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Poems: Patriotic, Religious, Miscellaneous

By Abram J. Ryan, (Father Ryan)

June, 1997 [Etext #937]

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Father Ryan's Poems

By Abram J. Ryan, (Father Ryan)

Introduction:

In preparing this electronic text of Father Ryan's poems, I was struck by the biased nature of the memoir included. While I will not gainsay anyone's right to their beliefs, I believe it is clearly evident from the poems themselves that Father Ryan believed strongly in the Southern Cause, and I do not believe his reaction was entirely emotional, as seems to be implied. The Memoir also makes mention of Father Ryan's poem "Reunited", as evidence of his support for the reunification of the States. To be fair to Ryan, I would note that such stanzas as

"The Northern heart and the Southern heart
May beat in peace again;

"But still till time's last day,
Whatever lips may plight,
The blue is blue, but the gray is gray,
Wrong never accords with Right."

in 'Sentinel Songs', are much more common in his poems.

I believe it important to notice this, as it demonstrates that while Ryan loved Peace, he never forsook the Cause.

Regarding his possible dates of birth, I can do no better than the Memoir included, but I can at least match places with dates, to wit: Hagerstown, Md., on 5 February 1838; or Norfolk, Virginia, sometime in 1838 or 15 August 1839. His full name was Abram Joseph Ryan, and he was the son of Matthew and Mary (Coughlin) Ryan. He was ordained in 1856 and he taught at Niagara, N.Y. and Cape Girardeau, Missouri, before he became a chaplain in the Confederate Army in 1862. He edited several publications, including the "Pacificator", the Catholic weekly "The Star" (New Orleans), and "The Banner of the South" in Augusta, Georgia. He was the pastor of St. Mary's Church in Mobile, Alabama from 1870 to 1883. He died at a Franciscan Monastery at Louisville, Kentucky, on 22 April 1886. He is buried in Mobile.

His most famous poem is "The Conquered Banner", which had its measure inspired by a Gregorian hymn.

Alan R. Light, May, 1996, Birmingham, Alabama.

[Note on text: Italicized words or phrases are marked by tildes (~).
Some obvious errors have been corrected.]

Poems: Patriotic, Religious, Miscellaneous.

By Abram J. Ryan, (Father Ryan).

Containing his posthumous poems.

"All Rests with those who Read. A work or thought
Is what each makes it to himself, and may
Be full of great dark meanings, like the sea,
With shoals of life rushing; or like the air,
Benighted with the wing of the wild dove,
Sweeping miles broad o'er the far southwestern woods
With mighty glimpses of the central light --
Or may be nothing -- bodiless, spiritless."
-- Festus.

[Based on the 1880 edition, the 1896 edition (New York)
from which this was transcribed also includes Ryan's posthumous poems.]

THESE
SIMPLE RHYMES
ARE LAID AS A GARLAND OF LOVE
AT THE FEET OF HIS MOTHER
BY HER CHILD THE
AUTHOR

Preface

These verses (which some friends call by the higher title of Poems, to which appellation the author objects) were written at random -- off and on, here, there, anywhere -- just when the mood came, with little of study and less of art, and always in a hurry.

Hence they are incomplete in finish, as the author is; tho' he thinks they are true in tone. His feet know more of the humble steps that lead up to the Altar and its Mysteries than of the steeps that lead up to Parnassus and the Home of the Muses. And souls were always more to him than songs. But still, somehow -- and he could not tell why -- he sometimes tried to sing. Here are his simple songs. He never dreamed of taking even lowest place in the rank of authors. But friends persisted; and, finally, a young lawyer friend, who has entire charge of his business in the book, forced him to front the world and its critics. There are verses connected with the war published in this volume, not for harm-sake, nor for hate-sake, but simply because the author wrote them. He could write again in the same tone and key, under the same circumstances. No more need be said, except that these verses mirror the mind of
THE AUTHOR.

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Memoir of Father Ryan

By John Moran

It is regretted that the materials at hand at this writing are not sufficient to warrant as extended a notice as the publishers of the present enlarged volume of Father Ryan's poems would wish, and as the many friends and admirers of the dead priest and poet desire. So distinguished a character and so brilliant a man cannot be passed over lightly, or dealt with sparingly, if the demand of his friends and the public generally would be satisfied even in a moderate degree; for Father Ryan's fame is the inheritance of a great and enlightened nation, and his writings have passed into history to emblazon its pages and enrich the literature of the present and succeeding ages, since it is confidently believed that, with the lapse of time, his fame and his merits will grow brighter and more enduring. With this appreciation of his merits, and a realizing sense of what is due to his memory, and with an equal consciousness of his own want of ability to do justice to the subject, the writer bespeaks the indulgent criticism of those who may read the following remarks -- admittedly far short of what are due to the illustrious dead.

The exact date and place of Father Ryan's birth are not yet definitely settled. Some assert that he was born at Norfolk, Va.; others claim Hagerstown, Md., as the place of his birth; whilst there is some ground to believe that in Limerick, Ireland, he first saw the light. The same uncertainty exists as to time. Some claim to know that he was born in 1834, whilst others fix with equal certainty, the year 1836 as the time. In the midst of these

conflicting statements, the writer prefers to leave the questions at issue for future determination, when it is hoped that final and conclusive proof will be obtained to place them outside the realms of dispute. Meanwhile, he will present what may be regarded as of primary importance in forming a correct estimate of the character of the deceased, and the value of his life-work, which, after all, are the chief ends sought to be accomplished.

From the most reliable information that can be obtained, it is learned that Father Ryan went to St. Louis with his parents when a lad of some seven or eight years. There he received his early training under the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Even at that early date young Ryan showed signs of mental activity which gave promise of one day producing substantial and lasting results. He evinced rare aptitude for knowledge, and made rapid progress in its attainment. His thoughtful mien and modest look soon won for him the respect and friendship of his teachers and the esteem and affection of his companions. It was noticed that he had an instinctive reverence for sacred things and places, and a rich and ardent nature which bespoke deep spirituality. Discerning eyes soon recognized in the mild youth the germs of a future vocation to the priesthood. It was, therefore, prudently resolved to throw around him every possible safeguard in order to protect and cherish so rare and precious a gift. The youth himself corresponded to this design, and bent all his energies towards acquiring the necessary education to fit him for entering upon the still higher and more extended studies required for the exalted vocation to which he aspired. In due time he had made the necessary preparatory studies, and was deemed fitted to enter the ecclesiastical seminary at Niagara, N.Y., whither he went, having bid an affectionate farewell to his relatives and numerous friends, who fervently invoked heaven's blessing upon the pious youth who, they hoped, would return one day to their midst to offer up the "Clean Oblation" which is offered up "from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof."

The heart of the youth as he started for his future home was all aglow with the fervor that animated him in the pursuit of his high and holy purpose. He entered the seminary, leaving no regrets or attachments behind him. One thing only did he appear to regret -- separation from home and the loved ones to whom he had bid so affectionate an adieu. Home and parents are ever dear to the pure of heart; for around them cluster memories too precious and associations too endearing for utterance. Father -- mother -- home, "trinity of joys", whose completion and perfection are to be found only in the Trinity in Heaven -- these must ever remain bright recollections in the lives of all who cherish ennobling sentiments which do reverence to God and honor to humanity. But if such be the effect of these sentiments upon the hearts of men in general, they have a still deeper and more tender effect upon those who, in response to the call of the Master, "Follow thou Me," have abandoned all things for His sweet sake, that they may find a home hereafter in heaven, after having spent themselves in dispensing His riches and benefits to men.

Like nearly all great men, Father Ryan owed much to

the early training and example of his truly Christian mother.
Hence the deep affection he ever manifested towards her.
After the lapse of long years, we find his heart still fresh and loving,
pouring out upon the grave of his mother all the wealth of his rich mind
and the affection of his chaste heart. He tells us that
he had placed his poems upon her grave as a garland of affection.
Oh! what a beautiful offering on the part of a gifted son to a devoted mother!
Nature's richest and best gifts consecrated to nature's purest
and holiest sentiments! May we not suppose that the endearing affection
which he cherished for his mother was the source of the inspiration
which drew forth the "splendid brightness of his songs"?
This filial reverence and tender affection, could nothing more
be said in his favor, would speak volumes in his praise.
But how much more can be said, and said truly, were there pen and lips
eloquent enough to proclaim his praises! Mine are unworthy of the task;
yet mine be the duty of recalling some, at least, of the virtues and qualities
that marked him during life; for virtues and estimable qualities he had,
and they were many and conspicuous. Heaven doth know,
earth doth witness, angels have recorded, that he is worthy of praise.
Therefore, in no cold and measured terms shall the writer speak
of the dear and venerated dead, Abram J. Ryan, priest and poet --
once magic name, still revered and possessed of talismanic power.
If we cannot crown thee, O child of genius, with a wreath of justice,
let us, at least, endeavor to crown thee with a garland of love,
composed of thy own glorious deeds and achievements.

Having passed through the usual course of studies in an ecclesiastical
seminary with distinction, Father Ryan was duly ordained priest,
and soon afterwards entered upon the active duties of missionary life.
But little was heard of him until the breaking out of the late civil war,
when he entered the Confederate army as a chaplain,
and served in that capacity up to the close of the civil war.
He was then stationed at Nashville, afterwards at Clarksville, Tenn.,
and still later at Augusta, Ga., where he founded the ~Banner of the South~,
which exercised great influence over the people of that section,
and continued about five years, when Father Ryan was obliged
to suspend its publication. He then removed to Mobile, Ala.,
where he was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church in 1870,
and continued in that position until 1883, when he obtained leave of absence
from Bishop Quinlan to make an extended lecture tour of the country to further
a praiseworthy and charitable undertaking of great interest to the South.
Bishop Quinlan having died soon afterwards, Father Ryan's leave was extended
by his successor, Bishop Manucy. It was whilst engaged in this mission
that Father Ryan received his death summons.

During all these changes and journeyings, the busy brain of Father Ryan
was incessantly employed, expending itself in composing
those immortal poems which have won their way to all hearts
and elicited widespread and unmeasured praise from critics
of the highest repute. Like all true poets, Father Ryan touched
the tenderest chords of the human heart, and made them respond
to his own lofty feelings and sublime inspirations.

Of his priestly character but little need be said. His superiors and those whom he served know best how well and faithfully he discharged the sometimes severe and always onerous and responsible duties of his sacred calling. The merit of his life-work is now the measure of his reward. As he had in view only God's honor and glory, and the good of his fellow-men, and directed his labors and employed his talents to promote these ends, may we not hope that a merciful Judge has given him a recompense in excess of his deserts, since, in the bountifulness of His liberality, He is wont to bestow a reward exceeding our merits?

But it is not claimed that Father Ryan was without fault. This would be attributing to him angelic nature or equivalent perfection, against which, were he living, he would be the first to protest. He needs no such fulsome or exaggerated praise. He was a man, though not cast in the common mould, and as such let us view him. Doubtless he had his faults, and perhaps not a few; for "the best of men are only the least sinful." But as far as is known, he had no serious defects or blemishes that would mar the beauty or disturb the harmonious grandeur of his character in its entirety. Had his heart been cold and selfish, or his thoughts defiled with the sordid cares of earth, he never could have sung so sweetly or soared so sublimely into those serene and heavenly regions whither his chaste fancy led him. He delighted to roam in those far-off regions beyond the skies, whose spheres are ruled and whose realms are governed by those mysterious laws which have their fountain source in God, and whose operations are controlled by the exercise of His infinite power and love. His defects, then, did not seriously impair the integrity of his virtues, which were many and solid. Chief amongst his virtues may be named his zeal for the honor and glory of God, and devotion to the Mother of God -- the latter the necessary outgrowth of the former. The deep and earnest piety of Father Ryan towards his "Queen and Patroness", as he loved to call her, bespeaks much in his praise; for, like all truly great men of the Catholic Church, he saw that it was not only eminently proper, but also a sublime act of Christian duty, to pay filial reverence and honor to the Mother of God. Hence Father Ryan crowned Mary with many gems of rare beauty. Amongst them may be named his beautiful poem "Last of May", dedicated to the Children of Mary, of the Cathedral of Mobile, Ala. Few Catholics will read these lines without experiencing feelings of deep and tender devotion towards their Queen and Mother.

Father Ryan's was an open, manly character, in which there was no dissimulation. His generous nature and warm heart were ever moved by kind impulses and influenced by charitable feelings, as became his priestly calling. We may readily believe him when he tells us that he never wrote a line for hate's sake. He shrank instinctively from all that was mean and sordid. Generosity was a marked trait of his character, an ennobling principle of his nature, the motive power of his actions, and the mainspring of his life. Friendship was likewise congenial to his taste, if not a necessity of his nature; and with him it meant more than a name. It was a sacred union formed between kindred spirits --

a chain of affection whose binding link was fidelity.
Never was he false to its claims, nor known to have violated its obligations.
Hence he was highly esteemed during life by numerous persons
of all classes and denominations; for his sympathies
were as broad as humanity, and as far-reaching as its wants and its miseries.
Yet he was a man of deep conviction and a strict adherent to principle,
or what he conceived to be principle; for we find him long after the war
still clinging to its memories, and slow to accept its results,
which he believed were fraught with disaster to the people of his section.
A Southerner of the most pronounced kind, he was unwilling
to make any concession to his victorious opponents of the North
which could be withheld from them. Perhaps, upon reflection,
it may not appear wholly strange or inexplicable that he should have so acted.
There was, at least, some foundation for his fears with regard to
the ill fate of those of his section. Though peace had been proclaimed,
the rainbow of hope did not encircle the heavens or cast its peaceful shadow
over the South. Dark clouds loomed up over that fair and sunny land,
portentous of evil; for they were surcharged with the lightning of passion.
The chariot wheel of the conqueror had laid waste and desolate the land.
No one knew precisely what would follow; for passion's dark spirit
was abroad and ruling in high places. To make matters worse
and intensify the sufferings of the people still more, they were debarred
from participating in the political affairs of their own States.
Non-residents, and aliens in sympathy and common interest,
were appointed to rule over them, if not to oppress them.
Is it to be wondered at if some refused to bow and kiss the hands
that were uplifted against them? Among such was Father Ryan.
All honor to the man and those who stood by him! Instead of attempting
to cast obloquy upon their memory, we should do them honor
for having maintained in its integrity the dignity of the manhood
with which heaven had blessed them, when earth had deprived them
of all else that was dear and sacred to brave and honorable men!
But how differently Father Ryan acted when the oppressed people of the South
were restored to their rights, and when the great heart of the North
went out in sympathy towards them in their dire affliction
during the awful visitation of the yellow fever, when death reaped
a rich harvest in Memphis and elsewhere, and a sorrow-stricken land
was once more buried in ruin and desolation! It was then, indeed,
that Father Ryan and all good men beheld the grand spectacle
of the whole North coming to the rescue of the afflicted South
with intense and sublime admiration. He then saw for certain
the rainbow of peace span the heavens; and though his section
was wailing under the hand of affliction, he yet took down his harp,
which for years had hung on the weeping willows of his much-loved South,
and, with renewed vigor and strength of heart, again touched its chords
and drew forth in rich tones and glorious melodies his grand poem, "Reunited".
Then it was that the star of peace shone out in the heavens,
resplendent with the brightness and purity of love,
and dispelled the dark and foul spirit of hate which had poisoned the air
and polluted the soil of free Columbia. Then, too,
the angel of affliction and the angel of charity joined hands together
and pronounced the benediction over a restored Union and a reunited people.

Before proceeding to speak of Father Ryan's poems, a few observations upon poets and poetry in general may not be deemed inappropriate. To speak of poets and their merits is by no means an easy matter, even where one is in every respect fitted to pronounce critical judgment. It requires rare qualifications for such a task; a wide range of information; extensive knowledge of the various authors; a keen sense of justice; a fine sense of appreciation of the merits and demerits of each, and a rare power of discrimination. These are qualifications seldom combined in a single person. Hence so few competent critics are to be found. The writer does not claim to possess all or any one of these powers in as eminent degree as would fit him for the work of passing judicious criticism upon the various authors and their works -- or, indeed, any single one of them. What he will venture to say, therefore, is by way of preface to the remarks which he is called upon to offer upon the merits of the particular poet whose productions he is specially called upon to consider.

Of poets it may be said, that they are not like other men, though invested with similar qualities and characteristics. They differ in this: That they are not cold and calculating in their speech; they do not analyze and weigh their words with the same precision; nor are they always master of their feelings. Possessed of the subtle power of genius, which no mortal can describe, though all may experience its potent influence, they cannot be confined within the narrow limits assigned to others less gifted, nor subjected to fixed methods or unvarying processes of mental action. No; poets must roam in broader fields, amidst brighter prospects and more elevated surroundings. They must be left to themselves, to go where they choose, and evolve their thoughts according to their own ways and fancies; for ways and fancies they have which are peculiar to themselves and must be indulged. Genius is ever wont to be odd, in the sense that it does not and cannot be made to move in common ruts and channels. This is especially true of poetic genius, whose life may be said to depend upon the purity of its inspirations and the breadth and character of its surroundings.

Much has been said, and deservedly, in favor of the great poets of antiquity. Unmeasured praise has been bestowed upon the epic grandeur of Homer and the classical purity of Virgil. They have ever been considered as foremost amongst the best models of poetic excellence. Yet there was wanting to them the true sources of poetic inspiration, whence flow the loftiest conceptions and sublimest emanations of genius. Homer never rose above the summit of Olympus, nor Virgil above the level of pagan subjects and surroundings. Therefore they cannot be properly regarded as the highest and best models, certainly not the safest for Christians, who can feast their eyes and fill their minds and hearts with more perfect models and more sublime subjects. The sight of Sinai, where Jehovah, the God of Israel, is veiled in the awful splendor of His Majesty, whilst his voice is heard in the loud war and fierce thunderings amongst the clouds, as the lightnings crown its summit, is far more grand and imposing, more sublime and inspiring, than are those subjects presented to us by pagan authors, however refined and elegant may be the language employed

to convey their thoughts and depict their scenes. Wherefore, the Biblical narratives furnish the highest and best models and the richest sources of poetic inspiration; and "all great poets have had recourse to those ever-living fountains to learn the secret of elevating our hearts, ennobling our affections, and finding subjects worthy of their genius."

The writer would not care to assert that Father Ryan's poems possess the majestic grandeur and elaborate finish of the great masters, whose productions have withstood the severe criticism of ages, and still stand as the highest models of poetic excellence. His style is not that of Milton, who soared aloft into the eternal mansions and opened their portals to our astonished and admiring gaze, picturing to us "God in His first frown and man in his first prevarication." Nor is it that of Shakespeare, whose deep and subtle mind fathomed "the dark abysses of the human heart," and laid bare and naked the varied doings of mankind! Nor is it, least of all, that of Dante, who, with even greater boldness than Milton, plunged into the impenetrable depths of the infernal regions, whose appalling misery and never-ending woe he has described in words of fearful and awe-inspiring grandeur. Neither is his style like unto that of any one of the several leading American poets, so far as their works are known to the writer, though some have said that his style resembles that of the highly gifted and lamented Poe.

The writer will not undertake to say what place Father Ryan will occupy in the Temple of Fame, though he believes that an enlightened public sentiment would accord to him a high position. The chief merits of his poems would seem to be the simple sublimity of his verses; the rare and chaste beauty of his conceptions; the richness and grandeur of his thoughts, and their easy, natural flow; the refined elegance and captivating force of the terms he employs as the medium through which he communicates those thoughts and the weird fancy which throws around them charms peculiarly their own. These, and perhaps other merits, will win for their author enduring fame.

For the future of Father Ryan's poems we need have no fears. They will pass down through the ages bearing the stamp of genius, impressed with the majesty of truth, replete with the power and grandeur of love; these are the purest sources of poetic inspiration; for both are attributes of the Divinity. Strip poetry of these, and nothing remains but its mutilated relics and soulless body; it becomes robbed of its highest glory and its most enduring qualities.

Though the South may claim Father Ryan as her son of genius, whose heart beat in sympathy with her hopes and her aspirations and of whose productions she may well feel proud, yet no section owns him, since he belongs to our common country, and in a certain sense to mankind, for the fame of genius is not controlled by sections or circumscribed within limits; it extends beyond the confines of earth -- yea, unto eternity itself! It is proper to regard him in this light as the heritage of the nation, for in the nation's keeping his fame will be secure and appropriately perpetuated.

All sections will unite in doing honor to his memory, which is associated with grand intellectual triumphs, won by the union of the highest gifts of the Creator -- the union of religion and poetic genius; the former the source and inspiration of the latter.

Father Ryan also wrote several works of prose, chief amongst which is that entitled, "A Crown for Our Queen". Like his poem, "Last of May", this book was intended as a loving tribute to Mary, the Mother of God, whom he wished to honor as the highest type and grandest embodiment of womanhood. If Father Ryan failed to make this work worthy of the exalted subject -- an opinion by no means expressed -- it was not from any lack of good-will and earnest purpose on his part. With him tender affection for the Queen of Heaven was a pure and holy sentiment, a sublime, and ennobling act of piety. He saw in her lofty and immaculate beauty the true ideal of woman; and this explains the deep reverence and delicate sentiment of respect and sympathy which he exhibited towards all women. Poetical sentiment and religious feeling he thus happily blended, as they should ever be, directing and influencing man's action in his relations and intercourse with woman.

Three essentially poetical sentiments exist in man, says a distinguished writer: The love of God, the love of woman, and the love of country -- the religious, the human, and the political sentiment. For this reason, continues the same writer, wherever the knowledge of God is darkened, wherever the face of woman is veiled, wherever the people are captive or enslaved, there poetry is like a flame which, for want of fuel, exhausts itself and dies out. On the contrary, wherever God reigns upon His throne in all the majesty of His glory, wherever woman rules by the irresistible power of her enchantments, wherever the people are free, there poetry has modest roses for the woman, glorious palms for the people, and splendid wings with which to mount up to the loftiest regions of heaven.

Father Ryan also won distinction as an orator, a lecturer, and an essayist, having contributed to several of the leading journals and magazines of the country. His oratory was not of the cold and unimpassioned kind which falls upon the ears but fails to make an impression on the heart. He did not lose sight of the fact that the chief end and aim of oratory is to arouse men to a sense of duty, deter them from the commission of evil, and inspire them with high and holy purposes and noble, generous resolves, the accomplishment of which demands that the living, breathing spirit or soul should be infused into the words. Though the unction of divine charity can alone give efficacy to man's words, yet man must not appear to be devoid of those qualities and attributes which contribute towards making a lasting impression upon the minds and hearts of those whose interests are presumed to be dear to him. This was the spirit that animated Father Ryan, and all his efforts were directed towards the accomplishment of the objects stated. It is not claimed that all his discourses were up to the highest standard of literary excellence, or above the test of exact criticism. Some of his efforts did not bear evidence of deep thought or careful and exhaustive preparation,

but all exhibited warmth of soul and earnestness of purpose. It may be well to remark in connection with this, that Father Ryan's health for many years was such that it would not permit of his engaging in laborious mental work. And yet he labored much and spoke often; for his zeal and mental activity were greatly in excess of his strength. Had his physical powers corresponded to his rare mental endowments, the value of his productions -- great as it now is -- would have been enhanced. The marvel is that he was able to sustain those powers of mind which marked him up to the time of his death.

Though he had been ailing for years, as has been stated, yet his wonderful energy of mind made it appear to many that there was no immediate danger of his life. When the end came it was a surprise to all, even himself. To him let us hope that it was not unprovided for. We have the gratifying assurance that it was not so; for we are told that he had retired into a Franciscan monastery in Louisville, Ky., to make a retreat, intending, at its close, to finish a "Life of Christ", on which he was engaged, or purposed to undertake. Little did he think, apparently at least, that the Angel of Death pursued him and would soon deliver the final message to him. He did not fear the end. Why should he? Death has no terrors for the truly Christian soul. It is not the end, but the beginning of life; not the destroyer, but the restorer of our rights -- that which puts us in possession of our eternal home in heaven. Therefore he was not gloomy nor despondent at the sight of the grave. He saw beyond it the glorious sunshine of God's presence and the cheering prospect of his love. The final moment at last came and found him prepared. On the 23d of April, 1886, the soul of Abram J. Ryan, priest and poet, beloved of all who knew him, passed quietly away, let us hope, from earth to heaven, there to sing the glorious songs whose melodies are attuned to the harps of angels, and whose mysterious harmonies ravish with delight the pure souls of the just. As the setting sun on a calm eve sinks beneath the horizon, gilding the heavens with its mild yet gorgeous splendor, so did the grand soul of Father Ryan pass into eternity, leaving behind the bright light of his genius and virtues -- the one to illumine the firmament of literature, and the other to serve as a shining example to men.

Here the writer would end this imperfect tribute to a truly great character, did he not wish to remind the reader that he must not regard it as an entire portrait of the illustrious dead, though he has tried to present him clothed with some, at least, of the attributes and qualities which marked him during life. The failure, if such it be, must be ascribed to his own want of skill and ability rather than to any lack of merit in the subject. If he has not invested him with the panoply of his greatness, he has endeavored to strew some flowers over his grave; and these are love's purest and best offering, which, were he living, would be most acceptable to the heart of the poet; for love it was that inspired its tenderest promptings and holiest feelings and consecrated them to its ennobling influence.

Another thought, and the writer will bring his remarks to a close. This thought will be borrowed from the dead priest's poem, "Reunited",

to suggest a sentiment in response to his prayer for a union of all sections -- a sentiment which cannot fail to meet a ready and generous acceptance on the part of all true lovers of liberty. The thought is embodied in the following words, which take the form of an appeal:

Let all hearts join in the wish that the valor displayed
and the sacrifices endured on both sides during the late civil war
may henceforth unite all sections of our common country more closely
in the bonds of fraternal affection, and cement more firmly
the foundations of our political superstructure, now so vast and imposing,
thus serving as a guaranty for the stability, permanence,
and enduring greatness of the Republic! Thus will we respond
to the prayer of the dead priest, whose poem, the "Lost Cause",
and song of "The Conquered Banner", will mingle harmoniously
with the soft, earnest words and sweet, placid tones
of his peaceful "Reunited". So the songs of the dead poet
will be music to the living until time shall be no more!

Washington, D.C.

Poems: Patriotic, Religious, Miscellaneous.

Song of the Mystic

I walk down the Valley of Silence --
Down the dim, voiceless valley -- alone!
And I hear not the fall of a footstep
Around me, save God's and my own;
And the hush of my heart is as holy
As hovers where angels have flown!

Long ago was I weary of voices
Whose music my heart could not win;
Long ago was I weary of noises
That fretted my soul with their din;
Long ago was I weary of places
Where I met but the human -- and sin.

I walked in the world with the worldly;
I craved what the world never gave;
And I said: "In the world each Ideal,

That shines like a star on life's wave,
Is wrecked on the shores of the Real,
And sleeps like a dream in a grave."

And still did I pine for the Perfect,
And still found the False with the True;
I sought 'mid the Human for Heaven,
But caught a mere glimpse of its Blue:
And I wept when the clouds of the Mortal
Veiled even that glimpse from my view.

And I toiled on, heart-tired, of the Human,
And I moaned 'mid the mazes of men,
Till I knelt, long ago, at an altar
And I heard a voice call me. Since then
I walk down the Valley of Silence
That lies far beyond mortal ken.

Do you ask what I found in the Valley?
'Tis my Trysting Place with the Divine.
And I fell at the feet of the Holy,
And above me a voice said: "Be mine."
And there arose from the depths of my spirit
An echo -- "My heart shall be Thine."

Do you ask how I live in the Valley?
I weep -- and I dream -- and I pray.
But my tears are as sweet as the dewdrops
That fall on the roses in May;
And my prayer, like a perfume from censers,
Ascendeth to God night and day.

In the hush of the Valley of Silence
I dream all the songs that I sing;
And the music floats down the dim Valley,
Till each finds a word for a wing,
That to hearts, like the Dove of the Deluge,
A message of Peace they may bring.

But far on the deep there are billows
That never shall break on the beach;
And I have heard songs in the Silence
That never shall float into speech;
And I have had dreams in the Valley
Too lofty for language to reach.

And I have seen Thoughts in the Valley --
Ah! me, how my spirit was stirred!
And they wear holy veils on their faces,
Their footsteps can scarcely be heard;
They pass through the Valley like virgins,
Too pure for the touch of a word!

Do you ask me the place of the Valley,
Ye hearts that are harrowed by Care?
It lieth afar between mountains,
And God and His angels are there:
And one is the dark mount of Sorrow,
And one the bright mountain of Prayer.

Reverie ["Only a few more years!"]

Only a few more years!
Weary years!
Only a few more tears!
Bitter tears!
And then -- and then -- like other men,
I cease to wander, cease to weep,
Dim shadows o'er my way shall creep;
And out of the day and into the night,
Into the dark and out of the bright
I go, and Death shall veil my face,
The feet of the years shall fast efface
My very name, and every trace
I leave on earth; for the stern years tread --
Tread out the names of the gone and dead!
And then, ah! then, like other men,
I close my eyes and go to sleep,
Only a few, one hour, shall weep:
Ah! me, the grave is dark and deep!

Alas! Alas!
How soon we pass!
And ah! we go
So far away;
When go we must,
From the light of Life, and the heat of strife,
To the peace of Death, and the cold, still dust,
We go -- we go -- we may not stay,
We travel the lone, dark, dreary way;
Out of the day and into the night,
Into the darkness, out of the bright.
And then, ah! then, like other men,
We close our eyes and go to sleep;
We hush our hearts and go to sleep;
Only a few, one hour, shall weep:
Ah! me, the grave is lone and deep!

I saw a flower, at morn, so fair;
I passed at eve, it was not there.
I saw a sunbeam, golden bright,

I saw a cloud the sunbeam's shroud,
And I saw night
Digging the grave of day;
And day took off her golden crown,
And flung it sorrowfully down.
Ah! day, the Sun's fair bride!
At twilight moaned and died.
And so, alas! like day we pass:
At morn we smile,
At eve we weep,
At morn we wake,
In night we sleep.
We close our eyes and go to sleep:
Ah! me, the grave is still and deep!

But God is sweet.
My mother told me so,
When I knelt at her feet
Long -- so long -- ago;
She clasped my hands in hers.
Ah! me, that memory stirs
My soul's profoundest deep --
No wonder that I weep.
She clasped my hands and smiled,
Ah! then I was a child --
I knew not harm --
My mother's arm
Was flung around me; and I felt
That when I knelt
To listen to my mother's prayer,
God was with my mother there.

Yea! "God is sweet!"
She told me so;
She never told me wrong;
And through my years of woe
Her whispers soft, and sad, and low,
And sweet as Angel's song,
Have floated like a dream.

And, ah! to-night I seem
A very child in my old, old place,
Beneath my mother's blessed face,
And through each sweet remembered word,
This sweetest undertone is heard:
"My child! my child! our God is sweet,
In Life -- in Death -- kneel at his feet --
Sweet in gladness, sweet in gloom,
Sweeter still beside the tomb."
Why should I wail? Why ought I weep?
The grave -- it is not dark and deep;
Why should I sigh? Why ought I moan?
The grave -- it is not still and lone;

Our God is sweet, our grave is sweet,
We lie there sleeping at His feet,
Where the wicked shall from troubling cease,
And weary hearts shall rest in peace!

Lines -- 1875

Go down where the wavelets are kissing the shore,
And ask of them why do they sigh?
The poets have asked them a thousand times o'er,
But they're kissing the shore as they kissed it before,
And they're sighing to-day, and they'll sigh evermore.
Ask them what ails them: they will not reply;
But they'll sigh on forever and never tell why!
Why does your poetry sound like a sigh?
The waves will not answer you; neither shall I.

Go stand on the beach of the blue boundless deep,
When the night stars are gleaming on high,
And hear how the billows are moaning in sleep,
On the low lying strand by the surge-beaten steep.
They're moaning forever wherever they sweep.
Ask them what ails them: they never reply;
They moan, and so sadly, but will not tell why
Why does your poetry sound like a sigh?
The waves will not answer you; neither shall I.

Go list to the breeze at the waning of day,
When it passes and murmurs "Good-bye."
The dear little breeze -- how it wishes to stay
Where the flowers are in bloom, where the singing birds play;
How it sighs when it flies on its wearisome way.
Ask it what ails it: it will not reply;
Its voice is a sad one, it never told why.
Why does your poetry sound like a sigh?
The breeze will not answer you; neither shall I.

Go watch the wild blasts as they spring from their lair,
When the shout of the storm rends the sky;
They rush o'er the earth and they ride thro' the air
And they blight with their breath all the lovely and fair,
And they groan like the ghosts in the "land of despair".
Ask them what ails them: they never reply;
Their voices are mournful, they will not tell why.
Why does your poetry sound like a sigh?
The blasts will not answer you; neither shall I.

Go stand on the rivulet's lily-fringed side,

Or list where the rivers rush by;
The streamlets which forest trees shadow and hide,
And the rivers that roll in their oceanward tide,
Are moaning forever wherever they glide;
Ask them what ails them: they will not reply.
On -- sad voiced -- they flow, but they never tell why.
Why does your poetry sound like a sigh?
Earth's streams will not answer you; neither shall I.

Go list to the voices of air, earth and sea,
And the voices that sound in the sky;
Their songs may be joyful to some, but to me
There's a sigh in each chord and a sigh in each key,
And thousands of sighs swell their grand melody.
Ask them what ails them: they will not reply.
They sigh -- sigh forever -- but never tell why.
Why does your poetry sound like a sigh?
Their lips will not answer you; neither shall I.

A Memory

One bright memory shines like a star
In the sky of my spirit forever;
And over my pathway it flashes afar
A radiance that perishes never.

One bright memory -- only one;
And I walk by the light of its gleaming;
It brightens my days, and when days are done
It shines in the night o'er my dreaming.

One bright memory, whose golden rays
Illumine the gloom of my sorrows,
And I know that its lustre will gladden my gaze
In the shadows of all my to-morrows.

One bright memory; when I am sad
I lift up my eyes to its shining,
And the clouds pass away, and my spirit grows glad,
And my heart hushes all its repining.

One bright memory; others have passed
Back into the shadows forever;
But it, far and fair, bright and true to the last,
Sheds a light that will pass away never.

Shine on, shine always, thou star of my days!
And when Death's starless night gathers o'er me,

Beam brighter than ever adown on my gaze,
And light the dark valley before me.

Rhyme

One idle day --
A mile or so of sunlit waves off shore --
In a breezeless bay,
We listless lay --
Our boat a "dream of rest" on the still sea --
And -- we were four.

The wind had died
That all day long sang songs unto the deep;
It was eventide,
And far and wide
Sweet silence crept thro' the rifts of sound
With spells of sleep.

Our gray sail cast
The only cloud that flecked the foamless sea;
And weary at last
Beside the mast
One fell to slumber with a dreamy face,
And -- we were three.

No ebb! no flow!
No sound! no stir in the wide, wondrous calm;
In the sunset's glow
The shore shelved low
And snow-white, from far ridges screened with shade
Of drooping palm.

Our hearts were hushed;
All light seemed melting into boundless blue;
But the west was flushed
Where sunset blushed,
Thro' clouds of roses, when another slept
And -- we were two.

How still the air!
Not e'en a sea-bird o'er us waveward flew;
Peace rested there!
Light everywhere!
Nay! Light! some shadows fell on that fair scene,
And -- we are two.

Some shadows! Where?

No matter where! all shadows are not seen;
For clouds of care
To skies all fair
Will sudden rise as tears to shining eyes,
And dim their sheen.

We spake no word,
Tho' each I ween did hear the other's soul.
Not a wavelet stirred,
And yet we heard
The loneliest music of the weariest waves
That ever roll.

Yea! Peace, you swayed
Your sceptre jeweled with the evening light;
And then you said:
"Here falls no shade,
Here floats no sound, and all the seas and skies
Sleep calm and bright."

Nay! Peace, not so!
The wildest waves may feel thy sceptre's spell
And fear to flow,
But to and fro --
Beyond their reach lone waves on troubled seas
Will sink and swell.

No word e'en yet;
Were our eyes speaking while they watched the sky?
And in the sunset
Infinite regret
Swept sighing from the skies into our souls --
I wonder why?

A half hour passed --
'Twas more than half an age; 'tis ever thus.
Words came at last,
Fluttering and fast
As shadows veiling sunsets in the souls
Of each of us.

The noiseless night
Sped flitting like a ghost where waves of blue
Lost all their light,
As lips once bright
Whence smiles have fled; we or the wavelets sighed,
And -- we were two.

The day had gone:
And on the dim, high altar of the dark,
Stars, one by one,
Far, faintly shone;
The moonlight trembled, like a mother's smile,

Upon our bark.

We softly spoke:

The waves seemed listening on the lonely sea,
The winds awoke;
Our whispers broke
The spell of silence; and two eyes unclosed,
And -- we were three.

"The breeze blows fair,"

He said; "the waking waves set towards the shore."
The long brown hair
Of the other there,
Who slumbered near the mast with dreamy face
Stirred -- we were four.

That starry night,

A mile or so of shadows from the shore,
Two faces bright
With laughter light
Shone on two souls like stars that shine on shrines;
And -- we were four.

Over the reach

Of dazzling waves our boat like wild bird flew;
We reached the beach,
Nor song, nor speech
Shall ever tell our sacramental thought
When -- we were two.

Nocturne ["I sit to-night by the firelight,"]

I sit to-night by the firelight,
And I look at the glowing flame,
And I see in the bright red flashes
A Heart, a Face, and a Name.

How often have I seen pictures
Framed in the firelight's blaze,
Of hearts, of names, and of faces,
And scenes of remembered days!

How often have I found poems
In the crimson of the coals,
And the swaying flames of the firelight
Unrolled such golden scrolls.

And my eyes, they were proud to read them,

In letters of living flame,
But to-night, in the fire, I see only
One Heart, one Face, and one Name.

But where are the olden pictures?
And where are the olden dreams?
Has a change come over my vision?
Or over the fire's bright gleams?

Not over my vision, surely;
My eyes -- they are still the same,
That used to find in the firelight
So many a face and name.

Not over the firelight, either,
No change in the coals or blaze
That flicker and flash, as ruddy
To-night as in other days.

But there must be a change -- I feel it.
To-night not an old picture came;
The fire's bright flames only painted
One Heart, one Face, and one Name.

Three pictures? No! only one picture;
The Face belongs to the Name,
And the Name names the Heart that is throbbing
Just back of the beautiful flame.

Who said it, I wonder: "All faces
Must fade in the light of but one;
The soul, like the earth, may have many
Horizons, but only one sun?"

Who dreamt it? Did I? If I dreamt it
'Tis true -- every name passes by
Save one; the sun wears many cloudlets
Of gold, but has only one sky.

And out of the flames have they faded,
The hearts and the faces of yore?
Have they sunk 'neath the gray of the ashes
To rise to my vision no more?

Yes, surely, or else I would see them
To-night, just as bright as of old,
In the white of the coal's silver flashes,
In the red of the restless flames' gold.

Do you say I am fickle and faithless?
Else why are the old pictures gone?
And why should the visions of many
Melt into the vision of one?

Nay! list to the voice of the Heavens,
"One Eternal alone reigns above."
Is it true? and all else are but idols,
So the heart can have only one love?

Only one, all the rest are but idols,
That fall from their shrines soon or late,
When the Love that is Lord of the temple,
Comes with sceptre and crown to the gate.

To be faithless oft means to be faithful,
To be false often means to be true;
The vale that loves clouds that are golden
Forgets them for skies that are blue.

To forget often means to remember
What we had forgotten too long;
The fragrance is not the bright flower,
The echo is not the sweet song.

Am I dreaming? No, there is the firelight,
Gaze I ever so long, all the same
I only can see in its glowing
A Heart, a Face, and a Name.

Farewell! all ye hearts, names, and faces!
Only ashes now under the blaze,
Ye never again will smile on me,
For I'm touching the end of my days.

