

THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE.

BY
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PART I.



EARTH.



I. EARTH GLADDENED.



FAIR EYES.

I.

FAIR eyes of women, many had I seen,
Eyes deep as darkness, bright as noontide ray,
And others bluer than the depths of day,
Bluer than turquoise-jewels of a queen,
But none so sweet, so wonderful, I ween,
With power to quicken, power to pierce and slay,
A twin-born wonder, green and brown and grey,
Three colours blended, mixed in loveliest sheen ;
Gazing in awe I saw myself therein,
My past and future mingled into one,
A picture harmonised from taint of sin,
A poem finished, or a race well run,
The melody I long had gasped to win,
A moon completed, a full-circled sun.

II.

Nor have I ceased to wonder at those eyes,
Nor have they lost their power to make me
tremble,
My sweet love-shivering I cannot dissemble,
Nor can I meet them yet without surprise ;
Most wonderful ! were all the thoughts that rise
Within me to be told with facile fingers,
There'd still remain some loiterer that lingers,
A fancy that eludes, a form that flies ;
Had I the sacred lyres full softly strung
Of all the poets who have touched the ages,
Those lyres would not suffice to get it sung,
To tell the beauty which my soul engages,
To tell the torments which my heart have wrung,
Though I should rustle through ten thousand pages.

III.

How can one ever hope to ever get it sung,
A beauty which for ever is deceiving us,
First wiling forth our worship, and then leaving us
With minds embittered and with heart-strings wrung ;
The vision, when it beamed upon us, stung
Our being into songfulness, achieving
A gladness of possession past believing,
Next into emptiness our souls it flung ;
The wonder still is borne upon the breeze,
Moves on the hill-top, shines upon the sea,
Still ripples in the river and the trees,
Looms forth at twilight from the lonely lea,
The sorrow of it is that no one sees,
And dumb for ever are the souls that see.

Feb. 10, 1870.



QUEEN BEAUTY.

BACKWARD Queen Beauty darts her maiden glances—

With lips that quiver as she glances back

The poet urges on the sweet attack,

With feet that flutter, and with heart that dances ;

The distance all her loveliness enhances—

He sinks exhausted, footsteps growing slack,

She waits him at some turning of the track,

Till once again hope's tremulous flood advances.

So goes it : but from time to time he seizes

Some cadence of the melody she sings,

And even that distant silver echo pleases

His spirit more than any earthly things,

And the odour of her hair on flying breezes

Mad worship and a wilder longing brings.



IN THE END.

How madly I love Beauty! I would grasp her
 With greedy grasp of passion-shaking hands,
 As proudly as a long-lost-lover stands,
So standing, to my bosom I would clasp her !
 What recks the lover of fierce storms or sands
Whirled wildly on the foam-strewn beach of death,
 If in the end he loose fate's adverse bands,
And revel in love's soft, enamoured breath ?
 The sufferer cannot all forsaken feel
If love's sweet image in his soul resides—
 A heart-enshrinèd shrine at which to kneel,
As, year by year, life's river onward glides ;
 Around it strains of music ever peal,
Soft as blown aspens, strong as ocean-tides.



FRUITION.

O, BEAUTY, kiss me, kiss me on the lips ;
As frightened children to their mother cry
I cry to thee, O tell me why should I
Be like the bee that sucks, the fly that sips,
The swallow that her wings in water dips,
Why cannot I possess thee? I would die
But once to hear thee, see thee, feel thee nigh,
But ever from my mouth the goblet slips.

Take pity on me, O my gracious Queen,
Immerse my soul in sweetness,—let the waves
Of rapture writhe around the mouth that craves,
And choke it in fruition,—rend the screen !
Stand forth and let thy majesty be seen !
The majesty that slays the souls it saves.



PSYCHE AND MERCURY.

ONE OF RAPHAEL'S FRESCOES.

A FACE of moulded mystery that combines
All sweet expression in one perfect whole,
All lights and shadows of my lady's soul :
Chiefly the rippling laugh that softly shines
Across the corresponding facial lines.

Gaze with intensity ! Why I could swear
I've seen it move as I was standing there,
And look to me and speak to me by signs.

It is my lady's face made pure for ever
By the undying power of perfect art.
So Dante, with wild passionate endeavour,
Portrayed the endless mistress of his heart,—
As her image gleamed beyond the seas that sever
The immortal from our transitory part.



BRIDAL BLISSES.

A VISION of the wavy, windy tresses,
And sweet, short lips, and laughing eyes of grey ;
A future-enfolded vision of the day
When, free to lavish largess of caresses,
At last to love my soul itself addresses,
And panting steeds of passion, unrestrained,
Bound forth, free, foaming, frolicking, unreined,
Glad now that time's dull hand no more represses.

If fancy's house of cards for ever misses
Some rapture unforeseen, some joy that's new,
If even in thought, sweet love, your gentle kisses,
Like rain of violets, or a rose-leaf dew,
Lie light upon my lips,—what bridal blisses
Shall one day greet us, delicately true !



THE ECSTASY OF THE HAIR.

I'd send a troop of kisses to entangle
And lose themselves in labyrinths of hair,
Thy deep dark night of hair with stars to spangle,
And, each a firefly's tiny lamp, to dangle
Amid the tresses of that forest fair.
A perfume seems to blossom into air ;
The ecstasy that hangs about the tresses,
Their blush, their overflow, their breath, their
bloom ;
A wind that gently lifts them, and caresses,
And wings itself and floats about the room ;
The beauty that the flame of youth expresses,
A tender fire, too tender to consume,
Which seizing all my soul, pervades, possesses,
And minglenth in a subtly sweet perfume.



WEAK AND WEARY.

I WANDER ever onward, weak and weary—

At times there comes a great desire for rest ;
The days are sad, the nights are dark and dreary ;
I long to sink into my love's soft breast,
My home, my abiding place, my snowy nest,—
I long to run and hide my head therein,
My face all scarred and marred with shame and sin,
And yet she loves me ! why, she knoweth best.

My sweet, my life, my all, my golden treasure,
My bower of buds and blossoms of delight,
What joy for us, what pale pursuit of pleasure,
What sound of sighs and kisses through the night !
What echoes of low laughter without measure
From dewy eve till morning clear and bright !



DREAMS.

I.

At last have passed the blanks and dreary spaces,
And chilling hours of the white windy day !
My soul set free descends to happier places,
Where golden-wingèd dreams, a bright array,
Wait for me, glimpses of sweet smiling faces,
And chords of light that round my pillow play ;
O welcome, welcome, gladsome hours of night time,
When fancy loosed exerts her wondrous spell,
A joy to me, a marvel, a delight-time,
A rainbow-coloured realm I love right well,
My region of reality, my bright time—
(For nights are sometimes heaven when days
are hell),
The time in which in dreams comes peeping in
The face of her I'd give the world to win.

II.

Therefore I love the darkness, and right gladly
I lay me down and close my eyes and wait,
Wait, wondering half smilingly, half sadly,
What dreams will issue through the ivory gate ;
'Tis bliss to feel that I perchance may meet her,
And talk to her, and walk with her till morn,
And falling low before her feet entreat her
Till dreams at daylight-advent fly forlorn ;
To think that ere I wake to brave the morrow
Closed eyes may feast in rapture on her face,
And heart forget its pain, and soul its sorrow,
And life its labour, for some little space,
While I, with lips half parted for delight,
Follow my lady through the halls of night.

III.

The thought of such sweet company forsaking
Is odious,—would that I could stay the sun,
Put back the clock, dream on without awaking,
Nor rise to meet a sad new day begun ;
But days will pass,—they do not last for ever,
And then there comes again the sweet warm night,
A gentle lady, sent our souls to sever
From all the wear and labour of the light ;
Thrice welcome art thou ! brood about my pillow,
And cover me with darkness as a shield,
And touch my eyes with sleep—into the billow
Of soft unconsciousness my soul I yield,
And sinking, dying into sleep, I pray
To dream of her who stole my heart away.



THE DISCOVERY OF LOVE.

A YOUTH was walking, in the early hours
Of life, along a garden-alley fair,
When on a sudden, lo ! a rose was there,—
Unseen by him before among the flowers
That wove a many-coloured mist of bowers,
And redolent of sweetness made the air.
He came the next day, but would hardly dare
To hope the night's attendant band of showers
Had spared the rose ; but lo ! the rose was red,
And fragrant, far more fragrant than before,
And fuller petals had unfolded more,
And round about it brighter bloom was shed :
The rose the lover fondly feared was dead,
Was blushing beauty to the very core.



IN THE FUTURE.

I FANCY somewhere waits for every one
A bride, a bridegroom, far in future years :
The way thereunto sodden deep with tears
It may be, or parched fiery dry with sun
Of lonely misery ; but when 'tis done,
With gladness each shall garland memory's biers,
And make away with faces of old fears,
And hail the advent of new life begun.

And such a spot is waiting on the road
Of each of us,—a place where three paths meet,
Two sad ones into this that shall be sweet
Converging : towards which our foreboding showed
That ever since we can remember flowed
The expectant, eager current of our feet.



THOSE FLOWERS.

I HAVE them still, those flowers,—ah ! those flowers,
They blossom in my heart, not withered yet,
Though more than twelve months 'tis since they
were wet

With tender nourishing of northern showers,
Since they were beautiful in northern bowers.

Sweet savours even now of soft regret
Hang round them, and a fragrant misty net
Of memory, having most miraculous powers
To wake the past and bring it near again.

Ah ! that sweet past of mine—that most sad past—
Most sad, most sweet, set thick with thorns of
pain,

With many a cloudy canopy overcast,
Yet bearing roses one or two to last,
A smile or two predestined to remain.



MY LADY.

I SAID, "My love is sweet, and I will seek
 Whereto to liken her ; her eyes are grey
As the grey water mingled in a creek
 With green, and greener than the seas are they,
And browner than the golden moor-fed stream ;
 Her hands are wonderful, her lips are red,
And as the light of morning is the beam
 That like a coronet crowns my lady's head ;
She hath a supple fawn's advancing grace ;
 She hath the flushing of a mountain rose,
Like some sweet lily in a shady place
 My lady, quiet yet most queenly, grows,
Waiting for one to pluck the tender flower
Whose beauty floods with white the garden bower."



A SPRIG OF HEATH.

I HAVE not written sonnets lately, Sweet,
About you, have I? What am I to say,
What melody wring from out my brain to-day
Worthy your soft approving smile to meet?
What flower of novel song before your feet,
Already deep in blossoms, shall I lay—
A rosebud or a white acacia spray,
Or golden globèd lily incomplete?

Nay, sweet, on second thoughts it shall be none
Of these : cast glance of memory back, my Queen,
Be quick to apprehend the thing I mean,
When I recall a sprig of heath undone
By careless fingers underneath a sun
Of afternoon, and *what you asked for* glean.



DANTE AND BEATRICE.

HE circled round his Queen, and nearer grew
Each fainting circle ; at each meeting-place
His hands with some sweet flower she would grace,
Diverse in perfume, different in hue—
A gracious rose, or hyacinth-bud blue,
To summon up the vision of her face,
To burn before him till his steps retrace
The well-worn path his former footing knew.

But at the last she stood, fair, flowerless, white
To meet him ; even herself he shall attain
This time, and, having traversed icy plain
And fiery seas and penetrated night,
Shall stride—worn weary Dante—into light,
And share the sceptre of his lady's reign.



THE ROSIER STATUE.

THIS hath been given, that the thing I sought
I have also found—a flower I might love,
A bird to sing to, soft as any dove,
And supple, and as wayward as a thought ;
Towards me such a worship hath been brought,
And is it not enough? I might have sighed
For such a vision vainly till I died,
Building my silent statue all for nought.

It is not so ; God gives me better things :
The stone is moved and flushes, and I see
No longer a white maid with marble wings,
A cold ideal rounded mournfully,
A shape to which thought's speechless chisel clings,
But living woman's ripe reality.



LOVE AND IMMORTALITY.

