

Letters and Literary Remains

Edward FitzGerald

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Letters and Literary Remains

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- ON ANNE ALLEN.
- TO A VIOLET.

VOL. I.

'Tis a dull sight

'Tis a dull sight
To see the year dying,
When winter winds
Set the yellow wood sighing:
Sighing, oh! sighing.
bsp; When such a time cometh,
I do retire
Into an old room
Beside a bright fire:
Oh, pile a bright fire! And there I sit
Reading old things,
Of knights and lorn damsels,
While the wind sings
Oh, drearily sings! I never look out
Nor attend to the blast;
For all to be seen
Is the leaves falling fast:
Falling, falling! But close at the hearth,
Like a cricket, sit I,
Reading of summer
And chivalry
Gallant chivalry! Then with an old friend
I talk of our youth
How 'twas gladsome, but often
Foolish, forsooth:
But gladsome, gladsome!
Or to get merry
We sing some old rhyme,
That made the wood ring again
In summer time
Sweet summer time! Then go we to smoking,
Silent and snug:
Nought passes between us,

Save a brown jug
Sometimes! And sometimes a tear
Will rise in each eye,
Seeing the two old friends
So merrily
So merrily! And ere to bed
Go we, go we,
Down on the ashes
We kneel on the knee,
Praying together! Thus, then, live I,
Till, 'mid all the gloom,
By heaven! the bold sun
Is with me in the room,
Shining, shining! Then the clouds part,
Swallows soaring between;
The spring is alive,
And the meadows are green!
I jump up, like mad,
Break the old pipe in twain,
And away to the meadows,
The meadows again!

When Yúsúf from his Father's House was torn

When Yúsúf from his Father's House was torn,
His Father's Heart was utterly forlorn;
And, like a Pipe with but one note, his Tongue
Still nothing but the name of Yúsúf rung.
Then down from Heaven's Branches came the Bird
Of Heaven, and said "God wearies of that Word.
Hast thou not else to do, and else to say?"
So Yacúb's lips were sealed from that Day.
But one Night in a Vision, far away
His Darling in some alien Home he saw,
And stretch'd his Arms forth; and between the Awe
Of God's Displeasure, and the bitter Pass
Of Love and Anguish, sigh'd forth an *Alas!*
And stopp'd But when he woke The Angel came,
And said, 'Oh, faint of purpose! Though the Name
Of that Belovèd were not utter'd by
Thy Lips, it hung sequester'd in that Sigh.'

A Saint there was who threescore Years and ten

A Saint there was who threescore Years and ten
In holy Meditation among Men

Letters and Literary Remains

Had spent, but, wishing, ere he came to close
With God, to meet him in complete Repose,
Withdrew into the Wilderness, where he
Set up his Dwelling in an aged Tree
Whose hollow Trunk his Winter Shelter made,
And whose green branching Arms his Summer Shade.
And like himself a Nightingale one Spring
Making her Nest above his Head would sing
So sweetly that her pleasant Music stole
Between the Saint and his severer Soul,
And made him sometimes heedless of his Vows
Listening his little Neighbour in the Boughs.
Until one Day a sterner Music woke
The sleeping Leaves, and through the Branches spoke
"What! is the Love between us two begun
And waxing till we Two were nearly One,
For three score Years of Intercourse unstirr'd
Of Men, now shaken by a little Bird;
And such a precious Bargain, and so long
A making, put in peril for a Song?"

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires,
The Sun from India's Shore retires:
To *Orwell's* Bank, with temperate ray
Home of my Youth! he leads the Day:
Oh Banks to me for ever dear,
Oh Stream whose Murmur meets my Ear;
Oh all my Hopes of Bliss abide
Where *Orwell* mingles with the Tide.

VOL. VI.

AGAMEMNON

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Agamemnon . . . *King of Argos.*
Clytemnestra . . . *his Queen.*
Ægisthus . . . *his Cousin.*
Cassandra . . . *Daughter of King Priam.*

Letters and Literary Remains

Herald.

Chorus of Ancient Councillors.

The scene is at Argos. Agamemnon's Palace: a Warder on the Battlements.

Warder.

Once more, once more, and once again once more
I crave the Gods' compassion, and release
From this inexorable watch, that now
For one whole year, close as a couching dog,
On Agamemnon's housetop I have kept,
Contemplating the muster of the stars,
And those transplendent Dynasties of Heav'n
That, as alternately they rise and fall,
Draw Warmth and Winter over mortal man.
Thus, and thus long, I say, at the behest
Of the man-minded Woman who here rules,
Here have I watch'd till yonder mountain-top
Shall kindle with a signal-light from Troy.
And watch'd in vain, couch'd on the barren stone,
Night after night, night after night, alone,
Ev'n by a wandering dream unvisited,
To which the terror of my post denies
The customary passage of closed eyes.
From which, when haply nodding, I would scare
Forbidden sleep, or charm long night away
With some old ballad of the good old times,
The foolish song falls presently to tears,
Remembering the glories of this House,
Where all is not as all was wont to be,
No, nor as should Alas, these royal walls,
Had they but tongue (as ears and eyes, men say)
Would tell strange stories! but, for fear they should,
Mine shall be mute as they are. Only this
And this no treason surely might I but,
But once more might I, see my lord again
Safe home! But once more look upon his face!
But once more take his hand in mine!

Hilloa!

The words scarce from my lips. Have the Gods heard?
Or am I dreaming wide awake? as wide
Awake I am The Light! The Light! The Light
Long look'd for, long despair'd of, on the Height!
Oh more to me than all the stars of night!
More than the Morning-star! more than the Sun
Who breaks my nightly watch, this rising one
Which tells me that my year-long night is done!
When, shaking off the collar of my watch,
I first to Clytemnestra shall report
Such news as, if indeed a lucky cast

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

For her and Argos, sure a Main to me!
But grant the Gods, to all! A master-cast,
More than compensating all losses past;
And lighting up our altars with a fire
Of Victory that never shall expire! *Exit Warder. Daylight gradually dawns, and enter slowly Chorus.*

Chorus.

I.

Another rising of the sun
That rolls another year away,
Sees us through the portal dun
Dividing night and day
Like to phantoms from the crypt
Of Morpheus or of Hades slipt,
Through the sleeping city creeping,
Murmuring an ancient song
Of unvindicated wrong,
Ten year told as ten year long.
Since to revenge the great abuse
To Themis done by Priam's son,
The Brother-Princes that, co-heir
Of Atreus, share his royal chair,
And from the authentic hand of Zeus
His delegated sceptre bear,
Startled Greece with such a cry
For Vengeance as a plunder'd pair
Of Eagles, over their aerial lair
Screaming, to whirlpool lash the waves of air.

II.

The Robber, blinded in his own conceit,
Must needs think Retribution deaf and blind.
Fool! not to know what tongue was in the wind,
When Tellus shudder'd under flying feet,
When stricken Ocean under alien wings;
Was there no Phoebus to denounce the flight
From Heav'n? Nor those ten thousand Eyes of Night?
And, were no other eye nor ear of man
Or God awake, yet universal Pan,
For ever watching at the heart of things,
And Zeus, the Warden of domestic Right,
And the perennial sanctity of Kings,
Let loose the Fury who, though late
Retarded in the leash of Fate,
Once loosed, after the Sinner springs;
Over Ocean's heights and hollows,
Into cave and forest follows,
Into fastest guarded town,
Close on the Sinner's heel insists,
And, turn or baffle as he lists,
Dogs him inexorably down.

III.

Therefore to revenge the debt

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

To violated Justice due,
Armèd Hellas hand in hand
The iron toils of Ares drew
Over water, over land,
Over such a tract of years;
Draught of blood abroad, of tears
At home, and unexhausted yet:
All the manhood Greece could muster,
And her hollow ships enclose;
All that Troy from her capacious
Bosom pouring forth oppose;
By the ships, beneath the wall,
And about the sandy plain,
Armour-glancing files advancing,
Fighting, flying, slaying, slain:
And among them, and above them,
Crested Heroes, twain by twain,
Lance to lance, and thrust to thrust,
Front erect, and, in a moment,
One or other roll'd in dust.
Till the better blood of Argos
Soaking in the Trojan sand,
In her silent half dispeopled
Cities, more than half unmann'd,
Little more of man to meet
Than the helpless child, or hoary
Spectre of his second childhood,
Tottering on triple feet,
Like the idle waifs and strays
Blown together from the ways
Up and down the windy street.

IV.

But thus it is; All bides the destined Hour;
And Man, albeit with Justice at his side,
Fights in the dark against a secret Power
Not to be conquer'd and how pacified?

V.

For, before the Navy flush'd
Wing from shore, or lifted oar
To foam the purple brush'd;
While about the altar hush'd
Throng'd the ranks of Greece thick-fold,
Ancient Chalcas in the bleeding
Volume of the Future reading
Evil things foresaw, foretold:
That, to revenge some old disgrace
Befall'n her sylvan train,
Some dumb familiar of the Chace
By Menelaus slain,
The Goddess Artemis would vex
The fleet of Greece with storms and checks:

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

That Troy should not be reach'd at all;
Or as the Gods themselves divide
In Heav'n to either mortal side
If ever reach'd, should never fall
Unless at such a loss and cost
As counterpoises Won and Lost.

VI.

The Elder of the Royal Twain
Listen'd in silence, daring not arraign
Ill omen, or rebuke the raven lips:
Then taking up the tangled skein
Of Fate, he pointed to the ships;
He sprang aboard: he gave the sign;
And blazing in his golden arms ahead,
Drew the long Navy in a glittering line
After him like a meteor o'er the main.

VII.

So from Argos forth: and so
O'er the rolling waters they,
Till in the roaring To-and-fro
Of rock-lock'd Aulis brought to stay:
There the Goddess had them fast:
With a bitter northern blast
Blew ahead and block'd the way:
Day by day delay; to ship
And tackle damage and decay;
Day by day to Prince and People
Indignation and dismay.
'All the while that in the ribb'd
'Bosom of their vessels cribb'd,
'Tower-crown'd Troy above the waters
'Yonder, quaffing from the horn
'Of Plenty, laughing them to scorn'
So would one to other say;
And man and chief in rage and grief
Fretted and consumed away.

VIII.

Then to Sacrifice anew:
And again within the bleeding
Volume of the Future reading,
Once again the summon'd Seer
Evil, Evil, still fore-drew.
Day by day, delay, decay
To ship and tackle, chief and crew:
And but one way one only way to appease
The Goddess, and the wind of wrath subdue;
One way of cure so worse than the disease,
As, but to hear propound,
The Atreidæ struck their sceptres to the ground.

IX.

After a death-deep pause,

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

The Lord of man and armament his voice
Lifted into the silence 'Terrible choice!
'To base imprisonment of wind and flood
 'Whether consign and sacrifice the band
'Of heroes gather'd in my name and cause;
'Or thence redeem them by a daughter's blood
 'A daughter's blood shed by a father's hand;
'Shed by a father's hand, and to atone
 'The guilt of One who, could the God endure
 'Propitiation by the Life impure,
'Should wash out her transgression with her own.'

X.

But, breaking on that iron multitude,
 The Father's cry no kindred echo woke:
And in the sullen silence that ensued
 An unrelenting iron answer spoke.

XI.

At last his neck to that unnatural yoke
He bow'd: his hand to that unnatural stroke:
With growing purpose, obstinate as the wind
That block'd his fleet, so block'd his better mind,
To all the Father's heart within him blind
 For thus it fares with men; the seed
 Of Evil, sown by seeming Need,
 Grows, self–infatuation–nurst,
 From evil Thought to evil Deed,
 Incomprehensible at first,
 And to the end of Life accurst.

XII.

And thus, the blood of that one innocent
Weigh'd light against one great accomplishment,
At last at last in the meridian blaze
Of Day, with all the Gods in Heaven agaze,
And armed Greece below he came to dare
After due preparation, pomp, and prayer,
He came the wretched father came to dare
 Himself with sacrificial knife in hand,
 Before the sacrificial altar stand,
To which her sweet lips, sweetly wont to sing
 Before him in the banquet–chamber, gagg'd,
Lest one ill word should mar the impious thing;
Her saffron scarf about her fluttering,
 Dumb as an all–but–speaking picture, dragg'd
Through the remorseless soldiery
 But soft!
 While I tell the more than oft–
Told Story, best in silence found,
 Incense–breathing fires aloft
Up into the rising fire,
Into which the stars expire,
 Of Morning mingle; and a sound

Letters and Literary Remains

As of Rumour at the heel

Of some great tidings gathers ground;
And from portals that disclose
Before a fragrant air that blows
Them open, what great matter, Sirs,
Thus early Clytemnestra stirs,
Hither through the palace gate
Torch in hand, and step-elate,
Advancing, with the kindled Eyes
As of triumphant Sacrifice? *Enter Clytemnestra.*
Oh, Clytemnestra, my obeisance
Salutes your coming footstep, as her right
Who rightly occupies the fellow-chair
Of that now ten years widow'd of its Lord.
But be it at your pleasure ask'd, as answer'd
What great occasion, almost ere Night's self
Rekindles into Morning from the Sun,
Has woke your Altar-fire to Sacrifice?

Clytemnestra.

Oh, never yet did Night
Night of all Good the Mother, as men say,
Conceive a fairer issue than To-day!
Prepare your ears, Old man, for tidings such
As youthful hope would scarce anticipate.

Chorus.

I have prepared them for such news as such
Preamble argues.

Clytemnestra.

What if you be told
Oh mighty sum in one small figure cast!
That ten-year-toil'd-for Troy is ours at last?

Chorus.

'If told!' Once more! the word escaped our ears,
With many a baffled rumour heretofore
Slipp'd down the wind of wasted Expectation.

Clytemnestra.

Once more then; and with unconditional
Assurance having hit the mark indeed
That Rumour aim'd at Troy, with all the towers
Our burning vengeance leaves aloft, is ours.
Now speak I plainly?

Chorus.

Oh! to make the tears,
That waited to bear witness in the eye,
Start, to convict our incredulity!

Clytemnestra.

Oh, blest conviction that enriches you
That lose the cause with all the victory!

Chorus.

Ev'n so. But how yourself convinced before?

Clytemnestra.

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

By no less sure a witness than the God.

Chorus.

What, in a dream?

Clytemnestra.

I am not one to trust

The vacillating witnesses of Sleep.

Chorus.

Ay but as surely undeluded by

The waking Will, that what we strongly *would*
Imaginates?

Clytemnestra.

Ay, like a doating girl.

Chorus.

Oh, Clytemnestra, pardon mere Old Age
That, after so long starving upon Hope,
But slowly brooks his own Accomplishment.
The Ten-year war is done then! Troy is taken!
The Gods have told you, and the Gods tell true
But how? and when?

Clytemnestra.

Ev'n with the very birth

Of the good Night which mothers this best Day.

Chorus.

To-day! To-night! but of Night's work in Troy
Who should inform the scarce awaken'd ear
Of Morn in Argos?

Clytemnestra.

Hephaistos, the lame God,

And spriteliest of mortal messengers;
Who, springing from the bed of burning Troy,
Hither, by fore-devised Intelligence
Agreed upon between my Lord and me,
Posted from dedicated Height to Height
The reach of land and sea that lies between.
And, first to catch him and begin the game,
Did Ida fire her forest-pine, and, waving,
Handed him on to that Hermæan steep
Of Lemnos; Lemnos to the summit of
Zeus-consecrated Athos lifted; whence,
As by the giant taken, so despatch'd,
The Torch of Conquest, traversing the wide
Ægæan with a sunbeam-stretching stride,
Struck up the drowsy watchers on Makistos;
Who, flashing back the challenge, flash'd it on
To those who watch'd on the Messapian height.
With whose quick-kindling heather heap'd and fired
The meteor-bearded messenger refresh'd,
Clearing Asopus at a bound, struck fire
From old Kithæron; and, so little tired
As waxing even wanton with the sport,
Over the sleeping water of Gorgopis

Letters and Literary Remains

Sprung to the Rock of Corinth; thence to the cliffs
Which stare down the Saronic Gulf, that now
Began to shiver in the creeping Dawn;
Whence, for a moment on the neighbouring top
Of Arachnæum lighting, one last bound
Brought him to Agamemnon's battlements.
By such gigantic strides in such a Race
Where First and Last alike are Conquerors,
Posted the travelling Fire, whose Father-light
Ida conceived of burning Troy To-night.

Chorus.

Woman, your words man-metal ring, and strike
Ev'n from the tuneless fibre of Old Age
Such martial unison as from the lips
Shall break into full Pæan by and by.

Clytemnestra.

Ay, think think think, old man, and in your soul,
As if 'twere mirror'd in your outward eye,
Imagine what wild work a-doing there
In Troy to-night to-day this moment how
Harmoniously, as in one vessel meet
Esil and Oil, meet Triumph and Despair,
Sluiced by the sword along the reeking street,
On which the Gods look down from burning air.
Slain, slaying dying, dead about the dead
Fighting to die themselves maidens and wives
Lock'd by the locks, with their barbarian young,
And torn away to slavery and shame
By hands all reeking with their Champion's blood.
Until, with execution weary, we
Fling down our slaughter-satiated swords,
To gorge ourselves on the unfinish'd feasts
Of poor old Priam and his sons; and then,
Roll'd on rich couches never spread for us,
Ev'n now our sleep-besotted foreheads turn
Up to the very Sun that rises here.
Such is the lawful game of those who win
Upon so just a quarrel so long fought:
Provided always that, with jealous care,
Retaliation wreaking upon those
Who our insulted Gods upon them drew,
We push not Riot to *their* Altar-foot;
Remembering, on whichever mortal side
Engaged, the Gods are Gods in heav'n and earth,
And not to be insulted unavenged.
This let us take to heart, and keep in sight;
Lest, having run victoriously thus far,
And turn'd the very pillar of our race,
Before we reach the long'd-for goal of Home
Nemesis overtake, or trip us up;
Some ere safe shipp'd: or, launch'd upon the foam,

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Ere touch'd the threshold of their native shore;
Yea, or that reach'd, the threshold of the door
Of their own home; from whatsoever corner
The jealous Power is ever on the watch
To compass arrogant Prosperity.
These are a woman's words; for men to take,
Or disregarded drop them, as they will;
Enough for me, if having won the stake,
I pray the Gods with us to keep it still. *Exit Clytemnestra.*

Chorus.

I.

Oh, sacred Night,
From whose unfathomable breast
Creative Order formed and saw
Chaos emerging into Law:
And now, committed with Eternal Right,
Who didst with star-entangled net invest
So close the guilty City as she slept,
That when the deadly fisher came to draw,
Not one of all the guilty fry through crept.

II.

Oh, Nemesis,
Night's daughter! in whose bosoming abyss
Secretly sitting by the Sinner's sleeve,
Thou didst with self-confusion counterweave
His plot; and when the fool his arrow sped,
Thine after-shot didst only not dismiss
Till certain not to miss the guilty head.

III.

Some think the Godhead, couching at his ease
Deep in the purple Heav'ns, serenely sees
Insult the altar of Eternal Right.
Fools! For though Fortune seem to misrequite,
And Retribution for a while forget;
Sooner or later she reclaims the debt
With usury that triples the amount
Of Nemesis with running Time's account.

IV.

For soon or late sardonic Fate
With Man against himself conspires;
Puts on the mask of his desires:
Up the steps of Time elate
Leads him blinded with his pride,
And gathering as he goes along
The fuel of his suicide:
Until having topp'd the pyre
Which Destiny permits no higher,
Ambition sets himself on fire;
In conflagration like the crime
Conspicuous through the world and time
Down amidst his brazen walls

The accumulated Idol falls
To shapeless ashes; Demigod
Under the vulgar hoof down-trod
Whose neck he trod on; not an eye
To weep his fall, nor lip to sigh
For him a prayer; or, if there were,
No God to listen, or reply.

V.

And as the son his father's guilt may rue;
And, by retort of justice, what the son
Has sinn'd, to ruin on the father run;
So may the many help to pay the due
Of guilt, remotely implicate with one.
And as the tree 'neath which a felon cowers,
With all its branch is blasted by the bolt
Of Justice launch'd from Heav'n at *his* revolt;
Thus with old Priam, with his royal line,
Kindred and people; yea, the very towers
They crouch'd in, built by masonry divine.

VI.

Like a dream through sleep she glided
Through the silent city gate,
By a guilty Hermes guided
On the feather'd feet of Theft;
Leaving between those she left
And those she fled to lighted Discord,
Unextinguishable Hate;
Leaving him whom least she should,
Menelaus brave and good,
Scarce believing in the mutter'd
Rumour, in the worse than utter'd
Omen of the wailing maidens,
Of the shaken hoary head,
Of deserted board and bed.
For the phantom of the lost one
Haunts him in the wonted places;
Hall and Chamber, which he paces
Hither, Thither, listening, looking,
Phantom-like himself alone;
Till he comes to loathe the faces
Of the marble mute Colossi,
Godlike Forms, and half-divine,
Founders of the Royal line,
Who with all unalter'd Quiet
Witness all and make no sign.
But the silence of the chambers,
And the shaken hoary head,
And the voices of the mourning
Women, and of ocean wailing,
Over which with unavailing
Arms he reaches, as to hail

The phantom of a flying sail
All but answer, Fled! fled! fled!
False! dishonour'd! worse than dead!

VII.

At last the sun goes down along the bay,
And with him drags detested Day.
He sleeps; and, dream-like as she fled, beside
His pillow, Dream indeed, behold! his Bride
Once more in more than bridal beauty stands;
But, ever as he reaches forth his hands,
Slips from them back into the viewless deep,
On those soft silent wings that walk the ways of sleep.

VIII.

Not beside thee in the chamber,
Menelaus, any more;
But with him she fled with, pillow'd
On the summer softly-billow'd
Ocean, into dimple wreathing
Underneath a breeze of amber
Air that, as from Eros breathing,
Fill'd the sail and flew before;
Floating on the summer seas
Like some sweet Effigies
Of Eirene's self, or sweeter
Aphrodite, sweeter still:
With the Shepherd, from whose luckless
Hand upon the Phrygian hill,
Of the three Immortals, She
The fatal prize of Beauty bore,
Floating with him o'er the foam
She rose from, to the Shepherd's home
On the Ionian shore.

IX.

Down from the City to the water-side
Old Priam, with his princely retinue.
By many a wondering Phrygian follow'd, drew
To welcome and bear in the Goddess-bride,
Whom some propitious wind of Fortune blew
From whence they knew not o'er the waters wide
Among the Trojan people to abide,
A pledge of Love and Joy for ever Yes;
As one who drawing from the leopardess
Her suckling cub, and, fascinated by
The little Savage of the lustrous eye,
Bears home, for all to fondle and caress,
And be the very darling of the house
It makes a den of blood of by and by.

X.

For the wind, that amber blew,
Tempest in its bosom drew,
Soon began to hiss and roar;

And the sweet Effigies
That amber breeze and summer seas
Had wafted to the Ionian shore,
By swift metamorphosis
Turn'd into some hideous, hated,
Fury of Revenge, and fated
Hierophant of Nemesis;
Who, growing with the day and hour,
Grasp'd the wall, and topp'd the tower,
And, when the time came, by its throat
The victim City seized, and smote.

XI.

But now to be resolved, whether indeed
Those fires of Night spoke truly, or mistold
To cheat a doating woman; for, behold,
Advancing from the shore with solemn speed,
A Herald from the Fleet, his footsteps roll'd
In dust, Haste's thirsty consort, but his brow
Check-shadow'd with the nodding Olive-bough;
Who shall interpret us the speechless sign
Of the fork'd tongue that preys upon the pine.

Herald.

Oh, Fatherland of Argos, back to whom
After ten years do I indeed return
Under the dawn of this auspicious day!
Of all the parted anchors of lost Hope
That this, depended least on, yet should hold;
Amid so many men to me so dear
About me dying, yet myself exempt
Return to live what yet of life remains
Among my own; among my own at last
To share the blest communion of the Dead!
Oh, welcome, welcome, welcome once again
My own dear Country and the light she draws
From the benignant Heav'ns; and all the Gods
Who guard her; Zeus Protector first of all;
And Phoebus, by this all-restoring dawn
Who heals the wounds his arrows dealt so fast
Beside Scamander; and not last nor least
Among the Powers engaged upon our side,
Hermes, the Herald's Patron, and his Pride;
Who, having brought me safely through the war,
Now brings me back to tell the victory
Into my own belovèd country's ear;
Who, all the more by us, the more away,
Beloved, will greet with Welcome no less dear
This remnant of the unremorseful spear.
And, oh, you Temples, Palaces, and throned
Colossi, that affront the rising sun,
If ever yet, your marble foreheads now
Bathe in the splendour of returning Day

Letters and Literary Remains

To welcome back your so long absent Lord;
Who by Zeus' self directed to the spot
Of Vengeance, and the special instrument
Of Retribution put into his hands,
Has undermined, uprooted, and destroy'd,
Till scarce one stone upon another stands,
The famous Citadel, that, deeply cast
For crime, has all the forfeit paid at last.

Chorus.

Oh hail and welcome, Herald of good news!
Welcome and hail! and doubt not thy return
As dear to us as thee.

Herald.

To me so dear,
After so long despair'd of, that, for fear
Life's after-draught the present should belie,
One might implore the Gods ev'n now to die!

Chorus.

Oh, your soul hunger'd after home!

Herald.

So sore,
That sudden satisfaction of once more
Return weeps out its surfeit at my eyes.

Chorus.

And ours, you see, contagiously, no less
The same long grief, and sudden joy, confess.

Herald.

What! Argos for her missing children yearn'd
As they for her, then?

Chorus.

Ay; perhaps and more,
Already pining with an inward sore.

Herald.

How so?

Chorus.

Nay, Silence, that has best endured
The pain, may best dismiss the memory.

Herald.

Ev'n so. For who, unless the God himself,
Expects to live his life without a flaw?
Why, once begin to open that account,
Might not *we* tell for ten good years to come
Of all we suffer'd in the ten gone by?
Not the mere course and casualty of war,
Alarum, March, Battle, and such hard knocks
As foe with foe expects to give and take;
But all the complement of miseries
That go to swell a long campaign's account.
Cramm'd close aboard the ships, hard bed, hard board:
Or worse perhaps while foraging ashore
In winter time; when, if not from the walls,

Letters and Literary Remains

Pelted from Heav'n by Day, to couch by Night
Between the falling dews and rising damps
That elf'd the locks, and set the body fast
With cramp and ague; or, to mend the matter,
Good mother Ida from her winter top
Flinging us down a coverlet of snow.
Or worst perhaps in Summer, toiling in
The bloody harvest-field of torrid sand,
When not an air stirr'd the fierce Asian noon,
And ev'n the sea sleep-sicken'd in his bed.
But why lament the Past, as past it is?
If idle for the Dead who feel no more,
Idler for us to whom this blissful Dawn
Shines doubly bright against the stormy Past;
Who, after such predicament and toil,
Boast, once more standing on our mother soil,
That Zeus, who sent us to revenge the crime
Upon the guilty people, now recalls
To hang their trophies on our temple walls
For monumental heir-looms to all time.

Chorus.

Oh, but Old age, however slow to learn,
Not slow to learn, nor after you repeat,
Lesson so welcome, Herald of the Fleet!
But here is Clytemnestra; be you first
To bless her ears, as mine, with news so sweet.

Clytemnestra.

I sang my Song of Triumph ere he came,
Alone I sang it while the City slept,
And these wise Senators, with winking eyes,
Look'd grave, and weigh'd mistrustfully my word,
As the light coinage of a woman's brain.
And so they went their way. But not the less
From those false fires I lit my altar up,
And, woman-wise, held on my song, until
The City taking up the note from me,
Scarce knowing why, about that altar flock'd,
Where, like the Priest of Victory, I stood,
Torch-handed, drenching in triumphant wine
The flame that from the smouldering incense rose.
Now what more needs? This Herald of the Day
Adds but another witness to the Night;
And I will hear no more from other lips,
Till from my husband Agamemnon all,
Whom with all honour I prepare to meet.
Oh, to a loyal woman what so sweet
As once more wide the gate of welcome fling
To the loved Husband whom the Gods once more
After long travail home triumphant bring;
Where he shall find her, as he left before,
Fix'd like a trusty watchdog at the door,

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Tractable him—ward, but inveterate
Against the doubtful stranger at the gate;
And not a seal within the house but still
Inviolable, under a woman's trust
Incapable of taint as gold of rust. *Exit Clytemnestra.*

Herald.

A boast not misbeseeming a true woman.

Chorus.

For then no boast at all. But she says well;
And Time interprets all. Enough for us
To praise the Gods for Agamemnon's safe,
And more than safe return. And Menelaus,
The other half of Argos What of him?

Herald.

Those that I most would gladden with good news,
And on a day like this with fair but false
I dare not.

Chorus.

What, must fair then needs be false?

Herald.

Old man, the Gods grant somewhat, and withhold
As seems them good: a time there is for Praise,
A time for Supplication: nor is it well
To twit the celebration of their largess,
Reminding them of somewhat they withhold.

Chorus.

Yet till we know how much withheld or granted,
We know not how the balance to adjust
Of Supplication or of Praise.

Herald.

Alas,
The Herald who returns with downcast eyes,
And leafless brow prophetic of Reverse,
Let him at once at once let him, I say,
Lay the whole burden of Ill—tidings down
In the mid—market place. But why should one
Returning with the garland on his brow
Be stopp'd to name the single missing leaf
Of which the Gods have stinted us?

Chorus.

Alas,
The putting of a fearful question by
Is but to ill conjecture worse reply!
You bring not back then do not leave behind
What Menelaus was?

Herald.

The Gods forbid!
Safe shipp'd with all the host.

Chorus.

Well but how then?
Surely no tempest

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Herald.

Ay! by that one word
Hitting the centre of a boundless sorrow!

Chorus.

Well, but if peradventure from the fleet
Parted not lost?

Herald.

None but the eye of Day,
Now woke, knows all the havoc of the Night.
For Night it was; all safe aboard sail set,
And oars all beating home; when suddenly,
As if those old antagonists had sworn
New strife between themselves for our destruction,
The sea, that tamely let us mount his back,
Began to roar and plunge under a lash
Of tempest from the thundering heavens so fierce
As, falling on our fluttering navy, some
Scatter'd, or whirl'd away like flakes of foam:
Or, huddling wave on wave, so ship on ship
Like fighting eagles on each other fell,
And beak, and wing, and claws, entangled, tore
To pieces one another, or dragg'd down.
So when at last the tardy-rising Sun
Survey'd, and show'd, the havoc Night had done,
We, whom some God or Fortune's self, I think
Seizing the helm, had steer'd as man could not,
Beheld the waste Ægæan wilderness
Strown with the shatter'd forest of the fleet,
Trunk, branch, and foliage; and yet worse, I ween,
The flower of Argos floating dead between.
Then we, scarce trusting in our own escape,
And saving such as yet had life to save,
Along the heaving wilderness of wave
Went ruminating, who of those we miss'd
Might yet survive, who lost: the saved, no doubt,
As sadly speculating after us.
Of whom, if Menelaus and the Sun
(A prayer which all the Gods in Heav'n fulfil!)
Behold him on the water breathing still;
Doubt not that Zeus, under whose special showers
And suns the royal growth of Atreus towers,
Will not let perish stem, and branch, and fruit,
By loss of one corroborating root.

Chorus.

I.

Oh, Helen, Helen, Helen! oh, fair name
And fatal, of the fatal-fairest dame
That ever blest or blinded human eyes!
Of mortal women Queen beyond compare,
As she whom the foam lifted to the skies
Is Queen of all who breathe immortal air!

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Whoever, and from whatsoever wells
Of Divination, drew the syllables
By which we name thee; who shall ever dare
In after time the fatal name to wear,
Or would, to be so fatal, be so fair?
Whose dowry was a Husband's shame;
Whose nuptial torch was Troy in flame;
Whose bridal Chorus, groans and cries;
Whose banquet, brave men's obsequies;
Whose Hymenæal retinue,
The winged dogs of War that flew
Over lands and over seas,
Following the tainted breeze,
Till, Scamander reed among,
Their fiery breath and bloody tongue
The fatal quarry found and slew;
And, having done the work to which
The God himself halloo'd them, back
Return a maim'd and scatter'd pack.

II.

And he for whose especial cause
Zeus his winged instrument
With the lightning in his claws
From the throne of thunder sent:
He for whom the sword was drawn:
Mountain ashes fell'd and sawn;
And the armed host of Hellas
Cramm'd within them, to discharge
On the shore to bleed at large;
He, in mid accomplishment
Of Justice, from his glory rent!
What ten years had hardly won,
In a single night undone;
And on earth what saved and gain'd,
By the ravin sea distraint'd.

III.

Such is the sorrow of this royal house;
And none in all the City but forlorn
Under its own peculiar sorrow bows.
For the stern God who, deaf to human love,
Grudges the least abridgment of the tale
Of human blood once pledged to him, above
The centre of the murder-dealing crowd
Suspends in air his sanguinary scale;
And for the blooming Hero gone a-field
Homeward remits a beggarly return
Of empty helmet, fallen sword and shield,
And some light ashes in a little urn.

IV.

Then wild and high goes up the cry
To heav'n, 'So true! so brave! so fair!

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

'The young colt of the flowing hair
'And flaming eye, and now look there!
'Ashes and arms!' or, 'Left behind
'Unburied, in the sun and wind
'To wither, or become the feast
'Of bird obscene, or unclean beast;
'The good, the brave, without a grave
'All to redeem *her* from the shame
'To which she sold her self and name!
For such insinuation in the dark
About the City travels like a spark;
Till the pent tempest into lightning breaks,
And takes the topmost pinnacle for mark.

V.

But avaunt all evil omen!
Perish many, so the State
They die for live inviolate;
Which, were all her mortal leafage
In the blast of Ares scatter'd,
So herself at heart unshatter'd,
In due season she retrieves
All her wasted wealth of leaves,
And age on age shall spread and rise
To cover earth and breathe the skies.
While the rival at her side
Who the wrath of Heav'n defied,
By the lashing blast, or flashing
Bolt of Heav'n comes thunder-crashing,
Top and lop, and trunk and bough,
Down, for ever down. And now,
He to whom the Zeus of Vengeance
Did commit the bolt of Fate
Agamemnon how shall I
With a Pæan not too high
For mortal glory, to provoke
From the Gods a counter-stroke,
Nor below desert so lofty,
Suitably felicitate?
Such as chasten'd Age for due
May give, and Manhood take for true.
For, as many men comply
From founts no deeper than the eye
With others' sorrows; many more,
With a Welcome from the lips,
That far the halting heart outstrips,
Fortune's Idol fall before.
Son of Atreus, I premise,
When at first the means and manhood
Of the cities thou didst stake
For a wanton woman's sake,
I might grudge the sacrifice;

But, the warfare once begun,
Hardly fought and hardly won,
Now from Glory's overflowing
Horn of Welcome all her glowing
Honours, and with uninvincible
Hand, before your advent throwing,
I salute, and bid thee welcome,
Son of Atreus, Agamemnon,
Zeus' revenging Right-hand, Lord
Of taken Troy and righted Greece:
Bid thee from the roving throne
Of War the reeking steed release;
Leave the laurell'd ship to ride
Anchor'd in her country's side,
And resume the royal helm
Of thy long-abandon'd realm:
What about the State or Throne
Of good or evil since has grown,
Alter, cancel, or complete;
And to well or evil-doer

Even-handed Justice mete. *Enter Agamemnon in his chariot, Cassandra following in another.*

Agamemnon.

First, as first due, my Country I salute,
And all her tutelary Gods; all those
Who, having sent me forth, now bring me back,
After full retribution wrought on those
Who retribution owed us, and the Gods
In full consistory determined; each,
With scarce a swerving eye to Mercy's side,
Dropping his vote into the urn of blood,
Caught and consuming in whose fiery wrath,
The stately City, from her panting ashes
Into the nostril of revolted Heav'n
Gusts of expiring opulence puffs up.
For which, I say, the Gods alone be thank'd;
By whose contrivance round about the wall
We drew the belt of Ares, and laid bare
The flank of Ilium to the Lion-horse,
Who sprung by night over the city wall,
And foal'd his iron progeny within,
About the setting of the Pleiades.
Thus much by way of prelude to the Gods.
For you, oh white-hair'd senators of Argos,
Your measured Welcome I receive for just;
Aware on what a tickle base of fortune
The monument of human Glory stands;
And, for humane congratulation, knowing
How, smile as may the mask, the man behind
Frets at the fortune that degrades his own.
This, having heard of from the wise, myself,
From long experience in the ways of men,

Letters and Literary Remains

Can vouch for what a shadow of a shade
Is human loyalty; and, as a proof,
Of all the Host that fill'd the Grecian ship,
And pour'd at large along the field of Troy,
One only Chief and he, too, like yourself,
At first with little stomach for the cause
The wise Odysseus once in harness, he
With all his might pull'd in the yoke with me,
Through envy, obloquy, and opposition:
And in Odysseus' honour, live or dead
For yet we know not which shall this be said.
Of which enough. For other things of moment
To which you point, or human or divine,
We shall forthwith consider and adjudge
In seasonable council; what is well,
Or in our absence well deserving, well
Establish and requite; what not, redress
With salutary caution; or, if need,
With the sharp edge of Justice; and to health
Restore, and right, our ailing Commonwealth.
Now, first of all, by my own altar-hearth
To thank the Gods for my return, and pray
That Victory, which thus far by my side
Has flown with us, with us may still abide. *Enter Clytemnestra from the Palace.*

Clytemnestra.