And the beautiful fading firelight
Paints, now, with a pencil of flame,
Three pictures -- yet only one picture --
A Heart, a Face, and a Name.

The Old Year and the New

How swift they go,
Life's many years,
With their winds of woe
And their storms of tears,
And their darkest of nights whose shadowy slopes
Are lit with the flashes of starriest hopes,
And their sunshiny days in whose calm heavens loom
The clouds of the tempest -- the shadows of the gloom!

And ah! we pray

With a grief so drear,
That the years may stay
When their graves are near;
Tho' the brows of To-morrows be radiant and bright,
With love and with beauty, with life and with light,
The dead hearts of Yesterdays, cold on the bier,
To the hearts that survive them, are evermore dear.

For the hearts so true
To each Old Year cleaves;
Tho' the hand of the New
Flowery garlands weaves.
But the flowers of the future, tho' fragrant and fair,
With the past's withered leaflets may never compare;
For dear is each dead leaf -- and dearer each thorn --
In the wreaths which the brows of our past years have worn.

Yea! men will cling
With a love to the last,
And wildly fling
Their arms round their past!
As the vine that clings to the oak that falls;
As the ivy twines round the crumbled walls;
For the dust of the past some hearts higher prize
Than the stars that flash out from the future's bright skies.

And why not so?
The old, Old Years,
They knew and they know
All our hopes and fears;
We walked by their side, and we told them each grief,
And they kissed off our tears while they whispered relief;
And the stories of hearts that may not be revealed
In the hearts of the dead years are buried and sealed.

Let the New Year sing
At the Old Year's grave:
Will the New Year bring
What the Old Year gave?
Ah! the Stranger-Year trips over the snows,
And his brow is wreathed with many a rose:
But how many thorns do the roses conceal
Which the roses, when withered, shall so soon reveal?

Let the New Year smile
When the Old Year dies;
In how short a while
Shall the smiles be sighs?
Yea! Stranger-Year, thou hast many a charm,
And thy face is fair and thy greeting warm,
But, dearer than thou -- in his shroud of snows --
Is the furrowed face of the Year that goes.

Yea! bright New Year,
O'er all the earth,
With song and cheer,
They will hail thy birth;
They will trust thy words in a single hour,
They will love thy face, they will laud thy power;
For the ~New~ has charms which the ~Old~ has not,
And the Stranger's face makes the Friend's forgot.

Erin's Flag

Unroll Erin's flag! fling its folds to the breeze!
Let it float o'er the land, let it flash o'er the seas!
Lift it out of the dust -- let it wave as of yore,
When its chiefs with their clans stood around it and swore
That never! no, never! while God gave them life,
And they had an arm and a sword for the strife,
That never! no, never! that banner should yield
As long as the heart of a Celt was its shield:
While the hand of a Celt had a weapon to wield
And his last drop of blood was unshed on the field.

Lift it up! wave it high! 'tis as bright as of old!
Not a stain on its green, not a blot on its gold,
Tho' the woes and the wrongs of three hundred long years
Have drenched Erin's sunburst with blood and with tears!
Though the clouds of oppression enshroud it in gloom,
And around it the thunders of Tyranny boom.
Look aloft! look aloft! lo! the clouds drifting by,
There's a gleam through the gloom, there's a light in the sky,
'Tis the sunburst resplendent -- far, flashing on high!
Erin's dark night is waning, her day-dawn is nigh!

Lift it up! lift it up! the old Banner of Green!
The blood of its sons has but brightened its sheen;
What though the tyrant has trampled it down,
Are its folds not emblazoned with deeds of renown?
What though for ages it droops in the dust,
Shall it droop thus forever? No, no! God is just!
Take it up! take it up! from the tyrant's foul tread,
Let him tear the Green Flag -- we will snatch its last shred,
And beneath it we'll bleed as our forefathers bled,
And we'll vow by the dust in the graves of our dead,
And we'll swear by the blood which the Briton has shed,
And we'll vow by the wrecks which through Erin he spread,
And we'll swear by the thousands who, famished, unfed,
Died down in the ditches, wild-howling for bread;
And we'll vow by our heroes, whose spirits have fled,

And we'll swear by the bones in each coffinless bed,
That we'll battle the Briton through danger and dread;
That we'll cling to the cause which we glory to wed,
'Til the gleam of our steel and the shock of our lead
Shall prove to our foe that we meant what we said --
That we'll lift up the green, and we'll tear down the red!

Lift up the Green Flag! oh! it wants to go home,
Full long has its lot been to wander and roam,
It has followed the fate of its sons o'er the world,
But its folds, like their hopes, are not faded nor furled;
Like a weary-winged bird, to the East and the West,
It has flitted and fled -- but it never shall rest,
'Til, pluming its pinions, it sweeps o'er the main,
And speeds to the shores of its old home again,
Where its fetterless folds o'er each mountain and plain
Shall wave with a glory that never shall wane.

Take it up! take it up! bear it back from afar!
That banner must blaze 'mid the lightnings of war;
Lay your hands on its folds, lift your gaze to the sky,
And swear that you'll bear it triumphant or die,
And shout to the clans scattered far o'er the earth
To join in the march to the land of their birth;
And wherever the Exiles, 'neath heaven's broad dome,
Have been fated to suffer, to sorrow and roam,
They'll bound on the sea, and away o'er the foam,
They'll sail to the music of "Home, Sweet Home!"

The Sword of Robert Lee

Forth from its scabbard, pure and bright,
 Flashed the sword of Lee!
Far in the front of the deadly fight,
High o'er the brave in the cause of Right,
Its stainless sheen, like a beacon light,
 Led us to Victory!

Out of its scabbard, where, full long,
 It slumbered peacefully,
Roused from its rest by the battle's song,
Shielding the feeble, smiting the strong,
Guarding the right, avenging the wrong,
 Gleamed the sword of Lee!

Forth from its scabbard, high in air
 Beneath Virginia's sky --
And they who saw it gleaming there,

And knew who bore it, knelt to swear
That where that sword led they would dare
To follow -- and to die!

Out of its scabbard! Never hand
Waved sword from stain as free,
Nor purer sword led braver band,
Nor braver bled for a brighter land,
Nor brighter land had a cause so grand,
Nor cause a chief like Lee!

Forth from its scabbard! How we prayed
That sword might victor be;
And when our triumph was delayed,
And many a heart grew sore afraid,
We still hoped on while gleamed the blade
Of noble Robert Lee!

Forth from its scabbard all in vain
Bright flashed the sword of Lee;
'Tis shrouded now in its sheath again,
It sleeps the sleep of our noble slain,
Defeated, yet without a stain,
Proudly and peacefully!

Life

A baby played with the surplice sleeve
Of a gentle priest; while in accents low,
The sponsors murmured the grand "I believe,"
And the priest bade the mystic waters to flow
In the name of the Father, and the Son,
And Holy Spirit -- Three in One.

Spotless as a lily's leaf,
Whiter than the Christmas snow;
Not a sign of sin or grief,
And the babe laughed, sweet and low.

A smile flitted over the baby's face:
Or was it the gleam of its angel's wing
Just passing then, and leaving a trace
Of its presence as it soared to sing?
A hymn when words and waters win
To grace and life a child of sin.

Not an outward sign or token,
That a child was saved from woe;

But the bonds of sin were broken,
And the babe laughed, sweet and low.

A cloud rose up to the mother's eyes,
And out of the cloud grief's rain fell fast;
Came the baby's smiles, and the mother's sighs,
Out of the future, or the past?
Ah! gleam and gloom must ever meet,
And gall must mingle with the sweet.

Yea, upon the baby's laughter
Trickled tears: 'tis ever so --
Mothers dread the dark hereafter;
But the babe laughed sweet and low.

And the years like waves broke on the shore
Of the mother's heart, and her baby's life;
But her lone heart drifted away before
Her little boy knew an hour of strife;
Drifted away on a Summer's eve,
Ere the orphaned child knew how to grieve

Her humble grave was gently made
Where roses bloomed in Summer's glow;
The wild birds sang where her heart was laid,
And her boy laughed sweet and low.

He drifted away from his mother's grave,
Like a fragile flower on a great stream's tide,
Till he heard the moan of the mighty wave,
That welcomed the stream to the ocean wide.
Out from the shore and over the deep,
He sailed away and learned to weep.

Furrowed grew the face once fair,
Under storms of human woe;
Silvered grew the dark brown hair,
And he wailed so sad and low.

The years swept on as erst they swept,
Bright wavelets once, dark billows now;
Wherever he sailed he ever wept,
A cloud hung over the darkened brow --
Over the deep and into the dark,
But no one knew where sank his bark.

Wild roses watched his mother's tomb,
The world still laughed, 'tis ever so --
God only knows the baby's doom,
That laughed so sweet and low.

A Laugh -- and A Moan

The brook that down the valley
So musically drips,
Flowed never half so brightly
As the light laugh from her lips.

Her face was like the lily,
Her heart was like the rose,
Her eyes were like a heaven
Where the sunlight always glows.

She trod the earth so lightly
Her feet touched not a thorn;
Her words wore all the brightness
Of a young life's happy morn.

Along her laughter rippled
The melody of joy;
She drank from every chalice,
And tasted no alloy.

Her life was all a laughter,
Her days were all a smile,
Her heart was pure and happy,
She knew not gloom nor guile.

She rested on the bosom
Of her mother, like a flower
That blooms far in a valley
Where no storm-clouds ever lower.

And -- "Merry, merry, merry!"
Rang the bells of every hour,
And -- "Happy, happy, happy!"
In her valley laughed the flower.

There was not a sign of shadow,
There was not a tear nor thorn,
And the sweet voice of her laughter
Filled with melody the morn.

* * * * *

Years passed -- 'twas long, long after,
And I saw a face at prayer;
There was not a sign of laughter,
There was every sign of care.

For the sunshine all had faded

From the valley and the flower,
And the once fair face was shaded
In life's lonely evening hour.

And the lips that smiled with laughter
In the valley of the morn,
In the valley of the evening
They were pale and sorrow-worn.

And I read the old, old lesson
In her face and in her tears,
While she sighed amid the shadows
Of the sunset of her years.

All the rippling streams of laughter
From our hearts and lips that flow,
Shall be frozen, cold years after,
Into icicles of woe.

In Memory of My Brother

Young as the youngest who donned the Gray,
True as the truest that wore it,
Brave as the bravest he marched away,
(Hot tears on the cheeks of his mother lay)
Triumphant waved our flag one day --
He fell in the front before it.

Firm as the firmest, where duty led,
He hurried without a falter;
Bold as the boldest he fought and bled,
And the day was won -- but the field was red --
And the blood of his fresh young heart was shed
On his country's hallowed altar.

On the trampled breast of the battle plain
Where the foremost ranks had wrestled,
On his pale, pure face not a mark of pain,
(His mother dreams they will meet again)
The fairest form amid all the slain,
Like a child asleep he nestled.

In the solemn shades of the wood that swept
The field where his comrades found him,
They buried him there -- and the big tears crept
Into strong men's eyes that had seldom wept.
(His mother -- God pity her -- smiled and slept,
Dreaming her arms were around him.)

A grave in the woods with the grass o'ergrown,
A grave in the heart of his mother --
His clay in the one lies lifeless and lone;
There is not a name, there is not a stone,
And only the voice of the winds maketh moan
O'er the grave where never a flower is strewn
But -- his memory lives in the other.

"Out of the Depths"

Lost! Lost! Lost!
The cry went up from a sea --
The waves were wild with an awful wrath,
Not a light shone down on the lone ship's path;
The clouds hung low:
Lost! Lost! Lost!
Rose wild from the hearts of the tempest-tossed.

Lost! Lost! Lost!
The cry floated over the waves --
Far over the pitiless waves;
It smote on the dark and it rended the clouds;
The billows below them were weaving white shrouds
Out of the foam of the surge,
And the wind-voices chanted a dirge:
Lost! Lost! Lost!
Wailed wilder the lips of the tempest-tossed.

Lost! Lost! Lost!
Not the sign of a hope was nigh,
In the sea, in the air, or the sky;
And the lifted faces were wan and white,
There was nothing without them but storm and night
And nothing within but fear.
But far to a Father's ear:
Lost! Lost! Lost!
Floated the wail of the tempest-tossed.

Lost! Lost! Lost!
Out of the depths of the sea --
Out of the night and the sea;
And the waves and the winds of the storm were hushed,
And the sky with the gleams of the stars was flushed.
Saved! Saved! Saved!
And a calm and a joyous cry
Floated up through the starry sky,
In the dark -- in the storm -- "Our Father" is nigh.

A Thought

The summer rose the sun has flushed
With crimson glory may be sweet;
'Tis sweeter when its leaves are crushed
Beneath the wind's and tempest's feet.

The rose that waves upon its tree,
In life sheds perfume all around;
More sweet the perfume floats to me
Of roses trampled on the ground.

The waving rose with every breath
Scents carelessly the summer air;
The wounded rose bleeds forth in death
A sweetness far more rich and rare.

It is a truth beyond our ken --
And yet a truth that all may read --
It is with roses as with men,
The sweetest hearts are those that bleed.

The flower which Bethlehem saw bloom
Out of a heart all full of grace,
Gave never forth its full perfume
Until the cross became its vase.

March of the Deathless Dead

Gather the sacred dust
Of the warriors tried and true,
Who bore the flag of a Nation's trust
And fell in a cause, though lost, still just,
And died for me and you.

Gather them one and all,
From the private to the chief;
Come they from hovel or princely hall,
They fell for us, and for them should fall
The tears of a Nation's grief.

Gather the corpses strewn

O'er many a battle plain;
From many a grave that lies so lone,
Without a name and without a stone,
Gather the Southern slain.

We care not whence they came,
Dear in their lifeless clay!
Whether unknown, or known to fame,
Their cause and country still the same;
They died -- and wore the Gray.

Wherever the brave have died,
They should not rest apart;
Living, they struggled side by side,
Why should the hand of Death divide
A single heart from heart?

Gather their scattered clay,
Wherever it may rest;
Just as they marched to the bloody fray,
Just as they fell on the battle day,
Bury them, breast to breast.

The foeman need not dread
This gathering of the brave;
Without sword or flag, and with soundless tread,
We muster once more our deathless dead,
Out of each lonely grave.

The foeman need not frown,
They all are powerless now;
We gather them here and we lay them down,
And tears and prayers are the only crown
We bring to wreath each brow.

And the dead thus meet the dead,
While the living o'er them weep;
And the men by Lee and Stonewall led,
And the hearts that once together bled,
Together still shall sleep.

Reunited

[Written after the yellow fever epidemic of 1878.]

Purer than thy own white snow,
Nobler than thy mountains' height;
Deeper than the ocean's flow,

Stronger than thy own proud might;
O Northland! to thy sister land,
Was late thy mercy's generous deed and grand.

Nigh twice ten years the sword was sheathed:
Its mist of green o'er battle plain
For nigh two decades Spring had breathed;
And yet the crimson life-blood stain
From passive swords had never paled,
Nor fields, where all were brave and some had failed.

Between the Northland, bride of snow,
And Southland, brightest sun's fair bride,
Swept, deepening ever in its flow,
The stormy wake, in war's dark tide:
No hand might clasp across the tears
And blood and anguish of four deathless years.

When Summer, like a rose in bloom,
Had blossomed from the bud of Spring,
Oh! who could deem the dews of doom
Upon the blushing lips could cling?
And who could believe its fragrant light
Would e'er be freighted with the breath of blight?

Yet o'er the Southland crept the spell,
That e'en from out its brightness spread,
And prostrate, powerless, she fell,
Rachel-like, amid her dead.
Her bravest, fairest, purest, best,
The waiting grave would welcome as its guest.

The Northland, strong in love, and great,
Forgot the stormy days of strife;
Forgot that souls with dreams of hate
Or unforgiveness e'er were rife.
Forgotten was each thought and hushed;
Save -- she was generous and her foe was crushed.

No hand might clasp, from land to land;
Yea! there was one to bridge the tide!
For at the touch of Mercy's hand
The North and South stood side by side:
The Bride of Snow, the Bride of Sun,
In Charity's espousals are made one.

"Thou givest back my sons again,"
The Southland to the Northland cries;
"For all my dead, on battle plain,
Thou biddest my dying now arise:
I still my sobs, I cease my tears,
And thou hast recompensed my anguished years.

"Blessings on thine every wave,
Blessings on thine every shore,
Blessings that from sorrow save,
Blessings giving more and more,
For all thou gavest thy sister land,
O Northland, in thy generous deed and grand."

A Memory

Adown the valley dripped a stream,
White lilies drooped on either side;
Our hearts, in spite of us, will dream
In such a place at eventide.

Bright wavelets wove the scarf of blue
That well became the valley fair,
And grassy fringe of greenest hue
Hung round its borders everywhere.

And where the stream, in wayward whirls,
Went winding in and winding out,
Lay shells, that wore the look of pearls
Without their pride, all strewn about.

And here and there along the strand,
Where some ambitious wave had strayed,
Rose little monuments of sand
As frail as those by mortals made.

And many a flower was blooming there
In beauty, yet without a name,
Like humble hearts that often bear
The gifts, but not the palm of fame.

The rainbow's tints could never vie
With all the colors that they wore;
While bluer than the bluest sky
The stream flowed on 'tween shore and shore.

And on the height, and down the side
Of either hill that hid the place,
Rose elms in all the stately pride
Of youthful strength and ancient race.

While here and there the trees between --
Bearing the scars of battle-shocks,
And frowning wrathful -- might be seen
The moss-veiled faces of the rocks.

And round the rocks crept flowered vines,
And clomb the trees that towered high --
The type of a lofty thought that twines
Around a truth -- to touch the sky.

And to that vale, from first of May
Until the last of August went,
Beauty, the exile, came each day
In all her charms, to cast her tent.

'Twas there, one long-gone August day,
I wandered down the valley fair:
The spell has never passed away
That fell upon my spirit there.

The summer sunset glorified
The clouded face of dying day,
Which flung a smile upon the tide
And lilies, ere he passed away.

And o'er the valley's grassy slopes
There fell an evanescent sheen,
That flashed and faded, like the hopes
That haunt us of what might have been.

And rock and tree flung back the light
Of all the sunset's golden gems,
As if it were beneath their right
To wear such borrowed diadems.

Low in the west gleam after gleam
Glowed faint and fainter, till the last
Made the dying day a living dream,
To last as long as life shall last.

And in the arches of the trees
The wild birds slept with folded wing;
And e'en the lips of the summer breeze
That sang all day, had ceased to sing.

And all was silent, save the rill
That rippled round the lilies' feet,
And sang, while stillness grew more still
To listen to the murmur sweet.

And now and then it surely seemed
The little stream was laughing low,
As if its sleepy wavelets dreamed
Such dreams as only children know.

So still that not the faintest breath
Did stir the shadows in the air;

It would have seemed the home of Death,
Had I not felt Life sleeping there.

And slow and soft, and soft and slow,
From darkling earth and darkened sky
Wide wings of gloom waved to and fro,
And spectral shadows flitted by.

And then, methought, upon the sward
I saw -- or was it starlight's ray?
Or angels come to watch and guard
The valley till the dawn of day?

Is every lower life the ward
Of spirits more divinely wrought?
'Tis sweet to believe 'tis God's, and hard
To think 'tis but a poet's thought.

But God's or poet's thought, I ween,
My senses did not fail me when
I saw veiled angels watch that scene
And guard its sleep, as they guard men.

Sweet sang the stream as on it pressed,
As sorrow sings a heart to sleep;
As a mother sings one child to rest,
And for the dead one still will weep.

I walked adown the singing stream,
The lilies slept on either side;
My heart -- it could not help but dream
At eve, and after eventide.

Ah! dreams of such a lofty reach
With more than earthly fancies fraught,
That not the strongest wings of speech
Could ever touch their lowest thought.

Dreams of the Bright, the Fair, the Far --
Heart-fancies flashing Heaven's hue --
That swept around, as sweeps a star
The boundless orbit of the True.

Yea! dreams all free from earthly taint,
Where human passion played no part,
As pure as thoughts that thrill a saint,
Or hunt an archangelic heart.

Ah! dreams that did not rise from sense,
And rose too high to stoop to it,
And framed aloft like frankincense
In censers round the infinite.

Yea! dreams that vied with angels' flight!
And, soaring, bore my heart away
Beyond the far star-bounds of night,
Unto the everlasting day.

How long I strolled beside the stream
I do not know, nor may I say;
But when the poet ceased to dream
The priest went on his knees to pray.

I felt as sure a seraph feels
When in some golden hour of grace
God smiles, and suddenly reveals
A new, strange glory in His face.

Ah! starlit valley! Lilies white!
The poet dreamed -- ye slumbered deep!
But when the priest knelt down that night
And prayed, why woke ye from your sleep?

* * * * *

The stream sang down the valley fair,
I saw the wakened lilies nod,
I knew they heard me whisper there,
"How beautiful art Thou, my God!"

At Last

Into a temple vast and dim,
Solemn and vast and dim,
Just when the last sweet Vesper Hymn
Was floating far away,
With eyes that tabernacled tears --
Her heart the home of tears --
And cheeks wan with the woes of years,
A woman went one day.

And, one by one, adown the aisles,
Adown the long, lone aisles,
Their faces bright with holy smiles
That follow after prayer,
The worshipers in silence passed,
In silence slowly passed away;
The woman knelt until the last
Had left her lonely there.

A holy hush came o'er the place,

O'er the holy place,
The shadows kissed her woe-worn face,
Her forehead touched the floor;
The wreck that drifted thro' the years --
Sin-driven thro' the years --
Was floating o'er the tide of tears,
To Mercy's golden shore.

Her lips were sealed, they could not pray,
They sighed, but could not pray,
All words of prayer had died away
From them long years ago;
But ah! from out her eyes there rose --
Sad from her eyes there rose --
The prayer of tears, which swiftest goes
To Heaven -- winged with woe.

With weary tears, her weary eyes,
Her joyless, weary eyes,
Wailed forth a rosary; and her sighs
And sobs strung all the beads;
The while before her spirit's gaze --
Her contrite spirit's gaze --
Moved all the mysteries of her days,
And histories of her deeds.

Still as a shadow, while she wept,
So desolately wept,
Up thro' the long, lone aisle she crept
Unto an altar fair;
"Mother!" -- her pale lips said no more --
Could say no more --
The wreck, at last, reached Mercy's shore,
For Mary's shrine was there.

A Land without Ruins

"A land without ruins is a land without memories --
a land without memories is a land without history.
A land that wears a laurel crown may be fair to see;
but twine a few sad cypress leaves around the brow of any land,
and be that land barren, beautiless and bleak, it becomes lovely
in its consecrated coronet of sorrow, and it wins the sympathy of the heart
and of history. Crowns of roses fade -- crowns of thorns endure.
Calvaries and crucifixions take deepest hold of humanity --
the triumphs of might are transient -- they pass and are forgotten --
the sufferings of right are graven deepest on the chronicle of nations."

Yes give me the land where the ruins are spread,
And the living tread light on the hearts of the dead;
Yes, give me a land that is blest by the dust,
And bright with the deeds of the down-trodden just.
Yes, give me the land where the battle's red blast
Has flashed to the future the fame of the past;
Yes, give me the land that hath legends and lays
That tell of the memories of long vanished days;
Yes, give me a land that hath story and song!
Enshrine the strife of the right with the wrong!
Yes, give me a land with a grave in each spot,
And names in the graves that shall not be forgot;
Yes, give me the land of the wreck and the tomb;
There is grandeur in graves -- there is glory in gloom;
For out of the gloom future brightness is born,
As after the night comes the sunrise of morn;
And the graves of the dead with the grass overgrown
May yet form the footstool of liberty's throne,
And each single wreck in the war path of might
Shall yet be a rock in the temple of right.

Memories

They come, as the breeze comes over the foam,
Waking the waves that are sinking to sleep --
The fairest of memories from far-away home,
The dim dreams of faces beyond the dark deep.

They come as the stars come out in the sky,
That shimmer wherever the shadows may sweep,
And their steps are as soft as the sound of a sigh
And I welcome them all while I wearily weep.

They come as a song comes out of the past
A loved mother murmured in days that are dead,
Whose tones spirit-thrilling live on to the last,
When the gloom of the heart wraps its gray o'er the head.

They come like the ghosts from the grass shrouded graves,
And they follow our footsteps on life's winding way;
And they murmur around us as murmur the waves
That sigh on the shore at the dying of day.

They come, sad as tears to the eyes that are bright;
They come, sweet as smiles to the lips that are pale;
They come, dim as dreams in the depths of the night;
They come, fair as flowers to the summerless vale.

There is not a heart that is not haunted so,
Though far we may stray from the scenes of the past,
Its memories will follow wherever we go,
And the days that were first sway the days that are last.

The Prayer of the South

My brow is bent beneath a heavy rod!
My face is wan and white with many woes!
But I will lift my poor chained hands to God,
And for my children pray, and for my foes.
Beside the graves where thousands lowly lie
I kneel, and weeping for each slaughtered son,
I turn my gaze to my own sunny sky,
And pray, O Father, let Thy will be done!

My heart is filled with anguish, deep and vast!
My hopes are buried with my children's dust!
My joys have fled, my tears are flowing fast!
In whom, save Thee, our Father, shall I trust?
Ah! I forgot Thee, Father, long and oft,
When I was happy, rich, and proud, and free;
But conquered now, and crushed, I look aloft,
And sorrow leads me, Father, back to Thee.

Amid the wrecks that mark the foeman's path
I kneel, and wailing o'er my glories gone,
I still each thought of hate, each throb of wrath,
And whisper, Father, let Thy will be done!
Pity me, Father of the desolate!
Alas! my burdens are so hard to bear;
Look down in mercy on my wretched fate,
And keep me, guard me, with Thy loving care.

Pity me, Father, for His holy sake,
Whose broken heart bled at the feet of grief,
That hearts of earth, whenever they shall break,
Might go to His and find a sure relief.
Ah, me, how dark! Is this a brief eclipse?
Or is it night with no to-morrow's sun?
O Father! Father! with my pale, sad lips,
And sadder heart, I pray Thy will be done.

My homes are joyless, and a million mourn
Where many met in joys forever flown;
Whose hearts were light, are burdened now and torn,
Where many smiled, but one is left to moan.
And ah! the widow's wails, the orphan's cries,

Are morning hymn and vesper chant to me;
And groans of men and sounds of women's sighs
Commingle, Father, with my prayer to Thee.

Beneath my feet ten thousand children dead --
Oh! how I loved each known and nameless one!
Above their dust I bow my crownless head
And murmur: Father, still Thy will be done.
Ah! Father, Thou didst deck my own loved land
With all bright charms, and beautiful and fair;
But foeman came, and with a ruthless hand,
Spread ruin, wreck, and desolation there.

Girdled with gloom, of all my brightness shorn,
And garmented with grief, I kiss Thy rod,
And turn my face, with tears all wet and worn,
To catch one smile of pity from my God.
Around me blight, where all before was bloom,
And so much lost, alas! and nothing won
Save this -- that I can lean on wreck and tomb
And weep, and weeping, pray Thy will be done.

And oh! 'tis hard to say, but said, 'tis sweet;
The words are bitter, but they hold a balm --
A balm that heals the wounds of my defeat,
And lulls my sorrow into holy calm.
It is the prayer of prayers, and how it brings,
When heard in heaven, peace and hope to me!
When Jesus prayed it did not angels' wings
Gleam 'mid the darkness of Gethsemane?

My children, Father, Thy forgiveness need;
Alas! their hearts have only place for tears!
Forgive them, Father, ev'ry wrongful deed,
And every sin of those four bloody years;
And give them strength to bear their boundless loss,
And from their hearts take every thought of hate;
And while they climb their Calvary with their cross,
Oh! help them, Father, to endure its weight.

And for my dead, my Father, may I pray?
Ah! sighs may soothe, but prayer shall soothe me more!
I keep eternal watch above their clay;
Oh! rest their souls, my Father, I implore;
Forgive my foes -- they know not what they do --
Forgive them all the tears they made me shed;
Forgive them, though my noblest sons they slew,
And bless them, though they curse my poor, dear dead.

Oh! may my woes be each a carrier dove,
With swift, white wings, that, bathing in my tears,
Will bear Thee, Father, all my prayers of love,
And bring me peace in all my doubts and fears.

Father, I kneel, 'mid ruin, wreck, and grave --
A desert waste, where all was erst so fair --
And for my children and my foes I crave
Pity and pardon. Father, hear my prayer!

Feast of the Assumption

"A Night Prayer"

Dark! Dark! Dark!
The sun is set; the day is dead:
Thy Feast has fled;
My eyes are wet with tears unshed;
I bow my head;
Where the star-fringed shadows softly sway
I bend my knee,
And, like a homesick child, I pray,
Mary, to thee.

Dark! Dark! Dark!
And, all the day -- since white-robed priest
In farthest East,
In dawn's first ray -- began the Feast,
I -- I the least --
Thy least, and last, and lowest child,
I called on thee!
Virgin! didst hear? my words were wild;
Didst think of me?

Dark! Dark! Dark!
Alas! and no! The angels bright,
With wings as white
As a dream of snow in love and light,
Flashed on thy sight;
They shone like stars around thee, Queen!
I knelt afar --
A shadow only dims the scene
Where shines a star!

Dark! Dark! Dark!
And all day long, beyond the sky,
Sweet, pure, and high,
The angel's song swept sounding by
Triumphantly;
And when such music filled thy ear,
Rose round thy throne,
How could I hope that thou wouldst hear
My far, faint moan?

Dark! Dark! Dark!
And all day long, where altars stand,
Or poor or grand,
A countless throng from every land,
With lifted hand,
Winged hymns to thee from sorrow's vale
In glad acclaim;
How couldst thou hear my lone lips wail
Thy sweet, pure name?

Dark! Dark! Dark!
Alas! and no! Thou didst not hear
Nor bend thy ear,
To prayer of woe as mine so drear;
For hearts more dear
Hid me from hearing and from sight
This bright Feast-day;
Wilt hear me, Mother, if in its night
I kneel and pray?

Dark! Dark! Dark!
The sun is set, the day is dead;
Thy Feast hath fled;
My eyes are wet with the tears I shed;
I bow my head;
Angels and altars hailed thee, Queen,
All day; ah! be
To-night what thou hast ever been --
A mother to me!

Dark! Dark! Dark!
Thy queenly crown in angels' sight
Is fair and bright;
Ah! lay it down; for, oh! to-night
Its jeweled light
Shines not as the tender love-light shines,
O Mary! mild,
In the mother's eyes, whose pure heart pines
For poor, lost child!

Dark! Dark! Dark!
Sceptre in hand, thou dost hold sway
Fore'er and aye
In angel-land; but, fair Queen! pray
Lay it away.
Let thy sceptre wave in the realms above
Where angels are;
But, Mother! fold in thine arms of love
Thy child afar!

Dark! Dark! Dark!
Mary, I call! Wilt hear the prayer

My poor lips dare?
Yea! be to all a Queen most fair,
Crown, sceptre, bear!
But look on me with a mother's eyes
From heaven's bliss;
And waft to me from the starry skies
A mother's kiss!

Dark! Dark! Dark!
The sun is set; the day is dead;
Her Feast has fled;
Can she forget the sweet blood shed,
The last words said
That evening -- "Woman! behold thy Son!
Oh! priceless right,
Of all His children! The last, least one,
Is heard to-night.

Sursum Corda

Weary hearts! weary hearts! by the cares of life oppressed,
Ye are wand'ring in the shadows -- ye are sighing for a rest:
There is darkness in the heavens, and the earth is bleak below,
And the joys we taste to-day may to-morrow turn to woe.
Weary hearts! God is Rest.

Lonely hearts! lonely hearts! this is but a land of grief;
Ye are pining for repose -- ye are longing for relief:
What the world hath never given, kneel and ask of God above,
And your grief shall turn to gladness, if you lean upon His love.
Lonely hearts! God is Love.

Restless hearts! restless hearts! ye are toiling night and day,
And the flowers of life, all withered, leave but thorns along your way:
Ye are waiting, ye are waiting, till your toilings all shall cease,
And your ev'ry restless beating is a sad, sad prayer for peace.
Restless hearts! God is Peace.

Breaking hearts! broken hearts! ye are desolate and lone,
And low voices from the past o'er your present ruins moan!
In the sweetest of your pleasures there was bitterest alloy,
And a starless night hath followed on the sunset of your joy.
Broken hearts! God is Joy.

Homeless hearts! homeless hearts! through the dreary, dreary years,
Ye are lonely, lonely wand'ers, and your way is wet with tears;
In bright or blighted places, wheresoever ye may roam,
Ye look away from earth-land, and ye murmur, "Where is home?"

Homeless hearts! God is Home.

A Child's Wish

Before an Altar

I wish I were the little key
That locks Love's Captive in,
And lets Him out to go and free
A sinful heart from sin.

I wish I were the little bell
That tinkles for the Host,
When God comes down each day to dwell
With hearts He loves the most.

I wish I were the chalice fair,
That holds the Blood of Love,
When every flash lights holy prayer
Upon its way above.

I wish I were the little flower
So near the Host's sweet face,
Or like the light that half an hour
Burns on the shrine of grace.

I wish I were the altar where,
As on His mother's breast,
Christ nestles, like a child, fore'er
In Eucharistic rest.

But, oh! my God, I wish the most
That my poor heart may be
A home all holy for each Host
That comes in love to me.

Presentiment

"My Sister"

Cometh a voice from a far-land!
Beautiful, sad, and low;
Shineth a light from the star-land!

Down on the night of my woe;
And a white hand, with a garland,
Biddeth my spirit to go.

Away and afar from the night-land,
Where sorrow o'ershadows my way,
To the splendors and skies of the light-land,
Where reigneth eternity's day;
To the cloudless and shadowless bright-land,
Whose sun never passeth away.

And I knew the voice; not a sweeter
On earth or in Heaven can be;
And never did shadow pass fleeter
Than it and its strange melody;
And I know I must hasten to meet her,
"Yea, ~Sister!~ thou callest to me!"

And I saw the light; 'twas not seeming,
It flashed from the crown that she wore,
And the brow, that with jewels was gleaming,
My lips had kissed often of yore!
And the eyes, that with rapture were beaming,
Had smiled on me sweetly before.

And I saw the hand with the garland,
Ethel's hand -- holy and fair;
Who went long ago to the far-land
To weave me the wreath I shall wear;
And to-night I look up to the star-land,
And pray that I soon may be there.

Last of May

To the Children of Mary of the Cathedral of Mobile

In the mystical dim of the temple,
In the dream-haunted dim of the day,
The sunlight spoke soft to the shadows,
And said: "With my gold and your gray,
Let us meet at the shrine of the Virgin,
And ere her fair feast pass away,
Let us weave there a mantle of glory,
To deck the last evening of May."

The tapers were lit on the altar,
With garlands of lilies between;
And the steps leading up to the statue

Flashed bright with the roses' red sheen;
The sun-gleams came down from the heavens
Like angels, to hallow the scene,
And they seemed to kneel down with the shadows
That crept to the shrine of the Queen.

The singers, their hearts in their voices,
Had chanted the anthems of old,
And the last trembling wave of the Vespers
On the far shores of silence had rolled.
And there -- at the Queen-Virgin's altar --
The sun wove the mantle of gold
While the hands of the twilight were weaving
A fringe for the flash of each fold.

And wavelessly, in the deep silence,
Three banners hung peaceful and low --
They bore the bright blue of the heavens,
They wore the pure white of the snow
And beneath them fair children were kneeling,
Whose faces, with graces aglow,
Seemed sinless, in land that is sinful,
And woeless, in life full of woe.

Their heads wore the veil of the lily,
Their brows wore the wreath of the rose,
And their hearts like their flutterless banners,
Were stilled in a holy repose.
Their shadowless eyes were uplifted,
Whose glad gaze would never disclose
That from eyes that are most like the heavens
The dark rain of tears soonest flows.

The banners were borne to the railing,
Beneath them, a group from each band;
And they bent their bright folds for the blessing
That fell from the priest's lifted hand.
And he signed the three fair, silken standards,
With a sign never foe could withstand.
What stirred them? The breeze of the evening?
Or a breath from the far angel-land?

Then came, two by two, to the altar,
The young, and the pure, and the fair,
Their faces the mirror of Heaven,
Their hands folded meekly in prayer;
They came for a simple blue ribbon,
For love of Christ's Mother to wear;
And I believe, with the Children of Mary,
The Angels of Mary were there.

Ah, faith! simple faith of the children!
You still shame the faith of the old!

Ah, love! simple love of the little,
You still warm the love of the cold!
And the beautiful God who is wandering
Far out in the world's dreary wold,
Finds a home in the hearts of the children
And a rest with the lambs of the fold.

Swept a voice: was it wafted from Heaven?
Heard you ever the sea when it sings
Where it sleeps on the shore in the night time?
Heard you ever the hymns the breeze brings
From the hearts of a thousand bright summers?
Heard you ever the bird, when she springs
To the clouds, till she seems to be only
A song of a shadow on wings?

Came a voice: and an "Ave Maria"
Rose out of a heart rapture-thrilled;
And in the embrace of its music
The souls of a thousand lay stilled.
A voice with the tones of an angel,
Never flower such a sweetness distilled;
It faded away -- but the temple
With its perfume of worship was filled.

Then back to the Queen-Virgin's altar
The white veils swept on, two by two;
And the holiest halo of heaven
Flashed out from the ribbons of blue;
And they laid down the wreaths of the roses
Whose hearts were as pure as their hue;
Ah! they to the Christ are the truest,
Whose loves to the Mother are true!

And thus, in the dim of the temple,
In the dream-haunted dim of the day,
The Angels and Children of Mary
Met ere their Queen's Feast passed away,
Where the sun-gleams knelt down with the shadows
And wove with their gold and their gray
A mantle of grace and of glory
For the last lovely evening of May.

"Gone"

S. M. A.

Gone! and there's not a gleam of you,

Faces that float into far away;
Gone! and we can only dream of you
Each as you fade like a star away.
Fade as a star in the sky from us,
Vainly we look for your light again;
Hear ye the sound of a sigh from us?
"Come!" and our hearts will be bright again.

Come! and gaze on our face once more,
Bring us the smiles of the olden days;
Come! and shine in your place once more,
And change the dark into golden days.
Gone! gone! gone! Joy is fled for us;
Gone into the night of the nevermore,
And darkness rests where you shed for us
A light we will miss ~forevermore~.

Faces! ye come in the night to us;
Shadows! ye float in the sky of sleep;
Shadows! ye bring nothing bright to us;
Faces! ye are but the sigh of sleep.
Gone! and there's not a gleam of you,
Faces that float into the far away;
Gone! and we only can dream of you
Till we sink like you and the stars away.

Feast of the Sacred Heart

Two lights on a lowly altar;
Two snowy cloths for a Feast;
Two vases of dying roses;
The morning comes from the east,
With a gleam for the folds of the vestments
And a grace for the face of the priest.

The sound of a low, sweet whisper
Floats over a little bread,
And trembles around a chalice,
And the priest bows down his head!
O'er a sign of white on the altar --
In the cup -- o'er a sign of red.

As red as the red of roses,
As white as the white of snows!
But the red is a red of a surface
Beneath which a God's blood flows;
And the white is the white of a sunlight
Within which a God's flesh glows.

Ah! words of the olden Thursday!
Ye come from the far-away!
Ye bring us the Friday's victim
In His own love's olden way;
In the hand of the priest at the altar
His Heart finds a home each day.

The sight of a Host uplifted!
The silver-sound of a bell!
The gleam of a golden chalice.
Be glad, sad heart! 'tis well;
He made, and He keeps love's promise,
With thee all days to dwell.

From his hand to his lips that tremble,
From his lips to his heart a-thrill,
Goes the little Host on its love-path,
Still doing the Father's will;
And over the rim of the chalice
The blood flows forth to fill

The heart of the man anointed
With the waves of a wondrous grace;
A silence falls on the altar --
An awe on each bended face --
For the Heart that bled on Calvary
Still beats in the holy place.