THOSE magic dreams of boyhood ! passing sweet
They were—the glimpses swift as when we see,
Ourselves fast-moving, field and tower and tree
Torn by us on the wings of motion fleet ;
The flashes of a future joy to meet,
A heaven all untrodden yet to be.
But present Love transcends foreboded glee
As April suns are pale in August heat,
And youth's romance was but a star beside
The moon of riper passion ; so I think
It shall be when we float upon death's tide
To a new shore's, another ocean's, brink ;
The draught shall deeper, sweeter, be to drink
Than dimly in the distance we descried.



GOLDEN LILIES.

SWEET, teach me gentle secrets that thy soul
Has learnt of God in early girlish years ;
Let me with outpouring of sweet calm tears
My self-sufficient manhood sideways roll,
And humbly touch with lips the crystal bowl
Thou holdest out with timid hands and fears :
No, sweet one, I have made away with sneers ;
The cynic perished when his heart you stole
And wrapped it in your mantle mute and pure.
See I am seated, quiet, at your feet,
Waiting to gather golden lilies, sweet :
Preach to me, and be confidently sure
That what God's tenderness has taught to you
Must be for me delicious, perfect, true.



THE BIRD LOVERS.

I.

HE that hath loved deserveth not to die.

So thought I ; and a sudden vision came
Of birds of splendour, crowned with crimson flame,
Wings touched with brilliance of the azure sky,
Breasts sapphire, throats of emerald, flying high
In the old forest-haunts without a name,
The sweet green palaces that shone the same
Millions of centuries ere a man was nigh.

I saw them frolic through the leafy arches,
And a strange sense came over me that they,
Those two, that loved and laughed amid the larches,
And leaped with glittering feet from spray to spray,
Being in the secret, had my right to stay—
Yet stayed not—Death's indomitable marches.

II.

I could have wept to think that these sweet things
Had loved, not lived for ever ; that the fire
That lit their eyes with the same soft desire
That stirs a poet's pulses as he sings,
And round the raiment of a sonnet clings,
And sweeps the fingers firm across the lyre,—
That such a flame should faint, subside, and tire,
When final sleep the ice-cold opiate brings.

It ought not so to be ; those birds should live
For ever, had I in my power the voice
To bid them blossom onward, and rejoice
In endless spiral ascent—*I* would give
To every soul Love's song-creating kiss,
Eternity in which to utter this !



DEPARTURE AND RETURN.

YOUR presence is not always with me, Sweet,
As a conscious summer sky to dome me round
With rapture, or a soft encircling sound,
Or tenderest embrace of arms that meet,
Or sense of cool refreshment after heat,
Or wreath of flowers about my temples wound :
I seem to lose the treasure I have found,
And in the distance fade departing feet.

But, back you come, with the old glorious hair,
And grace and melody of returning spring,
More cruelly delightful, and more fair ;
As each successive season seems to bring
Grass greener, sweeter roses, birds that sing
The stronger, beauty brighter yet you wear.



II. EARTH DARKENED.

ONCE MORE.

I.

ONCE more ! and can I mix the past and present
Close in a single cup of clasped hands,
Into a single grasp compress the pleasant
Old memories, the voices of lost lands,
Into a single glance hurl all the passion
That should have been, that is to be no more,
Then say good-bye to you in common fashion,
And move to meet the lone waves' hollow roar ?
Once more to see you—then—I must be dreaming—
My Lady of the rosebands and the bays ;
My sweet hair still divinely downward streaming,
My dimple, and *my* soft caressing ways—
It *is* not true ? to-morrow I shall wake,
And off my heart the accursed nightmare shake !

II.

Once more to bring to mind the old green places,
And songs and dreams and tenderness recall,
As in one flash to see my sonnets' faces
In *your* face, then a long farewell to all ;
Sweet eyes...sweet lips...no time for numeration
Have I, I leave a dainty list behind,—
One gaze, one second in the singer's station
With vision clear, the next a poet blind ;
Once more to feel the summer thrill flow through
me,
Then winter—winter—winter—and the dark,
The last time at the sunrise to renew me,
To the old sweet melody once more to hark,
Once more—once more—then never, love, again,
But one long arctic solitude of pain.



THE ROSE.

A POET loved a rose—and watched it grow,
And every day a sweeter blush was there,
And pouting petals fuller and more fair ;
Each eventide “to-morrow it will blow,”
The poet said—“to-morrow I shall know
The perfect splendour of this flower rare ;”
Sometimes its beauty more than he could bear,
Brought tears for joy’s excess akin to woe.

And so he watched it, and one night he said,
“I see my rose upon the verge of bloom,
To-morrow royal robes she shall assume,
Uplift to heaven a pink most perfect head ;”
But when he came next day the rose was dead,
And on that spot they placed—a poet’s tomb !



A WEDDING-GIFT.

WHAT can I give you, lady? pearls will soon

Be shining, as I doubt not, in your hand—

What silver memory from a former land,

What echo of a talk beneath the moon,

What vision, in a sonnet for a boon

Set daintily, shall I be bold to place

Among the many presents proud to grace

Your boudoir,—what choice jewel of a tune?

I cannot give a part,—I give you *all*,

My songs, my poems, all of them, complete ;

You are my songs, and they are nothing, sweet,

But one long sounding of a throstle's call

Whose hope was high that next his own might fall

The music of another throstle's feet !



A NEW LOVE.

I.

God gives a new love—but is that the old?
Thy ways are all imperfect now we see,
Who art thou then that we should worship thee,
Believe the fable of thy glory told!
Strongly we do deny thee,—yea, we are bold
To look thee in the face and not to flee:
We are rebellious creatures,—even we
With hanging heads and lips unkissed and cold.

“Come, let me do it,” sayst thou, “what I can—
Bind up the wound, if I must leave the scar?”
I tell thee, God, thou knowst not us that are
Thine offspring, thou art ignorant of a man,
And all the suns thou holdest in thy span
Shall not console him for that sweet set star.

II.

God gives a new love—but is that the same?

A lily, not the splendour of a rose,—

Some better, princelier flower, perhaps, that blows
With circled opening scent of crimson flame ;
He thinks that he with patient care will tame

The old desire,—that he when no one knows

Will, coming in the night-time, interpose

Another plant, and turn aside our aim.

But is it so? men who have loved I pray

You speak your minds out, let your voices rise

In one wild protestation to the skies,—

Call bleeding hearts to witness when you say

That no new God-sent loves of latter day

Have kissed to peace the God-caused former
sighs.



THE BITTERNESS OF LIFE.

THIS is the bitterness of life, to know

That Love lies not in front but far behind :

That not for violent searching shall one find

A sweet-faced rose of hope beneath time's snow,

Nor any flower of new joy below

The furrows swept by the autumnal wind,

Nor any corn-stalk when the maidens bind

The golden ears in a long laughing row.

This is the bitterness of life, to feel

The slow-limbed noisome minutes crawl away,

But not to mark by any happy peal

Of silver bells the passing of a day,

Tarrying till one more consciousness doth steal

Into death's pine-wood, damp, obscure, and grey.

Christmas Eve, 1871.



THE VANISHING OF LOVE.

LOVE came—as a sweet maiden passing fair,
And touched my eyes and opened them from
sleep ;

And when I could but worship her and weep,
She wiped my violent crying with her hair,
And bathed me as in some soft unknown air
Wherein the Arabian roses watch and keep
Faces of maidens dim and pure and deep,
Covering them through the solemn nights with care.

But in the morning, lo ! my love was gone,—
And in her place a withered figure stood
With withered and grey miserable hood
Before me, and a body bent and wan ;
And this was Death,—but in the distance shone
Love's wings superbly golden-plumed and good.

Christmas Eve, 1871.



MY LADY'S VANISHING.

THE bells are ringing softly out of doors,
And many feet will fill the churches crowned
With the red gracious berries that abound
On arches, in the windows, on the floors,
And over the priest's pulpit,—whence he pours
His yearly flood of ministerial sound :
I wait at home, and white wings wave around
My solitude, like white impulsive oars
Shining through the thin mists that clothe the
morn ;—
If unto wide humanity this day
A golden-bodied wondrous child is born
Not fashioned, as are others, of dim clay,
From my sad narrower self a love is torn,
And a sweet woman vanishes away.

Christmas Day, 1871.



LOVE PASSES. . .

I WISH that I was dead ; the flowers go,
Love passes, and the bloom of gracious things
That shone in summer and did overflow
Departs, at rustle of sad winter's wings.
I saw a violet, purple in a shady
Moist valley—but behold ! the flower is gone ;
I kissed the white rose-breast of a white lady—
She vanishes ! my passion lingers on :
Her mouth was sweet, and over me her beauty
Like some soft crystal stream did speed and run,
But now the waves are frozen, and a booty
To winter, and the absence of the sun
Makes all things desolate that should be fair,
Spreading a murky sadness through the air.



“THE OLD ORDER CHANGES.”

“THE old order changes,” and the new begins,
And passion is not gold as heretofore,
And roses are not crowns on heads of sins,
Nor silver feet do glimmer on the shore,
Nor Beauty doth delude us as of yore—
But the autumnal maple shines with red
Effulgence, and the yellow sycamore,
And spring’s green bounteous laughing days are
dead,
And the dusty produce of sad winds is shed
Over us,—and the pools are very still
Where the young summer swans white gambols led,
And the starwort gleams with frost upon the rill,
And all loves fade,—life’s darkening alleys lose
The immeasurable scent of every rose.



LAST YEAR.

RECALLING now my passion of last year

I wonder at the height of that strong wave
That washed me to a beach beyond the grave,
Where an immortal woman bent to hear
My pleading—all the sorrow, all the fear,
And the jewelled stones that shone and seemed
to pave

That lonely shore—the bosom that she gave,
And her hands, and pity of voice, and glances clear.

I seem like one whose vessel is receding

From the affectionate cliffs of a white shore—
Who watches, from his heart's hills red and bleeding,
The country that his love shall find no more,
Though with swift inextinguishable pleading
To God's throne, like an eagle, it may soar.



THE MOONLIT ISLAND.

BEHIND me blooms a mystical, far place,
Filled with faint dreams and odours of delight ;
As when a mariner beneath the night
Leaves the soft isle that for a little space
Covered his wandering shrouds with warmth and
grace,
And sweet, strange perfumes wafted from the shore
Follow—my island shall return no more,
Nor scents of blossoms soothe a sleepless face.
But as in far Pacific hazy seas,
Lingers that moonlit island of my soul,
Washed over by a honey-perfumed breeze,
And there the bright birds flit from knoll to knoll,
And dappled fawns are tame among the trees,
And the smooth interminable breakers roll.



A PASSING GLIMPSE.

I CAUGHT a passing glimpse above my head
Of summer's coronet, pale and tender blue,—
And memory ran my spirit thro' and thro',
Recalling with his piercing lance-point red
Summers and flowery seasons mute and dead :
Long since despatched and hidden from mortal
view,—
Recalling the sweet sense of evening dew,
And sweeter sense of love's low whispers said.
It all has vanished ! and I add my wailing
To myriads seated by the hollow tomb,
Leaning cold foreheads on its dismal railing :
I mourn the utter overthrow of bloom,
And spirit after tortured spirit sailing
Towards death's black impenetrable gloom.



NEVER AGAIN.

Is there no resurrección from the dead ?

Ah, what does this one simple sentence mean ?

Never again to watch the grass wax green
In spring-time, and the early rose wax red.
Never again to mark the waving head

Of some fair tuft of cream-white meadow-sweet—

Never again the gold crowns of the wheat,
Nor yellow leaves by autumn breezes shed !

This is the meaning of the simple word—

Ne'er, after some poor thirty years or so,
To listen to the song of any bird,

Or hear the storm-struck sea's unquiet flow—
Never again to mark a rose's grace,
Nor the sweet smiling of a woman's face.



THE DEAD FLOWERS.

THINK of the gracious blossoms that are dead !

Think not of men and women for a time,

But dream of grand buds in some torrid clime—

Roses with sweet lips marvellously red,

And many a fair magnolia's luscious head,

And many a lily, and many a violet :—

Think of the pale world-blossoms with regret,

Weep for the meadow-sweet whose bloom is fled.

