
 mouths ;
 And one was tender for he dear good-
 man
 Who had missed her sorely,—and one,
 querulous . .

' Would pay backbiting neighbours who
 had dared
 To talk about her as already dead,'—
 And one was proud . . ' and if her
 sweetheart Luke
 Had left her for a ruddier face than
 hers,
 (The gossip would be seen through at a
 glance)
 Sweet riddance of such sweethearts—let
 him hang !
 ' Twere good to have been as sick for
 such an end.'

And while they talked, and Marian felt
 the worse
 For having missed the worst of all their
 wrongs,
 A visitor was ushered through the wards
 And paused among the talkers. ' When
 he looked
 It was as if he spoke, and when he spoke
 He sang perhaps,' said Marian ; ' could
 she tell ?
 She only knew (so much she had chron-
 iced,
 As seraphs might the making of the sun)
 That he who came and spake, was
 Romney Leigh,
 And then, and there, she saw and heard
 him first.'
 And when it was her turn to have the
 face
 Upon her,—all those buzzing pallid lips
 Being satisfied with comfort—when he
 changed
 To Marian, saying, ' And *you* ? you're
 going, where ?'—
 She, moveless as a worm beneath a
 stone
 Which some one's stumbling foot has
 turned aside,
 Writhed suddenly, astonished with the
 light,
 And breaking into sobs cried, ' Where I
 go ?
 None asked me till this moment. Can I
 say
 Where *I* go ? when it has not seemed
 worth while
 To God himself, who thinks of every
 one,
 To think of me, and fix where I shall
 go ?'

'So young,' he gently asked her, 'you
have lost
Your father and your mother?'

Both,' she said,
'Both lost! my father was burnt up with
gin

Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost.
My mother sold me to a man last month,
And so my mother's lost, 'tis manifest.
And I, who fled from her for miles and
miles,

As if I had caught sight of the fire of hell
Through some wild gap, (she was my
mother, sir)

It seems I shall be lost too, presently,
And so we end, all three of us.'

'Poor child!'
He said,—with such a pity in his voice,
It soothed her more than her own tears,
—'poor child

'Tis simple that betrayal by mother's
love
Should bring despair of God's too. Yet
be taught

He's better to us than many mothers
are,
And children cannot wander beyond
reach

Of the sweep of his white raiment.
Touch and hold
And if you weep still, weep where John
was laid

While Jesus loved him.'
She could say the words,
She told me, 'exactly as he uttered them
A year back, . . . since in any doubt or
dark

They came out like the stars, and shone
on her
With just their comfort. Common
words, perhaps

The ministers in church might say the
same;
But *he*, he made the church with what
he spoke,—

The difference was the miracle,' said
she.

Then catching up her smile to ravish-
ment,
She added quickly, 'I repeat his words,
But not his tones: can any one repeat
The music of an organ, out of church?
And when he said 'poor child,' I shut
my eyes

To feel how tenderly his voice broke
through,
As the ointment-box broke on the Holy
feet
To let out the rich medicative nard.'

She told me how he had raised and res-
cued her
With reverent pity, as, in touching grief,
He touched the wounds of Christ,—and
made her feel

More self-respecting. Hope, he called,
belief
In God,—work, worship . . . therefore let
us pray!

And thus, to snatch her soul from athe-
ism,
And keep it stainless from her mother's
face,

He sent her to a famous sempstress-
house
Far off in London, there to work and
hope.

With that they parted. She kept sight
of Heaven,
But not of Romney. He had good to
do

To others: through the days and through
the nights
She sewed and sewed and sewed. She
drooped sometimes,

And wondered, while along the tawny
light
She struck the new thread into her
needle's eye,

How people without mothers on the
hills
Could choose the town to live in!—then
she drew

The stitch, and mused how Romney's
face would look
And if 'twere likely he'd remember her's,
When they too had their meeting after
death.

FOURTH BOOK.

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a year
from thence
When Lucy Gresham, the sick sempstress
girl,
Who sewed by Marian's chair so still and
quick,

And leant her head upon its back to
 cough
 More freely when, the mistress turning
 round,
 The others took occasion to laugh out,
 Gave up at last. Among the workers,
 spoke
 A bold girl with black eyebrows and red
 lips,
 'You know the news? Who's dying, do
 you think?
 Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it
 As little as Nell Hart's wedding. Blush
 not, Nell,
 Thy curls be red enough without thy
 cheeks;
 And, some day, there'll be found a man
 to dote
 On red curls.—Lucy Gresham swooned
 last night,
 Dropped sudden in the street while going
 home;
 And now the baker says, who took her
 up
 And laid her by her grandmother in bed,
 He'll give her a week to die in. Pass
 the silk.
 Let's hope he gave her a loaf too, within
 reach,
 For otherwise they'll starve before they
 die,
 That funny pair of bedfellows! Miss
 Bell,
 I'll thank you for the scissors. The old
 crone
 Is paralytic—that's the reason why
 Our Lucy's thread went faster than her
 breath,
 Which went too quick, we all know.
 Marian Erle!
 Why, Marian Erle, you're not the fool
 to cry?
 Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's new
 dress,
 You piece of pity!

Marian rose up straight,
 And, breaking through the talk and
 through the work,
 Went outward, in the face of their sur-
 prise,
 To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to
 life
 Or down to death. She knew, by such
 an act

All place and grace were forfeit in the
 house,
 Whose mistress would supply the miss-
 ing hand
 With necessary, not inhuman haste,
 And take no blame. But pity, too, had
 dues;
 She could not leave a solitary soul
 To founder in the dark, while she sate
 still
 And lavished stitches on a lady's hem
 As if no other work were paramount.
 'Why, God,' thought Marian, 'has a
 missing hand
 This moment; Lucy wants a drink, per-
 haps.
 Let others miss me! never miss me,
 God!'

So Marian sat by Lucy's bed content
 With duty, and was strong, for recom-
 pense,
 To hold the lamp of human love arm-
 high
 To catch the death-strained eyes and
 comfort them,
 Until the angels, on the luminous side
 Of death, had got theirs ready. And she
 said,
 When Lucy thanked her sometimes,
 called her kind,
 It touched her strangely. 'Marian Erle
 called kind!
 What, Marian, beaten and sold, who
 could not die!
 'Tis verily good fortune to be kind.
 Ah, you,' she said, 'who are born to
 such a grace,
 Be sorry for the unlicensed class, the
 poor,
 Reduced to think the best good fortune
 means
 That others, simply, should be kind to
 them.'

From sleep to sleep while Lucy slid
 away
 So gently, like a light upon a hill,
 Of which none names the moment that
 it goes
 Though all see when 'tis gone,—a man
 came in
 And stood beside the bed. The old idiot
 wretch
 Screamed feebly, like a baby overlain,

'Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for the corpse ?

Don't look at *me*, sir ! never bury *me* !
Although I lie here I'm as live as you,
Except my legs and arms,—I eat and drink,

And understand,—(that you're the gentleman

Who fits the funerals up, Heaven speed you, sir,)

And certainly I should be livelier still
If Lucy here . . . sir, Lucy is the corpse . . .

Had worked more properly to buy me wine :

But Lucy, sir, was always slow at work,
(I shan't lose much by Lucy. Marian Erle.

Speak up and show the gentleman the corpse.'

And then a voice said, 'Marian Erle.'

She rose :

It was the hour for angels—there, stood hers !

She scarcely marvelled to see Romney Leigh.

As light November snows to empty nests,

As grass to graves, as moss to mildewed stones,

As July suns to ruins, through the rents,
As ministering spirits to mourners,

Through a loss,
As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death

He came uncalled wherever grief had come.

And so,' said Marian Erle, 'we met anew,'

And added softly, 'so, we shall not part.'
He was not angry that she had left the house

Wherein he placed her. Well—she had feared it might

Have vexed him. Also, when he found her set

On keeping, though the dead was out of sight,

That half-dead, half-live body left behind

With cankerous heart and flesh,—which took your best

And cursed you for the little good it did,

(Could any leave the bed-rid wretch alone,

So joyless she was thankless even to God,

Much more to you?) he did not say 'twas well,

Yet Marian thought he did not take it ill,—

Since day by day he came, and every day

She felt within his utterance and his eyes
A closer, tenderer presence of the soul,

Until at last he said, 'We shall not part.'

On that same day, was Marian's work complete :

She had smoothed the empty bed, and swept the floor

Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew
The dead had ended gossip in, and stood

In that poor room so cold and orderly,
The door-key in her hand, prepared to

As ^{go} *they* had, howbeit not their way. He spoke.

'Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all,

And though men push and poke and paddle in't

(As children play at fashioning dirt-pies)
And call their fancies by the name of facts,

Assuming difference, lordship, privilege,
When all's plain dirt,—they come back

to it at last ;
The first grave digger proves it with a spade,

And pass all even. Need we wait for this,

You, Marian, and I, Romney?'

She, at that,
Looked blindly in his face, as when one looks

Through driving autumn-rains to find the sky.

He went on speaking.

'Marian, I being born
What men call noble, and you, issued from

The noble people,—though the tyrannous sword

Which pierced Christ's heart, has cleft
 the world in twain
 'Twixt class and class, opposing rich to
 poor,
 Shall *we* keep parted? Not so. Let
 us lean
 And strain together rather, each to each,
 Compress the red lips of this gaping
 wound,
 As far as two souls can,—ay, lean and
 league,
 I, from my superabundance,—from your
 want
 You,—joining in a protest 'gainst the
 wrong
 On both sides !'

All the rest, he held her hand
 In speaking, which confused the sense of
 much;
 Her heart against his words beat out so
 thick,
 They might as well be written on the
 dust
 Where some poor bird, escaping from
 hawk's beak,
 Has dropped and beats its shuddering
 wings,—the lines
 Are rubbed so,—yet 'twas something like
 to this,
 —'That they two, standing at the two
 extremes

Of social classes, had received one seal,
 Been dedicate and drawn beyond them-
 selves

To mercy and ministration,—he, indeed,
 Through what he knew, and she, through
 what she felt,

He, by man's conscience, she, by wo-
 man's heart,

Relinquishing their several 'vantage
 posts

Of wealthy ease and honourable toil,
 To work with God at love. And since
 God willed

'That putting out his hand to touch this
 ark,

He found a woman's hand there, he'd
 accept

The sign too, hold the tender fingers
 fast,

And say, 'My fellow-worker, be my
 wife !'

She told the tale with simple, rustic
 turns,—

Strong leaps of meaning in her sudden
 eyes

That took the gaps of any imperfect
 phrase

Of the unschooled speaker: I have rather
 writ

The thing I understood so, than the
 thing

I heard so. And I cannot render right
 Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft,

Self-startled from the habitual mood she
 used,

Half sad, half languid,—like dumb crea-
 tures (now

A rustling bird, and now a wandering
 deer,

Or squirrel 'gainst the oak-gloom flash-
 ing up

His sidelong burnished head, in just her
 way

Of savage spontaneity,) that stir
 Abruptly the green silence of the woods,

And make it stranger, holier, more pro-
 found;

As Nature's general heart confessed itself
 Of life, and then fell backward on re-
 pose.

I kissed the lips that ended.—' So in-
 deed

He loves you, Marian?'

'Loves me !' She looked up
 With a child's wonder when you ask
 him first

Who made the sun—a puzzled blush,
 that grew,

Then broke off in a rapid radiant smile
 Of sure solution. 'Loves me ! he loves
 all,—

And me, of course. He had not asked
 me else

To work with him for ever and be his
 wife.'

Her words reproved me. This perhaps
 was love—

To have its hands too full of gifts to
 give,

For putting out a hand to take a gift ;
 To love so much, the perfect round of
 love

Includes, in strict conclusion, being
 loved ;

As Eden-dew went up and fell again,
 Enough for watering Eden. Obviously

She had not thought about his love at all :

The cataracts of her soul had poured themselves,

And risen self-crowned in rainbow ; would she ask

Who crowned her ?—it sufficed that she was crowned.

With women of my class, 'tis otherwise : We haggle for the small change of our gold,

And so much love accord for so much love,

Rialto-prices. Are we therefore wrong ? If marriage be a contract, look to it then,

Contracting parties should be equal, just ;

But if, a simple fealty on one side, A mere religion,—right to give, is all,

And certain brides of Europe duly ask To mount the pile as Indian widows do,

The spices of their tender youth heaped up,

The jewels of their gracious virtues worn,

More gems, more glory,—to consume entire

For a living husband : as the man's alive,

Not dead, the woman's duty by so much,

Advanced in England beyond Hindostan.

I sate there musing, till she touched my hand

With hers, as softly as a strange white bird

She feared to startle in touching. ' You are kind.

But are you, peradventure, vexed at heart

Because your cousin takes me for a wife ? I know I am not worthy—nay, in truth,

I'm glad on't, since, for that, he chooses me.

He likes the poor things of the world the best ;

I would not therefore, if I could, be rich.

It pleasures him to stoop for buttercups ; I would not be a rose upon the wall

A queen might stop at, near the palace-door,

To say to a courtier, ' Pluck that rose for me,

' It's prettier than the rest.' O Romney Leigh !

I'd rather far be trodden by his foot, Than lie in a great queen's bosom.'

Out of breath She paused.

' Sweet Marian, do you disavow The roses with that face ?'

She dropt her head, As if the wind had caught that flower of her,

And bent it in the garden,—then looked up

With grave assurance. ' Well, you think me bold !

But so we all are, when we're praying God.

And if I'm bold—yet, lady, credit me, That, since I know myself for what I am,

Much fitter for his handmaid than his wife,

I'll prove the handmaid and the wife at once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,

And be a worthier mate, perhaps, than some

Who are wooed in silk among their learned books ;

While I shall set myself to read his eyes, Till such grow plainer to me than the French

To wisest ladies. Do you think I'll miss A letter, in the spelling of his mind ?

No more than they do when they sit and write

Their flying words with flickering wild-fowl tails,

Nor ever pause to ask how many *z*s,

Should that be *y* or *i*—they know't so well :

I've seen them writing, when I brought a dress

And waited,—floating out their soft white hands

On shining paper. But they're hard sometimes,

For all those hands !—we've used out many nights,

And worn the yellow daylight into shreds Which flapped and shivered down our aching eyes

Till night appeared more tolerable, just

That pretty ladies might look beautiful,
Who said at last . . . 'You're lazy in that
house!

'You're slow in sending home the work,
—I count

'I've waited near an hour for't.' Pardon
me,

I do not blame them, madam, nor mis-
prize;

They are fair and gracious; ay, but not
like you,

Since none but you has Mr. Leigh's own
blood

Both noble and gentle,—and without
it . . . well,

They are fair, I said; so fair, it scarce
seems strange

That, flashing out in any looking-glass
The wonder of their glorious brows and
breasts,

They are charmed so, they forget to look
behind

And mark how pale we've grown, we
pitiful

Remainders of the world. And so per-
haps

If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife from
these,

She might . . . although he's better than
her best,

And dearly she would know it . . . steal
a thought

Which should be all his, an eye-glance
from his face,

To plunge into the mirror opposite
In search of her own beauty's pearl;

while I . . .

Ah, dearest lady, serge will outweigh
silk

For winter-wear when bodies feel a-cold,
And I'll be a true wife to your cousin
Leigh.'

Before I answered he was there himself.
I think he had been standing in the
room

And listened probably to half her talk,
Arrested, turned to stone,—as white as
stone.

Will tender sayings make men look so
white?

He loves her then profoundly.

'You are here,
Aurora? Here I meet you!'—We
clasped hands.

'Even so, dear Romney. Lady Walde-
mar

Has sent me in haste to find a cousin of
mine

Who shall be.'

'Lady Waldemar is good.'

'Here's one, at least, who is good,' I
sighed, and touched

Poor Marian's happy head, as, doglike
she

Most passionately patient, waited on,
A-tremble for her turn of greeting words;

'I've sat a full hour with your Marian
Erle,

And learnt the thing by heart,—and,
from my heart,

Am therefore competent to give you
thanks

For such a cousin.'

'You accept at last
A gift from me, Aurora, without scorn?

At last I please you?'—How his voice
was changed!

'You cannot please a woman against her
will,

And once you vexed me. Shall we
speak of that?

We'll say, then, you were noble in it all
And I not ignorant—let it pass. And
now

You please me, Romney, when you
please yourself;

So, please you, be fanatical in love,
And I'm well pleased. Ah, cousin! at
the old hall,

Among the gallery portraits of our
Leighs,

We shall not find a sweeter signory
Than this pure forehead's.'

Not a word he said.
How arrogant men are!—Even philan-
thropists,

Who try to take a wife up in the way
They put down a subscription-cheque,—
if once

She turns and says, 'I will not tax you
so,

Most charitable sir,'—feel ill at ease,
As though she had wronged them some-
how. I suppose

We woman should remember what we
are,

And not throw back an obolus inscribed

With Cæsar's image, lightly. I resumed.

It strikes me, some of those sublime
Vandykes

Were not too proud to make good saints
in heaven ;

And if so, then they're not too proud to-
day

To bow down (now the ruffs are off their
necks)

And own this good, true, noble Marian,
. . . yours,

And mine, I'll say !—For poets (bear
the word)

Half-poets even, are still whole demo-
crats,—

Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,
But loyal to the low, and cognisant

Of the less scrutable majesties. For me,
I comprehend your choice—I justify

Your right in choosing.'

'No, no, no,' he sighed,
With a sort of melancholy impatient
scorn,

As some grown man, who never had a
child,

Puts by some child who plays at being a
man,

—'You did not, do not, cannot compre-
hend

My choice, my ends, my motives, nor
myself :

No matter now—we'll let it pass, you
say.

I thank you for your generous cousin-
ship

Which helps this present ; I accept for
her

Your favourable thoughts. We're fallen
on days,

We two who are not poets, when to wed
Requires less mutual love than common

love,
For two together to bear out at once

Upon the loveless many. Work in
pairs,

In galley-couplings or in marriage-rings,
The difference lies in the honour, not the

work,—
And such we're bound to, I and she.

But love,
{You poets are benighted in this age ;

The hour's too late for catching even
moths,

You've gnats instead,) love !—love's fool-
paradise

Is out of date, like Adam's. Set a swan
To swim the Trenton, rather than true
love

To float its fabulous plumage safely
down

The cataracts of this loud transition-
time,—

Whose roar, for ever henceforth in my
ears

Must keep me deaf to music.'

There, I turned
And kissed poor Marian, out of discon-
tent.

The man had baffled, chafed me, till I
flung

For refuge to the woman,—as, some-
times.

Impatient of some crowded room's close
smell,

You throw a window open and lean out
To breathe a long breath in the dewy
night

And cool your angry forehead. She, at
least,

Was not built up as walls are, brick by
brick ;

Each fancy squared, each feeling ranged
by line,

The very heat of burning youth applied
To indurate forms and systems ! excel-
lent bricks,

A well-built wall,—which stops you on
the road,

And, into which, you cannot see an inch
Although you beat your head against it
—pslaw !

'Adieu,' I said, 'for this time, cousins
both ;

And, cousin Romney, pardon me the
word,

Be happy !—oh, in some esoteric sense
Of course !—I mean no harm in wishing
well.

Adieu, my Marian :—may she come to
me,

Dear Romney, and be married from my
house ?

It is not part of your philosophy
'To keep your bird upon the blackthorn ?'

'Ay,'
He answered, 'but it is :—I take my wife

Directly from the people,—and she
comes
As Austria's daughter to imperial France,
Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her
race,
From Margaret's Court at garret-height,
to meet
And wed me at St. James's, nor put off
Her gown of serge for that. The things
we do,
We do: we'll wear no mask, as if we
blushed.'

'Dear Romney, you're the poet,' I re-
plied,
But felt my smile too mournful for my
word,
And turned and went. Ay, masks, I
thought,—beware
Of tragic masks we tie before the glass,
Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard
Above the natural stature! we would
play
Heroic parts to ourselves,—and end,
perhaps,
As impotently as Athenian wives
Who shrieked in fits at the Eumenides.

His foot pursued me down the stair.
'At least,
You'll suffer me to walk with you beyond
These hideous streets, these graves,
where men alive,
Packed close with earthworms, burr un-
consciously
About the plague that slew them; let
me go.
The very women pelt their souls in mud
At any woman who walks here alone.
How came you here alone?—you are
ignorant.'

We had a strange and melancholy walk :
The night came drizzling downward in
dark rain ;
And, as we walked, the colour of the
time,
The act, the presence, my hand upon his
arm,
His voice in my ear, and mine to my
own sense,
Appeared unnatural. We talked modern
books,
And daily papers; Spanish marriage-
schemes,

And English climate—was't so cold last
year?
And will the wind change by to-morrow
morn?
Can Guizot stand? is London full? is
trade
Competitive? has Dickens turned his
hinge
A-pinch upon the fingers of the great?
And are potatoes to grow mythical
Like moly? will the apple die out too?
Which way is the wind to-night? south-
east? due east?
We talked on fast, while every common
word
Seemed tangled with the thunder at one
end,
And ready to pull down upon our heads
A terror out of sight. And yet to pause
Were surelier mortal: we tore greedily
up
All silence, all the innocent breathing-
points,
As if, like pale conspirators in haste,
We tore up papers where our signatures
Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death.

I cannot tell you why it was. 'Tis plain
We had not loved nor hated: wherefore
dread
To spill gunpowder on ground safe from
fire?
Perhaps we had lived too closely, to di-
verge
So absolutely: leave two clocks, they
say,
Wound up to different hours, upon one
shelf,
And slowly, through the interior wheels
of each,
The blind mechanic motion sets itself
A-throb to feel out for the mutual time.
It was not so with us, indeed. While
he
Struck midnight, I kept striking six at
dawn,
While he marked judgment, I, redemp-
tion-day;
And such exception to a general law,
Imperious upon inert matter even,
Might make us, each to either, insecure.
A beckoning mystery or a troubling fear.
I mind me, when we parted at the door,

How strange his good-night sounded,—
 like good-night
 Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's
 sun
 Is sure to come too late for more good
 days.
 And all that night I thought . . . 'Good-
 night,' said he.

And so, a month passed. Let me set it
 down
 At once,—I have been wrong, I have
 been wrong.
 We are wrong always when we think too
 much
 Of what we think or are; albeit our
 thoughts
 Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,
 We're not less selfish. If we sleep on
 rocks
 Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon
 We're lazy. This I write against my-
 self.
 I had done a duty in the visit paid
 To Marian, and was ready otherwise
 To give the witness of my presence and
 name
 Whenever she should marry.—Which, I
 thought,
 Sufficed. I even had cast into the scale
 An overweight of justice toward the
 match;
 The Lady Waldemar had missed her
 tool,
 Had broken it in the lock as being too
 straight
 For a crooked purpose, while poor Ma-
 rian Erle
 Missed nothing in my accents or my
 acts:
 I had not been ungenerous on the whole,
 Nor yet untender; so, enough. I felt
 Tired, overworked: this marriage some-
 what jarred,
 Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise . . .
 The pricking of the map of life with
 pins,
 In schemes of . . . 'Here we'll go,' and
 'There we'll stay,'
 And 'everywhere we'll prosper in our
 love,'
 Was scarce my business. Let them
 order it;
 Who else should care? I threw myself
 aside,

As one who had done her work and
 shuts her eyes
 To rest the better.

I, who should have known,
 Forereckoned mischief! Where we dis-
 avow
 Being keeper to our brother we're his
 Cain.

I might have held that poor child to my
 heart
 A little longer! 'twould have hurt me
 much
 To have hastened by its beats the mar-
 riage day,
 And kept her safe meantime from tamp-
 ering hands
 Or, peradventure, traps. What drew me
 back
 From telling Romney plainly the de-
 signs
 Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out
 To me . . . me? had I any right, ay, right,
 With womanly compassion and reserve
 To break the fall of woman's impu-
 dence?—
 To stand by calmly, knowing what I
 knew,
 And hear him call her *good*?
 Distrust that word.
 'There is none good save God,' said
 Jesus Christ.
 If He once, in the first creation-week,
 Called creatures good,—for ever after-
 ward,
 The Devil only has done it, and his
 heirs,
 The knaves who win so, and the fools
 who lose;
 The word's grown dangerous. In the
 middle age,
 I think they called malignant fays and
 imps
 Good people. A good neighbour, even
 in this,
 Is fatal sometimes,—cuts your morning
 up
 To mince-meat of the very smallest
 talk,
 Then helps to sugar her bohea at night
 With your reputation. I have known
 good wives,
 As chaste, or nearly so, as Potiphar's.
 And good, good mothers, who would use
 a child

To better an intrigue ; good friends,
beside,
(Very good) who hung succinctly round
your neck
And sucked your breath, as cats are
fabled to do
By sleeping infants. And we all have
known
Good critics who have stamped out
poet's hopes ;
Good statesmen who pulled ruin on the
state ;
Good patriots who for a theory risked a
cause ;
Good kings who disembowelled for a
tax ;
Good popes who brought ail good to
jeopardy ;
Good Christians who sate still in easy
chairs
And damned the general world for stand-
ing up.—
Now may the good God pardon all good
men !

How bitterly I speak,—how certainly
The innocent white milk in us is turned,
By much persistent shining of the sun !
Shake up the sweetest in us long enough
With men, it drops to foolish curd, too
sour
To feed the most untender of Christ's
lambs.

I should have thought . . a woman of
the world
Like her I'm meaning,—centre to her-
self,
Who has wheeled on her own pivot half a
life
In isolated self-love and self-will,
As a windmill seen at distance radiating
Its delicate white vans against the sky,
So soft and soundless, simply beautiful,
Seen nearer . . what a roar and tear it
makes,
How it grinds and bruises ! . . if she
loves at last
Her love's a e-adjustment of self-love,
No more ; a need felt of another's use
To her one advantage,—as the mill wants
grain,
The fire wants fuel, the very wolf wants
prey,
And none of these is more unscrupulous

Than such a charming woman when she
loves.
She'll not be thwarted by an obstacle
So trifling as . . her soul is, . . much
less yours !—
Is God a consideration ?—she loves *you*,
Not God ; she will not flinch for Him
indeed :
She did not for the Marchioness of
Perth,
When wanting tickets for the fancy-ball.
She loves you, sir, with passion, to luna-
cy ;
She loves you like her diamonds . . al-
most.

Well,
A month passed so, and then the notice
came ;
On such a day the marriage at the
church.

I was not backward.
Half St. Giles in frieze
Was bidden to meet St. James in cloth
of gold,
And, after contract at the altar, pass
To eat a marriage feast on Hampstead
Heath.
Of course the people came in uncom-
pelled,
Lame, blind, and worse—sick, sorrowful,
and worse,
The humours of the peccant social
wound
All pressed out, poured down upon Pim-
lico,
Exasperating the unaccustomed air
With hideous interfusion : you'd sup-
pose
A finished generation, dead of plague,
Swept outward from their graves into
the sun,
The moil of death upon them. What a
sight !
A holiday of miserable men
Is sadder than a burial-day of kings.

They clogged the streets, they oozed into
the church
In a dark slow stream like blood. To
see that sight,
The noble ladies stood up in their pews,
Some pale for fear, a few as red for hate,
Some simply curious, some just insolent,
And some in wondering scorn,—'What
next? what next?'

These crushed their delicate rose-lips
 from the smile
 That misbecame them in a holy place,
 With brodered hems of perfumed hand-
 kerchiefs :
 Those passed the salts with confidence
 of eyes
 And simultaneous shiver of moire silk ;
 While all the aisles, alive and black
 with heads,
 Crawled slowly toward the altar from
 the street,
 As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out of
 a hole
 With shuddering involution, swaying
 slow
 From right to left, and then from left
 to right,
 In pants and pauses. What an ugly
 crest
 Of faces rose upon you everywhere
 From that crammed mass ! you did not
 usually
 See faces like them in the open day :
 They hide in cellars, not to make you
 mad
 As Romney Leigh is.—Faces !—O my
 God,
 We call those, faces ? men's and wo-
 men's . . ay,
 And children's ;—babies, hanging like a
 rag
 Forgotten on their mother's neck,—poor
 months,
 Wiped clean of mother's milk by moth-
 er's blow
 Before they are taught her cursing.
 Faces ? . . phew,
 We'll call them vices festering to des-
 pairs,
 Or sorrows petrifying to vices : not
 A finger-touch of God left whole on
 them ;
 All ruined, lost—the countenance worn
 out
 As the garment, the will dissolute as the
 act ;
 The passions loose and drangling in the
 dirt
 To trip the foot up at the first free
 step !
 Those, faces ! 'twas as if you had stirred
 up hell
 To heave its lowest dreg-fiends upper-
 most

In fiery swirls of slime,—such strangled
 fronts,
 Such obdurate jaws were thrown up
 constantly
 To twit you with your race, corrupt
 your blood,
 And grind to devlish colours all your
 dreams
 Henceforth, . . though, haply, you
 should drop asleep
 By clink of silver waters, in a muse
 On Raffael's mild Madonna of the Bird.

I've waked and slept through many
 nights and days
 Since then,—but still that day will catch
 my breath
 Like a nightmare. There are fatal days,
 indeed,
 In which the fibrous years have taken
 root
 So deeply, that they quiver to their tops
 Whene're you stir the dust of such a day.

My cousin met me with his eyes and
 hand,
 And then, with just a word, . . that
 'Marian Erle
 Was coming with her bridesmaids
 presently,'
 Made haste to place me by the altar-
 stair,
 Where he and other noble gentlemen
 And high-born ladies, waited for the
 bride.

We waited. It was early: there was
 time
 For greeting, and the morning's com-
 pliment ;
 And gradually a ripple of women's talk
 Arose and fell, and tossed about a spray
 Of English *ss*, soft as a silent hush,
 And, notwithstanding, quite as audible
 As louder phrases thrown out by the men.
 —' Yes, really, if we need to wait in
 church,
 We need to talk there.'—' She ? 'Tis
 Lady Ayr,
 In blue—not purple ! that's the dow-
 ager.'
 —' She looks as young.'—' She flirts as
 young, you mean.
 Why if you had seen her upon Thursday
 night,

You'd call Miss Norris modest.'—'You again!
I waltzed with you three hours back.
Up at six,
Up still at ten: scarce time to change one's shoes.
I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,
So pray don't speak to me, Lord Belcher.'—'No,
I'll look at you instead, and it's enough
While you have that face.'—'In church,
my lord! fie, fie!'
—'Adair, you stayed for the Division?'
—'Lost
By one.'—'The devil it is! I'm sorry
for't.
And if I had not promised Mistress
Grove'
—'You might have kept your word to
Liverpool.'
'Constituents must remember, after all,
We're mortal.'—'We remind them of it.'
—'Hark,
The bride comes! Here she comes, in
a stream of milk!'
—'There? Dear, you are asleep still;
don't you know
The five Miss Granvilles? always dress-
ed in white
To show they're ready to be married.'—
'Lower!
The aunt is at your elbow.'—'Lady
Maud,
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had
seen
This girl of Leigh's?'—'No,—wait!
'twas Mistress Brookes,
Who told me Lady Waldemar told
her—
No, 'twasn't Mrs. Brookes.'—'She's
pretty?'—'Who?
Mrs. Brookes? Lady Waldemar?'—
'How hot!
Pray isn't the law to-day we're not to
breathe?
You're treading on my shawl—I thank
you, sir'
—'They say the bride's a mere child, who
can't read,
But knows the things she shouldn't, with
wide-awake
Great eyes. I'd go through fire to look
at her.'
—'You do, I think.'—'And Lady Walde-
mar

(You see her; sitting close to Romney
Leigh;
How beautiful she looks, a little flush-
ed!)
Has taken up the girl, and methodised
Leigh's folly. Should I have come here,
you suppose,
Except she'd asked me?'—'She'd have
served him more
By marrying him herself.'
'Ah—there she comes,
The bride, at last!'
'Indeed, no. Past eleven.
She puts off her patched petticoat to-day
And puts on May-fair manners, so be-
gins
By setting us to wait.'—'Yes, yes, this
Leigh
Was always odd; it's in the blood, I
think;
His father's uncle's cousin's second son
Was, was . . . you understand me—and
for him,
He's stark!—has turned quite lunatic
upon
This modern question of the poor—the
poor:
An excellent subject when you're mode-
rate;
You've seen Prince Albert's model lodg-
ing-house?
Does honour to his royal highness.
Good!
But would he stop his carriage in Cheap-
side
To shake a common fellow by the fist
Whose name was . . . Shakspeare? no.
We draw a line,
And if we stand not by our order, we
In England, we fall headlong. Here's a
sight,—
A hideous sight, a most indecent sight
My wife would come, sir, or I had kept
her back.
By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens'
trunk and limbs
Were torn by horses, women of the
court
Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day
On this dismembering of society,
With pretty troubled faces.'
'Now, at last.
She comes now.'
'Where? who sees? you push me, sir,
Beyond the point of what is mannerly.

You're standing, madam, on my second
flounce
I do beseech you.'

'No—it's not the bride.
Half-past eleven. How late. The
bridegroom, mark,
Gets anxious and goes out.'

'And as I said,
These Leighs! our best blood running in
the rut!
It's something awful. We had pardoned
him
A simple misalliance, got up aside
For a pair of sky-blue eyes; our House
of Lords
Has winked at such things, and we've
all been young.
But here's an inter-marriage reasoned
out,
A contract (carried boldly to the light
To challenge observation, pioneer
Good acts by a great example) 'twixt the
extremes
Of martyrised society,—on the left
The well-born,—on the right the merest
mob,
To treat as equals!—'tis anarchical!
It means more than it says—'tis damna-
ble.
Why, sir, we can't have even our coffee
good,
Unless we strain it.'

'Here, Miss Leigh!'
'Lord Howe,
You're Romney's friend. What's all
this waiting for?'

'I cannot tell. The bride has lost her
head
(And, way perhaps!) to prove her sym-
pathy
With the bridegroom.'

'What,—you also disapprove!'

'Oh, I approve of nothing in the world,'
He answered; 'not of you, still less of
me,
Nor even of Romney—though he's
worth us both.
We're all gone wrong. The tune in us
is lost:
And whistling down back alleys to the
moon,
Will never catch it.

Let me draw Lord Howe;
A born aristocrat, bred radical,
And educated socialist, who still
Goes floating, on traditions of his kind,
Across the theoretic flood from France,
Though, like a drenched Noah on a rot-
ten deck,
Scarce safer for his place there. He, at
least,
Will never land on Ararat, he knows,
To recommence the world on the new
plan:
Indeed, he thinks, said world had better
end;
He sympathises rather with the fish
Outside, than with the drowned paired
beasts within
Who cannot couple again or multiply:
And that's the sort of Noah he is, Lord
Howe.
He never could be anything complete,
Except a loyal, upright gentleman,
A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,
And entertainer more than hospitable,
Whom authors dine with and forget the
hock
Whatever he believes, and it is much,
But no-wise certain . . . now here and
now there,
He still has sympathies beyond his creed
Diverting him from action. In the
House,
No party counts upon him, while for all
His speeches have a noticeable weight.
Men like his books too, (he has written
books)
Which, safe to lie beside a bishop's
chair,
At times outreach themselves with jets
of fire
At which the foremost of the progress-
ists
May warm audacious hands in passing
by.
—Of stature over-tall, lounging for ease:
Light hair, that seems to carry a wind
in it,
And eyes that, when they look on you,
will lean
Their whole weight half in indolence
and half
In wishing you unmitigated good,
Until you know not if to flinch from him
Or thank him.—'Tis Lord Howe.
'We're all gone wrong,'

Said he, 'and Romney, that dear friend
of ours,
Is no-wise right. There's one true
thing on earth ;
That's love ! He takes it up, and
dresses it,
And acts a play with it, as Hamlet did,
To show what cruel uncles we have
been,
And how we should be uneasy in our
minds
While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a pretty
maid
(Who keeps us too long waiting, we'll
confess)
By symbol, to instruct us formally
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and
class,
And live together in phalansteries.
What then ?—he's mad, our Hamlet !
clap his play,
And bind him.'
' Ah, Lord Howe, this spectacle
Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.
See there !
The crammed aisles heave and strain and
steam with life—
Dear Heaven, what life !'
' Why, yes.—a poet sees ;
Which makes him different from a com-
mon man.
I, too, see somewhat, though I cannot
sing ;
I should have been a poet, only that
My mother took fright at the ugly
world,
And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll grant
me now
That Romney gives us a fine actor-piece
To make us merry on his marriage-
morn,
The fable's worse than Hamlet's, I'll
concede.
The terrible people, old and poor and
blind,
Their eyes eat out with plague and
poverty
From seeing beautiful and cheerful sights,
We'll liken to a brutalised King Lear,
Led out,—by no means to clear scores
with wrongs—
His wrongs are so far back, . . he has
forgot ;
All's past like youth ; but just to witness
here

A simple contract,—he, upon his side,
And Regan with her sister Goneril
And all the dappled courtiers and court-
fools,
On their side. Not that any of these
would say
They're sorry, neither. What is done,
is done,
And violence is now turned privilege,
As cream turns cheese, if buried long
enough.
What could such lovely ladies have to do
With the old man there, in those ill-
odorous rags,
Except to keep the wind-side of him ?
Lear
Is flat and quiet, as a decent grave ;
He does not curse his daughters in the
least.
Be these his daughters ? Lear is think-
ing of
His porridge chiefly . . is it getting cold
At Hampstead ? will the ale be served in
pots ?
Poor Lear, poor daughters ! Bravo,
Romney's play !'

A murmur and a movement drew
around ;
A naked whisper touched us. Some-
thing wrong !
What's wrong ? The black crowd, as an
overstrained
Cord, quivered in vibration, and I
saw . .
Was that *his* face I saw ? . . his . .
Romney Leigh's . .
Which tossed a sudden horror like a
sponge
Into all eyes,—while himself stood white
upon
The topmost altar-stair, and tried to
speak,
And failed, and lifted higher above his
head
A letter, . . as a man who drowns and
gasps.

' My brothers, bear with me ! I am
very weak.
I meant but only good. Perhaps I
meant
Too proudly,—and God snatched the cir-
cumstance

And changed it therefore. There's no marriage—none.

She leaves me,—she departs,—she disappears.

Close her. Yet I never forced her 'ay,'
To have her 'no' so cast into my teeth,
In manner of an accusation, thus.

My friends, you are dismissed. Go, eat
and drink

According to the programme,—and farewell !'

He ended. There was silence in the church ;

We heard a baby sucking in its sleep
At the farthest end of the aisle. Then
spoke a man,

Now, look to it, coves, that all the beef
and drink

Be not filched from us like the other
fun ;

For beer's spilt easier than a woman's
lost !

This gentry is not honest with the poor ;
They bring us up, to trick us.'—' Go it,
Jim,'

A woman screamed back,—' I'm a tender
soul,

I never banged a child at two years old
And drew blood from him, but I sobbed
for it

Next moment,—and I've had a plague
of seven,

I'm tender ; I've no stomach even for
beef,

Until I know about the girl that's lost,
That's killed, mayhap. I did misdoubt,
at first,

The fine lord meant no good by her or
us.

He, maybe, got the upper hand of her
By holding up a wedding-ring, and
then . . .

A choking finger on her throat last
night,

And just a clever tale to keep us still,
As she is, poor lost innocent. ' Disap-
pear !'

Who ever disappears except a ghost ?
And who believes a story of a ghost ?

I ask you,—would a girl go off, instead
Of staying to be married? a fine tale !

A wicked man, I say, a wicked man !
For my part I would rather starve on
gin

Than make my dinner on his beef and
beer.'—

At which a cry rose up—' We'll have
our rights.

We'll have the girl, the girl ! Your la-
dies there

Are married safely and smoothly every
day,

And *she* shall not drop through into a
trap

Because she's poor and of the people :
shame !

We'll have no tricks played off by gentle-
folks ;

We'll see her righted.'

Through the rage and roar
I heard the broken words which Romney
flung

Among the turbulent masses, from the
ground

He held still with his masterful pale
face—

As huntsmen throw the ration to the
pack,

Who, falling on it headlong, dog on dog
In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it up

With yelling hound-jaws,—his indignant
words,

His suppliant words, his most pathetic
words,

Whereof I caught the meaning here and
there

By his gesture . . . torn in morsels, yelled
across,

And so devoured. From end to end,
the church

Rocked round us like the sea in storm,
and then

Broke up like the earth in earthquake.
Men cried out,

' Poice '—and women stood and shrieked
for God,

Or dropt and swooned ; or, like a herd
of deer,

(For whom the black woods suddenly
grow alive,

Unleashing their wild shadows down the
wind

To hunt the creatures into corners, back
And forward) madly fled, or blindly fell,

Trod screeching underneath the feet of
those

Who fled and screeched.

The last sight left to me
Was Romney's terrible calm face above

The tumult!—the last sound was ‘ Pull
him down !

Strike—kill him !’ Stretching my un-
reasoning arms,

As men in dreams, who vainly interpose
’Twi’x gods and their undoing, with a
cry

I struggled to precipitate myself
Head-foremost, to the rescue of my soul
In that white face, . . . till some one
caught me back,

And so the world went out,—I felt no
more.

What followed, was told after by Lord
Howe,

Who bore me senseless from the strang-
ling crowd

In church and street, and then returned
alone

To see the tumult quelled. The men of
law

Had fallen as thunder on a roaring fire,
And made all silent,—while the people’s
smoke

Passed eddying slowly from the emptied
aisles.

Here’s Marian’s letter, which a ragged
child

Brought running, just as Romney at the
porch

Looked out expectant of the bride. He
sent

The letter to me by his friend Lord
Howe

Some two hours after, folded in a sheet
On which his well known hand had left
a word.

Here’s Marian’s letter.

‘ Noble friend, dear saint,
Be patient with me. Never think me
vile,

Who might to-morrow morning be your
wife

But that I loved you more than such a
name.

Farewell, my Romney. Let me write it
once,—

My Romney.

‘ ’Tis so pretty a coupled word,
I have no heart to pluck it with a blot.

We say ‘ my God ’ sometimes, upon our
knees,

Who is not therefore vexed: so bear
with it . . .

And me. I know I’m foolish, weak, and
vain ;

Yet most of all I’m angry with myself
For losing your last footstep on the stain
The last time of your coming,—yester-
day !

The very first time I lost step of yours,
(Its sweetness comes the next to what
you speak)

But yesterday sobs took me by the
throat

And cut me off from music.

‘ Mister Leigh
You’ll set me down as wrong in many
things.

You’ve praised me, sir, for truth,—and
now you’ll learn

I had not courage to be rightly true.

I once began to tell you how she came,
The woman . . . and you stared upon the
floor

In one of your fixed thoughts . . . which
put me out

For that day. After, some one spoke
of me,

So wisely, and of you, so tenderly,
Persuading me to silence for your sake .

Well, well ! it seems this moment I was
wrong

In keeping back from telling you the
truth :

There might be truth betwixt us two, a
least,

If nothing else. And yet ’twas danger-
ous.

Suppose a real angel came from heaven
To live with men and women ! he’d go
mad,

If no considerate hand should tie a blind
Across his piercing eyes. ’Tis thus
with you :

You see us too much in your heavenly
light ;

I always thought so, angel,—and indeed
There’s danger that you beat yourself to
death

Against the edges of this alien world,
In some divine and fluttering pity.