The priest comes down to the railing
Where brows are bowed in prayer;
In the tender clasp of his fingers
A Host lies pure and fair,
And the hearts of Christ and the Christian
Meet there -- and only there!

Oh! love that is deep and deathless!
Oh! faith that is strong and grand!
Oh! hope that will shine forever,
O'er the wastes of a weary land!
Christ's Heart finds an earthly heaven
In the palm of the priest's pure hand.

In Memory of Very Rev. J. B. Etienne

Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission
and of the Sisters of Charity.

A shadow slept folded in vestments,
The dream of a smile on its face,
Dim, soft as the gleam after sunset
That hangs like a halo of grace
Where the daylight hath died in the valley,
And the twilight hath taken its place.
A shadow! but still on the mortal
There rested the tremulous trace
Of the joy of a spirit immortal,
Passed up to its God in His grace.

A shadow! hast seen in the summer
A cloud wear the smile of the sun?
On the shadow of death there is flashing
The glory of noble deeds done;
On the face of the dead there is glowing
The light of a holy race run;
And the smile of the face is reflecting
The gleam of the crown he has won.
Still, shadow! sleep on in the vestments
Unstained by the priest who has gone.

And thro' all the nations the children
Of Vincent de Paul wail his loss;
But the glory that crowns him in heaven
Illumines the gloom of their cross.
They send to the shadow the tribute
Of tears, from the fountains of love,
And they send from their altars sweet prayers
To the throne of their Father above.

Yea! sorrow weeps over the shadow,
But faith looks aloft to the skies;
And hope, like a rainbow, is flashing
O'er the tears that rain down from their eyes.
They murmur on earth "De Profundis",
The low chant is mingled with sighs;
"Laudate" rings out through the heavens --
The dead priest hath won his faith's prize.

His children in sorrow will honor
His grave; every tear is a gem,
And their prayers round his brow in the heavens
Will brighten his fair diadem.
I kneel at his grave and remember,
In love, I am ~still~ one of them.

Tears

The tears that trickled down our eyes,
They do not touch the earth to-day;
But soar like angels to the skies,
And, like the angels, may not die;
For ah! our immortality
Flows thro' each tear -- sounds in each sigh.

What waves of tears surge o'er the deep
Of sorrow in our restless souls!
And they are strong, not weak, who weep
Those drops from out the sea that rolls
Within their hearts forevermore,
Without a depth -- without a shore.

But ah! the tears that are not wept,
The tears that never outward fall;
The tears that grief for years has kept
Within us -- they are best of all;
The tears our eyes shall never know,
Are dearer than the tears that flow.

Each night upon earth's flowers below,
The dew comes down from darkest skies,
And every night our tears of woe
Go up like dews to Paradise,
To keep in bloom, and make more fair,
The flowers of crowns we yet shall wear.

For ah! the surest way to God
Is up the lonely streams of tears,
That flow when bending 'neath His rod,
And fill the tide of earthly years.
On laughter's billows hearts are tossed,
On waves of tears no heart is lost.

Flow on, ye tears! and bear me home;
Flow not! ye tears of deeper woe;
Flow on, ye tears! that are but foam
Of deeper waves that will not flow.
A little while -- I reach the shore
Where tears flow not forevermore!

Lines (Two Loves)

Two loves came up a long, wide aisle,
And knelt at a low, white gate;
One -- tender and true, with the shyest smile,

One -- strong, true, and elate.

Two lips spoke in a firm, true way,
And two lips answered soft and low;
In one true hand such a little hand lay
Fluttering, frail as a flake of snow.

One stately head bent humbly there,
Stilled were the throbbings of human love;
One head drooped down like a lily fair,
Two prayers went, wing to wing, above.

God blest them both in the holy place,
A long, brief moment the rite was done;
On the human love fell the heavenly grace,
Making two hearts forever one.

Between two lengthening rows of smiles,
One sweetly shy, one proud, elate,
Two loves passed down the long, wide aisles,
Will they ever forget the low, white gate?

The Land We Love

Land of the gentle and brave!
Our love is as wide as thy woe;
It deepens beside every grave
Where the heart of a hero lies low.

Land of the sunniest skies!
Our love glows the more for thy gloom;
Our hearts, by the saddest of ties,
Cling closest to thee in thy doom.

Land where the desolate weep
In a sorrow no voice may console!
Our tears are but streams, making deep
The ocean of love in our soul.

Land where the victor's flag waves,
Where only the dead are free!
Each link of the chain that enslaves
But binds us to them and to thee.

Land where the Sign of the Cross
Its shadow hath everywhere shed!
We measure our love by thy loss,
Thy loss by the graves of our dead!

In Memoriam

Go! heart of mine! the way is long --
The night is dark -- the place is far;
Go! kneel and pray, or chant a song,
Beside two graves where Mary's star
Shines o'er two children's hearts at rest,
With Mary's medals on their breast.

Go! heart! those children loved you so,
Their little lips prayed oft for you!
But ah! those necks are lying low
Round which you twined the badge of blue.
Go to their graves, this Virgin's feast,
With poet's song and prayer of priest.

Go! like a pilgrim to a shrine,
For that is holy ground where sleep
Children of Mary and of thine;
Go! kneel, and pray and sing and weep;
Last summer how their faces smiled
When each was blessed as Mary's child.

* * * * *

My heart is gone! I cannot sing!
Beside those children's grave, song dies;
Hush! Poet! -- Priest! Prayer hath a wing
To pass the stars and reach the skies;
Sweet children! from the land of light
Look down and bless my heart to-night.

Reverie ["We laugh when our souls are the saddest,"]

We laugh when our souls are the saddest,
We shroud all our griefs in a smile;
Our voices may warble their gladdest,
And our souls mourn in anguish the while.

And our eyes wear a summer's bright glory,
When winter is wailing beneath;
And we tell not the world the sad story

Of the thorn hidden back of the wreath.

Ah! fast flow the moments of laughter,
And bright as the brook to the sea
But ah! the dark hours that come after
Of moaning for you and for me.

Yea, swift as the sunshine, and fleeting
As birds, fly the moments of glee!
And we smile, and mayhap grief is sleeting
Its ice upon you and on me.

And the clouds of the tempest are shifting
O'er the heart, tho' the face may be bright;
And the snows of woe's winter are drifting
Our souls; and each day hides a night.

For ah! when our souls are enjoying
The mirth which our faces reveal,
There is something -- a something -- alloying
The sweetness of joy that we feel.

Life's loveliest sky hides the thunder
Whose bolt in a moment may fall;
And our path may be flowery, but under
The flowers there are thorns for us all.

Ah! 'tis hard when our beautiful dreamings
That flash down the valley of night,
Wave their wing when the gloom hides their gleaming,
And leave us, like eagles in flight;

And fly far away unreturning,
And leave us in terror and tears,
While vain is the spirit's wild yearning
That they may come back in the years.

Come back! did I say it? but never
Do eagles come back to the cage:
They have gone -- they have gone -- and forever --
Does youth come back ever to age?

No! a joy that has left us in sorrow
Smiles never again on our way,
But we meet in the farthest to-morrow
The face of the grief of to-day.

The brightness whose tremulous glimmer
Has faded we cannot recall;
And the light that grows dimmer and dimmer --
When gone -- 'tis forever and all.

Not a ray of it anywhere lingers,

Not a gleam of it gilds the vast gloom;
Youth's roses perfume not the fingers
Of age groping nigh to the tomb.

For "the memory of joy is a sadness" --
The dim twilight after the day;
And the grave where we bury a gladness
Sends a grief like a ghost, on our way.

No day shall return that has faded,
The dead come not back from the tomb;
The vale of each life must be shaded,
That we may see best from the gloom.

The height of the homes of our glory,
All radiant with splendors of light;
That we may read clearly life's story --
"The dark is the dawn of the bright."

I Often Wonder Why 'Tis So

Some find work where some find rest,
And so the weary world goes on:
I sometimes wonder which is best;
The answer comes when life is gone.

Some eyes sleep when some eyes wake,
And so the dreary night-hours go;
Some hearts beat where some hearts break;
I often wonder why 'tis so.

Some wills faint where some wills fight,
Some love the tent, and some the field;
I often wonder who are right --
The ones who strive, or those who yield?

Some hands fold where other hands
Are lifted bravely in the strife;
And so thro' ages and thro' lands
Move on the two extremes of life.

Some feet halt where some feet tread,
In tireless march, a thorny way;
Some struggle on where some have fled;
Some seek when others shun the fray.

Some swords rust where others clash,
Some fall back where some move on;

Some flags furl where others flash
Until the battle has been won.

Some sleep on while others keep
The vigils of the true and brave:
They will not rest till roses creep
Around their name above a grave.

A Blessing

Be you near, or be you far,
Let my blessing, like a star,
Shine upon you everywhere!
And in each lone evening hour,
When the twilight folds the flower,
I will fold thy name in prayer.

In the dark and in the day,
To my heart you know the way,
Sorrow's pale hand keeps the key;
In your sorrow or your sin
You may always enter in;
I will keep a place for thee.

If God's blessing pass away
From your spirit; if you stray
From his presence, do not wait.
Come to my heart, for I keep
For the hearts that wail and weep,
Ever opened wide -- a gate.

In your joys to others go,
When your feet walk ways of woe
Only then come back to me;
I will give you tear for tear,
And our tears shall more endear
Thee to me and me to thee.

For I make my heart the home
Of all hearts in grief that come
Seeking refuge and a rest.
Do not fear me, for you know,
Be your footsteps e'er so low,
I know yours, of all, the best.

Once you came; and you brought sin;
Did not my hand lead you in --
Into God's heart, thro' my own?

Did not my voice speak a word
You, for years, had never heard --
Mystic word in Mercy's tone?

And a grace fell on your brow,
And I heard your murmured vow,
When I whispered: "Go in peace."
"Go in peace, and sin no more,"
Did you not touch Mercy's shore,
Did not sin's wild tempest cease?

Go! then: thou art good and pure!
If thou e'er shouldst fall, be sure,
Back to me thy footsteps trace!
In my heart for year and year,
Be thou far away or near,
I shall keep for thee a place.

Yes! I bless you -- near or far --
And my blessing, like a star,
Shall shine on you everywhere;
And in many a holy hour,
As the sunshine folds the flower,
I will fold thy heart in prayer.

July 9th, 1872

Between two pillared clouds of gold
The beautiful gates of evening swung --
And far and wide from flashing fold
The half-furled banners of light, that hung
O'er green of wood and gray of wold
And over the blue where the river rolled,
The fading gleams of their glory flung.

The sky wore not a frown all day
To mar the smile of the morning tide;
The soft-voiced winds sang joyous lay --
You never would think they had ever sighed;
The stream went on its sunlit way
In ripples of laughter; happy they
As the hearts that met at Riverside.

No cloudlet in the sky serene!
Not a silver speck in the golden hue!
But where the woods waved low and green,
And seldom would let the sunlight through,
Sweet shadows fell, and in their screen,

The faces of children might be seen,
And the flash of ribbons of blue.

It was a children's simple feast,
Yet many were there whose faces told
How far they are from childhood's East
Who have reached the evening of the old!
And father -- mother -- sister -- priest --
They seemed all day like the very least
Of the little children of the fold.

The old forgot they were not young,
The young forgot they would e'er be old,
And all day long the trees among,
Where'er their footsteps stayed or strolled,
Came wittiest word from tireless tongue,
And the merriest peals of laughter rung
Where the woods drooped low and the river rolled.

No cloud upon the faces there,
Not a sorrow came from its hiding place
To cast the shadow of a care
On the fair, sweet brows in that fairest place
For in the sky and in the air,
And in their spirits, and everywhere,
Joy reigned in the fullness of her grace.

The day was long, but ah! too brief!
Swift to the West bright-winged she fled;
Too soon on ev'ry look and leaf
The last rays flushed which her plumage shed
From an evening cloud -- was it a sign of grief?
And the bright day passed -- is there much relief
That its dream dies not when its gleam is dead?

Great sky, thou art a prophet still!
And by thy shadows and by thy rays
We read the future if we will,
And all the fates of our future ways;
To-morrows meet us in vale and hill,
And under the trees, and by the rill,
Thou givest the sign of our coming days.

That evening cloud was a sign, I ween --
For the sister of that summer day
Shall come next year to the selfsame scene;
The winds will sing the selfsame lay;
The selfsame woods will wave as green,
And Riverside, thy skies serene
Shall robe thee again in a golden sheen;
Yet though thy shadows may weave a screen
Where the children's faces may be seen,
Thou ne'er shall be as thou hast been,

For a face they loved has passed away.

Wake Me a Song

Out of the silences wake me a song,
Beautiful, sad, and soft, and low;
Let the loveliest music sound along,
And wing each note with a wail of woe:
 Dim and drear
 As hope's last tear;
Out of the silences wake me a hymn,
Whose sounds are like shadows soft and dim.

Out of the stillness in your heart --
A thousand songs are sleeping there --
Wake me a song, thou child of art!
The song of a hope in a last despair:
 Dark and low,
 A chant of woe;
Out of the stillness, tone by tone,
Cold as a snowflake, low as a moan.

Out of the darkness flash me a song,
Brightly dark and darkly bright;
Let it sweep as a lone star sweeps along
The mystical shadows of the night:
 Sing it sweet;
Where nothing is drear, or dark, or dim,
And earth-song soars into heavenly hymn.

In Memoriam (David J. Ryan, C.S.A.)

Thou art sleeping, brother, sleeping
 In thy lonely battle grave;
Shadows o'er the past are creeping,
Death, the reaper, still is reaping,
Years have swept, and years are sweeping
Many a memory from my keeping,
But I'm waiting still, and weeping
 For my beautiful and brave.

When the battle songs were chanted,
 And war's stirring tocsin pealed,

By those songs thy heart was haunted,
And thy spirit, proud, undaunted,
Clamored wildly -- wildly panted:
"Mother! let my wish be granted;
I will ne'er be mocked and taunted
That I fear to meet our vaunted
Foemen on the bloody field.

"They are thronging, mother! thronging,
To a thousand fields of fame;
Let me go -- 'tis wrong, and wronging
God and thee to crush this longing;
On the muster-roll of glory,
In my country's future story,
On the field of battle gory
I must consecrate my name.

"Mother! gird my sword around me,
Kiss thy soldier-boy 'good-bye."
In her arms she wildly wound thee,
To thy birth-land's cause she bound thee,
With fond prayers and blessings crowned thee,
And she sobbed: "When foes surround thee,
If you fall, I'll know they found thee
Where the bravest love to die."

At the altar of their nation,
Stood that mother and her son,
He, the victim of oblation,
Panting for his immolation;
She, in priestess' holy station,
Weeping words of consecration,
While God smiled his approbation,
Blessed the boy's self-abnegation,
Cheered the mother's desolation,
When the sacrifice was done.

Forth, like many a noble other,
Went he, whispering soft and low:
"Good-bye -- pray for me, my mother;
Sister! kiss me -- farewell, brother;"
And he strove his grief to smother.
Forth, with footsteps firm and fearless,
And his parting gaze was tearless
Though his heart was lone and cheerless,
Thus from all he loved to go.

Lo! yon flag of freedom flashing
In the sunny Southern sky:
On, to death and glory dashing,
On, where swords are clanging, clashing,
On, where balls are crushing, crashing,
On, 'mid perils dread, appalling,

On, they're falling, falling, falling.
On, they're growing fewer, fewer,
On, their hearts beat all the truer,
 On, on, on, no fear, no falter,
 On, though round the battle-altar
There were wounded victims moaning,
There were dying soldiers groaning;
On, right on, death's danger braving,
Warring where their flag was waving,
While Baptismal blood was laving
 All that field of death and slaughter;
On, still on; that bloody lava
Made them braver and made them braver,
On, with never a halt or waver,
On in battle -- bleeding -- bounding,
While the glorious shout swept sounding,
 "We will win the day or die!"

And they won it; routed -- riven --
 Reeled the foemen's proud array:
They had struggled hard, and striven,
Blood in torrents they had given,
But their ranks, dispersed and driven,
 Fled, in sullenness, away.

Many a heart was lonely lying
 That would never throb again;
Some were dead, and some were dying;
Those were silent, these were sighing;
Thus to die alone, unattended,
Unbewept and unbefriended,
 On that bloody battle-plain.

When the twilight sadly, slowly
 Wrapped its mantle o'er them all,
Thousands, thousands lying lowly,
Hushed in silence deep and holy,
There was one, his blood was flowing
And his last of life was going,

And his pulse faint, fainter beating
Told his hours were few and fleeting;
And his brow grew white and whiter,
While his eyes grew strangely brighter;
There he lay -- like infant dreaming,
With his sword beside him gleaming,
For the hand in life that grasped it,
True in death still fondly clasped it;
There his comrades found him lying
'Mid the heaps of dead and dying,
And the sternest bent down weeping
O'er the lonely sleeper sleeping:
'Twas the midnight; stars shone round him,

And they told us how they found him
Where the bravest love to fall.

Where the woods, like banners bending,
Drooped in starlight and in gloom,
There, when that sad night was ending,
And the faint, far dawn was blending
With the stars now fast descending;
There they mute and mournful bore him,
With the stars and shadows o'er him,
And they laid him down -- so tender --
And the next day's sun, in splendor,
Flashed above my brother's tomb.

What? (To Ethel)

At the golden gates of the visions
I knelt me adown one day;
But sudden my prayer was a silence,
For I heard from the "Far away"
The murmur of many voices
And a silvery censer's sway.

I bowed in awe, and I listened --
The deeps of my soul were stirred,
But deepest of all was the meaning
Of the far-off music I heard,
And yet it was stiller than silence,
Its notes were the "Dream of a Word".

A word that is whispered in heaven,
But cannot be heard below;
It lives on the lips of the angels
Where'er their pure wings glow;
Yet only the "Dream of its Echo"
Ever reaches this valley of woe.

But I know the word and its meaning;
I reached to its height that day,
When prayer sank into a silence
And my heart was so far away;
But I may not murmur the music,
Nor the word may my lips yet say.

But some day far in the future,
And up from the dust of the dead,
And out of my lips when speechless
The mystical word shall be said,

'Twill come to thee, still as a spirit,
When the soul of the bard has fled.

The Master's Voice

The waves were weary, and they went to sleep;
The winds were hushed;
The starlight flushed
The furrowed face of all the mighty deep.

The billows yester eve so dark and wild,
Wore strangely now
A calm upon their brow,
Like that which rests upon a cradled child.

The sky was bright, and every single star,
With gleaming face,
Was in its place,
And looked upon the sea -- so fair and far.

And all was still -- still as a temple dim,
When low and faint,
As murmurs plaint,
Dies the last note of the Vesper hymn.

A bark slept on the sea, and in the bark
Slept Mary's Son --
The only One
Whose face is light! where all, all else, is dark.

His brow was heavenward turned, His face was fair
He dreamed of me
On that still sea --
The stars He made were gleaming through His hair.

And lo! a moan moved o'er the mighty deep;
The sky grew dark:
The little bark
Felt all the waves awaking from their sleep.

The winds wailed wild, and wilder billows beat;
The bark was tossed:
Shall all be lost?
But Mary's Son slept on, serene and sweet.

The tempest raged in all its mighty wrath,
The winds howled on,
All hope seemed gone,

And darker waves surged round the bark's lone path.

The sleeper woke! He gazed upon the deep;

He whispered: "Peace!

Winds -- wild waves, cease!

Be still!" The tempest fled -- the ocean fell asleep.

And ah! when human hearts by storms are tossed,

When life's lone bark

Drifts through the dark

And 'mid the wildest waves where all seems lost,

He now, as then, with words of power and peace,

Murmurs: "Stormy deep,

Be still -- still -- and sleep!"

And lo! a great calm comes -- the tempest's perils cease.

A "Thought-Flower"

Silently -- shadowly -- some lives go,

And the sound of their voices is all unheard;

Or, if heard at all, 'tis as faint as the flow

Of beautiful waves which no storm hath stirred.

Deep lives these

As the pearl-strewn seas.

Softly and noiselessly some feet tread

Lone ways on earth, without leaving a mark;

They move 'mid the living, they pass to the dead,

As still as the gleam of a star thro' the dark.

Sweet lives those

In their strange repose.

Calmly and lowly some hearts beat,

And none may know that they beat at all;

They muffle their music whenever they meet

A few in a hut or a crowd in a hall.

Great hearts those --

God only knows!

Soundlessly -- shadowly -- such move on,

Dim as the dream of a child asleep;

And no one knoweth 'till they are gone

How lofty their souls -- their hearts how deep.

Bright souls these --

God only sees.

Lonely and hiddenly in the world --

Tho' in the world 'tis their lot to stay --
The tremulous wings of their hearts are furled
Until they fly from the world away,
And find their rest
On "Our Father's" breast,
Where earth's unknown shall be known the best,
And the hidden hearts shall be brightest blest.

A Death

Crushed with a burden of woe,
Wrecked in the tempest of sin:
Death came, and two lips murmured low,
"Ah! once I was white as the snow,
In the happy and pure long ago;
But they say God is sweet -- is it so?
Will He let a poor wayward one in --
In where the innocent are?
Ah! justice stands guard at the gate;
Does it mock at a poor sinner's fate?
Alas! I have fallen so far!
Oh, God! Oh, my God! 'tis too late!
I have fallen as falls a lost star:

"The sky does not miss the gone gleam,
But my heart, like the lost star, can dream
Of the sky it has fall'n from. Nay!
I have wandered too far -- far away.
Oh! would that my mother were here;
Is God like a mother? Has He
Any love for a sinner like me?"

Her face wore the wildness of woe --
Her words, the wild tones of despair;
Ah! how can a heart sink so low?
How a face that was once bright and so fair,
Can be furrowed and darkened with care?
Wild rushed the hot tears from her eyes,
From her lips rushed the wildest of sighs,
Her poor heart was broken; but then
Her God was far gentler than men.

A voice whispered low at her side,
"Child! God is more gentle than men,
He watches by passion's dark tide,
He sees a wreck drifting -- and then
He beckons with hand and with voice,
And he sees the poor wreck floating in

To the haven on Mercy's bright shore;
And He whispers the whisper of yore:
'The angels of heaven rejoice
O'er the sinner repenting of sin.'"

* * * * *

And a silence came down for a while,
And her lips they were moving in prayer,
And her face it wore just such a smile
As, perhaps, it was oft wont to wear,
Ere the heart of the girl knew a guile,
Ere the soul of the girl knew the wile,
That had led her to passion's despair.

Death's shadows crept over her face,
And softened the hard marks of care;
Repentance had won a last grace,
And the Angel of Mercy stood there.

The Rosary of My Tears

Some reckon their age by years,
Some measure their life by art;
But some tell their days by the flow of their tears,
And their lives by the moans of their heart.

The dials of earth may show
The length, not the depth, of years,
Few or many they come, few or many they go,
But time is best measured by tears.

Ah! not by the silver gray
That creeps thro' the sunny hair,
And not by the scenes that we pass on our way,
And not by the furrows the fingers of care

On forehead and face have made.
Not so do we count our years;
Not by the sun of the earth, but the shade
Of our souls, and the fall of our tears.

For the young are oftentimes old,
Though their brows be bright and fair;
While their blood beats warm, their hearts are cold --
O'er them the spring -- but winter is there.

And the old are oftentimes young,

When their hair is thin and white;
And they sing in age, as in youth they sung,
And they laugh, for their cross was light.

But bead, by bead, I tell
The rosary of my years;
From a cross to a cross they lead; 'tis well,
And they're blest with a blessing of tears.

Better a day of strife
Than a century of sleep;
Give me instead of a long stream of life
The tempests and tears of the deep.

A thousand joys may foam
On the billows of all the years;
But never the foam brings the lone back home --
It reaches the haven through tears.

Death

Out of the shadows of sadness,
Into the sunshine of gladness,
Into the light of the blest;
Out of a land very dreary,
Out of a world very weary,
Into the rapture of rest.

Out of to-day's sin and sorrow,
Into a blissful to-morrow,
Into a day without gloom;
Out of a land filled with sighing,
Land of the dead and the dying,
Into a land without tomb.

Out of a life of commotion,
Tempest-swept oft as the ocean,
Dark with the wrecks drifting o'er;
Into a land calm and quiet,
Never a storm cometh nigh it,
Never a wreck on its shore.

Out of a land in whose bowers
Perish and fade all the flowers:
Out of the land of decay,
Into the Eden where fairest
Of flowerets, and sweetest and rarest,
Never shall wither away.

Out of the world of the wailing
Thronged with the anguished and ailing;
Out of the world of the sad,
Into the world that rejoices --
World of bright visions and voices --
Into the world of the glad.

Out of a life ever mournful,
Out of a land very lornful,
Where in bleak exile we roam,
Into a joy-land above us,
Where there's a Father to love us --
Into our home -- "Sweet Home".

What Ails the World?

"What ails the world?" the poet cried;
"And why does death walk everywhere?
And why do tears fall anywhere?
And skies have clouds, and souls have care?"
Thus the poet sang, and sighed.

For he would fain have all things glad,
All lives happy, all hearts bright;
Not a day would end in night,
Not a wrong would vex a right --
And so he sang -- and he was sad.

Thro' his very grandest rhymes
Moved a mournful monotone --
Like a shadow eastward thrown
From a sunset -- like a moan
Tangled in a joy-bell's chimes.

"What ails the world?" he sang and asked --
And asked and sang -- but all in vain;
No answer came to any strain,
And no reply to his refrain --
The mystery moved 'round him masked.

"What ails the world?" An echo came --
"Ails the world?" The minstrel bands,
With famous or forgotten hands,
Lift up their lyres in all the lands,
And chant alike, and ask the same

From him whose soul first soared in song,

A thousand, thousand years away,
To him who sang but yesterday,
In dying or in deathless lay --
"What ails the world?" comes from the throng.

They fain would sing the world to rest;
And so they chant in countless keys,
As many as the waves of seas,
And as the breathings of the breeze,
Yet even when they sing their best --

When o'er the list'ning world there floats
Such melody as 'raptures men --
When all look up entranced -- and when
The song of fame floats forth, e'en then
A discord creepeth through the notes --

Their sweetest harps have broken strings,
Their grandest accords have their jars,
Like shadows on the light of stars,
And somehow, something ever mars
The songs the greatest minstrel sings.

And so each song is incomplete,
And not a rhyme can ever round
Into the chords of perfect sound
The tones of thought that e'er surround
The ways walked by the poet's feet.

"What ails the world?" he sings and sighs;
No answer cometh to his cry.
He asks the earth and asks the sky --
The echoes of his song pass by
Unanswered -- and the poet dies.

A Thought

There never was a valley without a faded flower,
There never was a heaven without some little cloud;
The face of day may flash with light in any morning hour,
But evening soon shall come with her shadow-woven shroud.

There never was a river without its mists of gray,
There never was a forest without its fallen leaf;
And joy may walk beside us down the windings of our way,
When, lo! there sounds a footstep, and we meet the face of grief.

There never was a seashore without its drifting wreck,

There never was an ocean without its moaning wave;
And the golden gleams of glory the summer sky that fleck,
Shine where dead stars are sleeping in their azure-mantled grave.

There never was a streamlet, however crystal clear,
Without a shadow resting in the ripples of its tide;
Hope's brightest robes are 'broidered with the sable fringe of fear,
And she lures us, but abysses girt her path on either side.

The shadow of the mountain falls athwart the lowly plain,
And the shadow of the cloudlet hangs above the mountain's head,
And the highest hearts and lowest wear the shadow of some pain,
And the smile has scarcely flitted ere the anguish'd tear is shed.

For no eyes have there been ever without a weary tear,
And those lips cannot be human which have never heaved a sigh;
For without the dreary winter there has never been a year,
And the tempests hide their terrors in the calmest summer sky.

The cradle means the coffin, and the coffin means the grave;
The mother's song scarce hides the ~De Profundis~ of the priest;
You may cull the fairest roses any May-day ever gave,
But they wither while you wear them ere the ending of your feast.

So this dreary life is passing -- and we move amid its maze,
And we grope along together, half in darkness, half in light;
And our hearts are often burdened by the mysteries of our ways,
Which are never all in shadow and are never wholly bright.

And our dim eyes ask a beacon, and our weary feet a guide,
And our hearts of all life's mysteries seek the meaning and the key;
And a cross gleams o'er our pathway -- on it hangs the Crucified,
And He answers all our yearnings by the whisper, "Follow Me."

Life is a burden; bear it;

Life is a duty; dare it;

Life is a thorn-crown; wear it,

Though it break your heart in twain;

Though the burden crush you down;

Close your lips, and hide your pain,

First the Cross, and then, the Crown.

In Rome

At last the dream of youth
Stands fair and bright before me,
The sunshine of the home of truth
Falls tremulously o'er me.

And tower, and spire, and lofty dome
In brightest skies are gleaming;
Walk I, to-day, the ways of Rome,
Or am I only dreaming?

No, 'tis no dream; my very eyes
Gaze on the hill-tops seven;
Where crosses rise and kiss the skies,
And grandly point to Heaven.

Gray ruins loom on ev'ry side,
Each stone an age's story;
They seem the very ghosts of pride
That watch the grave of glory.

There senates sat, whose sceptre sought
An empire without limit;
There grandeur dreamed its dream and thought
That death would never dim it.

There rulers reigned; yon heap of stones
Was once their gorgeous palace;
Beside them now, on altar-thrones,
The priests lift up the chalice.

There legions marched with bucklers bright,
And lances lifted o'er them;
While flags, like eagles plumed for flight,
Unfurled their wings before them.

There poets sang, whose deathless name
Is linked to deathless verses;
There heroes hushed with shouts of fame
Their trampled victim's curses.

There marched the warriors back to home,
Beneath yon crumbling portal,
And placed upon the brow of Rome
The proud crown of immortal.

There soldiers stood with armor on,
In steel-clad ranks and serried,
The while their red swords flashed upon
The slaves whose rights they buried.

Here pagan pride, with sceptre, stood,
And fame would not forsake it,
Until a simple cross of wood
Came from the East to break it.

That Rome is dead -- here is the grave --
Dead glory rises never;
And countless crosses o'er it wave,

And will wave on forever.

Beyond the Tiber gleams a dome
Above the hill-tops seven;
It arches o'er the world from Rome,
And leads the world to Heaven.

December 6, 1872.

After Sickness

I nearly died, I almost touched the door
That swings between forever and no more;
I think I heard the awful hinges grate,
Hour after hour, while I did weary wait
Death's coming; but alas! 'twas all in vain:
The door half-opened and then closed again.

What were my thoughts? I had but one regret --
That I was doomed to live and linger yet
In this dark valley where the stream of tears
Flows, and, in flowing, deepens thro' the years.
My lips spake not -- my eyes were dull and dim,
But thro' my heart there moved a soundless hymn --
A triumph song of many chords and keys,
Transcending language -- as the summer breeze,
Which, through the forest mystically floats,
Transcends the reach of mortal music's notes.
A song of victory -- a chant of bliss:
Wedded to words, it might have been like this:

"Come, death! but I am fearless,
I shrink not from your frown;
The eyes you close are tearless;
Haste! strike this frail form down.
Come! there is no dissembling
In this last, solemn hour,
But you'll find my heart untrembling
Before your awful power.
My lips grow pale and paler,
My eyes are strangely dim,
I wail not as a wailer,
I sing a victor's hymn.
My limbs grow cold and colder,
My room is all in gloom;
Bold death! -- but I am bolder --
Come! lead me to my tomb!

'Tis cold, and damp, and dreary,
'Tis still, and lone, and deep;
Haste, death! my eyes are weary,
I want to fall asleep.

'Strike quick! Why dost thou tarry?
Of time why such a loss?
Dost fear the sign I carry?
'Tis but a simple cross.
Thou wilt not strike? Then hear me:
Come! strike in any hour,
My heart shall never fear thee
Nor flinch before thy power.
I'll meet thee -- time's dread licitor --
And my wasted lips shall sing:
'Dread death! I am the victor!
Strong death! where is thy sting?'"

Milan, January, 1873.

Old Trees

Old trees, old trees! in your mystic gloom
There's many a warrior laid,
And many a nameless and lonely tomb
Is sheltered beneath your shade.
Old trees, old trees! without pomp or prayer
We buried the brave and the true,
We fired a volley and left them there
To rest, old trees, with you.

Old trees, old trees! keep watch and ward
Over each grass-grown bed;
'Tis a glory, old trees, to stand as guard
Over the Southern dead;
Old trees, old trees! we shall pass away
Like the leaves you yearly shed,
But ye, lone sentinels, still must stay,
Old trees, to guard "our dead".

After Seeing Pius IX

I saw his face to-day; he looks a chief
Who fears not human rage, nor human guile;
Upon his cheeks the twilight of a grief,
But in that grief the starlight of a smile.
Deep, gentle eyes, with drooping lids that tell
They are the homes where tears of sorrow dwell;
A low voice -- strangely sweet -- whose very tone
Tells how these lips speak oft with God alone.
I kissed his hand, I fain would kiss his feet;
"No, no," he said; and then, in accents sweet,
His blessing fell upon my bended head.
He bade me rise; a few more words he said,
Then took me by the hand -- the while he smiled --
And, going, whispered: "Pray for me, my child."

Sentinel Songs

When falls the soldier brave,
Dead at the feet of wrong,
The poet sings and guards his grave
With sentinels of song.

Songs, march! he gives command,
Keep faithful watch and true;
The living and dead of the conquered land
Have now no guards save you.

Gray ballads! mark ye well!
Thrice holy is your trust!
Go! halt by the fields where warriors fell;
Rest arms! and guard their dust.

List, songs! your watch is long,
The soldiers' guard was brief;
Whilst right is right, and wrong is wrong,
Ye may not seek relief.

Go! wearing the gray of grief!
Go! watch o'er the dead in gray!
Go! guard the private and guard the chief,
And sentinel their clay!

And the songs, in stately rhyme
And with softly sounding tread,
Go forth, to watch for a time -- a time --
Where sleep the Deathless Dead.

And the songs, like funeral dirge,

In music soft and low,
Sing round the graves, whilst hot tears surge
From hearts that are homes of woe.

What tho' no sculptured shaft
Immortalize each brave?
What tho' no monument epitaphed
Be built above each grave?

When marble wears away
And monuments are dust,
The songs that guard our soldiers' clay
Will still fulfil their trust.

With lifted head and stately tread,
Like stars that guard the skies,
Go watch each bed where rest the dead,
Brave songs, with sleepless eyes.

* * * * *

When falls the cause of Right,
The poet grasps his pen,
And in gleaming letters of living light
Transmits the truth to men.

Go, songs! he says who sings;
Go! tell the world this tale;
Bear it afar on your tireless wings:
The Right will yet prevail.

Songs! sound like the thunder's breath!
Boom o'er the world and say:
Brave men may die -- Right has no death!
Truth never shall pass away!

Go! sing thro' a nation's sighs!
Go! sob thro' a people's tears!
Sweep the horizons of all the skies,
And throb through a thousand years!

* * * * *

And the songs, with brave, sad face,
Go proudly down their way,
Wailing the loss of a conquered race
And waiting an Easter-day.

Away! away! like the birds,
They soar in their flight sublime;
And the waving wings of the poet's words
Flash down to the end of time.

When the flag of justice fails,
Ere its folds have yet been furled,
The poet waves its folds in wails
That flutter o'er the world.

Songs, march! and in rank by rank
The low, wild verses go,
To watch the graves where the grass is dank,
And the martyrs sleep below.

Songs! halt where there is no name!
Songs! stay where there is no stone!
And wait till you hear the feet of Fame
Coming to where ye moan.

And the songs, with lips that mourn,
And with hearts that break in twain
At the beck of the bard -- a hope forlorn --
Watch the plain where sleep the slain.

* * * * *

When the warrior's sword is lowered
Ere its stainless sheen grows dim,
The bard flings forth its dying gleam
On the wings of a deathless hymn.

Songs, fly far o'er the world
And adown to the end of time:
Let the sword still flash, tho' its flag be furled,
Thro' the sheen of the poet's rhyme.

Songs! fly as the eagles fly!
The bard unbars the cage;
Go, soar away, and afar and high
Wave your wings o'er every age.

Shriek shrilly o'er each day,
As futureward ye fly,
That the men were right who wore the gray,
And Right can never die.

And the songs, with waving wing,
Fly far, float far away
From the ages' crest; o'er the world they fling
The shade of the stainless gray.

Might! sing your triumph-songs!
Each song but sounds a shame;
Go down the world, in loud-voiced throngs,
To win, from the future, fame.

Our ballads, born of tears,

Will track you on your way,
And win the hearts of the future years
For the men who wore the gray.

And so -- say what you will --
In the heart of God's own laws
I have a faith, and my heart believes still
In the triumph of our cause.

Such hope may all be vain,
And futile be such trust;
But the weary eyes that weep the slain,
And watch above such dust,

They cannot help but lift
Their visions to the skies;
They watch the clouds, but wait the rift
Through which their hope shall rise.

The victor wields the sword:
Its blade may broken be
By a thought that sleeps in a deathless word,
To wake in the years to be.

We wait a grand-voiced bard,
Who, when he sings, will send
Immortal songs' "Imperial Guard"
The Lost Cause to defend.

He has not come; he will.
But when he chants, his song
Will stir the world to its depths and thrill
The earth with its tale of wrong.

The fallen cause still waits --
Its bard has not come yet.
His sun through one of to-morrow's gates
Shall shine, but never set.

But when he comes he'll sweep
A harp with tears all stringed,
And the very notes he strikes will weep
As they come from his hand woe-winged.

Ah! grand shall be his strain,
And his songs shall fill all climes,
And the rebels shall rise and march again
Down the lines of his glorious rhymes.

And through his verse shall gleam
The swords that flashed in vain,
And the men who wore the gray shall seem
To be marshaling again.

But hush! between his words
Peer faces sad and pale,
And you hear the sound of broken chords
Beat through the poet's wail.

Through his verse the orphans cry --
The terrible undertone --
And the father's curse and the mother's sigh,
And the desolate young wife's moan.

* * * * *

But harps are in every land
That await a voice that sings,
And a master-hand -- but the humblest hand
May gently touch its strings.

I sing with a voice too low
To be heard beyond to-day,
In minor keys of my people's woe,
But my songs pass away.

To-morrow hears them not --
To-morrow belongs to Fame --
My songs, like the birds', will be forgot,
And forgotten shall be my name.

And yet who knows? Betimes
The grandest songs depart,
While the gentle, humble, and low-toned rhymes
Will echo from heart to heart.

But, oh! if in song or speech,
In major or minor key,
My voice could over the ages reach,
I would whisper the name of Lee.

In the night of our defeat
Star after star had gone,
But the way was bright to our soldiers' feet
Where the star of Lee led on.

But sudden there came a cloud,
Out rung a nation's knell;
Our cause was wrapped in its winding shroud,
All fell when the great Lee fell.

From his men, with scarce a word,
Silence when great hearts part!
But we know he sheathed his stainless sword
In the wound of a broken heart.

He fled from Fame; but Fame
Sought him in his retreat,
Demanding for the world one name
Made deathless by defeat.

Nay, Fame! success is best!
All lost! and nothing won:
North, keep the clouds that flush the West,
We have the sinking sun.

All lost! but by the graves
Where martyred heroes rest,
He wins the most who honor saves --
Success is not the test.

All lost! a nation weeps;
By all the tears that fall,
He loses naught who conscience keeps,
Lee's honor saves us all.

All lost! but e'en defeat
Hath triumphs of her own,
Wrong's paeon hath no note so sweet
As trampled Right's proud moan.

The world shall yet decide,
In truth's clear, far-off light,
That the soldiers who wore the gray, and died
With Lee, were in the right.

And men, by time made wise,
Shall in the future see
No name hath risen, or ever shall rise,
Like the name of Robert Lee.

