

A Book
of
Mystery and Vision

BY
ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE
=

*“ Multa quidem sunt sacramenta . . . ut invisibilis
gratia signo aliquo visibili præstaretur.”—S. BERNARDI
ABBATIS, In Cæna Domini Sermo.*

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Drawn by J. de Steiger.

—days and nights dissolve
By this low-breathing sea,
While here I pause and still revolve
Voyage and venture free!

Dim main through all my dreams inlone
And far through paths untrod,
Sung on by all life's voices, lone
Let me embark for God.

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INTRODUCTION

THESE poems are offered as the confession of a man who knows that there is only one character of true excellence in human life, and that is the seal or character which expresses the sanction of eternity. They are, in most respects, a new experiment made upon the thought of a period, and as such they appear unassisted by any precedents in metrical literature. They are the work of a writer who, after trying many paths of experience, has become conscious in part of the mysteries which environ us, and it is obvious that, in the main, they can appeal only to those who have been similarly awakened. Such persons are more numerous than would perhaps be thought possible, when the question of their interests or their knowledge is appreciated from within the enmeshment of the present social order; and they constitute a kind of secret school, or united but incorporate fraternity, which independently of all

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conventional means of recognition and communication do no less communicate and recognise one another without hesitation or hindrance in every part of the world. But it is before all things desirable that this statement should not be understood in a common thaumaturgical sense.

Of this school the author may and does claim that he is the intimate representative and mouth-piece, and thereby is empowered to speak of that which it holds and recognises, namely, that far removed from ordinary paths and interests, even in the order of the soul, there is a grand experiment possible, and that some have achieved it. Beyond all the subordinate consequences of daily life and the extrinsic sanctity of conventional duty, a certain communication is at times established with higher measures of existence, and it becomes possible to take an entirely different view of the mixed and disconcerting lessons of the natural world.

This school, to which, from various causes, a quickening has come within recent years, has to create its literature anew for the century which has now opened, and this is the first tentative experiment in that direction. Its chief fault, as

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might be expected, is that it has insufficiently purged out the leaven of the old interests ; its chief pretension is that it should be regarded as a first-hand attempt to present the sacramental nature of life in a literary form. The school in question confesses only to a single necessity which embodies one interest held in unity thereby. It is a necessity of desire, the desire of the Great Quest, of the great experiment—in vastissimum divinitatis pelagus navigare. For the members, external or internal, of this sodality, in the light of this desire it may be truly said that the whole universe bursts forth into a flame and blossoming of parable, symbol and sacrament. All things minister thereto, all things proclaim and show it forth ; the desire and its fulfilment receive their earnest and demonstrations everywhere. Everywhere there is the ringing of bells, ever the passing of Hosts, the smoke of incense, the acclamation of the cosmos to urge and encourage the quest. The brethren know well and out of all doubt that their emancipation is assured from the decorations and emblazonments of the material universe.

But the secret school is also aware that its doctrines—if it can be said to hold doctrines—are

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not intended to conquer the world. In life itself, as in art and in literature, as in the church also, all the higher canons exceed the province of the commandment; they belong neither to law nor equity, they are counsels of perfection. So also, like all true Catholicism, the school and its doctrines are of necessity in the minority. And it is best so, for those at least before whose face the great light of the world has been enkindled. For them, amidst this alien order, there is need of the unconscious ministry of the restless, questing, fretful, inventive majority to encompass their Divine Dream with the providence of the physical sciences, of civilisation, in a sense even of luxury, so that those who know that there is indeed but one thing needful, which is the union of the soul with God, may be absolved as far as possible from the stress and turbulence of the active life. It is for this reason that the excesses of civilisation have almost always produced mysticism. Such mysticism is perhaps essentially cynical, though the means of the union which it aspires to do not differ from the lesser mysteries of sanctification; and it is with something of cynical tolerance that it accepts all which the lesser

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brethren can give to it with a full assurance that it is absolved from giving anything in return because it has only one treasure, for which the lesser brethren, by the quality of their election, have here and now no use.

This mystic life at its highest is perhaps undeniably selfish, but it is with the transcendental selfishness of the Absolute, that is to say, it is absorbent, and it is in this faculty of absorption that it looks for its joy in eternity.