Weep for the blossoms that have perished since

The first red rose shed petals on the grass

Of this our planet : weep for the bright mass

Of silver petals—weep not for a prince

Or king :—for once forget humanity,

And weep that not one flower death's grasp can
flee.



HOPELESS.

My high hope passes—what is left me now ?

Yea, what is all the guerdon of my song ?

Why have I laboured, resolute and strong,
Building, with blood-sweat from my weary brow,
This Temple time doth spurn and disallow ?

What recompense is there for suffering long ?

What justice in the world—what wrath for wrong,
What corn to ingather for the hands that plough ?

The old, old question—yea, the sad old story—

Just one more spirit passing towards the tomb,
Crowned, yet uncrowned,—brown-haired, yet aged
and hoary,—

With every flower of passion in full bloom,
Filled with the poet's sense of life's wild glory,
Yet burthened, likewise, with the poet's doom.



THE POET'S DOOM.

THIS is the poet's doom—to love all joys,
To mark them fading, and to mourn them dead.
To see the rose at daybreak blushing red—
At night to watch the wind with wanton noise
Scattering the petals from their perfect poise,—
Yea, to behold that blossom's beauty fled ;
To marvel at some woman's curve of head,
Till death both body and carven brow destroys.

This is the poet's doom—far more than others
To feel the life, and so the death far more :
To sing for the sweet sake of tuneless brothers
The beauty of each shell upon the shore :
To see too deep ; to love a rose too much,—
And so to mark it fading at his touch !



THE VICTORY OF DEATH.

I.

I SAW i' the morn a woman passing fair.

Her face was like a rose, her breast was white ;

Her gracious lips were made for man's delight ;

And speechless pleasure nestled in her hair.

She seemed enrobed in fervent summer air,—

Her glance was as a star, but far more bright ;

The flowers were jealous at the lovely sight,

Of her triumphant sisterhood aware.

I marked i' the eve a body stretched upon

A common bier : the pale long limbs were white—

But not with health's unutterable light—

As in that fragrant previous morn they shone ;

Death was the victor : he with iron might

Had struck, and all the sweet, sweet bloom was gone.

II.

And then I wept to think that not one flower
Can live—not one bud can survive the grave.
That over all alike the grasses wave,
In their green, glittering, malignant power.
Oh roses that once bloomed on Helen's bower,
Oh petals that sprang near the hollow cave
Where they laid Christ, were ye not fit to save?
Could God not stay Death's hot scythe for one
hour?

Oh Death, the conqueror, oh thou lord of hosts,
What armies of sad pallid fluctuant ghosts
Attest the violent vigour of thy reign!
Armies of roses! legions of dead flowers
Torn recklessly from immemorial bowers!
Rivers of slaughter! bloodiest seas of slain!



YET SWEETER AND SWEETER.

YET sweeter and yet sweeter as we pass
Towards bitter death that slays all songs and
flowers,

Becomes the scent that hovers o'er the bowers
Of youth ; yet lovelier the bright green grass ;
Yet tenderer fair passion's burning hours ;
Yet softer all the varied songs of love ;
Yet bluer the clear spotless heavens above ;
And yet more manifold life's glorious powers.

Now for the first time human life is fair
In that there is no life beyond the grave :
Now for the first time shines the morning air
With true delight,—now first the branches wave
In genuine glee,—now first the roses wear
In perfect calm those tints no power can save.



BUT MORE SOLEMN.

BUT far more solemn is our passing life !

The flowers are solemn now, as well as sweet :

Our loves no longer move with careless feet
Across youth's meadows, or through stormier strife

Of later days :—the wings of Time are fleet,
And soon this gladness will be ours no more,—
So is our pleasure sweeter than of yore,

But also grave and thoughtful, as is meet.

The roses now, so simple and sweet and red

Before, bring solemn messages that show
That, as one day they gleam with crimson head

Then fade and seek the pallid shade and go,
So are we soon to join the eternal dead :

Therefore let brief life be one brief red glow !



ONE FOND TUNE.

It is worth while, tho' death be at the door
 To slay all joys with his remorseless hand—
 Tho' horror stalks with red feet thro' the land,
And dreams of God can comfort us no more—
Tho' we are but as foam upon the shore,
 Or as the shifting grains of heedless sand,
 And tho' no risen Jesus e'er did stand
In re-awakened Galilee of yore :—

It is worth while, tho' all these things be so,
 Once to have lived, if but for one fair hour—
 Once to have kissed the fragrant living flower
Of woman's lips—one sunset in full glow
 To have beheld—to have lingered in Love's
 bower
Once—one fond tune to chant before we go.



SEVERED HEARTS. !

THE heart of man is like a flower blown !
Across a windy desolate mountain-side,
Or a frond of seaweed shaken in the tide,
Or the splendour of a temporary throne,
Or the passing sweetness of a dream-born tone,
Or the passing beauty of a dream-born bride,
Or a daisy just now crimson in its pride,
To-morrow withered and dismayed and mown.

The heart of woman is a passing scent,
Like a furze-blossom gold upon a breeze
That dallies with it to its heart's content
Yet bears it towards the salt destructive seas ;
So are our souls from one another rent,
And the wasted bloom and wasted wings of these.



THE VIEWLESS SPLENDOUR.

MEN pass through life and never, never, see
The souls of the companions by their side :
It is not much to be an actual bride ;
Much is it to have thought's community.
Husbands and wives may kiss, yet never be
The closer and the happier for the kiss—
One may be dreaming of some distant bliss—
The other of some sweet past ecstasy.

So it goes on : they draw not any nearer ;
They pass, it seems, contentedly through life ;
But yet their mutual vision grows no clearer :
The man is gifted with a living wife,
But he will ne'er approach her—ne'er unroll
The viewless splendour of the unseen soul.

PART II.



HEAVEN.



THE MORNING AND THE EVENING STAR.

Thou art the morning, I the evening star,
I am the sun, thou art the dainty moon ;
When thou art absent I am risen soon,
When thou dost fade the morning is not far
And when the sun sets sadly, lo ! thy car
Is shortly present for a silver boon
To lovers,—so we keep the world in tune,
And all the tides and cloudlands that there are.

The sweet significance is deeper yet,
My moon, thy light is gathered from the sun,
And with his kisses, lo ! thy lips are wet ;
And shining soft attire he hath spun
For thee, and having crossed the dark and met,
The evening and the morning star are one.



NOT TOO LONG.

O DANTE, breathe upon us, that the race

Be perfect and eternal in pure love !

And, Beatrice, thy golden wings above

Our womanhood be calm and quick to place ;

Ah ! let thy lips and the unforgotten face

Lean over us and bring us into peace.

Have we not loved, and is there no release ?

And didst thou leave thy Dante without grace,

To linger, and to struggle, and to sigh ?

O Dante, make us worthy, make us strong ;

And, Beatrice, be pitiful, be nigh ;

And, Dante, burn our passion into song,

And grant that it be sweet, but not too long,

Lest, inadvertent, we let death go by.



FOR YOUR SAKE.

For your sake, sweet, I long to stretch my hands
 Into the future, filled with flowers of thought,
 To scatter these wild grasses I have brought,
In summers of far-distant times and lands ;
To send faint odours of hay-woven bands
 In advance of me my eagerness has sought,
 If haply I might mould or fashion aught
That shall abide on Time's untrodden sands.

For your sake I would have the people say,
 “ Here was a poet, and he loved, and she
Was beautiful and tender as the day——”
For your sake I would have my memory stay,
 That the hair I wrote soft words about may be
Black-brown for ever, when my own is grey.



LOVE'S UNITY.

THERE cannot be two true loves, for the soul
Is smitten by the unity of God
And blooms but once, whether on heaven's sod
Or where the waves of earth's salt craving roll.
But once in an existence shall the whole
Of any heart be sweet between the hands
Of Love,—but once, the vision of fair lands
And far-off Canaanitish meadows stole
Across the enraptured gaze of Moses ; he
Was only once permitted to draw near
To God upon the mountain-top and see,
As the blue spaces, distant and austere,
Are sundered by the branches of a tree,
God's image outlined beautifully clear.



UTTER GLADNESS.

Now I know utter gladness passing song,
 Seeing that the love I fancied was away
 Is as the sun of heaven's endless day,
Interminably luminous and strong,
And tender and immovable and long,
 Patient of tears and languor and delay,
 Able to suffer underneath the grey
Autumnal skies till many a gold-clad throng
 Of happy hours shines in the advancing spring ;
Now I know utter gladness, in that I
 Have trampled death and time and everything,
And seen, resplendent in the further sky,
 The form to whose departing skirts I cling
Brought once for all irrevocably nigh.



THE RESURRECTION OF THOUGHT.

IN some clear mood of mind, when thought is free,
I see the past transfigured into light,
And every flower is present and as bright
As when my lady's breath was sweet with me,
And hands were sweet, and mingled words,—when
we

Bathed in the silver fountains of the night,
And watched the maiden moon's unfolded might
Stream over the illimitable sea.

And then I know that not a thought is dead,
But every one shall rise with rosy wings
And white unfettered magnitude of head,
Even as an eagle's first appearing springs
From some wild cliff-top, and the air is shed
Over his crest in sweet divided rings.



GIFTS OF THE BREEZE.

SWEET, now the wind of thought pervades my brain,
And time unlocks with soft approach of hand
The golden flood-gates of the former land,
And streams of mingled recollections rain
Throughout me—bringing savours of wild pain,
As their brown breasts of tumid waves expand ;
But many a gift besides of silver sand,
And perfect fossil fancies they retain,

And then I know that I shall not forget,
Though time with his imperishable palm
Press seething reminiscence into calm,
The face of any single flower we met—
Nor any tear wherewith your lids were wet,
When even folded round us wings of balm.



MORTAL.

ONCE clear and white the mortal woman came
And softly filled the silent yearning room
With a superb exuberance of bloom,
A sweet and silvery excess of flame,
So that I wept for mingled love and shame
And terror,—and her feet she seemed to pour
As some strange stream of rosebuds on the floor,
And fragrant as white roses were the same.

She filled the room, and, as for me, I wept
And closed my eyes and opened them again
To find her still before me,—then I slept :
But through my sleep I felt upon my brain
Her hands drip gently like a rose-leaf rain,
Conscious of the unending watch she kept.



IMMORTAL

Now clear and white the immortal woman shines,
Pervading with sweet roses of her hands,
And violets of her bosom, and dark strands
Of endless overflowing hair she twines,
Not any room, but the blue dim-seen lines
Of hills, and misty spaces of the air,
And rivers, and brown forests, and the fair
And murmuring interstices of pines,
And larches, and green hollows of the beech :
As a sweet single star she shone before,
But now she fills the multitudinous shore
Plain in the wet reflected orb of each,
And I can winnow silver grains of speech
From ocean's indistinguishable roar.



THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

ONCE Love was plain before me, for at night,
Sleeping, my eyes were sundered, and, awake,
Like some sweet moon reflected in a lake,
Surrounded with a silver stream of light,
I saw my lady's presence flame in sight,
And, after, came a sense of roses cast
In soft encompassing luxuriance fast
Over my silent body, and a bright
And strange unveiling of the spirit's form
And immortality made visible,
And death and sin and feebleness and hell,
Being black, shone white beneath the fragrant
storm
Of snows that clothed her body sweet and warm,
And every tower of separation fell.



LOVE'S WHITE KISS.

SLEEPING, mine eyes were sundered, and the fair
And endless wealth of body came in view,
Clothed endlessly with fragrance of soft dew,
And endless odour as of morning air,
And round about her streamed the endless hair,
The same, yet strangely, beautifully new—
And roses and sweet lilies not a few
The sweetness of her bosom strove to share.

Then, once for all, my spirit understood
The meaning and eternity of this
Its solemn passion, and its naked bliss
Shone without cape or covering or hood ;—
The sense that neither death nor sorrow could
Impede love's white inevitable kiss.



WHEN AND WHERE.

WHEN shall we meet, my lost delight, and where ?