‘ Yes
It would be dreadful for a friend of
yours,

To see all England thrust you out of
doors

And mock you from the windows. You
 might say,
 Or think (that's worse,) 'There's some
 one in the house
 I miss and love still.' Dreadful!
 'Very kind,
 I pray you mark, was Lady Waldemar.
 She came to see me nine times, rather
 ten—
 So beautiful, she hurts one like the day
 Let suddenly on sick eyes.
 'Most kind of all,
 Your cousin!—ah, most like you! Ere
 you came
 She kissed me mouth to mouth: I felt
 her soul!
 Dip through her serious lips in holy
 fire.
 God help me, but it made me arrogant;
 I almost told her that you would not
 lose
 By taking me to wife: though ever since
 I've pondered much a certain thing she
 asked . . .
 'He loves you, Marian?' . . . in a sort
 of mild
 Derisive sadness . . . as a mother asks
 Her babe, 'You'll touch that star, you
 think?'
 'Farewell!
 I know I never touched it.
 'This is worst:
 Babes grow, and lose the hope of things
 above;
 A silver threepence sets them leaping
 high—
 But no more stars! mark that.
 'I've writ all night,
 Yet told you nothing. God, if I could
 die,
 And let this letter break off innocent
 Just here! But no—for your sake . . .
 'Here's the last:
 I never could be happy as your wife,
 I never could be harmless as your friend,
 I never will look more into your face
 I'll God says, 'Look!' I charge you,
 seek me not,
 Nor vex yourself with lamentable
 thoughts
 That peradventure I have come to grief;
 Be sure I'm well, I'm merry, I'm at
 ease,
 But such a long way, long way, long way
 off,

I think you'll find me sooner in my
 grave;
 And that's my choice, observe. For
 what remains,
 An over-generous friend will care for me
 And keep me happy . . . happier . . .
 'There's a blot!
 This ink runs thick . . . we light girls
 lightly weep . . .
 And keep me happier . . . was the thing
 to say,
 Than as your wife I could be!—O, my
 star,
 My saint, my soul! for surely you're my
 soul,
 Through whom God touched me! I am
 not so lost
 I cannot thank you for the good you did,
 The tears you stopped, which fell down
 bitterly,
 Like these—the times you made me weep
 for joy
 At hoping I should learn to write you
 notes
 And save the tiring of your eyes, a
 night;
 And most for that sweet thrice you kiss
 ed my lips
 And said 'Dear Marian'
 'Twould be hard to read
 This letter, for a reader half as learn'd,
 But you'll be sure to master it in spite
 Of ups and downs. My hand shakes, I
 am blind,
 I'm poor at writing at the best,—and yet
 I tried to make my *gs* the way you
 showed.
 Farewell—Christ love you.—Say 'Poor
 Marian' now.'
 Poor Marian!—wanton Marian!—was
 it so,
 Or so? For days, her touching, foolish
 lines
 We mused on with conjectural fantasy,
 As if some riddle of a summer-cloud
 On which one tries unlike similitudes
 Of now a spotted Hydra-skin cast off,
 And now a screen of carven ivory
 That shuts the heaven's conventual se-
 crets up
 From mortals over-bold. We sought the
 sense:
 She loved him so perhaps (such words
 mean love,)

That, worked on by some shrewd perfidious tongue,
 (And then I thought of Lady Waldemar)
 She left him, not to hurt him; or perhaps
 She loved one in her class,—or did not love,
 But mused upon her wild bad tramping life
 Until the free blood fluttered at her heart,
 And black bread eaten by the road-side hedge
 Seemed sweeter than being put to Romney's school
 Of philanthropical self-sacrifice,
 Irrevocably.—Girls are girls, beside,
 Thought I, and like a wedding by one rule.
 You seldom catch these birds except with chaff:
 They feel it almost an immoral thing
 To go out and be married in broad day,
 Unless some winning special flattery should
 Excuse them to themselves for't, . . . 'No one parts
 Her hair with such a silver line as you,
 One moonbeam from the forehead to the crown!
 Or else . . . 'You bite your lip in such a way,
 It spoils me for the smiling of the rest'—
 And so on. Then a worthless gaud or two
 To keep for love,—a ribbon for the neck,
 Or some glass pin,—they have their weight with girls.
 And Romney sought her many days and weeks:
 He sifted all the refuse of the town,
 Explored the trains, inquired among the ships,
 And felt the country through from end to end;
 No Marian!—Though I hinted what I knew,—
 A friend of his had reasons of her own
 For throwing back the match—he would not hear:
 The lady had been ailing ever since,
 The shock had harmed her. Something in his tone

Repressed me; something in me shamed my doubt
 To a sigh repressed too. He went on to say
 That, putting questions where his Marian lodged,
 He found she had received for visitors,
 Besides himself and Lady Waldemar
 And, that once, me—a dubious woman dressed
 Beyond us both. The rings upon her hands
 Had dazed the children when she threw them pence;
 'She wore her bonnet as the queen might hers,
 To show the crown,' they said,—'a scarlet crown
 Of roses that had never been in bud.'
 When Romney told me that,—for now and then
 He came to tell me how the search advanced,
 His voice dropped: I bent forward for the rest:
 The woman had been with her, it appeared,
 At first from week to week, then day by day,
 And last, 'twas sure . . .
 I looked upon the ground
 To escape the anguish of his eyes, and asked
 As low as when you speak to mourners:
 new
 Of those they cannot bear yet to call dead,
 'If Marian had as much as named to him
 A certain Rose, an early friend of hers,
 A ruined creature.'
 'Never.'—Starting up
 He strode from side to side about the room,
 Most like some prisoned lion sprung awake,
 Who has felt the desert sting him through his dreams.
 'What was I to let her that she should tell me aught?
 A friend I was I a friend? I see all clear.
 Such devils would pull angels out of heaven,

Provided they could reach them; 'tis
 their pride;
 And that's the odds 'twixt soul and body-
 plague!
 The veriest slave who drops in Cairo's
 street,
 Cries, 'Stand off from me,' to the pass-
 engers;
 While these blotched souls are eager to
 infect,
 And blow their bad breath in a sister's
 face
 As if they got some ease by it.'
 I broke through.
 'Some natures catch no plagues. I've
 read of babes
 Found whole and sleeping by the spotted
 breast
 Of one a full day dead. I hold it true,
 As I'm a woman and know womanhood,
 That Marian Erle, however lured from
 place,
 Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim and
 heart
 As snow that's drifted from the garden-
 bank
 To the open road.'
 'Twas hard to hear him laugh.
 'The figure's happy. Well—a dozen
 carts
 And trampers will secure you presently
 A fine white snow-drift. Leave it there,
 your snow!
 'Twill pass for soot ere sunset. Pure in
 aim?
 She's pure in aim, I grant you,—like
 myself,
 Who thought to take the world upon my
 back
 To carry it o'er a chasm of social ill,
 And end by letting slip through impo-
 tence
 A single soul, a child's weight in a soul,
 Straight down the pit of hell! yes, I and
 she
 Have reason to be proud of our pure
 aims.'

Then softly, as the last repenting drops
 Of a thunder-shower, he added, 'The
 poor child;
 Poor Marian! 'twas a luckless day for
 her,
 When first she chanced on my philan-
 thropy.'

He drew a chair beside me, and sat
 down;
 And I, instinctively, as women use
 Before a sweet friend's grief,—when, in
 his ear,
 They hum the tune of comfort though
 themselves
 Most ignorant of the special words of
 such,
 And quiet so and fortify his brain
 And give it time and strength for feeling
 out
 To reach the availing sense beyond that
 sound,—
 Went murmuring to him what, if written
 here,
 Would seem not much, yet fetched him
 better help
 Than, peradventure, if it had been more.
 I've known the pregnant thinkers of our
 time,
 And stood by breathless, hanging on
 their lips,
 When some chromatic sequence of fine
 thought
 In learned modulation phrased itself
 To an un conjectured harmony of truth.
 And yet I've been more moved, more
 raised, I say,
 By a simple word . . . a broken easy
 thing
 A three-years infant might at need re-
 peat,
 A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,
 Which meant less than 'I love you' . . .
 than by all
 The full-voiced rhetoric of those master-
 mouths.

'Ah, dear Aurora,' he began at last,
 His pale lips fumbling for a sort of smile,
 'Your printer's devils have not spoilt
 your heart:
 That's well. And who knows but, long
 years ago,
 When you and I talked, you were some-
 what right
 In being so peevish with me? You, at
 least,
 Have ruined no one through your dreams.
 Instead,
 You've helped the facile youth live
 youth's day
 With innocent distraction, still perhaps

Suggestive of things better than your rhymes.

The little shepherd-maiden, eight years old,

I've seen upon the mountains of Vaucluse,

Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her knees,

The flocks all scattered,—is more laudable

Than any sheep-dog trained imperfectly, Who bites the kids through too much zeal.'

'I look

As if I had slept, then?'

He was touched at once

By something in my face. Indeed 'twas sure

That he and I,—despite a year or two Of younger life on my side, and on his

The heaping of the years' work on the days,

The three-hour speeches from the member's seat,

The hot committees in and out of doors, The pamphlets, 'Arguments,' 'Collective Views,'

Tossed out as straw before sick houses, just

To show one's sick and so be trod to dirt And no more use,—through this world's

underground

The burrowing, groping effort, whence the arm

And heart come torn,—'twas sure that he and I

Were, after all, unequally fatigued!

That he, in his developed manhood, stood

A little sunburnt by the glare of life; While I . . . it seemed no sun had shone

on me,

So many seasons I had missed my Springs;

My cheeks had pined and perished from their orbs,

And all the youth-blood in them had grown white

As dew on autumn cyclamens: alone My eyes and forehead answered for my face.

He said, 'Aurora, you are changed—are ill!'

'Not so, my cousin,—only not asleep,' I answered, smiling gently. 'Let it be.

You scarcely found the poet of Vaucluse As drowsy as the shepherds. What is

art

But life upon the larger scale, the higher,

When, graduating up in a spiral line Of still expanding and ascending gyres,

It pushes toward the intense significance Of all things, hungry for the Infinite?

Art's life,—and where we live, we suffer and toil.'

He seemed to sift me with his painful eyes.

'You take it gravely, cousin; you refuse

Your dreamland's right of common, and green rest.

You break the mythic turf where danced the nymphs

With crooked ploughs of actual life,—let in

The axes to the legendary woods, To pay the head-tax. You are fallen indeed

On evil days, you poets, if yourselves Can praise that art of yours no other-

wise;

And, if you cannot, . . . better take a trade

And be of use: 'twere cheaper for your youth.'

'Of use!' I softly echoed, 'there's the point

We sweep about forever in an argument;

Like swallows which the exasperate, dying year

Sets spinning in black circles, round and round,

Preparing for far flights o'er unknown seas.

And we . . . where tend we?'

'Where?' he said, and sighed.

'The whole creation, from the hour we are born,

Perplexes us with questions. Not a stone

But cries behind us, every weary step, 'Where, where?' I leave stones to reply

to stones.

Enough for me and for my fleshly heart

To harken the invocations of my kind,
When men catch hold upon my shuddering
nerves

And shriek, 'What help? what hope?
what bread i' the house?

What fire i' the frost?' There must be
some response,

Though mine fail utterly. This social
Sphinx

Who sits between the sepulchres and
stews,

Makes mock and mow against the crys-
tal heavens,

And bullies God,—exacta a word at least
From each man standing on the side of
God,

However paying a sphinx-price for it.

We pay it also if we hold our peace,
In pangs and pity. Let me speak and
die.

Alas! you'll say I speak and kill in-
stead.'

I pressed in there. 'The best men, do-
ing their best,

Know peradventure least of what they
do:

Men usefulest i' the world, are simply
used;

The nail that holds the wood, must pierce
it first,

And He alone who wields the hammer,
sees

The work advanced by the earliest blow.

'Take heart.'

'Ah, if I could have taken yours!' he
said,

'But that's past now.' Then rising . .

'I will take

At least your kindness and encourage-
ment.

I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing
your songs,

If that's your way! but sometimes slum-
ber too,

Nor tire too much with following, out of
breath,

The rhymes upon your mountains of De-
light.

Reflect, if Art be in truth the higher
life,

You need the lower life to stand upon
In order to reach up unto that higher:

And none can stand a-tiptoe in the place
He cannot stand in with two stable feet.

Remember then!—for Art's sake, hold
your life.'

We parted so. I held him in respect.
I comprehended what he was in heart
And sacrificial greatness. Ay, but *he*
Supposed me a thing too small to deign
to know;

He blew me, plainly, from the crucible,
As some intruding, interrupting fly
Not worth the pains of his analysis
Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt a
fly!

He would not for the world: he's pitiful
To flies even. 'Sing,' says he, 'and
tease me still,

If that's your way, poor insect.' That's
your way.

FIFTH BOOK.

AURORA LEIGH, be humble. Shall I
hope

To speak my poems in mysterious tune
With man and nature,—with the lava-
lymph

That trickles from successive galaxies
Still drop by drop adown the finger of
God

In still new worlds?—with summer-days
in this,

That scarce dare breathe they are so
beautiful?

With Spring's delicious trouble in the
ground

Tormented by the quickened blood of
roots,

And softly pricked by golden crocus-
sheaves

In token of the harvest-time of flowers?
With winters and with autumns,—and
beyond

With the human heart's large seasons,
when it hopes

And fears, joys, grieves, and loves?—
with all that strain

Of sexual passion, which devours the
flesh

In a sacrament of souls? with mother's
breasts

Which, round the new-made creatures
hanging there,

Throb luminous and harmonious like
pure spheres?—

With multitudinous life, and finally
 With the great escapings of ecstatic souls,
 Who, in a rush of too long prisoned
 flame,
 Their radiant faces upward, burn away
 Thus dark of the body, issuing on a
 world
 Beyond our mortal?—can I speak my
 verse
 So plainly in tune to these things and the
 rest,
 That men shall feel it catch them on the
 quick,
 As having the same warrant over them
 To hold and move them if they will or
 no,
 Alike imperious as the primal rhythm
 Of that theurgic nature? I must fail,
 Who fail at the beginning to hold and
 move
 One man,—and he my cousin, and he
 my friend,
 And he born tender, made intelligent,
 Inclined to ponder the precipitous sides
 Of difficult questions; yet obtuse to *me*,
 Of *me*, incurious! likes me very well,
 And wishes me a paradise of good,
 Good looks, good means, and good di-
 gestion,—ay,
 But otherwise evades me, puts me off
 With kindness, with a tolerant gentle-
 ness,—
 Too light a book for a grave man's read-
 ing! Go,
 Aurora Leigh: be humble.

There it is,

We women are too apt to look to one,
 Which proves a certain impotence in
 art.
 We strain our natures at doing something
 great,
 Far less because it's something great to
 do,
 Than haply that we, so, commend our-
 selves
 As being not small, and more apprecia-
 ble
 To some one friend. We must have
 mediators
 Betwixt our highest conscience and the
 judge;
 Some sweet saint's blood must quicken
 in our palms
 Or all the life in heaven seems slow and
 cold:

Good only being perceived as the end of
 good,
 And God alone pleased,—that's too poor,
 we think,
 And not enough for us by any means.
 Ay—Romney, I remember, told me once
 We miss the abstract, when we compre-
 hend.
 We miss it most when we aspire, . . . and
 fail.

Yet, so, I will not.—This vile woman's
 way
 Of trailing garments, shall not trip me
 up.
 I'll have no traffic with the personal
 thought
 In art's pure temple. Must I work in
 vain,
 Without the approbation of a man?
 It cannot be: it shall not. Fame itself,
 That approbation of the general race,
 Presents a poor end, (though the arrow
 speed,
 Shot straight with vigorous finger to the
 white,)
 And the highest fame was never reached
 except
 By what was aimed above it. Art for
 art,
 And good for God Himself, the essen-
 tial Good!
 We'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes
 erect,
 Although our woman hands should shake
 and fail:
 And if we fail . . . But must we?—
 Shall I fail?
 The Greeks said grandly in their tragic
 phrase,
 'Let no one be called happy till his
 death.'
 To which I add,—Let no one till his
 death
 Be called unhappy. Measure not the
 work
 Until the day's out and the labour done;
 Then bring your gauges. If the day's
 work's scant,
 Why, call it scant; affect no compro-
 mise;
 And, in that we have nobly stiven at
 least,
 Deal with us nobly, women though we
 be,

And honor us with truth if not with
praise.

My ballads prospered; but the ballad's
race

Is rapid for a poet who bears weights
Of thought and golden image. He can
stand

Like Atlas, in the sonnet,—and support
His own heavens pregnant with dynastic
stars;

But then he must stand still, nor take a
step.

In that descriptive poem called 'The
Hills,'

The prospects were too far and indis-
tinct.

'Tis true my critics said, 'A fine view,
that!'

The public scarcely cared to climb the
book

For even the finest; and the public's
right,

A tree's mere firewood, unless human-
ised;

Which well the Greeks knew when they
stirred its bark

With close-pressed bosoms of subsiding
nymphs,

And made the forest-rivers garrulous
With babble of gods. For us, we are
called to mark

A still more intimate humanity
In this inferior nature,—or, ourselves,
Must fall like dead leaves trodden un-
derfoot

By veritable artists. Earth, shut up
By Adam, like a fakir in a box

Left too long buried, remained stiff and
dry,

A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the Lord
came down,

Unlocked the doors, forced open the
blank eyes,

And used His kingly chrisim to straighten
out

The leathery tongue turned back into
the throat:

Since when, she lives, remembers, pal-
pitates

In every limb, aspires in every breath,
Embraces infinite relations. Now

We want no half-gods, Panomphæan
Joves,

Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads, and
the rest,

To take possession of a senseless world
To unnatural vampyre-uses. See the
earth,

The body of our body, the green earth,
Indubitably human like this flesh

And these articulated veins through
which

Our heart drives blood! there's not a
flower of spring

That dies ere June, but vaunts itself al-
lied

By issue and symbol, by significance
And correspondence, to that spirit-world

Outside the limits of our space and
time,

Whereto we are bound. Let poets give
it voice

With human meanings; else they miss
the thought,

And henceforth step down lower, stand
confessed

Instructed poorly for interpreters,
Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the
text.

Even so my pastoral failed: it was a
book

Of surface-pictures—pretty, cold, and
false

With literal transcript,—the worse done,
I think,

For being not ill-done. Let me set my
mark

Against such doings, and do otherwise.
This strikes me.—If the public whom

we know,

Could catch me at such admissions, I
should pass

For being right modest. Yet how proud
we are,

In daring to look down upon ourselves!

The critics say that epics have died out
With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed
gods—

I'll not believe it. I could never deem
As Payne Knight did, (the mythic moun-
taineer

Who travelled higher than he was born
to live,

And showed sometimes the goitre in his
throat

Discoursing of an image seen through
 fog.)
 That Homer's heroes measured twelve
 feet high.
 They were but men:—his Helen's hair
 turned gray
 Like any plain Miss Smith's, who wears
 a front;
 And Hector's infant whimpered at a
 plume.
 All actual heroes are essential men,
 And all men possible heroes: every age,
 Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
 Looks backward and before, expects a
 morn
 And claims an epos.

Ay, but every age
 Appears to souls who live in 't, (ask
 Carlyle)
 Most unheroic. Ours, for instance,
 ours:
 The thinkers scout it, and the poets
 abound
 Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:
 A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-
 washed;
 An age of scum, spooned off the richer
 part,
 An age of patches for old gaberdines,
 An age of mere transition, meaning
 nought
 Except that what succeeds must shame
 it quite
 If God please. That's wrong thinking,
 to my mind,
 And wrong thoughts make poor poems.

Every age,
 Through being beheld too close, is ill-
 discerned
 By those who have not lived past it.
 We'll suppose
 Mount Athos carved, as Alexander
 schemed,
 To some colossal statue of a man:
 The peasants, gathering brushwood in
 his ear,
 Had guessed as little as the browsing
 goats
 Of form or feature of humanity
 Up there,—in fact, had travelled five
 miles off
 Or ere the giant image broke on them,
 Full human profile, nose and chin dis-
 tinct,

Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence up
 the sky,
 And fed at evening with the blood of
 suns;
 Grand torso,—hand that flung perpetual-
 ly
 The largesse of a silver river down
 To all the country pastures. 'Tis ever
 thus
 With times we live in,—evermore too
 great
 To be apprehended near.

But poets should
 Exert a double vision; should have eyes
 To see near things as comprehensively
 As if afar they took their point of sight,
 And distant things as intimately deep
 As if they touched them. Let us strive
 for this.

I do distrust the poet who discerns
 No character or glory in his times,
 And trundles back his soul five hundred
 years,
 Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-
 court,
 To sing—oh not of lizard or of toad
 Alive in the ditch there,—'twere excusa-
 ble;
 But of some black chief, half knight, half
 sheep-lifter,
 Some beauteous dame, half chattel and
 half queen,
 As dead as must be, for the greater part,
 The poems made on their chivalric
 bones.
 And that's no wonder: death inherits
 death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this
 world
 A little overgrown, (I think here is)
 Their sole work is to represent the age,
 Their age, not Charlemagne's,—this live-
 throbbing age,
 That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates,
 aspires,
 And spends more passion, more heroic
 heat,
 Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-
 rooms,
 Than Roland with his knights at
 Roncesvalles.
 To flinch from modern varnish, coat or
 flounce,
 Cry out for togas and the picturesque,

is fatal,—foolish too. King Arthur's
self

Was commonplace to Lady Guenever ;
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as
flat,
As Fleet Street to our poets.

Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-breast-
ed age :

That, when the next shall come, the men
of that

May touch the impress with reverent
hand, and say

Behold,—behold, the paps we all have
sucked !

This bosom seems to beat still, or at
least

(It sets ours beating. This is living art,
Which thus presents and thus records
true life.)

What form is best for poems? Let me
think

Of forms less, and the external. Trust
the spirit,

As sovran nature does, to make the
form ;

For otherwise we only imprison spirit
And not embody. Inward evermore

To outward,—so in life, and so in art,
Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.
And why not fifteen? why not ten? or
seven?

What matter for the number of the
leaves,

Supposing the tree lives and grows? ex-
act

The literal unities of time and place,
When 'tis the essence of passion to ig-
nore

Both time and place? Absurd. Keep
up the fire,

And leave the generous flames to shape
themselves.

'Tis true the stage requires obsequious-
ness

To this or that convention ; ' exit ' here
And ' enter ' there ; the points for clap-
ping, fixed,

Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before
the rams :

And all the close-curved imagery clipped
In manner of their fleece at shearing-
time.

Forget to prick the galleries to the heart
Precisely at the fourth act,—culminate

Our five pyramidal acts with one act
more,—

We've lost so ! Shakspeare's ghost
could scarcely plead

Against our just damnation. Stand
aside ;

We'll muse for comfort that, last cen-
tury,

On this same tragic stage on which we
have failed,

A wigless Hamlet would have failed the
same.

And whosoever writes good poetry,
Looks just to art. He does not write
for you

Or me,—for London or for Edinburgh ;
He will not suffer the best critic known

To step into his sunshine of free thought
And self-absorbed conception, and exact

An inch-long swerving of the holy lines.
If virtue done for popularity

Defiles like vice, can art for praise or
hire

Still keep its splendour, and remain pure
art?

Eschew such serfdom. What the poet
writes,

He writes: mankind accepts it if it suits,
And that's success: if not, the poem's

passed
From hand to hand, and yet from hand

to hand,
Until the unborn snatch it, crying out

In pity on their fathers' being so dull,
And that's success too.

I will write no plays ;
Because the drama, less sublime in this,

Makes lower appeals, defends more
menially,

Adopts the standard of the public taste
To chalk its height on, wears a dog-chain

round
Its regal neck, and learns to carry and
fetch

The fashions of the day to please the
day ;

Fawns close on pit and boxes, who clap
hands,

Commending chiefly its docility

And humour in stage-tricks ; or else indeed
 Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at
 like a dog,
 Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, unjustly
 kicked,
 Yell, bite at need ; but if your drama-
 tist
 (Being wronged by some five hundred
 nobodies
 Because their grosser brains most natu-
 rally
 Misjudge the fineness of his subtle wit)
 Shows teeth an almond's breadth, pro-
 tests the length
 Of a modest phrase,—' My gentle coun-
 trymen,
 ' There's something in it haply of your
 fault,'—
 Why, then, beside five hundred nobod-
 ies,
 He'll have five thousand and five thou-
 sand more
 Against him,—the whole public,—all the
 hoofs
 Of King Saul's father's asses, in full
 drove,
 And obviously deserve it. He appealed
 To these,—and why say more if they
 condemn,
 Than if they praise him?—Weep, my
 Æschylus,
 But low and far, upon Sicilian shores !
 For since 'twas Athens (so I read the
 myth)
 Who gave commission to that fatal
 weight
 The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop on
 thee
 And crush thee,—better cover thy bald
 head ;
 She'll hear the softest hum of Hyblan
 bee
 Before thy loudest protestation ! Then
 The risk's still worse upon the modern
 stage ;
 I could not, for so little, accept success,
 Nor would I risk so much, in ease and
 calm,
 For manifest gains ; let those who
 prize,
 Pursue them : *I stand off.*

And yet, forbid,

That any irreverent fancy or conceit

Should litter in the Drama's throne-room
 where
 The rulers of our art, in whose full veins
 Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength
 And do their kingly work,—conceive
 command,
 And, from the imagination's crucial heat
 Catch up their men and and women all
 a-flame
 For action, all alive and forced to prove
 Their life by living out heart, brain, and
 nerve,
 Until mankind makes witness, ' These
 be men
 As we are,' and vouchsafes the greeting
 due
 To Imogen and Juliet—sweetest kin
 On art's side.

'Tis that, honouring to its worth
 The drama, I would fear to keep it down
 To the level of the footlights. Dies no
 more
 The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus slain,
 His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirling
 white
 Of choral vestures,—troubled in his
 blood,
 While tragic voices that clanged keen as
 swords,
 Leapt high together with the altar-flame
 And made the blue air wink. The waxen
 mask,
 Which set the grand still front of ' Themis'
 son
 Upon the puckered visage of a player ;—
 The buskin, which he rose upon and
 moved,
 As some tall ship first conscious of the
 wind
 Sweeps slowly past the piers ;—the
 mouth-piece, where
 The mere man's voice with all its breath
 and breaks
 Went sheathed in brass, and clashed on
 even heights
 Its phrasèd thunders ;—these things are
 no more,
 Which once were. And concluding
 which is clear,
 The growing drama has outgrown such
 toys
 Of simulated stature, face, and speech,
 It also peradventure may outgrow
 The simulation of the painted scene,

boards, actors, prompters, gaslight, and
costume ;
and take for a worthier stage the soul it-
self,
its shifting fancies and celestial lights,
With all its grand orchestral silences
to keep the pauses of the rhythmic
sounds.

alas, I still see something to be done,
and what I do falls short of what I see
though I waste myself on doing. Long
green days,
Vorn bare of grass and sunshine,—long
calm nights,
from which the silken sleeps were fretted
out,
be witness for me, with no amateur's
irreverent haste and busy idleness
set myself to art ! What then ? what's
done ?
What's done, at last ?

Behold, at last, a book.
of life-blood's necessary,—which it is,
By that blue vein athrob on Mahomet's
brow,
Each prophet-poet's book must show
man's blood !
of life-blood's fertilising, I wrung mine
On every leaf of this,—unless the drops
slid heavily on one side and left it dry.
That chances often : many a fervid man
Writes books as cold and flat as grave-
yard stones
From which the lichen's scraped, and if
St. Preux
Had written his own letters, as he might,
We had never wept to think of the little
mole
Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Passion
is
But something suffered, after all.

While art
Sets action on the top of suffering :
The artist's part is both to be and do,
Transfixing with a special, central power
The flat experience of the common man,
And turning outward, with a sudden
wrench,
Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing
He feels the inmost : never felt the less
Because he sings it. Does a torch less
burn
For burning next reflectors of blue steel,

That *he* should be the colder for his
place
'Twi'x't two incessant fires,—his personal
life's,
And that intense refraction which burns
back
Perpetually against him from the round
Of crystal conscience he was born into
If artist-born ? O sorrowful great gift
Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,
When one life has been found enough
for pain !
We staggering 'neath our burden as mere
men,
Being called to stand up straight as
demi-gods,
Support the intolerable strain and stress
Of the universal, and send clearly up
With voices broken by the human sob,
Our poems to find rhymes among the
stars !
But soft !—a 'poet' is a word soon said ;
A book's a thing soon written. Nay,
indeed,
The more the poet shall be questionable,
The more unquestionably comes his
book.
And this of mine—well, granting to my-
self
Some passion in it, furrowing up the
flats,
Mere passion will not prove a volume
worth
Its gall and rags even. Bubbles round
a keel
Mean nought, excepting that the vessel
moves.
There's more than passion goes to make
a man
Or book, which is a man too.
I am sad,
I wonder if Pygmalion had these
doubts,
And, feeling the hard marble first re-
lent,
'Grow supple to the straining of his arms.
And tingle through its cold to his burn-
ing lip,
Supposed his senses mocked, and that
the toil
Of stretching past the known and seen
to reach
The archetypal Beauty out of sight,
Had made his heart beat fast enough for
two,

And with his own life dazed and blinded
him!

Not so; Pygmalion loved,—and whoso
loves

Believes the impossible.

And I am sad:
I cannot thoroughly love a work of
mine,

Since none seems worthy of my thought
and hope

More highly mated. He has shot them
down.

My Phebus Apollo, soul within my soul,
Who judges by the attempted, what's at-
tained,

And with the silver arrow from his
height

Has struck down all my works before
my face

While I said nothing. Is there aught
to say?

I call the artist but a greated man:
He may be childless also, like a man.

I laboured on alone. The wind and
dust

And sun of the world beat blistering in
my face;

And hope, now for me, now against me,
dragged

My spirits onward,—as some fallen
balloon,

Which, whether caught by blossoming
tree or bare,

Is torn alike. I sometimes touched my
aim,

Or seemed,—and generous souls cried
out, 'Be strong,

Take courage; now you're on our level,
—now!

The next step saves you!' I was flushed
with praise,

But, pausing just a moment to draw
breath,

I could not choose but murmur to my-
self

'Is this all? all that's done? and all
that's gained?

If this then be success, 'tis dismaller
'Than any failure.'

O my God, my God,
O Supreme Artist, who as sole return
For all the cosmic wonder of Thy work,
Demandest of us just a word . . . a name,

'My Father!—thou hast knowledge,
only thou.'

How dreary 'tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires,
And hear the nations praising them far
off,

Too far! ay, praising our quick sense of
love.

Our very heart of passionate woman-
hood,

Which could not beat so in the verse
without

Being present also in the un-kissed lips,
And eyes undried because there's none
to ask

The reason they grow moist.

To sit alone,
And think for comfort how, that very
night,

Affianced lovers, leaning face to face
With sweet half-listenings for each other's
breath

Are reading haply from a page of ours,
To pause with a thrill, as if their cheeks
had touched,

When such a stanza, level to their mood,
Seems floating their own thoughts out—

'So I feel
For thee,'—'And I, for thee: this poet
knows

What everlasting love is!'—how, that
night,

A father, issuing from the misty roads
Upon the luminous round of lamp and
hearth

And happy children, having caught up
first

The youngest there until it shrink and
shriek

To feel the cold chin prick its dimples
through

With winter from the hills, may throw it
the lap

Of the eldest, (who has learnt to drop
her lids

To hide some sweetness newer than last
year's)

Our book and cry, . . . 'Ah you, you care
for rhymes;

So here be rhymes to pore on under
trees,

When April comes to let you! I've been
told

They are not idle as so many are,

But set hearts beating pure as well as
fast :

'Tis yours, the book ; I'll write your
name in it,

That so you may not lose, however lost
In poet's lore and charming reverie,
The thought of how your father thought
of you

In riding from the town.'

To have our books
Appraised by love, associated with love,
While *we* sit loveless ! is it hard, you
think ?

At least 'tis mournful. Fame, indeed,
'twas said,

Means simply love. It was a man said
that.

And then, there's love and love : the
love of all

To risk in turn a woman's paradox,
(Is but a small thing to the love of one.

You bid a hungry child be satisfied
With a heritage of many corn-fields :

ay,
He says he's hungry,—he would rather
have

That little barley-cake you keep from
him

While reckoning up his harvests. So
with us ;

Here, Romney, too, we fail to general-
ise !)

We're hungry.

Hungry ! but it's pitiful
To wail like unweaned babes and suck
our thumbs

Because we're hungry. Who, in all this
world,

Wherein we are haply set to pray and
fast,

And learn what good is by its opposite)
Has never hungered ? Woe to him who
has found

The meal enough : if Ugolino's full,
His teeth have crunched some foul un-
natural thing :

For here satiety proves penury
More utterly irremediable. And since
We needs must hunger,—better, for
man's love

Than God's truth ! better, for compan-
ions sweet,

Than great convictions ! let us bear our
weights,

Preferring dreary hearths to desert
souls.

Well, well, they say we're envious, we
who rhyme ;

But I, because I am a woman perhaps,
And so rhyme ill, am ill at envying.

I never envied Graham his breadth of
style,

Which gives you, with a random smutch
or two,

(Near-sighted critics analyse to smutch)
Such delicate perspectives of full life ;

Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim
'To which he cuts his cedarn poems, fine

As sketchers do their pencils ; nor Mark
Gage,

For that caressing colour and trancing
tone

Whereby you're swept away and melted
in

The sensual element, which with a back
wave

Restores you to the level of pure souls
And leaves you with Plotinus. None

of these,
For native gifts or popular applause,
I've envied ; but for this,—that when by
chance

Says some one,—' There goes Belmore,
a great man !

He leaves clean work behind him, and
requires

No sweeper up of the chips,' . . a girl
I know,

Who answers nothing, save with her
brown eyes,

Smiles unaware as if a guardian saint
Smiled in her :—for this, too,—that

Gage comes home

And lays his last book's prodigal review
Upon his mother's knees, where, years

ago,
He laid his childish spelling-book and
learned

To chirp and peck the letters from her
mouth,

As young birds must. ' Well done,' she
murmured then,

She will not say it now more wonder-
ingly ;

And yet the last ' Well done,' will touch
him more,

As catching up to-day and yesterday
In a perfect cord of love ; and so, Mark
Gage,

I envy you your mother!—and you, Graham,
 Because you have a wife who loves you
 so,
 She half forgets, at moments, to be
 proud
 Of being Graham's wife, until a friend
 observes,
 'The boy here, has his father's massive
 brow,
 Done small in wax . . . if we push back
 the curls.'

Who loves *me*? Dearest father,—mother
 sweet,—
 I speak the names out sometimes by
 myself,
 And make the silence shiver: they
 sound strange,
 As Hindostanee to an Ind-born man
 Accustomed many years to English
 speech;
 Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,
 Which will not leave off singing. Up
 in heaven
 I have my father,—with my mother's
 face
 Beside him in a blotch of heavenly
 light;
 No more for earth's familiar household
 use,
 No more! The best verse written by
 this hand,
 Can never reach them where they sit, to
 seem
 Well-done to *them*. Death quite un-
 fellows us,
 Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live and
 dead,
 And makes us part as those at Babel did
 Through sudden ignorance of a common
 tongue.
 A living Cæsar would not dare to play
 At bowls with such as my dead father
 is.

And yet this may be less so than ap-
 pears,
 This change and separation. Sparrows
 five
 For just two farthings, and God cares
 for each.
 If God is not too great for little cares,
 Is any creature, because gone to God?

I've seen some men, veracious, nowise
 mad,
 Who have thought or dreamed, de-
 clared and testified,
 They heard the Dead a ticking like a
 clock
 Which strikes the hours of the eterni-
 ties,
 Beside them, with their natural ears, and
 know
 That human spirits feel the human way,
 And hate the unreasoning awe which
 waves them off
 From possible communion. It may be.

At least, earth separates as well as
 heaven.
 For instance, I have not seen Romney
 Leigh
 Full eighteen months . . . add six, you
 get two years.
 They say he's very busy with good
 works,—
 Has parted Leigh Hall into almshouses.
 He made an almshouse of his heart one
 day,
 Which ever since is loose upon the latch
 For those who pull the string.—I never
 did.

It always makes me sad to go abroad;
 And now I'm sadder that I went to-
 night
 Among the lights and talkers at Lord
 Howe's.
 His wife is gracious, with her glossy
 braids,
 And even voice, and gorgeous eyeballs,
 calm
 As her other jewels. If she's somewhat
 cold,
 Who wonders, when her blood has stood
 so long
 In the ducal reservoir she calls her line
 By no means arrogantly? she's i.o.t
 proud:
 Not prouder than the swan is of the
 lake
 He has always swum in;—'tis her ele-
 ment,
 And so she takes it with a natural grace,
 Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows per-
 haps
 There *are* who travel without outriders,

hich isn't her fault. Ah, to watch
 her face,
 hen good Lord Howe expounds his
 theories
 f social justice and equality—
 is curious, what a tender, tolerant
 bend
 er neck takes: for she loves him,
 likes his talk,
 uch clever talk—that dear, odd Alger-
 non !'
 ie listens on, exactly as if he talked
 some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,
 oo pretty to dispute, and too absurd.

 e's gracious to me as her husband's
 friend,
 nd would be gracious, were I not a
 Leigh,
 eing used to smile just so, without her
 eyes,
 n Joseph Strangways, the Leeds mes-
 merist,
 nd Delia Dobbs, the lecturer from 'the
 States'
 pon the 'Woman's question.' Then,
 for him,
 like him . . . he's my friend. And all
 the rooms
 ere full of crinkling silks that swept
 about
 he fine dust of most subtle courtesies.
 hat then?—why then, we come home
 to be sad.
 ow lovely One I love not looked to-
 night !
 he's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.
 ler maid must use both hands to twist
 that coil
 f tresses, then be careful lest the rich
 ronze rounds should slip:—she missed,
 though, a gray hair,
 single one,—I saw it; otherwise
 he woman looked immortal. How
 they told,
 hose alabaster shoulders and bare
 breasts,
 n which the pearls, drowned out of
 sight in milk,
 ere lost, excepting for the ruby-clasp !
 hey split the amaranth velvet-boddice
 down
 o the waist or nearly, with the auda-
 cious press

Of full-breathed beauty. If the heart
 within
 Were half as white!—but, if it were,
 perhaps
 The breasts were closer covered, and the
 sight
 Less respectable, by half, too.
 I heard
 The young man with the German stu-
 dent's look—
 A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft stick,
 Which shot up straight against the part-
 ing line
 So equally dividing the long hair,—
 Say softly to his neighbor, (thirty-five
 And mediæval) 'Look that way, Sir
 Blaise.
 She's Lady Waldemar—to the left,—in
 red—
 Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest man
 just now,
 Is soon about to marry.'
 Then replied
 Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priestlike
 voice,
 Too used to syllable damnations round
 To make a natural emphasis worth
 while :
 'Is Leigh your ablest man? the same, I
 think,
 Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid
 Adopted from the people? Now, in
 change,
 He seems to have plucked a flower from
 the other side
 Of the social hedge.'
 'A flower, a flower,' exclaimed
 My German student,—his own eyes full-
 blown
 Bent on her. He was twenty, certainly.

 Sir Blaise resumed with gentle arro-
 gance,
 As if he had dropped his alms into a hat
 And gained the right to counsel,—'My
 young friend,
 I doubt your ablest man's ability
 To get the least good or help meet for
 him,
 For pagan phalanstery or Christian
 home,
 From such a flowery creature.'
 'Beautiful !'
 My student murmured, rapt,—'Mark
 how she stirs !

Just waves her head, as if a flower indeed,
Touched far off by the vain breath of
our talk.'

At which that bilious Grimwald, (he
who writes
For the Renovator) who had seemed
absorbed

Upon the table-book of autographs,
(I dare say mentally he crunched the
bones
Of all those writers, wishing them alive
To feel his tooth in earnest) turned short
round

With low carnivorous laugh,—‘a flower,
of course !
She neither sews nor spins,—and takes
no thought
Of her garments . . . falling off.’

The student flinched,
Sir Blaise, the same ; then both, draw-
ing back their chairs
As if they spied black-beetles on the
floor,

Pursued their talk, without a word being
thrown
To the critic.

Good Sir Blaise's brow is high
And noticeably narrow : a strong wind,
You fancy, might unroof him suddenly,
And blow that great top attic off his
head

So piled with feudal relics. You admire
His nose in profile, though you miss his
chin ;

But, though you miss his chin, you sel-
dom miss

His ebon cross worn innermosty,
(carved

For penance by a saintly Styrian monk
Whose flesh was too much with him,) slipping through

Some unaware unbuttoned casualty
Of the under-waistcoat. With an absent
air

Sir Blaise sate fingering it and speaking
low,

While I, upon the sofa, heard it all.

‘ My dear young friend, if we could bear
our eyes
Like blessedest St. Lucy, on a plate,
They would not trick us into choosing
wives,

As doublets, by the colour. Otherwise
Our fathers chose,—and therefore, when
they had hung
Their household keys about a lady's
waist,

The sense of duty gave her dignity :
She kept her bosom holy to her babes ;
And, if a moralist reproved her dress,
‘Twas, ‘ Too much starch ! ’—and not,
‘ Too little lawn ! ’

‘ Now, pshaw ! ’ returned the other in a
heat,

A little fretted by being called ‘ young
friend,’

Or so I took it,—‘ for St. Lucy's sake,
If she's the saint to swear by, let us
leave

Our fathers, — plagued enough about
our sons ! ’

(He stroked his beardless chin) ‘ yes,
plagued, sir, plagued :

The future generations lie on us
As heavy as the nightmare of a seer ;
Our meat and drink grow painful proph-
ecy :

I ask you,—have we leisure, if we liked,
To hallow out our weary hands to keep
Your intermittent rushlight of he past
From draughts in lobbies ? Prejudice
of sex

And marriage-law . . . the socket drops
them through

While we two speak,—however may
protest

Some over-delicate nostrils, like your
own,

‘ Gainst odours thence arising.’

‘ You are young,’
Sir Blaise objected.

‘ If I am,’ he said
With fire,—‘ though somewhat less so
than I seem,

The young run on before, and see the
thing

That's coming. Reverence for the young
I cry.

In that new church for which the world's
near ripe,

You'll have the younger in the Elder's
chair,

Presiding with his ivory front of hope
O'er foreheads clawed by cruel carrion
birds

Of life's experience.’

'Pray your blessing, sir,'
 Sir Blaise replied good-humouredly,—'I
 plucked
 A silver hair this morning from my beard,
 Which left me your inferior. Would I
 were
 Eighteen and worthy to admonish you!
 If young men of your order run before
 To see such sights as sexual prejudice
 And marriage-law dissolved,—in plainer
 words,
 A general concubinage expressed
 In a universal pruriency,—the thing
 Is scarce worth running fast for, and
 you'd gain
 By loitering with your elders.'

'Ah,' he said,
 Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-hill,
 Can talk with one at bottom of the view,
 To make it comprehensible? Why,
 Leigh

Himself, although our ablest man, I
 said,
 Is scarce advanced to see as far as this,
 Which some are: he takes up imper-
 fectly

The social question—by one handle—
 leaves

The rest to trail. A Christian socialist,
 Is Romney Leigh, you understand.'

'Not I.
 I disbelieve in Christian-pagans, much
 As you in women-fishes. If we mix
 Two colours, we lose both, and make a
 third

Distinct from either. Mark you! to
 mistake

A colour is the sign of a sick brain,
 And mine, I thank the saints, is clear
 and cool:

A neutral tint is here impossible.
 The church,—and by the church, I mean
 of course

The catholic, apostolic, mother-church,—
 Draws lines as plain and straight as her
 own wall;

Inside of which, are Christians, ob-
 viously,
 And outside . . . dogs.'

'We thank you. Well I know
 The ancient mother-church would fain
 still bite,
 For all her toothless gums,—as Leigh
 himself

Would fain be a Christian still, for all
 his wit;

Pass that; you two may settle it, for me.
 You're slow in England. In a month I
 learnt

At Gottingen enough philosophy
 To stock your English schools for fifty
 years;

Pass that, too. Here alone, I stop you
 short,

—Supposing a true man like Leigh could
 stand

Unequal in the stature of his life
 To the height of his opinions. Choose
 a wife

Because of a smooth skin?—not he, not
 he!

He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking
 shoes,

Unless she walked his way of righteous-
 ness;

And if he takes a Venus Meretrix,
 (No imputation on the lady there)

Be sure that, by some sleight of Chris-
 tian art.

He has metamorphosed and converted
 her

To a Blessed Virgin.'

'Soft!' Sir Blaise drew breath
 As if it hurt him,—'Soft! no blasphemy,
 I pray you!'

'The first Christians did the thing:
 Why not the last?' asked he of Gottin-
 gen,

With just that shade of sneering on the
 lip,

Compensates for the lagging of the
 beard,—

'And so the case is. If that fairest fair
 Is talked of as the future wife of Leigh,
 She's talked of too, at least as certainly.

As Leigh's disciple. You may find her
 name

On all his missions and commissions,
 schools,

Asylums, hospitals,—he had her down,
 With other ladies whom her starry lead

Persuaded from their spheres, to his
 country-place

In Shropshire, to the famed phalanstery
 At Leigh Hall, christianised from Four-
 tier's own,

(In which he has planted out his sapling
 stocks

Of knowledge into social nurseries)

And there, 'they say, she has tarried half
a week,
And milked the cows, and churned, and
pressed the curd,
And said 'my sister' to the lowest drab
Of all the assembled castaways; such
girls!

Ay, sided with them at the washing-
tub—
Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked perfect
arms,
Round glittering arms, plunged elbow-
deep in suds,
Like wild swans hid in lilies all a-shake.'

Lord Howe came up. 'What, talking
poetry
So near the image of the unfavorable
Muse?

That's you, Miss Leigh: I've watched
you half an hour,

Precisely as I watched the statue called
A Pallas in the Vatican;—you mind
The face, Sir Blaise?—intensely calm and
sad,

As wisdom cut it off from fellowship,—
But *that* spoke louder. Not a word
from *you*!

And these two gentlemen were bold, I
marked,
And unabashed by even your silence.'

'Ah,'
Said I, 'my dear Lord Howe, you shall
not speak

To a printing woman who has lost her
place,

(The sweet safe corner of the household
fire

Behind the heads of children) compli-
ments

As if she were a woman. We who have
clipt

The curls before our eyes, may see at
least

As plain as men do: speak out, man to
man;

No compliments, beseech you.'

'Friend to friend,
Let that be. We are sad to-night, I
saw,

(—Good night, Sir Blaise! Ah, Smith
—he has slipped away)

I saw you across the room, and stayed,
Miss Leigh,

To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,

With faces toward your jungle. There
were three;

A spacious lady, five feet ten and fat,
Who has the devil in her (and there's
room)

For walking to and fro upon the earth,
From Chippewa to China; she requires
Your autograph upon a tinted leaf
'Twixt Queen Pomare's and Emperor
Soulouque's:

Pray give it; she has energies, though
fat:

For me, I'd rather see a rick on fire
Than such a woman angry. Then a
youth

Fresh from the backwoods, green as the
underboughs,

Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss your
shoe,

And adds, he has an epic in twelve
parts,

Which when you've read, you'll do it for
his boot,—

All which I saved you, and absorb next
week

Both manuscript and man,—because a
lord

Is still more potent than a poetess
With any extreme republican. Ah, ah,
You smile at last, then.'

'Thank you.'

'Leave the smile.
I'll lose the thanks for't,—ay, and throw
you in

My transatlantic girl, with golden eyes,
That draw you to her splendid white-
ness as

The pistil of a water-lily draws,
Adust with gold. Those girls across the
sea

Are tyrannously pretty,—and I swore
(She seemed to me an innocent, frank
girl)

To bring her to you for a woman's kiss,
Not now, but on some other day or
week:

—We'll call it perjury; I give her up.'

'No, bring her.'

'Now,' said he, 'you make it hard
To touch such goodness with a girmy
palm.

I thought to tease you well, and fret you
cross,

nd steel myself, when rightly vexed
with you,
or telling you a thing to tease you more.'

Of Romney?'

'No, no; nothing worse,' he cried,
Of Romney Leigh than what is buzzed
about,—

That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,
Like many half as wise. The thing I
mean
Refers to you, not him.'

