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by George MacDonald

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THE POETICAL WORKS OF

GEORGE MACDONALD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. 2

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PARABLES

THE MAN OF SONGS.

"Thou wanderest in the land of dreams,
O man of many songs!
To thee what is, but looks and seems;
No realm to thee belongs!"

"Seest thou those mountains, faint and far,
O spirit caged and tame?"
"Blue clouds like distant hills they are,
And like is not the same."

"Nay, nay; I know each mountain well,
Each cliff, and peak, and dome!
In that cloudland, in one high dell,
Nesteth my little home."

THE HILLS.

Behind my father's cottage lies
A gentle grassy height
Up which I often ran--to gaze
Back with a wondering sight,
For then the chimneys I thought high
Were down below me quite!

All round, where'er I turned mine eyes,
Huge hills closed up the view;
The town 'mid their converging roots
Was clasped by rivers two;
From, one range to another sprang
The sky's great vault of blue.

It was a joy to climb their sides,
And in the heather lie!
A joy to look at vantage down
On the castle grim and high!
Blue streams below, white clouds above,
In silent earth and sky!

And now, where'er my feet may roam,
At sight of stranger hill
A new sense of the old delight
Springs in my bosom still,
And longings for the high unknown
Their ancient channels fill.

For I am always climbing hills,
From the known to the unknown--
Surely, at last, on some high peak,
To find my Father's throne,
Though hitherto I have only found
His footsteps in the stone!

And in my wanderings I did meet
Another searching too:
The dawning hope, the shared quest
Our thoughts together drew;
Fearless she laid her band in mine
Because her heart was true.

She was not born among the hills,
Yet on each mountain face
A something known her inward eye
By inborn light can trace;
For up the hills must homeward be,
Though no one knows the place.

Clasp my hand close, my child, in thine--
A long way we have come!
Clasp my hand closer yet, my child,
Farther we yet must roam--
Climbing and climbing till we reach
Our heavenly father's home.

THE JOURNEY.

I.

Hark, the rain is on my roof!
Every murmur, through the dark,
Stings me with a dull reproof
Like a half-extinguished spark.
Me! ah me! how came I here,
Wide awake and wide alone!
Caught within a net of fear,
All my dreams undreamed and gone!

I will rise; I will go forth.
Better dare the hideous night,
Better face the freezing north
Than be still, where is no light!
Black wind rushing round me now,
Sown with arrowy points of rain!
Gone are there and then and now--
I am here, and so is pain!

Dead in dreams the gloomy street!
I will out on open roads.
Eager grow my aimless feet--
Onward, onward something goads!
I will take the mountain path,
Beard the storm within its den;
Know the worst of this dim wrath
Harassing the souls of men.

Chasm 'neath chasm! rock piled on rock!
Roots, and crumbling earth, and stones!
Hark, the torrent's thundering shock!
Hark, the swaying pine tree's groans!
Ah! I faint, I fall, I die,
Sink to nothingness away!--
Lo, a streak upon the sky!
Lo, the opening eye of day!

II.

Mountain summits lift their snows
O'er a valley green and low;
And a winding pathway goes
Guided by the river's flow;
And a music rises ever,
As of peace and low content,
From the pebble-paven river
Like an odour upward sent.

And the sound of ancient harms
Moans behind, the hills among,
Like the humming of the swarms
That unseen the forest throng.
Now I meet the shining rain
From a cloud with sunny weft;
Now against the wind I strain,
Sudden burst from mountain cleft.

Now a sky that hath a moon
Staining all the cloudy white
With a faded rainbow--soon
Lost in deeps of heavenly night!
Now a morning clear and soft,
Amber on the purple hills;
Warm blue day of summer, oft
Cooled by wandering windy rills!

Joy to travel thus along
With the universe around!
Every creature of the throng,
Every sight and scent and sound
Homeward speeding, beauty-laden,
Beelike, to its hive, my soul!

Mine the eye the stars are made in!
Mine the heart of Nature's whole!

III.

Hills retreating on each hand
Slowly sink into the plain;
Solemn through the outspread land
Rolls the river to the main.
In the glooming of the night
Something through the dusky air
Doubtful glimmers, faintly white,
But I know not what or where.

Is it but a chalky ridge
Bared of sod, like tree of bark?
Or a river-spanning bridge
Miles away into the dark?
Or the foremost leaping waves
Of the everlasting sea,
Where the Undivided laves
Time with its eternity?

Is it but an eye-made sight,
In my brain a fancied gleam?
Or a faint aurora-light
From the sun's tired smoking team?
In the darkness it is gone,
Yet with every step draws nigh;
Known shall be the thing unknown
When the morning climbs the sky!

Onward, onward through the night
Matters it I cannot see?
I am moving in a might
Dwelling in the dark and me!
End or way I cannot lose--
Grudge to rest, or fear to roam;
All is well with wanderer whose
Heart is travelling hourly home.

IV.

Joy! O joy! the dawning sea
Answers to the dawning sky,
Foretaste of the coming glee
When the sun will lord it high!
See the swelling radiance growing
To a dazzling glory-might!
See the shadows gently going
'Twixt the wave-tops wild with light!

Hear the smiting billows clang!

See the falling billows lean
Half a watery vault, and hang
Gleaming with translucent green,
Then in thousand fleeces fall,
Thundering light upon the strand!--
This the whiteness which did call
Through the dusk, across the land!

See, a boat! Out, out we dance!
Fierce blasts swoop upon my sail!
What a terrible expanse--
Tumbling hill and heaving dale!
Stayless, helpless, lost I float,
Captive to the lawless free!
But a prison is my boat!
Oh, for petrel-wings to flee!

Look below: each watery whirl
Cast in beauty's living mould!
Look above: each feathery curl
Dropping crimson, dropping gold!--
Oh, I tremble in the flush
Of the everlasting youth!
Love and awe together rush:
I am free in God, the Truth!

THE TREE'S PRAYER.

Alas, 'tis cold and dark!
The wind all night hath sung a wintry tune!
Hail from black clouds that swallowed up the moon
Beat, beat against my bark.

Oh! why delays the spring?
Not yet the sap moves in my frozen veins;
Through all my stiffened roots creep numbing pains,
That I can hardly cling.

The sun shone yester-morn;
I felt the glow down every fibre float,
And thought I heard a thrush's piping note
Of dim dream-gladness born.

Then, on the salt gale driven,
The streaming cloud hissed through my outstretched arms,
Tossed me about in slanting snowy swarms,
And blotted out the heaven.

All night I brood and choose
Among past joys. Oh, for the breath of June!
The feathery light-flakes quavering from the moon

The slow baptizing dews!

Oh, the joy-frantic birds!--

They are the tongues of us, mute, longing trees!

Aha, the billowy odours! and the bees

That browse like scattered herds!

The comfort-whispering showers

That thrill with gratefulness my youngest shoot!

The children playing round my deep-sunk root,

Green-caved from burning hours!

See, see the heartless dawn,

With naked, chilly arms latticed across!

Another weary day of moaning loss

On the thin-shadowed lawn!

But icy winter's past;

Yea, climbing suns persuade the relenting wind:

I will endure with steadfast, patient mind;

My leaves will come at last!

WERE I A SKILFUL PAINTER.

Were I a skilful painter,

My pencil, not my pen,

Should try to teach thee hope and fear,

And who would blame me then?--

Fear of the tide of darkness

That floweth fast behind,

And hope to make thee journey on

In the journey of the mind.

Were I a skilful painter,

What should I paint for thee?--

A tiny spring-bud peeping out

From a withered wintry tree;

The warm blue sky of summer

O'er jagged ice and snow,

And water hurrying gladsome out

From a cavern down below;

The dim light of a beacon

Upon a stormy sea,

Where a lonely ship to windward beats

For life and liberty;

A watery sun-ray gleaming

Athwart a sullen cloud

And falling on some grassy flower

The rain had earthward bowed;

Morn peeping o'er a mountain,
In ambush for the dark,
And a traveller in the vale below
Rejoicing like a lark;
A taper nearly vanished
Amid the dawning gray,
And a maiden lifting up her head,
And lo, the coming day!

I am no skilful painter;
Let who will blame me then
That I would teach thee hope and fear
With my plain-talking pen!--
Fear of the tide of darkness
That floweth fast behind,
And hope to make thee journey on
In the journey of the mind.

FAR AND NEAR.

[The fact which suggested this poem is related by Clarke in his Travels.]

I.

Blue sky above, blue sea below,
Far off, the old Nile's mouth,
'Twas a blue world, wherein did blow
A soft wind from the south.

In great and solemn heaves the mass
Of pulsing ocean beat,
Unwrinkled as the sea of glass
Beneath the holy feet.

With forward leaning of desire
The ship sped calmly on,
A pilgrim strong that would not tire
Or hasten to be gone.

II.

List!--on the wave!--what can they be,
Those sounds that hither glide?
No lovers whisper tremulously
Under the ship's round side!

No sail across the dark blue sphere
Holds white obedient way;
No far-fled, sharp-winged boat is near,
No following fish at play!

'Tis not the rippling of the wave,

Nor sighing of the cords;
No winds or waters ever gave
A murmur so like words;

Nor wings of birds that northward strain,
Nor talk of hidden crew:
The traveller questioned, but in vain--
He found no answer true.

III.

A hundred level miles away,
On Egypt's troubled shore,
Two nations fought, that sunny day,
With bellowing cannons' roar.

The fluttering whisper, low and near,
Was that far battle's blare;
A lipping, rippling motion here,
The blasting thunder there.

IV.

Can this dull sighing in my breast
So faint and undefined,
Be the worn edge of far unrest
Borne on the spirit's wind?

The uproar of high battle fought
Betwixt the bond and free,
The thunderous roll of armed thought
Dwarfed to an ache in me?

MY ROOM

To G. E. M.

'Tis a little room, my friend--
Baby walks from end to end;
All the things look sadly real
This hot noontide unideal;
Vaporous heat from cope to basement
All you see outside the casement,
Save one house all mud-becrusted,
And a street all drought-bedusted!
There behold its happiest vision,
Trickling water-cart's derision!
Shut we out the staring space,
Draw the curtains in its face!

Close the eyelids of the room,

Fill it with a scarlet gloom:
Lo, the walls with warm flush dyed!
Lo, the ceiling glorified,
As when, lost in tenderest pinks,
White rose on the red rose thinks!
But beneath, a hue right rosy,
Red as a geranium-posy,
Stains the air with power estranging,
Known with unknown clouding, changing.
See in ruddy atmosphere
Commonplaceness disappear!
Look around on either hand--
Are we not in fairyland?

On that couch, inwrapt in mist
Of vaporized amethyst,
Lie, as in a rose's heart:
Secret things I would impart;
Any time you would believe them--
Easier, though, you will receive them
Bathed in glowing mystery
Of the red light shadowy;
For this ruby-hearted hue,
Sanguine core of all the true,
Which for love the heart would plunder
Is the very hue of wonder;
This dissolving dreamy red
Is the self-same radiance shed
From the heart of poet young,
Glowing poppy sunlight-stung:
If in light you make a schism
'Tis the deepest in the prism.

This poor-seeming room, in fact
Is of marvels all compact,
So disguised by common daylight
By its disenchanting gray light,
Only eyes that see by shining,
Inside pierce to its live lining.
Loftiest observatory
Ne'er unveiled such hidden glory;
Never sage's furnace-kitchen
Magic wonders was so rich in;
Never book of wizard old
Clasped such in its iron hold.

See that case against the wall,
Darkly-dull-purpureal!--
A piano to the prosy,
But to us in twilight rosy--
What?--A cave where Nereids lie,
Naiads, Dryads, Oreads sigh,
Dreaming of the time when they

Danced in forest and in bay.
In that chest before your eyes
Nature self-enchanted lies;--
Lofty days of summer splendour;
Low dim eyes of opal tender;
Airy hunts of cloud and wind;
Brooding storm--below, behind;
Awful hills and midnight woods;
Sunny rains in solitudes;
Babbling streams in forests hoar;
Seven-hued icebergs; oceans frore.--
Yes; did I not say _enchanted_,
That is, hid away till wanted?
Do you hear a low-voiced singing?
'Tis the sorceress's, flinging
Spells around her baby's riot,
Binding her in moveless quiet:--
She at will can disenchant them,
And to prayer believing grant them.

You believe me: soon will night
Free her hands for fair delight;
Then invoke her--she will come.
Fold your arms, be blind and dumb.
She will bring a book of spells
Writ like crabbed oracles;
Like Sabrina's will her hands
Thaw the power of charmed bands.
First will ransomed music rush
Round thee in a glorious gush;
Next, upon its waves will sally,
Like a stream-god down a valley,
Nature's self, the formless former,
Nature's self, the peaceful stormer;
She will enter, captive take thee,
And both one and many make thee,
One by softest power to still thee,
Many by the thoughts that fill thee.--
Let me guess three guesses where
She her prisoner will bear!

On a mountain-top you stand
Gazing o'er a sunny land;
Shining streams, like silver veins,
Rise in dells and meet in plains;
Up yon brook a hollow lies
Dumb as love that fears surprise;
Moorland tracts of broken ground
O'er it rise and close it round:
He who climbs from bosky dale
Hears the foggy breezes wail.
Yes, thou know'st the nest of love,
Know'st the waste around, above!

In thy soul or in thy past,
Straight it melts into the vast,
Quickly vanishes away
In a gloom of darkening gray.

Sinks the sadness into rest,
Ripple like on water's breast:
Mother's bosom rests the daughter--
Grief the ripple, love the water;
And thy brain like wind-harp lies
Breathed upon from distant skies,
Till, soft-gathering, visions new
Grow like vapours in the blue:
White forms, flushing hyacinthine,
Move in motions labyrinthine;
With an airy wishful gait
On the counter-motion wait;
Sweet restraint and action free
Show the law of liberty;
Master of the revel still
The obedient, perfect will;
Hating smallest thing awry,
Breathing, breeding harmony;
While the god-like graceful feet,
For such mazy marvelling meet,
Press from air a shining sound,
Rippling after, lingering round:
Hair afloat and arms aloft
Fill the chord of movement soft.

Gone the measure polyhedral!
Towers aloft a fair cathedral!
Every arch--like praying arms
Upward flung in love's alarms,
Knit by clasped hands o'erhead--
Heaves to heaven a weight of dread;
In thee, like an angel-crowd,
Grows the music, praying loud,
Swells thy spirit with devotion
As a strong wind swells the ocean,
Sweeps the visioned pile away,
Leaves thy heart alone to pray.

As the prayer grows dim and dies
Like a sunset from the skies,
Glides another change of mood
O'er thy inner solitude:
Girt with Music's magic zone,
Lo, thyself magician grown!
Open-eyed thou walk'st through earth
Brooding on the aeonian birth
Of a thousand wonder-things
In divine dusk of their springs:

Half thou seest whence they flow,
Half thou seest whither go--
Nature's consciousness, whereby
On herself she turns her eye,
Hoping for all men and thee
Perfected, pure harmony.

But when, sinking slow, the sun
Leaves the glowing curtain dun,
I, of prophet-insight reft,
Shall be dull and dreamless left;
I must hasten proof on proof,
Weaving in the warp my woof!

What are those upon the wall,
Ranged in rows symmetrical?
Through the wall of things external
Posterns they to the supernal;
Through Earth's battlemented height
Loopholes to the Infinite;
Through locked gates of place and time,
Wickets to the eternal prime
Lying round the noisy day
Full of silences alway.

That, my friend? Now, it is curious
You should hit upon the spurious!
'Tis a door to nowhere, that;
Never soul went in thereat;
Lies behind, a limy wall
Hung with cobwebs, that is all.

Do not open that one yet,
Wait until the sun is set.
If you careless lift its latch
Glimpse of nothing will you catch;
Mere negation, blank of hue,
Out of it will stare at you;
Wait, I say, the coming night,
Fittest time for second sight,
Then the wide eyes of the mind
See far down the Spirit's wind.
You may have to strain and pull,
Force and lift with cunning tool,
Ere the rugged, ill-joined door
Yield the sight it stands before:
When at last, with grating sweep,
Wide it swings--behold, the deep!

Thou art standing on the verge
Where material things emerge;
Hoary silence, lightning fleet,
Shooteth hellward at thy feet!

Fear not thou whose life is truth,
Gazing will renew thy youth;
But where sin of soul or flesh
Held a man in spider-mesh,
It would drag him through that door,
Give him up to loreless lore,
Ages to be blown and hurled
Up and down a deedless world.

Ah, your eyes ask how I brook
Doors that are not, doors to look!
That is whither I was tending,
And it brings me to good ending.

Baby is the cause of this;
Odd it seems, but so it is;--
Baby, with her pretty prate
Molten, half articulate,
Full of hints, suggestions, catches,
Broken verse, and music snatches!
She, like seraph gone astray,
Must be shown the homeward way;
Plant of heaven, she, rooted lowly,
Must put forth a blossom holy,
Must, through culture high and steady,
Slow unfold a gracious lady;
She must therefore live in wonder,
See nought common up or under;
She the moon and stars and sea,
Worm and butterfly and bee,
Yea, the sparkle in a stone,
Must with marvel look upon;
She must love, in heaven's own blueness,
Both the colour and the newness;
Must each day from darkness break,
Often often come awake,
Never with her childhood part,
Change the brain, but keep the heart.

So, from lips and hands and looks,
She must learn to honour books,
Turn the leaves with careful fingers,
Never lean where long she lingers;
But when she is old enough
She must learn the lesson rough
That to seem is not to be,
As to know is not to see;
That to man or book, _appearing_
Gives no title to revering;
That a pump is not a well,
Nor a priest an oracle:
This to leave safe in her mind,
I will take her and go find

Certain no-books, dreary apes,
Tell her they are mere mock-shapes
No more to be honoured by her
But be laid upon the fire;
Book-appearance must not hinder
Their consuming to a cinder.

Would you see the small immortal
One short pace within Time's portal?
I will fetch her.--Is she white?
Solemn? true? a light in light?
See! is not her lily-skin
White as whitest ermelin
Washed in palest thinnest rose?
Very thought of God she goes,
Ne'er to wander, in her dance,
Out of his love-radiance!

But, my friend, I've rattled plenty
To suffice for mornings twenty!
I should never stop of course,
Therefore stop I will perforce.--
If I led them up, choragic,
To reveal their nature magic,
Twenty things, past contradiction,
Yet would prove I spoke no fiction
Of the room's belongings cryptic
Read by light apocalyptic:
There is that strange thing, glass-masked,
With continual questions tasked,
Ticking with untiring rock:
It is called an eight-day clock,
But to me the thing appears
Busy winding up the years,
Drawing on with coiling chain
The epiphany again.

DEATH AND BIRTH.

'Tis the midnight hour; I heard
The Abbey-bell give out the word.
Seldom is the lamp-ray shed
On some dwarfed foot-farer's head
In the deep and narrow street
Lying ditch-like at my feet
Where I stand at lattice high
Downward gazing listlessly
From my house upon the rock,
Peak of earth's foundation-block.

There her windows, every story,

Shine with far-off nebulous glory!
Round her in that luminous cloud
Stars obedient press and crowd,
She the centre of all gazing,
She the sun her planets dazing!
In her eyes' victorious lightning
Some are paling, some are brightening:
Those on which they gracious turn,
Stars combust, all tenfold burn;
Those from which they look away
Listless roam in twilight gray!
When on her my looks I bent
Wonder shook me like a tent,
And my eyes grew dim with sheen,
Wasting light upon its queen!
But though she my eyes might chain,
Rule my ebbing flowing brain,
Truth alone, without, within,
Can the soul's high homage win!

He, I do not doubt, is there
Who unveiled my idol fair!
And I thank him, grateful much,
Though his end was none of such.
He from shapely lips of wit
Let the fire-flakes lightly flit,
Scorching as the snow that fell
On the damned in Dante's hell;
With keen, gentle opposition,
Playful, merciless precision,
Mocked the sweet romance of youth
Balancing on spheric truth;
He on sense's firm set plane
Rolled the unstable ball amain:
With a smile she looked at me,
Stung my soul, and set me free.

Welcome, friend! Bring in your bricks.
Mortar there? No need to mix?
That is well. And picks and hammers?
Verily these are no shammers!--
There, my friend, build up that niche,
That one with the painting rich!

Yes, you're right; it is a show
Picture seldom can bestow;
City palaces and towers,
Terraced gardens, twilight bowers,
Vistas deep through swaying masts,
Pennons flaunting in the blasts:
Build; my room it does not fit;
Brick-glaze is the thing for it!

Yes, a window you may call it;
Not the less up you must wall it:
In that niche the dead world lies;
Bury death, and free mine eyes.

There were youths who held by me,
Said I taught, yet left them free:
Will they do as I said then?
God forbid! As ye are men,
Find the secret--follow and find!
All forget that lies behind;
Me, the schools, yourselves, forsake;
In your souls a silence make;
Hearken till a whisper come,
Listen, follow, and be dumb.

There! 'tis over; I am dead!
Of my life the broken thread
Here I cast out of my hand!--
O my soul, the merry land!
On my heart the sinking vault
Of my ruining past makes halt;
Ages I could sit and moan
For the shining world that's gone!

Haste and pierce the other wall;
Break an opening to the All!
Where? No matter; done is best.
Kind of window? Let that rest:
Who at morning ever lies
Pondering how to ope his eyes!

I bethink me: we must fall
On the thinnest of the wall!
There it must be, in that niche!--
No, the deepest--that in which
Stands the Crucifix.

You start?--
Ah, your half-believing heart
Shrinks from that as sacrilege,
Or, at least, upon its edge!
Worse than sacrilege, I say,
Is it to withhold the day
From the brother whom thou knowest
For the God thou never sawest!

Reverently, O marble cold,
Thee in living arms I fold!
Thou who art thyself the way
From the darkness to the day,
Window, thou, to every land,
Wouldst not one dread moment stand

Shutting out the air and sky
And the dayspring from on high!
Brother with the rugged crown,
Gently thus I lift thee down!

Give me pick and hammer; you
Stand aside; the deed I'll do.
Yes, in truth, I have small skill,
But the best thing is the will.

Stroke on stroke! The frescoed plaster
Clashes downward, fast and faster.
Hark, I hear an outer stone
Down the rough rock rumbling thrown!
There's a cranny! there's a crack!
The great sun is at its back!
Lo, a mass is outward flung!
In the universe hath sprung!

See the gold upon the blue!
See the sun come blinding through!
See the far-off mountain shine
In the dazzling light divine!
Prisoned world, thy captive's gone!
Welcome wind, and sky, and sun!

LOVE'S ORDEAL.

A recollection and attempted completion of a prose fragment read in
boyhood.

"Hear'st thou that sound upon the window pane?"
Said the youth softly, as outstretched he lay
Where for an hour outstretched he had lain--
Softly, yet with some token of dismay.
Answered the maiden: "It is but the rain
That has been gathering in the west all day!
Why shouldst thou hearken so? Thine eyelids close,
And let me gather peace from thy repose."

"Hear'st thou that moan creeping along the ground?"
Said the youth, and his veiling eyelids rose
From deeps of lightning-haunted dark profound
Ruffled with herald blasts of coming woes.
"I hear it," said the maiden; "'tis the sound
Of a great wind that here not seldom blows;
It swings the huge arms of the dreary pine,
But thou art safe, my darling, clasped in mine."

"Hear'st thou the baying of my hounds?" said he;
"Draw back the lattice bar and let them in."

From a rent cloud the moonlight, ghostily,
Slid clearer to the floor, as, gauntly thin,
She opening, they leaped through with bound so free,
Then shook the rain-drops from their shaggy skin.
The maiden closed the shower-bespattered glass,
Whose spotted shadow through the room did pass.

The youth, half-raised, was leaning on his hand,
But, when again beside him sat the maid,
His eyes for one slow minute having scanned
Her moonlit face, he laid him down, and said,
Monotonous, like solemn-read command:
"For Love is of the earth, earthy, and is laid
Lifeless at length back in the mother-tomb."
Strange moanings from the pine entered the room.

And then two shadows like the shadow of glass,
Over the moonbeams on the cottage floor,
As wind almost as thin and shapeless, pass;
A sound of rain-drops came about the door,
And a soft sighing as of plummy grass;
A look of sorrowing doubt the youth's face wore;
The two great hounds half rose; with aspect grim
They eyed his countenance by the taper dim.

Shadow nor moaning sound the maiden noted,
But on his face dwelt her reproachful look;
She doubted whether he the saying had quoted
Out of some evil, earth-begotten book,
Or up from his deep heart, like bubbles, had floated
Words which no maiden ever yet could brook;
But his eyes held the question, "Yea or No?"
Therefore the maiden answered, "Nay, not so;

"Love is of heaven, eternal." Half a smile
Just twinned his lips: shy, like all human best,
A hopeful thought bloomed out, and lived a while;
He looked one moment like a dead man blest--
His soul a bark that in a sunny isle
At length had found the haven of its rest;
But he could not remain, must forward fare:
He spoke, and said with words abrupt and bare,

"Maiden, I have loved other maidens." Pale
Her red lips grew. "I loved them, yes, but they
Successively in trial's hour did fail,
For after sunset clouds again are gray."
A sudden light shone through the fringy veil
That drooping hid her eyes; and then there lay
A stillness on her face, waiting; and then
The little clock rung out the hour of ten.

Moaning once more the great pine-branches bow

To a soft plaining wind they would not stem.
Brooding upon her face, the youth said, "Thou
Art not more beautiful than some of them,
But a fair courage crowns thy peaceful brow,
Nor glow thine eyes, but shine serene like gem
That lamps from radiant store upon the dark
The light it gathered where its song the lark.

"The horse that broke this day from grasp of three,
Thou sawest then the hand thou holdest, hold:
Ere two fleet hours are gone, that hand will be
Dry, big-veined, wrinkled, withered up and old!--
No woman yet hath shared my doom with me."
With calm fixed eyes she heard till he had told;
The stag-hounds rose, a moment gazed at him,
Then laid them down with aspect yet more grim.

Spake on the youth, nor altered look or tone:
"Tis thy turn, maiden, to say no or dare."--
Was it the maiden's, that importunate moan?--
"At midnight, when the moon sets, wilt thou share
The terror with me? or must I go alone
To meet an agony that will not spare?"
She answered not, but rose to take her cloak;
He staid her with his hand, and further spoke.

"Not yet," he said; "yet there is respite; see,
Time's finger points not yet to the dead hour!
Enough is left even now for telling thee
The far beginnings whence the fearful power
Of the great dark came shadowing down on me:
Red roses crowding clothe my love's dear bower--
Nightshade and hemlock, darnel, toadstools white
Compass the place where I must lie to-night!"

Around his neck the maiden put her arm
And knelt beside him leaning on his breast,
As o'er his love, to keep it strong and warm,
Brooding like bird outspread upon her nest.
And well the faith of her dear eyes might charm
All doubt away from love's primeval rest!
He hid his face upon her heart, and there
Spake on with voice like wind from lonely lair.

A drearier moaning through the pine did go
As if a human voice complained and cried
For one long minute; then the sound grew low,
Sank to a sigh, and sighing sank and died.
Together at the silence two voices mow--
His, and the clock's, which, loud grown, did divide
The hours into live moments--sparks of time
Scorching the soul that trembles for the chime.

He spoke of sins ancestral, born in him
Impulses; of resistance fierce and wild;
Of failure weak, and strength reviving dim;
Self-hatred, dreariness no love beguiled;
Of storm, and blasting light, and darkness grim;
Of torrent paths, and tombs with mountains piled;
Of gulfs in the unsunned bosom of the earth;
Of dying ever into dawning birth.

"But when I find a heart whose blood is wine;
Whose faith lights up the cold brain's passionless hour;
Whose love, like unborn rose-bud, will not pine,
But waits the sun and the baptizing shower--
Till then lies hid, and gathers odours fine
To greet the human summer, when its flower
Shall blossom in the heart and soul and brain,
And love and passion be one holy twain--

"Then shall I rest, rest like the seven of yore;
Slumber divine will steep my outworn soul
And every stain dissolve to the very core.
She too will slumber, having found her goal.
Time's ocean o'er us will, in silence frore,
Aeonian tides of change-filled seasons roll,
And our long, dark, appointed period fill.
Then shall we wake together, loving still."

Her face on his, her mouth to his mouth pressed,
Was all the answer of the trusting maid.
Close in his arms he held her to his breast
For one brief moment--would have yet assayed
Some deeper word her heart to strengthen, lest
It should though faithful be too much afraid;
But the clock gave the warning to the hour--
And on the thatch fell sounds not of a shower.

One long kiss, and the maiden rose. A fear
Lay, thin as a glassy shadow, on her heart;
She trembled as some unknown thing were near,
But smiled next moment--for they should not part!
The youth arose. With solemn-joyous cheer,
He helped the maid, whose trembling hands did thwart
Her haste to wrap her in her mantle's fold;
Then out they passed into the midnight cold.

The moon was sinking in the dim green west,
Curled upward, half-way to the horizon's brink,
A leaf of glory falling to its rest,
The maiden's hand, still trembling, sought to link
Her arm to his, with love's instinctive quest,
But his enfolded her; hers did not sink,
But, thus set free, it stole his body round,
And so they walked, in freedom's fetters bound.

Pressed to his side, she felt, like full-toned bell,
A mighty heart heave large in measured play;
But as the floating moon aye lower fell
Its bounding force did, by slow loss, decay.
It throbbed now like a bird; now like far knell
Pulsed low and faint! And now, with sick dismay,
She felt the arm relax that round her clung,
And from her circling arm he forward hung.

His footsteps feeble, short his paces grow;
Her strength and courage mount and swell amain.
He lifted up his head: the moon lay low,
Nigh the world's edge. His lips with some keen pain
Quivered, but with a smile his eyes turned slow
Seeking in hers the balsam for his bane
And finding it--love over death supreme:
Like two sad souls they walked met in one dream.[A]

[Note A:

In a lovely garden walking
Two lovers went hand in hand;
Two wan, worn figures, talking
They sat in the flowery land.

On the cheek they kissed one another,
On the mouth with sweet refrain;
Fast held they each the other,
And were young and well again.

Two little bells rang shrilly--
The dream went with the hour:
She lay in the cloister stilly,
He far in the dungeon-tower!

From Uhland.]

Hanging his head, behind each came a hound,
Padding with gentle paws upon the road.
Straight silent pines rose here and there around;
A dull stream on the left side hardly flowed;
A black snake through the sluggish waters wound.
Hark, the night raven! see the crawling toad!
She thinks how dark will be the moonless night,
How feeblest ray is yet supernal light.

The moon's last gleam fell on dim glazed eyes,
A body shrunken from its garments' fold:
An aged man whose bent knees could not rise,
He tottered in the maiden's tightening hold.
She shivered, but too slight was the disguise
To hide from love what never yet was old;

She held him fast, with open eyes did pray,
Walked through the fear, and kept the onward way.

Toward a gloomy thicket of tall firs,
Dragging his inch-long steps, he turned aside.
There Silence sleeps; not one green needle stirs.
They enter it. A breeze begins to chide
Among the cones. It swells until it whirs,
Vibrating so each sharp leaf that it sighed:
The grove became a harp of mighty chords,
Wing-smote by unseen creatures wild for words.

But when he turned again, toward the cleft
Of a great rock, as instantly it ceased,
And the tall pines stood sudden, as if reft
Of a strong passion, or from pain released;
Again they wove their straight, dark, motionless weft
Across the moonset-bars; and, west and east,
Cloud-giants rose and marched up cloudy stairs;
And like sad thoughts the bats came unawares.

'Twas a drear chamber for thy bridal night,
O poor, pale, saviour bride! An earthen lamp
With shaking hands he kindled, whose faint light
Mooned out a tiny halo on the damp
That filled the cavern to its unseen height,
Dim glimmering like death-candle in a swamp.
Watching the entrance, each side lies a hound,
With liquid light his red eyes gleaming round.

A heap rose grave-like from the rocky floor
Of moss and leaves, by many a sunny wind
Long tossed and dried--with rich furs covered o'er
Expectant. Up a jealous glory shined
In her possessing heart: he should find more
In her than in those faithless! With sweet mind
She, praying gently, did herself unclothe,
And lay down by him, trusting, and not loath.

Once more a wind came, flapping overhead;
The hounds pricked up their ears, their eyes flashed fire.
The trembling maiden heard a sudden tread--
Dull, yet plain dinted on the windy gyre,
As if long, wet feet o'er smooth pavement sped--
Come fiercely up, as driven by longing dire
To enter; followed sounds of hurried rout:
With bristling hair, the hounds stood looking out.

Then came, half querulous, a whisper old,
Feeble and hollow as if shut in a chest:
"Take my face on your bosom; I am cold."
She bared her holy bosom's truth-white nest,
And forth her two hands instant went, love-bold,

And took the face, and close against her pressed:
Ah, the dead chill!--Was that the feet again?--
But her great heart kept beating for the twain.

She heard the wind fall, heard the following rain
Swelling the silent waters till their sound
Went wallowing through the night along the plain.
The lamp went out, by the slow darkness drowned.
Must the fair dawn a thousand years refrain?
Like centuries the feeble hours went round.
Eternal night entombed her with decay:
To her live soul she clasped the breathless clay.

The world stood still. Her life sank down so low
That but for wretchedness no life she knew.
A charnel wind moaned out a moaning--_No_;
From the devouring heart of earth it blew.
Fair memories lost all their sunny glow:
Out of the dark the forms of old friends grew
But so transparent blanched with dole and smart
She saw the pale worm lying in each heart.

And, worst of all--Oh death of keep-fled life!
A voice within her woke and cried: In sooth
Vain is all sorrow, hope, and care, and strife!
Love and its beauty, its tenderness and truth
Are shadows bred in hearts too fancy-rife,
Which melt and pass with sure-decaying youth:
Regard them, and they quiver, waver, blot;
Gaze at them fixedly, and they are not.

And all the answer the poor child could make
Was in the tightened clasp of arms and hands.
Hopeless she lay, like one Death would not take
But still kept driving from his empty lands,
Yet hopeless held she out for his dear sake;
The darksome horror grew like drifting sands
Till nought was precious--neither God nor light,
And yet she braved the false, denying night.

So dead was hope, that, when a glimmer weak
Stole through a fissure somewhere in the cave,
Thinning the clotted darkness on his cheek,
She thought her own tired eyes the glimmer gave:
He moved his head; she saw his eyes, love-meek,
And knew that Death was dead and filled the Grave.
Old age, convicted lie, had fled away!
Youth, Youth eternal, in her bosom lay!

With a low cry closer to him she crept
And on his bosom hid a face that glowed:
It was his turn to comfort--he had slept!
Oh earth and sky, oh ever patient God,

She had not yielded, but the truth had kept!
New love, new bliss in weeping overflowed.
I can no farther tell the tale begun;
They are asleep, and waiting for the sun.

THE LOST SOUL.

Look! look there!
Send your eyes across the gray
By my finger-point away
Through the vaporous, fummy air.
Beyond the air, you see the dark?
Beyond the dark, the dawning day?
On its horizon, pray you, mark
Something like a ruined heap
Of worlds half-uncreated, that go back:
Down all the grades through which they rose
Up to harmonious life and law's repose,
Back, slow, to the awful deep
Of nothingness, mere being's lack:
On its surface, lone and bare,
Shapeless as a dumb despair,
Formless, nameless, something lies:
Can the vision in your eyes
Its idea recognize?

'Tis a poor lost soul, alack!--
Half he lived some ages back;
But, with hardly opened eyes,
Thinking him already wise,
Down he sat and wrote a book;
Drew his life into a nook;
Out of it would not arise
To peruse the letters dim,
Graven dark on his own walls;
Those, he judged, were chance-led scrawls,
Or at best no use to him.
A lamp was there for reading these;
This he trimmed, sitting at ease,
For its aid to write his book,
Never at his walls to look--
Trimmed and trimmed to one faint spark
Which went out, and left him dark.--
I will try if he can hear
Spirit words with spirit ear!

Motionless thing! who once,
Like him who cries to thee,
Hadst thy place with thy shining peers,
Thy changeful place in the changeless dance
Issuing ever in radiance

From the doors of the far eternity,
With feet that glitter and glide and glance
To the music-law that binds the free,
And sets the captive at liberty--
To the clang of the crystal spheres!
O heart for love! O thirst to drink
From the wells that feed the sea!
O hands of truth, a human link
'Twi' mine and the Father's knee!
O eyes to see! O soul to think!
O life, the brother of me!
Has Infinitude sucked back all
The individual life it gave?
Boots it nothing to cry and call?
Is thy form an empty grave?

It heareth not, brothers, the terrible thing!
Sounds no sense to its ear will bring!
Let us away, 'tis no use to tarry;
Love no light to its heart will carry!
Sting it with words, it will never shrink;
It will not repent, it cannot think!
Hath God forgotten it, alas!
Lost in eternity's lumber-room?
Will the wind of his breathing never pass
Over it through the insensate gloom?
Like a frost-killed bud on a tombstone curled,
Crumbling it lies on its crumbling world,
Sightless and deaf, with never a cry,
In the hell of its own vacuity!

See, see yon angel crossing our flight
Where the thunder vapours loom,
From his upcast pinions flashing the light
Of some outbreaking doom!
Up, brothers! away! a storm is nigh!
Smite we the wing up a steeper sky!
What matters the hail or the clashing winds,
The thunder that buffets, the lightning that blinds!
We know by the tempest we do not lie
Dead in the pits of eternity!

THE THREE HORSES.

What shall I be?--I will be a knight
Walled up in armour black,
With a sword of sharpness, a hammer of might.
And a spear that will not crack--
So black, so blank, no glimmer of light
Will betray my darkling track.

Saddle my coal-black steed, my men,
Fittest for sunless work;
Old Night is steaming from her den,
And her children gather and lurk;
Bad things are creeping from the fen,
And sliding down the murk.

Let him go!--let him go! Let him plunge!--Keep away!
He's a foal of the third seal's brood!
Gaunt with armour, in grim array
Of poitre and frontlet-hood,
Let him go, a living castle, away--
Right for the evil wood.

I and Ravenwing on the course,
Heavy in fighting gear--
Woe to the thing that checks our force,
That meets us in career!
Giant, enchanter, devil, or worse--
What cares the couched spear!

Slow through the trees zigzag I ride.
See! the goblins!--to and fro!
From the skull of the dark, on either side,
See the eyes of a dragon glow!
From the thickets the silent serpents glide--
I pass them, I let them go;

For somewhere in the evil night
A little one cries alone;
An aged knight, outnumbered in fight,
But for me will be stricken prone;
A lady with terror is staring white,
For her champion is overthrown.

The child in my arms, to my hauberk prest,
Like a trembling bird will cling;
I will cover him over, in iron nest,
With my shield, my one steel wing,
And bear him home to his mother's breast,
A radiant, rescued thing.

Spur in flank, and lance in rest,
On the old knight's foes I flash;
The caitiffs I scatter to east and west
With clang and hurtle and crash;
Leave them the law, as knaves learn it best,
In bruise, and breach, and gash.

The lady I lift on my panting steed;
On the pommel she holds my mace;
Hand on bridle I gently lead
The horse at a gentle pace;

The thickets with martel-axe I heed,
For the wood is an evil place.

What treasure is there in manly might
That hid in the bosom lies!
Who for the crying will not fight
Had better be he that cries!
A man is a knight that loves the right
And mounts for it till he dies.

Alas, 'tis a dream of ages hoar!
In the fens no dragons won;
No giants from moated castles roar;
Through the forest wide roadways run;
Of all the deeds they did of yore
Not one is left to be done!

If I should saddle old Ravenwing
And hie me out at night,
Scared little birds away would spring
An ill-shot arrow's flight:
The idle fancy away I fling,
Now I will dream aright!

Let a youth bridle Twilight, my dapple-gray,
With broad rein and snaffle bit;
He must bring him round at break of day
When the shadows begin to flit,
When the darkness begins to dream away,
And the owls begin to sit.

Ungrathed in plate or mail I go,
With only my sword--gray-blue
Like the scythe of the dawning come to mow
The night-sprung shadows anew
From the gates of the east, that, fair and slow,
Maid Morning may walk through.

I seek no forest with darkness grim,
To the open land I ride;
Low light, from the broad horizon's brim,
Lies wet on the flowing tide,
And mottles with shadows dun and dim
The mountain's rugged side.

Steadily, hasteless, o'er valley and hill.
O'er the moor, along the beach,
We ride, nor slacken our pace until
Some city of men we reach;
There, in the market, my horse stands still,
And I lift my voice and preach.

Wealth and poverty, age and youth

Around me gather and throng;
I tell them of justice, of wisdom, of truth,
Of mercy, and law, and wrong;
My words are moulded by right and ruth
To a solemn-chanted song.

They bring me questions which would be scanned,
That strife may be forgot;
Swerves my balance to neither hand,
The poor I favour no jot;
If a man withstand, out sweeps my brand.
I slay him upon the spot.

But what if my eye have in it a beam
And therefore spy his mote?
Righteousness only, wisdom supreme
Can tell the sheep from the goat!
Not thus I dream a wise man's dream,
Not thus take Wrong by the throat!

Lead Twilight home. I dare not kill;
The sword myself would scare.--
When the sun looks over the eastern hill,
Bring out my snow-white mare:
One labour is left which no one will
Deny me the right to share!

Take heed, my men, from crest to heel
Snow-white have no speck;
No curb, no bit her mouth must feel,
No tightening rein her neck;
No saddle-girth drawn with buckle of steel
Shall her mighty breathing check!

Lay on her a cloth of silver sheen,
Bring me a robe of white;
Wherever we go we must be seen
By the shining of our light--
A glistening splendour in forest green,
A star on the mountain-height.

With jar and shudder the gates unclose;
Out in the sun she leaps!
A unit of light and power she goes
Levelling vales and steeps:
The wind around her eddies and blows,
Before and behind her sleeps.

Oh joy, oh joy to ride the world
And glad, good tidings bear!
A flag of peace on the winds unfurled
Is the mane of my shining mare:
To the sound of her hoofs, lo, the dead stars hurled

Quivering adown the air!

Oh, the sun and the wind! Oh, the life and the love!

Where the serpent swung all day
The loud dove coos to the silent dove;
Where the web-winged dragon lay
In its hole beneath, on the rock above
Merry-tongued children play.

With eyes of light the maidens look up
As they sit in the summer heat
Twining green blade with golden cup--
They see, and they rise to their feet;
I call aloud, for I must not stop,
"Good tidings, my sisters sweet!"

For mine is a message of holy mirth
To city and land of corn;
Of praise for heaviness, plenty for dearth,
For darkness a shining morn:
Clap hands, ye billows; be glad, O earth,
For a child, a child is born!

Lo, even the just shall live by faith!
None argue of mine and thine!
Old Self shall die an ecstatic death
And be born a thing divine,
For God's own being and God's own breath
Shall be its bread and wine.

Ambition shall vanish, and Love be king,
And Pride to his darkness hie;
Yea, for very love of a living thing
A man would forget and die,
If very love were not the spring
Whence life springs endlessly!

The myrtle shall grow where grew the thorn;
Earth shall be young as heaven;
The heart with remorse or anger torn
Shall weep like a summer even;
For to us a child, a child is born,
Unto us a son is given!

Lord, with thy message I dare not ride!
I am a fool, a beast!
The little ones only from thy side
Go forth to publish thy feast!
And I, where but sons and daughters abide,
Would have walked about, a priest!

Take Snow-white back to her glimmering stall;
There let her stand and feed!--

I am overweening, ambitious, small,
A creature of pride and greed!
Let me wash the hoofs, let me be the thrall,
Jesus, of thy white steed!

THE GOLDEN KEY.

From off the earth the vapours curled,
Went up to meet their joy;
The boy awoke, and all the world
Was waiting for the boy!

The sky, the water, the wide earth
Was full of windy play--
Shining and fair, alive with mirth,
All for his holiday!

The hill said "Climb me;" and the wood
"Come to my bosom, child;
Mine is a merry gamboling brood,
Come, and with them go wild."

The shadows with the sunlight played,
The birds were singing loud;
The hill stood up with pines arrayed--
He ran to join the crowd.

But long ere noon, dark grew the skies,
Pale grew the shrinking sun:
"How soon," he said, "for clouds to rise
When day was but begun!"

The wind grew rough; a wilful power
It swept o'er tree and town;
The boy exulted for an hour,
Then weary sat him down.

And as he sat the rain began,
And rained till all was still:
He looked, and saw a rainbow span
The vale from hill to hill.

He dried his tears. "Ah, now," he said,
"The storm was good, I see!
Yon pine-dressed hill, upon its head
I'll find the golden key!"

He thrid the copse, he climbed the fence,
At last the top did scale;
But, lo, the rainbow, vanished thence,
Was shining in the vale!

"Still, here it stood! yes, here," he said,
"Its very foot was set!
I saw this fir-tree through the red,
This through the violet!"

He searched and searched, while down the skies
Went slow the slanting sun.
At length he lifted hopeless eyes,
And day was nearly done!

Beyond the vale, above the heath,
High flamed the crimson west;
His mother's cottage lay beneath
The sky-bird's rosy breast.

"Oh, joy," he cried, "not _all_ the way
Farther from home we go!
The rain will come another day
And bring another bow!"

Long ere he reached his mother's cot,
Still tiring more and more,
The red was all one cold gray blot,
And night lay round the door.

But when his mother stroked his head
The night was grim in vain;
And when she kissed him in his bed
The rainbow rose again.

Soon, things that are and things that seem
Did mingle merrily;
He dreamed, nor was it all a dream,
His mother had the key.

SOMNIUM MYSTICI

A Microcosm In Terza Rima.

I.

Quiet I lay at last, and knew no more
Whether I breathed or not, so worn I lay
With the death-struggle. What was yet before
Neither I met, nor turned from it away;
My only conscious being was the rest
Of pain gone dead--dead with the bygone day,
And long I could have lingered all but blest
In that half-slumber. But there came a sound
As of a door that opened--in the west

Somewhere I thought it. As the hare the hound,
The noise did start my eyelids and they rose.
I turned my eyes and looked. Then straight I found
It was my chamber-door that did unclose,
For a tall form up to my bedside drew.
Grand was it, silent, its very walk repose;
And when I saw the countenance, I knew
That I was lying in my chamber dead;
For this my brother--brothers such are few--
That now to greet me bowed his kingly head,
Had, many years ago, like holy dove
Returning, from his friends and kindred sped,
And, leaving memories of mournful love,
Passed vanishing behind the unseen veil;
And though I loved him, all high words above.
Not for his loss then did I weep or wail,
Knowing that here we live but in a tent,
And, seeking home, shall find it without fail.
Feeble but eager, toward him my hands went--
I too was dead, so might the dead embrace!
Taking me by the shoulders down he bent,
And lifted me. I was in sickly case,
But, growing stronger, stood up on the floor,
There turned, and once regarded my dead face
With curious eyes: its brow contentment wore,
But I had done with it, and turned away.
I saw my brother by the open door,
And followed him out into the night blue-gray.
The houses stood up hard in limpid air,
The moon hung in the heavens in half decay,
And all the world to my bare feet lay bare.

II.

Now I had suffered in my life, as they
Must suffer, and by slow years younger grow,
From whom the false fool-self must drop away,
Compact of greed and fear, which, gathered slow,
Darkens the angel-self that, evermore,
Where no vain phantom in or out shall go,
Moveless beholds the Father--stands before
The throne of revelation, waiting there,
With wings low-drooping on the sapphire-floor,
Until it find the Father's ideal fair,
And be itself at last: not one small thorn
Shall needless any pilgrim's garments tear;
And but to say I had suffered I would scorn
Save for the marvellous thing that next befell:
Sudden I grew aware I was new-born;
All pain had vanished in the absorbent swell
Of some exalting peace that was my own;
As the moon dwelt in heaven did calmness dwell
At home in me, essential. The earth's moan

Lay all behind. Had I then lost my part
In human griefs, dear part with them that groan?
"Tis weariness!" I said; but with a start
That set it trembling and yet brake it not,
I found the peace was love. Oh, my rich heart!
For, every time I spied a glimmering spot
Of window pane, "There, in that silent room,"
Thought I, "mayhap sleeps human heart whose lot
Is therefore dear to mine!" I cared for whom
I saw not, had not seen, and might not see!
After the love crept prone its shadow-gloom,
But instant a mightier love arose in me,
As in an ocean a single wave will swell,
And heaved the shadow to the centre: we
Had called it prayer, before on sleep I fell.
It sank, and left my sea in holy calm:
I gave each man to God, and all was well.
And in my heart stirred soft a sleeping psalm.

III.

No gentlest murmur through the city crept;
Not one lone word my brother to me had spoken;
But when beyond the city-gate we stept
I knew the hovering silence would be broken.
A low night wind came whispering: through and through
It did baptize me with the pledge and token
Of that soft spirit-wind which blows and blew
And fans the human world since evermore.
The very grass, cool to my feet, I knew
To be love also, and with the love I bore
To hold far sympathy, silent and sweet,
As having known the secret from of yore
In the eternal heart where all things meet,
Feelings and thinkings, and where still they are bred.
Sudden he stood, and with arrested feet
I also. Like a half-sunned orb, his head
Slow turned the bright side: lo, the brother-smile
That ancient human glory on me shed
ClothØd in which Jesus came forth to wile
Unto his bosom every labouring soul,
And all dividing passions to beguile
To winsome death, and then on them to roll
The blessed stone of the holy sepulchre!
"Thank God," he said, "thou also now art whole
And sound and well! For the keen pain, and stir
Uneasy, and sore grief that came to us all,
In that we knew not how the wine and myrrh
Could ever from the vinegar and gall
Be parted, are deep sunk, yea drowned in God;
And yet the past not folded in a pall,
But breathed upon, like Aaron's withered rod,
By a sweet light that brings the blossoms through,

Showing in dreariest paths that men have trod
Another's foot-prints, spotted of crimson hue,
Still on before wherever theirs did wend;
Yea, through the desert leading, of thyme and rue,
The desert souls in which young lions rend
And roar--the passionate who, to be blest,
Ravin as bears, and do not gain their end,
Because that, save in God, there is no rest."

IV.

Something my brother said to me like this,
But how unlike it also, think, I pray:
His eyes were music, and his smile a kiss;
Himself the word, his speech was but a ray
In the clear nimbus that with verity
Of absolute utterance made a home-born day
Of truth about him, lamping solemnly;
And when he paused, there came a swift repose,
Too high, too still to be called ecstasy--
A purple silence, lanced through in the close
By such keen thought that, with a sudden smiling,
It grew sheen silver, hearted with burning rose.
He was a glory full of reconciling,
Of faithfulness, of love with no self-stain,
Of tenderness, and care, and brother-wiling
Back to the bosom of a speechless gain.

V.

I cannot tell how long we joyous talked,
For from my sense old time had vanished quite,
Space dim-remaining--for onward still we walked.
No sun arose to blot the pale, still night--
Still as the night of some great spongy stone
That turns but once an age betwixt the light
And the huge shadow from its own bulk thrown,
And long as that to me before whose face
Visions so many slid, and veils were blown
Aside from the vague vast of Isis' grace.
Innumerable thoughts yet throng that infinite hour,
And hopes which greater hopes unceasing chase,
For I was all responsive to his power.
I saw my friends weep, wept, and let them weep;
I saw the growth of each grief-nurtured flower;
I saw the gardener watching--in their sleep
Wiping their tears with the napkin he had laid
Wrapped by itself when he climbed Hades' steep;
What wonder then I saw nor was dismayed!
I saw the dull, degraded monsters nursed
In money-marshes, greedy men that preyed
Upon the helpless, ground the feeblest worst;
Yea all the human chaos, wild and waste,

Where he who will not leave what God hath cursed
Now fruitless wallows, now is stung and chased
By visions lovely and by longings dire.
"But who believeth, he shall not make haste,
Even passing through the water and the fire,
Or sad with memories of a better lot!
He, saved by hope, for all men will desire,
Knowing that God into a mustard-jot
May shut an aeon; give a world that lay
Wombed in its sun, a molten unorbbed clot,
One moment from the red rim to spin away
Librating--ages to roll on weary wheel
Ere it turn homeward, almost spent its day!
Who knows love all, time nothing, he shall feel
No anxious heart, shall lift no trembling hand;
Tender as air, but clothed in triple steel,
He for his kind, in every age and land,
Hoping will live; and, to his labour bent,
The Father's will shall, doing, understand."
So spake my brother as we onward went:
His words my heart received, as corn the lea,
And answered with a harvest of content.
We came at last upon a lonesome sea.

VI.