What regions have the flowers of thy feet
Made odorous, or what hazy heights of air
Have trembled o'er thine hands in kisses sweet ?
What heaven shines with gold increase of light,
What clouds are touched to music at thy tone,
What myrmidons angelic, mailed in might,
Are humble worshippers of thee, mine own ?
And dost thou sail through balmy sunset seas,
Clothed with the vapours that incarnadine
The tender outpoured ringlets of the breeze ?
Ah ! thou art not irrevocably mine
Till the inevitable hand of death
Blends the forlorn divisions of our breath.



CLEANSING.

I DREAMED a sudden dream, and was aware
Of my lost goddess bending over me,
And of some magic echo of the sea,
And strange outpouring of remembered hair,
And round me flowed, as an electric air
Of crystal and surpassing purity,
A woman's breath, and clothed from head to knee
My body in a raiment soft and fair.

And every sin she lightly blew away,
But as an easy flake of thistledown
That floats along the summer, winged and grey,
And over me she placed a quiet crown
Of hands, and brought my cheek beside the brown
Same tresses, and she taught me how to pray.



HOPE.

YES, she *did* hear me, and her eyes were wet ;
And for that sacred jewel of a tear
I bless with solemn hands my lady here,
That pearl of unmistakable regret,
And many a tender searching look I met,
And smiles I hold beyond expression dear ;
Bloomed then the last rose of my mortal year,
Last, saddest, unresumable, and yet
I would not change the imperishable bloom
Of this my lady's everlasting rose,
That glitters and is sweet within my tomb,
For any fresh young laughing flower, God knows !
For, surely, to each fragrant petal clings
Hope incorruptible of happier things.



BENEATH THE OAK.

I CLOSED my eyes in winter ; when I woke,
Or seemed to wake, the trees were new and green,
And many a flower was there, and glossy sheen
Of insects, each resplendent in his cloak
Of gorgeous summer, and the bird-choirs spoke,
And I heard a woman's voice that seemed to say—
—'Twill ring within me to my dying day—
“Hasten, I wait for thee beneath the oak,
I was expecting thee ;” and never more
Shall any other voice be strange and sweet
As that was, though I search from shore to shore,
From the blue Arctic icebergs to the heat
Of the extreme South, and open every door,
And try the hollows of each green retreat.



THE SEA-PALACE.

IN the fair days of youth I did behold
One standing on the sea-shore, and her face
Smote me with sudden rapture ; then that place
O'er which the sea-wind travelled gaunt and cold
Became as a sweet palace wrought of gold
And chiselled into cunning lines of grace,
And in its heart a fountain I could trace,
And many a pillar of no mortal mould.

And, still, when I am wandering by the sea
The winds do beckon with a sudden tune,
Bringing that palace back again to me,
And the early crescent of love's rising moon ;
Surely, I whisper, I shall meet her soon,
And hands shall join in one eternally.



A DREAM OF SUNSET.

I DREAMED I stood beneath a golden sunset
With idle breakers leaping on the sand
In silver irresistible slow onset,
And I watched the waving of my lady's hand,
And her sweet hair loosened in so many a band
Fell over shoulders white as mountain snows,
Or the silver ripples sliding in to land ;
Her mouth was as the glory of a rose
The day before its full refulgence blows,
And all her figure seemed like some fair lily
Rising and falling in a soft repose
At even, swept by winds from regions hilly,
And eyes were as the green-gold lamps that then
Emerge, each gliding from a mossy den.



THE LOST GLORY.

BEYOND the grave that passionate lost glory
Shall surely, with white splendour, be revealed
We left, a lily dead in love's fair field,
And the threads of love's sweet intercepted story
Shall be renewed,—although man's head be hoary
Before the eternal lagging meadows yield
And Perseus leap with perfect-polished shield
From life's immeasurable promontory.

Then, as Athene's lofty help uplifted
The daring venture of that hero's head,
The brave man's spirit shall be largely gifted
With power whereby his ascent shall be sped—
This mortal cloak of sorrow shall be shifted,
And the heavenly satisfaction worn instead.



ROSE-WREATHED.

“WHAT shall I give him?” so a maiden said—

“With brave pure labour he sang songs of me ;

What shall my final tear-touched token be,

Now that he lies pale, voiceless, heedless, dead ?

Shall it be some ripe rose of loveliest red,

Or snowdrop drooping petals tenderly,

Or blue-grey valiant thistle from the sea

Beside whose waves our wandering steps were led ?”

So doubted she ; but then there came a voice,

An audible direction from the air,

Saying, “Thy first thought was the seemlier choice ;

No snow-white name I gave to him to bear,

In no calm crown of lilies to rejoice,

But my rose-wreathed intensity to share.”



FROM A WINDOW.

I GAZE upon the night : ah ! thou art breathing
The same sweet odours, the same gracious air,
In thy pure locks the same night-winds are wreathing
Scents delicate and flowery petals rare ;
The same pure, holy stars do rest above us,
The same moon glitters at the window-pane,
The soul o' the tender self-same God doth love us,
We are refreshed alike by summer rain ;
Sleep sends upon us both her healing beauty,
The eternal wings of sacred darkness brood
Above us both—we dream alike of duty,
We grasp hands in the same nocturnal wood ;
The sweet night brings us close ; the days divide
A poet from his visionary bride.



SWEET TWILIGHT.

WHEN the sweet twilight comes, my soul doth enter
A sweet place, hardly seen by shifting light,
Whereof one glorious, white form is the centre,
As the clear moon is central orb of night.
I cease to live alone ; sad facts forsake me ;
I find a queenly, gracious counterpart,
To her with reverent pleasure I betake me,
Bringing the songful treasures of my heart.
I am no more alone, my lady brings me
Another self, a higher, holier power,
The tender, reappearing twilight flings me
A wave-washed shell towards the fragrant bower,
Wherein things seem divinely, grandly new,
Robed in fair summer's unexpected hue.



THINE HANDS.

THINE hands do smite me like the perfect chords

Of music, every finger brings a tune ;

They draw me like the drawing of the moon,

They thrill my heart like beautiful sharp swords,

Or as God's sweet, unerring touch rewards

His heroes ; they pervade me like a stream

Of honeyed influence, or as a dream

The milk-white bosom of the night affords.

Oh, that my heaven may be the ceaseless rain

Of swords and soft flowers clustered in thy hands,

Or as the ceaseless music that expands

From these, the founts of music, when they strain

Above me, touching me ; and do retain

The sweetness of the women of all lands.



ALONE WITH THEE.

I AM alone with thee, alone in thought.

It is as if on some Pacific Island,

Under the shadow of its central highland,

We sate, our love to consummation brought ;

It is as if the clamorous world were nought

But a far-distant murmur ; as if we

Sate by the margin of a purple sea,

With feet by babbling wavelets softly caught.

It is as if upon some furthest star

We stood, at last triumphantly alone,

Holding that orb for our sufficient car

Of love, our radiant solitary throne ;

In that sweet shrine no human beings are,

All sounds are variations of thy tone.



MY BURIAL-PLACE.

I CHOOSE that I be buried by the sea !

I choose that I be buried in the North,

Where once life's sacred love-flower blossomed
forth

Towards the mad winds that shook deliciously
Its curved, smooth petals—this, my final plea,

I charge you, carry out with solemn hands,

Yea, bear me towards those surge-swept windy
lands

That I may know the passion of the free !

Around those northern headlands wrapped in foam,

And silent with pent-up desire, and kissed

To beauty by the delicate pale mist

That round them as a mantle soft doth roam,

My soul shall pleasure—finding 'mid those airs

The utter endless life high God prepares.



NO SEPARATION.

THERE is not any separation, truly,
For souls whose inmost spotless powers are *one* ;
Though moon be swept against revolving sun,
And wasted planets mixed in wars unruly,
Yet shall these fair souls meet each other duly
When God's strong course of separate training's
done ;
Love shall be sweeter than when 'twas begun,
And passion shall arise, superbly, newly.

In the vast ultimate of human things
Resides a recompense for every soul,
Like a sweet angel watching with white wings
The tides of starry clusters as they roll
Forth from the palm of God—and bright death
brings
This sweet gift nigh ; yea, bright death makes us
whole.



THE ELEMENTAL KISS.

I GIVE to thee the blessing of all flowers,—
The sweetness lingering on the summer breeze,
The music of all thunders and all seas,
The passionate brightness of all red-rose bowers,
The silver magic of love's moonlit hours,
The soft sense of the greenness of the leas,
And tender utterance of the buds of trees,
And tender melody of the spring-tide showers.

The blessing of the universe is thine,
This I thy poet for a guerdon give ;
Around thy perfect brows all flowers I twine ;
In these and in my songs thy soul shall live :
When all loves else are passing to decay,
Then, sweet, the dawning of our bridal day !



MY LADY'S SOUL.

My lady's soul is given to me to keep :

It shall be mine with perfect triumph pure—

With dawning revelation sweet and sure—

With ecstasy unutterable and deep.

Once all its glory flamed on me thro' sleep—

But next in waking wonderment her soul

Shall, flooding me with soft possession, roll

Throughout me : as one spirit our spirits shall weep.

This perfect passionate consummation waits,

More glorious for all the sorrow past,

Close hidden behind our sufferings' silent gates :

My lady's look shall seek mine at the last—

Then shall I reach the passionate soul within—

Untouched—unstained :—*left white for me to win.*



THE MAIDEN BLOSSOM.

For all her soul is maidenly and pure :
It has not flowered—it is divine as yet
With God's first blessing, with sweet dewdrops
wet ;
The blossom waits for true love to secure.
All sorrow passes from me, all regret,
For now I know the paths of God are sure.
And that the glances soft that once I met
Are mine for ever,—so I but endure.
All hardness therefore, in this perfect faith
That so illumines and transfigures death,
I can make light of, suffering to the end :
Now that I know that holy God is true,
Life's clouds have parted, and the glad bright blue
Shows God's face as the lost face of a friend.



MY PLUMES OF SONG.

MINE are the plumes of sound that shall uplift

 This viewless spirit of hers towards the sky.

Yea, mine shall be the spirit itself : my gift.

 Again and yet again her soul shall try

 In its own sweet self-confidence to fly—

Again and yet again her soul shall fail—

She is not garbed in the immortal mail,—

 Nor can she, through fierce effort, soar on high.

Then shall she come to me with humble face,

Seeking the assistance of the singer's grace,

 And he shall lift her softly through the air :

Oh when thou need'st me, and the moment comes

In which thy flower of aspiration blooms,

 Nor look, nor call : unsought, *I shall be there.*



"I AM VERY FOND OF YOU."

WORDS sweet, supremely perfect, and unending—
Words that have reached my inmost spirit, and
made
That spirit white and tender and deep—soft
blending
Passion's divine betrayal with the shade
Of perfect purity as a veil descending
To hide some fierce-flushed rose-bud in a glade :
Words that must keep my soul from e'er offending ;
Words that must bring my spirit eternal aid,
For ever holiness and manhood lending ;
Words after which no death can make me afraid,—
Oh peaceful girlish words—a calm extending
That shall outlive the cold years' bitter raid,
Words soft, pure, exquisite,—divinely strong,—
I give the world your beauty ;—in this song.



THE CROWN.

IN a great vision I beheld the Lord.

I saw his robes, his sceptre, and his rings,
And all his heavenly store of wondrous things—
His garments and his jewels and his sword.

But what is this that some bright seraph brings,
This wonder girded by a golden cord?

Surely it is the crown the King of kings
Alone doth wear,—chief marvel in his hoard.

Eager I looked,—my soul was in a glow,

For surely, thought I, this high God who scorns
To mingle with the earth, more white than snow,
More pure than woman, some strange wreath
adorns ;—

I yearned and looked—and looked again—for lo !
The crown was not of roses, but of thorns.



CHIEFEST.

If any man would win a crown to last
First let him learn to suffer and endure :
First let his inmost spirit of love be pure—
Let every sin and weakness be downcast.
When this world's fiery seas are safely past
There shall be pleasure and there shall be praise,
And glory perhaps, and garlands of green bays,
And recompense ; but such flowers spring not fast.
Who would be first, must fight the fight most hard ;
In labours and in sorrows must abound ;
Smooth things and easy must his soul discard ;
In battle's red front must his sword-stroke
sound :—
Who would be chiefest in the world's regard,
With the world's supreme sorrow must be crowned.