He echoed,— 'Me! You sound it like
a stone

Dropped down a dry well very listlessly
By one who never thinks about the toad
lively at the bottom. Presently perhaps
You'll sound your 'me' more proudly—
till I shrink.'

Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this
question?'

'Brief,
You'll take it graver. Give me sofa-
room,
and quiet hearing. You know Eglinton,
John Eglinton, of Eglinton in Kent?'

Is *he* the toad?—he's rather like the
snail;
Known chiefly for the house upon his
back;
To divide the man and house—you kill the
man;
That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord
Howe.'

He answered grave. 'A reputable man,
An excellent landlord of the olden
stamp,
Somewhat slack in new philanthro-
pies;
Who keeps his birthdays with a tenants'
dance,
Hard upon them when they miss the
church
To hold their children back from cate-
chism,

Not ungentle when the aged poor
Climb sticks at hedge-sides; nay, I've
heard him say,
The old dame has a twinge because
she stoops:

'That's punishment enough *for* felony.'

'O tender-hearted landlord! May I
take

My long lease with him, when the time
arrives
For gathering winter faggots!'

'He likes art-
Buys books and pictures . . of a certain
kind;
Neglects no patent duty; a good son' . . .

'To a most obedient mother. Born to
wear

His father's shoes, she wears her hus-
band's too:

Indeed I've heard it's touching. Dear
Lord Howe,

You shall not praise *me* so against your
heart,

When I'm at worst for praise *for* and fag-
gots.'

'Be
Less bitter with me, for . . in short,' he
said,

'I have a letter, which he urged me so
To bring you . . I could scarcely choose
but yield;

Insisting that a new love passing through
The hand of an old friendship, caught
from it

Some reconciling odour.'

'Love, you say?
My lord, I cannot love. I only find
The rhyme for love,—and that's not love,
my lord.

Take back your letter.'
'Pause: you'll read it first?'

'I will not read it: it is stereotyped;
The same he wrote to,—anybody's
name,

Anne Blythe the actress, when she died
so true,

A duchess fainted in a private box:
Pauline the dancer, after the great *pas*
In which her little feet winked over-
head

Like other fireflies, and amazed the pit:
Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt
Had touched the silver tops of heaven
itself

With such a pungent spirit-dart, the
Queen

Laid softly, each to each, her white-gloved palms,
And sighed for joy: or else (I thank your friend)

Aurora Leigh,—when some indifferent rhymes.

Like those the boys sang round the holy ox

On Memphis-highway, chance perhaps to set

Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he wants, Instead of any worthy wife at home,

A star upon his stage of Eglinton!

Advise him that he is not overshrewd

In being so little modest: a dropped star

Makes bitter waters, says a book I've read,—

And there's his unread letter.'

'My dear friend,'

Lord Howe began . . .

In haste I tore the phrase.

'You mean your friend of Eglinton, or me?'

'I mean you, you,' he answered with some fire.

'A happy life means prudent compromise:

The tare runs through the farmer's garnered sheaves;

But though the gleaner's apron holds pure wheat,

We count her poorer. Tare with wheat, we cry,

And good with drawbacks. You, you love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your soul on utterance. Only, . . . in this world

we have made,

(They say God made it first, but if He did

'Twas so long since, . . . and, since, we have spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if He looked this way,

From hells we preach of, with the flames blown out,)

In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy world, Where all the heaviest wrongs get uppermost,—

In this uneven, unfostering England here,

Where ledger-strokes and sword-strokes count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon the flesh

They strike from,—it is hard to stand for art,

Unless some golden tripod from the sea Be fished up, by Apollo's divine chance

To throne such feet as yours, my proph-
etess,

At Delphi. Think,—the god comes down as fierce

As twenty bloodhounds! shakes you strangles you,

Until the oracular shriek shall ooze in froth!

At best 'tis not all ease,—at worst too hard:

A place to stand on is a 'vantage gained. And here's your tripod. To be plain

dear friend, You're poor, except in what you richly

give; You labour for your own bread painful-

ly,

Or ere you pour our wine. For art's sake, pause.'

I answered slow,—as some wayfaring man,

Who feels himself at night too far from home,

Makes steadfast face against the bitter wind.

'Is art so less a thing than virtue is, That artists first must cater for their

ease Or ever they make issue past them-

selves To generous use? alas, and is it so,

That we, who would be somewhat clean must sweep

Our ways as well as walk them, and no friend

Confirm us nobly,—'Leave results to God,

But you, be clean?' What! 'prudent compromise

Makes acceptable life,' you say, instead You, you, Lord Howe?—in things in-

different, well.

For instance, compromise the wheate-
bread

For rye, the meat for lentils, silk for serge,

And sleep on down, if needs, for sleep on straw;

But there, end compromise. I will not
bate
One artist-dream on straw or down, my
lord,
Nor pinch my liberal soul, though I be
poor,
Nor cease to love high, though I live
thus low.'

So speaking, with less anger in my voice
Than sorrow, I rose quickly to depart ;
While he, thrown back upon the noble
shame
Of such high-stumbling natures, mur-
mured words,
The right words after wrong ones. Ah,
the man

Is worthy, but so given to entertain
Impossible plans of superhuman life,—
He sets his virtues on so raised a shelf,
To keep them at the grand millennial
height,

He has to mount a stool to get at them ;
And meantime, lives on quite the com-
mon way,
With everybody's morals.

As we passed,

Lord Howe insisting that his friendly
arm
Should oar me across the sparkling
brawling stream

Which swept from room to room, we fell
at once

On Lady Waldemar. 'Miss Leigh,' she
said,

And gave me such a smile, so cold and
bright,

As if she tried it in a 'tiring glass
And liked it ; ' all to-night I've strained
at you,

As babes at babbles held up out of reach
By spiteful nurses, ('Never snatch,'
they say,)

And there you sate, most perfectly shut
in

By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister
Smith,

And then our dear Lord Howe ! at last
indeed

I almost snatched. I have a world to
speak

About your cousin's place in Shropshire,
where

I've been to see his work . . . our work,—
you heard

I went? . . . and of a letter yesterday,
In which, if I should read a page or
two,

You might feel interest, though you're
locked of course

In literary toil.—You'll like to hear
Your last book lies at the phalanstery,
As judged innocuous for the elder girls
And younger women who still care for
books.

We all must read, you see, before we
live :

But slowly the ineffable light comes up,
And, as it deepens, drowns the written
word,—

So said your cousin, while we stood and
felt

A sunset from his favourite beech-tree
seat :

He might have been a poet if he would,
But then he saw the higher thing at once
And climbed to it. I think he looks well
now,

Has quite got over that unfortunate . .
Ah, ah . . . I know it moved you. Ten-
der-heart !

You took a liking to the wretched girl.
Perhaps you thought the marriage suita-
ble,

Who knows? a poet hankers for ro-
mance,

And so on. As for Romney Leigh, 'tis
sure

He never loved her,—never. By the
way,

You have not heard of *her*? . . . quite
out of sight,

And out of saving? lost in every sense?'

She might have gone on talking half-an
hour,

And I stood still, and cold, and pale, I
think,

As a garden-statue a child pelts with
snow

For pretty pastime. Every now and
then

I put in 'yes' or 'no,' I scarce knew
why ;

The blind man walks wherever the dog
pulls,

And so I answered. Till Lord Howe
broke in :

'What penance takes the wretch who in-
terrupts

The talk of charming women? I, at last,
Must brave it. Pardon, Lady Waldemar!

The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,
And loyally I've promised she shall say
Nor harder word this evening, than . . .
goodnight;

The rest her face speaks for her.'—Then
we went

And I breathe large at home. I drop
my cloak,
Unclasp my girdle, loose the band that
ties

My hair . . . now could I but unloose my
soul!

We are sepulchered alive in this close
world,

And want more room.

The charming woman there—
This reckoning up and writing down her
talk

Affects me singularly. How she talked
To pain me! woman's spite!—You wear
steel-mail;

A woman takes a housewife from her
breast,

And plucks the delicatest needle out
As 'twere a rose, and pricks you care-
fully

'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your nos-
trils, — say,

A beast would roar so tortured,—but a
man,

A human creature, must not, shall not
flinch,

No, not for shame.

What vexes after all,
Is just that such as she, with such as I,
Knows how to vex. Sweet heaven, she
takes me up

As if she had fingered me and dog-eared
me

And spelled me by the fireside half a
life!

She knows my turns, my feeble points.
—What then?

The knowledge of a thing implies the
thing;

Of course, she found *that* in me, she saw
that,

Her pencil underscored *this* for a fault,
And I, still ignorant. Shut the book up
—close!

And crush that beetle in the leaves.

O heart,
At last we shall grow hard too, like the
rest,
And call it self-defence because we are
soft.

And after all, now, . . . why should I be
pained

That Romney Leigh, my cousin, should
espouse

This Lady Waldemar? And, say, she
held

Her newly-blossomed gladness in my
face, . . .

'Twas natural surely, if not generous,
Considering how, when winter held her
fast,

I helped the frost with mine, and pained
her more

Than she pains me. Pains me!—but
wherefore pained?

'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants a
wife,—

So, good!—The man's need of the
woman, here,

Is greater than the woman's of the man,
And easier served; for where the man
discerns

A sex, (ah, ah, the man can generalise,
Said he) we see but one, ideally

And really: where we yearn to lose our-
selves

And melt like white pearls in another's
wine,

He seeks to double himself by what he
loves,

And make his drink more costly by our
pearls.

At board, at bed, at work and holiday,
It is not good for man to be alone,

And that's his way of thinking, first and
last;

And thus my cousin Romney wants a
wife.

But then my cousin sets his dignity
On personal virtue. If he understands

By love, like others, self-aggrandise-
ment,

It is that he may verily be great
By doing rightly and kindly. Once he

thought,
For charitable ends set duly forth

In heaven's white judgment-book, to
 marry . . . ah,
 We'll call her name Aurora Leigh, al-
 though
 She's changed since then!—and once,
 for social ends,
 Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian
 Erle,
 My woodland sister, sweet Maid Marian,
 Whose memory moans on in me like the
 wind
 'Through ill-shut casements, making me
 more sad
 Than ever I find reasons for. Alas,
 Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied
 ghost,
 He finds it easy then, to clap thee off
 From pulling at his sleeve and book and
 pen,—
 He locks thee out at night into the cold,
 Away from butting with thy horny eyes
 Against his crystal dreams,—that now
 he's strong
 To love anew? that Lady Waldemar
 Succeeds my Marian?

After all, why not?

He loved not Marian, more than once
 he loved
 Aurora. If he loves at last that Third,
 Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt oil
 On marble floors, I will not augur him
 Ill luck for that. Good love, howe'er
 ill-placed,
 Is better for a man's soul in the end,
 Than if he loved ill what deserves love
 well.
 A pagan, kissing for a step of Pan
 The wild-goat's hoof-print on the loamy
 down,
 Exceeds our modern thinker who turns
 back
 The strata . . . granite, limestone, coal
 and clay,
 Concluding coldly with, 'Here's law!
 Where's God?'

And then at worse,—if Romney loves
 her not,—
 At worst,—if he's incapable of love,
 Which may be—then indeed, for such a
 man
 Incapable of love, she's good enough;
 For she, at worst too, is a woman still

And loves him . . . as the sort of woman
 can.

My loose long hair began to burn and
 creep,
 Alive to the very ends, about my knees:
 I swept it backward as the wind sweeps
 flame,
 With the passion of my hands. Ah,
 Romney laughed
 One day . . . (how full the memories come
 up!)
 '—Your Florence fire-flies live on in
 your hair,'
 He said, 'It gleams so.' Well, I wrung
 them out,
 My fire-flies; made a knot as hard as
 life
 Of those loose, soft, impracticable curls,
 And then sat down and thought . . .
 'She shall not think
 Her thoughts of me,'—and drew my
 desk and wrote.

'Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not
 speak
 With people round me, nor can sleep to-
 night
 And not speak, after the great news I
 heard
 Of you and of my cousin. May you
 be
 Most happy; and the good he meant
 the world,
 Replenish his own life. Say what I
 say,
 And let my word be sweeter for your
 mouth,
 As you are *you* . . . I only Aurora Leigh.'

That's quiet, guarded. Though she hold
 it up
 Against the light, she'll not see through
 it more
 Than lies there to be seen. So much for
 pride;
 And now for peace, a little! Let me
 stop
 All writing back . . . 'Sweet thanks, my
 sweetest friend,
 You've made more joyful my great joy
 itself.'
 —No, that's too simple! she would
 twist it thus,

' My joy would still be as sweet as
 thyme in drawers,
 However shut up in the dark and dry ;
 But violets, aired and dewed by love like
 yours,
 Out-smell all thyme : we keep that in
 our clothes,
 But drop the other down our bosoms
 till
 They smell like ' . . ah, I see her writing
 back
 Just so. She'll make a nosegay of her
 words,
 And tie it with blue ribbons at the end
 ' To suit a poet ;—pshaw !
 And then we'll have
 ' The call to church ; the broken, sad,
 bad dream
 Dreamed out at last ; the marriage-vow
 complete
 With the marriage-breakfast ; praying
 in white gloves,
 Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan
 toasts
 In somewhat stronger wine than any
 sipped
 By gods since Bacchus had his way
 with grapes.

A postscript stops all that and rescues
 me.
 ' You need not write. I have been over-
 worked,
 And think of leaving London, England
 even,
 And hastening to get nearer to the sun
 Where men sleep better. So, adieu.'—
 I fold
 And seal,—and now I'm out of all the
 coil ;
 I breathe now ; I spring upward like a
 branch
 A ten-year school-boy with a crooked
 stick
 May pull down to his level in search of
 nuts,
 But cannot hold a moment. How we
 twang
 Back on the blue sky, and assert our
 height,
 While he stares after ! Now, the won-
 der seems
 That I could wrong myself by such a
 doubt.

We poets always have uneasy hearts ;
 Because our hearts, large-rounded as the
 globe,
 Can turn but one side to the sun at once.
 We are used to dip our artist-hands in
 gall
 And potash, trying potentialities
 Of alternated color, till at last
 We get confused, and wonder for our
 skin
 How nature tinged it first. Well—here's
 the true
 Good flesh-color ; I recognise my hand,
 Which Romney Leigh may clasp as just
 a friend's,
 And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.
 Alas, if we could ride with naked souls
 And make no noise and pay no price at
 all,
 I would have seen thee sooner, Italy,—
 For still I have heard thee crying
 through my life,
 Thou piercing silence of ecstatic graves,
 Men call that name !

But even a witch to-day
 Must melt down golden pieces in the
 nard
 Wherewith to anoint her broomstick ere
 she rides ;
 And poets evermore are scant of gold,
 And if they find a piece behind the
 door
 It turns by sunset to a withered leaf.
 The Devil himself scarce trusts his pat-
 ented
 Gold-making art to any who make
 rhymes,
 But culls his Faustus from philosophers
 And not from poets. ' Leave my Job,'
 said God,
 And so the Devil leaves him without
 pence,
 And poverty proves plainly special
 grace,
 In these new, just, administrative times
 Men clamour for an order of merit ;
 Why ?
 Here's black bread on the table and no
 wine !
 At least I am a poet in being poor ;
 Thank God. I wonder if the manu-
 script.

Of my long poem, if'twere sold outright,
Would fetch enough to buy me shoes, to

go
A-foot, (thrown in, the necessary patch
For the other side the Alps) ? it cannot
be :

I fear that I must sell this residue
Of my father's books ; although the
Elzcivirs

Have fly - leaves over-written by his
hand
In faded notes as thick and fine and
brown

As cobwebs on a tawny monument
Of the Old Greeks—*conferenda hæc
cum his*—

Corrupte citat—lege potius,
And so on, in the scholar's regal way
Of giving judgment on the parts of
speech,

As if he sate on all twelve thrones up-
piled,
Arraigning Israel. Ay, but books and
notes

Must go together. And this Proclus too
In these dear quaint contracted Grecian
types,

Fantastically crumpled, like his thoughts
Which would not seem too plain ; you
go round twice

For one step forward, then you take it
back

Because you're somewhat giddy ;
there's the rule

For Proclus. Ah, I stained this middle
leaf

With pressing in't my Florence iris-
bell,

Long stalk and all ; my father chided
me

For that stain of blue blood,—I recol-
lect

The peevish turn his voice took,—' Sil-
ly girls,

Who plant their flowers in our philoso-
phy

To make it fine, and only spoil the
book !

No more of it, Aurora.' Yes—no more !
Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than
all praise

Of those who love not ! 'tis so lost on
me,

I cannot, in such beggared life, afford

To lose my Proclus. Not for Florence
even.

The kissing Judas, Wolff, shall go in-
stead,

Who builds us such a royal book as
this

To honour a chief-poet, folio-built,
And writes above, 'The house of No-
body :'

Who floats in cream, as rich as any
sucked

From Juno's breasts, the broad Home-
ric lines,

And, while with their spondaic prodi-
gious mouths

They lap the lucent margins as babe-
gods,

Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's an
atheist ;

And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,
By mere fortuitous concourse of old

songs,
Conclude as much too for the universe.

That Wolff, those Platos : sweep the
upper shelves

As clean as this, and so I am almost
rich,

Which means, not forced to think of
being poor

In sight of ends. To-morrow : no de-
lay.

I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington
Dispose of such, and, having chaffered

for
My book's price with the publisher, di-
rect

All proceeds to me. Just a line to ask
His help.

And now I come, my Italy,
My own hills ! Are you 'ware of me,

my hills,
How I burn toward you ? do you feel

to-night

The urgency and yearning of my soul,
As sleeping mothers feel the sucking

babe
And smile ?—Nay, not so much as when
in heat

Vain lightnings catch at your inviolate
tops

And tremble while ye are stedfast. Still
ye go

Your own determined, calm, indifferent
 way
 Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and
 light by light ;
 Of all the grand progression nought left
 out ;
 As if God verily made you for your-
 selves,
 And would not interrupt your life with
 ours.

SIXTH BOOK.

THE English have a scornful insular way
 Of calling the French light. The lev-
 ity
 Is in the judgment only, which yet
 stands ;
 For say a foolish thing but oft enough
 (And here's the secret of a hundred
 creeds,
 Men get opinions as boys learn to spell,
 By re-iteration chiefly) the same thing
 Shall pass at last for absolutely wise,
 And not with fools exclusively. And so
 We say the French are light, as if we
 said
 The cat mews or the milch-cow gives
 us milk ;
 Say rather, cats are milked and milch-
 cows mew ;
 For what is lightness but inconsequence,
 Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and
 cause,
 Compelled by neither? Is a bullet
 light,
 That dashes from the gun-mouth, while
 the eye
 Winks and the heart beats one, to flat-
 ten itself
 To a wafer on the white speck on a
 wall
 A hundred paces off? Even so direct,
 So sternly undivertible of aim,
 Is this French people.

All idealists

Too absolute and earnest, with them all
 The idea of a knife cuts real flesh ;
 And still, devouring the safe interval
 Which nature placed between the
 thought and act

With those too fiery and impatient
 souls,
 They threaten conflagration to the world
 And rush with most unscrupulous logic
 on
 Impossible practice. Set your orators
 To blow upon them with loud windy
 mouths
 Through watchword phrases, jest or
 sentiment,
 Which drives our burley brutal English
 mobs
 Like so much chaff, whichever way
 they blow,—
 This light French people will not thus
 be driven.
 They turn indeed ; but then they turn
 upon
 Some central pivot of their thought and
 choice,
 And veer out by the force of holding
 fast.
 —That's hard to understand, for En-
 glishmen
 Unused to abstract questions, and un-
 trained
 To trace the involutions, valve by valve,
 In each orb'd bulb-root of a general
 truth,
 And mark what subtly fine integument
 Divides opposed compartments. Free-
 dom's self
 Comes concrete to us, to be understood.
 Fixed in a feudal form incarnately
 To suit our ways of thought and reve-
 rence,
 The special form, with us, being still
 the thing.
 With us, I say, though I'm of Italy
 By mother's birth and grave, by father's
 grave
 And memory ; let it be,—a poet's heart
 Can swell to a pair of nationalities,
 However ill-lodged in a woman's
 breast.

And so I am strong to love this noble
 France.

This poet of the nations, who dreams on
 And wails on (while the household goes
 to wreck)

For ever, after some ideal good,—
 Some equal poise of sex, some unvowed
 love

Inviolate, some spontaneous brother-
hood.
Some wealth, that leaves none poor and
finds none tired,
Some freedom of the many that respects
The wisdom of the few. Heroic
dreams !
Sublime, to dream so ; natural, to wake :
And sad, to use such lofty scaffoldings,
Erected for the building of a church,
To build instead a brothel . . or a pris-
on—
May God save France !
And if at last she sighs
Her great soul up into a great man's
face,
To flush his temples out so gloriously
That few dare carp at Cæsar for being
bald,
What then ?—this Cæsar represents, not
reigns,
And is no despot, though twice abso-
lute :
This Head has all the people for a
heart ;
This purple's lined with the democ-
racy.—
Now let him see to it ! for a rent within
Must leave irreparable rags without.

A serious riddle : find such anywhere
Except in France ; and when 'tis found
in France,
Be sure to read it rightly. So, I mused
Up and down, up and down, the ter-
raced streets,
The glittering Boulevards, the white
colonnades
Of fair fantastic Paris who wears trees
Like plumes, as if man made them, spire
and tower
As if they had grown by nature, tossing
up
Her fountains in the sunshine of the
squares,
As if in beauty's game she tossed the
dice,
Or blew the silver down-balls of her
dreams
To sow futurity with the seeds of thought
And count the passage of her festive
hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful

As Venice on the waters, the sea-swan.
What bosky gardens dropped in close-
walled courts
As plums in ladies' laps, who start and
laugh :
What miles of streets that run on after
trees,
Still carrying all the necessary shops,
Those open caskets with the jewels seen!
And trade is art, and art's philosophy,
In Paris. There's a silk, for instance,
there,
As worth an artist's study for the folds,
As that bronze opposite ! nay, the bronze
has faults ;
Art's here too artful,—conscious as a
maid
Who leans to mark her shadow on the
wall
Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.

Yet Art walks forward, and knows
where to walk :
The artists also are idealists,
Too absolute for nature, logical
To austerity in the application of
The special theory : not a soul content
To paint a crooked pollard and an ass,
As the English will, because they find
it so
And like it somehow.—There the old
Tuileries
Is pulling its high cap down on its eyes,
Confounded, conscience-stricken, and
amazed
By the apparition of a new fair face
In those devouring mirrors. Through
the grate
Within the gardens, what a heap of
babes,
Swept up like leaves beneath the chest-
nut trees
From every street and alley of the town,
By ghosts perhaps that blow too bleak
this way
A-looking for their heads ! Dear pretty
babes,
I wish them luck to have their ball-play
out
Before the next change. Here the air
is thronged
With statues poised upon their columns
fine,
As if to stand a moment were a feat,

Against that blue! What squares!
 what breathing-room
 For a nation that runs fast,—ay, runs
 against
 The dentist's teeth at the corner in pale
 rows,
 Which grin at progress in an epigram.

I walked the day out, listening to the
 chink
 Of the first Napoleon's dry bones in his
 second grave
 By victories guarded 'neath the golden
 dome
 That caps all Paris like a bubble. ' Shall
 These dry bones live,' thought Louis
 Philippe once,
 And lived to know. Herein is argu-
 ment
 For kings and politicians, but still more
 For poets, who bear buckets to the well
 Of ampler draught.

These crowds are very good
 For meditation, (when we are very
 strong)
 Though love of beauty makes us timor-
 ous,
 And draws us backward from the coarse
 town-sights
 To count the daisies upon dappled fields,
 And hear the streams bleat on among
 the hills
 In innocent and indolent repose ;
 While still with silken elegiac thoughts
 We wind out from us the distracting
 world
 And die into the chrysalis of a man,
 And leave the best that may, to come of
 us
 In some brown moth. I would be bold
 and bear
 To look into the swarthiest face of things.
 For God's sake who has made them.

Six days' work ;

The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn
 and eve,
 The whole work bettered of the pre-
 vious five!
 Since God collected and resumed in
 man

The firmaments, the strata, and the
 lights,
 Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—all
 their trains
 Of various life caught back upon His
 arm,
 Reorganised, and constituted MAN,
 The microcosm, the adding up of works ;
 Within whose fluttering nostrils, then,
 at last
 Consummating Himself the Maker sigh-
 ed,
 As some strong winner at the foot race
 sighs
 Touching the goal

Humanity is great ;
 And, if I would not rather pour upon
 An ounce of common, ugly, human dust,
 An artisan's palm or a peasant's brow,
 Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and God,
 Than track old Nilus to his silver roots,
 And wait on all the changes of the
 moon

Among the mountain-peaks of Thessaly,
 (Until her magic crystal round itself
 For many a witch to see in)—set it down
 As weakness,—strength by no means.
 How is this

That men of science, osteologists
 And surgeons, beat some poets in respect
 For nature,—count nought common or
 unclean,
 Spend raptures upon perfect specimens
 Of indurated veins, distorted joints,
 Or beautiful new cases of curved spine ;
 While we, we are shocked at nature's
 falling off,
 We dare to shrink back from her warts
 and blains,
 We will not, when she sneezes, look at
 her,
 Not even to say, 'God bless her !'
 That's our wrong,
 For that, she will not trust us often with
 Her larger sense of beauty and desire,
 But tethers us to a lily or a rose
 And bids us diet on the dew inside,
 Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-
 boy
 (Who stares unseen against our absent
 eyes,
 And wonders at the gods that we must
 be,
 To pass so carelessly for the oranges !)

Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-world
 To this world, undisparaged, unde-
 spoiled,
 And (while we scorn him for a flower or
 two,
 As being, Heaven help us, less poetical)
 Contains himself both flowers and firm-
 maments
 And surging seas and aspectable stars
 And all that we would push him out of
 sight
 In order to see nearer. Let us pray
 God's grace to keep God's image in re-
 pute:
 That so the poet and philanthropist
 (Even I and Romney) may stand side
 by side,
 Because we both stand face to face with
 men
 Contemplating the people in the rough,
 Yet each so follow a vocation,—his
 And mine.

I walked on, musing with myself
 On life and art, and whether after all
 A larger metaphysics might not help
 Our physics, a completer poetry
 Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants
 More fully than the special outside
 plans,
 Phalansteries, material institutes,
 The civil descriptions and lay monas-
 teries
 Preferred by modern thinkers, as they
 thought
 The bread of man indeed made all his
 life,
 And washing seven times in the 'Peo-
 ple's Baths'
 Were sovereign for a people's leprosy,
 Still leaving out the essential prophet's
 word
 That comes in power. On which, we
 thunder down,
 We prophets, poets,—Virtue's in the
 word!
 The maker burnt the darkness up with
 His,
 To inaugurate the use of vocal life;
 And, plant a poet's word even, deep
 enough
 In any man's breast, looking presently
 For offshoots, you have done more for
 the man

Than if you dressed him in a broad-
 cloth coat
 And warmed his Sunday potage at your
 fire.
 Yet Romney leaves me . . .
 God! what face is that?
 O Romney, O Marian!
 Walking on the quays
 And pulling thoughts to pieces leisurely,
 As if I caught at grasses in a field
 And bit them slow between my absent
 lips,
 And shred them with my hands . . .
 What face is that?
 What a face, what a look, what a like-
 ness! Full on mine
 The sudden blow of it came down, till
 all
 My blood swam, my eyes dazzled.
 Then I sprang—

It was as if a meditative man
 Were dreaming out a summer afternoon
 And watching gnats a-prick upon a
 pond,
 When something floats up suddenly, out
 there,
 Turns over . . . a dead face, known once
 alive—
 So old, so new! It would be dreadful
 now
 To lose the sight and keep the doubt of
 this.
 He plunges—ha! he has lost it in the
 splash.

I plunged—I tore the crowd up, either
 side,
 And rushed on,—forward, forward . . .
 after her.
 Her? whom?
 A woman sauntered slow in front,
 Munching an apple,—she left off
 amazed
 As if I had snatched it: that's not she,
 at least.
 A man walked arm-linked with a lady
 veiled,
 Both heads dropped closer than the
 need of talk:
 They started; he forgot her with his
 face,
 And she, herself,—and clung to him as if

My look were fatal. Such a stream of folk,
 And all with cares and business of their own!
 I ran the whole quay down against their eyes;
 No Marian; nowhere Marian. Almost, now,
 I could call Marian, Marian, with the shriek
 Of desperate creatures calling for the Dead.
 Where is she, was she? was she anywhere?
 I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining out
 In every uncertain distance, till at last,
 A gentleman abstracted as myself
 Came full against me, then resolved the clash
 In voluble excuses,—obviously
 Some learned member of the Institute
 Upon his way there, walking, for his health,
 While meditating on the last 'Discourse,'
 Pinching the empty air 'twixt finger and thumb,
 From which the snuff being ousted by that shock,
 Defiled his snow-white waistcoat duly pricked
 At the button-hole with honourable red;
 'Madame, your pardon,'—there he swerved from me
 A metre, as confounded as he had heard
 That Dumas would be chosen to fill up
 The next chair vacant, by his '*men in us,*'
 Since when was genius found respectable?
 It passes in its place, indeed,—which means
 The seventh floor back, or else the hospital:
 Revolving pistols are ingenious things,
 But prudent men (Academicans are)
 Scarce keep them in the cupboard next the prunes.

And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth,
 I loitered to my inn. O world, O world,

O jurists, rhymers, dreamers, what you please,
 We play a weary game of hide and seek!
 We shape a figure of our fantasy,
 Call nothing something, and run after it
 And lose it, lose ourselves too in the search,
 Till clash against us, comes a somebody
 Who also has lost something and is lost,
 Philosopher against Philanthropist,
 Academician against poet, man
 Against woman, against the living the dead,—
 Then home, with a bad headache and worst jest,

To change the water for my heliotropes
 And yellow roses. Paris has such flowers.
 But England, also. 'Twas a yellow rose,
 By that south window of the little house,
 My cousin Romney gathered with his hand
 On all my birthdays for me, save the last;
 And then I shook the tree too rough, too rough,
 For roses to stay after.

Now, my maps.
 I must not linger here from Italy
 Till the last nightingale is tired of song,
 And the last fire-fly dies off in the maize.
 My soul's in haste to leap into the sun
 And scorch and seethe itself to a finer mood,
 Which here, in this chill north, is apt to stand
 Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face persists.
 It floats up, it turns over in my mind,
 As like to Marian, as one dead is like
 The same alive. In very deed a face
 And not a fancy, though it vanished so;
 The small fair face between the darks
 of hair,

I used to liken, when I saw her first,
 To a point of moonlit water down a well:
 The low brow, the frank space between
 the eyes,
 Which always had the brown pathetic
 look
 Of a dumb creature who had been beaten
 once
 And never since was easy with the
 world.
 Ah, ah—now I remember perfectly
 Those eyes to-day,—how overlarge they
 seemed,
 As if some patient passionate despair
 Like a coal dropt and forgot on tapes-
 try,
 Which slowly burns a widening circle
 out)
 Had burnt them larger, larger. And
 those eyes
 To-day, I do remember, saw me too,
 As I saw them, with conscious lids
 astrain
 In recognition. Now a fantasy,
 A simple shade or image of the brain,
 Is merely passive, does not retro-act,
 Is seen, but sees not.

'Twas a real face,
 Perhaps a real Marian.
 Which being so,
 I ought to write to Romney, 'Marian's
 here.
 Be comforted for Marian.'
 My pen fell,
 My hands struck sharp together as
 hands do
 Which hold at nothing. Can I write to
 him
 A half truth? can I keep my own soul
 blind
 To the other half, . . . the worse? What
 are our souls,
 If still, to run on straight a sober pace
 Nor start at every pebble or dead leaf,
 They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,
 suppress
 Six tenths of the road? Confront the
 truth, my soul!
 And oh, as truly as that was Marian's
 face,
 The arms of that same Marian clasped
 a thing

. . . Not hid so well beneath the scanty
 shawl,
 I cannot name it now for what it was.

A child. Small business has a cast-
 away
 Like Marian with that crown of prosper-
 ous wives,
 At which the gentlest she grows arro-
 gant
 And says, 'my child.' Who'll find an
 emerald ring
 On a beggar's middle finger, and require
 More testimony to convict a thief?
 A child's too costly for so mere a wretch;
 She filched it somewhere; and it means,
 with her,
 Instead of honor, blessing, . . . merely
 shame
 I cannot write to Romney, 'Here she is,
 Here's Marian found! I'll set you on
 her track:
 I saw her here, in Paris, . . . and her
 child.

She put away your love two years ago,
 But, plainly, not to starve. You suf-
 fered then;
 And, now that you've forgot her utterly
 As any last year's annual in whose place
 You've planted a thick flowering ever-
 green,
 I choose, being kind, to write and tell
 you this
 To make you wholly easy—she's not
 dead,
 But only . . . damned.'

Stop there: I go too fast,
 I'm cruel like the rest,—in haste to take
 The first stir in the arras for a rat,
 And set my barking, biting thoughts
 upon't.
 —A child! what then? Suppose a
 neighbour's sick
 And asked her, 'Marian, carry out my
 child
 In this Spring air,'—I punish her for
 that?
 Or say, the child should hold her round
 the neck
 For good child-reasons, that he liked it
 so
 And would not leave her—she had win-
 ning ways—

I brand her therefore that she took the
child ?

Not so.

I will not write to Romney Leigh.
For now he's happy,—and she may in-
deed

Be guilty,—and the knowledge of her
fault

Would draggle his smooth time. But I,
whose days

Are not so fine they cannot bear the
rain,

And who moreover having seen her
face

Must see it again, . . . will see it, by my
hopes

Of one day seeing heaven too. The
police

Shall track her, hound her, ferret their
own soil ;

We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs

But certainly we'll find her, have her
out,

And save her, if she will or will not—
child

Or no child,—if a child, then one to
save !

The long weeks passed on without con-
sequence.

As easy find a footstep on the sand

The morning after spring-tide, as the
trace

Of Marian's feet between the incessant
surfs

Of this live flood. She may have
moved this way,—

But so the star-fish does, and crosses out
The dent of her small shoe. The foiled

police
Renounced me ; ' Could they find a girl

and child,
No other signalment but a girl and

child ?
No data shown but noticeable eyes

And hair in masses, low upon the brow,
As if it were an iron crown and pressed ?

Friends heighten, and suppose they
specify :

Why, girls with hair and eyes, are every-
where

In Paris ; they had turned me up in
vain

No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly

Mathildes, Justines, Victoires, . . . or, if I
sought

The English Betsis, Saras, by the score.
They might as well go out into the
fields

To find a speckled bean, that's somehow
specked,

And somewhere in the pod.'—They left
me so.

Shall I leave Marian ? have I dreamed
a dream ?

—I thank God I have found her ? I
must say

' Thank God,' for finding her, although
' tis true

I find the world more sad and wicked
for't.

But she—

I'll write about her, presently ;
My hand's a-tremble as I had just
caught up

My heart to write with, in the place
of it.

At least you'd take these letters to be
write

At sea, in storm !—wait now . . .
A simple chance

Did all. I could not sleep last night,
and tired

Of turning on my pillow and harder
thoughts,

Went out at early morning, when the
air

Is delicate with some last starry touch,
To wander through the Market-place of

Flowers
(The prettiest haunt in Paris), and make

sure
At worst that there were roses in the

world
So wandering, musing with the artist's

eye,
That keeps the shade-side of the thing

it loves,
Half-absent, whole-observing, while the

crowd
Of young vivacious and black-braided

heads
Dipped, quick as finches in a blossomed

tree,
Among the nosegays, cheapening this

and that
In such a cheerful twitter of rapid

speech,—

My heart leapt in me, startled by a voice
That slowly, faintly, with long breaths
that marked

The interval between the wish and
word,

Inquired in stranger's French, 'Would
that be much,

That branch of flowering mountain-
gorse?'—'So much?

Too much for me, then!' turning the
face round

So close upon me, that I felt the sigh
It turned with.

'Marian, Marian!'—face to face—
'Marian! I find you. Shall I let you
go?'

I held her two slight wrists with both
my hands;

'Ah Marian, Marian, can I let you go?'

—She fluttered from me like a cycla-
men,

As white, which taken in a sudden wind
Beats on against the palisade.—'Let
pass.'

She said at last. 'I will not,' I replied;

'I lost my sister Marian many days,
And sought her ever in my walks and
prayers,

And now I find her . . . do we throw
away

The bread we worked and prayed for,—
crumble it

And drop it, . . . to do even so by thee
Whom still I've hungered after more
than bread,

My sister Marian?—Can I hurt thee,
dear?

Then why distrust me? Never tremble
so.

Come with me rather where we'll talk
and live

And none shall vex us. I've a home for
you

And me and no one else' . . .

She shook her head.

'A home for you and me and no one
else

Ill-suits one of us: I prefer to such,
A roof of grass on which a flower might
spring,

Less costly to me than the cheapest
here;

And yet I could not, at this hour, afford
A like home even. That you offer yours,

I thank you. You are good as heaven
itself—

As good as one I knew before . . . Fare-
well!

I loosed her hands.—'In *his* name, no
farewell!

(She stood as if I held her,) 'for his
sake,

For his sake, Romney's! by the good he
meant,

Ay, always! by the love he pressed for
once,—

And by the grief, reproach, abandon-
ment,

He took in change' . . .

'He, Romney! who grieved *him*?
Who had the heart for't? what reproach
touched *him*?

Be merciful,—speak quickly.'

'Therefore come.'

I answered with authority,—'I think
We dare to speak such things and name
such names

In the open squares of Paris!'

Not a word
She said, but in a gentle humbled way,

(As one who had forgot herself in grief)
Turned round and followed closely
where I went,

As if I led her by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, step by step,—
And so in silence we walked on a mile.

And then she stopped: her face was
white as wax.

'We go much further?'

'You are ill,' I asked,

'Or tired?'

She looked the whiter for her smile.

'There's one at home,' she said, 'has
need of me

By this time,—and I must not let him
wait.'

'Not even,' I asked, 'to hear of Romney
Leigh?'

'Not even,' she said, 'to hear of Mister
Leigh.'

'In that case,' I resumed, 'I go with
you,

And we can talk the same thing there
as here.

None waits for me : I have my day to spend.'

Her lips moved in a spasm without a sound,—

But then she spoke. 'It shall be as you please ;

And better so—'tis shorter seen than told.

And though you will not find me worth your pains,

That even, may be worth some pains to know

For one as good as you are.'

Then she led

The way, and I, as by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, followed her,
Stepping by her footsteps, breathing by
her breath,

And holding her with eyes that would
not slip ;

And so, without a word, we walked a
mile,

And so, another mile, without a word.

Until the peopled streets being all dis-
missed,

House-rows and groups all scattered
like a flock,

The market-gardens thickened, and the
long

White walls beyond, like spiders' out-
side threads,

Stretched, feeling blindly toward the
country-fields

Through half-built habitations and half-
dug

Foundations, — intervals of trenchant
chalk,

That bit betwixt the grassy uneven
turfs

Where goats (vine tendrils trailing from
their mouths)

Stood perched on edges of the cellarage
Which should be, staring as about to

leap
To find their coming Bacchus. All the

place
Seemed less a cultivation than a waste :

Men work here, only,—scarce begin to
live :

All's sad, the country struggling with
the town,

Like an untamed hawk upon a strong
man's fist,

That beats its wings and tries to get
away,

And cannot choose be satisfied so soon
To hop through court-yards with its

right foot tied,
The vintage plains and pastoral hills in

sight.

We stopped beside a house too high and
slim

To stand there by itself, but waiting till
Five others, two on this side, three on

that,
Should grow up from the sullen second
floor

They pause at now, to build it to a row.
The upper windows partly were un-

glazed
Meantime,—a meagre, unripe house : a

line
Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind,

And just in front, beyond the lime and
bricks

That wronged the grass between it and
the road,

A great acacia with its slender trunk
And overpoise of multitudinous leaves,

(In which a hundred fields might spill
their dew

And intense verdure, yet find room
enough)

Stood reconciling all the place with
green.

I followed up the stair upon her step.
She hurried upward, shot across a face,

A woman's on the landing,—'How now,
now !

Is no one to have holidays but you ?
You said an hour, and staid three hours,

I think,
And Julie waiting for your betters here ?

Why if he had waked, he might have
waked, for me.'

—Just murmuring an excusing word she
passed

And shut the rest out with the chamber-
door,

Myself shut in beside her.

'Twas a room
Scarce larger than a grave, and near as

bare ;

Two stools, a pallet-bed ; I saw the
 room ;
 A mouse could find no sort of shelter
 in't,
 Much less a greater secret ; curtain-
 less,—
 The window fixed you with its torturing
 eye,
 Defying you to take a step apart
 If peradventure you would hide a thing.
 I saw the whole room, I and Marian
 there
 Alone.
 Alone ? She threw her bonnet off,
 Then sighing as 'twere sighing the last
 time,
 Approached the bed, and drew a shawl
 away ;
 You could not peel a fruit you fear to
 bruise
 More calmly and more carefully than
 so,—
 Nor would you find within, a rosier
 flushed
 Pomegranate—
 There he lay upon his back,
 The yearling creature, warm and moist
 with life
 To the bottom of his dimples,—to the
 ends
 Of the lovely tumbled curls about his
 face ;
 For since he had been covered over-
 much
 To keep him from the light glare, both
 his cheeks
 Were hot and scarlet as the first live
 rose
 The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed away
 into,
 The faster for his love. And love was
 here
 As instant : in the pretty baby-mouth,
 Shut close as if for dreaming that it
 sucked ;
 The little naked feet drawn up the way
 Of nestled birdlings ; everything so
 soft
 And tender,—to the tiny holdfast
 hands,
 Which, closing on the finger into sleep,
 Had kept the mould of't.

While we stood there dumb,

For oh, that it should take such inno-
 cence
 To prove just guilt, I thought, and stood
 there dumb ;
 The light upon his eyelids pricked them
 wide,
 And, staring out at us with all their
 blue,
 As half perplexed between the angel-
 hood
 He had been away to visit in his sleep,
 And our most mortal presence,—gradu-
 ally
 He saw his mother's face, accepting it
 In change for heaven itself, with such a
 smile
 As might have well been learnt there,—
 never moved,
 But smiled on in a drowse of ecstasy,
 So happy (half with her and half with
 heaven)
 He could not have the trouble to be
 stirred,
 But smiled and lay there. Like a rose,
 I said :
 As red and still indeed as any rose.
 That blows in all the silence of its
 leaves,
 Content, in blowing, to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking him as
 wine)
 In that extremity of love, 'twill pass
 For agony or rapture, seeing that love
 Includes the whole of nature, rounding
 it
 To love . . . no more,—since more can
 never be
 Than just love. Self-forgot, cast out of
 self,
 And drowning in the transport of the
 sight,
 Her whole pale passionate face, mouth,
 forehead, eyes,
 One gaze, she stood : then, slowly as he
 smiled,
 She smiled too, slowly, smiling unaware,
 And drawing from his countenance to
 hers
 A fainter red, as if she watched a flame
 And stood in it a-glow. 'How beauti-
 ful,'
 Said she.

I answered, trying to be cold.
 (Must sin have compensations, was my thought,
 As if it were a holy thing like grief?
 And is a woman to be fooled aside
 From putting vice down, with that woman's toy
 A baby?)—'Ay! the child is well enough.'
 I answered. 'If his mother's palms are clean
 They need be glad of course in clasping such:
 But if not,—I would rather lay my hand,
 Were I she,—on God's brazen altar-bar,
 Red-hot with burning sacrificial lambs,
 Than touch the sacred curls of such a child.'

She plunged her fingers in his clustering locks,
 As one who would not be afraid of fire;
 And then with indrawn steady utterance said,
 'My lamb, my lamb! although, through such as thou,
 The most unclean got courage and approach
 To God, once,—now they cannot, even with men,
 Find grace enough for pity and gentle words.'

'My Marian,' I made answer, grave and sad,
 'The priest who stole a lamb to offer him,
 Was still a thief. And if a woman steals
 (Through God's own barrier-hedges of true love,
 Which fence out license in securing love)
 A child like this, that smiles so in her face,
 She is no mother but a kidnapper,
 And he's a dismal orphan . . . not a son;
 Whom all her kisses cannot feed so full
 He will not miss hereafter a pure home
 To live in, a pure heart to lean against,
 A pure good mother's name and memory
 To hope by, when the world grows thick and bad,
 And he feels out for virtue.'

'Oh,' she smiled
 With bitter patience, 'the child takes his chance,
 Not much worse off in being fatherless
 Than I was, fathered. He will say, be-like,
 His mother was the saddest creature born;
 He'll say his mother lived so contrary
 To joy, that even the kindest, seeing her,
 Grew sometimes almost cruel: he'll not say
 She flew contrarious in the face of God
 With bat-wings of her vices. Stole my child,—
 My flower of earth, my only flower on earth,
 My sweet, my beauty! . . . Up she snatched the child,
 And, breaking on him in a storm of tears,
 Drew out her long sobs from their shivering roots,
 Until he took it for a game, and stretched
 His feet and flapped his eager arms like wings,
 And crowed and gurgled through his infant laugh:
 'Mine, mine,' she said; 'I have as sure a right
 As any glad proud mother in the world,
 Who sets her darling down to cut his teeth
 Upon her church-ring. If she talks of law,
 I talk of law! I claim my mother-dues
 By law,—the law which now is paramount;
 The common law, by which the poor and weak
 Are trodden underfoot by vicious men,
 And loathed for ever after by the good.
 Let pass! I did not filch . . . I found the child.'