And onward still he went, I following
Out on the water. But the water, lo,
Like a thin sheet of glass, lay vanishing!
The starry host in glorious twofold show
Looked up, looked down. The moment I saw this,
A quivering fear thorough my heart did go:
Unstayed I walked across a twin abyss,
A hollow sphere of blue; nor floor was found
Of questing eye, only the foot met the kiss
Of the cool water lightly crisping round
The edges of the footsteps! Terror froze
My fallen eyelids. But again the sound
Of my guide's voice on the still air arose:
"Hast thou forgotten that we walk by faith?
For keenest sight but multiplies the shows.
Lift up thine eyelids; take a valiant breath;
Terrified, dare the terror in God's name;
Step wider; trust the invisible. Can Death
Avail no more to hearten up thy flame?"
I trembled, but I opened wide mine eyes,
And strode on the invisible sea. The same
High moment vanished all my cowardice,
And God was with me. The well-pleased stars
Threw quivering smiles across the gulfy skies,
The white aurora flashed great scimitars
From north to zenith; and again my guide
Full turned on me his face. No prison-bars

Latticed across a soul I there descried,
No weather-stains of grief; quiet age-long
Brooded upon his forehead clear and wide;
Yet from that face a pang shot, vivid and strong,
Into my heart. For, though I saw him stand
Close to me in the void as one in a throng,
Yet on the border of some nameless land
He stood afar; a still-eyed mystery
Caught him whole worlds away. Though in my hand
His hand I held, and, gazing earnestly,
Searched in his countenance, as in a mine,
For jewels of contentment, satisfy
My heart I could not. Seeming to divine
My hidden trouble, gently he stooped and kissed
My forehead, and his arms did round me twine,
And held me to his bosom. Still I missed
That ancient earthly nearness, when we shared
One bed, like birds that of no morrow wist;
Roamed our one father's farm; or, later, fared
Along the dusty highways of the old clime.
Backward he drew, and, as if he had bared
My soul, stood reading there a little time,
While in his eyes tears gathered slow, like dew
That dims the grass at evening or at prime,
But makes the stars clear-goldener in the blue:
And on his lips a faint ethereal smile
Hovered, as hangs the mist of its own hue
Trembling about a purple flower, the while
Evening grows brown. "Brother! brother!" I cried;
But straight outbursting tears my words beguile,
And in my bosom all the utterance died.

VII.

A moment more he stood, then softly sighed.
"I know thy pain; but this sorrow is far
Beyond my help," his voice at length replied
To my beseeching tears. "Look at yon star
Up from the low east half-way, all ablaze:
Think'st thou, because no cloud between doth mar
The liquid glory that from its visage rays,
Thou therefore knowest that same world on high,
Its people and its orders and its ways?"
"What meanest thou?" I said. "Thou know'st that
Would hold, not thy dear form, but the self-thee!
Thou art not near me! For thyself I cry!"
"Not the less near that nearer I shall be.
I have a world within thou dost not know--
Would I could make thee know it! but all of me
Is thine, though thou not yet canst enter so
Into possession that betwixt us twain
The frolic homeliness of love should flow
As o'er the brim of childhood's cup again:

Away the deeper childhood first must wipe
That clouded consciousness which was our pain.
When in thy breast the godlike hath grown ripe,
And thou, Christ's little one, art ten times more
A child than when we played with drum and pipe
About our earthly father's happy door,
Then--" He ceased not; his holy utterance still
Flowing went on, like spring from hidden store
Of wasteless waters; but I wept my fill,
Nor heeded much the comfort of his speech.
At length he said: "When first I clomb the hill--
With earthly words I heavenly things would reach--
Where dwelleth now the man we used to call
Father, whose voice, oh memory dear! did teach
Us in our beds, when straight, as once a stall
Became a temple, holy grew the room,
Prone on the ground before him I did fall,
So grand he towered above me like a doom;
But now I look into the well-known face
Fearless, yea, basking blessed in the bloom
Of his eternal youthfulness and grace."
"But something separates us," yet I cried;
"Let light at least begin the dark to chase,
The dark begin to waver and divide,
And clear the path of vision. In the old time,
When clouds one heart did from the other hide,
A wind would blow between! If I would climb,
This foot must rise ere that can go up higher:
Some big A teach me of the eternal prime."
He answered me: "Hearts that to love aspire
Must learn its mighty harmony ere they can
Give out one perfect note in its great quire;
And thereto am I sent--oh, sent of one
Who makes the dumb for joy break out and sing:
He opens every door 'twixt man and man;
He to all inner chambers all will bring."

VIII.

It was enough; Hope waked from dreary swound,
And Hope had ever been enough for me,
To kennel driving grim Tomorrow's hound;
From chains of school and mode she set me free,
And urged my life to living.--On we went
Across the stars that underlay the sea,
And came to a blown shore of sand and bent.
Beyond the sand a marshy moor we crossed
Silent--I, for I pondered what he meant,
And he, that sacred speech might not be lost--
And came at length upon an evil place:
Trees lay about like a half-buried host,
Each in its desolate pool; some fearful race
Of creatures was not far, for howls and cries

And gurgling hisses rose. With even pace
Walking, "Fear not," he said, "for this way lies
Our journey." On we went; and soon the ground
Slow from the waste began a gentle rise;
And tender grass in patches, then all round,
Came clouding up, with its fresh homely tinge
Of softest green cold-flushing every mound;
At length, of lowly shrubs a scattered fringe;
And last, a gloomy forest, almost blind,
For on its roof no sun-ray did impinge,
So that its very leaves did share the mind
Of a brown shadowless day. Not, all the year,
Once part its branches to let through a wind,
But all day long the unmoving trees appear
To ponder on the past, as men may do
That for the future wait without a fear,
And in the past the coming present view.

IX.

I know not if for days many or few
Pathless we thrid the wood; for never sun,
Its sylvan-traceried windows peeping through,
Mottled with brighter green the mosses dun,
Or meted with moving shadows Time the shade.
No life was there--not even a spider spun.
At length we came into a sky-roofed glade,
An open level, in a circle shut
By solemn trees that stood aside and made
Large room and lonely for a little hut
By grassy sweeps wide-margined from the wood.
'Twas built of saplings old, that had been cut
When those great trees no larger by them stood;
Thick with an ancient moss, it seemed to have grown
Thus from the old brown earth, a covert rude,
Half-house, half-grave; half-lifted up, half-prone.
To its low door my brother led me. "There
Is thy first school," he said; "there be thou shown
Thy pictured alphabet. Wake a mind of prayer,
And praying enter." "But wilt thou not come,
Brother?" I said. "No," said he. And I, "Where
Then shall I find thee? Thou wilt not leave me dumb,
And a whole world of thoughts unuttered?"
With half-sad smile and dewy eyes, and some
Conflicting motions of his kingly head,
He pointed to the open-standing door.
I entered: inward, lo, my shadow led!
I turned: his countenance shone like lightning hoar!
Then slow he turned from me, and parted slow,
Like one unwilling, whom I should see no more;
With voice nor hand said, _Farewell, I must go!_
But drew the clinging door hard to the post.
No dry leaves rustled 'neath his going; no

Footfalls came back from the departing ghost.
He was no more. I laid me down and wept;
I dared not follow him, restrained the most
By fear I should not see him if I leapt
Out after him with cries of pleading love.
Close to the wall, in hopeless loss, I crept;
There cool sleep came, God's shadow, from above.

X.

I woke, with calmness cleansed and sanctified--
The peace that filled my heart of old, when I
Woke in my mother's lap; for since I died
The past lay bare, even to the dreaming shy
That shadowed my yet gathering unborn brain.
And, marvelling, on the floor I saw, close by
My elbow-pillowed head, as if it had lain
Beside me all the time I dreamless lay,
A little pool of sunlight, which did stain
The earthen brown with gold; marvelling, I say,
Because, across the sea and through the wood,
No sun had shone upon me all the way.
I rose, and through a chink the glade I viewed,
But all was dull as it had always been,
And sunless every tree-top round it stood,
With hardly light enough to show it green;
Yet through the broken roof, serenely glad,
By a rough hole entered that heavenly sheen.
Then I remembered in old years I had
Seen such a light--where, with dropt eyelids gloomed,
Sitting on such a floor, dark women sad
In a low barn-like house where lay entombed
Their sires and children; only there the door
Was open to the sun, which entering plumed
With shadowy palms the stones that on the floor
Stood up like lidless chests--again to find
That the soul needs no brain, but keeps her store
In hidden chambers of the eternal mind.
Thence backward ran my roused Memory
Down the ever-opening vista--back to blind
Anticipations while my soul did lie
Closed in my mother's; forward thence through bright
Spring morns of childhood, gay with hopes that fly
Bird-like across their doming blue and white,
To passionate summer noons, to saddened eyes
Of autumn rain, so on to wintred night;
Thence up once more to the dewy dawn that weaves
Saffron and gold--weaves hope with still content,
And wakes the worship that even wrong bereaves
Of half its pain. And round her as she went
Hovered a sense as of an odour dear
Whose flower was far--as of a letter sent
Not yet arrived--a footstep coming near,

But, oh, how long delayed the lifting latch!--
As of a waiting sun, ready to peer
Yet peering not--as of a breathless watch
Over a sleeping beauty--babbling rime
About her lips, but no winged word to catch!
And here I lay, the child of changeful Time
Shut in the weary, changeless Evermore,
A dull, eternal, fadeless, fruitless clime!
Was this the dungeon of my sinning sore--
A gentle hell of loneliness, foredoomed
For such as I, whose love was yet the core
Of all my being? The brown shadow gloomed
Persistent, faded, warm. No ripple ran
Across the air, no roaming insect boomed.
"Alas," I cried, "I am no living man!
Better were darkness and the leave to grope
Than light that builds its own drear prison! Can
This be the folding of the wings of Hope?"

XI.

That instant--through the branches overhead
No sound of going went--a shadow fell
Isled in the unrippled pool of sunlight fed
From some far fountain hid in heavenly dell.
I looked, and in the low roofs broken place
A single snowdrop stood--a radiant bell
Of silvery shine, softly subdued by grace
Of delicate green that made the white appear
Yet whiter. Blind it bowed its head a space,
Half-timid--then, as in despite of fear,
Unfolded its three rays. If it had swung
Its pendent bell, and music golden clear--
Division just entrancing sounds among--
Had flickered down as tender as flakes of snow,
It had not shed more influence as it rung
Than from its look alone did rain and flow.
I knew the flower; perceived its human ways;
Dim saw the secret that had made it grow:
My heart supplied the music's golden phrase.
Light from the dark and snowdrops from the earth,
Life's resurrection out of gross decays,
The endless round of beauty's yearly birth,
And nations' rise and fall--were in the flower,
And read themselves in silence. Heavenly mirth
Awoke in my sad heart. For one whole hour
I praised the God of snowdrops. But at height
The bliss gave way. Next, faith began to cower;
And then the snowdrop vanished from my sight.

XII.

Last, I began in unbelief to say:

"No angel this! a snowdrop--nothing more!
A trifle which God's hands drew forth in play
From the tangled pond of chaos, dank and frore,
Threw on the bank, and left blindly to breed!
A wilful fancy would have gathered store
Of evanescence from the pretty weed,
White, shapely--then divine! Conclusion lame
O'erdriven into the shelter of a creed!
Not out of God, but nothingness it came:
Colourless, feeble, flying from life's heat,
It has no honour, hardly shunning shame!"
When, see, another shadow at my feet!
Hopeless I lifted now my weary head:
Why mock me with another heavenly cheat?--
A primrose fair, from its rough-blanketed bed
Laughed, lo, my unbelief to heavenly scorn!
A sun-child, just awake, no prayer yet said,
Half rising from the couch where it was born,
And smiling to the world! I breathed again;
Out of the midnight once more dawned the morn,
And fled the phantom Doubt with all his train.

XIII.

I was a child once more, nor pondered life,
Thought not of what or how much. All my soul
With sudden births of lovely things grew rife.
In peeps a daisy: on the instant roll
Rich lawny fields, with red tips crowding the green,
Across the hollows, over ridge and knoll,
To where the rosy sun goes down serene.
From out of heaven in looks a pimpernel:
I walk in morning scents of thyme and bean;
Dewdrops on every stalk and bud and bell
Flash, like a jewel-orchard, many roods;
Glow ruby suns, which emerald suns would quell;
Topaz saint-glories, sapphire beatitudes
Blaze in the slanting sunshine all around;
Above, the high-priest-lark, o'er fields and woods--
Rich-hearted with his five eggs on the ground--
The sacrifice bore through the veil of light,
Odour and colour offering up in sound.--
Filled heart-full thus with forms of lowly might
And shapeful silences of lovely lore,
I sat a child, happy with only sight,
And for a time I needed nothing more.

XIV.

Supine to the revelation I did lie,
Passive as prophet to his dreaming deep,
Or harp Aeolian to the breathing sky,
And blest as any child whom twilight sleep

Holds half, and half lets go. But the new day
 Of higher need up-dawned with sudden leap:
 "Ah, flowers," I said, "ye are divinely gay,
 But your fair music is too far and fine!
 Ye are full cups, yet reach not to allay
 The drought of those for human love who pine
 As the hart for water-brooks!" At once a face
 Was looking in my face; its eyes through mine
 Were feeding me with tenderness and grace,
 And by their love I knew my mother's eyes.
 Gazing in them, there grew in me apace
 A longing grief, and love did swell and rise
 Till weeping I brake out and did bemoan
 My blameful share in bygone tears and cries:
 "O mother, wilt thou plead for me?" I groan;
 "I say not, plead with Christ, but plead with those
 Who, gathered now in peace about his throne,
 Were near me when my heart was full of throes,
 And longings vain alter a flying bliss,
 Which oft the fountain by the threshold froze:
 They must forgive me, mother! Tell them this:
 No more shall swell the love-dividing sigh;
 Down at their feet I lay my selfishness."
 The face grew passionate at this my cry;
 The gathering tears up to its eyebrims rose;
 It grew a trembling mist, that did not fly
 But slow dissolved. I wept as one of those
 Who wake outside the garden of their dream,
 And, lo, the droop-winged hours laborious close
 Its opal gates with stone and stake and beam.

XV.

But glory went that glory more might come.
 Behold a countless multitude--no less!
 A host of faces, me besieging, dumb
 In the lone castle of my mournfulness!
 Had then my mother given the word I sent,
 Gathering my dear ones from the shining press?
 And had these others their love-aidance lent
 For full assurance of the pardon prayed?
 Would they concentrate love, with sweet intent,
 On my self-love, to blast the evil shade?
 Ah, perfect vision! pledge of endless hope!
 Oh army of the holy spirit, arrayed
 In comfort's panoply! For words I grope--
 For clouds to catch your radiant dawn, my own,
 And tell your coming! From the highest cope
 Of blue, down to my roof-breach came a cone
 Of faces and their eyes on love's will borne,
 Bright heads down-bending like the forward blown,
 Heavy with ripeness, golden ears of corn,
 By gentle wind on crowded harvest-field,

All gazing toward my prison-hut forlorn
As if with power of eyes they would have healed
My troubled heart, making it like their own
In which the bitter fountain had been sealed,
And the life-giving water flowed alone!

XVI.

With what I thus beheld, glorified then,
"God, let me love my fill and pass!" I sighed,
And dead, for love had almost died again.
"O fathers, brothers, I am yours!" I cried;
"O mothers, sisters. I am nothing now
Save as I am yours, and in you sanctified!
O men, O women, of the peaceful brow,
And infinite abysses in the eyes
Whence God's ineffable gazes on me, how
Care ye for me, impassioned and unwise?
Oh ever draw my heart out after you!
Ever, O grandeur, thus before me rise
And I need nothing, not even for love will sue!
I am no more, and love is all in all!
Henceforth there is, there can be nothing new--
All things are always new!" Then, like the fall
Of a steep avalanche, my joy fell steep:
Up in my spirit rose as it were the call
Of an old sorrow from an ancient deep;
For, with my eyes fixed on the eyes of him
Whom I had loved before I learned to creep--
God's vicar in his twilight nursery dim
To gather us to the higher father's knee--
I saw a something fill their azure rim
That caught him worlds and years away from me;
And like a javelin once more through me passed
The pang that pierced me walking on the sea:
"O saints," I cried, "must loss be still the last?"

XVII.

When I said this, the cloud of witnesses
Turned their heads sideways, and the cloud grew dim
I saw their faces half, but now their bliss
Gleamed low, like the old moon in the new moon's rim.
Then as I gazed, a better kind of light
On every outline 'gan to glimmer and swim,
Faint as the young moon threadlike on the night,
Just born of sunbeams trembling on her edge:
'Twas a great cluster of profiles in sharp white.
Had some far dawn begun to drive a wedge
Into the night, and cleave the clinging dark?
I saw no moon or star, token or pledge
Of light, save that manifold silvery mark,
The shining title of each spirit-book.

Whence came that light? Sudden, as if a spark
Of vital touch had found some hidden nook
Where germs of potent harmonies lay prest,
And their outbursting life old Aether shook,
Rose, as in prayer to lingering promised guest,
From that great cone of faces such a song,
Instinct with hope's harmonical unrest,
That with sore weeping, and the cry "How long?"
I bore my part because I could not sing.
And as they sang, the light more clear and strong
Bordered their faces, till the glory-sting
I could almost no more encounter and bear;
Light from their eyes, like water from a spring,
Flowed; on their foreheads reigned their flashing hair;
I saw the light from eyes I could not see.
"He comes! he comes!" they sang, "comes to our prayer!"
"Oh my poor heart, if only it were _He!_"
I cried. Thereat the faces moved! those eyes
Were turning on me! In rushed ecstasy,
And woke me to the light of lower skies.

XVIII.

"What matter," said I, "whether clank of chain
Or over-bliss wakes up to bitterness!"
Stung with its loss, I called the vision vain.
Yet feeling life grown larger, suffering less,
Sleep's ashes from my eyelids I did brush.
The room was veiled, that morning should not press
Upon the slumber which had stayed the rush
Of ebbing life; I looked into the gloom:
Upon her brow the dawn's first grayest flush,
And on her cheek pale hope's reviving bloom,
Sat, patient watcher, darkling and alone,
She who had lifted me from many a tomb!
One then was left me of Love's radiant cone!
Its light on her dear face, though faint and wan,
Was shining yet--a dawn upon it thrown
From the far coming of the Son of Man!

XIX.

In every forehead now I see a sky
Catching the dawn; I hear the wintriest breeze
About me blow the news the Lord is nigh.
Long is the night, dark are the polar seas,
Yet slanting suns ascend the northern hill.
Round Spring's own steps the oozy waters freeze
But hold them not. Dreamers are sleeping still,
But labourers, light-stung, from their slumber start:
Faith sees the ripening ears with harvest fill
When but green blades the clinging earth-clods part.

XX.

Lord, I have spoken a poor parable,
In which I would have said thy name alone
Is the one secret lying in Truth's well,
Thy voice the hidden charm in every tone,
Thy face the heart of every flower on earth,
Its vision the one hope; for every moan
Thy love the cure! O sharer of the birth
Of little children seated on thy knee!
O human God! I laugh with sacred mirth
To think how all the laden shall go free;
For, though the vision tarry, in healing ruth
One morn the eyes that shone in Galilee
Will dawn upon them, full of grace and truth,
And thy own love--the vivifying core
Of every love in heart of age or youth,
Of every hope that sank 'neath burden sore!

THE SANGREAL:

A Part Of The Story Omitted In The Old Romances.

I.

How sir Galahad despaired of finding the Grail.

Through the wood the sunny day
Glimmered sweetly glad;
Through the wood his weary way
Rode sir Galahad.

All about stood open porch,
Long-drawn cloister dim;
'Twas a wavering wandering church
Every side of him.

On through columns arching high,
Foliage-vaulted, he
Rode in thirst that made him sigh,
Longing miserably.

Came the moon, and through the trees
Glimmered faintly sad;
Withered, worn, and ill at ease
Down lay Galahad;

Closed his eyes and took no heed
What might come or pass;
Heard his hunger-busy steed
Cropping dewy grass.

Cool and juicy was the blade,
Good to him as wine:
For his labour he was paid,
Galahad must pine!

Late had he at Arthur's board,
Arthur strong and wise,
Pledged the cup with friendly lord,
Looked in ladies' eyes;

Now, alas! he wandered wide,
Resting never more,
Over lake and mountain-side,
Over sea and shore!

Swift in vision rose and fled
All he might have had;
Weary tossed his restless head,
And his heart grew sad.

With the lowliest in the land
He a maiden fair
Might have led with virgin hand
From the altar-stair:

Youth away with strength would glide,
Age bring frost and woe;
Through the world so dreary wide
Mateless he must go!

Lost was life and all its good,
Gone without avail!
All his labour never would
Find the Holy Grail!

II.

How sir Galahad found and lost the Grail.

Galahad was in the night,
And the wood was drear;
But to men in darksome plight
Radiant things appear:

Wings he heard not floating by,
Heard no heavenly hail;
But he started with a cry,
For he saw the Grail.

Hid from bright beholding sun,
Hid from moonlight wan,
Lo, from age-long darkness won,

It was seen of man!

Three feet off, on cushioned moss,
As if cast away,
Homely wood with carven cross,
Rough and rude it lay!

To his knees the knight rose up,
Loosed his gauntlet-band;
Fearing, daring, toward the cup
Went his naked hand;

When, as if it fled from harm,
Sank the holy thing,
And his eager following arm
Plunged into a spring.

Oh the thirst, the water sweet!
Down he lay and quaffed,
Quaffed and rose up on his feet,
Rose and gayly laughed;

Fell upon his knees to thank,
Loved and lauded there;
Stretched him on the mossy bank,
Fell asleep in prayer;

Dreamed, and dreaming murmured low
Ave, pater, creed;
When the fir-tops gan to glow
Waked and called his steed;

Bitted him and drew his girth,
Watered from his helm:
Happier knight or better worth
Was not in the realm!

Belted on him then his sword,
Braced his slackened mail;
Doubting said: "I dreamed the Lord
Offered me the Grail."

III.

How sir Galahad gave up the Quest for the Grail.

Ere the sun had cast his light
On the water's face,
Firm in saddle rode the knight
From the holy place,

Merry songs began to sing,
Let his matins bide;

Rode a good hour pondering,
And was turned aside,

Saying, "I will henceforth then
Yield this hopeless quest;
Tis a dream of holy men
This ideal Best!"

"Every good for miracle
Heart devout may hold;
Grail indeed was that fair well
Full of water cold!

"Not my thirst alone it stilled
But my soul it stayed;
And my heart, with gladness filled,
Wept and laughed and prayed!

"Spectral church with cryptic niche
I will seek no more;
That the holiest Grail is, which
Helps the need most sore!"

And he spake with speech more true
Than his thought indeed,
For not yet the good knight knew
His own sorest need.

IV.

How sir Galahad sought yet again for the Grail.

On he rode, to succour bound,
But his faith grew dim;
Wells for thirst he many found,
Water none for him.

Never more from drinking deep
Rose he up and laughed;
Never more did prayerful sleep
Follow on the draught.

Good the water which they bore,
Plenteously it flowed,
Quenched his thirst, but, ah, no more
Eased his bosom's load!

For the _Best_ no more he sighed;
Rode as in a trance;
Life grew poor, undignified,
And he spake of chance.

Then he dreamed through Jesus' hand

That he drove a nail--
Woke and cried, "Through every land,
Lord, I seek thy Grail!"

V.

That sir Galahad found the Grail.

Up the quest again he took,
Rode through wood and wave;
Sought in many a mossy nook,
Many a hermit-cave;

Sought until the evening red
Sunk in shadow deep;
Sought until the moonlight fled;
Slept, and sought in sleep.

Where he wandered, seeking, sad,
Story doth not say,
But at length sir Galahad
Found it on a day;

Took the Grail with holy hand,
Had the cup of joy;
Carried it about the land,
Gleesome as a boy;

Laid his sword where he had found
Boot for every bale,
Stuck his spear into the ground,
Kept alone the Grail.

VI.

How sir Galahad carried about the Grail.

Horse and crested helmet gone,
Greaves and shield and mail,
Caroling loud the knight walked on,
For he had the Grail;

Caroling loud walked south and north,
East and west, for years;
Where he went, the smiles came forth,
Where he left, the tears.

Glave nor dagger mourned he,
Axe nor iron flail:
Evil might not brook to see
Once the Holy Grail.

Wilds he wandered with his staff,

Woods no longer sad;
Earth and sky and sea did laugh
Round sir Galahad.

Bitter mere nor trodden pool
Did in service fail,
Water all grew sweet and cool
In the Holy Grail.

Without where to lay his head,
Chanting loud he went;
Found each cave a palace-bed,
Every rock a tent.

Age that had begun to quail
In the gathering gloom,
Counselled he to seek the Grail
And forget the tomb.

Youth with hope or passion pale,
Youth with eager eyes,
Taught he that the Holy Grail
Was the only prize.

Maiden worn with hidden ail,
Restless and unsure,
Taught he that the Holy Grail
Was the only cure.

Children rosy in the sun
Ran to hear his tale
How twelve little ones had won
Each of them the Grail.

VII.

How sir Galahad hid the Grail.

Very still was earth and sky
When he passing lay;
Oft he said he should not die,
Would but go away.

When he passed, they reverent sought,
Where his hand lay prest,
For the cup he bare, they thought,
Hidden in his breast.

Hope and haste and eager thrill
Turned to sorrowing wail:
Hid he held it deeper still,
Took with him the Grail.

THE FAILING TRACK.

Where went the feet that hitherto have come?
Here yawns no gulf to quench the flowing past!
With lengthening pauses broke, the path grows dumb;
The grass floats in; the gazer stands aghast.

Tremble not, maiden, though the footprints die;
By no air-path ascend the lark's clear notes;
The mighty-throated when he mounts the sky
Over some lowly landmark sings and floats.

Be of good cheer. Paths vanish from the wave;
There all the ships tear each its track of gray;
Undaunted they the wandering desert brave:
In each a magic finger points the way.

No finger finely touched, no eye of lark
Hast thou to guide thy steps where footprints fail?
Ah, then, 'twere well to turn before the dark,
Nor dream to find thy dreams in yonder vale!

The backward way one hour is plain to thee,
Hard hap were hers who saw no trace behind!
Back to confession at thy mother's knee,
Back to the question and the childlike mind!

Then start afresh, but toward unending end,
The goal o'er which hangs thy own star all night;
So shalt thou need no footprints to befriend,
Child-heart and shining star will guide thee right.

TELL ME.

"Traveller, what lies over the hill?
Traveller, tell to me:
Tip-toe-high on the window-sill
Over I cannot see."

"My child, a valley green lies there,
Lovely with trees, and shy;
And a tiny brook that says, 'Take care,
Or I'll drown you by and by!'"

"And what comes next?"--"A little town,
And a towering hill again;
More hills and valleys up and down,
And a river now and then."

"And what comes next?"--"A lonely moor
Without one beaten way,
And slow clouds drifting dull before
A wind that will not stay."

"And then?"--"Dark rocks and yellow sand,
Blue sea and a moaning tide."
"And then?"--"More sea, and then more land,
With rivers deep and wide."

"And then?"--"Oh, rock and mountain and vale,
Ocean and shores and men,
Over and over, a weary tale,
And round to your home again!"

"And is that all? From day to day,
Like one with a long chain bound,
Should I walk and walk and not get away,
But go always round and round?"

"No, no; I have not told you the best,
I have not told you the end:
If you want to escape, away in the west
You will see a stair ascend,

"Built of all colours of lovely stones,
A stair up into the sky
Where no one is weary, and no one moans,
Or wishes to be laid by."

"Is it far away?"--"I do not know:
You must fix your eyes thereon,
And travel, travel through thunder and snow,
Till the weary way is gone.

"All day, though you never see it shine,
You must travel nor turn aside,
All night you must keep as straight a line
Through moonbeams or darkness wide."

"When I am older!"--"Nay, not so!"
"I have hardly opened my eyes!"
"He who to the old sunset would go,
Starts best with the young sunrise."

"Is the stair right up? is it very steep?"
"Too steep for you to climb;
You must lie at the foot of the glorious heap
And patient wait your time."

"How long?"--"Nay, that I cannot tell."
"In wind, and rain, and frost?"
"It may be so; and it is well

That you should count the cost.

"Pilgrims from near and from distant lands
Will step on you lying there;
But a wayfaring man with wounded hands
Will carry you up the stair."

BROTHER ARTIST!

Brother artist, help me; come!
Artists are a maimed band:
I have words but not a hand;
Thou hast hands though thou art dumb.

Had I thine, when words did fail--
Vassal-words their hasting chief,
On the white awaiting leaf
Shapes of power should tell the tale.

Had I hers of music-might,
I would shake the air with storm
Till the red clouds trailed enorm
Boreal dances through the night.

Had I his whose foresight rare
Piles the stones with lordliest art,
From the quarry of my heart
Love should climb a heavenly stair!

Had I his whose wooing slow
Wins the marble's hidden child,
Out in passion undefiled
Stood my Psyche, white as snow!

Maimed, a little help I pray;
Words suffice not for my end;
Let thy hand obey thy friend,
Say for me what I would say.

Draw me, on an arid plain
With hoar-headed mountains nigh,
Under a clear morning sky
Telling of a night of rain,

Huge and half-shaped, like a block
Chosen for sarcophagus
By a Pharaoh glorious,
One rude solitary rock.

Cleave it down along the ridge
With a fissure yawning deep

To the heart of the hard heap,
Like the rent of riving wedge.

Through the cleft let hands appear,
Upward pointed with pressed palms
As if raised in silent psalms
For salvation come anear.

Turn thee now--'tis almost done!--
To the near horizon's verge:
Make the smallest arc emerge
Of the forehead of the sun.

One thing more--I ask too much!--
From a brow which hope makes brave
Sweep the shadow of the grave
With a single golden touch.

Thanks, dear painter; that is all.
If thy picture one day should
Need some words to make it good,
I am ready to thy call.

AFTER AN OLD LEGEND.

The monk was praying in his cell,
With bowed head praying sore;
He had been praying on his knees
For two long hours and more.

As of themselves, all suddenly,
His eyelids opened wide;
Before him on the ground he saw
A man's feet close beside;

And almost to the feet came down
A garment wove throughout;
Such garment he had never seen
In countries round about!

His eyes he lifted tremblingly
Until a hand they spied:
A chisel-scar on it he saw,
And a deep, torn scar beside.

His eyes they leaped up to the face,
His heart gave one wild bound,
Then stood as if its work were done--
The Master he had found!

With sudden clang the convent bell

Told him the poor did wait
His hand to give the daily bread
Doled at the convent-gate.

Then Love rose in him passionate,
And with Duty wrestled strong;
And the bell kept calling all the time
With merciless iron tongue.

The Master stood and looked at him
He rose up with a sigh:
"He will be gone when I come back
I go to him by and by!"

He chid his heart, he fed the poor
All at the convent-gate;
Then with slow-dragging feet went back
To his cell so desolate:

His heart bereaved by duty done,
He had sore need of prayer!
Oh, sad he lifted the latch!--and, lo,
The Master standing there!

He said, "My poor had not to stand
Wearily at thy gate:
For him who feeds the shepherd's sheep
The shepherd will stand and wait."

_Yet, Lord--for thou would'st have us judge,
And I will humbly dare--
If he had staid, I do not think
Thou wouldst have left him there.

Thy voice in far-off time I hear,
With sweet defending, say:
"The poor ye always have with you,
Me ye have not alway!"

Thou wouldst have said: "Go feed my poor,
The deed thou shalt not rue;
Wherever ye do my father's will
I always am with you."_

A MEDITATION OF ST. ELIGIUS.

_Queen Mary one day Jesus sent
To fetch some water, legends tell;
The little boy, obedient,
Drew a full pitcher from the well;

But as he raised it to his head,
The water lipping with the rim,
The handle broke, and all was shed
Upon the stones about the brim.

His cloak upon the ground he laid
And in it gathered up the pool; [Proverbs xxx. 4.]
Obedient there the water staid,
And home he bore it plentiful._

Eligius said, "Tis fabled ill:
The hands that all the world control,
Had here been room for miracle,
Had made his mother's pitcher whole!

"Still, some few drops for thirsty need
A poor invention even, when told
In love of thee the Truth indeed,
Like broken pitcher yet may hold:

"Thy truth, alas, Lord, once I spilt:
I thought to bear the pitcher high;
Upon the shining stones of guilt
I slipped, and there the potsherds lie!

"Master, I cried, _no man will drink,
No human thirst will e'er be stilled
Through me, who sit upon the brink,
My pitcher broke, thy water spilled!

"What will they do I waiting left?
They looked to me to bring thy law!
The well is deep, and, sin-bereft,
I nothing have wherewith to draw!"_

"But as I sat in evil plight,
With dry parched heart and sickened brain,
Uprose in me the water bright,
Thou gavest me thyself again!"

THE EARLY BIRD.

A little bird sat on the edge of her nest;
Her yellow-beaks slept as sound as tops;
Day-long she had worked almost without rest,
And had filled every one of their gibbous crops;
Her own she had filled just over-full,
And she felt like a dead bird stuffed with wool.

"Oh dear!" she sighed, as she sat with her head
Sunk in her chest, and no neck at all,

Looking like an apple on a feather-bed
Poked and rounded and fluffed to a ball,
"What's to be done if things don't reform?
I cannot tell where there is one more worm!

"I've had fifteen to-day, and the children five each,
Besides a few flies, and some very fat spiders:
Who will dare say I don't do as I preach?
I set an example to all providers!
But what's the use? We want a storm:
I don't know where there's a single worm!"

"There's five in my crop," chirped a wee, wee bird
Who woke at the voice of his mother's pain;
"I know where there's five!" And with the word
He tucked in his head and went off again.
"The folly of childhood," sighed his mother,
"Has always been my especial bother!"

Careless the yellow-beaks slept on,
They never had heard of the bogy, Tomorrow;
The mother sat outside making her moan--
"I shall soon have to beg, or steal, or borrow!
I have always to say, the night before,
Where shall I find one red worm more!"

Her case was this, she had gobbled too many,
And sleepless, had an attack she called foresight:
A barn of crumbs, if she knew but of any!
Could she but get of the great worm-store sight!
The eastern sky was growing red
Ere she laid her wise beak in its feather-bed.

Just then, the fellow who knew of five,
Nor troubled his sleep with anxious tricks,
Woke, and stirred, and felt alive:
"To-day," he said, "I am up to six!
But my mother feels in her lot the crook--
What if I tried my own little hook!"

When his mother awoke, she winked her eyes
As if she had dreamed that she was a mole:
Could she believe them? "What a huge prize
That child is dragging out of its hole!"
The fledgeling indeed had just caught his third!
And here is a fable to catch the bird!

SIR LARK AND KING SUN.

"Good morrow, my lord!" in the sky alone
Sang the lark as the sun ascended his throne.

"Shine on me, my lord: I only am come,
Of all your servants, to welcome you home!
I have shot straight up, a whole hour, I swear,
To catch the first gleam of your golden hair."

"Must I thank you then," said the king, "sir Lark,
For flying so high and hating the dark?
You ask a full cup for half a thirst:
Half was love of me, half love to be first.
Some of my subjects serve better my taste:
Their watching and waiting means more than your haste."

King Sun wrapt his head in a turban of cloud;
Sir Lark stopped singing, quite vexed and cowed;
But higher he flew, for he thought, "Anon
The wrath of the king will be over and gone;
And, scattering his head-gear manifold,
He will change my brown feathers to a glory of gold!"

He flew, with the strength of a lark he flew,
But as he rose the cloud rose too;
And not one gleam of the flashing hair
Brought signal of favour across the air;
And his wings felt withered and worn and old,
For their feathers had had no chrism of gold.

Outwearied at length, and throbbing sore,
The strong sun-seeker could do no more;
He faltered and sank, then dropped like a stone
Beside his nest, where, patient, alone,
Sat his little wife on her little eggs,
Keeping them warm with wings and legs.

Did I say alone? Ah, no such thing!
There was the cloudless, the ray-crowned king!
"Welcome, sir Lark!--You look tired!" said he;
"_Up_ is not always the best way to me:
While you have been racing my turban gray,
I have been shining where you would not stay!"

He had set a coronet round the nest;
Its radiance foamed on the wife's little breast;
And so glorious was she in russet gold
That sir Lark for wonder and awe grew cold;
He popped his head under her wing, and lay
As still as a stone till king Sun went away.

THE OWL AND THE BELL.

Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!
Sang the Bell to himself in his house at home,

High in the church-tower, lone and unseen,
In a twilight of ivy, cool and green;
With his _Bing, Bing, Bim, Bing, Bang, Bome!_
Singing bass to himself in his house at home.

Said the Owl, on a shadowy ledge below,
Like a glimmering ball of forgotten snow,
"Pest on that fellow sitting up there,
Always calling the people to prayer!
He shatters my nerves with his _Bing, Bang, Bome!_---
Far too big in his house at home!

"I think I will move.--But it suits me well,
And one may get used to it, who can tell!"
So he slept again with all his might,
Then woke and snooved out in the hush of night
When the Bell was asleep in his house at home,
Dreaming over his _Bing, Bang, Bome!_

For the Owl was born so poor and genteel
What could he do but pick and steal?
He scorned to work for honest bread--
"Better have never been hatched!" he said.
So his day was the night, for he dared not roam
Till sleep had silenced the _Bing, Bang, Bome!_

When five greedy Owlets chipped the egg
He wanted two beaks and another leg,
And they ate the more that they did not sleep well:
"It's their gizzards," said Owless; said Owl, "It's that Bell!"
For they quivered like leaves of a wind-blown tome
When the Bell bellowed out his _Bing, Bang, Bome!_

But the Bell began to throb with the fear
Of bringing his house about his one ear;
And his people came round it, quite a throng,
To buttress the walls and make them strong:
A full month he sat, and felt like a mome
Not daring to shout his _Bing, Bang, Bome!_

Said the Owl to himself, and hissed as he said,
"I trust in my heart the old fool is dead!
No more will he scare church-mice with his bounce,
And make them so thin they're scarce worth a pounce!
Once I will see him ere he's laid in the loam,
And shout in his ear _Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!_"

"Hoo! hoo!" he cried, as he entered the steeple,
"They've hanged him at last, the righteous people!
His swollen tongue lolls out of his head!
Hoo! hoo! at last the old brute is dead!
There let him hang, the shapeless gnome,
Choked with a throatful of _Bing, Bang, Bome!_"

He fluttered about him, singing _Too-whooh!_
He flapped the poor Bell, and said, "Is that you?
You that never would matters mince,
Banging poor owls and making them wince?
A fig for you now, in your great hall-dome!
Too-whit is better than _Bing, Bang, Bome!_"

Still braver he grew, the downy, the dapper;
He flew in and perched on the knob of the clapper,
And shouted _Too-whooh!_ An echo awoke
Like a far-off ghostly _Bing-Bang_ stroke:
"Just so!" he cried; "I am quite at home!
I will take his place with my _Bing, Bang, Bome!_"

He hissed with the scorn of his grand self-wonder,
And thought the Bell's tremble his own great thunder:
He sat the Jove of creation's fowl.--
Bang! went the Bell--through the rope-hole the owl,
A fluffy avalanche, light as foam,
Loosed by the boom of the _Bing, Bang, Bome!_

He sat where he fell, as if he had meant it,
Ready for any remark anent it.
Said the eldest Owlet, "Pa, you were wrong;
He's at it again with his vulgar song!"
"Child," said the Owl, "of the mark you are wide:
I brought him to life by perching inside."

"Why did you, my dear?" said his startled wife;
"He has always been the plague of your life!"
"I have given him a lesson of good for evil:
Perhaps the old ruffian will now be civil!"
The Owl sat righteous, he raised his comb.
The Bell bawled on, _Bing, Bim, Bang, Bome!_

A MAMMON-MARRIAGE.

The croak of a raven hoar!
A dog's howl, kennel-tied!
Loud shuts the carriage-door:
The two are away on their ghastly ride
To Death's salt shore!

Where are the love and the grace?
The bridegroom is thirsty and cold!
The bride's skull sharpens her face!
But the coachman is driving, jubilant, bold,
The devil's pace.

The horses shivered and shook

Waiting gaunt and haggard
With sorry and evil look;
But swift as a drunken wind they staggered
'Longst Lethe brook.

Long since, they ran no more;
Heavily pulling they died
On the sand of the hopeless shore
Where never swelled or sank a tide,
And the salt burns sore.

Flat their skeletons lie,
White shadows on shining sand;
The crusted reins go high
To the crumbling coachman's bony hand
On his knees awry.

Side by side, jarring no more,
Day and night side by side,
Each by a doorless door,
Motionless sit the bridegroom and bride
On the Dead-Sea-shore.

A SONG IN THE NIGHT.

A brown bird sang on a blossomy tree,
Sang in the moonshine, merrily,
Three little songs, one, two, and three,
A song for his wife, for himself, and me.

He sang for his wife, sang low, sang high,
Filling the moonlight that filled the sky;
"Thee, thee, I love thee, heart alive!
Thee, thee, thee, and thy round eggs five!"

He sang to himself, "What shall I do
With this life that thrills me through and through!
Glad is so glad that it turns to ache!
Out with it, song, or my heart will break!"

He sang to me, "Man, do not fear
Though the moon goes down and the dark is near;
Listen my song and rest thine eyes;
Let the moon go down that the sun may rise!"

I folded me up in the heart of his tune,
And fell asleep with the sinking moon;
I woke with the day's first golden gleam,
And, lo, I had dreamed a precious dream!

LOVE'S HISTORY.

Love, the baby,
Crept abroad to pluck a flower:
One said, Yes, sir; one said, Maybe;
One said, Wait the hour.

Love, the boy,
Joined the youngsters at their play:
But they gave him little joy,
And he went away.

Love, the youth,
Roamed the country, quiver-laden;
From him fled away in sooth
Many a man and maiden!

Love, the man,
Sought a service all about;
But they called him feeble, one
They could do without.

Love, the aged,
Walking, bowed, the shadeless miles,
Read a volume many-paged,
Full of tears and smiles.

Love, the weary,
Tottered down the shelving road:
At its foot, lo, Night, the starry,
Meeting him from God!

"Love, the holy,"
Sang a music in her dome,
Sang it softly, sang it slowly,
"Love is coming home!"

THE LARK AND THE WIND.

In the air why such a ringing?
On the earth why such a droning?

In the air the lark is singing;
On the earth the wind is moaning.

"I am blest, in sunlight swinging!"
"Sad am I: the world lies groaning!"

In the sky the lark kept singing;
On the earth the wind kept moaning.

A DEAD HOUSE.

When the clock hath ceased to tick
Soul-like in the gloomy hall;
When the latch no more doth click
Tongue-like in the red peach-wall;
When no more come sounds of play,
Mice nor children romping roam,
Then looks down the eye of day
On a dead house, not a home!

But when, like an old sun's ghost,
Haunts her vault the spectral moon;
When earth's margins all are lost,
Melting shapes nigh merged in swoon,
Then a sound--hark! there again!--
No, 'tis not a nibbling mouse!
'Tis a ghost, unseen of men,
Walking through the bare-floored house!

And with lightning on the stair
To that silent upper room,
With the thunder-shaken air
Sudden gleaming into gloom,
With a frost-wind whistling round,
From the raging northern coasts,
Then, mid sieging light and sound,
All the house is live with ghosts!

Brother, is thy soul a cell
Empty save of glittering motes,
Where no live loves live and dwell,
Only notions, things, and thoughts?
Then thou wilt, when comes a Breath
Tempest-shaking ridge and post,
Find thyself alone with Death
In a house where walks no ghost.

'BELL UPON ORGAN.

It's all very well,
Said the Bell,
To be the big Organ below!
But the folk come and go,
Said the Bell,
And you never can tell
What sort of person the Organ will blow!
And, besides, it is much at the mercy of the weather

For 'tis all made in pieces and glued together!

But up in my cell
Next door to the sky,
Said the Bell,
I dwell
Very high;
And with glorious go
I swing to and fro;
I swing swift or slow,
I swing as I please,
With summons or knell;
I swing at my ease,
Said the Bell:
Not the tallest of men
Can reach up to touch me,
To smirch me or smutch me,
Or make me do what
I would not be at!
And, then,
The weather can't cause me to shrink or increase:
I chose to be made in one perfect piece!

MASTER AND BOY.

"WHO is this little one lying,"
Said Time, "at my garden-gate,
Moaning and sobbing and crying,
Out in the cold so late?"

"They lurked until we came near,
Master and I," the child said,
"Then caught me, with 'Welcome, New-year!
Happy Year! Golden-head!'

"See Christmas-day, my Master,
On the meadow a mile away!
Father Time, make me run faster!
I'm the Shadow of Christmas-day!"

"Run, my child; still he's in sight!
Only look well to his track;
Little Shadow, run like the light,
He misses you at his back!"

Old Time sat down in the sun
On a grave-stone--his legs were numb:
"When the boy to his master has run,"
He said, "Heaven's New Year is come!"

THE CLOCK OF THE UNIVERSE.

A clock aeonian, steady and tall,
With its back to creation's flaming wall,
Stands at the foot of a dim, wide stair.
Swing, swang, its pendulum goes,
Swing--swang--here--there!
Its tick and its tack like the sledge-hammer blows
Of Tubal Cain, the mighty man!
But they strike on the anvil of never an ear,
On the heart of man and woman they fall,
With an echo of blessing, an echo of ban;
For each tick is a hope, each tack is a fear,
Each tick is a _Where_, each tack a _Not here_,
Each tick is a kiss, each tack is a blow,
Each tick says _Why_, each tack _I don't know_.
Swing, swang, the pendulum!
Tick and tack, and _go_ and _come_,
With a haunting, far-off, dreamy hum,
With a tick, tack, loud and dumb,
Swings the pendulum.

Two hands, together joined in prayer,
With a roll and a volley of spheric thunder;
Two hands, in hope spread half asunder,
An empty gulf of longing embrace;
Two hands, wide apart as they can fare
In a fear still coasting not touching Despair,
But turning again, ever round to prayer:
Two hands, human hands, pass with awful motion
From isle to isle of the sapphire ocean.

The silent, surfaceless ocean-face
Is filled with a brooding, hearkening grace;
The stars dream in, and sink fainting out,
And the sun and the moon go walking about,
Walking about in it, solemn and slow,
Solemn and slow, at a thinking pace,
Walking about in it to and fro,
Walking, walking about.

With open beak and half-open wing
Ever with eagerness quivering,
On the peak of the clock
Stands a cock:
Tip-toe stands the cock to crow--
Golden cock with silver call
Clear as trumpet tearing the sky!
No one yet has heard him cry,
Nor ever will till the hour supreme
When Self on itself shall turn with a scream,
What time the hands are joined on high

In a hoping, despairing, speechless sigh,
The perfect groan-prayer of the universe
When the darkness clings and will not disperse
Though the time is come, told ages ago,
For the great white rose of the world to blow:
--Tick, tack, to the waiting cock,
Tick, tack, goes the aeon-clock!

A polar bear, golden and gray,
Crawls and crawls around the top.
Black and black as an Ethiop
The great sea-serpent lies coiled beneath,
Living, living, but does not breathe.
For the crawling bear is so far away
That he cannot hear, by night or day,
The bourdon big of his deep bear-bass
Roaring atop of the silent face,
Else would he move, and none knows then
What would befall the sons of men!

Eat up old Time, O raging Bear;
Take Bald-head, and the children spare!
Lie still, O Serpent, nor let one breath
Stir thy pool and stay Time's death!
Steady, Hands! for the noon is nigh:
See the silvery ghost of the Dawning shy
Low on the floor of the level sky!
Warn for the strike, O blessed Clock;
Gather thy clarion breath, gold Cock;
Push on the month-figures, pale, weary-faced Moon;
Tick, awful Pendulum, tick amain;
And soon, oh, soon,
Lord of life, and Father of boon,
Give us our own in our arms again!

Then the great old clock to pieces will fall
Sans groaning of axle or whirring of wheel.
And away like a mist of the morning steal,
To stand no more in creation's hall;
Its mighty weights will fall down plumb
Into the regions where all is dumb;
No more will its hands, in horror or prayer,
Be lifted or spread at the foot of the stair
That springs aloft to the Father's room;
Its tick and its tack, _When?--Not now_,
Will cease, and its muffled groan below;
Its sapphire face will dissolve away
In the dawn of the perfect, love-potent day;
The serpent and bear will be seen no more,
Growling atop, or prone on the floor;
And up the stair will run as they please
The children to clasp the Father's knees.

O God, our father, Allhearts' All,
Open the doors of thy clockless hall!

THE THORN IN THE FLESH.

Within my heart a worm had long been hid.
I knew it not when I went down and chid
Because some servants of my inner house
Had not, I found, of late been doing well,
But then I spied the horror hideous
Dwelling defiant in the inmost cell--
No, not the inmost, for there God did dwell!
But the small monster, softly burrowing,
Near by God's chamber had made itself a den,
And lay in it and grew, the noisome thing!
Aghast I prayed--'twas time I did pray then!
But as I prayed it seemed the loathsome shape
Grew livelier, and did so gnaw and scrape
That I grew faint. Whereon to me he said--
Some one, that is, who held my swimming head,
"Lo, I am with thee: let him do his worst;
The creature is, but not his work, accurst;
Thou hating him, he is as a thing dead."
Then I lay still, nor thought, only endured.
At last I said, "Lo, now I am inured
A burgess of Pain's town!" The pain grew worse.
Then I cried out as if my heart would break.
But he, whom, in the fretting, sickening ache,
I had forgotten, spoke: "The law of the universe
Is this," he said: "Weakness shall be the nurse
Of strength. The help I had will serve thee too."
So I took courage and did bear anew.
At last, through bones and flesh and shrinking skin,
Lo, the thing ate his way, and light came in,
And the thing died. I knew then what it meant,
And, turning, saw the Lord on whom I leant.

LYCABAS:

A name of the Year. Some say the word means _a march of wolves_,
which wolves, running in single file, are the Months of the Year.
Others say the word means _the path of the light_.

O ye months of the year,
Are ye a march of wolves?
Lycabas! Lycabas! twelve to growl and slay?
Men hearken at night, and lie in fear,
Some men hearken all day!

Lycabas, verily thou art a gallop of wolves,
Gaunt gray wolves, gray months of the year, hunting in twelves,
Running and howling, head to tail,
In a single file, over the snow,
A long low gliding of silent horror and fear!
On and on, ghastly and drear,
Not a head turning, not a foot swerving, ye go,
Twelve making only a one-wolf track!
Onward ye howl, and behind we wail;
Wail behind your narrow and slack
Wallowing line, and moan and weep,
As ye draw it on, straight and deep,
Thorough the night so swart!
Behind you a desert, and eyes a-weary,
A long, bare highway, stony and dreary,
A hungry soul, and a wolf-cub wrapt,
A live wolf-cub, sharp-toothed, steel-chapt,
In the garment next the heart!

Lycabas!
One of them hurt me sore!
Two of them hurt and tore!
Three of them made me bleed!
The fourth did a terrible deed,
Rent me the worst of the four!
Rent me, and shook me, and tore,
And ran away with a growl!
Lycabas, if I feared you a jot,
You, and your devils running in twelves,
Black-mouthed, hell-throated, straight-going wolves,
I would run like a wolf, I too, and howl!
I live, and I fear you not.

But shall I not hate you, low-galloping wolves
Hunting in ceaseless twelves?
Ye have hunted away my lambs!
Ye ran at them open-mouthed,
And your mouths were gleamy-toothed,
And their whiteness with red foam frothed,
And your throats were a purple-black gulf:
My lambs they fled, and they came not back!
Lovely white lambs they were, alack!
They fled afar and they left a track
Which at night, when the lone sky clears,
Glistens with Nature's tears!
Many a shepherd scarce thinks of a lamb
But he hears behind it the growl of a wolf,
And behind that the wail of its dam!

They ran, nor cried, but fled
From day's sweet pasture, from night's soft bed:
Ah me, the look in their eyes!
For behind them rushed the swallowing gulf,

The maw of the growl-throated wolf,
And they fled as the thing that speeds or dies:
They looked not behind,
But fled as over the grass the wind.

Oh my lambs, I would drop away
Into a night that never saw day
That so in your dear hearts you might say,
"_All is well for ever and aye!_"
Yet it was well to hurry away,
To hurry from me, your shepherd gray:
I had no sword to bite and slay,
And the wolfy Months were on your track!
It was well to start from work and play,
It was well to hurry from me away--
But why not once look back?

The wolves came panting down the lea--
What was left you but somewhere flee!
Ye saw the Shepherd that never grows old,
Ye saw the great Shepherd, and him ye knew,
And the wolves never once came near to you;
For he saw you coming, threw down his crook,
Ran, and his arms about you threw;
He gathered you into his garment's fold,
He kneeled, he gathered, he lifted you,
And his bosom and arms were full of you.
He has taken you home to his stronghold:
Out of the castle of Love ye look;
The castle of Love is now your home,
From the garden of Love you will never roam,
And the wolves no more shall flutter you.

Lycabas! Lycabas!
For all your hunting and howling and cries,
Your yelling of _woe_! and _alas_!
For all your thin tongues and your fiery eyes,
Your questing thorough the windy grass,
Your gurgling gnar, and your horrent hair,
And your white teeth that will not spare--
Wolves, I fear you never a jot,
Though you come at me with your mouths red-hot,
Eyes of fury, and teeth that foam:
Ye can do nothing but drive me home!
Wolves, wolves, you will lie one day--
Ye are lying even now, this very day,
Wolves in twelves, gaunt and gray,
At the feet of the Shepherd that leads the dams,
At the feet of the Shepherd that carries the lambs!

And now that I see you with my mind's eye,
What are you indeed? my mind revolves.
Are you, are you verily wolves?

I saw you only through twilight dark,
Through rain and wind, and ill could mark!
Now I come near--are you verily wolves?
Ye have torn, but I never saw you slay!
Me ye have torn, but I live to-day,
Live, and hope to live ever and aye!
Closer still let me look at you!--
Black are your mouths, but your eyes are true!--
Now, now I know you!--the Shepherd's sheep-dogs!
Friends of us sheep on the moors and bogs,
Lost so often in swamps and fogs!
Dear creatures, forgive me; I did you wrong;
You to the castle of Love belong:
Forgive the sore heart that made sharp the tongue!
Your swift-flying feet the Shepherd sends
To gather the lambs, his little friends,
And draw the sheep after for rich amends!
Sharp are your teeth, my wolves divine,
But loves and no hates in your deep eyes shine!
No more will I call you evil names,
No more assail you with untrue blames!
Wake me with howling, check me with biting,
Rouse up my strength for the holy fighting:
Hunt me still back, nor let me stray
Out of the infinite narrow way,
The radiant march of the Lord of Light
Home to the Father of Love and Might,
Where each puts Thou in the place of I,
And Love is the Law of Liberty.