THE HIGHEST CROWN.

THE highest anguish wears the highest crown—

The deepest passion brings the best reward.

Woman surrenders to the strongest sword,
And lays before that steel her sweet heart down.
Yea, when the leaves of this life wax quite brown,

Or pale and sodden, true love 'gins to bloom—

True love's pure petals sweetliest o'er the tomb
Wave : then begins love's golden glad renown.

When the grave closes all love's blossoms bright
Tenderly tremble,—stretching towards the light

The pure smooth petals, yea, the firm long leaves :
When life is stripped off like a raiment rent
Love glows and blows, eternally content,
And passion's hand ingathers lustrous sheaves.



AN ENDLESS UNION.

WHAT are the unions of the present?—poor
And pallid, mere forlorn sick shades of love.
When Beatrice kissed Dante from above
Then first their joy shone, glorious to endure.
The love that death can shorten or obscure
Is not love—love alone which hath no ending,
For ever towards God's throne on sweet wings
tending,
Is love that touching, touches to secure.
The lips of love may touch, the breasts may meet,
And yet there shall be separation after ;
God's scorn and all heaven's high tempestuous
laughter
May round about such ghosts of lovers beat—
When first a union is for endless time,
Then first it passionate is,—then first sublime.



SYMPATHY.

BUT sympathy can draw, tho' distance parts
True lovers—if a man can *see*, he holds
The woman, and indisputably folds
Her silent spirit to his heart of hearts.
Around her the white plumes of love he darts—
Into his image all her shape he moulds—
Though seas between them lie and barren
wolds,
And sunstruck deserts, at one sigh he starts.

One gentle sigh can bring his spirit near,
One look for help, one utterance of a fear,
For he, he only of all men, understands :
So tho' as far divided as the poles
In earthly distance, the sweet close-knit souls
Lock equal indivisible white hands.



THE MEADOW-SWEET OF HEAVEN.

I WROTE of fragrant meadow-sweet of earth
And mourned to think that last year's bloom
 had perished :
So vanish all long love-thoughts that we've
 cherished,
I deemed—yea, passion crumbles at its birth.
 I wandered through the woods,—the flowers
 were there,
So soft, so tender—but they all belonged
To that new season,—all the flowers that thronged
 The woods of old had passed outside God's care.
So thought I—and the thought was sad and cold ;
 For I had loved those blossoms, and had striven,
Mixing with fern their creamy plumes of old,
In my love's brown locks joyous wreaths to fold :—
 The thought was sad : it passed ; instead was
 given
 A bright glimpse of the meadow-sweet of heaven.



THE SUDDEN SWEETNESS.

How soon thou know'st not—yet it *may* be soon.

This high reward of holy expectation

God sends : it outweighs years of tribulation,—

It is a glorious and sufficient boon.

A *sudden* splendour round me like a moon

Grandly uprising from some silent sea

May flame—transfiguring unexpectedly ;

Hurling my soul towards heaven in one swift swoon.

Oh lady—when thy kiss comes, be it thro' pain

Or earthly terror, or this life's defeat,

Or some protracted agonising strain

Of sorrow—when thy white wings round me
beat—

Though at thy touch this mortal self be slain,

It *may* be sudden but it *must* be sweet.



TILL SHE COME.

OH holy wondrous coming of the Lord
That they expected—which they saw indeed,
Though not according to their carnal creed
Of trumpets, and a red avenger's sword—
When all thy perfect glory was outpoured
Upon the faithful watchers, what a meed
Was theirs,—how utterly it did exceed
Their suffering,—how transcendent the reward !
Their patient watchword in the end prevailed,
Though all the cultured folk around them railed
And mocked :—it was too forceful for the tomb.
With the same patience I my lady's death
Show forth,—I watch with hushed and solemn
breath
The clouds that hide her beauty—*till she come.*



BLESSED IS HE.

BLESSED is he who tarrieth for the king ;
And blessed is he who waiteth for his lady
Through nights of suffering—threading valleys
shady

And dim defiles of pain with lips that sing.
Not yet the blue sky parts before her wing—
Not yet the sun-bright angels round her throng
As she descends—the murky night is long ;
No pink clouds round the mountain-summits cling.

But she shall come. Most blest of all is he
Whom no most sudden sunrise can perturb—
Who, when the rich dawn gilds the smallest herb
Upon the mountain-side, can fearlessly
Meet the full rapture of his lady's face
Not having flinched from his appointed place.



ONE SILVER LAUGH.

IF I could hear thy laughter, as of old
It rang in early autumn through the woods,
When berries of the mountain-ash, red-gold,
We gathered—happy in the tearless moods
Of youth,—if once again I could behold
The happy girlish smile upon thy face,
And watch thy figure in its girlish grace
As then I watched,—my life's tale would be told.
The mere delight, the joyous sense of this
Pure vision would bring peace ; it would be bliss
Exceeding every agony of mine :
I should be happy then : it is reward
For me, worth every thrust of God's straight sword,
To hear one tender silver laugh of thine.



AT NIGHT.

I STRUGGLE on through every weary day,

Well knowing that at night a rest will come :

That then I shall behold my blossom's bloom
And count her new buds,—in the twilight grey.

The hours of sunlight are to me a tomb
Most piteous : but the darkness changes all ;
Then do I seek thee through the star-hung hall
Of night, soft-guided by some strange perfume.

The long days pierce me with a reckless sword—
Their wild hours hustle me, they heed not how ;
Yet have I thee all anguish to allay.

An ample and most exquisite reward
Is thy sweet kiss that lights upon my brow
After the agony of another day.



THOU SHALT DRAW ME.

Thou shalt draw me : it shall be changed at last

I am the stronger now—I have to draw

Thy soul by some magnetic simple law

Towards mine, till every idol is downcast.

Then when thy spirit is wholly free from flaw,

Thou shalt draw me : my work will then be past ;

Thou shalt allure by thine own yearning vast

My spirit ; and it shall follow, pale with awe.

My ecstasy shall then at last begin,—

My cup of glorious pleasure shall be full,—

As into silver waters soft and cool

That purge with many a lovely surge from sin

I joyous then shall plunge : thy great desire

Shall clothe me, as in measureless white fire.



THE SLEEPER.

THOU art asleep : thou dost not know me yet :

A stranger am I till the soul awakes.

The body has wide eyes, and it partakes
Of human cares—knows pity and regret,
Joy, sorrow, tenderness,—but firmly set,
Tight fastened are the eyelids of the soul.

It sleeps deep, deep within,—and swift months
roll

Far past it,—but no day-dawn has been met.

I wait—in utter patience : Soul, that sleepest,
When one fair tear shall show me that thou
weepest,

These songs shall touch the closed lids of thine
eyes :

And wet with that tear drawn from underneath
Those maiden lids, shall lift thee, as from death,
Saying—Thou hast slept long enough—Arise !



REVOLVING PLANETS.

OUR orbits touched : as swinging stars might meet,
Just graze each other—quit each other then,
Not, for uncounted years, to touch again :
Just for that moment hearing, each, the beat
O' the other's central heart—feeling the heat
Of kindred breasts ;—then parted ever after,
And followed as by Fate's sardonic laughter,
While through the void their quivering shapes
retreat.

We touched so, parted so,—yet as a planet
So touched, so touching, might from trees that
brush
The other as with wind of boughs to fan it,
Cast off a host of singing birds that rush
Towards the new globe—*you, touching me, impart*
These clamorous dreams that cluster round my heart.



ROSES FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE.

SWEET blossoms many and fair I sought to bring ;
Some plucked in hedges, some in wild wet
woods,—

Some gathered in weird pathless solitudes,
Where the lone eagle is unquestioned king.
I wove for thee the supple stems that cling
Round garden bowers—sweet, splendid flowers,
I brought
From tropic lands—through English vales I
sought,

And through the groves where English throistles sing.
All these I wove, my lady, in a crown,
For thee—thee only—if so I might add
To thy fair fame and glory, and make thee glad
With some fresh token of a wide renown :
Yet *then* I thought enough had not been given,
And sought to bring thee roses culled in heaven.



AN EMBODIED MUSIC.

THOU art indeed the very spirit of song.

Thou art in truth the essence of fair sound.

All chants upon thy rose-red lips abound—

When thou dost speak, it is as music strong,

And sweet and clear : I hear one dream-tune long

Whene'er I hear, see, worship, watch for thee,—

The spirit of gracious speech descends on me,

And through me thoughts float, in one white-
winged throng.

Oh, lady fair, thou art the spirit of singing—

A sweet embodied music—nought besides.

Lo! through thy white, white body, the pure tides
Of universal sound are softly ringing,

Delighting, dazzling, changing fast, and bringing

My soul towards some fair rest that God pro-
vides.



THY SWEET SORROW.

It is *thy* sorrow, lady, that at last
Shall amply and with certitude repay ;
My cross shall draw thee towards me—thou
shalt say,

“ *I* nailed him there, *my* folly nailed him fast
To this accursed wood one bitter day,
Far-off but unforgotten in our past ;
I drove the nails in, while he gazed aghast—
Then left him there to wear the years away.”

When thou dost see and say this gracious thing,
Self-sentenced, sad, repentant—when thine eyes
Look large and lovely as the great drops rise
Therein, and round the downcast lashes cling,
Those tears shall be as pearls within my crown,
Adding soft lustre—doubling my renown.



YOUR WATCHING AS WELL.

I do your watching, sweet, and mine besides—
I bear for you the burden of the years ;
If e'er your tender face is wet with tears,
Adown my own an answering tear-drop glides.
Your sorrow through my veins in swift true tides
Pulses along—your doubts, and pangs, and fears
Are my doubts also, and my pains—what clears
Your own horizon, hope for me provides.

You watch within the garden ; tear-drops fall
Upon the leaves and flowers—I am this rose,
Whose petals your soft tears do discompose ;
In my red perfumed cup I gather all—
I watch with you, a true flower, through the night,
Sharing all sorrow—as I share delight.



GOD'S HOLY FIRE.

UPON me at some seasons there descends
The fire of God to purge thee of thine error—
Through thunder and through anguish, and
through terror,
To draw thee back towards nobler, queenlier ends.
The Spirit of God in flaming glory blends
Its power with mine, and bids me speak to thee—
Yea, could I, without fieriest anger, see
That weakness late repentance barely mends?
There is in me the holy fire of God,
To purge each furrow of the slavish sod
Of thine own fickle and rebellious heart—
There is in me an agony supreme
At thine own sin, and so a saving stream
Of sweet divine redemption I impart.



FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH.

THOUGH joys of heaven around me in a throng
Should glitter—though the past might far away
Fade, like the evening of a stormy day,
When darkness gathers quickly—though the strong
Delights of heaven might make the earth wax
cold

In thought, and e'en the memory of my song,
Like something far behind, forgotten and old,—
Yet one remembrance no deep joy could wrong.

I still should see thee, as I saw thee first,
When first I knew mine own eternal queen,
And felt the insatiable and ardent thirst
Of passion :—the sweet girlish face, serene
With placid thoughts in sunniest leisure nursed—
The gentle, perfect maiden of sixteen.



THE NARROW GATE.

THE road of pain and sorrow I pursue,
That so thine eyes may meet mine in the end:—
That thou may'st upward readily ascend,
My hair is wet with watching 'mid the dew
Of frequent nights; that thou may'st hasten through
The narrow gate, I stand beside and keep
My eyes, though heavy, from the aggressive
sleep—
That I may aid thy toil with weapon true.

Because the gate is strait, I will be there—
Ready to help thee, ready forth to fare,
That I may bring thy steps along the road;
Because the path is terrible and dire
I straightway seek it—with redoubled fire—
Secure that it conducts towards Love's abode.



THE FIRST TRUE BLOSSOMING.