'You found him, Marian?'
 'Ay, I found him where
 I found my curse,—in the gutter, with my shame!
 What have you, any of you, to say to that,
 Who all are happy, and sit safe and high

And never spoke before to arraign my
 right
 To grief itself? What, what, . . . being
 beaten down
 By hoofs of maddened oxen into a ditch,
 Half-dead, whole mangled, . . . when a girl
 at last,
 Breathes, sees . . . and finds there, bed-
 ded in her flesh,
 Because of the extremity of the shock,
 Some coin of price! . . . and when a
 good man comes
 (That's God! the best men are not quite
 as good)
 And says, 'I dropped the coin there:
 take it you,
 And keep it,—it shall pay you for the
 loss,'—
 You all put up your finger—'See the
 thief!
 'Observe that precious thing she has
 come to filch:
 'How bad those girls are!' Oh, my
 flower, my pet,
 I dare forget I have you in my arms,
 And fly off to be angry with the world,
 And fright you, hurt you with my tem-
 pers, till
 You double up your lip? Why, that
 indeed
 Is bad: a naughty mother!
 'You mistake,'
 I interrupted, 'If I loved you not,
 I should not, Marian, certainly be here.
 'Alas,' she said, 'you are so very good;
 And yet I wish indeed you had never
 come
 To make me sob until I vex the child.
 It is not wholesome for these pleasure-
 plats
 To be so early watered by our brine.
 And then, who knows? he may not like
 me now
 As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me fret,
 One's ugly fretting! he has eyes the
 same
 As angels, but he cannot see as deep.
 And so I've kept for ever in his sight
 A sort of smile to please him, as you
 place
 A green thing from the garden in a cup,
 To make believe it grows there. Look,
 my sweet,

My cowslip-ball! we've done with that
 cross face,
 And here's the face come back you
 used to like.
 Ah, ah! he laughs! he likes me. Ah,
 Miss Leigh,
 You're great and pure; but were you
 purer still,—
 As if you had walked, we'll say, no
 elsewhere
 Than up and down the new Jerusalem,
 And held your trailing lutestring up
 yourself
 From brushing the twelve stones, for
 fear of some
 Small speck as little as a needle-prick,
 White stitched on white,—the child
 would keep to *me*
 Would choose his poor lost Marian, like
 me best,
 And, though you stretched your arms,
 cry back and cling,
 As we do when God says it's time to die
 And bids us go up higher. Leave us,
 then;
 We two are happy. Does *he* push me off?
 He's satisfied with me, as I with him.'

'So soft to one, so hard to others! Nay,'
 I cried, more angry that she melted me,
 'We make henceforth a cushion of our
 faults
 To sit and practise easy virtues on?
 I thought a child was given to sanctify
 A woman,—set her in the sight of all
 The clear-eyed heavens, a chosen min-
 ister
 To do their business and lead spirits up
 The difficult blue heights. A woman
 lives,
 Not bettered, quickened toward the
 truth and good
 Through being a mother? . . . then she's
 none! although
 She damps her baby's cheeks by kissing
 them,
 As we kill roses'
 'Kill! O Christ,' she said,
 And turned her wild sad face from side
 to side
 With most despairing wonder in it—
 'What,
 What have you in your souls against me
 then,

All of you? am I wicked, do you think?
God knows me, trusts me with a child;
but you,

You think me really wicked?

‘Complaisant’

I answered softly, ‘to a wrong you’ve
done,

Because of certain profits,—which is
wrong

Beyond the first wrong, Marian. When
you left

The pure place and the noble heart, to
take

The hand of a seducer’ . . .

‘Whom? whose hand?’

I took the hand of’ . . .

Springing up erect

And lifting up the child at full arms’
length,

As if to bear him like an oriflamme
Unconquerable to armies of reproach,—

‘By *him*,’ she said, ‘my child’s head
and its curls,

By those blue eyes no woman born could
dare

A perjury on, I make my mother’s oath,
That if I left that Heart, to lighten it,

The blood of mine was still, except for
grief!

No cleaner maid than I was, took a step
To a sadder end,—no matron-mother
now

Looks backward to her early maiden-
hood

Through chaster pulses. I speak stead-
ily:

And if I lie so, . . . if, being fouled in
will

And paltered with in soul by devil’s
lust,

I dared to bid this angel take my part, . . .
Would God sit quiet, let us think, in
heaven,

Nor strike me dumb with thunder? Yet
I speak:

He clears me therefore. What, ‘se-
duced’ ’s your word?

Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn in
France?

Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb
with claws,

Seduce it into carrion? So with me.
I was not ever, as you say, seduced,

But simply, murdered.’

There she paused, and sighed,
With such a sigh as drops from agony
To exhaustion,—sighing while she let
the babe

Slide down upon her bosom from her
arms,

And all her face’s light fell after him,
Like a torch quenched in falling

Down she sank,

And he sate upon the bedside with the
child.

But I, convicted, broken utterly,
With woman’s passion clung about her
waist,

And kissed her hair and eyes,—‘I have
been wrong,

Sweet Marian’ . . . (weeping in a tender
rage)

‘Sweet holy Marian! And now, Ma-
rian, now,

I’ll use your oath although my lips are
hard,

And by the child, my Marian, by the
child,

I’ll swear his mother shall be innocent
Before my conscience, as in the open
book

Of Him who reads our judgment. In-
nocent,

My sister! let the night be ne’er so
dark,

The moon is surely somewhere in the
sky:

So surely is your whiteness to be found
Through all dark facts. But pardon,
pardon me,

And smile a little, Marian,—for the
child,

If not for me, my sister.’

The poor lip

Just motioned for the smile and let it
go:

And then, with scarce a stirring of the
mouth,

As if a statue spoke that could not
breathe,

But spoke on calm between its marble
lips,—

‘I’m glad, I’m very glad you clear me
so.

I should be sorry that you set me down
With harlots, or with even a better
name

Which misbecomes his mother. 'For
the rest
I am not on a level with your love,
Nor ever was, you know,—but now am
worse,
Because that world of yours has dealt
with me
As when the hard sea bites and chews a
stone
And changes the first form of it. I've
marked
A shore of pebbles bitten to one shape
From all the various life of madre-
pores ;
And so, that little stone, called Marian
Erle,
Picked up and dropped by you another
friend,
Was ground and tortured by the ince-
sant sea
And bruised from what she was,—
changed I death's a change,
And she, I said, was murdered ; Ma-
rian's dead.
What can you do with people when
they are dead,
But, if you are pious, sing a hymn and
go,
Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh and
go,
But go by all means,—and permit the
grass
To keep its green feud up 'twixt them
and you ?
Then leave me,—let me rest. I'm
dead, I say.
And if, to save the child from death as
well,
The mother in me has survived the
rest,
Why, that's God's miracle you must not
tax,
I'm not less dead for that : I'm nothing
more
But just a mother. Only for the child,
I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and
afraid,
And smell the flowers a little, and see
the sun,
And speak still, and am silent,—just for
him !
I pray you therefore to mistake me not,
And treat me haply as I were alive ;
For though you ran a pin into my soul,

I think it would not hurt or trouble me.
Here's proof, dear lady,—in the mark-
et-place
But now, you promised me to say a
word
About . . . a friend, who once, long years
ago,
'Took God's place toward me, when He
leans and loves
And does not thunder, . . . whom at last
I left,
As all of us leave God. You thought
perhaps
I seemed to care for hearing of that
friend ?
Now, judge me ! we have sate here half
an hour
And talked together of the child and
me,
And I not asked as much as, 'What's
the thing
You had to tell me of the friend . . . the
friend ?'
He's sad, I think you said,—he's sick
perhaps ?
'Tis nought to Marian if he's sad or sick.
Another would have crawled beside
your foot
And prayed your words out. Why, 'a
beast, a dog.
A starved cat, if he had fed it once with
milk,
Would show less hardness. But I'm
dead, you see,
And that explains it.'
Poor, poor thing, she spoke
And shook her head, as white and calm
as frost
Or days too cold for raining any more,
But still with such a face, so much
alive,
I could not choose but take it on my
arm
And stroke the placid patience of its
cheeks,—
And told my story out, of Romney
Leigh,
How, having lost her, sought her, missed
her still,
He, broken-hearted for himself and her,
Had drawn the curtains of the world
awhile
As if he had done with morning. There
I stopped,

For when she gasped, and pressed me
with her eyes,

'And now . . . how is it with him? tell
me now,'

I felt the shame of compensated grief,
And chose my words with scruple—
slowly stepped

Upon the slippery stones set here and
there

Across the sliding water. 'Certainly
As evening empties morning into night,
Another morning takes the evening up
With healthful, providential inter-
change;

And though he thought still of her,—

She understood: she had supposed, in-
deed,

That, as one stops a hole upon a flute,
At which a new note comes and shapes
the tune,

Excluding her would bring a worthier
in,

And, long ere this, that Lady Waldemar
He loved so' . . .

'Loved,' I started,—'loved her so!
Now tell me' . . .

'I will tell you,' she replied:
'But since we're taking oaths, you'll
promise first

That he in England, he, shall never
learn

In what a dreadful trap his creature
here,

Round whose unworthy neck he had
meant to tie

The honourable ribbon of his name,
Fell unaware and came to butchery;
Because,—I know him,—as he takes to
heart

The grief of every stranger, he's not
like

To banish mine as far as I could choose
In wishing him most happy. Now he
leaves

To think of me, perverse, who went my
way,

Unkind, and left him,—but if once he
knew . . .

Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel
wrong

Would fasten me forever in his sight,
Like some poor curious bird, through
each spread wing

Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's
fire,

To spoil the dinner of all tenderer folk
Come in by chance. Nay, since you

Marian's dead,
You shall not hang her up, but dig
hole

And bury her in silence! ring no bells!

I answered gaily, though my whole
voice wept;

'We'll ring the joy-bells, not the fune-
ral-bells,

Because we have her back, dead and
alive.'

She never answered that, but shook her
head;

Then low and calm, as one who, safe in
heaven,

Shall tell a story of his lower life,
Unmoved by shame or anger,—so she
spoke.

She told me she had loved upon her
knees,

As others pray, more perfectly absorbed
In the act and inspiration. She felt his
For just his uses, not her own at all,

His stool, to sit on or put up his foot,
His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,
Whichever drink might please him
the chance,

For that should please her always: I
him write

His name upon her . . . it seemed natural
It was most precious, standing on her
shelf,

To wait until he chose to lift his hand
Well, well,—I saw her then, and must
have seen

How bright her life went floating on his
love,

Like wicks the housewives send afloat
on oil

Which feeds them to a flame that lasts
the night.

To do good seemed so much his busi-
ness,

That, having done it, she was faint
think,

Must fill up his capacity for joy
At first she never mooted with herself
If he was happy, since he made her

Or if *he* loved her, being so much beloved ;
 Who thinks of asking if the sun is light,
 Observing that it lightens ? who's so bold,
 To question God of His felicity ?
 Till less. And thus she took for granted first,
 What first of all she should have put to proof,
 And sinned against him so, but only so.
 What could you hope,' she said, 'of such as she ?
 You take a kid you like, and turn it out
 In some fair garden ; though the creature's fond
 And gentle, it will leap upon the beds
 And break your tulips, bite your tender trees ;
 The wonder would be if such innocence
 Spoiled less. A garden is no place for kids.'
 And, by degrees, when he who had
 Chosen her,
 Brought in his courteous and benignant friends
 To spend their goodness on her, which
 She took
 So very gladly, as a part of his,—
 By slow degrees it broke on her slow sense,
 That she too in that Eden of delight
 Was out of place, as like the silly kid,
 Still did most mischief where she meant
 Most love.
 I thought enough to make a woman
 Mad,
 No beast in this but she may well go
 Mad)
 That saying ' I am thine to love and use '
 May blow the plague in her protesting
 Breath
 To the very man for whom she claims to
 Die,—
 That, clinging round his neck, she pulls
 Him down
 And drowns him,—and that, lavishing
 Her soul,
 She hales perdition on him. ' So, being
 Mad,'
 Said Marian . . .
 ' Ah—who stirred such thoughts, you
 Ask ?

Whose fault it was, that she should have
 Such thoughts ?
 None's fault, none's fault. The light
 Comes, and we see ;
 But if it were not truly for our eyes,
 There would be nothing seen, for all the
 Light ;
 And so with Marian. If she saw at last,
 The sense was in her,—Lady Waldemar
 Had spoken all in vain else.'
 ' O my heart,
 O prophet in my heart,' I cried aloud,
 ' Then Lady Waldemar spoke !'
 ' Did she speak,'
 Mused Marian softly—' or did she only
 Sign ?
 Or did she put a word into her face
 And look, and so impress you with the
 Word ?
 Or leave it in the foldings of her gown,
 Like rosemary smells, a movement will
 Shake out
 When no one's conscious ? who shall say
 Or guess ?
 One thing alone was certain,—from the
 Day
 The gracious lady paid a visit first,
 She, Marian, saw things different,—felt
 Distrust
 Of all that sheltering roof of circum-
 stance
 Her hopes were building into with clay
 Nests :
 Her heart was restless, pacing up and
 Down
 And fluttering, like dumb creatures be-
 fore the storms,
 Not knowing wherefore she was ill at
 Ease,'
 ' And still the lady came,' said Marian
 Erle,
 ' Much oftener than *he* knew it, Mister
 Leigh.
 She bade me never tell him she had
 Come,
 She liked to love me better than he
 Knew,
 So very kind was Lady Waldemar :
 And every time she brought with her
 More light,
 And every light made sorrow clearer . . .
 Well,
 Ah, well ! we cannot give her blame for
 That ;

'Twould be the same thing if an angel
 came,
 Whose right should prove our wrong.
 And every time
 The lady came, she looked more beau-
 tiful,
 And spoke more like a flute among green
 trees,
 Until at last, as one, whose heart being
 sad
 On hearing lovely music, suddenly
 Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in
 tears
 Before her . . . asked her counsel . . . ' had
 I erred
 'In being too happy? would she set me
 straight?
 'For she, being wise and good and born
 above
 'The flats I had never climbed from,
 could perceive
 'If such as I might grow upon the hills;
 'And whether such poor herbs sufficed to
 grow
 'For Romney Leigh to break his fast
 upon't,—
 'Or would he pine on such, or haply
 starve?'
 She wrapt me in her generous arms at
 once,
 And let me dream a moment how it
 feels
 To have a real mother, like some girls:
 But when I looked, her face was young-
 er . . . ay,
 Youth's too bright not to be a little
 hard,
 And beauty keeps itself still uppermost,
 That's true!—though Lady Waldemar
 was kind,
 She hurt me, hurt as if the morning-sun
 Should smite us on the eyelids when we
 sleep,
 And wake us up with headache. Ay,
 and soon
 Was light enough to make my heart
 ache too:
 She told me truths I asked for . . . 'twas
 my fault . . .
 'That Romney could not love me if he
 would,
 'As men call loving; there are bloods
 that flow
 'Together like some rivers and not mix,

'Through contraries of nature. He is
 deed
 'Was set to wed me, to espouse my clas
 'Act out a rash opinion,—and, one
 wed,
 'So just a man and gentle could n
 choose
 'But make my life as smooth as ma
 riage-ring,
 'Bespeak me mildly, keep me a chee
 ful house,
 'With servants, brooches, all the flowe
 I liked,
 And pretty dresses, silk the whole year
 round' . . .
 At which I stopped her,—'This for m
 And now
 'For *him*.'—She hesitated,—truth gre
 hard;
 She owned, "'Twas plain a man lik
 Romney Leigh
 'Required a wife more level to himsel
 'If day by day he had to bend h
 height
 'To pick up sympathies, opinion
 thoughts,
 'And interchange the common talk
 life
 'Which helps a man to live as well:
 talk,
 'His days were heavily taxed. W
 buys a staff
 'To fit the hand, that reaches but th
 knee?
 'He'd feel it bitter to be forced to mi
 'The perfect joy of married suited pain
 'Who bursting through the separatin
 hedge
 'Of personal dues with that sweet eglar
 tine
 'Of equal love, keep saying, 'So z
 think,
 "'It strikes *us*,—that's *our* fancy.'—
 When I asked
 If earnest will, devoted love, employe
 In youth like mine, would fail to rais
 me up,
 As two strong arms will always raise
 child
 To a fruit hung overhead? she sighe
 and sighed . . .
 'That could not be,' she feared. 'Ye
 take a pink,
 'You dig about the roots and water it,

And so improve it to a garden-pink,
 But will not change it to a heliotrope,
 The kind remains. And then, the
 harder truth—
 This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap a
 pale,
 So bold for conscience, quick for mar-
 tyrdom,
 Would suffer steadily and never flinch,
 But suffer surely and keenly, when his
 class
 Turned shoulder on him for a shameful
 match,
 And set him up as nine-pin in their
 talk,
 To bowl him down with jestings.'—
 There, she paused;
 and when I used the pause in doubting
 that
 We wronged him after all in what we
 feared—
 Suppose such things should never
 touch him more
 In his high conscience (if the thing
 should be,)
 Than, when the queen sits in an upper
 room,
 The horses in the street can spatter
 her!'—
 A moment, hope came,—but the lady
 closed
 The door and nicked the lock and shut
 it out,
 Observing wisely that, 'the tender
 heart
 Which made him over-soft to a lower
 class,
 Would scarcely fail to make him sensi-
 tive
 To a higher,—how they thought and
 what they felt.

Alas, 'alas,' said Marian, rocking slow
 The pretty baby who was near asleep,
 The eyelids creeping over the blue
 balls,—
 She made it clear, too clear—I saw the
 whole!
 And yet who knows if I had seen my
 way
 Straight out of it by looking, though
 'twas clear,
 Unless the generous lady, 'ware of this,
 Had set her own house all a-fire for me,

To light me forwards? Leaning on my
 face
 Her heavy agate eyes which crushed
 my will,
 She told me tenderly, (as when men
 come
 To a bedside to tell people they must
 die)
 'She knew of knowledge,—ay, of
 knowledge knew,
 'That Romney Leigh had loved *her* for-
 merly:
 'And *she* loved *him*, she might say,
 now the chance
 'Was past . . . but that, of course, he
 never guessed,—
 'For something came between them . . .
 something thin
 'As a cobweb . . . catching every fly of
 doubt
 'To hold it buzzing at the window-pane
 'And help to dim the daylight. Ah,
 man's pride
 'Or woman's—which is greatest? most
 averse
 'To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she
 and he
 'Remained fast friends; it seemed not
 more than so,
 'Because he had bound his hands and
 could not stir:
 'An honourable man, if somewhat
 rash;
 'And she, not even for Romney, would
 she spill
 'A blot . . . as little even as a tear . . .
 'Upon his marriage-contract—not to
 gain
 'A better joy for two than came by
 that:
 'For, though I stood between her heart
 and heaven,
 'She loved me wholly."
 Did I laugh or curse?
 I think I sate there silent, hearing all,
 Ay, hearing double,—Marian's tale, at
 once,
 And Romney's marriage-vow, 'I'll keep
 to THEE,
 Which means that woman-serpent. Is
 it time
 For church now?
 'Lady Waldemar spoke more,'
 Continued Marian, 'but as when a soul

Will pass out through the sweetness of
 a song
 Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,—
 Even so mine wandered from the things
 I heard
 To those I suffered. It was afterward
 I shaped the resolution to the act.
 For many hours we talked. What
 need to talk ?
 The fate was clear and close ; it
 touched my eyes ;
 But still the generous lady tried to keep
 The case afloat, and would not let it go,
 And argued, struggled upon Marian's
 side,
 Which was not Romney's I though she
 little knew
 What ugly monster would take up the
 end,—
 What gripping death within the drown-
 ing death
 Was ready to complete my sum of
 death.
 I thought,—Perhaps he's sliding now
 the ring
 Upon that woman's finger. .

She went on :

The lady, failing to prevail her way,
 Upgathered my torn wishes from the
 ground
 And pieced them with her strong bene-
 volence ;
 And, as I thought I could breathe freer
 air
 Away from England, going without
 pause,
 Without farewell,—just breaking with
 a jerk
 The blossomed offshoot from my thorny
 life,—
 She promised kindly to provide the
 means,
 With instant passage to the colonies
 And full protection, would commit me
 straight
 ' To one who once had been her wait-
 ing-maid
 ' And had the customs of the world, in-
 tent
 ' On changing England for Australia
 ' Herself to carry out her fortune so.'
 For which I thanked the Lady Walde-
 mar,

As men upon their death-beds thank
 last friends
 Who lay the pillow straight : it is not
 much,
 And yet 'tis all of which they are capa-
 ble,
 This lying smoothly in a bed to die.
 And so, 'twas fixed ;—and so, from day
 to day,
 The woman named came in to visit
 me.'

Just then, the girl stopped speaking,—
 sat erect,
 And stared at me as if I had been a
 ghost,
 (Perhaps I looked as white as any
 ghost)
 With large-eyed horror. ' Does God
 make,' she said,
 ' All sorts of creatures really, do you
 think ?
 Or is it that the Devil slavers them
 So excellently, that we come to doubt
 Who's stronger, He who makes, or he
 who mars ?
 I never liked the woman's face or voice
 Or ways : it made me blush to look at
 her ;
 It made me tremble if she touched my
 hand ;
 And when she spoke a fondling word
 I shrank
 As if one hated me who had power to
 hurt ;
 And every time she came, my veins ran
 cold
 As somebody were walking on my
 grave.
 At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar :
 ' Could such an one be good to trust ?'
 I asked.
 Whereat the lady stroked my cheek and
 laughed
 Her silver-laugh—(one must be born to
 laugh,
 To put such music in it) ' Foolish girl,
 ' Your scattered wits are gathering wool
 beyond
 ' The sheep-walk reaches!—leave the
 thing to me '
 And therefore, half in trust, and half in
 scorn
 That I had heart still for another fear

In such a safe despair, I left the thing.
 The rest is short. I was obedient :
 I wrote my letter which delivered *him*
 From Marian to his own prosperities,
 And followed that bad guide. The
 lady?—hush,
 I never blame the lady. Ladies who
 Sit high, however willing to look down,
 Will scarce see lower than their dainty
 feet :
 And Lady Waldemar saw less than I,
 With what a Devil's daughter I went
 forth
 Along the swine's road, down the preci-
 pice,
 In such a curl of hell-foam caught and
 choked,
 No shriek of soul in anguish could pierce
 through
 To fetch some help. They say there's
 help in heaven
 For all such cries. But if one cries from
 hell . . .
 What then?—the heavens are deaf upon
 that side.
 'A woman . . . hear me,—let me make it
 plain,—
 A woman . . . not a monster . . . both her
 breasts—
 Made right to suckle babes . . . she took
 me off
 A woman also, young and ignorant
 And heavy with my grief, my two poor
 eyes
 Near washed away with weeping, till
 the trees,
 The blessed unaccustomed trees and
 fields
 Ran either side the train like stranger
 dogs
 Unworthy of any notice,—took me off,
 So dull, so blind, so only half alive,
 Not seeing by what road, nor by what
 ship,
 Nor toward what place, nor to what end
 of all.
 Men carry a corpse thus,—past the door-
 way, past
 The garden-gate, the children's play-
 ground, up
 The green lane,—then they leave it in
 the pit,
 To sleep and find corruption, check to
 check

With him who stinks since Friday.
 'But suppose ;
 To go down with one's soul into the
 grave,
 To go down half dead, half alive, I say,
 And wake up with corruption, . . . cheek
 to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday !
 There it is,
 And that's the horror of't, Miss Leigh.
 'You feel ?
 You understand?—no, do not look at
 me,
 But understand. The blank, blind,
 weary way
 Which led . . . where'er it led . . . away at
 least ;
 The shifted ship . . . to Sydney or to
 France,
 Still bound, wherever else, to another
 land ;
 The swooning sickness on the dismal
 sea,
 The foreign shore, the shameful house,
 the night,
 The feeble blood, the heavy-headed
 grief, . . .
 No need to bring their damnable drug-
 ged cup,
 And yet they brought it. Hell's so
 prodigal
 Of devil's gifts . . . hunts liberally in
 packs,
 Will kill no poor small creature of the
 wilds
 But fifty red wide throats must smoke
 at it,
 As HIS at me . . . when waking up at
 last . . .
 I told you that I waked up in the grave.
 'Enough so!—it is plain enough so.
 True,
 We wretches cannot tell out all our
 wrong
 Without offence to decent happy folk.
 I know that we must scrupulously hint
 With half-words, delicate reserves, the
 thing
 Which no one scrupled we should feel
 in full.
 Let pass the rest, then ; only leave my
 oath
 Upon this sleeping child—man's violence

Not man's seduction, made me what I
 am,
 As lost as . . . I told *him* I should be lost:
 When mothers fail us, can we help our-
 selves?
 That's fatal!—And you call it being
 lost,
 That down came next day's noon and
 caught me there
 Half gibbering and half raving on the
 floor,
 And wondering what had happened up
 in heaven,
 That suns should dare to shine when
 God himself
 Was certainly abolished.

'I was mad,

How many weeks, I know not,—many
 weeks.
 I think they let me go, when I was mad,
 They feared my eyes and loosed me, as
 boys might
 A mad dog which they had tortured.
 Up and down
 I went by road and village, over tracts
 Of open foreign country, large and
 strange,
 Crossed everywhere by long thin pop-
 lar-lines
 Like fingers of some ghastly skeleton
 Hand
 Through sunlight and through moon-
 light evermore
 Pushed out from hell itself to pluck me
 back,
 And resolute to get me, slow and sure ;
 While every roadside Christ upon his
 cross
 Hung reddening through his gory
 wounds at me,
 And shook his nails in anger and came
 down
 To follow a mile after, wading up
 The low vines and green wheat, crying
 'Take the girl!
 'She's none of mine from henceforth.'
 Then I knew
 (But this is somewhat dimmer than the
 rest)
 The charitable peasants gave me bread
 And leave to sleep in straw : and twice
 they tied,
 At parting, Mary's image round my
 neck—

How heavy it seemed! as heavy as a
 stone ;
 A woman has been strangled with less
 weight :
 I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean
 And ease my breath a little, when none
 looked ;
 I did not need such safeguards :—brutal
 men
 Stopped short, Miss Leigh, in insult,
 when they had seen
 My face,—I must have had an awful
 look.
 And so I lived : the weeks passed on,
 —I lived.
 'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er
 again,
 But, this time, in a dream, and hunted
 round
 By some prodigious Dream-fear at my
 back,
 Which ended yet : my brain cleared
 presently
 And there I sate, one evening, by the
 road,
 I, Marian Erle, myself, alone, undone,
 Facing a sunset low upon the flats
 As if it were the finish of all time,
 The great red stone upon my sepulchre,
 Which angels were too weak to roll
 away.

SEVENTH BOOK.

THE woman's motive? shall we daub
 ourselves
 With finding roots for nettles? 'tis soft
 clay
 And easily explored. She had the
 means,
 The monies, by the lady's liberal grace,
 In trust for that Australian scheme
 and me,
 Which so, that she might clutch with
 both her hands
 And chink to her naughty uses undis-
 turbed,
 She served me (after all it was not
 strange ;
 'Twas only what my mother would
 have done)

A motherly, right damnable good turn.

Well, after. There are nettles every-
where,
but smooth green grasses are more com-
mon still ;
the blue of heaven is larger than the
cloud ;
A miller's wife at Clichy took me in
and spent her pity on me,—made me
calm
and merely very reasonably sad.
He found me a servant's place in Paris,
where
I tried to take a cast-off life again,
and stood as quiet as a beaten ass
Who, having fallen through overloads,
stands up
to let them charge him with another
pack.

A few months, so. My mistress, young
and light,
was easy with me, less for kindness
than
because she led, herself, an easy time
and twixt her lover and her looking-
glass,
scarce knowing which way she was
praised the most.
He felt so pretty and so pleased all day
he could not take the trouble to be
cross,
but sometimes, as I stooped to tie her
shoe,
would tap me softly with her slender
foot
till restless with the last night's danc-
ing in't,
and say, 'Fie, pale-face! are you En-
glish girls
All grave and silent? mass-book still,
and Lent?
And first-communion pallor on your
cheeks,
Worn past the time for't? little fool,
be gay!
at which she vanished, like a fairy,
through
a gap of silver laughter.

When all went otherwise. She did not
speak,

But clenched her brows, and clipped me
with her eyes

As if a viper, with a pair of tongs,
Too far for any touch, yet near enough
To view the writhing creature,—then at
last,

'Stand still there, in the holy Virgin's
name,

'Thou Marian; thou'rt no reputable
girl,

'Although sufficient dull for twenty
saints!

'I think thou mock'st me and my
house,'

'Confess thou'lt be a mother in a month,
'Thou mask of saintship.'

'Could I answer her?

The light broke in so: it meant *that*
then, *that*?

I had not thought of that, in all my
thoughts,

Through all the cold, numb aching of
my brow,

Through all the heaving of impatient
life

Which threw me on death at intervals,
through all

The upbreak of the fountains of my
heart

The rains had swelled too large: it
could mean *that*?

Did God make mothers out of victims,
then,

And set such pure amens to hideous
deeds?

Why not? He overblows an ugly grave
With violets which blossom in the
spring.

And *I* could be a mother in a month!

I hope it was not wicked to be glad.

I lifted up my voice and wept, and
laughed,

To heaven, not her, until it tore my
throat.

'Confess, confess!' what was there to
confess,

Except man's cruelty, except my wrong?
Except this anguish, or this ecstasy?

This shame or glory? The light woman
there

Was small to take it in: an acorn-cup

Would take the sea in sooner.

"Good," she cried;

‘Unmarried and a mother, and she laughs!

‘These unchaste girls are always impudent.

‘Get out, intriguer? leave my house and trot:

‘I wonder you should look me in the face,

‘With such a filthy secret.’

‘Then I rolled

My scanty bundle up and went my way,
Washed white with weeping, shuddering
head and foot

With blind hysteric passion, staggering
forth

Beyond those doors. ‘Twas natural of
course

She should not ask me where I meant to
sleep:

I might sleep well beneath the heavy
Seine,

Like others of my sort; the bed was laid
For us. But any woman, womanly,

Had thought of him who should be in a
month,

The sinless babe that should be in a
month,

And if by chance he might be warmer
housed

Than underneath such dreary, dripping
eaves.’

I broke on Marian there. ‘Yet she
herself,

A wife, I think, had scandals of her own,
A lover not her husband.’

‘Ay,’ she said,

‘But gold and meal are measured other-
wise;

I learnt so much at school,’ said Marian
Erle.

‘O crooked world,’ I cried, ‘ridiculous
If not so lamentable! It’s the way
With these light women of a thrifty
vice,

My Marian,—always hard upon the rent
In any sister’s virtue! while they keep
Their own so darned and patched with
perfidy,

That, though a rag itself, it looks as well
Across a street, in balcony or coach,
As any perfect stuff might. For my
part,

I’d rather take the wind-side of the
stews

Than touch such women with my finger-
end!

They top the poor street-walker by their
lie,

And look the better for being so much
worse:

The devil’s most devilish when respecta-
ble.

But you, dear, and your story.’

‘All the rest

Is here,’ she said, and signed upon the
child.

‘I found a mistress-sempstress who was
kind

And let me sew in peace among her
girls;

And what was better than to draw the
threads

All day and half the night for him and
him?

And so I lived for him, and so he lives,
And so I know, by this time, God lives
too.’

She smiled beyond the sun and ende-
so,

And all my soul rose up to take her
part

Against the world’s successes, virtue’s
fames.

‘Come with me, sweetest sister,’ I re-
turned,

‘And sit within my house, and do my
good

From henceforth, thou and thine! you
are my own

From henceforth. I am lonely in the
world,

And thou art lonely, and the child
half

An orphan. Come,—and henceforth
thou and I

Being still together will not miss a friend
Nor he a father, since two mothers shall
Make that up to him. I am journeying
south,

And in my Tuscan home I’ll find a niece
And set thee there, my saint, the child
and thee,

And burn the lights of love before thy
face,

And ever at thy sweet look cross my
self

From mixing with the world's prosperities ;
That so, in gravity and holy calm,
We two may live on toward the truer life.'

She looked me in the face and answered not,
Nor signed she was unworthy, nor gave thanks,
But took the sleeping child and held it out

To meet my kiss, as if requiting me
And trusting me at once. And thus at once,

I carried him and her to where I lived ;
She's there now, in the little room, asleep,

I hear the soft child-breathing through the door ;

And all three of us, at to-morrow's break,

Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy.
Oh, Romney Leigh, I have your debts to pay,

And I'll be just and pay them.

But yourself !

To pay your debts is scarcely difficult ;
To buy your life is nearly impossible,
Being sold away to Lamia. My head aches ;

I cannot see my road along this dark ;
Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the dark,

For these foot-catching robes of womanhood :

A man might walk a little . . . but I !—
He loves

The Lamia-woman,—and I, write to him

What stops his marriage, and destroys his peace,—

Or what perhaps shall simply trouble him,

Until she only need to touch his sleeve
With just a finger's tremulous, white flame,

Saying, ' Ah,—Aurora Leigh ! a pretty tale,

' A very pretty poet ! I can guess
' The motive,'—then, to catch his eyes in hers,

And vow she does not wonder,—and they two

To break in laughter as the sea along
A melancholy coast, and float up higher,
In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of love !

Ay, fatal, ay. And who shall answer me

Fate has not hurried tides ; and if to-night

My letter would not be a night too late,
An arrow shot into a man that's dead,
To prove a vain intention ; Would I show

The new wife vile, to make the husband mad ?

No, Lamia ! shut the shutters, bar the doors

From every glimmer on thy serpent-skin !

I will not let thy hideous secret out

To agonise the man I love—I mean

The friend I love . . . as friends love.

It is strange,

To-day while Marion told her story like
To absorb most listeners, how I listened chief

To a voice not hers, nor yet that enemy's,

Nor God's in wrath, . . . but one that mixed with mine

Long years ago, among the garden-trees,

And said to *me*, to *me*, too, ' Be my wife,

Aurora.' It is strange with what a swell

Yearning passion, as a snow of ghosts

Might beat against the impervious doors of heaven,

I thought, ' Now, if I had been a woman, such

As God made women, to save men by love,—

By just my love I might have saved this man,

And made a nobler poem for the world
' Than all I have failed in.' But I failed besides

In this ; and now he's lost ! through me alone !

And, by my only fault, his empty house
Sucks in, at this same hour, a wind from hell

To keep his hearth cold, make his case-ments creak

Forever to the tune of plague and sin—
O Romney, O my Romney, O my
friend!

My cousin and friend! my helper, when
I would,

My love, that might be! mine!

Why, how one weeps
When one's too weary! Were a wit-
ness by.

He'd say some folly . . . that I loved the
man,

Who knows? . . . and make me laugh
again for scorn.

At strongest, women are as weak in
flesh,

As men, at weakest, vilest, are in soul:
So, hard for women to keep pace with
men!

As well give up at once, sit down at
once,

And weep as I do. Tears, tears! *why*
we weep?

'Tis worth inquiry?—That we've shamed
a life,

Or lost a love, or missed a world, per-
haps?

By no means. Simply, that we've
walked too far,

Or talked too much, or felt the wind i'
the east,—

And so we weep, as if both body and
soul

Broke up in water—this way.

Poor mixed rags
Forsooth we're made of, like those
other dolls

That lean with pretty faces into fairs.

It seems as if I had a man in me,

Despising such a woman.

Yet indeed,
To see a wrong or suffering moves us all
To undo it, though we should undo our-
selves;

Ay, all the more, that we undo our-
selves:

That's womanly, past doubt, and not ill-
moved.

A natural movement therefore, on my
part,

To fill the chair up of my cousin's wife,
And save him from a devil's company!

We're all so,—made so,—'tis our wo-
man's trade

To suffer torment for another's ease.

The world's male chivalry has perished
out,

But women are knight-errant to the
last;

And if Cervantes had been Shakes-
peare too,

He had made his Don a Donna.

So it clears,
And so we rain our skies blue.

Put away
This weakness. If, as I have just now
said,

A man's within me,—let him act him-
self,

Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of
blood

That's called the woman merely. I will
write

Plain words to England.—if too late, too
late,

If ill-accounted, then accounted ill;
We'll trust the heavens with something.

'Dear Lord Howe
You'll find a story on another leaf
Of Marion Erle,—what noble friend of
yours

She trusted once, through what flagi-
tious means

To what disastrous ends;—the story's
true.

I found her wandering on the Paris
quays,

A babe upon her breast,—unnatural
Unseasonable outcast on such snow

Unthawed to this time. I will tax in this
Your friendship, friend,—if that con-
victed She

Be not his wife yet, to denounce the
facts

To himself,—but, otherwise, to let them
pass

On tip-toe like escaping murderers,
And tell my cousin merely—Marian

lives,
Is found, and finds her home with such
a friend,

Myself, Aurora. Which good news,
'She's found,'

Will help to make him merry in his love:
I send it, tell him, for my marriage gift,

As good as orange water for the nerves,
Or perfumed gloves for headaches,—

though aware

That he, except of love, is scarcely sick:
I mean the new love this time, . . . since
last year.

Such quick forgetting on the part of
men!

Is any shrewder trick upon the cards
To enrich them? pray instruct me how
'tis done.

First, clubs,—and while you look at
clubs, 'tis spades;

That's prodigy. The lightning strikes a
man,

And when we think to find him dead
and charred . . .

Why, there he is on a sudden, playing
pipes

Beneath the splintered elm-tree! Crime
and shame

And all their hoggerly trample your
smooth world,

Nor leave more foot-marks than Apollo's
kine,

Whose hoofs were muffled by the thiev-
ing god

In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm so
sad,

So weary and sad to-night, I'm some-
what sour,—

Forgive me. To be blue and shrewd at
once,

Exceeds all toleration except yours;
But yours, I know, is infinite. Fare-
well.

To-morrow we take train for Italy.
Speak gently of me to your gracious
wife,

As one, however far, shall yet be near
In loving wishes to your house.'

I sign.

And now I loose my heart upon a page,
This—

'Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad
I never liked you; which you knew so
well

You spared me, in your turn, to like me
much.

Your liking surely had done worse for
me

Than has your loathing, though the last
appears

Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,
And not afraid of judgment. Now,
there's space

Between our faces,—I stand off, as if

I judged a stranger's portrait and pro-
nounced

Indifferently the type was good or bad:
What matter to me that the lines are
false,

I ask you? Did I ever ink my lips
By drawing your name through them as
a friend's,

Or touch your hands as lovers do?
thank God

I never did: and, since you're proved
so vile,

Ay, vile, I say,—we'll show it presently,
I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in
you,

Or wash out my own blots, in counting
yours,

Or even excuse myself to honest souls
Who seek to touch my lip or clasp my
palm,—

'Alas, but Lady Waldemar came first!'
'Tis true, by this time you may near me
so

That you're my cousin's wife. You've
gambled deep

As Lucifer, and won the morning-star
In that case,—and the noble house of
Leigh

Must henceforth with its good roof shel-
ter you:

I cannot speak and burn you up between
Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh,—
nor speak

And pierce your breast through Ron-
ney's, I who live

His friend and cousin!—so, you're safe.
You two

Must grow together like the tares and
wheat

Till God's great fire.—But make the
best of time

'And hide this letter! let it speak no
more

Than I shall, how you tricked poor
Marian Erle,

And set her own love digging her own
grave

Within her green hope's pretty garden-
ground;

Ay, sent her forth with some one of
your sort

To a wicked house in France,—from
which she fled

With curses in her eyes and ears and
throat,
Her whole soul choked with curses,—
mad in short,
And madly scouring up and down for
weeks
The foreign hedgeless country, lone and
lost,—
So innocent, male-fiends might slink
within
Remote hell-corners, seeing her so de-
filed.

'But you,—you are a woman and mor-
bold.
To do you justice, you'd not shrink to
face . .
We'll say the unfledged life in the other
room,
Which, treading down God's corn, you
trod in sight
Of all the dogs, in reach of all the
guns,—
Ay, Marian's babe, her poor unfathered
child,
Her yearling babe!—you'd face him
when he wakes
And opens up his wonderful blue eyes :
You'd meet them and not wink perhaps,
nor fear
God's triumph in them and supreme
revenge,
When righting His creation's balance-
scale
(You pulled as low as Tophet) to the
top
Of most celestial innocence. For me
Who am not as bold, I own those infant
eyes
Have set me praying.

'While they look at heaven,
No need of protestation in my words
Against the place you've made them !
let them look !
They'll do your business with the heav-
ens, be sure :
I spare you common curses.

'Ponder this.
If haply you're the wife of Romney
Leigh,
(For which inheritance beyond your
birth
You sold that poisonous porridge called
your soul)

I charge you be his faithful and true
wife !
Keep warm his hearth and clean his
board, and, when
He speaks, be quick with your obedi-
ence ;
Still grind your paltry wants and low
desires
To dust beneath his heel ; though even
thus,
The ground must hurt him,—it was writ
of old,
'Ye shall not yoke together ox and
ass,'
The nobler and ignobler. Ay, but you
Shall do your part as well as such ill
things
Can do aught good. You shall not vex
him,—mark,
You shall not vex him . . jar him when
he's sad,
Or cross him when he's eager. Under-
stand
To trick him with apparent sympathies,
Nor let him see thee in the face too
near
And unlearn thy sweet seeming. Pay
the price
Of lies, by being constrained to lie on
still :
'Tis easy for thy sort : a million more
Will scarcely damn thee deeper.
'Doing which
You are very safe from Marian and my-
self ;
We'll breathe as softly as the infant
here,
And stir no dangerous embers. Fail a
point,
And show our Romney wounded, ill-
content,
Tormented in his home, . . we open
mouth,
And such a noise will follow the last
trump's
Will scarcely seem more dreadful, even
to you ;
You'll have no pipers after : Romney
will
(I know him) push you forth as none of
his,
All other men declaring it well done ;
While women, even the worst, your
like, will draw

Their skirts back, not to brush you in
the street ;
And so I warn you. I'm . . . Aurora
Leigh.'

The letter written, I felt satisfied.
The ashes smouldering in me, were
thrown out
By handfuls from me : I had writ my
heart
And wept my tears, and now was cool
and calm ;
And, going straightway to the neigh-
bouring room,
I lifted up the curtains of the bed
Where Marian Erle, the babe upon her
arm,
Both faces leaned together like a pair
Of folded innocences, self-complete,
Each smiling from the other, smiled
and slept.
There seemed no sin, no shame, no
wrath, no grief
I felt she too had spoken words that
night,
But softer certainly, and said to God,
Who laughs in heaven perhaps that such
as I
Should make ado for such as she.—' De-
filed'
I wrote ? ' defiled ' I thought her ?
Stoop lower, Aurora ! get the angels'
leave
To creep in somewhere, humbly, on
your knees,
Within this round of sequestration
white
In which they have wrapt earth's found-
lings, heaven's elect.

The next day we took train to Italy
And fled on southward in the roar of
steam.
The marriage-bells of Romney must be
loud,
To sound so clear through all. I was
not well ;
And truly, though the truth is like a
jest,
I could not choose but fancy, half the
way,
I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells
Of naked iron, mad with merriment,

(As one who laughs and cannot stop
himself)
All clanking at me, in me. over me,
Until I shrieked a shriek I could not
hear,
And swooned with noise,—but still,
along my swoon,
Was 'ware the baffled changes back-
ward rang,
Prepared, at each emerging sense, to
beat
And crash it out with clangour. I was
weak ;
I struggled for the posture of my soul
In upright consciousness of place and
time,
But evermore, 'twixt waking and asleep,
Slipped somehow, staggered, caught at
Marian's eyes
A moment, (it is very good for strength
To know that some one needs you to be
strong)
And so recovered what I called myself,
For that time.
I just knew it when we swept
Above the old roof of Dijon. Lyons
dropped
A spark into the night, half trodden out
Unseen. But presently the winding
Rhone
Washed out the moonlight large along
his banks,
Which strained their yielding curves
out clear and clean
To hold it,—shadow of town and castle
blurred
Upon the hurrying river. Such an air
Blew thence upon the forehead,—half an
air
And half a water,—that I leaned and
looked ;
Then, turning back on Marian, smiled to
mark
That she looked only on her child, who
slept,
His face toward the moon too.
So we passed
The liberal open country and the close,
And shot through tunnels, like a light-
ning-wedge
By great Thor-hammers driven through
the rock,
Which, quivering through the intestine
blackness, splits,

And lets it in at once : the train swept
 in
 Athrob with effort, trembling with re-
 solve,
 The fierce denouncing whistle wailing
 on
 And dying off smothered in the shud-
 dering dark,
 While we, self-awed, drew troubled
 breath, oppressed
 As other Titans underneath the pile
 And nightmare of the mountains. Out,
 at last,
 To catch the dawn afloat upon the
 land !
 —Hills, slung forth broadly and gauntly
 everywhere,
 Not cramp't in their foundations, pushing
 wide
 Rich outspreads of the vineyards and
 the corn,
 (As if they entertained i' the name of
 France)
 While, down their straining sides,
 streamed manifest
 A soil as red as Charlemagne's knightly
 blood,
 To consecrate the verdure. Some one
 said
 'Marseilles !' And lo, the city of Mar-
 seilles,
 With all her ships behind her, and be-
 yond,
 The scimitar of ever-shining sea
 For right-hand use, bared blue against
 the sky !
 That night we spent between the purple
 heaven
 And purple water : I think Marian
 slept ;
 But I, as a dog a-watch for his master's
 foot,
 Who cannot sleep or eat before he
 hears,
 I sate upon the deck and watched the
 night,
 And listened through the stars for Italy.
 Those marriage-bells I spoke of, sounded
 far,
 As some child's go-cart in the street be-
 neath
 To a dying man who will not pass the
 day,

And knows it, holding by a hand he
 loves.
 I too sate quiet, satisfied with death,
 Sate silent : I could hear my own soul
 speak,
 And had my friend,—for Nature comes
 sometimes
 And says, 'I am ambassador for God.'
 I felt the wind soft from the land of
 souls ;
 The old miraculous mountains heaved in
 sight,
 One straining past another along the
 shore,
 The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts
 Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of
 seas
 And stare on voyagers. Peak pushing
 peak
 They stood : I watched beyond that
 Tyrian belt
 Of intense sea betwixt them and the
 ship,
 Down all their sides the misty olive-
 woods
 Dissolving in the weak congenial moon,
 And still disclosing some brown convent-
 tower
 That seems as if it grew from some
 brown rock,
 Or many a little lighted village, dropt
 Like a fallen star, upon so high a point,
 You wonder what can keep it in its
 place
 From sliding headlong with the water-
 falls
 Which powder all the myrtle and orange
 groves
 With spray of silver. Thus my Italy
 Was stealing on us. Genoa broke with
 day ;
 The Doria's long pale palace striking
 out,
 From green hills in advance of the white
 town,
 A marble finger dominant to ships,
 Seen glimmering through the uncertain
 gray of dawn.
 And then I did not think, 'my Italy,'
 I thought, 'my father !' O my father's
 house,
 Without his presence !—Places are too
 much

Or else too little, for immortal man ;
 Too little, when love's May o'ergrows
 the ground,—
 Too much, when that luxuriant robe of
 green
 Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves.
 'Tis only good to be or here or there,
 Because we had a dream on such a stone,
 Or this or that,—but, once being wholly
 waked,
 And come back to the stone without a
 dream,
 We trip upon't,—alas ! and hurt our-
 selves ;
 Or else it falls on us and grinds us flat,
 The heaviest grave-stone on this bury-
 ing earth.
 —But while I stood and mused, a quiet
 touch
 Fell light upon my arm, and, turning
 round,
 A pair of moistened eyes convicted
 mine.
 'What, Marian ! is the babe astir so
 soon ?'
 'He sleeps,' she answered ; 'I have
 crept up thrice,
 And seen you sitting, standing, still at
 watch.
 I thought it did you good till now, but
 now' . . .
 'But now,' I said, 'you leave the child
 alone.'
 'And you're alone,' she answered,—and
 she looked
 As if I too were something. Sweet the
 help
 Of one we have helped ! Thanks, Ma-
 rian, for such help.