There is no intention to propose that the mystic school is a new thing, or that it offers even some new aspect of an old doctrine. It is concerned with the greatest of all truths, and it is altogether fitting and inevitable that this should be also the oldest of all. But from the fact that its truth is of all truths the greatest, it should not be surprising that it is the least realised and the most apparently out of reach. It is the highest, and indeed the only concern of poetry, but it is also that with which poetry has the least concerned itself, and so far hitherto as it has given material to the poet it has done so only in the least degree, even as on rare occasions. It is a striking fact that so little of any divine consequence has been uttered

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by poets in the English language—having regard to the great majesty and volume of English song—and that least of all by the conventionally religious and theological poets. The sense of sacramentalism is indeed to be found in most, if we agree to set aside the merely rhetorical and metrical preaching of an external creed. It is usually in the least recognised part of all their work, perhaps because it is so much nearer to perfection. It is found in snatches of Coleridge and Wordsworth. It opens sudden depths for a single moment in Crashaw. It is audible amidst the grand chords and strophes of the Faerie Queen. The inspiration of it at certain times saturated the whole soul of Tennyson. It appears with a force, a vitality, a fulness in Whitman which makes him, despite his formless animalism, the most catholic and mystic of the poets. On the other hand, and curiously enough, it is sometimes wholly wanting in the case of many great names which are popularly connected with the notion of the spiritual. For example, there is scarcely a trace or tincture of this sense in Shelley, and it is needless to say that in the eighteenth century there was none found to give it voice. It is not less wanting in what is from some

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points of view the most striking religious poem of England, namely, Festus. Enough has been remarked to show that the real matter is not the common possession of the poet among us, understanding the metrical artist, and for the school to which reference has been made this is equivalent to saying that, great signs as they are, they are signs only that are passing away. For this school it is quite impossible that Shakespeare, for example, all his human greatness notwithstanding, should possess any consequence, and the reason is that this school does not confess to what is understood commonly by the human interest. It values life only for its eternal possibilities, and has regard only to the final consequences of things.

To sum up : God is the end, and there is no other call but to its attainment. As the Mystic is placed in the Universe, though perhaps in any true sense it would be difficult to say that he belongs to it, he presses its resources into his service so that he may gain his end. He has no use for it in the natural order, and by a simple intellectual process he converts it into parables, omens, signs, wonders and sacraments. How this outward world has thus been efficient to the

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needs of one mystic and sacramentalist is shown forth in this book, which is offered by the writer to his brethren, ut adeptis appareat me illis parem et fratrem, as proof positive that he is numbered among them, that he is initiated into their mysteries, and exacts recognition as such in all houses, temples and tarrying places of the confraternity.

A Book of Mystery and Vision

SALVETE

ARGUMENT.—The singer still dwells upon the threshold, having been recently restored to sight. He looks in a glass darkly, discerning things inverted and out of their true proportion, but he is among the substances of the new order and is indeed renewed in light. Arrived at another degree of life and song, the instrument of vision will have become adapted to the sacramental objects.

IN the midst of a world full of omen and sign,
 impell'd by the seeing gift,
On auspice and portent reflecting, in part I conjecture their drift ;
I catch faint words of the language which the world
 speaks far and wide,
And the soul withdrawn in the deeps of man from
 the birth of each man has cried.
I know that a sense is beyond the sense of the
 manifest Voice and Word,
That the tones in the chant which we strain to seize
 are the tones that are scarcely heard ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

While life pulsating with secret things has many
too deep to speak,
And that which evades, with a quailing heart, we
feel is the sense we seek ;
Scant were the skill to discern a few where the
countless symbols crowd,
To render the easiest reading, heed the cry that is
trite and loud.

Wistfully therefore, a seer, I come, for the records
that here I bring
Are light-tongued rumours and hints alone of the
songs I had hoped to sing,
Could words implied by the heart of song be suffer'd
without eclipse
Of inborn splendour their runes to render in passing
through mortal lips.

Only as mystery's scribe I make my script of the
things which seem,
And this book is a book of the visions beheld by
one who has walk'd in a dream—
Has walk'd in a waking dream apart from the gates
and the walls which fence
The common life of a world enswathed in the dream-
less swoon of sense.

But you who are keeping a mystic watch in the
same suspended state,
And I recounting the moods therein for an hour of
waking wait ;

SALVETE

Triumphant then through the light derived shall
light from the centre blaze,
And that be known which we glimpse alone through
the moon-sweet mist and haze.
How will it come to us, that great day? What
will the dawn disclose?
Past veils expended, the omens ended, what truth
at the heart of those?

PART I
*OF SINGLE CHORDS AND
OF MONOLOGUES*

WORLDS OF VESTURE

WORLDS OF VESTURE

ARGUMENT.—Man is encompassed by sacraments and parables, and the living language of Nature is not beyond his mastery. The universe expands with his growth and marks the limits of his advance. Man's destiny is to comprehend Nature. Other orders of sacramentalism may await him beyond these present veils, and he has no doubt been a recipient of earlier ministries. There is an inner as well as an outer world, and our true goal is within. When man has received all the sacraments of the universe, that which is without will have become as that which is within, and the depth and the height will meet at the centre of his rest. And this rest is the vision of the Divine manifest within man.