Oh Men of Argos, count it not a shame
If a fond wife, and one whom riper years
From Youth's becoming bashfulness excuse,
Dares own her love before the face of men;
Nor leaving it for others to enhance,
Simply declares the wretched widowhood
Which these ten years she has endured, since first
Her husband Agamemnon went to Troy.
'Tis no light matter, let me tell you, Sirs,
A woman left in charge of house and home
And when that house and home a Kingdom and
She left alone to rule it and ten years!
Beside dissent and discontent at home,
Storm'd from abroad with contrary reports,
Now fair, now foul; but still as time wore on
Growing more desperate; as dangerous
Unto the widow'd kingdom as herself.
Why, had my husband there but half the wounds
Fame stabb'd him with, he were before me now,
Not the whole man we see him, but a body
Gash'd into network; ay, or had he died
But half as often as Report gave out,
He would have needed thrice the cloak of earth
To cover him, that triple Geryon
Lies buried under in the world below.
Thus, back and forward baffled, and at last

Letters and Literary Remains

So desperate that, if I be here alive
To tell the tale, no thanks to me for that,
Whose hands had twisted round my neck the noose
Which others loosen'd my Orestes too
In whose expanding manhood day by day
My Husband I perused and, by the way,
Whom wonder not, my Lord, not seeing here;
My simple mother-love, and jealousy
Of civic treason ever as you know,
Most apt to kindle when the lord away
Having bestow'd him, out of danger's reach,
With Strophius of Phocis, wholly yours
Bound by the generous usages of war,
That make the once-won foe so fast a friend.
Thus, widow'd of my son as of his sire,
No wonder if I wept not drops, but showers,
The ten years' night through which I watch'd in vain
The star that was to bring him back to me;
Or, if I slept, a sleep so thin as scared
Even at the slight incursion of the gnat;
And yet more thick with visionary terrors
Than thrice the waking while had occupied.
Well, I have borne all this: all this have borne,
Without a grudge against the wanderer,
Whose now return makes more than rich amends
For all ungrateful absence Agamemnon,
My Lord and Husband; Lord of Argos; Troy's
Confunder: Mainstay of the realm of Greece;
And Master-column of the house of Atreus
Oh wonder not if I accumulate
All honour and endearment on his head!
If to his country, how much more to me,
Welcome, as land to sailors long at sea,
Or water in the desert; whose return
Is fire to the forsaken winter-hearth;
Whose presence, like the rooted Household Tree
That, winter-dead so long, anew puts forth
To shield us from the Dogstar, what time Zeus
Wrings the tart vintage into blissful juice.
Down from the chariot thou standest in,
Crown'd with the flaming towers of Troy, descend,
And to this palace, rich indeed with thee,
But beggar-poor without, return! And ye,
My women, carpet all the way before,
From the triumphal carriage to the door,
With all the gold and purple in the chest
 Stored these ten years; and to what purpose stored,
 Unless to strew the footsteps of their Lord
Returning to his unexpected rest!
Agamemnon.
 Daughter of Leda, Mistress of my house,

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Beware lest loving Welcome of your Lord,
Measuring itself by his protracted absence,
Exceed the bound of rightful compliment,
And better left to other lips than yours.
Address me not, address me not, I say
With dust-adoring adulation, meeter
For some barbarian Despot from his slave;
Nor with invidious Purple strew my way,
Fit only for the footstep of a God
Lighting from Heav'n to earth. Let whoso will
Trample their glories underfoot, not I.
Woman, I charge you, honour me no more
Than as the man I am; if honour-worth,
Needing no other trapping but the fame
Of the good deed I clothe myself withal;
And knowing that, of all their gifts to man,
No greater gift than Self-sobriety
The Gods vouchsafe him in the race of life:
Which, after thus far running, if I reach
The goal in peace, it shall be well for me.

Clytemnestra.

Why, how think you old Priam would have walk'd
Had he return'd to Troy your conqueror,
As you to Hellas his?

Agamemnon.

What then? Perhaps

Voluptuary Asiatic-like,
On gold and purple.

Clytemnestra.

Well, and grudging this,

When all that out before your footstep flows
Ebbs back into the treasury again;
Think how much more, had Fate the tables turn'd,
Irrevocably from those coffers gone,
For those barbarian feet to walk upon,
To buy your ransom back!

Agamemnon.

Enough, enough!

I know my reason.

Clytemnestra.

What! the jealous God?

Or, peradventure, yet more envious Man?

Agamemnon.

And *that* of no small moment.

Clytemnestra.

No; the one

Sure proof of having won what others would.

Agamemnon.

No matter Strife but ill becomes a woman.

Clytemnestra.

And frank submission to her simple wish

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

How well becomes the Soldier in his strength!

Agamemnon.

And I must then submit?

Clytemnestra.

Ay, Agamemnon,

Deny me not this first Desire on this

First Morning of your long–desired Return.

Agamemnon.

But not till I have put these sandals off,

That, slave–like, too officiously would pander

Between the purple and my dainty feet.

For fear, for fear indeed, some Jealous eye

From heav'n above, or earth below, should strike

The Man who walks the earth Immortal–like.

So much for that. For this same royal maid,

Cassandra, daughter of King Priamus,

Whom, as the flower of all the spoil of Troy,

The host of Hellas dedicates to me;

Entreat her gently; knowing well that none

But submit hardly to a foreign yoke;

And those of Royal blood most hardly brook.

That if I sin thus trampling underfoot

A woof in which the Heav'ns themselves are dyed,

The jealous God may less resent his crime,

Who mingles human mercy with his pride.

Clytemnestra.

The Sea there is, and shall the sea be dried?

Fount inexhaustible of purple grain

Than all the wardrobes of the world could drain;

And Earth there is, whose dusky closets hide

The precious metal wherewith not in vain

The Gods themselves this Royal house provide;

For what occasion worthier, or more meet,

Than now to carpet the victorious feet

Of Him who, thus far having done their will,

Shall now their last About–to–be fulfil? *Agamemnon descends from his chariot, and goes with Clytemnestra into the house, Cassandra remaining.*

Chorus.

I.

About the nations runs a saw,

That Over–good ill–fortune breeds;

And true that, by the mortal law,

Fortune her spoilt children feeds

To surfeit, such as sows the seeds

Of Insolence, that, as it grows,

The flower of Self–repentance blows.

And true that Virtue often leaves

The marble walls and roofs of kings,

And underneath the poor man's eaves

On smoky rafter folds her wings.

II.

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Thus the famous city, flown
With insolence, and overgrown,
Is humbled: all her splendour blown
To smoke: her glory laid in dust;
Who shall say by doom unjust?
But should He to whom the wrong
Was done, and Zeus himself made strong
To do the vengeance He decreed
At last returning with the meed
 He wrought for should the jealous Eye
 That blights full-blown prosperity
Pursue him then indeed, indeed,
Man should hoot and scare aloof
Good-fortune lighting on the roof;
Yea, even Virtue's self forsake
If Glory follow'd in the wake;
Seeing bravest, best, and wisest
 But the playthings of a day,
Which a shadow can trip over,
 And a breath can puff away.

Clytemnestra (*re-entering*).

Yet for a moment let me look on her
This, then, is Priam's daughter
Cassandra, and a Prophetess, whom Zeus
Has giv'n into my hands to minister
Among my slaves. Didst thou prophesy that?
Well some more famous have so fall'n before
Ev'n Herakles, the son of Zeus, they say
Was sold, and bow'd his shoulder to the yoke.

Chorus.

And, if needs must a captive, better far
Of some old house that affluent Time himself
Has taught the measure of prosperity,
That drunk with sudden superfluity.

Clytemnestra.

Ev'n so. You hear? Therefore at once descend
From that triumphal chariot And yet
She keeps her station still, her laurel on,
Disdaining to make answer.

Chorus.

 Nay, perhaps,
Like some stray swallow blown across the seas,
Interpreting no twitter but her own.

Clytemnestra.

But, if barbarian, still interpreting
The universal language of the hand.

Chorus.

Which yet again she does not seem to see,
Staring before her with wide-open eyes
As in a trance.

Clytemnestra.

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Ay, ay, a prophetess
Phoebus Apollo's minion once Whose now?
A time will come for her. See you to it:
A greater business now is on my hands:
For lo! the fire of Sacrifice is lit,
And the grand victim by the altar stands. *Exit Clytemnestra.*

Chorus (*continuing*).

Still a mutter'd and half-blind
Superstition haunts mankind,
That, by some divine decree
Yet by mortal undivined,
Mortal Fortune must not over-
Leap the bound he cannot see;
For that even wisest labour
Lofty-building, builds to fall,
Evermore a jealous neighbour
Undermining floor and wall.
So that on the smoothest water
Sailing, in a cloudless sky,
The wary merchant overboard
Flings something of his precious hoard
To pacify the jealous eye,
That will not suffer man to swell
Over human measure. Well,
As the Gods have order'd we
Must take I know not let it be.
But, by rule of retribution,
Hidden, too, from human eyes,
Fortune in her revolution,
If she fall, shall fall to rise:
And the hand of Zeus dispenses
Even measure in the main:
One short harvest recompenses
With a glut of golden grain;
So but men in patience wait
Fortune's counter-revolution
Axled on eternal Fate;
And the Sisters three that twine,
Cut not short the vital line;
For indeed the purple seed
Of life once shed

Cassandra.

Phoebus Apollo!

Chorus.

Hark!

The lips at last unlocking.

Cassandra.

Phoebus! Phoebus!

Chorus.

Well, what of Phoebus, maiden? though a name
'Tis but disparagement to call upon

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

In misery.

Cassandra.

Apollo! Apollo! Again!

Oh, the burning arrow through the brain!

Phoebus Apollo! Apollo!

Chorus.

Seemingly

Possess'd indeed whether by

Cassandra.

Phoebus! Phoebus!

Thorough trampled ashes, blood, and fiery rain,

Over water seething, and behind the breathing

Warhorse in the darkness till you rose again

Took the helm took the rein

Chorus.

As one that half asleep at dawn recalls

A night of Horror!

Cassandra.

Hither, whither, Phoebus? And with whom,

Leading me, lighting me

Chorus.

I can answer that

Cassandra.

Down to what slaughter-house?

Foh! the smell of carnage through the door

Scares me from it drags me tow'rd it

Phoebus! Apollo! Apollo!

Chorus.

One of the dismal prophet-pack, it seems,

That hunt the trail of blood. But here at fault

This is no den of slaughter, but the house

Of Agamemnon.

Cassandra.

Down upon the towers

Phantoms of two mangled Children hover and a famish'd man,

At an empty table glaring, seizes and devours!

Chorus.

Thyestes and his children! Strange enough

For any maiden from abroad to know,

Or, knowing

Cassandra.

And look! in the chamber below

The terrible Woman, listening, watching,

Under a mask, preparing the blow

In the fold of her robe

Chorus.

Nay, but again at fault:

For in the tragic story of this House

Unless, indeed, the fatal Helen

No woman

Cassandra.

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

No Woman Tisiphone! Daughter

Of Tartarus love-grinning Woman above,
Dragon-tail'd under honey-tongued, Harpy-claw'd,
Into the glittering meshes of slaughter
She wheedles, entices, him into the poisonous
Fold of the serpent

Chorus.

Peace, mad woman, peace!

Whose stony lips once open vomit out
Such uncouth horrors.

Cassandra.

I tell you the lioness

Slaughters the Lion asleep; and lifting
Her blood-dripping fangs buried deep in his mane,
Glaring about her insatiable, bellowing,
Bounds hither Phoebus, Apollo, Apollo, Apollo!
Whither have you led me, under night alive with fire,
Through the trampled ashes of the city of my sire,
From my slaughter'd kinsmen, fallen throne, insulted shrine,
Slave-like to be butcher'd, the daughter of a Royal line?

Chorus.

And so returning, like a nightingale
Returning to the passionate note of woe
By which the silence first was broken!

Cassandra.

Oh,

A nightingale, a nightingale, indeed,
That, as she 'Itys! Itys! Itys!' so
I 'Helen! Helen! Helen!' having sung
Amid my people, now to those who flung
And trampled on the nest, and slew the young,
Keep crying 'Blood! blood! blood!' and none will heed!
Now what for me is this prophetic weed,
And what for me is this immortal crown,
Who like a wild swan from Scamander's reed
Chaunting her death-song float Cocytus-down?
There let the fatal Leaves to perish lie!
To perish, or enrich some other brow
With that all-fatal gift of Prophecy
They palpitated under Him who now,
Checking his flaming chariot in mid sky,
With divine irony sees disadorn
The wretch his love has made the people's scorn,
The raving quean, the mountebank, the scold,
Who, wrapt up in the ruin she foretold
With those who would not listen, now descends
To that dark kingdom where his empire ends.

Chorus.

Strange that Apollo should the laurel wreath
Of Prophecy he crown'd your head withal
Himself disgrace. But something have we heard

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Of some divine revenge for slighted love.

Cassandra.

Ay and as if in malice to attest

With one expiring beam of Second-sight

Wherewith his victim he has cursed and blest,

Ere quench'd for ever in descending night;

As from behind a veil no longer peeps

The Bride of Truth, nor from their hidden deeps

Darkle the waves of Prophecy, but run

Clear from the very fountain of the Sun.

Ye call'd and rightly call'd me bloodhound; ye

That like old lagging dogs in self-despite

Must follow up the scent with me; with me,

Who having smelt the blood about this house

Already spilt, now bark of more to be.

For, though you hear them not, the infernal Choir

Whose dread antiphony forswears the lyre,

Who now are chaunting of that grim carouse

Of blood with which the children fed their Sire,

Shall never from their dreadful chorus stop

Till all be counter-pledged to the last drop.

Chorus.

Hinting at what indeed has long been done,

And widely spoken, no Apollo needs;

And for what else you aim at still in dark

And mystic language

Cassandra.

Nay, then, in the speech,

She that reproved me was so glib to teach

Before yon Sun a hand's-breadth in the skies

He moves in shall have moved, those age-sick eyes

Shall open wide on Agamemnon slain

Before your very feet. Now, speak I plain?

Chorus.

Blasphemer, hush!

Cassandra.

Ay, hush the mouth you may,

But not the murder.

Chorus.

Murder! But the Gods

Cassandra.

The Gods!

Who even now are their accomplices.

Chorus.

Woman! Accomplices With whom?

Cassandra.

With Her,

Who brandishing aloft the axe of doom,

That just has laid one victim at her feet,

Looks round her for that other, without whom

The banquet of revenge were incomplete.

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Yet ere I fall will I prelude the strain
Of Triumph, that in full I shall repeat
When, looking from the twilight Underland,
I welcome Her as she descends amain,
Gash'd like myself, but by a dearer hand.
For that old murder'd Lion with me slain,
Rolling an awful eyeball through the gloom
He stalks about of Hades up to Day,
Shall rouse the whelp of exile far away,
His only authentic offspring, ere the grim
Wolf crept between his Lioness and him;
Who with one stroke of Retribution, her
Who did the deed, and her adulterer,
Shall drive to hell; and then, himself pursued
By the wing'd Furies of his Mother's blood,
Shall drag about the yoke of Madness, till
Released, when Nemesis has gorged her fill,
By that same God, in whose prophetic ray
Viewing To-morrow mirror'd as To-day,
And that this House of Atreus the same wine
Themselves must drink they brew'd for me and mine;
I close my lips for ever with one prayer,
That the dark Warder of the World below
Would ope the portal at a single blow.

Chorus.

And the raving voice, that rose
Out of silence into speech
Over-shooting human reach,
Back to silence foams and blows,
Leaving all my bosom heaving
Wrath and raving all, one knows;
Prophet-seeming, but if ever
Of the Prophet-God possess'd,
By the Prophet's self confess'd
God-abandon'd woman's shrill
Anguish into tempest rising,
Louder as less listen'd.

Still

Spite of Reason, spite of Will,
What unwelcome, what unholy,
Vapour of Foreboding, slowly
Rising from the central soul's
Recesses, all in darkness rolls?
What! shall Age's torpid ashes
Kindle at the ransom spark
Of a raving maiden? Hark!
What was that behind the wall?
A heavy blow a groan a fall
Some one crying Listen further

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Letters and Literary Remains

Hark again then, crying 'Murder!'
Some one who then? Agamemnon?
Agamemnon? Hark again!
Murder! murder! murder! murder!
Help within there! Help without there!
Break the doors in!

Clytemnestra. (*Appearing from within, where lies Agamemnon dead.*)

Spare your pain.

Look! I who but just now before you all
Boasted of loyal wedlock unashamed,
Now unashamed dare boast the contrary.
Why, how else should one compass the defeat
Of him who underhand contrives one's own,
Unless by such a snare of circumstance
As, once enmesh'd, he never should break through?
The blow now struck was not the random blow
Of sudden passion, but with slow device
Prepared, and levell'd with the hand of time.
I say it who devised it; I who did;
And now stand here to face the consequence.
Ay, in a deadlier web than of that loom
In whose blood-purple he divined a doom,
And fear'd to walk upon, but walk'd at last,
Entangling him inextricably fast,
I smote him, and he bellow'd; and again
I smote, and with a groan his knees gave way;
And, as he fell before me, with a third
And last libation from the deadly mace
I pledged the crowning draught to Hades due,
That subterranean Saviour of the Dead!
At which he spouted up the Ghost in such
A burst of purple as, bespatter'd with,
No less did I rejoice than the green ear
Rejoices in the largess of the skies
That fleeting Iris follows as it flies.

Chorus.

Oh woman, woman, woman!
By what accursèd root or weed
Of Earth, or Sea, or Hell, inflamed,
Darest stand before us unashamed
And, daring do, dare glory in the deed!

Clytemnestra.

Oh, I that dream'd the fall of Troy, as you
Belike of Troy's destroyer. Dream or not,
Here lies your King my Husband Agamemnon,
Slain by this right hand's righteous handicraft.
Like you, or like it not, alike to me;
To me alike whether or not you share
In making due libation over this
Great Sacrifice if ever due, from him
Who, having charged so deep a bowl of blood,

Letters and Literary Remains

Himself is forced to drink it to the dregs.

Chorus.

Woman, what blood but that of Troy, which Zeus
Foredoom'd for expiation by his hand
For whom the penalty was pledged? And now,
Over his murder'd body, Thou
Talk of libation! Thou! Thou! Thou!
But mark! Not thine of sacred wine
Over his head, but ours on thine
Of curse, and groan, and torn-up stone,
To slay or storm thee from the gate,
The City's curse, the People's hate,
Execrate, exterminate

Clytemnestra.

Ay, ay, to me how lightly you adjudge
Exile or death, and never had a word
Of counter-condemnation for Him there;
Who, when the field throve with the proper flock
For Sacrifice, forsooth let be the beast,
And with his own hand his own innocent
Blood, and the darling passion of my womb
Her slew to lull a peevish wind of Thrace.
And him who cursed the city with that crime
You hail with acclamation; but on me,
Who only do the work you should have done,
You turn the axe of condemnation. Well;
Threaten you me, I take the challenge up;
Here stand we face to face; win Thou the game,
And take the stake you aim at; but if I
Then, by the Godhead that for me decides,
Another lesson you shall learn, though late.

Chorus.

Man-mettled evermore, and now
Manslaughter-madden'd! Shameless brow!
But do you think us deaf and blind
Not to know, and long ago,
What Passion under all the prate
Of holy justice made thee hate
Where Love was due, and love where

Clytemnestra.

Nay, then, hear!

By this dead Husband, and the reconciled
Avenging Fury of my slaughter'd child,
I swear I will not reign the slave of fear
While he that holds me, as I hold him, dear,
Kindles his fire upon this hearth: my fast
Shield for the time to come, as of the past.
Yonder lies he that in the honey'd arms
Of his Chryseides under Troy walls
Dishonour'd mine: and this last laurell'd wench,
Prophetic messmate of the rower's bench,

Letters and Literary Remains

Thus far in triumph his, with him along
Shall go, together chaunting one death-song
To Hades fitting garnish for the feast
Which Fate's avenging hand through mine hath dress'd.

Chorus.

Woe, woe, woe, woe!

That death as sudden as the blow
That laid Thee low would me lay low
Where low thou liest, my sovereign Lord!
Who ten years long to Trojan sword
Devoted, and to storm aboard,
In one ill woman's cause accurst,
Liest slain before thy palace door
By one accursedest and worst!

Clytemnestra.

Call not on Death, old man, that, call'd or no,
Comes quick; nor spend your ebbing breath on me,
Nor Helena: who but as arrows be
Shot by the hidden hand behind the bow.

Chorus.

Alas, alas! The Curse I know
That round the House of Atreus clings,
About the roof, about the walls,
Shrouds it with his sable wings;
And still as each new victim falls,
And gorged with kingly gore,
Down on the bleeding carcase flings,
And croaks for 'More, more, more!'

Clytemnestra.

Ay, now, indeed, you harp on likelier strings.
Not I, nor Helen, but that terrible
Alastor of old Tantalus in Hell;
Who, one sole actor in the scene begun
By him, and carried down from sire to son,
The mask of Victim and Avenger shifts;
And, for a last catastrophe, that grim
Guest of the abominable banquet lifts
His head from Hell, and in my person cries
For one full-grown sufficient sacrifice,
Requital of the feast prepared for him
Of his own flesh and blood And there it lies.

Chorus.

Oh, Agamemnon! Oh, my Lord!
Who, after ten years toil'd;
After barbarian lance and sword
Encounter'd, fought, and foil'd:
Returning with the just award
Of Glory, thus inglorious by
Thine own domestic Altar die,
Fast in the spider meshes coil'd
Of Treason most abhor'd!

Slow spreads the Gloom my Soul desires

Clytemnestra.

And by what retribution more complete,
Than, having in the meshes of deceit
Enticed my child, and slain her like a fawn
Upon the altar; to that altar drawn
Himself, like an unconscious beast, full-fed
With Conquest, and the garland on his head,
Is slain? and now, gone down among the Ghost,
Of taken Troy indeed may make the most,
But not *one* unrequited murder boast.

Chorus.

Oh Agamemnon, dead, dead, dead, dead, dead!
What hand, what pious hand shall wash the wound
Through which the sacred spirit ebb'd and fled!
With reverend care compose, and to the ground
Commit the mangled form of Majesty,
And pour the due libation o'er the mound!

Clytemnestra.

This hand, that struck the guilty life away,
The guiltless carcass in the dust shall lay
With due solemnities: and if with no
Mock tears, or howling counterfeit of woe,
On this side earth; perhaps the innocent thing,
Whom with paternal love he sent before,
Meeting him by the melancholy shore,
Her arms about him with a kiss shall fling,
And lead him to his shadowy throne below.

Chorus.

Alas! alas! the fatal rent
Which through the house of Atreus went,
Gapes again; a purple rain
Sweats the marble floor, and falls
From the tottering roof and walls,
The Dæmon heaving under; gone
The master-prop they rested on:
And the storm once more awake
Of Nemesis; of Nemesis
Whose fury who shall slake!

Clytemnestra.

Ev'n I; who by this last grand victim hope
The Pyramid of Vengeance so to cope,
That and methinks I hear him in the deep
Beneath us growling tow'rd his rest the stern
Alastor to some other roof may turn,
Leaving us here at last in peace to keep
What of life's harvest yet remains to reap.

Chorus.

Thou to talk of reaping Peace
Who sowest Murder! Woman, cease!
And, despite that iron face
Iron as the bloody mace

Thou bearest boasting as if Vengeance
Centred in that hand alone;
Know that, Fury pledged to Fury,
Vengeance owes himself the debts
He makes, and while he serves thee, whets
His knife upon another stone,
Against thyself, and him with thee
Colleaguings, as you boast to be,
The tools of Fate. But Fate is Zeus;
Zeus who for a while permitting
Sin to prosper in his name,
Shall vindicate his own abuse;
And having brought his secret thought
To light, shall break and fling to shame
The baser tools with which he wrought.

Ægisthus: Clytemnestra: Chorus.

All hail, thou daybreak of my just revenge!
In which, as waking from injurious sleep,
Methinks I recognize the Gods enthroned
In the bright conclave of eternal Justice,
Revindicate the wrongs of man to man!
For see *this* man so dear to me now dead
Caught in the very meshes of the snare
By which his father Atreus netted mine.
For that same Atreus surely, was it not?
Who, wrought by false Suspicion to fix'd Hate,
From Argos out his younger brother drove,
My sire Thyestes drove him like a wolf,
Keeping his cubs save one to better purpose.
For when at last the home-heartbroken man
Crept humbly back again, craving no more
Of his own country than to breathe its air
In liberty, and of her fruits as much
As not to starve withal the savage King,
With damnable alacrity of hate,
And reconciliation of revenge,
Bade him, all smiles, to supper such a supper,
Where the prime dainty was my brother's flesh,
So maim'd and clipt of human likelihood,
That the unsuspecting Father, light of heart,
And quick of appetite, at once fell to,
And ate ate what, with savage irony
As soon as eaten, told the wretched man
Disgorging with a shriek, down to the ground
The table with its curst utensil dash'd,
And, grinding into pieces with his heel,
Cried, loud enough for Heav'n and Hell to hear,
'Thus perish all the race of Pleisthenes!'
And now behold! the son of that same Atreus
By me the son of that Thyestes slain
Whom the kind brother, sparing from the cook,

Letters and Literary Remains

Had with his victim pack'd to banishment;
Where Nemesis (so sinners from some nook,
Whence least they think assailable, assail'd)
Rear'd me from infancy till fully grown,
To claim in full my father's bloody due.
Ay, I it was none other far away
Who spun the thread, which gathering day by day
Mesh after mesh, inch upon inch, at last
Reach'd him, and wound about him, as he lay,
And in the supper of his smoking Troy
Devour'd his own destruction scarce condign
Return for that his Father forced on mine.

Chorus.

Ægisthus, only things of baser breed
Insult the fallen; fall'n too, as you boast,
By one who plann'd but dared not do the deed.
This is your hour of triumph. But take heed;
The blood of Atreus is not all outrun
With this slain King, but flowing in a son,
Who saved by such an exile as your own
For such a counter-retribution

Ægisthus.

Oh,

You then, the nether benchers of the realm,
Dare open tongue on those who rule the helm?
Take heed yourselves; for, old and dull of wit,
And harden'd as your mouth against the bit,
Be wise in time; kick not against the spurs;
Remembering Princes are shrewd taskmasters.

Chorus.

Beware thyself, beware me;
Remembering that, too sharply stirr'd,
The spurrer need beware the spur'd;
As thou of me; whose single word
Shall rouse the City yea, the very
Stones you walk upon, in thunder
Gathering o'er your head, to bury
Thee and thine Adulteress under!

Ægisthus.

Raven, that with croaking jaws
Unorphan, undivine,
After you no City draws;
And if any vengeance, mine
Upon your wither'd shoulders

Chorus.

Thine!

Who daring not to strike the blow
Thy worse than woman-craft design'd,
To worse than woman

Ægisthus.

Soldiers, ho!

Clytemnestra.

Softly, good Ægisthus, softly; let the sword that has so deep
Drunk of righteous Retribution now within the scabbard sleep!
And if Nemesis be sated with the blood already spilt,
Even so let us, nor carry lawful Justice into Guilt.
Sheathe your sword; dismiss your spears; and you, Old men, your howling cease,
And, ere ill blood come to running, each unto his home in peace,
Recognizing what is done for done indeed, as done it is,
And husbanding your scanty breath to pray that nothing more amiss.
Farewell. Meanwhile, you and I, Ægisthus, shall deliberate,
When the storm is blowing under, how to settle House and State.

THE DOWNFALL AND DEATH OF KING OEDIPUS
***A Drama in Two Parts* CHIEFLY TAKEN FROM THE OEDIPUS TYRANNUS**
AND COLONEUS OF SOPHOCLES.

To Charles Eliot Norton.

PART I
OEDIPUS IN THEBES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Oedipus *King of Thebes.*
Iocasta *his Queen.*
Creon *her brother.*
Teiresias *Prophet of Apollo.*
Priest.
Herald from Corinth.
Shepherd of King Laius.
Chorus of Theban Elders.

The Scene is at Thebes, before the Palace of King Oedipus. Oedipus, Priest and Suppliants assembled before his palace-gate, Chorus.

Oed.

Children of Cadmus, and as mine to me,
When all that of the plague-struck city can
With lamentation loud, and sacrifice
Beset the shrines and altars of the Gods
Through street and market, by the Temples twain
Of Pallas, and before the Tomb that shrouds
Ismenus' his prophetic ashes why
Be you thus gather'd at my palace-door,
Mute, with the Suppliant's olive-branch in hand?
Asking, or deprecating, what? which I,

Letters and Literary Remains

Not satisfied from other lips to learn,
Myself am come to hear it from your own.
You, whose grave aspect and investiture
Announce the chosen oracle of all,
Tell me the purport: I am here, you see,
As King, and Father of his people too,
To listen and what in me lies to do;
For surely mine were but a heart of stone
Not to be moved by such an embassy,
Nor feel my people's sorrows as my own.

Priest.

O Oedipus, our Father, and our King!
Of what a mingled company you see
This Supplication gather'd at your door;
Ev'n from the child who scarce has learn'd to creep,
Down to old age that little further can,
With all the strength of life that breathes between.
You know how all the shatter'd city lies
Reeling a-wreck, and cannot right herself
Under the tempest of this pestilence,
That nips the fruitful growth within the bud,
Strangles the struggling blossom in the womb,
With sudden death infects the living man,
Until the realm of Cadmus wastes, and Thebes
With her depopulation Hades feeds.
Therefore, myself and this mute company
In supplication at your altar sit,
Looking to you for succour; looking not
As to a God, but to the Man of men,
Most like the God in man's extremity:
Who, coming here a stranger to the land,
Didst overcome the Witch who with her song
Seduced, and slew the wisest and the best;
For which all but divine deliverance Thebes
Call'd the strange man who saved her to the throne
Left void by her hereditary king.
And now the kingdom looks to you once more
To you, the Master of the master-mind,
To save her in a worse extremity:
When men, not one by one, but troop by troop,
Fall by a plague more deadly than the Sphinx,
Till Thebes herself is left to foreign arms
Assailable for what are wall and tower,
Divinely built and founded as they be,
Without the rampart of the man within?
And let not what of Cadmus yet survives
From this time forth regard you as the man
Who saved them once, by worse to perish now.

Oed.

Alas, my children! telling me of that
My people groans with, knowing not yourselves

Letters and Literary Remains

How more than any man among you, I,
Who bear the accumulated woes of all;
So that you find me, coming when you may,
Restlessly all day pacing up and down,
Tossing all night upon a sleepless bed,
Endeavouring all that of myself I can,
And all of Heaven implore thus far in vain.
But if your King have seem'd to pause awhile,
'Tis that I wait the issue of one hope,
Which, if accomplish'd, will accomplish all.
Creon, my brother, and my second self
Beside the throne I sit on, to the shrine
Of Delphian Phoebus, man's assured appeal
In all his exigence, I have despatch'd:
And long before you gather'd at my door
Within my soul was fretting, lest To-day
That should have lighted him from Delphi back
Pass over into night, and bring him not.
But come he must, and will; and when he comes,
Do I not all, so far as man may do,
To follow where the God shall point the way,
Denounce me traitor to the State I saved
And to the people who proclaim'd me King.

Cho.

Your words are as a breath from Delphi, King,
Prophetic of itself; for even now
Fore-running Rumour buzzes in our ear
That he whose coming all await is here.

Oed.

And as before the advent of a God,
The moving multitude divides O Phoebus!
Be but the word he carries back to me
Auspicious as well-timed!

Chorus.

And shall no less;
For look! the laurel wreath about his brow
Can but announce the herald of Success. Oedipus, Creon, Chorus.

Oed.

Son of Menoeceus! Brother! Brother-king!
Oh, let impatience for the word you bring
Excuse brief welcome to the messenger!
Be but the word as welcome!

Cre.

As it shall,
Have you your ancient cunning to divine
The darker word in which the God of Light
Enshrines his answer.

Oed.

Speak! for till I hear,
I know not whether most to hope or fear.

Cre.

Letters and Literary Remains

Am I to speak before the people here,
Or to yourself within?

Oed.

Here, before all,
Whose common cause it is.

Cre.

To all then thus:
When Delphi reach'd, and at the sacred shrine
Lustration, sacrifice, and offering made,
I put the question I was charged withal,
The Prophetess of the three-footed throne,
Conceiving with the vapour of the God
Which wrapt her, rising from Earth's centre, round,
At length convulsed to sudden answer broke:
'O seven-gated City, by the Lyre
Compact, and peopled from a Dragon Sire!
Thebes feeds the Plague that slays her nourishing
Within her walls the slayer of her King.'

Oed.

The slayer of her King? What king?

Cre.

None else
I know than Laius, son of Labdacus,
Who occupied the throne before you came;
That much of Oracle, methinks, is plain.

Oed.

A story rises on me from the past.
Laius, the son of Labdacus of whom
I know indeed, but him I never saw.

Cre.

No; he was slain before you set your foot
Over the country's threshold.

Oed.

Slain! By whom?

Cre.

That to divine were to interpret all
That Oedipus himself is call'd to answer.
Thus much is all we know,
The King was murder'd by some roving band
Of outlaws, who waylaid him on his road
To that same Delphi, whither he had gone
On some such sacred mission as myself.

Oed.

Yet of those roving outlaws, one at least
Yet breathes among us in the heart of Thebes.

Cre.

So saith the Oracle.

Oed.

In the midst of all
The citizens and subjects of the King
He slew?

Letters and Literary Remains

Cre.

So saith the Oracle.

Oed.

But hold!

The story of this treason all, you say,
Now known of it, how first made known in Thebes?

Cre.

By the one man of the King's retinue,
Who having 'scaped the fate which took the rest,
As if the assassin's foot were at his heels,
Half dead with fear, just reach'd the city gates
With breath to tell the story.

Oed.

And breathes still

To tell it once again?

Cre.

I know not that:

For having told it, the bewilder'd man,
As fast as hither he had fled, fled hence,
Where, if the assassin's foot not on him then,
His eye, the God declares, were on him now
So fled he to his native field again
Among his flocks and fellow-husbandmen.

Oed.

And thus the single witness you let slip,
Whose eye might ev'n have singled out the man,
As him the man's! Oh, had I but been by,
I would have driv'n interrogation home,
Would the bewilder'd memory so have sifted
Of each minutest grain of circumstance
How many, accoutred how, what people like
Now by the lapse of time and memory,
Beyond recall into oblivion pass'd!
But not to lose what yet of hope there is
Let him be sent for, sought for, found and brought.

Cre.

Meanwhile, default of him for whom you send,
Or of uncertain memory when he comes,
Were it not well, if still the God withhold
His revelation of the word we need,
To question it of his Interpreter?

Oed.

Of his Interpreter!

Cre.

Of whom so well,
As of Teiresias, the blind Seer of Thebes,
Whose years the God hath in his service counted
Beyond all reach of human memory?

Oed.

So be it. But I marvel yet why Thebes,
Letting the witness slip, then unpursued,

Letters and Literary Remains

Or undetected, left the criminal,
Whom the King's blood, by whomsoever spilt,
Cried out aloud to be revenged upon.

Cre.

What might be done we did. But how detect
The roving robber, in whatever land,
Of friend or foe alike, outlaw'd of all,
Where ever prey to pounce on on the wing,
Or housed in rock or forest, save to him
Unknown, or inaccessible? Besides,
Thebes soon had other business on her hand.

Oed.

Why, what of business to engage her more
Than to revenge the murder of her King?

Cre.

None other than the riddle-singing Sphinx
Who, till you came to silence her, held Thebes
From thinking of the dead to save herself.

Oed.

And leaving *this* which then you might have guess'd,
To guess at that which none of you could solve,
You have brought home a riddle on your heads
Inextricable and more fatal far!
But I, who put the riddling Witch to rest,
This fatal riddle will unravel too,
And by swift execution following
The revelation, once more save the realm,
And wipe away the impiety and shame
Of Laius' yet unexpiated death.
For were no expiation to the God,
And to the welfare of this people due,
Were't not a shame thus unrevenged so long
To leave the slaughter of so great a King
King Laius, the son of Labdacus,
Who from his father Polydore his blood
Direct from Cadmus and Agenor drew?
Shame to myself, who, sitting on the throne
He sat on, wedded to the very Queen
Who should have borne him children, as to me
She bore them, had not an assassin's hand
Divorced them ere their wedded life bore fruit!
Therefore to this as 'twere my father's cause,
As of my people's nay, why not my own,
Who in his death am threaten'd by the hand
Of him, whose eye now follows me about?
With the Gods' aid do I devote myself.
And hereto let the city's Herald all
Her population summon, from my lips
To hear and help in what I shall devise:
And you, that with bow'd head and olive wand,
Have since the dawn been gather'd at my door,

Letters and Literary Remains

Beseeching me with piteous silence, rise,
And by their altars supplicate the Gods,
And Phoebus chief of all, that he may turn
His yet half–clouded word into full light,
And with one shaft of his unerring bow
Smite dead the Plague which back into the dust
Whence Cadmus raised them lays the People low,

Chorus.

bsp; Thou oracle of Jove, what fate
 From Pytho's golden shrine
 Brings to th' illustrious Theban state
 Thy sweet–breathed voice divine?
My trembling heart what terror rends,
While dread suspense on thee attends,
 O Delian Pæan, healing pow'r!
 Daughter of golden Hope, to me,
 Blest voice, what now dost thou decree,
 Or in time's future hour? Daughter of heav'n's almighty lord,
 Immortal Pallas, hear!
 And thou, Diana, queen adored,
 Whose tutelary care
Protects these walls, this favour'd state,
Amidst the forum 'round whose seat
 Sublime encircling pillars stand!
 God of the distant–wounding bow,
 Apollo, hear; avert our woe,
 And save the sick'ning land!
 This realm when former ills opprest,
 If your propitious pow'r
 In mercy crush'd the baleful pest,
 Outrageous to devour;
In mercy now extend your care,
For all is misery and despair,
 And vain the counsels of the wise.
 No fruit, no grain to ripeness grows;
 The matron feels untimely throes,
 The birth abortive dies.

bsp; The Shades, as birds of rapid flight,
 In quick succession go,
 Quick as the flames that flash through night,
 To Pluto's realms below.

Th' unpeopled town beholds the dead
Wide o'er her putrid pavements spread,
 Nor graced with tear or obsequy.
 The altars round a mournful band,
 The wives, the hoary matrons, stand,
 And heave the suppliant sigh.

bsp; With deep sighs mix'd the hallow'd strain
 Bursts fervent to the skies:
 Deign then, O radiant Pallas, deign
 In all thy might to rise.