I found a house at Florence on the hill
 Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower that
 keeps
 A post of double-observation o'er
 The valley of Arno (holding as a hand
 The outspread city) straight toward Fie-
 sole
 And Mount Morello and the setting sun,
 The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,
 Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups
 Turned red to the brim because their
 wine was red.
 No sun could die nor yet be born unseen
 By dwellers in my villa : morn and eve

Were magnified before us in the pure
 Illimitable space and pause of sky,
 Intense as angels' garments blanched
 with God,
 Less blue and radiant. From the outer
 wall
 Of the garden, drops the mystic floating
 gray
 Of olive-trees, (with interruptions green
 From maize and vine) until 'tis caught
 and torn
 Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses
 Which signs the way to Florence. Beau-
 tiful
 The city lies along the ample vale ;
 Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and
 street,
 The river trailing like a silver cord
 Through all, and curling loosely, both
 before
 And after, over the broad stretch of land
 Sown whitely up and down its opposite
 slopes
 With farm and villas.
 Many weeks had passed,
 No word was granted.—Last, a letter
 came
 From Vincent Carrington :—' My dear
 Miss Leigh,
 You've been as silent as a poet should,
 When any other man is sure to speak.
 If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver-piece
 Will split a man's tongue,—straight he
 speaks and says,
 'Received that cheque.' But you ! . .
 I send you funds
 To Paris, and you make no sign at all.
 Remember I'm responsible and wait
 A sign of you, Miss Leigh.
 ' Meantime your book
 Is eloquent as if you were not dumb ;
 And common critics, ordinarily deaf
 To such fine meanings, and, like deaf
 men, loth
 To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,
 yes or no,
 'It must be,' or 'it must not,' (most
 pronounced
 When least convinced) pronounced for
 once aright :
 You'd think they really heard,—and so
 they do . .
 The burr of three or four who really
 hear

'While you——! Write weaker than
Aurora Leigh,
And there'll be women who believe of
you
(Besides my Kate) that if you walked on
sand
You would not leave a foot-print.

'Are you put
To wonder by my marriage, like poor
Leigh?

'Kate Ward!' he said. 'Kate Ward!'
he said anew.

'I thought . . . ' he said, and stopped,—
'I did not think . . . '
And then he dropped to silence.

'Ah, he's changed.
I had not seen him, you're aware, for
long,
But went of course. I have not touched
on this

Through all this letter,—conscious of
your heart,
And writing lightlier for the heavy fact,
As clocks are voluble with lead.

'How poor,
To say I'm sorry. Dear Leigh, dearest
Leigh!

In those old days of Shropshire,—pardon
me,—

When he and you fought many a field
of gold

On what you should do, or you should
not do,

Make bread or verses, (it just came to
that)

I thought you'd one day draw a silken
peace

Through a golden ring. I thought so.
Foolishly,

The event proved,—for you went more
opposite

To each other, month by month, and
year by year,

Until this happened. God knows best,
we say,

But hoarsely. When the fever took him
first,

Just after I had writ to you in France,
They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed
drinks

And counted grains, like any salaried
nurse,

Excepting that she wept too. Then
Lord Howe,

You're right about Lord Howe, Lord
Howe's a trump;
And yet, with such in his hand, a man
like Leigh

May lose, as *he* does. There's an end to
all,—

Yes, even this letter, though this second
sheet

May find you doubtful. Write a word
for Kate:

She reads my letters always, like a wife,
And if she sees her name, I'll see her
smile

And share the luck. So, bless you,
friend of two!

I will not ask you what your feeling is
At Florence with my pictures. I can hear
Your heart a-flutter over the snow-hills:
And, just to pace the Pitti with you
once,

I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's walk
With Kate . . . I think so. Vincent Car-
rington.

The noon was hot; the air scorched like
the sun

And was shut out. The closed persiani
threw

Their long-scored shadows on my villa-
floor,

And interlined the golden atmosphere
Straight, still,—across the pictures on the
wall

The statuette on the console, (of young
Love

And Psyche made one marble by a kiss)
The low couch where I leaned, the table
near,

The vase of lilies Marian pulled last
night

(Each green leaf and each white leaf
ruled in black

As if for writing some new text of fate)
And the open letter, rested on my knee,
But there, the lines swerved, trembled,
though I sate

Untroubled . . . plainly, . . . reading it
again

And three times. Well, he's married;
that is clear.

No wonder that he's married, nor much
more

That Vincent's therefore 'sorry.' Why,
of course,

The lady nursed him when he was not well,
 Mixed drinks,—unless nepenthe was the drink
 'Twas scarce worth telling. But a man in love
 Will see the whole sex in his mistress' hood,
 The prettier for its lining of fair rose ;
 Although he catches back and says at last,
 ' I m sorry.' Sorry. Lady Waldemar
 At prettiest, under the said hood, preserved
 From such a light as I could hold to her face
 To flare its ugly wrinkles out to shame,
 Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends judge,
 Aurora Leigh, or Vincent Carrington,
 That's plain. And if he's 'conscious of my heart' . . .
 It may be natural, though the phrase is strong ;
 (One's apt to use strong phrases, being in love)
 And even that stuff of 'fields of gold,'
 'gold rings,'
 And what he 'thought,' poor Vincent !
 what he 'thought,'
 May never mean enough to ruffle me.
 —Why, this room stifles. Better burn than choke :
 Best have air, air, although it comes with fire,
 Throw open blinds and windows to the noon
 And take a blister on my brow instead
 Of this dead weight ! Best, perfectly be stunned
 By those insufferable cicale, sick
 And hoarse with rapture of the summer heat,
 That sing like poets, till their hearts break, . . . sing
 Till men say, ' It's too tedious.'
 Books succeed,
 And lives fail. Do I feel it so, at last ?
 Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being like mine,
 While I live self-despised for being myself,
 And yearn toward some one else, who yearns away

From what he is, in his turn. Strain a step
 For ever, yet gain no step? Are we ever,
 such,
 We cannot, with our admirations even,
 Our tip-toe aspirations, touch a thing
 That's higher than we? is all a dismal flat,
 And God alone above each,—as the sun
 O'er level lagunes, to make them shine and stink,—
 Laying stress upon us with immediate flame,
 While we respond with our miasmal fog,
 And call it mounting higher because we grow
 More highly fatal?
 'Tush, Aurora Leigh !
 You wear your sackcloth looped in Caesar's way,
 And brag your failings as mankind's. Be still.
 There 's what's higher, in this very world,
 Than you can live, or catch at. Stand aside,
 And look at others—instance little Kate !
 She'll make a perfect wife for Carrington.
 She always has been looking round the earth
 For something good and green to alight upon
 And nestle into, with those soft-winged eyes
 Subsiding now beneath his manly hand
 'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive joy :
 I will not scorn her, after all, too much,
 That so much she should love me. A wise man
 Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture in't ;
 And I, too, . . . God has made me,—I've a heart
 That's capable of worship, love and loss ;
 We say the same of Shakspeare's. I'll be meek,
 And learn to reverence, even this poor myself.

The book, too—pass it. 'A good book,' says he,
 'And you a woman.' I had laughed at that,
 But long since. I'm a woman,—it is true :

Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it
most!

Then, least care have we for the crowns
and goals
And compliments on writing our good
books.

The book has some truth in it, I believe ;
And truth outlives pain, as the soul does
life.

I know we talk our Phædons to the end
Through all the dismal faces that we
make,

O'er-wrinkled with dishonoring agony
From decomposing drugs. I have writ-
ten truth,

And I a woman ; feebly, partially,
Inapty in presentation, Romney'll add,
Because a woman. For the truth itself,
That's neither man's nor woman's, but
just God's ;

None else has reason to be proud of
truth :

Himself will see it sifted, disenthralled,
And kept upon the height and in the
light,

As far as and no farther than 'tis truth ;
For,—now He has left off calling firm-
ments

And strata, flowers and creatures, very
good,

He says it still of truth, which is His
own.

Truth, so far, in my book ;—the truth
which draws

Through all things upwards ; that a two-
fold world

Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural
things

And spiritual,—who separates those two
In art, in morals, or the social drift,

Tears up the bond of nature and brings
death,

Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,
Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly
with men,

Is wrong, in short, at all points. We
divide

This apple of life, and cut it through
the pips,—

The perfect round which fitted Venus'
hand

Has perished as utterly as if we ate

Both halves. Without the spiritual, ob-
serve,

The natural's impossible ; no form,
No motion ! Without sensuous, spirit-
ual

Is inappreciable ;—no beauty or power ;
And in this twofold sphere the twofold
man

(And still the artist is intensely a man)
Holds firmly by the natural, to reach

The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still
The type with mortal vision, to pierce

through,

With eyes immortal, to the antetype
Some call the ideal,—better called the

real,

And certain to be called so presently
When things shall have their names.

Look long enough
On any peasant's face here, coarse and
lined,

You'll catch Antinous somewhere in that
clay,

As perfect featured as he yearns at
Rome

From marble pale with beauty ; then
persist,

And, if your apprehension's competent,
You'll find some fairer angel at his back,

As much exceeding him as he the boor,
And pushing him with imperial disdain

For ever out of sight. Ay, Carrington
Is glad of such a creed : an artist must,

Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common
stone,

With just his hand, and finds it sud-
denly

A-piece with and conterminous to his
soul.

Why else do these things move him,
leaf or stone ?

The bird's not moved, that pecks at a
spring-shoot ;

Nor yet the horse before a quarry
a-graze :

But man, the two-fold creature, appre-
hends

The two-fold manner, in and outwardly,
And nothing in the world comes single

to him,
A mere itself,—cup, column, or candle-
stick,

All patterns of what shall be in the
Mount ;

The whole temporal show related royally,
 And built up to eterne significance
 Through the open arms of God. 'There's nothing great
 - Nor small,' has said a poet of our day,
 Whose voice will ring beyond the curfew of eve
 And not be thrown out by the matin's bell ;
 And truly, I reiterate, . . . nothing's small !
 No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,
 But finds some coupling with the spinning stars ;
 No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere ;
 No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim :
 And,—glancing on my own thin, veined wrist,—
 In such a little tremour of the blood
 'The whole strong clamour of a vehement soul
 Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's crammed with heaven,
 And every common bush afire with God :
 But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
 The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
 And daub their natural faces unaware
 More and more from the first similitude.
 Truth so far, in my book ! a truth which draws
 From all things upward. I, Aurora, still
 Have felt it hound me through the wastes of life
 As Jove did Io : and, until that Hand
 Shall overtake me wholly, and on my head
 Lay down its large unfluctuating peace,
 The feverish gad-fly pricks me up and down,
 It must be. Art's the witness of what is
 Behind this show. If this world's show were all,
 Then imitation would be all in Art ;
 'Here, Jove's hand gripes us!—for we stand here, we,
 If genuine artists, witnessing for God's
 Complete, consummate, undivided work ;

—That every natural flower which grows on earth,
 Implies a flower upon the spiritual side
 Substantial, archetypal, all a-glow
 With blossoming causes,—not so far away,
 That we, whose spirit-sense is somewhat cleared,
 May catch at something of the bloom and breath,—
 Too vaguely apprehended, though indeed
 Still apprehended, consciously or not,
 And still transferred to picture, music, verse,
 For thrilling audient and beholding souls
 By signs and touches which are known to souls.
 How known they know not,—why, they cannot find,
 So straight call out on genius, say, 'A man
 Produced this,' when much rather they should say,
 ' 'Tis insight, and he saw this.'
 Thus is Art
 Self-magnified in magnifying a truth
 Which, fully recognised, would change the world
 And shift its morals. If a man could feel,
 Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,
 But every day, feast, fast, or working-day,
 The spiritual significance burn through
 The hieroglyphic of material shows,
 Henceforward he would paint the globe with wings,
 And reverence fish and fowl, the bull, the tree,
 And even his very body as a man,—
 Which now he counts so vile, that all the towns
 Make offal of their daughters for its use
 On summer-nights, when God is sad in heaven
 To think what goes on in his recreant world
 He made quite other ; while that moon
 He made
 To shine there, at the first love's covenant,
 Shines still, convictive as a marriage-ring
 Before adulterous eyes.

How sure it is,
That, if we say a true word, instantly
We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass it
on

As bread at sacrament we taste and pass
Nor handle for a moment, as indeed
We dared to set up any claim to such !
And I—my poem ;—let my readers talk.
I'm closer to it—I can speak as well :
I'll say with Romney, that the book is
weak,

The range uneven, the points of sight
obscure,

The music interrupted.

Let us go.

The end of woman (or of man, I think)
Is not a book, Alas, the best of books
Is but a word in Art, which soon grows
cramped,

Stiff, dubious-statured with the weight
of years,

And drops an accent or digamma down
Some cranny of unfathomable time,
Beyond the critic's reaching. Art itself,
We've called the higher life, must feel
the soul

Live past it. For more's felt than is
perceived,

And more's perceived than can be in-
terpreted,

And Love strikes higher with his lam-
bent flame

Than Art can pile the fagots.

Is it so ?

When Jove's hand meets us with com-
posing touch,

And when at last we are hushed and
satisfied,

Then Io does not call it truth, but love ?
Well, well ! my father was an English-
man ;

My mother's blood in me is not so strong
That I should bear this stress of Tuscan
noon

And keep my wits. The town, there,
seems to seethe

In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun,
And all the patient hills are bubbling
round

As if a prick would leave them flat.
Does heaven

Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze ?

Not so,—let drag your fiery fringes,
heaven,

And burn us up to quiet ! Ah, we know
Too much here, not to know what's best
for peace ;

We have too much light here, not to
want more fire

To purify and end us. We talk, talk,
Conclude upon divine philosophies,
And get the thanks of men for hopeful
books ;

Whereat we take our own life up, and
. . . pshaw !

Unless we piece it with another's life,
(A yard of silk to carry out our lawn)
As well suppose my little handkerchief
Would cover Samminiato, church an
all,

If out I threw it past the cypresses,
As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,
Contain my own conclusions.

But at least

We'll shut up the persiani and sit down,
And when my head's done aching in the
cool,

Write just a word to Kate and Carring-
ton.

May joy be with them ! she has chosen
well,

And he not ill.

I should be glad, I think,
Except for Romney. Had *he* married
Kate,

I surely, surely, should be very glad.

This Florence sits upon me easily,
With native air and tongue. My graves
are calm,

And do not too much hurt me. Ma-
rian's good,

Gentle and loving,—lets me hold the
child,

Or drags him up the hills to find me
flowers

And fill those vases ere I'm quite
awake,—

The grandiose red tulips, which grow
wild,

Or Dante's purple lilies, which he blew
To a larger bubble with his prophet
breath ;

Or one of those tall flowering reeds that
stand

In Arno like a sheaf of sceptres left

By some remote dynasty of dead gods,
To suck the stream for ages and get
green,

And blossom wheresoe'r a hand divine
Had warmed the place with ichor.

Such I find

At early morning laid across my bed,
And woke up pelted with a childish
laugh

Which even Marian's low precipitous
'hush'

Had vainly interposed to put away,—
While I, with shut eyes, smile and motion
for

The dewy kiss that's very sure to come
From mouth and cheeks, the whole
child's face at once

Dissolved on mine,—as if a nosegay
burst

Its string with the weight of roses over-
blown,

And dropt upon me. Surely I should be
glad.

The little creature almost loves me now,
And calls my name . . . 'Alola,' stripping
off

The *rs* like thorns, to make it smooth
enough

To take between his dainty, milk-fed
lips.

God love him ! I should certainly be glad,
Except, God help me, that I'm sorrow-
ful,

Because of Romney.

Romney, Romney ! Well,

This grows absurd !—too like a tune that
runs

I' the head, and forces all things in the
world,

Wind, rain, the creaking gnat or stutter-
ing fly,

To sing itself and vex you ;—yet per-
haps

A paltry tune you never fairly liked,
Some 'I'd be a butterfly,' or 'C'est
l'amour :'

We're made so,—not such tyrants to
ourselves

But still we are slaves to nature. Some
of us

Are turned, too, overmuch like some
poor verse

With a trick of ritournelle : the same
thing goes

And comes back ever.

Vincent Carrington

Is 'sorry,' and I'm sorry ; but *he's* strong

To mount from sorrow to his heaven of
love,

And when he says at moments, 'Poor,
poor Leigh,

Who'll never call his own so true a heart,
So fair a face even,'—he must quickly
lose

The pain of pity in the blush he makes
By his very pitying eyes. The snow,
for him,

Has fallen in May, and finds the whole
earth warm,

And melts at the first touch of the green
grass.

But Romney,—he has chosen, after all.
I think he had as excellent a sun

To see by, as most others, and perhaps
Hasscarce seen really worse than some
of us,

When all's said. Let him pass. I'm
not too much

A woman, not to be a man for once
And bury all my Dead like Alaric,

Depositing the treasures of my soul
In this drained water-course, then letting
flow

The river of life again with commerce-
ships

And pleasure-barges, full of silks and
songs.

Blow winds, and help us.

Ah, we mock ourselves

With talking of the winds ! perhaps as
much

With other resolutions. How it weighs,
This hot, sick air ! and how I covet here

The Dead's provision on the river-couch
With silver curtains drawn on tinkling
rings !

Or else their rest in quiet crypts,—laid by
From heat and noise:—from those cicale,
say,

And this more vexing heart-beat.

So it is :

We covet for the soul, the body's part,
To die and rot. Even so, Aurora, ends

Our aspiration, who bespoke our place
So far in the east. The occidental flats

Had fed us fatter, therefore ? we have
climbed

Where herbage ends ? we want the
beast's part now

And tire of the angel's ?—Men define a
man,

The creature who stands front-ward to
the stars,
The creature who looks inward to him-
self,
The tool - wright, laughing creature.
'Tis enough :
We'll say, instead, the inconsequent
creature, man,
For that's his speciality. What creature
else
Conceives the circle, and then walks the
square ?
Loves things proved bad, and leaves a
thing proved good ?
You think the bee makes honey half a
year,
To loathe the comb in winter and desire
The little ant's food rather ? But a man—
Note men !—they are but women after
all.
As women are but Auroras !—there are
men
Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden
worm,
Who paint for pastime, in their favorite
dream,
Spruce auto - vestments flowered with
crocus - flames :
There are two, who believe in heaven,
and fear :
There are, who waste their souls in
working out
Life's problem on these sands betwixt
two tides,
Concluding,—' Give us the oyster's part,
in death.'
Alas, long - suffering and most patient
God,
Thou need'st be surelier God to bear
with us
Than even to have made us ! thou aspire,
aspire
From henceforth for me ! thou who hast
thyself
Endured this fleshhood, knowing how
as a soaked
And sucking vesture it can drag us
down
And choke us in the melancholy Deep,
Sustain me, that with thee I walk these
waves,
Resisting !—breathe me upwar', thou in
me

Aspiring, who art the way, the truth,
the life,—
That no truth henceforth seem indiffer-
ent,
No way to truth laborious, and no life,
Not even this life I live, intolerable !
The days went by. I took up the old
days
With all their Tuscan pleasures worn
and spoiled
Like some lost book we dropt in the long
grass
On such a happy summer-afternoon
When last we read it with a loving
friend,
And find in autumn when the friend is
gone,
The grass cut short, the weather
changed, too late,
And stare at, as at something wonderful
For sorrow,—thinking how two hands
before
Had held up what is left to only one,
And how we smiled when such a vehe-
ment nail
Impressed the tiny dint here which pre-
sents
This verse in fire for ever. Tenderly
And mournfully I lived. I knew the
birds
And insects,—which looked fathered
by the flowers
And emulous of their hues : I recog-
nized
The moths, with the great overpoise of
wings
Which makes a mystery of them how at
all
They can stop flying : butterflies, that
bear
Upon their blue wings such red embers
round,
They seem to scorch the blue air into
holes
Each slight they take : and fire-flies
that aspire
In short soft lapses of transported flame,
Across the tingling Dark, while over-
head
The constant and inviolable stars
Outburn those lights-of-love : melodious
owls,
(If music had but one note and was sad,

'Twould sound just so) and all the silent
swirl
Of bats that seem to follow in the air
Some grand circumference of a shadowy
dome
To which we are blind : and then the
nightingales,
Which pluck our heart across a garden-
wall
(When walking in the town) and carry
it
So high into the bowery almond-trees,
We tremble and are afraid, and feel as if
The golden flood of moonlight unaware
Dissolved the pillars of the steady earth
And made it less substantial. And I
knew
The harmless opal snakes, and large
mouthed frogs
(Those noisy vaunters of their shallow
streams)
And lizards, the green lightnings of the
wall,
Which, if you sit down quiet nor sigh
loud,
Will flatter you and take you for a
stone,
And flash familiarly about your feet
With such prodigious eyes in such small
heads !—
I knew them, though they had somewhat
dwindled from
My childish imagery,—and kept in
mind
How last I sat among them equally,
In fellowship and mateship, as a child
Feels equal still toward insect, beast,
and bird,
Before the Adam in him has foregone
All privilege of Eden,—making friends
And talk, with such a bird or such a goat,
And buying many a two-inch-wide rush-
cage
To let out the caged cricket on a tree,
Saying, 'Oh, my dear grillino, were
you cramped ?
And are you happy with the ilex-leaves ?
And do you love me who have let you
go ?
Say *yes* in singing, and I'll understand.'
But now the creatures all seemed farther
off,
No longer mine, nor like me ; only *there*,

A gulph between us. I could yearn in
deed,
Like other rich men, for a drop of dew
To cool this heat,—a drop of the early
dew,
The irrecoverable child innocence
(Before the heart took fire and withered
life)
When childhood might pair equally
with birds ;
But now . . the birds were grown too
proud for us !
Alas, the very sun forbids the dew.
And I, I had come back to an empty
nest,
Which every bird's too wise for. How
I heard
My father's step on that deserted ground.
His voice along that silence, as he told
The names of bird and insect, tree and
flower,
And all the presentations of the stars
Across Valdarno, interposing still
'My child,' 'my child.' When father
say 'my child,'
'Tis easier to conceive the universe,
And life's transitions down the steps of
law.
I rode once to the little mountain-house
As fast as if to find my father there,
But when in sight of't, within fifty yards,
I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck
And paused upon his flank. The house's
front
Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian
corn
In tessellated order and device
Of golden patterns : not a stone of wall
Uncovered,—not an inch of room to
grow
A vine-leaf. The old porch had disap-
peared ;
And right in the open doorway, sat a
girl
At plaiting straws,—her black hair
strained away
To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her
chin
In Tuscan fashion,—her full ebon eyes,
Which looked too heavy to be lifted so
Still dropt and lifted toward the mul-
berry-tree

On which the lads were busy with their
staves
In shout and laughter, stripping every
bough
As bare as winter, of those summer
leaves
My father had not changed for all the
silk
In which the ugly silkworms hide them-
selves.
Enough. My horse recoiled before my
heart.
I turned the rein abruptly. Back we
went as fast, to Florence.

That was trial enough
Of graves. I would not visit, if I could,
My father's, or my mother's any more,
To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat
So early in the race, or throw my flowers,
Which could not out-smell heaven or
sweeten earth.
They live too far above, that I should
look
So far below to find them : let me think
That rather they are visiting my grave,
This life here, (undeveloped yet to life)
And that they drop upon me, now and
then,
For token or for solace, some small weed
Least odorous of the growths of paradise,
To spare such pungent scents as kill with
joy.
My old Assunta, too, was dead, was
dead—
O land of all men's past ! for me alone,
It would not mix its tenses. I was past,
It seemed, like others, — only not in
heaven.
And, many a Tuscan eve I wandered
down
The cypress alley like a restless ghost
That tries its feeble ineffectual breath
Upon its own charred funeral-brands
put out
Too soon,—where black and stiff stood
up the trees
Against the broad vermilion of the
skies.
Such skies!—all clouds abolished in a
sweep
Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to ghosts
and men,
As down I went, saluting on the bridge

The hem of such before 'twas caught
away
Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Under-
neath,
The river just escaping from the weight
Of that intolerable glory, ran
In aquiescent shadow murmuringly :
While up beside it, streamed the festa-
folk
With fellow-murmurs from their feet
and fans,
And *issimo* and *ino* and sweet poise
Of vowels in their pleasant scandalous
talk ;
Returning from the grand-duke's dairy-
farm
Before the trees grew dangerous at
eight,
(For, 'trust no tree by moonlight,'
Tuscans say)
To eat their ice at Donay's tenderly,—
Each lovely lady close to a cavalier
Who holds her dear fan while she feeds
her smile
On meditative spoonfuls of vanille,
And listens to his hot-breathed vows of
love,
Enough to thaw her cream and scorch
his beard.
'Twas little matter. I could pass them by
Indifferently, not fearing to be known.
No danger of being wrecked upon a
friend,
And forced to take an iceberg for an isle !
The very English, here, must wait and
learn
To hang the cobweb of their gossip out
And catch a fly. I'm happy. It's sub-
lime,
This perfect solitude of foreign lands !
To be, as if you had not been till then,
And were then, simply what you choose
to be ;
To spring up, not be brought forth from
the ground
Like grasshoppers at Athens, and skip
thrice
Before a woman makes a pounce on you
And plants you in her hair !—possess,
yourself,
A new world all alive with creatures
new,
New sun, new moon, new flowers, new
people—ah.

And be possessed by none of them! no
right
In one, to call your name, enquire your
where,
Or what you think of Mister Some-one's
book,
Or Mister Other's marriage or decease,
Or how's the headache which you had
last week,
Or why you look so pale still, since it's
gone?
—Such most surprising riddance of one's
life
Comes next one's death; 'tis disembod-
iment
Without the pang. I marvel, people
choose
To stand stock-still like fakirs, till the
moss
Grows on them and they cry out, self-
admired,
'How verdant and how virtuous!' Well,
I'm glad
Or should be, if grown foreign to my-
self
As surely as to others.

Musing so,

I walked the narrow unrecognising
streets,
Where many a palace-front peers gloom-
ily
Through stony vizors iron-barred, (pre-
pared
Alike, should foe or lover pass that way,
For guest or victim) and came wander-
ing out
Upon the churches with mild open doors
And plaintive wail of vespers, where a
few,
Those chiefly women, sprinkled round
in blots
Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and
prayed
Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft a ray
(I liked to sit and watch would tremble
out,
Just touch some face more lifted, more
in need,
Of course a woman's—while I dreamed
a tale
To fit its fortunes. There was one who
looked
As if the earth had suddenly grown too
large

For such a little humpbacked thing as
she;
The pitiful black kerchief round her
neck
Sole proof she had had a mother. One,
again,
Looked sick for love,—scemed praying
some soft saint
To put more virtue in the new fine scarf
She spent a fortnight's meals on, yester-
day,
That cruel Gigi might return his eyes
From Giuliana. There was one, so old,
So old, to kneel grew easier than to
stand,—
So solitary, she accepts at last
Our Lady for her gossip, and frets on
Against the sinful world which goes its
rounds
In marrying and being married, just the
same
As when 'twas almost good and had the
right,
(Her Gian alive, and she herself eigh-
teen).
And yet, now even, if Madonna willed,
She'd win a tern in Thursday's lottery
'And better all things. Did she dream
for nought,
That, boiling cabbage for the fast-day's
soup,
It smelt like blessed entrails? such a
dream
For nought! would sweetest Mary cheat
her so,
And lose that certain candle, straight
and white
As any fair grand-duchess in her teens,
Which otherwise should flare here in a
week?
Benigna sis, thou beauteous Queen of
heaven!

I sate there musing and imagining
Such utterance from such faces: poor
blind souls
That writhed toward heaven along the
devil's trail,—
Who knows, I thought, but He may
stretch his hand
And pick them up? 'tis written in the
Book
He heareth the young ravens when they
cry;

And yet they cry for carrion.—O my
 God,
 And we, who make excuses for the rest,
 We do it in our measure. Then I knelt,
 And dropped my head upon the pavement
 too,
 And prayed, since I was foolish in desire
 Like other creatures, craving offal-food,
 That He would stop his ears to what I
 said,
 And only listen to the run and beat
 Of this poor, passionate, helpless blood—
 And then
 I lay, and spoke not. But He heard in
 heaven.
 So many Tuscan evenings passed the
 same.
 I could not lose a sunset on the bridge,
 And would not miss a vigil in the church,
 And liked to mingle with the out-door
 crowd
 So strange and gay and ignorant of my
 face,
 For men you know not, are as good as
 trees.
 And only once, at the Santissima,
 I almost chanced upon a man I knew,
 Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me cer-
 tainly,
 And somewhat hurried, as he crossed
 himself,
 The smoothness of the action,—then half
 bowed,
 But only half, and merely to my shade,
 I slipped so quick behind the porphyry
 plinth
 And left him dubious if 'twas really I,
 Or peradventure Satan's usual trick
 To keep a mounting saint uncanonised.
 But he was safe for that time, and I too ;
 The argent angels in the altar-flare
 Absorbed his soul next moment. The
 good man !
 In England we were scarce acquaint-
 ances,
 That here in Florence he should keep
 my thought
 Beyond the image on his eye, which
 came
 And went : and yet his thought dis-
 turbed my life :
 For, after that, I oftener sat at home
 On evenings, watching how they fined
 themselves

With gradual conscience to a perfect
 night,
 Until the moon, diminished to a curve,
 Lay out there like a sickle for His hand
 Who cometh down at last to reap the
 earth.
 At such times, ended seemed my trade
 of verse ;
 I feared to jingle bells upon my robe
 Before the four-faced silent cherubim ;
 With God so near me, could I sing of
 God ?
 I did not write, nor read, nor even
 think,
 But sate absorbed amid the quickening
 glooms,
 Most like some passive broken lump of
 salt
 Dropt in by chance to a bowl of œno-
 mel,
 To spoil the drink a little and lose itself,
 Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

 EIGHTH BOOK.

ONE eve it happened when I sate alone,
 Alone upon the terrace of my tower,
 A book upon my knees to counterfeit
 The reading that I never read at all,
 While Marian, in the garden down be-
 low,
 Knelt by the fountain I could just hear
 thrill
 The drowsy silence of the exhausted
 day,
 And peeled a new fig from that purple
 heap
 In the grass beside her,—turning out the
 red
 To feed her eager child, who sucked at
 it
 With vehement lips across a gap of air
 As he stood opposite, face and curls
 a-flame
 With that last sun-ray, crying, ' give me,
 give,'
 And stamping with imperious baby-
 feet,
 (We're all born princes) — something
 startled me,—
 The laugh of sad and innocent souls,
 that breaks

Abruptly, as if frightened at itself ;
 'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her
 glance above
 In sudden shame that I should hear her
 laugh,
 And straightway dropped my eyes upon
 my book,
 And knew, the first time, 'twas Bocca-
 cio's tale,
 The Falcon's, — of the lover who for
 love
 Destroyed the best that loved him.
 Some of us
 Do it still, and then we sit and laugh no
 more.
 Laugh *you*, sweet Marian ! you've the
 right to laugh,
 Since God himself is for you, and a
 child !
 For me there's somewhat less,—and so I
 sigh.

The heavens were making room to hold
 the night,
 The seven-fold heavens unfolding all
 their gates
 To let the stars out slowly (prophesied
 in close-approaching advent, not dis-
 cerned),
 While still the cue-owls from the
 cypresses
 Of the poggio called and counted every
 pulse
 Of the skyey palpitation. Gradually
 'The purple and transparent shadows
 slow
 Had filled up the whole valley to the
 brim,
 And flooded all the city, which you
 saw
 As some drowned city in some enchanted
 sea,
 Cut off from nature,—drawing you who
 gaze,
 With passionate desire, to leap and
 plunge
 And find a sea-king with a voice of
 waves,
 And treacherous soft eyes, and slippery
 locks
 You cannot kiss but you shall bring
 away
 Their salt upon your lips. The duomo-
 bell

Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms
 down,
 So deep ; and fifty churches answer it
 The same with twenty various instances.
 Some gaslights tremble along squares
 and streets ;
 The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in fire :
 And, past the quays, Maria Novella
 Place,
 In which the mystic obelisks stand up
 Triangular, pyramidal, each based
 Upon its four-square brazen tortoises,
 To guard that fair church, Buonarotti's
 Bride,
 That stares out from her large blind
 dial-eyes,
 Her quadrant and armillary dials, black
 With rhythms of many suns and moons,
 in vain
 Enquiry for so rich a soul as his.
 Methinks I have plunged, I see it all so
 clear . . .
 And, oh my heart , . . the sea-king !

In my ears

The sound of waters. There he stood,
 my king !

I felt him, rather than beheld him Up
 I rose, as if he were my king indeed,
 And then sate down, in trouble at my-
 self,
 And struggling for my woman's empery.
 'Tis pitiful ; but women are so made :
 We'll die for you perhaps,—'tis proba-
 ble ;
 But we'll not spare you an inch of our
 full height :
 We'll have our whole just stature,—five
 feet four,
 Though laid out in our coffins : pitiful !
 —'You, Romney !—Lady Waldemar
 is here ?'

He answered in a voice which was not
 his,
 'I have her letter ; you shall read it
 soon.
 But first, I must be heard a little, I,
 Who have waited long and travelled far
 for that,
 Although you thought to have shut a
 tedious book
 And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared such
 a page,

And here you find me.'

Did he touch my hand,
Or but my sleeve? I trembled, hand
and foot,—

He must have touched me.—' Will you
sit?' I asked,

And motioned to a chair; but down he
sate,

A little slowly, as a man in doubt,
Upon the couch beside me,—couch and
chair

Being wheeled upon the terrace.

' You are come,
My cousin Romney?—this is wonder-
ful.

But all is wonder on such summer-
nights;

And nothing should surprise us any
more,

Who see that miracle of stars. Behold.'

I signed above, where all the stars were
out,

As if an urgent heat had started there
A secret writing from a sombre page,
A blank last moment, crowded suddenly
With hurrying splendors.

' Then you do not know'—
He murmured.

' Yes, I know,' I said, ' I know.
I had the news from Vincent Carrington.

And yet I did not think you'd leave the
work

In England, for so much even,—though
of course

You'll make a work-day of your holiday,
And turn it to our Tuscan people's use,—
Who much need helping since the Aus-
trian boar

(So bold to cross the Alp to Lombardy
And dash his brute front unabashed
against

The steep snow-bosses of that shield of
God

Who soon shall rise in wrath and 'shake
it clear,)

Came hither also,—raking up our grape
And olive-gardens with his tyrannous
tusk,

And rolling on our maize with all his
swine.'

' You had the news from Vincent Car-
rington,'

He echoed,—picking up the phrase be-
yond,

As if he knew the rest was merely talk
To fill a gap and keep out a strong wind,
' You had, then, Vincent's personal
news?'

' His own,'
I answered. ' All that ruined world of
yours

Seems crumbling into marriage. Car-
rington

Has chosen wisely.'

' Do you take it so?'
He cried, ' and is it possible at last' . . .
He paused there,—and then, inward to
himself,

' Too much at last, too late!—yet cer-
tainly' . . .

(And there his voice swayed as an Al-
pine plank

That feels a passionate torrent under-
neath)

' The knowledge, had I known it first or
last,

Had never changed the actual case for
me.

And best for *her* at this time.'

Nay, I thought,
He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now, like
a man,

Because he has married Lady Walde-
mar.

Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh was
moved

To hear that Vincent was betrothed to
Kate.

With what cracked pitchers go we to
deep wells

In this world! Then I spoke.—' I did
not think,

My cousin, you had ever known Kate
Ward.'

' In fact I never knew her. 'Tis enough
That Vincent did, and therefore chose
his wife

For other reasons than those topaz eyes
I've heard of. Not to undervalue them,
For all that. One takes up the world
with eyes.

—Including Romney Leigh, I thought
again,
Albeit he knows them only by repute.

How vile must all men be, since *he's* a man.

His deep pathetic voice, as if he guessed I did not surely love him, took the word; 'You never got a letter from Lord Howe A month back, dear Aurora?'

'None,' I said.

'I felt it so,' he replied: 'Yet, strange! Sir Blaise Delorine has passed through Florence?'

'Ay,

By chance. I saw him in Our Lady's church, (I saw him, mark you, but he saw not me)

Clean-washed in holy water from the count

Of things terrestrial,—letters and the rest;

He had crossed us out together with his sins.

Ay, strange; but only strange that good Lord Howe

Preferred him to the post because of pauls.

For me I'm sworn never to trust a man—
At least with letters.'

There were facts to tell,

To smooth with eye and accent. Howe supposed . .

Well, well, no matter! there was dubious need;

You heard the news from Vincent Car-
rington.

And yet perhaps you had been startled less

To see me, dear Aurora, if you had read

That letter.'

—Now he sets me down as vexed.

I think I've draped myself in woman's pride

To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm vexed, it seems!

My friend Lord Howe deposes his friend Sir Blaise

To break as softly as a sparrow's egg

That lets a bird out tenderly, the news Of Romney's marriage to a certain saint;

To *smooth with eye and accent*,—indicate

His possible presence. Excellently well You've played your part, my Lady Waldemar,—
As I've played mine.

'Dear Romney,' I began,

'You did not use, of old, to be so like A Greek king coming from a taken Troy, 'Twas needful that precursors spread your path

With three-piled carpets, to receive your foot

And dull the sound of't. For myself, be sure,

Although it frankly grinds the gravel here,

I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry too To lose this famous letter, which Sir Blaise

Has twisted to a lighter absently To fire some holy taper: dear Lord Howe

Writes letters good for all things but to lose;

And many a flower of London gossipry Has dropt wherever such a stem broke off.

Of course I feel that, lonely among my vines,

Where nothing's talked of, save the blight again.

And no more Chianti! Still the letter's use

As preparation Did I start indeed!

Last night I started at a cockchafer, And shook a half-hour after. Have you learnt

No more of woman, 'spite of privilege, Than still to take account too seriously

Of such weak flutterings? Why, we like it, sir,

We get our powers and our effects that way.

The trees stand stiff and still at time of frost,

If no wind tears them; but, let summer come,

When trees are happy,—and a breath avails

To set them trembling through a million leaves

In luxury of emotion. Something less It takes to move a woman: let her start

And shake at pleasure,—nor conclude at yours,

The winter's bitter,—but the summer's green.'

He answered, 'Be the summer ever green

With you, Aurora!—though you sweep your sex

With somewhat bitter gusts from where you live

Above them, whirling downward from your heights

Your very own pine-cones, in a grand disdain

Of the lowland burrs with which you scatter them.

So high and cold to others and yourself, A little less to Romney were unjust,

And thus, I would not have you. Let it pass :

I feel content so. You can bear indeed

My sudden step beside you : but for me, 'T would move me sore to hear your

softened voice,—
Aurora's voice,—if softened unaware
In pity of what I am.'

Ah friend, I thought,
As husband of the Lady Waldemar

You're granted very sorely pitiable !
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard her

voice
From softening in the pity of your case,
As if from lie or license. Certainly

We'll soak up all the slush and soil of life
With softened voices, ere we come to

you.

At which I interrupted my own thought
And spoke out calmly. 'Let us ponder,

friend,
Whate'er our state we must have made

it first ;
And though the thing displease us, ay,

perhaps
Displease us warrantably, never doubt
'That other states, though possible once,

and then
Rejected by the instinct of our lives,
If then adopted had displeased us more

Than this in which the choice, the will,
the love,

Has stamped the honour of a patent act
From henceforth. What we choose may

not be good ;

But, that we choose it, proves it good for
us

Potentially, fantastically, now
Or last year, rather than a thing we saw,

And saw no need for choosing. Moths
will burn

Their wings,—which proves that light is
good for moths,

Or else they had flown not where they
agonise.'

'Ay, light is good,' he echoed, and there
paused.

And then abruptly, . . 'Marian. Ma-
rian's well ?'

I bowed my head but found no word.
'Twas hard

To speak of *her* to Lady Waldemar's
New husband. How much did he know,

at last ?
How much ? how little ?——He would
take no sign,

But straight repeated,—'Marian. Is she
well ?'

'She's well,' I answered.

She was there in sight
An hour back, but the night had drawn
her home ;

Where still I heard her in an upper
room,

Her low voice singing to the child in
bed,

Who, restless with the summer-heat and
play

And slumber snatched at noon, was low
sometimes

At falling off, and took a score of songs
And mother-hushes ere she saw him

sound.

'She's well,' I answered.

'Here ?' he asked.

'Yes, here.

He stopped and sighed. 'That shall be
presently.

But now this must be. I have words to
say,

And would be alone to say them, I with
you,

And no third troubling.'

'Speak then,' I returned,
'She will not vex you.'

At which, suddenly
He turned his face upon me with its
smile,
As if to crush me. 'I have read your
book,
Aurora.'

'You have read it,' I replied,
'And I have writ it,—we have done
with it.

And now the rest ?

'The rest is like the first,
He answered,—'for the book is in my
heart,
Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams
in me :

My daily bread tastes of it,—and my
wine

Which has no smack of it, I pour it out ;
It seems unnatural drinking.'

Bitterly
I took the word up ; 'Never waste your
wine.

The book lived in me ere it lived in you ;
I know it closer than another does,
And how it's foolish, feeble, and afraid,
And all unworthy so much compliment.
Beseech you, keep your wine,—and,
when you drink,
Still wish some happier fortune to a
friend,
Than even to have written a far better
book.'

He answered gently, 'That is conse-
quent :

The poet looks beyond the book he has
made,

Or else he had not made it. If a man
Could make a man, he'd henceforth be
a god

In feeling what a little thing is man :
It is not my case. And this special book,
I did not make it, to make light of it :
It stands above my knowledge, draws
me up ;

'Tis high to me. It may be that the book
Is not so high, but I so low, instead ;
Still high to me. I mean no compliment :
I will not say there are not, young or old,
Male writers, ay or female,—let it pass,

Who'll write us richer and completer
books.

A man may love a woman perfectly,
And yet by no means ignorantly main-
tain

A thousand women have not larger eyes :
Enough that she alone has looked at him
With eyes that, large or small, have won
his soul.

And so, this book, Aurora, — so, your
book.'

'Alas,' I answered, 'is it so, indeed ?'
And then was silent.

'Is it so, indeed,'
He echoed, 'that *alas* is all your word ?'

I said,—'I'm thinking of a far-off June,
When you and I, upon my birthday
once,

Discoursed of life and art, with both
untried.

I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas morn-
ing then,

And now 'tis night.'

'And now,' he said, 'tis night.'

'I'm thinking,' I resumed, 'tis some-
what sad

That if I had known, that morning in
the dew,

My cousin Romney would have said
such words

On such a night at close of many years,
In speaking of a future book of mine,

It would have pleased me better as a
hope,

Than as an actual grace it can at all.
'That's sad, I'm thinking.'

'Ay,' he said, 'tis night.'

'And there,' I added lightly, 'are the
stars !

And here we'll talk of stars and not of
books.'

'You have the stars,' he murmured,—
'it is well :

Be like them ! shine, Aurora, on my
dark

Though high and cold and only like a
star,

And for this short night only,—you,
who keep

The same Aurora of the bright June
 day
 That withered up the flowers before my
 face,
 And turned me from the garden ever-
 more
 Because I was not worthy. Oh, de-
 served,
 Deserved! That I, who verily had not
 learnt
 God's lesson half, attaining as a dunce
 To obliterate good works with fractious
 thumbs
 And cheat myself of the context,—I
 should push
 Aside, with male ferocious impudence,
 'The world's Aurora, who had conned
 her part
 On the other side the leaf! Ignore her
 so,
 Because she was a woman and a queen,
 And had no beard to bristle through her
 song,
 My teacher, who has taught me with a
 book,
 My Miriam, whose sweet mouth, when
 nearly drowned
 I still heard singing on the shore! De-
 served,
 That here I should look up unto the
 stars
 And miss the glory' . . .