FAR spreads a world of outward gleam and pomp,
Fictitious parities, fair-seeming shows,
And shallow music on a thousand themes
Discoursing lightly to external sense,
But, void of vital meaning, leaving souls
Untouch'd and unawaken'd. Beauty there
Is specious only ; to the heart it brings
No message which can penetrate or bind :
Here lights false fantasy, a moon full-orb'd.
There spreads another world—a world composed
Of sensible impressions and of joys
Bereft of depth or height ; a restless crowd
Is surging there. As earth of coarsest earth
For inspiration pure, for genius true,
Hold thou these worlds with all their paths and ways!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

All ye who would be saved, come out from them,
And in the heaven of everlasting mind
Surely the Word Divine shall welcome you !
No password there he needs who keeps within
One sacred truth, that man is compass'd now
By many sacraments and parables,
By speaking likenesses and shows which show
Rich depths for inquisition. Close about
They press, they minister and dimly limn
The infinite behind them. By a quest
Which does not take too far or ask too much
He can achieve their meanings, and the grace
Which lies within, their living language learn,
And this shall take him past all outward pomps
Far into vision, far through mystery.

In splendid pageantries of holy sea,
And in the mellow hush of moonless nights,
And in the grandeur of the starry vault,
Dare thou confess the ministries of deep
And many-sided emblems which exist
For man alone, developing for him
Resources in the measure of his need,
His insight, inquest and experiment.
All speculation's penetrant research ;
Toil-conquer'd tracts of Knowledge, and the vast
Beyond, ungain'd ; the solemn sense of things
Immeasurable ; glimpses scarcely caught
Of new worlds glimmering on the utmost verge
And precipice of being ; these are fonts

WORLDS OF VESTURE

Of fresh suggestion, vivify, uplift
Supreme imagination, and therein
Find proper end and first reality.
Thus, by the glass of the astronomer,
Man searches deeper in his nature's depths,
And by the flights of mathematic thought
He further gauges and surveys himself ;
And in proportion with the mind's advance
Great Nature widens, for the silver links
Which form the mystic and symbolic chain
Are multiplied by counting ; the divine
And visionary universe expands
At every further plunge of mind therein.

The goal is still within ourselves alone,
The dream is also there, the meaning there,
All in a sense within. The outer world
Marks but the limit of the human soul's
Advance, developing her infinite.
O blessed promise of the time to come !
At each succeeding stage more lofty types—
A wider world—significance more deep—
Till, in the full possession of itself,
The soul attains, from every type set free,
The supra-conscious life of pure repose
And unveil'd vision into God the all.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE VOYAGE AND THE VENTURE

ARGUMENT.—The multitude of quests and voyages of which we read in history, and do still witness daily in so many places, impelled by so many designs, might offer an occasion of wonder, seeing that a much simpler and more requiring mode of travel is within our reach. Unhappily, the stimulus of such wonder is individual to those only who have taken out the roots of their nature from the earth of those interests which are about us. Otherwise the soul's travels are impossible, because of the hindrances of daily life. The way of the inward life must yet be so very plain, could we be liberated from the compulsory contract into which we were drawn by our first education. It is now a longer journey; we embark with difficulty, sail perforce slowly and know not whither we are going. At the same time, the beacons start up everywhere, and we set forth amidst the subdued plaudits of all the natural world.

O to set forth and not to swerve,
Press forward—early, late!—
Thus I, because they also serve,
’Tis said, who stand and wait;
Who wait to hear the Master’s charge,
As I, who pause and rest
By this great restless ocean’s marge,
Do also urge the quest:—

A quest unknown, pursued through all,
As ships brave storm and stress,
Nor e’er did venture such befall
In old sea voyages;

THE VOYAGE AND THE VENTURE

For, compass'd in the flight of thought
What has been or shall be,
I pass beyond whate'er have wrought
The heroes of the sea.

The ships of Colchis slip behind
Through golden seas of dream ;
Columbus in the glass of mind
Sees all his Indies gleam ;
De Gama dares the burning Cape
Through gorgeous zones of day,
Appeasing that portentous shape
Which looms to bar his way.

O Colchis, keep thy fleece of gold !
O western world, retain
Thine Inca's secret wealth untold !
And thou, far southern main,
Fold all thy jewell'd shores in mist
From Cape to austral pole ;
With brilliant, topaz, amethyst,
Tempt eyes, but not the soul !

Those sea-kings safe in harbours far
Found anchor long ago ;
Set forth where further ventures are
Which future ages show.
The secret of the poles lay bare,
The flight of men with wings,
And past the highest tracts of air
Declare star travellings.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

When sounding tocsins, far beyond,
To greater aims adjure,
Which hold man's higher soul in bond—
Will frozen zones allure?
Nay, nor the eagle's wings uplift,
Nor stars, nor suns extend,
Though past all starry paths we drift,
The lights of this great end.