BALLADS

THE UNSEEN MODEL.

Forth to his study the sculptor goes
In a mood of lofty mirth:
"Now shall the tongues of my carping foes
Confess what my art is worth!
In my brain last night the vision arose,
To-morrow shall see its birth!"

He stood like a god; with creating hand
He struck the formless clay:
"Psyche, arise," he said, "and stand;
In beauty confront the day.
I have sought nor found thee in any land;
I call thee: arise; obey!"

The sun was low in the eastern skies

When spoke the confident youth;
Sweet Psyche, all day, his hands and eyes
Wiled from the clay uncouth,
Nor ceased when the shadows came up like spies
That dog the steps of Truth.

He said, "I will do my will in spite
Of the rising dark; for, see,
She grows to my hand! The mar-work night
Shall hurry and hide and flee
From the glow of my lamp and the making might
That passeth out of me!"

In the flickering lamplight the figure swayed,
In the shadows did melt and swim:
With tool and thumb he modelled and made,
Nor knew that feature and limb
Half-obeying, half-disobeyed,
And mocking eluded him.

At the dawning Psyche of his brain
Joyous he wrought all night:
The oil went low, and he trimmed in vain,
The lamp would not burn bright;
But he still wrought on: through the high roof-pane
He saw the first faint light!

The dark retreated; the morning spread;
His creatures their shapes resume;
The plaster stares dumb-white and dead;
A faint blue liquid bloom
Lies on each marble bosom and head;
To his Psyche clings the gloom.

Backward he stept to see the clay:
His visage grew white and sear;
No beauty ideal confronted the day,
No Psyche from upper sphere,
But a once loved shape that in darkness lay,
Buried a lonesome year!

From maidenhood's wilderness fair and wild
A girl to his charm had hied:
He had blown out the lamp of the trusting child,
And in the darkness she died;
Now from the clay she sadly smiled,
And the sculptor stood staring-eyed.

He had summoned Psyche--and Psyche crept
From a half-forgotten tomb;
She brought her sad smile, that still she kept,
Her eyes she left in the gloom!
High grace had found him, for now he wept,

And love was his endless doom!

Night-long he pined, all day did rue;
He haunted her form with sighs:
As oft as his clay to a lady grew
The carvers, with dim surmise,
Would whisper, "The same shape come to woo,
With its blindly beseeching eyes!"

THE HOMELESS GHOST.

Through still, bare streets, and cold moonshine
His homeward way he bent;
The clocks gave out the midnight sign
As lost in thought he went
Along the rampart's ocean-line,
Where, high above the tossing brine,
Seaward his lattice leant.

He knew not why he left the throng,
Why there he could not rest,
What something pained him in the song
And mocked him in the jest,
Or why, the flitting crowd among,
A moveless moonbeam lay so long
Athwart one lady's breast!

He watched, but saw her speak to none,
Saw no one speak to her;
Like one decried, she stood alone,
From the window did not stir;
Her hair by a haunting gust was blown,
Her eyes in the shadow strangely shown,
She looked a wanderer.

He reached his room, he sought a book
His brooding to beguile;
But ever he saw her pallid look,
Her face too still to smile.
An hour he sat in his fireside nook,
The time flowed past like a silent brook,
Not a word he read the while.

Vague thoughts absorbed his passive brain
Of love that bleeding lies,
Of hoping ever and hoping in vain,
Of a sorrow that never dies--
When a sudden spatter of angry rain
Smote against every window-pane,
And he heard far sea-birds' cries.

He looked from the lattice: the misty moon
Hardly a glimmer gave;
The wind was like one that hums a tune,
The first low gathering stave;
The ocean lay in a sullen swoon,
With a moveless, monotonous, murmured croon
Like the moaning of a slave.

Sudden, with masterful, angry blare
It howled from the watery west:
The storm was up, he had left his lair!
The night would be no jest!
He turned: a lady sat in his chair!
Through her loose dim robe her arm came bare,
And it lay across her breast.

She sat a white queen on a ruined throne,
A lily bowed with blight;
In her eyes the darkness about was blown
By flashes of liquid light;
Her skin with very whiteness shone;
Back from her forehead loosely thrown
Her hair was dusk as night.

Wet, wet it hung, and wept like weeds
Down her pearly shoulders bare;
The pale drops glistened like diamond beads
Caught in a silken snare;
As the silver-filmy husk to its seeds
Her dank robe clings, and but half recedes
Her form so shadowy fair.

Doubting she gazed in his wondering face,
Wonder his utterance ties;
She searches, like one in forgetful case,
For something within his eyes,
For something that love holds ever in chase,
For something that is, and has no place,
But away in the thinking lies.

Speechless he ran, brought a wrap of wool,
And a fur that with down might vie;
Listless, into the gathering pool
She dropped them, and let them lie.
He piled the hearth with fagots so full
That the flames, as if from the log of Yule,
Up the chimney went roaring high.

Then she spoke, and lovely to heart and ear
Was her voice, though broke by pain;
Afar it sounded, though sweet and clear,
As if from out of the rain;
As if from out of the night-wind drear

It came like the voice of one in fear
Lest she should no welcome gain.

"I am too far off to feel the cold,
Too cold to feel the fire;
It cannot get through the heap of mould
That soaks in the drip from the spire:
Cerement of wax 'neath cloth of gold,
'Neath fur and wool in fold on fold,
Freezes in frost so dire."

Her voice and her eyes and her cheek so white
Thrilled him through heart and brain;
Wonder and pity and love unite
In a passion of bodiless pain;
Her beauty possessed him with strange delight:
He was out with her in the live wan night,
With her in the blowing rain!

Sudden she rose, she kneeled, she flung
Her loveliness at his feet:
"I am tired of being blown and swung
In the rain and the snow and the sleet!
But better no rest than stillness among
Things whose names would defile my tongue!
How I hate the mouldy sheet!

"Ah, though a ghost, I'm a lady still!"
The youth recoiled aghast.
Her eyes grew wide and pale and chill
With a terror that surpassed.
He caught her hand: a freezing thrill
Stung to his wrist, but with steadfast will
He held it warm and fast.

"What can I do to save thee, dear?"
At the word she sprang upright;
On tiptoe she stood, he bent his ear,
She whispered, whispered light.
She withdrew; she gazed with an asking fear:
Like one that looks on his lady's bier
He stood, with a face ghost-white.

"Six times--in vain, oh hapless maid!--
I have humbled myself to sue!
This is the last: as the sunset decayed,
Out with the twilight I grew,
And about the city flitted and strayed,
A wandering, lonely, forsaken shade:
No one saw me but you."

He shivered, he shook, he had turned to clay,
Vile fear had gone into his blood;

His face was a dismal ashy gray,
Through his heart crept slime and mud;
The lady stood in a still dismay,
She drooped, she shrank, she withered away
Like a half-blown frozen bud.

"Speak once more. Am I frightful then?
I live, though they call it death;
I am only cold! Say _dear_ again."
But scarce could he heave a breath;
Over a dank and steaming fen
He floated astray from the world of men,
A lost, half-conscious wraith.

"Ah, 'tis the last time! Save me!" Her cry
Entered his heart, and lay.
But he loved the sunshine, the golden sky,
And the ghosts' moonlight is gray!--
As feverous visions flit and fly
And without a motion elude the eye,
She stood three steps away.

But oh, her eyes!--refusal base
Those live-soul-stars had slain!
Frozen eyes in an icy face
They had grown. Like a ghost of the brain,
Beside the lattice, thought-moved in space,
She stood with a doleful despairing grace:
The fire burned! clanged the rain!

Faded or fled, she had vanished quite!
The loud wind sank to a sigh;
Pale faces without paled the face of night,
Sweeping the window by;
Some to the glass pressed a cheek of fright,
Some shot a gleam of decaying light
From a flickering, uncertain eye.

Whence did it come, from the sky or the deep,
That faint, long-cadenced wail?
From the closing door of the down-way steep,
His own bosom, or out of the gale?
From the land where dead dreams, or dead maidens sleep?
Out of every night to come will creep
That cry his heart to quail!

The clouds had broken, the wind was at rest,
The sea would be still ere morn,
The moon had gone down behind its breast
Save the tip of one blunt horn:
Was that the ghost-angel without a nest--
Across the moonset far in the west
That thin white vapour borne?

He turned from the lattice: the fire-lit room
With its ghost-forsaken chair
Was cold and drear as a rifled tomb,
Shameful and dreamless and bare!
Filled it was with his own soul's gloom,
With the sense of a traitor's merited doom,
With a lovely ghost's despair!

He had driven a lady, and lightly clad,
Out in the stormy cold!
Was she a ghost?--Divinely sad
Are the people of Hades old!
A wandering ghost? Oh, self-care bad,
Caitiff and craven and cowering, which had
Refused her an earthly fold!

Ill had she fared, his lovely guest!--
A passion of wild self-blame
Tore the heart that failed in the test
With a thousand hooks of shame,
Bent his proud head on his heaving breast,
Shore the plume from his ancient crest,
Puffed at his ancient name.

He sickened with scorn of a fallen will,
With love and remorse he wept;
He sank and kissed her footprints chill
And the track by her garment swept;
He kneeled by her chair, all ice-cold still,
Dropped his head in it, moaned until
For weariness he slept.

He slept until the flaming sun
Laughed at the by-gone dark:
"A frightful dream!--but the night is done,"
He said, "and I hear the lark!"
All day he held out; with the evening gun
A booming terror his brain did stun,
And Doubt, the jackal, gan bark.

Followed the lion, Conviction, fast,
And the truth no dream he knew!
Night after night raved the conscience-blast,
But stilled as the morning grew.
When seven slow moons had come and passed
His self-reproach aside he cast,
And the truth appeared untrue.

A lady fair--old story vile!--
Would make his heart her boast:
In the growing glamour of her smile
He forgot the lovely ghost:

Forgot her for bitterness wrapt in wile,
For the lady was false as a crocodile,
And her heart was a cave of frost.

Then the cold white face, with its woe divine,
Came back in the hour of sighs:
Not always with comfort to those that pine
The dear true faces arise!
He yearned for her, dreamed of her, prayed for a sign;
He wept for her pleading voice, and the shine
Of her solitary eyes.

"With thy face so still, which I made so sad--
Ah me! which I might have wooed--
Thou holdest my heart in a love not glad,
Sorrowful, shame-subdued!
Come to me, lady, in pardon clad;
Come to my dreams, white Aideal,
For on thee all day I brood!"

She came not. He sought her in churchyards old,
In churchyards by the sea;
And in many a church, when the midnight tolled
And the moon shone eerily,
Down to the crypt he crept, grown bold,
Sat all night in the dead men's cold,
And called to her: never came she.

Praying forgiveness more and more,
And her love at any cost,
Pining and sighing and longing sore
He grew like a creature lost;
Thin and spectral his body wore,
He faded out at the ghostly door,
And was himself a ghost.

But if he found the lady then,
So sorrowfully lost
For lack of the love 'mong earthly men
That was ready to brave love's cost,
I know not till I drop my pen,
Wander away from earthly ken,
And am myself a ghost.

ABU MIDJAN.

"If I sit in the dust
For lauding good wine,
Ha, ha! it is just:
So sits the vine!"

Abu Midjan sang as he sat in chains,
For the blood of the grape ran the juice of his veins.
The Prophet had said, "O Faithful, drink not!"
Abu Midjan drank till his heart was hot;
Yea, he sang a song in praise of wine,
He called it good names--a joy divine,
The giver of might, the opener of eyes,
Love's handmaid, the water of Paradise!
Therefore Saad his chief spake words of blame,
And set him in irons--a fettered flame;
But he sings of the wine as he sits in his chains,
For the blood of the grape runs the juice of his veins:

"I will not think
That the Prophet said
_Ye shall not drink
Of the flowing red!_"

"'Tis a drenched brain
Whose after-sting
Cries out, _Refrain:
'Tis an evil thing!_"

"But I will dare,
With a goodly drought,
To drink, nor spare
Till my thirst be out.

"_I_ do not laugh
Like a Christian fool
But in silence quaff
The liquor cool

"At door of tent
'Neath evening star,
With daylight spent,
And Uriel afar!

"Then, through the sky,
Lo, the emerald hills!
My faith swells high,
My bosom thrills:

"I see them hearken,
The Houris that wait!
Their dark eyes darken
The diamond gate!

"I hear the float
Of their chant divine,
And my heart like a boat
Sails thither on wine!

"Can an evil thing
Make beauty more?
Or a sinner bring
To the heavenly door?"

"The sun-rain fine
Would sink and escape,
But is drunk by the vine,
Is stored in the grape:

"And the prisoned light
I free again:
It flows in might
Through my shining brain

"I love and I know;
The truth is mine;
I walk in the glow
Of the sun-bred wine.

"_I_ will not think
That the Prophet said
_Ye shall not drink
Of the flowing red!_"

"For his promises, lo,
Sevenfold they shine
When the channels o'erflow
With the singing wine!

"But I care not, !!--'tis a small annoy
To sit in chains for a heavenly joy!"

Away went the song on the light wind borne;
His head sank down, and a ripple of scorn
Shook the hair that flowed from his curling lip
As he eyed his brown limbs in the iron's grip.

Sudden his forehead he lifted high:
A faint sound strayed like a moth-wing by!
Like beacons his eyes burst blazing forth:
A dust-cloud he spied in the distant north!
A noise and a smoke on the plain afar?
'Tis the cloud and the clang of the Moslem war!
He leapt aloft like a tiger snared;
The wine in his veins through his visage flared;
He tore at his fetters in bootless ire,
He called the Prophet, he named his sire;
From his lips, with wild shout, the Techir burst;
He danced in his irons; the Giaours he cursed;
And his eyes they flamed like a beacon dun,
Or like wine in the crystal twixt eye and sun.

The lady of Saad heard him shout,
Heard his fetters ring on the stones about
The heart of a warrior she understood,
And the rage of the thwarted battle-mood:
Her name, with the cry of an angry prayer,
He called but once, and the lady was there.

"The Giaour!" he panted, "the Godless brute!
And me like a camel tied foot to foot!
Let me go, and I swear by Allah's fear
At sunset I don again this gear,
Or lie in a heaven of starry eyes,
Kissed by moon-maidens of Paradise!
O lady, grant me the death of the just!
Hark to the hurtle! see the dust!"

With ready fingers the noble dame
Unlocked her husband's iron blame;
Brought his second horse, his Abdon, out,
And his second hauberk, light and stout;
Harnessed the warrior, and hight him go
An angel of vengeance upon the foe.

With clank of steel and thud of hoof
Away he galloped; she climbed the roof.

She sees the cloud and the flashes that leap
From the scythe-shaped swords inside it that sweep
Down with back-stroke the disordered swath:
Thither he speeds, a bolt of wrath!
Straight as an arrow she sees him go,
Abu Midjan, the singer, upon the foe!
Like an eagle he vanishes in the cloud,
And the thunder of battle bursts more loud,
Mingled of crashes and blows and falls,
Of the whish that severs the throat that calls,
Of neighing and shouting and groaning grim:
Abu Midjan, she sees no more of him!
Northward the battle drifts afar
On the flowing tide of the holy war.

Lonely across the desert sand,
From his wrist by its thong hung his clotted brand,
Red in the sunset's level flame
Back to his bonds Abu Midjan came.

"Lady, I swear your Saad's horse--
The Prophet himself might have rode a worse!
Like the knots of a serpent the play of his flesh
As he tore to the quarry in Allah's mesh!
I forgot him, and mowed at the traitor weeds,
Which fell before me like rushes and reeds,
Or like the tall poppies that sudden drop low

Their heads to an urchin's unstrung bow!
Fled the Giaour; the faithful flew after to kill;
I turned to surrender: beneath me still
Was Abdon unjaded, fresh in force,
Faithful and fearless--a heavenly horse!
Give him water, lady, and barley to eat;
Then haste thee and fetter the wine-bibber's feet."

To the terrace he went, and she to the stall;
She tended the horse like guest in hall,
Then to the warrior unhasting returned.
The fire of the fight in his eyes yet burned,
But he sat in a silence that might betoken
One ashamed that his heart had spoken--
Though where was the word to breed remorse?
He had lauded only his chief's brave horse!
Not a word she spoke, but his fetters locked;
He watched with a smile that himself bemocked;
She left him seated in caitiff-plight,
Like one that had feared and fled the fight.

But what singer ever sat lonely long
Ere the hidden fountain burst in song!
The battle wine foamed in the warrior's veins,
And he sang sword-tempest who sat in chains.

"Oh, the wine
Of the vine
Is a feeble thing!
In the rattle
Of battle
The true grapes spring!

"When on whir
Of Tecbir
Allah's wrath flies,
And the power
Of the Giaour
A blasted leaf lies!

"When on force
Of the horse
The arm flung abroad
Is sweeping,
And reaping
The harvest of God!

"Ha! they drop
From the top
To the sear heap below!
Ha! deeper,
Down steeper,
The infidels go!

"Azrael
Sheer to hell
Shoots the foul shoals!
There Monker
And Nakir
Torture their souls!

"But when drop
On their crop
The scimitars red,
And under
War's thunder
The faithful lie dead,

"Oh, bright
Is the light
On hero slow breaking!
Rapturous faces
Bent for embraces
Watch for his waking!

"And he hears
In his ears
The voice of Life's river,
Like a song
Of the strong,
Jubilant ever!

"Oh, the wine
Of the vine
May lead to the gates,
But the rattle
Of battle
Wakes the angel who waits!

"To the lord
Of the sword
Open it must!
The drinker,
The thinker
Sits in the dust!

"He dreams
Of the gleams
Of their garments of white;
He misses
Their kisses,
The maidens of light!

"They long
For the strong
Who has burst through alarms--

Up, by the labour
Of stirrup and sabre,
Up to their arms!

"Oh, the wine of the grape is a feeble ghost!
The wine of the fight is the joy of a host!"

When Saad came home from the far pursuit,
An hour he sat, and an hour was mute.
Then he opened his mouth: "Ah, wife, the fight
Had been lost full sure, but an arm of might
Sudden rose up on the crest of the battle,
Flashed blue lightnings, thundered steel rattle,
Took up the fighting, and drove it on--
Enoch sure, or the good Saint John!
Wherever he leaped, like a lion he,
The battle was thickest, or soon to be!
Wherever he sprang with his lion roar,
In a minute the battle was there no more!
With a headlong fear, the sinners fled,
And we swept them down the steep of the dead:
Before us, not from us, did they flee,
They ceased in the depths of a new Red Sea!
But him who saved us we saw no more;
He went as he came, by a secret door!
And strangest of all--nor think I err
If a miracle I for truth aver--
I was close to him thrice--the holy Force
Wore my silver-ringed hauberk, rode Abdon my horse!"

The lady rose up, withholding her word,
And led to the terrace her wondering lord,
Where, song-soothed, and weary with battle strain,
Abu Midjan sat counting the links of his chain:
"The battle was raging, he raging worse;
I freed him, harnessed him, gave him thy horse."

"Abu Midjan! the singer of love and of wine!
The arm of the battle, it also was thine?
Rise up, shake the irons from off thy feet:
For the lord of the fight are fetters meet?
If thou wilt, then drink till thou be hoar:
Allah shall judge thee; I judge no more!"

Abu Midjan arose; he flung aside
The clanking fetters, and thus he cried:
"If thou give me to God and his decrees,
Nor purge my sin with the shame of these,
Wrath against me I dare not store:
In the name of Allah, I drink no more!"

THE THANKLESS LADY.

It is May, and the moon leans down at night
Over a blossomy land;
Leans from her window a lady white,
With her cheek upon her hand.

"Oh, why in the blue so misty, moon?
Why so dull in the sky?
Thou look'st like one that is ready to swoon
Because her tear-well is dry.

"Enough, enough of longing and wail!
Oh, bird, I pray thee, be glad!
Sing to me once, dear nightingale,
The old song, merry mad.

"Hold, hold with thy blossoming, colourless, cold,
Apple-tree white as woe!
Blossom yet once with the blossom of old,
Let the roses shine through the snow!"

The moon and the blossoms they gloomily gleam,
The bird will not be glad:
The dead never speak when the mournful dream,
They are too weak and sad.

Listened she listless till night grew late,
Bound by a weary spell;
Then clanked the latch of the garden-gate,
And a wondrous thing befell:

Out burst the gladness, up dawned the love.
In the song, in the waiting show;
Grew silver the moon in the sky above.
Blushed rosy the blossom below.

But the merry bird, nor the silvery moon,
Nor the blossoms that flushed the night
Had one poor thanks for the granted boon:
The lady forgot them quite!

LEGEND OF THE CORRIEVRECHAN.

Prince Breacan of Denmark was lord of the strand
And lord of the billowy sea;
Lord of the sea and lord of the land,
He might have let maidens be!

A maiden he met with locks of gold,
Straying beside the sea:

Maidens listened in days of old,
And repented grievously.

Wiser he left her in evil wiles,
Went sailing over the sea;
Came to the lord of the Western Isles:
Give me thy daughter, said he.

The lord of the Isles he laughed, and said:
Only a king of the sea
May think the Maid of the Isles to wed,
And such, men call not thee!

Hold thine own three nights and days
In yon whirlpool of the sea,
Or turn thy prow and go thy ways
And let the isle-maiden be.

Prince Breacan he turned his dragon prow
To Denmark over the sea:
Wise women, he said, now tell me how
In yon whirlpool to anchor me.

Make a cable of hemp and a cable of wool
And a cable of maidens' hair,
And hie thee back to the roaring pool
And anchor in safety there.

The smiths of Greydule, on the eve of Yule,
Will forge three anchors rare;
The hemp thou shalt pull, thou shalt shear the wool,
And the maidens will bring their hair.

Of the hair that is brown thou shalt twist one strand,
Of the hair that is raven another;
Of the golden hair thou shalt twine a band
To bind the one to the other!

The smiths of Greydule, on the eve of Yule,
They forged three anchors rare;
The hemp he did pull, and he shore the wool,
And the maidens brought their hair.

He twisted the brown hair for one strand,
The raven hair for another;
He twined the golden hair in a band
To bind the one to the other.

He took the cables of hemp and wool.
He took the cable of hair,
He hied him back to the roaring pool,
He cast the three anchors there.

The whirlpool roared, and the day went by,
And night came down on the sea;
But or ever the morning broke the sky
The hemp was broken in three.

The night it came down, the whirlpool it ran,
The wind it fiercely blew;
And or ever the second morning began
The wool it parted in two.

The storm it roared all day the third,
The whirlpool wallowed about,
The night came down like a wild black bird,
But the cable of hair held out.

Round and round with a giddy swing
Went the sea-king through the dark;
Round went the rope in the swivel-ring,
Round reeled the straining bark.

Prince Breacan he stood on his dragon prow,
A lantern in his hand:
Blest be the maidens of Denmark now,
By them shall Denmark stand!

He watched the rope through the tempest black
A lantern in his hold:
Out, out, alack! one strand will crack!
It is the strand of gold!

The third morn clear and calm came out:
No anchored ship was there!
The golden strand in the cable stout
Was not all of maidens' hair.

THE DEAD HAND

The witch lady walked along the strand,
Heard a roaring of the sea,
On the edge of a pool saw a dead man's hand,
Good thing for a witch lady!

Lightly she stepped across the rocks,
Came where the dead man lay:
Now pretty maid with your merry mocks,
Now I shall have my way!

On a finger shone a sapphire blue
In the heart of six rubies red:
Come back to me, my promise true,
Come back, my ring, she said.

She took the dead hand in the live,
And at the ring drew she;
The dead hand closed its fingers five,
And it held the witch lady.

She swore the storm was not her deed,
Dark spells she backward spoke;
If the dead man heard he took no heed,
But held like a cloven oak.

Deathly cold, crept up the tide,
Sure of her, made no haste;
Crept up to her knees, crept up each side,
Crept up to her wicked waist.

Over the blue sea sailed the bride
In her love's own sailing ship,
And the witch she saw them across the tide
As it rose to her lying lip.

Oh, the heart of the dead and the hand of the dead
Are strong hasps they to hold!
Fled the true dove with the kite's new love,
And left the false kite with the old.

MINOR DITTIES.

IN THE NIGHT.

As to her child a mother calls,
"Come to me, child; come near!"
Calling, in silent intervals,
The Master's voice I hear.

But does he call me verily?
To have me does he care?
Why should he seek my poverty,
My selfishness so bare?

The dear voice makes his gladness brim,
But not a child can know
Why that large woman cares for him,
Why she should love him so!

Lord, to thy call of me I bow,
Obey like Abraham:
Thou lov'st me because thou art thou,

And I am what I am!

Doubt whispers, _Thou art such a blot
He cannot love poor thee_:
If what I am he loveth not,
He loves what I shall be.

Nay, that which can be drawn and wooed,
And turned away from ill,
Is what his father made for good:
He loves me, I say still!

THE GIVER.

To give a thing and take again
Is counted meanness among men;
To take away what once is given
Cannot then be the way of heaven!

But human hearts are crumbly stuff,
And never, never love enough,
Therefore God takes and, with a smile,
Puts our best things away a while.

Thereon some weep, some rave, some scorn,
Some wish they never had been born;
Some humble grow at last and still,
And then God gives them what they will.

FALSE PROPHETS.

Would-be prophets tell us
We shall not re-know
Them that walked our fellows
In the ways below!

Smoking, smouldering Tophets
Steaming hopeless plaints!
Dreary, mole-eyed prophets!
Mean, skin-pledging saints!

Knowing not the Father
What their prophecies!
Grapes of such none gather,
Only thorns and lies.

Loving thus the brother,
How the Father tell?
Go without each other

To your heavenly hell!

LIFE-WEARY

O Thou that walkest with nigh hopeless feet
Past the one harbour, built for thee and thine.
Doth no stray odour from its table greet,
No truant beam from fire or candle shine?

At his wide door the host doth stand and call;
At every lattice gracious forms invite;
Thou seest but a dull-gray, solid wall
In forest sullen with the things of night!

Thou cravest rest, and Rest for thee doth crave,
The white sheet folded down, white robe apart.--
Shame, Faithless! No, I do not mean the grave!
I mean Love's very house and hearth and heart.

APPROACHES

When thou turn'st away from ill,
Christ is this side of thy hill.

When thou turnest toward good,
Christ is walking in thy wood.

When thy heart says, "Father, pardon!"
Then the Lord is in thy garden.

When stern Duty wakes to watch,
Then his hand is on the latch.

But when Hope thy song doth rouse,
Then the Lord is in the house.

When to love is all thy wit,
Christ doth at thy table sit.

When God's will is thy heart's pole,
Then is Christ thy very soul.

TRAVELLERS' SONG

Bands of dark and bands of light
Lie athwart the homeward way;
Now we cross a belt of Night,

Now a strip of shining Day!

Now it is a month of June,
Now December's shivering hour;
Now rides high loved memories' Moon,
Now the Dark is dense with power!

Summers, winters, days, and nights,
Moons, and clouds, they come and go;
Joys and sorrows, pains, delights,
Hope and fear, and _yes_ and _no_.

All is well: come, girls and boys,
Not a weary mile is vain!
Hark--dim laughter's radiant noise!
See the windows through the rain!

LOVE IS STRENGTH.

Love alone is great in might,
Makes the heavy burden light,
Smooths rough ways to weary feet,
Makes the bitter morsel sweet:
Love alone is strength!

Might that is not born of Love
Is not Might born from above,
Has its birthplace down below
Where they neither reap nor sow:
Love alone is strength!

Love is stronger than all force,
Is its own eternal source;
Might is always in decay,
Love grows fresher every day:
Love alone is strength!

Little ones, no ill can chance;
Fear ye not, but sing and dance;
Though the high-heaved heaven should fall
God is plenty for us all:
God is Love and Strength!

COMING.

When the snow is on the earth
Birds and waters cease their mirth;
When the sunlight is prevailing
Even the night-winds drop their wailing.

On the earth when deep snows lie
Still the sun is in the sky,
And when most we miss his fire
He is ever drawing nigher.

In the darkest winter day
Thou, God, art not far away;
When the nights grow colder, drearer,
Father, thou art coming nearer!

For thee coming I would watch
With my hand upon the latch--
Of the door, I mean, that faces
Out upon the eternal spaces!

SONG OF THE WAITING DEAD.

With us there is no gray fearing,
With us no aching for lack!
For the morn it is always nearing,
And the night is at our back.
At times a song will fall dumb,
A thought-bell burst in a sigh,
But no one says, "He will not come!"
She says, "He is almost nigh!"

The thing you call a sorrow
Is our delight on its way:
We know that the coming morrow
Comes on the wheels of to-day!
Our Past is a child asleep;
Delay is ripening the kiss;
The rising tear we will not weep
Until it flow for bliss.

OBEDIENCE.

Trust him in the common light;
Trust him in the awesome night;

Trust him when the earth doth quake:
Trust him when thy heart doth ache;

Trust him when thy brain doth reel
And thy friend turns on his heel;

Trust him when the way is rough,
Cry not yet, _It is enough_!

But obey with true endeavour,
Else the salt hath lost his savour.

A SONG IN THE NIGHT.

I would I were an angel strong,
An angel of the sun, hasting along!

I would I were just come awake,
A child outbursting from night's dusky brake!

Or lark whose inward, upward fate
Mocks every wall that masks the heavenly gate!

Or hopeful cock whose clarion clear
Shrills ten times ere a film of dawn appear!

Or but a glowworm: even then
My light would come straight from the Light of Men!

I am a dead seed, dark and slow:
Father of larks and children, make me grow.

DE PROFUNDIS.

When I am dead unto myself, and let,
O Father, thee live on in me,
Contented to do nought but pay my debt,
And leave the house to thee,

Then shall I be thy ransomed--from the cark
Of living, from the strain for breath,
From tossing in my coffin strait and dark,
At hourly strife with death!

Have mercy! in my coffin! and awake!
A buried temple of the Lord!
Grow, Temple, grow! Heart, from thy cerements break!
Stream out, O living Sword!

When I am with thee as thou art with me,
Life will be self-forgetting power;
Love, ever conscious, buoyant, clear, and free,
Will flame in darkest hour.

Where now I sit alone, unmoving, calm,
With windows open to thy wind,
Shall I not know thee in the radiant psalm

Soaring from heart and mind?

The body of this death will melt away,
And I shall know as I am known;
Know thee my father, every hour and day,
As thou know'st me thine own!

BLIND SORROW.

"My life is drear; walking I labour sore;
The heart in me is heavy as a stone;
And of my sorrows this the icy core:
Life is so wide, and I am all alone!"

Thou did'st walk so, with heaven-born eyes down bent
Upon the earth's gold-rosey, radiant clay,
That thou had'st seen no star in all God's tent
Had not thy tears made pools first on the way.

Ah, little knowest thou the tender care
In a love-plenteous cloak around thee thrown!
Full many a dim-seen, saving mountain-stair
Toiling thou climb'st--but not one step alone!

Lift but thy languid head and see thy guide;
Let thy steps go in his, nor choose thine own;
Then soon wilt thou, thine eyes with wonder wide,
Cry, _Now I know I never was alone_!

MOTES IN THE SUN.

ANGELS.

Came of old to houses lonely
Men with wings, but did not show them:
Angels come to our house, only,
For their wings, they do not know them!

THE FATHER'S WORSHIPPERS.

'Tis we, not in thine arms, who weep and pray;
The children in thy bosom laugh and play.

A BIRTHDAY-WISH.

Who know thee, love: thy life be such
That, ere the year be o'er,
Each one who loves thee now so much,
Even God, may love thee more!

TO ANY ONE.

Go not forth to call Dame Sorrow
From the dim fields of Tomorrow;
Let her roam there all unheeded,
She will come when she is needed;
Then, when she draws near thy door,
She will find God there before.

WAITING.

Lie, little cow, and chew thy cud,
The farmer soon will shift thy tether;
Chirp, linnet, on the frozen mud,
Sun and song will come together;
Wait, soul, for God, and thou shalt bud,
He waits thy waiting with his weather.

LOST BUT SAFE.

Lost the little one roams about,
Pathway or shelter none can find;
Blinking stars are coming out;
No one is moving but the wind;
It is no use to cry or shout,
All the world is still as a mouse;
One thing only eases her mind:
"Father knows I'm not in the house!"

MUCH AND MORE.

When thy heart, love-filled, grows graver,
And eternal bliss looks nearer,
Ask thy heart, nor show it favour,
Is the gift or giver dearer?

Love, love on; love higher, deeper;

Let love's ocean close above her;
Only, love thou more love's keeper,
More, the love-creating lover.

HOPE AND PATIENCE.

An unborn bird lies crumpled and curled,
A-dreaming of the world.

Round it, for castle-wall, a shell
Is guarding it well.

Hope is the bird with its dim sensations;
The shell that keeps it alive is _Patience_.

A BETTER THING.

I took it for a bird of prey that soared
High over ocean, battled mount, and plain;
'Twas but a bird-moth, which with limp horns gored
The invisibly obstructing window-pane!

Better than eagle, with far-towering nerve
But downward bent, greedy, marauding eye,
Guest of the flowers, thou art: unhurt they serve
Thee, little angel of a lower sky!

A PRISONER.

The hinges are so rusty
The door is fixed and fast;
The windows are so dusty
The sun looks in aghast:
Knock out the glass, I pray,
Or dash the door away,
Or break the house down bodily,
And let my soul go free!

TO MY LORD AND MASTER.

Imagination cannot rise above thee;
Near and afar I see thee, and I love thee;
My misery away from me I thrust it,
For thy perfection I behold, and trust it.

TO ONE UNSATISFIED.

When, with all the loved around thee,
Still thy heart says, "I am lonely,"
It is well; the truth hath found thee:
Rest is with the Father only.

TO MY GOD.

Oh how oft I wake and find
I have been forgetting thee!
I am never from thy mind:
Thou it is that wakest me.

TRIOLET.

Oh that men would praise the Lord
For his goodness unto men!
Forth he sends his saving word,
--Oh that men would praise the Lord!--
And from shades of death abhorred
Lifts them up to light again:
Oh that men would praise the Lord
For his goodness unto men!

THE WORD OF GOD.

Where the bud has never blown
Who for scent is debtor?
Where the spirit rests unknown
Fatal is the letter.

In thee, Jesus, Godhead-stored,
All things we inherit,
For thou art the very Word
And the very Spirit!

EINE KLEINE PREDIGT.

Graut Euch nicht, Ihr lieben Leute,
Vor dem ungeheuren Morgen;
Wenn es kommt, es ist das Heute,
Und der liebe Gott zu sorgen.

TO THE LIFE ETERNAL.

Thou art my thought, my heart, my being's fortune,
The search for thee my growth's first conscious date;
For nought, for everything, I thee importune;
Thou art my all, my origin and fate!

HOPE DEFERRED.

"Where is thy crown, O tree of Love?
Flowers only bears thy root!
Will never rain drop from above
Divine enough for fruit?"

"I dwell in hope that gives good cheer,
Twilight my darkest hour;
For seest thou not that every year
I break in better flower?"

FORGIVENESS.

God gives his child upon his slate a sum--
To find eternity in hours and years;
With both sides covered, back the child doth come,
His dim eyes swollen with shed and unshed tears;
God smiles, wipes clean the upper side and nether,
And says, "Now, dear, we'll do the sum together!"

DEJECTION.

O Father, I am in the dark,
My soul is heavy-bowed:
I send my prayer up like a lark,
Up through my vapoury shroud,
To find thee,
And remind thee
I am thy child, and thou my father,
Though round me death itself should gather.

Lay thy loved hand upon my head,
Let thy heart beat in mine;
One thought from thee, when all seems dead,
Will make the darkness shine
About me

And throughout me!
And should again the dull night gather,
I'll cry again, _Thou art my father_.

APPEAL.

If in my arms I bore my child,
Would he cry out for fear
Because the night was dark and wild
And no one else was near?

Shall I then treat thee, Father, as
My fatherhood would grieve?
I will be hopeful, though, alas,
I cannot quite believe!

I had no power, no wish to be:
Thou madest me half blind!
The darkness comes! I cling to thee!
Be thou my perfect mind.

POEMS FOR CHILDREN

LESSONS FOR A CHILD.

I.

There breathes not a breath of the summer air
But the spirit of love is moving there;
Not a trembling leaf on the shadowy tree,
Flutters with hundreds in harmony,
But that spirit can part its tone from the rest,
And read the life in its beetle's breast.
When the sunshiny butterflies come and go,
Like flowers paying visits to and fro,
Not a single wave of their fanning wings
Is unfelt by the spirit that feeleth all things.
The long-mantled moths that sleep at noon
And rove in the light of the gentler moon;
And the myriad gnats that dance like a wall,
Or a moving column that will not fall;
And the dragon-flies that go burning by,
Shot like a glance from a seeking eye--
There is one being that loves them all:
Not a fly in a spider's web can fall
But he cares for the spider, and cares for the fly;

He cares for you, whether you laugh or cry,
Cares whether your mother smile or sigh.
How he cares for so many, I do not know,
But it would be too strange if he did not so--
Dreadful and dreary for even a fly:
So I cannot wait for the _how_ and _why_,
But believe that all things are gathered and nursed
In the love of him whose love went first
And made this world--like a huge great nest
For a hen to sit on with feathery breast.

II.

The bird on the leafy tree,
The bird in the cloudy sky,
The hart in the forest free,
The stag on the mountain high,
The fish inside the sea,
The albatross asleep
On the outside of the deep,
The bee through the summer sunny
Hunting for wells of honey--
What is the thought in the breast
Of the little bird in its nest?
What is the thought in the songs
The lark in the sky prolongs?
What mean the dolphin's rays,
Winding his watery ways?
What is the thought of the stag,
Stately on yonder crag?
What does the albatross think,
Dreaming upon the brink
Of the mountain billow, and then
Dreaming down in its glen?
What is the thought of the bee
Fleeting so silently,
Or flitting--with busy hum,
But a careless go-and-come--
From flower-chalice to chalice,
Like a prince from palace to palace?
What makes them alive, so very--
Some of them, surely, merry.
And others so stately calm
They might be singing a psalm?

I cannot tell what they think---
Only know they eat and drink,
And on all that lies about
With a quiet heart look out,
Each after its kind, stately or coy,
Solemn like man, gamesome like boy,
Glad with its own mysterious joy.

And God, who knows their thoughts and ways
Though his the creatures do not know,
From his full heart fills each of theirs:
Into them all his breath doth go;
Good and better with them he shares;
Content with their bliss while they have no prayers,
He takes their joy for praise.

If thou wouldst be like him, little one, go
And be kind with a kindness undefiled;
Who gives for the pleasure of thanks, my child,
God's gladness cannot know.

III.

Root met root in the spongy ground,
Searching each for food:
Each turned aside, and away it wound.
And each got something good.

Sound met sound in the wavy air--
That made a little to-do!
They jostled not long, but were quick and fair;
Each found its path and flew.

Drop dashed on drop, as the rain-shower fell;
They joined and sank below:
In gathered thousands they rose a well,
With a singing overflow.

Wind met wind in a garden green,
They began to push and fret:
A tearing whirlwind arose between:
There love lies bleeding yet.

WHAT MAKES SUMMER?

Winter froze both brook and well;
Fast and fast the snowflakes fell;
Children gathered round the hearth
Made a summer of their mirth;
When a boy, so lately come
That his life was yet one sum
Of delights--of aimless rambles.
Romps and dreams and games and gambols,
Thought aloud: "I wish I knew
What makes summer--that I do!"
Father heard, and it did show him
How to write a little poem.

What makes summer, little one,

Do you ask? It is the sun.
Want of heat is all the harm,
Summer is but winter warm.
'Tis the sun--yes, that one there,
Dim and gray, low in the air!
Now he looks at us askance,
But will lift his countenance
Higher up, and look down straighter.
Rise much earlier, set much later,
Till we sing out, "Hail, Well-comer,
Thou hast brought our own old Summer!"

When the sun thus rises early
And keeps shining all day rarely,
Up he draws the larks to meet him,
Earth's bird-angels, wild to greet him;
Up he draws the clouds, and pours
Down again their shining showers;
Out he draws the grass and clover,
Daisies, buttercups all over;
Out he wiles all flowers to stare
At their father in the air--
He all light, they how much duller,
Yet son-suns of every colour!
Then he draws their odours out,
Sends them on the winds about.
Next he draws out flying things--
Out of eggs, fast-flapping wings;
Out of lumps like frozen snails,
Butterflies with splendid sails;
Draws the blossoms from the trees,
From their hives the buzzy bees,
Golden things from muddy cracks--
Beetles with their burnished backs;
Laughter draws he from the river
Gleaming back to the gleam-giver;
Light he sends to every nook
That no creature be forsook;
Draws from gloom and pain and sadness,
Hope and blessing, peace and gladness,
Making man's heart sing and shine
With his brilliancy divine:
Summer, thus it is he makes it,
And the little child he takes it.

Day's work done, adown the west
Lingering he goes to rest;
Like a child, who, blissful yet,
Is unwilling to forget,
And, though sleepy, heels and head,
Thinks he cannot go to bed.
Even when down behind the hill
Back his bright look shineth still,

Whose keen glory with the night
Makes the lovely gray twilight--
Drawing out the downy owl,
With his musical bird-howl;
Drawing out the leathery bats--
Mice they are, turned airy cats--
Noiseless, sly, and slippery things
Swimming through the air on wings;
Drawing out the feathery moth,
Lazy, drowsy, very loath;
Drawing children to the door
For one goodnight-frolic more;
Drawing from the glow-worms' tails
Glimmers green in grassy dales;
Making ocean's phosphor-flashes
Glow as if they were sun-ashes.

Then the moon comes up the hill,
Wide awake, but dreaming still,
Soft and slow, as if in fear
Lest her path should not be clear.
Like a timid lady she
Looks around her daintily,
Begs the clouds to come about her,
Tells the stars to shine without her,
Then unveils, and, bolder grown,
Climbs the steps of her blue throne:
Stately in a calm delight,
Mistress of a whole fair night,
Lonely but for stars a few,
There she sits in silence blue,
And the world before her lies
Faint, a round shade in the skies!

But what fun is all about
When the humans are shut out!
Shadowy to the moon, the earth
Is a very world of mirth!
Night is then a dream opaque
Full of creatures wide awake!
Noiseless then, on feet or wings,
Out they come, all moon-eyed things!
In and out they pop and play,
Have it all their own wild way,
Fly and frolic, scamper, glow;
Treat the moon, for all her show,
State, and opal diadem,
Like a nursemaid watching them.
And the nightingale doth snare
All the merry tumult rare,
All the music and the magic,
All the comic and the tragic,
All the wisdom and the riot

Of the midnight moonlight diet,
In a diamond hoop of song,
Which he trundles all night long.

What doth make the sun, you ask,
Able for such mighty task?
He is not a lamp hung high
Sliding up and down the sky,
He is carried in a hand:
That's what makes him strong and grand!
From that hand comes all his power;
If it set him down one hour,
Yea, one moment set him by,
In that moment he would die,
And the winter, ice, and snow
Come on us, and never go.

Need I tell you whose the hand
Bears him high o'er sea and land?

MOTHER NATURE.

Beautiful mother is busy all day,
So busy she neither can sing nor say;
But lovely thoughts, in a ceaseless flow,
Through her eyes, and her ears, and her bosom go--
Motion, sight, and sound, and scent,
Weaving a royal, rich content.

When night is come, and her children sleep,
Beautiful mother her watch doth keep;
With glowing stars in her dusky hair
Down she sits to her music rare;
And her instrument that never fails,
Is the hearts and the throats of her nightingales.

THE MISTLETOE.

Kiss me: there now, little Neddy,
Do you see her staring steady?
There again you had a chance of her!
Didn't you catch the pretty glance of her?
See her nest! On any planet
Never was a sweeter than it!
Never nest was such as this is:
Tis the nest of all the kisses,
With the mother kiss-bird sitting
All through Christmas, never flitting,
Kisses, kisses, kisses hatching,

Sweetest birdies, for the catching!
Oh, the precious little brood
Always in a loving mood!--
There's one under Mamy's hood!

There, that's one I caught this minute,
Musical as any linnet!
Where it is, your big eyes question,
With of doubt a wee suggestion?
There it is--upon mouth merry!
There it is--upon cheek cherry!
There's another on chin-chinnie!
Now it's off, and lights on Minnie!
There's another on nose-nosey!
There's another on lip-rosy!
And the kissy-bird is hatching
Hundreds more for only catching.

Why the mistletoe she chooses,
And the Christmas-tree refuses?
There's a puzzle for your mother?
I'll present you with another!
Tell me why, you question-asker,
Cruel, heartless mother-tasker--
Why, of all the trees before her,
Gathered round, or spreading o'er her,
Jenny Wren should choose the apple
For her nursery and chapel!
Or Jack Daw build in the steeple
High above the praying people!
Tell me why the limping plover
O'er moist meadow likes to hover;
Why the partridge with such trouble
Builds her nest where soon the stubble
Will betray her hop-thumb-cheepers
To the eyes of all the reapers!--
Tell me, Charley; tell me, Janey;
Answer all, or answer any,
And I'll tell you, with much pleasure,
Why this little bird of treasure
Nestles only in the mistletoe,
Never, never goes the thistle to.

Not an answer? Tell without it?
Yes--all that I know about it:--
Mistletoe, then, cannot flourish,
Cannot find the food to nourish
But on other plant when planted--
And for kissing two are wanted.
That is why the kissy-birdie
Looks about for oak-tree sturdy
And the plant that grows upon it
Like a wax-flower on a bonnet.

But, my blessed little mannie,
All the birdies are not cannie
That the kissy-birdie hatches!
Some are worthless little patches,
Which indeed if they don't smutch you,
'Tis they're dead before they touch you!
While for kisses vain and greedy,
Kisses flattering, kisses needy,
They are birds that never waddled
Out of eggs that only addled!
Some there are leave spots behind them,
On your cheek for years you'd find them:
Little ones, I do beseech you,
Never let such birdies reach you.

It depends what net you venture
What the sort of bird will enter!
I will tell you in a minute
What net takes kiss--lark or linnnet--
Any bird indeed worth hatching
And just therefore worth the catching:
The one net that never misses
Catching at least some true kisses,
Is the heart that, loving truly,
Always loves the old love newly;
But to spread out would undo it--
Let the birdies fly into it.

PROFESSOR NOCTUTUS.

Nobody knows the world but me.
The rest go to bed; I sit up and see.
I'm a better observer than any of you all,
For I never look out till the twilight fall,
And never then without green glasses,
And that is how my wisdom passes.

I never think, for that is not fit:
I observe. I have seen the white moon sit
On her nest, the sea, like a fluffy owl,
Hatching the boats and the long-legged fowl!
When the oysters gape--you may make a note--
She drops a pearl into every throat.

I can see the wind: can you do that?
I see the dreams he has in his hat,
I see him shaking them out as he goes,
I see them rush in at man's snoring nose.
Ten thousand things you could not think,
I can write down plain with pen and ink!

You know that I know; therefore pull off your hat,
Whether round and tall, or square and flat:
You cannot do better than trust in me;
You may shut your eyes in fact--_I_ see!
Lifelong I will lead you, and then, like the owl,
I will bury you nicely with my spade and showl.

BIRD-SONGS.

I will sing a song,
Said the owl.
You sing a song, sing-song
Ugly fowl!
What will you sing about,
Night in and day out?

All about the night,
When the gray
With her cloak smothers bright,
Hard, sharp day.
Oh, the moon! the cool dew!
And the shadows!--tu-who!

I will sing a song,
Said the nightingale.
Sing a song, long, long,
Little Neverfail!
What will you sing about,
Day in or day out?

All about the light
Gone away,
Down, away, and out of sight:
Wake up, day!
For the master is not dead,
Only gone to bed.

I will sing a song,
Said the lark.
Sing, sing, Throat-strong,
Little Kill-the-dark!
What will you sing about,
Day in and night out?

I can only call!
I can't think!
Let me up, that's all!
I see a chink!
I've been thirsting all night
For the glorious light!

RIDDLES.

I.

I have only one foot, but thousands of toes;
My one foot stands well, but never goes;
I've a good many arms, if you count them all,
But hundreds of fingers, large and small;
From the ends of my fingers my beauty grows;
I breathe with my hair, and I drink with my toes;
I grow bigger and bigger about the waist
Although I am always very tight laced;
None e'er saw me eat--I've no mouth to bite!
Yet I eat all day, and digest all night.
In the summer, with song I shake and quiver,
But in winter I fast and groan and shiver.

II.

There is a plough that hath no share,
Only a coulter that parteth fair;
 But the ridges they rise
 To a terrible size
Or ever the coulter comes near to tear:
The horses and ridges fierce battle make;
The horses are safe, but the plough may break.

Seed cast in its furrows, or green or sear,
Will lift to the sun neither blade nor ear:
 Down it drops plumb
 Where no spring-times come,
Nor needeth it any harrowing gear;
Wheat nor poppy nor blade has been found
Able to grow on the naked ground.

FOR MY GRANDCHILD.

III.

Who is it that sleeps like a top all night,
And wakes in the morning so fresh and bright
That he breaks his bed as he gets up,
And leaves it smashed like a china cup?

IV.

I've a very long nose, but what of that?
It is not too long to lie on a mat!

I have very big jaws, but never get fat:

I don't go to church, and I'm not a church rat!

I've a mouth in my middle my food goes in at,
Just like a skate's--that's a fish that's a flat.

In summer I'm seldom able to breathe,
But when winter his blades in ice doth sheathe

I swell my one lung, I look big and I puff,
And I sometimes hiss.--There, that's enough!

BABY.

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here.

Where did you get those eyes so blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?
Some of the starry twinkles left in.

Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here.

What makes your forehead so smooth and high?
A soft hand stroked it as I went by.

What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?
I saw something better than any one knows.

Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?
Three angels gave me at once a kiss.

Where did you get this pearly ear?
God spoke, and it came out to hear.

Where did you get those arms and hands?
Love made itself into bonds and bands.

Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?
From the same box as the cherubs' wings.

How did they all just come to be you?
God thought about me, and so I grew.

But how did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

UP AND-DOWN.

The sun is gone down
And the moon's in the sky
But the sun will come up
And the moon be laid by.

The flower is asleep.
But it is not dead,
When the morning shines
It will lift its head.

When winter comes
It will die! No, no,
It will only hide
From the frost and snow.

Sure is the summer,
Sure is the sun;
The night and the winter
Away they run.

UP IN THE TREE.

What would you see, if I took you up
My little aerie-stair?
You would see the sky like a clear blue cup
Turned upside down in the air.

What would you do, up my aerie-stair
In my little nest on the tree?
With cry upon cry you would ripple the air
To get at what you would see.

And what would you reach in the top of the tree
To still your grasping grief?
Not a star would you clutch of all you would see,
You would gather just one green leaf.

But when you had lost your greedy grief,
Content to see from afar,
Your hand it would hold a withering leaf,
But your heart a shining star.

A BABY-SERMON.

The lightning and thunder
They go and they come:
But the stars and the stillness

Are always at home.

LITTLE BO-PEEP

Little Bo-Peep, she has lost her sheep,
And will not know where to find them;
They are over the height and out of sight,
Trailing their tails behind them!

Little Bo-Peep woke out of her sleep,
Jump'd up and set out to find them:
"The silly things! they've got no wings,
And they've left their trails behind them!"

"They've taken their tails, but they've left their trails,
And so I shall follow and find them!"
For wherever a tail had dragged a trail
The grass lay bent behind them.

She washed in the brook, and caught up her crook.
And after her sheep did run
Along the trail that went up the dale
Across the grass in the sun.

She ran with a will, and she came to a hill
That went up steep like a spire;
On its very top the sun seemed to stop,
And burned like a flame of fire.

But now she went slow, for the hill did go
Up steeper as she went higher;
When she reached its crown, the sun was down,
Leaving a trail of fire.

And her sheep were gone, and hope she had none.
For now was no trail behind them.
Yes, there they were! long-tailed and fair!
But to see was not to find them!

Golden in hue, and rosy and blue,
And white as blossom of pears,
Her sheep they did run in the trail of the sun,
As she had been running in theirs!

After the sun like clouds they did run,
But she knew they were her sheep:
She sat down to cry and look up at the sky,
But she cried herself to sleep.

And as she slept the dew down wept,
And the wind did blow from the sky;

And doings strange brought a lovely change:
She woke with a different cry!

Nibble, nibble, crop, without a stop!
A hundred little lambs
Did pluck and eat the grass so sweet
That grew in the trail of their dams!

She gave one look, she caught up her crook,
Wiped away the sleep that did blind her;
And nibble-nibble-crop, without a stop
The lambs came nibbling behind her.

Home, home she came, both tired and lame,
With three times as large a stock;
In a month or more, they'll be sheep as before,
A lovely, long-wooled flock!

But what will she say, if, one fine day,
When they've got their bushiest tails,
Their grown-up game should be just the same,
And again she must follow mere trails?

Never weep, Bo-Peep, though you lose your sheep,
Tears will turn rainbow-laughter!
In the trail of the sun if the mothers did run,
The lambs are sure to run after;

But a day is coming when little feet drumming
Will wake you up to find them--
All the old sheep--how your heart will leap!--
With their big little lambs behind them!