Letters and Literary Remains

From this fierce pow'r, which raging round
Unarm'd inflicts the fiery wound,
 Daughter of Jove, my country save;
Hence, goddess, hence the fury sweep
To Amphitrite's chambers deep,
 Or the rough Euxine wave!
Doth aught the Night from ruin spare?
 The Morning's sickly ray,
Pregnant with death, inflames the air,
 And gives disease its prey.
Father of gods, whose matchless force
Wings the red lightning's vengeful course,
 With all thy thunders crush this foe!
Potent to aid, Lycæan king,
Thy shafts secure of conquest wing,
 And bend thy golden bow!
Thy beams around, Diana, throw,
 And pierce this gloom of night,
As on Lycæum's moss-clad brow
 Thou pour'st thy silver light!
Thy nymphs, O Theban Bacchus, lead,
The golden mitre round thy head,
 Grief-soothing God of wine and joy;
Wave thy bright torch, and with its flame
This god, to gods an odious name,
 This lurid Pest destroy! Oedipus, Chorus.

Oed.

You came to me for counsel; hearken then,
And do as well as hearken, like myself
Following the pointed finger of the God
Which thus far leads us, all may yet be well.
I, Oedipus, albeit no Theban born,
By Thebes herself enthroned her sovereign King,
Thus to the citizens of Thebes proclaim;
That whosoever of them knows by whom
King Laius, son of Labdacus, was slain,
Forthwith let him disclose it undismay'd;
Yea, though the criminal himself he were,
Let not the dread of deadly consequence
Revolt him from confession of the crime;
For he shall suffer nothing worse than this,
Instant departure from the city, but
Uninjured, uninsulted, unpursued;
For though feloniously a King he slew
Yet haply as a stranger unaware
That king was Laius; and thus the crime
Half-clear'd of treason, half absolved by time.
Nor, on the other hand, if any knows
Another guilty, let him not for love,
Or fear, or whatsoever else regard,
Flinch from a revelation that shall win

Letters and Literary Remains

More from myself than aught he fears to lose
Nay, as a second saviour of the State
Shall after me be call'd; and who should not
Save a whole people at the cost of one?
But *Him* that one who would not at the cost
Of self–confession save himself and all
Him were he nearest to my heart and hearth
Nearest and dearest thus do I denounce;
That from the very moment that he stands,
By whatsoever, or by whom, reveal'd,
No man shall him bespeak, at home, abroad,
Sit with at table, nor by altar stand,
But, as the very Pestilence he were
Incarnate which this people now devours,
Him slay at once, or hoot and hunt him forth,
With execration from the city walls.
But if, in spite of promise or of threat,
The man who did, or knows who did, this deed,
Still hold it in his bosom unreveal'd
That man and he is here among us now
Man's vengeance may escape when he forswears
Participation in the crime, but not
The Gods', himself involving in the Curse
Which, with myself and every man in Thebes,
He shall denounce upon the criminal,
The Gods invoking to withhold from him
That issue of the earth by which he lives,
That issue of the womb by which himself
Lives after him; that in the deadly curse
By which his fellows perish he and his
May perish, or, if worse there be, by worse!

Cho.

Beside Apollo's altar standing here,
That oath I swear, that neither I myself
Nor did myself, nor know who did this deed:
And in the curse I join on him who did,
Or, knowing him who did, will not reveal.

Oed.

'Tis well: and, all the city's seven gates closed,
Thus solemnly shall every man in Thebes
Before the altars of his country swear.

Cho.

Well have you done, O Master, in so far
As human hand and wit may reach; and lo!
The sacred Seer of Thebes, Teiresias,
To whom, next to the God himself, we look
For Heaven's assistance, at your summons comes,
In his prophetic raiment, staff in hand,
Approaching, gravely guided as his wont,
But with a step, methinks, unwonted slow. Oedipus, Teiresias, Chorus.
Teiresias, Minister and Seer of God,

Letters and Literary Remains

Who, blind to all that others see without,
See that within to which all else are blind;
Sequester'd as you are with Deity,
You know, what others only know too well,
The mortal sickness that confounds us all;
But you alone can tell the remedy.
For since the God whose Minister you are
Bids us, if Thebes would be herself again,
Revenge the murder of King Laius
By retribution on the murderer,
Who undetected walks among us now;
Unless by you, Teiresias, to whose lips,
As Phoebus his Interpreter we cling,
To catch the single word that he withholds,
And without which what he reveals is vain
Therefore to you, Teiresias, you alone,
Do look this people and their Ruler look,
Imploring you, by that same inward light
Which sees, to name the man who lurks unseen,
And whose live presence is the death of all.

Tei.

Alas! how worse than vain to be well arm'd
When the man's weapon turns upon himself!

Oed.

I know not upon whom that arrow lights.

Tei.

If not on him that summon'd, then on him
Who, summon'd, came. There is one remedy;
Let those who hither led me lead me hence.

Oed.

Before the single word which you alone
Can speak be spoken? How is this, Teiresias,
That to your King on such a summons come,
You come so much distemper'd?

Tei.

For the King,
With all his wisdom, knows not what he asks.

Oed.

And therefore asks that he may know from you,
Seeing the God hath folded up his word
From human eyesight.

Tei.

Why should I reveal
What He I serve has chosen to conceal?

Oed.

Is't not your office to interpret that
To man which he for man vouchsafes from Heaven?

Tei.

What Fate hath fix'd to come to pass come will,
Whether reveal'd or not.

Oed.

Letters and Literary Remains

I know it must;
But Fate may cancel Fate, foretelling that
Which, unpredicted, else would come to pass.

Tei.
Yet none the less I tell you, Oedipus,
That you, though wise, not knowing what you ask,
I, knowing, shall not answer.

Oed.
You will not!
Inexorable to the people's cries
Plague-pitiless, disloyal to your King

Tei.
Oh! you forsooth were taunting me but now
With my distemper'd humour

Oed.
Who would not,
When but a word, which you pretend to know,
Would save a people?

Tei.
One of them at least
It would not.

Oed.
Oh, scarce any man, methinks,
But would himself, though guiltless, sacrifice,
If that would ransom all.

Tei.
Yet one, you see,
Obdurate as myself

Oed.
You have not heard, perchance, Teiresias,
(Unless from that prophetic voice within,)
How through the city, by my herald's voice,
With excommunication, death, or banishment,
I have denounced, not him alone who did,
But him who, knowing who, will not reveal?

Tei.
I hear it now.

Oed.
And are inflexible
To Fear as Pity?

Tei.
It might be, to Fear
Inflexible *by* Pity; else, why fear
Invulnerable as I am in Truth,
And by the God I serve inviolate?

Oed.
Is not your King a Minister of Zeus,
As you of Phoebus, and the King of Thebes
Not more to be insulted or defied
Than any Priest or Augur in his realm?

Tei.

Letters and Literary Remains

Implore, denounce, and threaten as you may,
What unreveal'd I would, I will not say.

Oed.

You will not! Mark then how, default of your
Interpretation, I interpret you:
Either not knowing what you feign to know,
You lock your tongue in baffled ignorance;
Or, knowing that which you will not reveal,
I do suspect Suspect! why, stand you not
Self-accused, self-convicted, and by me
Denounced as he, that knowing him who did,
Will not reveal nay, might yourself have done
The deed that you with some accomplice plann'd,
Could those blind eyes have aim'd the murderous hand?

Tei.

You say so! Now then, listen in your turn
To that one word which, as it leaves my lips,
By your own Curse upon the Criminal
Denounced, should be your last in Thebes to hear.
For by the unerring insight of the God
You question, Zeus his delegate though you be
Who lay this Theban people under curse
Of revelation of the murderer
Whose undiscover'd presence eats away
The people's life I tell you You are he!

Cho.

Forbear, old man, forbear! And you, my King,
Heed not the passion of provoked old age.

Oed.

And thus, in your blind passion of revenge,
You think to 'scape contempt or punishment
By tossing accusation back on me
Under Apollo's mantle.

Tei.

Ay, and more,
Dared you but listen.

Cho.

Peace, O peace, old man!

Oed.

Nay, let him shoot his poison'd arrows out;
They fall far short of me.

Tei.

Not mine, but those
Which Fate had fill'd my Master's quiver with,
And you have drawn upon yourself.

Oed.

Your Master's?
Your Master's; but assuredly not His
To whom you point, albeit you see him not,
In his meridian dazzling overhead,
Who is the God of Truth as well as Light,

Letters and Literary Remains

And knows as I within myself must know
If Memory be not false as Augury,
The words you put into his lips a Lie!
Not He, but Self Self only in revenge
Of self–convicted ignorance Self alone,
Or with some self whom Self would profit by
As were it Creon, say smooth, subtle Creon,
Moving by rule and weighing every word
As in the scales of Justice but of whom
Whispers of late have reach'd me Creon, ha!
Methinks I scent another Master here!
Who, wearied of but secondary power
Under an alien King, and would belike
Exalt his Prophet for good service done
Higher than ever by my throne he stood
And, now I think on't, bade me send for you
Under the mask of Phoebus

Cho.

Oh, forbear
Forbear, in turn, my lord and master!

Tei.

Nay,
Let him, in turn, his poison'd arrows, *not*
From Phoebus' quiver, shoot, but to recoil
When his mad Passion having pass'd

Oed.

O vain
Prerogative of human majesty,
That one poor mortal from his fellows takes,
And, with false pomp and honour dressing up,
Lifts idol–like to what men call a Throne,
For all below to worship and assail!
That even the power which unsolicited
By aught but salutary service done
The men of Thebes committed to my hands,
Some, restless under just authority,
Or jealous of not wielding it themselves,
Ev'n with the altar and the priest collude,
And tamper with, to ruin or to seize!
Prophet and Seer forsooth and Soothsayer!
Why, when the singing Witch contrived the noose
Which strangled all who tried and none could loose,
Where was the Prophet of Apollo then?
'Twas not for one who poring purblind down
Over the reeking entrail of the beast,
Nor gaping to the wandering bird in air,
Nor in the empty silence of his soul
Feigning a voice of God inaudible,
Not he, nor any of his tribe but I
I, Oedipus, a stranger in the land,
And uninspired by all but mother–wit,

Letters and Literary Remains

Silenced and slew the monster against whom
Divine and human cunning strove in vain.
And now again when tried, and foil'd again,
This Prophet whether to revenge the past,
And to prevent discomfiture to come,
Or by some traitor aiming at my throne
Suborn'd to stand a greater at his side
Than peradventure e'er he stood at mine,
Would drag me to destruction! But beware!
Beware lest, blind and agèd as you are,
Wrapt in supposititious sanctity,
You, and whoever he that leagues with you,
Meet a worse doom than you for me prepare.

Tei.

Quick to your vengeance, then; for this same day
That under Phoebus' fiery rein flies fast
Over the field of heaven, shall be the last
That you shall play the tyrant in.

Oed.

O Thebes,
You never called me Tyrant, from the day
Since first I saved you!

Tei.

And shall save again;
As then by coming, by departing now.
Enough: before the day that judges both
Decide between us, let them lead me home.

Oed.

Ay, lead him hence home Hades anywhere!
Blind in his inward as his outward eye.

Tei.

Poor man! that in your inward vision blind,
Know not, as I, that ere this day go down,
By your own hand yourself shall be consign'd
To deeper night than now you taunt me with;
When, not the King and Prophet that you were,
But a detested outcast of the land,
With other eyes and hands you feel your way
To wander through the world, begging the bread
Of execration from the stranger's hand
Denied you here, and thrust from door to door,
As though yourself the Plague you brought from Thebes;
A wretch, self-branded with the double curse
Of such unheard, unnatural infamy,
As shall confound a son in the embrace
Of her who bore him to the sire he slew!

Chorus

Strophe 1

All yet is dark. What wretch abhorr'd,
Grasping with blood-stain'd hand his ruthless sword,
From Delphi's high rock-seated shrine

Letters and Literary Remains

Declares the voice divine
The author of this horrid deed?
Now let him wing his swiftest speed;
The son of Jove upon him flies,
Arm'd with the flames and lightnings of the skies:
Dreadful, resistless in their force
The Fates attend his course.

Antistrophe 1

The oracle divinely bright
To drag the latent murderer into light
Shone forth, Parnassus, from thy brow
White with eternal snow:
For, like a bull, to secret shades,
To rocks, to caves, to sylvan glades,
Far from the Pythian prophecies
Mournful the solitary wanderer flies:
In vain: they hover round his head,
And ceaseless terrors spread.

Strophe 2

Dreadful, dreadful things to hear
Utters the prophetic Seer.
Him doth truth, doth falsehood guide?
Fear and hope my soul divide;
Painful suspense! The present and the past
Darkening clouds alike o'ercast.
Was wrong by Laius done of old,
That made the son of Polybus his foe?
Such in no record is enroll'd;
Nought at this hour of proof I know,
Decreeing as the Seer decreed,
To charge on Oedipus the secret deed.

Antistrophe 2

Jove, high ruler of the skies,
And the Pythian god are wise;
They the deeds of mortals know,
All whate'er is done below:
Of knowledge doth the Seer a brighter ray,
Than illumines me, display?
Some deeper drink of wisdom's spring;
But proofs, that flash conviction I demand.
The Sphinx display'd her dreadful wing,
His wisdom saved the sinking land;
Then let my grateful soul disdain
To rank the hero with the murderer's train. *Iocasta, Chorus, then Oedipus.*

Ioc.

A noise has reach'd me through the palace-wall
Of words between Teiresias and the King,
In which my brother's name was all misused.
You who were here, and heard, can tell me all.

Cho.

Words there have been indeed on either side,

Letters and Literary Remains

By provocation into passion blown,
Which after-thought as likely will disown.

Ioc.

But to what purport?

Cho.

I would not repeat
What those who utter'd now may wish unsaid,
Much more, unheard. But look! the King himself
To answer for himself.

Ioc.

As one who dreams.
In Heaven's name, husband, tell me what has fired
This wrath between you and Teiresias,
So fierce that e'en my brother Creon's name
Was scorcht withal, and in its ashes now
Still smoulders in your face?

Oed.

That has been said
On either side that should not; but on his,
Relying on protection from his God,
Treason so foul against his King

Ioc.

But what?

Oed.

Why need tell now, if, as the Prophet says,
This very day shall not go down without
To Thebes, as you, revealing? What if I
If I, that have with banishment or death
Denounced the assassin of King Laius
Myself am he?

Ioc.

You! Oedipus?

Oed.

So says
Apollo's prophet.

Ioc.

You! Teiresias! You!
On what presumption, Human or Divine?

Oed.

On His whose chariot shall not cross the sky,
But dragging me to Night along with it.

Ioc.

Which cannot be we know, which cannot be
Of the God's self you of yourself more sure
Than any mortal Prophet sure of Him.

Oed.

So might I think. But if not from the God,
From whom then, Iocasta?

Ioc.

Only not
From Creon Whosoever else, not he!

Letters and Literary Remains

My brother, and your brother, being mine!

Oed.

Yet brother against brother, son 'gainst sire,
Such things have been between them, and shall be,
For things of less ambition than a throne.

Ioc.

Oh, strangle such suspicion in its birth
Of one more innocent than babe unborn!
Why, had he minded empire, could he not
Have seized it for his own before you came,
And Thebes was looking for a sovereign?
Or, after-minded to unseat you King,
Would have contrived and hatch'd his priestly plot
Ere you so firmly seated on the throne,
And life with him at least so much for-spent
As makes ev'n just possession and much more,
Unjust of little moment unto all!

Oed.

So be it. From the God of Light and Truth
Less likely than from him of Sleep and Dream,
Whose-ever be the Prophet.

Ioc.

Had you not
Provoked the Prophet first?

Oed.

As who would not,
Who either knowing would withhold the word
On which a people's whole salvation hung,
Then, taunted into malice by just wrath,
Or to collusion with some traitor leagued,
Belied his God, and me.

Ioc.

The man is old,
And testy, and perhaps incensed by you,
Mere human passion with the leas
Of Divination mixing

Oed.

Be it so;
And so, methinks, I might have let it pass,
But for a parting threat, which though in wrath
And malice, like the rest it may have been,
Woke up the echo of another Word
Told me by Delphi's self, so long ago
As with its unfulfilment to have died
Almost from memory.

Ioc.

What Oracle
Which, if the Prophet fail'd, has fail'd as well?

Oed.

You know I am the son of Polybus,
Of Corinth King, and Merope his Queen,

Letters and Literary Remains

And till a chance, of which you may not know,
Slight as it seem'd, but fraught with grave result,
Methought the first in Corinth after them.
One day at table, when the cup went round,
One of the company whom I, belike
Flushed with the wine and youthful insolence,
Had twitted with his meaner parentage,
Bade me beware; for, proudly as I sate
Above them all beside the royal twain
A superstition linger'd, that because
Of some ill-omen'd accident of birth
Their son should never to their throne succeed.
The word awhile sank in the flowing wine,
But when the wine went off the word was there,
And all night long kept stirring in my brain.
So that, with morning when I woke again,
Unable to endure it unsuppress'd,
I challenged King and Queen to answer me
The challenge thrown out by the nameless guest.
Indignantly they heard; denounced the man
Whoever it might be, for false or fool,
And with endearing re-assurances
Recomforted me awhile. Nevertheless,
Spite re-assurance and redoubled love,
That random word still rankled in my heart,
And I resolved on quenching all misdoubt
From the head fountain of all truth at Delphi.
Thither, without a word of whither gone,
I went, and put my question. But the God
Vouchsafed no revelation of the past,
But prophesied far worse for me to come;
That I should slay my father: then with her
Who bore me wed, and bring into the world
A race the world would loathe to look upon.
Whereat affrighted as what man were not?
From Corinth and from those I was to wrong
I fled I scarce knew whither, so from them
Fled hither; and in spite of prophecies,
All that I lost regain'd, except the bliss
Of prospering in a loving mother's eyes.

Ioc.

And see! the father whom you were to slay,
With that Queen-mother whom you were to wed,
Lives to a ripe old age in Corinth, far
Beyond his reach who should have wrong'd them both,
Himself fast wedded and enthroned in Thebes!

Oed.

And yet this blunted shaft of long ago,
And rusted with oblivion, had the Seer
Snatch'd from his Master's armoury To-day,
For malediction's last and master blow!

Letters and Literary Remains

Ioc.

Which from his Master's hand had fail'd before!
And would you listen to a woman's voice
I could requite your story, Oedipus,
With one so like as almost to be one,
Save that in mine the Sire it was who foil'd
Predestination, as in yours the Son.

Oed.

In this dumb pause between despair and hope,
Whose voice to me more welcome than your own?

Ioc.

When first I wedded with King Laius,
Whose murder now perplexes Thebes and you,
A Prophecy from Delphi reached his ears
But whether from the God, or from his Priest,
I know not but there went the Prophecy;
That he should die slain by the hand of him
Who should be born between himself and me.
Whereat, like you, affrighted, when the child
But three days born had seen the light of day,
He had him, spite of all a mother's cries,
Not slain, but left in some such desert place
As where with cold and hunger, he must die.
So, at the sacrifice of that poor life
Saving his own, he lived himself in peace,
Till slain, not as the Oracle foretold
Slain by the son himself had slain before,
But by that undetected alien hand
Which the fond Prophet pointed at in you.
Of such account are such vaticinations,
Whether from Phoebus, or his Minister;
Of which take you no heed. For, surely, what
Fate has determined, Fate shall bring to pass,
Whether by prophecy foretold or not.

Oed.

So seems it.

Ioc.

Nay, beyond denial *is*.

And yet you seem to hesitate as one
Who in broad daylight cannot see his way.

Oed.

Was it not said that Laius your King
Upon some sacred errand by the road
Was set upon and murder'd?

Ioc.

Even so;

To that same Delphi where yourself had been,
As much to be misled.

Oed.

And whereabouts?

Ioc.

Letters and Literary Remains

Somewhere in Phocis which his road went through;
As went the story.

Oed.

And how long ago?

Ioc.

Nay, just before you came to Thebes yourself
To save us from the Sphinx, and occupy
The throne left empty by my husband's death.
What makes you muse?

Oed.

And this King Laius
About what age, and what to look upon?

Ioc.

Lofty and large of stature, and of port
And aspect that becomes a King; his hair
Just whitening with the earliest frost of age

Oed.

And how accompanied?

Ioc.

With such a train
Accompanied as may become a King
Upon a peaceful errand of his own,
And through a friendly people travelling.

Oed.

And, as the story went, but one of those
Who, witnessing, escaped to tell the tale.

Ioc.

Ev'n so it was.

Oed.

And him they let depart
With half his tale untold?

Ioc.

Nay, all he could,
Half dead with terror. Meanwhile Oedipus,
What is't that, when I thought to clear your brow
With dissipation of prophetic fear,
Darkens it more and more?

Oed.

Is it not strange
Strange that your second husband, like your first,
With such a cross-related Prophecy
Threaten'd, like him should have defeated it?

Ioc.

Strange as it is, but most assuredly.

Oed.

O Iocasta, what if secret Fate
Avenged the God, who sometimes speaks for her,
Two thwarted utterances by one blow
On Laius and myself unprophesied?

Ioc.

I know not what this aims at.

Letters and Literary Remains

Oed.

You shall hear.

When, as I told you, in my youth at Corinth,
I had resolved to cross that Prophecy
Which from the God's own lips myself had heard,
By flying those I was foredoom'd to wrong
Nay, from the very country of my birth,
Leaving them all behind me for the stars
Alone to tell me of their whereabouts,
I fled: and flying as at random on,
I came now mark me, Iocasta, came
Whether in Phocis, or elsewhere, I know not
Where two main roads which lead two nations on
To Delphi, shrink into a narrow gorge;
When, coming up the narrow road, Behold!
A Herald first, and then a chariot,
In which, erect beside his charioteer,
There rode the stately semblance of a King,
And so came on, not swerving left or right,
As if the road were but for them, and I
A cur, to slink aside and let them by.
Whereat, no cur, but a King's son, enraged,
With the stout staff I carried in my hand
I smote the charioteer; on which the King
Struck me with his for which he paid too dear
With such a fatal counter-blow from mine
As roll'd him headlong dead into the dust:
And, after him, his Herald, and all his
Who came against me one by one I slew.
Now if the royal man for such he was
Were as by such consent of circumstance
I scarce dare think were not

Ioc.

Oh, many a King

Of a like presence, and like retinue,
Has been that road to learn the word of Fate
Which he, like you, had vainly learn'd before.

Oed.

But one escaped, they say; and if he live
And if maintain the tale that first he told,
That Laius, not by one, but many men,
Was in his chariot set upon and slain,
Then was it surely not King Laius
Whom single-handed, and alone, I slew.
But if he falter from that first report

Ioc.

How should he?

Oed.

Whether out of present fear,
Or after, to excuse a coward flight,
One man to numbers multiply he might

Letters and Literary Remains

Ioc.

He cannot whether by device or fear,
He cannot falter from his first report
Unless the sudden presence of his King,
And the disquiet of your looks affright him
Into the confirmation of false fear.
But meanwhile, Oedipus, come in with me,
And let not troubled Thebes new troubles see
Writ in your brows, augmenting present ill,
And Prophecy that Fate shall not fulfil.

Chorus.

Strophe 1.

Fair Fortune deign with me to dwell,
My soul if holy reverence awes,
By thinking, speaking, acting well,
To bow obedient to the Laws.
From heav'n they draw their lineage high,
And tread with stately step the sky:
Their father the Olympian king;
No mixture of man's mortal mould;
Nor shall Oblivion's sable wing
In shades their active virtues fold.
In them the god is great, nor fears
The withering waste of years.

Antistrophe 1.

The tyrant Pride engenders. Pride
With wealth o'erfill'd, with greatness vain,
Mounting with Outrage at her side,
The splendid summit if she gain,
Falls headlong from the dangerous brow,
Down dash'd to ruin's gulf below.
Not so our monarch: for of old,
His contest glorious to the state,
In her own blood the Fury roll'd:
So may the god now guide his fate!
Still be the god's protection mine,
Strong in his power divine!

Strophe 2.

But should some wretch, contemptuous, bold,
Brave the just gods, his hands with slaughter stain,
The vengeful pow'rs of heav'n disdain,
Nor their pure seats in holy reverence hold,
Him may Perdition sweep away,
And thus his wanton pride repay;
Him too, whom wild Ambition prompts to seize,
Though Justice cries aloud, forbear.
Can all his vaunts, who dares attempts like these,
Guard his proud heart from guilty fear?
Such deeds if glory waits, in vain
I lead this choral train.

Antistrophe 2.

Letters and Literary Remains

No more at Delphi's central cell,
At Abæ, or Olympia's hallow'd shrine,
Attendant pay I rites divine,
Till the god deigns this darkness to dispel.
O Jove, if thee we rightly call
The sovereign lord, the king of all,
Let not concealment this in shades enfold
From thee, and thy immortal reign!
The oracles, to Laius giv'n of old,
They spurn with insolent disdain,
No more to Phoebus honours pay;
And things divine decay. Iocasta, Chorus.

Ioc.

Ancients of Thebes, in this extremity
When ev'n the very steersman of the realm,
To whom we look for our deliverance,
Veering himself with every wind that blows
Of rumour, helplessly resigns the helm,
I come, albeit with these poor woman's hands,
To offer wreath and incense on the shrines
And altars of our tutelary Gods:
And first to thee, Apollo, first to thee,
Whose altar nearest to the palace stands,
And on whose word depends the life of Thebes,
Lest any unconsider'd word against
Thy Minister, revolt thy face from us;
Imploring thee with all the Gods in Heav'n
To help where all of human help is vain.

Chorus

Barb'd with Death, there are among
The gold-enquiver'd arrows hung
About Apollo's shoulder; whence,
As over heav'n his chariot burns
The land he loves to harvest turns,
And cities swell with opulence;
Ev'n so, where yet unexpiated sin
Cries out, or undetected lurks within,
The God his lustre turns to pestilence;
And contrite man must worship and abide,
Till, Nemesis and Justice satisfied,
When men least dream it, one relenting ray
Oh grant, Apollo, grant it as we pray!
Strikes through sheer midnight, and lets in the day. Herald, Iocasta, Chorus.

Her.

Tell me who will among you, men of Thebes,
Which is the palace of King Oedipus,
And, further, if the King himself within.

Cho.

This is the palace; and the King himself
Within; and she that by that altar stands
Offering her garland to the God, his Queen.

Letters and Literary Remains

Oed.

And this is he whom by the Oracle
From Phoebus his own lips, myself I heard
Foredoom'd to slay
Yet with whose death I have no more to do
Than leaving him to languish for the son
Whose hand was to have slain him had he stay'd!

Ioc.

Did not I say?

Oed.

But who would not be scared
By such prediction from the God himself
Of which yet half hangs dark above my head!

Ioc.

This word from Corinth is a Signal-fire
Assuring us that Oracle, half slain,
Must all lie buried in your father's tomb.

Oed.

The agèd King is dead, you tell me, Herald
But Merope, his Queen?

Her.

Lives, and may live
As one that hath not reached her winter yet;
And longer yet to live if you return,
Whose sudden flight from Corinth neither she
Nor Corinth cease to wonder at, and mourn.

Oed.

Yet, Herald, she herself it was whose love,
That would have held me there, thence banish'd me.

Her.

If one, a simple subject as I am,
Might ask of him he now salutes for King

Oed.

A Prophecy of Phoebus, from the lips
Of Phoebus' self, and utter'd in these ears,
Involving me in worse calamity
With Merope, my mother, who survives,
Than by my father's death I have escaped.

Her.

I understand not wholly, but thus much,
That 'twas the fear of some mysterious wrong
Against them both which drove you from their side
And from your country.

Oed.

That, and that alone.

Her.

I know not if for better or for worse,
But certainly for strangest, Oedipus,
If now for the first time, and from my lips,
You learn that you are not indeed the son
Of those you fled from in what two-fold fear.

Letters and Literary Remains

Oed.

You seem a loyal as well-season'd man,
As near in age to him you lately served
As trusted, and I think to me and mine
Well-minded now.

Her.

If not, I had not told
What told I have.

Oed.

And would reiterate?

Her.

By the most solemn oath by which mankind
Adjure the Gods to witness human word.

Oed.

That I am not in very deed the son
Of Polybus, and Merope his Queen?

Her.

No more their son than might I so dare say
Than son of mine and that is, not at all.

Oed.

But was this known in Corinth?

Her.

To none else
Save to the King and Queen themselves, and me.

Oed.

Yet 'twas in Corinth when the cup went round
At table, that a guest once startled me
With a light taunt of somewhat like to that
Which now you gravely tell.

Her.

The random shot
Of idleness, or malice freed by wine,
That sometimes nears the mark.

Oed.

But how was it
That only you beside the King and Queen
Knew for a truth?

Her.

Would Oedipus know all?

Oed.

Yea on the allegiance you profess to him,
Whom now you have saluted as your King.

Her.

Thus then I know it: for that I alone
Laid you a new-born babe into their hands
Who, childless as they were, and like to be,
Ev'n took what fortune sent them for their own.

Cho.

This man bears stranger tidings from himself
Than from his country he was charged withal.

Oed.

Letters and Literary Remains

You and you solely brought me to their hands
From whose received me then?

Ioc.

O Oedipus,
When all, beyond all hope, has ended well,
Why tempt the God, still jealous of success,
By questioning the means?

Oed.

I bid you speak!

Her.

You charge me for an answer, Oedipus,
Which, were you not my King who bids me speak,
Yet might resent when spoken

Oed.

But one word
Of ev'n unwelcome truth from human lip
Were welcome in the night of mystery
That Fate has gather'd round me.

Her.

Listen, then.
Long ere in favour of these whitening locks,
And recompence of faithful service done,
King Polybus had made me what I am,
I was his shepherd; and, upon a time
Keeping my flock upon Kithæron's side,
One of like calling with myself, though not
Of the same country, who that summer through
Had fed his sheep beside me, came one day,
And listening first, and looking all about,
With those rough hands of his he laid in mine
As tenderly as any mother might,
A naked infant say, some three days born
And fasten'd foot to foot, like some poor lamb,
Which some one of the land from which he came,
Warm from the bosom of its mother took
To perish on the barren mountain's side,
Of cold and hunger. Which the kindly man
Not finding in himself the heart to do,
But yet as fearful if he left undone,
Gave you for you, King Oedipus, it was
The very name you bear, remembering
The pitiful condition of the babe
Gave you to me, to carry far away
And pitifully cherish for my own
Beyond all search of those who wish'd you dead.
So to his country he, and I to mine:
Which when I reach'd, and to my King and Queen
Show'd them the prettiest lamb of all my flock,
They, whether by some instinct of their own
Inspired, or somewhat royal in the Child
Prophetic of the Man that was to be,

Letters and Literary Remains

Took, nursed, and rear'd to manhood for their own,
And set beside themselves upon the throne.

Cho.

The Gods upon the mountain-top, men tell,
Do sometimes light, and through the tangled dell,
And forest-shade

Oed.

A shepherd like yourself,
But not of Corinth. Whence then?

Her.

Thebes, he said,
To which your destiny recall'd you.

Oed.

Thebes!

Ioc.

O Oedipus, by all the Gods in heav'n,
And all that upon earth you hold most dear,
Heed not these stories of the past, patch'd up
By the fallacious memory of old age!

Oed.

He were by nature baser than base-born
Who would not find and follow to its source
The current of the blood by which he lives.
This Shepherd and from whom took he the child
Charged with that ruthless errand?

Her.

Either I
With mine own duty busied did not ask,
Or he not answer.

Oed.

But to answer lives?

Her.

Those of his country best can answer that.

Oed.

Does any man of all the people here
Remember such a man?

Cho.

May be the same
Already sent for, who, as I remember,
Like this good Herald, shepherded the flocks
Of Laius, then our Master. But the Queen

Ioc.

No more! No more! For your sake, Oedipus,
If not for mine no more!

Oed.

Whatever shame
My birth betray, your blood it cannot taint;
Not were I proved the issue of a sire
Three generations deep in slavery.

Ioc.

Forbear! once more, for one last time, forbear!

Letters and Literary Remains

Oed.

If aught you know and your wild looks and words
But argue somewhat than conjecture worse
At once reveal it all: for ask I will
Till all be answered.

Ioc.

Wretched man! the last
These lips shall ever utter you have heard!

Cho.

She is gone as one distracted. O my Lord,
What should this sudden passion of the Queen
Forbode of ill!

Oed.

Forbode what ill it may,
But I will solve the riddle of my birth.
The Queen belike, of royal birth herself
And haughty-minded as such women are,
Resents her husband's baser parentage;
But I, regardless of the accident
That oft from royal blood provokes a slave,
I do account myself the royal heir
Of Destiny, who found me where I lay,
By man's blind foresight which defeats itself
Cradled to perish on Kithæron's side,
And taking from a simple shepherd's hand,
So laid me in the lap of Royalty,
And through the days and years of human growth
Rear'd to the kingly stature that I am.
And when, affrighted by vain prophecies,
From Corinth, and the throne prepared me there,
I fled, inalienable Destiny
Pursuing drove me but from throne to throne,
Till, doubling back my course to reach my height,
Now Thebes and Corinth claim me for their own.

Chorus.

Strophe.

If a prophet's soul be mine
Aught illumed with skill divine,
By Olympus' sacred height,
Ere the morning's streaming light,
Thou, Kithæron, shalt unfold
All this mystery round thee roll'd,
And with pride and triumph own
Oedipus thy foster'd son.
Then with joy would we advance,
Leading light the festive dance;
Teach thy woods with joy to ring,
And with transport hail our king.
Glorious with thy silver bow
Phoebus, these our joys allow!

Antistrophe.

Letters and Literary Remains

Who, of all the heav'nly pow'rs,
Gave thee birth in these close bow'rs?
Some bright Nymph of sylvan race
Did the frolic Pan embrace,
Wand'ring o'er the mountain's brow?
Or to Phoebus dost thou owe
Thy birth? For him the craggy height,
Him the pastured dales delight.
Or to him, the god who roves
Through Cyllene's cypress groves?
Or did Bacchus, wont to tread
His loved haunt, the mountain's head,
Thee receive, confess'd his son,
From the Nymphs of Helicon?
Raptured with their tuneful strain
Sportive oft he joins their train. Oedipus, Shepherd, Herald, Chorus.

Oed.

Whether or not the man we have so long
Been looking after, one at least whose age
Evens with his whose story we have heard.

Cho.

Whether the same of whom the stranger tells
I know not, but the man himself I know
For an old shepherd of King Laius.

Her.

And I for him with whom I shepherded
Upon Kithæron's side so long ago.

Oed.

Approach, old man still nearer unafraid;
For nothing but my favour need you fear,
If, looking straight at me, as I at you,
Straightforwardly you answer what I ask.
You, in the days gone by, and long ere Time
Had strewn his silver honour on your head
You were a servant of King Laius?

Shep.

His servant not his slave no less than he,
Myself a freeman of the soil of Thebes.

Oed.

As such I understand; and in that wise,
As a free servant of King Laius,
You kept his flocks?

Shep.

Upon a time I might.

Oed.

And folding them at home in winter-time,
Led them in Summer forth?

Shep.

So shepherds use,
Where'er the more and sweeter pasture grew.

Oed.

Letters and Literary Remains

And ever on Kithæron's grassy sides
In summer-time, remember you this man,
Old as yourself, keeping his flock with yours?

Shep.

Time that has silver'd, as you say, my locks,
Has somewhat dimm'd both eyes and memory.

Oed.

None older than your fellow-shepherd here,
Who with his locks as silver-touch'd as yours,
Sees, and recalls in you the man of yore.

Shep.

May be; but all men are not all alike,
And he may err as well remembering me,
As I forgetting him.

Her.

Listen to me,
And let my voice, and what it has to tell,
Recall to you the man your eyes do not.
Can you not call to mind, though long ago,
Keeping your flock with one whose flock, like yours,
Grazed on Kithæron, one long summer through

Shep.

With more than one, may be.

Her.

Nay, but with one
To whom, just as that same long summer closed,
And cold Arcturus warn'd the shepherd home,
You brought a naked infant

Shep.

Brought? who brought?

Her.

Tied by the feet

Shep.

What should one know of that?

Her.

Being myself the man you gave it to.

Shep.

Methinks this man, whoever he may be,
And howsoever gifted with good eyes,
Is something weaker in his wits than I,
Recounting all such idle rhapsody.

Oed.

And you, sharp-witted as you are, methinks
Seem looking round about you for escape
In hesitation but escape shall not.
Look you! Beware!

Shep.

What have I said amiss?

Oed.

Not said, but will not say.

Shep.

Letters and Literary Remains

What would you have?

Oed.

The babe your fellow—shepherd asks about
That naked, new—born, ankle—fetter'd babe,
Did not you bring and put into his hands?

Shep.

And would to Heaven had died before I did!

Oed.

And death you shall not have to pray for long,
If, knowing what prevarication proves
You know, you not reveal.

Shep.

And if reveal!

Have you not heard enough?

Oed.

No, if not all.

The babe you put into this shepherd's hands
Was not your own?

Shep.

Oh, not mine own!

Oed.

Then whose?

Shep.

O Oedipus, my master, and my lord!
In mercy question me no more!

Oed.

No more

In mercy if you answer not at once.

Shep.

O me! The terror of your countenance
Scatters what little memory age has left!
What if I found the little helpless thing
There laid alone and none to tell me whose?
Or he from whom I took it knew no more
Than he to whom I gave it?

Oed.

Bind his hands:

The lash must loose the tongue.

Shep.

O Oedipus,

Shame not white hairs!

Oed.

Nay, shame them not yourself

By false prevarication with your King.
That helpless babe me Oedipus your King
Who gave into your hands?

Shep.

Alas! alas!

One of the household of the King that was!

Oed.

Slave? Servant? Who?

Letters and Literary Remains

Shep.

Alas! one now within

Can answer all!

Oed.

Answer yourself then, who?

Shep.