So therefore days and nights dissolve
By this low-breathing sea,
While here I pause and still revolve
Voyage and venture free!
Dim main, through all my dream intone
And far through paths untrod,
Sung on by all life's voices, lone
Let me embark for God.

I know not when my quest comes true,
I seek, I know not Whom,
Ah, life's end, if I only knew,
I should know all life's doom!
Light of the endless East and West,
Shine on me here as there;
The signs at least of this great quest
Are round me everywhere!

TRANSCRIPTS

TRANSCRIPTS

ARGUMENT.—There is no such thing as common life; the convention under which we regard it is alone common. The key of the great mysteries lies hidden in all things round us, but the perplexities of the convention hinder us from finding it. The gift of understanding is within us, and we might read the world's language if we dared, but the inherited averseness of all the centuries to a first-hand experience of things sets an effectual check on the attempt. The inclination of the axis of the soul places us outside the direct line of vision; it can be rectified, and the operation may not be essentially difficult, but it calls for a peculiar courage.

SPURR'D on, with zealous soul, to seek
Life's language now unheard,
Boots it to take the mountain peak
Or covet flight of bird?
The byway too shall hear it speak—
That lost, that only Word.

I sought it long, I seek it yet,
Nor cease while life I own;
Art to attain her strength has set
And faith of old has known;
With longing eyes by tears made wet,
I listen all alone.

The shadows of a thousand leaves
Dance in this dying light;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The word for which my spirit grieves
On grass and moss they write ;
There too the blessed zephyr weaves
The blessed word of might.

Old is the soul, and elsewhere
Read once with shining eyes
The word's compounded meanings rare
And her own mysteries ;
At Nature's writings now I stare
As seer in crystal skries ;

Who out of mists beholds reversed,
Inchoate shapes emerge,
And deep in waking dream immersed
Seems ever on the verge
Where very life and light shall burst,
And every cloud diverge.

Him the true life escapes, and I
The life of life in vain
From Nature's rapid writings try
To reconstruct again ;
The flash comes oft to beautify,
But never to remain.

Alone in all the omens found
Through life and time abide ;
They take me aye through haunted ground
And on through ways untried ;
Lost word, thy transcripts still abound
On every country side !

TRANSCRIPTS

And in those moments, rarely known,
When the soul feels her wings,
Emblazon'd upon star and stone
There flash immortal things ;
Through Nature's gates wide open thrown
A wild voice sings and sings.

Comes secret sense through veils confess'd,
And God eludes no more,
But doth most surely manifest
And all his worlds restore ;
Methinks that word of peace and rest
High-seated saints read o'er.

Lost word and last word, far and long,
Heard through the closing gate,
Dies the dim echo of thy song !
Soul, is it dark and late ?
Vast is the void, though hope is strong,
We languish, but await.

Yes, we are waiting, I and you,
The white Kings wait enthroned,
And life's pale outcasts languish too
Dishonour'd and disown'd,
Till that word searching through and through
Be suddenly intoned.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

AND HENCE THESE ECSTASIES

ARGUMENT.—The instruction of the teaching church of Nature offers a substantial intellectual guarantee as for some of the conceded aspirations, so also for those which most persons in the present social order must imply rather than express through all their life. Any aspect of Nature provides this instruction and comprehends this warrant. It is the unceasing grind and jar of the social mechanism which blunts the hearing and darkens or embarrasses the evidence.

I KNOW,

When a glorious disc of gold
Moves swan-like over the spaces high,
And lone unattainable tracts of a purple sky ;
When the air is clear and the air is keen
And the air is cold ;
The stars dissolve in the Artemisian sheen
But gather and cluster and crowd in the quarters
four ;
The dark, luxurious olive shadows of trees
Twist bending branches and tops that sway and soar
In the search and swathe of a viewless tide
That rises up on a sudden with shout and roar,
Latent strength of the storm and eager rush,
Or sinks with the soft and languorous sigh of a
summer breeze,
Swooning, crooning, soft in the mystic arms of
the midnight hush,
And the world has past aside :—

AND HENCE THESE ECSTASIES

I know,

When the shadows lie so rich, so slant, so long
Over the close-cropp'd lawn which else is white
with dew,

Where the misty vistas shine, and the winding
paths go through

To thickets beyond the garden ground and a
secret bird in song ;

The darkling orbs of the sunflowers, splendidly
tall,

Droop in the moon-mist nimbus, dim with a
hallowing tinge,

While from their palm-like leaves the thick dews
trickle and fall,

And the musk-rich scents of the garden rise

To the overshadowing fringe

Of their gorgeous golden eyes :—

I know,

When at last the uttermost stillness steeps

Rose and lily, and laurel and lilac hedge ;