LITTLE BOY BLUE.

Little Boy Blue lost his way in a wood--
Sing apples and cherries, roses and honey:
He said, "I would not go back if I could,
It's all so jolly and funny!"

He sang, "This wood is all my own--
Apples and cherries, roses and honey!
Here I will sit, a king on my throne,
All so jolly and funny!"

A little snake crept out of a tree--
Apples and cherries, roses and honey:
"Lie down at my feet, little snake," said he--
All so jolly and funny!"

A little bird sang in the tree overhead--

"Apples and cherries, roses and honey:"
"Come and sing your song on my finger," he said,
All so jolly and funny.

Up coiled the snake; the bird came down,
And sang him the song of Birdie Brown.

But little Boy Blue found it tiresome to sit
Though it was on a throne: he would walk a bit!

He took up his horn, and he blew a blast:
"Snake, you go first, and, birdie, come last."

Waves of green snake o'er the yellow leaves went;
The snake led the way, and he knew what he meant:

But by Boy Blue's head, with flutter and dart,
Flew Birdie Brown, her song in her heart.

Boy Blue came where apples grew fair and sweet:
"Tree, drop me an apple down at my feet."

He came where cherries hung plump and red:
"Come to my mouth, sweet kisses," he said.

And the boughs bow down, and the apples they dapple
The grass, too many for him to grapple;

And the cheeriest cherries, with never a miss,
Fall to his mouth, each a full-grown kiss.

He met a little brook singing a song:
"Little brook," he said, "you are going wrong,

"You must follow me, follow me, follow, I say,
Do as I tell you, and come this way."

And the song-singing, sing-singing forest brook
Leapt from its bed and after him took;

And the dead leaves rustled, yellow and wan,
As over their beds the water ran.

He called every bird that sat on a bough;
He called every creature with poop and prow--

I mean, with two ends, that is, nose and tail:
With legs or without, they followed full sail;

Squirrels that carried their tails like a sack,
Each his own on his little brown humpy back;

Snails that drew their own caravans,

Poking out their own eyes on the point of a lance,

And houseless slugs, white, black, and red--
Snails too lazy to build a shed;

And butterflies, flutterbys, weasels, and larks,
And owls, and shrew-mice, and harkydarks,

Cockchafers, henchafers, cockioli-birds,
Cockroaches, henroaches, cuckoos in herds;

The dappled fawns fawning, the fallow-deer following;
The swallows and flies, flying and swallowing--

All went flitting, and sailing, and flowing
After the merry boy running and blowing.

The spider forgot, and followed him spinning,
And lost all his thread from end to beginning;

The gay wasp forgot his rings and his waist--
He never had made such undignified haste!

The dragon-flies melted to mist with their hurrying;
The mole forsook his harrowing and burrowing;

The bees went buzzing, not busy but beesy,
And the midges in columns, upright and easy.

But Little Boy Blue was not content,
Calling for followers still as he went,

Blowing his horn, and beating his drum,
And crying aloud, "Come all of you, come!"

He said to the shadows, "Come after me;"
And the shadows began to flicker and flee,

And away through the wood went flattering and fluttering,
Shaking and quivering, quavering and muttering.

He said to the wind, "Come, follow; come, follow
With whistle and pipe, with rustle and hollo;"

And the wind wound round at his desire,
As if Boy had been the gold cock on the spire;

And the cock itself flew down from the church
And left the farmers all in the lurch.

Everything, everything, all and sum,
They run and they fly, they creep and they come;

The very trees they tugged at their roots,
Only their feet were too fast in their boots--

After him leaning and straining and bending,
As on through their boles the army kept wending,

Till out of the wood Boy burst on a lea,
Shouting and calling, "Come after me,"

And then they rose with a leafy hiss
And stood as if nothing had been amiss.

Little Boy Blue sat down on a stone,
And the creatures came round him every one.

He said to the clouds, "I want you there!"
And down they sank through the thin blue air.

He said to the sunset far in the west,
"Come here; I want you; 'tis my behest!"

And the sunset came and stood up on the wold,
And burned and glowed in purple and gold.

Then Little Boy Blue began to ponder:
"What's to be done with them all, I wonder!"

He thought a while, then he said, quite low,
"What to do with you all, I am sure I don't know!"

The clouds clodded down till dismal it grew;
The snake sneaked close; round Birdie Brown flew;

The brook, like a cobra, rose on its tail,
And the wind sank down with a _what-will-you_ wail,

And all the creatures sat and stared;
The mole opened the eyes that he hadn't, and glared;

And for rats and bats, and the world and his wife
Little Boy Blue was afraid of his life.

Then Birdie Brown began to sing,
And what he sang was the very thing:

"Little Boy Blue, you have brought us all hither:
Pray, are we to sit and grow old together?"

"Go away; go away," said Little Boy Blue;
"I'm sure I don't want you! get away--do."

"No, no; no, no; no, yes, and no, no,"
Sang Birdie Brown, "it mustn't be so!

"If we've come for no good, we can't go away.
Give us reason for going, or here we stay!"

They covered the earth, they darkened the air,
They hovered, they sat, with a countless stare.

"If I do not give them something to do,
They will stare me up!" said Little Boy Blue.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" he began to cry,
"They're an awful crew, and I feel so shy!"

All of a sudden he thought of a thing,
And up he stood, and spoke like a king:

"You're the plague of my life! have done with your bother!
Off with you all: take me back to my mother!"

The sunset went back to the gates of the west.
"Follow _me_" sang Birdie, "I know the way best!"

"I am going the same way as fast as I can!"
Said the brook, as it sank and turned and ran.

To the wood fled the shadows, like scared black ghosts:
"If we stay, we shall all be missed from our posts!"

Said the wind, with a voice that had changed its cheer,
"I was just going there when you brought me here!"

"That's where I live," said the sack-backed squirrel,
And he turned his sack with a swing and a swirl.

Said the gold weather-cock, "I'm the churchwarden!"
Said the mole, "I live in the parson's garden!"

Said they all, "If that's where you want us to steer for,
What on earth or in air did you bring us here for?"

"You are none the worse!" said Boy. "If you won't
Do as I tell you, why, then, don't;

"I'll leave you behind, and go home without you;
And it's time I did: I begin to doubt you!"

He jumped to his feet. The snake rose on his tail,
And hissed three times, a hiss full of bale,

And shot out his tongue at Boy Blue to scare him,
And stared at him, out of his courage to stare him.

"You ugly snake," Little Boy Blue said,

"Get out of my way, or I'll break your head!"

The snake would not move, but glared at him glum;
Boy Blue hit him hard with the stick of his drum.

The snake fell down as if he was dead.
Little Boy Blue set his foot on his head.

"Hurrah!" cried the creatures, "hurray! hurrah!
Little Boy Blue, your will is a law!"

And away they went, marching before him,
And marshalled him home with a high cockorum.

And Birdie Brown sang, _"Twirrr twitter, twirrr twee!
In the rosiest rose-bush a rare nest!
Twirrr twitter, twirrr twitter, twirrr twitter, twirrrrr tweeeee!
In the fun he has found the earnest!"_

WILLIE'S QUESTION.

I.

Willie speaks.

Is it wrong, the wish to be great,
For I do wish it so?
I have asked already my sister Kate;
She says she does not know.

Yestereve at the gate I stood
Watching the sun in the west;
When I saw him look so grand and good
It swelled up in my breast.

Next from the rising moon
It stole like a silver dart;
In the night when the wind began his tune
It woke with a sudden start.

This morning a trumpet blast
Made all the cottage quake;
It came so sudden and shook so fast
It blew me wide awake.

It told me I must make haste,
And some great glory win,
For every day was running to waste,
And at once I must begin.

I want to be great and strong,

I want to begin to-day;
But if you think it very wrong
I will send the wish away.

II.

The Father answers.

Wrong to wish to be great?
No, Willie; it is not wrong:
The child who stands at the high closed gate
Must wish to be tall and strong!

If you did not wish to grow
I should be a sorry man;
I should think my boy was dull and slow,
Nor worthy of his clan.

You are bound to be great, my boy:
Wish, and get up, and do.
Were you content to be little, my joy
Would be little enough in you.

Willie speaks.

Papa, papa! I'm so glad
That what I wish is right!
I will not lose a chance to be had;
I'll begin this very night.

I will work so hard at school!
I will waste no time in play;
At my fingers' ends I'll have every rule,
For knowledge is power, they say.

I would be a king and reign,
But I can't be that, and so
Field-marshal I'll be, I think, and gain
Sharp battles and sieges slow.

I shall gallop and shout and call,
Waving my shining sword:
Artillery, cavalry, infantry, all
Hear and obey my word.

Or admiral I will be,
Wherever the salt wave runs,
Sailing, fighting over the sea,
With flashing and roaring guns.

I will make myself hardy and strong;
I will never, never give in.
I am so glad it is not wrong!

At once I will begin.

The Father speaks.

Fighting and shining along,
All for the show of the thing!
Any puppet will mimic the grand and strong
If you pull the proper string!

Willie speaks.

But indeed I want to _be_ great,
I should despise mere show;
The thing I want is the glory-state--
Above the rest, you know!

The Father answers.

The harder you run that race,
The farther you tread that track,
The greatness you fancy before your face
Is the farther behind your back.

To be up in the heavens afar,
Miles above all the rest,
Would make a star not the greatest star,
Only the dreariest.

That book on the highest shelf
Is not the greatest book;
If you would be great, it must be in yourself,
Neither by place nor look.

The Highest is not high
By being higher than others;
To greatness you come not a step more nigh
By getting above your brothers.

III.

Willie speaks.

I meant the boys at school,
I did not mean my brother.
Somebody first, is there the rule--
It must be me or another.

The Father answers.

Oh, Willie, it's all the same!
They are your brothers all;
For when you say, "Hallowed be thy name!"
Whose Father is it you call?

Could you pray for such rule to _him_?
Do you think that he would hear?
Must he favour one in a greedy whim
Where all are his children dear?

It is right to get up and do,
But why outstrip the rest?
Why should one of the many be one of the few?
Why should _you_ think to be best?

Willie speaks.

Then how am I to be great?
I know no other way;
It would be folly to sit and wait,
I must up and do, you say!

The Father answers.

I do not want you to wait,
For few before they die
Have got so far as begin to be great,
The lesson is so high.

I will tell you the only plan
To climb and not to fall:
He who would rise and be greater than
He is, must be servant of all.

Turn it each way in your mind,
Try every other plan,
You may think yourself great, but at length you'll find
You are not even a man.

Climb to the top of the trees,
Climb to the top of the hill,
Get up on the crown of the sky if you please,
You'll be a small creature still.

Be admiral, poet, or king,
Let praises fill both your ears,
Your soul will be but a windmill thing
Blown round by its hopes and fears.

IV.

Willie speaks.

Then put me in the way,
For you, papa, are a man:
What thing shall I do this very day?--
Only be sure I _can_.

I want to know--I am willing,
Let me at least have a chance!
Shall I give the monkey-boy my shilling?--
I want to serve at once.

The Father answers.

Give all your shillings you might
And hurt your brothers the more;
He only can serve his fellows aright
Who goes in at the little door.

We must do the thing we _must_
Before the thing we _may;_
We are unfit for any trust
Till we can and do obey.

Willie speaks.

I will try more and more;
I have nothing now to ask;
Obedience I know is the little door:
Now set me some hard task.

The Father answers.

No, Willie; the father of all,
Teacher and master high,
Has set your task beyond recall,
Nothing can set it by.

Willie speaks.

What is it, father dear,
That he would have me do?
I'd ask himself, but he's not near,
And so I must ask you!

The Father answers.

Me 'tis no use to ask,
I too am one of his boys!
But he tells each boy his own plain task;
Listen, and hear his voice.

Willie speaks.

Father, I'm listening _so_
To hear him if I may!
His voice must either be very low,
Or very far away!

The Father answers.

It is neither hard to hear,
Nor hard to understand;
It is very low, but very near,
A still, small, strong command.

Willie answers.

I do not hear it at all;
I am only hearing you!

The Father speaks.

Think: is there nothing, great or small,
You ought to go and do?

Willie answers.

Let me think:--I ought to feed
My rabbits. I went away
In such a hurry this morning! Indeed
They've not had enough to-day!

The Father speaks.

That is his whisper low!
That is his very word!
You had only to stop and listen, and so
Very plainly you heard!

That duty's the little door:
You must open it and go in;
There is nothing else to do before,
There is nowhere else to begin.

Willie speaks.

But that's so easily done!
It's such a trifling affair!
So nearly over as soon as begun.
For that he can hardly care!

The Father answers.

You are turning from his call
If you let that duty wait;
You would not think any duty small
If you yourself were great.

The nearest is at life's core;
With the first, you all begin:
What matter how little the little door

If it only let you in?

V.

Willie speaks.

Papa, I am come again:

It is now three months and more
That I've tried to do the thing that was plain,
And I feel as small as before.

The Father answers.

Your honour comes too slow?
How much then have you done?
One foot on a mole-heap, would you crow
As if you had reached the sun?

Willie speaks.

But I cannot help a doubt
Whether this way be the true:
The more I do to work it out
The more there comes to do;

And yet, were all done and past,
I should feel just as small,
For when I had tried to the very last--
'Twas my duty, after all!

It is only much the same
As not being liar or thief!

The Father answers.

One who tried it found even, with shame,
That of sinners he was the chief!

My boy, I am glad indeed
You have been finding the truth!

Willie speaks.

But where's the good? I shall never speed--
Be one whit greater, in sooth!

If duty itself must fail,
And that be the only plan,
How shall my scarce begun duty prevail
To make me a mighty man?

The Father answers.

Ah, Willie! what if it were
Quite another way to fall?
What if the greatness itself lie there--
In knowing that you are small?

In seeing the good so good
That you feel poor, weak, and low;
And hungrily long for it as for food,
With an endless need to grow?

The man who was lord of fate,
Born in an ox's stall,
Was great because he was much too great
To care about greatness at all.

Ever and only he sought
The will of his Father good;
Never of what was high he thought,
But of what his Father would.

You long to be great; you try;
You feel yourself smaller still:
In the name of God let ambition die;
Let him make you what he will.

Who does the truth, is one
With the living Truth above:
Be God's obedient little son,
Let ambition die in love.

KING COLE.

King Cole he reigned in Aureoland,
But the sceptre was seldom in his hand

Far oftener was there his golden cup--
He ate too much, but he drank all up!

To be called a king and to be a king,
That is one thing and another thing!

So his majesty's head began to shake,
And his hands and his feet to swell and ache,

The doctors were called, but they dared not say
Your majesty drinks too much Tokay;

So out of the king's heart died all mirth,
And he thought there was nothing good on earth.

Then up rose the fool, whose every word

Was three parts wise and one part absurd.

Nuncle, he said, never mind the gout;
I will make you laugh till you laugh it out.

King Cole pushed away his full gold plate:
The jester he opened the palace gate,

Brought in a cold man, with hunger grim,
And on the dais-edge seated him;

Then caught up the king's own golden plate,
And set it beside him: oh, how he ate!

And the king took note, with a pleased surprise,
That he ate with his mouth and his cheeks and his eyes,

With his arms and his legs and his body whole,
And laughed aloud from his heart and soul.

Then from his lordly chair got up,
And carried the man his own gold cup;

The goblet was deep and wide and full,
The poor man drank like a cow at a pool.

Said the king to the jester--I call it well done
To drink with two mouths instead of one!

Said the king to himself, as he took his seat,
It is quite as good to feed as to eat!

It is better, I do begin to think,
To give to the thirsty than to drink!

And now I have thought of it, said the king,
There might be more of this kind of thing!

The fool heard. The king had not long to wait:
The fool cried aloud at the palace-gate;

The ragged and wretched, the hungry and thin,
Loose in their clothes and tight in their skin,

Gathered in shoals till they filled the hall,
And the king and the fool they fed them all;

And as with good things their plates they piled
The king grew merry as a little child.

On the morrow, early, he went abroad
And sought poor folk in their own abode--

Sought them till evening foggy and dim,
Did not wait till they came to him;

And every day after did what he could,
Gave them work and gave them food.

Thus he made war on the wintry weather,
And his health and the spring came back together.

But, lo, a change had passed on the king,
Like the change of the world in that same spring!

His face had grown noble and good to see,
And the crown sat well on his majesty.

Now he ate enough, and ate no more,
He drank about half what he drank before,

He reigned a real king in Aureoland,
Reigned with his head and his heart and his hand.

All this through the fool did come to pass.
And every Christmas-eve that was,

The palace-gates stood open wide
And the poor came in from every side,

And the king rose up and served them duly,
And his people loved him very truly.

SAID AND _DID_.

Said the boy as he read, "I too will be bold,
I will fight for the truth and its glory!"
He went to the playground, and soon had told
A very cowardly story!

Said the girl as she read, "That was grand, I declare!
What a true, what a lovely, sweet soul!"
In half-an-hour she went up the stair,
Looking as black as a coal!

"The mean little wretch, I wish I could fling
This book at his head!" said another;
Then he went and did the same ugly thing
To his own little trusting brother!

Alas for him who sees a thing grand
And does not fit himself to it!
But the meanest act, on sea or on land,
Is to find a fault, and then do it!

DR. DODDRIDGE'S DOG.

"What! you Dr. Doddridge's dog, and not know who made you?"

My little dog, who blessed you
With such white toothy-pegs?
And who was it that dressed you
In such a lot of legs?

Perhaps he never told you!
Perhaps you know quite well,
And beg me not to scold you
For you can't speak to tell!

I'll tell you, little brother,
In case you do not know:--
One only, not another,
Could make us two just so.

You love me?--Quiet!--I'm proving!--
It must be God above
That filled those eyes with loving:
He was the first to love!

One day he'll stop all sadness--
Hark to the nightingale!
Oh blessed God of gladness!--
Come, doggie, wag your tail!

That's--Thank you, God!--He gave you
Of life this little taste;
And with more life he'll save you,
Not let you go to waste!

He says now, Live together,
And share your bite and sup;
And then he'll say, Come hither--
And lift us both high up.

THE GIRL THAT LOST THINGS.

There was a girl that lost things--
Nor only from her hand;
She lost, indeed--why, most things,
As if they had been sand!

She said, "But I must use them,
And can't look after all!

Indeed I did not lose them,
I only let them fall!"

That's how she lost her thimble,
It fell upon the floor:
Her eyes were very nimble
But she never saw it more.

And then she lost her dolly,
Her very doll of all!
That loss was far from jolly,
But worse things did befall.

She lost a ring of pearls
With a ruby in them set;
But the dearest girl of girls
Cried only, did not fret.

And then she lost her robin;
Ah, that was sorrow dire!
He hopped along, and--bob in--
Hopped bob into the fire!

And once she lost a kiss
As she came down the stair;
But that she did not miss,
For sure it was somewhere!

Just then she lost her heart too,
But did so well without it
She took that in good part too,
And said--not much about it.

But when she lost her health
She did feel rather poor,
Till in came loads of wealth
By quite another door!

And soon she lost a dimple
That was upon her cheek,
But that was very simple--
She was so thin and weak!

And then she lost her mother,
And thought that she was dead;
Sure there was not another
On whom to lay her head!

And then she lost her self--
But that she threw away;
And God upon his shelf
It carefully did lay.

And then she lost her sight,
And lost all hope to find it;
But a fountain-well of light
Came flashing up behind it.

At last she lost the world:
In a black and stormy wind
Away from her it whirled--
But the loss how could she mind?

For with it she lost her losses,
Her aching and her weeping,
Her pains and griefs and crosses,
And all things not worth keeping;

It left her with the lost things
Her heart had still been craving;
'Mong them she found--why, most things,
And all things worth the saving.

She found her precious mother,
Who not the least had died;
And then she found that other
Whose heart had hers inside.

And next she found the kiss
She lost upon the stair;
'Twas sweeter far, I guess,
For ripening in that air.

She found her self, all mended,
New-drest, and strong, and white;
She found her health, new-blended
With a radiant delight.

She found her little robin:
He made his wings go flap,
Came fluttering, and went bob in,
Went bob into her lap.

So, girls that cannot keep things,
Be patient till to-morrow;
And mind you don't bewep things
That are not worth such sorrow;

For the Father great of fathers,
Of mothers, girls, and boys,
In his arms his children gathers,
And sees to all their toys.

A MAKE-BELIEVE.

I will think as thinks the rabbit:--

Oh, delight
In the night
When the moon
Sets the tune
To the woods!
And the broods
All run out,
Frisk about,
Go and come,
Beat the drum--
Here in groups,
There in troops!
Now there's one!
Now it's gone!
There are none!

And now they are dancing like chaff!
I look, and I laugh,
But sit by my door, and keep to my habit--
A wise, respectable, clean-furred old rabbit!

Now I'm going,
Business calls me out--
Going, going,
Very knowing,
Slow, long-heeled, and stout,
Loping, lumbering,
Nipping, numbering,
Head on this side and on that,
Along the pathway footed flat,
Through the meadow, through the heather,
Through the rich dusky weather--
Big stars and little moon!

Dews are lighting down in crowds,
Odours rising in thin clouds,
Night has all her chords in tune--
The very night for us, God's rabbits,
Suiting all our little habits!
Wind not loud, but playful with our fur,
Just a cool, a sweet, a gentle stir!
And all the way not one rough bur,
But the dewiest, freshest grasses,
That whisper thanks to every foot that passes!

I, the king the rest call Mappy,
Canter on, composed and happy,
Till I come where there is plenty
For a varied meal and dainty.
Is it cabbage, I grab it;
Is it parsley, I nab it;

Is it carrot, I mar it;
The turnip I turn up
And hollow and swallow;
A lettuce? Let us eat it!
A beetroot? Let's beat it!
If you are juicy,
Sweet sir, I will use you!
For all kinds of corn-crop
I have a born crop!
Are you a green top?
You shall be gleaned up!
Sucking and feazing,
Crushing and squeezing
All that is feathery,
Crisp, not leathery,
Juicy and bruisy--
All comes proper
To my little hopper
Still on the dance,
Driven by hunger and drouth!

All is welcome to my crunching,
Finding, grinding,
Milling, munching,
Gobbling, lunching,
Fore-toothed, three-lipped mouth--
Eating side way, round way, flat way,
Eating this way, eating that way,
Every way at once!

Hark to the rain!--
Pattering, clattering,
The cabbage leaves battering,
Down it comes amain!--
Home we hurry
Hop and scurry,
And in with a flurry!
Hustling, jostling
Out of the airy land
Into the dry warm sand;
Our family white tails,
The last of our vitals,
Following hard with a whisk to them,
And with a great sense of risk to them!

Hear to it pouring!
Hear the thunder roaring
Far off and up high,
While we all lie
So warm and so dry
In the mellow dark,
Where never a spark,
White or rosy or blue,

Of the sheeting, fleeting,
Forking, frightening,
Lashing lightning
Ever can come through!

Let the wind chafe
In the trees overhead,
We are quite safe
In our dark, yellow bed!
Let the rain pour!
It never can bore
A hole in our roof--
It is waterproof!
So is the cloak
We always carry,
We furry folk,
In sandhole or quarry!
It is perfect bliss
To lie in a nest
So soft as this,
All so warmly drest!
No one to flurry you!
No one to hurry you!
No one to scurry you!
Holes plenty to creep in!
All day to sleep in!
All night to roam in!
Gray dawn to run home in!
And all the days and nights to come after--
All the to-morrows for hind-legs and laughter!

Now the rain is over,
We are out again,
Every merry, leaping rover,
On his right leg and his wrong leg,
On his doubled, shortened long leg,
Floundering amain!
Oh, it is merry
And jolly--yes, very!

But what--what is that?
What can he be at?
Is it a cat?
Ah, my poor little brother,
He's caught in the trap
That goes-to with a snap!
Ah me! there was never,
Nor will be for ever--
There was never such another,
Such a funny, funny bunny,
Such a frisking, such a whisking,
Such a frolicking brother!
He's screeching, beseeching!

They're going to--

Ah, my poor foot,
It is caught in a root!
No, no! 'tis a trap
That goes-to with a snap!
Ah me, I'm forsaken!
Ah me, I am taken!
I am screeching, beseeching!
They are going to--

No more! no more! I must stop this play,
Be a boy again, and kneel down and pray
To the God of sparrows and rabbits and men,
Who never lets any one out of his ken--
It must be so, though it be bewild'ring--
To save his dear beasts from his cruel children!

THE CHRISTMAS CHILD.

"Little one, who straight hast come
Down the heavenly stair,
Tell us all about your home,
And the father there."

"He is such a one as I,
Like as like can be.
Do his will, and, by and by,
Home and him you'll see."

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER.

Loving looks the large-eyed cow,
Loving stares the long-eared ass
At Heaven's glory in the grass!
Child, with added human birth
Come to bring the child of earth
Glad repentance, tearful mirth,
And a seat beside the hearth
At the Father's knee--
Make us peaceful as thy cow;
Make us patient as thine ass;
Make us quiet as thou art now;
Make us strong as thou wilt be.
Make us always know and see
We are his as well as thou.

NO END OF NO-STORY.

There is a river
whose waters run asleep
run run ever
singing in the shallows
dumb in the hollows
sleeping so deep
and all the swallows
that dip their feathers
in the hollows
or in the shallows
are the merriest swallows
and the nests they make
with the clay they cake
with the water they shake
from their wings that rake
the water out of the shallows
or out of the hollows
will hold together
in any weather
and the swallows
are the merriest fellows
and have the merriest children
and are built very narrow
like the head of an arrow
to cut the air
and go just where
the nicest water is flowing
and the nicest dust is blowing
and each so narrow
like the head of an arrow
is a wonderful barrow
to carry the mud he makes
for his children's sakes
from the wet water flowing
and the dry dust blowing
to build his nest
for her he loves best
and the wind cakes it
the sun bakes it
into a nest
for the rest
of her he loves best
and all their merry children
each little fellow
with a beak as yellow
as the buttercups growing
beside the flowing
of the singing river
always and ever
growing and blowing
as fast as the sheep

awake or asleep
crop them and crop
and cannot stop
their yellowness blowing
nor yet the growing
of the obstinate daisies
the little white praises
they grow and they blow
they spread out their crown
and they praise the sun
and when he goes down
their praising is done
they fold up their crown
and sleep every one
till over the plain
he is shining amain
and they're at it again
praising and praising
such low songs raising
that no one can hear them
but the sun so near them
and the sheep that bite them
but do not fright them
are the quietest sheep
awake or asleep
with the merriest bleat
and the little lambs
are the merriest lambs
forgetting to eat
for the frolic in their feet
and the lambs and their dams
are the whitest sheep
with the woolliest wool
for the swallow to pull
when he makes his nest
for her he loves best
and they shine like snow
in the grasses that grow
by the singing river
that sings for ever
and the sheep and the lambs
are merry for ever
because the river
sings and they drink it
and the lambs and their dams
would any one think it
are bright and white
because of their diet
which gladdens them quiet
for what they bite
is buttercups yellow
and daisies white
and grass as green

as the river can make it
with wind as mellow
to kiss it and shake it
as never was known
but here in the hollows
beside the river
where all the swallows
are the merriest fellows
and the nests they make
with the clay they cake
in the sunshine bake
till they are like bone
and as dry in the wind
as a marble stone
dried in the wind
the sweetest wind
that blows by the river
flowing for ever
and who shall find
whence comes the wind
that blows on the hollows
and over the shallows
where dip the swallows
and comes and goes
and the sweet life blows
into the river
that sings as it flows
and the sweet life blows
into the sheep
awake or asleep
with the woolliest wool
and the trailingest tails
and never fails
gentle and cool
to wave the wool
and to toss the grass
as the lambs and the sheep
over it pass
and tug and bite
with their teeth so white
and then with the sweep
of their trailing tails
smooth it again
and it grows amain
and amain it grows
and the wind that blows
tosses the swallows
over the hollows
and over the shallows
and blows the sweet life
and the joy so rife
into the swallows
that skim the shallows

and have the yellowest children
and the wind that blows
is the life of the river
that flows for ever
and washes the grasses
still as it passes
and feeds the daisies
the little white praises
and buttercups sunny
with butter and honey
that whiten the sheep
awake or asleep
that nibble and bite
and grow whiter than white
and merry and quiet
on such good diet
watered by the river
and tossed for ever
by the wind that tosses
the wool and the grasses
and the swallow that crosses
with all the swallows
over the shallows
dipping their wings
to gather the water
and bake the cake
for the wind to make
as hard as a bone
and as dry as a stone
and who shall find
whence comes the wind
that blows from behind
and ripples the river
that flows for ever
and still as it passes
waves the grasses
and cools the daisies
the white sun praises
that feed the sheep
awake or asleep
and give them their wool
for the swallows to pull
a little away
to mix with the clay
that cakes to a nest
for those they love best
and all the yellow children
soon to go trying
their wings at the flying
over the hollows
and over the shallows
with all the swallows
that do not know

whence the wind doth blow
that comes from behind
a blowing wind.

A THREEFOLD CORD:

Poems by Three Friends.

TO

GREVILLE MATHESON MACDONALD.

First, most, to thee, my son, I give this book
In which a friend's and brother's verses blend
With mine; for not son only--brother, friend,
Art thou, through sonship which no veil can brook
Between the eyes that in each other look,
Or any shadow 'twixt the hearts that tend
Still nearer, with divine approach, to end
In love eternal that cannot be shook
When all the shakable shall cease to be.
With growing hope I greet the coming day
When from thy journey done I welcome thee
Who sharest in the names of all the three,
And take thee to the two, and humbly say,
Let this man be the fourth with us, I pray.

CASA CORAGGIO:

May, 1883.

A THREEFOLD CHORD.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE:

Suggested by a drawing of Thomas Moran, the American painter.

This must be the very night!
The moon knows it!--and the trees!
They stand straight upright,
Each a sentinel drawn up,
As if they dared not know
Which way the wind might blow!
The very pool, with dead gray eye,
Dully expectant, feels it nigh,

And begins to curdle and freeze!
And the dark night,
With its fringe of light,
Holds the secret in its cup!

II. What can it be, to make
The poplars cease to shiver and shake,
And up in the dismal air
Stand straight and stiff as the human hair
When the human soul is dizzy with dread--
All but those two that strain
Aside in a frenzy of speechless pain,
Though never a wind sends out a breath
To tunnel the foggy rheum of death?
What can it be has power to scare
The full-grown moon to the idiot stare
Of a blasted eye in the midnight air?
Something has gone wrong;
A scream will come tearing out ere long!

III. Still as death,
Although I listen with bated breath!
Yet something is coming, I know--is coming!
With an inward soundless humming
Somewhere in me, or if in the air
I cannot tell, but it is there!
Marching on to an unheard drumming
Something is coming--coming--
Growing and coming!
And the moon is aware,
Aghast in the air
At the thing that is only coming
With an inward soundless humming
And an unheard spectral drumming!

IV. Nothing to see and nothing to hear!
Only across the inner sky
The wing of a shadowy thought flits by,
Vague and featureless, faceless, drear--
Only a thinness to catch the eye:
Is it a dim foreboding unborn,
Or a buried memory, wasted and worn
As the fading frost of a wintry sigh?
Anon I shall have it!--anon!--it draws nigh!
A night when--a something it was took place
That drove the blood from that scared moon-face!
Hark! was that the cry of a goat,
Or the gurgle of water in a throat?
Hush! there is nothing to see or hear,
Only a silent something is near;
No knock, no footsteps three or four,
Only a presence outside the door!
See! the moon is remembering!--what?

The wail of a mother-left, lie-alone brat?
Or a raven sharpening its beak to peck?
Or a cold blue knife and a warm white neck?
Or only a heart that burst and ceased
For a man that went away released?
I know not--know not, but something is coming
Somehow back with an inward humming!

V. Ha! look there! look at that house,
Forsaken of all things, beetle and mouse!
Mark how it looks! It must have a soul!
It looks, it looks, though it cannot stir!
See the ribs of it, how they stare!
Its blind eyes yet have a seeing air!
It _knows_ it has a soul!
Haggard it hangs o'er the slimy pool,
And gapes wide open as corpses gape:
It is the very murderer!
The ghost has modelled himself to the shape
Of this drear house all sodden with woe
Where the deed was done, long, long ago,
And filled with himself his new body full--
To haunt for ever his ghastly crime,
And see it come and go--
Brooding around it like motionless time,
With a mouth that gapes, and eyes that yawn
Blear and blintering and full of the moon,
Like one aghast at a hellish dawn!--
The deed! the deed! it is coming soon!

VI. For, ever and always, when round the tune
Grinds on the barrel of organ-Time,
The deed is done. And it comes anon:
True to the roll of the clock-faced moon,
True to the ring of the spheric chime,
True to the cosmic rhythm and rime,
Every point, as it first fell out,
Will come and go in the fearsome bout.
See! palsied with horror from garret to core,
The house cannot shut its gaping door;
Its burst eye stares as if trying to see,
And it leans as if settling heavily,
Settling heavy with sickness dull:
It also is hearing the soundless humming
Of the wheel that is turning--the thing that is coming!
On the naked rafters of its brain,
Gaunt and wintred, see the train
Of gossiping, scandal-mongering crows
That watch, all silent, with necks a-strain,
Wickedly knowing, with heads awry
And the sharpened gleam of a cunning eye--
Watch, through the cracks of the ruined skull,
How the evil business goes!--

Beyond the eyes of the cherubim,
Beyond the ears of the seraphim,
Outside, forsaken, in the dim
Phantom-haunted chaos grim
He stands, with the deed going on in him!

VII. O winds, winds, that lurk and peep
Under the edge of the moony fringe!
O winds, winds, up and sweep,
Up and blow and billow the air,
Billow the air with blow and swinge,
Rend me this ghastly house of groans!
Rend and scatter the skeleton's bones
Over the deserts and mountains bare!
Blast and hurl and shiver aside
Nailed sticks and mortared stones!
Clear the phantom, with torrent and tide,
Out of the moon and out of my brain,
That the light may fall shadowless in again!

VIII. But, alas, then the ghost
O'er mountain and coast
Would go roaming, roaming! and never was swine
That, grubbing and talking with snork and whine
On Gadarene mountains, had taken him in
But would rush to the lake to unhouse the sin!
For any charnel
This ghost is too carnal;
There is no volcano, burnt out and cold,
Whose very ashes are gray and old,
But would cast him forth in reviving flame
To blister the sky with a smudge of shame!

IX. Is there no help? none anywhere
Under the earth or above the air?--
Come, sad woman, whose tender throat
Has a red-lipped mouth that can sing no note!
Child, whose midwife, the third grim Fate,
Shears in hand, thy coming did wait!
Father, with blood-bedabbled hair!
Mother, all withered with love's despair!
Come, broken heart, whatever thou be,
Hasten to help this misery!
Thou wast only murdered, or left forlorn:
He is a horror, a hate, a scorn!
Come, if out of the holiest blue
That the sapphire throne shines through;
For pity come, though thy fair feet stand
Next to the elder-band;
Fling thy harp on the hyaline,
Hurry thee down the spheres divine;
Come, and drive those ravens away;
Cover his eyes from the pitiless moon,

Shadow his brain from her stinging spray;
Droop around him, a tent of love,
An odour of grace, a fanning dove;
Walk through the house with the healing tune
Of gentle footsteps; banish the shape
Remorse calls up thyself to ape;
Comfort him, dear, with pardon sweet;
Cool his heart from its burning heat
With the water of life that laves the feet
Of the throne of God, and the holy street!

X. O God, he is but a living blot,
Yet he lives by thee--for if thou wast not,
They would vanish together, self-forgot,
He and his crime:--one breathing blown
From thy spirit on his would all atone,
Scatter the horror, and bring relief
In an amber dawn of holy grief!
God, give him sorrow; arise from within,
His primal being, deeper than sin!

XI. Why do I tremble, a creature at bay?
'Tis but a dream--I drive it away.
Back comes my breath, and my heart again
Pumps the red blood to my fainting brain
Released from the nightmare's nine-fold train:
God is in heaven--yes, everywhere,
And Love, the all-shining, will kill Despair!--
To the wall's blank eyeless space
I turn the picture's face.

XII. But why is the moon so bare, up there?
And why is she so white?
And why does the moon so stare, up there--
Strangely stare, out of the night?
Why stand up the poplars
That still way?
And why do those two of them
Start astray?
And out of the black why hangs the gray?
Why does it hang down so, I say,
Over that house, like a fringed pall
Where the dead goes by in a funeral?--
Soul of mine,
Thou the reason canst divine:
Into thee the moon doth stare
With pallid, terror-smitten air!
Thou, and the Horror lonely-stark,
Outcast of eternal dark,
Are in nature same and one,
And thy story is not done!
So let the picture face thee from the wall,
And let its white moon stare!

IN THE WINTER.

In the winter, flowers are springing;
In the winter, woods are green,
Where our banished birds are singing,
Where our summer sun is seen!
Our cold midnights are coeval
With an evening and a morn
Where the forest-gods hold revel,
And the spring is newly born!

While the earth is full of fighting,
While men rise and curse their day,
While the foolish strong are smiting,
And the foolish weak betray--
The true hearts beyond are growing,
The brave spirits work alone,
Where Love's summer-wind is blowing
In a truth-irradiate zone!

While we cannot shape our living
To the beauty of our skies,
While man wants and earth is giving--
Nature calls and man denies--
How the old worlds round Him gather
Where their Maker is their sun!
How the children know the Father
Where the will of God is done!

Daily woven with our story,
Sounding far above our strife,
Is a time-enclosing glory,
Is a space-absorbing life.
We can dream no dream Elysian,
There is no good thing might be,
But some angel has the vision,
But some human soul shall see!

Is thy strait horizon dreary?
Is thy foolish fancy chill?
Change the feet that have grown weary
For the wings that never will.
Burst the flesh, and live the spirit;
Haunt the beautiful and far;
Thou hast all things to inherit,
And a soul for every star.

CHRISTMAS-DAY, 1878.

I think I might be weary of this day
That comes inevitably every year,
The same when I was young and strong and gay,
The same when I am old and growing sere--
I should grow weary of it every year
But that thou comest to me every day.

I shall grow weary if thou every day
But come to me, Lord of eternal life;
I shall grow weary thus to watch and pray,
For ever out of labour into strife;
Take everlasting house with me, my life,
And I shall be new-born this Christmas-day.

Thou art the Eternal Son, and born no day,
But ever he the Father, thou the Son;
I am his child, but being born alway--
How long, O Lord, how long till it be done?
Be thou from endless years to years the Son--
And I thy brother, new-born every day.

THE NEW YEAR.

Be welcome, year! with corn and sickle come;
Make poor the body, but make rich the heart:
What man that bears his sheaves, gold-nodding, home,
Will heed the pain rubbed from his groaning cart!

Nor leave behind thy fears and holy shames,
Thy sorrows on the horizon hanging low--
Gray gathered fuel for the sunset-flames
When joyous in death's harvest-home we go.

TWO RONDELS.

I.

When, in the mid-sea of the night,
I waken at thy call, O Lord,
The first that troop my bark aboard
Are darksome imps that hate the light,
Whose tongues are arrows, eyes a blight--
Of wraths and cares a pirate horde--
Though on the mid-sea of the night
It was thy call that waked me, Lord.

Then I must to my arms and fight--
Catch up my shield and two-edged sword,

The words of him who is thy word--
Nor cease till they are put to flight;
Then in the mid-sea of the night
I turn and listen for thee, Lord.

II.

There comes no voice from thee, O Lord,
Across the mid-sea of the night!
I lift my voice and cry with might:
If thou keep silent, soon a horde
Of imps again will swarm aboard,
And I shall be in sorry plight
If no voice come from thee, my Lord,
Across the mid-sea of the night.

There comes no voice; I hear no word!
But in my soul dawns something bright:--
There is no sea, no foe to fight!
Thy heart and mine beat one accord:
I need no voice from thee, O Lord,
Across the mid-sea of the night.

RONDEL.

Heart, thou must learn to do without--
That is the riches of the poor,
Their liberty is to endure;
Wrap thou thine old cloak thee about,
And carol loud and carol stout;
Let thy rags fly, nor wish them fewer;
Thou too must learn to do without,
Must earn the riches of the poor!

Why should'st thou only wear no clout?
Thou only walk in love-ropes pure?
Why should thy step alone be sure?
Thou only free of fortune's flout?
Nay, nay! but learn to go without,
And so be humbly, richly poor.

SONG.

Lighter and sweeter
Let your song be;
And for sorrow--oh cheat her
With melody!

SMOKE.

Lord, I have laid my heart upon thy altar
But cannot get the wood to burn;
It hardly flares ere it begins to falter
And to the dark return.

Old sap, or night-fallen dew, makes damp the fuel;
In vain my breath would flame provoke;
Yet see--at every poor attempt's renewal
To thee ascends the smoke!

'Tis all I have--smoke, failure, foiled endeavour,
Coldness and doubt and palsied lack:
Such as I have I send thee!--perfect Giver,
Send thou thy lightning back.

TO A CERTAIN CRITIC.

Such guests as you, sir, were not in my mind
When I my homely dish with care designed;
'Twas certain humble souls I would have fed
Who do not turn from wholesome milk and bread:
You came, slow-trotting on the narrow way,
O'erturned the food, and trod it in the clay;
Then low with discoid nostrils sniffing curt,
Cried, "Sorry cook! why, what a mess of dirt!"

SONG.

She loves thee, loves thee not!
That, that is all, my heart.
Why should she take a part
In every selfish blot,
In every greedy spot
That now doth ache and smart
Because she loves thee not--
Not, not at all, poor heart!

Thou art no such dove-cot
Of virtues--no such chart
Of highways, though the dart
Of love be through thee shot!
Why should she not love not
Thee, poor, pinched, selfish heart?

A CRY.

Lord, hear my discontent: all blank I stand,
A mirror polished by thy hand;
Thy sun's beams flash and flame from me--
I cannot help it: here I stand, there he!
To one of them I cannot say,
Go, and on yonder water play;
Nor one poor ragged daisy can I fashion--
I do not make the words of this my limping passion!
If I should say, Now I will think a thought,
Lo, I must wait, unknowing
What thought in me is growing,
Until the thing to birth be brought!
Nor know I then what next will come
From out the gulf of silence dumb:
I am the door the thing will find
To pass into the general mind!
I cannot say _I think_--
I only stand upon the thought-well's brink:
From darkness to the sun the water bubbles up--
lift it in my cup.
Thou only thinkest--I am thought;
Me and my thought thou thinkest. Nought
Am I but as a fountain spout
From which thy water welleteth out.
Thou art the only one, the all in all.--
Yet when my soul on thee doth call
And thou dost answer out of everywhere,
I in thy allness have my perfect share.

FROM HOME.

Some men there are who cannot spare
A single tear until they feel
The last cold pressure, and the heel
Is stamped upon the outmost layer.

And, waking, some will sigh to think
The clouds have borrowed winter's wing,
Sad winter, when the grasses spring
No more about the fountain's brink.

And some would call me coward fool:
I lay a claim to better blood,
But yet a heap of idle mud
Hath power to make me sorrowful.

TO MY MOTHER EARTH.

O Earth, Earth, Earth,
I am dying for love of thee,
For thou hast given me birth,
And thy hands have tended me.

I would fall asleep on thy breast
When its swelling folds are bare,
When the thrush dreams of its nest
And the life of its joy in the air;

When thy life is a vanished ghost,
And the glory hath left thy waves,
When thine eye is blind with frost,
And the fog sits on the graves;

When the blasts are shivering about,
And the rain thy branches beats,
When the damps of death are out,
And the mourners are in the streets.

Oh my sleep should be deep
In the arms of thy swiftening motion,
And my dirge the mystic sweep
Of the winds that nurse the ocean.

And my eye would slowly ope
With the voice that awakens thee,
And runs like a glance of hope
Up through the quickening tree;

When the roots of the lonely fir
Are dipt in thy veining heat,
And thy countless atoms stir
With the gather of mossy feet;

When the sun's great censer swings
In the hands that always be,
And the mists from thy watery rings
Go up like dust from the sea;

When the midnight airs are assembling
With a gush in thy whispering halls,
And the leafy air is trembling
Like a stream before it falls.

Thy shadowy hand hath found me
On the drifts of the Godhead's will,
And thy dust hath risen around me
With a life that guards me still.

O Earth! I have caught from thine
The pulse of a mystic chase;

O Earth! I have drunk like wine
The life of thy swiftening race.

Wilt miss me, mother sweet,
A life in thy milky veins?
Wilt miss the sound of my feet
In the tramp that shakes thy plains

When the jaws of darkness rend,
And the vapours fold away,
And the sounds of life ascend
Like dust in the blinding day?

I would know thy silver strain
In the shouts of the starry crowd
When the souls of thy changing men
Rise up like an incense cloud.

I would know thy brightening lobes
And the lap of thy watery bars
Though space were choked with globes
And the night were blind with stars!

From the folds of my unknown place,
When my soul is glad and free,
I will slide by my God's sweet grace
And hang like a cloud on thee.

When the pale moon sits at night
By the brink of her shining well,
Laving the rings of her widening light
On the slopes of the weltering swell,

I will fall like a wind from the west
On the locks of thy prancing streams,
And sow the fields of thy rest
With handfuls of sweet young dreams.

When the sound of thy children's cry
Hath stricken thy gladness dumb,
I will kindle thine upward eye
With a laugh from the years that come.

Far above where the loud wind raves,
On a wing as still as snow
I will watch the grind of the curly waves
As they bite the coasts below;

When the shining ranks of the frost
Draw down on the glistening wold
In the mail of a fairy host,
And the earth is mossed with cold,

Till the plates that shine about
Close up with a filmy din,
Till the air is frozen out,
And the stars are frozen in.

I will often stoop to range
On the fields where my youth was spent,
And my feet shall smite the cliffs of change
With the rush of a steep descent;

And my glowing soul shall burn
With a love that knows no pall,
And my eye of worship turn
Upon him that fashioned all--

When the sounding waves of strife
Have died on the Godhead's sea,
And thy life is a purer life
That nurses a life in me.

THY HEART.

Make not of thy heart a casket,
Opening seldom, quick to close;
But of bread a wide-mouthed basket,
Or a cup that overflows.

O LORD, HOW HAPPY!

From the German of Dessler.

O Lord, how happy is the time
When in thy love I rest!
When from my weariness I climb
Even to thy tender breast!
The night of sorrow endeth there--
Thou art brighter than the sun;
And in thy pardon and thy care
The heaven of heaven is won.

Let the world call herself my foe,
Or let the world allure--
I care not for the world; I go
To this dear friend and sure.
And when life's fiercest storms are sent
Upon life's wildest sea,
My little bark is confident
Because it holds by thee.

When the law threatens endless death
Upon the dreadful hill,
Straightway from her consuming breath
My soul goeth higher still--
Goeth to Jesus, wounded, slain,
And maketh him her home,
Whence she will not go out again,
And where death cannot come.

I do not fear the wilderness
Where thou hast been before;
Nay rather will I daily press
After thee, near thee, more!
Thou art my food; on thee I lean,
Thou makest my heart sing;
And to thy heavenly pastures green
All thy dear flock dost bring.

And if the gate that opens there
Be dark to other men,
It is not dark to those who share
The heart of Jesus then:
That is not losing much of life
Which is not losing thee,
Who art as present in the strife
As in the victory.

Therefore how happy is the time
When in thy love I rest!
When from my weariness I climb
Even to thy tender breast!
The night of sorrow endeth there--
Thou art brighter than the sun!
And in thy pardon and thy care
The heaven of heaven is won!

NO SIGN.

O Lord, if on the wind, at cool of day,
I heard one whispered word of mighty grace;
If through the darkness, as in bed I lay,
But once had come a hand upon my face;

If but one sign that might not be mistook
Had ever been, since first thy face I sought,
I should not now be doubting o'er a book,
But serving thee with burning heart and thought.

So dreams that heart. But to my heart I say,
Turning my face to front the dark and wind:
Such signs had only barred anew his way

Into thee, longing heart, thee, wildered mind.

They asked the very Way, where lies the way?
The very Son, where is the Father's face?
How he could show himself, if not in clay,
Who was the lord of spirit, form, and space!

My being, Lord, will nevermore be whole
Until thou come behind mine ears and eyes,
Enter and fill the temple of my soul
With perfect contact--such a sweet surprise,

Such presence as, before it met the view,
The prophet-fancy could not once foresee,
Though every corner of the temple knew
By very emptiness its need of thee.

When I keep _all_ thy words, no favoured some,
Heedless of worldly winds or judgment's tide,
Then, Jesus, thou wilt with thy father come--
Oh, ended prayers!--and in my soul abide.

Ah, long delay! ah, cunning, creeping sin!
I shall but fail, and cease at length to try:
O Jesus, though thou wilt not yet come in,
Knock at my window as thou passest by!

NOVEMBER, 1851.

What dost thou here, O soul,
Beyond thy own control,
Under the strange wild sky?
O stars, reach down your hands,
And clasp me in your silver bands,
I tremble with this mystery!--
Flung hither by a chance
Of restless circumstance,
Thou art but here, and wast not sent;
Yet once more mayest thou draw
By thy own mystic law
To the centre of thy wonderment.

Why wilt thou stop and start?
Draw nearer, oh my heart,
And I will question thee most wistfully;
Gather thy last clear resolution
To look upon thy dissolution.

The great God's life throbs far and free,
And thou art but a spark
Known only in thy dark,

Or a foam-fleck upon the awful ocean,
Thyself thy slender dignity,
Thy own thy vexing mystery,
In the vast change that is not change but motion.

'Tis not so hard as it would seem;
Thy life is but a dream--
And yet thou hast some thoughts about the past;
Let go, let go thy memories,
They are not things but wandering cries--
Wave them each one a long farewell at last:
I hear thee say--"Take them, O tide,
And I will turn aside,
Gazing with heedlessness, nay, even with laughter!
Bind me, ye winds and storms,
Among the things that once had forms,
And carry me clean out of sight thereafter!"

Thou hast lived long enough
To know thy own weak stuff,
Laughing thy fondest joys to utter scorn;
Give up the idle strife--
It is but mockery of life;
The fates had need of thee and thou wast born!
They are, in sooth, but thou shalt die.
O wandering spark! O homeless cry!
O empty will, still lacking self-intent!
Look up among the autumn trees:
The ripened fruits fall through the breeze,
And they will shake thee even like these
Into the lap of an Accomplishment!

Thou hadst a faith, and voices said:--
"Doubt not _that_ truth, but bend thy head
Unto the God who drew thee from the night:"
Thou liftedst up thy eyes--and, lo!
A host of voices answered--"No;
A thousand things as good have seen the light!"
Look how the swarms arise
From every clod before thy eyes!
Are thine the only hopes that fade and fall
When to the centre of its action
One purpose draws each separate fraction,
And nothing but effects are left at all?
Aha, thy faith! what is thy faith?
The sleep that waits on coming death--
A blind delirious swoon that follows pain.
"True to thy nature!"--well! right well!
But what that nature is thou canst not tell--
It has a thousand voices in thy brain.
Danced all the leaflets to and fro?
--Thy feet have trod them long ago!
Sprung the glad music up the blue?

--The hawk hath cut the song in two.
All the mountains crumble,
All the forests fall,
All thy brethren stumble,
And rise no more at all!
In the dim woods there is a sound
When the winds begin to moan;
It is not of joy or yet of mirth,
But the mournful cry of our mother Earth,
As she calleth back her own.
Through the rosy air to-night
The living creatures play
Up and down through the rich faint light--
None so happy as they!
But the blast is here, and noises fall
Like the sound of steps in a ruined hall,
An icy touch is upon them all,
And they sicken and fade away.

The child awoke with an eye of gladness,
With a light on his head and a matchless grace,
And laughed at the passing shades of sadness
That chased the smiles on his mother's face;
And life with its lightsome load of youth
Swam like a boat on a shining lake--
Freighted with hopes enough, in sooth,
But he lived to trample on joy and truth,
And change his crown for a murder-stake!

Oh, a ruddy light went through the room,
Till the dark ran out to his mother Night!
And that little chamber showed through the gloom
Like a Noah's ark with its nest of light!
Right glad was the maiden there, I wis,
With the youth that held her hand in his!
Oh, sweet were the words that went and came
Through the light and shade of the leaping flame
That glowed on the cheerful faces!
So human the speech, so sunny and kind,
That the darkness danced on the wall behind,
And even the wail of the winter wind
Sang sweet through the window-cases!

But a mournful wail crept round and round,
And a voice cried:--"Come!" with a dreary sound,
And the circle wider grew;
The light flame sank, and sorrow fell
On the faces of those that loved so well;
Darker and wilder grew the tone;
Fainter and fainter the faces shone;
The wild night clasped them, and they were gone--
And thou art passing too!

Lo, the morning slowly springs
Like a meek white babe from the womb of night!
One golden planet sits and stings
The shifting gloom with his point of light!
Lo, the sun on its throne of flame!
--Wouldst thou climb and win a crown?
Oh, many a heart that pants for the same
Falls to the earth ere he goes down!
Thy heart is a flower with an open cup--
Sit and watch, if it pleaseth thee,
Till the melting twilight fill it up
With a crystal of tender sympathy;
So, gently will it tremble
The silent midnight through,
And flocks of stars assemble
By turns in its depths of dew;--
But look! oh, look again!
After the driving wind and rain!
When the day is up and the sun is strong,
And the voices of men are loud and long,
When the flower hath slunk to its rest again,
And love is lost in the strife of men!