Woe's me! I drift into destruction's mouth!

Oed.

And I with you. But who?

Shep.

Alas! The Queen!

Oed.

The Queen!

Shep.

Ev'n Iocasta's sacred self!

Oed.

But not her own?

Shep.

I said not that

Oed.

Her own?

Shep.

Yourself have said.

Cho.

The man is turn'd to stone! *After a silence.*

Oed.

The God of Delphi has revenged himself!
His oracle defied of long ago,
And his insulted prophet's of to-day,
Break in one judgment o'er my head, who now,
Myself sole witness and interpreter,
Divine that half reveal'd is all fulfill'd,
And on myself myself pronounce my doom.

Cho.

O Oedipus, my lord

Oed.

Speak to me not,
Approach me not, unless at once to slay,
Or thrust with execration from the walls,
The wretch convicted of the double crime
Of parricide, and Ha! the prophet said
That, ere the Day which all beholds go down,
I shall have look'd my last upon the Sun
Which all accomplishes and, ere we pass
To darkness, somewhat yet is to be done.

Chorus.

Strophe.

Ye race of mortals, what your state?
Life I an airy nothing deem.
For what, ah! what your happiest fate,
More than light fancy's high-wrought dream?

Letters and Literary Remains

She fled, and flew distractedly within,
Shrieking, and tearing her grey locks, she ran
Along the echoing walls until she reach'd
The nuptial chamber, shot the bolt within,
And by the affrighted women lock'd without
Was heard calling on 'Laius, Laius!
Her husband Laius, father of the Son
Who slew, and worse dishonour'd him when dead!
This, and much more, and much more terrible,
They heard: and then a silence as of death,
Through all the house; till with the sudden yell
As of some wild beast closing on his prey,
King Oedipus along the corridor
With imprecations half articulate,
Fearful to hear too fearful to relate
With thrice the force of the mad Herakles
He flung himself against the chamber-door,
And bursting in, to all who dared to look
Disclosed the wretched woman hanging dead.
Whom when he saw, roaring, he sprang upon,
And tearing from the beam flung down ahead,
And spurn'd; and then, most horrible of all,
Wide open tore the raiment from her breast,
From which himself recoiling with a shriek,
He struck the golden clasp into his eyes,
Which having seen such things, henceforth, he said,
Should in the light of Day behold no more
Those whom he loved, nor, in the after-dark
Of Hades, those he loathed, to look upon.
Then rising, blind, and bleeding as he was,
He groped and stagger'd back the way he came,
Vociferating as he went along
That none who would not share the curse with him
Should touch unless to slay him till he reach'd
The palace-door, and would, methinks, have that,
As of the nuptial chamber, open burst,
Had not King Creon bid them lead him in
Where none henceforth should hear, and none behold,
Till Thebes his fate determine. All is told.

Chorus.

Oh men of Thebes, this famous man behold,
Who coming here a stranger to the gate,
The Sphinx's fatal riddle did unfold,
And chosen King, as Saviour of the State
So greatly ruled, and rose to such Renown
As not a King but envied: now by Fate
To such a Depth precipitated down
As not a Wretch but may commiserate.
Beholding which, and counsell'd by the wise,
That Nemesis regards with jealous eyes
Man's over-much, and at his elbow stands

To shake the full cup in the steadiest hands,
Deem not the wisest of To-morrow sure,
Nor fortunate account him till he dies.

PART II
OeDIPUS AT ATHENS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Oedipus.
Antigone *his Daughter.*
Polynices *his Son.*
Creon of Thebes.
Theseus *King of Athens.*
An Athenian Citizen.
An Athenian Messenger.
Herald from Thebes.
Chorus of Athenian Elders.

Scene: A road near Athens, bordered by the Sacred Grove of the Eumenides. Oedipus, Antigone
Oed.

The dawn which breaks not on my sightless eyes
Salutes my forehead with reviving warmth:
Here let us rest awhile, Antigone,
From this brief travel stol'n by fear from night.
But know you whither it hath led us, and
Among what strangers, who from charity
Shall with sufficient for the day provide
For one with less than little satisfied?

Ant.

I know from one who cross'd us in the dusk,
With steps as hurried as our own, the land
Is Attica.

Oed.

Ay, I remember now.

Ant.

And not far off I see the shining walls
And marble temple-fronts, and citadel,
As of some stately city: and the place
We stand on, as for some peculiar use
Sequester'd from the daily track of men,
Where a pure rill of water rambles through
Untrampled herbage, overshadowed all
With laurel, and with olive, poplar-topt,
As you may guess from many a nightingale
About us warbling, well assured of home.

Oed.

And might not, haply, some poor hunted thing,

Letters and Literary Remains

With but a sorry burden for his song,
Here, too, some breathing-while of refuge find?

Ant.

And in good time comes of the country one
Who shall advise us, lest, as strangers here,
We trespass on the usages of those
To whom we look for shelter and support. *Enter an Athenian.*
O stranger

Ath.

Hush! Before another word
Where ev'n a word unlawful how much more
With the soil'd foot of Travel trespassing
On consecrated ground!

Oed.

I yet dare ask
Whether to Deity, or Demigod,
Thus consecrate?

Ath.

To Deity, and such
As least of all will Men's intrusion brook
Within their hallow'd precincts.

Oed.

Who be they?

Ath.

None other but those awful Sisters Three,
Daughters of Earth and Darkness.

Oed.

By what name
Invoked of men?

Ath.

By whatsoever name
Elsewhere invoked, here, with averted eyes,
And with an inward whisper 'The Benign.'

Oed.

Benign then, as their name and nature is
To those who suffer and who do no wrong,
May they receive the sightless suppliant, who,
By no false Insight, howbeit unaware,
Within their Sanctuary first setting foot,
Alive shall never leave it but to die.

Ath.

Your words I understand not; but I know,
Whether to live or die, depart you must.

Oed.

But what, if rather fearing unjust Man
Than the just God, and those same awful Three,
If stern to guilt, not unbenign to me,
I leave their hallow'd refuge?

Ath.

Nay, for that
The land itself is dedicated all

Letters and Literary Remains

To God or Demigod, who, Just themselves,
Protect and vindicate the Just: for here
Poseidon rules, the Master of the Seas,
And there Prometheus, with his torch of Life;
The ground about us glories in the name
Of King Colonus of the Horse; and this
Same highway running by the Sacred Grove
Leads to the City and the Citadel
Surnamed of Her who keeps them for her own.

Oed.

As such I do salute her! And the King
That, under her, her chosen people rules

Ath.

Theseus, the son of Ægeus, and, like him,
Though mortal yet, almost the Demigod.

Oed.

Theseus, the son of Ægeus, ay, I know
And know indeed that no delusive light
Led me to him with whom I have to do.
Shall one among your fellow-citizens
Bear your King word from one who once was King,
And who, unkinglike as his presence now,
Can tell him that which, if he hearken to,
Shall, for a little service done to me,
Do to his kingdom and himself much more?

Ath.

Strange as the message from so strange a man,
Yet shall King Theseus hear of it. Meanwhile,
If in despite of warning and advice
You still refuse to leave this holy ground,
I, that am but a simple citizen,
Dare not enforce; but forthwith shall apprise
Those of the City who shall deal with you,
As in their wisdom best they shall advise. Oedipus, Antigone.

Oed.

Is he departed?

Ant.

We are all alone.

Oed.

Daughters of Earth and Darkness! In whose womb
Unborn till Sovereign Order the new World
From Chaos woke, yourselves you still secrete,
With those three Fatal Sisters who the thread
Of Human Life do spin among the Dead,
While you the scourge of human Wrong prepare;
If peradventure with unlicensed feet
The consecrated earth I have profaned,
That veils your Presence from this upper air,
Renounce me not: no, nor in me the God
Who destined, nor the God who prophesied,
That, after drifting the blind wreck I am

Letters and Literary Remains

About the world, a Horror to Mankind,
Within the Temple of that Triple wrath
That Nemesis unyoked to scourge me down,
At last the haven of my rest should find;
If satisfied at last be wrath Divine,
And men err not who name its ministers,
Though not without a shudder 'The Benign,'
Let your avenging Justice, that so long
Hath chased the guiltless instrument of Wrong,
Here grant him rest until the Power whose throne
You dwell beside in Darkness give the sign. Chorus, Oedipus, Antigone.

Cho.

These are the strangers this the sightless man,
And this the maiden that he told us of,
Who impiously this consecrated ground
Have ventured to profane.

Oed.

Not impiously,
But ignorantly, who first setting foot
Upon this alien soil

Cho.

But impiously,
When warn'd upon what consecrated ground,
With honey-flowing waters running through
The inviolable herbage still persist
A stranger too, where no Athenian born,
Not only dares not enter, but pass by
Save with averted eyes, and inward prayer,
That holy lips scarce dare articulate.

Ant.

We must obey them, Father, as we should,

Oed.

You will not, if I quit the Sanctuary,
Do, nor let others do me violence?

Cho.

Fear not the wrath of men, but that of those
Who watch you through the soil which you profane.

Oed.

But who, if of their counsel more you knew,
As sooner than you look for know you may,
Would not resent, as you, the wrong I do them.
Meanwhile, on no worse usage than from them
Relying when committed to your hands
Lead me, Antigone.

Cho.

Till you have pass'd
The bound of sequestration further yet
And yet a little further so, enough.
There, travel-wearied, and, perchance, in years
Well stricken, rest upon the bank awhile.
But, ere I bid you welcome to the land

Letters and Literary Remains

Whose sanctity your foot at first profaned,
Tell who you are, and whence.

Oed.

To tell you 'Who'
Would tell you all: and if I hesitate

Cho.

Not to declare your country and your name
Augurs but evil for yourself or it.

Oed.

You of that City have heard tell, whose walls
To Music rose, and whose Inhabitants,
From the sown Dragon's teeth sprung up arm'd men?

Cho.

Of Thebes? Ay, much of olden times, and of
The worse than Dragon Sphinx that in our day
The Dragon seed devour'd.

Oed.

And of the man
Who slew that worse than Dragon

Cho.

Oedipus!
As by the signal of those sightless eyes,
And lingering self-avowal, I divine

Oed.

Revolt not from me.

Cho.

And for You! for You
May be, the monster most unnatural
To set your foot upon the holiest spot
Of this all-consecrated Athens! You!
Who, were your very presence not enow
Contamination to the land, and shame,
May bring on us the plague you left at Thebes!
I should not wrong a promise half implied
If with these hands I tore you from the Land
Your impious presence doubly violates,
Where e'en the guiltless dare not enter Hence!
Begone! Pollute our land no more! Begone!

Ant.

O men of Athens! if you will not hear
My Father pleading for himself, hear me,
Not for myself, but for my Father pleading,
As to a Father, by the love you bear
The Daughter by yon Altar-hearth at home,
And by the Gods we worship as yourselves.

Cho.

Daughter, the Gods whom you adjure us by,
Repudiating Oedipus from Thebes,
From Athens also do repudiate.

Oed.

O then of Fame that blows about the world

Letters and Literary Remains

The praise of men and nations, what the worth,
If Athens Athens, through the world renown'd
For hospitable generosity
Athens, who boasts the power as much as will
To save and succour the misfortunate
If she that honour forfeit at your hands,
Who, from the very horror of my name,
And shapeless rumour of the terrible things
Which I have suffer'd, rather than have done,
Would thrust me from the Sanctuary forth
Of those whose law you violate no less
By broken Faith, than with unwary foot
Did I their consecrated soil transgress?
One, too, that howsoe'er you know it not,
Ev'n with the Ban that drives him from his own
Carries a Blessing with him to the Land
That shall accept him, and a Curse to those
Who, being his, henceforth shall be their foes.
All which, unto my inward eye as clear
As yonder Sun that shines in Heav'n to yours,
I shall reveal to him who governs here,
If hearing he deny me not. Meanwhile,
I do adjure you, by those Deities
Whose Sanctuary you have drawn me from,
Do me no violence; remembering
That, if Benign they be, Avengers too,
As of all outraged Law, so not the less
Of violated hospitality.

Cho.

We have discharged ourselves in warning you,
And to King Theseus, whom you summon'd here,
Your cause and self henceforward we commit
To deal with, and adjudge as seems him fit. Theseus, Oedipus, Antigone, Chorus

Thes.

I have been hither summon'd at the call
Of one from whom, 'twas said, the light of Day
Together with his Kingdom pass'd away:
And, knowing of one such, and one alone,
Reported in the roll of living men,
Nor uninstructed in the destiny
Which from the glory it had raised him to
Precipitated to a depth so low,
Amid the ruin of this fallen man
I know that Oedipus of Thebes is he.
I too remember when like him forlorn,
I wandered friendless in a foreign land,
And with an alien people much endured:
And, had I always been what now I am,
Yet none the less by what myself have known
Than by the records of Mankind, aware
That, howsoever great a King To-day,

No surer of To-morrow than yourself;
Therefore whatever Athens or her King
Of hospitable service can supply,
Let him demand: for much indeed it were
For Oedipus to ask and me withhold.

Oed.

O Theseus, if indeed the King I was
Look through the ruin of the wretch I am,
No less doth full assurance of a King,
Although to these quench'd eyes insensible,
Breathe through the generous welcome of your word,
And ere of my necessities I tell,
Assure me of the boon as yet unask'd.
For the detested story of my life,
Unask'd, you know it whence, and what I was,
To what catastrophe reserved you see
Yet not so ignominious to myself,
No, nor to Athens so unprofitable,
Will you but listen, and do that for me,
Which, howsoever strange from lips like mine,
Is sure as Fate itself, as Fate it is.

Thes.

Doubt not, however strange, whether or not
To Athens profitable, if to you,
What Oedipus demands shall Theseus do.

Oed.

But profitable shall it be to both,
Unless the Spokesman of Futurity
From Delphi shall have prophesied a lie:
For this unsightly remnant of a king
Though while it breathes a burden to us both,
But when the breath is out of it, to be
More serviceable to you than good looks
I do consign to you for sepulture
Under the walls that, as they shelter'd me
While living, after death will I defend.

Thes.

But of the life you have to live between
This hour and that why take you no account?

Oed.

No; for the life between this hour and that
In that sepulture is provided for.

Thes.

You ask an easy favour at my hands,
Whether for life or death.

Oed.

Nevertheless,
May be, to promise easier than to do.

Thes.

How so?

Oed.

Letters and Literary Remains

Those loving friends of mine in Thebes,
Who would not when I pray'd them, now, perforce,
If not per-suasion, when myself would not,
Will have me back with them.

Thes.

And what if Thebes,
Relenting, or repenting, Oedipus

Oed.

O, not repenting or relenting, Thebes,
But by an Oracle of Phoebus scared,
Which told them that unless they get me home,
To live what Life they leave me, and, when dead,
Lie tomb'd outside *outside*, I say their Gates
They shall not thrive in war against the foe,
Whose walls shall overshadow what they lose.
As Thebes shall find should ever strife arise
Between herself and Athens, if their King
Vouchsafe me that which I have ask'd of him.

Thes.

But Thebes and Athens, friendly powers of old,
What quarrel should arise to make them foes?

Oed.

O Son of Ægeus! to the Gods alone
Belongs immunity from Change and Death:
All else doth all controlling Time confound.
Earth waxes old: and all that from her womb
She brings to light upon her bosom dies,
And all is mutability between.
Ev'n so with Man, who never at one stay,
No less in mind than body changeable,
Likes what he liked not, loathes where once he loved,
And then perchance to liking turns again.
And as with man, with Nation none the less.
If now with Thebes and Athens all look fair,
Yet Time his furrow'd track of Night and Day
Pursues, wherein some grain of Discord dropt,
Perhaps no bigger than an idle word,
That shall infect his kindly Brotherhood,
And ripen'd Amity to rancour turn.
As one day for I prophesy shall be,
When my cold ashes underneath these walls
Shall drink the warm blood of my enemies
Ev'n as they might upon this quarrel now,
Had Thebes not other foe to deal withal.

Thes.

Rumour hath reach'd us of some warlike stir.
But on what quarrel

Oed.

Thebes against herself.
For those two sons of mine, who for so long
In the Egyptian fashion, as I thought,

Kept house, and did the women's work within,
Now, full adult in arrogance and pride,
Assert their sex to quarrel for the throne
From which they banish'd me: Eteocles
The younger, with the subtle Creon's aid,
Not only seizes first, but yet withholds
The sceptre from his elder brother's hand;
Who, as by sure intelligence I learn,
Hath fled to Argos, and so cunningly
Made good his cause, that King Adrastus there
Gives him his daughter's hand in marriage, and
Along with her, by way of royal dower,
A host in arms that shall reconquer Thebes,
And set my elder son upon my Throne.
And now by Phoebus' Oracle forewarn'd
That Victory no less within my Tomb
Shall live than in what now survives of me,
And fearful now of what they wish'd before,
Lest any day should find, where they might not,
Their victim, less by years than by the load
Of shame and woe they laid upon him, dead,
They dog my steps like vultures on the track
Of gathering battle, and the sharpest scent
May even now be close upon my heels.

Cho.

Whether with Argos Thebes for war prepares,
Behold a Herald, from whatever land
I know not, as a messenger of Peace
To Athens, with that Olive in his hand. *Enter Herald from Thebes.*

Her.

Creon of Thebes by mine his Herald's voice
To Theseus, King of Athens, greeting sends,
Craving from him due licence to confer
With Oedipus, the King of Thebes that was,
Now by report upon Athenian soil

Oed.

Oh, I forefelt his coming in the wind!

Her.

Until which licence granted by the King,
With a small retinue he waits aloof
Before advancing to the City's wall.

Thes.

Your King does well; and to his courtesy
With a like greeting Athens shall reply.

Oed.

Oh, let no greeting made to him impeach
What first vouchsafed to me!

Thes.

Fear not for that:
The courtesy which courtesy returns
No less leaves Oedipus sole arbiter

To witness, as I pledge it with my hand.

Oed.

Theseus, ere this the Gods whom you adjure
Themselves had sworn by Fate the fore-decreed
Requital of that generosity
Which no requital looks for; and I know
That even now, escaping through their hands,
The Blessing strives to anticipate the Deed.

Cho.

But, that no evil influence thwart its way,
And to propitiate that jealous Power
Whose Sanctuary you at first profaned
You, Oedipus, and you, whose pious hand
Leading him wrong, like expiation need
Returning to the consecrated shade
Of one that in its inmost shadow dwells,
Its dedicated Priest and Minister,
The ceremonial he enjoins obey,
First, by lustration in the sacred stream;
Then to the sacred Earth, whereunder keep
Those Three Benign ones ever on the watch,
Thrice three libations from three vessels pour
Or honey mix'd with water, but no wine:
Which when the forest-shaded Earth has supp'd,
Upon her bosom olive wands thrice three
Lay with a prayer within the lips suppress'd;
And then, with unreverting eyes to us
Returning, wait in confidence the rest.

Chorus.

Strophe 1.

Well, stranger, to these rural seats
Thou comest, this region's blest retreats,
Where white Colonus lifts his head,
And glories in the bounding steed.
Where sadly sweet the frequent nightingale
Impassion'd pours her evening song,
And charms with varied notes each verdant vale,
The ivy's dark-green boughs among;
Or shelter'd 'midst the cluster'd vine,
Which high above, to form a bow'r
Safe from the sun or stormy show'r,
Loves its thick branches to entwine;
Where frolic Bacchus always roves,
And visits with his fost'ring Nymphs the groves.

Antistrophe 1.

Bathed in the dew of heav'n each morn
Fresh is the fair Narcissus born,
Of these great pow'rs the crown of old:
The Crocus glitters robed in gold.
Here restless fountains ever murm'ring glide,
And as their crisped streamlets stray

Letters and Literary Remains

To feed, Cephisus, thy unfailing tide,
Fresh verdure marks their winding way;
And as their pure streams roll along
O'er the rich bosom of the ground,
Quick spring the plants, the flow'rs around.
Here oft to raise the tuneful song
The virgin band of Muses deigns;
And car-borne Venus guides her golden reins.

Strophe 2.

What nor rich Asia's wide domain,
Nor all that sea-encircled land
From Doric Pelops named, contain,
Here, unrequired the cult'ring hand,
The hallow'd plant spontaneous grows,
Striking cold terror through our foes.
Here blooms, this favour'd region round,
The fertile Olive's hoary head;
The young, the old behold it spread,
Nor dare with impious hand to wound:
For Morian Jove with guardian care
Delights to see it flourish fair;
And Pallas, fav'ring, from the skies
Rolls the blue lustre of her eyes.

Antistrophe 2.

My voice yet once more let me raise,
Yet other glories to relate:
A potent god for these we praise,
His presents to this favour'd state;
The Steed obedient to the rein,
And safe to plough the subject main.
Our highest vaunt is this, thy grace,
Saturnian Neptune, we behold
The ruling curb emboss'd with gold
Control the courser's managed pace.
Though loud, O King, thy billows roar,
Our strong hands grasp the well-form'd oar;
And, while the Nereids round it play,
Light cuts our bounding bark its way. Theseus, Oedipus, Creon, Antigone, Chorus.

Thes.

Son of Menoeceus, of the realm of Thebes,
A Ruler, and its Representative;
Your peaceful advent by your Herald's voice
Duly proclaim'd as much from me demands
Of courteous welcome and acknowledgment.
The purport of your mission to this Land
Yourself have told me, as foretold by him,
Who, till to-day a stranger like yourself,
And by no Herald like yourself announced,
Yet once a King, is still a King to me.
And at his bidding am I present now,
Not as a Judge between you to decide

A question that concerns yourselves alone,
But to hear that which, though he needs it not,
Should justify that honour at my hands
Which his ill Fate has forfeited in Thebes;
And as a King in Athens to remain,
If by persuasion or just argument
You fail to move him ev'n to reign with you.

Cre.

O Theseus, Son of Ægeus, and still more
Than Ægeus' self about the world proclaim'd,
Slayer of the fiery-breathing Minotaur,
And hordes of Men than one such monster worse:
The Monarch of a State, if any in Greece,
In men and means abounding, of the Gods
Observant, and of Justice to Mankind,
With your world-famous Areopagus,
No less for Wisdom than for Arms renown'd,
Like Her whose tutelary name you boast.
On what a peaceful mission I am come,
My Herald first, and the small retinue
That follows me, sufficiently declare:
To trespass not on foreign Land or Law
No, nor on his who, having found his way,
Hath found a home on this Athenian soil;
But whom, with what fair argument I may
Of Kindred and of Country, I would fain,
However royally entreated here,
Persuade with me back to his home again.

Cho.

You know the man, though, haply, not the man
He was, whom now you are to deal withal.

Cre.

Therefore to him will I address myself,
In words as few and unrheterical
As simple Truth needs to be clothed withal
In summing a momentous question up:
Praying the Goddess underneath whose shade
We here are standing to direct them home.
O Oedipus! my Brother once my King
And King once more to be, will you but hear
What for myself, and with me Thebes, I speak;
Sore wearied both under this long divorce
From one that once the Saviour was of all,
Under a judgment which your evil Fate
Prepared, yourself invoked on your own head,
And Thebes must execute if Thebes would live.
But as no judgment wrought by human hand,
And most to him that suffers from the blow,
But of the shaking hand that dealt it tells
What of misdeed, or of misfortune what,
Suffer'd or done unwittingly by you

Done, and by Thebes unwillingly redress'd
 Behold at last, by Fate's accomplishment,
 The Oracles of Phoebus justified,
 The Gods by expiation of the Curse
 Appeased, and Thebes once more herself again,
 Like one recover'd from a mortal throe,
 And fain to fold him to her heart once more
 Who saved her once, and yet a second time
 Who sacrificed himself that she might live;
 Your Country reaches out beseeching arms,
 Land over land, until she finds you here,
 Among a People, with a King alike
 In hospitality renown'd as arms,
 But, welcome and entreat you as they may,
 Who cannot be to you, nor you to them,
 As Oedipus to Thebes, or Thebes to him.
 Wherefore I do beseech you, Oedipus,
 By all the ties that man to man endear
 Of kindred and of country; by all those
 That King to People bind, as them to him:
 Yea, by the God, who, for a secret end
 That Man not fathoms, having parted them,
 Now, reconciled himself, would reconcile;
 Be all that erring Man on either side
 Hath done amiss forgotten as forgiv'n,
 And Oedipus and Thebes as one again.
 Look! I, more burden'd than yourself by years;
 And, little as you think it, like yourself
 Bow'd down with execution of the Doom
 Whereunder you now labour self-condemn'd,
 With long and weary travel have I come,
 Half fearful of less prosperous return,
 Imploring you, if I cannot persuade
 With argument that shall commend itself,
 If not to you, to those you trust in here,
 Yet in the eyes of Athens shame me not
 By sending empty-handed back to Thebes.

Cho.

The Man has spoken: and to us it seems
 In well-consider'd word, King Oedipus,
 And temper that invites a like reply.

Oed.

Temper and word so well consider'd, friends,
 That, unaccustom'd as I long have been
 To civil greeting till I lighted here,
 And haply not the man I was to guess
 The well-consider'd word But thus it runs:
 That, satisfied at length with all the shame
 And beggary Thebes condemn'd and left me to,
 To expiate the crime

Cre.

I said not that

Oed.

On which just Judgment done though, by the way,
Granting the Judgment just, I yet might ask
If you, my kinsman, and those sons of mine,
Must needs become its executioner?

Cre.

To Greece do I appeal if you yourself
On your own head drew not the Judgment down
Which Fate decreed and Phoebus prophesied,
And upon which the People's Being hung;
And which who but the People's Magistrate,
Kinsman or other, needs must execute?

Oed.

By setting on the rabble pack of Thebes
To yelp me through the gates? But let that pass:
For now the rabble pack, to make amends,
Send those who set them on to hunt me back.

Cre.

If you will have it so, so must it be:
So but to good result on either side.

Oed.

Yet somewhat late amends on yours, I think,
Whether by People or by Magistrate:
Who, when the Plague by ceasing long ago
Proved Expiation duly made by me,
And I myself, worn with the load of shame
I bore about with me among strange men,
Cried out to lay my weary burden down
Were't with my life among mine own once more,
Then would you not to my entreaty grant
What, unbesought, you come beseeching now.

Cre.

The People, panic-stricken with the storm
That, having made such havoc in their ranks,
Had scarcely pass'd, still dreaded its return.

Oed.

And prithee, Creon, how recomforted,
And to my presence reconciled at last?

Cre.

The Magistrates whom you so much distrust,
Adding the voice of their authority
To theirs who by their sacred ministry
The will of Heaven divine

Oed.

Teiresias still!

Whose refluent years against the base itself
Of Delphi breaking shiver out of sight?
Ay, he it was who with its breath surcharged,
First trumpeted me forth; and now perhaps,
When other Augury and Omen fail'd

Letters and Literary Remains

People and Magistrate to reassure,
By some new summons from the Delphian shrine,
Hath quicken'd Thebes to reconciliation
By something stronger than regretful Love.

Cre.

What mean you, Oedipus?

Oed.

No more but this;
That, as I wander'd not so long ago
About the world begging my daily bread,
A little wind from Delphi wandering too
Came up with me, and whisper'd in my ears
That, unless Thebes should have me back again,
She would not thrive in arms against the foe
That even then was knocking at her doors.

Cre.

I scarcely thought the selfsame Oedipus,
Who scarce would heed Apollo's Prophet once,
Should for a Prophet's take the wandering voice
Of rumour in the wind.

Oed.

And, did I not,
As, spite of taunt, now better taught, I do,
The pious Creon never fail'd in faith,
And by his presence here and now attests
That wandering voice from Delphi told me true:
And somewhat more. For, to be plain with you,
Another wind, that not from Delphi blew,
But somehow slipping through your city gates,
Whisper'd how Thebes, of that same Oracle
From Delphi self-assured, but not the less,
Despite of Augur and of Soothsayer,
Still apprehensive of my presence there,
Would have me back would have me back indeed,
Not while I lived to fold me to her heart
With those beseeching arms you tell me of,
But at arm's length outside the city walls
Like some infectious leper there to bide
Till Death, which surely could not come too fast,
And might perchance be quicken'd if too slow,
Even in death dishonour'd as in life,
Should safely hide me in the ground below.

Cre.

What! has some traitor been deluding you
With some swoll'n rumour of the market-place?

Oed.

Traitor to you, as true to me, but not
To you more traitor than to you yourself,
If, as I think, who cannot see your face
I thank the Gods I cannot but those here
Shall witness where the startled countenance

Convicts the false denial of the tongue.

Cre.

Ev'n were that babbling traitor's word as true
As he is false, I see not Oedipus
Much otherwise among his new friends here,
Than among those he counts for foes at home.

Oed.

You see not, for you know not how ere long
How soon I know not, but not long, I know
What others here now witness, standing round,
And some you see not watching underground,
Why from this spot, by which I first set foot,
I would not no, not to be seated by
King Theseus' side in his Acropolis,
I would not move until I went to die.
Whether or no you guess my mystery,
Enough! you see I have unravell'd yours.
Begone! You lose but time and tongue Begone!
And tell your people this on your return:
That, were the word from Delphi, and the word
From Thebes as false as you pretend it yea,
False as yourself I would not back with you;
No not were all the Dragon brood of Thebes,
From the first armèd harvest of the teeth
That ancient Cadmus sow'd the field withal
Raised from the dust to join the living host
Who yell'd me forth all these, and all the way
From Thebes to Athens grovelling at your heels
Back would I not with you no, not to reign
Enthroned among them as I was before,
Much less a tainted leper like to lie
Outside your walls while living, and, when dead,
There huddled under as a thing accursed,
Save for the Victory that within me lies,
And shall but quicken as the body dies.
No; the same answer that I make to you,
Take home with you to all: on this same spot
Of earth, which now I stand a beggar on,
Beside this consecrated Grove, in which
By no delusive Inspiration drawn
I first set foot I say, my Throne is here,
Deep-based as Hades, fix'd as Fate itself;
And this poor staff I long have lean'd upon
The Sceptre, wherewith from the world beneath
I shall direct the issues of the war
That shall determine wingèd Victory
To settle on the Land where tomb'd I lie.

Cre.

Theseus, in vain to reason with a man,
Still more the slave that evermore he was
Of Passion which inveterates with years;

Suspecting even those who mean him well,
 As once myself; and when, to his own cost,
 Falsely he found, as with such men it fares,
 He first injustice justifies by worse.
 Therefore to you, King Theseus, and to these
 Grave Councillors of Athens, I appeal:
 And, irrespective of the ties that bind
 All men to kith and country, but which he,
 Despite all loving offer on their side,
 Irreconcilably repudiates ask,
 If that same Oracle which he pretends
 By some vague rumour reach'd his ears say true,
 And that victorious power, as he pretends,
 Be lodged in him, whether alive or dead
 Is he not bound, reluctant though he be,
 With his returning presence to requite
 The deadly mischief which it wrought before?
 A Pestilence so terrible to Thebes
 As almost to extermination thinn'd
 Her people, and yet leaves but half array'd
 Against the foe now knocking at her doors.
 For such a foe we have to deal withal
 Adrastus, King of Argos, who, by this
 Man's son, and by his own ambition, led,
 Has, with some several powers allied with him,
 Raised such a Force as threatens to destroy
 What little life the Father left in Thebes,
 And either to reconquer and there reign,
 Or raze our sacred ramparts to the dust.
 And on that second count I ask again
 Whether, if that wing'd Victory do indeed
 Abide with him, he be not doubly bound,
 By now submission to his country's will
 To counter-expiate his son's revolt,
 While for past wrong atoning for himself?
 And furthermore I ask, would it beseem
 A King and People wise and just as this,
 If not with Thebes confederate, not her Foe,
 Who, disregarding, as I know you do,
 All visionary profit for yourselves,
 Would not escape that censure in men's eyes,
 Withholding nay, before those jealous eyes
 Upholding one who, for his sake still more
 For hers who innocently shares the shame
 Were better in the bosom of his own
 To veil the remnant of a life defaced
 If not by Crime yet by Calamity
 So crime-akin so terrible twofold
 Of Parricide and

Oed.

Shameless villain, hold

Who in the compass of this brief appeal
 Before these reverend Elders and their King,
 Dare show the double face and double tongue
 For which of old you were notorious:
 First with fair honey—sweet cajoling words
 Seeking to entice; and, when the honey fail'd,
 Intimidating with unsheathèd sting,
 As impotent to wound as that to win.
 Intimidate, I say not me alone,
 But this great People and their Sovereign,
 Who dare, forsooth, who dare between us stand
 With talk O not of Crime forsooth but of
 Calamity so crime—like 'twas the word
 So cunningly confused, that when at first
 You came, propitiation on your tongue,
 The word of pity floated on the top,
 But when that fail'd, then Crime came uppermost,
 And Crime left ringing in this people's ears.
 Lest which albeit but empty breath, I know,
 To good King Theseus, and his Councillors,
 But with the Citizens, less well advised,
 Ring out the old alarm that shall again
 And let it! rouse the cry of baffled Thebes,
 I will arrest, and from denial false,
 Or the less guilty silence of consent,
 Convict you once for all, and let you go.
 Was't not predicted, ev'n before my birth,
 By Phoebus, Fate's unerring Oracle,
 That I should slay my father? And the God
 Provided for his own accomplishment,
 Ev'n by the very means that father took
 To wrench out of my hands his destiny,
 As old Kithæron wots of to this hour.
 For Fate, that was not to be baffled thus,
 And Phoebus, that was not to be forsworn,
 There found and rear'd me till my arm was strong
 To do the execution they fore—doom'd.
 Yea, on the very road King Laius
 Again was going to that Oracle
 He fondly dream'd as afterward his son
 More vainly bragg'd of having foil'd before,
 I met I smote I slew my Father yes
 And you, before this presence, answer me!
 If one you knew not save that King he were,
 Upon the public thoroughfare of men
 Had struck you, no less royal than himself;
 Would you, sedate and pious as you are,
 In youth and courage strong as I was then
 Would you have paused to think whether, in all
 The roll of human possibility
 The man who smote you might not in his veins

Letters and Literary Remains

Have running blood akin to that in yours,
Or, in the sudden wrath of self-defence,
Retaliated with a counter-blow?
Yea! as the very Father whom I slew,
Could his voice reach us though the earth between,
Would ev'n now bear me witness, as he shall
When I rejoin him in the world below;
That, howsoever for the world's behoof,
The Gods, albeit with pitying eyes from heaven,
Chastise the guiltless instruments of crime
For which they know that Fate is chargeable,
They look not with a like compassion down
Upon those mortal agents of their doom
Who, with a vengeance more implacable,
Pursue and persecute ay, let it be
The Parricide! The Parricide!
And for that yet more terrible mischance
That follow'd and for which yourselves in Thebes
Were, under Destiny, responsible
All shameless as thou art, art not ashamed
Before an alien People and their King
To breathe as breathe thou wert about to do
Had not I swept it from thy lips unsaid
The Word which not myself alone involves,
But one whose Memory *Thou* least of all
Shouldst have untomb'd involves, I say, in that
Which unaware to have done is less shame
Than with aforethought malice to proclaim!

Cho.

If to King Creon Reason heretofore
Seem'd choked in wrath, 'tis not to wonder now
That, with this burst of Fury overwhelm'd,
He leaves in silence Theseus to reply.

Thes.

Albeit on either side appeal'd to now,
And whichsoever way myself inclined,
I shall not from my former purpose swerve;
To stand as Witness, not as Arbiter,
Between two Princes of an alien land,
Whereof one yet is Ruler, and though fall'n
From rule the other, still a King to me.
To whom, first coming to the land I rule,
I pledged an oath by those Eumenides
Beside whose sanctuary e'en now we stand,
That if Persuasion and fair Argument
Should fail with him, as fail'd it has, you see,
Nor less with her, who, wedded to his fate,
Clings all the closer to her father's side
No power but Heav'n's should move him from my land.
And therefore, heedless what the world may say,
Well knowing that my hospitality

To no remoter self–advantage looks,
I should not even if not engaged by oath
I should not from my plighted promise swerve.

Cre.

I may not, were I minded I, with these
Few followers in the teeth of Athens arm'd,
Arraign the adverse judgment of their King;
But to the courteous welcome I have met,
Reciprocating with a like farewell,
Must to my people leave on my return
How minded, and how temper'd, to receive
This unforeseen denial of their right.

Thes.

That you shall settle with your friends at home;
And in what temper and to what result
Among yourselves decided and declared,
Thebes shall not find our Athens unprepared.

Chorus

Strophe 1

Were I where the dauntless train
Swells the battle's brazen roar;
On the hallow'd Pythian plain;
Or the torch–illumin'd shore,
Where for men their holy flame
O'er the sacred Mysteries wakes,
And 'mongst Priests of honour'd name
Where his station Silence takes,
Wont his golden key to bear
In his firm tongue–locking hand!
There the warrior Theseus, there
Join'd the virgin sisters stand;
There they shall soon the conflict share,
And pour the torrent rage of war.

Antistrophe 1.

Westward haply on the plain,
Where the white and rocky steep
Tow'rs o'er Oia's rich domain,
May th' ensanguined battle sweep:
Where impetuous in their speed,
Glowing with the flames of war,
Warriors spur the foaming steed,
Other warriors roll the car.
Brave the youths who here reside,

Brave th' Athenian troops in fight;
Shine their reins with martial pride,
All their trappings glitter bright;
These honours in their rich array
To Pallas all and Neptune pay.

Strophe 2.

Is the dreadful work begun?
Or does ought their force delay?
O let me give the glad presages way!
Soon shall yon bright ethereal sun
Behold him, vaunting now no more,
Compell'd th' afflicted virgin to restore,
Afflicted through her father's woes.
Each day some deed effected shows,
The ruling hand of righteous Jove.
I am the prophet of a prosperous fight.
Had I the pennons of a dove
High o'er the clouds to whirl my flight,
Then should my raptured eyes behold
The victory my thoughts foretold.

Antistrophe 2.