The leaf does not stir on the willow, nor the leaf
where the ash-tree weeps,

The topmost twig of the yew and the cypress sleeps

Like the box of the garden edge ;

When great, divine, serene,

Flowing from vales beyond, and yet beyond from
the hills,

The sense magnetic of expectation fills

The palaces sacramental and high-roof'd halls

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

In the haunted place of incense, the wondrous
place
Earth and its crown between,
With an unvoiced solemn promise of boundless
grace,
As over the East's red ramparts, gateways and
cloudy walls,
And over a thousand changeful turrets and
towers,
The morning glory of heaven blooms over and
calls
To morning glories of earth in a thousand
bowers.:—

I know,
That the high emprise of the life of quest
Traces the pathway slowly which leads to a
glorious end,
Clambers the winding stairway which takes to
the wondrous height,
Buffets the seas tremendous, but makes for a
shining goal;
That never the starry promise which haunts the
human soul,
And never the hope which holds so high the head
up-turn'd to the light,
Or the great desire which swells and pants in the
breast,
Shall into the world of loss and of death
descend;

AND HENCE THESE ECSTASIES

But all we have dared to dream in the loftiest
flight

Is only the rumour and noise of a greater gain

Out of all mind and sight ;

And if one tittle of all we fail, as it seems,
to attain,

O never believe it because the dream was fond,

But because of the height which still soars over
the height,

Of the light within the light,

And the glory of all the glory withdrawn in the
great beyond !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

WINGS OF FIRE

ARGUMENT.—The sacramental life of Nature is often so encouraging in its aspects, that we are inclined to regard it as the only veil which separates us from the divine. And yet there are other of its aspects which hint at unknown forms of sacramentalism behind it, some of which interpenetrate our own, at least intermittently. There are indications also of the interference of lower sacramental orders, quite distinct from the presence of moral evil in the world. While it is the soul's end to rise above all the cosmic systems, it may be doubted whether this is attainable except through the pomp and adornment of several sacramental lives. What follows is therefore the expression of the soul's desire to be dissolved. Things that look near are sometimes very far away, as in the tropics of the physical world, so in certain torrid zones of supersensual thought.

SPRINGS to the West a scarlet bird o'erhead,
Far-darting, circles, sways,
Then swift and straight, as if a spirit sped,
Divides the mellow haze.

The splendid clouds about her burn and glow,
Through liquid gold she glides,
On purple crests floats buoyant, or below
Sinks deep in lilac tides.

What Iris cliffs o'erhang her path, what towers,
White argent, crumble down,
And scatter shards and glitter sparks in showers;
One gems her like a crown :

WINGS OF FIRE

Till all the lambent distance lessening through,
With eager wings address'd,
She merges past man's sight into the blue
Beyond the blazing West.

Do Thou from whom we come, by whom perdure,
Our ways direct and bend,
That past such pageants in Thy splendour pure
They may dissolve and end !

Thy rumours fill creation's sounding hall,
Thine omens round us press ;
We hear the holy rapture of Thy call
Through all life's close caress.

Oh speak incessantly in sheaths and veils !—
Speak, we have heard through these ;
We know what message of all life exhales
In Thy sweet August breeze.

The almond blossoms in Thy breath, the red
Lies richer on the rose,
Earth yields up fragrant incense, where we tread
Baptismal water flows.

For Thou hast severally sanctified
And sanction'd all our days,
And dost in many sacraments abide
Thin-veil'd on all our ways.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

A priestly chrism fills the scented air
Which brings Thy bridal kiss,
And Eucharistic feasts are dighted where
Thy board of plenty is.

And if the perfect joy of daily life
Some transient sorrow sears,
Thy holy unction falling on the strife
Melts pain to happy tears.

True joy transfigured knows no sense of loss,
The dead return in Thee ;
Our star-bright crowns are shadow'd by no cross,
All's light from sea to sea.

Ah, one thing more, last gift and best, we wait !
Beyond all type and sign,
Teach us to issue out of Nature's gate
On Thine unveil'd Divine.

Pipes on the mountain shrilling, stars supreme
Calling along the height,
Lift us, uplift us, out of this high dream
Into true waking light !

THE EXTREME SENSE

THE EXTREME SENSE

ARGUMENT.—While our construction of the sacraments is necessarily imperfect, it is never wrong, so only if it be the construction of eternity. This holds also in the order of the instituted sacraments. One of the most endearing remembrances which must follow us in the mystic life, often so far removed from all instituted ceremonial and all stipulated system, is the recognition of sacramentalism by some of the great churches. It is impossible to deny that they communicate substantially to many believers, and there can be no grade of spiritual ascent from which the Church and her ministry will not be regarded with loving tenderness, or the attempt to restrict that ministry, and to despoil the instituted sacraments, without a very real sense of dereliction.