'Can I understand?'

I broke in. 'You speak wildly, Rom-
 ney Leigh,
 Or I hear wildly. In that morning-
 time
 We recollect, the roses were too red,
 The trees too green, reproach too nat-
 ural
 If one should see not what the other
 saw:
 And now, it's night, remember; we
 have shades
 In place of colours; we are now 'grown
 cold,
 And old, my cousin Romney. Pardon
 me,—
 I'm very happy that you like my book,
 And very sorry that I quoted back
 A ten years' birthday; 'twas so mad a
 thing
 In any woman, I scarce marvel much

You took it for a venturous piece of
 spite,
 Provoking such excuses as indeed
 I cannot call you slack in.'

'Understand,'

He answered sadly, 'something, if but
 so.

This night is softer than an English day,
 And men may well come hither when
 they're sick,

To draw in easier breath from larger air.
 'Tis thus with me; I've come to you,—
 to you,

My Italy of women, just to breathe
 My soul out once before you, ere I go,
 As humble as God makes me at the last
 (I thank Him) quite out of the way of
 men

And yours, Aurora,—like a punished
 child,

His cheeks all blurred with tears and
 naughtiness,

To silence in a corner. I am come
 To speak, beloved' . . .

'Wisely, cousin Leigh,

And worthily of us both!'

'Yes, worthily;

For this time I must speak out and con-
 fess

That I, so truculent in assumption once,
 So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,
 And fierce in expectation,—I, who felt
 The whole world tugging at my skirts
 for help,

As if no other man than I, could pull,
 Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,
 Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my coat,
 Do know myself to-night for what I was
 On that June-day, Aurora. Poor bright
 day,

Which meant the best . . . a woman and
 a rose,

And which I smote upon the cheek with
 words

Until it turned and rent me! Young
 you were,

That birthday, poet, but you talked the
 right:

While I, . . . I built up follies like a wall
 To intercept the sunshine and your face.
 Your face! that's worse.'

Speak wisely, cousin Leigh.'

'Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too
 late:

But then, not wisely. I was heavy then,
And stupid, and distracted with the cries
Of tortured prisoners in the polished
brass

Of that Phalarian bull, society,
Which seems to bellow bravely like ten
bulls,

But, if you listen, moans and cries in-
stead

Despairingly, like victims tossed and
gored

And trampled by their hoofs. I heard
the cries

Too close: I could not hear the angels
lift

A fold of rustling air, nor what they said
To help my pity. I beheld the world
As one great famishing carnivorous
mouth,—

A huge, deserted, callow, blind, bird
Thing,

With piteous open beak that hurt my
heart,

Till down upon the filthy ground I drop-
ped,

And tore the violets up to get the worms.
Worms, worms, was all my cry: an
open mouth,

A gross want, bread to fill it to the lips,
No more! That poor men narrowed
their demands

To such an end, was virtue, I supposed,
Adjudicating that to see it so

Was reason. Oh, I did not push the case
Up higher, and ponder how it answers
when

The rich take up the same cry for them-
selves,

Professing equally,—‘an open mouth
A gross need, food to fill us, and no
more.’

Why that’s so far from virtue, only vice
Can find excuse for’t! That makes
libertines:

And slurs our cruel streets from end to
end

With eighty thousand women in one
smile,

Who only smile at night beneath the
gas:

The body’s satisfaction and no more,
Is used for argument against the soul’s,
Here too; the want, here too, implies
the right.

—How dark I stood that morning in the
sun.

My best Aurora, though I saw your eyes,
When first you told me . . . oh, I recollect
The sounds, and how you lifted your
small hand,

And how your white dress and your
burnished curls

Went greating round you in the still
blue air,

As if an inspiration from within
Had blown them all out when you spoke
the words,

Even these,—‘You will not compass
your poor ends

‘Of barley-feeding and material ease,
‘Without the poet’s individualism

‘To work your universal. It takes a soul,
‘To move a body,—it takes a high-

souled man,
‘To move the masses . . . even to a clean-
er style:

‘It takes the ideal, to blow an inch in-
side

‘The dust of the actual: } and your
Fouriers failed,

‘Because not poets enough to under-
stand

‘That life develops from within.’ I say
Your words,—I could say other words of
yours;

For none of all your words will let me
go;

Like sweet verbena which, being brushed
against,

Will hold us three hours after by the
smell

In spite of long walks upon windy hills,
But these words dealt in sharper per-
fume,—these

Were ever on me, stinging through my
dreams,

And saying themselves for ever o’er my
acts

Like some unhappy verdict. That I
failed,

Is certain. Style or no style, to con-
trive

The swine’s propulsion toward the pre-
cipice,

Proved easy and plain. I subtly organ-
ised

And ordered, built the cards up high
and higher,

Till, some one breathing, all fell flat
again!

In setting right society's wide wrong,
Mere life 's so fatal! So I failed indeed
Once, twice, and oftener,—hearing
through the rents

Of obstinate purpose, still those words of
yours,

' *You will not compass your poor ends,
not you!*'

But harder than you said them; every
time

Still farther from your voice, until they
came

To overcrow me with triumphant scorn
Which vexed me to resistance. Set down
this

For condemnation,—I was guilty here:
I stood upon my deed and fought my
doubt,

As men will,—for I doubted,—till at last
My deed gave way beneath me suddenly
And left me what I am. The curtain
dropped,

My part quite ended, all the footlights
quenched,

My own soul hissing at me through the
dark,

I, ready for confession,—I was wrong,
I've sorely failed, I've slipped the ends
of life,

I yield, you have conquered.'

'Stay,' I answered him;
'I've something for your hearing, also. I
Have failed too.'

'You!' he said, 'you're very great;
The sadness of your greatness fits you
well;

As if the plume upon a hero's casque
Should nod a shadow upon his victor
face.'

I took him up austere,—'You have
read

My book, but not my heart; for recol-
lect,

'Tis writ in Sanscrit which you bungle
at.

I've surely failed, I know, if failure
means

To look back sadly on work gladly
done,—

To wander on my mountains of Delight,
So called, (I can remember a friend's
words

As well as you, sir,) weary and in want
Of even a sheep-path, thinking bitterly.
Well, well! no matter. I but say so
much,

To keep you, Romney Leigh, from say-
ing more,

And let you feel I am not so high in-
deed,

That I can bear to have you at my
foot,—

Or safe, that I can help you. That Junc-
day,

Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets
now

For you or me to dig it up alive;
To pluck it out all bleeding with spent
flame

At the roots, before those moralising
stars

We have got instead,—that poor lost
day, you said

Some words as truthful as the thing of
mine

You cared to keep in memory: and I
hold

If I, that day, and, being the girl I was,
Had shown a gentler spirit, less arro-
gance,

It had not hurt me. You will scarce
mistake

The point here. I but only think, you
see,

More justly, that's more humbly, of my-
self,

Than when I tried a crown on and
supposed . . .

Nay, laugh sir,—I'll laugh with you!—
pray you, laugh.

I've had so many birthdays since that
day,

I've learnt to prize mirth's opportuni-
ties,

Which come too seldom. Was it you
who said

I was not changed? the same Aurora?
Ah,

We could laugh there, too! Why,
Ulysses' dog

Knew *him*, and wagged his tail and
died: but if

I had owned a dog, I too, before my
Troy,

And, if you brought him here, . . . I war-
rant you

He'd look into my face, bark lustily,
And live on stoutly, as the creatures will
Whose spirits are not troubled by long
loves.

A dog would never know me, I'm so
changed,

Much less a friend . . . except you're mis-
led

By the colour of the hair, the trick of
the voice,

Like that Aurora Leigh's.'

'Sweet trick of voice!

I would be a dog for this, to know it at
last,

And die upon the falls of it. O love,
O best Aurora! are you then so sad,

You scarcely had been sadder as my
wife?'

'Your wife, sir! I must certainly be
changed

If I, Aurora, can have said a thing
So light, it catches at the knightly spurs

Of a noble gentleman like Romney
Leigh,

And trips him from his honourable sense
Of what befits' . . .

'You wholly misconceive,'

He answered,

I returned,—'I'm glad of it:

But keep from misconception, too, your-
self:

I am not humbled to so low a point,
Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at

all,
Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's
head

Are apt to fossilise her girlish mirth,
Though ne'er so merry: I am perforce

more wise
And that, in truth, means sadder. For
the rest,

Look here, sir: I was right upon the
whole

That birthday morning. 'Tis impossible
To get at men excepting through their

souls,
However open their carnivorous jaws:

And poets get directlier at the soul,
Than any of your œconomists:—for

which
You must not overlook the poet's work
When scheming for the world's necessi-
ties,

The soul's the way. Not even Christ
Himself

Can save man else than as He holds
man's soul;

And therefore did He come into our
flesh,

As some wise hunter creeping on his
knees

With a torch, into the blackness of a
cave,

To face and quell the beast there,—take
the soul,

And so possess the whole man, body and
soul.

I said, so far, right, yes; not farther,
though:

We both were wrong that June-day,—
both as wrong

As an east wind had been. I who talked
of art,

And you who grieved for all men's griefs
. . . what then?

We surely made too small a part for God
In these things. What we are, imports

us more
Than what we eat; and life, you've
granted me,

Develops from within. But innermost
Of the inmost, most interior of the in-
terne,

God claims his own, Divine humanity
Renewing nature,—or the piercingest

verse,
Prest in by subtlest poet, still must keep
As much upon the outside of a man

As the very bowl in which he dips his
beard.

—And then, . . . the rest; I cannot surely
speak.

Perhaps I doubt more than you doubted
then,

If I, the poet's veritable charge,
Have borne upon my forehead. If I

have
It might feel somewhat liker to a crown,
The foolish green one even.—Ah, I think,

And chiefly when the sun shines, that
I've failed.

But what then, Romney? Though we
fail indeed,

You . . . I . . . a score of such weak work-
ers, . . . He

Fails never. If He cannot work by us,

He will work over us. Does He want
 a man,
 Much less a woman, think you? Every
 time
 The star winks there, so many souls are
 born,
 Who all shall work too. Let our own
 be calm:
 We should be ashamed to sit beneath
 those stars,
 Impatient that we're nothing.

'Could we sit
 Just so for ever, sweetest friend,' he said,
 'My failure would seem better than suc-
 cess,
 And yet indeed your book has dealt
 with me
 More gently, cousin, than you ever will!
 The book brought down entire the
 bright June-day,
 And set me wandering in the garden-
 walks,
 And let me watch the garland in a place,
 You blushed so . . . nay, forgive me; do
 not stir:
 I only thank the book for what it taught,
 And what, permitted. Poet, doubt your-
 self,
 But never doubt that you're a poet to
 me
 From henceforth. You have written
 poems, sweet,
 Which moved me in secret, as the sap
 is moved
 In still March-branches, signless as a
 stone:
 But this last book o'ercame me like soft
 rain
 Which falls at midnight, when the
 tightened bark
 Breaks out into unhesitating buds
 And sudden protestations of the spring.
 In all your other books, I saw but *you*:
 A man may see the moon so, in a pond,
 And not the nearer therefore to the
 moon,
 Nor use the sight . . . except to drown
 himself.
 And so I forced my heart back from the
 sight,
 For what had I, I thought, to do with *her*,
 Aurora . . . Romney? But, in this last
 book,

You showed me something separate from
 yourself,
 Beyond you, and I bore to take it in,
 And let it draw me You have shown
 me truths,
 O June-day friend, that help me now at
 night
 When June is over! truths not yours,
 indeed,
 But set within my reach by means of
 you,
 Presented by your voice and verse the
 way
 To take them clearest. Verily I was
 wrong;
 And verily many thinkers of this age,
 Ay, many Christian teachers, half in
 heaven,
 Are wrong in just my sense who under-
 stood
 Our natural world too insularly, as if
 No spiritual counterpart completed it
 Consummating its meaning, rounding
 all
 To justice and perfection, line by line,
 Form by form, nothing single nor alone,
 The great below clenched by the great
 above,
 Shade here authenticating substance
 there,
 The body proving spirit, as the effect
 The cause: we meantime being too
 grossly apt
 To hold the natural, as dogs a bone,
 (Though reason and nature beat us in
 the face)
 So obstinately, that we'll break our
 teeth
 Or ever we let go. For everywhere
 We're too materialistic,—eating clay
 (Like men of the west) instead of
 Adam's corn
 And Noah's wine; clay by handfuls,
 clay by lumps,
 Until we're filled up to the throat with
 clay,
 And grow the grimy colour of the
 ground
 On which we are feeding, Ay, materi-
 alist
 The age's name is. God himself, with
 some,
 Is apprehended as the bare result
 Of what his hand materially has made,

Expressed in such an algebraic sign
 Called God;—that is, to put it other-
 wise,
 They add up nature to a naught of God
 And cross the quotient. There are
 many even
 Whose names are written in the Chris-
 tian church
 To no dishonour,—diet still on mud,
 And splash the altars with it. You
 might think
 The clay, Christ laid upon their eyelids
 when,
 Still blind, he called them to the use of
 sight,
 Remained there to retard its exercise
 With clogging incrustations. Close to
 heaven,
 They see, for mysteries, through the
 open doors,
 Vague puffs of smoke from pots of
 earthenware;
 And fain would enter, when their time
 shall come,
 With quite another body than St Paul
 Has promised,—husk and chaff, the
 whole barley corn,
 Or where's the resurrection?'
 'Thns it is,'
 I sighed. And he resumed with mourn-
 ful face.
 'Beginning so, and filling up with clay
 The wards of this great key, the natural
 world,
 And fumbling vainly therefore at the
 lock
 Of the spiritual,—we feel ourselves shut
 in
 With all the wild-beast roar of struggling
 life,
 The terrors and compunctions of our
 souls,
 As saints with lions,—we who are not
 saints,
 And have no heavenly lordship in our
 stare
 To awe them backward! Ay, we are
 forced, so pent,
 To judge the whole too partially, . .
 confound
 Conclusions. Is there any common
 phrase
 Significant, with the adverb heard
 alone,

The verb being absent, and the pronoun
 out?
 But we, distracted in the roar of life
 Still insolently at God's adverb snatch,
 And bruit against Him that his thought
 is void,
 His meaning hopeless,—cry, that every-
 where
 The government is slipping from his
 hand,
 Unless some other Christ..say Romney
 Leigh..
 Come up and toil and moil, and change
 the world,
 Because the First has proved inadequate,
 However we talk bigly of His work
 And piously of His person. We blas-
 pheme
 At last, to finish our doxology,
 Despairing on the earth for which He
 died.'
 'So now I asked, 'you have more hope
 of men?
 'I hope,' he answered: 'I am come to
 think
 That God will have his work done, as
 you said,
 And that we need not be disturbed too
 much
 For Romney Leigh or others having
 failed
 With this or that quack nostrum,—
 recipes
 For keeping summits by annulling
 depths,
 For wrestling with luxurious lounging
 sleeves,
 And acting heroism without a scratch.
 We fail,—what, then? Aurora, if I
 smiled
 To see you, in your lovely morning-
 pride,
 Try on the poet's wreath which suits
 the noon,
 (Sweet cousin, walls must get the
 weather-stain
 Before they grow the ivy!) certainly
 I stood myself there worthier of con-
 tempt,
 Self-rated, in disastrous arrogance,
 As competent to sorrow for mankind
 And even their odds. A man may well
 despair,

Who counts himself so needful to success.

I failed. I throw the remedy back on God,
And sit down here beside you in good hope.'

'And yet, take heed,' I answered, 'lest we lean

Too dangerously on the other side,
And so fail twice. Be sure, no earnest work

Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,
It is not gathered as a grain of sand
To enlarge the sum of human action used
For carrying out God's end. No creature works

So ill, observe, that therefore he's cashiered.

The honest earnest man must stand and work,

The woman also; otherwise she drops
At once below the dignity of man,
Accepting serfdom. Free men freely work.

Whoever fears God, fears to sit at ease.'

He cried, 'True. After Adam, work was curse;

The natural creature labours, sweats and frets.

But after Christ, work turns to privilege,
And henceforth one with our humanity,
The Six-day Worker, working still in us,
Has called us freely to work on with Him

In high companionship. So, happiest!
I count that Heaven itself is only work
To a surer issue. Let us work, indeed,
But no more work as Adam.. nor as Leigh

Erewhile, as if the only man on earth,
Responsible for all the thistles blown
And tigers couchant,—struggling in amaze

Against disease and winter,—snarling on
For ever, that the world's not paradise,
Oh cousin, let us be content, in work,
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little. 'I will employ
Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin:

Who makes the head, content to miss the point,

Who makes the point, agreed to leave the join:

And if a man should cry, 'I want a pin,
'And I must make it straightway, head and point,'

His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants.

Seven men to a pin,—and not a man too much!

Seven generations, haply, to this world,
To right it visibly a finger's breadth,
And mend its rents a little. Oh, to storm
And say, 'This world here is intolerable;
'I will not eat this corn, nor drink this wine,

'Nor love this woman, flinging her soul
'Without a bond for 't as a lover should,
'Nor use the generous leave of happiness
'As not too good for using generously'—
(Since virtue kindles at the touch of joy,
Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's hand,

And God, who knows it, looks for quick returns

From joys)—to stand and claim to have a life

Beyond the bounds of the individual man,

And raze all personal cloisters of the soul

To build up public stores and magazines,
As if God's creatures otherwise were lost,
The builder surely saved by any means!
To think,—I have a pattern on my nail,
And I will carve the world new after it,
And solve so, these hard social questions,—nay,

Impossible social questions,—since their roots

Strike deep in Evil's own existence here,
Which God permits because the question's hard

To abolish evil nor attain free-will.

Ay, hard to God, but not to Romney

Leigh!

For Romney has a pattern on his nail
(Whatever may be lacking on the Mount)
And not being overnice to separate
What's element from what's convention,
hastes

By line on line to draw you out a world,
Without your help indeed, unless you take

His yoke upon you and will learn of him,

So much he has to teach! so good a world!

The same, the whole creation's groaning for!

No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor stint,

No potage in it able to exclude
A brother's birthright, and no right of birth,

The potage—both secured to every man,
And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest

Gratuitously, with the soup at six,
To whoso does not seek it.'

'Softly, sir,'
I interrupted,—'I had a cousin once
I held in reverence. If he strained too wide.

It was not to take honour but to give help;

The gesture was heroic. If his hand
Accomplished nothing . . . (well, it is not proved)

That empty hand thrown impotently out
Were sooner caught, I think, by One in heaven,

Than many a hand that reaped a harvest in

And keeps the scythe's glow on it.
Pray you, then,

For my sake merely, use less bitterness
In speaking of my cousin.'

'Ah,' he said,
'Aurora! when the prophet beats the ass,

The angel intercedes.' He shook his head—

'And yet to mean so well and fail so foul,

Expresses ne'er another beast than man;
The antithesis is human. Harken, dear;
There's too much abstract willing, purposing,

In this poor world. We talk by aggregates,

And think by systems; and, being used to face

Our evils in statistics, are inclined
To cap them with unreal remedies

Drawn out in haste on the other side the slate.'

'That's true,' I answered, fain to throw
up thought,

And make a game of't,—yes, we generalise

Enough to please you. If we pray at all,
We pray no longer for our daily bread,
But next centenary's harvests. If we give,

Our cup of water is not tendered till
We lay down pipes and found a Company

With Branches. Ass or angel, 'tis the same:

A woman cannot do the thing she ought,
Which means whatever perfect thing she can,

In life, in art, in science, but she fears
To let the perfect action take her part
And rest there: she must prove what she can do

Before she does it,—prate of woman's rights,

Of woman's mission, woman's function, till

The men (who are prating too on their side) cry,

'A woman's function plainly is . . . to talk.'

Poor souls, they are very reasonably vexed;

They cannot hear each other speak.'

'And you,
An artist, judge so?'

'I, an artist,—yes,
Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir,
And woman,—if another sate in sight,
I'd whisper,—Soft, my sister! not a word!

By speaking we prove only we can speak:
Which he, the man here, never doubted.

What
He doubts is whether we can *do* the thing

With decent grace we've not yet done at all.

Now, do it; bring your statue,—you have room!

He'll see it even by the starlight here;
And if 'tis e'er so little like the god

Who looks out from the marble silently
Along the track of his own shining dart

Through the dusk of ages,—there's no need to speak;

The universe shall henceforth speak for you,

And witness, 'She who did this thing,
was born

To do it,—claims her license in her
work.'

—And so with more works. Who cures
the plague,

Though twice a woman, shall be called
a leech :

Who rights a land's finances, is excused
For touching coppers, though her hands
be white,—

But we, we talk !'

'It is the age's mood.'

He said ; 'we boast, and do not. We
put up

Hostelry signs where'er we lodge a day,
Some red colossal cow with mighty
paps

A Cyclops' fingers could not strain to
milk ;

Then bring out presently our saucer-full
Of curds, We want more quiet in our
works,

More knowledge of the bounds in which
we work ;

More knowledge that each individual
man

Remains an Adam to the general race,
Constrained to see, like Adam, that he
keep

His personal state's condition honestly,
Or vain all thoughts of his to help the
world,

Which still must be developed from its
one

If bettered in its many. We indeed,
Who think to lay it out new like a park,
We take a work on us which is not
man's,

For God alone sits far enough above
To speculate so largely. None of us
(Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough to
say,

We'll have a grove of oaks upon that
slope

And sink the need of acorns. Govern-
ment,

If veritable and lawful, is not given
By imposition of the foreign hand,
Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book
Of some domestic idealogue who sits
And coldly chooses empire, where as
well

He might republic. Genuine govern-
ment

Is but the expression of a nation, good
Or less good,—even as all society,
Howe'er unequal, monstrous, crazed,
and cursed,

Is but the expression of men's single
lives,

The loud sum of the silent units. What,
We'd change the aggregate and yet
retain

Each separate figure ? Whom do we
cheat by that ?

Now, not even Romney.'

'Cousin, you are sad.

Did all your social labor at Leigh Hall
And elsewhere, come to nought then ?'

'It *was* nought,'

He answered mildly. 'There is room
indeed

For statues still, in this large world of
God's,

But not for vacuums,—so I am not sad :
Not sadder than is good for what I am.

My vain phalanstery dissolved itself ;
My men and women of disordered lives,

I brought in orderly to dine and sleep,
Broke up those waxen masks I made
them to wear,

With fierce contortions of the natural
face ;

And cursed me for my tyrannous con-
straint

In forcing crooked creatures to live
straight ;

And set the country hounds upon my
back

To bite and tear me for my wicked
deed

Of trying to do good without the church
Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you
mind

Your ancient neighbours ? The great
book-club teems

With 'sketches,' 'summaries,' and 'last
tracts' but twelve,

On socialistic troublers of close bonds
Betwixt the generous rich and grateful
poor.

The vicar preached from 'Revelations,'
(till

The doctor woke) and found me with
'the frogs'

On three successive Sundays; ay, and
 stopped
 To weep a little (for he's getting old)
 That such perdition should o'ertake a
 man
 Of such fair acres,—in the parish, too!
 He printed his discourses 'by request,'
 And if your book shall sell as his did,
 then
 Your verses are less good than I sup-
 pose.
 The women of the neighbourhood sub-
 scribed,
 And sent me a copy bound in scarlet silk,
 Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms of
 Leigh:
 I own that touched me.'
 'What, the pretty ones?
 Poor Romney!'
 'Otherwise the effect was small.
 I had my windows broken once or twice
 By liberal peasants naturally incensed
 At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,
 Who would not let men call their wives
 their own
 To kick like Britons, and made ob-
 stacles
 When things went smoothly as a baby
 drugged,
 Toward freedom and starvation; bring-
 ing down
 The wicked London tavern-thieves and
 drabs
 To affront the blessed hillside drabs and
 thieves
 With mended morals, quotha,—fine
 new lives!—
 My windows paid for't. I was shot at,
 once,
 By an active poacher who had hit a
 hare
 From the other barrel, (tired of springe-
 ing game
 So long upon my acres, undisturbed,
 And restless for the country's virtue,—
 yet
 He missed me)—ay, and pelted very oft
 In riding through the village. 'There
 he goes
 'Who'd drive away our Christian gen-
 tlefolks,
 'To catch us undefended in the trap
 'He baits with poisonous cheese, and
 lock us up

'In that pernicious prison of Leigh Hall
 'With all his murderers! Give another
 name
 'And say Leigh Hell, and burn it up
 with fire.'
 And so they did at last, Aurora.'
 'Did?'
 'You never heard it, cousin? Vincent's
 news
 Came stinted, then.'
 'They did? they burnt Leigh Hall?'
 'You're sorry, dear Aurora? Yes
 indeed,
 They did it perfectly: a thorough
 work,
 And not a failure, this time. Let us
 grant
 'Tis somewhat easier, though, to burn a
 house
 Than build a system:—yet that's easy,
 too,
 In a dream. Books, pictures,—ay, the
 pictures! what,
 You think your dear Vandykes would
 give them pause?
 Our proud ancestral Leighs with those
 peaked beards,
 Or bosoms white as foam thrown up on
 rocks
 From the old-spent wave. Such calm
 defiant looks
 They flared up with! now nevermore
 to twit
 The bones in the family-vault with ugly
 death.
 Not one was rescued, save the Lady
 Maud,
 Who threw you down, that morning you
 were born,
 The undeniable lineal mouth and chin
 To wear for ever for her gracious sake;
 For which good deed I saved her: the
 rest went:
 And you, you're sorry, cousin. Well,
 for me,
 With all my phalansterians safely out,
 (Poor hearts, they helped the burners,
 it was said,
 And certainly a few clapped hands and
 yelled)
 The ruin did not hurt me as it might,—
 As when for instance I was hurt one day

A certain letter being destroyed. In fact,
 To see the great house flare so . . . oaken
 floors,
 Our fathers made so fine with rushes
 once
 Before our mothers furnished them with
 trains,
 Carved wainscoats, panelled walls, the
 favourite slide
 For draining off a martyr, (or a rogue)
 The echoing galleries, half a half-mile
 long,
 And all the various stairs that took you
 up
 And took you down, and took you round
 about
 Upon their slippery darkness, recollect,
 All helping to keep up one blazing jest ;
 The flames through all the casements
 pushing forth
 Like red-hot devils crinkled into snakes,
 All signifying,—‘ Look you, Romney
 Leigh,
 ‘ We save the people from your saving,
 here,
 ‘ Yet so as by fire! we make a pretty
 show
 ‘ Besides,—and that’s the best you’ve
 ever done.’

—To see this, almost moved myself to
 clap!
 The ‘*vile et plaude*’ came too with
 effect
 When, in the roof fell, and the fire that
 paused,
 Stunned momentarily beneath the stroke
 of slates
 And tumbling rafters, rose at once and
 roared,
 And wrapping the whole house, (which
 disappeared
 In a mounting whirlwind of dilated
 flame,)
 Blew upward, straight, its drift of fiery
 chaff
 In the face of heaven, . . . which blenched,
 and ran up higher.’

‘ Poor Romney !’
 ‘ Sometimes when I dream,’ he said,
 ‘ I hear the silence after, ’twas so still.

For all those wild beasts, yelling, curs-
 ing round,
 Were suddenly silent, while you counted
 five,
 So silent, that you heard a young bird
 fall
 From the top-nest in the neighbouring
 rookery,
 Through edging over-rashly toward the
 light.
 The old rooks had already fled too far,
 To hear the screech they fled with,
 though you saw
 Some flying still, like scatterings of dead
 leaves
 In autumn-gusts, seen dark against the
 sky :
 All flying,—ousted, like the house of
 Leigh.

Dear Romney !

‘ Evidently ’twould have been
 A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like you,
 To make the verse blaze after. I myself,
 Even I, felt something in the grand old
 trees,
 Which stood that moment like brute
 Druid gods
 Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,
 As into a blackened socket, the great fire
 Had dropped,—still throwing up splin-
 ters now and then
 To show them grey with all their centu-
 ries,
 Left there to witness that on such a day
 The House went out.’

‘ Ah !’

‘ While you counted five
 I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh,—
 But then it passed, Aurora. A child
 cried,
 And I had enough to think of what to do
 With all those houseless wretches in the
 dark,
 And ponder where they’d dance the
 next time, they
 Who had burnt the viol.’

‘ Did you think of that ?
 Who burns his viol will not dance, I
 know,
 To cymbals, Romney.’
 ‘ O my sweet sad voice,’

He cried,—‘O voice that speaks and
overcomes!
The sun is silent, but Aurora speaks.’

‘Alas,’ I said; ‘I speak I know not
what;
I’m back in childhood, thinking as a
child,
A foolish fancy—will it make you smile?
I shall not from the window of my room
Catch sight of those old chimneys any
more.

‘No more,’ he answered. ‘If you pushed
one day
Through all the green hills to our father’s
house,
You’d come upon a great charred circle
where
The patient earth was singed an acre
round;
With one stone-stair, symbolic of my
life,
Ascending, winding, leading up to
nought!
’Tis worth a poet’s seeing. Will you
go?’

I made no answer. Had I any right
To weep with this man, that I dared to
speak!
A woman stood between his soul and
mine,
And waved us off from touching ever-
more
With those unclean white hands of hers.
Enough.
We had burnt our viols and were silent.
So,
The silence lengthened till it pressed. I
spoke,
To breathe: ‘I think you were ill after-
ward.’

More ill,’ he answered, ‘had been
scarcely ill.
I hoped this feeble fumbling at life’s
knot
Might end concisely,—but I failed to
die,
As formerly I failed to live,—and thus
Grew willing, having tried all other
ways,

To try just God’s. Humility’s so good,
When pride’s impossible. Mark us,
how we make

Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-out
sins,

Which smack of them from henceforth.
Is it right,

For instance, to wed here while you
love there?

And yet because a man sins once, the
sin

Cleaves to him, in necessity to sin,
That if he sinned not so, to damn him-
self,

He sins so, to damn others with himself:
And thus to wed here, loving there, be-
comes

A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf
Round mortal brows; your ivy’s better,
dear.

—Yet she, ’tis certain, is my very wife,
The very lamb left mangled by the
wolves

Through my own bad shepherding: and
could I choose

But take her on my shoulder past this
stretch

Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,
Poor child, poor child?—Aurora, my
beloved,

I will not vex you any more to-night,
But having spoken what I came to say,
The rest shall please you. What she
can in me,—

Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease,
She shall have surely, liberally, for her
And hers, Aurora. Small amends they’ll
make

For hideous evils which she had not
known

Except by me, and for this imminent
loss,

This forfeit presence of a gracious friend,
Which also she must forfeit for my sake,
Since, . . . drop your hand in mine a
moment, sweet,

We’re parting!—Ah, my snowdrop,
what a touch,

As if the wind had swept it off! you
grudge

Your gelid sweetness on my palm but
so,

A moment? angry, that I could not
bear

You . . . speaking, breathing, living, side
 by side
 With some one called my wife . . . and
 live, myself ?
 Nay, be not cruel—you must under-
 stand !
 Your lightest footfall on a floor of mine
 Would shake the house, my lintel being
 uncrossed
 'Gainst angels ; henceforth it is night
 with me,
 And so, henceforth, I put the shutters
 up :
 Auroras must not come to spoil my
 dark.'

He smiled so feebly, with an empty
 hand
 Stretched sideways from me,—as indeed
 he looked
 To any one but me to give him help,—
 And while the moon came suddenly out
 full,
 The double rose of our Italian moons,
 Sufficient plainly for the heaven and
 earth,
 (The stars, struck dumb and washed
 away in dews
 Of glory, and the mountains steeped
 In divine languor) he the man, ap-
 peared
 So pale and patient, like the marble
 man
 A sculptor puts his personal sadness in
 to join his grandeur of ideal thought,—
 As if his mallet struck me from my
 height
 Of passionate indignation, I who had
 risen
 Pale,—doubting, paused, . . . Was
 Romney mad indeed ?
 Had all this wrong of heart made sick
 the brain ?

Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous
 pride,
 'Go, cousin,' I said coldly ; 'a farewell
 Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of
 friends
 In those old days, than seems to suit you
 now.
 Howbeit, since then, I've writ a book
 or two,

I'm somewhat dull still in the manly art
 Of phrase and metaphor. Why, any
 man
 Can carve a score of white Loves out of
 snow,
 As Buonarotti in my Florence there,
 And set them on the wall in some safe
 shade,
 As safe, sir, as your marriage ! very
 good :
 Though if a woman took one from the
 ledge
 To put it on the table by her flowers,
 And let it mind her of a certain friend,
 'T would drop at once, (so better,) would
 not bear
 Her nail-mark even, where she took it
 up
 A little tenderly ; so best, I say :
 For me, I would not touch the fragile
 thing,
 And risk to spoil it half an hour before
 The sun shall shine to melt it : leave it
 there.
 I'm plain at speech, direct in purpose :
 when
 I speak, you'll take the meaning as it is,
 And not allow for puckerings in the silk
 By clever stitches. I'm a woman, sir,
 And use the woman's figures naturally,
 As you the male license. So, I wish
 you well.
 I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've
 had
 And not for your sake only, but man-
 kind's.
 This race is never grateful : from the
 first,
 One fills their cup at supper with pure
 wine,
 Which back they give at cross-time on
 a sponge,
 In vinegar and gall.'

'If gratefuller,'
 He murmured,—'by so much less pitia-
 ble !
 God's self would never have come down
 to die,
 Could man have thanked him for it.'
 'Happily
 'Tis patent that, whatever,' I resumed,
 'You suffered from—this thanklessness
 of men,

You sink no more than Moses' bulrush-boat
 When you once relieved of Moses; for you're light,
 You're light, my cousin! which is well for you,
 And manly. For myself,—now mark me, sir,
 They burnt Leigh Hall; but if, consummated
 To devils, heightened beyond Lucifers,
 They had burnt instead a star or two of those
 We saw above there just a moment back,
 Before the moon abolished them,—destroyed
 And riddled them in ashes through a sieve
 On the head of the foundering universe,—what then?
 If you and I remained still you and I,
 It could not shift our places as mere friends,
 Nor render decent you should toss a phrase
 Beyond the point of actual feeling!—nay,
 You shall not interrupt me: as you said,
 We're parting. Certainly, not once or twice
 To-night you've mocked me somewhat, or yourself,
 And I, at least, have not deserved it so
 That I should meet it unsurprised. But now,
 Enough: we're parting . . . parting.
 Cousin Leigh,
 I wish you well through all the acts of life
 And life's relations, wedlock not the least,
 And it shall 'please me,' in your words, to know
 You yield your wife, protection, freedom, ease,
 And very tender liking. May you live
 So happy with her, Romney, that your friends
 May praise her for it. Meantime some of us
 Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant
 Of what she has suffered by you, and what debt

Of sorrow your rich love sits down to pay:
 But if 'tis sweet for love to pay its debt,
 'Tis sweeter still for love to give its gift,
 And you, be liberal in the sweeter way,
 You can, I think. At least, as touches me,
 You owe her, cousin Romney, no amends.
 She is not used to hold my gown so fast,
 You need entreat her now to let it go:
 The lady never was a friend of mine,
 Nor capable,—I thought you knew as much,—
 Of losing for your sake so poor a prize
 As such a worthless friendship. Be content,
 Good cousin, therefore, both for her and you!
 I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull your noon,
 Nor vex you when you're merry, or at rest:
 You shall not need to put a shutter up
 To keep out this Aurora,—though your north
 Can make Auroras which vex nobody,
 Scarce known from night, I fancied! let me add,
 My larks fly higher than some windows.
 Well,
 You've read your Leighs. Indeed 'twould shake a house,
 If such as I came in with outstretched hand
 Still warm and thrilling from the clasp of one . . .
 Of one we know, . . . to acknowledge, palm to palm,
 As mistress there . . . the Lady Waldemar.'

'Now God be with us' . . . with a sudden clash
 Of voice he interrupted—'what name's that?
 You spoke a name, Aurora.'
 'Pardon me;
 I would that, Romney, I could name your wife
 Nor wound you, yet be worthy.'
 'Are we mad?'
 He echoed—'wife! mine! Lady Waldemar!

I think you said my wife.' He sprang
to his feet,
And threw his noble head back toward
the moon
As one who swims against a stormy sea,
And laughed with such a helpless, hope-
less scorn,
I stood and trembled.

'May God judge me so,'

He said at last,—'I came convicted
here,
And humbled sorely if not enough. I
came,
Because this woman from her crystal
soul
Had shown me something which a man
calls light :
Because too, formerly, I sinned by her
As then and ever since I have, by God,
Through arrogance of nature,—though I
loved . . .

Whom best, I need not say, . . . since that
is writ

Too plainly in the book of my misdeeds:
And thus I came here to abase myself,
And fasten, kneeling, on her regent
brows

A garland which I startled thence one
day

Of her beautiful June-youth. But here
again

I'm baffled!—fail in my abasement as
My aggrandisement: there's no room
left for me

At any woman's foot who misconceives
My nature, purpose, possible actions.
What!

Are you the Aurora who made large my
dreams

To frame your greatness? you conceive
so small?

You stand so less than woman, through
being more,

And lose your natural instinct, like a
beast,

Through intellectual culture? since in-
deed

I do not think that any common she
Would dare adopt such monstrous for-
geries

For the legible life-signature of such
As I, with all my blots: with all my
blots!

At last then, peerless cousin, we are
peers—

At last we're even. Ah, you've left
your height,

And here upon my level we take hands,
And here I reach you to forgive you,
sweet,

And that's a fall, Aurora. Long ago
You seldom understood me,—but before,

I could not blame you. Then, you only
seemed

So high above, you could not see be-
low;

But now I breathe,—but now I pardon!
—nay,

We're parting. Dearest, men have
burnt my house,

Maligned my motives,—but not one, I
swear,

Has wronged my soul as this Aurora has,
Who called the Lady Waldemar my
wife.

'Not married to her! yet you said' . . .

'Again?

'Nay, read the lines' (he held a letter
out)

'She sent you through me.'

By the moonlight there,
I tore the meaning out with passionate
haste

Much rather than I read it. Thus it
ran.

NINTH BOOK.

EVEN thus. I pause to write it out at
length,

The letter of the Lady Waldemar.

'I prayed your cousin Leigh to take you
this,

He says he'll do it. After years of love,
Or what is called so,—when a woman
frets

And fools upon one string of a man's
name,

And fingers it for ever till it breaks,—
He may perhaps do for her such thing,

And she accept it without detriment
Although she should not love him any
more.

And I, who do not love him, nor love
 you,
 Nor you, Aurora,—choose you shall re-
 pent
 Your most ungracious letter and confess,
 Constrained by his convictions, (he's
 convinced)
 You've wronged me foully. Are you
 made so ill,
 You woman—to impute such ill to *me*?
 We both had mothers,—lay in their
 bosom once.
 And, after all, I thank you, Aurora
 Leigh,
 For proving to myself that there are
 things
 I would not do, . . . not for my life . . .
 nor him . . .
 Though something I have somewhat
 overdone,—
 For instance, when I went to see the
 gods
 One morning on Olympus, with a step
 That shook the thunder from a certain
 cloud,
 Committing myself vilely. Could I think,
 The Muse I pulled my heart out from
 my breast
 To soften, had herself a sort of heart,
 And loved my mortal? He, at least
 loved her,
 I heard him say so; 'twas my recom-
 pense.
 When, watching at his bedside fourteen
 days,
 He broke out like a flame at whiles
 Between the heats of fever . . . 'Is it thou?
 'Breathe closer, sweetest mouth!' and
 when at last
 The fever gone, the wasted face extinct
 As if it irked him much to know me
 there,
 He said, ' 'Twas kind, 'twas good, 'twas
 womanly,'
 (And fifty praises to excuse no love)
 'But was the picture safe he had ven-
 tured for?'
 And then, half wandering . . . 'I have
 loved her well,
 'Although she could not love me.'—
 'Say instead,'
 I answered, 'she does love you.'—'Twas
 my turn
 To rave: I would have married him so
 changed,

Although the world had jeered me prop-
 erly
 For taking up with Cupid at his worst,
 The silver quiver worn off on his hair.
 'No, no,' he murmured, 'no, she loves
 me not;
 'Aurora Leigh does better: bring her
 book
 'And read it softly, Lady Waldemar,
 'Until I thank your friendship more for
 that
 'Than even for harder service.' So I
 read
 Your book, Aurora, for an hour that
 day:
 I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis;
 My voice, empaled upon its hooks of
 rhyme,
 Not once would writhe, nor quiver, nor
 revolt;
 I read on calmly,—calmly shut it up,
 Observing, 'There's some merit in the
 book;
 'And yet the merit in't is thrown away
 'As chances still with women if we
 write
 'Or write not: we want string to tie our
 flowers,
 'So drop them as we walk, which serves
 to show
 'The way we went. Good morning,
 Mister Leigh;
 'You'll find another reader the nex-
 time.
 'A woman who does better than to love
 'I hate; she will do nothing very well:
 'Male poets are preferable, straining
 less
 'And teaching more.' I triumphed o'er
 you both,
 And left him.
 'When I saw him afterward
 I had read your shameful letter, and my
 heart.
 He came with health recovered, strong
 though pale,
 Lord Howe and he, a corteous pair of
 friends,
 To say what men dare say to women
 when
 Their debtors. But I stopped them with
 a word,
 And proved I had never trodden such
 road
 To carry so much dirt upon my shoe.

hen, putting into it something of disdain,
 asked forsooth his pardon, and my own,
 or having done no better than to love,
 and that not wisely,—though 'twas long ago,
 and had been mended radically since.
 I told him, as I tell you now Miss Leigh,
 and proved I took some trouble for his sake
 because I knew he did not love the girl)
 to spoil my hands with working in the stream
 of that poor bubbling nature,—till she went,
 consigned to one I trusted, my own maid,
 who once had lived full five months in my house,
 (dressed hair superbly) with a lavish purse
 to carry to Australia where she had left her
 husband, said she. If the creature lied,
 the mission failed, we all do fail and lie
 more or less—and I'm sorry—which is all
 expected from us when we fail the most
 and go to church to own it. What I meant,
 'as just the best for him, and me, and her . . .
 best even for Marian!—I am sorry for't, and
 very sorry. Yet my creature said she
 saw her stop to speak in Oxford Street
 to one . . . no matter! I had sooner cut
 my hand off (though 'twere kissed the
 hour before,
 and promised a Duke's troth-ring for
 the next)
 than crush her silly head with so much
 wrong.
 Poor child! I would have mended it
 with gold,
 until it gleamed like St. Sophia's dome
 when all the faithful troop to morning
 prayer:
 but he, he nipped the bud of such a
 thought
 with that cold Leigh look which I fancied
 once,

And broke in, 'Henceforth she was called
 his wife.
 'His wife required no succour: he was
 bound
 'To Florence, to resume this broken
 bond:
 'Enough so. Both were happy, he and
 Howe,
 'To acquit me of the heaviest charge of
 all—'
 —At which I shut my tongue against my
 fly
 And struck him; 'Would he carry,—he
 was just,
 'A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,
 'And ratify from his authentic mouth
 'My answer to her accusation?'—'Yes,
 'If such a letter were prepared in time.'
 —He's just, your cousin,—ay, abhorrently.
 He'd wash his hands in blood to keep
 them clean,
 And so, cold, courteous, a mere gentleman,
 He bowed, we parted.
 'Parted. Face no more,
 Voice no more, love no more! wiped
 wholly out
 Like some ill scholar's scrawl from heart
 and slate,—
 Ay, spit on and so wiped out utterly
 By some coarse scholar! I have been
 too coarse,
 Too human. Have we business, in our
 rank,
 With blood i' the veins? I will have
 henceforth none,
 Not even to keep the colour at my lip.
 A rose is pink and pretty without blood;
 Why not a woman? When we've
 played in vain
 The game, to adore,—we have resources
 still,
 And can play on at leisure, being
 adored:
 Here's Smith already swearing at my
 feet
 That I'm the typic She. Away with
 Smith!—
 Smith smacks of Leigh,—and, henceforth
 I'll admit
 No socialist within three crinolines,
 To live and have his being. But for
 you,
 Though insolent your letter and absurd,

And though I hate you frankly,—take
 my Smith !
 For when you have seen this famous
 marriage tied,
 A most unspotted Erle to a noble Leigh,
 (His love astray on one he should not
 love)
 Howbeit you may not want his love, be-
 ware,
 You'll want some comfort. So I leave
 you Smith ;
 Take Smith !—he talks Leigh's subjects,
 somewhat worse ;
 Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and dwin-
 dles it ;
 Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch be-
 hind ;
 Will mind you of him, as a shoe-string
 may
 Of a man : and women, when they are
 made like you,
 Grow tender to a shoe-string, foot-print
 even,
 Adore averted shoulders in a glass,
 And memories of what, present once,
 was loathed.
 And yet, you loathed not Romney,—
 though you played
 At 'fox and goose' about him with your
 soul :
 Pass over fox, you rub out fox,—ignore
 A feeling, you eradicate it,—the act's
 Identical.

'I wish you joy, Miss Leigh,
 You've made a happy marriage for your
 friend,
 And all the honour, well-assorted love,
 Derives from you who love him, whom
 he loves !
 You need not wish *me* joy to think of it,
 I have so much. Observe, Aurora Leigh,
 Your droop of eyelid is the same as his,
 And, but for you, I might have won his
 love,
 And, to you, I have shown my naked
 heart,—
 For which three things I hate, hate, hate
 you. Hush,
 Suppose a fourth !—I cannot choose but
 think
 That, with him, I were virtuouser than
 you
 Without him : so I hate you from this
 gulf

And hollow of my soul, which open
 out
 To what, except for you, had been no
 heaven,
 And is instead, a place to curse by
 LOVE.'