FAR, far away from sympathy no flower
Can spread sweet petals into utmost bloom :
Her own desires, unanswered, must consume
The struggling, pallid bud from hour to hour.
Not by the summer sun—by no spring shower—
Shall all the inner marvellous perfume
Be drawn to light ; it lingers in a tomb,
Cold, sad, remorseless,—lacking joy and power.
•
But some day comes a heart that understands—
He takes the tender stalk in yearning hands ;
At one quick glance he apprehends the whole :—
Then touched by softer breezes, friendlier gales,
The sweet rose buds—next blossoms, and exhales
The lavish perfume of her inmost soul.



THE WIDE SYMPATHY.

We sympathise by chance with one or two—

We bear the sorrows maybe of a friend—

But there our power of sympathy doth end ;

Its fountain we are forceless to renew.

A great man through the world his heart may send,

Nobly partake in many a purpose true—

Yet silent agonies o'er some impend—

Sorrows there are earth's greatest ne'er passed
through.

The sympathy of human hearts may fail

After a time ; our noblest is but pale

With partial sorrow—Christ's sad eyes were dim

For every sufferer—this was His renown :

This was His utter victory—yea, to Him

'Twas given to wear all sorrows like a crown.



WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

It may be that my songs may meet the eyes
Of my sweet lady, knowing not their cause ;—
That she shall smile, and hesitate, and pause,—
Then wonder softly, as the quick tears rise,
Startled perhaps, with somewhat of surprise,
Whether *she is* indeed my queen of song ;
And then, assurance growing doubly strong,
With passion grasp her wreath,—through grief
made wise.

It may be thus ; it may be she shall linger,
Turning the pages, glancing to and fro,
Counting the songs with unsuspecting finger,
Till blushing suddenly, my queen shall know
That these soft songs at which her pulses stir
Are all to chant her beauty—all for her.



THE TRANSFIGURING TOUCH.

WHEN thou dost lay thine hand upon a thing
It gleams for ever, glorified and new—
For round thee some magnetic robe doth cling
Which from each flower extracts its secret true.
The daisies at the touching of thy wing,
As if fresh-bathed in lavish evening dew,
Dart forth pink sweeter petals—passing through
The meadows, choirs of birds about thee sing.

I praise all holy gifts when thee I praise—
For all the boons thou grantest me are such.
Treading behind thee in Christ's heaven-lit ways
I tread ; I seek thy footpath, wondering much ;
All common joys, transfiguring, thou dost raise,
Making them everlasting by thy touch.



BLOW ON BLOW.

OH puny, suffering, querulous soul of mine,
Be still now, be at peace—be not so sad ;
Think'st thou this thorn-wreath God has let thee
twine,

Is the first wreath the spirit of man has had ?
Have there been sufferers none with sorrow mad ?
Are there no sufferers now whose days decline
Slowly, while thou dost gather from life's vine
Some grapes at least, with healthful hands and glad ?
Or, if thou sufferest more than others, know
That long before thou wast to suffering born,
Fierce throbs of bitterest pain through God did
flow—

That He was left most utterly forlorn—
Encountered hostile spear-strokes, blow on blow,
And strokes of friends more grievous, scorn on
scorn.



THE LAST RIDGE.

THE end approaches—like a traveller pale
With strong protracted labour I rejoice ;
Soon may I hush my strained and weary voice,
And fold my rest about me, like a veil.
Soon “It is finished,” may I utter, standing
Nigh the last weary peak I have to assail :
Soon may I, tender Beatrice commanding,
Strip off my blood-bedewed war-beaten mail.
Close to the end of battle now I stand,
Holding my conquest almost in mine hand—
With Beatrice almost before my eyes ;—
My spirit clears itself triumphantly,
And climbs to the last ridge, whence now I see
Death’s sunset, which to me is life’s sunrise.



GOD'S SUFFERING.

OUR sorrow for our bitter sins God bears,
And His own utter sorrow at them too ;
To weep Himself was not enough to do—
Our weeping He, oh tender Spirit, shares.
Our suffering, suffering greater yet declares ;—
Even the sinless agony supreme,
Of which when purest we may faintly dream,
Though sin the vast comparison impairs.

Our sorrow God bears—lest we find the weight
Too heavy, far too terrible to carry ;
His great shield interferes to guard and parry
The blows of our own sinfulness ; the great
Sorrow of God in so surpassing ours
Turns, smiling through its tears, our thorns to
flowers.



THE FACE DIVINE.

I HAD sweet visions of the face divine ;
Sometimes a woman's face it was, and tender—
Yearning forgivingly o'er each offender,
With pity softening every perfect line.
Again it was a strong man's face,—and fine
With thought and ardent labour ; crowned with
flowers
I saw it next,—moist buds of eglantine,
And roses plucked from summer-coloured bowers.
Then came a season dark—the face no more
Shone near me ; it had vanished, and I dreamed
That every vision of the Lord was o'er ;
Yet forth again, sun-bright, the great face
gleamed—
Sun-bright, but as the sun through clouds appears,
For lo ! the face divine was wet with tears.



UTTERLY ALONE.

ALONE at last we shall be—then thine eyes
Shall be the light that lights us on our way ;
Thy face the glory of the perfect day ;
Thy beauty the soft splendour of sunrise.
All other loves shall fade—far past us flies
Sorrow, a bird on pinions gaunt and grey ;
The earthly sun is setting, but its ray
Is faint by that great fire that Love supplies.

Alone, alone, no mortal near us—air
Above us and around us : all the scars
Of life are healing ; now no lingering care
With sword perverse enfeebles us and mars ;
I am alone with thee, thou woman fair—
Thee only, and God's presence, and the stars.

PART III.



HEAVEN ON EARTH.



NOW.

Now that I pass towards the pure Ideal,
All earthly things are sanctified and white—
Now that I live as in my Lady's sight,
Superb imaginations crown *the real*.

I am happy now : before me shines the right—
Sweet to pursue, a gracious flag to follow :
All lesser lamps are glow-worms in a hollow,
By Purity's unutterable light.

I seek my Lady now with tender pleasure,
With hands made bold and spirit undefiled ;
Happy I am as in the golden leisure
Of early love—no more perverse and wild ;
I love beyond all words, beyond all measure,
With laughter like the laughter of a child.



IN ALL STARS AND FLOWERS.

IN stars and flowers I see my Lady now—

Now in the violets blue her glances shine,

Her mouth is hidden amid the eglantine—

The lilies are the whiteness of her brow.

The simplest bud is beautiful to me,

Oh never-ending love of mine, oh lady,

Because of thine own beauty !—Yea, for thee

Red roses blush in garden-alleys shady.

The world of flowers is thine: all gathered posies

Are symbols of the rich eternal roses

That bloom around the richness of thine heart:

All snowdrops and all buds of lily-brightness

Are but as signs of thine imperial whiteness—

Yea, whiter than God's whitest rose thou art.



AN OLD, OLD SPIRIT.

THOU art an old, old Spirit—thou dost belong
To some far different place and other days ;
Yea, perhaps thou heard'st in Paradise the praise
I give thee, smiling at my love-taught song.
Upon the ancient winds thou hast been strong—
Thou hast sailed wide upon the ocean ways—
In far forgotten epochs just such lays
Of passion at my eager lips did throng.

Upon this earth again thou hast been born,
But of thine earthly parents thou art *not* ;
Destined for some diviner, grander lot
Thou art—from some soul-sphere thou hast been
torn ;
Thy spirit, incarnate in thy baby-cot,
Left sister-angels for thy loss to mourn.



SISTERS, AND A BROTHER.

SISTERS thou hast—a brother upon earth—
But thou hast other sisters in the spheres,
And thou hast whispered unto other ears
Of spirit-brethren long before thy birth
In this our world :—thy laughter and sweet mirth,
And all thy timid loves and maiden fears
Were heard and marked of old by souls of worth,
And all thy passionate hopes, and tender tears.

Thou art incarnate for a season—we
Shall spread our spirit-pinions tremulously,
And presently along the ether soar :
Then shall apparent loss be passionate gain—
O'er our old spirit-kingdoms we shall reign,
And tarry on this troublous earth no more.



THE MARRIAGE IN MUSIC.

OH Beatrice, my lady—yea, my queen—

When I hear music I am one with thee,
And one with some high heavenly life serene.

The marvellous piercing sound transfigures me ;
All sorrows vanish—all the woes between ;

Thy whiteness leads me like a white fair star
Rising with solemn purport from afar,
Silver above broad endless billows green.

The star of thy pure whiteness glittereth so,
Lighting life's tideway with sweet silver glow,

Till all the trembling waves are mute and bright ;
Thy glory around me gleameth :—as of old
Life's waters all were tinged with magic gold
When first the sun of first love rose in might.



JOINED, NOT BLENDED.

JOINED, yet not hopelessly confused or blended,
Shall spirit-lovers in their union be.
If one fair shape were lost, desire were ended,
Then would ensue unglad satiety.
High individual power shall be extended—
Though two are one, yet separate thoughts shall
mingle,
As through the spirit-lips the rich throbs tingle—
The thoughts that here on separate forms depended.

Not mixed, not swallowed up, but grand as ever
Shall be the spirit-body of my bride.
Not brought too near to kiss, the sweet eyes never
Obscured, but brightened rather—deified ;
The sweet lips still a separate perfect flower ;
The pure mind still an independent power.



A SUDDEN MEETING, AFTER FIVE
YEARS.

O HOLIEST rapture, when the dear hand leapt
Up to the swiftly-beating eager side,
The heart that for so long had dreamed and slept—
A fairer revelation of my bride
It was than if the loving eyes had wept :
So sweet and exquisite a thing to me
It was, that it was payment verily
For all the suffering watch that I had kept.

That one small token was a payment ample
For all that suffering's bitterest spears could do ;
Now can I, in the strength of it, down-trample
All future foes, for heaven is in my view ;
That one small token of a beating heart
Has snapped all swords, and blunted every dart.



WITH BEATRICE, IN GOD.

My life is hid with Beatrice in God—

And hidden with her in all things sweet as well,
In every flower whereon her footstep fell,
Each rose rich-blushing on the sunny sod.
She, being sweet, can clothe my soul with sweetness
And subtle mystic power too fair to tell,
And all poetic passionate completeness—
She, being glad, can lift from sorrow's hell.

My life is hid with Beatrice in pleasure—

My life is hid with her beyond the sky :
My fair delight, my love, my sweet-winged treasure,
The utter gift of God, she is ; and I,
With tender worship passing tenderest measure
In music thus to Music's self reply.



NOW, HAVING SEEN THEE.

Now, having seen thee, all my song is ended—

I care no more for words, now once again

Thy sweet face, sadder, but as fair as when

First with love's vision it so softly blended,

Has met and crowned me ; when we breathe quite
close,

We do not sing the beauty of the rose—

There's hardly room now, left between our lips,

E'en for this song, as forth the flutterer slips !

I cannot speak of mine own soul ; and thou

Art mine, my lady ; when the souls are one,

The long, long task of separate praise is done ;

Thy glance has brought completion to my vow—

The gaze that bade me sing, now bids me cease ;

The look that worked me woe, now grants me
peace.



ONE WORD.

I HAVE said so much—have laboured for so long,
And thou hast kept a silence, as in sleep
The sound of music floated o'er the deep,
And the intense skies were vocal with my song ;
The petals of red flowers my passion strong
Has tinged with deeper red—the great stars
keep
A holy love-watch with me when I weep—
Spirits are round me in a white-browed throng !
But *thou, thou, thou*,—oh woman I love best,
Art thou so weak, so heartless, so afraid ?
Canst thou not speak one single word to aid ?
Silent to every passionate request
Dost thou remain ? I ask but for one word,
And that abides, from age to age, unheard.



THE WORD.

AN answer came—we met, no word was spoken,
But through the silent eyes there leapt a fire
Sweeter than utterance of intense desire,
And swifter pulsed the swift heart for a token.
Could any pure reward for suffering higher
Than this be given?—tight hand pressed upon
The bounding heart, and eyes in which there shone
Deep things ; the actual heart is not a liar.

Better than words was this ; the lips are cold,
Yea, e'en the lips of women that impart
Soft tender secrets ; poets' words are bold,
And silver is the gracious tongue of Art—
Yet sweeter was her token, wrought of gold,
For speech is with the lips—*here thrilled the
heart !*



DAY BY DAY.