MAN treads a path with signs and lights
 ablaze,
Yet scarce conceives of sacrament or sign,
And hence ill-starr'd his genius strays,
 Midst things that seem, not are, content
 To shine.

When Nature's mystic life at first unfolds,
False sacraments he makes and veils un-
 clean ;
The open'd eye but part beholds,
Misreads inverted types and tales
 Between.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And at the best we catch some hints alone,
The cypher characters in part translate
And then, our powers at fault compell'd to
own,
More insight with dejected heart
Await.

Man can but place, in his most lofty dreams,
Constructions on the signs which best accord
With signifying Nature's schemes
And broader gifts to life repress'd
Afford.

Nor saint, nor priest, nor poet can reveal
The true construction which, obscure and grand,
Life's sacramental depths conceal;
Secret of secrets, yet be sure
At hand.

We hear it spoken round us everywhere,
We know that it is blazon'd far and wide;
It falls with dew through evening air,
It glitters, with the fallen star
Descried.

Peace, we have heard it understanding not!
Silence, it fills the silent halls of night!
The heart knew once, the heart forgot,
And yet again the heart recalls—
O God, recall it in Thy morning light!

HOUSE FANTASTIC

HOUSE FANTASTIC

ARGUMENT.—Two sources of imperfection are traceable in the ministry of which man is the recipient. One bears the marks of inherence, and the other of introduction. The instruments of communication from the noumenal must, in the nature of things, fall short of that Absolute which it would impart, and hence we should not sin against the light by holding that the instrument may improve. We at least are not properly adjusted to it. It may even be that the leader of the sacramental universe rectifies continually, and thus leads us, in the symbolic language of the poem, into a perfect harmony.

Stood the house where I was born
In a garden grown of old,
Where the heavy scented flowers
Lay in wait to trap the hours,
Snare the days in bosks and bowers
And the moons in mazes fold.

In the house where I was born
Vivid light of rose and gold,
Permeating vast and fair
Vaulted heights of heavy air,
Held the netted sunbeams there,
In that mansion, ah, how old !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

In the house where I was born
 Mystic echoes waking told,
In a legend-haunted tongue,
As of viols half unstrung,
Of the days when life was young,
 Pulsing through that mansion old !

In the house where I was born
 On a time the light grew cold,
Columns moulder'd moist and wet,
Walls where little runnels met—
Woe is me, that old spinet
 Standing in the mansion old !

In the house where I was born,
 Overlooking weir and wold,
Heirs of Kings who once held sway
Mourn'd for grandeur pass'd away,
Fortunes now in such decay
 As o'ertook that mansion old.

In the house where I was born,
 Meats were meagre, wine was doled ;
Would the genius e'er restore
That exalted state of yore ?
To invoke him who forbore,
 Praying in that mansion old ?

HOUSE FANTASTIC

In the house where I was born,
 Long by mystic rites ensoul'd,
That spinet with ghostly tone,
By one melody unknown,
Could the genius call alone
 Watching o'er that mansion old.

In the house where I was born
 Gentle maidens, masters bold,
To search out the secret brought
Happy faces, eager thought,
And grew old there ; as they wrought,
 Perish'd in that mansion old.

O'er the house where I was born
 Many barren ages troul'd,
Till in singing robes came I
With a ballad heart to try
Unattempted melody,
 Singing through the mansion old.

In the house where I was born
 Forth the glorious measures roll'd,
And beneath my fingers playing
That spinet resounded, swaying ;
There was moaning, there was maying
 In the resonant mansion old.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

In the house where I was born
 Came the abbot, coped and stoled,
Came the censers, came the lights;
Lovers lost their bridal nights;
Rock'd the bases, cried the heights;
 Answer'd all the mansion old :

*Singing of the splendid Quest,
Nature's secret end confess'd ;
 Type and sign
 And things divine ;
How unskilful senses learn
The true matter to discern ;
How the artist's zeal intense
May the ruling secret wrest ;
Solemn call and sacred mission,
And beyond the seeing sense,
 And yet beyond the Vision.*

In the house where I was born
 That which hinders still will hold ;
All the airs to silence ran,
As when first the dole began ;
For the anthem and the man
 Tarries still that mansion old.

From the house where I was born,
 From the mildew, from the mould,
Into this great world I went,

HOUSE FANTASTIC

Midst the sign and sacrament,
And another meaning lent
 Legend of the mansion old.

In the house where I was born,
 By unresting ghosts patroll'd,
This old tale of song and art
Of the mystery is part
And the instrument man's heart,
 Waiting in that mansion old ;

In the house where I was born,
 Till the gifted hand unfold
Music living, music rare,
The long-sought forgotten air
Sleeping latent everywhere,
 As within that mansion old.