An active kind of curse. I stood the
 cursed
 Confounded. I had seized and caught
 the sense
 Of the letter with its twenty stinging
 snakes,
 In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and
 stood
 Dazed.—'Ah !—not married ?'
 'You mistake,' he said,
 'I'm married. Is not Marian Erle no
 wife ?
 As God sees things, I have a wife and
 child ;
 And I, as I'm a man who honours God
 Am here to claim them as my child and
 wife.'

I felt it hard to breathe, much less
 speak.
 Nor word of mine was needed. Some
 one else
 Was there for answering. 'Romney
 she began,
 'My great good angel, Romney.'

Then at first
 I knew that Marian Erle was beautiful.
 She stood there, still and pallid as
 saint,
 Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,
 As if the floating moonshine interposed
 Betwixt her foot and the earth, and raised
 her up
 To float upon it. 'I had left my child,
 Who sleeps,' she said, 'and having
 drawn this way
 I heard you speaking, . . friend !—Con-
 firm me now.
 You take this Marian, such as wicked
 men
 Have made her, for your honourable
 wife ?'

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic
 voice.
 He stretched his arms out toward the
 thrilling voice,
 As if to draw it on to his embrace.

I take her as God made her, and as
men
must fail to unmake her, for my hon-
oured wife.'

He never raised her eyes, nor took a
step,
but stood there in her place, and spoke
again.

You take this Marian's child, which
is her shame
sight of men and women, for your
child,
whom you will not ever feel ashamed?'

He thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic
voice.

He stepped on toward it, still with out-
stretched arms,
as if to quench upon his breast that
voice.

May God so father me, as I do him,
and so forsake me as I let him feel
his orphaned haply. Here I take the
child

share my cup, to slumber on my
knee,

to play his loudest gambol at my foot,
to hold my finger in the public ways,
and if none shall need inquire, 'Whose
child is this,'

he gesture saying so tenderly, 'My
own.'

He stood a moment silent in her place ;
then turning toward me very slow and
cold—

'And you,—what say you?—will you
blame me much,

careful for that outcast child of mine,
to catch this hand that's stretched to me
and him,

or dare to leave him friendless in the
world

where men have stoned me? Have I
not the right

to take so mere an aftermath from life,
and see found so wholly bare? Or is it
wrong

to let your cousin, for a generous bent,
to put out his ungloved fingers among
briars

to set a tumbling bird's nest somewhat
straight?

You will not tell him, though we're inno-
cent

We are not harmless, . . . and that both
our harms

Will stick to his good smooth noble life
like burrs,

Never to drop off though he shakes the
cloak?

You've been my friend: you will not now
be his?

You've known him that he's worthy of a
friend,

And you're his cousin, lady, after all,
And therefore more than free to take his
part,

Explaining, since the nest is surely
spoilt,

And Marian what you know her,—though
a wife,

The world would hardly understand her
case

Of being just hurt and honest; while for
him,

'Twould ever twit him with his bastard
child

And married harlot. Speak, while yet
there's time:

You would not stand and let a good
man's dog

Turn round and rend him, because his,
and reared

Of a generous breed,—and will you let
his act,

Because it's generous? Speak. I'm
bound to you.

And I'll be bound by only you, in this '
The thrilling solemn voice, so passion-
less,

Sustained, yet low, without a rise or fall,
As one who had authority to speak,

And not as Marian.

I looked up to feel

If God stood near me, and beheld his
heaven

As blue as Aaron's priestly robe appeared
To Aaron when he took it off to die.

And then I spoke—'Accept the gift, I
say,

My sister Marian, and be satisfied.
The hand that gives, has still a soul be-
hind

Which will not let it quail for having
given,

Though foolish wordlings talk they know
not what

Of what they know not. Romney's
 strong enough
 For this : do you be strong to know he's
 strong :
 He stands on Right's side ; never flinch
 for him,
 As if he stood on the other. You'll be
 bound
 By me ? I am a woman of repute ;
 No fly-blow gossip ever specked my life ;
 My name is clean and open as this hand,
 Whose glove there's not a man dares
 blab about
 As if he had touched it freely. Here's
 my hand
 To clasp your hand, my Marian, owned
 as pure !
 As pure,—as I'm a woman and a
 Leigh !—
 And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the
 world
 That Romney Leigh is honoured in his
 choice
 Who chooses Marian for his honoured
 wife.'

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot out a
 light ;
 Her smile was wonderful for rapture.
 ' Thanks,
 My great Aurora.' Forward then she
 sprang,
 And dropping her impassioned spaniel
 head
 With all its brown abandonment of curls
 On Romney's feet, we heard the kisses
 drawn
 Through sobs upon the foot, upon the
 ground—
 ' O Romney ! O my angel ! O unchanged,
 Though since we've parted I have passed
 the grave !
 But Death itself could only better *thee*,
 Not change thee !—*Thee* I do not thank
 at all :
 I but thank God who made thee what
 thou art,
 So wholly godlike.'

When he tried in vain
 To raise her to his embrace, escaping
 thence
 As any leaping fawn from a huntsman's
 grasp
 She bounded off and 'lighted beyond
 reach,

To keep him with a staglike majesty
 Of soft, serene defiance,—as she knew
 He could not touch her, so was tolerant
 He had cared to try. She stood there
 with her great
 Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks, a
 strange sweet smile
 That lived through all, as if one held
 light
 Across a waste of waters,—shook her
 head
 To keep some thoughts down deeper
 her soul,—
 Then, white and tranquil like a summer
 cloud
 Which, having rained itself to a taro
 peace,
 Stands still in heaven as if it ruled the
 day,
 Spoke out again—' Although, my gene
 ous friend,
 Since last we met and parted you're un
 changed,
 And, having promised faith to Maria
 Erle,
 Maintain it, as she were not changed
 all ;
 And though that's worthy, though that
 full of balm
 To any conscious spirit of a girl
 Who once has loved you as I loved you
 once,—
 Yet still it will not make her . . . if she
 dead,
 And gone away where none can give
 take
 In marriage,—able to revive, return
 And wed you,—will it Romney ? Here
 the point ;
 O friend, we'll see it plainer : you and
 Must never, never, never join hands so
 Nay, let me say it,—for I said it first
 To God, and placed it, rounded to a
 oath,
 Far, far above the moon there, at He
 feet,
 As surely as I wept just now at yours,—
 We never, never, never join hands so.
 And now, be patient with me ; do not
 think
 I'm speaking from a false humility.
 The truth is, I am grown so proud with
 grief,
 And He has said so often through his
 night's

And through his mornings, 'Weep a little still,
 'Thou foolish Marian, because women must,
 'But do not blush at all except for sin,'—
 'That I, who felt myself unworthy once
 Of virtuous Romney and his high-born race,
 Have come to learn, . . . a woman poor
 or rich,
 Despised or honoured, is a human soul:
 And what her soul is,—that, she is herself,
 Although she should be spit upon of men,
 As is the pavement of the churches here,
 Still good enough to pray in. And being chaste
 And honest, and inclined to do the right,
 And love the truth, and live my life out green
 And smooth beneath his steps, I should not fear
 To make him thus a less uneasy time
 Than many a happier woman. Very proud
 You see me. Pardon, that I set a trap
 To hear a confirmation in your voice . . .
 Both yours and yours. It is so good to know
 'Twas really God who said the same before:
 For thus it is in heaven, that first God speaks,
 And then his angels. Oh, it does me good,
 It wipes me clean and sweet from devil's dirt,
 That Romney Leigh should think me worthy still
 Of being his true and honourable wife!
 Henceforth I need not say, on leaving earth,
 I had o' glory in it. For the rest,
 The reason's ready (master, angel, friend,
 Be patient with me) wherefore you and I
 Can never, never, never join hands so.
 I know you'll not be angry like a man
 (For *you* are none) when I shall tell the truth,
 Which is, I do not love you, Romney Leigh,

I do not love you. Ah well! catch my hands,
 Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes with yours,—
 I swear I do not love him. Did I once?
 'Tis said that women have been bruised to death,
 And yet, if once they loved, that love of theirs
 Could never be drained out with all their blood:
 I've heard such things and pondered.
 Did I indeed
 Love once? or did I only worship?
 Yes,
 Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so high
 Above all actual good or hope of good
 Or fear of evil, all that could be mine,
 I haply set you above love itself
 And out of reach of these poor women's arms,
 Angelic Romney. What was in my thought?
 To be your slave, your help, your toy,
 your tool.
 To be your love . . . I never thought of that.
 To give you love . . . still less. I gave you love?
 I think I did not give you anything;
 I was but only yours,—upon my knees,
 All yours, in soul and body, in head and heart,
 A creature you had taken from the ground,
 Still crumbling through your fingers to your feet
 To join the dust she came from. Did I love,
 Or did I worship? judge, Aurora Leigh!
 But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago,—
 So long! before the sun and moon were made,
 Before the hells were open,—ah, before
 I heard my child cry in the desert night,
 And knew he had no father. It may be
 I'm not as strong as other women are,
 Who, torn and crushed, are not undone from love.
 It may be, I am colder than the dead,
 Who, being dead, love always. But for me
 Once killed, . . . this ghost of Mariau
 loves no more,

No more . . . except the child! . . . no more at all.
 I told your cousin, sir, that I was dead;
 And now, she thinks I'll get up from my grave,
 And wear my chin-cloth for a wedding veil,
 And glide along the churchyard like a bride,
 While all the dead keep whispering through the withes,
 'You would be better in your place with us,
 'You pitiful corruption!' At the thought,
 The damps breaks out on me like leprosy
 Although I'm clean. Ay, clean as Marian Erle:
 As Marian Leigh, I know, I were not clean:
 I have not so much life that I should love.
 . . . Except the child. Ah God! I could not bear
 To see my darling on a good man's knees
 And know by such a look, or such a sigh,
 Or such a silence, that he thought sometimes,
 'This child was fathered by some cursed wretch' . . .
 For, Romney,—angels are less tender-wise
 Than God and mothers: even *you* would think
 What *we* think never. He is ours, the child;
 And we would sooner vex a soul in heaven
 By coupling with it the dead body's thought,
 It left behind it in a last month's grave,
 Than, in my child, see other than . . . my child.
 We only, never call him fatherless
 Who has God and his mother. O my babe,
 My pretty, pretty blossom, an ill-wind
 Once blew upon my breast I can any think
 I'd have another,—one called happier,
 A fathered child, with father's love and race

That's worn as bold and open as a smile,
 To vex my darling when he's asked his name
 And has no answer? What! a happier child
 Than mine, my best,—who laughed so loud to-night
 He could not sleep for pastime? Nay, I swear
 By life and love, that, if I lived like some,
 And loved like . . . *some* . . . ay, loved you, Romney Leigh,
 As some love (eyes that have wept so much, see clear)
 I've room for no more children in my arms,
 My kisses are all melted on one mouth,
 I would not push my darling to a stool
 To dandle babies. Here's a hand shall keep
 For ever clean without a marriage-ring,
 To tend my boy until he cease to need
 One steady finger of it, and desert
 (Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit with men.
 And when I miss him (not he me) I'll come
 And say, 'Now give me some of Romney's work,
 'To help your outcast orphans of the world,
 And comfort grief with grief.' For you, meantime,
 Most noble Romney, wed a noble wife,
 And open on each other your great souls.—
 I need not farther bless you. If I dared
 But strain and touch her in her upper sphere
 And say, 'Come down to Romney—pay my debt!'
 I should be joyful with the stream of joy
 Sent through me. But the moon is in my face . . .
 I dare not,—though I guess the name he loves;
 I'm learned with my studies of old days,
 Remembering how he crushed his underlip
 When some one came and spoke, or did not come:
 Aurora, I could touch her with my hand,
 And fly, because I dare not.'

She was gone.
 He smiled so sternly that I spoke in
 haste.
 'Forgive her—she sees clearly for her-
 self:
 Her instinct's holy.'

'I forgive?' he said,
 'I only marvel how she sees so sure,
 While others' . . . there he paused,—
 then hoarse, abrupt,—
 'Aurora, you forgive us, her and me?
 For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal
 child,
 If once corrected by the thing I know,
 Had been unspoken, since she loves you
 well,
 Has leave to love you:—while for me,
 alas,
 If once or twice I let my heart escape
 This night, . . . remember, where hearts
 slip and fall
 They break beside: we're parting,—
 parting,—ah,
 You do not love, that you should surely
 know
 What that word means. Forgive, be
 tolerant ;
 It had not been, but that I felt myself
 So safe in impuissance and despair,
 I could not hurt you though I tossed my
 arms
 And sighed my soul out. The most
 utter wretch
 Will choose his postures when he comes
 to die,
 However in the presence of a queen :
 And you'll forgive me some unseemly
 spasms
 Which meant no more than dying. Do
 you think
 I had ever come here in my perfect
 mind,
 Unless I had come here in my settled
 mind
 Bound Marian's, bound to keep the bond
 and give
 My name, my house, my hand, the
 things I could,
 To Marian? For even I could give as
 much :
 Even I, affronting her exalted soul
 By a supposition that she wanted these,
 Could act the husband's coat and hat set
 up

To creak i' the wind and drive the world-
 crows off
 From pecking in her garden. Straw can
 fill
 A hole to keep out vermin. Now, at
 last,
 I own heaven's angels round her life
 suffice
 To fight the rats of our society,
 Without this Romney: I can see at
 last ;
 And here is ended my pretention which
 The most pretended. Over-proud of
 course.
 Even so !—but not so stupid . . . blind
 . . . that I,
 Whom thus the great Taskmaster of the
 world
 Has set to meditate mistaken work,
 My dreary face against a dim blank wall
 Throughout man's natural lifetime,—
 could pretend
 Or wish . . . O love, I have loved you !
 O my soul,
 I have lost you !—but I swear by all
 yourself,
 And all you might have been to me these
 years
 If that June-morning had not failed my
 hope,—
 I'm not so bestial, to regret that day
 This night,—this night, which still to
 you is fair ;
 Nay, not so blind, Aurora. I attest
 Those 'stars above us which I cannot
 see' . . .
 'You cannot.' . . .
 'That if Heaven itself should stoop,
 Remix the lots, and give me another
 chance.
 I'd say, 'No other !'—I'd record my
 blank.
 Aurora never should be wife of mine.'
 'Not see the stars?'
 'Tis worse still, not to see
 To find your hand, although we're part-
 ing, dear.
 A moment let me hold it ere we part ;
 And understand my last words—these at
 last !
 I would not have you thinking when I'm
 gone
 That Romney dared to hanker for your
 love

In thought or vision, if attainable,
 (Which certainly for me it never was)
 And wished to use it for a dog to-day,
 To help the blind man stumbling. God
 forbid!
 And now I know he held you in his
 palm,
 And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,
 To save you at last from such a dreary
 end.
 Believe me, dear, that if I had known
 like Him
 What loss was coming on me, I had
 done
 As well in this as He has.—Farewell
 you
 Who are still my light,—farewell! How
 late it is:
 I know that, now: you've been too pa-
 tient, sweet.
 I will but blow my whistle toward the
 lane,
 And some one comes . . . the same who
 brought me here.
 Get in—Good night.'
 'A moment. Heavenly Christ!
 A moment. Speak once, Romney. 'Tis
 not true.
 I hold your hands, I look into your
 face—
 You see me?'
 'No more than the blessed stars.
 Be blessed too, Aurora. Nay, my
 sweet,
 You tremble. Tender-hearted! Do
 you mind
 Of yore, dear, how you used to cheat old
 John,
 And let the mice out slyly from his traps,
 Until he marvelled at the soul in mice
 Which took the cheese and left the
 snare? The same
 Dear soft heart always! 'Twas for this
 I grieved
 Howe's letter never reached you. Ah,
 you had heard
 Of illness,—not the issue . . . not the
 extent:
 My life long sick with tossings up and
 down,
 The sudden revulsion in the blazing
 house,
 The strain and struggle both of body
 and soul, [blood:
 Which left fire running in my veins for

Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of the
 falling beam
 Which nicked me on the forehead as I
 passed
 The gallery-door with a burden. Say
 heaven's bolt,
 Not William Erle's, not Marian's fa-
 ther's,—tramp
 And poacher, whom I found for what he
 was,
 And, eager for her sake to rescue him,
 Forth swept from the open highway of
 the world,
 Road-dust and all,—till like a woodland
 boar
 Most naturally unwilling to be tamed,
 He notched me with his tooth. But not
 a word
 To Marian! and I do not think, be-
 sides,
 He turned the tilting of the beam my
 way,—
 And if he laughed, as many swear, poor
 wretch,
 Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so deep.
 We'll hope his next laugh may be mer-
 rier,
 In a better cause.'

'Blind, Romney?'

'Ah, my friend,

You'll learn to say it in a cheerful voice.
 I, too, at first desponded. To be blind,
 Turned out of nature, mulcted as a man,
 Refused the daily largesse of the sun
 To humble creatures! When the fever's
 heat
 Dropped from me, as the flame did from
 my house,
 And left me ruined like it, stripped of all
 The hues and shapes of respectable life,
 A mere bare blind stone in the blaze of
 day,
 A man, upon the outside of the earth,
 As dark as ten feet under, in the grave,—
 Why that seemed hard.'

'No hope?'

'A tear! you weep

Divine Aurora? tears upon my hand!
 I've seen you weeping for a mouse, :
 bird.—

But, weep for me, Aurora? Yes, there'
 hope.

Not hope of sight,—I could be learned
 dear, [name

And tell you in what Greek and Latin

The visual nerve is withered to the root,
 Though the outer eyes appear indifferent,
 Unspotted in their chrystals. But there's
 hope.
 The spirit, from behind this dethroned
 sense,
 Sees, waits in patience till the walls
 break up
 From which the bas-relief and fresco
 have dropt:
 There's hope. The man here, once so
 arrogant
 And restless, so ambitious, for his part,
 Of dealing with statistically packed
 Disorders, (from a pattern on his nail,
 And packing such things quite another
 way,—
 Is now contented. From his personal
 loss
 He has come to hope for others when
 they lose,
 And wear a gladder faith in what we
 gain . . .
 Through bitter experience, compensation
 sweet,
 Like that tear, sweetest. I am quiet
 now,
 As tender surely for the suffering world,
 But quiet,—sitting at the wall to learn,
 Content henceforth to do the thing I
 can:
 For, though as powerless, said I, as a
 stone,
 A stone can still give shelter to a worm,
 And it is worth while being a stone for
 that:
 There's hope, Aurora.'
 'Is there hope for me?
 For me?—and is there room beneath the
 stone
 For such a worm?—And if I came and
 said . . .
 What all this weeping scarce will let me
 say,
 And yet what women cannot say at all
 But weeping bitterly . . . (the pride keeps
 up,
 Until the heart breaks under it) . . . I
 love,—
 I love you, Romney' . . .
 'Silence!' he exclaimed.
 A woman's pity sometimes makes her
 mad. [soul
 A man's distraction must not cheat his

To take advantage of it. Yet, 'tis hard—
 Farewell, Aurora.'
 'But I love you, sir:
 And when a woman says she loves a
 man,
 The man must hear her, though he
 love her not,
 Which . . . hush! . . . he has leave to
 answer in his turn;
 She will not surely blame him. As for
 me,
 You call it pity,—think I'm generous?
 'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman
 proud
 As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,
 To let it pass as such, and press on you
 Love born of pity,—seeing that excellent
 loves
 Are born so, often, nor the quicker die,
 And this would set me higher by the
 head
 Than now I stand. No matter: let the
 truth
 Stand high; Aurora must be humble:
 no,
 My love's not pity merely. Obviously
 I'm not a generous woman, never was,
 Or else, of old, I had not looked so near
 To weights and measures, grudging you
 the power
 To give, as first I scorned your power to
 judge
 For me, Aurora: I would have no gifts
 Forsooth, but God's,—and I would use
 them too
 According to my pleasure and my choice,
 As He and I were equals,—you below,
 Excluded from that level of interchange
 Admitting benefaction. You were wrong
 In much? you said so. I was wrong in
 most.
 Oh, most! You only thought to rescue
 men
 By half-means, half-way, seeing half
 their wants,
 While thinking nothing of your personal
 gain.
 But I who saw the human nature broad
 At both sides, comprehending too the
 soul's,
 And all the high necessities of Art,
 Betrayed the thing I saw, and wronged
 my own life
 For which I pleaded. Passioned to
 exalt

The artist's instinct in me at the cost
 Of putting down the woman's—I forgot
 No perfect artist is developed here
 From any imperfect woman. Flower
 from root,
 And spiritual from natural, grade by
 grade
 In all our life. A handful of the earth
 To make God's image! the despised
 poor earth,
 The healthy odorous earth,—I missed,
 with it,
 The divine Breath that blows the nos-
 trils out
 To ineffable inflatus: ay, the breath
 Which love is. Art is much, but Love is
 more.
 O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but Love
 is more!
 Art symbolises heaven, but Love is God
 And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell from
 mine:
 I would not be a woman like the rest,
 A simple woman who believes in love
 And owns the right of love because she
 loves,
 And, hearing she's beloved, is satisfied
 With what contents God: I must ana-
 lyse,
 Confront, and question; just as if a fly
 Refused to warm itself in any sun
 Till such was *in leone*: I must fret
 Forsooth, because the month was only
 May;
 Be faithless of the kind of proffered love,
 And captious, lest it miss my dignity,
 And scornful, that my lover sought a
 wife
 To use . . . to use! O Romney, O my
 love,
 I am changed since then, changed
 wholly,—for indeed
 If now you'd stoop so low to take my
 love,
 And use it roughly, without stint or
 spare,
 As men use common things with more
 behind,
 (And, in this, ever would be more be-
 hind)
 To any mean and ordinary end,—
 The joy would set me like a star, in
 heaven,
 So high up, I should shine because of
 height

And not of virtue. Yet in one respect,
 Just one, beloved, I am in no wise
 changed:
 I love you, loved you . . . loved you first
 and last,
 And love you on for ever. Now I know
 I loved you always, Romney. She who
 died
 Knew that, and said so; Lady Walde-
 mar
 Knows that; . . . and Marian: I had
 known the same
 Except that I was prouder than I knew,
 And not so honest. Ay, and as I live,
 I should have died so, crushing in my
 hand
 This rose of love, the wasp inside and
 all,
 Ignoring ever to my soul and you
 Both rose and pain,—except for this
 great loss,
 This great despair.—to stand before your
 face
 And know you do not see me where I
 stand.
 You think, perhaps, I am not changed
 from pride,
 And that I chiefly bear to say such
 words
 Because you cannot shame me with your
 eyes?
 O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in a
 storm,
 Blown out like lights o'er melancholy
 seas,
 Though shrieked for by the shipwrecked,
 —O my Dark,
 My Cloud,—to go before me every day
 While I go ever toward the wilderness,—
 I would that you could see me bare to
 the soul!
 If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,
 And not for Romney: *he* can stand
 alone;
 A man like *him* is never overcome:
 No woman like me, counts him pitiable
 While saints applaud him. He mistook
 the world:
 But I mistook my own heart,—and tha
 slip
 Was fatal. Romney,—will you leave m
 here?
 So wrong, so proud, so weak, so uncon-
 soled,
 So mere a woman!—and I love you so.

I love you, Romney?
 Could I see his face,
 I wept so? Did I drop against his
 breast,
 Or did his arms constrain me? Were
 my cheeks
 Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or his?
 And which of our two large explosive
 hearts
 So shook me? That, I know not. There
 were words
 That broke in utterance . . . melted, in
 the fire;
 Embrace, that was convulsion, . . . then
 a kiss
 As long and silent as the ecstatic night,
 And deep, deep, shuddering breaths,
 which meant beyond
 Whatever could be told by word or kiss.
 But what he said . . . I have written day
 by day,
 With somewhat even writing. Did I
 think
 That such a passionate rain would inter-
 cept
 And dash this last page? What he said,
 indeed,
 I fain would write it down here like the
 rest
 To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,
 The heart's sweet scripture, to be read
 at night
 When weary, or at morning when afraid,
 and lean my heaviest oath on when I
 swear
 That when all's done, all tried, all count-
 ed here.
 All great arts, and all good philosophies,
 His love just puts its hand out in a
 dream,
 and straight outstretches all things.
 What he said,
 I fain would write. But if an angel spoke
 a thunder, should we, haply know much
 more
 than that it thundered? If a cloud
 came down
 and wrapt us wholly, could we draw its
 shape,
 as if on the outside and not overcome?
 and so he spake. His breath against
 my face
 confused his words, yet made them more
 intense,—

As when the sudden finger of the wind
 Will wipe a row of single city-lamps
 To a pure white line of flame, more
 luminous
 Because of obliteration; more intense,
 The intimate presence carrying in itself
 Complete communication, as with souls
 Who, having put the body off, perceive
 Through simply being. Thus, 'twas
 granted me
 To know he loved me to the depth and
 height
 Of such large natures, ever competent
 With grand horizons by the sea or land,
 To love's grand sunrise. Small spheres
 hold small fires:
 But he loved largely, as a man can love
 Who, baffled in his love, dares live his
 life,
 Accept the ends which God loves for
 his own,
 And lift a constant aspect.
 From the day
 I brought to England my poor searching
 face
 (An orphan even of my father's grave)
 He had loved me, watched me, watched
 his soul in mine,
 Which in me grew and heightened into
 love.
 For he, a boy still, had been told the
 tale
 Of how a fairy bride from Italy,
 With smells of oleanders in her hair,
 Was coming through the vines to touch
 his hand;
 Whereat the blood of boyhood on the
 palm
 Made sudden heats. And when at last I
 came,
 And lived before him, lived, and rarely
 smiled,
 He smiled and loved me for the thing I
 was,
 As every child will love the year's first
 flower,
 (Not certainly the fairest of the year,
 But, in which, the complete year seems
 to blow)
 The poor sad snowdrop,—growing be-
 tween drifts,
 Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant and
 frost,
 So faint with winter while so quick with
 spring,

So doubtful if to thaw itself away
 With that snow near it. Not that Romney Leigh
 Had loved me coldly. If I thought so
 once,
 It was as if I had held my hand in fire
 And shook for cold. But now I understood
 For ever, that the very fire and heat
 Of troubling passion in him burned him
 clear,
 And shaped to dubious order, word and
 act.
 That, just because he loved me over all,
 All wealth, all lands, all social privilege,
 To which chance made him unexpected
 heir,
 And, just because on all these lesser
 gifts,
 Constrained by conscience and the sense
 of wrong
 He had stamped with steady hand God's
 arrow-mark
 Of dedication to the human need,
 He thought it should be so too, with his
 love :
 He, passionately loving, would bring
 down
 His love, his life, his best, (because the
 best)
 His bride of dreams, who walked so still
 and high
 Through flowery poems as through
 meadow-grass,
 The dust of golden lilies on her feet,
 That *she* should walk beside him on the
 rocks
 In all that clang and hewing out of men,
 And help the work of help which was
 his life,
 And prove he kept back nothing,—not
 his soul.
 And when I failed him,—for I failed
 him, I—
 And when it seemed he had missed my
 love,—he thought,
 'Aurora makes room for a working-
 noon ;'
 And so, self-girded with torn strips of
 hope,
 Took up his life as if it were for death,
 (Just capable of one heroic aim.)
 And threw it in the thickest of the world,
 At which men laughed as if he had
 drowned a dog.

No wonder,—since Aurora failed him
 first !
 The morning and the evening made his
 day.
 But oh, the night ! oh, bitter-sweet ! oh,
 sweet !
 O dark, O moon and stars. O ecstasy
 Of darkness ! O great mystery of love,
 In which absorbed, loss, anguish, treas-
 on's self
 Enlarges rapture,—as a pebble dropt
 In some full wine-cup over-brims the
 wine !
 While we two sate together, leaned that
 night
 So close, my very garments crept and
 thrilled
 With strange electric life ; and both my
 cheeks
 Grew red, then pale, with touches from
 my hair
 In which his breath was ; while the gold-
 en moon
 Was hung before our faces as the badge
 Of some sublime inherited despair,
 Since ever to be seen by only one,—
 A voice said, low and rapid as a sigh,
 Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from :
 smile,
 'Thank God, who made me blind, to
 make me see !
 Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of souls
 Which rul'st for evermore both day and
 night !
 I am happy.'
 I flung closer to his breast,
 As sword that, after battle, flings to
 sheath ;
 And, in that hurtle of united souls,
 The mystic motions which in commo-
 moods
 Are shut beyond our sense, broke in o-
 us,
 And, as we sate, we felt the old earth
 spin,
 And all the starry turbulence of worlds
 Swing round us in their audient circles
 till
 If that same golden moon were overhead
 Or if beneath our feet, we did not know
 And then calm, equal, smooth with
 weights of joy
 His voice rose, as some chief musician
 song

Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-
 pause,
 And bade me mark how we two met at
 last
 Upon this moon-bathed promontory of
 earth,
 To give up much on each side, then take
 all.
 'Beloved,' it sang, 'we must be here to
 work ;
 And men who work can only work for
 men,
 And, not to work in vain, must compre-
 hend
 Humanity, and so work humanly,
 And raise men's bodies still by raising
 souls,
 As God did first.'
 'But stand upon the earth,'
 I said, 'to raise them,—(this is human
 too ;
 There's nothing high which has not first
 been low,
 My humbleness, said One, has made me
 great !)
 As God did last.'
 'And work all silently,
 And simply,' he returned, 'as God does
 all ;
 Distort our nature never for our work,
 Nor count our right hands stronger for
 being hoofs.
 The man most man, with tenderest hu-
 man hands,
 Works best for men,—as God in Naza-
 reth.'
 He paused upon the word, and then re-
 sumed :
 'Fewer programmes, we who have no
 prescience.
 Fewer systems, we who are held and do
 not hold.
 Less mapping out of masses to be saved,
 By nations or by sexes. Fourier's void,
 And Comte absurd,—and Cabot, puerile.
 Subsists no law of life outside of life,
 No perfect manners, without Christian
 souls :
 The Christ himself had been no Law-
 giver,
 Unless he had given the life, too, with
 the law.'

I echoed thoughtfully—'The man, most
 man,

Works best for men : and, if most man
 indeed,
 He gets his manhood plainest from his
 soul !
 While obviously this stringent soul itself
 Obeys our old law of development ;
 The Spirit ever witnessing in ours,
 And Love, the soul of soul, within the
 soul,
 Evolving it sublimely. First, God's
 love.'

'And next,' he smiled, 'the love of
 wedded souls,
 Which still presents that mystery's coun-
 terpart.
 Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water of
 life,
 Of such a mystic substance, Sharon
 gave
 A name to ! human, vital, fructuous rose,
 Whose calyx holds the multitude of
 leaves.
 Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbour-
 loves,
 And civic, . . . all fair petals, all good
 scents,
 All reddened, sweetened from one central
 Heart !'

'Alas,' I cried, 'it was not long ago,
 You swore this very social rose smelt
 ill.'

'Alas,' he answered, 'is it a rose at all ?
 The filial's thankless, the fraternal's
 hard,
 The rest is lost. I do but stand and
 think,
 Across the waters of a troubled life
 The Flower of Heaven so vainly over-
 hangs,
 What perfect counterpart would be in
 sight,
 If tanks were clearer. Let us clean the
 tubes,
 And wait for rains. O poet, O my love,
 Since I was too ambitious in my deed,
 And thought to distance all men in suc-
 cess,
 Till God came on me, marked the place,
 and said,
 'Ill-doer, henceforth keep within this
 line,
 Attempting less than others,'—and I
 stand

And work among Christ's little ones,
content,—
Come thou, my compensation, my dear
sight,
My morning-star, my morning ! rise and
shine,
And touch my hills with radiance not
their own.
Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil
My falling-short that must be ! work for
two,
As I, though thus restrained, for two,
shall love !
Gaze on, with inscient vision toward the
sun,
And, from his visceral heat, pluck out
the roots
Of light beyond him. Art's a service,—
mark :
A silver key is given to thy clasp,
And thou shalt stand unwearied, night
and day,
And fix it in the hard, slow-turning wards,
And open, so, that intermediate door
Betwixt the different planes of sensuous
form
And form insensuous, that inferior men
May learn to feel on still through these
to those,
And bless thy ministration. The world
waits
For help. Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our
love,
And still our love be sweeter for our
work,
And both commended, for the sake of
each,
By all true workers and true lovers born.
Now press thy clarion on thy woman's
lip
(Love's holy kiss shall still keep conse-
crate)
And breathe the fine keen breath along
the brass,
And blow all class-walls level as Jeri-
cho's
Past Jordan ; crying from the top of
souls,
To souls, that here assembled on earth's
flats,

To get them to some purer eminence
Than any hitherto beheld for clouds !
What height we know not,—but the way
we know,
And how by mounting ever, we attain,
And so climb on. It is the hour for
souls ;
That bodies, leavened by the will and
love,
Be lightened to redemption. The world's
old ;
But the old world waits the time to be
renewed :
Toward which, new hearts in individual
growth
Must quicken, and increase to multitude
In new dynasties of the race of men,—
Developed whence, shall grow spon-
taneously
New churches, new æconomies, new
laws
Admitting freedom, new societies
Excluding falsehood. HE shall make
all new.'
My Romney !—Lifting up my hand in
his,
As wheeled by Seeing spirits toward the
east,
He turned instinctively,—where, faint
and far,
Along the tingling desert of th sky,
Beyond the circle of the conscious hills,
Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as
glass
The first foundations of that new, near
Day
Which should be builded out of heaven
to God.
He stood a moment with erected brows,
In silence, as a creature might, who
gazed :
Stood calm, and fed his blind, majestic
eyes
Upon the thought of perfect noon. And
when
I saw his soul saw,—' Jasper first,' I
said,
' And second, sapphire ; third, chalce-
dony ;
' The rest in order, . . . last, an amethyst.'

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend—Place—A room in Wycombe Hall. Time—Late in the evening.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er you ;
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run at will :
I am humbled who was humble ! Friend,—I bow my head before you !
You should lead me to my peasants !—but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter ; she is proud and she is noble :
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed air ;
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of her land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence ;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain :
She has sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants ;
What was I that I should love her—save for competence to pain !

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their door-ways ;
She has blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she.
Far too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on me.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine :
Oft the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red wine and the chalice :
Oh, and what was I to love her ? my Beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet uses—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair :
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses—
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the people praised me,
With their critical deduction for the modern writer's fault ;
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence :—' Will your book appear this summer ?'
Then returning to each other—' Yes, our plans are for the moors ;'
Then with whisper dropped behind me—' There he is ! the latest comer !
Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures.

' Quite low born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though by nature,—
And we make a point by asking him,—of being very kind ;
You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers, leave their natural sting behind.'

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow ;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overrung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her ! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
' Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that able to confer it
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall ?'

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her speaking ;
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat as for shame ;
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—' I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

' Nevertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,'
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)
' But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

' I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first—
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human world at worst.'

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right queenly ;
And I bowed—I could not answer ! Alternate light and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind !
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's arrow found me.
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet ;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with elastic laughs sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep ;
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing ;
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark ;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded speeches,
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,
Oft I sat apart, and gazing on the river through the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them in the hills ;
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded—with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her throat ;
With the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly : her lips have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm—the dimple rarely ripples on her cheek :
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly,—as if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden :
And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep behind ;
Spake she unto all and unto me—' Behold, I am the warden
Of the song birds in these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

' But within this swarded circle, into which the lime-walk brings us—
Whence the beeches rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear ;
I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us,
Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

' The live air that waves the lilies waves this slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint !
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping ! (Lough the sculptor wrought her.)
So asleep she is forgetting to say *Hush !*—a fancy quaint !

' Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers !
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek :
And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
Has fallen back within the basin—yet this Silence will not speak !

' That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies more high and low.
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honor by denying outward show.'

'Nay, your Silence,' said I, 'truly holds her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken!
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as most ignoble men.

'Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these British Islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds;
Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.'

'Not so quickly!' she retorted,—'I confess where'er you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honor clear;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence here.'

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation;
Friends who listened laughed her words off while her lovers deemed her fair.
A fair woman—flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
And recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance! and thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet—
Why, her grayhound followed also! dogs—we both were dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sat down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before;
And the river running under; and across it from the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the air it bore—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded down!—

Or at times a modern volume.—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making—
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,—
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,
She would break out on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singling,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest—
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars—
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them—
And had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them,
In the birchen wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost rightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly,
Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is under-struck so rightly,
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—we talked, rather! upon all things—substance—shadow—
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear:
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—'The Age culls simples
With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars—
We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

'For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous wondrous age,'
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

'Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without bane?
When we drive out from the cloud of steam, majestic white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the mane?

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with a one hot electric breath,
'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power comprising
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.'

She was patient with my talking ; and I loved her—loved her certes,
 As I loved all Heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands !
 As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,
 In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so purely !—thought no idiot Hope was raising
 Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sat alone—
 Out, alas ! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
 With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan,

It was thus I reeled ! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
 But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did the waves—
 And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press their futures
 On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner chamber
 With the great saloon beyond it lost in pleasant thought serene—
 For I had been reading Camoens—that poem you remember,
 Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
 A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
 As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
 Springs up freely from his clasping and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
 Speakers using earnest language—' Lady Geraldine, you *would !*'
 And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger
 As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his station—
 Soul completed into lordship—might and right read on his brow :
 Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
 Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less expression
 Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other men,
 As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which seem to taste possession,
 And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distraint.

For the rest, accomplished, upright—ay, and standing by his order
 With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art, and letters too ;
 Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
 A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help the hearkening :
 In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
 Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all sides darkening,
 And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet that stood therein

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for wealth, position,
 For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
 And she interrupted gently, ' Nay, my lord, the old tradition
 Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won.'

'Ah, that white hand,' he said quickly,—and in his he either drew it Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
'Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it, And pass on like friends, to other points less easy to decide.'

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn—
'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble, Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born.'

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through me into fever, And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang full-statured in an hour:
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimes to power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded!—waved a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes: I felt self-drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspiration
Was a man or beast—perhaps so; for the tiger roars when speared;
And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
But for *her*—she half arose, then sat—grew scarlet and grew pale:
Oh she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman
In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest brothers
Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others!
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple and the gold,
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships—all that spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honor because chancing not to hold.

'For myself I do not argue, said I, 'though I love you, madam;
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod.
And this age shows to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing!
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no learning;
That comes quickly—quick as sin does, ay, and culminates to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

'What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more ?

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
As mere Paris of the outer world, forbidden to assail them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your mouth ?

'Have you any answer, ma'am ? If my spirit were less earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me ! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee ! I am worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her—
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonor—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain !'

More mad words like these—more madness ! friend, I need not write them fuller ;
And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears—
Oh, a woman ! friend, a woman ! Why, a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered ? She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said 'Bertram !' it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with queenly bearing
Which at needs is used by women, she had risen up and said,
'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less instead'—

I had borne it !—but that 'Bertram'—why it lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent,—and you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion ! I seemed drowning in a vapor,—
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract truth,
With a logic agonizing through unseemly demonstration,
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly gray the hairs of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely
I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake indeed was true—
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sat there weighing nicely
A full manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could do !—

With such wrong and wo exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
 s a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his eyes,
 and then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
 strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

o I fell, struck down before her! Do you blame me friend, for weakness?
 'twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her like a stone;
 ast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels of blackness!
 When the light came I was lying in this chamber—and alone.

h, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
 and to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the gate—
 he was too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
 such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

at for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,
 how my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone!
 shall leave her house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
 and I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
 no weak moanings—one word only left in writing for her hands,
 out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
 to make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

ame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious:
 out nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wings may soar again:
 here's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Phemius:
 to work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then*.

CONCLUSION.

ertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
 still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the tears on every leaf:
 having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
 from the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

h! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream!—a dream of mercies!
 wixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and pale!
 is a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
 not to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

'yes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo *me*?
 shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
 underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid
 over the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
 welleteth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows;
 while the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
 through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—' Vision of a lady ! stand there silent, stand there steady !
Now I see it plainly, plainly ; now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent passion,
Curved like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out.'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace ;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—' Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture ;
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine !
No approaching—hush ! no breathing ! or my heart must swoon to death in
'That too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine !'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly ;
' Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me ? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as I ?'

Said he—' I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea ;
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through this dream of THEK.

Ever, evermore the while in slow silence she kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks ;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
' Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—
And she whispered low in triumph—' It shall be as I have sworn !
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—noble, certes ;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born !'



LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

BUT why do you go?' said the lady, while both sate under the yew, and her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken beneath the sea-blue.

Because I fear you,' he answered; 'because you are far too fair, and able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your gold-colored hair.'

Oh, that,' she said 'is no reason! Such knots are quickly undone, and too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much sun.'

Yet, farewell so,' he answered;—'the sun-stroke's fatal at times. Value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop rings still from the limes.'

Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. You smell a rose through a fence: if two should smell it, what matter? who grumbles, and where's the pretence?'

But I,' he replied, 'have promised another, when love was free, to love her alone, alone, who alone and afar loves me.'

Why, that, she said, 'is no reason. Love's always free, I am told. Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday, and think it will hold?'

But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young little child, who was laid in your lap to be pure; so I leave you: the angels would make me afraid.'

Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep out of the way; and Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you should please me and stay.'

At which he rose up in his anger,—'Why, now, you no longer are fair! Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful, I swear.'

At which she laughed out in her scorn,—'These men! Oh, these men overnice, who are shocked if a color not virtuous, is frankly put on by a vice.'

Her eyes blazed upon him—'And *you*! You bring us your vices so near that we smell them! You think in our presence a thought 'twould defame us to hear!

What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to your soul from my life,—to find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?

If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much to uses unlawful and fatal. The praise!—shall I thank you for such?

'Too fair!—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while,
You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.

'A moment,—I pray your attention!—I have a poor word in my head
I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've broken the thing.

'You did me the honor, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

'Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures and fulfils.

'I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maud, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, still less, a mole on a cheek?

'And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and supplant,

'I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow,
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

'There! Look me in the face!—in the face. Understand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as the palm of a man.

'Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear we should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women we are.

'You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's Walter! And so at the
end,
I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the hand of a friend.

'Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay, friend of my Walter, be
mine!
Come, Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask him to dine.'



LAST POEMS.

To "Grateful Florence," to the Municipality, her Representative, and to Tommaseo, its Spokesman, Most Gratefully.

LITTLE MATTIE.

I.

LAD! Thirteen a month ago!
Short and narrow her life's walk,
Her love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
O young to be glad of youth;
Missing honor, labor, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this,
And for all the loss it is—
You, her mother, with wet face,
Why had all in your case?

II.

O so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death,
Obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday! yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Gently touched! an hour matures:
You can teach her nothing else.
You have seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid.
Those eyelids pale and close
Why she knows what Rhamsees knows.

III.

Look at her quiet hands, and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,
And passive as in truth
You your fingers in spilt milk
Saw along a marble floor;
But her lips you cannot wring
By saying a word more,
Yes' or 'no,' or such a thing.
Though you call, and beg, and wreak
If your soul out in a shriek,
It will lie there in default
Of most innocent revolt.

IV.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
She would answer like the SON,
'What is now 'twixt thee and me?'
Dreadful answer! better none.
Yours on Monday, GOD'S to-day!
Yours, your child, your blood, your
heart,
Called . . . you called her, did you say,
'Little Mattie' for your part?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls His angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

V.

'Twas a green and easy world
As she took it! room to play,
(Though one's hair might get uncurled
At the far end of the day.)
What she suffered she shook off
In the sunshine; what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
To keep safe above the wind.
If reproved by God or you,
'Twas to better her she knew;
And if crossed, she gathered still,
'Twas to cross out something ill.

VI.

You, you had the right, you thought,
To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom! Nay,
Now your places are changed so,
In that same superior way
She regards you dull and low
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen awhile,
Who look back with such a smile.

VII.

There's the sting of 't. That, I think,
Hurts the most, a thousand-fold !
To feel sudden, at a wink,
Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
Teach and tumble as our own,
All its curls about our knees,
Rise up suddenly full-grown.
Who could wonder such a sight
Made a woman mad outright ?
— Show me Michael with the sword,
Rather than such angels, Lord !

MAY'S LOVE.

I.

You love all you say,
Round, beneath, above me :
Find me then some way
Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May !

II.

O world-kissing eyes
Which the blue heavens melt to !
I, sad, otherwise,
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

III.

You love all, you say :
Therefore, Dear, abate me—
Just your love, I pray !
Shut your eyes and hate me
Only *me*—fair May !

A FALSE STEP.

I.

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
Pass ! there's a world full of men ;
And women as fair as thou art
Must do such things now and then.

II.

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
Malice, not one can impute ;

And why should a heart have b
there
In the way of a fair woman's foot

III.

It was not a stone that could trip,
Nor was it a thorn that could rend
Put up thy proud underlip !
'Twas merely the heart of a friend

IV.

And yet peradventure one day
Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
Remarking the bloom gone away,
Where the smile in its dimple
was,

V.

And seeking around thee in vain
From hundreds who flattered before
Such a word as, 'Oh, not in the main,
Do I hold thee less precious, I
more !'

VI.

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
'Of all I have known or can know,
I wish I had only that Heart
I trod upon ages ago !'

VOID IN LAW.

I.

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
And the moon has died out in the tree
And the great human world goeth i
Sleep, for the wicked agree :
Sleep, let them do as they will.
Sleep.

II.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my brea
The last drop of milk that was good
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
Lest the real should trouble thy bloo
Suck, little lips dispossessed,
As we kiss in the air whom we woul
Sleep.

III.

Lips of thy father! the same,
 So like! Very deeply they swore
 When he gave me his ring and his name,
 To take back, I imagined, no more!
 And now is all changed like a game,
 Though the old cards are used as of
 yore?
 Sleep.

IV.

'Void in law,' said the Courts. Some-
 thing wrong
 In the forms? Yet, 'Till death part
 us two,
 I, James, take thee, Jessie,' was strong,
 And ONE witness competent. True
 Such a marriage was worth an old song,
 Heard in Heaven though, as plain as
 the New.
 Sleep.