Let the morning break with thoughts of love,
And the evening fall with dreams of bliss--
So vainly panteth the prisoned dove
For the depths of her sweet wilderness;
So stoops the eagle in his pride
From his rocky nest ere the bow is bent;
So sleeps the deer on the mountain-side
Ere the howling pack hath caught the scent!

The fire climbs high till its work is done;
The stalk falls down when the flower is gone;
And the stars of heaven when their course is run
Melt silently away!
There was a footfall on the snow,
A line of light on the ocean-flow,
And a billow's dash on the rocks below
That stand by the wintry bay:--
The snow was gone on the coming night;
Another wave arose in his might,
Uplifted his foaming breast of white,
And died like the rest for aye!

Oh, the stars were bright! and thyself in thee
Yearned for an immortality!
And the thoughts that drew from thy busy brain
Clasped the worlds like an endless chain--
When a moon arose, and her moving chime
Smote on thy soul, like a word in time,
Or a breathless wish, or a thought in rime,
And the truth that looked so gloomy and high

Leapt to thy arms with a joyful cry!
But what wert thou when a soulless Cause
Opened the book of its barren laws,
And thy spirit that was so glad and free
Was caught in the gin of necessity,
And a howl arose from the strife of things
Vexing each other with scorpion stings?
What wert thou but an orphan child
Thrust from the door when the night was wild?
Or a sailor on the toiling main
Looking blindly up through the wind and rain
As the hull of the vessel fell in twain!

Seals are on the book of fate,
Hands may not unbind it;
Eyes may search for truth till late,
But will never find it--!
Rising on the brow of night
Like a portent of dismay,
As the worlds in wild affright
Track it on its direful way;
Resting like a rainbow bar
Where the curve and level meet,
As the children chase it far
O'er the sands with blistered feet;
Sadly through the mist of ages
Gazing on this life of fear,
Doubtful shining on its pages,
Only seen to disappear!
Sit thee by the sounding shore
--Winds and waves of human breath!--
Learn a lesson from their roar,
Swelling, bursting evermore:
Live thy life and die thy death!
Die not like the writhing worm,
Rise and win thy highest stake;
Better perish in the storm
Than sit rotting on the lake!
Triumph in thy present youth,
Pulse of fire and heart of glee;
Leap at once into the truth,
If there is a truth for thee.

Shapeless thoughts and dull opinions,
Slow distinctions and degrees,--
Vex not thou thy weary pinions
With such leaden weights as these--
Through this mystic jurisdiction
Reaching out a hand by chance,
Resting on a dull conviction
Whetted but by ignorance;
Living ever to behold
Mournful eyes that watch and weep;

Spirit suns that flashed in gold
Failing from the vasty deep;
Starry lights that glowed like Truth
Gazing with unnumbered eyes,
Melting from the skies of youth,
Swallowed up of mysteries;
Cords of love that sweetly bound thee;
Faded writing on thy brow;
Presences that came around thee;
Hands of faith that fail thee now!

Groping hands will ever find thee
In the night with loads of chains!
Lift thy fetters and unbind thee,
Cast thee on the midnight plains:
Shapes of vision all-providing--
Famished cheeks and hungry cries!
Sound of crystal waters sliding--
Thirsty lips and bloodshot eyes!
Empty forms that send no gleaming
Through the mystery of this strife!--
Oh, in such a life of seeming,
Death were worth an endless life!

Hark the trumpet of the ocean
Where glad lands were wont to be!
Many voices of commotion
Break in tumult over thee!
Lo, they climb the frowning ages,
Marching o'er their level lands!
Far behind the strife that rages
Silence sits with clasped hands;
Undivided Purpose, freeing
His own steps from hindrances,
Sending out great floods of being,
Bathes thy steps in silentness.
Sit thee down in mirth and laughter--
One there is that waits for thee;
If there is a true hereafter
He will lend thee eyes to see.

Like a snowflake gently falling
On a quiet fountain,
Or a weary echo calling
From a distant mountain,
Drop thy hands in peace,--
Fail--falter--cease.

__OF ONE WHO DIED IN SPRING__

Loosener of springs, he died by thee!

Softness, not hardness, sent him home;
He loved thee--and thou mad'st him free
Of all the place thou comest from!

AN AUTUMN SONG.

Are the leaves falling round about
The churchyard on the hill?
Is the glow of autumn going out?
Is that the winter chill?
And yet through winter's noise, no doubt
The graves are very still!

Are the woods empty, voiceless, bare?
On sodden leaves do you tread?
Is nothing left of all those fair?
Is the whole summer fled?
Well, so from this unwholesome air
Have gone away these dead!

The seasons pierce me; like a leaf
I feel the autumn blow,
And tremble between nature's grief
And the silent death below.
O Summer, thou art very brief!
Where do these exiles go?

Gilesgate, Durham.

TRIOLET.

Few in joy's sweet riot
Able are to listen:
Thou, to make me quiet,
Quenchest the sweet riot,
Tak'st away my diet,
Puttest me in prison--
Quenchest joy's sweet riot
That the heart may listen.

I SEE THEE NOT.

Yes, Master, when thou comest thou shalt find
A little faith on earth, if I am here!
Thou know'st how oft I turn to thee my mind.
How sad I wait until thy face appear!

Hast thou not ploughed my thorny ground full sore,
And from it gathered many stones and sherds?
Plough, plough and harrow till it needs no more--
Then sow thy mustard-seed, and send thy birds.

I love thee, Lord; and if I yield to fears,
Nor trust with triumph that pale doubt defies,
Remember, Lord, 'tis nigh two thousand years,
And I have never seen thee with mine eyes!

And when I lift them from the wondrous tale,
See, all about me hath so strange a show!
Is that thy river running down the vale?
Is that thy wind that through the pines doth blow?

Could'st thou right verily appear again,
The same who walked the paths of Palestine,
And here in England teach thy trusting men
In church and field and house, with word and sign?

Here are but lilies, sparrows, and the rest!
My hands on some dear proof would light and stay!
But my heart sees John leaning on thy breast,
And sends them forth to do what thou dost say.

A BROKEN PRAYER.

O Lord, my God, how long
Shall my poor heart pant for a boundless joy?
How long, O mighty Spirit, shall I hear
The murmur of Truth's crystal waters slide
From the deep caverns of their endless being,
But my lips taste not, and the grosser air
Choke each pure inspiration of thy will?

I am a denseness 'twixt me and the light;
I cannot round myself; my purest thought,
Ere it is thought, hath caught the taint of earth,
And mocked me with hard thoughts beyond my will.

I would be a wind
Whose smallest atom is a viewless wing,
All busy with the pulsing life that throbs
To do thy bidding; yea, or the meanest thing
That has relation to a changeless truth,
Could I but be instinct with thee--each thought
The lightning of a pure intelligence,
And every act as the loud thunder-clap
Of currents warring for a vacuum.

Lord, clothe me with thy truth as with a robe;

Purge me with sorrow; I will bend my head
And let the nations of thy waves pass over,
Bathing me in thy consecrated strength;
And let thy many-voiced and silver winds
Pass through my frame with their clear influence,
O save me; I am blind; lo, thwarting shapes
Wall up the void before, and thrusting out
Lean arms of unshaped expectation, beckon
Down to the night of all unholy thoughts.

Oh, when at midnight one of thy strong angels
Stems back the waves of earthly influence
That shape unsteady continents around me,
And they draw off with the devouring gush
Of exile billows that have found a home,
Leaving me islanded on unseen points,
Hanging 'twixt thee and chaos--I have seen
Unholy shapes lop off my shining thoughts,
And they have lent me leathern wings of fear,
Of baffled pride and harrowing distrust;
And Godhead, with its crown of many stars,
Its pinnacles of flaming holiness,
And voice of leaves in the green summer-time,
Has seemed the shadowed image of a self!
Then my soul blackened; and I rose to find
And grasp my doom, and cleave the arching deeps
Of desolation.

O Lord, my soul is a forgotten well
Clad round with its own rank luxuriance;
A fountain a kind sunbeam searches for,
Sinking the lustre of its arrowy finger
Through the long grass its own strange virtue
Hath blinded up its crystal eye withal:
Make me a broad strong river coming down
With shouts from its high hills, whose rocky hearts
Throb forth the joy of their stability
In watery pulses from their inmost deeps;
And I shall be a vein upon thy world,
Circling perpetual from the parent deep.

Most mighty One,
Confirm and multiply my thoughts of good;
Help me to wall each sacred treasure round
With the firm battlements of special action.
Alas, my holy happy thoughts of thee
Make not perpetual nest within my soul,
But like strange birds of dazzling colours stoop
The trailing glories of their sunward speed
For one glad moment, filling my blasted boughs
With the sunshine of their wings. Make me a forest
Of gladdest life wherein perpetual spring
Lifts up her leafy tresses in the wind.

Lo, now I see
Thy trembling starlight sit among my pines,
And thy young moon slide down my arching boughs
With a soft sound of restless eloquence!
And I can feel a joy as when thy hosts
Of trampling winds, gathering in maddened bands,
Roar upward through the blue and flashing day
Round my still depths of uncleft solitude.

Hear me, O Lord,
When the black night draws down upon my soul,
And voices of temptation darken down
The misty wind, slamming thy starry doors
With bitter jests:--"Thou fool!" they seem to say,
"Thou hast no seed of goodness in thee; all
Thy nature hath been stung right through and through;
Thy sin hath blasted thee and made thee old;
Thou hadst a will, but thou hast killed it dead,
And with the fulsome garniture of life
Built out the loathsome corpse; thou art a child
Of night and death, even lower than a worm;
Gather the skirts up of thy shadowy self,
And with what resolution thou hast left
Fall on the damned spikes of doom!"

Oh, take me like a child,
If thou hast made me for thyself, my God,
And lead me up thy hills. I shall not fear,
So thou wilt make me pure, and beat back sin
With the terrors of thine eye: it fears me not
As once it might have feared thine own good image,
But lays bold siege at my heart's doors.

Oh, I have seen a thing of beauty stand
In the young moonlight of its upward thoughts,
And the old earth came round it with its gifts
Of gladness, whispering leaves, and odorous plants,
Until its large and spiritual eye
Burned with intensest love: my God, I could
Have watched it evermore with Argus-eyes,
Lest when the noontide of the summer's sun
Let down the tented sunlight on the plain,
His flaming beams should scorch my darling flower;
And through the fruitless nights of leaden gloom,
Of plashing rains, and knotted winds of cold,
Yea, when thy lightnings ran across the sky,
And the loud stumbling blasts fell from the hills
Upon the mounds of death, I could have watched
Guarding such beauty like another life!
But, O my God, it changed!--
Yet methinks I know not if it was not !!
Its beauty turned to ghastly loathsomeness!
Then a hand spurned me backwards from the clouds,

And with the gather of a mighty whirlwind,
Drew in the glittering gifts of life.

How long, O Lord, how long?
I am a man lost in a rocky place!
Lo, all thy echoes smite me with confusion
Of varied speech,--the cry of vanished Life
Rolled upon nations' sighs--of hearts uplifted
Against despair--the stifled sounds of Woe
Sitting perpetual by its grey cold well--
Or wasted Toil climbing its endless hills
With quickening gasps--or the thin winds of Joy
That beat about the voices of the crowd!

Lord, hast thou sent
Thy moons to mock us with perpetual hope?
Lighted within our breasts the love of love
To make us ripen for despair, my God?

Oh, dost thou hold each individual soul
Strung clear upon thy flaming rods of purpose?
Or does thine inextinguishable will
Stand on the steeps of night with lifted hand
Filling the yawning wells of monstrous space
With mixing thought--drinking up single life
As in a cup? and from the rending folds
Of glimmering purpose, do all thy navied stars
Slide through the gloom with mystic melody,
Like wishes on a brow? Oh, is my soul,
Hung like a dewdrop in thy grassy ways,
Drawn up again into the rack of change
Even through the lustre which created it?
--O mighty one, thou wilt not smite me through
With scorching wrath, because my spirit stands
Bewildered in thy circling mysteries!

Oh lift the burdened gloom that chokes my soul
With dews of darkness; smite the lean winds of death
That run with howls around the ruined temples,
Blowing the souls of men about like leaves.

Lo, the broad life-lands widen overhead,
Star-galaxies arise like drifting snow,
And happy life goes whitening down the stream
Of boundless action, whilst my fettered soul
Sits, as a captive in a noisome dungeon
Watches the pulses of his withered heart
Lave out the sparkling minutes of his life
On the idle flags!

Come in the glory of thine excellence,
Rive the dense gloom with wedges of clear light,
And let the shimmer of thy chariot wheels

Burn through the cracks of night! So slowly, Lord,
To lift myself to thee with hands of toil,
Climbing the slippery cliffs of unheard prayer!
Lift up a hand among my idle days--
One beckoning finger: I will cast aside
The clogs of earthly circumstance and run
Up the broad highways where the countless worlds
Sit ripening in the summer of thy love.
Send a clear meaning sparkling through the years;
Burst all the prison-doors, and make men's hearts
Gush up like fountains with thy melody;
Brighten the hollow eyes; fill with life's fruits
The hands that grope and scramble down the wastes;
And let the ghastly troops of withered ones
Come shining o'er the mountains of thy love.

Lord, thy strange mysteries come thickening down
Upon my head like snowflakes, shutting out
The happy upper fields with chilly vapour.
Shall I content my soul with a weak sense
Of safety? or feed my ravenous hunger with
Sore purged hopes, that are not hopes but fears
Clad in white raiment?

The creeds lie in the hollow of men's hearts
Like festering pools glassing their own corruption;
The slimy eyes stare up with dull approval,
And answer not when thy bright starry feet
Move on the watery floors: oh, shake men's souls
Together like the gathering of all oceans
Rent from their hidden chambers, till the waves
Lift up their million voices of high joy
Along the echoing cliffs! come thus, O Lord,
With nightly gifts of stars, and lay a hand
Of mighty peace upon the quivering flood.

O wilt thou hear me when I cry to thee?
I am a child lost in a mighty forest;
The air is thick with voices, and strange hands
Reach through the dusk, and pluck me by the skirts.
There is a voice which sounds like words from home,
But, as I stumble on to reach it, seems
To leap from rock to rock: oh, if it is
Willing obliquity of sense, descend,
Heal all my wanderings, take me by the hand,
And lead me homeward through the shadows.
Let me not by my wilful acts of pride
Block up the windows of thy truth, and grow
A wasted, withered thing, that stumbles on
Down to the grave with folded hands of sloth
And leaden confidence.

COME DOWN.

Still am I haunting
Thy door with my prayers;
Still they are panting
Up thy steep stairs!
Wouldst thou not rather
Come down to my heart,
And there, O my Father,
Be what thou art?

A MOOD.

My thoughts are like fire-flies, pulsing in moonlight;
My heart like a silver cup, filled with red wine;
My soul a pale gleaming horizon, whence soon light
Will flood the gold earth with a torrent divine.

THE CARPENTER.

O Lord, at Joseph's humble bench
Thy hands did handle saw and plane;
Thy hammer nails did drive and clench,
Avoiding knot and humouring grain.

That thou didst seem, thou wast indeed,
In sport thy tools thou didst not use;
Nor, helping hind's or fisher's need,
The labourer's hire, too nice, refuse.

Lord, might I be but as a saw,
A plane, a chisel, in thy hand!--
No, Lord! I take it back in awe,
Such prayer for me is far too grand.

I pray, O Master, let me lie,
As on thy bench the favoured wood;
Thy saw, thy plane, thy chisel ply,
And work me into something good.

No, no; ambition, holy-high,
Urges for more than both to pray:
Come in, O gracious Force, I cry--
O workman, share my shed of clay.

Then I, at bench, or desk, or oar,
With knife or needle, voice or pen,
As thou in Nazareth of yore,

Shall do the Father's will again.

Thus fashioning a workman rare,
O Master, this shall be thy fee:
Home to thy father thou shall bear
Another child made like to thee.

THE OLD GARDEN.

I.

I stood in an ancient garden
With high red walls around;
Over them grey and green lichens
In shadowy arabesque wound.

The topmost climbing blossoms
On fields kine-haunted looked out;
But within were shelter and shadow,
With daintiest odours about.

There were alleys and lurking arbours,
Deep glooms into which to dive.
The lawns were as soft as fleeces,
Of daisies I counted but five.

The sun-dial was so aged
It had gathered a thoughtful grace;
'Twas the round-about of the shadow
That so had furrowed its face.

The flowers were all of the oldest
That ever in garden sprung;
Red, and blood-red, and dark purple
The rose-lamps flaming hung.

Along the borders fringed
With broad thick edges of box
Stood foxgloves and gorgeous poppies
And great-eyed hollyhocks.

There were junipers trimmed into castles,
And ash-trees bowed into tents;
For the garden, though ancient and pensive,
Still wore quaint ornaments.

It was all so stately fantastic
Its old wind hardly would stir;
Young Spring, when she merrily entered,
Scarce felt it a place for her.

II.

I stood in the summer morning
Under a cavernous yew;
The sun was gently climbing,
And the scents rose after the dew.

I saw the wise old mansion,
Like a cow in the noon-day heat,
Stand in a lake of shadows
That rippled about its feet.

Its windows were oriel and latticed,
Lowly and wide and fair;
And its chimneys like clustered pillars
Stood up in the thin blue air.

White doves, like the thoughts of a lady,
Haunted it all about;
With a train of green and blue comets
The peacock went marching stout.

The birds in the trees were singing
A song as old as the world,
Of love and green leaves and sunshine,
And winter folded and furled.

They sang that never was sadness
But it melted and passed away;
They sang that never was darkness
But in came the conquering day.

And I knew that a maiden somewhere,
In a low oak-panelled room,
In a nimbus of shining garments,
An aureole of white-browed bloom,

Looked out on the garden dreamy,
And knew not it was old;
Looked past the gray and the sombre,
Saw but the green and the gold,

III.

I stood in the gathering twilight,
In a gently blowing wind;
Then the house looked half uneasy,
Like one that was left behind.

The roses had lost their redness,
And cold the grass had grown;
At roost were the pigeons and peacock,
The sun-dial seemed a head-stone.

The world by the gathering twilight
In a gauzy dusk was clad;
Something went into my spirit
And made me a little sad.

Grew and gathered the twilight,
It filled my heart and brain;
The sadness grew more than sadness,
It turned to a gentle pain.

Browned and brooded the twilight,
Pervaded, absorbed the calm,
Till it seemed for some human sorrows
There could not be any balm.

IV.

Then I knew that, up a staircase
Which untrod will yet creak and shake,
Deep in a distant chamber
A ghost was coming awake--

In the growing darkness growing,
Growing till her eyes appear
Like spots of a deeper twilight,
But more transparent clear:

Thin as hot air up-trembling,
Thin as sun-molten crape,
An ethereal shadow of something
Is taking a certain shape;

A shape whose hands hang listless,
Let hang its disordered hair;
A shape whose bosom is heaving
But draws not in the air.

And I know, what time the moonlight
On her nest of shadows will sit,
Out on the dim lawn gliding
That shadowy shadow will flit.

V.

The moon is dreaming upward
From a sea of cloud and gleam;
She looks as if she had seen me
Never but in a dream.

Down the stair I know she is coming,
Bare-footed, lifting her train;
It creaks not--she hears it creaking

Where once there was a brain.

Out at yon side-door she's coming,
With a timid glance right and left;
Her look is hopeless yet eager,
The look of a heart bereft.

Across the lawn she is flitting,
Her thin gown feels the wind;
Are her white feet bending the grasses?
Her hair is lifted behind!

VI.

Shall I stay to look on her nearer?
Would she start and vanish away?
Oh, no, she will never see me,
Stand I near as I may!

It is not this wind she is feeling,
Not this cool grass below;
'Tis the wind and the grass of an evening
A hundred years ago.

She sees no roses darkling,
No stately hollyhocks dim;
She is only thinking and dreaming
The garden, the night, and him,

The unlit windows behind her,
The timeless dial-stone,
The trees, and the moon, and the shadows
A hundred years ago!

'Tis a night for a ghostly lover
To haunt the best-loved spot:
Is he come in his dreams to this garden?
I gaze, but I see him not.

VII.

I will not look on her nearer,
My heart would be torn in twain;
From my eyes the garden would vanish
In the falling of their rain.

I will not look on a sorrow
That darkens into despair,
On the surge of a heart that cannot
Yet cannot cease to bear.

My soul to hers would be calling:
She would hear no word it said!

If I cried aloud in the stillness
She would never turn her head!

She is dreaming the sky above her,
She is dreaming the earth below:--
This night she lost her lover
A hundred years ago.

A NOONDAY MELODY.

Everything goes to its rest;
The hills are asleep in the noon;
And life is as still in its nest
As the moon when she looks on a moon
In the depth of a calm river's breast
As it steals through a midnight in June.

The streams have forgotten the sea
In the dream of their musical sound;
The sunlight is thick on the tree,
And the shadows lie warm on the ground,--
So still, you may watch them and see
Every breath that awakens around.

The churchyard lies still in the heat,
With its handful of mouldering bone,
As still as the long stalk of wheat
In the shadow that sits by the stone,
As still as the grass at my feet
When I walk in the meadows alone.

The waves are asleep on the main,
And the ships are asleep on the wave;
And the thoughts are as still in my brain
As the echo that sleeps in the cave;
All rest from their labour and pain--
Then why should not I in my grave?

WHO LIGHTS THE FIRE?

Who lights the fire--that forth so gracefully
And freely frolicketh the fairy smoke?
Some pretty one who never felt the yoke--
Glad girl, or maiden more sedate than she.

Pedant it cannot, villain cannot be!
Some genius, may-be, his own symbol woke;
But puritan, nor rogue in virtue's cloke,
Nor kitchen-maid has done it certainly!

Ha, ha! you cannot find the lighter out
For all the blue smoke's pantomimic gesture--
His name or nature, sex or age or vesture!
The fire was lit by human care, no doubt--
But now the smoke is Nature's tributary,
Dancing 'twixt man and nothing like a fairy.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?

Who would have thought that even an idle song
Were such a holy and celestial thing
That wickedness and envy cannot sing--
That music for no moment lives with wrong?
I know this, for a very grievous throng,
Dark thoughts, low wishes, round my bosom cling,
And, underneath, the hidden holy spring
Stagnates because of their enchantment strong.

Blow, breath of heaven, on all this poison blow!
And, heart, glow upward to this gracious breath!
Between them, vanish, mist of sin and death,
And let the life of life within me flow!
Love is the green earth, the celestial air,
And music runs like dews and rivers there!

ON A DECEMBER DAY.

I.

This is the sweetness of an April day;
The softness of the spring is on the face
Of the old year. She has no natural grace,
But something comes to her from far away

Out of the Past, and on her old decay
The beauty of her childhood you can trace.--
And yet she moveth with a stormy pace,
And goeth quickly.--Stay, old year, oh, stay!

We do not like new friends, we love the old;
With young, fierce, hopeful hearts we ill agree;
But thou art patient, stagnant, calm, and cold,
And not like that new year that is to be;--
Life, promise, love, her eyes may fill, fair child!
We know the past, and will not be beguiled.

II.

Yet the free heart will not be captive long;
And if she changes often, she is free.
But if she changes: One has mastery
Who makes the joy the last in every song.
And so to-day I blessed the breezes strong
That swept the blue; I blessed the breezes free
That rolled wet leaves like rivers shiningly;
I blessed the purple woods I stood among.

"And yet the spring is better!" Bitterness
Came with the words, but did not stay with them.
"Accomplishment and promise! field and stem
New green fresh growing in a fragrant dress!
And we behind with death and memory!"
--Nay, prophet-spring! but I will follow thee.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1850.

Beautiful stories wed with lovely days
Like words and music:--what shall be the tale
Of love and nobleness that might avail
To express in action what this sweetness says--

The sweetness of a day of airs and rays
That are strange glories on the winter pale?
Alas, O beauty, all my fancies fail!
I cannot tell a story in thy praise!

Thou hast, thou hast one--set, and sure to chime
With thee, as with the days of "winter wild;"
For Joy like Sorrow loves his blessed feet
Who shone from Heaven on Earth this Christmas-time
A Brother and a Saviour, Mary's child!--
And so, fair day, thou _hast_ thy story sweet.

TO A FEBRUARY PRIMROSE.

I know not what among the grass thou art,
Thy nature, nor thy substance, fairest flower,
Nor what to other eyes thou hast of power
To send thine image through them to the heart;
But when I push the frosty leaves apart
And see thee hiding in thy wintry bower
Thou growest up within me from that hour,
And through the snow I with the spring depart.

I have no words. But fragrant is the breath,
Pale beauty, of thy second life within.
There is a wind that cometh for thy death,

But thou a life immortal dost begin,
Where in one soul, which is thy heaven, shall dwell
Thy spirit, beautiful Unspeakable!

IN FEBRUARY.

Now in the dark of February rains,
Poor lovers of the sunshine, spring is born,
The earthy fields are full of hidden corn,
And March's violets bud along the lanes;

Therefore with joy believe in what remains.
And thou who dost not feel them, do not scorn
Our early songs for winter overworn,
And faith in God's handwriting on the plains.

"Hope" writes he, "Love" in the first violet,
"Joy," even from Heaven, in songs and winds and trees;
And having caught the happy words in these
While Nature labours with the letters yet,
Spring cannot cheat us, though her _hopes_ be broken,
Nor leave us, for we know what God hath spoken.

THE TRUE.

I envy the tree-tops that shake so high
In winds that fill them full of heavenly airs;
I envy every little cloud that shares
With unseen angels evening in the sky;
I envy most the youngest stars that lie
Sky-nested, and the loving heaven that bears,
And night that makes strong worlds of them unawares;
And all God's other beautiful and nigh!

Nay, nay, I envy not! And these are dreams,
Fancies and images of real heaven!
My longings, all my longing prayers are given
For that which is, and not for that which seems.
Draw me, O Lord, to thy true heaven above,
The Heaven of thy Thought, thy Rest, thy Love.

THE DWELLERS THEREIN.

Down a warm alley, early in the year,
Among the woods, with all the sunshine in
And all the winds outside it, I begin
To think that something gracious will appear,

If anything of grace inhabit here,
Or there be friendship in the woods to win.
Might one but find companions more akin
To trees and grass and happy daylight clear,
And in this wood spend one long hour at home!
The fairies do not love so bright a place,
And angels to the forest never come,
But I have dreamed of some harmonious race,
The kindred of the shapes that haunt the shore
Of Music's flow and flow for evermore.

AUTUMN'S GOLD

Along the tops of all the yellow trees,
The golden-yellow trees, the sunshine lies;
And where the leaves are gone, long rays surprise
Lone depths of thicket with their brightnesses;
And through the woods, all waste of many a breeze,
Cometh more joy of light for Poet's eyes--
Green fields lying yellow underneath the skies,
And shining houses and blue distances.

By the roadside, like rocks of golden ore
That make the western river-beds so bright,
The briar and the furze are all alight!
Perhaps the year will be so fair no more,
But now the fallen, falling leaves are gay,
And autumn old has shone into a Day!

PUNISHMENT

Mourner, that dost deserve thy mournfulness,
Call thyself punished, call the earth thy hell;
Say, "God is angry, and I earned it well--
I would not have him smile on wickedness:"

Say this, and straightway all thy grief grows less:--
"God rules at least, I find as prophets tell,
And proves it in this prison!"--then thy cell
Smiles with an unsuspected loveliness.

--"A prison--and yet from door and window-bar
I catch a thousand breaths of his sweet air!
Even to me his days and nights are fair!
He shows me many a flower and many a star!
And though I mourn and he is very far,
He does not kill the hope that reaches there!"

SHEW US THE FATHER.

"Shew us the Father." Chiming stars of space,
And lives that fit the worlds, and means and powers,
A Thought that holds them up reveal to ours--
A Wisdom we have been made wise to trace.
And, looking out from sweetest Nature's face,
From sunsets, moonlights, rivers, hills, and flowers,
Infinite love and beauty, all the hours,
Woo men that love them with divinest grace;
And to the depths of all the answering soul
High Justice speaks, and calls the world her own;
And yet we long, and yet we have not known
The very Father's face who means the whole!
Shew us the Father! Nature, conscience, love
Revealed in beauty, is there One above?

THE PINAFORE.

When peevish flaws his soul have stirred
To fretful tears for crossed desires,
Obedient to his mother's word
My child to banishment retires.

As disappears the moon, when wind
Heaps miles of mist her visage o'er,
So vanisheth his face behind
The cloud of his white pinafore.

I cannot then come near my child--
A gulf between of gainful loss;
He to the infinite exiled--
I waiting, for I cannot cross.

Ah then, what wonder, passing show,
The Isis-veil behind it brings--
Like that self-coffined creatures know,
Remembering legs, foreseeing wings!

Mysterious moment! When or how
Is the bewildering change begun?
Hid in far deeps the awful now
When turns his being to the sun!

A light goes up behind his eyes,
A still small voice behind his ears;
A listing wind about him sighs,
And lo the inner landscape clears!

Hid by that screen, a wondrous shine

Is gathering for a sweet surprise;
As Moses grew, in dark divine,
Too radiant for his people's eyes.

For when the garment sinks again,
Outbeams a brow of heavenly wile,
Clear as a morning after rain,
And sunny with a perfect smile.

Oh, would that I the secret knew
Of hiding from my evil part,
And turning to the lovely true
The open windows of my heart!

Lord, in thy skirt, love's tender gaol,
Hide thou my selfish heart's disgrace;
Fill me with light, and then unveil
To friend and foe a friendly face.

THE PRISM.

I.

A pool of broken sunbeams lay
Upon the passage-floor,
Radiant and rich, profound and gay
As ever diamond bore.

Small, flitting hands a handkerchief
Spread like a cunning trap:
Prone lay the gorgeous jewel-sheaf
In the glory-gleaner's lap!

Deftly she folded up the prize,
With lovely avarice;
Like one whom having had made wise,
She bore it off in bliss.

But ah, when for her prisoned gems
She peeped, to prove them there,
No glories broken from their stems
Lay in the kerchief bare!

For still, outside the nursery door,
The bright persistency,
A molten diadem on the floor,
Lay burning wondrously.

II.

How oft have I laid fold from fold

And peered into my mind--
To see of all the purple and gold
Not one gleam left behind!

The best of gifts will not be stored:
The manna of yesterday
Has filled no sacred miser-hoard
To keep new need away.

Thy grace, O Lord, it is thyself;
Thy presence is thy light;
I cannot lay it on my shelf,
Or take it from thy sight.

For daily bread we daily pray--
The want still breeds the cry;
And so we meet, day after day,
Thou, Father in heaven, and I.

Is my house dreary, wall and floor,
Will not the darkness flit,
I go outside my shadowy door
And in thy rainbow sit.

SLEEP.

Oh! is it Death that comes
To have a foretaste of the whole?
To-night the planets and the stars
Will glimmer through my window-bars
But will not shine upon my soul!

For I shall lie as dead
Though yet I am above the ground;
All passionless, with scarce a breath,
With hands of rest and eyes of death,
I shall be carried swiftly round.

Or if my life should break
The idle night with doubtful gleams,
Through mossy arches will I go,
Through arches ruinous and low,
And chase the true and false in dreams.

Why should I fall asleep?
When I am still upon my bed
The moon will shine, the winds will rise
And all around and through the skies
The light clouds travel o'er my head!

O busy, busy things,

Ye mock me with your ceaseless life!
For all the hidden springs will flow
And all the blades of grass will grow
When I have neither peace nor strife.

And all the long night through
The restless streams will hurry by;
And round the lands, with endless roar,
The white waves fall upon the shore,
And bit by bit devour the dry.

Even thus, but silently,
Eternity, thy tide shall flow,
And side by side with every star
Thy long-drawn swell shall bear me far,
An idle boat with none to row.

My senses fail with sleep;
My heart beats thick; the night is noon;
And faintly through its misty folds
I hear a drowsy clock that holds
Its converse with the waning moon.

Oh, solemn mystery
That I should be so closely bound
With neither terror nor constraint,
Without a murmur of complaint,
And lose myself upon such ground!

SHARING.

On the far horizon there
Heaps of cloudy darkness rest;
Though the wind is in the air
There is stupor east and west.

For the sky no change is making,
Scarce we know it from the plain;
Droop its eyelids never waking,
Blinded by the misty rain;

Save on high one little spot,
Round the baffled moon a space
Where the tumult ceaseth not:
Wildly goes the midnight race!

And a joy doth rise in me
Upward gazing on the sight,
When I think that others see
In yon clouds a like delight;

How perchance an aged man
Struggling with the wind and rain,
In the moonlight cold and wan
Feels his heart grow young again;

As the cloudy rack goes by,
How the life-blood mantles up
Till the fountain deep and dry
Yields once more a sparkling cup.

Or upon the gazing child
Cometh down a thought of glory
Which will keep him undefiled
Till his head is old and hoary.

For it may be he hath woke
And hath raised his fair young form;
Strangely on his eyes have broke
All the splendours of the storm;

And his young soul forth doth leap
With the storm-clouds in the moon;
And his heart the light will keep
Though the vision passeth soon.

Thus a joy hath often laughed
On my soul from other skies,
Bearing on its wings a draught
From the wells of Paradise,

For that not to me alone
Comes a splendour out of fear;
Where the light of heaven hath shone
There is glory far and near.

IN BONDS.

Of the poor bird that cannot fly
Kindly you think and mournfully;
For prisoners and for exiles all
You let the tears of pity fall;
And very true the grief should be
That mourns the bondage of the free.

The soul--_she_ has a fatherland;
Binds _her_ not many a tyrant's hand?
And the winged spirit has a home,
But can she always homeward come?
Poor souls, with all their wounds and foes,
Will you not also pity those?

HUNGER.

Father, I cry to thee for bread
With hungred longing, eager prayer;
Thou hear'st, and givest me instead
More hunger and a half-despair.

O Lord, how long? My days decline,
My youth is lapped in memories old;
I need not bread alone, but wine--
See, cup and hand to thee I hold!

And yet thou givest: thanks, O Lord,
That still my heart with hunger faints!
The day will come when at thy board
I sit, forgetting all my plaints.

If rain must come and winds must blow,
And I pore long o'er dim-seen chart,
Yet, Lord, let not the hunger go,
And keep the faintness at my heart.

NEW YEAR'S EVE: A WAKING DREAM.

I have not any fearful tale to tell
Of fabled giant or of dragon-claw,
Or bloody deed to pilfer and to sell
To those who feed, with such, a gaping maw;
But what in yonder hamlet there befell,
Or rather what in it my fancy saw,
I will declare, albeit it may seem
Too simple and too common for a dream.

Two brothers were they, and they sat alone
Without a word, beside the winter's glow;
For it was many years since they had known
The love that bindeth brothers, till the snow
Of age had frozen it, and it had grown
An icy-withered stream that would not flow;
And so they sat with warmth about their feet
And ice about their hearts that would not beat.

And yet it was a night for quiet hope:--
A night the very last of all the year
To many a youthful heart did seem to ope
An eye within the future, round and clear;
And age itself, that travels down the slope,
Sat glad and waiting as the hour drew near,
The dreamy hour that hath the heaviest chime,

Jerking our souls into the coming time.

But they!--alas for age when it is old!
The silly calendar they did not heed;
Alas for age when in its bosom cold
There is not warmth to nurse a bladed weed!
They thought not of the morrow, but did hold
A quiet sitting as their hearts did feed
Inwardly on themselves, as still and mute
As if they were a-cold from head to foot.

O solemn kindly night, she looketh still
With all her moon upon us now and then!
And though she dwelleth most in craggy hill,
She hath an eye unto the hearts of men!
So past a corner of the window-sill
She thrust a long bright finger just as ten
Had struck, and on the dial-plate it came,
Healing each hour's raw edge with tender flame.

There is a something in the winds of heaven
That stirreth purposely and maketh men;
And unto every little wind is given
A thing to do ere it is still again;
So when the little clock had struck eleven,
The edging moon had drawn her silver pen
Across a mirror, making them aware
Of something ghostlier than their own grey hair.

Therefore they drew aside the window-blind
And looked upon the sleeping town below,
And on the little church which sat behind
As keeping watch upon the scanty row
Of steady tombstones--some of which inclined
And others upright, in the moon did show
Like to a village down below the waves--
It was so still and cool among the graves.

But not a word from either mouth did fall,
Except it were some very plain remark.
Ah! why should such as they be glad at all?
For years they had not listened to the lark!
The child was dead in them!--yet did there crawl
A wish about their hearts; and as the bark
Of distant sheep-dog came, they were aware
Of a strange longing for the open air.

Ah! many an earthy-weaving year had spun
A web of heavy cloud about their brain!
And many a sun and moon had come and gone
Since they walked arm in arm, these brothers twain!
But now with timØd pace their feet did stun
The village echoes into quiet pain:

The street appeared very short and white,
And they like ghosts unquiet for the light.

"Right through the churchyard," one of them did say
--I knew not which was elder of the two--
"Right through the churchyard is our better way."
"Ay," said the other, "past the scrubby yew.
I have not seen her grave for many a day;
And it is in me that with moonlight too
It might be pleasant thinking of old faces,
And yet I seldom go into such places."

Strange, strange indeed to me the moonlight was
Sitting about a solitary stone!
Stranger than many tales it is to scan
The earthy fragment of a human bone;
But stranger still to see a grey old man
Apart from all his fellows, and alone
With the pale night and all its giant quiet;
Therefore that stone was strange and those two by it.

It was their mother's grave, and here were hid
The priceless pulses of a mother's soul.
Full sixty years it was since she had slid
Into the other world through that deep hole.
But as they stood it seemed the coffin-lid
Grew deaf with sudden hammers!--'twas the mole
Niddering about its roots.--Be still, old men,
Be very still and ye will hear again.

Ay, ye will hear it! Ye may go away,
But it will stay with you till ye are dead!
It is but earthy mould and quiet clay,
But it hath power to turn the oldest head.
Their eyes met in the moon, and they did say
More than a hundred tongues had ever said.
So they passed onwards through the rapping wicket
Into the centre of a firry thicket.

It was a solemn meeting of Earth's life,
An inquest held upon the death of things;
And in the naked north full thick and rife
The snow-clouds too were meeting as on wings
Shorn round the edges by the frost's keen knife;
And the trees seemed to gather into rings,
Waiting to be made blind, as they did quail
Among their own wan shadows thin and pale.

Many strange noises are there among trees,
And most within the quiet moony light,
Therefore those aged men are on their knees
As if they listened somewhat.--Ye are right--
Upwards it bubbles like the hum of bees!

Although ye never heard it till to-night,
The mighty mother calleth ever so
To all her pale-eyed children from below.

Ay, ye have walked upon her paven ways,
And heard her voices in the market-place,
But ye have never listened what she says
When the snow-moon is pressing on her face!
One night like this is more than many days
To him who hears the music and the bass
Of deep immortal lullabies which calm
His troubled soul as with a hushing psalm.

I know not whether there is power in sleep
To dim the eyelids of the shining moon,
But so it seemed then, for still more deep
She grew into a heavy cloud, which, soon
Hiding her outmost edges, seemed to keep
A pressure on her; so there came a swoon
Among the shadows, which still lay together
But in their slumber knew not one another.

But while the midnight gropØd for the chime
As she were heavy with excess of dreams,
She from the cloud's thick web a second time
Made many shadows, though with minished beams;
And as she lookØd eastward through the rime
Of a thin vapour got of frosty steams,
There fell a little snow upon the crown
Of a near hillock very bald and brown.

And on its top they found a little spring,
A very helpful little spring indeed,
Which evermore unwound a tiny string
Of earnest water with continual speed--
And so the brothers stood and heard it sing;
For all was snowy-still, and not a seed
Had struck, and nothing came but noises light
Of the continual whitening of the night.

There is a kindness in the falling snow--
It is a grey head to the spring time mild;
So as the creamy vapour bowØd low
Crowning the earth with honour undefiled,
Within each withered man arose a glow
As if he fain would turn into a child:
There was a gladness somewhere in the ground
Which in his bosom nowhere could be found!

Not through the purple summer or the blush
Of red voluptuous roses did it come
That silent speaking voice, but through the slush
And snowy quiet of the winter numb!

It was a barren mound that heard the gush
Of living water from two fountains dumb--
Two rocky human hearts which long had striven
To make a pleasant noise beneath high heaven!

Now from the village came the onward shout
Of lightsome voices and of merry cheer;
It was a youthful group that wandered out
To do obeisance to the glad new year;
And as they passed they sang with voices stout
A song which I was very fain to hear,
But as they darkened on, away it died,
And the two men walked homewards side by side.

FROM NORTH WALES: TO THE MOTHER.

When the summer gave us a longer day,
And the leaves were thickest, I went away:
Like an isle, through dark clouds, of the infinite blue,
Was that summer-ramble from London and you.

It was but one burst into life and air,
One backward glance on the skirts of care,
A height on the hills with the smoke below--
And the joy that came quickly was quick to go.

But I know and I cannot forget so soon
How the Earth is shone on by Sun and Moon;
How the clouds hide the mountains, and how they move
When the morning sunshine lies warm above.

I know how the waters fall and run
In the rocks and the heather, away from the sun;
How they hang like garlands on all hill-sides,
And are the land's music, those crystal tides.

I know how they gather in valleys fair,
Meet valleys those beautiful waves to bear;
How they dance through the rocks, how they rest in the pool,
How they darken, how sparkle, and how they are cool.

I know how the rocks from their kisses climb
To keep the storms off with a front sublime;
And how on their platforms and sloping walls
The shadow of oak-tree and fir-tree falls.

I know how the valleys are bright from far,
Rocks, meadows, and waters, the wood and the scaur;
And how the roadside and the nearest hill
The foxglove and heather and harebell fill.

I know--but the joy that was quick to go
Gave more knowledge to me than words can shew;
And _you_ know the story, and how they fare
Who love the green earth and the heavenly air.

COME TO ME.

Come to me, come to me, O my God;
Come to me everywhere!
Let the trees mean thee, and the grassy sod,
And the water and the air!

For thou art so far that I often doubt,
As on every side I stare,
Searching within, and looking without,
If thou canst be anywhere.

How did men find thee in days of old?
How did they grow so sure?
They fought in thy name, they were glad and bold,
They suffered, and kept themselves pure!

But now they say--neither above the sphere
Nor down in the heart of man,
But solely in fancy, ambition, and fear
The thought of thee began.

If only that perfect tale were true
Which ages have not made old,
Which of endless many makes one anew,
And simplicity manifold!

But _he_ taught that they who did his word
The truth of it sure would know:
I will try to do it: if he be lord
Again the old faith will glow;

Again the old spirit-wind will blow
That he promised to their prayer;
And obeying the Son, I too shall know
His father everywhere!

A FEAR.

O Mother Earth, I have a fear
Which I would tell to thee--
Softly and gently in thine ear
When the moon and we are three.

Thy grass and flowers are beautiful;
Among thy trees I hide;
And underneath the moonlight cool
Thy sea looks broad and wide;

But this I fear--lest thou shouldst grow
To me so small and strange,
So distant I should never know
On thee a shade of change,

Although great earthquakes should uplift
Deep mountains from their base,
And thy continual motion shift
The lands upon thy face;--

The grass, the flowers, the dews that lie
Upon them as before--
Driven upwards evermore, lest I
Should love these things no more.

Even now thou dimly hast a place
In deep star galaxies!
And I, driven ever on through space,
Have lost thee in the skies!

THE LOST HOUSE.

Out of thy door I run to do the thing
That calls upon me. Straight the wind of words
Whoops from mine ears the sounds of them that sing
About their work, "My God, my father-king!"

I turn in haste to see thy blessed door,
But, lo, a cloud of flies and bats and birds,
And stalking vapours, and vague monster-herds
Have risen and lighted, rushed and swollen between!

Ah me! the house of peace is there no more.
Was it a dream then?--Walls, fireside, and floor,
And sweet obedience, loving, calm, and free,
Are vanished--gone as they had never been!

I labour groaning. Comes a sudden sheen!--
And I am kneeling at my father's knee,
Sighing with joy, and hoping utterly.

THE TALK OF THE ECHOES.

A FRAGMENT.

When the cock crows loud from the glen,
And the moor-cock chirrs from the heather,
What hear ye and see ye then,
Ye children of air and ether?

1st Echo.

A thunder as of waves at the rising of the moon,
And a darkness on the graves though the day is at its noon.

2nd Echo. A springing as of grass though the air is damp and chill,
And a glimmer from the river that winds about the hill.

1st Echo. A lapse of crags that leant from the mountain's earthen
sheath,

And a shock of ruin sent on the river underneath.

2nd Echo. A sound as of a building that groweth fair and good,
And a piping of the thrushes from the hollow of the wood.

1st Echo. A wailing as of lambs that have wandered from the flock,
And a bleating of their dams that was answered from the rock.

2nd Echo. A breathing as of cattle in the shadow where they dream,
And a sound of children playing with the pebbles in the stream.

1st Echo. A driving as of clouds in the kingdom of the air,
And a tumult as of crowds that mingle everywhere.

2nd Echo. A waving of the grass, and a passing o'er the lakes,
And a shred of tempest-cloud in the glory when it breaks.

THE GOAL

In God alone, the perfect end,
Wilt thou find thyself or friend.

THE HEALER.

They come to thee, the halt, the maimed, the blind,
The devil-torn, the sick, the sore;
Thy heart their well of life they find,
Thine ear their open door.

Ah, who can tell the joy in Palestine--
What smiles and tears of rescued throngs!
Their lees of life were turned to wine,
Their prayers to shouts and songs!

The story dear our wise men fable call,
Give paltry facts the mighty range;
To me it seems just what should fall,
And nothing very strange.

But were I deaf and lame and blind and sore,
I scarce would care for cure to ask;
Another prayer should haunt thy door--
Set thee a harder task.

If thou art Christ, see here this heart of mine,
Torn, empty, moaning, and unblest!
Had ever heart more need of thine,
If thine indeed hath rest?

Thy word, thy hand right soon did scare the bane
That in their bodies death did breed;
If thou canst cure my deeper pain
Then art thou lord indeed.

OH THAT A WIND.

Oh that a wind would call
From the depths of the leafless wood!
Oh that a voice would fall
On the ear of my solitude!

Far away is the sea,
With its sound and its spirit tone;
Over it white clouds flee;
But I am alone, alone.

Straight and steady and tall
The trees stand on their feet;
Fast by the old stone wall
The moss grows green and sweet;
But my heart is full of fears,
For the sun shines far away;
And they look in my face through tears,
And the light of a dying day.

My heart was glad last night
As I pressed it with my palm;
Its throb was airy and light
As it sang some spirit psalm;
But it died away in my breast
As I wandered forth to-day,--
As a bird sat dead on its nest,
While others sang on the spray.

O weary heart of mine,

Is there ever a Truth for thee?
Will ever a sun outshine
But the sun that shines on me?
Away, away through the air
The clouds and the leaves are blown;
And my heart hath need of prayer,
For it sitteth alone, alone.

A VISION OF ST. ELIGIUS.

I.

I see thy house, but I am blown about,
A wind-mocked kite, between the earth and sky,
All out of doors--alas! of thy doors out,
And drenched in dews no summer suns can dry.

For every blast is passion of my own;
The dews cold sweats of selfish agony;
Dank vapour steams from memories lying prone;
And all my soul is but a stifled cry.

II.

Lord, thou dost hold my string, else were I driven
Down to some gulf where I were tossed no more,
No turmoil telling I was not in heaven,
No billows raving on a blessed shore.

Thou standest on thy door-sill, calm as day,
And all my throbs and pangs are pulls from thee;
Hold fast the string, lest I should break away
And outer dark and silence swallow me.

III.

No longer fly thy kite, Lord; draw me home.
Thou pull'st the string through all the distance bleak;
Lord, I am nearing thee; O Lord, I come;
Thy pulls grow stronger and the wind grows weak.

In thy remodelling hands thou tak'st thy kite;
A moment to thy bosom hold'st me fast.
Thou flingest me abroad:--lo, in thy might
A strong-winged bird I soar on every blast!

OF THE SON OF MAN.

I. I honour Nature, holding it unjust

To look with jealousy on her designs;
With every passing year more fast she twines
About my heart; with her mysterious dust
Claim I a fellowship not less august
Although she works before me and combines
Her changing forms, wherever the sun shines
Spreading a leafy volume on the crust
Of the old world; and man himself likewise
Is of her making: wherefore then divorce
What God hath joined thus, and rend by force
Spirit away from substance, bursting ties
By which in one great bond of unity
God hath together bound all things that be?

II. And in these lines my purpose is to show
That He who left the Father, though he came
Not with art-splendour or the earthly flame
Of genius, yet in that he did bestow
His own true loving heart, did cause to grow,
Unseen and buried deep, whate'er we name
The best in human art, without the shame
Of idle sitting in most real woe;
And that whate'er of Beautiful and Grand
The Earth contains, by him was not despised,
But rather was so deeply realized
In word and deed, though not with artist hand,
That it was either hid or all disguised
From those who were not wise to understand.

III. Art is the bond of weakness, and we find
Therein acknowledgment of failing power:
A man would worship, gazing on a flower--
Onward he passeth, lo his eyes are blind!
The unenlivened form he left behind
Grew up within him only for an hour!
And he will grapple with Nature till the dower
Of strength shall be retreasured in his mind.
And each form-record is a high protest
Of treason done unto the soul of man,
Which, striving upwards, ever is oppress'd
By the old bondage, underneath whose ban
He, failing in his struggle for the best,
Must live in pain upon what food he can.

IV. Moreover, were there perfect harmony
'Twixt soul and Nature, we should never waste
The precious hours in gazing, but should haste
To assimilate her offerings, and we
From high life-elements, as doth the tree,
Should grow to higher; so what we call Taste
Is a slow living as of roots encased
In the grim chinks of some sterility
Both cramping and withholding. Art is Truth,

But Truth dammed up and frozen, gagged and bound
As is a streamlet icy and uncouth
Which pebbles hath and channel but no sound:
Give it again its summer heart of youth
And it will be a life upon the ground.

V. And Love had not been prisoned in cold stone,
Nor Beauty smeared on the dead canvas so,
Had not their worshipper been forced to go
Questful and restless through the world alone,
Searching but finding not, till on him shone
Back from his own deep heart a chilly glow
As of a frost-nipped sunbeam, or of snow
Under a storm-dodged crescent which hath grown
Wasted to mockery; and beneath such gleam
His wan conceits have found an utterance,
Which, had they found a true and sunny beam,
Had ripened into real touch and glance--
Nay more, to real deed, the Truth of all,
To some perfection high and personal.

VI. "But yet the great of soul have ever been
The first to glory in all works of art;
For from the genius-form would ever dart
A light of inspiration, and a sheen
As of new comings; and ourselves have seen
Men of stern purpose to whose eyes would start
Sorrow at sight of sorrow though no heart
Did riot underneath that chilly, screen;
And hence we judge such utterance native to
The human soul--expression highest--best."
--Nay, it is by such sign they will pursue,
Albeit unknowing, Beauty, without rest;
And failing in the search, themselves will fling
Speechless before its shadow, worshipping.

VII. And how shall he whose mission is to bring
The soul to worship at its rightful shrine,
Seeing in Beauty what is most divine,
Give out the mightiest impulse, and thus fling
His soul into the future, scattering
The living seed of wisdom? Shall there shine
From underneath his hand a matchless line
Of high earth-beauties, till the wide world ring
With the far clang that tells a missioned soul,
Kneeling to homage all about his feet?
Alas for such a gift were this the whole,
The only bread of life men had to eat!
Lo, I behold them dead about him now,
And him the heart of death, for all that brow!

VIII. If _Thou_ didst pass by Art, thou didst not scorn
The souls that by such symbol yearned in vain

From Truth and Love true nourishment to gain:
On thy warm breast, so chilly and forlorn
Fell these thy nurslings little more than born
That thou wast anguished, and there fell a rain
From thy blest eyelids, and in grief and pain
Thou partedst from them yet one night and morn
To find them wholesome food and nourishment
Instead of what their blindness took for such,
Laying thyself a seed in earthen rent
From which, outspringing to the willing touch,
Riseth for all thy children harvest great,
For which they will all learn to bless thee yet.

IV. Thou sawest Beauty in the streaking cloud
When grief lift up those eyelids; nor in scorn
Broke ever on thine eyes the purple morn
Along the cedar tops; to thee aloud
Spake the night-solitude, when hushed and bowed
The earth lay at thy feet stony and worn;
Loving thou markedst when the lamb unshorn
Was glad before thee, and amongst the crowd
Famished and pent in cities did thine eye
Read strangest glory--though in human art
No record lives to tell us that thy heart
Bowed to its own deep beauty: deeper did lie
The burden of thy mission, even whereby
We know that Beauty liveth where Thou art.

X. Doubtless thine eyes have watched the sun aspire
From that same Olivet, when back on thee
Flushed upwards after some night-agony
Thy proper Godhead, with a purer fire
Purpling thy Infinite, and in strong desire
Thou sattest in the dawn that was to be
Uplifted on our dark perplexity.
Yea in thee lay thy soul, a living lyre,
And each wild beauty smote it, though the sound
Rung to the night-winds oft and desert air;
Beneath thine eyes the lily paled more fair,
And each still shadow slanting on the ground
Lay sweetly on thee as commissioned there,
So full wast thou of eyes all round and round.

XI. And so thou neededst not our human skill
To fix what thus were transient--there it grew
Wedded to thy perfection; and anew
With every coming vision rose there still
Some living principle which did fulfil
Thy most legitimate manhood; and unto
Thy soul all Nature rendered up its due
With not a contradiction; and each hill
And mountain torrent and each wandering light
Grew out divinely on thy countenance,

Whereon, as we are told, by word and glance
Thy hearers read an ever strange delight--So
strange to them thy Truth, they could not tell
What made thy message so unspeakable.