Ah, me! my words are weak,
This task surpasses me;
Dead soldiers! rise from your graves and speak,
And tell how you loved Lee.

The banner you bore is furled,
And the gray is faded, too!
But in all the colors that deck the world
Your gray blends not with blue.

The colors are far apart,
Graves sever them in twain;
The Northern heart and the Southern heart
May beat in peace again;

But still till time's last day,
Whatever lips may plight,
The blue is blue, but the gray is gray,

Wrong never accords with Right.

Go, Glory! and forever guard
Our chieftain's hallowed dust;
And Honor! keep eternal ward!
And Fame! be this thy trust!

Go! with your bright emblazoned scroll
And tell the years to be,
The first of names that flash your roll
Is ours -- great Robert Lee.

Lee wore the gray! since then
'Tis Right's and Honor's hue!
He honored it, that man of men,
And wrapped it round the true.

Dead! but his spirit breathes!
Dead! but his heart is ours!
Dead! but his sunny and sad land wreathes
His crown with tears for flowers.

A statue for his tomb!
Mould it of marble white!
For Wrong, a spectre of death and doom;
An angel of hope for Right.

But Lee has a thousand graves
In a thousand hearts, I ween;
And teardrops fall from our eyes in waves
That will keep his memory green.

Ah! Muse, you dare not claim
A nobler man than he,
Nor nobler man hath less of blame,
Nor blameless man hath purer name,
Nor purer name hath grander fame,
Nor fame -- another Lee.

Fragments from an Epic Poem

A Mystery

His face was sad; some shadow must have hung
Above his soul; its folds, now falling dark,
Now almost bright; but dark or not so dark,
Like cloud upon a mount, 'twas always there --
A shadow; and his face was always sad.

His eyes were changeful; for the gloom of gray
Within them met and blended with the blue,
And when they gazed they seemed almost to dream
They looked beyond you into far-away,
And often drooped; his face was always sad.

His eyes were deep; I often saw them dim,
As if the edges of a cloud of tears
Had gathered there, and only left a mist
That made them moist and kept them ever moist.
He never wept; his face was always sad.

I mean, not many saw him ever weep,
And yet he seemed as one who often wept,
Or always, tears that were too proud to flow
In outer streams, but shrunk within and froze --
Froze down into himself; his face was sad.

And yet sometimes he smiled -- a sudden smile,
As if some far-gone joy came back again,
Surprised his heart, and flashed across his face
A moment like a light through rifts in clouds,
Which falls upon an unforgotten grave;
He rarely laughed; his face was ever sad.

And when he spoke his words were sad as wails,
And strange as stories of an unknown land,
And full of meanings as the sea of moans.
At times he was so still that silence seemed
To sentinel his lips; and not a word
Would leave his heart; his face was strangely sad.

But then at times his speech flowed like a stream --
A deep and dreamy stream through lonely dells
Of lofty mountain-thoughts, and o'er its waves
Hung mysteries of gloom; and in its flow
It rippled on lone shores fair-fringed with flowers,
And deepened as it flowed; his face was sad.

He had his moods of silence and of speech.
I asked him once the reason, and he said:
"When I speak much, my words are only words,
When I speak least, my words are more than words,
When I speak not, I then reveal myself!"
It was his way of saying things -- he spoke
In quaintest riddles; and his face was sad.

And, when he wished, he wove around his words
A nameless spell that marvelously thrilled
The dullest ear. 'Twas strange that he so cold
Could warm the coldest heart; that he so hard
Could soften hardest soul; that he so still

Could rouse the stillest mind: his face was sad.

He spoke of death as if it were a toy
For thought to play with; and of life he spoke
As of a toy not worth the play of thought;
And of this world he spoke as captives speak
Of prisons where they pine; he spoke of men
As one who found pure gold in each of them.
He spoke of women just as if he dreamed
About his mother; and he spoke of God
As if he walked with Him and knew His heart --
But he was weary, and his face was sad.

He had a weary way in all he did,
As if he dragged a chain, or bore a cross;
And yet the weary went to him for rest.
His heart seemed scarce to know an earthly joy,
And yet the joyless were rejoiced by him.
He seemed to have two selves -- his outer self
Was free to any passer-by, and kind to all,
And gentle as a child's; that outer self
Kept open all its gates, that who so wished
Might enter them and find therein a place;
And many entered; but his face was sad.

The inner self he guarded from approach,
He kept it sealed and sacred as a shrine;
He guarded it with silence and reserve;
Its gates were locked and watched, and none might pass
Beyond the portals; and his face was sad.
But whoso entered there -- and few were they --
So very few -- so very, very few,
They never did forget; they said: "How strange!"
They murmured still: "How strange! how strangely strange!"
They went their ways, but wore a lifted look,
And higher meanings came to common words,
And lowly thoughts took on the grandest tones;
And, near or far, they never did forget
The "Shadow and the Shrine"; his face was sad.

He was not young nor old -- yet he was both;
Nor both by turns, but always both at once;
For youth and age commingled in his ways,
His words, his feelings, and his thoughts and acts.
At times the "old man" tottered in his thoughts,
The child played thro' his words; his face was sad.

I one day asked his age; he smiled and said:
"The rose that sleeps upon yon valley's breast,
Just born to-day, is not as young as I;
The moss-robed oak of twice a thousand storms --
An acorn cradled ages long ago --
Is old, in sooth, but not as old as I."

It was his way -- he always answered thus,
But when he did his face was very sad.

* * * * *

Spirit Song

Thou wert once the purest wave
Where the tempests roar;
Thou art now a golden wave
On the golden shore --
Ever -- ever -- evermore!

Thou wert once the bluest wave
Shadows e'er hung o'er;
Thou art now the brightest wave
On the brightest shore --
Ever -- ever -- evermore!

Thou wert once the gentlest wave
Ocean ever bore;
Thou art now the fairest wave
On the fairest shore --
Ever -- ever -- evermore!

Whiter foam than thine, O wave,
Wavelet never wore,
Stainless wave; and now you lave
The far and stormless shore --
Ever -- ever -- evermore!

Who bade thee go, O bluest wave,
Beyond the tempest's roar?
Who bade thee flow, O fairest wave,
Unto the golden shore,
Ever -- ever -- evermore?

Who waved a hand, O purest wave?
A hand that blessings bore,
And wafted thee, O whitest wave,
Unto the fairest shore,
Ever -- ever -- evermore?

Who winged thy way, O holy wave,
In days and days of yore?
And wept the words: "O winsome wave,
This earth is not thy shore!"
Ever -- ever -- evermore?

Who gave thee strength, O snowy wave --
The strength a great soul wore --
And said: "Float up to God! my wave,

His heart shall be thy shore!"
Ever -- ever -- evermore?

Who said to thee, O poor, weak wave:
"Thy wail shall soon be o'er,
Float on to God, and leave me, wave,
Upon this rugged shore!"
Ever -- ever -- evermore?

And thou hast reached His feet! Glad wave,
Dost dream of days of yore?
Dost yearn that we shall meet, pure wave,
Upon the golden shore,
Ever -- ever -- evermore?

Thou sleepest in the calm, calm wave,
Beyond the wild storm's roar!
I watch amid the storm, bright wave,
Like rock upon the shore;
Ever -- ever -- evermore!

Sing at the feet of God, white wave,
Song sweet as one of yore!
I would not bring thee back, heart wave,
To break upon this shore,
Ever -- ever -- evermore!

* * * * *

"No, no," he gently spoke: "You know me not;
My mind is like a temple, dim, vast, lone;
Just like a temple when the priest has gone,
And all the hymns that rolled along the vaults
Are buried deep in silence; when the lights
That flashed on altars died away in dark,
And when the flowers, with all their perfumed breath
And beauteous bloom, lie withered on the shrine.
My mind is like a temple, solemn, still,
Untenanted save by the ghosts of gloom
Which seem to linger in the holy place --
The shadows of the sinners who passed there,
And wept, and spirit-shriven left upon
The marble floor memorials of their tears."

And while he spake, his words sank low and low,
Until they hid themselves in some still depth
He would not open; and his face was sad.

When he spoke thus, his very gentleness
Passed slowly from him, and his look, so mild,
Grew marble cold; a pallor as of death
Whitened his lips, and clouds rose to his eyes,
Dry, rainless clouds, where lightnings seemed to sleep.

His words, as tender as a rose's smile,
Slow-hardened into thorns, but seemed to sting
Himself the most; his brow, at such times, bent
Most lowly down, and wore such look of pain
As though it bore an unseen crown of thorns.
Who knows? perhaps it did!

But he would pass
His hand upon his brow, or touch his eyes,
And then the olden gentleness, like light
Which seems transfigured by the touch of dark,
Would tremble on his face, and he would look
More gentle than ever, and his tone
Would sweeten, like the winds when storms have passed.

I saw him, one day, thus most deeply moved
And darkened; ah! his face was like a tomb
That hid the dust of dead and buried smiles,
But, suddenly, his face flashed like a throne,
And all the smiles arose as from the dead,
And wore the glory of an Easter morn;
And passed beneath the sceptre of a hope
Which came from some far region of his heart,
Came up into his eyes, and reigned a queen.
I marveled much; he answered to my look
With all his own, and wafted me these words:

"There are transitions in the lives of all.
There are transcendent moments when we stand
In Thabor's glory with the chosen three,
And weak with very strength of human love
We fain would build our tabernacles there;
And, Peter-like, for very human joy
We cry aloud: 'Tis good that we are here.'
Swift are these moments, like the smile of God,
Which glorifies a shadow and is gone.

"And then we stand upon another mount --
Dark, rugged Calvary; and God keeps us there
For awful hours, to make us there His own
In Crucifixion's tortures; 'tis His way.
We wish to cling to Thabor; He says: 'No.'
And what He says is best because most true.
We fain would fly from Calvary; He says: 'No.'
And it is true because it is the best.
And yet, my friend, these two mounts are the same.

"They lie apart, distinct and separate,
And yet -- strange mystery! -- they are the same.
For Calvary is a Thabor in the dark,
And Thabor is a Calvary in the light.
It is the mystery of Holy Christ!
It is the mystery of you and me!

Earth's shadows move, as moves far-heaven's sun,
And, like the shadows of a dial, we
Tell, darkly, in the vale the very hours
The sun tells brightly in the sinless skies.
Dost understand?" I did not understand --
Or only half; his face was very sad.
"Dost thou not understand me? Then your life
Is shallow as a brook that brawls along
Between two narrow shores; you never wept --
You never wore great clouds upon your brow
As mountains wear them; and you never wore
Strange glories in your eyes, as sunset skies
Oft wear them; and your lips -- they never sighed
Grand sighs which bear the weight of all the soul;
You never reached your arms a-broad -- a-high --
To grasp far-worlds, or to enclasp the sky.
Life, only life, can understand a life;
Depth, only depth, can understand the deep.
The dewdrop glist'ning on the lily's face
Can never learn the story of the sea."

* * * * *

One day we strolled together to the sea.
Gray evening and the night had almost met,
We walked between them, silent, to the shore.
The feet of weird faced waves ran up the beach
Like children in mad play, then back again
As if the spirit of the land pursued;
Then up again -- and farther -- and they flung
White, foamy arms around each other's neck;
Then back again with sudden rush and shout,
As if the sea, their mother, called them home;
Then leaned upon her breast, as if so tired,
But swiftly tore themselves away and rushed
Away, and farther up the beach, and fell
For utter weariness; and loudly sobbed
For strength to rise and flow back to the deep.
But all in vain, for other waves swept on
And trampled them; the sea cried out in grief,
The gray beach laughed and clasped them to the sands.
It was the flood-tide and the even-tide --
Between the evening and the night we walked --
We walked between the billows and the beach,
We walked between the future and the past,
Down to the sea we twain had strolled -- to part.

The shore was low, with just the faintest rise
Of many-colored sands and shreds of shells,
Until about a stone's far throw they met
A fringe of faded grass, with here and there
A pale-green shrub; and farther into land --
Another stone's throw farther -- there were trees --

Tall, dark, wild trees, with intertwining arms,
Each almost touching each, as if they feared
To stand alone and look upon the sea.
The night was in the trees -- the evening on the shore.
We walked between the evening and the night --
Between the trees and tide we silent strolled.
There lies between man's silence and his speech
A shadowy valley, where thro' those who pass
Are never silent, tho' they may not speak;
And yet they more than breathe. It is the vale
Of wordless sighs, half uttered and half-heard.
It is the vale of the unutterable.
We walked between our silence and our speech,
And sighed between the sunset and the stars,
One hour beside the sea.

There was a cloud
Far o'er the reach of waters, hanging low
'Tween sea and sky -- the banner of the storm,
Its edges faintly bright, as if the rays
That fled far down the West had rested there
And slumbered, and had left a dream of light.
Its inner folds were dark -- its central, more.
It did not flutter; there it hung, as calm
As banner in a temple o'er a shrine.
Its shadow only fell upon the sea,
Above the shore the heavens bended blue.
We walked between the cloudless and the cloud,
That hour, beside the sea.

But, quick as thought,
There gleamed a sword of wild, terrific light --
Its hilt in heaven, its point hissed in the sea,
Its scabbard in the darkness -- and it tore
The bannered cloud into a thousand shreds,
Then quivered far away, and bent and broke
In flashing fragments;

And there came a peal
That shook the mighty sea from shore to shore,
But did not stir a sand-grain on the beach;
Then silence fell, and where the low cloud hung
Clouds darker gathered -- and they proudly waved
Like flags before a battle.

We twain walked --
We walked between the lightning's parted gleams,
We walked between the thunders of the skies,
We walked between the wavings of the clouds,
We walked between the tremblings of the sea,
We walked between the stillnesses and roars
Of frightened billows; and we walked between
The coming tempest and the dying calm --

Between the tranquil and the terrible --
That hour beside the sea.

There was a rock
Far up the winding beach that jutted in
The sea, and broke the heart of every wave
That struck its breast; not steep enough nor high
To be a cliff, nor yet sufficient rough
To be a crag; a simple, low, lone rock;
Yet not so low as that its brow was laved
By highest tide, yet not sufficient high
To rise beyond the reach of silver spray
That rained up from the waves -- their tears that fell
Upon its face, when they died at its feet.
Around its sides damp seaweed hung in long,
Sad tresses, dripping down into the sea.
A tuft or two of grass did green the rock,
A patch or so of moss; the rest was bare.

Adown the shore we walked 'tween eve and night;
But when we reached the rock the eve and night
Had met; light died; we sat down in the dark
Upon the rock.

Meantime a thousand clouds
Careered and clashed in air -- a thousand waves
Whirled wildly on in wrath -- a thousand winds
Howled hoarsely on the main, and down the skies
Into the hollow seas the fierce rain rushed,
As if its ev'ry drop were hot with wrath;
And, like a thousand serpents intercoiled,
The lightnings glared and hissed, and hissed and glared,
And all the horror shrank in horror back
Before the maddest peals that ever leaped
Out from the thunder's throat.

Within the dark
We silent sat. No rain fell on the rock,
Nor in on land, nor shore; only on sea
The upper and the lower waters met
In wild delirium, like a thousand hearts
Far parted -- parted long -- which meet to break,
Which rush into each other's arms and break
In terror and in tempests wild of tears.
No rain fell on the rock; but flakes of foam
Swept cold against our faces, where we sat
Between the hush and howling of the winds,
Between the swells and sinking of the waves,
Between the stormy sea and stilly shore,
Between the rushings of the maddened rains,
Between the dark beneath and dark above.

We sat within the dread heart of the night:

One, pale with terror; one, as calm and still
And stern and moveless as the lone, low rock.

* * * * *

Lake Como

Winter on the mountains
Summer on the shore,
The robes of sun-gleams woven,
The lake's blue wavelets wore.

Cold, white, against the heavens,
Flashed winter's crown of snow,
And the blossoms of the spring-tide
Waved brightly far below.

The mountain's head was dreary,
The cold and cloud were there,
But the mountain's feet were sandaled
With flowers of beauty rare.

And winding thro' the mountains
The lake's calm wavelets rolled,
And a cloudless sun was gilding
Their ripples with its gold.

Adown the lake we glided
Thro' all the sunlit day;
The cold snows gleamed above us,
But fair flowers fringed our way

The snows crept down the mountain,
The flowers crept up the slope,
Till they seemed to meet and mingle,
Like human fear and hope.

But the same rich, golden sunlight
Fell on the flowers and snow,
Like the smile of God that flashes
On hearts in joy or woe.

And on the lake's low margin
The trees wore stoles of green,
While here and there, amid them,
A convent cross was seen.

Anon a ruined castle,

Moss-mantled, loomed in view,
And cast its solemn shadow
Across the water's blue.

And chapel, cot, and villa,
Met here and there our gaze,
And many a crumbling tower
That told of other days.

And scattered o'er the waters
The fishing boats lay still,
And sound of song so softly
Came echoed from the hill.

At times the mountain's shadow
Fell dark across the scene,
And veiled with veil of purple
The wavelets' silver sheen.

But for a moment only
The lake would wind, and lo!
The waves would near the glory
Of the sunlight's brightest glow.

At times there fell a silence
Unbroken by a tone,
As if no sound of voices
Had ever there been known.

Through strange and lonely places
We glided thus for hours;
We saw no other faces
But the faces of the flowers.

The shores were sad and lonely
As hearts without a love,
While darker and more dreary
The mountains rose above.

But sudden round a headland
The lake would sweep again,
And voices from a village
Would meet us with their strain.

Thus all the day we glided,
Until the Vesper bell
Gave to the day, at sunset,
Its sweet and soft farewell.

Then back again we glided
Upon our homeward way,
When twilight wrapped the waters
And the mountains with its gray.

But brief the reign of twilight,
The night came quickly on;
The dark brow o'er the mountains,
Star-wreathed, brightly shone.

And down thro' all the shadows
The star-gleams softly crept,
And kissed, with lips all shining,
The wavelets ere they slept.

The lake lay in a slumber,
The shadows for its screen,
While silence waved her sceptre
Above the sleeping scene.

The spirit of the darkness
Moved, ghost-like, everywhere;
Wherever starlight glimmered,
Its shadow, sure, fell there.

The lone place grew more lonely,
And all along our way
The mysteries of the night-time
Held undisputed sway.

Thro' silence and thro' darkness
We glided down the tide
That wound around the mountains
That rose on either side.

No eyes would close in slumber
Within our little bark;
What charmed us so in daylight
So awed us in the dark.

Upon the deck we lingered,
A whisper scarce was heard;
When hearts are stirred profoundest,
Lips are without a word.

"Let's say the Chaplet," softly
A voice beside me spake.
"Christ walked once in the darkness
Across an Eastern lake,

"And to-night we know the secret
That will charm Him to our side:
If we call upon His Mother,
He will meet us on the tide."

So we said the beads together,
Up and down the little bark;

And I believe that Jesus met us,
With His Mother, in the dark.

And our prayers were scarcely ended
When, on mountain-top afar,
We beheld the morning meeting
With the night's last fading star.

And I left the lake; but never
Shall the years to come efface
From my heart the dream and vision
Of that strange and lonely place.

February 1, 1873.

"Peace! Be Still"

Sometimes the Saviour sleeps, and it is dark;
For, oh! His eyes are this world's only light,
And when they close wild waves rush on His bark,
And toss it through the dead hours of the night.

So He slept once upon an eastern lake,
In Peter's bark, while wild waves raved at will;
A cry smote on Him, and when He did wake,
He softly whispered, and the sea grew still.

It is a mystery: but He seems to sleep
As erst he slept in Peter's waved-rocked bark;
A storm is sweeping all across the deep,
While Pius prays, like Peter, in the dark.

The sky is darkened, and the shore is far,
The tempest's strength grows fiercer every hour:
Upon the howling deep there shines no star --
Why sleeps He still? Why does He hide His power?

Fear not! a holy hand is on the helm
That guides the bark thro' all the tempest's wrath;
Quail not! the wildest waves can never whelm
The ship of faith upon its homeward path.

The Master sleeps -- His pilot guards the bark;
He soon will wake, and at His mighty will
The light will shine where all before was dark --
The wild waves still remember: "Peace! be still."

Rome, 1873.

Good Friday

O Heart of Three-in-the evening,
You nestled the thorn-crowned head;
He leaned on you in His sorrow,
And rested on you when dead.

Ah! Holy Three-in-the evening
He gave you His richest dower;
He met you afar on Calvary,
And made you "His own last hour".

O Brow of Three-in-the evening,
Thou wearest a crimson crown;
Thou art Priest of the hours forever,
And thy voice, as thou goest down

The cycles of time, still murmurs
The story of love each day:
"I held in death the Eternal,
In the long and the far-away."

O Heart of Three-in-the evening,
Mine beats with thine to-day;
Thou tellest the olden story,
I kneel -- and I weep and pray.

Boulogne, sur mer.

My Beads

Sweet, blessed beads! I would not part
With one of you for richest gem
That gleams in kingly diadem;
Ye know the history of my heart.

For I have told you every grief
In all the days of twenty years,
And I have moistened you with tears,

And in your decades found relief.

Ah! time has fled, and friends have failed
And joys have died; but in my needs
Ye were my friends, my blessed beads!
And ye consoled me when I wailed.

For many and many a time, in grief,
My weary fingers wandered round
Thy circled chain, and always found
In some Hail Mary sweet relief.

How many a story you might tell
Of inner life, to all unknown;
I trusted you and you alone,
But ah! ye keep my secrets well.

Ye are the only chain I wear --
A sign that I am but the slave,
In life, in death, beyond the grave,
Of Jesus and His Mother fair.

At Night

Dreary! weary!
Weary! dreary!
Sighs my soul this lonely night.
Farewell gladness!
Welcome sadness!
Vanished are my visions bright.

Stars are shining!
Winds are pining!
In the sky and o'er the sea;
Shine forever
Stars! but never
Can the starlight gladden me.

Stars! you nightly
Sparkle brightly,
Scattered o'er your azure dome;
While earth's turning,
There you're burning,
Beacons of a better home.

Stars! you brighten
And you lighten
Many a heart-grief here below;

But your gleaming
And your beaming
Cannot chase away my woe.

Stars! you're shining,
I am pining --
I am dark, but you are bright;
Hanging o'er me
And before me
Is a night you cannot light.

Night of sorrow,
Whose to-morrow
I may never, never see,
Till upon me
And around me
Dawns a bright eternity.

Winds! you're sighing,
And you're crying,
Like a mourner o'er a tomb;
Whither go ye,
Whither blow ye,
Wailing through the midnight gloom?

Chanting lowly,
Softly, lowly,
Like the voice of one in woe;
Winds so lonely,
Why thus moan ye?
Say, what makes you sorrow so?

Are you grieving
For your leaving
Scenes where all is fair and gay?
For the flowers
In their bowers,
You have met with on your way?

For fond faces,
For dear places,
That you've seen as on you swept?
Are you sighing,
Are you crying,
O'er the memories they have left?

Earth is sleeping
While you're sweeping
Through night's solemn silence by;
On forever,
Pausing never --
How I love to hear you sigh!

Men are dreaming,
Stars are gleaming
In the far-off heaven's blue;
Bosom aching,
Musing, waking,
Midnight winds, I sigh with you!

Nocturne ["Betimes, I seem to see in dreams"]

Betimes, I seem to see in dreams
What when awake I may not see;
Can night be God's more than the day?
Do stars, not suns, best light his way?
Who knoweth? Blended lights and shades
Arch aisles down which He walks to me.

I hear him coming in the night
Afar, and yet I know not how;
His steps make music low and sweet;
Sometimes the nails are in his feet;
Does darkness give God better light
Than day, to find a weary brow?

Does darkness give man brighter rays
To find the God, in sunshine lost?
Must shadows wrap the trysting-place
Where God meets hearts with gentlest grace?
Who knoweth it? God hath His ways
For every soul here sorrow-tossed.

The hours of day are like the waves
That fret against the shores of sin:
They touch the human everywhere,
The Bright-Divine fades in their glare;
And God's sweet voice the spirit craves
Is heard too faintly in the din.

When all the senses are awake,
The mortal presses overmuch
Upon the great immortal part --
And God seems further from the heart.
Must souls, like skies, when day-dawns break,
Lose star by star at sunlight's touch?

But when the sun kneels in the west,
And grandly sinks as great hearts sink;
And in his sinking flings adown
Bright blessings from his fading crown,

The stars begin their song of rest,
And shadows make the thoughtless think.

The human seems to fade away;
And down the starred and shadowed skies
The heavenly comes -- as memories come
Of home to hearts afar from home;
And thro' the darkness after day
Many a winged angel flies.

And somehow, tho' the eyes see less,
Our spirits seem to see the more;
When we look thro' night's shadow-bars
The soul sees more than shining stars,
Yea -- sees the very loveliness
That rests upon the "Golden Shore".

Strange reveries steal o'er us then,
Like keyless chords of instruments,
With music's soul without the notes;
And subtle, sad, and sweet there floats
A melody not made by men,
Nor ever heard by outer sense.

And "what has been", and "what will be",
And "what is not", but "might have been",
The dim "to be", the "mournful gone",
The little things life rested on
In "Long-ago's", give tone, not key,
To reveries beyond our ken.

Sunless Days

They come to ev'ry life -- sad, sunless days,
With not a light all o'er their clouded skies;
And thro' the dark we grope along our ways
With hearts fear-filled, and lips low-breathing sighs.

What is the dark? Why cometh it? and whence?
Why does it banish all the bright away?
How does it weave a spell o'er soul and sense?
Why falls the shadow where'er gleams the ray?

Hast felt it? I have felt it, and I know
How oft and suddenly the shadows roll
From out the depths of some dim realm of woe,
To wrap their darkness round the human soul.

Those days are darker than the very night;
For nights have stars, and sleep, and happy dreams;
But these days bring unto the spirit-sight
The mysteries of gloom, until it seems

The light is gone forever, and the dark
Hangs like a pall of death above the soul,
Which rocks amid the gloom like storm-swept bark,
And sinks beneath a sea where tempests roll.

Winter on the Atlantic.

A Reverie ["Did I dream of a song? or sing in a dream?"]

Did I dream of a song? or sing in a dream?
Why ask when the night only knoweth?
The night -- and the angel of sleep!
But ever since then a music deep,
Like a stream thro' a shadow-land, floweth
Under each thought of my spirit that groweth
Into the blossom and bloom of speech --
Under each fancy that cometh and goeth --
Wayward, as waves when evening breeze bloweth
Out of the sunset and into the beach.
And is it a wonder I wept to-day?
For I mused and thought, but I cannot say
If I dreamed of a song, or sang in a dream.
In the silence of sleep, and the noon of night;
And now -- even now -- 'neath the words I write,
The flush of the dream or the flow of the song --
I cannot tell which -- moves strangely along.
But why write more? I am puzzled sore:
Did I dream of a song? or sing in a dream?
Ah! hush, heart! hush! 'tis of no avail;
The words of earth are a darksome veil,
The poet weaves it with artful grace;
Lifts it off from his thoughts at times,
Lets it rustle along his rhymes,
But gathers it close, covering the face
Of ev'ry thought that must not part
From out the keeping of his heart.

Back to where the roses rest
Round a shrine of holy name,
(Yes -- they knew me when I came)
More of peace and less of fame
Suit my restless heart the best.

Back to where long quiet brood,
Where the calm is never stirred
By the harshness of a word,
But instead the singing bird
Sweetens all my solitude.

With the birds and with the flowers
Songs and silences unite,
From the morning unto night;
And somehow a clearer light
Shines along the quiet hours.

God comes closer to me here --
Back of ev'ry rose leaf there
He is hiding -- and the air
Thrills with calls to holy prayer;
Earth grows far, and heaven near.

Every single flower is fraught
With the very sweetest dreams,
Under clouds or under gleams
Changeful ever -- yet meseems
On each leaf I read God's thought.

Still, at times, as place of death,
Not a sound to vex the ear,
Yet withal it is not drear;
Better for the heart to hear,
Far from men -- God's gentle breath.

Where men clash, God always clings:
When the human passes by,
Like a cloud from summer sky,
God so gently draweth nigh,
And the brightest blessings brings.

List! e'en now a wild bird sings,
And the roses seem to hear
Every note that thrills my ear,
Rising to the heavens clear,
And my soul soars on its wings

Up into the silent skies
Where the sunbeams veil the star,
Up -- beyond the clouds afar,

Where no discords ever mar,
Where rests peace that never dies.

So I live within the calm,
And the birds and roses know
That the days that come and go
Are as peaceful as the flow
Of a prayer beneath a psalm.

De Profundis

Ah! days so dark with death's eclipse!
Woe are we! woe are we!
And the nights are ages long!
From breaking hearts, thro' pallid lips
O my God! woe are we!
Trembleth the mourner's song;
A blight is falling on the fair,
And hope is dying in despair,
And terror walketh everywhere.

All the hours are full of tears --
O my God! woe are we!
Grief keeps watch in brightest eyes --
Every heart is strung with fears,
Woe are we! woe are we!
All the light hath left the skies,
And the living awe struck crowds
See above them only clouds,
And around them only shrouds.

Ah! the terrible farewells!
Woe are they! woe are they!
When last words sink into moans,
While life's trembling vesper bells --
O my God! woe are we!
Ring the awful undertones!
Not a sun in any day!
In the night-time not a ray,
And the dying pass away!

Dark! so dark! above -- below --
O my God! woe are we!
Cowereth every human life.
Wild the wailing; to and fro!
Woe are all! woe are we!
Death is victor in the strife:
In the hut and in the hall

He is writing on the wall
Dooms for many -- fears for all.

Thro' the cities burns a breath,
Woe are they! woe are we!
Hot with dread and deadly wrath;
Life and love lock arms in death,
Woe are they! woe are all!
Victims strew the spectre's path;
Shy-eyed children softly creep
Where their mothers wail and weep --
In the grave their fathers sleep.

Mothers waft their prayers on high,
O my God! woe are we!
With their dead child on their breast.
And the altars ask the sky --
O my Christ! woe are we!
"Give the dead, O Father, rest!
Spare thy people! mercy! spare!"
Answer will not come to prayer --
Horror moveth everywhere.

And the temples miss the priest --
O my God! woe are we!
And the cradle mourns the child.
Husband at your bridal feast --
Woe are you! woe are you!
Think how those poor dead eyes smiled;
They will never smile again --
Every tie is cut in twain,
All the strength of love is vain.

Weep? but tears are weak as foam --
Woe are ye! woe are we!
They but break upon the shore
Winding between here and home --
Woe are ye! woe are we!
Wailing never! nevermore!
Ah! the dead! they are so lone,
Just a grave, and just a stone,
And the memory of a moan.

Pray! yes, pray! for God is sweet --
O my God! woe are we!
Tears will trickle into prayers
When we kneel down at His feet --
Woe are we! woe are we!
With our crosses and our cares.
He will calm the tortured breast,
He will give the troubled rest --
And the dead He watcheth best.

When? (Death)

Some day in Spring,
When earth is fair and glad,
And sweet birds sing,
And fewest hearts are sad --
Shall I die then?
Ah! me, no matter when;
I know it will be sweet
To leave the homes of men
And rest beneath the sod,
To kneel and kiss Thy feet
In Thy home, O my God!

Some Summer morn
Of splendors and of songs,
When roses hide the thorn
And smile -- the spirit's wrongs --
Shall I die then?
Ah! me, no matter when;
I know I will rejoice
To leave the haunts of men
And lie beneath the sod,
To hear Thy tender voice
In Thy home, O my God!

Some Autumn eve,
When chill clouds drape the sky,
When bright things grieve
Because all fair things die --
Shall I die then?
Ah! me, no matter when,
I know I shall be glad,
Away from the homes of men,
Adown beneath the sod,
My heart will not be sad
In Thy home, O my God!

Some Wintry day,
When all skies wear a gloom,
And beautiful May
Sleeps in December's tomb,
Shall I die then?
Ah! me, no matter when;
My soul shall throb with joy
To leave the haunts of men
And sleep beneath the sod.
Ah! there is no alloy

In Thy joys, O my God!

Haste, death! be fleet;
I know it will be sweet
To rest beneath the sod,
To kneel and kiss Thy feet
In heaven, O my God!

The Conquered Banner

Furl that Banner, for 'tis weary;
Round its staff 'tis drooping dreary;
Furl it, fold it, it is best;
For there's not a man to wave it,
And there's not a sword to save it,
And there's not one left to lave it
In the blood which heroes gave it;
And its foes now scorn and brave it;
Furl it, hide it -- let it rest!

Take that Banner down! 'tis tattered;
Broken is its staff and shattered;
And the valiant hosts are scattered
Over whom it floated high.
Oh! 'tis hard for us to fold it;
Hard to think there's none to hold it;
Hard that those who once unrolled it
Now must furl it with a sigh.

Furl that Banner! furl it sadly!
Once ten thousands hailed it gladly,
And ten thousands wildly, madly,
Swore it should forever wave;
Swore that foeman's sword should never
Hearts like theirs entwined dis sever,
Till that flag should float forever
O'er their freedom or their grave!

Furl it! for the hands that grasped it,
And the hearts that fondly clasped it,
Cold and dead are lying low;
And that Banner -- it is trailing!
While around it sounds the wailing
Of its people in their woe.

For, though conquered, they adore it!
Love the cold, dead hands that bore it!
Weep for those who fell before it!

Pardon those who trailed and tore it!
But, oh! wildly they deplore it,
Now who furl and fold it so.

Furl that Banner! True, 'tis gory,
Yet 'tis wreathed around with glory,
And 'twill live in song and story,
Though its folds are in the dust:
For its fame on brightest pages,
Penned by poets and by sages,
Shall go sounding down the ages --
Furl its folds though now we must.

Furl that Banner, softly, slowly!
Treat it gently -- it is holy --
For it droops above the dead.
Touch it not -- unfold it never,
Let it droop there, furled forever,
For its people's hopes are dead!

A Christmas Chant

They ask me to sing them a Christmas song
That with musical mirth shall ring;
How know I that the world's great throng
Will care for the words I sing?

Let the young and the gay chant the Christmas lay,
Their voices and hearts are glad;
But I -- I am old, and my locks are gray,
And they tell me my voice is sad.

Ah! once I could sing, when my heart beat warm
With hopes, bright as life's first spring;
But the spring hath fled, and the golden charm
Hath gone from the songs I sing.

I have lost the spell that my verse could weave
O'er the souls of the old and young,
And never again -- how it makes me grieve --
Shall I sing as once I sung.

Why ask a song? ah! perchance you believe,
Since my days are so nearly past,
That the song you'll hear on this Christmas eve
Is the old man's best and last.

Do you want the jingle of rhythm and rhyme?

Art's sweet but meaningless notes?
Or the music of thought, that, like the chime
Of a grand cathedral, floats

Out of each word, and along each line,
Into the spirit's ear,
Lifting it up and making it pine
For a something far from here;

Bearing the wings of the soul aloft
From earth and its shadows dim;
Soothing the breast with a sound as soft
As a dream, or a seraph's hymn;

Evoking the solemnest hopes and fears
From our being's higher part;
Dimming the eyes with radiant tears
That flow from a spell bound heart?

Do they want a song that is only a song,
With no mystical meanings rife?
Or a music that solemnly moves along --
The undertone of a life!

Well, then, I'll sing, though I know no art,
Nor the poet's rhymes nor rules --
A melody moves through my aged heart
Not learned from the books or schools:

A music I learned in the days long gone --
I cannot tell where or how --
But no matter where, it still sounds on
Back of this wrinkled brow.

And down in my heart I hear it still,
Like the echoes of far-off bells;
Like the dreamy sound of a summer rill
Flowing through fairy dells.

But what shall I sing for the world's gay throng,
And what the words of the old man's song?

The world they tell me, is so giddy grown
That thought is rare;
And thoughtless minds and shallow hearts alone
Hold empire there;

That fools have prestige, place and power and fame;
Can it be true
That wisdom is a scorn, a hissing shame,
And wise are few?

They tell me, too, that all is venal, vain,

With high and low;
That truth and honor are the slaves of gain;
Can it be so?

That lofty principle hath long been dead
And in a shroud;
That virtue walks ashamed, with downcast head,
Amid the crowd.

They tell me, too, that few they are who own
God's law and love;
That thousands, living for this earth alone,
Look not above;

That daily, hourly, from the bad to worse,
Men tread the path,
Blaspheming God, and careless of the curse
Of his dead wrath.

And must I sing for slaves of sordid gain,
Or to the few
Shall I not dedicate this Christmas strain
Who still are true?

No; not for the false shall I strike the strings
Of the lyre that was mute so long;
If I sing at all, the gray bard sings
For the few and the true his song.

And ah! there is many a changeful mood
That over my spirit steals;
Beneath their spell, and in verses rude,
Whatever he dreams or feels.

Whatever the fancies this Christmas eve
Are haunting the lonely man,
Whether they gladden, or whether they grieve,
He'll sing them as best he can.

Though some of the strings of his lyre are broke
This holiest night of the year,
Who knows how its melody may wake
A Christmas smile or a tear?

So on with the mystic song,
With its meaning manifold --
Two tones in every word,
Two thoughts in every tone;
In the measured words that move along
One meaning shall be heard,
One thought to all be told;
But under it all, to be alone --
And under it all, to all unknown --

As safe as under a coffin-lid,
Deep meanings shall be hid.
Find them out who can!
The thoughts concealed and unrevealed
In the song of the lonely man.

* * * * *

I'm sitting alone in my silent room
This long December night,
Watching the fire-flame fill the gloom
With many a picture bright.
Ah! how the fire can paint!
Its magic skill, how strange!
How every spark
On the canvas dark
Draws figures and forms so quaint!
And how the pictures change!
One moment how they smile!
And in less than a little while,
In the twinkling of an eye,
Like the gleam of a summer sky,
The beaming smiles all die.

From gay to grave -- from grave to gay --
The faces change in the shadows gray;
And just as I wonder who they are,
Over them all,
Like a funeral pall,
The folds of the shadows droop and fall,
And the charm is gone,
And every one
Of the pictures fade away.

Ah! the fire within my grate
Hath more than Raphael's power,
Is more than Raphael's peer;
It paints for me in a little hour
More than he in a year;
And the pictures hanging 'round me here
This holy Christmas eve
No artist's pencil could create --
No painter's art conceive;

Ah! those cheerful faces,
Wearing youthful graces!
I gaze on them until I seem
Half awake and half in dream.
There are brows without a mark,
Features bright without a shade;
There are eyes without a tear;
There are lips unused to sigh.
Ah! never mind -- you soon shall die!

All those faces soon shall fade,
Fade into the dreary dark
Like their pictures hanging here.
-- Lo! those tearful faces,
Bearing age's traces!

I gaze on them, and they on me,
Until I feel a sorrow steal
Through my heart so drearily;
There are faces furrowed deep;
There are eyes that used to weep;
There are brows beneath a cloud;
There are hearts that want to sleep;
Never mind! the shadows creep
From the death-land; and a shroud,
Tenderly as mother's arm,
Soon shall shield the old from harm,
Soon shall wrap its robe of rest
Round each sorrow-haunted breast

Ah! that face of mother's,
Sister's, too, and brother's --
And so many others,
Dear is every name --
And Ethel! Thou art there,
With thy child-face sweet and fair,
And thy heart so bright
In its shroud so white;
Just as I saw you last
In the golden, happy past;
And you seem to wear
Upon your hair --
Your waving, golden hair --
The smile of the setting sun.
Ah! me, how years will run!
But all the years cannot efface
Your purest name, your sweetest grace,
From the heart that still is true
Of all the world to you;
The other faces shine,
But none so fair as thine;
And wherever they are to-night, I know
They look the very same
As in their pictures hanging here
This night, to memory dear,
And painted by the flames,
With tombstones in the background,
And shadows for their frames.