V.

Sleep, little child, his and mine!
 Her throat has the antelope curve,
 And her cheek just the color and line
 Which fade not before him nor swerve;
 Yet *she* has no child!—the divine
 Seal of right upon loves that deserve.
 Sleep.

VI.

My child! though the world take her
 part,
 Saying, 'She was the woman to
 choose,
 He had eyes, was a man in his heart,'—
 We twain the decision refuse:
 We . . . weak as I am, as thou art, . . .
 Cling on to him, never to loose.
 Sleep.

VII.

He thinks that, when done with this
 place,
 All's ended? he'll new-stamp the ore?
 Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.
 Let him learn we are waiting before
 The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,
 God's face,
 With implacable love evermore.
 Sleep.

VIII.

He's ours, though he kissed her but now;
 He's ours, though she kissed in reply;
 He's ours, though himself disavow,
 And God's universe favor the lie;
 Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,
 Ours above, . . . if we live, if we die.
 Sleep.

IX.

Ah baby, my baby, too rough
 Is my lullaby? What have I said?
 Sleep! When I've wept long enough
 I shall learn to weep softly instead,
 And piece with some alien stuff
 My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
 Sleep.

X.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet;
 Two loves led thee out to the sun;
 Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
 If the one who remains (only one)
 Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
 To thine enemy,—were it well done?
 Sleep.

XI.

May He of the manger stand near
 And love thee! An infant He came
 To His own who rejected Him here
 But the Magi brought gifts all the
 same.
 I hurry the cross on my Dear!
 My gifts are the griefs I declaim!
 Sleep.

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES.

I.

THE cypress stood up like a church
 That night we felt our love would
 hold,
 And saintly moonlight seemed to search
 And wash the whole world clean as
 gold;
 The olives crystallized the vales'
 Broad slopes until the hills grew strong:
 The fire-flies and the nightingales

Throbb'd each to either, flame and
 song.
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

II.

Upon the angle of its shade
 The cypress stood, self-balanced high
 Half up, half down, as double-made,
 Along the ground, against the sky.
 And *we*, too! from such soul-height
 went
 Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,
 We scarce knew if our nature meant
 Most passionate earth or intense hea-
 ven.
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

III.

We paled with love, we shook with
 love,
 We kissed so close we could not vow ;
 Till Giulio whispered, 'Sweet, above
 God's Ever guaranties this Now.'
 And through his words the nightingales
 Drove straight and full their long clear
 call,
 Like arrows through heroic mails,
 And love was awful in it all.
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

IV.

O cold white moonlight of the north,
 Refresh these pulses, quench this hell !
 O coverture of death drawn forth
 Across this garden-chamber . . well !
 But what have nightingales to do
 In gloomy England, called the free, .
 (Yes, free to die in ! . .) when we two
 Are sundered, singing still to me ?
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

V.

I think I hear him, how he cried
 'My own soul's life' between their
 notes.
 Each man has but one soul supplied,
 And that's immortal. Though his
 throat's
 On fire with passion now, to *her*
 He can't say what to me he said !
 And yet he moves her, they aver.
 The nightingales sing through my
 head,
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

VI.

He says to *her* what moves her most.
 He would not name his soul within
 Her hearing,—rather pays her cost
 With praises to her lips and chin.
 Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,
 And each soul but one love, I add ;
 Yet souls are damned and love's pro-
 faned.
 The nightingales will sing me mad !
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

VII.

I marvel how the birds can sing,
 There's little difference, in their view,
 Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
 As vital flames into the blue,
 And dull round blots of foliage meant
 Like saturated sponges here
 To suck the fogs up. As content
 Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

VIII.

My native Florence ! dear, foregone !
 I see across the Alpine ridge
 How the last feast-day of St. John
 Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.
 The luminous city, tall with fire,
 Trod deep down in that river of ours,
 While many a boat with lamp and choir
 Skimmed birdlike over glittering
 towers.
 I will not hear these nightingales.

IX.

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
 Down Arno's stream in festive guise ;
 A boat stikes flame into our boat,
 And up that lady seems to rise
 As then she rose. The shock had
 flashed
 A vision on us ! What a head,
 What leaping eyeballs !—beauty dashed
 To splendor by a sudden dread.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

X.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die ;
 Such women are so. As for me,
 I would we had drowned there, he and I,
 That moment, loving perfectly.

He had not caught her with her loosed
Gold ringlets . . . rarer in the south . . .
Nor heard the 'Grazie tanto' bruised
To sweetness by her English mouth.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XI.

She had not reached him at my heart
With her fine tongue, as snakes in-
deed
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,
Yearned after, in my desperate need,
And followed him as he did her
To coasts left bitter by the tide,
Whose very nightingales elsewhere
Delighting, torture and deride!
For still they sing, the nightingales.

XII.

A worthless woman! Mere cold clay
As all false things are! but so fair,
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.
I would not play her larcenous tricks
To have her looks! She lied and
stole,
And spat into my love's pure pyx
The rank saliva of her soul.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XIII.

I would not for her white and pink,
Though such he likes—her grace of
limb,
Though such he has praised—nor yet, I
think,
For life itself, though spent with him,
Commit such sacrilege, affront
God's nature which is love, intrude
'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
Like spiders, in the altar's wood
I cannot bear these nightingales.

XIV.

If she chose sin, a more gentler guise
She might have sinned in, so it seems:
She might have pricked out both my
eyes,
And I still seen him in my dreams!
—Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
Nor left me angry afterward:
To die here with his hand in mine,

His breath upon me, were not hard.
(Our Lady hush those nightingales!)

xv.

But set a springe for *him*, 'mio ben,'
My only good, my first last love!—
Though Christ knows well what sin is,
when
He sees some things done they must
move
Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
I think of her by night and day.
Must I too join her . . . out, alas! . . .
With Giulio, in each word I say?
And evermore the nightingales!

xvi.

Giulio, my Guilo!—sing they so,
And you be silent? Do I speak,
And you not hear? An arm you throw
Round some one, and I feel so weak?
—Oh, owl-like birds! They sing for
spite,
They sing for hate, theysing for doom!
They'll sing through death who sing
through night,
They'll sing and stun me in the
tomb—
The nightingales, the nightingales!

MY KATE.

I.

SHE was not as pretty as women I know,
And yet all your best made of sunshine
and snow
Drop to shade, melt to nought in the
long-trodden ways,
While she's still remembered on warm
and cold days—

My Kate.

II.

Her air had a meaning, her movements
a grace;
You turned from the fairest to gaze on
her face:
And when you had once seen her fore-
head and mouth,
You saw as distinctly her soul and her
truth—

My Kate.

III.

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids
outbroke,
You looked at her silence and fancied
she spoke :
When she did, so peculiar yet soft was
the tone,
Though the loudest spoke also, you
heard her alone—

My Kate.

IV.

I doubt if she said to you much that
could act
As a thought or suggestion : she did not
attract
In the sense of the brilliant or wise : I
infer
'Twas her thinking of others, made you
think of her—

My Kate.

V.

She never found fault with you, never
implied
Your wrong by her right ; and yet men
at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the
whole town
The children were gladder that pulled
at her gown—

My Kate.

VI.

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers
in thrall ;
They knelt more to God than they used,
—that was all :
If you praised her as charming, some
asked what you meant,
But the charm of her presence was felt
when she went—

My Kate.

VII.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and
rude,
She took as she found them, and did
them all good ;
It always was so with her—see what you
have !
She has made the grass greener even
here . . . with her grave—

My Kate.

VIII.

My dear one !—when thou wast alive
with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest and loved thee
the best :
And now thou art dead, shall I not take
thy part
As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my
sweet Heart—

My Kate.

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF LONDON.

WRITTEN IN ROME.

I.

I AM listening here in Rome.
' England's strong,' say many speakers,
' If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

II.

' England's rich in coal and oak,'
Adds a Roman, getting moody,
' If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

III.

' England's righteous,' they rejoin,
' Who shall grudge her exhalations,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations ?'

IV.

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
' England's cruel ! save us some
Of these victims in her keeping !'

V.

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no man

VI.

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here :
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, ' God forgive her grandeur.'

VII.

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin seems commissioned?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizened:

VIII.

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a people,

IX.

Lordly English, think it o'er,
Cæsar's doing is all undone!
You have cannons on your shore,
And free parliaments in London,

X.

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—
Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

XI.

Women leering through the gas,
(Just such bosoms used to nurse you)
Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!
Those can speak themselves, and
curse you.

XII.

But these others—children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay and street, and palace-wall—
Take them up into your pity!

XIII.

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in bright raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for payment.

XIV.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their bold-
ness.

XV.

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels;
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

XVI.

Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—pon-
der!
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

XVII.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
And old foreheads! there are many
With no pleasures except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

XVIII.

Sickly children, that whine low
To themselves and not their Mothers,
From mere habit,—never so
Hoping help or care from others.

XIX.

Healthy children, with those blue
English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
Fierce and ravenous, staring through
At the brown loaves of the baker.

XX.

I am listening here in Rome,
And the Romans are confessing,
'English children pass in bloom
All the prettiest made for blessing.'

XXI.

'*Angli angeli!*' (resumed
From the mediæval story)
'Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
In such ringlets of pure glory!'

XXII.

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear
The sweet looks of our own children,

XXIII.

While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity ?

XXIV.

'Is it our fault ?' you reply,
'When, throughout civilization,
Every nation's empery
Is asserted by starvation ?

XXV.

'All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies.'
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what God is !

XXVI.

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be joined
in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

XXVII.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavor
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver !

XXVIII.

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

XXIX.

O my sisters, not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

XXX.

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat's in daily keeping,—

XXXI.

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow

Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

XXXII.

O my sisters ! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all :
Let us take them into pity.

AMY'S CRUELTY.

I.

FAIR Amy in the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you would not hurt a mouse
Can torture so your lover.

II.

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

III.

But when *he* haunts your door . . the
town
Marks coming and marks going :
You seem to have stitched your eyelids
down
To that long piece of sewing !

IV.

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a 'Good morning,'
To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

V.

She shook her head—'The mouse and
bee
For crumb or flower will linger :
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

VI.

'But *he* . . to *him*, the least thing given
Means great things at a distance ;
He wants my world, my sun, my
heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

VII.

'They say love gives as well as takes ;
But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

VIII.

'I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing ;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

IX.

'Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him :
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt, . . . deny him.

X.

'He's sweetest friend, or hardest foe,
Best angel, or worst devil ;
I either hate or . . . love him so,
I can't be merely civil !

XI.

'You trust a woman who puts forth
Her blossoms thick as summer's ?
You think she dreams what love is
worth
Who casts it to new-comers ?

XII.

'Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,
A moment's pretty pastime ;
I give . . . all me, if anything,
The first time and the last time.

XIII.

'Dear neighbor of the trellised house,
A man should murmur never,
Though treated worse than dog and
mouse,
Till doted on forever !'

THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD.

WHAT'S the best thing in the world ?
Junc-rose by May-dew impearled ;

Sweet south-wind that means no rain ;
Truth, not cruel to a friend ;
Pleasure not in haste to end ;
Beauty not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over-plain ;
Light that never makes you wink ;
Memory, that gives no pain ;
Love, when, *so*, you're loved again.
What's the best thing in the world ?
—Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES ?

I.

NAV, if I had come back so,
And found her dead in her grave,
And if a friend I know
Had said, 'Be strong, nor rave :
She lies there, dead below :

II.

I saw her, I who speak,
While, stiff, the face one blank :
The blue shade came to her cheek
Before they nailed the plank,
For she had been dead a week.'

III.

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

IV.

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost ?
That sort of worm in the clay ?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

V.

My Agnes false ? such shame ?
She ? Rather be it said
That the pure saint of her name
Has stood there in her stead,
And tricked you to this blame.

VI.

Her very gown, her cloak
Fell chastely : no disguise,

But expression ! while she broke
 With her clear gray morning-eyes
 Full upon me and then spoke.

VII.

She wore her hair away
 From her forehead,—like a cloud
 Which a little wind in May
 Peels off finely : disallowed
 Though bright enough to stay.

VIII.

For the heavens must have the place
 To themselves, to use and shine in,
 As her soul would have her face
 To press through upon mine, in
 That orb of angel grace.

IX.

Had she any fault at all,
 'Twas having none, I thought too—
 There seemed a sort of thrall ;
 As she felt her shadow ought to
 Fall straight upon the wall.

X.

Her sweetness strained the sense
 Of common life and duty ;
 And every day's expense
 Of moving in such beauty,
 Required, almost, defence.

XI.

What good, I thought, is done
 By such sweet things if any ?
 This world smells ill i' the sun
 Though the garden-flowers are
 many,—
She is only one.

XII.

Can a voice so low and soft
 Take open actual part
 With Right,—maintain aloft
 Pure truth in life or art,
 Vexed always wounded oft ?—

XIII.

She fit, with that fair pose
 Which melts from curve to curve,
 To stand, run, work with those
 Who wrestle and deserve,
 And speak plain without glose ?

XIV.

But I turned round on my fear
 Defiant, disagreeing—
 What if God had sent her here
 Less for action than for Being ?
 For the eye and for the ear.

XV.

Just to show what beauty may,
 Just to prove what music can,—
 And then to die away
 From the presence of a man,
 Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray ?

XVI.

As a door, left half ajar
 In heaven, would make him think
 How heavenly-different are
 Things glanced at through the chink,
 Till he pined from near to far.

XVII.

That door could lead to hell ?
 That shining merely meant
 Damnation ? What ! She fell
 Like a woman, who was sent
 Like an angel by a spell ?

XVIII.

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
 Turned mere dirt ? My Agnes,—
 mine !
 Called so ! felt of too much worth
 To be used so ! too divine
 To be breathed near, and so forth ?

XIX.

Why, I dared not name a sin
 In her presence : I went round,
 Clipped its name and shut it in
 Some mysterious crystal sound,—
 Changed the dagger for the pin.

XX.

Now you name herself *that word* ?
 O my Agnes ! O my saint !
 Then the great joys of the Lord
 Do not last ? Then all this paint
 Runs off nature ? leaves a board ?

XXI.

Who's dead here ? No, not she :
 Rather I ! or whence this damp

Cold corruption's misery ?

Why my very mourners stamp
Closer in the clods on me.

XXII.

And my mouth is full of dust
Till I cannot speak and curse—
Speak and damn him . . . 'Blame's un-
just' ?

Sin blots out the universe,
All because she would and must ?

XXIII.

She, my white rose, dropping off
The high rose-tree branch ! and not
That the night-wind blew too rough,
Nor the noon-sun burnt too hot,
But, that being a rose—'twas enough !

XXIV.

Then henceforth, may earth grow trees !
No more roses !—hard straight lines
To score lies out ! none of these
Fluctuant curves ! but firs and pines,
Poplars, cedars, cypresses !

DE PROFUNDIS.

I.

THE face, which duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With daily love, is dimmed away—
And yet my days go on, go on.

II.

The tongue which like a stream could
run
Smooth music from the roughest stone,
And every morning with 'Good day'
Made each day good, is hushed away—
And yet my days go on, go on.

III.

The heart, which like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon ;
The strongest on the longest day
With steadfast love, is caught away—
And yet my days go on, go on.

IV.

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in nature's general tune.
And fallen too low for special fear,
And here, with hope no longer here—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

V.

The world goes whispering to its own,
'This anguish pierces to the bone.'
And tender friends go sighing round,
'What love can ever cure this wound ?'
My days go on, my days go on.

VI.

The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended ! Ended bliss !
And life, that will not end in this !
My days go on, my days go on.

VII.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan :
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

VIII.

I knock and cry, . . . Undone, undone !
Is there no help, no comfort—none ?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded wains ?
My vacant days go on, go on.

IX.

This nature, though the snows be down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June.
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so wintery go on ?

X.

No bird am I to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Nature's
To give away to better creatures—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI.

I ask less kindness to be done—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon

(Too early worn and grimed) with sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on.

XII.

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubic space, and say, ' Behold,
Creep in poor Heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on,'

XIII.

What harm would *that* do? Green
anon
The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and night
While my new rest went on, went on,

XIV.

From gracious nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? May I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV.

A voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when the
drone
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep,
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

XVI.

God's Voice, not Nature's—night and
noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creature's praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Dayspring He, whose days go on.

XVII.

He reigns above, He reigns alone:
Systems burn out and leave His throne:
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all!—
Ancient of days, whose days go on!

XVIII.

He reigns below, He reigns alone—
And having life in love forgone

Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the jealous God. Who
mourns
Or rules with HIM, while days go on?

XIX.

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear him charge his saints that none
Among the creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

XX.

—Take from my head the thorn-wreath
brown,
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O supreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for *Thee*
Whose days eternally go on!

XXI.

For us, . . whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done
Grief may be joy misunderstood:
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

XXII.

Whatever's lost, it first was won!
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here
That Heaven's new wine might show
more clear.
I praise thee while my days go on.

XXIII.

I praise Thee while my days go on,
I love Thee while my days go on!
Through dark and dearth, through fire
and frost.
With emptied arms and treasure lost
I thank Thee while my days go on!

XXIV.

And, having in thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops some pebble small
Down some deep well and hears it fall
Smiling . . . so I! THY DAYS GO ON!

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

I.

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a
goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river?

II.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river.
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

III.

High on the shore sate the great god
Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god
can
With his hard bleak steel at the patient
reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf in-
deed
To prove it fresh from the river.

IV.

He cut it short did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith like the heart of a
man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
Then notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes as he sate by the river.

V.

'This is the way,' laughed the great god
Pan,
(Laughed while he sate by the river!)
'The only way since gods began
To make sweet music, they could suc-
ceed,'
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in
the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

VI.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan,
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-
fly
Came back to dream on the river.

VII.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan
To laugh, as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man.
The true gods sigh for the cost and the
pain—
For the reed that grows never more
again
As a reed with the reeds of the river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-
FRANCA.

I.

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say?
What! with the enemy's guns in our
ears?
With the country's wrong not render-
ed back?
What! while Austria stands at bay
In Mantua, and our Venice bears
The cursed flag of the yellow and
black?

II.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?
And this the Mincio? Where's the
fleet?
And where's the sea? Are we all
blind
Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,
Ignoring Italy under our feet,
And seeing things before, behind?

III.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?
What uncontested, undenied?
Because we triumph, we succumb?
A pair of emperors stand in the way

(One of whom is a man beside)
To sign and seal our cannons dumb ?

IV.

No, not Napoleon ! he who mused
At Paris, and at Milan spake,
And at Solferino led the fight.
Not he we trusted, honored, used
Our hopes and hearts for . . till they
break.
Even so you tell us . . in his sight !

V.

Peace, peace, peace, is still your word ?
We say you lie, then, that is plain :
There is no peace, and shall be none,
Our very dead would cry, ' Absurd,'
And clamor that they died in vain,
And whine to come back to the sun.

VI.

Hush ! more reverence for the dead !
They've done the most for Italy
Evermore since the earth was fair.
Now would that *we* had died instead,
Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
And did not, could not, mean despair ?

VII.

Peace, you say ! Yes, peace in truth !
But such a peace as the ear can
achieve
'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush of
the ball.
'Twixt the tiger's spring and the crunch
of the tooth,
'Twixt the dying atheist's negative
And God's face . . waiting, after all.

KING VICTOR EMANUEL

ENTERING FLORENCE, APRIL, 1860.

I.

KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried to
thee,
Trampled to earth by the beasts im-
pure,
Dragged by the chariots which shame
as they roll,
The dust of our torment far and wide to
thee

Went up dark'ning the royal soul.
Was it *not* so, Cavour,
That the King was sad for the people
in thrall,
This King of us all ?

II.

King, we cried to thee !—Strong in re-
plying,
Thy word and sword sprang rapid
and sure,
Cleaving our way to a nation's place.
O first soldier of Italy, crying
Now grateful, exultant, we look in
thy face.
Is it *not* so, Cavour,
That, freedom's first soldier, the freed
should call
First King of them all ?

III.

This is our beautiful Italy's birthday :
Generous souls, whether many or
fewer,
Bring her the gift and wish her the
good ;
And heaven presents on this sunny earth-
day
The noble King to the land renewed.
Is it *not* so, Cavour ?
Roar, cannon-mouths !—proclaim, in-
stall
The King of us all !

IV.

Grave he rides through Florence gate-
way,
Clenching his face into calm, to im-
mure
His struggling heart till it half disap-
pears.
If he relaxed for a moment, straightway
He would break out into passionate
tears—
(Is it *not* so, Cavour ?)
While rings the cry without interval,
' Live King of us all !'

V.

Cry, free peoples !—honor the nation
By crowning the true man—and none
is true !

Pisa is here, and Livorna is here,
And thousands of faces in wild exulta-
tion,

Burn over the windows to feel him
near—

(Is it *not* so, Cavour?)

Burn over from terrace, roof, window
and wall,

On this King of us all.

VI.

Grave! A good man's ever the graver

For bearing a nation's trust secure:

And *he*, he thinks of the Heart, be-
side,

Which broke for Italy, failing to save
her,

And pining away by Oporto's tide.

Is it *not* so, Cavour,

That he thinks of his vow on that royal
pall,

This king of us all?

VII.

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery city!
Such innocent thanks for a deed so
pure.

As melting away for joy into flowers
The nation invites him to enter his Pitti
And evermore reign on this Florence
of ours.

Is it *not* so, Cavour?

He'll stand where the reptiles were
used to crawl,

This King of us all.

VIII.

Grave as the manner of noble men is—
The deed unfinished will weigh on
the doer:

And, baring his head to those crape-
veiled flags,

He bows to the grief of the South and
Venice.

—Let's riddle the last of the yellow
to rags,

And swear by Cavour

That the King shall reign where op-
pressors fall,

True King of us all.

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO
CASTRUCANI.

'Questa e per me.'—VICTOR EMANUEL.

I.

WHEN Victor Emanuel, the King,
Went down to his Lucca that day,
The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things away
In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for the
king.

II.

Gave the green forest-walk on the wall,
With the Apennine blue through the
trees:
Gave palaces, churches and all
The great pictures which burn out of
these;
But the eyes of the King seemed to
freeze
As he glanced upon ceiling and wall.

III.

'Good,' said the King as he past.
Was he cold to the arts? or else coy
To possession? or crossed at the last,
Whispered some, by the vote in
Savoy?
Shout!—love him enough for his joy!
'Good,' said the King as he past.

IV.

He, travelling the whole day through
flowers,
And protesting amenities, found,
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, 'the Orphans' (re-
nowned
As the heirs of Puccini) who wound
With a sword through the crowd and the
flowers.

V.

'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O King!
In old strife of intestine hate
Very famous. Accept what we bring,
We, who cannot be sons by our fate,
Tendered citizens by thee of late.
And endowed with a country and King.

' Read :—Puccini has willed that this sword
 (Which once made in an ignorant feud
 Many orphans) remain in our ward
 Till some patriot its pure civic blood
 Wipe away in the foe's and make good,
 In delivering the land by the sword.'

VII.

Then the King exclaimed, 'This is for
me !'
 And he dashed out his sword on the hilt,
 While his blue eye shot fire openly
 And his heart overboiled till it spilt
 A hot prayer,—God, the rest as thou wilt !
 But grant me this !—this is for *me !*'

VIII.

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
 The sword be for *thee*, and the deed,
 And naught for the alien next spring,
 Naught for Hapsburg and Bourbon agreed ;
 But, for us, a great Italy freed,
 With a hero to head us, . . . our King.

SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS OUT OF IT.)

I.

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
 When our Italy stands at full stature,
 A year ago tied down so fast
 That the cord cut the quick of her nature !
 You'll honor the deed and its scope,
 Then, in logical sequence upon it,
 Will use up the remnants of rope
 By hanging the men who have done it.

II.

The speech in the Commons which hits you

A sketch off, how dungeons must feel,—
 The official dispatch which commits you
 From stamping out groans with your heel,—
 Suggestions in journal or book for
 Good efforts,—are praised . . . as is meet :
 But what in this world can men look for,
 Who only achieve and complete ?

III.

True, you've praise for the fireman, who sets his
 Brave face to the axle of the flame,
 Disappears in the smoke and then fetches
 A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—
 For the boor even, who rescues through pity
 A sheep from the brute who would kick it :
 But saviours of nations !—'tis pretty,
 And doubtful : they *may* be so wicked !

IV.

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
 Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen !—
 here's
 Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
 Imperial cousins and cogeners ;
 Arese, Laiatico, courtly
 Of manners, if stringent of mouth,
 Garibaldi—we'll come to him shortly,
 (As soon as he ends in the south.)

V.

Napoleon,—as strong as ten armies,
 Corrupt as seven devils,—a fact
 You accede to, then seek where the harm is
 Drained off from the man to his act,
 And find . . . a free nation. Suppose
 Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet greenery,
 Convoked for creating . . . a rose !—
 Would it suit the infernal machinery ?

VI.

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,

Who his own thought so craftily mar-
ries.

What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from
Paris ?

Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a
lie)

He bore up his Piedmont ten years
'Till she suddenly smiled and was
Italy.

VII.

And the King, with that "stain on his
'scutcheon'"*

Savoy . . . as the calumny runs !
If it be not his blood,—with his clutch
on

The sword, and his face to the guns.
O first where the battle-storm gathers,
O loyal of hearts on the throne,
Let those keep the 'graves of their
fathers,'
Who quail, in the nerve, from their
own !

VIII.

For *thee* ;—through the dim Hades-
portal

The dream of a voice,—' Blessed thou
Who hast made all thy race thrice im-
mortal !

No need of the sepulchres now !
Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs, who
fester

Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,
While the ghost of some poor feudal
jester

Before them strews treaties in holes.'

IX.

—But hush !—am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, heaven, justice ?—not I.

I began too far off, in my poem,
With what men believe and deny,
And, on earth, whatsoever the meed is,
(To sum us as thoughtful reviewers,)
The moral of every great deed is
The virtue of slandering the doers.

' DIED . . .

(*The Times' Obituary.*)

I.

WHAT shall we add now ? He is dead.
And I who praise and you who blame,
With wash of words across his name,
Find suddenly declared instead—
' On Sunday, third of August, dead !'

II.

Which stops the whole we talked to-day.
I, quickened to a plausible glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they
say.

III.

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction—' rather, large
Through weakness of the continent
marge,
Than greatness of the thing contained'—
Broke off. Dead !—there, you stood
restrained.

IV.

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. ' Would you
choose
And air like that ? The gait is
loose—
Or noble.' Sudden in the sun
An oubliette winks. Where *is* he ?

V.

Dead. Man's ' I was ' by God's ' I am '—
All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high fame,
as flat
As a gravestone. Bring your *facit*
jam—
The epitaph's an epigram.

VI.

Dead. There's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust's his natural
place ;
He'll let the flies buzz round his face
And though you slander, not protest !
—From such an one, exact the Best !

* See Diplomatic Correspondence.

VII.

Opinions gold or brass are null.
 We chuck our flattery or abuse,
 Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's
 dues,
 I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
 To mend the grinning of a skull.

VIII.

Be abstinent in praise and blame.
 The man's still mortal, who stands
 first,
 And mortal only, if last and worst.
 Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
 Or softly drop so poor a shame.

 A FORCED RECRUIT AT SOL-
 FERINO.

I.

IN the ranks of the Austrian you found
 him ;
 He died with his face to you all :
 Yet bury him here where around him,
 You honor your bravest that fall.

II.

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
 He lies shot to death in his youth,
 With a smile on his lips over-tender
 For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

III.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor !
 Though alien the cloth on his breast,
 Underneath it how seldom a greater
 Young heart, has a shot sent to rest !

IV.

By your enemy tortured and goaded
 To march with them, stand in their
 file,
 His musket (see !) never was loaded—
 He facing your guns with that smile.

V.

As orphans yearn on their mothers,
 He yearned to your patriot bands,—
 'Let me die for one Italy, brothers,
 If not in your ranks, by your hands !

VI.

' Aim straightly, fire steadily ; spare me
 A ball in the body, which may
 Deliver my heart here and tear me
 This badge of the Austrian away.'

VII.

So thought he, so died he this morning.
 What then ? many others have died.
 Ay—but easy for men to die scorning
 The death-stroke, who fought side by
 side ;

VIII.

One tricolor floating above them ;
 Struck down mid triumphant acclaims
 Of an Italy rescued to love them,
 And brazen the brass with their names.

IX.

But he—without witness or honor,
 Mixed, shared in his country's regard,
 With the tyrants who march in upon
 her—
 Died faithful and passive : 'twas hard.

X.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
 Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
 With most filial obedience, conviction,
 His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

XI.

That moves you ? Nay, grudge not to
 show it,
 While digging a grave for him here.
 The others who died, says our poet,
 Have glory : let *him* have a tear.

 GARIBALDI.

I.

HE bent his head upon his breast
 Wherein his lion-heart lay sick :—
 'Perhaps we are not ill-repaid—
 Perhaps this is not a true test ;
 Perhaps that was not a foul trick ;
 Perhaps none wronged, and none be-
 trayed.

II.

'Perhaps the people's vote which here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think.
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with right
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

III.

'Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft;
Men's greatness, not a selfish greed;
Men's justice, not the safer side.
Perhaps even women when they laugh-
ed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was
freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us)
lied.

IV.

'Perhaps no more than this we meant,
When up at Austria's guns we flew
And spiked them with a cry apiece,
'*Italia!*'—Yet a dream was sent . . .
The little house my father knew
The olives and the palms of Nice.'

V.

He paused, and drew his sword out
slow,—
Then pored upon the blade intent
As if to read some written thing:
While many murmured, 'He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the King.'

VI.

He pouring still upon the blade
His large lid quivered, something fell.
'Perhaps,' he said, 'I was not born
With such fine brains to treat and trade,
And if a woman knew it well
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

VII.

Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke
My eye saw clear: men feared this
man
At Como, where his sword could deal
Death's protocol at every stroke.
And now . . . the drop there, scarcely
can
Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII.

'So man and sword may have their use;
And if the soil beneath my foot
In valor's act is forfeited,
I'll strike the harder, take my dues
Out nobler, and the loss confute
From ampler heavens above my head.

IX.

'My King, King Victor, I am thine!
So much Nice-dust as what I am
(To make our Italy) must cleave.
Forgive that.'—Forward with a sign
He went.—You've seen the telegram?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

ONLY A CURL.

I.

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land
Unvisited over the sea,
Who tell me how lonely you stand,
With a single gold curl in the hand
Held up to be looked at by me!

II.

While you ask me to ponder and say
What a father and mother can do,
With the bright yellow locks put away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay,
Where the violets press nearer than
you:—

III.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
Into weak woman's tears for relief?
Oh, children! I never lost one.
But my arm's round my own little son,
And Love knows the secret of Grief.

IV.

And I feel what it must be and is
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to His,
With a murmur of music you miss,
And a rapture of light you forego.

V.

How you think, staring on at the door
Where the face of your angel flashed
in,

That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

VI.

'God lent him and takes him,' you
sigh . . .
—Nay, there let me break with your
pain.

God's generous in giving, say I,
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He can ever take back again.

VII.

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes! In the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us, while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power;

VIII.

And the babe cries,—have all of us
known
By apocalypse (God being there,
Full in nature!) the child is *our own*,—
Life of life, love of love, moan of
moan,
Through all changes, all times, every-
where.

IX.

He's ours and forever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance! To give
Means, with God, not to tempt or de-
ceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

X.

He gives what He gives: be content.
He resumes nothing given,—be sure.
God lend?—where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant he went
And scourged away all those impure.

XI.

He lends not, but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That he draws back a gift, comprehend
'Tis to add to it rather . . . amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

XII.

Or keep . . . as a mother may toys
Too costly though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
And the children more fit for such joys,
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

XIII.

So look up, friends! You who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet
piece
Of the heaven which men strive for,
must need
Be more earnest than others are, speed
Where they loiter, persist where they
cease.

XIV.

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then courage! 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and
despair
To the safe place above us. Adieu!

A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN
CAMPAGNA. 1861.

I.

OVER the dumb campagna sea,
Out in the offing through mist and
rain,
St. Peter's church heaves silently
Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle and
strain.

II.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
Soundless breakers of desolate land!
The sullen surf of the mist devours
That mountain range upon either
hand,
Eaten away from its outline grand.

III.

And over the dumb campagna sea
Where the ship of the Church heaves
on to wreck,

Alone and silent as God must be
The Christ walks!—Ay, but Peter's
neck
Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

IV.

Peter, Peter, if such be thy name,
Now leave the ship for another to
steer,
And proving thy faith evermore the
same
Come forth tread out through the
dark and drear,
Since He who walks on the sea is
here!

V.

Peter, Peter!—he does not speak—
He is not as rash as in old Galilee.
Safer a ship though it toss and leak,
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea!
And he's got to be round in the girth,
thinks he.

VI.

Peter, Peter!—he does not stir—
His nets are heavy with silver fish;
He reckons his gains, and is keen to
infer,
'The broil on the shore, if the Lord
should wish—
But the sturgeon goes to Cæsar's dish.'

VII.

Peter, Peter, thou fisher of men,
Fisher of fish wouldst thou live in-
stead—
Haggling for pence with the other Ten,
Cheating the market at so much a
head,
Gripping the Bag of the traitor Dead?

VIII.

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine
eyes be dazed.
What bird comes next in the tempest
shock?
. . . Vultures! See—as when Romulus
gazed—
To inaugurate ROME for a world
amazed!

PARTING LOVERS.

SIENNA.

I.

I LOVE thee, I love thee, Giulio!
Some call me cold, and some demure,
And if you have ever guessed that so
I loved thee . . . well; the proof was
poor,
And no one could be sure.

II.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
To suit my name) did I undo
The persian? If it moved sometimes,
Thou hast not seen a hand push
through
A flower or two.

III.

My mother listening to my sleep
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
The short sigh rippling on the deep,—
When hearts run out of breath and
sight
Of men, to God's clear light.

IV.

When others named thee, . . . thought
thy brows
Where straight, thy smile was ten-
der, . . . 'Here
He comes between the vineyard-
rows!'
I said not 'Ay,' nor waited, Dear,
To feel thee step too near.

V.

I left such things to bolder girls,
Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
When that Clotilda thought her curls
Held both thine eyes in hers one day,
I marvelled, let me say.

VI.

I could not try the woman's trick:
Between us straightway fell the blueb,
Which kept me separate, blind, and
sick.
A wind came with thee in a flush,
As blown through Horeb's bush.

VII.

But now that Italy invokes
 Her young men to go forth and chase
 The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
 My voice, or drives me from the
 place ;
 I look thee in the face.

VIII.

I love thee ! it is understood,
 Confest : I do not shrink or start :
 No blushes : all my body's blood
 Has gone to greaten this poor heart,
 That, loving, we may part.

IX.

Our Italy invokes the youth
 To die if need be. Still there's room,
 Though earth is strained with dead, in
 truth,
 Since twice the lilies were in bloom
 They have not grudged a tomb.

X.

And many a plighted maid and wife
 And mother, who can say since then
 'My country,' cannot say through life
 'My son,' 'my spouse,' 'my flower
 of men,'
 And not weep dumb again.

XI.

Heroic males the country bears,
 But daughters give up more than sons.
 Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares
 You flash your souls out with the guns
 And take your Heaven at once !

XII.

But *we*,—we empty heart and home
 Of life's life, love ! we bear to think
 You're gone, . . . to feel you may not
 come,
 To hear the door-latch stir and click,
 Yet no more you, . . . nor sink.

XIII.

Dear God ! when Italy is one
 And perfected from bound to bound,
 Suppose (for my share) earth's undone
 My one grave in't ! as one small
 wound
 May kill a man, 'tis found,

XIV.

What then ? If love's delight must end,
 At least we'll clear its truth from
 flaws.
 I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend !
 Now take my sweetest without a
 pause,
 To help the nation's cause.

XV.

And thus of noble Italy
 We'll both be worthy. Let her show
 The future how we made her free,
 Not sparing life, nor Giulio,
 Nor this . . . this heart-break.

MOTHER AND POET.

(Turin—After news from Gaeta. 1861.)

I.

DEAD ! one of them shot by the sea in
 the east,
 And one of them shot in the west by
 the sea.
 Dead ! both my boys ! When you sit
 at the feast
 And are wanting a great song for
 Italy free,
 Let none look at *me* !

II.

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
 And good at my art, for a woman,
 men said.
 But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized
 here,
 The east sea and west sea rhyme on
 in her head
 Forever instead.

III.

What art can a woman be good at ? Oh
 vain !
 What art *is* she good at, but hurting
 her breast
 With the milk-teeth of babes, and a
 smile at the pain ?
 Ah, boys, how you hurt ! you were
 strong as you pressed,
 And I proud, by that test.

IV.

What art's for a woman? To hold on
 her knees
 Both darlings! to feel all their arms
 round her throat
 Cling, strangle a little! To sew by de-
 grees,
 And 'broider the long clothes and neat
 little coat!
 To dream and to dote.

V.

To teach them . . . It stings there. *I*
 made them indeed
 Speak plain the word 'country.' *I*
 taught them, no doubt,
 That a country's a thing men should
 die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
 The tyrant turned out.

VI.

And when their eyes flashed . . . 'O my
 beautiful eyes!
I exulted! nay, let them go forth at
 the wheels
 Of the guns, and denied not. But then
 the surprise,
 When one sits quite alone! Then one
 weeps, then one kneels!
 —God! how the house feels!

VII.

At first happy news came, in gay letters
 moiled
 With my kisses, of camp-life and glory
 and how
 They both loved me, and soon, coming
 home to be spoiled,
 In return would fan off every fly from
 my brow
 With their green-laurel bough.

VIII.

Then was triumph at Turin. 'Ancona
 was free!
 And some one came out of the cheers
 in the street,
 With a face pale as stone, to say some-
 thing to me.
 —My Guido was dead!—I fell down
 at his feet,
 While they cheered in the street.

IX.

I bore it—friends soothed me: my grief
 looked sublime
 As the ransom of Italy. One boy re-
 mained
 To be leant on and walked with, recall-
 ing the time
 When the first grew immortal, while
 both of us strained
 To the height he had gained.

X.

And letters still came,—shorter, sadder,
 more strong,
 Writ now but in one hand. 'I was
 not to faint.
 One loved me for two . . . would be
 with me ere long:
 And 'Viva Italia' *he* died for, our
 saint,
 Who forbids our complaint.

XI.

My Nanni would add 'he was safe, and
 aware
 Of a presence that turned off the balls
 . . . was imprest
 It was Guido himself, who knew what *I*
 could bear.
 And how 'twas impossible, quite dis-
 possessed,
 To live on for the rest.'

XII.

On which without pause up the tele-
 graph line
 Swept smoothly the next news from
 Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother, Ah, ah,—'his,' 'their'
 mother: not 'mine.'
 No voice says 'my mother' again to
 me. What!
 You think Guido forgot?

XIII.

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy
 with Heaven,
 They drop earth's affection, conceive
 not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately
 forgiven

Through that Love and Sorrow which
reconciled so
The Above and Below.

XIV.

O Christ of the seven wounds, who
look'dst through the dark
To the face of Thy mother! consider,
I pray,
How we common mothers stand deso-
late, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die
with eyes turned away.
And no last word to say!

XV.

Both boys dead! but that's out of na-
ture. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house
must always keep one,
Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a
wall.
And, when Italy's made, for what
end is it done
If we have not a son?

XVI.

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what
then?
When the fair wicked queen sits no
more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls
out of men?
When your guns of Cavalli with final
retort
Have cut the game short,—

XVII.

When Venice and Rome keep their new
jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for
its white, green, and red,
When *you* have your country from
mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown
on his head,
(And I have my dead,)

XVIII.

What then? Do not mock me? Ah,
ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly. *My*
country is there,

Above the star pricked by the last peak
of snow.

My Italy's there—with my brave civic
Pair,
To disfranchise despair.

XIX.

Forgive me. Some women bear chil-
dren in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in
self-scorn.
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring
us at length
Into wail such as this!—and we sit on
forlorn
When the man-child is born.

XX.

Dead!—one of them shot by the sea in
the west!
And one of them shot in the east by
the sea!
Both! both my boys!—If in keeping
the feast
You want a great song for your Italy
free,
Let none look at *me*!

NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

I.

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed
From the sucking-bottle used in her
race
On starch and water (for mother's
milk
Which gives a larger growth instead)
And, out of the natural liberal grace,
Was swaddled away in violet silk.

II.

And young and kind, and royally blind,
Forth she stepped from her palace-
door
On three-piled carpet of compli-
ments,
Curtains of incense drawn by the wind
In between her for evermore
And daylight issues of events.

III.

On she drew, as a queen might do,
 To meet a Dream of Italy,—
 Of magical town and musical wave,
 Where even a god, his amulet blue
 Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
 Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.

IV.

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
 To live more smoothly than mortals
 can,
 To love and to reign as queen and
 wife,
 To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
 And still, with a sceptre as light as a
 fan,
 Beat sweet time to the song of life.

V.

What is this? As quick as a kiss
 Falls the smile from her girlish mouth!
 The lion-people has left its lair,
 Roaring along her garden of bliss,
 And the fiery underworld of the South
 Scorched a way to the upper air.

VI.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a
 man,
 Burningly, boundingly, fatal, and fell,
 Bowling the kingdom down! Where
 was the king?
 She had heard somewhat, since life be-
 gan,
 Of terrors on earth and horrors in hell,
 But never, never, of such a thing!

VII.

You think she dropped when her dream
 was stopped,
 When the blotch of Bourbon blood
 inlay,
 Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek?
 Not so. Her high heart overtopped
 The royal part she had come to play.
 Only the men in that hour were
 weak.

VIII.

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
 And twice a queen by her kingdom
 lost,

She braved the shock and the
 counter-shock
 Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
 While Italy pushed, like a vengeful
 ghost,
 That son of the cursed from Gaeta's
 rock.

IX.

What will ye give her, who could not
 deliver,
 German Princesses? A laurel-wreath
 All over-scored with your signatures,
 Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?
 Mock her not, fresh from the truth of
 Death,
 Conscious of dignities higher than
 yours.

X.

What will ye put in your casket shut,
 Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name?
 Guizot's daughter, what have you
 brought her?
 Withered immortelles, long ago cut
 For guilty dynasties perished in shame,
 Putrid to memory, Guizot's daugh-
 ter?

XI.

Ah poor queen! so young and so serene!
 What shall we do for her, now hope's
 done,
 Standing at Rome in these ruins
 old,
 She too a ruin and no more a queen?
 Leave her that diadem made by the
 sun,
 Turning her hair to an innocent
 gold.

XII.

Ay! bring close to her, as'twere a rose,
 to her,
 Yon free child from an Apennine city
 Singing for Italy,—dumb in the
 place!
 Something like solace, let us suppose, to
 her
 Given, in that homage of wonder and
 pity,
 By his pure eyes to see her beautiful
 face.

XIII.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded,
 Ruined all queendom and dogmas of
 state,—
 Then in reaction remorseful and
 mild,
 Rescues the womanhood, nearly eluded,
 Shows her what's sweetest in woman-
 ly fate—
 Sunshine from Heaven, and the
 eyes of a child.

THE KING'S GIFT.

I.

TERESA, ah, Teresita !
 Now what has the messenger brought
 her,
 Our Garibaldi's youngest daughter,
 To make her stop short in her singing ?
 Will she not once more repeat a
 Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
 Setting the souls of us ringing ?
 Break off the song where the tear rose ?
 Ah, Teresita !

II.

A young thing, mark, is Teresa ;
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure, in
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,
 Till blind their regard to us men is.
 But still she remembers to raise a
 Shy look at her father, and note,
 . . . 'Could she sing on as well about
 Venice ;
 Yet wear such a frame at her throat ?
 Decide for Teresa.'

III.

Teresa, ah, Teresita !
 His right hand has passed on her head.
 'Accept it, my daughter,' he said ;
 'Ay, wear it, true child of thy mother,
 Then sing, till all start to their feet, a
 New verse even bolder and freer !
 King Victor's no king like another,
 But verily noble as *we* are,
 Child, Teresita !'

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

[THE LAST POEM.]

ROME, MAY, 1861.

I

'Now give us lands where olives grow,'
 Cried the North to the South,
 'Where the sun with a golden mouth
 can blow
 Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard
 row !'
 Cried the North to the South.

'Now give us men from the sunless
 plain,'
 Cried the South to the North,
 'By need of work in the snow and the
 rain
 Made strong, and brave by familiar
 pain !'
 Cried the South to the North.

II.

'Give lucider hills and intenser seas,'
 Said the North to the South,
 'Since ever by symbols and bright de-
 grees
 Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's
 knees,'
 Said the North to the South.

'Give strenuous souls for belief and
 prayer,'
 Said the South to the North,
 'That stand in the dark on the lowest
 stair,
 While affirming of God, "He is cer-
 tainly *there*,"'
 Said the South to the North.

III

'Yet, oh, for the skies that are softer
 and higher !'
 Sighed the North to the South,
 'For the flowers that blaze, and the
 trees that aspire

And the insects made of a song or a
fire!

Sighed the North to the South.

‘And oh, for a seer, to discern the
same!’

Sighed the South to the North,

‘—For a poet’s tongue of baptismal
flame,

To call the tree and the flower by its
name!’

Sighed the South to the North.

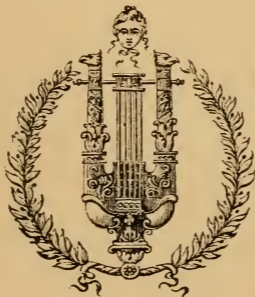
IV.

The North sent therefore a man of men
As a grace to the South,—

And thus to Rome, came Andersen.

‘—*Alas, but must you take him
again?*’

Said the South to the North.



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