XII. And by such living witness didst thou preach:
Not with blind hands of groping forward thrust
Into the darkness, gathering only dust,
But by this real sign--that thou didst reach,
In natural order, rising each from each,
Thy own ideals of the True and Just;
And that as thou didst live, even so he must
Who would aspire his fellow-men to teach,
Looking perpetual from new heights of Thought
On his old self. Of art no scorner thou!
Instead of leafy chaplet, on thy brow
Wearing the light of manhood, thou hast brought
Death unto Life! Above all statues now,
Immortal Artist, hail! thy work is wrought!

XIII. Solemn and icy stand ye in my eyes,
Far up into the niches of the Past,
Ye marble statues, dim and holden fast
Within your stony homes! nor human cries
Had shook you from your frozen phantasies
Or sent the life-blood through you, till there passed
Through all your chilly bulks a new life-blast
From the Eternal Living, and ye rise
From out your stiffened postures rosy-warm,
Walking abroad a goodly company
Of living virtues at that wondrous charm,
As he with human heart and hand and eye
Walked sorrowing upon our highways then,
The Eternal Father's living gift to men!

XIV. As the pent torrent in uneasy rest
Under the griping rocks, doth ever keep
A monstrous working as it lies asleep
In the round hollow of some mountain's breast,
Till where it hideth in its sweltering nest
Some earthquake finds it, and its waters leap
Forth to the sunshine down the mighty steep,
So in thee once was anguished forth the quest
Whereby man sought for life-power as he lay
Under his own proud heart and black despair
Wedged fast and stifled up with loads of care,
Yet at dumb struggle with the tyrant clay;
Thou wentest down below the roots of prayer,
And he hath cried aloud since that same day!

XV. As he that parts in hatred from a friend
Mixing with other men forgets the woe
Which anguished him when he beheld and lo

Two souls had fled asunder which did bend
Under the same blue heaven! yet ere the end,
When the loud world hath tossed him to and fro,
Will often strangely reappear that glow
At simplest memory which some chance may send,
Although much stronger bonds have lost their power:
So thou God-sent didst come in lowly guise,
Striking on simple chords,--not with surprise
Or mightiest recollectings in that hour,
But like remembered fragrance of a flower
A man with human heart and loving eyes.

March, 1852.

A SONG-SERMON:"

Job xiv. 13-15.

RONDEL.

Would that thou hid me in the grave
And kept me with death's gaoler-care;
Until thy wrath away should wear
A sentence fixed thy prisoner gave!
I would endure with patience brave
So thou remembered I was there!
Would that thou hid me in the grave,
And kept me with death's gaoler-care!

To see thy creature thou wouldst crave--
Desire thy handiwork so fair;
Then wouldst thou call through death's dank air
And I would answer from the cave!
Would that thou hid me in the grave,
And kept me with death's gaoler-care!

WORDS IN THE NIGHT"

I woke at midnight, and my heart,
My beating heart, said this to me:
Thou seest the moon, how calm and bright!
The world is fair by day and night,
But what is that to thee?
One touch to me, down dips the light
Over the land and sea.
All is mine, all is my own!
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
I am alive, I, only !!

One little touch and all is dark--
The winter with its sparkling moons,
The spring with all her violets,
The crimson dawns and rich sunsets,
The autumn's yellowing noons!
I only toss my purple jets,
And thou art one that swoons
Upon a night of gust and roar,
Shipwrecked among the waves, and seems
Across the purple hills to roam:
Sweet odours touch him from the foam,
And downward sinking still he dreams
He walks the clover fields at home
And hears the rattling teams.
All is mine, all is my own!
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone;
I am alive, I, only !!

Thou hast beheld a throated fountain spout
Full in the air, and in the downward spray
A hovering Iris span the marble tank,
Which, as the wind came, ever rose and sank,
Violet and red; so my continual play
Makes beauty for the Gods with many a prank
Of human excellence, while they,
Weary of all the noon, in shadows sweet,
Supine and heavy-eyed rest in the boundless heat.
Let the world's fountain play!
Beauty is pleasant in the eyes of Jove;
Betwixt the wavering shadows where he lies
He marks the dancing column with his eyes
Celestial, and amid his inmost grove
Upgathers all his limbs, serenely blest,
Lulled by the mellow noise of the great world's unrest.

One heart beats in all nature, differing
But in the work it works; its doubts and clamours
Are but the waste and brunt of instruments
Wherewith a work is done, or as the hammers
On forge Cyclopean plied beneath the rents
Of lowest Etna, conquering into shape
The hard and scattered ore;
Choose thou narcotics, and the dizzy grape
Outworking passion, lest with horrid crash
Thy life go from thee in a night of pain;
So tutoring thy vision, shall the flash
Of dove white-breasted be to thee no more
Than a white stone heavy upon the plain.

Hark, the cock crows loud!
And without, all ghastly and ill,

Like a man uplift in his shroud,
The white, white morn is propped on the hill;
And adown from the eaves, pointed and chill
The icicles 'gin to glitter
And the birds with a warble short and shrill
Pass by the chamber-window still--
With a quick, uneasy twitter!
Let me pump warm blood, for the cold is bitter;
And wearily, wearily, one by one,
Men awake with the weary sun!
Life is a phantom shut in thee:
I am the master and keep the key;
So let me toss thee the days of old
Crimson and orange and green and gold;
So let me fill thee yet again
With a rush of dreams from my spout amain;
For all is mine, all is my own:
Toss the purple fountain high!
The breast of man is a vat of stone,
And I am alive, I only, I!

CONSIDER THE RAVENS

Lord, according to thy words,
I have considered thy birds;
And I find their life good,
And better the better understood:
Sowing neither corn nor wheat
They have all that they can eat;
Reaping no more than they sow
They have more than they could stow;
Having neither barn nor store,
Hungry again, they eat more.

Considering, I see too that they
Have a busy life, and plenty of play;
In the earth they dig their bills deep
And work well though they do not heap;
Then to play in the air they are not loath,
And their nests between are better than both.
But this is when there blow no storms,
When berries are plenty in winter, and worms,
When feathers are rife, with oil enough--
To keep the cold out and send the rain off;
If there come, indeed, a long hard frost
Then it looks as thy birds were lost.

But I consider further, and find
A hungry bird has a free mind;
He is hungry to-day, not to-morrow,
Steals no comfort, no grief doth borrow;

This moment is his, thy will hath said it,
The next is nothing till thou hast made it.

Thy bird has pain, but has no fear
Which is the worst of any gear;
When cold and hunger and harm betide him,
He does not take them and stuff inside him;
Content with the day's ill he has got,
He waits just, nor haggles with his lot:
Neither jumbles God's will
With driblets from his own still.

But next I see, in my endeavour,
Thy birds here do not live for ever;
That cold or hunger, sickness or age
Finishes their earthly stage;
The rooks drop in cold nights,
Leaving all their wrongs and rights;
Birds lie here and birds lie there
With their feathers all astare;
And in thy own sermon, thou
That the sparrow falls dost allow.

It shall not cause me any alarm,
For neither so comes the bird to harm
Seeing our father, thou hast said,
Is by the sparrow's dying bed;
Therefore it is a blessed place,
And the sparrow in high grace.

It cometh therefore to this, Lord:
I have considered thy word,
And henceforth will be thy bird.

THE WIND OF THE WORLD.

Chained is the Spring. The Night-wind bold
Blows over the hard earth;
Time is not more confused and cold,
Nor keeps more wintry mirth.

Yet blow, and roll the world about--
Blow, Time, blow, winter's Wind!
Through chinks of time heaven peepeth out,
And Spring the frost behind.

SABBATH BELLS.

Oh holy Sabbath bells,

Ye have a pleasant voice!
Through all the land your music swells,
And man with one commandment tells
To rest and to rejoice.

As birds rejoice to flee
From dark and stormy skies
To brighter lands beyond the sea
Where skies are calm, and wings are free
To wander and to rise;

As thirsty travellers sing,
Through desert paths that pass,
To hear the welcome waters spring,
And see, beyond the spray they fling
Tall trees and waving grass;

So we rejoice to know
Your melody begun;
For when our paths are parched below
Ye tell us where green pastures glow
And living waters run.

LONDON, _December_ 15, 1840.

FIGHTING.

Here is a temple strangely wrought:
Within it I can see
Two spirits of a diverse thought
Contend for mastery.

One is an angel fair and bright,
Adown the aisle comes he,
Adown the aisle in raiment white,
A creature fair to see.

The other wears an evil mien,
And he hath doubtless slipt,
A fearful being dark and lean,
Up from the mouldy crypt.

* * * * *

Is that the roof that grows so black?
Did some one call my name?
Was it the bursting thunder crack
That filled this place with flame?

I move--I wake from out my sleep:
Some one hath victor been!

I see two radiant pinions sweep,
And I am borne between.

Beneath the clouds that under roll
An upturned face I see--
A dead man's face, but, ah, the soul
Was right well known to me!

A man's dead face! Away I haste
Through regions calm and fair:
Go vanquish sin, and thou shall taste
The same celestial air.

AFTER THE FASHION OF AN OLD EMBLEM.

I have long enough been working down in my cellar,
Working spade and pick, boring-chisel and drill;
I long for wider spaces, airy, clear-dark, and stellar:
Successless labour never the love of it did fill.

More profit surely lies in a holy, pure quiescence,
In a setting forth of cups to catch the heavenly rain,
In a yielding of the being to the ever waiting presence,
In a lifting of the eyes upward, homeward again!

Up to my garret, its storm-windows and skylights!
There I'll lay me on the floor, and patient let the sun,
The moon and the stars, the blueness and the twilights
Do what their pleasure is, and wait till they have done.

But, lo, I hear a waving on the roof of great pinions!
'Tis the labour of a windmill, broad-spreading to the wind!
Lo, down there goes a shaft through all the house-dominions!
I trace it to a cellar, whose door I cannot find.

But there I hear ever a keen diamond-drill in motion,
Now fast and now slow as the wind sits in the sails,
Drilling and boring to the far eternal ocean,
The living well of all wells whose water never fails.

So now I go no more to the cellar to my labour,
But up to my garret where those arms are ever going;
There the sky is ever o'er me, and the wind my blessed neighbour,
And the prayer-handle ready turns the sails to its blowing.

Blow, blow, my blessed wind; oh, keep ever blowing!
Keep the great windmill going full and free;
So shall the diamond-drill down below keep going
Till in burst the waters of God's eternal sea.

A PRAYER IN SICKNESS.

Thou foldest me in sickness;
Thou callest through the cloud;
I batter with the thickness
Of the swathing, blinding shroud:
Oh, let me see thy face,
The only perfect grace
That thou canst show thy child.

O father, being-giver,
Take off the sickness-cloud;
Saviour, my life deliver
From this dull body-shroud:
Till I can see thy face
I am not full of grace,
I am not reconciled.

QUIET DEAD!

Quiet, quiet dead,
Have ye aught to say
From your hidden bed
In the earthy clay?

Fathers, children, mothers,
Ye are very quiet;
Can ye shout, my brothers?
I would know you by it!

Have ye any words
That are like to ours?
Have ye any birds?
Have ye any flowers?

Could ye rise a minute
When the sun is warm?
I would know you in it,
I would take no harm.

I am half afraid
In the ghostly night;
If ye all obeyed
I should fear you quite.

But when day is breaking
In the purple east
I would meet you waking--
One of you at least--

When the sun is tipping
Every stony block,
And the sun is slipping
Down the weathercock.

Quiet, quiet dead,
I will not perplex you;
What my tongue hath said
Haply it may vex you!

Yet I hear you speaking
With a quiet speech,
As if ye were seeking
Better things to teach:

"Wait a little longer,
Suffer and endure
Till your heart is stronger
And your eyes are pure--

A little longer, brother,
With your fellow-men:
We will meet each other
Otherwhere again."

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE.

Sometimes, O Lord, thou lightest in my head
A lamp that well might pharos all the lands;
Anon the light will neither rise nor spread:
Shrouded in danger gray the beacon stands!

A pharos? Oh dull brain! poor dying lamp
Under a bushel with an earthy smell!
Mouldering it stands, in rust and eating damp,
While the slow oil keeps oozing from its cell!

For me it were enough to be a flower
Knowing its root in thee, the Living, hid,
Ordained to blossom at the appointed hour,
And wake or sleep as thou, my Nature, bid;

But hear my brethren in their darkling fright!
Hearten my lamp that it may shine abroad
Then will they cry--Lo, there is something bright!
Who kindled it if not the shining God?

TRIOLET.

When the heart is a cup
In the body low lying,
And wine, drop by drop
Falls into that cup

From somewhere high up,
It is good to be dying
With the heart for a cup
In the body low lying.

THE SOULS' RISING.

See how the storm of life ascends
Up through the shadow of the world!
Beyond our gaze the line extends,
Like wreaths of vapour tempest-hurled!
Grasp tighter, brother, lest the storm
Should sweep us down from where we stand,
And we may catch some human form
We know, amongst the straining band.

See! see in yonder misty cloud
One whirlwind sweep, and we shall hear
The voice that waxes yet more loud
And louder still approaching near!

Tremble not, brother, fear not thou,
For yonder wild and mystic strain
Will bring before us strangely now
The visions of our youth again!

Listen! oh listen!
See how its eyeballs roll and glisten
With a wild and fearful stare
Upwards through the shining air,
Or backwards with averted look,
As a child were gazing at a book
Full of tales of fear and dread,
When the thick night-wind came hollow and dead.

Round about it, wavering and light.
As the moths flock round a candle at night,
A crowd of phantoms sheeted and dumb
Strain to its words as they shrilly come:
Brother, my brother, dost thou hear?
They pierce through the tumult sharp and clear!

"The rush of speed is on my soul,
My eyes are blind with things I see;
I cannot grasp the awful whole,
I cannot gird the mystery!

The mountains sweep like mist away;
The great sea shakes like flakes of fire;
The rush of things I cannot see
Is mounting upward higher and higher!
Oh! life was still and full of calm
In yonder spot of earthly ground,
But now it rolls a thunder-psalm,
Its voices drown my ear in sound!
Would God I were a child again
To nurse the seeds of faith and power;
I might have clasped in wisdom then
A wing to beat this awful hour!
The dullest things would take my marks--
They took my marks like drifted snow--
God! how the footsteps rise in sparks,
Rise like myself and onward go!
Have pity, O ye driving things
That once like me had human form!
For I am driven for lack of wings
A shreddy cloud before the storm!"

How its words went through me then,
Like a long forgotten pang,
Till the storm's embrace again
Swept it far with sudden clang!--
Ah, methinks I see it still!
Let us follow it, my brother,
Keeping close to one another,
Blessing God for might of will!
Closer, closer, side by side!
Ours are wings that deftly glide
Upwards, downwards, and crosswise
Flashing past our ears and eyes,
Splitting up the comet-tracks
With a whirlwind at our backs!

How the sky is blackening!
Yet the race is never slackening;
Swift, continual, and strong,
Streams the torrent slope along,
Like a tidal surge of faces
Molten into one despair;
Each the other now displaces,
A continual whirl of spaces;
Ah, my fainting eyesight reels
As I strive in vain to stare
On a thousand turning wheels
Dimly in the gloom descending,
Faces with each other blending!--
Let us beat the vapours back,
We are yet upon his track.

Didst thou see a spirit halt

Upright on a cloudy peak,
As the lightning's horrid fault
Smote a gash into the cheek
Of the grinning thunder-cloud
Which doth still besiege and crowd
Upward from the nether pits
Where the monster Chaos sits,
Building o'er the fleeing rack
Roofs of thunder long and black?
Yes, I see it! I will shout
Till I stop the horrid rout.
Ho, ho! spirit-phantom, tell
Is thy path to heaven or hell?
We would hear thee yet again,
What thy standing amongst men,
What thy former history,
And thy hope of things to be!
Wisdom still we gain from hearing:
We would know, we would know
Whither thou art steering--
Unto weal or woe!

Ah, I cannot hear it speaking!
Yet it seems as it were seeking
Through our eyes our souls to reach
With a quaint mysterious speech,
As with stretched and crossing palms
One were tracing diagrams
On the ebbing of the beach,
Till with wild unmeasured dance
All the tiptoe waves advance,
Seize him by the shoulder, cover,
Turn him up and toss him over:
He is vanished from our sight,
Nothing mars the quiet night
Save a speck of gloom afar
Like the ruin of a star!

Brother, streams it ever so,
Such a torrent tide of woe?
Ah, I know not; let us haste
Upwards from this dreary waste,
Up to where like music flowing
Gentler feet are ever going,
Streams of life encircling run
Round about the spirit-sun!
Up beyond the storm and rush
With our lesson let us rise!
Lo, the morning's golden flush
Meets us midway in the skies!
Perished all the dream and strife!
Death is swallowed up of Life!

AWAKE!

The stars are all watching;
God's angel is catching
At thy skirts in the darkness deep!
Gold hinges grating,
The mighty dead waiting,
Why dost thou sleep?

Years without number,
Ages of slumber,
Stiff in the track of the infinite One!
Dead, can I think it?
Dropt like a trinket,
A thing whose uses are done!

White wings are crossing,
Glad waves are tossing,
The earth flames out in crimson and green
Spring is appearing,
Summer is nearing--
Where hast thou been?

Down in some cavern,
Death's sleepy tavern,
Housing, carousing with spectres of night?
There is my right hand!
Grasp it full tight and
Spring to the light.

Wonder, oh, wonder!
How the life-thunder
Bursts on his ear in horror and dread!
Happy shapes meet him;
Heaven and earth greet him:
Life from the dead!

TO AN AUTOGRAPH-HUNTER

Seek not my name--it doth no virtue bear;
Seek, seek thine own primeval name to find--
The name God called when thy ideal fair
Arose in deeps of the eternal mind.

When that thou findest, thou art straight a lord
Of time and space--art heir of all things grown;
And not my name, poor, earthly label-word,
But I myself thenceforward am thine own.

Thou hearest not? Or hearest as a man
Who hears the muttering of a foolish spell?
My very shadow would feel strange and wan
In thy abode:--I say _No_, and _Farewell_.

Thou understandest? Then it is enough;
No shadow-deputy shall mock my friend;
We walk the same path, over smooth and rough,
To meet ere long at the unending end.

_WITH A COPY OF "IN MEMORIAM." _

TO E.M. II.

Dear friend, you love the poet's song,
And here is one for your regard.
You know the "melancholy bard,"
Whose grief is wise as well as strong;

Already something understand
For whom he mourns and what he sings,
And how he wakes with golden strings
The echoes of "the silent land;"

How, restless, faint, and worn with grief,
Yet loving all and hoping all,
He gazes where the shadows fall,
And finds in darkness some relief;

And how he sends his cries across,
His cries for him that comes no more,
Till one might think that silent shore
Full of the burden of his loss;

And how there comes sublimer cheer--
Not darkness solacing sad eyes,
Not the wild joy of mournful cries,
But light that makes his spirit clear;

How, while he gazes, something high,
Something of Heaven has fallen on him,
His distance and his future dim
Broken into a dawning sky!

Something of this, dear friend, you know;
And will you take the book from me
That holds this mournful melody,
And softens grief to sadness so?

Perhaps it scarcely suits the day

Of joyful hopes and memories clear,
When love should have no thought of fear,
And only smiles be round your way;

Yet from the mystery and the gloom,
From tempted faith and conquering trust,
From spirit stronger than the dust,
And love that looks beyond the tomb,

What can there be but good to win,
But hope for life, but love for all,
But strength whatever may befall?--
So for the year that you begin,

For all the years that follow this
While a long happy life endures,
This hope, this love, this strength be yours,
And afterwards a larger bliss!

May nothing in this mournful song
Too much take off your thoughts from time,
For joy should fill your vernal prime,
And peace your summer mild and long.

And may his love who can restore
All losses, give all new good things,
Like loving eyes and sheltering wings
Be round us all for evermore!

THEY ARE BLIND.

They are blind, and they are dead:
We will wake them as we go;
There are words have not been said,
There are sounds they do not know:
We will pipe and we will sing--
With the Music and the Spring
Set their hearts a wondering!

They are tired of what is old,
We will give it voices new;
For the half hath not been told
Of the Beautiful and True.
Drowsy eyelids shut and sleeping!
Heavy eyes oppressed with weeping!
Flashes through the lashes leaping!

Ye that have a pleasant voice,
Hither come without delay;
Ye will never have a choice
Like to that ye have to-day:

Round the wide world we will go,
Singing through the frost and snow
Till the daisies are in blow.

Ye that cannot pipe or sing,
Ye must also come with speed;
Ye must come, and with you bring
Weighty word and weightier deed--
Helping hands and loving eyes!
These will make them truly wise--
Then will be our Paradise.

March 27, 1852.

WHEN THE STORM WAS PROUDEST.

When the storm was proudest,
And the wind was loudest,
I heard the hollow caverns drinking down below;
When the stars were bright,
And the ground was white,
I heard the grasses springing underneath the snow.

Many voices spake--
The river to the lake,
And the iron-ribbed sky was talking to the sea;
And every starry spark
Made music with the dark,
And said how bright and beautiful everything must be.

When the sun was setting,
All the clouds were getting
Beautiful and silvery in the rising moon;
Beneath the leafless trees
Wrangling in the breeze,
I could hardly see them for the leaves of June.

When the day had ended,
And the night descended,
I heard the sound of streams that I heard not through the day,
And every peak afar
Was ready for a star,
And they climbed and rolled around until the morning gray.

Then slumber soft and holy
Came down upon me slowly,
And I went I know not whither, and I lived I know not how;
My glory had been banished,
For when I woke it vanished;
But I waited on its coming, and I am waiting now.

THE DIVER.

FROM SCHILLER.

"Which of you, knight or squire, will dare
Plunge into yonder gulf?
A golden beaker I fling in it--there!
The black mouth swallows it like a wolf!
Who brings me the cup again, whoever,
It is his own--he may keep it for ever!"

'Tis the king who speaks. He flings from the brow
Of the cliff, that, rugged and steep,
Hangs out o'er the endless sea below,
The cup in the whirlpool's howling heap:--
"Again I ask, what hero will follow,
What hero plunge into yon dark hollow?"

The knights and the squires the king about
Hear, and dumbly stare
Into the wild sea's tumbling rout;
To win the beaker they hardly care!
The king, for the third time, round him glaring--
"Not one soul of you has the daring?"

Speechless all, as before, they stand.
Then a squire, young, gentle, gay,
Steps from his comrades' shrinking band,
Flinging his girdle and cloak away;
And all the women and men that surrounded
Gazed on the noble youth, astounded.

And when he stepped to the rock's rough brow
And looked down on the gulf so black,
The waters which it had swallowed, now
Charybdis bellowing rendered back;
And, with a roar as of distant thunder,
Foaming they burst from the dark lap under.

It wallows, seethes, hisses in raging rout,
As when water wrestles with fire,
Till to heaven the yeasty tongues they spout;
And flood upon flood keeps mounting higher:
It will never its endless coil unravel,
As the sea with another sea were in travail!

But, at last, slow sinks the writhing spasm,
And, black through the foaming white,
Downward gapes a yawning chasm--
Bottomless, cloven to hell's wide night;
And, sucked up, see the billows roaring

Down through the whirling funnel pouring!

Then in haste, ere the out-rage return again,
The youth to his God doth pray,
And--ascends a cry of horror and pain!--
Already the vortex hath swept him away,
And o'er the bold swimmer, in darkness eternal,
Close the great jaws of the gulf infernal!

Then the water above grows smooth as glass,
While, below, dull roarings ply;
And trembling they hear the murmur pass--
"High-hearted youth, farewell, good-bye!"
And hollower still comes the howl affraying,
Till their hearts are sick with the frightful delaying.

If the crown itself thou in should fling,
And say, "Who back with it hies
Himself shall wear it, and shall be king,"
I would not covet the precious prize!
What Ocean hides in that howling hell of it
Live soul will never come back to tell of it!

Ships many, caught in that whirling surge,
Shot sheer to their dismal doom:
Keel and mast only did ever emerge,
Shattered, from out the all-gulping tomb!--
Like the bluster of tempest, clearer and clearer,
Comes its roaring nearer and ever nearer!

It wallows, seethes, hisses, in raging rout,
As when water wrestles with fire,
Till to heaven the yeasty tongues they spout,
Wave upon wave's back mounting higher;
And as with the grumble of distant thunder,
Bellowing it bursts from the dark lap under.

And, see, from its bosom, flowing dark,
Something heave up, swan-white!
An arm and a shining neck they mark,
And it rows with never relaxing might!
It is he! and high his golden capture
His left hand waves in success's rapture!

With long deep breaths his path he ploughed,
And he hailed the heavenly day;
Jubilant shouted the gazing crowd,
"He lives! he is there! he broke away!
Out of the grave, the whirlpool uproarious,
The hero hath rescued his life victorious!"

He comes; they surround him with shouts of glee;
At the king's feet he sinks on the sod,

And hands him the beaker upon his knee;
To his lovely daughter the king gives a nod:
She fills it brim-full of wine sparkling and playing,
And then to the king the youth turned him saying:

"Long live the king!--Well doth he fare
Who breathes in this rosy light,
But, ah, it is horrible down there!
And man must not tempt the heavenly Might,
Or ever seek, with prying unwholesome,
What he graciously covers with darkness dolesome!

"It tore me down with a headlong swing;
Then a shaft in a rock outpours,
Wild-rushing against me, a torrent spring;
It seized me, the double stream's raging force,
And like a top, with giddy twisting,
It spun me round--there was no resisting!

"Then God did show me, sore beseeching
In deepest, frightfullest need,
Up from the bottom a rock-ledge reaching--
At it I caught, and from death was freed!
And, behold, on spiked corals the beaker suspended,
Which had else to the very abyss descended!

"For below me it lay yet mountain-deep
The purple darksome maw;
And though to the ear it was dead asleep,
The ghasted eye, down staring, saw
How with dragons, lizards, salamanders crawling,
The hell-jaws horrible were sprawling.

"Black swarming in medley miscreate,
In masses lumped hideously,
Wallowed the conger, the thorny skate,
The lobster's grisly deformity;
And bared its teeth with cruel sheen a
Terrible shark, the sea's hyena.

"And there I hung, and shuddering knew
That human help was none;
One thinking soul mid the horrid crew,
In the ghastly solitude I was alone--
Deeper than man's speech ever sounded,
By the waste sea's dismal monsters surrounded.

"I thought and shivered. Then something crept near,
Moved at once a hundred joints!
Now it will have me!--Frantic with fear
I lost my grasp of the coral points!
Away the whirl in its raging tore me,
But it was my salvation, and upward bore me!"

The king at the tale is filled with amaze:--
"The beaker, well won, is thine;
And this ring I will give thee too," he says,
"Precious with gems that are more than fine,
If thou dive yet once, and bring me the story--
What thou sawst in the sea's lowest repertory."

His daughter she hears with a tender dismay,
And her words sweet-suasive plead:
"Father, enough of this cruel play!
For you he has done an unheard-of deed!
And can you not master your soul's desire,
'Tis the knights' turn now to disgrace the squire!"

The king he snatches and hurls the cup
Into the swirling pool:--
"If thou bring me once more that beaker up,
My best knight I hold thee, most worshipful;
And this very day to thy home thou shall lead her
Who there for thee stands such a pitying pleader."

A heavenly passion his being invades,
His eyes dart a lightning ray;
He sees on her beauty the flushing shades,
He sees her grow pallid and sink away!
Determination thorough him flashes,
And downward for life or for death he dashes!

They hear the dull roar!--it is turning again,
Its herald the thunderous brawl!
Downward they bend with loving strain:
They come! they are coming, the waters all!--
They rush up!--they rush down!--up, down, for ever!
The youth again bring they never.

TO THE CLOUDS.

Through the unchanging heaven, as ye have sped,
Speed onward still, a strange wild company,
Fleet children of the waters! Glorious ye,
Whether the sun lift up his shining head,
High throned at noontide and established
Among the shifting pillars, or we see
The sable ghosts of air sleep mournfully
Against the sunlight, passionless and dead!
Take thus a glory, oh thou higher Sun,
From all the cloudy labour of man's hand--
Whether the quickening nations rise and run,
Or in the market-place we idly stand
Casting huge shadows over these thy plains--

Even thence, O God, draw thy rich gifts of rains.

SECOND SIGHT.

Rich is the fancy which can double back
All seeming forms, and from cold icicles
Build up high glittering palaces where dwells
Summer perfection, moulding all this wrack
To spirit symmetry, and doth not lack
The power to hear amidst the funeral bells
The eternal heart's wind-melody which swells
In whirlwind flashes all along its track!
So hath the sun made all the winter mine
With gardens springing round me fresh and fair;
On hidden leaves uncounted jewels shine;
I live with forms of beauty everywhere,
Peopling the crumbling waste and icy pool
With sights and sounds of life most beautiful.

NOT UNDERSTOOD.

Tumultuous rushing o'er the outstretched plains;
A wildered maze of comets and of suns;
The blood of changeless God that ever runs
With quick diastole up the immortal veins;
A phantom host that moves and works in chains;
A monstrous fiction, which, collapsing, stuns
The mind to stupor and amaze at once;
A tragedy which that man best explains
Who rushes blindly on his wild career
With trampling hoofs and sound of mailed war,
Who will not nurse a life to win a tear,
But is extinguished like a falling star;--
Such will at times this life appear to me
Until I learn to read more perfectly.

HOM. IL. v. 403.

If thou art tempted by a thought of ill,
Crave not too soon for victory, nor deem
Thou art a coward if thy safety seem
To spring too little from a righteous will;
For there is nightmare on thee, nor until
Thy soul hath caught the morning's early gleam
Seek thou to analyze the monstrous dream
By painful introversion; rather fill
Thine eye with forms thou knowest to be truth;

But see thou cherish higher hope than this,--
hope hereafter that thou shall be fit
Calm-eyed to face distortion, and to sit
Transparent among other forms of youth
Who own no impulse save to God and bliss.

THE DAWN.

And must I ever wake, gray dawn, to know
Thee standing sadly by me like a ghost?
I am perplexed with thee that thou shouldst cost
This earth another turning! All aglow
Thou shouldst have reached me, with a purple show
Along far mountain-tops! and I would post
Over the breadth of seas, though I were lost
In the hot phantom-chase for life, if so
Thou earnest ever with this numbing sense
Of chilly distance and unlovely light,
Waking this gnawing soul anew to fight
With its perpetual load: I drive thee hence!
I have another mountain-range from whence
Bursteth a sun unutterably bright!

GALILEO.

"And yet it moves!" Ah, Truth, where wert thou then
When all for thee they racked each piteous limb?
Wert thou in heaven, and busy with thy hymn
When those poor hands convulsed that held thy pen?
Art thou a phantom that deceives! men
To their undoing? or dost thou watch him
Pale, cold, and silent in his dungeon dim?
And wilt thou ever speak to him again?
"It moves, it moves! Alas, my flesh was weak!
That was a hideous dream! I'll cry aloud
How the green bulk wheels sunward day by day!
Ah me! ah me! perchance my heart was proud
That I alone should know that word to speak!
And now, sweet Truth, shine upon these, I pray."

SUBSIDY.

If thou wouldst live the Truth in very deed,
Thou hast thy joy, but thou hast more of pain.
Others will live in peace, and thou be fain
To bargain with despair, and in thy need
To make thy meal upon the scantiest weed.

These palaces, for thee they stand in vain;
Thine is a ruinous hut, and oft the rain
Shall drench thee in the midnight; yea, the speed
Of earth outstrip thee, pilgrim, while thy feet
Move slowly up the heights. Yet will there come
Through the time-rents about thy moving cell,
Shot from the Truth's own bow, and flaming sweet,
An arrow for despair, and oft the hum
Of far-off populous realms where spirits dwell.

THE PROPHET.

Speak, Prophet of the Lord! We may not start
To find thee with us in thine ancient dress,
Haggard and pale from some bleak wilderness,
Empty of all save God and thy loud heart,
Nor with like rugged message quick to dart
Into the hideous fiction mean and base;
But yet, O prophet man, we need not less
But more of earnest, though it is thy part
To deal in other words, if thou wouldst smite
The living Mammon, seated, not as then
In bestial quiescence grimly dight,
But _robed as priest, and honoured of good men
Yet_ thrice as much an idol-god as when
He stared at his own feet from morn to night.

THE WATCHER.

From out a windy cleft there comes a gaze
Of eyes unearthly, which go to and fro
Upon the people's tumult, for below
The nations smite each other: no amaze
Troubles their liquid rolling, or affrays
Their deep-set contemplation; steadily glow
Those ever holier eyeballs, for they grow
Liker unto the eyes of one that prays.
And if those clasped hands tremble, comes a power
As of the might of worlds, and they are holden
Blessing above us in the sunrise golden;
And they will be uplifted till that hour
Of terrible rolling which shall rise and shake
This conscious nightmare from us, and we wake.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

I.

One do I see and twelve; but second there
Methinks I know thee, thou beloved one;
Not from thy nobler port, for there are none
More quiet-featured: some there are who bear
Their message on their brows, while others wear
A look of large commission, nor will shun
The fiery trial, so their work is done;
But thou hast parted with thine eyes in prayer--
Unearthly are they both; and so thy lips
Seem like the porches of the spirit land;
For thou hast laid a mighty treasure by
Unlocked by Him in Nature, and thine eye
Burns with a vision and apocalypse
Thy own sweet soul can hardly understand.

II.

A Boanerges too! Upon my heart
It lay a heavy hour: features like thine
Should glow with other message than the shine
Of the earth-burrowing levin, and the start
That cleaveth horrid gulfs! Awful and swart
A moment stoodest thou, but less divine--
Brawny and clad in ruin--till with mine
Thy heart made answering signals, and apart
Beamed forth thy two rapt eyeballs doubly clear
And twice as strong because thou didst thy duty,
And, though affianced to immortal Beauty,
Hiddest not weakly underneath her veil
The pest of Sin and Death which maketh pale:
Henceforward be thy spirit doubly dear!

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

There is not any weed but hath its shower,
There is not any pool but hath its star;
And black and muddy though the waters are
We may not miss the glory of a flower,
And winter moons will give them magic power
To spin in cylinders of diamond spar;
And everything hath beauty near and far,
And keepeth close and waiteth on its hour!
And I, when I encounter on my road
A human soul that looketh black and grim,
Shall I more ceremonious be than God?
Shall I refuse to watch one hour with him
Who once beside our deepest woe did bud
A patient watching flower about the brim?

EVIL INFLUENCE

'Tis not the violent hands alone that bring
The curse, the ravage, and the downward doom,
Although to these full oft the yawning tomb
Owes deadly surfeit; but a keener sting,
A more immortal agony will cling
To the half fashioned sin which would assume
Fair Virtue's garb; the eye that sows the gloom
With quiet seeds of Death henceforth to spring
What time the sun of passion burning fierce
Breaks through the kindly cloud of circumstance;
The bitter word, and the unkindly glance,
The crust and canker coming with the years,
Are liker Death than arrows and the lance
Which through the living heart at once doth pierce.

SPOKEN OF SEVERAL PHILOSOPHERS

I pray you, all ye men who put your trust
In moulds and systems and well-tackled gear,
Holding that Nature lives from year to year
In one continual round because she must--
Set me not down, I pray you, in the dust
Of all these centuries, like a pot of beer--
A pewter-pot disconsolately clear,
Which holds a potful, as is right and just!
I will grow clamorous--by the rood, I will,
If thus ye use me like a pewter pot!
Good friend, thou art a toper and a sot--
will not be the lead to hold thy swill,
Nor any lead: I will arise and spill
Thy silly beverage--spill it piping hot!

NATURE A MORAL POWER

Nature, to him no message dost thou bear
Who in thy beauty findeth not the power
To gird himself more strongly for the hour
Of night and darkness. Oh, what colours rare
The woods, the valleys, and the mountains wear
To him who knows thy secret, and, in shower,
And fog, and ice-cloud, hath a secret bower
Where he may rest until the heavens are fair!
Not with the rest of slumber, but the trance
Of onward movement steady and serene,
Where oft, in struggle and in contest keen,
His eyes will opened be, and all the dance

Of life break on him, and a wide expanse
Roll upward through the void, sunny and green.

TO JUNE.

Ah, truant, thou art here again, I see!
For in a season of such wretched weather
I thought that thou hadst left us altogether,
Although I could not choose but fancy thee
Skulking about the hill-tops, whence the glee
Of thy blue laughter peeped at times, or rather
Thy bashful awkwardness, as doubtful whether
Thou shouldst be seen in such a company
Of ugly runaways, unshapely heaps
Of ruffian vapour, broken from restraint
Of their slim prison in the ocean deeps.
But yet I may not chide: fall to thy books--
Fall to immediately without complaint--
There they are lying, hills and vales and brooks.

SUMMER.

Summer, sweet Summer, many-fingered Summer!
We hold thee very dear, as well we may:
It is the kernel of the year to-day--
All hail to thee! thou art a welcome comer!
If every insect were a fairy drummer,
And I a fifer that could deftly play,
We'd give the old Earth such a roundelay
That she would cast all thought of labour from her.--
Ah! what is this upon my window-pane?
Some sulky, drooping cloud comes pouting up,
Stamping its glittering feet along the plain!--
Well, I will let that idle fancy drop!
Oh, how the spouts are bubbling with the rain!
And all the earth shines like a silver cup!

ON A MIDGE.

Whence do ye come, ye creatures? Each of you
Is perfect as an ange! wings and eyes
Stupendous in their beauty--gorgeous dyes
In feathery fields of purple and of blue!
Would God I saw a moment as ye do!
I would become a molecule in size,
Rest with you, hum with you, or slanting rise
Along your one dear sunbeam, could I view

The pearly secret which each tiny fly--
Each tiny fly that hums and bobs and stirs
Hides in its little breast eternally
From you, ye prickly, grim philosophers
With all your theories that sound so high:
Hark to the buz a moment, my good sirs!

STEADFAST.

Here stands a giant stone from whose far top
Comes down the sounding water: let me gaze
Till every sense of man and human ways
Is wrecked and quenched for ever, and I drop
Into the whirl of time, and without stop
Pass downward thus! Again my eyes I raise
To thee, dark rock; and through the mist and haze
My strength returns when I behold thy prop
Gleam stern and steady through the wavering wrack.
Surely thy strength is human, and like me
Thou bearest loads of thunder on thy back!
And, lo, a smile upon thy visage black--
A breezy tuft of grass which I can see
Waving serenely from a sunlit crack!

PROVISION.

Above my head the great pine-branches tower;
Backwards and forwards each to the other bends,
Beckoning the tempest-cloud which hither wends
Like a slow-laboured thought, heavy with power:
Hark to the patter of the coming shower!
Let me be silent while the Almighty sends
His thunder-word along--but when it ends
I will arise and fashion from the hour
Words of stupendous import, fit to guard
High thoughts and purposes, which I may wave,
When the temptation cometh close and hard,
Like fiery brands betwixt me and the grave
Of meaner things--to which I am a slave,
If evermore I keep not watch and ward.

FIRST SIGHT OF THE SEA.

I do remember how, when very young,
I saw the great sea first, and heard its swell
As I drew nearer, caught within the spell
Of its vast size and its mysterious tongue.

How the floor trembled, and the dark boat swung
With a man in it, and a great wave fell
Within a stone's cast! Words may never tell
The passion of the moment, when I flung
All childish records by, and felt arise
A thing that died no more! An awful power
I claimed with trembling hands and eager eyes,
Mine, mine for ever, an immortal dower.--
The noise of waters soundeth to this hour
When I look seaward through the quiet skies.

ON THE SOURCE OF THE ARVE.

Hears't thou the dash of water, loud and hoarse,
With its perpetual tidings upward climb,
Struggling against the wind? Oh, how sublime!
For not in vain from its portentous source
Thy heart, wild stream, hath yearned for its full force,
But from thine ice-toothed caverns, dark as time,
At last thou issuest, dancing to the rime
Of thy outvolleying freedom! Lo, thy course
Lies straight before thee as the arrow flies!
Right to the ocean-plains away, away!
Thy parent waits thee, and her sunset dyes
Are ruffled for thy coming, and the gray
Of all her glittering borders flashes high
Against the glittering rocks!--oh, haste, and fly!

CONFIDENCE.

Lie down upon the ground, thou hopeless one!
Press thy face in the grass, and do not speak.
Dost feel the green globe whirl? Seven times a week
Climbeth she out of darkness to the sun,
Which is her God; seven times she doth not shun
Awful eclipse, laying her patient cheek
Upon a pillow ghost-beset with shriek
Of voices utterless, which rave and run
Through all the star-penumbra, craving light
And tidings of the dawn from East and West.
Calmly she sleepeth, and her sleep is blest
With heavenly visions, and the joy of Night
Treading aloft with moons; nor hath she fright
Though cloudy tempests beat upon her breast.

FATE.

Oft, as I rest in quiet peace, am I
Thrust out at sudden doors, and madly driven
Through desert solitudes, and thunder-riven
Black passages which have not any sky:
The scourge is on me now, with all the cry
Of ancient life that hath with murder striven.
How many an anguish hath gone up to heaven,
How many a hand in prayer been lifted high
When the black fate came onward with the rush
Of whirlwind, avalanche, or fiery spume!
Even at my feet is cleft a shivering tomb
Beneath the waves; or else, with solemn hush
The graveyard opens, and I feel a crush
As if we were all huddled in one doom!

UNREST

Comes there, O Earth, no breathing time for thee,
No pause upon thy many-chequered lands?
Now resting on my bed with listless hands
I mourn thee resting not. Continually
Hear I the plashing borders of the sea
Answer each other from the rocks and sands!
Troop all the rivers seawards; nothing stands,
But with strange noises hasteth terribly!
Loam-eared hyenas go a moaning by;
Howls to each other all the bloody crew
Of Afric's tigers! but, O men, from you
Comes this perpetual sound more loud and high
Than aught that vexes air! I hear the cry
Of infant generations rising too!

ONE WITH NATURE

I have a fellowship with every shade
Of changing nature: with the tempest hour
My soul goes forth to claim her early dower
Of living princedom; and her wings have staid
Amidst the wildest uproar undismayed!
Yet she hath often owned a better power,
And blessed the gentle coming of the shower,
The speechless majesty of love arrayed
In lowly virtue, under which disguise
Full many a princely thing hath passed her by;
And she from homely intercourse of eyes
Hath gathered visions wider than the sky,
And seen the withered heart of man arise
Peaceful as God, and full of majesty.

MY TWO GENIUSES.

I.

One is a slow and melancholy maid;
I know not if she cometh from the skies
Or from the sleepy gulfs, but she will rise
Often before me in the twilight shade,
Holding a bunch of poppies and a blade
Of springing wheat: prostrate my body lies
Before her on the turf, the while she ties
A fillet of the weed about my head;
And in the gaps of sleep I seem to hear
A gentle rustle like the stir of corn,
And words like odours thronging to my ear:
"Lie still, beloved--still until the morn;
Lie still with me upon this rolling sphere--
Still till the judgment; thou art faint and worn."

II.

The other meets me in the public throng;
Her hair streams backward from her loose attire;
She hath a trumpet and an eye of fire;
She points me downward, steadily and long:--
"There is thy grave--arise, my son, be strong!
Hands are upon thy crown--awake, aspire
To immortality; heed not the lyre
Of the Enchantress, nor her poppy-song,
But in the stillness of the summer calm
Tremble for what is Godlike in thy being.
Listen a while, and thou shall hear the psalm
Of victory sung by creatures past thy seeing;
And from far battle-fields there comes the neighing
Of dreadful onset, though the air is balm."

III.

Maid with the poppies, must I let thee go?
Alas, I may not; thou art likewise dear!
I am but human, and thou hast a tear
When she hath nought but splendour, and the glow
Of a wild energy that mocks the flow
Of the poor sympathies which keep us here:
Lay past thy poppies, and come twice as near,
And I will teach thee, and thou too shalt grow;
And thou shalt walk with me in open day
Through the rough thoroughfares with quiet grace;
And the wild-visaged maid shall lead the way,
Timing her footsteps to a gentler pace
As her great orbs turn ever on thy face,

Drinking in draughts of loving help alway.

SUDDEN CALM.

There is a bellowing in me, as of might
Unfleshed and visionless, mangling the air
With horrible convulse, as if it bare
The cruel weight of worlds, but could not fight
With the thick-dropping clods, and could but bite
A vapour-cloud! Oh, I will climb the stair
Of the great universe, and lay me there
Even at the threshold of his gate, despite
The tempest, and the weakness, and the rush
Of this quick crowding on me!--Oh, I dream!
Now I am sailing swiftly, as we seem
To do in sleep! and I can hear the gush
Of a melodious wave that carries me
On, on for ever to eternity!

THOU ALSO.

Cry out upon the crime, and then let slip
The dogs of hate, whose hanging muzzles track
The bloody secret; let the welkin crack
Reverberating, while ye dance and skip
About the horrid blaze! or else ye strip,
More secretly, for the avenging rack,
Him who hath done the deed, till, oozing black
Ye watch the anguish from his nostrils drip,
And all the knotted limbs lie quivering!
Or, if your hearts disdain such banqueting,
With wide and tearless eyes go staring through
The murder cells! but think--that, if your knees
Bow not to holiness, then even in you
Lie deeper gulfs and blacker crimes than these.

THE AURORA BOREALIS.

Now have I grown a sharpness and an edge
Unto my future nights, and I will cut
Sheer through the ebon gates that yet will shut
On every set of day; or as a sledge
Drawn over snowy plains; where not a hedge
Breaks this Aurora's dancing, nothing but
The one cold Esquimaux' unlikely hut
That swims in the broad moonlight! Lo, a wedge
Of the clean meteor hath been brightly driven

Right home into the fastness of the north!
Anon it quickeneth up into the heaven!
And I with it have clomb and spreaded forth
Upon the crisp and cooling atmosphere!
My soul is all abroad: I cannot find it here!

THE HUMAN.

Within each living man there doth reside,
In some unrifled chamber of the heart,
A hidden treasure: wayward as thou art
I love thee, man, and bind thee to my side!
By that sweet act I purify my pride
And hasten onward--willing even to part
With pleasant graces: though thy hue is swart,
I bear thee company, thou art my guide!
Even in thy sinning wise beyond thy ken
To thee a subtle debt my soul is owing!
I take an impulse from the worst of men
That lends a wing unto my onward going;
Then let me pay them gladly back again
With prayer and love from Faith and Duty flowing!

WRITTEN ON A STORMY NIGHT.

O wild and dark! a night hath found me now
Wherein I mingle with that element
Sent madly loose through the wide staring rent
In yon tormented branches! I will bow
A while unto the storm, and thenceforth grow
Into a mighty patience strongly bent
Before the unconquering Power which hither sent
These winds to fight their battles on my brow!--
Again the loud boughs thunder! and the din
Licks up my footfall from the hissing earth!
But I have found a mighty peace within,
And I have risen into a home of mirth!
Wildly I climb above the shaking spires,
Above the sobbing clouds, up through the steady fires!

REVERENCE WAKING HOPE.

A power is on me, and my soul must speak
To thee, thou grey, grey man, whom I behold
With those white-headed children. I am bold
To commune with thy setting, and to wreak
My doubts on thy grey hair; for I would seek

Thee in that other world, but I am told
Thou goest elsewhere and wilt never hold
Thy head so high as now. Oh I were weak,
Weak even to despair, could I forego
The tender vision which will give somehow
Thee standing brightly one day even as now!
Thou art a very grey old man, and so
I may not pass thee darkly, but bestow
A look of reverence on thy wrinkled brow.

BORN OF WATER.

Methought I stood among the stars alone,
Watching a grey parched orb which onward flew
Half blinded by the dusty winds that blew,
Empty as Death and barren as a stone,
The pleasant sound of water all unknown!
When, as I looked in wonderment, there grew,
High in the air above, a drop of dew,
Which, gathering slowly through long cycles, shone
Like a great tear; and then at last it fell
Clasping the orb, which drank it greedily,
With a delicious noise and upward swell
Of sweet cool joy that tossed me like a sea;
And then the thick life sprang as from a grave,
With trees, flowers, boats upon the bounding wave!

TO A THUNDER-CLOUD.

Oh, melancholy fragment of the night
Drawing thy lazy web against the sun,
Thou shouldst have waited till the day was done
With kindred glooms to build thy fane aright,
Sublime amid the ruins of the light!
But thus to shape our glories one by one
With fearful hands, ere we had well begun
To look for shadows--even in the bright!
Yet may we charm a lesson from thy breast,
A secret wisdom from thy folds of thunder:
There is a wind that cometh from the west
Will rend thy tottering piles of gloom asunder,
And fling thee ruinous along the grass,
To sparkle on us as our footsteps pass!

SUN AND MOON.

First came the red-eyed sun as I did wake;

He smote me on the temples and I rose,
Casting the night aside and all its woes;
And I would spurn my idleness, and take
My own wild journey even like him, and shake
The pillars of all doubt with lusty blows,
Even like himself when his rich glory goes
Right through the stalwart fogs that part and break.
But ere my soul was ready for the fight,
His solemn setting mocked me in the west;
And as I trembled in the lifting night,
The white moon met me, and my heart confess'd
A mellow wisdom in her silent youth,
Which fed my hope with fear, and made my strength a truth.

DOUBT HERALDING VISION.

An angel saw me sitting by a brook,
Pleased with the silence, and the melodies
Of wind and water which did fall and rise:
He gently stirred his plumes and from them shook
An outworn doubt, which fell on me and took
The shape of darkness, hiding all the skies,
Blinding the sun, but giving to my eyes
An inextinguishable wish to look;
When, lo! thick as the buds of spring there came,
Crowd upon crowd, informing all the sky,
A host of splendours watching silently,
With lustrous eyes that wept as if in blame,
And waving hands that crossed in lines of flame,
And signalled things I hope to hold although I die!

LIFE OR DEATH?

Is there a secret Joy, that may not weep,
For every flower that ends its little span,
For every child that groweth up to man,
For every captive bird a cage doth keep,
For every aching eye that went to sleep
Long ages back, when other eyes began
To see and know and love as now they can,
Unravelling God's wonders heap by heap?
Or doth the Past lie 'mid Eternity
In charnel dens that rot and reek away,
A dismal light for those that go astray,
A pit of foul deformity--to be,
Beauty, a dreadful source of growth for thee
When thou wouldst lift thine eyes to greet the day?

LOST AND FOUND.

I missed him when the sun began to bend;
I found him not when I had lost his rim;
With many tears I went in search of him,
Climbing high mountains which did still ascend,
And gave me echoes when I called my friend;
Through cities vast and charnel-houses grim,
And high cathedrals where the light was dim,
Through books and arts and works without an end,
But found him not--the friend whom I had lost.
And yet I found him--as I found the lark,
A sound in fields I heard but could not mark;
I found him nearest when I missed him most;
I found him in my heart, a life in frost,
A light I knew not till my soul was dark.

THE MOON.

She comes! again she comes, the bright-eyed moon!
Under a ragged cloud I found her out,
Clasping her own dark orb like hope in doubt!
That ragged cloud hath waited her since noon,
And he hath found and he will hide her soon!
Come, all ye little winds that sit without,
And blow the shining leaves her edge about,
And hold her fast--ye have a pleasant tune!
She will forget us in her walks at night
Among the other worlds that are so fair!
She will forget to look on our despair!
She will forget to be so young and bright!
Nay, gentle moon, thou hast the keys of light--
I saw them hanging by thy girdle there!

TRUTH, NOT FORM!

I came upon a fountain on my way
When it was hot, and sat me down to drink
Its sparkling stream, when all around the brink
I spied full many vessels made of clay,
Whereon were written, not without display,
In deep engraving or with merely ink,
The blessings which each owner seemed to think
Would light on him who drank with each away.
I looked so hard my eyes were looking double
Into them all, but when I came to see
That they were filthy, each in his degree,
I bent my head, though not without some trouble,

To where the little waves did leap and bubble,
And so I journeyed on most pleasantly.

GOD IN GROWTH.

I said, I will arise and work some thing,
Nor be content with growth, but cause to grow
A life around me, clear as yes from no,
That to my restless hand some rest may bring,
And give a vital power to Action's spring:
Thus, I must cease to be! I cried; when, lo!
An angel stood beside me on the snow,
With folded wings that came of pondering.
"God's glory flashes on the silence here
Beneath the moon," he cried, and upward threw
His glorious eyes that swept the utmost blue,
"Ere yet his bounding brooks run forth with cheer
To bear his message to the hidden year
Who cometh up in haste to make his glory new."

IN A CHURCHYARD.

There may be seeming calm above, but no!--
There is a pulse below which ceases not,
A subterranean working, fiery hot,
Deep in the million-hearted bosom, though
Earthquakes unlock not the prodigious show
Of elemental conflict; and this spot
Nurses most quiet bones which lie and rot,
And here the humblest weeds take root and grow.
There is a calm upon the mighty sea,
Yet are its depths alive and full of being,
Enormous bulks that move unwieldily;
Yet, pore we on it, they are past our seeing!--
From the deep sea-weed fields, though wide and ample,
Comes there no rushing sound: _these_ do not trample!

POWER.

Power that is not of God, however great,
Is but the downward rushing and the glare
Of a swift meteor that hath lost its share
In the one impulse which doth animate
The parent mass: emblem to me of fate!
Which through vast nightly wastes doth onward fare,
Wild-eyed and headlong, rent away from prayer--
A moment brilliant, then most desolate!