And thus with my pictures only,
And the fancies they unweave,
Alone, and yet not lonely,
I keep my Christmas eve.
I'm sitting alone in my pictured room --

But, no! they have vanished all --
I'm watching the fire-glow fade into gloom,
I'm watching the ashes fall.
And far away back of the cheerful blaze
The beautiful visions of by-gone days
Are rising before my raptured gaze.
Ah! Christmas fire, so bright and warm,
Hast thou a wizard's magic charm
To bring those far-off scenes so near
And make my past days meet me here?

Tell me -- tell me -- how is it?
The past is past, and here I sit,
And there, lo! there before me rise,
Beyond yon glowing flame,
The summer suns of childhood's skies,
Yes -- yes -- the very same!
I saw them rise long, long ago;
I played beneath their golden glow;
And I remember yet,
I often cried with strange regret
When in the west I saw them set
And there they are again;
The suns, the skies, the very days
Of childhood, just beyond that blaze!
But, ah! such visions almost craze
The old man's puzzled brain!
I thought the past was past!
But, no! it cannot be;
'Tis here to-night with me!

How is it, then? the past of men
Is part of one eternity --
The days of yore we so deplore,
They are not dead -- they are not fled,
They live and live for evermore.
And thus my past comes back to me
With all its visions fair.

O past! could I go back to thee,
And live forever there!
But, no! there's frost upon my hair;
My feet have trod a path of care;
And worn and wearied here I sit
I am too tired to go to it.

And thus with visions only,
And the fancies they unweave,
Alone, and yet not lonely,
I keep my Christmas eve.

I am sitting alone in my fire-lit room;
But, no! the fire is dying,

And the weary-voiced winds, in the outer gloom,
Are sad, and I hear them sighing.
The wind hath a voice to pine --
Plaintive, and pensive and low;
Hath it a heart like mine or thine?
Knoweth it weal or woe?
How it wails in a ghost-like strain,
Just against that window pane!
As if it were tired of its long, cold flight,
And wanted to rest with me to-night.
Cease! night-winds, cease!
Why should you be sad?
This is a night of joy and peace,
And heaven and earth are glad!
But still the wind's voice grieves!
Perchance o'er the fallen leaves,
Which, in their summer bloom,
Danced to the music of bird and breeze,
But, torn from the arms of their parent trees,
Lie now in their wintry tomb --
Mute types of man's own doom.

And thus with the night winds only,
And the fancies they unweave,
Alone, and yet not lonely,
I keep my Christmas eve.

How long have I been dreaming here?
Or have I dreamed at all?
My fire is dead -- my pictures fled --
There's nothing left but shadows drear --
Shadows on the wall:

Shifting, flitting,
Round me sitting
In my old arm chair --
Rising, sinking
Round me, thinking,
Till, in the maze of many a dream,
I'm not myself; and I almost seem
Like one of the shadows there.
Well, let the shadows stay!
I wonder who are they?
I cannot say; but I almost believe
They know to-night is Christmas eve,
And to-morrow Christmas day.

Ah! there's nothing like a Christmas eve
To change life's bitter gall to sweet,
And change the sweet to gall again;
To take the thorns from out our feet --
The thorns and all their dreary pain,
Only to put them back again.

To take old stings from out our heart --
Old stings that made them bleed and smart --
Only to sharpen them the more,
And press them back to the heart's own core.

Ah! no eve is like the Christmas eve!
Fears and hopes, and hopes and fears,
Tears and smiles, and smiles and tears,
Cheers and sighs, and sighs and cheers,
Sweet and bitter, bitter, sweet,
Bright and dark, and dark and bright.
All these mingle, all these meet,
In this great and solemn night.

Ah! there's nothing like a Christmas eve
To melt, with kindly glowing heat,
From off our souls the snow and sleet,
The dreary drift of wintry years,
Only to make the cold winds blow,
Only to make a colder snow;
And make it drift, and drift, and drift,
In flakes so icy-cold and swift,
Until the heart that lies below
Is cold and colder than the snow.

And thus with the shadows only,
And the dreamings they unweave,
Alone, and yet not lonely,
I keep my Christmas eve.

'Tis passing fast!
My fireless, lampless room
Is a mass of moveless gloom;
And without -- a darkness vast,
Solemn -- starless -- still!
Heaven and earth doth fill.

But list! there soundeth a bell,
With a mystical ding, dong, dell!
Is it, say, is it a funeral knell?
Solemn and slow,
Now loud -- now low;
Pealing the notes of human woe
Over the graves lying under the snow!
Ah! that pitiless ding, dong, dell!
Trembling along the gale,
Under the stars and over the snow.
Why is it? whence is it sounding so?
Is it a toll of a burial bell?

Or is it a spirit's wail?
Solemnly, mournfully,

Sad -- and how lornfully!
Ding, dong, dell!
Whence is it? who can tell?
And the marvelous notes they sink and swell,
Sadder, and sadder, and sadder still!
How the sounds tremble! how they thrill!
Every tone
So like a moan;
As if the strange bell's stranger clang
Throbb'd with a terrible human pang.

Ding, dong, dell!
Dismally, drearily,
Ever so wearily.
Far off and faint as a requiem plaint
Floats the deep-toned voice of the mystic bell
Piercingly -- thrillingly,
Icily -- chillingly,
Near -- and more near,
Drearer -- and more drear,
Soundeth the wild, weird, ding, dong, dell!

Now sinking lower,
It tolleth slower!
I list, and I hear its sound no more.
And now, methinks, I know that bell,
Know it well -- know its knell --
For I often heard it sound before.

It is a bell -- yet not a bell
Whose sound may reach the ear!
It tolls a knell -- yet not a knell
Which earthly sense may hear.
In every soul a bell of dole
Hangs ready to be tolled;
And from that bell a funeral knell
Is often outward rolled;
And memory is the sexton gray
Who tolls the dreary knell;
And nights like this he loves to sway
And swing his mystic bell.
'Twas that I heard and nothing more,
This lonely Christmas eve;
Then, for the dead I'll meet no more,
At Christmas let me grieve.

Night, be a priest! put your star-stole on
And murmur a holy prayer
Over each grave, and for every one
Lying down lifeless there!

And over the dead stands the high priest, Night,
Robed in his shadowy stole;

And beside him I kneel as his acolyte,
To respond to his prayer of dole.

And list! he begins
That psalm for sins,
The first of the mournful seven;
Plaintive and soft
It rises aloft,
Begging the mercy of Heaven
To pity and forgive,
For the sake of those who live,
The dead who have died unshriven.
Miserere! Miserere!
Still your heart and hush your breath!
The voices of despair and death
Are shuddering through the psalm!
Miserere! Miserere!
Lift your hearts! the terror dies!
Up in yonder sinless skies
The psalms sound sweet and calm!
Miserere! Miserere!
Very low, in tender tones,
The music pleads, the music moans,
"I forgive and have forgiven,
The dead whose hearts were shriven."
De profundis! De profundis!
Psalm of the dead and disconsolate!
Thou hast sounded through a thousand years,
And pealed above ten thousand biers;
And still, sad psalm, you mourn the fate
Of sinners and of just,
When their souls are going up to God,
Their bodies down to dust.
Dread hymn! you wring the saddest tears
From mortal eyes that fall,
And your notes evoke the darkest fears
That human hearts appall!
You sound o'er the good, you sound o'er the bad,
And ever your music is sad, so sad,
We seem to hear murmured in every tone,
For the saintly a blessing; for sinners a curse.
Psalm, sad psalm! you must pray and grieve
Over our dead on this Christmas eve.
De profundis! De profundis!
And the night chants the psalm o'er the mortal clay,
And the spirits immortal from far away,
To the music of hope sing this sweet-toned lay.

You think of the dead on Christmas eve,
Wherever the dead are sleeping,
And we from a land where we may not grieve
Look tenderly down on your weeping.
You think us far, we are very near,

From you and the earth, though parted;
We sing to-night to console and cheer
The hearts of the broken-hearted.
The earth watches over the lifeless clay
Of each of its countless sleepers,
And the sleepless spirits that passed away
Watch over all earth's weepers.
We shall meet again in a brighter land,
Where farewell is never spoken;
We shall clasp each other in hand,
And the clasp shall not be broken;
We shall meet again, in a bright, calm clime,
Where we'll never know a sadness,
And our lives shall be filled, like a Christmas chime,
With rapture and with gladness.
The snows shall pass from our graves away,
And you from the earth, remember;
And the flowers of a bright, eternal May,
Shall follow earth's December.
When you think of us think not of the tomb
Where you laid us down in sorrow;
But look aloft, and beyond earth's gloom,
And wait for the great to-morrow.
And the pontiff, Night, with his star-stole on,
Whispereth soft and low:
Requiescat! Requiescat!

Peace! Peace! to every one
For whom we grieve this Christmas eve,
In their graves beneath the snow.

The stars in the far-off heaven
Have long since struck eleven!
And hark! from temple and from tower,
Soundeth time's grandest midnight hour,
Blessed by the Saviour's birth,
And night putteth off the sable stole,
Symbol of sorrow and sign of dole,
For one with many a starry gem,
To honor the Babe of Bethlehem,
Who comes to men the King of them,
Yet comes without robe or diadem,
And all turn towards the holy east,
To hear the song of the Christmas feast.

Four thousand years earth waited,
Four thousand years men prayed,
Four thousand years the nations sighed,
That their King so long delayed.

The prophets told His coming,
The saintly for Him sighed,
And the star of the Babe of Bethlehem

Shone o'er them when they died.

Their faces towards the future,
They longed to hail the light
That in the after centuries
Would rise on Christmas night.

But still the Saviour tarried,
Within His father's home
And the nations wept and wondered why
The promised had not come.

At last earth's hope was granted,
And God was a child of earth;
And a thousand angels chanted
The lowly midnight birth.

Ah! Bethlehem was grander
That hour than Paradise;
And the light of earth that night eclipsed
The splendors of the skies.

Then let us sing the anthem
The angels once did sing;
Until the music of love and praise,
O'er whole wide world will ring.

Gloria in excelsis!
Sound the thrilling song;
In excelsis Deo!
Roll the hymn along.
Gloria in excelsis!
Let the heavens ring;
In excelsis Deo!
Welcome, new-born King
Gloria in excelsis!
Over the sea and land,
In excelsis Deo!
Chant the anthem grand.
Gloria in excelsis!
Let us all rejoice;
In excelsis Deo!
Lift each heart and voice.
Gloria in excelsis!
Swell the hymn on high;
In excelsis Deo!
Sound it to the sky.
Gloria in excelsis!
Sing it, sinful earth,
In excelsis Deo!
For the Saviour's birth.

Thus joyfully and victoriously,

Glad and ever so gloriously,
High as the heavens, wide as the earth,
Swellleth the hymn of the Saviour's birth.

Lo! the day is waking
In the east afar;
Dawn is faintly breaking,
Sunk in every star.

Christmas eve has vanished
With its shadows gray;
All its griefs are banished
By bright Christmas day.

Joyful chimes are ringing
O'er the land and seas,
And there comes glad singing,
Borne on every breeze.

Little ones so merry
Bed-clothes coyly lift,
And, in such a hurry,
Prattle "Christmas gift!"

Little heads so curly,
Knowing Christmas laws,
Peep out very early
For old "Santa Claus".

Little eyes are laughing
O'er their Christmas toys,
Older ones are quaffing
Cups of Christmas joys.

Hearts are joyous, cheerful,
Faces all are gay;
None are sad and tearful
On bright Christmas day.

Hearts are light and bounding,
All from care are free;
Homes are all resounding
With the sounds of glee.

Feet with feet are meeting,
Bent on pleasure's way;
Souls to souls give greeting
Warm on Christmas day.

Gifts are kept a-going
Fast from hand to hand;
Blessings are a-flowing
Over every land.

One vast wave of gladness
Sweeps its world-wide way,
Drowning every sadness
On this Christmas day.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Haste around the earth;
Merry, merry Christmas,
Scatter smiles and mirth.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Be to one and all!
Merry, merry Christmas,
Enter hut and hall.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Be to rich and poor!
Merry, merry Christmas
Stop at every door.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Fill each heart with joy!
Merry, merry Christmas
To each girl and boy.

Merry, merry Christmas,
Better gifts than gold;
Merry, merry Christmas
To the young and old.

Merry, merry Christmas,
May the coming year
Bring as merry a Christmas
And as bright a cheer.

"Far Away"

"Far Away!" what does it mean?
A change of heart with a change of place?
When footsteps pass from scene to scene,
Fades soul from soul with face from face?
Are hearts the slaves or lords of space?

"Far Away!" what does it mean?
Does distance sever there from here?
Can leagues of land part hearts? -- I ween
They cannot; for the trickling tear

Says "Far Away" means "Far More Near".

"Far Away!" -- the mournful miles
Are but the mystery of space
That blends our sighs, but parts our smiles,
For love will find a meeting place
When face is farthest off from face.

"Far Away!" we meet in dreams,
As 'round the altar of the night
Far-parted stars send down their gleams
To meet in one embrace of light
And make the brow of darkness bright.

"Far Away!" we meet in tears,
That tell the path of weary feet;
And all the good-byes of the years
But make the wanderer's welcome sweet,
The rains of parted clouds thus meet.

"Far Away!" we meet in prayer,
You know the temple and the shrine;
Before it bows the brow of care,
Upon it tapers dimly shine;
'Tis mercy's home, and yours and mine.

"Far Away!" it falls between
What is to-day and what has been;
But ah! what is meet, what is not,
In every hour and every spot,
Where lips breathe on "I have forgot."

"Far Away!" there is no far!
Nor days nor distance e'er can bar
My spirit from your spirits -- nay,
Farewell may waft a face away,
But still with you my heart will stay.

"Far Away!" I sing its song,
But while the music moves along,
From out each word an echo clear
Falls trembling on my spirit's ear,
"Far Away" means "Far More Near".

Listen

We borrow,
In our sorrow,

From the sun of some to-morrow
Half the light that gilds to-day;
 And the splendor
 Flashes tender
O'er hope's footsteps to defend her
From the fears that haunt the way.

 We never
 Here can sever
Any now from the forever
Interclasping near and far!
 For each minute
 Holds within it
All the hours of the infinite,
As one sky holds every star.

Wrecked

The winds are singing a death-knell
Out on the main to-night;
The sky droops low -- and many a bark
That sailed from harbors bright,
 Like many an one before,
 Shall enter port no more:
And a wreck shall drift to some unknown shore
Before to-morrow's light.

The clouds are hanging a death-pall
Over the sea to-night;
The stars are veiled -- and the hearts that sailed
Away from harbors bright,
Shall sob their last for their quiet home --
And, sobbing, sink 'neath the whirling foam
Before the morning's light.

The waves are weaving a death-shroud
Out on the main to-night;
Alas! the last prayer whispered there
By lips with terror white!
 Over the ridge of gloom,
 Not a star will loom!
God help the souls that will meet their doom
Before the dawn of light!

* * * * *

The breeze is singing a joy song
Over the sea to-day;

The storm is dead and the waves are red
With the flush of the morning's ray;
And the sleepers sleep, but beyond the deep
The eyes that watch for the ships shall weep
For the hearts they bore away.

Dreaming

The moan of a wintry soul
Melted into a summer song,
And the words, like the wavelet's roll,
Moved murmuringly along.

And the song flowed far and away,
Like the voice of a half-sleeping rill --
Each wave of it lit by a ray --
But the sound was so soft and so still,

And the tone was so gentle and low,
None heard the song till it had passed;
Till the echo that followed its flow
Came dreamingly back from the past.

'Twas too late! -- a song never returns
That passes our pathway unheard;
As dust lying dreaming in urns
Is the song lying dead in a word.

For the birds of the skies have a nest,
And the winds have a home where they sleep,
And songs, like our souls, need a rest,
Where they murmur the while we may weep.

* * * * *

But songs -- like the birds o'er the foam,
Where the storm wind is beating their breast,
Fly shoreward -- and oft find a home
In the shelter of words where they rest.

A Thought

Hearts that are great beat never loud,

They muffle their music when they come;
They hurry away from the thronging crowd
With bended brows and lips half dumb,

And the world looks on and mutters -- "Proud."
But when great hearts have passed away
Men gather in awe and kiss their shroud,
And in love they kneel around their clay.

Hearts that are great are always lone,
They never will manifest their best;
Their greatest greatness is unknown --
Earth knows a little -- God, the rest.

"Yesterdays"

Gone! and they return no more,
But they leave a light in the heart;
The murmur of waves that kiss a shore
Will never, I know, depart.

Gone! yet with us still they stay,
And their memories throb through life;
The music that hushes or stirs to-day,
Is toned by their calm or strife.

Gone! and yet they never go!
We kneel at the shrine of time:
'Tis a mystery no man may know,
Nor tell in a poet's rhyme.

"To-Days"

Brief while they last,
Long when they are gone;
They catch from the past
A light to still live on.

Brief! yet I ween
A day may be an age,
The poet's pen may screen
Heart-stories on one page.

Brief! but in them,
From eve back to morn,
Some find the gem,
Many find the thorn.

Brief! minutes pass
Soft as flakes of snow,
Shadows o'er the grass
Could not swifter go.

Brief! but along
All the after-years
To-day will be a song
Of smiles or of tears.

"To-Morrrows"

God knows all things -- but we
In darkness walk our ways;
We wonder what will be,
We ask the nights and days.

Their lips are sealed; at times
The bards, like prophets, see,
And rays rush o'er their rhymes
From suns of "days to be".

They see To-morrow's heart,
They read To-morrow's face,
They grasp -- is it by art --
The far To-morrow's trace?

They see what is unseen,
And hear what is unheard,
And To-morrow's shade or sheen
Rests on the poet's word.

As seers see a star
Beyond the brow of night,
So poets scan the far
Prophetic when they write.

They read a human face,
As readers read their page,
The while their thought will trace
A life from youth to age.

They have a mournful gift,

Their verses oft are tears;
And sleepless eyes they lift
To look adown the years.

To-morrows are to-days!
Is it not more than art?
When all life's winding ways
Meet in the poet's heart?

The present meets the past,
The future, too, is there;
The first enclasps the last
And never folds fore'er.

It is not all a dream;
A poet's thought is truth;
The things that are -- and seem
From age far back to youth --

He holds the tangled threads,
His hands unravel them;
He knows the hearts and heads
For thorns, or diadem.

Ask him, and he will see
What your To-morrows are;
He'll sing "What is to be"
Beneath each sun and star.

To-morrows! Dread unknown!
What fates may they not bring?
What is the chord? the tone?
The key in which they sing?

I see a thousand throngs,
To-morrows for them wait;
I hear a thousand songs
Intoning each one's fate.

And yours? What will it be?
Hush! song, and let me pray!
God sees it all -- I see
A long, lone, winding way;

And more! no matter what!
Crosses and crowns you wear:
My song may be forgot,
But Thou shalt not, in prayer.

Inevitable

What has been will be,
'Tis the under law of life;
'Tis the song of sky and sea,
To the key of calm and strife.

For guard we as we may,
What is to be will be,
The dark must fold each day --
The shore must gird each sea.

All things are ruled by law;
'Tis only in man's will
You meet a feeble flaw;
But fate is weaving still

The web and woof of life,
With hands that have no hearts,
Thro' calmness and thro' strife,
Despite all human arts.

For fate is master here,
He laughs at human wiles;
He sceptres every tear,
And fetters any smiles.

What is to be will be,
We cannot help ourselves;
The waves ask not the sea
Where lies the shore that shelves.

The law is coldest steel,
We live beneath its sway,
It cares not what we feel,
And so pass night and day.

And sometimes we may think
This cannot -- will not -- be:
Some waves must rise -- some sink,
Out on the midnight sea.

And we are weak as waves
That sink upon the shore;
We go down into graves --
Fate chants the nevermore;

Cometh a voice! Kneel down!
'Tis God's -- there is no fate --
He giveth the Cross and Crown,
He opens the jeweled gate.

He watcheth with such eyes
As only mothers own --
"Sweet Father in the skies!
Ye call us to a throne."

There is no fate -- God's love
Is law beneath each law,
And law all laws above
Fore'er, without a flaw.

Sorrow and the Flowers

A Memorial Wreath to C. F.

Sorrow:

A garland for a grave! Fair flowers that bloom,
And only bloom to fade as fast away,
We twine your leaflets 'round our Claudia's tomb,
And with your dying beauty crown her clay.

Ye are the tender types of life's decay;
Your beauty, and your love-enfragranced breath,
From out the hand of June, or heart of May,
Fair flowers! tell less of life and more of death.

My name is Sorrow. I have knelt at graves,
All o'er the weary world for weary years;
I kneel there still, and still my anguish laves
The sleeping dust with moaning streams of tears.

And yet, the while I garland graves as now,
I bring fair wreaths to deck the place of woe;
Whilst joy is crowning many a living brow,
I crown the poor, frail dust that sleeps below.

She was a flower -- fresh, fair and pure, and frail;
A lily in life's morning. God is sweet;
He reached His hand, there rose a mother's wail;
Her lily drooped: 'tis blooming at His feet.

Where are the flowers to crown the faded flower?
I want a garland for another grave;
And who will bring them from the dell and bower,
To crown what God hath taken, with what heaven gave?

As though ye heard my voice, ye heed my will;
Ye come with fairest flowers: give them to me,

To crown our Claudia. Love leads memory still,
To prove at graves love's immortality.

White Rose:

Her grave is not a grave; it is a shrine,
Where innocence reposes,
Bright over which God's stars must love to shine,
And where, when Winter closes,
Fair Spring shall come, and in her garland twine,
Just like this hand of mine,
The whitest of white roses.

Laurel:

I found it on a mountain slope,
The sunlight on its face;
It caught from clouds a smile of hope
That brightened all the place.

They wreath with it the warrior's brow,
And crown the chieftain's head;
But the laurel's leaves love best to grace
The garland of the dead.

Wild Flower:

I would not live in a garden,
But far from the haunts of men;
Nature herself was my warden,
I lived in a lone little glen.
A wild flower out of the wildwood,
Too wild for even a name;
As strange and as simple as childhood,
And wayward, yet sweet all the same.

Willow Branch:

To sorrow's own sweet crown,
With simple grace,
The weeping-willow bends her branches down
Just like a mother's arm,
To shield from harm,
The dead within their resting place.

Lily:

The angel flower of all the flowers:

Its sister flowers,
In all the bowers
Worship the lily, for it brings,
Wherever it blooms,
On shrines or tombs,
A dream surpassing earthly sense
Of heaven's own stainless innocence.

Violet Leaves:

It is too late for violets,
I only bring their leaves,
I looked in vain for mignonettes
To grace the crown grief weaves;
For queenly May, upon her way,
Robs half the bowers
Of all their flowers,
And leaves but leaves to June.
Ah! beauty fades so soon;
And the valley grows lonely in spite of the sun,
For flowerets are fading fast, one by one.
Leaves for a grave, leaves for a garland,
Leaves for a little flower, gone to the far-land.

Forget-Me-Not:

"Forget-me-not!" The sad words strangely quiver
On lips, like shadows falling on a river,
Flowing away,
By night, by day,
Flowing away forever.
The mountain whence the river springs
Murmurs to it, "forget me not;"
The little stream runs on and sings
On to the sea, and every spot
It passes by
Breathes forth a sigh,
"Forget me not!" "forget me not!"

A Garland:

I bring this for her mother; ah, who knows
The lonely deeps within a mother's heart?
Beneath the wildest wave of woe that flows
Above, around her, when her children part,
There is a sorrow, silent, dark, and lone;
It sheds no tears, it never maketh moan.
Whene'er a child dies from a mother's arms,
A grave is dug within the mother's heart:
She watches it alone; no words of art

Can tell the story of her vigils there.
This garland fading even while 'tis fair,
It is a mother's memory of a grave,
When God hath taken her whom heaven gave.

Sorrow:

Farewell! I go to crown the dead;
Yet ye have crowned yourselves to-day,
For they whose hearts so faithful love
The lonely grave -- the very clay;
They crown themselves with richer gems
Than flash in royal diadems.

Hope

Thine eyes are dim:
A mist hath gathered there;
Around their rim
Float many clouds of care,
And there is sorrow every -- everywhere.

But there is God,
Every -- everywhere;
Beneath His rod
Kneel thou adown in prayer.

For grief is God's own kiss
Upon a soul.
Look up! the sun of bliss
Will shine where storm-clouds roll.

Yes, weeper, weep!
'Twill not be evermore;
I know the darkest deep
Hath e'en the brightest shore.

So tired! so tired!
A cry of half despair;
Look! at your side --
And see Who standeth there!

Your Father! Hush!
A heart beats in His breast;
Now rise and rush
Into His arms -- and rest.

Farewells

They are so sad to say: no poem tells
The agony of hearts that dwells
In lone and last farewells.

They are like deaths: they bring a wintry chill
To summer's roses, and to summer's rill;
And yet we breathe them still.

For pure as altar-lights hearts pass away;
Hearts! we said to them, "Stay with us! stay!"
And they said, sighing as they said it, "Nay."

The sunniest days are shortest; darkness tells
The starless story of the night that dwells
In lone and last farewells.

Two faces meet here, there, or anywhere:
Each wears the thoughts the other face may wear;
Their hearts may break, breathing, "Farewell fore'er."

Song of the River

A river went singing adown to the sea,
A-singing -- low -- singing --
And the dim rippling river said softly to me,
"I'm bringing, a-bringing --
While floating along --
A beautiful song
To the shores that are white where the waves are so weary,
To the beach that is burdened with wrecks that are dreary.
A song sweet and calm
As the peacefulest psalm;
And the shore that was sad
Will be grateful and glad,
And the weariest wave from its dreariest dream
Will wake to the sound of the song of the stream;
And the tempests shall cease
And there shall be peace."
From the fairest of fountains,
And farthest of mountains,
From the stillness of snow

Came the stream in its flow.

Down the slopes where the rocks are gray,
Thro' the vales where the flowers are fair --
Where the sunlight flashed -- where the shadows lay
Like stories that cloud a face of care,
The river ran on -- and on -- and on --
Day and night, and night and day;
Going and going, and never gone,
Longing to flow to the "far away",
Staying and staying, and never still;
Going and staying, as if one will
Said, "Beautiful river, go to the sea;"
And another will whispered, "Stay with me:"
And the river made answer, soft and low --
"I go and stay" -- "I stay and go."

But what is the song, I said, at last?
To the passing river that never passed;
And a white, white wave whispered, "List to me,
I'm a note in the song for the beautiful sea, --
A song whose grand accents no earth-din may sever,
And the river flows on in the same mystic key
That blends in one chord the 'forever and never'."

December 15, 1878.

Dreamland

Over the silent sea of sleep,
Far away! far away!
Over a strange and starlit deep
Where the beautiful shadows sway;
Dim in the dark,
Glideth a bark,
Where never the waves of a tempest roll --
Bearing the very "soul of a soul",
Alone, all alone --
Far away -- far away
To shores all unknown
In the wakings of the day;
To the lovely land of dreams,
Where what is meets with what seems
Brightly dim, dimly bright;
Where the suns meet stars at night,
Where the darkness meets the light
Heart to heart, face to face,

In an infinite embrace.

* * * * *

Mornings break,
And we wake,
And we wonder where we went
In the bark
Thro' the dark,
But our wonder is misspent;
For no day can cast a light
On the dreamings of the night.

Lines ["Sometimes, from the far-away,"]

Sometimes, from the far-away,
Wing a little thought to me;
In the night or in the day,
It will give a rest to me.

I have praise of many here,
And the world gives me renown;
Let it go -- give me one tear,
'Twill be a jewel in my crown.

What care I for earthly fame?
How I shrink from all its glare!
I would rather that my name
Would be shrined in some one's prayer.

Many hearts are all too much,
Or too little in their praise;
I would rather feel the touch
Of one prayer that thrills all days.

A Song

Written in an Album.

Pure faced page! waiting so long
To welcome my muse and me;
Fold to thy breast, like a mother, the song
That floats from my spirit to thee.

And song! sound soft as the streamlet sings,
And sweet as the Summer's birds,
And pure and bright and white be the wings
That will waft thee into words.

Yea! fly as the sea-birds fly over the sea
To rest on the far-off beach,
And breathe forth the message I trust to thee,
Tear toned on the shores of speech.

But ere you go, dip your snowy wing
In a wave of my spirit's deep --
In a wave that is purest -- then haste and bring
A song to the hearts that weep.

Oh! bring it, and sing it -- its notes are tears;
Its octaves, the octaves of grief;
Who knows but its tones in the far-off years
May bring to the lone heart relief?

Yea! bring it, and sing it -- a worded moan
That sweeps thro' the minors of woe,
With mystical meanings in every tone,
And sounds like the sea's lone flow.

* * * * *

And the thoughts take the wings of words, and float
Out of my spirit to thee;
But the song dies away into only one note,
And sounds but in only one key.

And the note! 'tis the wail of the weariest wave
That sobs on the loneliest shore;
And the key! never mind, it comes out of a grave;
And the chord! -- 'tis a sad "nevermore".

And just like the wavelet that moans on the beach,
And, sighing, sinks back to the sea,
So my song -- it just touches the rude shores of speech,
And its music melts back into me.

Yea, song! shrink back to my spirit's lone deep,
Let others hear only thy moan --
But I -- I forever shall hear the grand sweep
Of thy mighty and tear-burdened tone.

Sweep on, mighty song! -- sound down in my heart
As a storm sounding under a sea;
Not a sound of thy music shall pass into art,
Nor a note of it float out from me.

Parting

Farewell! that word has broken hearts
And blinded eyes with tears;
Farewell! one stays, and one departs;
Between them roll the years.

No wonder why who say it think --
Farewell! he may fare ill
No wonder that their spirits sink
And all their hopes grow chill.

Good-bye! that word makes faces pale
And fills the soul with fears;
Good-bye! two words that wing a wail
Which flutters down the years.

No wonder they who say it feel
Such pangs for those who go;
Good-bye they wish the parted weal,
But ah! they may meet woe.

Adieu! such is the word for us,
'Tis more than word -- 'tis prayer;
They do not part, who do part thus,
For God is everywhere.

St. Stephen

First champion of the Crucified!
Who, when the fight began
Between the Church and worldly pride
So nobly fought, so nobly died,
The foremost in the van;
While rallied to your valiant side
The red-robed martyr-band;
To-night with glad and high acclaim
We venerate thy saintly name;
Accept, Saint Stephen, to thy praise
And glory, these our lowly lays.

The chosen twelve with chrismed hand
And burning zeal within,

Led forth their small yet fearless band
On Pentecost, and took their stand
Against the world and sin --
While rang aloud the battle-cry:
"The hated Christians all must die!
As died the Nazarene before,
The God they believe in and adore."
Yet Stephen's heart quailed not with fear
At persecution's cry;
But loving, as he did, the cause
Of Jesus and His faith and laws,
Prepared himself to die.

He faced his foes with burning zeal,
Such zeal as only saints can feel;
He told them how the Lord had stood
Within their midst, so great and good,
How he had through Judea trod,
How wonders marked his way -- the God,
How he had cured the blind, the lame,
The deaf, the palsied, and the maimed,
And how, with awful, wondrous might,
He raised the dead to life and light;
And how his people knew Him not --
Had eyes and still had seen Him not,
Had ears and still had heard Him not,
Had hearts and comprehended not.
Then said he, pointing to the right,
Where darkly rose Golgotha's height:
"There have ye slain the Holy One,
Your Saviour and God's only Son."

They gnashed their teeth in raging ire,
Those dark and cruel men;
They vowed a vengeance deep and dire
Against Saint Stephen then.
Yet he was calm; a radiant light
Around his forehead gleamed;
He raised his eyes, a wondrous sight
He saw, so grand it was and bright,
His soul was filled with such delight
That he an angel seemed.
Then spoke the Saint: "A vision grand
Bursts on me from above:
The doors of heaven open stand,
And at the Father's own right hand
I see the Lord I love."

"Away with him," the rabble cry,
With swelling rage and hate,
But Stephen still gazed on the sky,
His heart was with his Lord on high,
He heeded not his fate.

The gathering crowd in fury wild
Rush on the 'raptured Saint,
And seize their victim, mute and mild,
Who, like his master, though reviled,
Still uttered no complaint.

With angry shouts they rend the air;
They drag him to the city gate;
They bind his hands and feet and there,
While whispered he for them a prayer,
The martyr meets his fate.

First fearless witness to his belief
In Jesus Crucified,
The red-robed martyrs' noble chief,
Thus for his Master died.
And to the end of time his name
Our Holy Church shall e'er proclaim,
And with a mother's pride shall tell
How her great proto-martyr fell.

A Flower's Song

Star! Star, why dost thou shine
Each night upon my brow?
Why dost thou make me dream the dreams
That I am dreaming now?

Star! Star, thy home is high --
I am of humble birth;
Thy feet walk shining o'er the sky,
Mine, only on the earth.

Star! Star, why make me dream?
My dreams are all untrue;
And why is sorrow dark for me
And heaven bright for you?

Star! Star, oh, hide thy ray,
And take it off my face;
Within my lowly home I stay,
Thou, in thy lofty place.

Star! Star, and still I dream,
Along thy light afar
I seem to soar until I seem
To be, like you, a star.

The Star's Song

Flower! Flower, why repine?
God knows each creature's place;
He hides within me when I shine,
And your leaves hide His face.

And you are near as I to Him,
And you reveal as much
Of that eternal soundless hymn
Man's words may never touch.

God sings to man through all my rays
That wreath the brow of night,
And walks with me thro' all my ways --
The everlasting light.

Flower! Flower, why repine?
He chose on lowly earth,
And not in heaven where I shine,
His Bethlehem and birth.

Flower! Flower, I see Him pass
Each hour of night and day,
Down to an altar and a Mass
Go thou! and fade away.

Fade away upon His shrine!
Thy light is brighter far
Than all the light wherewith I shine
In heaven, as a star.

Death of the Flower

I love my mother, the wildwood,
I sleep upon her breast;
A day or two of childhood,
And then I sink to rest.

I had once a lovely sister --
She was cradled by my side;
But one Summer day I missed her --

She had gone to deck a bride.

And I had another sister,
With cheeks all bright with bloom;
And another morn I missed her --
She had gone to wreath a tomb.

And they told me they had withered,
On the bride's brow and the grave;
Half an hour, and all their fragrance
Died away, which heaven gave.

Two sweet-faced girls came walking
Thro' my lonely home one day,
And I overheard them talking
Of an altar on their way.

They were culling flowers around me,
And I said a little prayer
To go with them -- and they found me --
And upon an altar fair,

Where the Eucharist was lying
On its mystical death-bed,
I felt myself a-dying,
While the Mass was being said.

But I lived a little longer,
And I prayed there all the day,
Till the evening Benediction,
When my poor life passed away.

Singing-Bird

In the valley of my life
Sings a "Singing-Bird",
And its voice thro' calm and strife
Is sweetly heard.

In the day and thro' the night
Sound the notes,
And its song thro' dark and bright
Ever floats.

Other warblers cease to sing,
And their voices rest,
And they fold their weary wing
In their quiet nest.

But my Singing-Bird still sings
Without a cease;
And each song it murmurs brings
My spirit peace.

"Singing-Bird!" O "Singing-Bird!"
No one knows,
When your holy songs are heard,
What repose

Fills my life and soothes my heart;
But I fear
The day -- thy songs, if we must part,
I'll never hear.

But "Singing-Bird!" ah! "Singing-Bird!"
Should this e'er be,
The dreams of all thy songs I heard
Shall sing for me.

Now

Sometimes a single hour
Rings thro' a long life-time,
As from a temple tower
There often falls a chime
From blessed bells, that seems
To fold in Heaven's dreams
Our spirits round a shrine;
Hath such an hour been thine?

Sometimes -- who knoweth why?
One minute holds a power
That shadows every hour,
Dialed in life's sky.
A cloud that is a speck
When seen from far away
May be a storm, and wreck
The joys of every day.

Sometimes -- it seems not much,
'Tis scarcely felt at all --
Grace gives a gentle touch
To hearts for once and all,
Which in the spirit's strife
May all unnoticed be.
And yet it rules a life;

Hath this e'er come to thee?

Sometimes one little word,
Whispered sweet and fleet,
That scarcely can be heard,
Our ears will sudden meet.
And all life's hours along
That whisper may vibrate,
And, like a wizard's song,
Decide our ev'ry fate.

Sometimes a sudden look,
That falleth from some face,
Will steal into each nook
Of life, and leave its trace;
To haunt us to the last,
And sway our ev'ry will
Thro' all the days to be,
For goodness or for ill;
Hath this e'er come to thee?

Sometimes one minute folds
The hearts of all the years,
Just like the heart that holds
The Infinite in tears;
There be such thing as this --
Who knoweth why, or how?
A life of woe or bliss
Hangs on some little Now.

M * * *

When I am dead, and all will soon forget
My words, and face, and ways --
I, somehow, think I'll walk beside thee yet
A down thy after days.

I die first, and you will see my grave;
But child! you must not cry;
For my dead hand will brightest blessings wave
O'er you from yonder sky.

You must not weep; I believe I'd hear your tears
Tho' sleeping in a tomb:
My rest would not be rest, if in your years
There floated clouds of gloom.

For -- from the first -- your soul was dear to mine,

And dearer it became,
Until my soul, in every prayer, would twine
Thy name -- my child! thy name.

You came to me in girlhood pure and fair,
And in your soul -- and face --
I saw a likeness to another there
In every trace and grace.

You came to me in girlhood -- and you brought
An image back to me;
No matter what -- or whose -- I often sought
Another's soul in thee.

Didst ever mark how, sometimes, I became --
Gentle though I be --
Gentler than ever when I called thy name,
Gentlest to thee?

You came to me in girlhood; as your guide
I watched your spirit's ways;
We walked God's holy valleys side by side,
And so went on the days.

And so went on the years -- 'tis five and more;
Your soul is fairer now;
A light as of a sunset on a shore
Is falling on my brow --

Is falling, soon to fade; when I am dead
Think this, my child, of me:
I never said -- I never could have said --
Ungentle words to thee.

I treated you as I would treat a flower,
I watched you with such care;
And from my lips God heard in many an hour
Your name in many a prayer.

I watched the flower's growth; so fair it grew,
On not a leaf a stain;
Your soul to purest thoughts so sweetly true;
I did not watch in vain.

I guide you still -- in my steps you tread still;
Towards God these ways are set;
'Twill soon be over: child! when I am dead
I'll watch and guide you yet.

'Tis better far that I should go before,
And you awhile should stay;
But I will wait upon the golden shore
To meet my child some day.

When I am dead; in some lone after time,
If crosses come to thee,
You'll think -- remembering this simple rhyme --
"He holds a crown for me."

I guide you here -- I go before you there;
But here or there -- I know --
Whether the roses, or the thorny crown you wear
I'll watch where'er you go,

And wait until you come; when I am dead
Think, sometimes, child, of this:
You must not weep -- follow where I led,
I wait for you in bliss.

God in the Night

Deep in the dark I hear the feet of God:
He walks the world; He puts His holy hand
On every sleeper -- only puts His hand --
Within it benedictions for each one --
Then passes on; but ah! where'er He meets
A watcher waiting for Him, He is glad.
(Does God, like man, feel lonely in the dark?)
He rests His hand upon the watcher's brow --
But more than that, He leaves His very breath
Upon the watcher's soul; and more than this,
He stays for holy hours where watchers pray;
And more than that, He oftentimes lifts the veils
That hide the visions of the world unseen.
The brightest sanctities of highest souls
Have blossomed into beauty in the dark.
How extremes meet! the very darkest crimes
That blight the souls of men are strangely born
Beneath the shadows of the holy night.

Deep in the dark I hear his holy feet --
Around Him rustle archangelic wings;
He lingers by the temple where His Christ
Is watching in His Eucharistic sleep;
And where poor hearts in sorrow cannot rest,
He lingers there to soothe their weariness.
Where mothers weep above the dying child,
He stays to bless the mother's bitter tears,
And consecrates the cradle of her child,
Which is to her her spirit's awful cross.
He shudders past the haunts of sin -- yet leaves

E'er there a mercy for the wayward hearts.
Still as a shadow through the night He moves,
With hands all full of blessings, and with heart
All full of everlasting love; ah, me!
How God does love this poor and sinful world!