Thou in heav'n's high throne adored,
Sovereign of the gods above,
Give strength, O pow'rful all-beholding Jove,
Give conquest to my country's lord;
With glory mark his purple way,
And make the ambush'd foe an easy prey!
Pallas, propitious hear my pray'r,
And show that Athens is thy care!
Thee, Hunter Phoebus, skill'd to trace
The sylvan savage in his rapid flight;
Thee, whom the pleasures in the chase
Of the fleet, spotted hind delight,
Thee I implore, chaste Huntress Maid,
Aid her brave sons, our country aid! Oedipus, Antigone, Messenger, Chorus.

Mes.

Where is King Oedipus?

Cho.

Behold him here.

Mes.

King Oedipus, Theseus, of Athens King,
Hath sent me back with this report full speed:
That Creon with a cloud of armèd men
Whom we found ambush'd on a neighbouring height,

Letters and Literary Remains

Without encounter, but with lowering brows,
And muttered thunder of Revenge to come,
Broke up and blew away the way they came.

Oed.

The Gods be praised, and Theseus blest withal!

Mes.

Who bids me tell you further what myself
Did also witness; that, as we returned,
Before Poseidon's Altar by the way,
Whereat we stay'd to sacrifice and pray,
A strange man, as with distant travel worn,
And low beneath a load of sorrow bow'd,
By that same Altar they both worshipp'd at
Besought a boon of Theseus; and, when ask'd
His country, name, and parentage replied,
From Argos

Oed.

Argos!

Mes.

But himself, he said,
The Son of Oedipus, once King of Thebes,
Whom, ere he went to conquer and retrieve
By arms the throne usurp'd from both in Thebes,
With many tears King Theseus he besought
To see, perchance before he went to die:
And Theseus, moved by pity for the man,
And reverence for the shrine by which he pray'd

Oed.

I will not see him!

Cho.

Nay, consider yet;
As by the sacred earth you stand beside
From Theseus welcome for yourself you found,
So by the shrine at which with Theseus pray'd
Your son, refuse not what to Creon granted
Of hearing and reply.

Mes.

So pray'd the King.

Ant.

Oh, Father, young and maiden as I am,
Unfit to lift my voice among these men,
Yet hear me if not for my brother's sake,
May be less guilty than you now believe,
Or if yet guilty, not impenitent,
Who comes to plead forgiveness at your feet
If not for his sake, Father, yet for mine
Let me but see my brother's face once more,
And hear his voice, before he goes to die.

Oed.

You know not what you ask, Antigone;
But thus by Theseus at the altar's side

Letters and Literary Remains

Entreated, let what has to be be done,
And leave me to such peace as may be mine.

Cho.

And yonder, lo! the solitary man
Comes slowly weeping hither.

Ant.

Oh, my brother!

Cho.

Approach, unhappy man, approach, and plead
Your sorrows, and, as you deserve, succeed. Polynices, Oedipus, Antigone, Chorus.

Pol.

Appeal! Alas, how scarcely dare approach,
Who scarce aloof dare contemplate through tears
That Vision of paternal majesty,
Or his misfortune like my own deplore!
Beholding him an outcast like myself,
In sorry raiment travel-torn as mine
With that bow'd head, those tangled locks that fall
O'er the benighted temple of his brows;
And her, who, like my father, loved me once,
And even now whose falling tears confess
That ev'n the eternal love she bears to him
Hath not yet quencht the Sister in her heart
Oh, wretched, and part-guilty as I am,
Albeit the judgment on yourself you brought,
Of living worse than death that Thebes might live,
Had I but known but heard much more had seen,
What now I see, and know, had never been;
Never had been much less so long endured,
And shall no longer, now I witness, be,
Despite of those who drown'd my single voice,
As now their treason has confounded me.

No word? No sign? revolted from me still?
For, were I guilty as you guilty deem,
Yet not so guilty as Eteocles,
Who proves himself arch-criminal tow'rd you
By after treason to your elder-born,
Seizing the Throne which, if you leave, devolves
Upon your first-born second self in me.
This hath Eteocles, my Brother, done,
By subornation of the Citizens,
With the connivance of the subtle Creon,
Who spins his web within the City walls
To catch the Sons, their Father as he caught,
Involving us in that unnatural strife
By which he purposes, when rid of one,
To rule the other; or, destroying both,
Himself in title as in deed to reign.
Thus me, who least came easy to his hand,

Hath he like you driv'n out, like you to seek
 And find a country and a home elsewhere;
 You, on this hospitable soil, with this
 Great Sovereign and his generous people here;
 Whom, without asking further service from,
 Nor wishing to dissever from your side,
 Unless by restoration to your own
 To sweeten separation from themselves,
 I do implore you, Father, were it but
 With one relenting gesture of the hand,
 One speechless inclination of the head,
 Vouchsafe your wretched son some dawning sign
 Of that forgiveness, wherewith fully arm'd,
 I may for more than past misdeed atone,
 By vengeance upon those who wrong us both.
 For when, so foully by those two betray'd,
 I fled to Argos, King Adrastus there
 Gave me not only welcome when I came,
 But after, when possess'd of all my wrongs,
 His daughter's hand in wedlock; and with that,
 By way of dowry, such an Host in Arms,
 As, with the favour of the Gods, which your
 Forgiveness, oh my Father! shall secure,
 Shall Thebes recover, and re-throne us both.
 For look! for us a seven-fold Armament
 By seven such Champions headed and array'd
 As yet the world has not together seen,
 Leagued in our cause; Amphiaraus first,
 For Divination famous as for Arms,
 Knowing the issue of the War he joins;
 Ætolian Tydeus next; and next to him
 Eteoclus of Argos; and the fourth,
 Hippomedon: then Capaneus, who boasts
 Of bringing down the walls of Thebes by Fire:
 Parthenopæus next of Arcady,
 So from his mother Atalanta named:
 And seventh, and last, myself, your elder-born,
 And right successor to your dynasty.
 With sev'n such Champions, and with such an Host,
 One need we yet to consecrate our arms
 And triumph in the cause which is your own.
 Wherefore, repenting what unfilial wrong,
 By others wrought on, I have done to you,
 Hither on foot from Argos am I come,
 A contrite suppliant at my Father's feet;
 Imploring him, by all those Household Gods
 Whose statues are before our palace door
 Yea, by the faithful men within the walls,
 Who, to a statue-like inaction cow'd,
 Stand mutely wondering for their absent lord
 And for her sake who, having shared so long

Letters and Literary Remains

Your sorrow, now your triumph shall partake
Remit your righteous wrath against a son,
Who, tow'rd you guilty as he may have been,
And all distasteful in your eyes as now,
Shall now for more than past misdeed atone,
Or, in just retribution failing, fall. (*After a long pause.*)

Oed.

Hath this man said all he came charged to say?

Cho.

So from the unruffled silence into which
His words have fall'n and vanish'd I conceive.

Oed.

But that the Sovereign Ruler of this Land
Had sent this man to me, and thought it well
That I should hear and answer, hear I might,
But not a word of answer from my lips:
No, nor a sign, save with averted face,
And one blind warning of the hand 'Begone!'
But thus entreated, by the word of one
Whose word should be the law of Love to me,
And of the friendly Council here beside,
I will not only hear, but will reply
Such a reply as he that asks for it
Shall wish he had not come so far to hear.
Who Wretch! who when thou hadst the sovereign power,
Which now thy Brother to himself usurps,
Then not cajoled nor forced, as you pretend
For was not I, the Victim, Witness too?
But, one with them, didst set the rabble on
To hoot me forth to shame and beggary;
Yea, when, not like yourselves implacable,
The God allow'd and I besought return,
Still shut me out, and, but to serve your ends,
Still would have let me linger till I died
In a strange country, and in such a plight
As now, forsooth, you weep to look upon!
Thou hypocrite! with those pretended tears
Of false contrition, which, were't true, too late,
Think'st to cajole me with a show of Love
Ay, of such Love wherewith a man regards
The tool he needs to work his purpose with,
And forthwith fling regardlessly away,
Laying on those the load of infamy
Thou sharèdst with them of the royal spoil
They stole from me, and now, like other thieves,
Would keep between themselves, outwitting thee,
Who, them outwitting, to thyself wouldst keep?
Oh Fool as Hypocrite! suspecting not
How that most cunning rogue of all the three
Has been before you, and the mask you wear,
But that, behind it playing such a part

Letters and Literary Remains

In his mid passion he was forced to drop,
And, as he fled discomfited away,
Left you to wear, and to a like result.
Fools both, as Hypocrites! suspecting not
That he you would deceive your errand knows,
Each to win back the stolen stakes you lost
The Kingdom once without the King, but now
The King himself to bring the Kingdom back;
Who, flung before as offal from your walls,
Is now become a treasure of such price
As each of you would fain get home again,
Like stolen treasure to be buried there.
You see I know your errand: if you fail
To guess my answer
One way lies Argos, and another Thebes,
Which those tired feet might fail to reach in time;
But could you borrow Hermes' feather'd heel
Might catch your Rival ere the Sun goes down,
And from his lip learn all. If not from him,
Then somewhat later, from your brother there,
When you shall meet him, arm to arm, in arms,
Under the wall where you would bury me.
Then might you tell him in return, were not
The story swallow'd up enacting it,
How, as he speaks, your living Father's Ghost
Foresees you both, up-looking from the tomb
In which your hopes of conquest die with him,
You, not the Champion leading, lance-erect,
Your Argive Host to sack your native Thebes;
Nor him within it in mock majesty
Posting his people to defend the Gates:
Not thus, but in your golden feathers both,
Where one another challenging you stood,
Stretch'd in the dust, slain by each other's hand.
This, standing on the consecrated ground
Of those avenging Sisters underneath
Who hear, and even as I speak prepare
To do their destined work, I prophesy;
You never to reconquer or regain
The Kingdom lost where he shall never reign;
But ev'n before the walls that you contest,
Die, slaying him by whom yourself are slain!

Cho.

Terrible words from human lip to hear!
And by what witness from what other world
Attested, as methought heard once before,
While this man spoke, and heav'n and earth look'd clear!

Ant.

Alas! Alas! for my belovèd Brother!

Pol.

Ay, and Alas! not for myself alone,

Strophe 2.

Letters and Literary Remains

But for all those arm'd in my cause, Alas!
To whom returning I may not reveal
The doom of death to me, to them defeat!

Ant.

Oh then by all you worship, and hold dear,
Return to Argos not; or, if return,
Revealing that you carry back with you,
Revolt them from your fatal Enterprise,
And, leaving graceless Thebes to go her way,
With those you loved, and you are loved by, live!

Pol.

Love me they would no more, Antigone,
If, having roused them at the trumpet's sound
To arms, both Men and Champions, in my cause,
Then to dissuade them, if dissuade I could,
By rumour of uncertain Prophecies,
And Malediction that to them would seem
But empty raving of impotent wrath.
Or, ev'n would they retreat, as will they not,
Could I endure in Argos to survive
My younger brother's laughing-stock in Thebes?

Ant.

Oh, better that than this unnatural war,
Which cannot end, which cannot end, I know,
But with the fatal consequence that leads
Or haunts my Father's footsteps where he goes!
While the false Creon, who has set you on,
Shall mock you both, who die that he may win!

Pol.

Too late, too late, Antigone, too late!
And when that comes which is foredoom'd, and I
Lie stark and cold before the walls of Thebes,
With him whom slaying I am doom'd to die,
Shall not one pious hand, Antigone,
Protect your lifeless brother from the dog
With some few handfuls of his Mother Earth?

Ant.

Oh, but it shall not need! You shall not go!
If not for Love, in Pity, for you both,
My Father shall relent!

Pol.

But Fate shall not.

Oed.

No, by that other roll of thunder, no!

Cho.

Again! Yet not a cloud in Heav'n above

Oed.

These are no thunders from the hand of Zeus,
But the dark Ruler of the World below,
Reverberating from the vault of Heav'n
Shall some one here go straightway to your King,

And bid him, whatsoever busied with
Yea, were it by the Altar worshipping,
Forthwith unworshipp'd leave it; for the God
Who links the Fate of Athens with mine own,
By those three thunders hence has summon'd me.
Gather no dust upon the feet of him
Who goes this errand: for the God, I know,
Who, brandishing aloft his Oracles
Accomplish'd, in one compass of the sky
From my meridian drove me to my fall,
And, as himself he sank behind the Night,
Into the hands of those who therein rule
My destiny resign'd the God, I say,
Whose rising found me here, with his descent
Shall take me down with him, and leave me there.

Chorus.

Strange things hath this day witness'd and heard tell
By the strange man whom Phoebus from the stream
Of Ocean rising with his levell'd beam
Surprised, as with a cloud of Oracle
Encompass'd, in the consecrated shade
Of those who underneath more darkly dwell,
Whose more propitious name scarce daring we
To whisper, he seemingly not unheard
No, nor unanswer'd calls on undismay'd.
Strange things and if the word of presage hold,
Not unattested by those thunders three,
Yet stranger are we likely to behold,
Prophetical of Evil if to some,
To Athens, and her People and her Kings,
Auspicious all, and for all time to come. Theseus, Oedipus, Antigone, Chorus.

Thes.

Look, at your bidding, Oedipus, once more
I come, prepared to do as I have done
Of hospitable service all I may.

Oed.

Yea, once more, Theseus, and for one last time,
Before the God recalls me to himself,
Have I recall'd you, to solicit nought,
But the good service of a single day,
Which, were life longer, were, I know, life-long,
With Death's eternal blessing to repay:
Which when I prophesied as soon to be,
Not knowing then how soon; but knowing now.

Thes.

By what assurance, Oedipus?

Oed.

By those
Three subterranean thunders summon'd hence.

Thes.

From Athens?

Strophe 2.

Oed.

From the eyes of Athens, ay;
And yet nowhither else: a mystery
Whose peremptory resolution
The God who loves you but for you delays.

Thes.

I must believe that one whom destiny
Hath step by step oracularly led,
Reads and interprets right the wondrous Signs
Which others but attest and wonder at.

Oed.

And for a further witness and a last
Blind as I am, and hitherto so long
Compell'd to find my way with others' eyes,
Myself shall those who led me forthwith lead
Along the road where that shall have to be
Which other eyes than Theseus' none may see.
Which having seen, King Theseus, in your heart
Keep unreveal'd; and when you come to die,
To him alone who after you the Throne
Of Athens mounts reveal it; he in turn
To him who him shall follow; and so forth,
From hand to hand, until the end of Time:
Not trusting that into the People's hand,
Who, loyal, wise, and pious, let them be,
Seducible by those seditious few
That still infest the soundest Commonweal,
Abuse the power committed to their hands,
And by disorder and revolt at home
Lay bare your bosom to the foe without.
And now the Powers to you and yours Benign,
Who thrice have call'd me from the world below,
Now that the word of vantage in your heart
Is register'd, will brook no more delay,
And the mute Hermes of the lower world,
Ev'n as I speak, prepares to lead the way.

Chorus.

Strophe.

If I may thee, infernal Queen,
Thou gloomy pow'r by mortal eyes unseen,
With holy awe revere;
And thee, stern Monarch, whose terrific sway
The dreary realms of night obey,
Hear Pluto, Pluto hear!
Let not pangs of tort'ring pow'r
Rack the stranger's dying hour,
While the cheerless path he treads
To the Stygian house that leads.
Guiltless thou wast doom'd to know
Various ills and bitter woe:
May the god with just regard

Strophe 2.

Grace thee with a bright reward!

Antistrophe.

Ye awful pow'rs, from realms of night
Who vengeful rise the guilty to affright!
And thou, grim Dog of Hell,
Before the iron gates of Pluto spread
Enormous on thy horrid bed,
With many a hideous yell
Whilst thy echoing cave resounds,
Guarding fierce those dismal bounds;
Thou, whom Earth to Tartarus bore,
Cease, oh cease thy dreaded roar;
Gentle meet him in those glades;
When he joins the silent shades;
Ever wakeful, cease t'appal;
Dog of Hell on thee I call! Messenger, Chorus.

Mes.

O citizens of Athens, to sum up
In fewest words what, to be told at large,
Would need an apter tongue than mine to tell
King Oedipus

Cho.

Is dead

Mes.

I say not that;
From human eyes departed, I will say;
And with such circumstance as, could I tell
All that myself I saw, who saw not all

Cho.

But, if not all, yet what you saw, recount.

Mes.

How the blind King, by what interior light
Guided himself we know not, guided us,
You that were present witness for yourselves;
And how with Theseus and the woeful Maid
Beside him, and some wondering few behind,
Straightforward, with unhesitating step,
That needed not his staff to feel the way,
Led on; till, reach'd the threshold of the road
Which leads, they say, down to the nether world,
Beside the monumental stone that marks
Where our King Theseus and Peirithous,
After long warfare, plighted hands of peace,
He stopp'd, sat down, his tatter'd raiment loosed,
And bade his daughter from the running brook
Bring him wherewith himself to purify.
Which she, resorting to the nearest field
Of Ceres, with what decent haste she might,
Return'd, and wash'd him, and in raiment clean
Reclothed, as to the rite of Burial due.
And when all this was done, as for the Dead,

Letters and Literary Remains

Weeping himself, he folded in his arms
His weeping child, and told her, from that hour,
She that so long had suffer'd for his sake,
With but the love between them to requite,
The face of him she loved must see no more.
And so they wept together for a while,
Together folded in each other's arms,
And all was silent else; when suddenly,
A thunder-speaking voice, as from the jaws
Of earth that yawn'd beneath us, call'd aloud:
'Ho! Thou there! Why so long a-coming? Come!'
Then Oedipus, who knew the word, and whence,
Relax'd his folding arms, and, rising up,
Took Theseus' hand, and, in it laying hers,
Besought him never to desert the child,
Nor yield her up to any against her will,
But be to her the Father whom she lost.
To which King Theseus having pledged his word,
The other, folding in one last embrace,
With one last kiss, his daughter to his heart,
Bade her return with us and never once
Look back on what was not for any one
But for King Theseus and himself to know.
Which said, and all in awful wonder hush'd,
The weeping Daughter turn'd away with us,
Slowly, like those who leave a funeral pyre,
With us our way re-tracing; until I,
Seized with a longing I could not control,
Despite the word yet ringing in my ears,
Look'd back and saw King Theseus standing there,
Stock-still, his hands before his eyes, like one
Smit with a sudden blaze: but Oedipus
There anywhere there was not vanish'd gone
But, whether by someflash from Heav'n despatch'd,
Or by His hand who through the shatter'd Earth
Had summon'd him in thunder, drawn below,
No living man but Theseus' self may know.

Chorus.

Let not the Man by Man be deem'd unblest,
Who, howsoever in the midnight gloom
Encompass'd of inexorable Doom
That shrouds him from his Zenith to the West,
Not till he sink below the Verge redeems
His unexpected Lustre in such beams
As reaching Heav'n-aloft enshrine his Tomb. (*or as follows*)

Strange Destinies of Man! But in the range
Of Destiny recorded none more strange
Than his, who, from his Sovereign Glory hurl'd,
Among strange men a Spectacle became

Strophe 2.

Of Horror and Reproach about the World:

Till by the hand
That drove him forth and forward to the land
Of sacred Athens led, he did repay
The hospitable Welcome of one day
With such Farewell of Welfare as on those
Who serve him some departing God bestows,
His tutelary care bequeathing yea,
Himself bequeathing albeit pass'd away.

Nor let the Man by Man be deem'd unblest
Who, howsoever in the midnight gloom
Eclipsed of some inexorable Doom
That shrouds him from his Zenith to the West,
Not till he sinks below the Earth redeems
His unextinguish'd lustre in such beams
As rising Zenith-high enshrine his Tomb.

VOL. VII

RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM FIRST EDITION 1859

I

Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultán's Turret in a Noose of Light.

II

Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
'Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry.'

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted 'Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more.'

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the White Hand of Moses on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

V

Irám indeed is gone with all its Rose,

Letters and Literary Remains

And Jamshýd's Sev'n—ring'd Cup where no one knows;
But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

VI

And David's Lips are lockt; but in divine
High piping Pehleví, with 'Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!' the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That yellow Cheek of her's to'incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

And look a thousand Blossoms with the Day
Woke and a thousand scatter'd into Clay:
And this first Summer Month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshýd and Kaikobád away.

IX

But come with old Khayyám, and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú forgot:
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hátim Tai cry Supper heed them not.

X

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán scarce is known,
And pity Sultán Máhmúd on his Throne.

XI

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

XII

'How sweet is mortal Sovranty!' think some:
Others 'How blest the Paradise to come!'
Ah, take the Cash in hand and waive the Rest;
Oh, the brave Music of a *distant* Drum!

XIII

Look to the Rose that blows about us 'Lo,
Laughing,' she says, 'into the World I blow:
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.'

XIV

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two is gone.

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,
And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,

Letters and Literary Remains

Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

XVII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep;
And Bahrám, that great Hunter the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

XVIII

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

XIX

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XX

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears
To-morrow? Why, *To-morrow* I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

XXI

Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

XXII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch for whom?

XXIII

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and sans End!

XXIV

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after a To-morrow stare,
A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries
'Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There!'

XXV

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn

Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVI

Oh, come with old Khayyám, and leave the Wise
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

XXVIII

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand labour'd it to grow:
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd
'I came like Water, and like Wind I go.'

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *why* not knowing,
Nor *whence*, like Water willy–nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *whither*, willy–nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *whence*?
And, without asking, *whither* hurried hence!
Another and another Cup to drown
The Memory of this Impertinence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Knot of Human Death and Fate.

XXXII

There was a Door to which I found no Key:
There was a Veil past which I could not see:
Some little Talk awhile of Me and Thee
There seem'd and then no more of Thee and Me.

XXXIII

Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,
Asking, 'What Lamp had Destiny to guide
Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?'
And 'A blind Understanding!' Heav'n replied.

XXXIV

Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd 'While you live
Drink! for once dead you never shall return.'

XXXV

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And merry–make; and the cold Lip I kiss'd
How many Kisses might it take and give!

XXXVI

For in the Market–place, one Dusk of Day,
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd 'Gently, Brother, gently, pray!'

XXXVII

Ah, fill the Cup: what boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet:
Unborn To–morrow, and dead Yesterday,
Why fret about them if To–day be sweet!

XXXVIII

One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,
One Moment, of the Well of Life to taste
The Stars are setting and the Caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing Oh, make haste!

XXXIX

How long, how long, in infinite Pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute?
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

XL

You know, my Friends, how long since in my House
For a new Marriage I did make Carouse:
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

XLI

For 'Is' and 'Is–not' though *with* Rule and Line,
And 'Up–and–down' *without*, I could define,
I yet in all I only cared to know,
Was never deep in anything but Wine.

XLII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas the Grape!

XLIII

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two–and–Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

XLIV

The mighty Mahmúd, the victorious Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

XLV

But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me
The Quarrel of the Universe let be:
And, in some corner of the Hubbub coucht,
Make Game of that which makes as much of Thee.

XLVI

Letters and Literary Remains

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow—show,
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

XLVII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in the Nothing all Things end in Yes
Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what
Thou shalt be Nothing Thou shalt not be less.

XLVIII

While the Rose blows along the River Brink,
With old Khayyám the Ruby Vintage drink:
And when the Angel with his darker Draught
Draws up to Thee take that, and do not shrink.

XLIX

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

L

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all He knows *HE* knows!

LI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

LII

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,
Whereunder crawling coopt we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to *It* for help for *It*
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

LIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man's knead,
And then of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
Yea, the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LIV

I tell Thee this When, starting from the Goal,
Over the shoulders of the flaming Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtara they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

LV

The Vine had struck a Fibre; which about
If clings my Being let the Súfi flout;
Of my Base Metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LVI

And this I know: whether the one True Light,

Letters and Literary Remains

Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
One glimpse of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LVII

Oh Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin!

LVIII

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give and take!

KÚZA-NÁMA.

LIX

Listen again. One evening at the Close
Of Ramazán, ere the better Moon arose,
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone
With the clay Population round in Rows.

LX

And, strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not:
And suddenly one more impatient cried
'Who *is* the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?'

LXI

Then said another 'Surely not in vain
My Substance from the common Earth was ta'en,
That He who subtly wrought me into Shape
Should stamp me back to common Earth again.'

LXII

Another said 'Why, ne'er a peevish Boy,
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy;
Shall He that *made* the Vessel in pure Love
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy!'

LXIII

None answer'd this; but after Silence spake
A Vessel of a more ungainly Make:
'They sneer at me for leaning all awry;
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?'

LXIV

Said one 'Folks of a surly Tapster tell,
And daub his Visage with the Smoke of Hell;
They talk of some strict Testing of us Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well.'

LXV

Then said another with a long-drawn Sigh,
'My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:

But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by–and–bye!

LXVI

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
One spied the little Crescent all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, 'Brother! Brother!
Hark to the Porter's Shoulder–knot a–creaking!'

LXVII

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash my Body whence the Life has died,
And in a Windingsheet of Vine–leaf wrapt,
So bury me by some sweet Garden–side.

LXVIII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a Snare
Of Perfume shall fling up into the Air,
As not a True Believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

LXIX

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much wrong:
Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

LXX

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose–in–hand
My thread–bare Penitence apieces tore.

LXXI

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour well,
I often wonder what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the Goods they sell.

LXXII

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet–scented Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

LXXIII

Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits and then
Re–mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

LXXIV

Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again:
How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same Garden after me in vain!

LXXV

And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star–scatter'd on the Grass,
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot

Where I made one turn down an empty Glass! TAMÁM SHUD

RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

I

Wake! For the Sun, who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
'When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?'

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted 'Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more.'

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the White Hand of Moses on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehleví, with 'Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!' the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to' incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter and the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose

- Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.
- X
Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to Supper heed not you.
- XI
With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne!
- XII
A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!
- XIII
Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!
- XIV
Look to the blowing Rose about us 'Lo,
Laughing,' she says, 'into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.'
- XV
And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.
- XVI
The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two is gone.
- XVII
Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.
- XVIII
They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great Hunter the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.
- XIX
I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
 Fledges the River–Lip on which we lean
 Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
 From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
 To–day of past Regrets and Future Fears:
To–morrow! Why, To–morrow I may be
 Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
 That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
 Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
 And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
 They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
 Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
 Descend ourselves to make a Couch for whom?

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
 Before we too into the Dust descend;
 Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
 Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and sans End!

XXV

Alike for those who for To–day prepare,
 And those that after some To–morrow stare,
 A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries,
 'Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There.'

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
 Of the Two Worlds so wisely they are thrust
 Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
 Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
 Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
 About it and about: but evermore
 Came out by the same door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
 And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow
 And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd
 'I came like Water, and like Wind I go.'

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
 Nor *Whence*, like Water willy–nilly flowing;
 And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
 I know not *Whither*, willy–nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate;
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was and then no more of Thee and Me.

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the Thee in Me who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without 'The Me within Thee blind!'

XXXV

Then to the lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd 'While you live,
Drink! for, once dead, you never shall return.'

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take and give!

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd 'Gently, Brother, gently, pray!'

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup

Letters and Literary Remains

Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in Yes;
Think then you are To-day what Yesterday
You were To-morrow you shall not be less.

XLIII

So when that Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff you shall not shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death address;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste
And Lo! the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The Nothing it set out from Oh, make haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About the secret quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True
And upon what, prithee, may life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue

- Could you but find it to the Treasure–house,
And peradventure to The Master too;
- LI
Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver–like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all but He remains;
- LII
A moment guess'd then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.
- LIII
But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze To–day, while You are You how then
To–morrow, You when shall be You no more?
- LIV
Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.
- LV
You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.
- LVI
For 'Is' and 'Is–not' though with Rule and Line
And 'Up–and–down' by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but Wine.
- LVII
Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning? Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To–morrow, and dead Yesterday.
- LVIII
And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas the Grape!
- LIX
The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two–and–Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:
- LX
The mighty Mahmúd, Allah–breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul

Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
BlaspHEME the twisted tendrIL as a Snare?

A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse why, then, Who set it there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup when crumbled into Dust!

LXIII

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain *This* Life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

LXIV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

LXVI

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd 'I Myself am Heav'n and Hell:'

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all he knows *HE* knows!

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help for *It*
As impotently moves as you or I.

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LXXIV

Yesterday *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
To-morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

LXXV

I tell you this When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my being let the Dervish flout;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of *It* within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd
Sue for a Debt he never did contract,
And cannot answer Oh the sorry trade!

LXXX

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

LXXXI

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd Man's forgiveness give and take!

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them 'Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again.'

LXXXV

Then said a Second 'Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy.'

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make;
'They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?'

LXXXVII

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot
I think a Súfi pipkin waxing hot
'All this of Pot and Potter Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?'

LXXXVIII

'Why,' said another, 'Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
The luckless Pots he marr'd in making Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 't will all be well.'

LXXXIX

'Well,' murmur'd one, 'Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by.'

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, 'Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!'

XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
 And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
 As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
 Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XCIV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore but was I sober when I swore?
 And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour Well,
 I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
 The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

XCVII

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
 To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

XCVIII

Would but some winged Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
 And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again
 How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
 How oft hereafter rising look for us
 Through this same Garden and for *one* in vain!

CI

And when like her, oh Sáki, you shall pass
 Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
 And in your joyous errand reach the spot
 Where I made One turn down an empty Glass! TAMÁM

SALÁMÁN AND ABSÁL
AN ALLEGORY TRANSLATED FROM THE PERSIAN OF JÁMÍ
PRELIMINARY INVOCATION.

Oh Thou, whose Spirit through this universe,
 In which Thou dost involve thyself diffused,
 Shall so perchance irradiate human clay
 That men, suddenly dazzled, lose themselves
 In ecstasy before a mortal shrine
 Whose Light is but a Shade of the Divine;
 Not till thy Secret Beauty through the cheek
 Of Laila smite doth she inflame Majnún;
 And not till Thou have kindled Shírín's Eyes
 The hearts of those two Rivals swell with blood.
 For Loved and Lover are not but by Thee,
 Nor Beauty; mortal Beauty but the veil
 Thy Heavenly hides behind, and from itself
 Feeds, and our hearts yearn after as a Bride
 That glances past us veil'd but ever so
 That none the veil from what it hides may know.
 How long wilt thou continue thus the World
 To cozen with the fantom of a veil
 From which thou only peepest? I would be
 Thy Lover, and thine only I, mine eyes
 Seal'd in the light of Thee to all but Thee,
 Yea, in the revelation of Thyself
 Lost to Myself, and all that Self is not
 Within the Double world that is but One.
 Thou lurkest under all the forms of Thought,
 Under the form of all Created things;
 Look where I may, still nothing I discern
 But Thee throughout this Universe, wherein
 Thyself Thou dost reflect, and through those eyes
 Of him whom Man thou madest, scrutinize.

C

To thy Harím Dividuality
 No entrance finds no word of This and That;
 Do Thou my separate and derivèd Self
 Make one with thy Essential! Leave me room
 On that Diván which leaves no room for Twain;
 Lest, like the simple Arab in the tale,
 I grow perplext, oh God! 'twixt 'Me' and 'Thee';
 If I this Spirit that inspires me whence?
 If *Thou* then what this sensual Impotence?

From the solitary Desert
Up to Baghdád came a simple
Arab; there amid the rout
Grew bewilder'd of the countless
People, hither, thither, running,
Coming, going, meeting, parting,
Clamour, clatter, and confusion,
All about him and about.
Travel—wearied, hubbub—dizzy,
Would the simple Arab fain
Get to sleep 'But then, on waking,
'How,' quoth he, 'amid so many
'Waking know Myself again?'
So, to make the matter certain,
Strung a gourd about his ankle,
And, into a corner creeping,
Baghdád and Himself and People
Soon were blotted from his brain.
But one that heard him and divined
His purpose, slyly crept behind;
From the Sleeper's ankle slipping,
Round his own the pumpkin tied,
And laid him down to sleep beside.
By and by the Arab waking
Looks directly for his Signal
Sees it on another's Ankle
Cries aloud, 'Oh Good—for—nothing
'Rascal to perplex me so!
'That by you I am bewilder'd,
'Whether I be I or no!
'If I the Pumpkin why on You?
'If You then Where am I, and Who?
 And yet, how long, O Jámí, stringing Verse,
 Pearl after pearl, on that old Harp of thine?
 Year after year attuning some new Song,
 The breath of some old Story? Life is gone,
 And that last song is not the last; my Soul
 Is spent and still a Story to be told!
 And I, whose back is crooked as the Harp
 I still keep tuning through the Night till Day!
 That harp untuned by Time the harper's hand

Shaking with Age how shall the harper's hand
 Repair its cunning, and the sweet old harp
 Be modulated as of old? Methinks
 'Twere time to break and cast it in the fire;
 The vain old harp, that, breathing from its strings
 No music more to charm the ears of men,
 May, from its scented ashes, as it burns,
 Breathe resignation to the Harper's soul,
 Now that his body looks to dissolution.
 My teeth fall out my two eyes see no more
 Till by Feringhí glasses turn'd to four;
 Pain sits with me sitting behind my knees,
 From which I hardly rise unhelp'd of hand;
 I bow down to my root, and like a Child
 Yearn, as is likely, to my Mother Earth,
 Upon whose bosom I shall cease to weep,
 And on my Mother's bosom fall asleep.

bsp; The House in ruin, and its music heard
 No more within, nor at the door of speech,
 Better in silence and oblivion
 To fold me head and foot, remembering
 What The Voice whisper'd in the Master's ear
 'No longer think of Rhyme, but think of Me!
 Of Whom? Of Him whose Palace the Soul is,
 And Treasure-house who notices and knows
 Its income and out-going, and *then* comes
 To fill it when the Stranger is departed.
 Yea; but whose Shadow being Earthly Kings,
 Their Attributes, their Wrath and Favour, His,
 Lo! in the meditation of His glory,
 The Sháh whose subject upon Earth I am,
 As he of Heaven's, comes on me unaware,
 And suddenly arrests me for his due.
 Therefore for one last travel, and as brief
 As may become the feeble breath of Age,
 My weary pen once more drinks of the well,
 Whence, of the Mortal writing, I may read
 Anticipation of the Invisible.

*One who travell'd in the Desert
 Saw Majnún where he was sitting
 All alone like a Magician
 Tracing Letters in the Sand.
 'Oh distracted Lover! writing
 'What the Sword-wind of the Desert
 'Undeciphers so that no one
 'After you shall understand.'
 Majnún answer'd 'I am writing
 'Only for myself, and only
 "'Laila," if for ever "Laila"
 'Writing, in that Word a Volume,*

*'Over which for ever poring,
'From her very Name I sip
'In Fancy, till I drink, her Lip.'*

THE STORY.

Part I.

A Sháh there was who ruled the realm of Yún,
And wore the Ring of Empire of Sikander;
And in his reign A Sage, of such report
For Insight reaching quite beyond the Veil,
That Wise men from all quarters of the World,
To catch the jewel falling from his lips
Out of the secret treasure as he went,
Went in a girdle round him. Which The Sháh
Observing, took him to his secresy;
Stirr'd not a step, nor set design afoot,
Without the Prophet's sanction; till, so counsell'd,
From Káf to Káf reach'd his Dominion:
No People, and no Prince that over them
The ring of Empire wore, but under his
Bow'd down in Battle; rising then in Peace
Under his Justice grew, secure from wrong,
And in their strength was his Dominion strong.
The Sháh that has not Wisdom in himself,
Nor has a Wise one for his Counsellor,
The wand of his Authority falls short,
And his Dominion crumbles at the base.
For he, discerning not the characters
Of Tyranny and Justice, confounds both,
Making the World a desert, and Redress
A fantom—water of the Wilderness.

*God said to the Prophet David
'David, whom I have exalted
'From the sheep to be my People's
'Shepherd, by your Justice my
'Revelation justify.
'Lest the misbelieving yea,
'The Fire—adoring Princes rather
'Be my Prophets, who fulfil,
'Knowing not my Word, my Will.'*
One night The Sháh of Yúnan as he sate
Contemplating his measureless extent
Of Empire, and the glory wherewithal,
As with a garment robed, he ruled alone;
Then found he nothing wanted to his heart
Unless a Son, who, while he lived, might share,
And, after him, his robe of Empire wear.

And then he turn'd him to The Sage, and said:
 'O Darling of the soul of Iflatún;
 'To whom with all his school Aristo bows;
 'Yea, thou that an Eleventh to the Ten
 'Intelligences addest: Thou hast read
 'The yet unutter'd secret of my Heart;
 'Answer Of all that man desires of God
 'Is any blessing greater than a Son?
 'Man's prime Desire; by whom his name and he
 'Shall live beyond himself; by whom his eyes
 'Shine living, and his dust with roses blows.
 'A Foot for thee to stand on, and an Arm
 'To lean by; sharp in battle as a sword;
 'Salt of the banquet-table; and a tower
 'Of salutary counsel in Diván;
 'One in whose youth a Father shall prolong
 'His years, and in his strength continue strong.'

When the shrewd Sage had heard The Sháh's

discourse

In commendation of a Son, he said:
 'Thus much of a *Good* Son, whose wholesome growth
 'Approves the root he grew from. But for one
 'Kneaded of *Evil* well, could one revoke
 'His generation, and as early pull
 'Him and his vices from the string of Time.
 'Like Noah's, puff'd with insolence and pride,
 'Who, reckless of his Father's warning call,
 'Was by the voice of Allah from the door
 'Of refuge in his Father's Ark debarr'd,
 'And perish'd in the Deluge. And as none
 Who long for children, may their children choose,
 'Beware of teasing Allah for a Son,
 'Whom having, you may have to pray to lose.'