And, O my brothers, shall we ever learn
From all the things we see continually
That pride is but the empty mockery
Of what is strong in man! Not so the stern
And sweet repose of soul which we can earn
Only through reverence and humility!

DEATH.

Yes, there is one who makes us all lay down
Our mushroom vanities, our speculations,
Our well-set theories and calculations,
Our workman's jacket or our monarch's crown!
To him alike the country and the town,
Barbaric hordes or civilized nations,
Men of all names and ranks and occupations,
Squire, parson, lawyer, Jones, or Smith, or Brown!
He stops the carter: the uplifted whip
Falls dreamily among the horses' straw;
He stops the helmsman, and the gallant ship
Holdeth to westward by another law;
No one will see him, no one ever saw,
But he sees all and lets not any slip.

THAT HOLY THING.

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes, and lift them high:
Thou can'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

O son of man, to right my lot
Nought but thy presence can avail;
Yet on the road thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea thy sail!

My fancied ways why shouldst thou heed?
Thou com'st down thine own secret stair:
Com'st down to answer all my need,
Yea, every bygone prayer!

FROM NOVALIS.

Uplifted is the stone
And all mankind arisen!
We are thy very own,
We are no more in prison!

What bitterest grief can stay
Beside thy golden cup,
When earth and life give way
And with our Lord we sup!

To the marriage Death doth call,
The lamps are burning clear,
The virgins, ready all,
Have for their oil no fear.
Would that even now were ringing
The distance with thy throng!
And that the stars were singing
To us a human song!

Courage! for life is hasting
To endless life away;
The inward fire, unwasting,
Transfigures our dull clay!
See the stars melting, sinking
In life-wine golden-bright!
We, of the splendour drinking,
Shall grow to stars of light.

Lost, lost are all our losses!
Love is for ever free!
The full life heaves and tosses
Like an unbounded sea!
One live, eternal story!
One poem high and broad!
And sun of all our glory
The countenance of God!

WHAT MAN IS THERE OF YOU?

The homely words how often read!
How seldom fully known!
"Which father of you, asked for bread,
Would give his son a stone?"

How oft has bitter tear been shed,
And heaved how many a groan,
Because thou wouldst not give for bread
The thing that was a stone!

How oft the child thou wouldst have fed,
Thy gift away has thrown!
He prayed, thou heard'st, and gav'st the bread:
He cried, "It is a stone!"

Lord, if I ask in doubt and dread
Lest I be left to moan,

Am I not he who, asked for bread,
Would give his son a stone?

O WIND OF GOD.

O wind of God, that blowest in the mind,
Blow, blow and wake the gentle spring in me;
Blow, swifter blow, a strong warm summer wind,
Till all the flowers with eyes come out to see;
Blow till the fruit hangs red on every tree,
And our high-soaring song-larks meet thy dove--
High the imperfect soars, descends the perfect love!

Blow not the less though winter cometh then;
Blow, wind of God, blow hither changes keen;
Let the spring creep into the ground again,
The flowers close all their eyes and not be seen:
All lives in thee that ever once hath been!
Blow, fill my upper air with icy storms;
Breathe cold, O wind of God, and kill my cankerworms.

SHALL THE DEAD PRAISE THEE?

I cannot praise thee. By his instrument
The master sits, and moves nor foot nor hand;
For see the organ-pipes this, that way bent,
Leaning, o'erthrown, like wheat-stalks tempest-fanned!

I well could praise thee for a flower, a dove,
But not for life that is not life in me;
Not for a being that is less than love--
A barren shoal half lifted from a sea!

Unto a land where no wind bloweth ships
Thy wind one day will blow me to my own:
Rather I'd kiss no more their loving lips
Than carry them a heart so poor and prone!

I bless thee, Father, thou art what thou art,
That thou dost know thyself what thou dost know--
A perfect, simple, tender, rhythmic heart,
Beating its blood to all in bounteous flow.

And I can bless thee too for every smart,
For every disappointment, ache, and fear;
For every hook thou fixest in my heart,
For every burning cord that draws me near.

But prayer these wake, not song. Thyself I crave.

Come thou, or all thy gifts away I fling.
Thou silent, I am but an empty grave:
Think to me, Father, and I am a king!

My organ-pipes will then stand up awake,
Their life soar, as from smouldering wood the blaze;
And swift contending harmonies shall shake
Thy windows with a storm of jubilant praise.

A YEAR SONG.

Sighing above,
Rustling below,
Thorough the woods
The winds go.
Beneath, dead crowds;
Above, life bare;
And the besom tempest
Sweeps the air:
_Heart, leave thy woe:
Let the dead things go._

Through the brown
Gold doth push;
Misty green
Veils the bush.
Here a twitter,
There a croak!
They are coming--
The spring-folk!
_Heart, be not numb;
Let the live things come._

Through the beech
The winds go,
With gentle speech,
Long and slow.
The grass is fine,
And soft to lie in:
The sun doth shine
The blue sky in:
_Heart, be alive;
Let the new things thrive._

Round again!
Here art thou,
A rimy fruit
On a bare bough!
Winter comes,
Winter and snow;
And a weary sighing

To fall and go!
_Heart, thy hour shall be;
Thy dead will comfort thee._

SONG.

Why do the houses stand
When they that built them are gone;
When remaineth even of one
That lived there and loved and planned
Not a face, not an eye, not a hand,
Only here and there a bone?
Why do the houses stand
When they who built them are gone?

Oft in the moonlighted land
When the day is overblown,
With happy memorial moan
Sweet ghosts in a loving band
Roam through the houses that stand--
For the builders are not gone.

FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO.

The miser lay on his lonely bed;
Life's candle was burning dim.
His heart in an iron chest was hid
Under heaps of gold and an iron lid;
And whether it were alive or dead
It never troubled him.

Slowly out of his body he crept.
He said, "I am just the same!
Only I want my heart in my breast;
I will go and fetch it out of my chest!"
Through the dark a darker shadow he leapt,
Saying "Hell is a fabled flame!"

He opened the lid. Oh, Hell's own night!
His ghost-eyes saw no gold!--
Empty and swept! Not a gleam was there!
In goes his hand, but the chest is bare!
Ghost-fingers, aha! have only might
To close, not to clasp and hold!

But his heart he saw, and he made a clutch
At the fungous puff-ball of sin:
Eaten with moths, and fretted with rust,
He grasped a handful of rotten dust,

And shrieked, as ghosts may, at the crumbling touch,
But hid it his breast within.

And some there are who see him sit
Under the church, apart,
Counting out coins and coins of gold
Heap by heap on the dank death-mould:
Alas poor ghost and his sore lack of wit--
They breed in the dust of his heart!

Another miser has now his chest,
And it hoards wealth more and more;
Like ferrets his hands go in and out,
Burrowing, tossing the gold about--
Nor heed the heart that, gone from his breast,
Is the cold heap's bloodless core.

Now wherein differ old ghosts that sit
Counting ghost-coins all day
From the man who clings with spirit prone
To whatever can never be his own?
Who will leave the world with not one whit
But a heart all eaten away?

THE ASTHMATIC MAN TO THE SATAN THAT BINDS HIM.

Satan, avaunt!
Nay, take thine hour,
Thou canst not daunt,
Thou hast no power;
Be welcome to thy nest,
Though it be in my breast.

Burrow amain;
Dig like a mole;
Fill every vein
With half-burnt coal;
Puff the keen dust about,
And all to choke me out.

Fill music's ways
With creaking cries,
That no loud praise
May climb the skies;
And on my labouring chest
Lay mountains of unrest.

My slumber steep
In dreams of haste,
That only sleep,
No rest, I taste--

With stifflings, rimes of rote,
And fingers on my throat.

Satan, thy might
I do defy;
Live core of night
I patient lie:
A wind comes up the gray
Will blow thee clean away.

Christ's angel, Death,
All radiant white,
With one cold breath
Will scare thee quite,
And give my lungs an air
As fresh as answered prayer.

So, Satan, do
Thy worst with me
Until the True
Shall set me free,
And end what he began,
By making me a man.

SONG-SERMON.

Lord, what is man
That thou art mindful of him!
Though in creation's van,
Lord, what is man!
He wills less than he can,
Lets his ideal scoff him!
Lord, what is man
That thou art mindful of him!

SHADOWS.

All things are shadows of thee, Lord;
The sun himself is but thy shade;
My spirit is the shadow of thy word,
A thing that thou hast said.

Diamonds are shadows of the sun,
They gleam as after him they hark:
My soul some arrows of thy light hath won.
And feebly fights the dark!

All knowledges are broken shades,
In gulfs of dark a scattered horde:

Together rush the parted glory-grades--
Then, lo, thy garment, Lord!

My soul, the shadow, still is light
Because the shadow falls from thee;
I turn, dull candle, to the centre bright,
And home flit shadowy.

Shine, Lord; shine me thy shadow still;
The brighter I, the more thy shade!
My motion be thy lovely moveless will!
My darkness, light delayed!

A WINTER PRAYER.

Come through the gloom of clouded skies,
The slow dim rain and fog athwart;
Through east winds keen with wrong and lies
Come and lift up my hopeless heart.

Come through the sickness and the pain,
The sore unrest that tosses still;
Through aching dark that hides the gain
Come and arouse my fainting will.

Come through the prate of foolish words,
The science with no God behind;
Through all the pangs of untuned chords
Speak wisdom to my shaken mind.

Through all the fears that spirits bow
Of what hath been, or may befall,
Come down and talk with me, for thou
Canst tell me all about them all.

Hear, hear my sad lone heart entreat,
Heart of all joy, below, above!
Come near and let me kiss thy feet,
And name the names of those I love!

SONG OF A POOR PILGRIM.

Roses all the rosy way!
Roses to the rosier west
Where the roses of the day
Cling to night's unrosy breast!

Thou who mak'st the roses, why
Give to every leaf a thorn?

On thy rosy highway I
Still am by thy roses torn!

Pardon! I will not mistake
These good thorns that make me fret!
Goads to urge me, stings to wake,
For my freedom they are set.

Yea, on one steep mountain-side,
Climbing to a fancied fold,
Roses grasped had let me slide
But the thorns did keep their hold.

Out of darkness light is born,
Out of weakness make me strong:
One glad day will every thorn
Break into a rose of song.

Though like sparrow sit thy bird
Lonely on the house-top dark,
By the rosy dawning stirred
Up will soar thy praising lark;

Roses, roses all his song!
Roses in a gorgeous feast!
Roses in a royal throng,
Surging, rosing from the east!

AN EVENING PRAYER.

I am a bubble
Upon thy ever-moving, resting sea:
Oh, rest me now from tossing, trespass, trouble!
Take me down into thee.

Give me thy peace.
My heart is aching with unquietness:
Oh, make its inharmonious beating cease!
Thy hand upon it press.

My Night! my Day!
Swift night and day betwixt, my world doth reel:
Potter, take not thy hand from off the clay
That whirls upon thy wheel.

O Heart, I cry
For love and life, pardon and hope and strength!
O Father, I am thine; I shall not die,
But I shall sleep at length!

SONG-SERMON.

Mercy to thee, O Lord, belongs,
For as his work thou giv'st the man.
From us, not thee, come all our wrongs;
Mercy to thee, O Lord, belongs:
With small-cord whips and scorpion thongs
Thou lay'st on every ill thy ban.
Mercy to thee, O Lord, belongs,
For as his work thou giv'st the man.

A DREAM-SONG.

The stars are spinning their threads,
And the clouds are the dust that flies,
And the suns are weaving them up
For the day when the sleepers arise.

The ocean in music rolls,
The gems are turning to eyes,
And the trees are gathering souls
For the day when the sleepers arise.

The weepers are learning to smile,
And laughter to glean the sighs,
And hearts to bury their care and guile
For the day when the sleepers arise.

Oh, the dews and the moths and the daisy-red,
The larks and the glimmers and flows!
The lilies and sparrows and daily bread,
And the something that nobody knows!

CHRISTMAS, 1880.

Great-hearted child, thy very being _The Son_,
Who know'st the hearts of all us prodigals;--
For who is prodigal but he who has gone
Far from the true to heart it with the false?--
Who, who but thou, that, from the animals',
Know'st all the hearts, up to the Father's own,
Can tell what it would be to be alone!

Alone! No father!--At the very thought
Thou, the eternal light, wast once aghast;
A death in death for thee it almost wrought!
But thou didst haste, about to breathe thy last,
And call'dst out _Father_ ere thy spirit passed,

Exhausted in fulfilling not any vow,
But doing his will who greater is than thou.

That we might know him, thou didst come and live;
That we might find him, thou didst come and die;
The son-heart, brother, thy son-being give--
We too would love the father perfectly,
And to his bosom go back with the cry,
Father, into thy hands I give the heart
Which left thee but to learn how good thou art!

There are but two in all the universe--
The father and his children--not a third;
Nor, all the weary time, fell any curse!
Not once dropped from its nest an unfledged bird
But thou wast with it! Never sorrow stirred
But a love-pull it was upon the chain
That draws the children to the father again!

O Jesus Christ, babe, man, eternal son,
Take pity! we are poor where thou art rich:
Our hearts are small; and yet there is not one
In all thy father's noisy nursery which,
Merry, or mourning in its narrow niche,
Needs not thy father's heart, this very now,
With all his being's being, even as thou!

RONDEL.

I do not know thy final will,
It is too good for me to know:
Thou willest that I mercy show,
That I take heed and do no ill,
That I the needy warm and fill,
Nor stones at any sinner throw;
But I know not thy final will--
It is too good for me to know.

I know thy love unspeakable--
For love's sake able to send woe!
To find thine own thou lost didst go,
And wouldst for men thy blood yet spill!--
How should I know thy final will,
Godwise too good for me to know!

THE SPARROW.

O Lord, I cannot but believe
The birds do sing thy praises then, when they sing to one another,

And they are lying seed-sown land when the winter makes them grieve,
Their little bosoms breeding songs for the summer to unsmother!

If thou hadst finished me, O Lord,
Nor left out of me part of that great gift that goes to singing,
I sure had known the meaning high of the songster's praising word,
Had known upon what thoughts of thee his pearly talk he was stringing!

I should have read the wisdom hid
In the storm-inspired melody of thy thrush's bosom solemn:
I should not then have understood what thy free spirit did
To make the lark-soprano mount like to a geyser-column!

I think I almost understand
Thy owl, his muffled swiftness, moon-round eyes, and intoned hooting;
I think I could take up the part of a night-owl in the land,
With yellow moon and starry things day-dreamers all confuting.

But 'mong thy creatures that do sing
Perhaps of all I likest am to the housetop-haunting sparrow,
That flies brief, sudden flights upon a dumpy, fluttering wing,
And chirps thy praises from a throat that's very short and narrow.

But if thy sparrow praise thee well
By singing well thy song, nor letting noisy traffic quell it,
It may be that, in some remote and leafy heavenly dell,
He may with a trumpet-throat awake, and a trumpet-song to swell it!

DECEMBER 23, 1879.

I.

A thousand houses of poesy stand around me everywhere;
They fill the earth and they fill my thought, they are in and above the
air;
But to-night they have shut their doors, they have shut their shining
windows fair,
And I am left in a desert world, with an aching as if of care.

II.

Cannot I break some little nut and get at the poetry in it?
Cannot I break the shining egg of some all but hatched heavenly linnet?
Cannot I find some beauty-worm, and its moony cocoon-silk spin it?
Cannot I find my all but lost day in the rich content of a minute?

III.

I will sit me down, all aching and tired, in the midst of this
never-unclosing
Of door or window that makes it look as if truth herself were dozing;

I will sit me down and make me a tent, call it poetizing or prosing,
Of what may be lying within my reach, things at my poor disposing!

IV.

Now what is nearest?--My conscious self. Here I sit quiet and say:
"Lo, I myself am already a house of poetry solemn and gay!
But, alas, the windows are shut, all shut: 'tis a cold and foggy day,
And I have not now the light to see what is in me the same alway!"

V.

Nay, rather I'll say: "I am a nut in the hard and frozen ground;
Above is the damp and frozen air, the cold blue sky all round;
And the power of a leafy and branchy tree is in me crushed and bound
Till the summer come and set it free from the grave-clothes
in which it is wound!"

VI.

But I bethink me of something better!--something better, yea best!
"I am lying a voiceless, featherless thing in God's own perfect nest;
And the voice and the song are growing within me, slowly lifting my
breast;
And his wide night-wings are closed about me, for his sun is down in the
west!"

VII.

Doors and windows, tents and grave-clothes, winters and eggs and seeds,
Ye shall all be opened and broken and torn; ye are but to serve my needs!
On the will of the Father all lovely things are strung like a string of
beads
For his heart to give the obedient child that the will of the father
heeds.

SONG-PRAYER: AFTER KING DAVID.

I shall be satisfied
With the seeing of thy face.
When I awake, wide-eyed,
I shall be satisfied
With what this life did hide,
The one supernal grace!
I shall be satisfied
With the seeing of thy face.

DECEMBER 27, 1879

Every time would have its song
If the heart were right,
Seeing Love all tender-strong
Fills the day and night.

Weary drop the hands of Prayer
Calling out for peace;
Love always and everywhere
Sings and does not cease.

Fear, the caitiff, through the night
Silent peers about;
Love comes singing with a light
And doth cast him out.

Hate and Guile and Wrath and Doubt
Never try to sing;
If they did, oh, what a rout
Anguished ears would sting!

Pride indeed will sometimes aim
At the finer speech,
But the best that he can frame
Is a peacock-screach.

Greed will also sometimes try:
Happiness he hunts!
But his dwelling is a sty,
And his tones are grunts.

Faith will sometimes raise a song
Soaring up to heaven,
Then she will be silent long,
And will weep at even.

Hope has many a gladsome note
Now and then to pipe;
But, alas, he has the throat
Of a bird unripe.

Often Joy a stave will start
Which the welkin rends,
But it always breaks athwart,
And untimely ends.

Grief, who still for death doth long,
Always self-abhorred,
Has but one low, troubled song,
I am sorry, Lord.

But Love singeth in the vault.
Singeth on the stair;
Even for Sorrow will not halt,

Singeth everywhere.

For the great Love everywhere
Over all doth glow;
Draws his birds up through the air,
Tends his birds below.

And with songs ascending sheer
Love-born Love replies,
Singing _Father_ in his ear
Where she bleeding lies.

Therefore, if my heart were right
I should sing out clear,
Sing aloud both day and night
Every month in the year!

SUNDAY,

DECEMBER 28, 1879.

A dim, vague shrinking haunts my soul,
My spirit bodeeth ill--
As some far-off restraining bank
Had burst, and waters, many a rank,
Were marching on my hill;

As if I had no fire within
For thoughts to sit about;
As if I had no flax to spin,
No lamp to lure the good things in
And keep the bad things out.

The wind, south-west, raves in the pines
That guard my cottage round;
The sea-waves fall in stormy lines
Below the sandy cliffs and chines,
And swell the roaring sound.

The misty air, the bellowing wind
Not often trouble me;
The storm that's outside of the mind
Doth oftener wake my heart to find
More peace and liberty.

Why is not such my fate to-night?
Chance is not lord of things!
Man were indeed a hapless wight
Things, thoughts occurring as they might--
Chaotic wallowings!

The man of moods might merely say
As by the fire he sat,
"I am low spirited to-day;
I must do something, work or play,
Lest care should kill the cat!"

Not such my saw: I was not meant
To be the sport of things!
The mood has meaning and intent,
And my dull heart is humbly bent
To have the truth it brings.

This sense of needed shelter round,
This frequent mental start
Show what a poor life mine were found,
To what a dead self I were bound,
How feeble were my heart,

If I who think did stand alone
Centre to what I thought,
A brain within a box of bone,
A king on a deserted throne,
A something that was nought!

A being without power to be,
Or any power to cease;
Whom objects but compelled to see,
Whose trouble was a windblown sea,
A windless sea his peace!

This very sadness makes me think
How readily I might
Be driven to reason's farthest brink,
Then over it, and sudden sink
In ghastly waves of night.

It makes me know when I am glad
'Tis thy strength makes me strong;
But for thy bliss I should be sad,
But for thy reason should be mad,
But for thy right be wrong.

Around me spreads no empty waste,
No lordless host of things;
My restlessness but seeks thy rest;
My little good doth seek thy best,
My needs thy ministerings.

'Tis this, this only makes me safe--
I am, immediate,
Of one that lives; I am no waif
That haggard waters toss and chafe,
But of a royal fate,

The born-child of a Power that lives
Because it will and can,
A Love whose slightest motion gives,
A Freedom that forever strives
To liberate his Man.

I live not on the circling air,
Live not by daily food;
I live not even by thinkings fair,
I hold my very being there
Where God is pondering good.

Because God lives I live; because
He thinks, I also think;
I am dependent on no laws
But on himself, and without pause;
Between us hangs no link.

The man that lives he knows not how
May well fear any mouse!
I should be trembling this same now
If I did think, my Father, thou
Wast nowhere in the house!

O Father, lift me on thine arm,
And hold me close to thee;
Lift me into thy breathing warm,
Then cast me, and I fear no harm,
Into creation's sea!

SONG-SERMON.

In his arms thy silly lamb,
Lo, he gathers to his breast!
See, thou sadly bleating dam,
See him lift thy silly lamb!
Hear it cry, "How blest I am!
Here is love, and love is rest!"
In his arms thy silly lamb
See him gather to his breast!

THE DONKEY IN THE CART TO THE HORSE IN THE CARRIAGE.

I.

I say! hey! cousin there! I mustn't call you brother!
Yet you have a tail behind, and I have another!
You pull, and I pull, though we don't pull together:

You have less hardship, and I have more weather!

II.

Your legs are long, mine are short; I am lean, you are fatter;
Your step is bold and free, mine goes pitter-patter;
Your head is in the air, and mine hangs down like lead--
But then my two great ears are so heavy on my head!

III.

You need not whisk your stump, nor turn away your nose;
Poor donkeys ain't so stupid as rich horses may suppose!
I could feed in any manger just as well as you,
Though I don't despise a thistle--with sauce of dust and dew!

IV.

T'other day a bishop's cob stopped before me in a lane,
With a tail as broad as oil-cake, and a close-clipped hoggy mane;
I stood sideways to the hedge, but he did not want to pass,
And he was so full of corn he didn't care about the grass.

V.

Quoth the cob, "You are a donkey of a most peculiar breed!
You've just eaten up a thistle that was going fast to seed!
If you had but let it be, you might have raised a crop!
To many a coming dinner you have put a sad stop!"

VI.

I told him I was hungry, and to leave one of ten
Would have spoiled my best dinner, the one I wanted then.
Said the cob, "_I_ ought to know the truth about dinners,
I don't eat on roadsides like poor tramping sinners!"

VII.

"Why don't you take it easy? You are working much too hard!
In the shafts you'll die one day, if you're not upon your guard!
Have pity on your friends: work seems to you delectable,
But believe me such a cart--excuse me--'s not respectable!"

VIII.

I told him I must trot in the shafts where I was put,
Nor look round at the cart, but set foremost my best foot;
It was rather rickety, and the axle wanted oil,
But I always slept at night with the deep sleep of toil!

IX.

"All very fine," he said, "to wag your ears and parley,
And pretend you quite despise my bellyfuls of barley!
But with blows and with starving, and with labour over-hard,
By spurs! a week will see you in the knacker's yard."

X.

I thanked him for his counsel, and said I thought I'd take it, really,
If he'd spare me half a feed out of four feeds daily.
He tossed his head at that: "Now don't be cheeky!" said he;
"When I find I'm getting fat, I'll think of you: keep steady."

XI.

"Good-bye!" I said--and say, for you are such another!
Why, now I look at you, I see you are his brother!
Yes, thank you for your kick: 'twas all that you could spare,
For, sure, they clip and singe you very, very bare!

XII.

My cart it is upsets you! but in that cart behind
There's no dirt or rubbish, no bags of gold or wind!
There's potatoes there, and wine, and corn, and mustard-seed,
And a good can of milk, and some honey too, indeed!

XIII.

Few blows I get, some hay, and of water many a draught:
I tell you he's no coster that sits upon my shaft!
And for the knacker's yard--that's not my destined bed:
No donkey ever yet saw himself there lying dead.

ROOM TO ROAM.

Strait is the path? He means we must not roam?
Yes; but the strait path leads into a boundless home.

COTTAGE SONGS.

I.--BY THE CRADLE.

Close her eyes: she must not peep!
Let her little puds go slack;
Slide away far into sleep:
Sis will watch till she comes back!

Mother's knitting at the door,
Waiting till the kettle sings;

When the kettle's song is o'er
She will set the bright tea-things.

Father's busy making hay
In the meadow by the brook,
Not so very far away--
Close its peeps, it needn't look!

God is round us everywhere--
Sees the scythe glitter and rip;
Watches baby gone somewhere;
Sees how mother's fingers skip!

Sleep, dear baby; sleep outright:
Mother's sitting just behind:
Father's only out of sight;
God is round us like the wind.

II.--SWEEPING THE FLOOR.

Sweep and sweep and sweep the floor,
Sweep the dust, pick up the pin;
Make it clean from fire to door,
Clean for father to come in!

Mother said that God goes sweeping,
Looking, sweeping with a broom,
All the time that we are sleeping,
For a shilling in the room:

Did he drop it out of glory,
Walking far above the birds?
Or did parson make the story
For the thinking afterwards?

If I were the swept-for shilling
I would hearken through the gloom;
Roll out fast, and fall down willing
Right before the sweeping broom!

III.--WASHING THE CLOTHES.

This is the way we wash the clo'es
Free from dirt and smoke and clay!
Through and through the water flows,
Carries Ugly right away!

This is the way we bleach the clo'es:
Lay them out upon the green;
Through and through the sunshine goes,
Makes them white as well as clean!

This is the way we dry the clo'es:

Hang them on the bushes about;
Through and through the soft wind blows,
Draws and drives the wetness out!

Water, sun, and windy air
Make the clothes clean, white, and sweet
Lay them now in lavender
For the Sunday, folded neat!

IV.--DRAWING WATER.

Dark, as if it would not tell,
Lies the water, still and cool:
Dip the bucket in the well,
Lift it from the precious pool!

Up it comes all brown and dim,
Telling of the twilight sweet:
As it rises to the brim
See the sun and water meet!

See the friends each other hail!
"Here you are!" cries Master Sun;
Mistress Water from the pail
Flashes back, alive with fun!

Have you not a tale to tell,
Water, as I take you home?
Tell me of the hidden well
Whence you, first of all, did come.

Of it you have kept some flavour
Through long paths of darkling strife:
Water all has still a savour
Of the primal well of life!

Could you show the lovely way
Back and up through sea and sky
To that well? Oh, happy day,
I would drink, and never die!

Jesus sits there on its brink
All the world's great thirst to slake,
Offering every one to drink
Who will only come and take!

Lord of wells and waters all,
Lord of rains and dewy beads,
Unto thee my thirst doth call
For the thing thou know'st it needs!

Come home, water sweet and cool,
Gift of God thou always art!

Spring up, Well more beautiful,
Rise in mine straight from his heart.

V.--CLEANING THE WINDOWS.

Wash the window; rub it dry;
Make the ray-door clean and bright:
He who lords it in the sky
Loves on cottage floors to light!

Looking over sea and beck,
Mountain-forest, orchard-bloom,
He can spy the smallest speck
Anywhere about the room!

See how bright his torch is blazing
In the heart of mother's store!
Strange! I never saw him gazing
So into that press before!

Ah, I see!--the wooden pane
In the window, dull and dead,
Father called its loss a gain,
And a glass one put instead!

What a difference it makes!
How it melts the filmy gloom!
What a little more it takes
Much to brighten up a room!

There I spy a dusty streak!
There a corner not quite clean!
There a cobweb! There the sneak
Of a spider, watching keen!

Lord of suns, and eyes that see,
Shine into me, see and show;
Leave no darksome spot in me
Where thou dost not shining go.

Fill my spirit full of eyes,
Doors of light in every part;
Open windows to the skies
That no moth corrupt my heart.

THE WIND AND THE MOON.

Said the Wind to the Moon, "I will blow you out!
You stare
In the air
As if crying _Beware_,

Always looking what I am about:
I hate to be watched; I will blow you out!"

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
So, deep
On a heap
Of clouds, to sleep
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,
Muttering low, "I've done for that Moon!"

He turned in his bed: she was there again!
On high
In the sky
With her one ghost-eye
The Moon shone white and alive and plain:
Said the Wind, "I will blow you out again!"

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew slim.
"With my sledge
And my wedge
I have knocked off her edge!
I will blow," said the Wind, "right fierce and grim,
And the creature will soon be slimmer than slim!"

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.
"One puff
More's enough
To blow her to snuff!
One good puff more where the last was bred,
And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go that thread!"

He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone.
In the air
Nowhere
Was a moonbeam bare;
Larger and nearer the shy stars shone:
Sure and certain the Moon was gone!

The Wind he took to his revels once more;
On down
And in town,
A merry-mad clown,
He leaped and holloed with whistle and roar--
When there was that glimmering thread once more!

He flew in a rage--he danced and blew;
But in vain
Was the pain
Of his bursting brain,
For still the Moon-scrap the broader grew
The more that he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

Slowly she grew--till she filled the night,

And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone
A matchless, wonderful, silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind, "What a marvel of power am I!
With my breath,
In good faith,
I blew her to death!--
First blew her away right out of the sky,
Then blew her in: what a strength am I!"

But the Moon she knew nought of the silly affair;
For, high
In the sky
With her one white eye,
Motionless miles above the air,
She never had heard the great Wind blare.

THE FOOLISH HAREBELL.

A harebell hung her wilful head:
"I am tired, so tired! I wish I was dead."

She hung her head in the mossy dell:
"If all were over, then all were well!"

The Wind he heard, and was pitiful,
And waved her about to make her cool.

"Wind, you are rough!" said the dainty Bell;
"Leave me alone--I am not well."

The Wind, at the word of the drooping dame,
Sighed to himself and ceased in shame.

"I am hot, so hot!" she moaned and said;
"I am withering up; I wish I was dead!"

Then the Sun he pitied her woeful case,
And drew a thick veil over his face.

"Cloud go away, and don't be rude,"
She said; "I do not see why you should!"

The Cloud withdrew. Then the Harebell cried,
"I am faint, so faint!--and no water beside!"

The Dew came down its millionfold path:
She murmured, "I did not want a bath!"

The Dew went up; the Wind softly crept;
The Night came down, and the Harebell slept.

A boy ran past in the morning gray,
Plucked the Harebell, and threw her away.

The Harebell shivered, and sighed, "Oh! oh!
I am faint indeed! Come, dear Wind, blow."

The Wind blew gently, and did not speak.
She thanked him kindly, but grew more weak.

"Sun, dear Sun, I am cold!" she said.
He shone; but lower she drooped her head.

"O Rain, I am withering! all the blue
Is fading out of me!--come, please do!"

The Rain came down as fast as he could,
But for all his good will he could do her no good.

She shuddered and shrivelled, and moaning said,
"Thank you all kindly!" and then she was dead.

Let us hope, let us hope when she comes next year
She'll be simple and sweet! But I fear, I fear!

SONG.

I was very cold
In the summer weather;
The sun shone all his gold,
But I was very cold--
Alas, we were grown old,
Love and I together!
Oh, but I was cold
In the summer weather!

Sudden I grew warmer
Though the brooks were frozen:
"Truly, scorn did harm her!"
I said, and I grew warmer;
"Better men the charmer
Knows at least a dozen!"
I said, and I grew warmer
Though the brooks were frozen.

Spring sits on her nest,
Daisies and white clover;
And my heart at rest

Lies in the spring's young nest:
My love she loves me best,
And the frost is over!
Spring sits on her nest,
Daisies and white clover!

AN IMPROVISATION.

The stars cleave the sky.
Yet for us they rest,
And their race-course high
Is a shining nest!

The hours hurry on.
But where is thy flight,
Soft pavilion
Of motionless night?

Earth gives up her trees
To the holy air;
They live in the breeze;
They are saints at prayer!

Summer night, come from God,
On your beauty, I see,
A still wave has flowed
Of eternity!

EQUITY.

No bird can sing in tune but that the Lord
Sits throned in equity above the heaven,
And holds the righteous balance always even;
No heart can true response to love afford
Wherein from one to eight not every chord
Is yet attuned by the spirits seven:
For tuneful no bird sings but that the Lord
Is throned in equity above high heaven.

Oh heart, by wrong unfilial scathed and scored,
And from thy humble throne with mazedness driven,
Take courage: when thy wrongs thou hast forgiven,
Thy rights in love thy God will see restored:
No bird could sing in tune but that the Lord
Sits throned in equity above the heaven.

CONTRITION.

Out of the gulf into the glory,
Father, my soul cries out to be lifted.
Dark is the woof of my dismal story,
Thorough thy sun-warp stormily drifted!--
Out of the gulf into the glory,
Lift me, and save my story.

I have done many things merely shameful;
I am a man ashamed, my father!
My life is ashamed and broken and blameful--
The broken and blameful, oh, cleanse and gather!
Heartily shame me, Lord, of the shameful!
To my judge I flee with my blameful.

Saviour, at peace in thy perfect purity,
Think what it is, not to be pure!
Strong in thy love's essential security,
Think upon those who are never secure.
Full fill my soul with the light of thy purity:
Fold me in love's security.

O Father, O Brother, my heart is sore aching!
Help it to ache as much as is needful;
Is it you cleansing me, mending, remaking,
Dear potter-hands, so tender and heedful?
Sick of my past, of my own self aching--
Hurt on, dear hands, with your making.

Proud of the form thou hadst given thy vessel,
Proud of myself, I forgot my donor;
Down in the dust I began to nestle,
Poured thee no wine, and drank deep of dishonour!
Lord, thou hast broken, thou mendest thy vessel!
In the dust of thy glory I nestle.

THE CONSOLER:

ON AN ENGRAVING OF SCHEFFER'S _Christus Consolator_.

I.

What human form is this? what form divine?
And who are these that gaze upon his face
Mild, beautiful, and full of heavenly grace,
With whose reflected light the gazers shine?
Saviour, who does not know it to be thine?
Who does not long to fill a gazer's place?
And yet there is no time, there is no space
To keep away thy servants from thy shrine!
Here if we kneel, and watch with faithful eyes,

Thou art not too far for faithful eyes to see,
Thou art not too far to turn and look on me,
To speak to me, and to receive my sighs.
Therefore for ever I forget the skies,
And find an everlasting Sun in thee.

II.

Oh let us never leave that happy throng!
From that low attitude of love not cease!
In all the world there is no other peace,
In all the world no other shield from wrong.
But chiefly, Saviour, for thy feet we long--
For no vain quiet, for no pride's increase--
But that, being weak, and Thou divinely strong,
Us from our hateful selves thou mayst release.
We wander from thy fold's free holy air,
Forget thy looks, and take our fill of sin!
But if thou keep us evermore within,
We never surely can forget thee there--
Breathing thy breath, thy white robe given to wear,
And loving thee for all thou diedst to win!

III.

To speak of him in language of our own,
Is not for us too daringly to try;
But, Saviour, we can read thy history
Upon the faces round thy humble throne;
And as the flower among the grass makes known
What summer suns have warmed it from the sky,
As every human smile and human sigh
Is witness that we do not live alone,
So in that company--in those sweet tears,
The first-born of a rugged melted heart,
In those gaunt chains for ever torn apart,
And in the words that weeping mother hears,
We read the story of two thousand years,
And know thee somewhat, Saviour, as thou art.

TO ----

I cannot write old verses here,
Dead things a thousand years away,
When all the life of the young year
Is in the summer day.

The roses make the world so sweet,
The bees, the birds have such a tune,
There's such a light and such a heat
And such a joy this June,

One must expand one's heart with praise,
And make the memory secure
Of sunshine and the woodland days
And summer twilights pure.

Oh listen rather! Nature's song
Comes from the waters, beating tides,
Green-margined rivers, and the throng
Of streams on mountain-sides.

So fair those water-spirits are,
Such happy strength their music fills,
Our joy shall be to wander far
And find them on the hills.

TO A SISTER.

A fresh young voice that sings to me
So often many a simple thing,
Should surely not unanswered be
By all that I can sing.

Dear voice, be happy every way
A thousand changing tones among,
From little child's unfinished lay
To angel's perfect song.

In dewy woods--fair, soft, and green
Like morning woods are childhood's bower--
Be like the voice of brook unseen
Among the stones and flowers;

A joyful voice though born so low,
And making all its neighbours glad;
Sweet, hidden, constant in its flow
Even when the winds are sad.

So, strengthen in a peaceful home,
And daily deeper meanings bear;
And when life's wildernesses come
Be brave and faithful there.

Try all the glorious magic range,
Worship, forgive, console, rejoice,
Until the last and sweetest change--
So live and grow, dear voice.

THE SHORTEST AND SWEETEST OF SONGS.

Come
Home.

SCOTS SONGS AND BALLADS.

ANNIE SHE'S DOWIE.

Annie she's dowie, and Willie he's wae:
What can be the matter wi' siccan a twae,
For Annie she's fair as the first o' the day,
And Willie he's honest and stalwart and gay?

Oh, the tane has a daddy is poor and is proud,
And the tither a minnie that cleiks at the goud'.
They lo'ed are anither, and said their say,
But the daddy and minnie hae partit the twae!

O LASSIE AYONT THE HILL!

O lassie ayont the hill,
Come ower the tap o' the hill,
Come ower the tap wi' the breeze o' the hill,
Bidena ayont the hill!

I'm needin ye sair the nicht,
For I'm tired and sick o' mysel.
A body's sel 's the sairest weicht:
O lassie, come ower the hill!

Gien a body could be a thought o' grace,
And no a sel ava!
I'm sick o' my heid and my ban's and my face,
O' my thoughts and mysel and a';

I'm sick o' the warl' and a';
The win' gangs by wi' a hiss;
Throu my starin een the sunbeams fa'
But my weary hert they miss!
O lassie ayont the hill,
Come ower the tap o' the hill,
Come ower the tap wi' the breeze o' the hill,
Bidena ayont the hill! &c.

For gien I but saw yer bonnie heid,
And the sunlicht o' yer hair,
The ghaist o' mysel wud fa' doun deid,

I wud be mysel nae mair.
I wud be mysel nae mair,
Filled o' the sole remeid,
Slain by the arrows o' licht frae yer hair,
Killed by yer body and heid!
O lassie ayont the hill, &c.

My sel nicht wauk up at the saft fitfa'
O' my bonnie departin dame;
But gien she lo'ed me ever sae sma'
I nicht bide it--the weary same!
Noo, sick o' my body and name
Whan it lifts its upsettin heid,
I turn frae the cla'es that cover my frame
As gien they war roun the deid.
O lassie ayont the hill, &c.

But gien ye lo'ed me as I lo'e you
I wud ring my ain deid knell;
The spectre wud melt, shot through and through
Wi' the shine o' your sunny sel!
By the shine o' yer sunny sel,
By the licht aneth yer broo
I wud dee to mysel, ring my ain deid-bell,
And live again in you!

O lassie ayont the hill,
Come ower the tap o' the hill,
Come ower the tap wi' the breeze o' the hill,
For I want ye sair the nicht!
I'm needin ye sair the nicht,
For I'm tired and sick o' mysel.
A body's sel 's the sairest weicht:
O lassie, come ower the hill!

THE BONNY, BONNY DELL

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the yorlin sings,
Wi' a clip o' the sunshine atween his wings;
Whaur the birks are a' strakit wi' fair munelicht,
And the brume hings its lamps by day and by nicht;
Whaur the burnie comes trottin ower shingle and stane
Liltin bonny havers til 'tsel its lane;
And the sliddery troot wi' ae soop o' its tail
Is ahint the green weed's dark swingin veil!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur I sang as I saw
The yorlin, the brume, and the burnie, and a'!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the primroses won,
Luikin oot o' their leaves like wee sons o' the sun;
Whaur the wild roses hing like flickers o' flame,

And fa' at the touch wi' a dainty shame;
Whaur the bee swings ower the white-clovery sod,
And the butterfly flits like a stray thought o' God;
Whaur, like arrow shot frae life's unseen bow,
The dragon-fly burns the sunlight throu!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur I sang to see
The rose and the primrose, the draigon and bee!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the mune luiks doon
As gien she war hearin a soughless tune,
Whan the floers and the birdies are a' asleep,
And the verra burnie gangs creepy-creep;
Whaur the corn-craik craiks i' the lang-heidit rye,
And the nicht is the safer for his rouch cry;
Whaur the win' wud fain lie doon on the slope,
And the gloamin waukens the high-reachin hope!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur, silent, I felt
The mune and the darkness baith into me melt!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the sun luiks in
Sayin, "Here awa, there awa, hand awa, Sin!"
Sayin darkness and sorrow a' work for the licht,
And the will o' God was the hert o' the nicht;
Whaur the laverock hings hie, on his ain sang borne,
Wi' bird-shout and tirroralee hailin the morn;
Whaur my hert ran ower wi' the lusome bliss
That, come winter, come weather, nocht gaed amiss!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the sun luikit in
Sayin, "Here awa, there awa, hand awa, Sin!"

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur aft I wud lie,
Wi' Jeanie aside me sae sweet and sae shy;
Whaur the stary gowans wi' rose-dippit tips
War as white as her cheek and as reid as her lips;
Whaur she spread her gowd hert till she saw that I saw,
Syne fauldit it up and gied me it a';
Whaur o' sunlight and munelicht she was the queen,
For baith war but middlin withoot my Jean!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur aft I wud lie,
Wi' Jeanie aside me sae sweet and sae shy!

Oh! the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the kirkyard lies
A' day and a' nicht luikin up to the skies;
Whaur the sheep wauken up i' the simmer nicht,
Tak a bite and lie doon, and await the licht;
Whaur the psalms roll ower the grassy heaps;
Whaur the win' comes and moans, and the rain comes and weeps;
Whaur my Jeanie's no lyin in a' the lair,
For she's up and awa up the angels' stair!
Oh, the bonny, bonny dell, whaur the kirkyard lies,
Whaur the stars luik doon, and the nicht-wind sighs!

NANNIE BRAW.

I like ye weel upo Sundays, Nannie,
I' yer goon and yer ribbons and a';
But I like ye better on Mondays, Nannie,
Whan ye're no sae buskit and braw.

For whan we're sittin sae douce, Nannie,
Wi' the lave o' the worshippin fowk,
That aneth the haly hoose, Nannie,
Ye nicht hear a moudiwarp howk,

It _will_ come into my heid, Nannie,
O' yer brows ye are thinkin a wee;
No alane o' the Bible-seed, Nannie,
Nor the minister nor me!

Syne hame athort the green, Nannie,
Ye gang wi' a toss o' yer chin;
And there walks a shadow atween 's, Nannie,
A dark ane though it be thin!

But noo, whan I see ye gang, Nannie,
Eident at what's to be dune,
Liltin a haiveless sang, Nannie,
I wud kiss yer verra shune!

Wi' yer silken net on yer hair, Nannie,
I' yer bonnie blue petticoat,
Wi' yer kin'ly arms a' bare, Nannie,
On yer ilka motion I doat.

For, oh, but ye're canty and free, Nannie,
Airy o' hert and o' fit!
A star-beam glents frae yer ee, Nannie--
O' yersel ye're no thinkin a bit!

Fillin the cogue frae the coo, Nannie,
Skimmin the yallow ream,
Pourin awa the het broo, Nannie,
Lichtin the lampie's leme,

Turnin or steppin alang, Nannie,
Liftin and layin doon,
Settin richt what's aye gaein wrang, Nannie,
Yer motion's baith dance and tune!

I' the hoose ye're a licht and a law, Nannie,
A servan like him 'at's abune:
Oh, a woman's bonniest o' a', Nannie,
Doin what _maun_ be dune!

Cled i' yer Sunday claes, Nannie,
Fair kythe ye to mony an ee;
But cled i' yer ilka-day's, Nannie,
Ye draw the hert frae me!

OWER THE HEDGE.

I.

"Bonny lassie, rosy lassie,
Ken ye what is care?
Had ye ever a thought, lassie,
Made yer hertie sair?"

Johnnie said it, Johnnie seekin
Sicht o' Mally's face,
Keekin i' the hedge o' holly
For a thinner place.

"Na," said Mally, pawky smilin,
"Nought o' care ken I;
Gien I meet the gruesome carline,
I s' hand weel ootby!"

"Lang be licht o' hert, Mally,
As o' fut and ban'!
Lang be ready wi' sic answer
To ony speirin man!"

"Ay, the men 'll aye be speirin!
Troth, it's naething new!
There's yersel wi' queston, queston--
And there's mair like you!"

"Deed ye wadna mock me, Mally,
Wi' yer lauchin ee,
Gien ye saw the thing aye muvin
I' the hert o' me!"

"Troth, I'm no sae pryin, laddie,
Yon's no my concern!
Jist as sune I wud gang speirin
What's intil yon cairn!"

"Still and on, there's ae thing, Mally,
Yont yer help, my doo--
That's to haud my hert frae lo'in
At the hert o' you!"

II.

Johnnie turned and left her,
Listit for the war;
In a year cam limp
Hame wi' mony a scar.

Wha was that was sittin
On the brae, sae still?
Worn and wan and alert,
Could it be hersel?

Cled in black, her eelids
Reid wi' greitin sair--
Was she wife and widow
In a towmond bare?

Mally's hert played wallop,
Kenned him or he spak:
"Are ye no deid, Johnnie?
Is't yersel come back?"

"Are ye wife or widow?
Tell me in a breath;
Lanely life is fearsome,
Waur nor ony death!"

"Wha cud be a widow
Wife was never nane?
Noo, gien ye will hae me,
Noo I will be ane!"

Crutch awa he flang it,
Clean forgot his hairms,
Cudna stan' without it,
Fell in Mally's airms.

GAEIN AND COMIN.

Whan Andrew frae Strathbogie gaed
The lift was lowerin dreary,
The sun he wadna raise his heid,
The win' blew laich and eerie.
In's pooch he had a plack or twa--
I vow he hadna mony,
Yet Andrew like a linty sang,
For Lizzie was sae bonny!
O Lizzie, Lizzie, bonny lassie!
Bonny, saucy hizzy!
What richt had ye to luik at me
And drive me daft and dizzy?

Whan Andrew to Strathbogie cam

The sun was shinin rarely;
He rade a horse that pranced and sprang--
I vow he sat him fairly!
And he had gowd to spen' and spare,
And a hert as true as ony;
But his luik was doon, his sigh was sair,
For Lizzie was sae bonny!
O Lizzie, Lizzie, bonny hizzy!
Aih, the sunlicht weary!
Ye're straucht and rare--ye're fause though fair!--
Hech, auld John Armstrong's deary!

A SANG O' ZION.

Ane by ane they gang awa;
The getherer gethers grit and sma':
Ane by ane maks ane and a'!

Aye whan ane sets doon the cup
Ane ahint maun tak it up:
A' thegither they will sup!

Golden-heidit, ripe, and strang,
Shorn will be the hairst or lang:
Syne begins a better sang!

TIME AND TIDE.

As I was walkin on the strand,
I spied ane auld man sit
On ane auld black rock; and aye the waves
Cam washin up its fit.
His lips they gaed as gien they wad lilt,
But o' liltin, wae's me, was nane!
He spak but an owercome, dreary and dreigh,
A burden wha's sang was gane:
"Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns;
They playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush."

"What can the auld man mean," quod I,
"Sittin o' the auld black rock?
The tide creeps up wi' a moan and a cry,
And a hiss 'maist like a mock!
The words he mutters maun be the en'
O' some weary auld-warl' sang--
A deid thing floatin aboot in his brain,
'At the tide 'ill no lat gang!"

"Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns;
They playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush."

"Hoo pairtit it them, auld man?" I said;
"Was't the sea cam up ower strang?
Oh, gien thegither the twa o' them gaed
Their pairtin wasna lang!
Or was are ta'en, and the ither left--
Ane to sing, are to greit?
It's sair, I ken, to be sae bereft--
But there's the tide at yer feet!"

"Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they playt thegither i' the gloamin's hush:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa wi' a glint and a gush."

"Was't the sea o' space wi' its storm o' time
That wadna lat things bide?
But Death's a diver frae heavenly clime
Seekin ye neth its tide,
And ye'll gaze again in ither's ee,
Far abune space and time!"
Never ae word he answered me,
But changed a wee his rime:

"Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they playt thegither upo' the shore;
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And pairtit the twa for evermore."

"May be, auld man, 'twas the tide o' change
That crap atween the twa?
Hech! that's a droonin fearsome strange,
Waur, waur nor are and a'!"
He said nae mair. I luikit, and saw
His lips they couldna gang:
Death, the diver, had ta'en him awa,
To gie him a new auld sang.

Robbie and Jeanie war twa bonnie bairns,
And they playt thegither upo' the shore:
Up cam the tide and the mune and the sterns,
And souft them awa throu a mirksome door!

THE WAESOME CARL.

There cam a man to oor toon-en',
And a waesome carl was he,
Snipie-nebbit, and crookit-mou'd,
And gleyt o' a blinterin ee.
Muckle he spied, and muckle he spak,

But the owercome o' his sang,
Whatever it said, was aye the same:--
There's nane o' ye a' but's wrang!
Ye're a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang:
There's no a man about the toon
But's a'thegither a' wrang.

That's no the gait to fire the breid,
Nor yet to brew the yill;
That's no the gait to haud the pleuch,
Nor yet to ca the mill;
That's no the gait to milk the coo,
Nor yet to spean the calf,
Nor yet to tramp the girmel-meal--
Ye kenna yer wark by half!
Ye're a' wrang, &c.

The minister wasna fit to pray
And lat alane to preach;
He nowther had the gift o' grace
Nor yet the gift o' speech!
He mind't him o' Balaām's ass,
Wi' a differ we nicht ken:
The Lord he opened the ass's mou,
The minister opened's ain!
He was a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There wasna a man about the toon
But was a'thegither a' wrang!

The puir precentor couldna sing,
He gruntit like a swine;
The verra elders couldna pass
The ladles til his min'.
And for the rulin' elder's grace
It wasna worth a horn;
He didna half uncurse the meat,
Nor pray for mair the morn!
He was a' wrang, &c.

And aye he gied his nose a thraw,
And aye he crook't his mou;
And aye he cockit up his ee
And said, Tak tent the noo!
We snichert hint oor loof, my man,
But never said him nay;
As gien he had been a prophet, man,
We loot him say his say:
Ye're a' wrang, &c.

Quo oor gudeman: The crater's daft!
Heard ye ever sic a claik?

Lat's see gien he can turn a ban',
Or only luik and craik!
It's true we maunna lippin til him--
He's fairly crack wi' pride,
But he maun live--we canna kill him!
Gien he can work, he s' bide.
He was a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There, troth, the gudeman o' the toon
Was a'thegither a' wrang!

Quo he, It's but a laddie's turn,
But best the first be a sma' thing:
There's a' thae weyds to gether and burn,
And he's the man for a' thing!--
We yokit for the far hill-moss,
There was peats to cast and ca;
O' 's company we thocht na loss,
'Twas peace till gloamin-fa!
We war a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There wasna man about the toon
But was a'thegither a' wrang!

For, losh, or it was denner-time
The toon was in a low!
The reek rase up as it had been
Frae Sodom-flames, I vow.
We lowst and rade like mad, for byre
And ruck bleezt a' thegither,
As gien the deil had broucht the fire
Frae's hell to mak anither!
'Twas a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang,
Stick and strae about the place
Was a'thegither a' wrang!

And luikin on, ban's neth his tails,
The waesome carl stude;
To see him wagglin at thae tails
'Maist drave 's a' fairly wud.
Ain wite! he cried; I tauld ye sae!
Ye're a' wrang to the last:
What gart ye burn thae deevilich weyds
Whan the win' blew frae the wast!
Ye're a' wrang, and a' wrang,
And a'thegither a' wrang;
There's no a man i' this fule warl
But's a'thegither a' wrang!

Up cam the tide wi' a burst and a whush,
And back gaed the stanes wi' a whurr;
The king's son walkit i' the evenin hush,
To hear the sea murmur and murr.

Straucht ower the water slade frae the mune
A glimmer o' cauld weet licht;
Ane o' her horns rase the water abune,
And lampit across the nicht.

Quhat's that, and that, far oot i' the gray,
The laich mune bobbin afore?
It's the bonny sea-maidens at their play--
Haud awa, king's son, frae the shore.

Ae rock stude up like an auld aik-root,
The king's son he steppit ahin';
The bonny sea-maidens cam gambolin oot,
Kaimin their hair to the win'.

O merry their lauch whan they fan the warm san',
For the lichtsme reel sae meet!
Ilk are flang her kaim frae her pearly ban',
And tuik til her pearly feet.

But are, wha's beauty was dream and spell,
Her kaim on the rock she cuist;
Her back was scarce turnt whan the munelicht shell
Was lyin i' the prince's breist!

The cluds grew grim as he watched their game,
Th' win' blew up an angry tune;
Ane efter are tuik up her kaim,
And seaward gaed dancin doon.

But are, wi' hair like the mune in a clud,
Was left by the rock her lane;
Wi' flittin ban's, like a priest's, she stude,
'Maist veiled in a rush o' rain.

She spied the prince, she sank at his feet,
And lay like a wreath o' snaw
Meltin awa i' the win' and weet
O' a wastin wastlin thaw.