The stars behold Him as He passes on,
And arch His path of mercy with their rays;
The stars are grateful -- He gave them their light,
And now they give Him back the light He gave.
The shadows tremble in adoring awe;
They feel His presence, and they know His face.
The shadows, too, are grateful -- could they pray,
How they would flower all His way with prayers!
The sleeping trees wake up from all their dreams --
Were their leaves lips, ah, me! how they would sing
A grand Magnificat, as His Mary sang.
The lowly grasses and the fair-faced flowers
Watch their Creator as He passes on,
And mourn they have no hearts to love their God,
And sigh they have no souls to be beloved.
Man -- only man -- the image of his God --
Let's God pass by when He walks forth at night.

Poets

Poets are strange -- not always understood
By many is their gift,
Which is for evil or for mighty good --
To lower or to lift.

Upon their spirits there hath come a breath;
Who reads their verse
Will rise to higher life, or taste of death
In blessing or in curse.

The Poet is great Nature's own high priest,
Ordained from very birth
To keep for hearts an everlasting feast --
To bless or curse the earth.

They cannot help but sing; they know not why
Their thoughts rush into song,
And float above the world, beneath the sky,
For right or for the wrong.

They are like angels -- but some angels fell,
While some did keep their place;

Their poems are the gates of heav'n or hell,
And God's or Satan's face

Looks thro' their ev'ry word into your face,
In blessing or in blight,
And leaves upon your soul a grace or trace
Of sunlight or of night.

They move along life's uttermost extremes,
Unlike all other men;
And in their spirit's depths sleep strangest dreams,
Like shadows in a glen.

They all are dreamers; in the day and night
Ever across their souls
The wondrous mystery of the dark or bright
In mystic rhythm rolls.

They live within themselves -- they may not tell
What lieth deepest there;
Within their breast a heaven or a hell,
Joy or tormenting care.

They are the loneliest men that walk men's ways,
No matter what they seem;
The stars and sunlight of their nights and days
Move over them in dream.

They breathe it forth -- their very spirit's breath --
To bless the world or blight;
To bring to men a higher life or death;
To give them light or night.

The words of some command the world's acclaim,
And never pass away,
While others' words receive no palm from fame,
And live but for a day.

But, live or die, their words leave their impress
Fore'er or for an hour,
And mark men's souls -- some more and some the less --
With good's or evil's power.

A Legend

He walked alone beside the lonely sea,
The slanting sunbeams fell upon his face,
His shadow fluttered on the pure white sands

Like the weary wing of a soundless prayer.
And He was, oh! so beautiful and fair!
Brown sandals on His feet -- His face downcast,
As if He loved the earth more than the heav'ns.
His face looked like His Mother's -- only hers
Had not those strange serenities and stirs
That paled or flushed His olive cheeks and brow.
He wore the seamless robe His Mother made --
And as He gathered it about His breast,
The wavelets heard a sweet and gentle voice
Murmur, "Oh! My Mother" -- the white sands felt
The touch of tender tears He wept the while.
He walked beside the sea; He took His sandals off
To bathe His weary feet in the pure cool wave --
For He had walked across the desert sands
All day long -- and as He bathed His feet
He murmured to Himself, "Three years! three years!
And then, poor feet, the cruel nails will come
And make you bleed; but, ah! that blood shall lave
All weary feet on all their thorny ways."
"Three years! three years!" He murmured still again,
"Ah! would it were to-morrow, but a will --
My Father's will -- biddeth Me bide that time."
A little fisher-boy came up the shore
And saw Him -- and, nor bold, nor shy,
Approached, but when he saw the weary face,
Said mournfully to Him: "You look a-tired."
He placed His hand upon the boy's brown brow
Caressingly and blessingly -- and said:
"I am so tired to wait." The boy spake not.
Sudden, a sea-bird, driven by a storm
That had been sweeping on the farther shore,
Came fluttering towards Him, and, panting, fell
At His feet and died; and then the boy said:
"Poor little bird," in such a piteous tone;
He took the bird and laid it in His hand,
And breathed on it -- when to his amaze
The little fisher-boy beheld the bird
Flutter a moment and then fly aloft --
Its little life returned; and then he gazed
With look intensest on the wondrous face
(Ah! it was beautiful and fair) -- and said:
"Thou art so sweet I wish Thou wert my God."
He leaned down towards the boy and softly said:
"I am thy Christ." The day they followed Him,
With cross upon His shoulders, to His death,
Within the shadow of a shel't'ring rock
That little boy knelt down, and there adored,
While others cursed, the thorn-crowned Crucified.

Thoughts

By sound of name, and touch of hand,
Thro' ears that hear, and eyes that see,
We know each other in this land,
How little must that knowledge be?

How souls are all the time alone,
No spirit can another reach;
They hide away in realms unknown,
Like waves that never touch a beach.

We never know each other here,
No soul can here another see --
To know, we need a light as clear
As that which fills eternity.

For here we walk by human light,
But there the light of God is ours,
Each day, on earth, is but a night;
Heaven alone hath clear-faced hours.

I call you thus -- you call me thus --
Our mortal is the very bar
That parts forever each of us,
As skies, on high, part star from star.

A name is nothing but a name
For that which, else, would nameless be;
Until our souls, in rapture, claim
Full knowledge in eternity.

Lines ["The world is sweet, and fair, and bright,"]

The world is sweet, and fair, and bright,
And joy aboundeth everywhere,
The glorious stars crown every night,
And thro' the dark of ev'ry care
Above us shineth heaven's light.

If from the cradle to the grave
We reckon all our days and hours
We sure will find they give and gave
Much less of thorns and more of flowers;
And tho' some tears must ever lave

The path we tread, upon them all
The light of smiles forever lies,
As o'er the rains, from clouds that fall,
The sun shines sweeter in the skies.
Life holdeth more of sweet than gall

For ev'ry one: no matter who --
Or what their lot -- or high or low;
All hearts have clouds -- but heaven's blue
Wraps robes of bright around each woe;
And this is truest of the true:

That joy is stronger here than grief,
Fills more of life, far more of years,
And makes the reign of sorrow brief;
Gives more of smiles for less of tears.
Joy is life's tree -- grief but its leaf.

C.S.A.

Do we weep for the heroes who died for us,
Who living were true and tried for us,
And dying sleep side by side for us;
The Martyr-band
That hallowed our land
With the blood they shed in a tide for us?

Ah! fearless on many a day for us
They stood in front of the fray for us,
And held the foeman at bay for us;
And tears should fall
Fore'er o'er all
Who fell while wearing the gray for us.

How many a glorious name for us,
How many a story of fame for us
They left: Would it not be a blame for us
If their memories part
From our land and heart,
And a wrong to them, and shame for us?

No, no, no, they were brave for us,
And bright were the lives they gave for us;
The land they struggled to save for us
Will not forget
Its warriors yet
Who sleep in so many a grave for us.

On many and many a plain for us
Their blood poured down all in vain for us,
Red, rich, and pure, like a rain for us;
 They bleed -- we weep,
 We live -- they sleep,
"All lost," the only refrain for us.

But their memories e'er shall remain for us,
And their names, bright names, without stain for us:
The glory they won shall not wane for us,
 In legend and lay
 Our heroes in Gray
Shall forever live over again for us.

The Seen and The Unseen

Nature is but the outward vestibule
Which God has placed before an unseen shrine,
The Visible is but a fair, bright vale
That winds around the great Invisible;
The Finite -- it is nothing but a smile
That flashes from the face of Infinite;
A smile with shadows on it -- and 'tis sad
Men bask beneath the smile, but oft forget
The loving Face that very smile conceals.
The Changeable is but the brodered robe
Enwrapped about the great Unchangeable;
The Audible is but an echo, faint,
Low whispered from the far Inaudible;
This earth is but an humble acolyte
A-kneeling on the lowest altar-step
Of this creation's temple, at the Mass
Of Supernature, just to ring the bell
At Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus! while the world
Prepares its heart for consecration's hour.
Nature is but the ever-rustling veil
Which God is wearing, like the Carmelite
Who hides her face behind her virgin veil
To keep it all unseen from mortal eyes,
Yet by her vigils and her holy prayers,
And ceaseless sacrifices night and day,
Shields souls from sin -- and many hearts from harm.

God hides in nature as a thought doth hide
In humbly-sounding words; and as the thought
Beats through the lowly word like pulse of heart
That giveth life and keepeth life alive,
So God, thro' nature, works on ev'ry soul;

For nature is His word so strangely writ
In heav'n, in all the letters of the stars,
Beneath the stars in alphabets of clouds,
And on the seas in syllables of waves,
And in the earth, on all the leaves of flowers,
And on the grasses and the stately trees,
And on the rivers and the mournful rocks
The word is clearly written; blest are they
Who read the word aright -- and understand.

For God is everywhere -- and He doth find
In every atom which His hand hath made
A shrine to hide His presence, and reveal
His name, love, power, to those who kneel
In holy faith upon this bright below
And lift their eyes, thro' all this mystery,
To catch the vision of the great beyond.

Yea! nature is His shadow, and how bright
Must that face be which such a shadow casts?
We walk within it, for "we live and move
And have our being" in His ev'rywhere.
Why is God shy? Why doth He hide Himself?
The tiniest grain of sand on ocean's shore
Entemples Him; the fragrance of the rose
Folds Him around as blessed incense folds
The altars of His Christ: yet some will walk
Along the temple's wondrous vestibule
And look on and admire -- yet enter not
To find within the Presence, and the Light
Which sheds its rays on all that is without.
And nature is His voice; who list may hear
His name low-murmured every -- everywhere.
In songs of birds, in rustle of the flowers,
In swaying of the trees, and on the seas
The blue lips of the wavelets tell the ships
That come and go, His holy, holy name.
The winds, or still or stormy, breathe the same;
And some have ears and yet they will not hear
The soundless voice re-echoed everywhere;
And some have hearts that never are enthralled
By all the grand Hosannahs nature sings.
List! Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus! without pause
Sounds sweetly out of all creation's heart,
That hearts with power to love may echo back
Their Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus! to the hymn.

Life's Vesper-bells are ringing
In the temple of my heart,
And yon sunset, sure, is singing
"Nunc dimittis -- Now depart!"
Ah! the eve is golden-clouded,
But to-morrow's sun shall shine
On this weary body shrouded;
But my soul doth not repine.

"Let me see the sun descending,
I will see his light no more,
For my life, this eve, is ending;
And to-morrow on the shore
That is fair, and white, and golden,
I will meet my God; and ye
Will forget not all the olden,
Happy hours ye spent with me.

"I am glad that I am going;
What a strange and sweet delight
Is thro' all my being flowing
When I know that, sure, to-night
I will pass from earth and meet Him
Whom I loved thro' all the years,
Who will crown me when I greet Him,
And will kiss away my tears.

"My last sun! haste! hurry westward!
In the dark of this to-night
My poor soul that hastens rest-ward
'With the Lamb' will find the light;
Death is coming -- and I hear him,
Soft and stealthy cometh he;
But I do not believe I fear him,
God is now so close to me."

* * * * *

Fell the daylight's fading glimmer
On a face so wan and white;
Brighter was his soul, while dimmer
Grew the shadows of the night;
And he died -- and God was near him;
I knelt by him to forgive;
And I sometimes seem to hear him
Whisper -- "Live as I did live."

The shades of night were brooding
O'er the sea, the earth, the sky;
The passing winds were wailing
In a low, unearthly sigh;
The darkness gathered deeper,
For no starry light was shed,
And silence reigned unbroken,
As the silence of the dead.

The wintry clouds were hanging
From the starless sky so low,
While 'neath them earth lay folded
In a winding shroud of snow.
'Twas cold, 'twas dark, 'twas dreary,
And the blast that swept along
The mountains hoarsely murmured
A fierce, discordant song.

And mortal men were resting
From the turmoil of the day,
And broken hearts were dreaming
Of the friends long passed away;
And saintly men were keeping
Their vigils through the night,
While angel spirits hovered near
Around their lonely light.

And wicked men were sinning
In the midnight banquet halls,
Forgetful of that sentence traced
On proud Belshazzar's walls.
On that night, so dark and dismal,
Unillumed by faintest ray,
Might be seen the lonely pilgrim
Wending on his darksome way.

Slow his steps, for he was weary,
And betimes he paused to rest;
Then he rose, and, pressing onward,
Murmured lowly: "I must haste."
In his hand he held a chaplet,
And his lips were moved in prayer,
For the darkness and the silence
Seemed to whisper God was there.

On the lonely pilgrim journeyed,
Nought disturbed him on his way,
And his prayers he softly murmured
As the midnight stole away.
Hark! amid the stillness rises
On his ears a distant strain

Softly sounding -- now it ceases --
Sweetly now it comes again.

In his path he paused to wonder
While he listened to the sound:
On it came, so sweet, so pensive,
'Mid the blast that howled around;
And the restless winds seemed soothed
By that music, gentle, mild,
And they slept, as when a mother
Rocks to rest her cradled child.

Strange and sweet the calm that followed,
Stealing through the midnight air;
Strange and sweet the sounds that floated
Like an angel breathing there.
From the sky the clouds were drifting
Swiftly one by one away,
And the sinless stars were shedding
Here and there a silver ray.

"Why this change?" the pilgrim whispered --
"Whence that music? whence its power?
Earthly sounds are not so lovely!
Angels love the midnight hour!"
Bending o'er his staff, he wondered,
Loath to leave that sacred place:
"I must hasten," said he, sadly --
On he pressed with quickened pace.

Just before him rose a mountain,
Dark its outline, steep its side --
Down its slopes that midnight music
Seemed so soothingly to glide.
"I will find it," said the pilgrim,
"Though this mountain I must scale" --
Scarcely said, when on his vision
Shone a distant light, and pale.

Glad he was; and now he hastened --
Brighter, brighter grew the ray --
Stronger, stronger swelled the music
As he struggled on his way.
Soon he gained the mountain summit,
Lo! a church bursts on his view:
From the church that light was flowing,
And that gentle music, too.

Near he came -- its door stood open --
Still he stood in awe and fear;
"Shall I enter spot so holy?
Am I unforbidden here?
I will enter -- something bids me --

Saintly men are praying here;
Vigils sacred they are keeping,
'Tis their Matin song I hear."

Softly, noiselessly, he glided
Through the portal; on his sight
Shone a vision, bright, strange, thrilling;
Down he knelt -- 'twas Christmas night --
Down, in deepest adoration,
Knelt the lonely pilgrim there;
Joy unearthly, rapture holy,
Blended with his whispered prayer.

Wrapped his senses were in wonder,
On his soul an awe profound,
As the vision burst upon him,
'Mid sweet light and sweeter sound.
"Is it real? is it earthly?
Is it all a fleeting dream?
Hark! those choral voices ringing,
Lo! those forms like angels seem."

On his view there rose an altar,
Glittering 'mid a thousand beams,
Flowing from the burning tapers
In bright, sparkling, silver streams.
From unnumbered crystal vases,
Rose and bloomed the fairest flowers,
Shedding 'round their balmy fragrance
'Mid the lights in sweetest showers.

Rich and gorgeous was the altar,
Decked it was in purest white.
Mortal hands had not arrayed it
Thus, upon that Christmas night.
Amid its lights and lovely flowers,
The little tabernacle stood;
Around it all was rich and golden,
It alone was poor and rude.

Hark! Venite Adoremus!
Round the golden altar sounds --
See that band of angels kneeling
Prostrate, with their sparkling crowns!
And the pilgrim looked and listened,
And he saw the angels there,
And their snow-white wings were folded,
As they bent in silent prayer.

Twelve they were; bright rays of glory
Round their brows effulgent shone;
But a wreath of nobler beauty
Seemed to grace and circle one;

And he, beauteous, rose and opened
Wide the tabernacle door:
Hark! Venite Adoremus
Rises -- bending, they adore.

Lo! a sound of censers swinging!
Clouds of incense weave around
The altar rich a silver mantle,
As the angels' hymns resound.
List! Venite Adoremus
Swells aloud in stronger strain,
And the angels swing the censers,
And they prostrate bend again.

Rising now, with voice of rapture,
Bursts aloud, in thrilling tone,
"Gloria in Excelsis Deo"
Round the sacramental throne.
Oh! 'twas sweet, 'twas sweet and charming
As the notes triumphant flowed!
Oh! 'twas sweet, while wreathes of incense
Curled, and countless tapers glowed.

Oh! 'twas grand! that hymn of glory
Earthly sounds cannot compare;
Oh! 'twas grand! it breath'd of heaven,
As the angels sung it there.
Ravished by the strains ecstatic,
Raptured by the vision grand,
Gazed the pilgrim on the altar,
Gazed upon the angel band.

All was hushed! the floating echoes
Of the hymn had died away;
Vanished were the clouds of incense,
And the censers ceased to sway.
Lo! their wings are gently waving,
And the angels softly rise,
Bending towards the tabernacle,
Worship beaming from their eyes.

One last, lowly genuflection!
From their brows love burning shone --
Ah! they're going, they've departed,
All but one, the brightest one.
"Why remains he?" thought the pilgrim,
Ah! he rises beauteously --
"Listen!" and the angel murmured
Sweetly: "Pilgrim, hail to thee!"

"Come unto the golden altar,
I'm an angel -- banish fear --
Come, unite in adoration

With me, for our God is here.
Come thy Jesus here reposes,
Come! He'll bless thy mortal sight --
Come! adore the Infant Saviour
With me -- for 'tis Christmas night."

Now approached the pilgrim, trembling,
Now beside the angel bent,
And the deepest, blissful gladness,
With his fervent worship blent.
"Pilgrim," said the spirit, softly,
"Thou hast seen bright angels here,
And hast heard our sacred anthems,
Filled with rapture, filled with fear.

"We are twelve -- 'twas we who chanted
First the Saviour's lowly birth,
We who brought the joyful tidings
Of His coming, to the earth;
We who sung unto the shepherds,
Watching on the mountain height,
That the Word was made Incarnate
For them on that blessed night.

"And since then we love to linger
On that festal night on earth;
And we leave our thrones of glory
Here to keep the Saviour's birth.
Happy mortals! happy mortals!
To-night the angels would be men;
And they leave their thrones in heaven,
For the Crib of Bethlehem."

And the angel led the pilgrim
To the tabernacle door;
Lo! an Infant there was sleeping,
And the angel said: "Adore!
He is sleeping, yet he watches,
See that beam of love divine;
Pilgrim! pay your worship holy
To your Infant God and mine."

And the spirit slowly, slowly,
Closed the tabernacle door,
While the pilgrim lowly, lowly,
Bent in rapture to adore.
"Pilgrim," spoke the angel sweetly,
"I must bid thee my adieu;
Love! oh! love the Infant Jesus! --"
And he vanished from his view.

* * * * *

All was silent -- silent -- silent --
Faded was the vision bright --
But the pilgrim long remembered
In his heart that Christmas night.

A Reverie ["Those hearts of ours -- how strange! how strange!"]

Those hearts of ours -- how strange! how strange!
How they yearn to ramble and love to range
Down through the vales of the years long gone,
Up through the future that fast rolls on.

To-days are dull -- so they wend their ways
Back to their beautiful yesterdays;
The present is blank -- so they wing their flight
To future to-morrows where all seems bright.

Build them a bright and beautiful home,
They'll soon grow weary and want to roam;
Find them a spot without sorrow or pain,
They may stay a day, but they're off again.

Those hearts of ours -- how wild! how wild!
They're as hard to tame as an Indian child;
They're as restless as waves on the sounding sea,
Like the breeze and the bird are they fickle and free.

Those hearts of ours -- how lone! how lone!
Ever, forever, they mourn and moan;
Let them revel in joy, let them riot in cheer;
The revelry o'er, they're all the more drear.

Those hearts of ours -- how warm! how warm!
Like the sun's bright rays, like the Summer's charm;
How they beam and burn! how they gleam and glow
Their flash and flame hide but ashes below.

Those hearts of ours -- how cold! how cold!
Like December's snow on the waste or wold;
And though our Decembers melt soon into May,
Hearts know Decembers that pass not away.

Those hearts of ours -- how deep! how deep!
You may sound the sea where the corals sleep,
Where never a billow hath rumbled or rolled --
Depths still the deeper our hearts hide and hold.

Where the wild storm's tramp hath ne'er been known

The wrecks of the sea lie low and lone;
Thus the heart's surface may sparkle and glow,
There are wrecks far down -- there are graves below.

Those hearts of ours -- but, after all,
How shallow and narrow, how tiny and small;
Like scantiest streamlet or Summer's least rill,
They're as easy to empty -- as easy to fill.

One hour of storm and how the streams pour!
One hour of sun and the streams are no more;
One little grief -- how the tears gush and glide!
One smile -- flow they ever so fast, they are dried.

Those hearts of ours -- how wise! how wise!
They can lift their thoughts till they touch the skies;
They can sink their shafts, like a miner bold,
Where wisdom's mines hide their pearls and gold.

Aloft they soar with undazzled gaze,
Where the halls of the Day-King burn and blaze;
Or they fly with a wing that will never fail,
O'er the sky's dark sea where the star-ships sail.

Those hearts of ours -- what fools! what fools!
How they laugh at wisdom, her cant and rules!
How they waste their powers, and, when wasted, grieve
For what they have squandered, but cannot retrieve.

Those hearts of ours -- how strong! how strong!
Let a thousand sorrows around them throng,
They can bear them all, and a thousand more,
And they're stronger than they were before.

Those hearts of ours -- how weak! how weak!
But a single word of unkindness speak,
Like a poisoned shaft, like a viper's fang,
That one slight word leaves a life-long pang.

Those hearts of ours -- but I've said enough,
As I find that my rhyme grows rude and rough;
I'll rest me now, but I'll come again
Some other day, to resume my strain.

---- Their Story Runneth Thus

Two little children played among the flowers,
Their mothers were of kin, tho' far apart;

The children's ages were the very same
E'en to an hour -- and Ethel was her name,
A fair, sweet girl, with great, brown, wond'ring eyes
That seemed to listen just as if they held
The gift of hearing with the power of sight.
Six summers slept upon her low white brow,
And dreamed amid the roses of her cheeks.
Her voice was sweetly low; and when she spoke
Her words were music; and her laughter rang
So like an altar-bell that, had you heard
Its silvery sound a-ringing, you would think
Of kneeling down and worshiping the pure.

They played among the roses -- it was May --
And "hide and seek", and "seek and hide", all eve
They played together till the sun went down.
Earth held no happier hearts than theirs that day:
And tired at last she plucked a crimson rose
And gave to him, her playmate, cousin-kin;
And he went thro' the garden till he found
The whitest rose of all the roses there,
And placed it in her long, brown, waving hair.
"I give you red -- and you -- you give me white:
What is the meaning?" said she, while a smile,
As radiant as the light of angels' wings,
Swept bright across her face; the while her eyes
Seemed infinite purities half asleep
In sweetest pearls; and he did make reply:
"Sweet Ethel! white dies first; you know, the snow,
(And it is not as white as thy pure face)
Melts soon away; but roses red as mine
Will bloom when all the snow hath passed away."

She sighed a little sigh, then laughed again,
And hand in hand they walked the winding ways
Of that fair garden till they reached her home.
A good-bye and a kiss -- and he was gone.

She leaned her head upon her mother's breast,
And ere she fell asleep she, sighing, called:
"Does white die first? my mother! and does red
Live longer?" And her mother wondered much
At such strange speech. She fell asleep
With murmurs on her lips of red and white.

Those children loved as only children can --
With nothing in their love save their whole selves.
When in their cradles they had been betroth'd;
They knew it in a manner vague and dim --
Unconscious yet of what betrothal meant.

The boy -- she called him Merlin -- a love name --
(And he -- he called her always Ullainee,

No matter why); the boy was full of moods.
Upon his soul and face the dark and bright
Were strangely intermingled. Hours would pass
Rippling with his bright prattle; and then, hours
Would come and go, and never hear a word
Fall from his lips, and never see a smile
Upon his face. He was so like a cloud
With ever-changeful hues, as she was like
A golden sunbeam shining on its face.

* * * * *

Ten years passed on. They parted and they met
Not often in each year; yet as they grew
In years, a consciousness unto them came
Of human love.

But it was sweet and pure.

There was no passion in it. Reverence,
Like Guardian-Angel, watched o'er Innocence.

One night in mid of May their faces met
As pure as all the stars that gazed on them.
They met to part from themselves and the world;
Their hearts just touched to separate and bleed;
Their eyes were linked in look, while saddest tears
Fell down, like rain, upon the cheeks of each:
They were to meet no more.

Their hands were clasped

To tear the clasp in twain; and all the stars
Looked proudly down on them, while shadows knelt,
Or seemed to kneel, around them with the awe
Evoked from any heart by sacrifice.
And in the heart of that last parting hour
Eternity was beating. And he said:
"We part to go to Calvary and to God --
This is our garden of Gethsemane;
And here we bow our heads and breathe His prayer
Whose heart was bleeding, while the angels heard:
Not my will, Father! but Thine own be done."
Raptures meet agonies in such heart-hours;
Gladness doth often fling her bright, warm arms
Around the cold, white neck of grief -- and thus
The while they parted -- sorrow swept their hearts
Like a great, dark stormy sea -- but sudden
A joy, like sunshine -- did it come from God? --

Flung over every wave that swept o'er them
A more than golden glory.

Merlin said:

"Our loves must soar aloft to spheres divine;
The human satisfies nor you nor me,
(No human love shall ever satisfy --
Or ever did -- the hearts that lean on it);

You sigh for something higher as do I,
So let our spirits be espoused in God,
And let our wedlock be as soul to soul;
And prayer shall be the golden marriage ring,
And God will bless us both."

She sweetly said:

"Your words are echoes of my own soul's thoughts;
Let God's own heart be our own holy home
And let us live as only angels live;
And let us love as our own angels love.
'Tis hard to part -- but it is better so --
God's will is ours, and -- Merlin! let us go."

And then she sobbed as if her heart would break --
Perhaps it did; an awful minute passed,
Long as an age and briefer than a flash
Of lightning in the skies. No word was said --
Only a look which never was forgot.
Between them fell the shadows of the night.
Their faces went away into the dark,
And never met again; and yet their souls
Were twined together in the heart of Christ.

And Ethel went from earthland long ago;
But Merlin stays still hanging on his cross.
He would not move a nail that nails him there,
He would not pluck a thorn that crowns him there.
He hung himself upon the blessed cross
With Ethel; she has gone to wear the crown
That wreathes the brows of virgins who have kept
Their bodies with their souls from earthly taint.

And years and years, and weary years, passed on
Into the past. One Autumn afternoon,
When flowers were in their agony of death,
And winds sang "De Profundis" over them,
And skies were sad with shadows, he did walk
Where, in a resting place as calm as sweet,
The dead were lying down; the Autumn sun
Was half way down the west; the hour was three --
The holiest hour of all the twenty-four,
For Jesus leaned His head on it, and died.
He walked alone amid the virgin's graves
Where virgins slept; a convent stood near by,
And from the solitary cells of nuns
Unto the cells of death the way was short.
Low, simple stones and white watched o'er each grave,
While in the hollows 'tween them sweet flowers grew,
Entwining grave and grave. He read the names
Engraven on the stones, and "Rest in peace"
Was written 'neath them all, and o'er each name
A cross was graven on the lowly stone.
He passed each grave with reverential awe,

As if he passed an altar, where the Host
Had left a memory of its sacrifice.
And o'er the buried virgins' virgin dust
He walked as prayerfully as tho' he trod
The holy floor of fair Loretta's shrine.
He passed from grave to grave, and read the names
Of those whose own pure lips had changed the names
By which this world had known them into names
Of sacrifice known only to their God;
Veiling their faces they had veiled their names;
The very ones who played with them as girls,
Had they passed there, would know no more than he
Or any stranger where their playmates slept;
And then he wondered all about their lives, their hearts,
Their thoughts, their feelings, and their dreams,
Their joys and sorrows, and their smiles and tears.
He wondered at the stories that were hid
Forever down within those simple graves.
In a lone corner of that resting-place
Uprose a low white slab that marked a grave
Apart from all the others; long, sad grass
Drooped o'er the little mound, and mantled it
With veil of purest green; around the slab
The whitest of white roses 'twined their arms --
Roses cold as the snows and pure as songs
Of angels -- and the pale leaflets and thorns
Hid e'en the very name of her who slept
Beneath. He walked on to the grave, but when
He reached its side a spell fell on his heart
So suddenly -- he knew not why -- and tears
Went up into his eyes and trickled down
Upon the grass; he was so strangely moved
As if he met a long-gone face he loved.
I believe he prayed. He lifted then the leaves
That hid the name; but as he did, the thorns
Did pierce his hand, and lo! amazed, he read
The very word -- the very, very name
He gave the girl in golden days before --

"ULLAINEE".

He sat beside that lonely grave for long,
He took its grasses in his trembling hand,
He toyed with them and wet them with his tears,
He read the name again, and still again,
He thought a thousand thoughts, and then he thought
It all might be a dream -- then rubbed his eyes
And read the name again to be more sure;
Then wondered and then wept -- then asked himself:
"What means it all? Can this be Ethel's grave?
I dreamed her soul had fled.
Was she the white dove that I saw in dream
Fly o'er the sleeping sea so long ago?"

The convent bell

Rang sweet upon the breeze, and answered him
His question. And he rose and went his way
Unto the convent gate; long shadows marked
One hour before the sunset, and the birds
Were singing Vespers in the convent trees.
As silent as a star-gleam came a nun
In answer to his summons at the gate;
Her face was like the picture of a saint,
Or like an angel's smile; her downcast eyes
Were like a half-closed tabernacle, where
God's presence glowed; her lips were pale and worn
By ceaseless prayer; and when she sweetly spoke,
And bade him enter, 'twas in such a tone
As only voices own which day and night
Sing hymns to God.

She locked the massive gate.

He followed her along a flower-fringed walk
That, gently rising, led up to the home
Of virgin hearts. The very flowers that bloomed
Within the place, in beds of sacred shapes,
(For they had fashioned them with holy care,
Into all holy forms -- a chalice, a cross,
And sacred hearts -- and many saintly names,
That, when their eyes would fall upon the flowers,
Their souls might feast upon some mystic sign),
Were fairer far within the convent walls,
And purer in their fragrance and their bloom
Than all their sisters in the outer world.

He went into a wide and humble room --
The floor was painted, and upon the walls,
In humble frames, most holy paintings hung;
Jesus and Mary and many an olden saint
Were there. And she, the veil-clad Sister, spoke:
"I'll call the mother," and she bowed and went.

He waited in the wide and humble room,
The only room in that unworldly place
This world could enter; and the pictures looked
Upon his face and down into his soul,
And strangely stirred him. On the mantle stood
A crucifix, the figured Christ of which
Did seem to suffer; and he rose to look
More nearly on to it; but he shrank in awe
When he beheld a something in its face
Like his own face.
But more amazed he grew, when, at the foot
Of that strange crucifix he read the name --

"ULLAINEE".

A whirl of thought swept o'er his startled soul --
When to the door he heard a footstep come,
And then a voice -- the Mother of the nuns
Had entered -- and in calmest tone began:
"Forgive, kind sir, my stay; our Matin song
Had not yet ended when you came; our rule
Forbids our leaving choir; this my excuse."
She bent her head -- the rustle of her veil
Was like the trembling of an angel's wing,
Her voice's tone as sweet. She turned to him
And seemed to ask him with her still, calm look
What brought him there, and waited his reply.
"I am a stranger, Sister, hither come,"
He said, "upon an errand still more strange;
But thou wilt pardon me and bid me go
If what I crave you cannot rightly grant;
I would not dare intrude, nor claim your time,
Save that a friendship, deep as death, and strong
As life, has brought me to this holy place."

He paused. She looked at him an instant, bent
Her lustrous eyes upon the floor, but gave
Him no reply, save that her very look
Encouraged him to speak, and he went on:

He told her Ethel's story from the first,
He told her of the day amid the flowers,
When they were only six sweet summers old;
He told her of the night when all the flowers,
A-list'ning, heard the words of sacrifice --
He told her all; then said: "I saw a stone
In yonder graveyard where your Sisters sleep,
And writ on it, all hid by roses white,
I saw a name I never ought forget."

She wore a startled look, but soon repressed
The wonder that had come into her face.
"Whose name?" she calmly spoke. But when he said

"ULLAINEE",

She forward bent her face and pierced his own
With look intensest; and he thought he heard
The trembling of her veil, as if the brow
It mantled throbbed with many thrilling thoughts
But quickly rose she, and, in hurried tone,
Spoke thus: "'Tis hour of sunset, 'tis our rule
To close the gates to all till to-morrow's morn.
Return to-morrow; then, if so God wills,
I'll see you."

He gave many thanks, passed out

From that unworldly place into the world.
Straight to the lonely graveyard went his steps --
Swift to the "White-Rose-Grave", his heart: he knelt
Upon its grass and prayed that God might will
The mystery's solution; then he took,
Where it was drooping on the slab, a rose,
The whiteness of whose leaves was like the foam
Of summer waves upon a summer sea.

Then thro' the night he went
And reached his room, where, weary of his thoughts,
Sleep came, and coming found the dew of tears
Undried within his eyes, and flung her veil
Around him. Then he dreamt a strange, weird dream.
A rock, dark waves, white roses and a grave,
And cloistered flowers, and cloistered nuns, and tears
That shone like jewels on a diadem,
And two great angels with such shining wings --
All these and more were in most curious way
Blended in one dream or many dreams. Then
He woke wearier in his mind. Then slept
Again and had another dream.

His dream ran thus --
(He told me all of it many years ago,
But I forgot the most. I remember this):
A dove, whiter than whiteness' very self,
Fluttered thro' his sleep in vision or dream,
Bearing in its flight a spotless rose. It
Flew away across great, long distances,
Thro' forests where the trees were all in dream,
And over wastes where silences held reign,
And down pure valleys, till it reached a shore
By which blushed a sea in the ev'ning sun;
The dove rested there awhile, rose again
And flew across the sea into the sun;
And then from near or far (he could not say)
Came sound as faint as echo's own echo --
A low sweet hymn it seemed -- and now
And then he heard, or else he thought he heard,
As if it were the hymn's refrain, the words:
"White dies first!" "White dies first."

The sun had passed his noon and westward sloped;
He hurried to the cloister and was told
The Mother waited him. He entered in,
Into the wide and pictured room, and there
The Mother sat and gave him welcome twice.
"I prayed last night," she spoke, "to know God's will;
I prayed to Holy Mary and the saints
That they might pray for me, and I might know
My conduct in the matter. Now, kind sir,
What wouldst thou? Tell thy errand." He replied:
"It was not idle curiosity

That brought me hither or that prompts my lips
To ask the story of the 'White-Rose-Grave',
To seek the story of the sleeper there
Whose name I knew so long and far away.
Who was she, pray? Dost deem it right to tell?"
There was a pause before the answer came,
As if there was a comfort in her heart,
There was a tremor in her voice when she
Unclosed two palest lips, and spoke in tone
Of whisper more than word:

"She was a child
Of lofty gift and grace who fills that grave,
And who has filled it long -- and yet it seems
To me but one short hour ago we laid
Her body there. Her mem'ry clings around
Our hearts, our cloisters, fresh, and fair, and sweet.
We often look for her in places where
Her face was wont to be: among the flowers,
In chapel, underneath those trees. Long years
Have passed and mouldered her pure face, and yet
It seems to hover here and haunt us all.
I cannot tell you all. It is enough
To see one ray of light for us to judge
The glory of the sun; it is enough
To catch one glimpse of heaven's blue
For us to know the beauty of the sky.
It is enough to tell a little part
Of her most holy life, that you may know
The hidden grace and splendor of the whole."

"Nay, nay," he interrupted her; "all! all!
Thou'lt tell me all, kind Mother."

She went on,
Unheeding his abruptness:
"One sweet day --
A feast of Holy Virgin, in the month
Of May, at early morn, ere yet the dew
Had passed from off the flowers and grass -- ere yet
Our nuns had come from holy Mass -- there came,
With summons quick, unto our convent gate
A fair young girl. Her feet were wet with dew --
Another dew was moist within her eyes --
Her large, brown, wond'ring eyes. She asked for me
And as I went she rushed into my arms --
Like weary bird into the leaf-roofed branch
That sheltered it from storm. She sobbed and sobbed
Until I thought her very soul would rush
From her frail body, in a sob, to God.
I let her sob her sorrow all away.
My words were waiting for a calm. Her sobs
Sank into sighs -- and they too sank and died

In faintest breath. I bore her to a seat
In this same room -- and gently spoke to her,
And held her hand in mine -- and soothed her
With words of sympathy, until she seemed
As tranquil as myself.

"And then I asked:

'What brought thee hither, child? and what wilt thou?'
'Mother!' she said, 'wilt let me wear the veil?
Wilt let me serve my God as e'en you serve
Him in this cloistered place? I pray to be --
Unworthy tho' I be -- to be His spouse.
Nay, Mother -- say not nay -- 'twill break a heart
Already broken;' and she looked on me
With those brown, wond'ring eyes, which pleaded more,
More strongly and more sadly than her lips
That I might grant her sudden, strange request.
'Hast thou a mother?' questioned I. 'I had,'
She said, 'but heaven has her now; and thou
Wilt be my mother -- and the orphan girl
Will make her life her thanks.'

'Thy father, child?'

'Ere I was cradled he was in his grave.'
'And hast nor sister nor brother?' 'No,' she said,
'God gave my mother only me; one year
This very day He parted us.' 'Poor child,'
I murmured. 'Nay, kind Sister,' she replied,
'I have much wealth -- they left me ample means --
I have true friends who love me and protect.
I was a minor until yesterday;
But yesterday all guardianship did cease,
And I am mistress of myself and all
My worldly means -- and, Sister, they are thine
If thou but take myself -- nay -- don't refuse.'
'Nay -- nay -- my child!' I said; 'the only wealth
We wish for is the wealth of soul -- of grace.
Not all your gold could unlock yonder gate,
Or buy a single thread of Virgin's veil.
Not all the coins in coffers of a king
Could bribe an entrance here for any one.
God's voice alone can claim a cell -- a veil,
For any one He sends.

Who sent you here,

My child? Thyself? Or did some holy one
Direct thy steps? Or else some sudden grief?
Or, mayhap, disappointment? Or, perhaps,
A sickly weariness of that bright world
Hath cloyed thy spirit? Tell me, which is it.'
'Neither,' she quickly, almost proudly spoke.
'Who sent you, then?'

'A youthful Christ,' she said,

'Who, had he lived in those far days of Christ,
Would have been His belov'd Disciple, sure --

Would have been His own gentle John; and would
Have leaned on Thursday night upon His breast,
And stood on Friday eve beneath His cross
To take His Mother from Him when He died.
He sent me here -- he said the word last night
In my own garden; this the word he said --
Oh! had you heard him whisper: "Ethel, dear!
Your heart was born with veil of virgin on;
I hear it rustle every time we meet,
In all your words and smiles; and when you weep
I hear it rustle more. Go -- wear your veil --
And outward be what inwardly thou art,
And hast been from the first. And, Ethel, list:
My heart was born with priestly vestments on,
And at Dream-Altars I have oft-times stood,
And said such sweet Dream-Masses in my sleep --
And when I lifted up a white Dream-Host,
A silver Dream-Bell rang -- and angels knelt,
Or seemed to kneel, in worship. Ethel say --
Thou wouldst not take the vestments from my heart
Nor more than I would tear the veil from thine.
My vested and thy veiled heart part to-night
To climb our Calvary and to meet in God;
And this, fair Ethel, is Gethsemane --
And He is here, who, in that other, bled;
And they are here who came to comfort Him --
His angels and our own; and His great prayer,
Ethel, is ours to-night -- let's say it, then:
Father! Thy will be done! Go find your veil
And I my vestments." He did send me here.'