THE VINDICATION

In the house where I was born
 Let the newer tale be told ;
Clavicord or organ deep,
Open tones from Nature sweep,
But more secret tones asleep
 Rest, as in that mansion old ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

*And the discord heard at times
In the music, in the rhymes,
Tripping stave and jarring tone,
 Show that He,
 Hidden in the mystery,
Artist of the ways unknown,
Also seeks the perfect key
For the cosmic melody.*

WAITING FOR THE MANIFESTATION

WAITING FOR THE MANIFESTATION

ARGUMENT.—The ministry between man and man is the most saving ministry of all, and is so various that in a certain sense we might be exempted from the continued regard of all others. Herein is the whole mystery of love and the sweet reason of the inward way. For the rest, it would seem impossible that man should ever become intelligible to himself except in the universal mode of his intelligence—that is to say, in the Divine Vision. How far or how near this may rest upon the path of life we cannot discern in our inverted glass of vision.

I BEHELD a scarlet pageant in a dream of night
Spread wide its banners, blazon'd with devices bright,
And my waking eyes are tinctured by the sheen and
show,
By the glory and the glister and the gorgeous glow.

Hence I hold this truth unquestion'd: from its
sources deep
Comes something into waking from the world of
sleep,
Transmuting, as a lamp at night held up in garden
closes,
Abounding wealth of magic at our gate exposes.

Now because you are a dreamer I may hint to you
That the world of common eyesight, though a
world not true,

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

By a certain tincture vested in a light divine,
Is sometimes kindled suddenly with type and sign.

We see that there are sacraments, and grace has
means
Incalculable even in the humblest scenes,
But the richest and the fullest in the mystic plan
Is the sacramental mystery of man to man.

For no man knows another, each is sign to each
Of a labyrinthine nature out of sight and reach ;
By the texture and the outline of the veil alone
Do we gather hint and presage of its form unknown :

The sign of strength and symmetry, the sign of
grace,
The sign of sainthood lighting an unearthly face,
And, pregnant with its message from the world
within,
The fever and the scarlet of the sign of sin.

And further out of knowledge, say, in far-off eyes,
Want of virgin lips unconscious or lost children's
cries,
The sign that past all signs, remote as white spume
out at sea,
The vision is which ever was and ever yet will be.

WAITING FOR THE MANIFESTATION

And this, I think, received into the heart of
heart,
Would life of life to mere day's length of shadow
life impart ;
Such sacramental flowers unfold in fair soul-gardens
then
As Carmel and Assisi never gave to men.

But, symbols to each other, to ourselves we are
A light reflected only, not itself the star :
Ah, therefore shine within us, thou sad moon of
mind,
To the day-star and the glory and the goal
assign'd !

Till the great time of awaking from the things
which seem
Unto pageantry and splendour which are more than
dream ;
Till the light of further knowledge of ourselves and
all
The lords behind the portal in the Father's hall !

O, hold we all our sacraments till that great day
As consecrated altar lights which shine alway,
And on the sign where God divine may dwell of
man unseen,
Let saving dread forbid the print of any mouth
unclean !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

I have dwelt among the tokens, and in types
expound
Some fragments of the secrets which our ways
surround,
And that you can interpret, as the veils allow,
Your bright dream-tincture proves me upon lips
and brow.

JAM NOLI TARDARE

JAM NOLI TARDARE

ARGUMENT.—The inward experiences of the saintly men of old, the mystics of all the creeds, attract us magnetically, and yet fail to satisfy. It would seem that the light of glory which they communicate is not actually the first light, but is also derived. They show forth certain transfigurations, such as a garden shows forth in the moonlight, when there are eyes to see. But in the last resource the garden is not large enough for the man, nor the *Imitatio* for his soul. A sense of deficiency and restriction is experienced by some travellers in the high Alps, and so also there is a sense of arrested experience in the records of those spiritual travellers who have returned from the secret Carmel. They have not encompassed the whole man in their pilgrimage. An omnipresent manhood fills Nature. It is not the dust of dead nations that we press beneath our feet, but the potentiality of the living humanities which supports us. The broken branch can cry out like the wounded man, and by the eyes of many animals we know that their root is in our root, that they also are led by a sacramental ministry, and that, like us, they will be brought forth in their due time. Man has a special ministry of the sacraments to some of these lesser brethren, and there is more than one sense in which we are saviours of men, since man is universal in Nature.

VEIL of Nature sacramental,
Thou art close but thou art thin,
And the inward transcendental
Glory canst at need let in ;
Lights engird the chosen head
From no sun of Nature shed.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And to see the veils dissolving
Need we travel fast or far,
Past the flashing suns revolving,
Onward to the furthest star?
Are they thinner, think you, friend,
Where the cosmic glories end?

Undetermined starry spaces,
Fill with joy your paths unknown!
But to catch the inward graces
Needs the inward sight alone;
Meanest places hold the spell
Of unfathom'd miracle.