*Sick at heart for want of Children,
 Ran before the Saint a Fellow,
 Catching at his garment, crying,
 'Master, hear and help me! Pray
 'That Allah from the barren clay
 'Raise me up a fresh young Cypress,
 'Who my longing eyes may lighten,
 'And not let me like a vapour
 'Unremember'd pass away.'*
*But the Dervish said 'Consider;
 'Wisely let the matter rest
 'In the hands of Allah wholly,
 'Who, whatever we are after,
 'Understands our business best.'*
*Still the man persisted 'Master,
 'I shall perish in my longing:
 'Help, and set my prayer a-going!'
 Then the Dervish raised his hand*

*From the mystic Hunting-land
 Of Darkness to the Father's arms
 A musky Fawn of China drew
 A Boy who, when the shoot of Passion
 In his Nature planted grew,
 Took to drinking, dicing, drabbing.
 From a corner of the house-top
 Ill-insulting honest women,
 Dagger-drawing on the husband;
 And for many a city-brawl
 Still before the Cadi summon'd,
 Still the Father pays for all.
 Day and night the youngster's doings
 Such the city's talk and scandal;
 Neither counsel, threat, entreaty,
 Moved him till the desperate Father
 Once more to the Dervish running,
 Catches at his garment crying
 'Oh my only Hope and Helper!
 'One more Prayer! That God, who laid,
 'Would take this trouble from my head!'*

*But the Saint replied 'Remember
 'How that very Day I warn'd you
 'Not with blind petition Allah
 'Trouble to your own confusion;
 'Unto whom remains no more
 'To pray for, save that He may pardon
 'What so rashly pray'd before.' 'So much for the result; and for the means*

*'Oh Sháh, who would not be himself a slave,
 'Which Sháh least should, and of an appetite
 'Among the basest of his slaves enslaved
 'Better let Azrael find him on his throne
 'Of Empire sitting childless and alone,
 'Than his untainted Majesty resign
 'To that seditious drink, of which one draught
 'Still for another and another craves,
 'Till it become a noose to draw the Crown
 'From off thy brows about thy lips a ring,
 'Of which the rope is in a Woman's hand,
 'To lead thyself the road of Nothing down.
 'For what is *She*? A foolish, faithless thing
 'A very Káfir in rapacity;
 'Robe her in all the rainbow-tinted woof
 'Of Susa, shot with rays of sunny Gold;
 'Deck her with jewel thick as Night with star;
 'Pamper her appetite with Houri fruit
 'Of Paradise, and fill her jewell'd cup
 'From the green-mantled Prophet's Well of Life
 'One little twist of temper all your cost
 'Goes all for nothing: and, as for yourself
 'Look! on your bosom she may lie for years;*

'But, get you gone a moment out of sight,
 'And she forgets you worse, if, as you turn,
 'Her eyes on any younger Lover light.'
*Once upon the Throne together
 Telling one another Secrets,
 Sate Sulaymán and Balkís;
 The Hearts of both were turn'd to Truth,
 Unsullied by Deception.
 First the King of Faith Sulaymán
 Spoke 'However just and wise
 'Reported, none of all the many
 'Suitors to my palace thronging
 'But afar I scrutinize;
 'And He who comes not empty-handed
 'Grows to Honour in mine Eyes.'*
*After this, Balkís a Secret
 From her hidden bosom utter'd,
 Saying 'Never night or morning
 'Comely Youth before me passes
 'Whom I look not after, longing' 'If this, as wise Firdausí says, the curse
 'Of better women, what then of the worse?'*
 The Sage his satire ended; and The Sháh,
 Determined on his purpose, but the means
 Resigning to Supreme Intelligence,
 With Magic-mighty Wisdom his own Will
 Colleague'd, and wrought his own accomplishment.
 For Lo! from Darkness came to Light A Child,
 Of carnal composition unattain'd;
 A Perfume from the realm of Wisdom wafted;
 A Rosebud blowing on the Royal stem;
 The crowning Jewel of the Crown; a Star
 Under whose augury triumph'd the Throne.
 For whom dividing, and again in one
 Whole perfect Jewel re-uniting, those
 Twin Jewel-words, Salámat and Asmán,
 They hail'd him by the title of Salámán.
 And whereas from no Mother milk he drew,
 They chose for him a Nurse her name Absál
 So young, the opening roses of her breast
 But just had budded to an infant's lip;
 So beautiful, as from the silver line
 Dividing the musk-harvest of her hair
 Down to her foot that trampled crowns of Kings,
 A Moon of beauty full; who thus elect
 Should in the garment of her bounty fold
 Salámán of auspicious augury,
 Should feed him with the flowing of her breast.
 And, once her eyes had open'd upon Him,
 They closed to all the world beside, and fed
 For ever doating on her Royal jewel
 Close in his golden cradle casketed:

Opening and closing which her day's delight,
 To gaze upon his heart—inflaming cheek,
 Upon the Babe whom, if she could, she would
 Have cradled as the Baby of her eye.

In rose and musk she wash'd him to his lip
 Press'd the pure sugar from the honeycomb;
 And when, day over, she withdrew her milk,
 She made, and having laid him in, his bed,
 Burn'd all night like a taper o'er his head.

bsp; And still as Morning came, and as he grew,
 Finer than any bridal-puppet, which
 To prove another's love a woman sends,
 She trick'd him up with fresh Collyrium dew
 Touch'd his narcissus eyes the musky locks
 Divided from his forehead and embraced
 With gold and ruby girdle his fine waist.

bsp; So for seven years she rear'd and tended him:
 Nay, when his still-increasing moon of Youth
 Into the further Sign of Manhood pass'd,
 Pursued him yet, till full fourteen his years,
 Fourteen-day full the beauty of his face,
 That rode high in a hundred thousand hearts.
 For, when Salámán was but half-lance high,
 Lance-like he struck a wound in every one,
 And shook down splendour round him like a Sun.
 Soon as the Lord of Heav'n had sprung his horse
 Over horizon into the blue field,
 Salámán kindled with the wine of sleep,
 Mounted a barb of fire for the Maidán;
 He and a troop of Princes Kings in blood,
 Kings in the kingdom—troubling tribe of beauty,
 All young in years and courage, bat in hand
 Gallop'd a-field, toss'd down the golden ball
 And chased, so many crescent Moons a full:
 And, all alike intent upon the Game,
 Salámán still would carry from them all
 The prize, and shouting 'Hál!' drive home the ball.

bsp; This done, Salámán bent him as a bow
 To Archery from Masters of the craft
 Call'd for an unstrung bow himself the cord
 Fitted unhelp't, and nimbly with his hand
 Twanging made cry, and drew it to his ear:
 Then, fixing the three-feather'd fowl, discharged:
 And whether aiming at the fawn a-foot,
 Or bird on wing, direct his arrow flew,
 Like the true Soul that cannot but go true.
 When night came, that releases man from toil,
 He play'd the chess of social intercourse;
 Prepared his banquet-hall like Paradise,
 Summon'd his Houri-faced musicians,
 And, when his brain grew warm with wine, the veil

Flung off him of reserve: taking a harp,
 Between its dry string and his finger quick
 Struck fire: or catching up a lute, as if
 A child for chastisement, would pinch its ear
 To wailing that should agèd eyes make weep.
 Now like the Nightingale he sang alone;
 Now with another lip to lip; and now
 Together blending voice and instrument;
 And thus with his associates night he spent.

bsp; His Soul rejoiced in knowledge of all kind;
 The fine edge of his Wit would split a hair,
 And in the noose of apprehension catch
 A meaning ere articulate in word;
 Close as the knitted jewel of Parwín
 His jewel Verse he strung; his Rhetoric
 Enlarging like the Mourners of the Bier.
 And when he took the nimble reed in hand
 To run the errand of his Thought along
 Its paper field the character he traced,
 Fine on the lip of Youth as the first hair,
 Drove Penmen, as that Lovers, to despair.

bsp; His Bounty like a Sea was fathomless
 That bubbled up with jewel, and flung pearl
 Where'er it touch'd, but drew not back again;
 It was a Heav'n that rain'd on all below
 Dirhems for drops But here that inward Voice
 Arrested and rebuked me 'Foolish Jámí!
 'Wearing that indefatigable pen
 'In celebration of an alien Sháh
 'Whose Throne, not grounded in the Eternal World,
 'If Yesterday it were, To-day is not,
 'To-morrow cannot be.' But I replied;
 'Oh Fount of Light! under an alien name
 'I shadow One upon whose head the Crown
 'Was and yet Is, and Shall be; whose Firmán
 'The Kingdoms Sev'n of this World, and the Seas,
 'And the Sev'n Heavens, alike are subject to.
 'Good luck to him who under other Name
 'Instructed us that Glory to disguise
 'To which the Initiate scarce dare lift his eyes.'

*Sate a Lover in a garden
 All alone, apostrophizing
 Many a flower and shrub about him,
 And the lights of Heav'n above.
 Nightingaling thus, a Noodle
 Heard him, and, completely puzzled,
 'What,' quoth he, 'and you a Lover,
 'Raving, not about your Mistress,
 'But about the stars and roses
 'What have these to do with Love?'*

*Answer'd he; 'Oh thou that aimest
 'Wide of Love, and Lovers' language
 'Wholly misinterpreting;
 'Sun and Moon are but my Lady's
 'Self, as any Lover knows;
 'Hyacinth I said, and meant her
 'Hair her cheek was in the rose
 'And I myself the wretched weed
 'That in her cypress shadow grows.'* And now the cypress stature of Sáláman
 Had reached his top, and now to blossom full
 The garden of his Beauty: and Absál,
 Fairest of hers, as of his fellows he
 The fairest, long'd to gather from the tree.
 But, for that flower upon the lofty stem
 Of Glory grew to which her hand fell short,
 She now with woman's sorcery began
 To conjure as she might within her reach.
 The darkness of her eyes she darken'd round
 With surma, to benight him in mid day,
 And over them adorn'd and arch'd the bows
 To wound him there when lost: her musky locks
 Into so many snaky ringlets curl'd,
 In which Temptation nestled o'er the cheek
 Whose rose she kindled with vermilion dew,
 And then one subtle grain of musk laid there,
 The bird of that belovèd heart to snare.
 Sometimes in passing with a laugh would break
 The pearl-enclosing ruby of her lips;
 Or, busied in the room, as by mischance
 Would let the lifted sleeve disclose awhile
 The vein of silver running up within:
 Or, rising as in haste, her golden anklets
 Clash, at whose sudden summons to bring down
 Under her silver feet the golden Crown.
 Thus, by innumerable witcheries,
 She went about soliciting his eyes,
 Through which she knew the robber unaware
 Steals in, and takes the bosom by surprise.

*Burning with her love Zulaikhá
 Built a chamber, wall and ceiling
 Blank as an untarnisht mirror,
 Spotless as the heart of Yúsuf.
 Then she made a cunning painter
 Multiply her image round it;
 Not an inch of wall or ceiling
 But re-echoing her beauty.
 Then amid them all in all her
 Glory sat she down, and sent for
 Yúsuf she began a tale
 Of Love and lifted up her veil.*

*Bashfully beneath her burning
Eyes he turn'd away; but turning
Wheresoever, still about him
Saw Zulaikhá, still Zulaikhá,
Still, without a veil, Zulaikhá.
But a voice as if from Canaan
Call'd him; and a Hand from Darkness
Touch'd; and ere a living Lip
Through the mirage of bewilder'd
Eyes seduced him, he recoil'd,
And let the skirt of danger slip.*

Part II.

Alas for those who having tasted once
Of that forbidden vintage of the lips
That, press'd and pressing, from each other draw
The draught that so intoxicates them both,
That, while upon the wings of Day and Night
Time rustles on, and Moons do wax and wane,
As from the very Well of Life they drink,
And, drinking, fancy they shall never drain,
But rolling Heaven from his ambush whispers,
'So in my license is it not set down:
'Ah for the sweet societies I make
'At Morning, and before the Nightfall break,
'Ah for the bliss that coming Night fills up,
'And Morn looks in to find an empty Cup!'

*Once in Baghdád a poor Arab,
After weary days of fasting,
Into the Khalífah's banquet—
Chamber, where, aloft in State
Harún the Great at supper sate,
Push'd and pushing, with the throng,
Got before a perfume—breathing
Pasty, like the lip of Shírín
Luscious, or the Poet's song.
Soon as seen, the famisht clown
Seizes up and swallows down.
Then his mouth undaunted wiping
'Oh Khalífah, hear me swear,
'While I breathe the dust of Baghdád,
'Ne'er at any other Table
'Than at Thine to sup or dine.'
Grimly laugh'd Harún, and answer'd;
'Fool! who think'st to arbitrate
'What is in the hands of Fate
'Take, and thrust him from the Gate!'*
Salámán and Absál rejoiced together,

While a full Year was counted by the Moon,

And neither Sháh nor Sage his face beheld.
 They question'd those about him, and from them
 Heard something: then himself to presence summon'd,
 And all the truth was told. Then Sage and Sháh
 Struck out with hand and foot in his redress.
 And first with Reason, which is also best;
 Reason that rights the wanderer; that completes
 The imperfect; Reason that resolves the knot
 Of either world, and sees beyond the Veil.
 For Reason is the fountain from of old
 From which the Prophets drew, and none beside:
 Who boasts of other inspiration, lies
 There are no other Prophets than The Wise.

bsp; And first The Sháh: 'Salámán, Oh my Soul
 'Light of the eyes of my Prosperity,
 'And making bloom the court of Hope with rose;
 'Year after year, Salámán, like a bud
 'That cannot blow, my own blood I devour'd,
 'Till, by the seasonable breath of God,
 'At last I blossom'd into thee, my Son;
 'Oh, do not wound me with a dagger thorn;
 'Let not the full-blown rose of Royalty
 'Be left to wither in a hand unclean.
 'For what thy proper pastime? Bat in hand
 'To mount and manage Rakhsh along the Field;
 'Not, with no weapon but a wanton curl
 'Idly reposing on a silver breast.
 'Go, fly thine arrow at the antelope
 'And lion let me not My lion see
 Slain by the arrow eyes of a ghazál.
 Go, challenge Zál or Rustam to the Field,
 'And smite the warriors' neck; not, flying them,
 'Beneath a woman's foot submit thine own.
 'Oh wipe the woman's henna from thy hand,
 'Withdraw thee from the minion who from thee
 'Dominion draws, and draws me with thee down;
 'Years have I held my head aloft, and all
 'For Thee Oh shame if thou prepare my Fall!'

*When before Shirúyeh's dagger
 Kai Khusrau, his Father, fell,
 He declared this Parable
 'Wretch! There was a branch that waxing
 'Wanton o'er the root he drank from,
 'At a draught the living water
 'Drain'd wherewith himself to crown;
 'Died the root and with him died
 'The branch and barren was brought down!'*
 'Oh last new vintage of the Vine of Life
 'Planted in Paradise; Oh Master-stroke,
 'And all-concluding flourish of the Pen

The Sháh ceased counsel, and The Sage began.

'Kun fa yakún; Thyself prime Archetype,
 'And ultimate Accomplishment of Man!
 'The Almighty hand, that out of common earth
 'Thy mortal outward to the perfect form
 'Of Beauty moulded, in the fleeting dust
 'Inscribed Himself, and in thy bosom set
 'A mirror to reflect Himself in Thee.
 'Let not that dust by rebel passion blown
 'Obliterate that character: nor let
 'That Mirror, sullied by the breath impure,
 'Or form of carnal beauty fore-possess,
 'Be made incapable of the Divine.
 'Supreme is thine Original degree,
 'Thy Star upon the top of Heaven; but Lust
 'Will bring it down, down even to the Dust!'

*Quoth a Muezzín to the crested
 Cock 'Oh Prophet of the Morning,
 'Never Prophet like to you
 'Prophesied of Dawn, nor Muezzín
 'With so shrill a voice of warning
 'Woke the sleeper to confession
 'Crying, "Lá allah illá 'llah,
 'Muhammad rasúluhu."
 'One, methinks, so rarely gifted
 'Should have prophesied and sung
 'In Heav'n, the Birds of Heav'n among,
 'Not with these poor hens about him,
 'Raking in a heap of dung.'
 'And,' replied the Cock, 'in Heaven
 'Once I was; but by my foolish
 'Lust to this uncleanly living
 'With my sorry mates about me
 'Thus am fallen. Otherwise,
 'I were prophesying Dawn
 'Before the gates of Paradise.'*

Of all the Lover's sorrows, next to that
 Of Love by Love forbidden, is the voice
 Of Friendship turning harsh in Love's reproof,
 And overmuch of Counsel whereby Love
 Grows stubborn, and recoiling unsuppress
 Within, devours the heart within the breast.

bsp; Salámán heard; his Soul came to his lips;
 Reproaches struck not Absál out of him,
 But drove Confusion in; bitter became
 The drinking of the sweet draught of Delight,
 And waned the splendour of his Moon of Beauty.
 His breath was Indignation, and his heart
 Bled from the arrow, and his anguish grew.
 How bear it? By the hand of Hatred dealt,
 Easy to meet and deal with, blow for blow;

But from Love's hand which one must not requite,
 And cannot yield to what resource but Flight?
 Resolved on which, he victuall'd and equipp'd
 A Camel, and one night he led it forth,
 And mounted he with Absál at his side,
 Like sweet twin almonds in a single shell.
 And Love least murmurs at the narrow space
 That draws him close and closer in embrace.

*When the Moon of Canaan Yúsuf
 In the prison of Egypt darken'd,
 Nightly from her spacious Palace—*

*Chamber, and its rich array,
 Stole Zulaikhá like a fantom
 To the dark and narrow dungeon
 Where her buried Treasure lay.
 Then to those about her wond'ring
 'Were my Palace,' she replied,
 'Wider than Horizon—wide,
 'It were narrower than an Ant's eye,
 'Were my Treasure not inside:
 'And an Ant's eye, if but there
 'My Lover, Heaven's horizon were.'*

Six days Salámán on the Camel rode,
 And then the hissing arrows of reproof
 Were fallen far behind; and on the Seventh
 He halted on the Seashore; on the shore
 Of a great Sea that reaching like a floor
 Of rolling Firmament below the Sky's
 From Káf to Káf, to Gau and Máhí down
 Descended, and its Stars were living eyes.
 The Face of it was as it were a range
 Of moving Mountains; or a countless host
 Of Camels trooping tumultuously up,
 Host over host, and foaming at the lip.
 Within, innumerable glittering things
 Sharp as cut Jewels, to the sharpest eye
 Scarce visible, hither and hither slipping,
 As silver scissors slice a blue brocade;
 But should the Dragon coil'd in the abyss
 Emerge to light, his starry counter—sign
 Would shrink into the depth of Heav'n aghast.

bsp; Salámán eyed the moving wilderness
 On which he thought, once launcht, no foot, nor eye
 Should ever follow; forthwith he devised
 Of sundry scented woods along the shore
 A little shallop like a Quarter—moon,
 Wherein Absál and He like Sun and Moon
 Enter'd as into some Celestial Sign;
 That, figured like a bow, but arrow—like
 In flight, was feather'd with a little sail,

And, pitcht upon the water like a duck,
 So with her bosom sped to her Desire.
 bsp; When they had sail'd their vessel for a Moon,
 And marr'd their beauty with the wind o' the Sea,
 Suddenly in mid sea reveal'd itself
 An Isle, beyond imagination fair;
 An Isle that all was Garden; not a Flower,
 Nor Bird of plumage like the flower, but there;
 Some like the Flower, and others like the Leaf;
 Some, as the Pheasant and the Dove adorn'd
 With crown and collar, over whom, alone,
 The jewell'd Peacock like a Sultan shone;
 While the Musicians, and among them Chief
 The Nightingale, sang hidden in the trees
 Which, arm in arm, from fingers quivering
 With any breath of air, fruit of all kind
 Down scatter'd in profusion to their feet,
 Where fountains of sweet water ran between,
 And Sun and shadow chequer-chased the green.
 Here Iram-garden seem'd in secresy
 Blowing the rosebud of its Revelation;
 Or Paradise, forgetful of the dawn
 Of Audit, lifted from her face the veil.

bsp; Salámán saw the Isle, and thought no more
 Of Further there with Absál he sate down,
 Absál and He together side by side
 Together like the Lily and the Rose,
 Together like the Soul and Body, one.
 Under its trees in one another's arms
 They slept they drank its fountains hand in hand
 Paraded with the Peacock raced the Partridge
 Chased the green Parrot for his stolen fruit,
 Or sang divisions with the Nightingale.
 There was the Rose without a thorn, and there
 The Treasure and no Serpent to beware
 Oh think of such a Mistress at your side
 In such a Solitude, and none to chide!

*Said to Wámik one who never
 Knew the Lover's passion 'Why
 'Solitary thus and silent
 'Solitary places haunting,
 'Like a Dreamer, like a Spectre,
 'Like a thing about to die?'
 Wámik answer'd 'Meditating
 'Flight with Azrá to the Desert:
 'There by so remote a Fountain
 'That, whichever way one travell'd,
 'League on league, one yet should never
 'See the face of Man; for ever
 'There to gaze on my Belovèd;*

'Gaze, till Gazing out of Gazing
 'Grew to Being Her I gaze on,
 'She and I no more, but in One
 'Undivided Being blended.
 'All that is by Nature twain
 'Fears, or suffers by, the pain
 'Of Separation: Love is only
 'Perfect when itself transcends
 'Itself, and, one with that it loves,
 'In undivided Being blends.'

When by and by the Sháh was made aware
 Of that heart-breaking Flight, his royal robe
 He changed for ashes, and his Throne for dust,
 And wept awhile in darkness and alone.
 Then rose; and, taking counsel from the Sage,
 Pursuit set everywhere afoot: but none
 Could trace the footstep of the flying Deer.
 Then from his secret Art the Sage-Vizyr
 A Magic Mirror made; a Mirror like
 The bosom of All-wise Intelligence
 Reflecting in its mystic compass all
 Within the sev'n-fold volume of the World
 Involved; and, looking in that Mirror's face,
 The Sháh beheld the face of his Desire.
 Beheld those Lovers, like that earliest pair
 Of Lovers, in this other Paradise
 So far from human eyes in the mid sea,
 And yet within the magic glass so near
 As with a finger one might touch them, isled.
 The Sháh beheld them; and compassion touch'd
 His eyes and anger died upon his lips;
 And arm'd with Righteous Judgment as he was,
 Yet, seeing those two Lovers with one lip
 Drinking that cup of Happiness and Tears
 In which Farewell had never yet been flung,
 He paused for their repentance to recall
 The lifted arm that was to shatter all.

bsp; The Lords of Wrath have perish'd by the blow
 Themselves had aim'd at others long ago.
 Draw not in haste the sword, which Fate, may be,
 Will sheathe, hereafter to be drawn on Thee.
*Farhád, who the shapeless mountain
 Into human likeness moulded,
 Under Shírín's eyes as slavish
 Potters' earth himself became.*

bsp; *Then the secret fire of jealous
 Frenzy, catching and devouring
 Kai Khusrau, broke into flame.*

bsp; *With that ancient Hag of Darkness
 Plotting, at the midnight Banquet
 Farhád's golden cup he poison'd,
 And in Shírín's eyes alone*

*Reign'd But Fate that Fate revenges,
Arms Shírúyeh with the dagger
That at once from Shírín tore,*

And hurl'd him lifeless from his throne. But as the days went on, and still The Sháh
Beheld his Son how in the Woman lost,
And still the Crown that should adorn his head,
And still the Throne that waited for his foot,
Both trampled under by a base desire,
Of which the Soul was still unsatisfied
Then from the sorrow of The Sháh fell Fire;
To Gracelessness ungracious he became,
And, quite to shatter that rebellious lust,
Upon Salámán all his Will, with all
His Sage–Vizyr's Might–magic arm'd, discharged.
And Lo! Salámán to his Mistress turn'd,
But could not reach her look'd and look'd again,
And palpitated tow'rd her but in vain!
Oh Misery! As to the Bankrupt's eyes
The Gold he may not finger! or the Well
To him who sees a–thirst, and cannot reach,
Or Heav'n above reveal'd to those in Hell!
Yet when Salámán's anguish was extreme,
The door of Mercy open'd, and he saw
That Arm he knew to be his Father's reacht
To lift him from the pit in which he lay:
Timidly tow'rd his Father's eyes his own
He lifted, pardon–pleading, crime–confest,
And drew once more to that forsaken Throne,
As the stray bird one day will find her nest.

*One was asking of a Teacher,
'How a Father his reputed
'Son for his should recognize?'
Said the Master, 'By the stripling,
'As he grows to manhood, growing
'Like to his reputed Father,
'Good or Evil, Fool or Wise.*

*bsp; 'Lo the disregarded Darnel
'With itself adorns the Wheat–field,
'And for all the vernal season
'Satisfies the farmer's eye;
'But the hour of harvest coming,
'And the thrasher by and by,
'Then a barren ear shall answer,
'"Darnel, and no Wheat, am I."
Yet Ah for that poor Lover! 'Next the curse
'Of Love by Love forbidden, nothing worse
'Than Friendship turn'd in Love's reproof unkind,
'And Love from Love divorcing' Thus I said:
Alas, a worse, and worse, is yet behind
Love's back–blow of Revenge for having fled!
Salámán bow'd his forehead to the dust*

Before his Father; to his Father's hand
Fast but yet fast, and faster, to his own
Clung one, who by no tempest of reproof
Or wrath might be dissever'd from the stem
She grew to: till, between Remorse and Love,
He came to loathe his Life and long for Death.
And, as from him *She* would not be divorced,
With Her he fled again: he fled but now
To no such Island centred in the sea
As lull'd them into Paradise before;
But to the Solitude of Desolation,
The Wilderness of Death. And as before
Of sundry scented woods along the shore
A shallop he devised to carry them
Over the waters whither foot nor eye
Should ever follow them, he thought so now
Of sere wood strewn about the plain of Death,
A raft to bear them through the wave of Fire
Into Annihilation, he devised,
Gather'd, and built; and, firing with a Torch,
Into the central flame Absál and He
Sprung hand in hand exulting. But the Sage
In secret all had order'd; and the Flame,
Directed by his self-fulfilling Will,
Devouring Her to ashes, left untouch'd
Salámán all the baser metal burn'd,
And to itself the authentic Gold return'd.

Part III.

From the Beginning such has been the Fate
Of Man, whose very clay was soak'd in tears.
For when at first of common Earth they took,
And moulded to the stature of the Soul,
For Forty days, full Forty days, the cloud
Of Heav'n wept over him from head to foot:
And when the Forty days had passed to Night,
The Sunshine of one solitary day
Look'd out of Heav'n to dry the weeping clay.
And though that sunshine in the long arrear
Of darkness on the breathless image rose,
Yet, with the Living, every wise man knows
Such consummation scarcely shall be here!
Salámán fired the pile; and in the flame
That, passing him, consumed Absál like straw,
Died his Divided Self, his Individual
Survived, and, like a living Soul from which
The Body falls, strange, naked, and alone.
Then rose his cry to Heaven his eyelashes

Letters and Literary Remains

Wept blood his sighs stood like a smoke in Heaven,
And Morning rent her garment at his anguish.
And when Night came, that drew the pen across
The written woes of Day for all but him,
Crouch'd in a lonely corner of the house,
He seem'd to feel about him in the dark
For one who was not, and whom no fond word
Could summon from the Void in which she lay.

bsp; And so the Wise One found him where he sate
Bow'd down alone in darkness; and once more
Made the long-silent voice of Reason sound
In the deserted Palace of his Soul;
Until Salámán lifted up his head
To bow beneath the Master; sweet it seem'd,
Sweeping the chaff and litter from his own,
To be the very dust of Wisdom's door,
Slave of the Firmán of the Lord of Life,
Who pour'd the wine of Wisdom in his cup,
Who laid the dew of Peace upon his lips;
Yea, wrought by Miracle in his behalf.
For when old Love return'd to Memory,
And broke in passion from his lips, The Sage,
Under whose waxing Will Existence rose
From Nothing, and, relaxing, waned again,
Raising a Fantom Image of Absál,
Set it awhile before Salámán's eyes,
Till, having sow'd the seed of comfort there,
It went again down to Annihilation.
But ever, as the Fantom past away,
The Sage would tell of a Celestial Love;
'Zuhrah,' he said, 'Zuhrah, compared with whom
'That brightest star that bears her name in Heav'n
'Was but a winking taper; and Absál,
'Queen-star of Beauties in this world below,
'But her distorted image in the stream
'Of fleeting Matter; and all Eloquence,
'And Soul-enchaining harmonies of Song,
'A far-off echo of that Harp in Heav'n
'Which Dervish-dances to her harmony.' Salámán listen'd, and inclined again
Entreated, inclination ever grew;
Until The Sage beholding in his Soul
The Spirit quicken, so effectually
With Zuhrah wrought, that she reveal'd herself
In her pure lustre to Salámán's Soul,
And blotting Absál's Image from his breast
There reign'd instead. Celestial Beauty seen,
He left the Earthly; and, once come to know
Eternal Love, the Mortal he let go.
The Crown of Empire how supreme a lot!
The Sultan's Throne how lofty! Yea, but not
For All None but the Heaven-ward foot may dare

Letters and Literary Remains

To mount The head that touches Heaven to wear! When the Beloved of Royal augury
Was rescued from the bondage of Absál,
Then he arose, and shaking off the dust
Of that lost travel, girded up his heart,
And look'd with undefilèd robe to Heaven.
Then was his Head worthy to wear the Crown,
His Foot to mount the Throne. And then The Sháh
From all the quarters of the World-wide realm
Summon'd all those who under Him the ring
Of Empire wore, King, Counsellor, Amír;
Of whom not one but to Salámán did
Obeisance, and lifted up his neck
To yoke it under His supremacy.
Then The Sháh crown'd him with the Golden Crown,
And set the Golden Throne beneath his feet,
And over all the heads of the Assembly,
And in the ears of all, his Jewel-word
With the Diamond of Wisdom cut, and said: 'My Son, the Kingdom of the World is not
'Eternal, nor the sum of right desire;
'Make thou the Law reveal'd of God thy Law,
'The voice of Intellect Divine within
'Interpreter; and considering To-day
'To-morrow's Seed-field, ere That come to bear,
'Sow with the harvest of Eternity.
'And, as all Work, and, most of all, the Work
'That Kings are born to, wisely should be wrought,
'Where doubtful of thine own sufficiency,
'Ever, as I have done, consult the Wise.
'Turn not thy face away from the Old ways,
'That were the canon of the Kings of Old;
'Nor cloud with Tyranny the glass of Justice:
'By Mercy rather to right Order turn
'Confusion, and Disloyalty to Love.
'In thy provision for the Realm's estate,
'And for the Honour that becomes a King,
'Drain not thy People's purse the Tyranny
'Which thee enriches at thy Subject's cost,
'Awhile shall make thee strong; but in the end
'Shall bow thy neck beneath thy People's hate,
'And lead thee with the Robber down to Hell.
'Thou art a Shepherd, and thy Flock the People,
'To help and save, not ravage and destroy;
'For which is for the other, Flock or Shepherd?
'And join with thee True men to keep the Flock
'Dogs, if you will but trusty head in leash,
'Whose teeth are for the Wolf, not for the Lamb,
'And least of all the Wolf's accomplices.
'For Sháhs must have Vizyrs but be they Wise
'And Trusty knowing well the Realm's estate
'Knowing how far to Sháh and Subject bound
'On either hand not by extortion, nor

Letters and Literary Remains

'By usury wrung from the People's purse,
'Feeding their Master, and themselves (with whom
'Enough is apt enough to make rebel)
'To such a surfeit feeding as feeds Hell.
'Proper in soul and body be they pitiful
'To Poverty hospitable to the Saint
'Their sweet Access a salve to wounded Hearts;
'Their Wrath a sword against Iniquity,
'But at thy bidding only to be drawn;
'Whose Ministers they are, to bring thee in
'Report of Good or Evil through the Realm:
 'Which to confirm with thine immediate Eye,
'And least of all, remember least of all,
'Suffering Accuser also to be Judge,
 'By surest steps up—builds Prosperity.'

Meaning of The Story.

Under the leaf of many a Fable lies
The Truth for those who look for it; of this
If thou wouldst look behind and find the Fruit,
(To which the Wiser hand hath found his way)
Have thy desire No Tale of Me and Thee,
Though I and Thou be its Interpreters.
What signifies The Sháh? and what The Sage?
And what Salámán not of Woman born?
Who was Absál who drew him to Desire?
And what the Kingdom that awaited him
When he had drawn his Garment from her hand?
What means That Sea? And what that Fiery Pile?
And what that Heavenly Zuhrah who at last
Clear'd Absál from the Mirror of his Soul?
Listen to me, and you shall understand
The Word that Lover wrote along the sand.
The Incomparable Creator, when this World
He did create, created first of all
The First Intelligence First of a Chain
Of Ten Intelligences, of which the Last
Sole Agent is in this our Universe,
Active Intelligence so call'd; The One
Distributor of Evil and of Good,
Of Joy and Sorrow. Himself apart from Matter,
In Essence and in Energy He yet
Hath fashion'd all that is Material Form,
And Spiritual, all from Him by Him
Directed all, and in his Bounty drown'd.
Therefore is He that Firmán—issuing Sháh
To whom the World was subject. But because

What He distributes to the Universe
 Another and a Higher Power supplies,
 Therefore all those who comprehend aright,
 That Higher in The Sage will recognise.

bsp; *HIS* the Prime Spirit that, spontaneously
 Projected by the Tenth Intelligence,
 Was from no womb of Matter reproduced
 A special Essence called The Soul of Man;
 A Child of Heaven, in raiment unbeset
 Of Sensual taint, and so Salámán named.

bsp; And who Absál? The Sense-adoring Body,
 Slave to the Blood and Sense through whom The Soul,
 Although the Body's very Life it be,
 Doth yet imbibe the knowledge and delight
 Of things of Sense; and these in such a bond
 United as God only can divide,
 As Lovers in this Tale are signified.
 And what the Flood on which they sail'd, with those
 Fantastic creatures peopled; and that Isle
 In which their Paradise awhile they made,
 And thought, for ever? That false Paradise
 Amid the fluctuating Waters found
 Of Sensual passion, in whose bosom lies
 A world of Being from the light of God
 Deep as in unsubiding Deluge drown'd.

bsp; And why was it that Absál in that Isle
 So soon deceived in her Delight, and He
 Fell short of his Desire? that was to show
 How soon the Senses of their Passion tire,
 And in a surfeit of themselves expire.

bsp; And what the turning of Salámán's Heart
 Back to The Shah, and to the throne of Might
 And Glory yearning? What but the return
 Of the lost Soul to his true Parentage,
 And back from Carnal error looking up
 Repentant to his Intellectual Right.

bsp; And when the Man between his living Shame
 Distracted, and the Love that would not die,
 Fled once again what meant that second Flight
 Into the Desert, and that Pile of Fire
 On which he fain his Passion with Himself
 Would immolate? That was the Discipline
 To which the living Man himself devotes,
 Till all the Sensual dross be scorcht away,
 And, to its pure integrity return'd,
 His Soul alone survives. But forasmuch
 As from a darling Passion so divorced
 The wound will open and will bleed anew,
 Therefore The Sage would ever and anon
 Raise up and set before Salámán's eyes
 That Fantom of the past; but evermore

Revealing one Diviner, till his Soul
She fill'd, and blotted out the Mortal Love.
For what is Zuhrah? What but that Divine
Original, of which the Soul of Man
Darkly possesst, by that fierce Discipline
At last he disengages from the Dust,
And flinging off the baser rags of Sense,
And all in Intellectual Light array'd,
As Conqueror and King he mounts the Throne,
And wears the Crown of Human Glory Whence,
Throne over Throne surmounting, he shall reign
One with the Last and First Intelligence.
This is the meaning of this Mystery,
Which to know wholly ponder in thy Heart,
Till all its ancient Secret be enlarged.
Enough The written Summary I close,
And set my Seal

THE TRUTH GOD ONLY KNOWS

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF FARÍD-UDDÍN ATTAR'S BIRD-PARLIAMENT

Once on a time from all the Circles seven
Between the stedfast Earth and rolling Heaven
The Birds, of all Note, Plumage, and Degree,
That float in Air, and roost upon the Tree;
And they that from the Waters snatch their Meat,
And they that scour the Desert with long Feet:
Birds of all Natures, known or not to Man,
Flock'd from all Quarters into full Divan,
On no less solemn business than to find
Or choose, a Sultán Khalif of their kind,
For whom, if never their's, or lost, they pined.
The Snake had his, 'twas said; and so the Beast
His Lion-lord: and Man had his, at least:
And that the Birds, who nearest were the Skies,
And went apparell'd in its Angel Dyes,
Should be without under no better Law
Than that which lost all other in the Maw
Disperst without a Bond of Union nay,
Or meeting to make each the other's Prey
This was the Grievance this the solemn Thing
On which the scatter'd Commonwealth of Wing,
From all the four Winds, flying like to Cloud
That met and blacken'd Heav'n, and Thunder-loud
With Sound of whirring Wings and Beaks that clash'd
Down like a Torrent on the Desert dash'd:
Till by Degrees, the Hubbub and Pell-mell

Into some Order and Precedence fell,
 And, Proclamation made of Silence, each
 In special Accent, but in general Speech
 That all should understand, as seem'd him best,
 The Congregation of all Wings address.

bsp; And first, with Heart so full as from his Eyes
 Ran weeping, up rose Tájidár the Wise;
 The mystic Mark upon whose Bosom show'd
 That he alone of all the Birds The Road
 Had travell'd: and the Crown upon his Head
 Had reach'd the Goal; and He stood forth and said.
 I speak you know by *His* authentic Sign,
 And Name, emblazon'd on my Breast and Bill:
 Whose Counsel I assist at, and fulfil:
 At His Behest I measured as he plann'd
 The Spaces of the Air and Sea and Land;
 I gauged the secret sources of the Springs
 From Cloud to Fish: the Shadow of my Wings
 Dream'd over sleeping Deluge: piloted
 The Blast that bore Sulaymán's Throne: and led
 The Cloud of Birds that canopied his Head;
 Whose Word I brought to Balkís: and I shared
 The Counsel that with Ásaf he prepared.
 And now *you* want a Khalif: and I know
 Him, and his whereabouts, and How to go:
 And go alone I could, and plead your cause
 Alone for all: but, by the eternal laws,
 Yourselves by Toil and Travel of your own
 Must for your old Delinquency atone.
 Were you indeed not blinded by the Curse
 Of Self-exile, that still grows worse and worse,
 Yourselves would know that, though *you* see him not,
 He *is* with you this Moment, on this Spot,
 Your Lord through all Forgetfulness and Crime,
 Here, There, and Everywhere, and through all Time.
 But as a Father, whom some wayward Child
 By sinful Self-will has unreconciled,
 Waits till the sullen Reprobate at cost
 Of long Repentance should regain the Lost,
 Therefore, yourselves to see as you are seen,
 Yourselves must bridge the Gulf you made between
 By such a Search and Travel to be gone
 Up to the mighty mountain Káf, whereon
 Hinges the World, and round about whose Knees
 Into one Ocean mingle the Sev'n Seas;
 In whose impenetrable Forest-folds
 Of Light and Dark 'Sýmurgh' his Presence holds;
 Not to be reach'd, if to be reach'd at all
 But by a Road the stoutest might appal;
 Of Travel not of Days or Months, but Yeàrs
 Life-long perhaps: of Dangers, Doubts, and Fears