As day by day the void doth greater grow
Between thee and the world—'tween thee and
friends—

As life's wide wintry landscape now extends
Before thee, its chill meadows deep with snow—
As, silently, thou paces to and fro,
Revolving in thy spirit silent ends—
As over thee the eternal azure bends,
Like love's skies stooping o'er thee long ago : —

When things are thus—when thou dost yearn to hear
Some word from thine own country, where the air
Of softest love once lifted thy brown hair,
Some note of recompense, some sound of cheer—
Remember then, that, in Art's sunny lands,
Thou hast for ever one who understands.



THE EXILE.

FOR, sweet, thou art an exile from thy lord,
An exile from thy home ; the bitter years
Have taught thee this, through pangs and many
tears,

And keen heaven-thrust of many a silent sword.

Did I not mark the tired look in thy face,
Telling of lonely thoughts and prayers outpoured
Beneath the pitying stars ? Could I not trace
The lines the passionless cold years had scored ?

Exile, oh exile,—hearken unto me—

A voice I send across the moonlit waves
That stirs with melody the tuneless sea !

Ponder no more on earthly pleasures' graves !
It is thy suffering, 'tis thy lonely life,
That makes thee to me more than perfect wife.



EXILES.

I ALSO am an exile ! In the realm
Of high Art is our home, but now as yet
In separate lands, with ever-new regret
We have to tarry,—sorrows overwhelm
Our spirits, and in patience must be met :
O'er different seas we look to our one home ;
The region of fair Art shines o'er the foam,
In thought, and glorious suns above it set.

Oh grand will be the roses, bright the lanes
In Art's land, when our step that land regains !
Happy the meadows, when once more we pass
With lingering footfall through the May-deep grass.
Divine the touching of close lips, and sweet
Will be the rapture—*when the exiles meet !*



SWEETER, LESS AWFUL.

SOMETHING of the awe has vanished from my strain,

It may be; now that thou art wholly near

It is a softer task to sing thee, dear ;

There is not the old yearning, nor the pain.

We cannot crave the rose that we retain

In our own hands, made fragrant from the touch,

We cannot long for present joys so much

As for the gifts no passionate prayer could gain.

Oh white rose, perfect lady of my song,

Desired and sought and struggled for so long

Now that thy petals sweet within my clasp

Abide—the passionate agony is over,

Thank God !—the happy calm soul of thy lover

Pants *not* for that which rests within his grasp.



THROUGH TROPIC WOODS.

I AM as one who, threading tropic woods
The first time, wondered at the marvels fair
That met his yearning vision everywhere
Through the green splendid tangled solitudes—
Who worshipped in that dense and torrid air
Some wonderful white blossom by the way,
Ready to kiss with tender lips each spray
That laughed beneath the blue heavens' burning
glare ;—

Just as he worshipped wildly—yet at last,
When the sweet days of distant awe were past,
Plucked tenderly the blossom for his own—
So hold I now my snow-white bud too near
For the old tremulous glance, the old sweet fear,
Since worship into living love has grown.



YET DEEPER.

YET deeper is my passionate tenderness !

The nearer that thou art, the more thine eyes

Are ever to me, love, a sweet surprise ;

Purer than fancy's is thy warm caress !

If at a distance I had cause to bless,

What shall I say now that God's bluest skies

Of cordial summer, deep with ecstasies,

Beam round me, freed for e'er from each distress ?

Oh whiter than the soul of which I dreamed,

Is this thine own soul, now its wealth has gleamed

Upon me, brought by God for ever close ;

Sweeter the body of wonder I adored,

Now that sweet love, our guardian and our lord,

Has given to me that wonderful white rose !



THE SUMMER.

THE spring has passed—the spring-time of my
strain ;

The spring of thy fair life; now round us summer
Beams and his wings resound, an ardent comer,
With fervent loves in his impassioned train.

Thine hair is fragrant with the smell of flowers
Still—but no flowers of simpler spring remain ;
Still art thou beauteous as in those first hours
Of love—but no lost hours again we gain.

We pass towards utter summer—our delight
Is hidden for us among the full-leaved trees,
And 'mid the passion of the August night,
And by the moonlit wonderful still seas
Of August—all thy perfect face is bright
With summer thoughts and ripest ecstasies !



I AM CONTENT.

I AM content—I twine thy deep dark hair
With August flowers : the meadow-sweet I bring,
That long ago in sorrow I did sing,
Ere love renewed for me his music fair.
Thou passest through me like some viewless air
Of summer, touching with thy fragrant wing
My lips and eyes : white blossoms round thee
cling,
Whiter than e'en our snowiest May can bear.
The marvellous perfume of the old lost dream
Again pervades me ; once again some flower
Ne'er known on earth, but whose white petals gleam
Perhaps in some redolent angelic bower,
Wraps me in speechless scent, and, as of old,
Thy white arms, shuddering softly, round me fold.



**BEYOND ALL SONGS, BEYOND ALL
FLOWERS.**

BEYOND all songs and dreams, beyond all flowers,
Beyond all snow-white fancies—thou art mine !
Beyond the brilliance of the rose-red bowers
Of Paradise, wherein fair seraphs twine
Locks marvellous :—beyond all earthly hours
Of pleasure, and beyond each pale design
Of earth, and all earth's passions and her powers :—
Beyond all earthly speech my heart is thine,
And every chant my harp around it showers,
And every wreath, whether of eglantine,
Or whether woven of thorns when sorrow lowers,
Or tender tendrils from the tender vine,—
Beyond all thought or speech our hearts are knit,—
Beyond all light our love-light God's hand lit !



MY OWN FOR EVER.

“My lady of the rosebands and the bays,
 My dimple, and *my* soft caressing” speech—
My pure eternal unforgotten “ways,”
 My smiles, with sonnet-plumage hid in each ;
“My sweet hair still divinely downward streaming,”
 My hands so soft and wonderful and white—
My mind with delicate love-fancies teeming,
 My glance of heavenly and most sacred light ;
My lips so pure and red, so sweet and tender,
 My heart so glad and great, so deep and warm—
My silver voice, to which love did surrender,
 My breast, white as a sea-bird’s thro’ a storm,—
For ever and for ever, tho’ they fled,
All these are *mine*—now selfish love lies dead.



BEAUTIFUL.

OH beautiful, thrice beautiful thou art !
More beautiful than ever ! when the days
Of early love were with us, and the ways
Tender with early blossoms of the heart,
Thou wast not then more beautiful—the rays
Of love's fair morn were round thee, but the sun
Now shines upon us ; great heights have we won,
And cause there is for unremitting praise.

The great God who has led us by the hand
Through all these desolate and lonely years,
Through arid furrows and grim wastes of sand,
Now parts his clouds—and all the prospect
clears ;
Now leads us forth from out the flowerless land,
Gives us green buds for thorns, and smiles for
tears.



WHITBY.

AND now the seas round all thy cliffs are blue,
O Whitby, precinct of love's early dream ;
Thy waters now are marvellous in hue,
Silvered at night by many a magic beam
Just as of old, when all the wondrous view
Widened beneath the moon's unearthly gleam ;
All old strange fancies of delight come true
Now—now more summer-like the zephyrs seem,
And all the reddened luscious rosebuds teem
With fragrance, now that, fragrant rosebud, you
Descend on earth to soften and redeem—
To heal and to deliver and renew—
To make all glad things gladder, and the dew
Clearer, and more intense the ocean-stream.



BENEATH OTHER STARS.

BUT now beneath strange stars our spirits meet :
Those golden flower-buds of the gracious sky,
That shone upon our youth, when you and I
Found their gold petals, falling on us, sweet—
Those ancient stars are withered with life's heat,
The golden petals, once so smooth, are dry ;
Oh, darling, heave with me one long sweet sigh
For tracks deep-trodden by lone flowerless feet !

The sorrow and loneliness are over, truly,
Life's fresh stars rise and beam upon us newly—
Yet weep for splendours of the ancient day :
Forget not wholly the most sacred night
Of young love's uttermost and mute delight,—
Forget not any flower dropped by the way !



SPLENDOUR.

THE supreme splendour of surpassing love
Is all before us—flowers before us gleam
Sweeter than any flowers of sweetest dream,
And towards new heavenly blossoms our feet move:
August is all the happiness before us,
And yet because it is august and great
I would forget no star that once shone o'er us,
But all life's pleasures recapitulate.

The humblest flower e'er trodden by thy feet
To me is holiness,—to me is sweet ;
Thine every pleasure I would make my own,
Each smile, each laugh, each cadence of thy tone ;
Thy life I would absorb,—I envy even
Thy nightly robe of dark encircling heaven !



THE FLOWERS.

THE flowers that thou hast loved within my song
Shine tenderly,—they are thy sweetest friends,
And to all such my including strain extends
Its grace : they shine within it in a throng !
Smooth jonquil, white camellia, rosebud strong :
Violets from nooks round which the water bends ;
Green grasses, lavish ferns, all gifts love sends ;
Thine orange-blossoms,—stems of lilies long.

Not one frail bud will I forget, I swear !
Whether within white bosom or deep hair
That bud has lingered, softly gathering sweets :
Thy life I wreathe around thee for a crown,—
Thine own past blossom-pleasures I lay down,—
I watch thy heart that was, and count its beats.



THE UTTER LIFE OF MUSIC.

THE utter life of music now at times

Descends upon us :—lo ! we form a part

Of music's wide unutterable heart,

And mix, in rapture, with the eternal rhymes.

We traverse, in a dream, strange spirit-climes—

We hear strange oceans beating on white shores—

We thread strange rivers to the splash of oars

Unearthly, ringing round us silvery chimes.

The spirit of music lifts us,—and our love

Becomes a passion every change above :

The spirit of music aids us, and its fire

Is one with us in one intense desire :

The spirit of music bears us towards that sea

Whose blue waves murmur—"Immortality."



NOW THOU ART WITH ME.

Now thou art with me, angel of each day,
Each day is as an angel golden-plumed,
The old desires that tortured and consumed
Have gathered rapid wings, and sped away.
The old fierce yearning is a thing entombed
For ever 'neath the old skies cold and grey—
Upon life's grass-plots many a flower has
bloomed—
The larks in blue skies murmur music gay.

Oh, woman, woman, who canst give a crown
Sweeter than roses, richer than renown,
How long thou lingerest ere thine hands bestow—
Yet when thou *dost* give how divine a glow
Of heavenly rapture lights thy face ! how calm
The boon of flowers soft-pressed within thy palm !



THE CLOSING OF MY SONG.

THE closing of my strain of many years
Brings solemn thoughts : sweet death with tender
wings

Now round me, gentle as a woman, sings,
And all his chant awakes the swelling tears.

The fight is nearly ended I have fought—
The crown is nearly woven I have won—

Almost complete the work at which I've wrought—
Finished Love's blossomy mantle that I've spun.

Solemn it is to put my strong sword down,
Ungird my armour, and to lay my shield
At length upon the red deep-trodden field,
Most solemn to assume the conqueror's crown ;
When sin, time, death—the final foes shall yield,
Then am I victor—till then, Fly, renown !



REST.

YET rest and flowers, for swords and pain, are sweet :

Sweet too the whispering of the summer wind

Outside the casement, softly through the blind

Pulsing :—advancing, playing at swift retreat !

Glad, too, it is the old soft glance to meet,

No longer doubtful, but for ever kind ;

Glad all maturer raptures of the mind ;

Pleasant the simple warmth, the strong June heat.

Oh ! after the long fighting and the labour

Pleasant it is to quit the ensanguined sword—

Joyous to cast aside the crimsoned sabre,

Unwinding from the wrist its blood-glued cord.

Merry to list to moonlight harp and tabour,

And all glad sounds through leafy vistas poured !



YET BY THE AGONY.

YET by the utter agony I won thee—

The awful lingering sorrow gave me strength
To cast the robe of all my passion on thee,
To hope and tarry, and to prevail at length.
Had I not suffered so, I had not seen
Deep, deep into the mystery of things,—
Nor hadst thou wrapped me in thy snow-white
wings,

My lady, and my true love, and my queen !