"She paused -- a few stray tears had dropped upon
Her closing words and softened them to sighs.
I listened, inward moved, but outward calm and cold
To the girl's strange story. Then, smiling, said:
'I see it is a love-tale after all,
With much of folly and some of fact in it;
It is a heart affair, and in such things
There's little logic, and there's less of sense.
You brought your heart, dear child, but left your head
Outside the gates; nay, go, and find the head
You lost last night -- and then, I am quite sure,
You'll not be anxious to confine your heart
Within this cloistered place.'

She seemed to wince
Beneath my words one moment -- then replied:
'If e'en a wounded heart did bring me here,
Dost thou do well, Sister, to wound it more?
If merely warmth of feelings urged me here,
Dost thou do well to chill them into ice?
And were I disappointed in yon world,
Should that debar me from a purer place?
You say it is a love-tale -- so it is;

The vase was human -- but the flower divine;
And if I break the vase with my own hands,
Will you forbid that I should humbly ask
The heart of God to be my lily's vase?
I'd trust my lily to no heart on earth
Save his who yesternight did send me here
To dip it in the very blood of Christ,
And plant it here.'

And then she sobbed outright
A long, deep sob.

I gently said to her:
'Nay, child, I spoke to test thee -- do not weep.
If thou art called of God, thou yet shalt come
And find e'en here a home. But God is slow
In all His works and ways, and slower still
When He would deck a bride to grace His court.
Go, now, and in one year -- if thou dost come
Thy veil and cell shall be prepared for thee;
Nay -- urge me not -- it is our holy rule --
A year of trial! I must to choir, and thou
Into the world to watch and wait and pray
Until the Bridegroom comes.'

She rose and went
Without a word.

"And twelvemonth after came,
True to the very day and hour, and said:
'Wilt keep thy promise made one year ago?
Where is my cell -- and where my virgin's veil?
Wilt try me more? Wilt send me back again?
I came once with my wealth and was refused:
And now I come as poor as Holy Christ
Who had no place to rest His weary head --
My wealth is gone; I offered it to him
Who sent me here; he sent me speedy word
"Give all unto the poor in quiet way --
And hide the giving -- ere you give yourself
To God!" 'Wilt take me now for my own sake?
I bring my soul -- 'tis little worth I ween,
And yet it cost sweet Christ a priceless price.'

"My child,' I said, 'thrice welcome -- enter here;
A few short days of silence and of prayer,
And thou shalt be the Holy Bridegroom's bride.'

"Her novice days went on; much sickness fell
Upon her. Oft she lay for weary weeks
In awful agonies, and no one heard
A murmur from her lips. She oft would smile
A sunny, playful smile, that she might hide
Her sufferings from us all. When she was well
She was the first to meet the hour of prayer --
The last to leave it -- and they named her well:

The 'Angel of the Cloister'. Once I heard
The Father of our souls say when she passed
'Beneath that veil of sacrificial black
She wears the white robe of her innocence.'
And we -- we believed it. There are sisters here
Of three-score years of service who would say:
'Within our memory never moved a veil
That hid so saintly and so pure a heart.'
And we -- we felt it, and we loved her so,
We treated her as angel and as child.
I never heard her speak about the past,
I never heard her mention e'en a name
Of any in the world. She little spake;
She seemed to have rapt moments -- then she grew
Absent-minded, and would come and ask me
To walk alone and say her Rosary
Beneath the trees. She had a voice divine;
And when she sang for us, in truth it seemed
The very heart of song was breaking on her lips.
The dower of her mind as of her heart,
Was of the richest, and she mastered art
By instinct more than study. Her weak hands
Moved ceaselessly amid the beautiful.
There is a picture hanging in our choir
She painted. I remember well the morn
She came to me and told me she had dreamt
A dream; then asked me would I let her paint
Her dream. I gave permission. Weeks and weeks
Went by, and ev'ry spare hour of the day
She kept her cell all busy with her work.
At last 'twas finished, and she brought it forth --
A picture my poor words may not portray.
But you must gaze on it with your own eyes,
And drink its magic and its meanings in;
I'll show it thee, kind sir, before you go.

"In every May for two whole days she kept
Her cell. We humored her in that; but when
The days had passed, and she came forth again,
Her face was tender as a lily's leaf,
With God's smile on it; and for days and days
Thereafter, she would scarcely ope her lips
Save when in prayer, and then her every look
Was rapt, as if her soul did hold with God
Strange converse. And, who knows? mayhap she did.

"I half forgot -- on yonder mantlepiece
You see that wondrous crucifix; one year
She spent on it, and begged to put beneath
That most mysterious word -- 'Ullainee'.

"At last the cloister's angel disappeared;
Her face was missed at choir, her voice was missed --

Her words were missed where every day we met
In recreation's hour. And those who passed
The angel's cell would lightly tread, and breathe
A prayer that death might pass the angel by
And let her longer stay, for she lay ill --
Her frail, pure life was ebbing fast away.
Ah! many were the orisons that rose
From all our hearts that God might spare her still;
At Benediction and at holy Mass
Our hands were lifted, and strong pleadings went
To heaven for her; we did love her so --
Perhaps too much we loved her, and perhaps
Our love was far too human. Slow and slow
She faded like a flower. And slow and slow
Her pale cheeks whitened more. And slow and slow
Her large, brown, wondering eyes sank deep and dim.
Hope died on all our faces; but on her's
Another and a different hope did shine,
And from her wasted lips sweet prayers arose
That made her watchers weep. Fast came the end.
Never such silence o'er the cloister hung --
We walked more softly, and, whene'er we spoke,
Our voices fell to whispers, lest a sound
Might jar upon her ear. The sisters watched
In turns beside her couch; to each she gave
A gentle word, a smile, a thankful look.
At times her mind did wander; no wild words
Escaped her lips -- she seemed to float away
To far-gone days, and live again in scenes
Whose hours were bright and happy. In her sleep
She oftentimes spoke low, gentle, holy words
About her mother; and sometimes she sang
The fragments of sweet olden songs -- and when
She woke again, she timidly would ask
If she had spoken in her sleep, and what
She said, as if, indeed, her heart did fear
That sleep might open there some long-closed gate
She would keep locked. And softly as a cloud,
A golden cloud upon a summer's day,
Floats from the heart of land out o'er the sea,
So her sweet life was passing. One bright eve,
The fourteenth day of August, when the sun
Was wrapping, like a king, a purple cloud
Around him on descending day's bright throne,
She sent for me and bade me come in haste.
I went into her cell. There was a light
Upon her face, unearthly; and it shone
Like gleam of star upon a dying rose.
I sat beside her couch, and took her hand
In mine -- a fair, frail hand that scarcely seem'd
Of flesh -- so wasted, white and wan it was.
Her great, brown, wond'ring eyes had sunk away
Deep in their sockets -- and their light shone dim

As tapers dying on an altar. Soft
As a dream of beauty on me fell low,
Last words.

'Mother, the tide is ebbing fast;
But ere it leaves this shore to cross the deep
And seek another, calmer, I would say
A few last words -- and, Mother, I would ask
One favor more, which thou wilt not refuse.
Thou wert a mother to the orphan girl,
Thou gav'st her heart a home, her love a vase,
Her weariness a rest, her sacrifice a shrine --
And thou didst love me, Mother, as she loved
Whom I shall meet to-morrow, far away --
But no, it is not far -- that other heaven
Touches this, Mother; I have felt its touch,
And now I feel its clasp upon my soul.
I'm going from this heaven into that,
To-morrow, Mother. Yes, I dreamt it all.
It was the sunset of Our Lady's feast.
My soul passed upwards thro' the golden clouds
To sing the second Vespers of the day
With all the angels. Mother, ere I go,
Thou'lt listen, Mother sweet, to my last words,
Which, like all last words, tell whate'er was first
In life or tenderest in heart. I came
Unto my convent cell and virgin veil,
Sent by a spirit that had touched my own
As wings of angels touch -- to fly apart
Upon their missions -- till they meet again
In heaven, heart to heart, wing to wing.
The "Angel of the Cloister" you called me --
Unworthy sure of such a beauteous name --
My mission's over -- and your angel goes
To-morrow home. This earthly part which stays
You'll lay away within a simple grave --
But, Mother, on its slab thou'lt grave this name,
"Ullainee!" (she spelt the letters out),
Nor ask me why -- tho' if thou wilt I'll tell;
It is my soul name, given long ago
By one who found it in some Eastern book,
Or dreamt it in a dream, and gave it me --
Nor ever told the meaning of the name;
And, Mother, should he ever come and read
That name upon my grave, and come to thee
And ask the tidings of "Ullainee",
Thou'lt tell him all -- and watch him if he weeps,
Show him the crucifix my poor hands carved --
Show him the picture in the chapel choir --
And watch him if he weeps; and then
There are three humble scrolls in yonder drawer;
(She pointed to the table in her room);
'Some words of mine and words of his are there.
And keep these simple scrolls until he comes,

And put them in his hands; and, Mother, watch --
Watch him if he weeps; and tell him this:
I tasted all the sweets of sacrifice,
I kissed my cross a thousand times a day,
I hung and bled upon it in my dreams,
I lived on it -- I loved it to the last.' And then
A low, soft sigh crept thro' the virgin's cell;
I looked upon her face, and death was there."
There was a pause -- and in the pause one wave
Of shining tears swept thro' the Mother's eyes.
"And thus," she said, "our angel passed away.
We buried her, and at her last request
We wrote upon the slab, 'Ullainee'.
And I -- (for she asked me one day thus,
The day she hung her picture in the choir) --
I planted o'er her grave a white rose tree.
The roses crept around the slab and hid
The graven name -- and still we sometimes cull
Her sweet, white roses, and we place them on
Our Chapel-Altar."

Then the Mother rose,
Without another word, and led him thro'
A long, vast hall, then up a flight of stairs
Unto an oaken door, which turned upon its hinge
Noiselessly -- then into a Chapel dim,
On gospel side of which there was a gate
From ceiling down to floor, and back of that
A long and narrow choir, with many stalls,
Brown-oaken; all along the walls were hung
Saint-pictures, whose sweet faces looked upon
The faces of the Sisters in their prayers.
Beside a "Mater Dolorosa" hung
The picture of the "Angel of the Choir".
He sees it now thro' vista of the years,
Which stretch between him and that long-gone day,
It hangs within his memory as fresh
In tint and touch and look as long ago.
There was a power in it, as if the soul
Of her who painted it had shrined in it
Its very self; there was a spell in it
That fell upon his spirit thro' his eyes,
And made him dream of God's own holy heart.
The shadow of the picture, in weak words,
Was this, or something very like to this:

---- A wild, weird wold,
Just like the desolation of a heart,
Stretched far away into infinity;
Above it low, gray skies drooped sadly down,
As if they fain would weep, and all was bare
As bleakness' own bleak self; a mountain stood
All mantled with the glory of a light
That flashed from out the heavens, and a cross
With such a pale Christ hanging in its arms

Did crown the mount; and either side the cross
There were two crosses lying on the rocks --
One of the whitest roses -- ULLAINEE
Was woven into it with buds of Red;
And one of reddest roses -- Merlin's name
Was woven into it with buds of white.
Below the cross and crosses and the mount
The earth-place lay so dark and bleak and drear;
Above, a golden glory seemed to hang
Like God's own benediction o'er the names.
I saw the picture once; it moved me so
I ne'er forgot its beauty or its truth;
But words as weak as mine can never paint
That Crucifixion's picture.

Merlin said to me:

"Some day -- some far-off day -- when I am dead,
You have the simple rhymings of two hearts,
And if you think it best, the world may know
A love-tale crowned by purest SACRIFICE."

Night After the Picnic

And "Happy! Happy! Happy!"
Rang the bells of all the hours;
"Shyly! Shyly! Shyly!"
Looked and listened all the flowers;
They were wakened from their slumbers,
By the footsteps of the fair;
And they smiled in their awaking
On the faces gathered there.

"Brightly! Brightly! Brightly!"
Looked the overhanging trees,
For beneath their bending branches
Floated tresses in the breeze.
And they wondered who had wandered
With such voices and so gay;
And their leaflets seemed to whisper
To each other: "Who are they?"

They were just like little children,
Not a sorrow's shade was there;
And "Merry! Merry! Merry!"
Rang their laughter thro' the air.
There was not a brow grief-darkened,
Was there there a heart in pain?
But "Happy! Happy! Happy!"
Came the happy bells' refrain.

When the stately trees were bending
O'er a simple, quiet home,
That looked humble as an altar,
Nestling 'neath a lofty dome;
Thither went they gaily! gaily!
Where their coming was a joy,
Just to pass away together
One long day without alloy.

"Slowly! Slowly! Slowly!"
Melted morning's mist away,
Till the sun, in all its splendor,
Lit the borders of the bay.
"Gladly! Gladly! Gladly!"
Glanced the waters that were gray,
While the wavelets whispered "Welcome!"
To us all that happy day.

And "Happy! Happy! Happy!"
Rang the bell in every heart,
And it chimed, "All day let no one
Think that ye shall ever part.
Go and sip from every moment
Sweets to perfume many years;
Keep your feast, and be too happy
To have thought of any tears."

There was song with one's soul in it,
And the happy hearts grew still
While they leaned upon the music
Like fair lilies o'er the rill;
Till the notes had softly floated
Into silent seas away
O'er the wavelets, where they listened
While they rocked upon the bay.

And ---- "Dreamy! Dreamy! Dreamy!"
When the song's sweet life was o'er,
Drooped the eyes that will remember
All its echoes evermore.
And "Stilly! Stilly! Stilly!"
Beat the hearts of some, I ween,
That can see the unseen mystery
Which a song may strive to screen.

Then "Gaily! Gaily! Gaily!"
Rang the laughter everywhere,
From the lips that seemed too lightsome
For the sigh of any care.
And the dance went "Merry! Merry!"
Whilst the feet that tripped along,
Bore the hearts that were as happy

As a wild bird's happy song.

And sweet words with smiles upon them,
Joy-winged, flitted to and fro,
Flushing every face they met with
With the glory of their glow.
Not a brow with cloud upon it --
Not an eye that seemed to know
What a tear is; not a bosom
That had ever nursed a woe.

And how "Swiftly! Swiftly! Swiftly!"
Like the ripples of a stream,
Did the bright hours chase each other,
Till it all seemed like a dream;
Till it seemed as if no ~Never~
Ever in this world had been,
To o'ercloud the ~brief Forever~,
Shining o'er the happy scene.

Dimly! dimly fell the shadows
Of the tranquil eventide;
But the sound of dance and laughter
Would not die, and had not died;
And still "Happy! Happy! Happy!"
Rang the voiceless vesper bells
O'er the hearts that were too happy
To remember earth's farewells.

Came the night hours -- faster! faster!
Rose the laughter and the dance,
And the eyes that should look weary
Shone the brighter in their glance:
And they stole from every minute
What no other day could lend --
They were happy! happy! happy!
But the feast must have an end.

"Children, come!" the words were cruel --
'Twas the death sigh of the feast;
And they came, still merry! merry!
At the bidding of the priest,
Who had heard the joy-bells ringing
Round him all the summer day.
"Happy! Happy! Happy! Happy!"
Did he hear an angel say?

"Happy! happy! still more happy!
Yea, the happiest are they.
I was moving 'mid the children
By the borders of the bay,
And I bring to God no record
Of a single sin this day.

"Happy! Happy! Happy!"

When your life seems lone and long,
You will hear that feast's bells ringing
Far and faintly thro' my song.

Lines ["The death of men is not the death"]

The death of men is not the death
Of rights that urged them to the fray;
For men may yield
On battle-field
A noble life with stainless shield,
And swords may rust
Above their dust,
But still, and still
The touch and thrill
Of freedom's vivifying breath
Will nerve a heart and rouse a will
In some hour, in the days to be,
To win back triumphs from defeat;
And those who blame us then will greet
Right's glorious eternity.

For right lives in a thousand things;
Its cradle is its martyr's grave,
Wherein it rests awhile until
The life that heroisms gave
Will rise again, at God's own will,
And right the wrong,
Which long and long
Did reign above the true and just;
And thro' the songs the poet sings,
Right's vivifying spirit rings;
Each simple rhyme
Keeps step and time
With those who marched away and fell,
And all his lines
Are humble shrines
Where love of right will love to dwell.

Death of the Prince Imperial

Waileth a woman, "O my God!"
A breaking heart in a broken breath,
A hopeless cry o'er her heart-hope's death!
Can words catch the chords of the winds that wail,
When love's last lily lies dead in the vale!
 Let her alone,
 Under the rod
 With the infinite moan
 Of her soul for God.
Ah! song! you may echo the sound of pain,
 But you never may shrine,
 In verse or line,
The pang of the heart that breaks in twain.

Waileth a woman, "O my God!"
Wind-driven waves with no hearts that ache,
Why do your passionate pulses throb?
No lips that speak -- have ye souls that sob?
We carry the cross -- ye wear the crest,
 We have our God -- and ye, your shore,
Whither ye rush in the storm to rest;
We have the havens of holy prayer --
And we have a hope -- have ye despair?
 For storm-rocked waves ye break evermore,
Adown the shores and along the years,
In the whitest foam of the saddest tears,
And we, as ye, O waves, gray waves!
Drift over a sea more deep and wide,
For we have sorrow and we have death;
And ye have only the tempest's breath;
But we have God when heart-oppressed,
As a calm and beautiful shore of rest.

O waves! sad waves! how you flowed between
The crownless Prince and the exiled Queen!

Waileth a woman, "O my God!"
Her hopes are withered, her heart is crushed,
For the love of her love is cold and dead,
The joy of her joy hath forever fled;
 A starless and pitiless night hath rushed
On the light of her life -- and far away
In Afric wild lies her poor dead child,
Lies the heart of her heart -- let her alone
 Under the rod
 With her infinite moan,
 O my God!
He was beautiful, pure, and brave,
 The brightest grace
 Of a royal race;
Only his throne is but a grave;
 Is there fate in fame?
 Is there doom in names?

Ah! what did the cruel Zulu spears
Care for the prince or his mother's tears?
What did the Zulu's ruthless lance
Care for the hope of the future France?

Crieth the Empress, "O my son!"
He was her own and her only one,
She had nothing to give him but her love.
'Twas kingdom enough on earth -- above
She gave him an infinite faith in God;
Let her cry her cry
Over her own and only one,
All the glory is gone -- is gone,
Into her broken-hearted sigh.

Moaneth a mother, "O my child!"
And who can sound that depth of woe?
Homeless, throneless, crownless -- now
She bows her sorrow-wreathed brow --
(So fame and all its grandeurs go)
Let her alone
Beneath the rod
With her infinite moan,
"O my God!"

In Memoriam (Father Keeler)

Father Keeler died February 28, 1880, in Mobile, Ala.
Inscribed to his sister.

"Sweet Christ! let him live, ah! we need his life,
And woe to us if he goes!
Oh! his life is beautiful, sweet, and fair,
Like a holy hymn, and the stillest prayer;
Let him linger to help us in the strife
On earth, with our sins and woes."

'Twas the cry of thousands who loved him so,
The Angel of Death said: "No! oh! no!"
He was passing away -- and none might save
The virgin priest from a spotless grave.

"O God! spare his life, we plead and pray,
He taught us to love You so --
So, so much -- his life is so sweet and fair --
A still, still song -- and a holy prayer;
He is our Father; oh! let him stay --
He gone, to whom shall we go?"

'Twas the wail of thousands who loved him so,
But the Angel of Death murmured low: "No, no;"
And the voice of his angel from far away,
Sang to Christ in heav'n: "He must not stay."

"O Mary! kneel at the great white throne,
And pray with your children there --
Our hearts need his heart -- 'tis sweet and fair,
Like the sound of hymns and the breath of prayer,
Goeth he now -- we are lone -- so lone,
And who is there left to care?"

'Twas the cry of the souls who loved him so --
But the Angel of Death sang: "Children, no!"
And a voice like Christ's from the far away,
Sounded sweet and low: "He may not stay."

From his sister's heart swept the wildest moan:
"O God let my brother stay --
I need him the most -- oh! me! how lone,
If he passes from earth away --
O beautiful Christ, for my poor sake
Let him live for me, else my heart will break."

But the Angel of Death wept: "Poor child! no,"
And Christ sang: "Child, I will soothe thy woe."

"O Christ! let his sister's prayer be heard,
Let her look on his face once more!
Ah! that prayer was a wail -- without a word --
She will look on him nevermore!"

The long gray distances unmoved swept
'Tween the dying eyes and the eyes that wept.

He was dying fast, and the hours went by,
Ah! desolate hours were they!
His mind had hidden away somewhere
Back of a fretted and wearied brow,
Ere he passed from life away.
And one who loved him (at dead of night),
Crept up to an altar, where the light
That guards Christ's Eucharistic sleep,
Shone strangely down on his vow:
"Spare him! O God! -- O God! for me,
Take me, beautiful Christ, instead;
Let me taste of death and come to Thee,
I will sleep for him with the dead."

The Angel of Death said: "No! Priest! No!
You must suffer and live, but he must go."
And a voice like Christ's sang far away:

"He will come to me, but you must stay."

We leaned on hope that was all in vain,
'Till the terrible word at last
Told our stricken hearts he was out of pain,
And his beautiful life had passed.

Oh! take him away from where he died;
Put him not with the common dead
(For he was so pure and fair);
And the city was stirred, and thousands cried
Whose tears were a very prayer.

No, no, no, take him home again,
For his bishop's heart beats there;
Cast him not with the common dead,
Let him go home and rest his head,
Ah! his weary and grief-worn head,
On the heart of his father -- he is mild
For he loved him as his own child.

And they brought him home to the home he blest,
With his life so sweet and fair,
He blessed it more in his deathly rest --
His face was a chiseled prayer,
White as the snow, pure as the foam
Of a weary wave on the sea,
He drifted back -- and they placed him where
He would love at last to be.

His Father in God thought over the years
Of the beautiful happy past;
Ah! me! we were happy then; but now,
The sorrow has come, and saddest tears
Kiss the dead priest's virgin brow.

Who will watch o'er the dead young priest,
People and priests and all?
No, no, no, 'tis his spirit's feast;
When the evening shadows fall,
Let him rest alone -- unwatched, alone,
Just beneath the altar's light,
The holy hosts on their humble throne
Will watch him all thro' the night.

The doors were closed -- he was still and fair,
What sound moved up the aisles?
The dead priests come with soundless prayer,
Their faces wearing smiles.
And this was the soundless hymn they sung:
"We watch o'er you to-night,
Your life was beautiful, fair, and young,
Not a cloud upon its light.

To-morrow -- to-morrow you will rest
With the virgin priests whom Christ has blest."

Kyrie Eleison! the stricken crowd
Bowed down their heads in tears
O'er the sweet young priest in his vestment shroud
 (Ah! the happy, happy years!)
They are dead and gone, and the Requiem Mass
 Went slowly, mournfully on,
The Pontiff's singing was all a wail,
The altars cried, and the people wept,
The fairest flower in the church's vale
 (Ah! me! how soon we pass!)
In the vase of his coffin slept.

We bore him out to his resting place,
Children, priests, and all;
There was sorrow on almost ev'ry face --
 And ah! what tears did fall!
Tears from hearts, for a heart asleep,
Tears from sorrow's deepest deep.

"Dust to dust," he was lowered down;
Children! kneel and pray --
"Give the white rose priest a flower and crown,
For the white rose passed away."

And we wept our tears and left him there.
And brought his memory home --
Ah! he was beautiful, sweet, and fair,
A heavenly hymn -- a sweet, still prayer,
Pure as the snow, white as the foam,

That seeks a lone, far shore.
Dead Priest! bless from amid the blest,
The hearts that will guard thy place of rest,
Forever, forever, forever more.

Mobile Mystic Societies

The olden golden stories of the world,
 That stirred the past,
And now are dim as dreams,
The lays and legends which the bards unfurled
 In lines that last,
All -- rhymed with glooms and gleams.
Fragments and fancies writ on many a page
 By deathless pen,

And names, and deeds that all along each age,
 Thrill hearts of men.
And pictures erstwhile framed in sun or shade
 Of many climes,
And life's great poems that can never fade
 Nor lose their chimes;
And acts and facts that must forever ring
 Like temple bells,
That sound or seem to sound where angels sing
 Vesper farewells;
And scenes where smiles are strangely touching tears,
 'Tis ever thus,
Strange Mystics! in the meeting of the years
 Ye bring to us
All these, and more; ye make us smile and sigh,
 Strange power ye hold!
When New Year kneels low in the star-aisled sky
 And asks the Old
To bless us all with love, and life, and light,
 And when they fold
Each other in their arms, ye stir the sight,
 We look, and lo!
The past is passing, and the present seems
 To wish to go.
Ye pass between them on your mystic way
 Thro' scene and scene,
The Old Year marches through your ranks, away
 To what has been,
The while the pageant moves, it scarcely seems
 Apart of earth;
The Old Year dies -- and heaven crowns with gleams
 The New Year's birth.
And you -- you crown yourselves with heaven's grace
 To enter here;
A prayer -- ascending from an orphan face,
 Or just one tear
May meet you in the years that are to be
 A blessing rare.
Ye pass beneath the arch of charity,
 Who passeth there
Is blest in heaven, and is blest on earth,
 And God will care,
Beyond the Old Year's death and New Year's birth,
 For each of you, ye Mystics! everywhere.

Rest

My feet are wearied, and my hands are tired,

My soul oppressed --
And I desire, what I have long desired --
Rest -- only rest.

'Tis hard to toil -- when toil is almost vain,
In barren ways;
'Tis hard to sow -- and never garner grain,
In harvest days.

The burden of my days is hard to bear,
But God knows best;
And I have prayed -- but vain has been my prayer
For rest -- sweet rest.

'Tis hard to plant in Spring and never reap
The Autumn yield;
'Tis hard to till, and 'tis tilled to weep
O'er fruitless field.

And so I cry a weak and human cry,
So heart oppressed;
And so I sigh a weak and human sigh,
For rest -- for rest.

My way has wound across the desert years,
And cares infest
My path, and through the flowing of hot tears,
I pine -- for rest.

'Twas always so; when but a child I laid
On mother's breast
My wearied little head; e'en then I prayed
As now -- for rest.

And I am restless still; 'twill soon be o'er;
For down the West
Life's sun is setting, and I see the shore
Where I shall rest.

Follow Me

The Master's voice was sweet:
"I gave My life for thee;
Bear thou this cross thro' pain and loss,
Arise and follow Me."
I clasped it in my hand --
O Thou! who diedst for me,
The day is bright, my step is light,

'Tis sweet to follow Thee!

Through the long Summer days
I followed lovingly;
'Twas bliss to hear His voice so near,
His glorious face to see.
Down where the lilies pale
Fringed the bright river's brim,
In pastures green His steps were seen --
'Twas sweet to follow Him!

Oh, sweet to follow Him!
Lord, let me here abide.
The flowers were fair; I lingered there;
I laid His cross aside --
I saw His face no more
By the bright river's brim;
Before me lay the desert way --
'Twas hard to follow Him!

Yes! hard to follow Him
Into that dreary land!
I was alone; His cross had grown
Too heavy for my hand.
I heard His voice afar
Sound thro' the night air chill;
My weary feet refused to meet
His coming o'er the hill.

The Master's voice was sad:
"I gave My life for thee;
I bore the cross thro' pain and loss,
Thou hast not followed Me."
So fair the lilies' banks,
So bleak the desert way:
The night was dark, I could not mark
Where His blessed footsteps lay.

Fairer the lilies' banks
Softer the grassy lea;
"The endless bliss of those who best
Have learned to follow Me!
Canst thou not follow Me?
Hath patient love a power no more
To move thy faithless heart?
Wilt thou not follow Me?
These weary feet of Mine
Have stained, and red the pathway dread
In search of thee and thine."

O Lord! O Love divine!
Once more I follow Thee!
Let me abide so near Thy side

That I Thy face may see.
I clasp Thy pierced hand,
O Thou who diedst for me!
I'll bear Thy cross thro' pain and loss,
So let me cling to Thee.

The Poet's Child

Lines addressed to the daughter of Richard Dalton Williams.

Child of the heart of a child of sweetest song!
The poet's blood flows through thy fresh pure veins;
Dost ever hear faint echoes float along
Thy days and dreams of thy dead father's strains?
 Dost ever hear,
 In mournful times,
 With inner ear,
The strange sweet cadences of thy father's rhymes?

Child of a child of art, which Heaven doth give
To few, to very few as unto him!
His songs are wandering o'er the world, but live
In his child's heart, in some place lone and dim;
 And nights and days
 With vestal's eyes
 And soundless sighs
Thou keepest watch above thy father's lays.

Child of a dreamer of dreams all unfulfilled --
(And thou art, child, a living dream of him) --
Dost ever feel thy spirit all enthralled
With his lost dreams when summer days wane dim?
 When suns go down,
 Thou, song of the dead singer,
 Dost sigh at eve and grieve
O'er the brow that paled before it won the crown?

Child of the patriot! Oh, how he loved his land!
And how he moaned o'er Erin's ev'ry wrong!
Child of the singer! he swept with purest hand
The octaves of all agonies, until his song
 Sobbed o'er the sea;
 And now through thee
 It cometh to me,
Like a shadow song from some Gethsemane.

Child of the wanderer! and his heart the shrine
Where three loves blended into only one --

His God's, thy mother's, and his country's; and 'tis thine
To be the living ray of such a glorious sun.
His genius gleams,
My child, within thee,
And dim thy dreams
As stars on the midnight sea.

Child of thy father, I have read his songs --
Thou art the sweetest song he ever sung --
Peaceful as Psalms, but when his country's wrongs
Swept o'er his heart he stormed. And he was young;
He died too soon --
So men will say --
Before he reached Fame's noon;
His songs are letters in a book -- thou art their ray.

Mother's Way

Oft within our little cottage,
As the shadows gently fall,
While the sunlight touches softly
One sweet face upon the wall,
Do we gather close together,
And in hushed and tender tone
Ask each other's full forgiveness
For the wrong that each has done.
Should you wonder why this custom
At the ending of the day,
Eye and voice would quickly answer:
"It was once our mother's way."

If our home be bright and cheery,
If it holds a welcome true,
Opening wide its door of greeting
To the many -- not the few;
If we share our father's bounty
With the needy day by day,
'Tis because our hearts remember
This was ever mother's way.

Sometimes when our hands grow weary,
Or our tasks seem very long;
When our burdens look too heavy,
And we deem the right all wrong;
Then we gain a new, fresh courage,
And we rise to proudly say:
"Let us do our duty bravely --
This was our dear mother's way."

Then we keep her memory precious,
While we never cease to pray
That at last, when lengthening shadows
Mark the evening of our day,
They may find us waiting calmly
To go home our mother's way.

Feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple

The priests stood waiting in the holy place,
Impatient of delay
(Isaiah had been read),
When sudden up the aisle there came a face
Like a lost sun's ray;
And the child was led
By Joachim and Anna. Rays of grace
Shone all about the child;
Simeon looked on, and bowed his aged head --
Looked on the child, and smiled.

Low were the words of Joachim. He spake
In a tremulous way,
As if he were afraid,
Or as if his heart were just about to break,
And knew not what to say;
And low he bowed his head --
While Anna wept the while -- he, sobbing, said:
"Priests of the holy temple, will you take
Into your care our child?"
And Simeon, listening, prayed, and strangely smiled.

A silence for a moment fell on all;
They gazed in mute surprise,
Not knowing what to say,
Till Simeon spake: "Child, hast thou heaven's call?"
And the child's wondrous eyes
(Each look a lost sun's ray)
Turned toward the far mysterious wall.
(Did the veil of the temple sway?)
They looked from the curtain to the little child --
Simeon seemed to pray, and strangely smiled.

"Yes; heaven sent me here. Priests, let me in!"
(And the voice was sweet and low.)
"Was it a dream by night?"
A voice did call me from this world of sin --
A spirit-voice I know,

An angel pure and bright.
'Leave father, mother,' said the voice, 'and win';
(I see my angel now)
'The crown of a virgin's vow.'
I am three summers old -- a little child."
And Simeon seemed to pray the while he smiled.

"Yes, holy priests, our father's God is great,
And all His mercies sweet!
His angel bade me come --
Come thro' the temple's beautiful gate;
He led my heart and feet
To this, my holy home.
He said to me: 'Three years your God will wait
Your heart to greet and meet.'
I am three summers old --
I see my angel now --
Brighter his wings than gold --
He knoweth of my vow."
The priests, in awe, came closer to the child --
She wore an angel's look -- and Simeon smiled.

As if she were the very holy ark,
Simeon placed his hand
On the fair, pure head.
The sun had set, and it was growing dark;
The robed priests did stand
Around the child. He said:
"Unto me, priests, and all ye Levites, hark!
This child is God's own gift --
Let us our voices lift
In holy praise." They gazed upon the child
In wonderment -- and Simeon prayed and smiled.

And Joachim and Anna went their way --
The little child, she shed
The tenderest human tears.
The priests and Levites lingered still to pray;
And Simeon said:
"We teach the latter years
The night is passing 'fore the coming day
(Isaiah had been read)
Of our redemption" -- and some way the child
Won all their hearts. Simeon prayed and smiled.

That night the temple's child knelt down to pray
In the shadows of the aisle --
She prayed for you and me.
Why did the temple's mystic curtain sway?
Why did the shadows smile?
The child of Love's decree
Had come at last; and 'neath the night-stars' gleam
The aged Simeon did see in dream

The mystery of the child,
And in his sleep he murmured prayer -- and smiled.

And twelve years after, up the very aisle
Where Simeon had smiled
Upon her fair, pure face,
She came again, with a mother's smile,
And in her arms a Child,
The very God of grace.
And Simeon took the Infant from her breast,
And, in glad tones and strong,
He sang his glorious song
Of faith, and hope, and everlasting rest.

St. Bridget

Sweet heaven's smile
Gleamed o'er the isle,
That gems the dreamy sea.
One far gone day,
And flash'd its ray,
More than a thousand years away,
Pure Bridget, over thee.

White as the snow,
That falls below
To earth on Christmas night,
Thy pure face shone
On every one;
For Christ's sweet grace thy heart had won
To make thy birth-land bright.

A cloud hangs o'er
Thy Erin's shore --
Ah! God, 'twas always so.
Ah! virgin fair
Thy heaven pray'r
Will help thy people in their care,
And save them from their woe.

Thou art in light --
They are in light;
Thou hast a crown -- they a chain.
The very sod,
Made theirs by God,
Is still by tyrants' footsteps trod;
They pray -- but all in vain.

Thou! near Christ's throne,
Dost hear the moan
Of all their hearts that grieve;
Ah! virgin sweet,
Kneel at His feet,
Where angels' hymns thy prayer shall greet,
And pray for them this eve.

New Year

Each year cometh with all his days,
Some are shadowed and some are bright;
He beckons us on until he stays
Kneeling with us 'neath Christmas night.

Kneeling under the stars that gem
The holy sky, o'er the humble place,
When the world's sweet Child of Bethlehem
Rested on Mary, full of grace.

Not only the Bethlehem in the East,
But altar Bethlehem everywhere,
When the ~Gloria~ of the first great feast
Rings forth its gladness on the air.

Each year seemeth loath to go,
And leave the joys of Christmas day;
In lands of sun and in lands of snow,
The year still longs awhile to stay.

A little while, 'tis hard to part
From this Christ blessed here below,
Old year! and in thy aged heart
I hear thee sing so sweet and low.

A song like this, but sweeter far,
And yet as if with a human tone,
Under the blessed Christmas star,
And thou descendest from thy throne.

"A few more days and I am gone,
The hours move swift and sure along;
Yet still I fain would linger on
In hearing of the Christmas song.

"I bow to Him who rules all years;
Thrice blessed is His high behest;
Nor will He blame me if, with tears,

I pass to my eternal rest.

"Ah, me! to altars every day
I brought the sun and the holy Mass;
The people came by my light to pray,
While countless priests did onward pass.

"The words of the Holy Thursday night
To one another from east to west;
And the holy Host on the altar white
Would take its little half-hour's rest.

"And every minute of every hour
The Mass bell rang with its sound so sweet,
While from shrine to shrine, with tireless power,
And heaven's love, walked the nailed feet.

"I brought the hours for ~Angelus~ bells,
And from a thousand temple towers
They wound their sweet and blessed spell
Around the hearts of all the hours.

"Every day has a day of grace
For those who fain would make them so;
I saw o'er the world in every place
The wings of guardian angels glow.

"Men! could you hear the song I sing --
But no, alas! it cannot be so!
My heir that comes would only bring
Blessings to bless you here below."

* * * * *

Seven days passed; the gray, old year
Calls to his throne the coming heir;
Falls from his eyes the last, sad tear,
And lo! there is gladness everywhere.

Singing, I hear the whole world sing,
Afar, anear, aloud, alow:
"What to us will the New Year bring!"
Ah! would that each of us might know!

Is it not truth? as old as true?
List ye, singers, the while ye sing!
Each year bringeth to each of you
What each of you will have him bring.

The year that cometh is a king,
With better gifts than the old year gave;
If you place on his fingers the holy ring
Of prayer, the king becomes your slave.

Zeila (A Story from a Star)

From the mystic sidereal spaces,
In the noon of a night 'mid of May,
Came a spirit that murmured to me --
Or was it the dream of a dream?
No! no! from the purest of places,
Where liveth the highest of races,
In an unfallen sphere far away
(And it wore Immortality's gleam)
Came a Being. Hath seen on the sea
The sheen of some silver star shimmer
'Thwart shadows that fall dim and dimmer
O'er a wave half in dream on the deep?
It shone on me thus in my sleep.

Was I sleeping? Is sleep but the closing,
In the night, of our eyes from the light?
Doth the spirit of man e'en then rest?
Or doth it not toil all the more?
When the earth-wearied frame is reposing,
Is the vision then veiled the less bright?
When the earth from our sight hath been taken,
The fetters of senses off shaken,
The soul, doth it not then awaken
To the light on Infinity's shore?
And is not its vision then best,
And truest, and farthest, and clearest?
In night, is not heaven the nearest?
Ah, me! let the day have his schemers,
Let them work on their ways as they will,
And their workings, I trow, have their worth.
But the unsleeping spirits of dreamers,
In hours when the world-voice is still,
Are building, with faith without falter,
Bright steps up to heaven's high altar,
Where lead all the aisles of the earth.

Was I sleeping? I know not -- or waking?
The body was resting, I ween;
Meseems it was o'ermuch tired
With the toils of the day that had gone;
When sudden there came the bright breaking
Of light thro' a shadowy screen;
And with the brightness there blended
The voice of the Being descended
From a star ever pure of all sin,

In music too sweet to be lyred
By the lips of the sinful and mortal.
And, oh! how the pure brightness shone!
As shines thro' the summer morn's portal
Rays golden and white as the snow,
As white as the flakes -- ah, no! whiter;
Only angelic wings may be brighter
When they flash o'er the brow of some woe
That walketh this shadowed below.

The soul loseth never its seeing,
In the goings of night and of day
It graspeth the Infinite Far.
No wonder there may come some Being,
As if it had wandered astray
At times down the wonder-filled way --
As to me in the midnight of May --
From its home in some glory-crowned star,
Where evil hath never left traces;
Where dwelleth the highest of races,
Save the angels that circle the throne,
In a grace far beyond all our graces,
Whose Christ is the same as our own.

Yea! I ween the star spaces are teeming
With the gladness of life and of love.
No! no! I am not at all dreaming --
The Below's hands enclasp the Above.
'Tis a truth that is more than a seeming --
Creation is many, tho' one,
And we are the last of its creatures.
This earth bears the sign of our sin
(From the highest the evil came in);
Yet ours are the same human features
That veiled long ago the Divine.
How comes it, O holy Creator!
That we, not the first, but the latter
Of varied and numberless beings
Springing forth in Thy loving decreeings,
That we are, of all, the most Thine?