'Oh Birds, by what Authority divine

Letters and Literary Remains

As yet unheard of: Sweat of Blood and Brain
Interminable often all in vain
And, if successful, no Return again:
A Road whose very Preparation scared
The Traveller who yet must be prepared.
Who then this Travel to Result would bring
Needs both a Lion's Heart beneath the Wing,
And even more, a Spirit purified
Of Worldly Passion, Malice, Lust, and Pride:
Yea, ev'n of Worldly *Wisdom*, which grows dim
And dark, the nearer it approaches *Him*,
Who to the Spirit's Eye alone reveal'd,
By sacrifice of Wisdom's self unseal'd;
Without which none who reach the Place could bear
To look upon the Glory dwelling there.' One Night from out the swarming City Gate
Stept holy Bajazyd, to meditate
Alone amid the breathing Fields that lay
In solitary Silence leagues away,
Beneath a Moon and Stars as bright as Day.
And the Saint wondering such a Temple were,
And so lit up, and scarce one worshipper,
A voice from Heav'n amid the stillness said;
'The Royal Road is not for all to tread,
Nor is the Royal Palace for the Rout,
Who, even if they reach it, are shut out.
The Blaze that from my Harím window breaks
With fright the Rabble of the Roadside takes;
And ev'n of those that at my Portal din,
Thousands may knock for one that enters in.'
Thus spoke the Tájidár: and the wing'd Crowd,
That underneath his Word in Silence bow'd,
Clapp'd Acclamation: and their Hearts and Eyes
Were kindled by the Firebrand of the Wise.
They felt their Degradation: they believed
The word that told them how to be retrieved,
And in that glorious Consummation won
Forgot the Cost at which it must be done.
'They only *long'd* to follow: they would go
Whither he led, through Flood, or Fire, or Snow.'
So cried the Multitude. But some there were
Who listen'd with a cold disdainful air,
Content with what they were, or grudging Cost
Of Time or Travel that might all be lost;
These, one by one, came forward, and prefer'd
Unwise Objection: which the wiser Word
Shot with direct Reproof, or subtly round
With Argument and Allegory wound.

bsp; *The Pheasant* first would know by what pretence
The Tájidár to that pre-eminence
Was raised a Bird, but for his lofty Crest
(And such the Pheasant had) like all the Rest Who answer'd 'By no Virtue of my own

Sulaymán chose me, but by *His* alone:
 Not by the Gold and Silver of my Sighs
 Made mine, but the free Largess of his Eyes.
 Behold the Grace of Allah comes and goes
 As to Itself is good: and no one knows
 Which way it turns: in that mysterious Court
 Not he most finds who furthest travels for't.
 For one may crawl upon his knees Life-long,
 And yet may never reach, or all go wrong:
 Another just arriving at the Place
 He toil'd for, and the Door shut in his Face:
 Whereas Another, scarcely gone a Stride,
 And suddenly Behold he is Inside!
 But though the Runner win not, he that *stands*,
 No Thorn will turn to Roses in *his* Hands:
 Each one must do his best and all endure,
 And all endeavour, hoping but not sure.
 Heav'n its own Umpire is; its Bidding do,
 And Thou perchance shalt be Sulaymán's too.' One day Shah Mahmúd, riding with the Wind
 A-hunting, left his Retinue behind,
 And coming to a River, whose swift Course
 Doubled back Game and Dog, and Man and Horse,
 Beheld upon the Shore a little Lad
 A-fishing, very poor, and Tatter-clad
 He was, and weeping as his Heart would break.
 So the Great Sultán, for Good humour's sake
 Pull'd in his Horse a moment, and drew nigh,
 And after making his Salám, ask'd why
 He wept weeping, the Sultán said, so sore
 As he had never seen one weep before.
 The Boy look'd up, and 'Oh Amír,' he said,
 'Sev'n of us are at home, and Father dead,
 And Mother left with scarce a Bit of Bread:
 And now since Sunrise have I fish'd and see!
 Caught nothing for our Supper Woe is Me!'
 The Sultán lighted from his Horse. 'Behold,'
 Said he, 'Good Fortune will not be controll'd:
 And, since To-day yours seems to turn from you,
 Suppose we try for once what mine will do,
 And we will share alike in all I win.'
 So the Shah took, and flung his Fortune in,
 The Net; which, cast by the Great Mahmúd's Hand,
 A hundred glittering Fishes brought to Land.
 The Lad look'd up in Wonder Mahmúd smiled
 And vaulted into Saddle. But the Child
 Ran after 'Nay, Amír, but half the Haul
 Is yours by Bargain' 'Nay, To-day take all,'
 The Sultán cried, and shook his Bridle free
 'But mind To-morrow All belongs to Me '
 And so rode off. Next morning at Divan
 The Sultán's Mind upon his Bargain ran,

And being somewhat in a mind for sport
 Sent for the Lad: who, carried up to Court,
 And marching into Royalty's full Blaze
 With such a Catch of Fish as yesterday's,
 The Sultán call'd and set him by his side,
 And asking him, 'What Luck?' The Boy replied,
 'This is the Luck that follows every Cast,
 Since o'er my Net the Sultán's Shadow pass'd.'
 Then came *The Nightingale*, from such a Draught
 Of Ecstasy that from the Rose he quaff'd
 Reeling as drunk, and ever did distil
 In exquisite Divisions from his Bill
 To inflame the Hearts of Men and thus sang He
 'To me alone, alone, is giv'n the Key
 Of Love; of whose whole Mystery possesst,
 When I reveal a little to the Rest,
 Forthwith Creation listening forsakes
 The Reins of Reason, and my Frenzy takes:
 Yea, whosoever once has quaff'd this wine
 He leaves unlisten'd David's Song for mine.
 In vain do Men for my Divisions strive,
 And die themselves making dead Lutes alive:
 I hang the Stars with Meshes for Men's Souls:
 The Garden underneath my Music rolls.
 The long, long Morns that mourn the Rose away
 I sit in silence, and on Anguish prey:
 But the first Air which the New Year shall breathe
 Up to my Boughs of Message from beneath
 That in her green Harím my Bride unveils,
 My Throat bursts silence and *her* Advent hails,
 Who in her crimson Volume registers
 The Notes of Him whose Life is lost in hers.
 The Rose I love and worship now is here;
 If dying, yet reviving, Year by Year;
 But that you tell of, all my Life why waste
 In vainly searching; or, if found, not taste?' So with Division infinite and Trill
 On would the Nightingale have warbled still,
 And all the World have listen'd; but a Note
 Of sterner Import check'd the love-sick Throat.
 bsp; 'Oh watering with thy melodious Tears
 Love's Garden, and who dost indeed the Ears
 Of men with thy melodious Fingers mould
 As David's Finger Iron did of old:
 Why not, like David, dedicate thy Dower
 Of Song to something better than a Flower?
 Empress indeed of Beauty, so they say,
 But one whose Empire hardly lasts a Day,
 By Insurrection of the Morning's Breath
 That made her hurried to Decay and Death:
 And while she lasts contented to be seen,
 And worshipt, for the Garden's only Queen,

Letters and Literary Remains

Leaving thee singing on thy Bough forlorn,
 Or if she smile on Thee, perhaps in Scorn.' Like that fond Dervish waiting in the throng
 When some World-famous Beauty went along,
 Who smiling on the Antic as she pass'd
 Forthwith Staff, Bead and Scrip away he cast,
 And grovelling in the Kennel, took to whine
 Before her Door among the Dogs and Swine.
 Which when she often went unheeding by,
 But one day quite as heedless ask'd him 'Why?'
 He told of that one Smile, which, all the Rest
 Passing, had kindled Hope within his Breast
 Again she smiled and said, 'Oh self-beguiled
 Poor Wretch, *at* whom and not *on* whom I smiled.'
 Then came the subtle *Parrot* in a coat
 Greener than Greensward, and about his Throat
 A Collar ran of sub-sulphureous Gold;
 And in his Beak a Sugar-plum he troll'd,
 That all his Words with luscious Lispering ran,
 And to this Tune 'Oh cruel Cage, and Man
 More iron still who did confine me there,
 Who else with him whose Livery I wear
 Ere this to his Eternal Fount had been,
 And drunk what should have kept me ever-green.
 But now I know the Place, and I am free
 To go, and all the Wise will follow Me.
 Some' and upon the Nightingale one Eye
 He leer'd 'for nothing but the Blossom sigh:
 But I am for the luscious Pulp that grows
 Where, and for which the Blossom only blows:
 And which so long as the Green Tree provides
 What better grows along Káf's dreary Sides?
 And what more needful Prophet *there* than He
 Who gives me Life to nip it from the Tree?' To whom the Tájídár 'Oh thou whose Best
 In the green leaf of Paradise is drest,
 But whose Neck kindles with a lower Fire
 Oh slip the collar off of base Desire,
 And stand apparell'd in Heav'n's Woof entire!
This Life that hangs so sweet about your Lips
 But, spite of all your Khizar, slips and slips,
 What is it but itself the coarser Rind
 Of the True Life withinside and behind,
 Which he shall never never reach unto
 Till the gross Shell of Carcase he break through?' For what said He, that dying Hermit, whom
 Your Prophet came to, trailing through the Gloom
 His Emerald Vest, and tempted 'Come with Me,
 And Live.' The Hermit answered 'Not with Thee.
 Two Worlds there are, and *This* was thy Design,
 And thou hast got it; but *The Next* is mine;
 Whose Fount is *this* Life's Death, and to whose Side
 Ev'n now I find my Way without a Guide.'
 Then like a Sultán glittering in all Rays

Of Jewelry, and deckt with his own Blaze,
 The glorious *Peacock* swept into the Ring:
 And, turning slowly that the glorious Thing
 Might fill all Eyes with wonder, thus said He.
 'Behold, the Secret Artist, making me,
 With no one Colour of the skies bedeckt,
 But from its Angel's Feathers did select
 To make up mine withal, the Gabriel
 Of all the Birds: though from my Place I fell
 In Eden, when Acquaintance I did make
 In those blest Days with that Sev'n-headed Snake,
 And thence with him, my perfect Beauty marr'd
 With these ill Feet, was thrust out and debarr'd.
 Little I care for Worldly Fruit or Flower,
 Would you restore me to lost Eden's Bower,
 But first my Beauty making all complete
 With reparation of these ugly Feet.' 'Were it,' 'twas answer'd, 'only to return
 To that lost Eden, better far to burn
 In Self-abasement up thy plumèd Pride,
 And ev'n with lamer feet to creep inside
 But all mistaken you and all like you
 That long for that lost Eden as the true;
 Fair as it was, still nothing but the Shade
 And Out-court of the Majesty that made
 That which I point you tow'rd, and which the King
 I tell you of broods over with his Wing,
 With no deciduous leaf, but with the Rose
 Of Spiritual Beauty, smells and glows:
 No plot of Earthly Pleasance, but the whole
 True Garden of the Universal Soul.'
 For so Creation's Master-jewel fell
 From that same Eden: loving which too well,
 The Work before the Artist did prefer,
 And in the Garden lost the Gardener.
 Wherefore one Day about the Garden went
 A voice that found him in his false Content,
 And like a bitter Sarsar of the North
 Shrivell'd the Garden up, and drove him forth
 Into the Wilderness: and so the Eye
 Of Eden closed on him till by and by.

bsp; Then from a Ruin where conceal'd he lay
 Watching his buried Gold, and hating Day,
 Hooted *The Owl*. 'I tell you, my Delight
 Is in the Ruin and the Dead of Night
 Where I was born, and where I love to wone
 All my Life long, sitting on some cold stone,
 Away from all your roystering Companies,
 In some dark Corner where a Treasure lies;
 That, buried by some Miser in the Dark,
 Speaks up to me at Midnight like a Spark;
 And o'er it like a Talisman I brood,

Letters and Literary Remains

Companion of the Serpent and the Toad.
What need of other Sovereign, having found,
And keeping as in Prison underground,
One before whom all other Kings bow down,
And with his glittering Heel their Foreheads crown?
'He that a Miser lives and Miser dies,
At the Last Day what Figure shall he rise?' A Fellow all his life lived hoarding Gold,
And, dying, hoarded left it. And behold,
One Night his Son saw peering through the House
A Man, with yet the semblance of a Mouse,
Watching a crevice in the Wall and cried
'My Father?' 'Yes,' the Musulman replied,
'Thy Father!' 'But why watching thus?' 'For fear
Lest any smell my Treasure buried here.'
'But wherefore, Sir, so metamorphosed?'
'Because, my Son, such is the true outside
Of the inner Soul by which I lived and died.'
'Ay,' said *The Partridge*, with his Foot and Bill
Crimson with raking Rubies from the Hill,
And clattering his Spurs 'Wherewith the Ground
'I stab,' said he, 'for Rubies, that, when found
I swallow; which, as soon as swallow'd, turn
To Sparks which through my beak and eyes do burn.
Gold, as you say, is but dull Metal dead,
And hanging on the Hoarder's Soul like Lead:
But Rubies that have Blood within, and grown
And nourisht in the Mountain Heart of Stone,
Burn with an inward Light, which they inspire,
And make their Owners Lords of their Desire.' To whom the Tájidár 'As idly sold
To the quick Pebble as the drowsy Gold,
As dead when sleeping in their mountain mine
As dangerous to Him who makes them shine:
Slavish indeed to do their Lord's Commands,
And slave-like, aptest to escape his Hands,
And serve a second Master like the first,
And working all their wonders for the worst.' Never was Jewel after or before
Like that Sulaymán for a Signet wore:
Whereby one Ruby, weighing scarce a grain
Did Sea and Land and all therein constrain,
Yea, ev'n the Winds of Heav'n made the fierce East
Bear his League-wide Pavilion like a Beast,
Whither he would: yea, the Good Angel held
His subject, and the lower Fiend compell'd.
Till, looking round about him in his pride,
He overtax'd the Fountain that supplied,
Praying that after him no Son of Clay
Should ever touch his Glory. And one Day
Almighty God his Jewel stole away,
And gave it to the Div, who with the Ring
Wore also the Resemblance of the King,
And so for forty days play'd such a Game

Letters and Literary Remains

As blots Sulaymán's forty years with Shame.
Then *The Shah–Falcon*, tossing up his Head
Blink–hooded as it was 'Behold,' he said,
'I am the chosen Comrade of the King,
And perch upon the Fist that wears the Ring;
Born, bred, and nourisht, in the Royal Court,
I take the Royal Name and make the Sport.
And if strict Discipline I undergo
And half my Life am blinded be it so;
Because the Shah's Companion ill may brook
On aught save Royal Company to look.
And why am I to leave my King, and fare
With all these Rabble Wings I know not where?' 'Oh blind indeed' the Answer was, 'and dark
To any but a vulgar Mortal Mark,
And drunk with Pride of Vassalage to those
Whose Humour like their Kingdom comes and goes;
All Mutability: who one Day please
To give: and next Day what they gave not seize:
Like to the Fire: a dangerous Friend at best,
Which who keeps farthest from does wiseliest.'
A certain Shah there was in Days foregone
Who had a lovely Slave he doated on,
And cherish'd as the Apple of his Eye,
Clad gloriously, fed sumptuously, set high,
And never was at Ease were *He* not by,
Who yet, for all this Sunshine, Day by Day
Was seen to wither like a Flower away.
Which, when observing, one without the Veil
Of Favour ask'd the Favourite 'Why so pale
And sad?' thus sadly answer'd the poor Thing
'No Sun that rises sets until the King,
Whose Archery is famous among Men,
Aims at an Apple on my Head; and when
The stricken Apple splits, and those who stand
Around cry "Lo! the Shah's unerring Hand!"
Then He too laughing asks me "Why so pale
And sorrow–some? as could the Sultan fail,
Who such a master of the Bow confest,
And aiming by the Head that he loves best."
Then on a sudden swoop'd *The Phoenix* down
As though he wore as well as gave The Crown:
And cried 'I care not, I, to wait on Kings,
Whose crowns are but the Shadow of my Wings!' 'Ay,' was the Answer 'And, pray, how has sped,
On which it lighted, many a mortal Head?' A certain Sultán dying, his Vizier
In Dream beheld him, and in mortal Fear
Began 'Oh mighty Shah of Shahs! Thrice–blest'
But loud the Vision shriek'd and struck its Breast,
And 'Stab me not with empty Title!' cried
'One only Shah there is, and none beside,
Who from his Throne above for certain Ends
Awhile some Spangle of his Glory lends

To Men on Earth; but calling in again
 Exacts a strict account of every Grain.
 Sultán I lived, and held the World in scorn:
 Oh better had I glean'd the Field of Corn!
 Oh better had I been a Beggar born,
 And for my Throne and Crown, down in the Dust
 My living Head had laid where Dead I must!
 Oh wither'd, wither'd, wither'd, be the Wing
 Whose overcasting Shadow made me King!
 Then from a Pond, where all day long he kept,
 Waddled the dapper *Duck* demure, adept
 At infinite Ablution, and precise
 In keeping of his Raiment clean and nice.
 And 'Sure of all the Race of Birds,' said He,
 'None for Religious Purity like Me,
 Beyond what strictest Rituals prescribe
 Methinks I am the Saint of all our Tribe,
 To whom, by Miracle, the Water, that
 I wash in, also makes my Praying–Mat.' To whom, more angrily than all, replied
 The Leader, lashing that religious Pride,
 That under ritual Obedience
 To outer Law with inner might dispense:
 For, fair as all the Feather to be seen,
 Could one see *through*, the Maw was not so clean:
 But He that made both Maw and Feather too
 Would take account of, seeing through and through.

bsp; A Shah returning to his Capital,
 His subjects drest it forth in Festival,
 Thronging with Acclamation Square and Street,
 And kneeling flung before his Horse's feet
 Jewel and Gold. All which with scarce an Eye
 The Sultán superciliously rode by:
 Till coming to the public Prison, They
 Who dwelt within those grisly Walls, by way
 Of Welcome, having neither Pearl nor Gold,
 Over the wall chopt Head and Carcase roll'd,
 Some almost parcht to Mummy with the Sun,
 Some wet with Execution that day done.
 At which grim Compliment at last the Shah
 Drew Bridle: and amid a wild Hurrah
 Of savage Recognition, smiling threw
 Silver and Gold among the wretched Crew,
 And so rode forward. Whereat of his Train
 One wondering that, while others sued in vain
 With costly gifts, which carelessly he pass'd,
 But smiled at ghastly Welcome like the last;
 The Shah made answer 'All that Pearl and Gold
 Of ostentatious Welcome only told:
 A little with great Clamour from the Store
 Of Hypocrites who kept at home much more.
 But when those sever'd Heads and Trunks I saw

Letters and Literary Remains

Save by strict Execution of my Law
They had not parted company; not one
But told my Will not talk'd about, but *done*.' Then from a Wood was heard unseen to coo
The Ring-dove 'Yúsuf! Yúsuf! Yúsuf! Yú-'
(For thus her sorrow broke her Note in twain,
And, just where broken, took it up again)
'-suf! Yúsuf! Yúsuf! Yúsuf!' But one Note,
Which still repeating, she made hoarse her throat:
Till checkt 'Oh You, who with your idle Sighs
Block up the Road of better Enterprize;
Sham Sorrow all, or bad as sham if true,
When once the better thing is come to *do*;
Beware lest wailing thus you meet *his* Doom
Who all too long his Darling wept, from whom
You draw the very Name you hold so dear,
And which the World is somewhat tired to hear.'
When Yúsuf from his Father's Home was torn,
The Patriarch's Heart was utterly forlorn,
And, like a Pipe with but one stop, his Tongue
With nothing but the name of 'Yúsuf' rung.
Then down from Heaven's Branches flew the *Bird*
Of Heav'n, and said 'God wearies of that word:
Hast thou not else to do and else to say?'
So Yacúb's lips were sealéd from that Day.
But one Night in a Vision, far away
His darling in some alien Field he saw
Binding the Sheaf; and what between the Awe
Of God's Displeasure and the bitter Pass
Of passionate Affection, sigh'd 'Alas '
And stopp'd But with the morning Sword of Flame
That oped his Eyes the sterner Angel's came
'For the forbidden Word not utter'd by
Thy Lips was yet sequester'd in that Sigh.'
And the right Passion whose Excess was wrong
Blinded the aged Eyes that wept too long.
And after these came others arguing,
Enquiring and excusing some one Thing,
And some another endless to repeat,
But, in the Main, Sloth, Folly, or Deceit.
Their Souls were to the vulgar Figure cast
Of earthly Victual not of Heavenly Fast.
At last one smaller Bird, of a rare kind,
Of modest Plume and unpretentious Mind,
Whisper'd, 'Oh Tájjidár, we know indeed
How Thou both knowest, and would'st help our Need;
For thou art wise and holy, and hast been
Behind the Veil, and there *The Presence* seen. But we are weak and vain, with little care
Beyond our yearly Nests and daily Fare
How should we reach the Mountain? and if there
How get so great a Prince to hear our Prayer?
For there, you say, dwells *The Symurgh* alone

Letters and Literary Remains

In Glory, like Sulaymán on his Throne,
And we but Pismires at his feet: can He
Such puny Creatures stoop to hear, or see;
Or hearing, seeing, *own* us unakin
As He to Folly, Woe, and Death, and Sin?' To whom the Tájidár, whose Voice for those
Bewilder'd ones to full Compassion rose
'Oh lost so long in Exile, you disclaim
The very Fount of Being whence you came,
Cannot be parted from, and, will or no,
Whither for Good or Evil must re-flow!
For look the Shadows into which the Light
Of his pure Essence down by infinite
Gradation dwindles, which at random play
Through Space in Shape indefinite one Ray
Of his Creative *Will* into *defined*
Creation quickens: We that swim the Wind,
And they the Flood below, and Man and Beast
That walk between, from Lion to the least
Pismire that creeps along Sulaymán's Wall
Yea, that in which they swim, fly, walk, and crawl
However near the Fountain Light, or far
Removed, yet *His* authentic Shadows are;
Dead Matter's Self but the dark Residue
Exterminating Glory dwindles to.
A Mystery too fearful in the Crowd
To utter scarcely to Thyself aloud
But when in solitary Watch and Prayer
Consider'd: and religiously beware
Lest Thou the Copy with the Type confound;
And *Deity*, with Deity indrown'd,
For as pure Water into purer Wine
Incorporating shall itself refine
While the dull Drug lies half-resolved below,
With Him and with his Shadows is it so:
The baser Forms, to whatsoever Change
Subject, still vary through their lower Range:
To which the *higher* even shall decay,
That, letting ooze their better Part away
For Things of Sense and Matter, in the End
Shall merge into the Clay to which they tend.
Unlike to him, who straining through the Bond
Of outward Being for a Life beyond,
While the gross Worldling to *his* Centre clings,
That draws him deeper in, exulting springs
To merge him in the central *Soul* of Things.
And shall not he pass home with other Zest
Who, with full Knowledge, yearns for such a Rest,
Than he, who with his better self at strife,
Drags on the weary Exile call'd *This Life*?
One, like a child with outstretcht Arms and Face
Up-turn'd, anticipates his Sire's Embrace;

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The other crouching like a guilty Slave
Till flogg'd to Punishment across the Grave.
And, knowing that *His* glory ill can bear
The unpurged Eye; do thou Thy Breast prepare;
And the mysterious Mirror He set there,
To temper his reflected Image in,
Clear of Distortion, Doubleness, and Sin:
And in thy Conscience understanding *this*,
The *Double* only *seems*, but The *One is*,
Thy-self to Self-annihilation give
That this false *Two* in that true *One* may live.
For this I say: if, looking in thy Heart,
Thou for *Self-whole* mistake thy *Shadow-part*,
That *Shadow-part* indeed into *The Sun*
Shall melt, but senseless of its Union:
But in that Mirror if with purgèd eyes
Thy Shadow Thou *for* Shadow recognize,
Then shalt Thou back into thy Centre fall
A conscious Ray of that eternal *All*.' He ceased, and for a while Amazement quell'd
The Host, and in the Chain of Silence held:
A Mystery so awful who would dare
So glorious who would not wish to share?
So Silence brooded on the feather'd Folk,
Till here and there a timid Murmur broke
From some too poor in honest Confidence,
And then from others of too much Pretence;
Whom both, as each unduly hoped or fear'd,
The Tájidár in answer check'd or cheer'd.

bsp; Some said their Hearts were good indeed to go
The Way he pointed out: but they were slow
Of Comprehension, and scarce understood
Their present Evil or the promised Good:
And so, tho' willing to do all they could,
Must not they fall short, or go wholly wrong,
On such mysterious Errand, and so long?
Whom the wise Leader bid but Do their Best
In Hope and Faith, and leave to *Him* the rest,
For He who fix'd the Race, and knew its Length
And Danger, also knew the Runner's Strength.

bsp; Shah Mahmúd, absent on an Enterprize,
Ayas, the very Darling of his eyes,
At home under an Evil Eye fell sick,
Then cried the Sultán to a soldier 'Quick!
To Horse! to Horse! without a Moment's Stay,
The shortest Road with all the Speed you may,
Or, by the Lord, your Head shall pay for it!
Off went the Soldier, plying Spur and Bit
Over the Sandy Desert, over green
Valley, and Mountain, and the Stream between,
Without a Moment's Stop for rest or bait,
Up to the City to the Palace Gate

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Up to the Presence—Chamber at a Stride
And Lo! The Sultán at his Darling's side!
Then thought the Soldier 'I have done my Best,
And yet shall die for it.' The Sultán guess'd
His Thought and smiled. 'Indeed your Best you did,
The nearest Road you knew, and well you rid:
And if I knew a shorter, my Excess
Of Knowledge does but justify thy Less.'
And then, with drooping Crest and Feather, came
Others, bow'd down with Penitence and Shame.
They long'd indeed to go; 'but how begin,
Mesh'd and entangled as they were in Sin
Which often—times Repentance of past Wrong
As often broken had but knit more strong?' Whom the wise Leader bid be of good cheer,
And, conscious of the Fault, dismiss the Fear,
Nor at the very Entrance of the Fray
Their Weapon, ev'n if broken, fling away:
Since Mercy on the broken Branch anew
Would blossom were but each Repentance true.

bsp; For did not God his Prophet take to Task?
'Sev'n—times of Thee did Kárún Pardon ask;
Which, hadst thou been like Me his Maker yea,
But present at the Kneading of his Clay
With those twain Elements of Hell and Heav'n,
One prayer had won what Thou deny'st to Sev'n.' For like a Child sent with a fluttering Light
To feel his way along a gusty Night
Man walks the World: again and yet again
The Lamp shall be by Fits of Passion slain:
But shall not He who sent him from the Door
Relight the Lamp once more, and yet once more? When the rebellious Host from Death shall wake
Black with Despair of Judgment, God shall take
Ages of holy Merit from the Count
Of Angels to make up Man's short Amount,
And bid the murmuring Angel gladly spare
Of that which, undiminishing his Share
Of Bliss, shall rescue Thousands from the Cost
Of Bankruptcy within the Prison lost.

bsp; Another Story told how in the Scale
Good Will beyond mere Knowledge would prevail.

bsp; In Paradise the Angel Gabriel heard
The Lips of Allah trembling with the Word
Of perfect Acceptation: and he thought
'Some perfect Faith such perfect Answer wrought,
But whose?' And therewith slipping from the Crypt
Of Sidra, through the Angel—ranks he slipt
Watching what Lip yet trembled with the Shot
That so had hit the Mark but found it not.
Then, in a Glance to Earth, he threaded through
Mosque, Palace, Cell and Cottage of the True
Belief in vain; so back to Heaven went
And Allah's Lips still trembling with assent!

Then the tenacious Angel once again
 Threaded the Ranks of Heav'n and Earth in vain
 Till, once again return'd to Paradise,
 There, looking into God's, the Angel's Eyes
 Beheld the Prayer that brought that Benison
 Rising like Incense from the Lips of one
 Who to an Idol bow'd as best he knew
 Under that False God worshipping the True.

bsp; And then came others whom the summons found
 Not wholly sick indeed, but far from sound:
 Whose light inconstant Soul alternate flew
 From Saint to Sinner, and to both untrue;
 Who like a niggard Tailor, tried to match
 Truth's single Garment with a worldly Patch.
 A dangerous Game; for, striving to adjust
 The hesitating Scale of either Lust,
 That which had least within it upward flew,
 And still the weightier to the Earth down drew,
 And, while suspended between Rise and Fall,
 Apt with a shaking Hand to forfeit all.

bsp; There was a Queen of Egypt like the Bride
 Of Night, Full-moon-faced and Canopus-eyed,
 Whom one among the meanest of her Crowd
 Loved and she knew it, (for he loved aloud)
 And sent for him, and said 'Thou lovest thy Queen:
 Now therefore Thou hast this to choose between:
 Fly for thy Life: or for this one night Wed
 Thy Queen, and with the Sunrise lose thy Head.'
 He paused he turn'd to fly she struck him dead.
 'For had he truly loved his Queen,' said She,
 'He would at once have given his Life for me,
 And Life and Wife had carried: but he lied;
 And loving only Life, has justly died.'
 And then came one who having clear'd his Throat
 With sanctimonious Sweetness in his Note
 Thus lisp'd 'Behold I languish from the first
 With passionate and unrequited Thirst
 Of Love for more than any mortal Bird.
 Therefore have I withdrawn me from the Herd
 To pine in Solitude. But Thou at last
 Hast drawn a line across the dreary Past,
 And sure I am by Fore-taste that the Wine
 I long'd for, and Thou tell'st of, shall be mine.'
 Such Boast is no Assurance of such Bliss:
 Thou canst not even fill the sail of Prayer
 Unless from *Him* breathe that authentic Air
 That shall lift up the Curtain that divides
 His Lover from the Harím where *He* hides
 And the Fulfilment of thy Vows must be,
 Not from thy Love for Him, but His for Thee.'
 The third night after Bajazyd had died,

But he was sternly checkt. 'I tell thee this:

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One saw him, in a dream, at his Bed-side,
And said, 'Thou Bajazyd? Tell me Oh Pýr,
How fared it there with Munkar and Nakýr?'
And Bajazyd replied, 'When from the Grave
They met me rising, and "If Allah's slave"
Ask'd me, "or collar'd with the Chain of Hell?"
I said "Not I but God alone can tell:
My Passion for his service were but fond
Ambition had not He approved the Bond:
Had He not round my neck the Collar thrown
And told me in the Number of his own;
And that *He* only knew. What signifies
A hundred Years of Prayer if none replies?"'
'But' said Another, 'then shall none the Seal
Of Acceptation on his Forehead feel
Ere the Grave yield them on the other Side
Where all is settled?' But the Chief replied
'Enough for us to know that who is meet
Shall enter, and with unprovéd Feet,
(Ev'n as he might upon the Waters walk)
The Presence-room, and in the Presence talk
With such unbridled License as shall seem
To the Uninitiated to blaspheme.' Just as another Holy Spirit fled,
The Skies above him burst into a Bed
Of Angels looking down and singing clear
'Nightingale! Nightingale! thy Rose is here!'
And yet, the Door wide open to that Bliss,
As some hot Lover slights a scanty Kiss,
The Saint cried 'All I sigh'd for come to *this*?
I who life-long have struggled, Lord, to be
Not of thy Angels one, but one with Thee!'
Others were sure that all he said was true:
They were extremely wicked, that they knew:
And much they long'd to go at once but some,
They said, so unexpectedly had come
Leaving their Nests half-built in bad Repair
With Children in Themselves about to pair
'Might he not choose a better Season nay,
Better perhaps a Year or Two's Delay,
Till all was settled, and themselves more stout
And strong to carry their Repentance out
And then' 'And then, the same or like Excuse,
With harden'd Heart and Resolution loose
With dallying: and old Age itself engaged
Still to shirk that which shirking we have aged;
And so with Self-delusion, till, too late,
Death upon all Repentance shuts the Gate;
Or some fierce blow compels the Way to choose,
And forced Repentance half its Virtue lose.' As of an aged Indian King they tell
Who, when his Empire with his Army fell
Under young Mahmúd's Sword of Wrath, was sent

At sunset to the Conqueror in his Tent;
 But, ere the old King's silver head could reach
 The Ground, was lifted up with kindly Speech,
 And with so holy Mercy re-assured,
 That, after due Persuasion, he abjured
 His Idols, sate upon Mahmúd's Diván,
 And took the Name and Faith of Musulman.
 But when the Night fell, in his Tent alone
 The poor old King was heard to weep and groan
 And smite his Bosom; which, when Mahmúd knew,
 He went to him and said 'Lo, if Thou rue
 Thy lost Dominion, Thou shalt wear the Ring
 Of thrice as large a Realm.' But the dark King
 Still wept, and Ashes on his Forehead threw
 And cried 'Not for my Kingdom lost I rue;
 But thinking how at the Last Day, will stand
The Prophet with The Volume in his Hand,
 And ask of me "How was't that, in thy Day
 Of Glory, Thou didst turn from Me and slay
 My People; but soon as thy Infidel
 Before my True Believers' Army fell
 Like Corn before the Reaper thou didst own
 His Sword who scoutedst *Me*." Of seed so sown
 What profitable Harvest should be grown?'
 Then after cheering others who delay'd,
 Not of the Road but of Themselves afraid,
 The Tájidár the Troop of those address'd,
 Whose uncomplying Attitude confess'd
 Their Souls entangled in the old Deceit,
 And hankering still after forbidden Meat 'Oh ye who so long feeding on the Husk
 Forgo the Fruit, and doating on the Dusk
 Of the false Dawn, are blinded to the True:
 That in the Maidán of this World pursue
 The Golden Ball which, driven to the Goal,
 Wins the World's Game but loses your own Soul:
 Or like to Children after Bubbles run
 That still elude your Fingers; or, if won,
 Burst in Derision at your Touch; all thin
 Glitter without, and empty Wind within.
 So as a prosperous Worldling on the Bed
 Of Death "Behold, I am as one," he said,
 "Who all my Life long have been measuring Wind,
 And, dying, now leave even that behind"
 This World's a Nest in which the Cockatrice
 Is warm'd and hatcht of Vanity and Vice:
 A false Bazár whose Wares are all a lie,
 Or never worth the Price at which you buy:
 A many-headed Monster that, supplied
 The faster, faster is unsatisfied;
 So as one, hearing a rich Fool one day
 To God for yet one other Blessing pray,

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Bid him no longer bounteous Heaven tire
For Life to feed, but Death to quench, the Fire.
And what are all the Vanities and Wiles
In which the false World decks herself and smiles
To draw Men down into her harlot Lap?
Lusts of the Flesh that Soul and Body sap,
And, melting Soul down into carnal Lust,
Ev'n that for which 'tis sacrificed disgust:
Or Lust of worldly Glory hollow more
Than the Drum beaten at the Sultán's Door,
And fluctuating with the Breath of Man
As the Vain Banner flapping in the Van.
And Lust of Gold perhaps of Lusts the worst;
The mis-created Idol most accurst
That between Man and Him who made him stands:
The Felon that with suicidal hands
He sweats to dig and rescue from his Grave,
And sets at large to make Himself its Slave.

bsp; 'For lo, to what worse than oblivion gone
Are some the cozening World most doated on?
Pharaoh tried *Glory*: and his Chariots drown'd:
Kárún with all his Gold went underground:
Down toppled Nembroth with his airy Stair:
Schedád among his Roses lived but *where*? 'And as the World upon her victims feeds
So She herself goes down the Way she leads.
For all her false allurements are the Threads
The Spider from her Entrail spins, and spreads
For Home and hunting-ground: And by and by
Darts at due Signal on the tangled Fly,
Seizes, dis-wings, and drains the Life, and leaves
The swinging Carcase, and forthwith re-weaves
Her Web: each Victim adding to the store
Of poison'd Entrail to entangle more.
And so She bloats in Glory: till one Day
The Master of the House, passing that way,
Perceives, and with one flourish of his Broom
Of Web and Fly and Spider clears the Room.

bsp; 'Behold, dropt through the Gate of Mortal Birth,
The Knightly Soul alights from Heav'n on Earth;
Begins his Race, but scarce the Saddle feels,
When a foul Imp up from the distance steals,
And, double as he will, about his Heels
Closer and ever closer circling creeps,
Then, half-invited, on the Saddle leaps,
Clings round the Rider, and, once there, in vain
The strongest strives to thrust him off again.
In Childhood just peeps up the Blade of Ill,
That Youth to Lust rears, Fury, and Self-will:
And, as Man cools to sensual Desire,
Ambition catches with as fierce a Fire;
Until Old Age sends him with one last Lust

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Of Gold, to keep it where he found in Dust.
 Life at both Ends so feeble and constrain'd
 How should that Imp of Sin be slain or chain'd? 'And woe to him who feeds the hateful Beast
 That of his Feeder makes an after-feast!
 We know the Wolf: by Stratagem and Force
 Can hunt the Tiger down: but what Resource
 Against the Plague we heedless hatch within,
 Then, growing, pamper into full-blown Sin
 With the Soul's self: ev'n, as the wise man said,
 Feeding the very Devil with God's own Bread;
 Until the Lord his Largess misapplied
 Resent, and drive us wholly from his Side? 'For should the Grey-hound whom a Sultán fed,
 And by a jewell'd String a-hunting led,
 Turn by the Way to gnaw some nasty Thing
 And snarl at Him who twitch'd the silken String,
 Would not his Lord soon weary of Dispute,
 And turn adrift the incorrigible Brute? 'Nay, would one follow, and without a Chain,
 The only Master truly worth the Pain,
 One must beware lest, growing over-fond
 Of even Life's more consecrated Bond,
 We clog our Footsteps to the World beyond.
 Like that old Arab Chieftain, who confess'd
 His soul by two too Darling Things possess'd
 That only Son of his: and that one Colt
 Descended from the Prophet's Thunderbolt.
 "And I might well bestow the last," he said,
 "On him who brought me Word the Boy was dead." 'And if so vain the glittering Fish we get,
 How doubly vain to doat upon the Net,
 Call'd Life, that draws them, patching up this thin
 Tissue of Breathing out and Breathing in,
 And so by husbanding each wretched Thread
 Spin out Death's very Terror that we dread
 For as the Rain-drop from the sphere of God
 Dropt for a while into the Mortal Clod
 So little makes of its allotted Time
 Back to its Heav'n itself to re-sublime,
 That it but serves to saturate its Clay
 With Bitterness that will not pass away.' One day the Prophet on a River Bank,
 Dipping his Lips into the Channel, drank
 A Draught as sweet as Honey. Then there came
 One who an earthen Pitcher from the same
 Drew up, and drank: and after some short stay
 Under the Shadow, rose and went his Way,
 Leaving his earthen Bowl. In which, anew
 Thirsting, the Prophet from the River drew,
 And drank from: but the Water that came up
 Sweet from the Stream, drank bitter from the Cup.
 At which the Prophet in a still Surprise
 For Answer turning up to Heav'n his Eyes,
 The Vessel's Earthen Lips with Answer ran
 'The Clay that I am made of once was *Man*,

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Who dying, and resolved into the same
Obliterated Earth from which he came,
Was for the Potter dug, and chased in turn
Through long Vicissitude of Bowl and Urn:
But howsoever moulded, still the Pain
Of that first mortal Anguish would retain,
And cast, and re-cast, for a Thousand years
Would turn the sweetest Water into Tears.'