It is the agony that blooms at last
In richest flowers, when all the pain is past—
It is the snow-white bud of tender sorrow
Which spreads divinest petals towards blue skies
At last : to-day on earth our agonies
Endure,—they vanish quite in heaven's to-morrow.



FOR FUTURE AGES.

I WOULD our love might help the future world :

I would that future lovers as they pass,
Happy and hand in hand, along the grass
Of this sweet earth, with pure love-fancies furl'd
Within their bosoms, might enjoy the song
Wherein I worship thee : I would that they,
In England, on some bright far future day,
Might listen to my chant of passion strong.

We have to help the world by our own passion :

To aid it towards that far triumphant goal
When all men in the Dantesque sacred fashion
Shall love, with all the intense triumphant *soul* :
Then men shall praise us, saying—We love as these
Once loved 'mid England's flowers, by English seas.



OUR LOVE-FLOWERS.

BACK men shall look, considering all my song,
As we now look towards Helen, or the face
Of that eternal Beatrice whose grace
Crowned the Italian bard, and made him strong :
Back men shall glance, throughout the ages long,
And women's hearts shall struggle hard to trace
Those perfect woman's features that I place
Herein for ever,—safe from time and wrong.

Our early love-flowers are eternal things,
Though on the earth so soon they passed away
With tremulous sighing in their snowy wings,
And signs of death-tints, tokens of decay ;
Time withers,—time sure retribution brings,—
Not one lost bud but blooms within my lay !



THOU, AND THE FLOWERS.

THOU art eternal, and thy flowers as well :

 The gold-brown ripples curling by the banks

 Of Esk,—the meadow-sweet in tufted ranks,—

The vast eternal ocean's moonlit swell,—

The purple heather broidering moor and fell,—

 The green rich grass,—the blossoms by the way,—

 All that Love saw in Love's one perfect day,—

The yellow laughing corn,—the fern-lined dell :—

All these for ever, tho' we pass, abide :

The grey or green cliffs sloping to the tide ;

The great black ships that clove the yielding deep ;

The stars that over us pure watch did keep ;

All these are in my song : and thou art there,

Tender to me alone,—to all hearts fair.



BY ALL THE STRENGTH OF SONG.

By all the strength of holy song I swear

Thou shalt not be forgotten—thy sweet eyes
Shall shine for ever on the world ; more fair

And everlasting with each new sunrise
Thou shalt be : at the wonder of thine hair

Women shall wonder,—and thy snow-white hands
Like Helen's, shall bring gifts to many lands,—
Nor shall thy name forsake the English air.

Oh, English lady—fair white English rose,
Breathed upon gently by the northern wind,
Thee from thine empire time shall not depose :
Thou shalt in every noble English mind
Blossom for ever : through my music glows
Thy flower-face, there indelibly designed.



THE LAST SONNET AND THE LAST PRAYER.

SOON will my glad last word be spoken,—when
We truly love, we are too close to pray :
The prayers that reach God's mansion every day
Are but from strangers, from no denizen
Of his most intimate heavens : no words we say
To father, or to mother, or to friend,
When absolutely one : pure love hath end
If love must clamour, fretting at delay.

The great sweet love is wordless—for its speech
Is spoken ; now the hearts each other reach :
The union is too close for any prayer :
The bright sweet rose petitions not the air
Of summer : God importunes not his heart,
Nor we God's spirit, when of that spirit a part.



THE OLD RAPTURE.

Now, every time that music sends its dream,
Winged like an angel, o'er the listening skies,
I meet, eternal love, thy full clear eyes,
And pass into the old ecstatic stream
Of thoughts that God's sweet vivid hand supplies:
The old flower-rapture, fragrant, is around
My spirit, snatching it from earthly ground,—
Towards heavenly hills on flower-soft wings I rise.

The great immortal yearning soul within
Yearns like a wrestling giant, and it shakes
The body terribly,—and it forsakes
The earth, and all earth's joys and soulless din,
And seeks the regions where the eternal streams,
Like lilies on their ripples, lift love's dreams.



BEYOND.

"Not in that way !" but in the holier sense
Of all high, sacred, and eternal things !
Such love, such passion, thy fair spirit brings ;
It granteth every pleasure most intense,
And every crown— but not the crowns of kings :
It reigneth with me underneath the stars :
Its lovely grace no selfish yearning mars :
It spreadeth in the sunbeams snow-white wings.

Beyond all love of purest earth is ours—
Beyond the yearning of the rose-red flowers—
Beyond desires of days and hopes that fall :
Beyond time's victories—yea, beyond them all !
Beyond the future : yea, beyond the tomb
Begins our passionate love-flower's fullest bloom !



THE WOMAN.

IN early days the woman was my queen !

The fair sweet maiden, crowned with first love's
flowers :

With her I wandered through the inwoven bowers
Of first love,—marked the young moon's silver sheen
Upon the deep, or heard the echoing shore
Ring to the white waves, answering their roar :
With her I lingered through the summer hours,
Or smote the river tides with laughing oar.

I sought no further than the simple boon
Of simple maiden love : sufficient bliss
Had been the bounty of her red-lipped kiss—
One whispered word beneath the secret moon :
The maiden all-sufficing was : all fair :
The summer beauty slept amid her hair.



THE ANGEL.

I LOST her, and the passionate angel came
 With heavenly glitter in her glowing wings,
And words of comfort, and a crown like flame :
 Such change, such gradual recompense time
 brings,
Touching, transforming many an early aim :
 Through heaven we passed together, and we saw
 With sighs of rapture and with trembling awe
Love's perfect goal : we conquered love and fame.

In heaven we dwelt together for long years
 And plucked white wondrous blossoms for a
 token,
 To bear away if e'er the dream was broken,
And earth with all her retinue of fears
 Returned : seraphic words were round us spoken,
And we forgot all terror and all tears.



THE ANGEL-WOMAN.

BUT now the angel and the woman too
Are mine : the white arms and the golden wings
Are but as one—as joined undiverse things,
And the sweet eyes, of the old tender hue,
Now shine upon me: dreams have all come true,—
Life's calm is reached as round the planet swings :
Once more to mine the woman's bosom clings,
And yet we are wrapped in heaven's most fragrant
dew.

Oh, wondrous woman-angel and yet heart
Of mine own living spirit,—we can part
Never again now thus thy bosom white,
Fragrant as roses, yet with heavenly light
Shineth for me : thou art for ever now
A woman, for the angel crowns thy brow.



FAR, FAR AWAY.

FAR, far away I bear thee—towards new fields
Of wondrous thought : oh, bid the gentle flowers
Of earth farewell—bid farewell to the bowers
Of youth, and all that common pleasure yields :
Prepare to traverse the immortal plains
With me,—with me to watch the swift-winged
hours,—
With me to enter into what remains
Of perfect rest : thy past keen time devours.

Behold, the skies are wonderful in hue,
The dawn is on the mountains, deepening blue,—
Great spirits with thee on God's hill-tops tread :
Come : enter into heaven, O fairest flower
Therein,—I give thee that angelic power,—
The immortal wreath I twine around thy head.



TO GREAT SPIRITS.

I BRING thee to the spirits of all the past :
To Dante and to Shelley, and to each
Whose gift of high imperishable speech
Has made on earth their sacred memories last.
Before *thee*, lo ! their glittering crowns they cast—
Higher than theirs the throne that thou shalt
reach !

Sweeter the wonders that thou hast to teach !
Grander thy victory, and thy realm more vast !

Thou art the fairest flower of all the flowers
Poets have sung of with bright burning lips :
Their beauty my white blossom doth eclipse :
They are as leaves, as branches, on thy bowers,—
Thou art the one eternal rose that shines
Beyond *all* wreaths the spirit of passion twines !



THE GREAT COMPANIONSHIP.

THE great superb companionship of these,
And of the souls their sacred spirits loved,
Sought and redeemed, made trial of and proved,
Shall then be thine : thou shalt transcend with ease
All lower pale companionship of earth :
The stars and sun shall crown thee, and the air
Shall be to thee for wings,—thou shalt be fair
With all the splendour of the heavenly birth.

I give ^u thee the life that knows no ending :
Thy spirit with immortal spirits blending
Shall utterly transgress the lowly tomb :
Yea, when earth's friends do mourn for thee as dead
Shall blossoms marvel round thy living head,
Wondering and pondering at thy flower-like
bloom !



BACK TO THEE.

AND now I leave these thoughts—e'en Nature too

I leave, for *thou* art Nature, and her whole

Delight in thine immeasurable soul

Blossoms ; thou art to me the pearly dew

Of morn, and whiter than the rose in hue—

Thou hast the notes of birds upon thy tongue ;

Through thee the immortal cadences have rung :

Thou art the darkling eve ; the mid-day blue.

I leave all things for thee—the summer air ;

For thou art sweeter, and thy mouth more fair.

I quit the sacred rapture of the night ;

Thine hair is deeper, and than stars more bright

Thine eyes : thou keepest all created things

Safe with the safe shield of thy snowy wings.



EVEN MY SONG.

EVEN my song I leave : its voice is hushed.

For thee, for thee alone, its numbers spake—

Not for the soft waves of the listening lake ;

Not for the breezes that around it rushed ;

Not for the women whose fair cheeks were flushed

With pleasure, or whose hearts with love did ache :

Not for the spirits whom my thought may make

Nobler—whose sorrows melody hath crushed :

For thee, for thee alone, the song is fair :

Towards thee this crown of patient words I bear :

Towards thy fair eyes I look for my reward ;

My wreath of victory for thee burns red

Like death's impassioned sunset—round thy head

Let all its pure aspirant flames be poured !



FAR FROM ALL SMALLNESS.

FAR from from all smallness towards the eternal hills

Of highest Art I lift thee : thou hast been

As one who, child-like, 'mid the meadows green
Plays, bathing white feet in earth's murmuring rills.

But now her mission holy Art fulfils—

She calls thee forth to be an endless queen ;

Forsake all lower thoughts ; with happy mien
List to the song whose passion through thee thrills !

Thy days of earth are over : come with me,
And watch the stars, and hearken to the sea,
Whose every solemn wave doth whisper, "Thee."

The moon above the waters rises slow—
Sweeter than dreams around us is the flow
Of silver streamlets :—Love waits ; let us go !

Christmas Day, 1876.



I CALL THEE.

I CALL thee ! o'er the distance sounds my voice !
Art thou asleep? then hearken through a dream—
Or art thou waking? then let music seem
To reach and stir thee ; in its power rejoice !
Where'er thou art I send for thee—a gleam
Of sudden sunshine is upon the waves
Of my strong singing, and it crowns the graves
Of buried hopes with one triumphant beam.

The past has vanished : with me face the years
That shall be to thee one triumphant crown ;
Wipe the last lingering trace of lonely tears ;
The wreath that I have won thee I lay down ;
I call thee ! Listen—let thy happy eyes
Flash with the radiance of the new-born skies.

Christmas Day, 1876.



SOFT EYES.

SOFT eyes of women many have I seen :

But none so soft, so wonderful, so fair—

Locks have I kissed of golden and brown hair,

Lips have I kissed of many a rose-sweet queen,

But never any locks or lips, I ween,

Can with thy sacred tresses, or the rare

And perfect mouth that quivered once, compare—

The same eyes glance—but now with tenderer sheen.

Gazing in awe, I see my song therein,

And all its sorrows, all its joy as well

Reflected : in the face I sought to win,

For which I climbed to heaven, and traversed hell,

I see the recompense for what hath been,

More sweet, more pure, more grand, than tongue
can tell.

Christmas Day, 1876.



THE ENDING OF MY WORK.

My work is over : all my eager speech
Has mounted up towards heaven and to the stars,
And rung round many a lonely moonlit beach,
And reached the angels wandering in bright cars
Along the trembling azure ; much to teach
I've sought—the roses flowered within my song,
And through it chanted many a throstle strong—
And Love was in it—Love no word can reach.

And now I rest: in utter love I pass
From earth, and earth's sweet meadows soft with
grass :
My Lady I possess beyond all height
And depth of love, with ever-new delight ;
My whole soul spake in music : now I cease :
Upon me there descends eternal peace.

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