He liftit her, trimlin wi' houp and dreid,
And hame wi' his prize he gaed,
And laid her doon, like a witherin weed,
Saft on a gowden bed.

A' that nicht, and a' day the neist,
She never liftit heid;

Quaiet lay the sea, and quaiet lay her breist,
And quaiet lay the kirkyard-deid.

But quhan at the gloamin a sea-breeze keen
Blew intil the glimsome room,
Like twa settin stars she opened her een,
And the sea-floer began to bloom.

And she saw the prince kneelin at her bed,
And afore the mune was new,
Careless and cauld she was wooed and wed--
But a winsome wife she grew.

And a' gaed weel till their bairn was born,
And syne she cudna sleep;
She wud rise at midnicht, and wan'er till morn,
Hark-harkin the sough o' the deep.

Ae nicht whan the win' gaed ravin aboot,
And the winnocks war speckled wi' faem,
Frae room to room she strayt in and oot,
And she spied her pearly kaim.

She twined up her hair wi' eager ban's,
And in wi' the rainbow kaim!
She's oot, and she's aff ower the shinin san's
And awa til her moanin hame!

The prince he startit whaur he lay,
He waukit, and was himlane!
He soucht far intil the mornin gray,
But his bonny sea-wife was gane!

And ever and aye, i' the mirk or the mune,
Whan the win' blew saft frae the sea,
The sad shore up and the sad shore doon
By the lanely rock paced he.

But never again on the sands to play
Cam the maids o' the merry, cauld sea;
He heard them lauch far oot i' the bay,
But hert-alane gaed he.

THE YERL O' WATERYDECK.

The wind it blew, and the ship it flew,
And it was "Hey for hame!"
But up an' cried the skipper til his crew,
"Haud her oot ower the saut sea faem."

Syne up an' spak the angry king:

"Haud on for Dumferline!"
Quo' the skipper, "My lord, this maunna be--
I'm king on this boat o' mine!"

He tuik the helm intil his han',
He left the shore un'er the lee;
Syne croodit sail, an', east an' south,
Stude awa richt oot to sea.

Quo' the king, "Leise-majesty, I trow!
Here lies some ill-set plan!
'Bout ship!" Quo' the skipper, "Yer grace forgets
Ye are king but o' the lan'!"

Oot he heild to the open sea
Quhill the north wind flaughtered an' fell;
Syne the east had a bitter word to say
That waukent a watery hell.

He turnt her heid intil the north:
Quo' the nobles, "He s' droon, by the mass!"
Quo' the skipper, "Haud afif yer lady-ban's
Or ye'll never see the Bass."

The king creepit down the cabin-stair
To drink the gude French wine;
An' up cam his dochter, the princess fair,
An' luikit ower the brine.

She turnt her face to the drivin snaw,
To the snaw but and the weet;
It claucht her snood, an' awa like a dud
Her hair drave oot i' the sleet.

She turnt her face frae the drivin win'--
"Quhat's that aheid?" quo' she.
The skipper he threw himsel frae the win'
An' he brayt the helm alee.

"Put to yer han', my lady fair!
Haud up her heid!" quo' he;
"Gien she dinna face the win' a wee mair
It's faurweel to you an' me!"

To the tiller the lady she laid her han',
An' the ship brayt her cheek to the blast;
They joukit the berg, but her quarter scraped,
An' they luikit at ither aghast.

Quo' the skipper, "Ye are a lady fair,
An' a princess gran' to see,
But war ye a beggar, a man wud sail
To the hell i' yer company!"

She liftit a pale an' a queenly face,
Her een flashed, an' syne they swam:
"An' what for no to the hevin?" she says,
An' she turnt awa frae him.

Bot she tuik na her han' frae the gude ship's helm
Till the day begouth to daw;
An' the skipper he spak, but what was said
It was said atween them twa.

An' syne the gude ship she lay to,
Wi' Scotlan' hyne un'er the lee;
An' the king cam up the cabin-stair
Wi' wan face an' bluidshot ee.

Laigh loutit the skipper upo' the deck;
"Stan' up, stan' up," quo' the king;
"Ye're an honest loun--an' beg me a boon
Quhan ye gie me back this ring."

Lowne blew the win'; the stars cam oot;
The ship turnt frae the north;
An' or ever the sun was up an' aboot
They war intil the firth o' Forth.

Quhan the gude ship lay at the pier-heid,
And the king stude steady o' the lan',--
"Doon wi' ye, skipper--doon!" he said,
"Hoo daur ye afore me stan'!"

The skipper he loutit on his knee;
The king his blade he drew:
Quo' the king, "Noo mynt ye to centre me!
I'm aboard _my_ vessel noo!

"Gien I hadna been yer verra gude lord
I wud hae thrawn yer neck!
Bot--ye wha loutit Skipper o' Doon,
Rise up Yerl o' Waterydeck."

The skipper he rasena: "Yer Grace is great,
Yer wull it can heize or ding:
Wi' ae wee word ye hae made me a yerl--
Wi' anither mak me a king."

"I canna mak ye a king," quo' he,
"The Lord alane can do that!
I snowk leise-majesty, my man!
Quhat the Sathan wad ye be at?"

Glowert at the skipper the doutsum king
Jalousin aneth his croon;

Quo' the skipper, "Here is yer Grace's ring--
An' yer dochter is my boon!"

The black blude shot intil the king's face
He wasna bonny to see:
"The rascal skipper! he lichtlies oor grace!--
Gar hang him heigh on yon tree."

Up sprang the skipper an' aboard his ship,
Cleikit up a bytin blade
An' hackit at the cable that held her to the pier,
An' thocht it 'maist ower weel made.

The king he blew shill in a siller whustle;
An' tramp, tramp, doon the pier
Cam twenty men on twenty horses,
Clankin wi' spur an' spear.

At the king's fute fell his dochter fair:
"His life ye wadna spill!"
"Ye daur stan' twixt my hert an' my hate?"
"I daur, wi' a richt gude will!"

"Ye was aye to yer faither a thrawart bairn,
But, my lady, here stan's the king!
Luikna _him_ i' the angry face--
A monarch's anither thing!"

"I lout to my father for his grace
Low on my bendit knee;
But I stan' an' luik the king i' the face,
For the skipper is king o' me!"

She turnt, she sprang upo' the deck,
The cable splashed i' the Forth,
Her wings sae braid the gude ship spread
And flew east, an' syne flew north.

Now was not this a king's dochter--
A lady that feared no skaith?
A woman wi' quhilk a man micht sail
Prood intil the Port o' Death?

THE TWA GORDONS.

I.

There was John Gordon an' Archibold,
An' a yerl's twin sons war they;
Quhan they war are an' twenty year auld
They fell oot on their ae birthday.

"Turn ye, John Gordon, nae brither to me!
Turn ye, fause an' fell!
Or doon ye s' gang, as black as a lee,
To the muckle deevil o' hell."

"An' quhat for that, Archie Gordon, I pray?
Quhat ill hae I dune to thee?"
"Twa-faced loon, ye sail rue this day
The answer I'm gain to gie!

"For it'll be roucher nor lady Janet's,
An' loud i' the braid daylight;
An' the wa' to speil is my iron mail,
No her castle-wa' by nicht!"

"I speilt the wa' o' her castle braw
I' the roarin win' yestreen;
An' I sat in her bower till the gloamin sta'
Licht-fittit ahint the mune."

"Turn ye, John Gordon--the twasum we s' twin!
Turn ye, an' haud yer ain;
For ane sall lie on a cauld weet bed--
An' I downa curse again!"

"O Archie, Janet is my true love--
notna speir leave o' thee!"
"Gien that be true, the deevil's a sanct,
An' ye are no tellin a lee!"

Their suerds they drew, an' the fire-flauchts flew,
An' they shiftit wi' fendin feet;
An' the blude ran doon, till the grun a' roun
Like a verra bog was weet.

"O Archie, I hae gotten a cauld supper--
O' steel, but shortest grace!
Ae grip o' yer han' afore ye gang!
An' turn me upo' my face."

But he's turnit himsel upon his heel,
An' wordless awa he's gane;
An' the corbie-craw i' the aik abune
Is roupin for his ain.

II.

Lady Margaret, her hert richt gret,
Luiks ower the castle wa';
Lord Archibold rides oot at the yett,
Ahint him his merry men a'.

Wi' a' his band, to the Holy Land
He's boune wi' merry din,
His shouther's doss a Christ's cross,
In his breist an ugsome sin.

But the cross it brunt him like the fire.
Its burnin never ceast;
It brunt in an' in, to win at the sin
Lay cowerin in his breist.

A mile frae the shore o' the Deid Sea
The army haltit ae nicht;
Lord Archie was waukrife, an' oot gaed he
A walkin i' the munelicht.

Dour-like he gaed, wi' doon-hingin heid,
Quhill he cam, by the licht o' the mune,
Quhaur michty stanes lay scattert like sheep,
An' ance they worshipt Mahoun.

The scruff an' scum o' the deid shore gleamt
An' glintit a sauty gray;
The banes o' the deid stack oot o' its bed,
The sea lickit them as they lay.

He sat him doon on a sunken stane,
An' he sighit sae dreary an' deep:
"I can thole ohn grutten, lyin awauk,
But he comes whan I'm asleep!

"I wud gie my soul for ever an' aye
Intil en'less dule an' smert,
To sleep a' nicht like a bairn again,
An' cule my burnin hert!"

Oot frae ahint a muckle stane
Cam a voice like a huddy craw's:
"Behaud there, Archibold Gordon!" it said,
"Behaud--ye hae ower gude cause!"

"I'll say quhat I like," quod Archibold,
"Be ye ghaist or deevil or quhat!"
"Tak tent, lord Archie, gien ye be wise--
The tit winna even the tat!"

Lord Archibold leuch wi' a loud ha, ha,
Eerisome, grousum to hear:
"A bonny bargain auld Cloots wad hae,
It has ilka faut but fear!"

"Dune, lord Archibold?" craikit the voice;
"Dune, Belzie!" cried he again.--
The gray banes glimmert, the white saut shimmert--

Lord Archie was him lane.

Back he gaed straught, by the glowerin mune,
An' doun in his plaid he lay,
An' soun' he sleepit.--A ghaist-like man
Sat by his heid quhill the day.

An' quhanever he moanit or turnit him roun,
Or his broo gae token o' plycht,
The waukin man i' the sleepin man's lug
Wud rown a murgeon o' micht.

An' the glint o' a smile wud quaver athort
The sleepin cheek sae broun,
An' a tear atween the ee-lids wud stert,
An' whiles rin fairly doun.

An' aye by his lair sat the ghaist-like man,
He watchit his sleep a' nicht;
An' in mail rust-broun, wi' his visorne doun,
Rade at his knee i' the fecht.

Nor anis nor twyis the horn-helmit chiel
Saved him frae deidly dad;
An' Archie said, "Gien this be the deil
He's no sac black as he's ca'd."

But wat ye fu' weel it wasna the deil
That tuik lord Archie's pairt,
But his twin-brother John he thought deid an' gone,
Wi' luv like a lowe in his hert.

III.

Hame cam lord Archibold, weary wicht,
Hame til his ain countree;
An' he cried, quhan his castle rase in sicht,
"Noo Christ me sain an' see!"

He turnit him roun: the man in rust-broun
Was gane, he saw nocht quhair!
At the ha' door he lichtit him doun,
Lady Margaret met him there.

Reid, reid war her een, but hie was her mien,
An' her words war sharp an' sair:
"Welcome, Archie, to dule an' tene,
An' welcome ye s' get nae mair!"

Quhaur is yer twin, lord Archibold,
That lay i' my body wi' thee?
I miss my mark gien he liesna stark
Quhaur the daylight comesna to see!"

Lord Archibold docht na speik a word
For his hert was like a stane;
He turnt him awa--an' the huddy craw
Was roupin for his ain.

"Quhaur are ye gaein, lord Archie," she said,
"Wi' yer lips sae white an' thin?"
"Mother, gude-bye! I'm gaein to lie
Ance mair wi' my body-twin."

Up she brade, but awa he gaed
Straucht for the corbie-tree;
For quhaur he had slain he thocht to slay,
An' cast him doon an' dee.

"God guide us!" he cried wi' gastit rair,
"Has he lien there ever sin' syne?"
An' he thocht he saw the banes, pykit an' bare,
Throu the cracks o' his harness shine.

"Oh Johnnie! my brither!" quo' Archibold
Wi' a hert-upheavin mane,
"I wad pit my soul i' yer wastit corp
To see ye alive again!"

"Haud ye there!" quod a voice frae oot the helm,
"A man suld heed quhat he says!"
An' the closin joints grippit an' tore the gerse
As up the armour rase:--

"Soul ye hae nane to ca' yer ain
An' its time to hand yer jaw!
The sleep it was thine, an' the soul it is mine:
Deil Archie, come awa!"

"Auld Hornie," quo' Archie, "twa words to that:
My burnin hert burns on;
An' the sleep, weel I wat, was nae reek frae thy pat,
For aye I was dreamin o' John!

"But I carena a plack for a soul sae black--
Wae's me 'at my mither bore me!
Put fire i' my breist an' fire at my back,
But ae minute set Johnnie afore me!"

The gantlets grippit the helm sae stoot
An' liftit frae chin an' broo:
An' Johnnie himsel keekit smilin oot:--
"O Archie, I hae ye noo!

"O' yer wee bit brod I was little the waur,
I crap awa my lane;

An' never a deevil cam ye nar,
'Cep ye coont yer Johnnie ane!"

Quhare quhylum his brither Johnnie lay,
Fell Archie upon his knees;
The words he said I dinna say,
But I'm sure they warnna lees.

THE LAST WOOIN.

"O lat me in, my bonny lass!
It's a lang road ower the hill,
And the flauchterin snaw begud to fa'
On the brig ayont the mill!"

"Here's nae change-hoose, John Munro!"
"I'll ken that to my cost
Gien ye gar me tak the hill the nicht,
Wi' snaw o' the back o' frost!"

But tell me, lass, what's my offence."
"Weel ken ye! At the fair
Ye lichtlied me! Ay, twasna ance!--
Ye needna come nae mair!"

"I lichtlied ye?"--"Ay, ower the glass!"
"Foul-fa' the ill-faured mou
'At made the leein word to pass
By rowin 't i' the true!"

The trouth is this: I docht na bide
To hear yer bonnie name
Whaur lawless mous war openit wide
Wi' ill-tongued scoff and blame;

And what I said was: 'Hoot, lat sit!
She's but a bairn, the lass!
It turnt the spait o' words a bit,
And loot yer fair name pass."

"Thank ye for naething, John Munro!
My name it needna hide;
It's no a drucken sough wud gar
Me turn my heid aside!"

"O Elsie, lassie, be yersel!
The snaw-stour's driftin thrang!
O tak me in, the win' 's sae snell,
And in an hour I'll gang."

"I downa pay ye guid for ill,

Ye heedna fause and true!
Gang back to Katie at the mill--
She loos sic like as you!"

He turnt his fit; she heardna mair.
The lift was like to fa';
And Elsie's hert grew grit and sair
At sicht o' the drivin snaw.

She laid her doon, but no to sleep,
Her verra hert was cauld;
And the sheets war like a frozen heap
O' drift about her faul'd.

She rase fu' air; the warl lay fair
And still in its windin-sheet;
At door-cheek, or at winnock-lug,
Was never a mark o' feet!

She crap for days about the hoose,
Dull-futtit and hert-sair,
Aye keekin oot like a hungert moose--
But Johnnie was na there!

Lang or the spring begoud to thow
The waesome, sick-faced snaw,
Her hert was saft a' throu and throu,
Her pride had ta'en a fa'.

And whan the wreaths war halfpins gane,
And the sun was blinkin bonnie,
Oot ower the hill she wud gang her lane
To speir about her Johnnie.

Half ower, she cam intil a lair
O' snaw and slush and weet:
The Lord hae mercy! what's that there?
It was Johnnie at her feet.

Aneth the snaw his heid was smorit,
But his breist was maistly bare,
And twixt his richt ban' and his hert
Lay a lock o' gouden hair.

The warm win' blew, the blackcock flew,
The lerrick muntit the skies;
The burnie ran, and a baein began,
But Johnnie wudna rise.

The sun was clear, the lift was blue,
The winter was awa;
Up cam the green gerse plentiful,
The better for the snaw;

And warm it happit Johnnie's grave
Whaur the ae lock gouden lay;
But on Elsie's hingin heid the lave
Was afore the barley gray.

HALLOWEEN.

Sweep up the flure, Janet;
Put on anither peat.
It's a lown and a starry nicht, Janet,
And nowther could nor weet.

It's the nicht atween the Sancts and Souls
Whan the bodiless gang aboot;
And it's open hoose we keep the nicht
For ony that may be oot.

Set the cheirs back to the wa', Janet;
Mak ready for quaiet fowk.
Hae a'thing as clean as a windin-sheet:
They comena ilka ook.

There's a spale upo' the flure, Janet,
And there's a rowan-berry!
Sweep them intil the fire, Janet,
Or they'll neither come nor tarry.

Syne set open the outer dure--
Wide open for wha kens wha?
As ye come ben to your bed, Janet,
Set baith dures to the wa'.

She set the cheirs back to the wa',
But ane that was o' the birk;
She sweepit the flure, but left the spale--
A lang spale o' the aik.

The nicht was lown; the stars sae still
War glintin doon the sky;
The souls crap oot o' their mooly graves,
A' dank wi' lyin by.

They faund the dure wide to the wa',
And the peats blawn rosy reid:
They war shuneless feet gaed in and oot,
Nor clampit as they gaed.

The mither she keekit but the hoose,
Saw what she ill could say;
Quakin she slidit doon by Janet,

And gaspin a whilie she lay.

There's are o' them sittin afore the fire!

Ye wudna hearken to me!

Janet, ye left a cheir by the fire,

Whaur I tauld ye nae cheir suld be!

Janet she smilit in her minnie's face:

She had brunt the roden reid,

But she left aneth the birken cheir

The spale frae a coffin-lid!

Saft she rase and gaed but the hoose,

And ilka dure did steik.

Three hours gaed by, and her minnie heard

Sound o' the deid nor quick.

Whan the gray cock crew, she heard on the flure

The fa' o' shuneless feet;

Whan the rud cock crew, she heard the dure,

And a sough o' win' and weet.

Whan the goud cock crew, Janet cam back;

Her face it was gray o' ble;

Wi' starin een, at her mither's side

She lay doon like a bairn to dee.

Her white lips hadna a word to lat fa'

Mair nor the soulless deid;

Seven lang days and nights she lay,

And never a word she said.

Syne suddent, as oot o' a sleep, she brade,

Smilin richt winsumly;

And she spak, but her word it was far and strayit,

Like a whisper come ower the sea.

And never again did they hear her lauch,

Nor ever a tear doun ran;

But a smile aye flittit about her face

Like the mune on a water wan.

And ilka nicht atween Sancts and Souls

She laid the dures to the wa',

Blew up the fire, and set the cheir,

And loot the spale doon fa'.

And at midnicht she gaed but the hoose

Aye steekin dure and dure.

Whan the goud cock crew, quaiet as a moose

She cam creepin ower the flure.

Mair wan grew her face, and her smile mair sweet

Quhill the seventh Halloweve:
Her mother she heard the shuneless feet,
Said--She'll be ben belyve!

She camna ben. Her minnie rase--
For fear she 'maist cudna stan;
She grippit the wa', and but she gaed,
For the goud cock lang had crawn.

There sat Janet upo' the birk cheir,
White as the day did daw;
But her smile was a sunglint left on the sea
Whan the sun himsel is awa.

THE LAVEROCK.

The Man says:

Laverock i' the lift,
Hae ye nae sang-thrift,
'At ye scatter 't sae heigh, and lat it a' drift?
Wasterfu laverock!

Dinna ye ken
'At ye hing ower men
Wha haena a sang or a penny to spen?
Hertless laverock!

But up there you,
I' the bow o' the blue,
Haud skirlin on as gien a' war new!
Toom-heidit laverock!

Haith, ye're ower blythe!
I see a great scythe
Swing whaur yer nestie lies, doon i' the lythe,
Liltin laverock!

Eh, sic a soun!
Birdie, come doun,
Ye're fey to sing sic a merry tune!
Gowkit laverock!

Come to yer nest;
Yer wife's sair prest,
She's clean worn oot wi' duin her best!
Rovin laverock!

Winna ye haud?
Ye're surely mad!
Is there naebody there to gie ye a dad,

Menseless laverock?

Come doon and conform,
Pyke an honest worm,
And hap yer bairns frae the comin storm,
Spendrife laverock!

The Bird sings:

My nestie it lieth
I' the how o' a ban';
The swing o' the scythe
'Ill miss 't by a span.

The lift it's sae cheery!
The win' it's sae free!
I hing ower my dearie,
And sing 'cause I see.

My wifie's wee breistie
Grows warm wi' my sang,
And ilk crumpled-up beastie
Kens no to think lang.

Up here the sun sings, but
He only shines there!
Ye haena nae wings, but
Come up on a prayer.

The man sings:

Ye wee daurin cratur,
Ye rant and ye sing
Like an oye o' auld Natur
Ta'en hame by the king!

Ye wee feathert priestie,
Yer bells i' yer thro't,
Yer altar yer breistie,
Yer mitre forgot--

Offerin and Aaron,
Ye burn hert and brain;
And dertin and daurin,
Flee back to yer ain!

Ye wee minor prophet,
It's 'maist my belief
'At I'm doon in Tophet,
And you abune grief!

Ye've deavt me and daudit
And ca'd me a fule:

I'm nearhan' persuaudit
To gang to your schule!

For, birdie, I'm thinkin
Ye ken mair nor me--
Gien ye haena been drinkin,
And sing as ye see.

Ye maun hae a sicht 'at
Sees gay and far ben,
And a hert, for the micht o' 't,
Wad sair for nine men!

There's somebody's been til
Roun saft to ye wha
Said birdies are seen til,
And e'en whan they fa'!

GODLY BALLANTS.

I.--THIS SIDE AN' THAT.

The rich man sat in his father's seat--
Purple an' linen, an' a'thing fine!
The puir man lay at his yett i' the street--
Sairs an' tatters, an' weary pine!

To the rich man's table ilk dainty comes,
Mony a morsel gaed frae't, or fell;
The puir man fain wud hae dined on the crumbs,
But whether he got them I canna tell.

Servants prood, saft-fittit, an' stoot,
Stan by the rich man's curtained doors;
Maisterless dogs 'at rin about
Cam to the puir man an' lickit his sores.

The rich man deeit, an' they buried him gran',
In linen fine his body they wrap;
But the angels tuik up the beggar man,
An' layit him down in Abraham's lap.

The guid upo' this side, the ill upo' that--
Sic was the rich man's waesome fa'!
But his brithers they eat, an' they drink, an' they chat,
An' carena a strae for their Father's ha'!

The trowth's the trowth, think what ye will;
An' some they kenna what they wad be at;
But the beggar man thought he did no that ill,
Wi' the dogs o' this side, the angels o' that!

II.--THE TWA BAUBEEES.

Stately, lang-robit, an' steppin at ease,
The rich men gaed up the temple ha';
Hasty, an' grippin her twa baubees,
The widow cam efter, booit an' sma'.

Their goud rang lood as it fell, an' lay
Yallow an' glintin, bonnie an' brow;
But the fowk roun the Maister h'ard him say
The puir body's baubees was mair nor it a'.

III.--WHA'S MY NEIBOUR?

Doon frae Jerus'lem a traveller took
The laigh road to Jericho;
It had an ill name an' mony a crook,
It was lang an' unco how.

Oot cam the robbers, an' fell o' the man,
An' knockit him o' the heid,
Took a' whauron they couth lay their han',
An' left him nakit for deid.

By cam a minister o' the kirk:
"A sair mishanter!" he cried;
"Wha kens whaur the villains may lirk!
I s' haud to the ither side!"

By cam an elder o' the kirk;
Like a young horse he shied:
"Fie! here's a bonnie mornin's wark!"
An' he spangt to the ither side.

By cam ane gaed to the wrang kirk;
Douce he trottit alang.
"Puir body!" he cried, an' wi' a yerk
Aff o' his cuddy he sprang.

He ran to the body, an' turnt it ower:
"There's life i' the man!" he cried.
He wasna ane to stan an' glower,
Nor hand to the ither side!

He doctort his oons, an' heised him then
To the back o' the beastie douce;
An' he heild him on till, twa weary men,
They wan to the half-way hoose.

He ten'd him a' nicht, an' o' the morn did say,
"Lan'lord, latna him lack;
Here's auchteen pence!--an' ony mair ootlay

I'll saddle 't as I come back."

Sae tak til ye, neibours; read aricht the word;
It's a portion o' God's ain spell!
"Wha is my neibour?" speirna the Lord,
But, "Am I a neibour?" yersel.

IV.--HIM WI' THE BAG.

Ance was a woman wha's hert was gret;
Her love was sae dumb it was 'maist a grief;
She brak the box--it's tellt o' her yet--
The bonny box for her hert's relief.

Ane was there wha's tale's but brief,
Yet was ower lang, the gait he cawed;
He luikit a man, and was but a thief,
Michty the gear to grip and hand.

"What guid," he cried, "sic a boxfu to blaud?
Wilfu waste I couth never beir!
It micht hae been sellt for ten poun, I wad--
Sellt for ten poun, and gien to the puir!"

Savin he was, but for love o' the gear;
Carefu he was, but a' for himsel;
He carried the bag to his hert sae near
What fell i' the ane i' the ither fell.

And the strings o' his hert hingit doun to hell,
They war pu'd sae ticht about the mou;
And hence it comes that I hae to tell
The warst ill tale that ever was true.

The hert that's greedy maun mischief brew,
And the deils pu'd the strings doon yon'er in hell;
And he sauld, or the agein mune was new,
For thirty shillins the Maister himsel!

Gear i' the hert it's a canker fell:
Brithers, latna the siller ben!
Troth, gien ye du, I warn ye ye'll sell
The verra Maister or ever ye ken!

V.--THE COORSE CRATUR.

The Lord gaed wi' a crood o' men
Throu Jericho the bonny;
'Twas ill the Son o' Man to ken
Mang sons o' men sae mony:

The wee bit son o' man Zacchay
To see the Maister seekit;

He speilt a fig-tree, bauld an' shy,
An' sae his shortness ekit.

But as he thought to see his back,
Roun turnt the haill face til 'im,
Up luikit straucht, an' til 'im spak--
His hert gaed like to kill 'im.

"Come doun, Zacchay; bestir yersel;
This nicht I want a lodgin."
Like a ripe aipple 'maist he fell,
Nor needit ony nudgin.

But up amang the unco guid
There rase a murmurin won'er:
"This is a deemis want o' heed,
The man's a special sinner!"

Up spak Zacchay, his hert ableeze:
"Half mine, the puir, Lord, hae it;
Gien oucht I've taen by ony lees,
Fourfauld again I pay it!"

Then Jesus said, "This is a man!
His hoose I'm here to save it;
He's are o' Abraham's ain clan,
An' siclike has behavit!

I cam the lost to seek an' win."--
Zacchay was are he wantit:
To ony man that left his sin
His grace he never scantit.

THE DEIL'S FORHOOIT HIS AIN.

_The Deil's forhooit his ain, his ain!
The Deil's forhooit his ain!
His bairns are greitin in ilka neuk,
For the Deil's forhooit his ain._

The Deil he tuik his stick and his hat,
And his yallow gluves on he drew:
"The coal's sae dear, and the preachin sae flat.
And I canna be aye wi' you!"

The Deil's, &c.

"But I'll gie ye my blessin afore I gang,
Wi' jist ae word o' advice;
And gien onything efter that gaes wrang
It'll be yer ain wull and ch'ice!

"Noo hark: There's diseases gaein aboot,
Whiles are, and whiles a' thegither!
Ane's ca'd Repentance--haith, hand it oot!
It comes wi' a change o' weather.

"For that, see aye 'at ye're gude at the spune
And tak yer fair share o' the drink;
Gien ye dinna, I wadna won'er but sune
Ye micht 'maist begin to think!

"Neist, luik efter yer liver; that's the place
Whaur Conscience gars ye fin'!
Some fowk has mair o' 't, and some has less--
It comes o' breedin in.

"But there's waur nor diseases gaein aboot,
There's a heap o' fair-spoken lees;
And there's naething i' natur, in or oot,
'At waur with the health agrees.

"There's what they ca' Faith, 'at wad aye be fain;
And Houp that glowers, and tynes a';
And Love, that never yet found its ain,
But aye turnt its face to the wa'.

"And Trouth--the sough o' a sickly win';
And Richt--what needna be;
And Beauty--nae deeper nor the skin;
And Blude--that's naething but bree.

"But there's ae gran' doctor for a' and mair--
For diseases and lees in a breath--
My bairns, I lea' ye wi'oot a care
To yer best freen, Doctor Death.

"He'll no distress ye: as quaiet's a cat
He grips ye, and a'thing's ower;
There's naething mair 'at ye wad be at,
There's never a sweet nor sour!

"They ca' 't a sleep, but it's better bliss,
For ye wauken up no more;
They ca' 't a mansion--and sae it is,
And the coffin-lid's the door!

"Jist ae word mair---and it's _verbum sat_--
I hae preacht it mony's the year:
Whaur there's naething ava to be frictit at
There's naething ava to fear.

"I dinna say 'at there isna a hell--
To lee wad be a disgrace!

I bide there whan I'm at hame mysel,
And it's no sic a byous ill place!

"Ye see yon blue thing they ca' the lift?
It's but hell turnt upside down,
A whummilt bossie, whiles fou o' drift,
And whiles o' a rumlin soun!

"Lat auld wives tell their tales i' the reek,
Men hae to du wi' fac's:
There's naebody there to watch, and keek
Intil yer wee mistaks.

"But nor ben there's naebody there
Frae the yird to the farthest spark;
Ye'll rub the knees o' yer breeks to the bare
Afore ye'll pray ye a sark!

"Sae fare ye weel, my bonny men,
And weel may ye thrive and the!
Gien I dinna see ye some time again
It'll be 'at ye're no to see."

He cockit his hat ower ane o' his cheeks,
And awa wi' a halt and a spang--
For his tail was doun ae leg o' his breeks,
And his butes war a half ower lang.

_The Deil's forhooit his ain, his ain!
The Deil's forhooit his ain!
His bairns are greitin in ilka neuk,
For the Deil's forhooit his ain._

THE AULD FISHER.

There was an auld fisher, he sat by the wa',
An' luiokit oot ower the sea;
The bairnies war playin, he smil't on them a',
But the tear stude in his e'e.

_An' it's--oh to win awa, awa!
An' it's, oh to win awa
Whaur the bairns come hame, an' the wives they bide,
An' God is the father o' a'!_

Jocky an' Jeamy an' Tammy oot there
A' i' the boatie gaed doon;
An' I'm ower auld to fish ony mair,
Sae I hinna the chance to droon!

An' it's--oh to win awa, awa! &c.

An' Jeannie she grat to ease her hert,
An' she easit hersel awa;
But I'm ower auld for the tears to stert,
An' sae the sighs maun blaw.

An' it's--oh to win awa, awa! &c.

Lord, steer me hame whaur my Lord has steerit,
For I'm tired o' life's rockin sea;
An' dinna be lang, for I'm growin that fearit
'At I'm ablins ower auld to dee!

_An' it's--oh to win awa, awa!
An' it's, oh to win awa
Whaur the bairns come hame, an' the wives they bide,
An' God is the father o' a'!_

THE HERD AND THE MAVIS.

"What gars ye sing," said the herd-laddie,
"What gars ye sing sae lood?"
"To tice them oot o' the yerd, laddie,
The worms for my daily food."

_An' aye he sang, an' better he sang,
An' the worms creepit in an' oot;
An' ane he tuik, an' twa he loot gang,
An' still he carolled stoot._

"It's no for the worms, sir," said the herd;
"They comena for your sang!"
"Think ye sae, sir?" answered the bird,
"Maybe ye're no i' the wrang!"

But aye &c.

"Sing ye young Sorrow to beguile,
Or to gie auld Fear the flegs?"
"Na," quo' the mavis, "I sing to wile
My wee things oot o' her eggs."

An' aye &c.

"The mistress is plenty for that same gear
Though ye sangna air nor late!"
"I wud draw the deid frae the moul sae drear.
An' open the kirkyard-gate."

An' aye &c.

"Better ye sing nor a burn i' the mune,
Nor a wave ower san' that flows,
Nor a win' wi' the glintin stars abune,
An' aneth the roses in rows;

An' aye &c.

But a better sang it wud tak nor yer ain,
Though ye hae o' notes a feck,
To mak the auld Barebanes there sae fain
As to lift the muckle sneck!

An' aye &c.

An' ye wudna draw ae bairnie back
Frae the arms o' the bonny man
Though its minnie was greitin alas an' alack,
An' her cries to the bairnie wan!

An' aye &c.

An' I'll speir ye nae mair, sir," said the herd,
"I fear what ye micht say neist!"
"I doobt ye wud won'er, sir," said the bird,
"To see the thouchts i' my breist!"

_An' aye he sang, an' better he sang,
An' the worms creepit in an' oot;
An' ane he tuik, an' twa he loot gang,
An' still he carolled stoot._

A LOWN NICHT.

Rose o' my hert,
Open yer leaves to the lampin mune;
Into the curls lat her keek an' dert,
She'll tak the colour but gie ye tune.

Buik o' my brain,
Open yer faulds to the starry signs;
Lat the e'en o' the holy luik an' strain,
Lat them glimmer an' score atween the lines.

Cup o' my soul,
Goud an' diamond an' ruby cup,
Ye're noucht ava but a toom dry bowl
Till the wine o' the kingdom fill ye up.

Conscience-glass,
Mirror the en'less All in thee;
Melt the bounded and make it pass

Into the tideless, shoreless sea.

Warl o' my life,
Swing thee roun thy sunny track;
Fire an' win' an' water an' strife,
Carry them a' to the glory back.

THE HOME OF DEATH.

"Death, whaur do ye bide, auld Death?"
"I bide in ilka breath,"
Quo' Death;
"No i' the pyramids,
No whaur the wormie rids
'Neth coffin-lids;
I bidena whaur life has been,
An' whaur's nae mair to be dune."

"Death, whaur do ye bide, auld Death?"
"Wi' the leevin, to dee 'at are laith,"
Quo' Death;
"Wi' the man an' the wife
'At loo like life,
Bot strife;
Wi' the bairns 'at hing to their mither,
Wi' a' 'at loo ane anither."

"Death, whaur do ye bide, auld Death?"
"Abune an' about an' aneth,"
Quo' Death;
"But o' a' the airts
An' o' a' the pairts,
In herts--
Whan the tane to the tither says, Na,
An' the north win' begins to blow."

TRIOLET.

I'm a puir man I grant,
But I am weel neiboured;
And nane shall me daunt
Though a puir man, I grant;
For I shall not want--
The Lord is my Shepherd!
I'm a puir man I grant,
But I am weel neiboured!

WIN' THAT 'BLAWS.

Win' that blows the simmer plaid
Ower the hie hill's shooters laid,
Green wi' gerse, an' reid wi' heather--
Welcome wi' yer sowl-like weather!
Mony a win' there has been sent
Oot aneth the firmament--
Ilka ane its story has;
Ilka ane began an' was;
Ilka ane fell quaiet an' mute
Whan its angel wark was oot:
First gaed are oot throu the mirk
Whan the maker gan to work;
Ower it gaed an' ower the sea,
An' the warl begud to be.
Mony are has come an' gane
Sin' the time there was but ane:
Ane was grit an' strong, an' rent
Rocks an' muntains as it went
Afore the Lord, his trumpeter,
Waukin up the prophet's ear;
Ane was like a stepping soun
I' the mulberry taps abune--
Them the Lord's ain steps did swing,
Walkin on afore his king;
Ane lay dune like scoldit pup
At his feet, an' gatna up--
Whan the word the Maister spak
Drave the wull-cat billows back;
Ane gaed frae his lips, an' dang
To the yird the sodger thrang;
Ane comes frae his hert to mine
Ilka day to mak it fine.
Breath o' God, eh! come an' blaw
Frae my hert ilk fog awa;
Wauk me up an' mak me strang,
Fill my hert wi' mony a sang,
Frae my lips again to stert
Fillin sails o' mony a hert,
Blawin them ower seas dividin
To the only place to bide in.

A SONG OF HOPE.

I dinna ken what's come ower me!
There's a how whaur ance was a hert!
I never luik oot afore me,
An' a cry winna gar me stert;
There's naething nae mair to come ower me,
Blaw the win' frae ony airt!

For i' yon kirkyard there's a hillock,
A hert whaur ance was a how;
An' o' joy there's no left a mealock--
Deid aiss whaur ance was a low!
For i' yon kirkyard, i' the hillock,
Lies a seed 'at winna grow.

It's my hert 'at hauds up the wee hillie--
That's hoo there's a how i' my breist;
It's awa doon there wi' my Willie--
Gaed wi' him whan he was releast;
It's doon i' the green-grown hillie,
But I s' be efter it neist!

Come awa, nicht an' mornin,
Come ooks, years, a' Time's clan:
Ye're welcome: I'm no a bit scornin!
Tak me til him as fest as ye can.
Come awa, nicht an' mornin,
Ye are wings o' a mighty span!

For I ken he's luikin an' waitin,
Luikin aye doon as I clim;
An' I'll no hae him see me sit greitin
I'stead o' gaein to him!
I'll step oot like ane sure o' a meetin,
I'll travel an' rin to him.

THE BURNIE.

The water ran doon frae the heich hope-heid,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin;
It wimpled, an' waggled, an' sang a screed
O' nonsense, an' wadna blin
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin.

Frae the hert o' the warl, wi' a swirl an' a sway,
An' a Rin, burnie, rin,
That water lap clear frae the dark til the day,
An' singin awa did spin,
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin.

Ae wee bit mile frae the heich hope-heid
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin,
Mang her yows an' her lammies the herd-lassie stude,
An' she loot a tear fa' in,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin.

Frae the hert o' the maiden that tear-drap rase
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin;

Wear'ly clim'in up weary ways
There was but a drap to fa' in,
Sae laith did that burnie rin.

Twa wee bit miles frae the heich hope-heid
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin,
Doon creepit a cowerin streakie o' reid,
An' it meltit awa within
The burnie 'at aye did rin.

Frae the hert o' a youth cam the tricklin reid,
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin;
It ran an' ran till it left him deid,
An' syne it dried up i' the win':
That burnie nae mair did rin.

Whan the wimplin burn that frae three herts gaed
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin,
Cam to the lip o' the sea sae braid,
It curled an' groued wi' pain o' sin--
But it tuik that burnie in.

HAME.

The warl it's dottit wi' hames
As thick as gowans o' the green,
Aye bonnier ilk ane nor the lave
To him wha there opent his een.

An' mony an' bonny's the hame
That lies neth auld Scotlan's crests,
Her hills an' her mountains they are the sides
O' a muckle nest o' nests.

His lies i' the dip o' a muir
Wi' a twa three elder trees,
A lanely cot wi' a sough o' win',
An' a simmer bum o' bees;

An' mine in a bloomin strath,
Wi' a river rowin by,
Wi' the green corn glintin i' the sun,
An' a lowin o' the kye;

An' yours whaur the chimleys auld
Stan up i' the gloamin pale
Wi' the line o' a gran' sierra drawn
On the lift as sharp's wi' a nail.

But whether by ingle-neuk
On a creepie ye sookit yer thumb,

Dreamin, an' watchin the blue peat-reek
Wamle oot up the muckle lum,

Or yer wee feet sank i' the fur
Afore a bleezin hearth,
Wi' the curtains drawn, shuttin oot the toon--
Aberdeen, Auld Reekie, or Perth,

It's a naething, nor here nor there;
Leal Scots are a'ane thegither!
Ilk ane has a hame, an' it's a' the same
Whether in clover or heather!

An' the hert aye turns to the hame--
That's whaur oor ain folk wons;
An' gien hame binna hame, the hert bauds ayont
Abune the stars an' the suns.

For o' a' the hames there's a hame
Herty an' warm an' wide,
Whaur a' that maks hame ower the big roun earth
Gangs til its hame to bide.

THE SANG O' THE AULD FOWK.

Doon cam the sunbeams, and up gaed the stour,
As we spangt ower the road at ten mile the hoor,
The horse wasna timmer, the cart wasna strae,
And little cared we for the burn or the brae.

We war young, and the hert in's was strang i' the loup,
And deeper in yet was the courage and houp;
The sun was gey aft in a clood, but the heat
Cam throu, and dried saftly the doon fa'en weet.

Noo, the horsie's some tired, but the road's nae sae lang;
The sun comes na oot, but he's no in a fang:
The nicht's comin on, but hame's no far awa;
We hae come a far road, but hae payit for a'.

For ane has been wi' us--and sometimes 'maist seen,
Wha's cared for us better nor a' oor four e'en;
He's cared for the horsie, the man, and the wife,
And we're gaein hame to him for the rest o' oor life.

Doon comes the water, and up gangs nae stour;
We creep ower the road at twa mile the hoor;
But oor herts they are canty, for ane's to the fore
Wha was and wha is and will be evermore.

THE AULD MAN'S PRAYER

Lord, I'm an auld man,
An' I'm deein!
An' do what I can
I canna help bein
Some feart at the thocht!
I'm no what I oucht!
An' thou art sae gran',
Me but an auld man!

I haena gotten muckle
Guid o' the warld;
Though siller a puckle
Thegither I hae hart,
Noo I maun be rid o' 't,
The ill an' the guid o' 't!
An' I wud--I s' no back frae 't--
Rather put til 't nor tak frae 't!

It's a pity a body
Coudna haud on here,
Puttin cloddy to cloddy
Till he had a bit lan' here!--
But eh I'm forgettin
Whaur the tide's settin!
It'll pusion my prayer
Till it's no worth a hair!

It's awfu, it's awfu
To think 'at I'm gaein
Whaur a' 's ower wi' the lawfu,
Whaur's an en' til a' haein!
It's gruesome to en'
The thing 'at ye ken,
An' gang to begin til
What ye canna see intil!

Thou may weel turn awa,
Lord, an' say it's a shame
'At noo I suld ca'
On thy licht-giein name
Wha my lang life-time
Wud no see a stime!
An' the fac' there's no fleein--
But hae pity--I'm deein!

I'm thine ain efter a'--
The waur shame I'm nae better!
Dinna sen' me awa,
Dinna curse a puir cratur!
I never jist cheatit--

I own I defeatit,
Gart his poverty tell
On him 'at maun sell!

Oh that my probation
Had lain i' some region
Whaur was less consideration
For gear mixt wi' religion!
It's the mixin the twa
'At jist ruins a'!
That kirk's the deil's place
Whaur gear glorifees grace!

I hae learnt nought but ae thing
'At life's but a span!
I hae warslet for naething!
I hae noucht i' my han'!
At the fut o' the stairs
I'm sayin my prayers:--
Lord, lat the auld loon
Confess an' lie doon.

I hae been an ill man--
Micht hae made a guid dog!
I could rin though no stan--
Micht hae won throu a bog!
But 't was ower easy gaein,
An' I set me to playin!
Dinna sen' me awa
Whaur's no licht ava!

Forgie me an' hap me!
I hae been a sharp thorn.
But, oh, dinna drap me!
I'll be coothie the morn!
To my brither John
Oh, lat me atone--
An' to mair I cud name
Gien I'd time to tak blame!

I hae wullt a' my gear
To my cousin Lippit:
She needs 't no a hair,
An' wud haud it grippit!
But I'm thinkin 't 'll be better
To gie 't a bit scatter
Whaur it winna canker
But mak a bit anchor!

Noo I s'try to sit loose
To the warld an' its thrang!
Lord, come intil my hoose,
For Sathan sall gang!

Awa here I sen' him--
Oh, haud the hoose agane him,
Or thou kens what he'll daur--
He'll be back wi' seven waur!

Lord, I knock at thy yett!
I hear the dog yowlin!
Lang latna me wait--
My conscience is growlin!
Whaur but to thee
Wha was broken for me,
But to thee, Lord, sae gran',
Can flee an auld man!

GRANNY CANTY.

"What maks ye sae canty, granny dear?
Has some kin' body been for ye to speir?
Ye luik as smilin an' fain an' willin
As gien ye had fun a bonny shillin!"

"Ye think I luik canty, my bonny man,
Sittin watchin the last o' the sun sae gran'?
Weel, an' I'm thinkin ye're no that wrang,
For 'deed i' my hert there's a wordless sang!

"Ken ye the meanin o' _canty_, my dow?
It's bein i' the humour o' singin, I trow!
An' though nae sang ever crosses my lips
I'm aye like to sing whan anither sun dips.

"For the time, wee laddie, the time grows lang
Sin' I saw the man wha's sicht was my sang--
Yer gran'father, that's--an' the sun's last glim
Says aye to me, 'Lass, ye're a mile nearer him!

"For he's hame afore me, an' lang's the road!
He fain at my side wud hae timed his plod,
But, eh, he was sent for, an' hurried awa!
Noo, I'm thinkin he's harkin to hear my fit-fa'."

"But, grannie, yer face is sae lirkie an' thin,
Wi' a doun-luikin nose an' an up-luikin chin,
An' a mou clumpit up oot o' sicht atween,
Like the witherin half o' an auld weary mune!"

"Hoot, laddie, ye needna glower yersel blin!
The body 'at loos, sees far throu the skin;
An', believe me or no, the hoor's comin amain
Whan ugly auld fowk 'ill be bonny again.

"For there is _ane_--an' it's no my dear man,
Though I loo him as nane but a wife's hert can--
The joy o' beholdin wha's gran' lovely face
Til mak me like him in a' 'at's ca'd grace.

"But what I am like I carena a strae
Sae lang as I'm _his_, an' what _he_ wud hae!
Be ye a guid man, John, an' ae day ye'll ken
What maks granny canty yont four score an' ten."

TIME.

A lang-backit, spilgie, fuistit auld carl
Gangs a' nicht rakin athort the warl
Wi' a pock on his back, luikin hungry an' lean,
His crook-fingert han' aye followin his e'en:
He gathers up a'thing that canna but fa'--
Intil his bag wi' 't, an' on, an' awa!
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!--
Intil his bag wi' 't, an' on, an' awa!

But whan he comes to the wa' o' the warl,
Spangs up it, like lang-leggit spider, the carl;
Up gangs his pock wi' him, humpit ahin,
For naething fa's oot 'at ance he pat in;
Syne he warstles doon ootside the flamin wa',
His bag 'maist the deith o' him, pangt like a ba';
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!
His bag 'maist throttlin him, pangt like a ba'!

Doon he draps weary upon a laigh rock,
Flingin aside him his muckle-mou'd pock:
An' there he sits, his heid in his han',
Like a broken-hertit, despairin man;
Him air his pock no bonny, na, na!
Him an' his pock an ugsome twa!
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!
Him an' his pock an ugsome twa!

But sune 's the first ray o' the sunshine bare
Lichts on the carl, what see ye there?
An angel set on eternity's brink,
Wi' e'en to gar the sun himsel blink;
By his side a glintin, glimmerin urn,
Furth frae wha's mou rins a liltin burn:--
Soot an' snaw! soot an' snaw!
The dirt o' the warl rins in glory awa!

WHAT THE AULD FOWK ARE THINKIN.

The bairns i' their beds, worn oot wi' nae wark,
Are sleepin, nor ever an eelid winkin;
The auld fowk lie still wi' their een starin stark,
An' the mirk pang-fou o' the things they are thinkin.

Whan oot o' ilk corner the bairnies they keek,
Lauchin an' daffin, airms loosin an' linkin,
The auld fowk they watch frae the warm ingle-cheek,
But the bairns little think what the auld fowk are thinkin.

Whan the auld fowk sit quaiet at the reet o' a stook,
I' the sunlicht their washt een blinterin an' blinkin,
Fowk scythin, or bin'in, or shearin wi' heuk
Carena a strae what the auld fowk are thinkin.

At the kirk, whan the minister's dreich an' dry,
His fardens as gien they war gowd guineas chinkin,
An' the young fowk are noddin, or fidgetin sly,
Naebody kens what the auld fowk are thinkin.

Whan the young fowk are greitin about the bed
Whaur like water throu san' the auld life is sinkin,
An' some wud say the last word was said,
The auld fowk smile, an' ken what they're thinkin.

GREITNA, FATHER

Greitna, father, that I'm gauin,
For fu' well ye ken the gaet;
I' the winter, corn ye're sawin,
I' the hairst again ye hae't.

I'm gauin hame to see my mither;
She'll be weel acquaint or this!
Sair we'll muse at ane anither
'Tween the auld word an' new kiss!

Love I'm doobtin may be scanty
Roun ye efter I'm awa:
Yon kirkyard has happin plenty
Close aside me, green an' brow!

An' abune there's room for mony;
'Twasna made for ane or twa,
But was aye for a' an' ony
Countin love the best ava.

There nane less ye'll be my father;
Auld names we'll nor tyne nor spare!
A' my sonship I maun gather

For the Son is king up there.

Greitna, father, that I'm gauin,
For ye ken fu' well the gaet!
Here, in winter, cast yer sawin,
There, in hairst, again ye hae't!

I KEN SOMETHING.

What gars ye sing sae, birdie,
As gien ye war lord o' the lift?
On breid ye're an unco sma' lairdie,
But in hicht ye've a kingly gift!

A' ye hae to coont yersel rich in
'S a wee mawn o' glory-motes!
The whilk to the throne ye're aye hitchin
Wi a lang tow o' sapphire notes!

Ay, yer sang's the sang o' an angel
For a sinfu' thrapple no meet,
Like the pipes til a heavenly braingel
Whaur they dance their herts intil their feet!

But though ye canna behaud, birdie,
Ye needna gar a'thing wheesht!
I'm noucht but a hirplin herdie,
But I hae a sang i' my breist!

Len' me yer throat to sing throu,
Len' me yer wings to gang hie,
And I'll sing ye a sang a laverock to cow,
And for bliss to gar him dee!

MIRLS.

The stars are steady abune;
I' the water they flichter and flee;
But, steady aye, luikin doon
They ken theirsels i' the sea.

A' licht, and clear, and free,
God, thou shonest abune;
Yet luik, and see thysel in me,
Aye on me luikin doon.

* * * * *

Throu the heather an' how gaed the creepin thing,

But abune was the waff o' an angel's wing.

* * * * *

Hither an' thither, here an' awa,
Into the dub ye maunna fa';
Oot o' the dub wad ye come wi' speed,
Ye maun lift yer han's abune yer heid.

* * * * *

Whaur's nor sun nor mune,
Laigh things come abune.

* * * * *

My thouchts are like worms in a starless gloamin
My hert's like a sponge that's fillit wi' gall;
My soul's like a bodiless ghaist sent a roamin
I' the haar an' the mirk till the trumpet call.

Lord, turn ilk worm til a butterflee,
Wring oot my hert, an' fill 't frae thy ain;
My soul syne in patience its weird will dree,
An' luik for the mornin throu the rain.

THE END.

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hae't.

I'm gain hame to see my mither;

She'll be weel acquaint or this!

Sair we'll muse at ane anither

'Tween the auld word an' new kiss!

Love I'm doobtin may be scanty

Roun ye efter I'm awa:

Yon kirkyard has happin plenty

Close aside me, green an' braw!

An' abune there's room for mony;

'Twasna made for ane or twa,

But was aye for a' an' ony

Countin love the best ava.

There nane less ye'll be my father;

Auld names we'll nor tyne nor spare!

A' my sonship I maun gather

For the Son is king up there.

Greitna, father, that I'm gainin,

For ye ken fu' well the gaet!

Here, in winter, cast yer sawin,

There, in hairst, again ye hae't!

I KEN SOMETHING.

What gars ye sing sae, birdie,

As gien ye war lord o' the lift?

On breid ye're an unco sma' lairdie,

But in hicht ye've a kingly gift!

A' ye hae to coont yersel rich in

'S a wee mawn o' glory-motes!

The whilk to the throne ye're aye hitchin

Wi a lang tow o' sapphire notes!

Ay, yer sang's the sang o' an angel

For a sinfu' thrapple no meet,

Like the pipes til a heavenly braingel

Whaur they dance their herts intil their feet!

But though ye canna behaud, birdie,

Ye needna gar a'thing wheesht!

I'm noucht but a hirplin herdie,

But I hae a sang i' my breist!

Len' me yer throat to sing throu,

Len' me yer wings to gang hie,

And I'll sing ye a sang a laverock to cow,

And for bliss to gar him dee!

MIRLS.

The stars are steady abune;

I' the water they flichter and flee;

But, steady aye, luikin doon

They ken theirsels i' the sea.

A' licht, and clear, and free,

God, thou shonest abune;

Yet luik, and see thysel in me,

Aye on me luikin doon.

* * * * *

Throu the heather an' how gaed the creepin thing,

But abune was the waff o' an angel's wing.

* * * * *

Hither an' thither, here an' awa,

Into the dub ye maunna fa';

Oot o' the dub wad ye come wi' speed,

Ye maun lift yer han's abune yer heid.

* * * * *

Whaur's nor sun nor mune,

Laigh things come abune.

* * * * *

My thoughts are like worms in a starless gloamin

My hert's like a sponge that's fillit wi' gall;

My soul's like a bodiless ghaist sent a roamin

I' the haar an' the mirk till the trumpet call.

Lord, turn ilk worm til a butterflee,

Wring oot my hert, an' fill 't frae thy ain;

My soul syne in patience its weird will dree,

An' luik for the mornin throu the rain.

THE END.

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