Yea! we are the least and the lowly,
The half of our history gone,
We look up the Infinite slope
In faith, and we walk on in hope;
But think ye from here to the "Holy
Of Holies" beyond yon still sky,
O'er the stars that forever move on,
I' the heavens beyond the bright Third,
In glory's ineffable light;
Where the Father, and Spirit, and Word
Reign circled by angels all bright --
Ah! think you 'tween Here and that Yonder

There is naught but the silence of death?
There's naught of love's wish or life's wonder,
And naught but an infinite night?
No! no! the great Father is fonder
Of breathing His life-giving breath
Into beings of numberless races.
And from here on and up to His throne
The Trinity's beautiful faces,
In countless various traces,
Are seen in more stars than our own.
This earth telleth not half the story
Of the infinite heart of our God --
The heavens proclaim of His glory
The least little part, and His power
Broke not its sceptre when earth
Was beckoned by Him into birth.
Is He resting, I wonder, to-night?
Can He rest when His love sways His will?
Will He rest ere His glory shall fill
All spaces below and above
With beings to know and to love?

Creation -- when was it begun?
Who knows its first day? Nay, none.
And then, what ken among men
Can tell when the last work is done?
Is He resting, I wonder, to-night?
Doth He ever grow weary of giving
To Darknesses rays of His light?
Doth He ever grow weary of giving
To Nothings the rapture of living
And waiting awhile for His sight?
If His will rules His glorious power,
And if love sways His beautiful will,
Is He not, e'en in this very hour,
Going on with love's wonder-work still?

* * * * *

Let me pray just awhile, for betimes
My spirit is clouded; and then
Strange darknesses creep o'er my rhymes,
Till prayer lendeth light to my pen.
And then shall I better unfold
The story to me that was told,
Of the unfallen star far away,
In the noon of the night 'mid of May,
By the beautiful Being who came,
With the pure and the beautiful name.
"Call me Zeila," the bright spirit said,
And passed from my vision afar.
With rapture I bowed down my head,
And dreamed of that unfallen star.

Better than Gold

Better than grandeur, better than gold,
Than rank and titles a thousand fold,
Is a healthy body and a mind at ease,
And simple pleasures that always please
A heart that can feel for another's woe,
With sympathies large enough to enfold
All men as brothers, is better than gold.

Better than gold is a conscience clear,
Though toiling for bread in an humble sphere,
Doubly blessed with content and health,
Untried by the lusts and cares of wealth,
Lowly living and lofty thought
Adorn and ennoble a poor man's cot;
For mind and morals in nature's plan
Are the genuine tests of a gentleman.

Better than gold is the sweet repose
Of the sons of toil when the labors close;
Better than gold is the poor man's sleep,
And the balm that drops on his slumbers deep.
Bring sleeping draughts on the downy bed,
Where luxury pillows its aching head,
The toiler simple opiate deems
A shorter route to the land of dreams.

Better than gold is a thinking mind,
That in the realm of books can find
A treasure surpassing Australian ore,
And live with the great and good of yore.
The sage's lore and the poet's lay,
The glories of empires passed away;
The world's great dream will thus unfold
And yield a pleasure better than gold.

Better than gold is a peaceful home
Where all the fireside characters come,
The shrine of love, the heaven of life,
Hallowed by mother, or sister, or wife.
However humble the home may be,
Or tried with sorrow by heaven's decree,
The blessings that never were bought or sold,
And centre there, are better than gold.

Sea Dreamings

To-day a bird on wings as white as foam
That crests the blue-gray wave,
With the vesper light upon its breast, flew home
Seaward. The God who gave
To the birds the virgin-wings of snow
Somehow telleth them the ways they go.

Unto the Evening went the white-winged bird --
Gray clouds hung round the West --
And far away the tempest's tramp was heard.
The bird flew for a rest
Away from the grove, out to the sea --
Is it only a bird's mystery?

Nay! nay! lone bird! I watched thy wings of white
That cleft thy waveward way --
Past the evening and swift into the night,
Out of the calm, bright day --
And thou didst teach me, bird of the sea,
More than one human heart's history.

Only men's hearts -- tho' God shows each its way
That leadeth hence to home --
Unlike the wild sea-birds, somehow go astray,
Seeking in the far foam
Of this strange world's tempest-trampled main
A resting place -- but they seek in vain.

Only the bird can rest upon the deep,
And sleep upon the wave,
And dream its peaceful dreams where wild winds sweep.
And sweet the God who gave
The birds a rest place on the restless sea --
But this, my heart, is not His way with thee.

Over the world, ah! passion's tempests roll,
And every fleck of foam
Whitens the place where sank some sin-wrecked soul
That never shall reach home.
Ah! the tranquil shore of God's sweet, calm grace,
My heart, is thy only resting place.

Sea Rest

Far from "where the roses rest",
Round the altar and the aisle,
Which I loved, of all, the best --
I have come to rest awhile
By the ever-restless sea --
Will its waves give rest to me?

But it is so hard to part
With my roses. Do they know
(Who knows but each has a heart?)
How it grieves my heart to go?
Roses! will the restless sea
Bring, as ye, a rest for me?

Ye were sweet and still and calm,
Roses red and roses white;
And ye sang a soundless psalm
For me in the day and night.
Roses! will the restless sea
Sing as sweet as ye for me?

Just a hundred feet away,
Seaward, flows and ebbs the tide;
And the wavelets, blue and gray,
Moan, and white sails windward glide
O'er the ever restless sea
From me, far and peacefully.

And as many feet away,
Landward, rise the moss-veiled trees;
And they wail, the while they sway
In the sad November breeze,
Echoes in the sighing sea
To me, near and mournfully.

And beside me sleep the dead,
In the consecrated ground;
Blessed crosses o'er each head.
O'er them all the Requiem sound,
Chanted by the moaning sea,
Echoed by each moss-veiled tree.

Roses! will you miss my face?
Do you know that I have gone
From your fair and restful place,
Far away where moveth on
Night and day the restless sea?
But I saw eternity

In your faces. Roses sweet!
Ye were but the virgin veils,

Hiding Him whose holy feet
Walked the waves, whose very wails
Bring to me from Galilee
Rest across the restless sea.

And who knows? mayhap some wave,
From His footstep long ago,
With the blessing which He gave
After ages ebb and flow,
Cometh in from yonder sea,
With a blessing sweet for me.

Just last night I watched the deep,
And it shone as shines a shrine,
(Vigils such I often keep)
And the stars did sweetly shine
O'er the altar of the sea;
So they shone in Galilee.

Roses! round the shrine and aisle!
Which of all I loved the best,
I have gone to rest awhile
Where the wavelets never rest --
Ye are dearer far to me
Than the ever restless sea.

I will come to you in dreams,
In the day and in the night,
When the sun's or starlight's gleams
Robe you in your red or white;
Roses! will you dream of me
By the ever restless sea?

Biloxi, Miss.

Sea Reverie

Strange Sea! why is it that you never rest?
And tell me why you never go to sleep?
Thou art like one so sad and sin-oppressed --
(And the waves are the tears you weep) --
And thou didst never sin -- what ails the sinless deep?

To-night I hear you crying on the beach,
Like a weary child on its mother's breast --
A cry with an infinite and lonesome reach
Of unutterably deep unrest;

And thou didst never sin -- why art thou so distressed?

But, ah, sad Sea! the mother's breast is warm,
Where crieth the lone and the wearied child;
And soft the arms that shield her own from harm;
And her look is unutterably mild --
But to-night, O Sea! thy cry is wild, so wild!

What ails thee, Sea? The midnight stars are bright --
How safe they lean on heaven's sinless breast!
O Sea! is the beach too hard, tho' e'er so white,
To give thy utter weariness a rest?
(And to-night the winds are a-coming from the West).

* * * * *

Where the shadows moan o'er the day's life done,
And the darkness is waiting for the light,
Ah, me! how the shadows ever seek and shun
The sacred, radiant faces of the bright --
(And the stars are the vestal virgins of the night);

Or am I dreaming? Do I see and hear
Without me what I feel within?
Is there an inner eye and an inner ear
Thro' which the sounds and silences float in
In reflex of the spirit's calm or troublous din?

I know not. After all, what do I know?
Save only this -- and that is mystery --
Like the sea, my spirit hath its ebb and flow
In unison, and the tides of the sea
Ever reflect the ceaseless tides of thoughts in me.

Waves, are ye priests in surplices of gray,
Fringed by the fingers of the breeze with white?
Is the beach your altar where ye come to pray,
With the sea's ritual, every day and night?
And the suns and stars your only altar light?

Great Sea! the very rhythm of my song
(And the winds are a-coming from the West),
Like thy waves, moveth uncertainly along;
And my thoughts, like thy tide with a snow-white crest,
Flow and ebb, ebb and flow with thy own unrest.

Biloxi, Miss.

Fell the snow on the festival's vigil
And surpliced the city in white;
I wonder who wove the pure flakelets?
Ask the Virgin, or God, or the night.

It fitted the Feast: 'twas a symbol,
And earth wore the surplice at morn,
As pure as the vale's stainless lily
For Mary, the sinlessly born;

For Mary, conceived in all sinlessness;
And the sun, thro' the clouds of the East,
With the brightest and fairest of flashes,
Fringed the surplice of white for the Feast.

And round the horizon hung cloudlets,
Pure stoles to be worn by the Feast;
While the earth and the heavens were waiting
For the beautiful Mass of the priest.

I opened my window, half dreaming;
My soul went away from my eyes,
And my heart began saying "Hail Marys"
Somewhere up in the beautiful skies,

Where the shadows of sin never rested;
And the angels were waiting to hear
The prayer that ascends with "Our Father",
And keeps hearts and the heavens so near.

And all the day long -- can you blame me?
"Hail Mary", "Our Father", I said;
And I think that the Christ and His Mother
Were glad of the way that I prayed.

And I think that the great, bright Archangel
Was listening all the day long
For the echo of every "Hail Mary"
That soared thro' the skies like a song,

From the hearts of the true and the faithful,
In accents of joy or of woe,
Who kissed in their faith and their fervor
The Festival's surplice of snow.

I listened, and each passing minute,
I heard in the lands far away
"Hail Mary", "Our Father", and near me
I heard all who knelt down to pray.

Pray the same as I prayed, and the angel,
And the same as the Christ of our love --
"Our Father", "Hail Mary", "Our Father" --
Winging just the same sweet flight above.

Passed the morning, the noon: came the even --
The temple of Christ was aflame
With the halo of lights on three altars,
And one wore His own Mother's name.

Her statue stood there, and around it
Shone the symbolic stars. Was their gleam,
And the flowerets that fragrancd her altar,
Were they only the dream of a dream?

Or were they sweet signs to my vision
Of a truth far beyond mortal ken,
That the Mother had rights in the temple
Of Him she had given to men?

Was it wronging her Christ-Son, I wonder,
For the Christian to honor her so?
Ought her statue pass out of His temple?
Ask the Feast in its surplice of snow.

Ah, me! had the pure flakelets voices,
I know what their white lips would say;
And I know that the lights on her altar
Would pray with me if they could pray.

Methinks that the flowers that were fading --
Sweet virgins that die with the Feast,
Like martyrs, upon her fair altar --
If they could, they would pray with the priest;

And would murmur "Our Father", "Hail Mary",
Till they drooped on the altar in death,
And be glad in their dying for giving
To Mary their last sweetest breath.

Passed the day as a poem that passes
Through the poet's heart's sweetest of strings;
Moved the minutes from Masses to Masses --
Did I hear a faint sound as of wings

Rustling over the aisles and the altars?
Did they go to her altar and pray?
Or was my heart only a-dreaming
At the close of the Festival day?

Quiet throngs came into the temple,
As still as the flowers at her feet,
And wherever they knelt, they were gazing

Where the statue looked smiling and sweet.

"Our Fathers", "Hail Marys" were blended
In a pure and a perfect accord,
And passed by the beautiful Mother
To fall at the feet of our Lord.

Low toned from the hearts of a thousand
"Our Fathers", "Hail Marys" swept on
To the star-wreathed statue. I wonder
Did they wrong the great name of her Son.

Her Son and our Saviour -- I wonder
How He heard our "Hail Marys" that night?
Were the words to Him sweet as the music
They once were, and did we pray right?

Or was it all wrong? Will he punish
Our lips if we make them the home
Of the words of the great, high Archangel
That won Him to sinners to come.

Ah, me! does He blame my own mother,
Who taught me, a child, at her knee,
To say, with "Our Father", "Hail Mary"?
If 'tis wrong, my Christ! punish but me.

Let my mother, O Jesus! be blameless;
Let me suffer for her if You blame.
Her pure mother's heart knew no better
When she taught me to love the pure name.

O Christ! of Thy beautiful Mother
Must I hide her name down in my heart?
But, ah! even there you will see it --
With Thy Mother's name how can I part?

On Thy name all divine have I rested
In the days when my heart-trials came;
Sweet Christ, like to Thee I am human,
And I need Mary's pure human name.

Did I hear a voice? or was I dreaming?
I heard -- or I sure seemed to hear --
"Who blames you for loving My Mother
Is wronging my heart -- do not fear.

"I am human, e'en here in My heavens,
What I was I am still all the same;
And I still love My beautiful Mother --
And thou, priest of Mine, do the same."

I was happy -- because I am human --

And Christ in the silences heard
"Our Father", "Hail Mary", "Our Father",
Murmured faithfully word after word.

* * * * *

Swept the beautiful ~O Salutaris~
Down the aisles -- did the starred statue stir?
Or was my heart only a-dreaming
When it turned from her statue and her?

The door of a white tabernacle
Felt the touch of the hand of the priest --
Did he waken the Host from its slumbers
To come forth and crown the high Feast?

To come forth so strangely and silent,
And just for a sweet little while,
And then to go back to its prison.
Thro' the stars -- did the sweet statue smile?

I knew not; but Mary, the Mother,
I think, almost envied the priest --
He was taking her place at the altar --
Did she dream of the days in the East?

When her hands, and hers only, held Him,
Her Child, in His waking and rest,
Who had strayed in a love that seemed wayward
This eve to shrine in the West.

Did she dream of the straw of the manger
When she gazed on the altar's pure white?
Did she fear for her Son any danger
In the little Host, helpless, that night?

No! no! she is trustful as He is --
What a terrible trust in our race!
The Divine has still faith in the human --
What a story of infinite grace!

~Tantum Ergo~, high hymn of the altar
That came from the heart of a saint,
Swept triumph-toned all through the temple --
Did my ears hear the sound of a plaint?

'Neath the glorious roll of the singing
To the temple had sorrow crept in?
Or was it the moan of a sinner?
O beautiful Host! wilt Thou win

In the little half-hour's Benediction
The heart of a sinner again?

And, merciful Christ, Thou wilt comfort
The sorrow that brings Thee its pain.

Came a hush, and the Host was uplifted,
And It made just the sign of the cross
O'er the low-bended brows of the people.
O Host of the Holy! Thy loss

To the altar, and temple, and people
Would make this world darkest of night;
And our hearts would grope blindly on through it,
For our love would have lost all its light.

~Laudate~, what thrilling of triumph!
Our souls soared to God on each tone;
And the Host went again to Its prison,
For our Christ fears to leave us alone.

Blessed priest! strange thou art His jailor!
Thy hand holds the beautiful key
That locks in His prison love's Captive,
And keeps Him in fetters for me.

* * * * *

'Twas over -- I gazed on the statue --
"Our Father", "Hail Mary" still came;
And to-night faith and love cannot help it,
I must still pray the same -- still the same.

Written at Loyola College, Baltimore, on the Night of December 8, 1880.

Fifty Years at the Altar

"To Rev. Father E. Sourin, S.J., from A. J. Ryan; first, in memory of some happy hours passed in his company at Loyola College, Baltimore; next, in appreciation of a character of strange beautifulness, known of God, but hidden from men; and last, but by no means least, to test and tempt his humility in the (to him) proud hour of the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination."

To-day -- fifty years at the altar --
Thou art, as of old, at thy post!
Tell us, O chasubled soldier!
Art weary of watching the Host?
Fifty years -- Christ's sacred sentry,
To-day thy feet faithful are found

When the cross on the altar is blessing
Thy heart in its sentinel-round.

The beautiful story of Thabor
Fifty years agone thrilled thy young heart,
When wearing white vestments of glory,
And up the "high mountain apart".
In the fresh, glowing grace of thy priesthood,
Thou didst climb to the summit alone,
While the Feast of Christ's Transfiguration
Was a sweet outward sign of thy own.

Old priest! on the slope of the summit
Did float down and fall on thine ear
The strong words of weak-hearted Peter.
"O Lord, it is good to be here!"
Thy heart was stronger than Peter's,
And sweeter the tone of thy prayer;
'Twas Calvary thy young feet were climbing,
And old -- thou art still standing there.

For you, as for him, on bright Thabor,
Forever to stay were not hard;
But when Calvary girdles the altar,
And garments the Eucharist's guard
With sacrifice and with its shadows --
To keep there forever a feast
Is the glory and grace of the human --
The altar, the cross, and the priest.

The crucifix's wardens and watchers,
Like Him, must be heart sacrificed --
The Christ on the crucifix lifeless
For guard needs a brave human Christ.
To guard Him three hours -- what a glory!
With sacrifice splendors aflame!
Three hours -- and He died on His Calvary --
How long hast thou lived for His name?

"Half a century," cries out thy crucifix,
Binding together thy beads;
His look, like thy life, lingers in it,
A light for men's souls in their needs.
Old priest! is thy life not a rosary?
Five decades and more have been said,
In thy heart the warm splendors of Thabor
Beneath the white snows of thy head!

Fifty years lifting the chalice --
Ah, 'tis Life in this death-darkened land!
Thy clasp may be weak, but the chrism,
Old priest! that anointed thy hand
Is as fresh and as strong in its virtue

As in the five decades agone
Thy young hands were touched with its unction,
And thy vestments of white were put on.

Fifty years! Every day passes
A part of one great, endless feast,
That moves round its orbit of Masses,
And hath nor a West nor an East;
But everywhere hath its pure altars,
At each of its altars a priest
To lift up a Host with a chalice
Till the story of grace shall have ceased.

Fifty years in the feast's orbit,
Nearly two thousand of days;
Fifty years priest in the priesthood,
Fifty years lit with its rays --
Lit them but to reflect them
When the adorers' throngs pass
Out of thy life and its glory
Shining each day from thy Mass.

Half of a century's service!
Wearing thy cassock of black
O'er thy camps, and thy battles, and triumphs!
Old soldier of Jesus! look back
To the day when thou kissed thy first altar
In love with youth's fervor athrill.
From the day when we meet and we greet thee,
So true to the old altar still.

Fifty long years! what if trials
Did oftentimes darken thy way --
They marked, like the shadows on dials,
Thy soul's brightest hour every day.
The sun in the height of his splendor,
By the mystical law of his light,
O'er his glories flings vestments of shadows,
And, sinking, leaves stars to the night.

Old priest! with the heart of a poet
Thou hast written sweet stanzas for men;
Thy life, many versed, is a poem
That puzzles the art of the pen;
The crucifix wrote it and writes it --
A scripture too deep for my ken;
A record of deeds more than sayings --
Only God reads it rightly; and then

My stanzas are just like the shadows
That follow the sun and his sheen,
To tell to the eye that will read them
Where the purest of sunshine has been.

Thy life moves in mystical eclipse,
All hidden from men and their sight;
We look, but we see but its surface,
But God sees the depth of its light.

Twenty-five years! highest honors
Were thine -- high deserved in the world:
Dawned a day with a grace in its flashing
O'er thy heart from a standard unfurled,
Whose folds bore the mystical motto:
"To the greater glory of God!"
And somehow there opened before thee
A way thou hadst never yet trod.

Twenty-five years -- still a private
In files where the humblest and last
Stands higher in rank than the highest
Of those who are passing or passed;
Twenty-five years in the vanguard,
Whose name is a spell of their strength,
The light of the folds of whose standard
Lengthens along all the length

Of the march of the Crucified Jesus.
Loyola was wiser than most
In claiming for him and his soldiers
The name of the Chief of the host;
His name, and his motto, and colors
That never shall know a defeat,
Whose banner, when others are folded,
Shall never float over retreat.

To-day when the wind wafts the wavelets
To the gray altar steps of yon shore,
Each wearing an alb foam-embroidered,
And kneeling, like priests, to adore
The God of the land -- I will mingle
My prayers, aged priest! with the sea,
While God, for thy fifty years' priesthood,
Will hear thy prayers whispered for me.

Song of the Deathless Voice

'Twas the dusky Hallowe'en --
Hour of fairy and of wraith,
When in many a dim-lit green,
'Neath the stars' prophetic sheen,
As the olden legend saith,

All the future may be seen,
And when -- an older story hath --
Whate'er in life hath ever been
Loveful, hopeful, or of wrath,
Cometh back upon our path.
I was dreaming in my room,
'Mid the shadows, still as they;
Night, in veil of woven gloom,
Wept and trailed her tresses gray
O'er her fair, dead sister -- Day.
To me from some far-away
Crept a voice -- or seemed to creep --
As a wave-child of the deep,
Frightened by the wild storm's roar
Creeps low-sighing to the shore
Very low and very lone
Came the voice with song of moan,
This, weak-sung in weaker word,
Is the song that night I heard:

How long! Alas, how long!
How long shall the Celt chant the sad song of hope,
That a sunrise may break on the long starless night of our past?
How long shall we wander and wait on the desolate slope
Of Thabors that promise our Transfiguration at last?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long, O Fate! How long!
How long shall our sunburst reflect but the sunset of Right,
When gloaming still lights the dim immemorial years?
How long shall our harp's strings, like winds that are wearied of night,
Sound sadder than moanings in tones all a-trembling with tears?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long, O Right! How long!
How long shall our banner, the brightest that ever did flame
In battle with wrong, droop furled like a flag o'er a grave?
How long shall we be but a nation with only a name,
Whose history clanks with the sounds of the chains that enslave?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long! Alas, how long!
How long shall our isle be a Golgotha, out in the sea,
With a cross in the dark? Oh, when shall our Good Friday close?
How long shall thy sea that beats round thee bring only to thee
The wailings, O Erin! that float down the waves of thy woes?
How long, O Lord! How long!

How long! Alas, how long!
How long shall the cry of the wronged, O Freedom! for thee
Ascend all in vain from the valleys of sorrow below?
How long ere the dawn of the day in the ages to be,
When the Celt will forgive, or else tread on the heart of his foe?

How long, O Lord! How long!

Whence came the voice? Around me gray silence fall;
And without in the gloom not a sound is astir 'neath the sky;
And who is the singer? Or hear I a singer at all?
Or, hush! Is't my heart athrill with some deathless old cry?

Ah! blood forgets not in its flowing its forefathers' wrongs --
They are the heart's trust, from which we may ne'er be released;
Blood keeps in its throbs the echoes of all the old songs
And sings them the best when it flows thro' the heart of a priest.

Am I not in my blood as old as the race whence I sprung?
In the cells of my heart feel I not all its ebb and its flow?
And old as our race is, is it not still forever as young,
As the youngest of Celts in whose breast Erin's love is aglow?

The blood of a race that is wronged beats the longest of all,
For long as the wrong lasts, each drop of it quivers with wrath;
And sure as the race lives, no matter what fates may befall,
There's a Voice with a Song that forever is haunting its path.

Aye, this very hand that trembles thro' this very line,
Lay hid, ages gone, in the hand of some forefather Celt,
With a sword in its grasp, if stronger, not truer than mine,
And I feel, with my pen, what the old hero's sworded hand felt --

The heat of the hate that flashed into flames against wrong,
The thrill of the hope that rushed like a storm on the foe;
And the sheen of that sword is hid in the sheath of the song
As sure as I feel thro' my veins the pure Celtic blood flow.

The ties of our blood have been strained o'er thousands of years,
And still are not severed, how mighty soever the strain;
The chalice of time o'erflows with the streams of our tears,
Yet just as the shamrocks, to bloom, need the clouds and their rain,

The Faith of our fathers, our hopes, and the love of our isle
Need the rain of our hearts that falls from our grief-clouded eyes,
To keep them in bloom, while for ages we wait for the smile
Of Freedom, that some day -- ah! some day! shall light Erin's skies.

Our dead are not dead who have gone, long ago, to their rest;
They are living in us whose glorious race will not die --
Their brave buried hearts are still beating on in each breast
Of the child of each Celt in each clime 'neath the infinite sky.

Many days yet to come may be dark as the days that are past,
Many voices may hush while the great years sweep patiently by;
But the voice of our race shall live sounding down to the last,
And our blood is the bard of the song that never shall die.

To Mr. and Mrs. A. M. T.

Just when the gentle hand of spring
Came fringing the trees with bud and leaf,
And when the blades the warm suns bring
Were given glad promise of golden sheaf;
Just when the birds began to sing
Joy hymns after their winter's grief,
I wandered weary to a place;
Tired of toil, I sought for rest,
Where Nature wore her mildest grace --
I went where I was more than guest.
Strange, tall trees rose as if they fain
Would wear as crowns the clouds of skies;
The sad winds swept with low refrain
Through branches breathing softest sighs;
And o'er the field and down the lane
Sweet flowers, the dreams of Paradise,
Bloomed up into this world of pain,
Where all that's fairest soonest dies;
And 'neath the trees a little stream
Went winding slowly round and round,
Just like a poet's mystic dream,
With here a silence, there a sound.
The lowly ground, beneath the sheen
Of March day suns, now dim, now bright,
Now emeralds of golden green
In flashing or in fading light;
And here and there throughout the scene
The timid wild flowers met the sight,
While over all the sun and shade
Swept like a strangely woven veil,
Folding the flowers that else might fade,
Guarding young rosebuds from the gale.
And blossoms of most varied hue
Bedecked the forest everywhere,
While valleys wore the robes of blue,
Bright woven by the violets fair;
And there was gladness all around;
It was a place so fair to see,
And yet so simple -- there I found
How sweet a quiet home may be.
Four children -- and thro' all the day
They flung their laughter o'er the place;
Bright as the flowers in happy May,
The children shed a sweet pure grace
Around this quiet home, and they
To father and to mother brought
The smiles of purest love unsought;

It was a happy, happy spot,
Too dear to be fore'er forgot.
Farewell, sweet place! I came as guest;
From toil, in thee I found relief,
I found in thee a home and rest --
But, ah! the days are far too brief.
Farewell! I go, but with me come
Sweet memories that long will last;
I'll think of thee as of a home
That stands forever in my past.

To Virginia (on Her Birthday)

Your past is past and never to return,
The long bright yesterday of life's first years,
Its days are dead -- cold ashes in an urn.
Some held for you a chalice for your tears,
And other days strewed flowers upon your way.
They all are gone beyond your reach,
And thus they are beyond my speech.
I know them not, so that your first gone times
To me unknown, lie far beyond my rhymes.
But I can bless your soul and aims to-day,
And I can ask your future to be sweet,
And I can pray that you may never meet
With any cross, you are too weak to bear.
Virginia, Virgin name, and may you wear
Its virtues and its beauties, fore'er and fore'er.
I breathe this blessing, and I pray this prayer.

Epilogue

Go, words of mine! and if you live
Only for one brief, little day;
If peace, or joy, or calm you give
To any soul; or if you bring
A something higher to some heart,
I may come back again and sing
Songs free from all the arts of Art.

-- Abram J. Ryan.

Posthumous Poems

In Remembrance

In the eclipses of your soul, and when you cry
"O God! give more of rest and less of night,"
My words may rest you; and mayhap a light
Shall flash from them bright o'er thy spirit's sky;
Then think of me as one who passes by.
A few brief hours -- a golden August day,
We met, we spake -- I pass fore'er away.
Let ev'ry word of mine be golden ray
To brighten thy eclipses; and then wilt pray
That he who passes thee shall meet thee yet
In the "Beyond" where souls may ne'er forget.

A Reverie ["O Songs!" I said:]

"O Songs!" I said:
"Stop sounding in my soul
Just for a little while and let me sleep,
Resting my head on the breast
Of Silence;" but the rhythmic roll
Of a thousand songs swept on and on,
And a far Voice said:
"When thou art dead
Thy restless heart shall rest."

And the songs will never let me sleep.
I plead with them; but o'er the deep
They still will roll
On, and on, and on,
Their music never gone.
Ah! world-tired soul!
Just for a little while,
Just like a poor, tired child
Beneath its Mother's smile --

Only to fall asleep!
Silence! be mother to me!
But -- No! No! No!
The waves will ebb and flow.
I wonder is it best
To never, never rest
Down on the shores of this strange Below?

Only a Dream

Only a Dream!
It floated thro'
The sky of a lonely sleep
As floats a gleam
Athwart the Blue
Of a golden clouded Deep.

Only a Dream!
I calmly slept.
Meseems I called a name;
I woke; and, waking, I think I wept
And called -- and called the same.

Only a Dream!
Graves have no ears;
They give not back the dead;
They will not listen to the saddest tears
That ever may be shed.

Only a Dream!
Graves keep their own;
They have no hearts to hear;
But the loved will come
From their Heaven-Home
To smile on the sleeper's tear.

The Poet

The Poet is the loneliest man that lives;
Ah me! God makes him so --
The sea hath its ebb and flow,
He sings his songs -- but yet he only gives
In the waves of the words of his art

Only the ~foam~ of his heart.

Its sea rolls on forever, evermore,
Beautiful, vast, and deep;
Only his ~shallowest~ thoughts touch the shore
Of Speech; his ~deepest~ sleep.

The foam that crests the wave is pure and white;
The ~foam~ is not the ~wave~;
The wave is not the sea -- ~it rolls~ forever on;
The winding shores will crave
A kiss from ev'ry wavelet on the deep;
~Some come~; some always ~sleep~.

The Child of the Poet

The sunshine of thy Father's fame
Sleeps in the shadows of thy eyes,
And flashes sometimes when his name
Like a lost star seeks its skies.

In the horizons of thy heart
His memory shines for aye,
A light that never shall depart
Nor lose a single ray.

Thou passest thro' the crowds unknown,
So gentle, so sweet, and so shy;
Thy heart throbs fast and sometimes may grow low;
Then alone
Art the star in thy Father's sky.

'Tis fame enough for thee to bear his name --
Thou couldst not ask for more;
Thou art the jewel of thy Father's fame,
He waiteth on the bright and golden shore;
He prayeth in the great Eternity
Beside God's throne for thee.

The Poet Priest

~Not~ as of one whom multitudes ~admire~,
I believe they call him great;

They throng to hear him with a strange desire;
They, silent, come and wait,
And wonder when he opens wide the gate
Of some strange, inner temple, where the fire
Is lit on many altars of many dreams --
They wait to catch the gleams --
And then they say,
In praiseful words: "'Tis beautiful and grand."
And so his way
Is strewn with many flowers, sweet and fair;
 And people say:
"How happy he must be to win and wear
 Praise ev'ry day!"
And all the while he stands far out the crowd,
 Strangely ~alone~.
Is it a Stole he wears? -- or mayhap a shroud --
No matter which, his spirit maketh moan;
And all the while a lonely, lonesome sense
Creeps thro' his days -- all fame's incense
Hath not the fragrance of his altar; and
He seemeth rather to kneel in lowly prayer
Than lift his head aloft amid the Grand:
If all the world would kneel down at his feet
 And give acclaim --
He fain would say: "Oh! No! No! No!
The breath of fame is sweet -- but far more sweet
Is the breath of Him who lives within my heart;
God's breath, which e'en, despite of me, will creep
Along the words of merely human art;
It cometh from some far-off hidden Deep,
Far-off and from so far away --
It filleth night and day."
~Not~ as of one who ever, ever cares
For earthly praises, not as of such think thou of me,
And in the nights and days -- I'll meet with thee
In Prayers -- and thou shalt meet with me.

Wilt Pray for Me?

Wilt pray for me?

They tell me I have Fame;
I plead with thee,
Sometimes just fold my name
In beautiful "Hail Marys"!
And you give me more
Than all the world besides.
It praises Poets for the well-sung lay;
But ah! it hath forgotten how to pray.

It brings to brows of Poets crowns of Pride;
Some win such crowns and wear;
Give me, instead, a simple little Prayer.

The living child of a dead Poet is like a faintly glowing Sanctuary lamp,
which sheds its rays in the beautiful Temple whence the great Presence
hath departed.

-- Abram J. Ryan

End of this Project Gutenberg Etext of Father Ryan's Poems.

-- Abram J. Ryan

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How long! Alas, how long!

How long shall the cry of the wronged, O Freedom! for thee

Ascend all in vain from the valleys of sorrow below?

How long ere the dawn of the day in the ages to be,

When the Celt will forgive, or else tread on the heart of his foe?

How long, O Lord! How long!

Whence came the voice? Around me gray silence fall;

And without in the gloom not a sound is astir 'neath the sky;

And who is the singer? Or hear I a singer at all?

Or, hush! Is't my heart athrill with some deathless old cry?

Ah! blood forgets not in its flowing its forefathers' wrongs --

They are the heart's trust, from which we may ne'er be released;

Blood keeps in its throbs the echoes of all the old songs

And sings them the best when it flows thro' the heart of a priest.

Am I not in my blood as old as the race whence I sprung?

In the cells of my heart feel I not all its ebb and its flow?

And old as our race is, is it not still forever as young,

As the youngest of Celts in whose breast Erin's love is aglow?

The blood of a race that is wronged beats the longest of all,

For long as the wrong lasts, each drop of it quivers with wrath;

And sure as the race lives, no matter what fates may befall,

There's a Voice with a Song that forever is haunting its path.

Aye, this very hand that trembles thro' this very line,

Lay hid, ages gone, in the hand of some forefather Celt,

With a sword in its grasp, if stronger, not truer than mine,

And I feel, with my pen, what the old hero's sworded hand felt --

The heat of the hate that flashed into flames against wrong,

The thrill of the hope that rushed like a storm on the foe;

And the sheen of that sword is hid in the sheath of the song

As sure as I feel thro' my veins the pure Celtic blood flow.

The ties of our blood have been strained o'er thousands of years,

And still are not severed, how mighty soever the strain;

The chalice of time o'erflows with the streams of our tears,

Yet just as the shamrocks, to bloom, need the clouds and their rain,

The Faith of our fathers, our hopes, and the love of our isle

Need the rain of our hearts that falls from our grief-clouded eyes,

To keep them in bloom, while for ages we wait for the smile

Of Freedom, that some day -- ah! some day! shall light Erin's skies.

Our dead are not dead who have gone, long ago, to their rest;

They are living in us whose glorious race will not die --

Their brave buried hearts are still beating on in each breast

Of the child of each Celt in each clime 'neath the infinite sky.

Many days yet to come may be dark as the days that are past,

Many voices may hush while the great years sweep patiently by;

But the voice of our race shall live sounding down to the last,

And our blood is the bard of the song that never shall die.

To Mr. and Mrs. A. M. T.

Just when the gentle hand of spring
Came fringing the trees with bud and leaf,
And when the blades the warm suns bring
Were given glad promise of golden sheaf;
Just when the birds began to sing
Joy hymns after their winter's grief,
I wandered weary to a place;
Tired of toil, I sought for rest,
Where Nature wore her mildest grace --
I went where I was more than guest.
Strange, tall trees rose as if they fain
Would wear as crowns the clouds of skies;
The sad winds swept with low refrain
Through branches breathing softest sighs;
And o'er the field and down the lane
Sweet flowers, the dreams of Paradise,
Bloomed up into this world of pain,
Where all that's fairest soonest dies;
And 'neath the trees a little stream
Went winding slowly round and round,
Just like a poet's mystic dream,
With here a silence, there a sound.
The lowly ground, beneath the sheen

Of March day suns, now dim, now bright,

Now emeralds of golden green

In flashing or in fading light;

And here and there throughout the scene

The timid wild flowers met the sight,

While over all the sun and shade

Swept like a strangely woven veil,

Folding the flowers that else might fade,

Guarding young rosebuds from the gale.

And blossoms of most varied hue

Bedecked the forest everywhere,

While valleys wore the robes of blue,

Bright woven by the violets fair;

And there was gladness all around;

It was a place so fair to see,

And yet so simple -- there I found

How sweet a quiet home may be.

Four children -- and thro' all the day

They flung their laughter o'er the place;

Bright as the flowers in happy May,

The children shed a sweet pure grace

Around this quiet home, and they

To father and to mother brought

The smiles of purest love unsought;

It was a happy, happy spot,

Too dear to be fore'er forgot.

Farewell, sweet place! I came as guest;

From toil, in thee I found relief,
I found in thee a home and rest --
But, ah! the days are far too brief.
Farewell! I go, but with me come
Sweet memories that long will last;
I'll think of thee as of a home
That stands forever in my past.

To Virginia (on Her Birthday)

Your past is past and never to return,
The long bright yesterday of life's first years,
Its days are dead -- cold ashes in an urn.
Some held for you a chalice for your tears,
And other days strewed flowers upon your way.
They all are gone beyond your reach,
And thus they are beyond my speech.
I know them not, so that your first gone times
To me unknown, lie far beyond my rhymes.
But I can bless your soul and aims to-day,
And I can ask your future to be sweet,

And I can pray that you may never meet
With any cross, you are too weak to bear.
Virginia, Virgin name, and may you wear
Its virtues and its beauties, fore'er and fore'er.
I breathe this blessing, and I pray this prayer.

Epilogue

Go, words of mine! and if you live
Only for one brief, little day;
If peace, or joy, or calm you give
To any soul; or if you bring
A something higher to some heart,
I may come back again and sing
Songs free from all the arts of Art.

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Posthumous Poems

In Remembrance

In the eclipses of your soul, and when you cry

"O God! give more of rest and less of night,"

My words may rest you; and mayhap a light

Shall flash from them bright o'er thy spirit's sky;

Then think of me as one who passes by.

A few brief hours -- a golden August day,

We met, we spake -- I pass fore'er away.

Let ev'ry word of mine be golden ray

To brighten thy eclipses; and then wilt pray

That he who passes thee shall meet thee yet

In the "Beyond" where souls may ne'er forget.

A Reverie ["O Songs!" I said:]

"O Songs!" I said:

"Stop sounding in my soul

Just for a little while and let me sleep,

Resting my head on the breast

Of Silence;" but the rhythmic roll

Of a thousand songs swept on and on,

And a far Voice said:

"When thou art dead

Thy restless heart shall rest."

And the songs will never let me sleep.

I plead with them; but o'er the deep

They still will roll

On, and on, and on,

Their music never gone.

Ah! world-tired soul!

Just for a little while,

Just like a poor, tired child

Beneath its Mother's smile --

Only to fall asleep!

Silence! be mother to me!

But -- No! No! No!

The waves will ebb and flow.

I wonder is it best

To never, never rest

Down on the shores of this strange Below?

Only a Dream

Only a Dream!

It floated thro'

The sky of a lonely sleep

As floats a gleam

Athwart the Blue

Of a golden clouded Deep.

Only a Dream!

I calmly slept.

Meseems I called a name;

I woke; and, waking, I think I wept

And called -- and called the same.

Only a Dream!

Graves have no ears;
They give not back the dead;
They will not listen to the saddest tears
That ever may be shed.

Only a Dream!

Graves keep their own;
They have no hearts to hear;
But the loved will come
From their Heaven-Home
To smile on the sleeper's tear.

The Poet

The Poet is the loneliest man that lives;
Ah me! God makes him so --
The sea hath its ebb and flow,
He sings his songs -- but yet he only gives
In the waves of the words of his art
Only the ~foam~ of his heart.

Its sea rolls on forever, evermore,

Beautiful, vast, and deep;

Only his ~shallowest~ thoughts touch the shore

Of Speech; his ~deepest~ sleep.

The foam that crests the wave is pure and white;

The ~foam~ is not the ~wave~;

The wave is not the sea -- ~it rolls~ forever on;

The winding shores will crave

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