And after Death? that, shirk it as we may,
Will come, and with it bring its After-Day
Came up from Egypt to buy Corn, and stood
Before their Brother in his lofty Place,
Nor knew him, for a Veil before his Face,)

For ev'n as Yúsuf, (when his Brotherhood

Struck on his Mystic Cup, which straightway then
Rung out their Story to those guilty Ten:
Not to *them* only, but to every one;
Whatever he have said and thought and done,
Unburied with the Body shall fly up,
And gather into Heav'n's inverted Cup,
Which, stricken by God's Finger, shall tell all
The Story whereby we must stand or fall.

And though we walk this World as if behind
There were no Judgment, or the Judge half-blind,

Beware, for He with whom we have to do
Outsees the Lynx, outlives the Phoenix too
With mightier numbers of the swarthy Race,
Vow'd that if God to him the battle gave,
God's Dervish People all the Spoil should have.

So Sultán Mahmúd, coming Face to Face

And God the Battle gave him; and the Fruit
Of a great Conquest coming to compute,
A Murmur through the Sultán's Army stirr'd
Lest, ill committed to one hasty Word,
The Shah should squander on an idle Brood
What should be theirs who earn'd it with their Blood,
Or go to fill the Coffers of the State.

So Mahmúd's Soul began to hesitate:
Till looking round in Doubt from side to side
A raving Zealot in the Press he spied,
And call'd and had him brought before his Face,
And, telling, bid him arbitrate the case.

Who, having listen'd, said 'The Thing is plain:
If Thou and God should never have again
To deal together, rob him of his share:

But if perchance you should why then Beware!
Among the Birds in Whispers went about:
Great was their Need: and Succour to be sought
At any Risk: at any Ransom bought:

So spake the Tájídár: but Fear and Doubt

But such a Monarch greater than Mahmúd
The Great Himself! Why how should he be woo'd
To listen to them? they too having come
So suddenly, and unprepared from home

With any Gold, or Jewel, or rich Thing
 To carry with them to so great a King
 Poor Creatures! with the old and carnal Blind,
 Spite of all said, so thick upon the Mind,
 Devising how they might ingratiate
 Access, as to some earthly Potentate.
 'Let him that with this Monarch would engage
 Bring the Gold Dust of a long Pilgrimage:
 The Ruby of a bleeding Heart, whose Sighs
 Breathe more than Amber–incense as it dies;
 And while in naked Beggary he stands
 Hope for the Robe of Honour from his Hands.
 And, as no gift this Sovereign receives
 Save the mere Soul and Self of him who gives,
 So let that Soul for other none Reward
 Look than the Presence of its Sovereign Lord.'
 And as his Hearers seem'd to estimate
 Their Scale of Glory from Mahmúd the Great,
 A simple Story of the Sultán told

How best a subject with his Shah made bold One night Shah Mahmúd who had been of late
 Somewhat distemper'd with Affairs of State
 Stroll'd through the Streets disguised, as wont to do
 And, coming to the Baths, there on the Flue
 Saw the poor Fellow who the Furnace fed
 Sitting beside his Water–jug and Bread.
 Mahmúd stept in sat down unask'd took up
 And tasted of the untasted Loaf and Cup,
 Saying within himself, 'Grudge but a bit,
 And, by the Lord, your Head shall pay for it!'
 So having rested, warm'd and satisfied
 Himself without a Word on either side,
 At last the wayward Sultán rose to go.
 And then at last his Host broke silence 'So?
 Art satisfied? Well, Brother, any Day
 Or Night, remember, when you come this Way
 And want a bit of Provender why, you
 Are welcome, and if not why, welcome too.'
 The Sultán was so tickled with the whim
 Of this quaint Entertainment and of him
 Who offer'd it, that many a Night again
 Stoker and Shah forgather'd in that Vein
 Till, the poor Fellow having stood the Test
 Of true Good–fellowship, Mahmúd confess'd
 One Night the Sultán that had been his Guest:
 And in requital of the scanty Dole
 The Poor Man offer'd with so large a soul,
 Bid him ask any Largess that he would
 A Throne if he *would* have it, so he *should*.
 The Poor Man kiss'd the Dust, and 'All,' said he,
 'I ask is what and where I am to be;
 If but the Shah from time to time will come

As now and see me in the lowly Home
 His presence makes a palace, and my own
 Poor Flue more royal than another's Throne.'
 So said the cheery Tale: and, as they heard,
 Again the Heart beneath the Feather stirr'd:
 Again forgot the Danger and the Woes
 Of the long Travel in its glorious Close:
 'Here truly all was Poverty, Despair
 And miserable Banishment but *there*
 That more than Mahmúd, for no more than Prayer
 Who would restore them to their ancient Place,
 And round their Shoulders fling his Robe of Grace.'
 They clapp'd their Wings, on Fire to be assay'd
 And prove of what true Metal they were made,
 Although defaced, and wanting the true Ring
 And Superscription of their rightful King.
 'The Road! The Road!' in countless voices cried
 The Host 'The Road! and who shall be our Guide?'
 And they themselves 'The Tájidár!' replied:
 Yet to make doubly certain that the Voice
 Of Heav'n accorded with the People's Choice,
 Lots should be drawn; and He on whom should light
 Heav'n's Hand they swore to follow him outright.
 This settled, and once more the Hubbub quell'd,
 Once more Suspense the Host in Silence held,
 While, Tribe by Tribe, the Birds their Fortune drew;
 And Lo! upon the Tájidár it flew.
 Then rising up again in wide and high
 Circumference of wings that mesh'd the sky
 'The Tájidár! The Tájidár!' they cry
 'The Tájidár! The Tájidár!' with Him
 Was Heav'n, and They would follow Life and Limb!
 Then, once more fluttering to their Places down,
 Upon his Head they set the Royal Crown
 As Khalif of their Khalif so long lost,
 And Captain of his now repentant Host;
 And setting him on high, and Silence call'd,
 The Tájidár, in Pulpit–throne install'd,
 His Voice into a Trumpet–tongue so clear
 As all the wingèd Multitude should hear
 Raised, to proclaim the Order and Array
 Of March; which, many as it frighten'd yea,
 The Heart of Multitudes at outset broke,
 Yet for due Preparation must be spoke.
 bsp; A Road indeed that never Wing before
 Flew, nor Foot trod, nor Heart imagined o'er
 Waterless Deserts Waters where no Shore
 Valleys comprising cloudhigh Mountains: these
 Again their Valleys deeper than the Seas:
 Whose Dust all Adders, and whose vapour Fire:
 Where all once hostile Elements conspire

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To set the Soul against herself, and tear
Courage to Terror Hope into Despair,
And Madness; Terrors, Trials, to make stray
Or stop where Death to wander or delay:
Where when half dead with Famine, Toil, and Heat,
'Twas Death indeed to rest, or drink, or eat.
A Road still waxing in Self-sacrifice
As it went on: still ringing with the Cries
And Groans of Those who had not yet prevail'd,
And bleaching with the Bones of those who fail'd:
Where, almost all withstood, perhaps to earn
Nothing: and, earning, never to return. And first the *VALE OF SEARCH*: an endless Maze,
Branching into innumerable Ways
All courting Entrance: but one right: and this
Beset with Pitfall, Gulf, and Precipice,
Where Dust is Embers, Air a fiery Sleet,
Through which with blinded Eyes and bleeding Feet
The Pilgrim stumbles, with Hyæna's Howl
Around, and hissing Snake, and deadly Ghoul,
Whose Prey he falls if tempted but to droop,
Or if to wander famish'd from the Troop
For fruit that falls to ashes in the Hand,
Water that reacht recedes into the Sand.
The only word is 'Forward!' Guide in sight,
After him, swerving neither left nor right,
Thyself for thine own Victual by Day,
At night thine own Self's Caravanserai.
Till suddenly, perhaps when most subdued
And desperate, the Heart shall be renew'd
When deep in utter Darkness, by one Gleam
Of Glory from the far remote *Harím*,
That, with a scarcely conscious Shock of Change,
Shall light the Pilgrim toward the Mountain Range
Of Knowledge: where, if stronger and more pure
The Light and Air, yet harder to endure;
And if, perhaps, the Footing more secure,
Harder to keep up with a nimble Guide,
Less from lost Road than insufficient Stride
Yet tempted still by false Shows from the Track,
And by false Voices call'd aside or back,
Which echo from the Bosom, as if won
The Journey's End when only just begun,
And not a Mountain Peak with Toil attain'd
But shows a Top yet higher to be gain'd.
Wherefore still Forward, Forward! Love that fired
Thee first to search, by Search so re-inspired
As that the Spirit shall the carnal Load
Burn up, and double wing Thee on the Road;
That wert thou knocking at the very Door
Of Heav'n, thou still would'st cry for More, More, More! Till loom in sight Káf's Mountain Peak ashroud
In Mist uncertain yet Mountain or Cloud,

But where the Pilgrim 'gins to hear the Tide
 Of that one Sea in which the Sev'n subside;
 And not the Sev'n Seas only: but the sev'n
 And self-enfolded Spheres of Earth and Heav'n
 Yea, the Two Worlds, that now as Pictures sleep
 Upon its Surface but when once the Deep
 From its long Slumber 'gins to heave and sway
 Under that Tempest shall be swept away
 With all their Phases and Phenomena:
 Not senseless Matter only, but combined
 With Life in all Varieties of Kind;
 Yea, ev'n the abstract Forms that Space and Time
 Men call, and Weal and Woe, Virtue and Crime,
 And all the several Creeds, like those who fell
 Before them, Musulman and Infidel
 Shall from the Face of Being melt away,
 Cancell'd and swept as Dreams before the Day.
 So hast thou seen the Astrologer prepare
 His mystic Table smooth of Sand, and there
 Inscribe his mystic Figures, Square, and Trine,
 Circle and Pentagram, and heavenly Sign
 Of Star and Planet: from whose Set and Rise,
 Meeting and Difference, he prophesies;
 And, having done it, with his Finger clean
 Obliterates as never they had been.

bsp; Such is when reacht the Table Land of *One*
 And *Wonder*: blazing with so fierce a Sun
 Of Unity that blinds while it reveals
 The Universe that to a Point congeals,
 So, stunn'd with utter Revelation, reels
 The Pilgrim, when that *Double*-seeming House,
 Against whose Beams he long had chafed his Brows,
 Crumbles and cracks before that Sea, whose near
 And nearer Voice now overwhelms his Ear.
 Till blinded, deafen'd, madden'd, drunk with doubt
 Of all within Himself as all without,
 Nay, whether a *Without* there be, or not,
 Or a *Within* that doubts: and if, then *what?*
 Ev'n so shall the bewilder'd Pilgrim seem
 When nearest waking deepliest in Dream,
 And darkest next to Dawn; and lost what had
 When *All* is found: and just when sane quite Mad
 As one that having found the Key once more
 Returns, and Lo! he cannot find the Door
 He stumbles over So the Pilgrim stands
 A moment on the Threshold with raised Hands
 Calls to the eternal Sáki for one Draught
 Of Light from the One Essence: which when quaff'd,
 He plunges headlong in: and all is well
 With him who never more returns to tell.

bsp; Such being then the Race and such the Goal,

Judge if you must not Body both and Soul
 With Meditation, Watch, and Fast prepare.
 For he that wastes his Body to a Hair
 Shall seize the Locks of Truth: and he that prays
 Good Angels in their Ministry way-lays:
 And the Midnightly Watcher in the Folds
 Of his own Darkness God Almighty holds.
 He that would prosper here must from him strip
 The World, and take the Dervish Gown and Scrip:
 And as he goes must gather from all Sides
 Irrelevant Ambitions, Lusts, and Prides,
 Glory and Gold, and sensual Desire,
 Whereof to build the fundamental Pyre
 Of Self-annihilation: and cast in
 All old Relations and Regards of Kin
 And Country: and, the Pile with this perplex
 World platform'd, from the Fables of the Next
 Raise it tow'rd Culmination, with the torn
 Rags and Integuments of Creeds out-worn;
 And top the giddy Summit with the Scroll
 Of *Reason* that in dingy Smoke shall roll
 Over the true Self-sacrifice of Soul:
 (For such a Prayer was his 'Oh God, do Thou
 With all my Wealth in the other World endow
 My Friends: and with my Wealth in *this* my Foes,
 Till bankrupt in *thy* Riches I repose!')

Then, all the Pile completed of the Pelf
 Of either World at last throw on *Thyself*,
 And with the Torch of Self-negation fire;
 And ever as the Flames rise high and higher,
 With Cries of agonizing Glory still
 All of that *Self* burn up that burn up will,
 Leaving the Phoenix that no Fire can slay
 To spring from its own Ashes kindled nay,
 Itself an inextinguishable Spark
 Of Being, *now* beneath Earth-ashes dark,
 Transcending these, at last *Itself* transcends
 And with the One Eternal Essence blends.

bsp; The Moths had long been exiled from the Flame
 They worship: so to solemn Council came,
 And voted *One* of them by Lot be sent
 To find their Idol. One was chosen: went.
 And after a long Circuit in sheer Gloom,
 Seeing, he thought, the Taper in a Room
 Flew back at once to say so. But the chief
 Of *Mothistán* slighted so slight Belief,
 And sent another Messenger, who flew
 Up to the House, in at the window, through
 The Flame itself; and back the Message brings
 With yet no sign of Conflict on his wings.
 Then went a Third, who spurr'd with true Desire,

Plunging at once into the sacred Fire,
 Folded his Wings within, till he became
 One Colour and one Substance with the Flame.
 He only knew the Flame who in it burn'd;
 And only He could tell who ne'er to tell return'd.
 After declaring what of this declared
 Must be, that all who went should be prepared,
 From his high Station ceased the Tájidár
 And lo! the Terrors that, when told afar,
 Seem'd but as Shadows of a Noon-day Sun,
 Now that the talkt of Thing was to be *done*,
 Lengthening into those of closing Day
 Strode into utter Darkness: and Dismay
 Like Night on the husht Sea of Feathers lay,
 Late so elate 'So terrible a Track!
 Endless or, ending, never to come back!
 Never to Country, Family, or Friend!
 In sooth no easy Bow for Birds to bend!
 Even while he spoke, how many Wings and Crests
 Had slunk away to distant Woods and Nests;
 Others again in Preparation spent
 What little Strength they had, and never went:
 And others, after Preparation due
 When up the Veil of that first Valley drew
 From whose waste Wilderness of Darkness blew
 A Sarsar, whether edged of Flames or Snows,
 That through from Root to Tip their Feathers froze
 Up went a Multitude that overhead
 A moment darken'd, then on all sides fled
 Dwindling the World-assembled Caravan
 To less than half the Number that began.
 Of those who fled not, some in Dread and Doubt
 Sat without stirring: others who set out
 With frothy Force, or stupidly resign'd,
 Before a League, flew off or fell behind.
 And howsoever the more Brave and Strong
 In Courage, Wing, or Wisdom push'd along,
 Yet League by League the Road was thicklier spread
 By the fast falling Foliage of the Dead:
 Some spent with Travel over Wave and Ground;
 Scorcht, frozen, dead for Drought, or drinking drown'd.
 Famisht, or poison'd with the Food when found:
 By Weariness, or Hunger, or Affright
 Seduced to stop or stray, become the Bite
 Of Tiger howling round or hissing Snake,
 Or Crocodile that eyed them from the Lake:
 Or raving Mad, or in despair Self-slain:
 Or slaying one another for a Grain: Till of the mighty Host that fledged the Dome
 Of Heav'n and Floor of Earth on leaving Home,
 A Handfull reach'd and scrambled up the Knees
 Of Káf whose Feet dip in the Seven Seas;

And of the few that up his Forest–sides
 Of Light and Darkness where *The Presence* hides,
 But *Thirty* thirty desperate draggled Things,
 Half–dead, with scarce a Feather on their Wings,
 Stunn'd, blinded, deafen'd with the Crash and Craze
 Of Rock and Sea collapsing in a Blaze
 That struck the Sun to Cinder fell upon
 The Threshold of the Everlasting *One*,
 With but enough of Life in each to cry,
 On That which all absorb'd And suddenly
 Forth flash'd a wingèd Harbinger of Flame
 And Tongue of Fire, and 'Who?' and 'Whence they came?'
 And 'Why?' demanded. And the *Tájidár*
 For all the *Thirty* answer'd him 'We are
 Those Fractions of the Sum of Being, far
 Dis–spent and foul disfigured, that once more
 Strike for Admission at the Treasury Door.' To whom the Angel answer'd 'Know ye not
 That He you seek reck's little who or what
 Of Quantity and Kind himself the Fount
 Of Being Universal needs no Count
 Of all the Drops o'erflowing from his Urn,
 In what Degree they issue or return?' Then cried the Spokesman, 'Be it even so:
 Let us but see the Fount from which we flow,
 And, seeing, lose Ourselves therein!' And, Lo!
 Before the Word was utter'd, or the Tongue
 Of Fire replied, or Portal open flung,
 They were *within* they were before the *Throne* ,
 Before the Majesty that sat thereon,
 But wrapt in so insufferable a Blaze
 Of Glory as beat down their baffled Gaze,
 Which, downward dropping, fell upon a Scroll
 That, Lightning–like, flash'd back on each the whole
 Past half–forgotten Story of his Soul:
 Like that which *Yúsuf* in his Glory gave
 His Brethren as some Writing he would have
 Interpreted; and at a Glance, behold
 Their own Indenture for their Brother sold!
 And so with these poor *Thirty*: who, abasht
 In Memory all laid bare and Conscience lasht,
 By full Confession and Self–loathing flung
 The Rags of carnal Self that round them clung;
 And, their old selves self–knowledged and self–loathed,
 And in the Soul's Integrity re–clothed,
 Once more they ventured from the Dust to raise
 Their Eyes up to the Throne into the Blaze
 And in the Centre of the Glory there
 Beheld the Figure of *Themselves* as 'twere
 Transfigured looking to Themselves, beheld
 The Figure on the Throne en–miracled,
 Until their Eyes themselves and *That* between
 Did hesitate which *Sëer* was, which *Seen*;

They That, That They: Another, yet the Same;
 Dividual, yet One: from whom there came
 A Voice of awful Answer, scarce discern'd
 From *which* to Aspiration *whose* return'd
 They scarcely knew; as when some Man apart
 Answers aloud the Question in his Heart
 'The Sun of my Perfection is a Glass
 Wherein from *Seeing* into *Being* pass
 All who, reflecting as reflected see
 Themselves in Me, and Me in Them: not *Me*,
 But all of Me that a contracted Eye
 Is comprehensive of Infinity:
 Nor yet *Themselves*: no Selves, but of The All
 Fractions, from which they split and whither fall.
 As Water lifted from the Deep, again
 Falls back in individual Drops of Rain
 Then melts into the Universal Main.
 All you have been, and seen, and done, and thought,
 Not *You* but *I*, have seen and been and wrought:
 I was the Sin that from Myself rebell'd:
 I the Remorse that tow'rd Myself compell'd:
 I was the Tájidár who led the Track:
 I was the little Briar that pull'd you back:
 Sin and Contrition Retribution owed,
 And cancell'd Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Road,
 Was but Myself toward Myself: and Your
 Arrival but *Myself* at my own Door:
 Who in your Fraction of Myself behold
 Myself within the Mirror Myself hold
 To see Myself in, and each part of Me
 That sees himself, though drown'd, shall ever see.
 Come you lost Atoms to your Centre draw,
 And *be* the Eternal Mirror that you saw:
 Rays that have wander'd into Darkness wide
 Return, and back into your Sun subside." This was the Parliament of Birds: and this
 The Story, of the Host who went amiss,
 And of the Few that better Upshot found;
 Which being now recounted, Lo, the Ground
 Of Speech fails underfoot: But this to tell
 Their Road is thine Follow and Fare thee well.

THE TWO GENERALS

I. LUCIUS ÆMILIUS PAULLUS.

With what success, Quirites, I have served
 The Commonwealth, and, in the very hour
 Of Glory, what a double Thunderbolt
 From Heav'n has struck upon my private roof,

Letters and Literary Remains

Rome needs not to be told, who lately saw
So close together treading through her streets
My Triumph, and the Funeral of my Sons.
Yet bear with me while, in a few brief words,
And uninvincible spirit, I compare
Beside the fulness of the general Joy
My single Destitution. When the time
For leaving Italy was come, the Ships
With all their Armament and men complete,
As the Sun rose I left Brundisium:
With all my Ships before that Sun was down
I made Corcyra: thence, within five days
To Delphi: where, Lustration to the God
Made for myself, the Army, and the Fleet,
In five days more I reach'd the Roman Camp;
Took the Command; redress'd what was amiss:
And, for King Perseus would not forth to fight,
And, for his Camp's strength, forth could not be forced,
I slipp'd beside him through the Mountain-pass
To Pydna; whither when himself forced back,
And fight he must, I fought, I routed him:
And all the War that, swelling for four years,
Consul to Consul handed over worse
Than from his Predecessor he took up,
In fifteen days victoriously I closed.
Nor stay'd my Fortune here. Upon Success
Success came rolling: with their Army lost,
The Macedonian Cities all gave in;
Into my hands the Royal Treasure then
And, by and by, the King's self and his Sons,
As by the very finger of the Gods
Betray'd, whose Temple they had fled to fell.
And now my swollen Fortune to myself
Became suspicious: I began to dread
The seas that were to carry such a freight
Of Conquest, and of Conquerors. But when
With all-propitious Wind and Wave we reach'd
Italian Earth again, and all was done
That was to be, and nothing furthermore
To deprecate or pray for still I pray'd;
That, whereas human Fortune, having touch'd
The destined height it may not rise beyond,
Forthwith begins as fatal a decline,
Its Fall might but myself and mine involve,
Swerving beside my Country. Be it so!
By my sole sacrifice may jealous Fate
Absolve the Public; and by such a Triumph
As, in derision of all Human Glory,
Began and closed with those two Funerals.
Yes, at that hour were Perseus and myself
Together two notorious monuments

Standing of Human Instability:

He that was late so absolute a King,
Now Bondsman, and his Sons along with him
Still living Trophies of my Conquest led;
While I, the Conqueror, scarce had turn'd my face
From one still unextinguisht Funeral,
And from my Triumph to the Capitol
Return return to close the dying Eyes
Of the last Son I yet might call my own,
Last of all those who should have borne my name
To after Ages down. For ev'n as one
Presuming on a rich Posterity,
And blind to Fate, my two surviving Sons
Into two noble Families of Rome
I had adopted
And Paullus is the last of all his Name.

II. SIR CHARLES NAPIER (Writing home after the Battle of Meeanee)

Leaving the Battle to be fought again
Over the wine with all our friends at home,
I needs must tell, before my letter close,
Of one result that you will like to hear.
bsp; The Officers who under my command
Headed and led the British Troops engaged
In this last Battle that decides the War,
Resolved to celebrate the Victory
With those substantial Honours that, you know,
So much good English work begins and ends with.
Resolved by one and all, the day was named;
One mighty Tent, with 'room and verge enough'
To hold us all, of many Tents made up
Under the very walls of Hydrabad,
And then and there were they to do me honour.
Some of them grizzled Veterans like myself:
Some scorcht with Indian Sun and Service; some
With unrecover'd wound or sickness pale;
And some upon whose boyish cheek the rose
They brought with them from England scarce had faded.
Imagine these in all varieties
Of Uniform, Horse, Foot, Artillery,
Ranged down the gaily decorated Tent,
Each with an Indian servant at his back,
Whose dusky feature, Oriental garb,
And still, but supple, posture of respect
Served as a foil of contrast to the lines
Of animated English Officers.
Over our heads our own victorious Colours
Festoon'd with those wrencht from the Indian hung,

Letters and Literary Remains

While through the openings of the tent were seen
Darkling the castle walls of Hydrabad;
And, further yet, the monumental Towers
Of the Kalloras and Talpoors; and yet
Beyond, and last, the Field of Meeanee.
Yes, there in Triumph as upon the tombs
Of two extinguisht Dynasties we sate,
Beside the field of blood we quench'd them in.
And I, chief Actor in that Scene of Death,
And foremost in the passing Triumph I,
Veteran in Service as in years, though now
First call'd to play the General I myself
So swiftly disappearing from the stage
Of all this world's transaction! As I sate,
My thoughts reverted to that setting Sun
That was to rise on our victorious march;
When from a hillock by my tent alone
I look'd down over twenty thousand Men
Husht in the field before me, like a Fire
Prepared, and waiting but my breath to blaze.
And now, methought, the Work is done; is done,
And well; for those who died, and those who live
To celebrate our common Glory, well;
And, looking round, I whisper'd to myself
'These are my Children these whom I have led
Safe through the Vale of Death to Victory,
And in a righteous cause; righteous, I say,
As for our Country's welfare, so for this,
Where from henceforth Peace, Order, Industry,
Blasted and trampled under heretofore
By every lawless Ruffian of the Soil,
Shall now strike root, and' I was running on
With all that was to be, when suddenly
My Name was call'd; the glass was fill'd; all rose;
And, as they pledged me cheer on cheer, the Cannon
Roar'd it abroad, with each successive burst
Of Thunder lighting up the banks now dark
Of Indus, which at Inundation-height,
Beside the Tent we revell'd in roll'd down
Audibly growling 'But a hand-breadth higher,
And whose the Land you boast as all your own!'

BREDFIELD HALL

Lo, an English mansion founded
In the elder James's reign,
Quaint and stately, and surrounded
With a pastoral domain.
bsp; With well-timber'd lawn and gardens

Letters and Literary Remains

And with many a pleasant mead,
Skirted by the lofty coverts
Where the hare and pheasant feed.
bsp; Flank'd it is with goodly stables,
Shelter'd by coeval trees:
So it lifts its honest gables
Toward the distant German seas; Where it once discern'd the smoke
Of old sea-battles far away:
Saw victorious Nelson's topmasts
Anchoring in Hollesley Bay.
But whatever storm might riot,
Cannon roar, and trumpet ring,
Still amid these meadows quiet
Did the yearly violet spring: Still Heaven's starry hand suspended
That light balance of the dew,
That each night on earth descended,
And each morning rose anew: And the ancient house stood rearing
Undisturb'd her chimneys high,
And her gilded vanes still veering
Toward each quarter of the sky: While like wave to wave succeeding
Through the world of joy and strife,
Household after household speeding
Handed on the torch of life: First, sir Knight in ruff and doublet,
Arm in arm with stately dame;
Then the Cavaliers indignant
For their monarch brought to shame: Languid beauties limn'd by Lely;
Full-wigg'd Justice of Queen Anne:
Tory squires who tipp'd freely;
And the modern Gentleman:
Here they lived, and here they greeted,
Maids and matrons, sons and sires,
Wandering in its walks, or seated
Round its hospitable fires: Oft their silken dresses floated
Gleaming through the pleasure ground:
Oft dash'd by the scarlet-coated
Hunter, horse, and dappled hound.
bsp; Till the Bell that not in vain
Had summon'd them to weekly prayer,
Call'd them one by one again
To the church and left them there!
They with all their loves and passions,
Compliment, and song, and jest,
Politics, and sports, and fashions,
Merged in everlasting rest!
So they pass while thou, old Mansion,
Markest with unalter'd face
How like the foliage of thy summers
Race of man succeeds to race.
bsp; To most thou stand'st a record sad,
But all the sunshine of the year
Could not make thine aspect glad

Letters and Literary Remains

To one whose youth is buried here.
In thine ancient rooms and gardens
Buried and his own no more
Than the youth of those old owners,
Dead two centuries before.
bsp; Unto him the fields around thee
Darken with the days gone by:
O'er the solemn woods that bound thee
Ancient sunsets seem to die.
bsp; Sighs the selfsame breeze of morning
Through the cypress as of old;
Ever at the Spring's returning
One same crocus breaks the mould.
bsp; Still though 'scaping Time's more savage
Handywork this pile appears,
It has not escaped the ravage
Of the undermining years.
bsp; And though each succeeding master,
Grumbling at the cost to pay,
Did with coat of paint and plaster
Hide the wrinkles of decay; Yet the secret worm ne'er ceases,
Nor the mouse behind the wall;
Heart of oak will come to pieces,
And farewell to Bredfield Hall!

CHRONOMOROS

In all the actions that a Man performs, some part of his life passeth. We die with doing that, for which only our sliding life was granted. Nay, though we do nothing, Time keeps his constant pace, and flies as fast in idleness, as in employment. Whether we play or labour, or sleep, or dance, or study, THE SUNNE POSTETH, AND THE SAND RUNNES.

Owen Felltham.

Wearied with hearing folks cry,
That Time would incessantly fly,
Said I to myself, 'I don't see
Why Time should not wait upon me;
I will not be carried away,
Whether I like it, or nay:'
But ere I go on with my strain,
Pray turn me that hour-glass again!
I said, 'I will read, and will write,
And labour all day, and all night,
And Time will so heavily load,
That he cannot but wait on the road;'
But I found, that, balloon-like in size,
The more fill'd, the faster he flies;

And I could not the trial maintain,
Without turning the hour-glass again!
Then said I, 'If Time has so flown
When laden, I'll leave him alone;
And I think that he cannot but stay,
When he's nothing to carry away!'
So I sat, folding my hands,
Watching the mystical sands,
As they fell, grain after grain,
Till I turn'd up the hour-glass again!
Then I cried, in a rage, 'Time *shall* stand!'
The hour-glass I smash'd with my hand,
My watch into atoms I broke
And the sun-dial hid with a cloak!
'Now,' I shouted aloud, 'Time is done!'
When suddenly, down went the Sun;
And I found to my cost and my pain,
I might buy a new hour-glass again!
Whether we wake, or we sleep,
Whether we carol, or weep,
The Sun, with his Planets in chime,
Marketh the going of Time;
But Time, in a still better trim,
Marketh the going of him:
One link in an infinite chain,
Is this turning the hour-glass again!
The robes of the Day and the Night,
Are not wove of mere darkness and light;
We read that, at Joshua's will,
The Sun for a Time once stood still!
So that Time by his measure to try,
Is *Petitio Principii*!
Time's Scythe is going amain,
Though he turn not his hour-glass again!
And yet, after all, what is Time?
Renowned in Reason, and Rhyme,
A Phantom, a Name, a Notion,
That measures Duration or Motion?
Or but an apt term in the lease
Of Beings, who know they must cease?
The hand utters more than the brain,
When turning the hour-glass again!
The King in a carriage may ride,
And the Beggar may crawl at his side;
But, in the general race,
They are travelling all the same pace,
And houses, and trees, and high-way,
Are in the same gallop as they:
We mark our steps in the train,
When turning the hour-glass again!
People complain, with a sigh,

How terribly Chroniclers lie;
But there is one pretty right,
Heard in the dead of the night,
Calling aloud to the people,
Out of St. Dunstan's Steeple,
Telling them under the vane,
To turn their hour-glasses again!

MORAL.

Masters! we live here for ever,
Like so many fish in a river;
We may mope, tumble, or glide,
And eat one another beside;
But, whithersoever we go,
The River will flow, flow, flow!
And now, that I've ended my strain,
Pray turn me that hour-glass again!

VIRGIL'S GARDEN
Laid out à la Delille.

'There is more pleasantness in the little platform of a Garden which he gives us about the middle of this Book' ('Georgick' IV. 115–148) 'than in all the spacious Walks and Waterfalls of Monsieur Rapin.' Dryden; two of whose lines are here marked by inverted commas.

bsp; But that, my destined voyage almost done,
I think to slacken sail and shoreward run,
I would enlarge on that peculiar care
Which makes the Garden bloom, the Orchard bear,
Pampers the Melon into girth, and blows
Twice to one summer the Calabrian Rose:
Nor many a shrub with flower and berries hung,
Nor Myrtle of the seashore leave unsung.
bsp; 'For where the Tower of old Tarentum stands,
And dark Galesus soaks the yellow sands,'
I mind me of an old Corycian swain,
Who from a plot of disregarded plain,
That neither Corn, nor Vine, nor Olive grew,
Yet such a store of garden-produce drew
That made him rich in heart as Kings with all
Their wealth, when he returned at even-fall,
And from the conquest of the barren ground
His table with unpurchased plenty crown'd.
For him the Rose first open'd; his, somehow,
The first ripe Apple redden'd on the bough;
Nay, even when melancholy Winter still
Congeal'd the glebe, and check'd the wandering rill,
The sturdy veteran might abroad be seen,
With some first slip of unexpected green,
Upbraiding Nature with her tardy Spring,

Letters and Literary Remains

And those south winds so late upon the wing,
He sow'd the seed; and, under Sun and Shower,
Up came the Leaf, and after it the Flower,
From which no busier bees than his derived
More, or more honey for their Master hived:
Under his skilful hand no savage root
But sure to thrive with its adopted shoot;
No sapling but, transplanted, sure to grow,
Sizable standards set in even row;
Some for their annual crop of fruit, and some
For longer service in the years to come;
While his young Plane already welcome made
The guest who came to drink beneath the shade.
But, by the stern conditions of my song
Compell'd to leave where I would linger long,
To other bards the Garden I resign
Who with more leisure step shall follow mine.

FROM PETRARCH

(Se la mia vita dall' aspro tormento.)

If it be destined that my Life, from thine
Divided, yet with thine shall linger on
Till, in the later twilight of Decline,
I may behold those Eyes, their lustre gone;
When the gold tresses that enrich thy brow
Shall all be faded into silver-gray,
From which the wreaths that well bedeck them now
For many a Summer shall have fall'n away:
Then should I dare to whisper in your ears
The pent-up Passion of so long ago,
That Love which hath survived the wreck of years
Hath little else to pray for, or bestow,
Thou wilt not to the broken heart deny
The boon of one too-late relenting Sigh.

OCCASIONAL VERSES

TO A LADY SINGING.

Canst thou, my Clora, declare,
After thy sweet song dieth
Into the wild summer air,
Whither it falleth or flieth?
Soon would my answer be noted,
Wert thou but sage as sweet throated.

bsp; Melody, dying away,
 Into the dark sky closes,
 Like the good soul from her clay
 Like the fair odour of roses:
Therefore thou now art behind it,
But thou shalt follow, and find it.
bsp; Nothing can utterly die;
 Music, aloft upspringing,
 Turns to pure atoms of sky
 Each golden note of thy singing:
And that to which morning did listen
At eve in a Rainbow may glisten.
bsp; Beauty, when laid in the grave,
 Feedeth the lily beside her,
 Therefore the soul cannot have
 Station or honour denied her;
She will not better her essence,
But wear a crown in God's presence.

ON ANNE ALLEN.

I
The wind blew keenly from the Western sea,
And drove the dead leaves slanting from the tree
 Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith
Heaping them up before her Father's door
When I saw her whom I shall see no more
 We cannot bribe thee, Death.

2
She went abroad the falling leaves among,
She saw the merry season fade, and sung
 Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith
Freely she wander'd in the leafless wood,
And said that all was fresh, and fair, and good,
 She knew thee not, O Death.

3
She bound her shining hair across her brow,
She went into the garden fading now;
 Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith
And if one sigh'd to think that it was sere,
She smiled to think that it would bloom next year:
 She fear'd thee not, O Death.

4
Blooming she came back to the cheerful room
With all the fairer flowers yet in bloom,
 Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith
A fragrant knot for each of us she tied,
And placed the fairest at her Father's side

She cannot charm thee, Death.

5

Her pleasant smile spread sunshine upon all;
We heard her sweet clear laughter in the Hall;
 Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith
We heard her sometimes after evening prayer,
As she went singing softly up the stair
 No voice can charm thee, Death.

6

Where is the pleasant smile, the laughter kind,
That made sweet music of the winter wind?
 Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith
Idly they gaze upon her empty place,
Her kiss hath faded from her Father's face;
 She is with thee, O Death

TO A VIOLET.

Fair violet! sweet saint!
 Answer us Whither art thou gone?
Ever thou wert so still, and faint,
 And fearing to be look'd upon.
We cannot say that one hath died,
 Who went to live so unespied,
But crept away unto a stiller spot,
Where men may stir the grass, and find thee not.