Hence when any hour invites you,
Whether seemly eve's repose,
Or, if better this delights you,
Night august or hush'd moon-close;
Best when best your charm is found—
Pass into your garden ground.

There a sudden sense supernal
On the mind prepared shall fall,
As of haunted thought eternal
And great strangeness vesting all;
Grass and glebe and grove expound
Thin veil'd secrets latent round.

JAM NOLI TARDARE

Not in bowers of roses solely
 Shall the wondrous tale be told,
But plantations meek and lowly,
 Beds of burning marigold ;
Yet betwixt the lilies straight
Swings the visionary gate.

Not devoid of dream if blended
 Are the windflowers and the docks,
For myself I love a splendid
 Place of purple hollyhocks,
And my fancy knows the powers
Which lie rich in the sunflowers.

I could set you in my closes,
 With the seeing sense endow'd,
Where the weed is as the rose is,
 And the bird's lilt, low or loud,
Outward voices, clear and strong,
Worlds of rapture, worlds of song.

But for you a place of wonder
 Your own garden ground must be ;
'Twixt the trees that you stand under,
 Seeing what is yours to see :
In my garden seen aright,
All is scarlet and white light.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Of all flowers the bloom and splendour
Backward, forward, sweep and swing,
Light as pampas grass and slender,
Fringe the edge of the world's ring ;
As the wind-tides round them lave
Cups and patens, flame and wave.

But when eastward some moon rises
(Many moons have haunted there),
As the witchcraft pomp devizes,
They are virgins very fair,
In ecstatic motion driven
Towards the virgin born of heaven.

And an incense each exhaling
From a thurible ascends,
Drifts, a dim enchanted veiling,
Eastward as the dew descends :
Hence conceal'd in all that seems,
Truly human nature teems.

Yes, all Nature waits expecting—
Forest, floral hall and field—
For some vital word directing
Her those sleep-held forms to yield ;
Long expected, long deferr'd,
Come, thou great unutter'd Word !

JAM NOLI TARDARE

Then if man through far creation
Must the secret meaning make,
Fountain, centre, destination,
Let that secret soul awake,
And present the inmost plan—
Man in all and God in man !

While the Word of Words reposes
Far beyond the lip's control,
Till the fitting time discloses,
In the garden of the soul,
Let us dreamers day by day
In the outward gardens pray :

Pray that flesh divinely sifted
May discern the Word of power ;
Then transmuted Nature lifted
Shall confess the crowning hour ;
Putting weed and vesture by,
Manifest humanity !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

IN THOSE HEIGHTS

ARGUMENT.—The sense of loneliness which is inseparable from the great quests of the soul is to some extent illusory, or is at least initial. Many watchers protect us from every side. But it is the fear of this isolation which has often hindered and betrayed the high experiments. The inward world might not be less known at this day than the world without, which we have taken such pains to extend by our explorations, had we not been continually deterred by the dread of unaccompanied research. Other impediments have been already mentioned. The seven senses of mystic Nature should not be understood according to the convention of numbers, for they are economical in the same way that the sacraments of the Church are an economy summarising the kind of ministry which goes with man in his journey.

If sadness habit in the solitude
And liveness in the uplifted height ;
Stars beyond stars show light
Where few intrude.

Nor yet believe that sense through all repining
Yearns in the soul to share, withdrawn,
That light other than dawn
So far-off shining.

Who knoweth the rapture of exceeding thought
Beyond the covenant of speech,
Where thou art first to reach,
Of thy soul taught !

IN THOSE HEIGHTS

And wouldst thou forfeit freedom to explore
Those realms terrific and unknown,
Because thou goest alone
For evermore ?

Disconsolate perchance yet firm ascend,
Thou hast eternity to gain ;
The infinite domain—
That is thine end.

It lies above thee, spotless, cold, serene
And piercing as a polar wind,
But thou must quit to find
Seen for unseen.

Dissemble not the joy of this great quest,
Yet know that all of earthly bliss
Thou hast agreed to miss,
All human rest.

What others prize, on that thou dost not reckon,
What others mean is nought to thee ;
But hopes they dare not see
Rise up and beckon.

The simple ministry of sense is dead ;
No surface meanings Nature shows ;
But secrets none disclose
By thee are read.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

All things are merged into the sense unspoken,
And up through depths their prize concealing
A dim third sense appealing
Sends sign and token.

It lies with thine own will to penetrate
Still further in that daring field ;
What shall the seventh sense yield ?
O gorgeous state !

Seventh sense the Sabbath of far-cleaving soul—
When all the shining seas are travell'd,
And all the maze-drawn paths unravell'd—
Be thou our goal !

O sevenfold Nature, to the sevenfold man
Responding, set thy veils aside,
Thine inner self confide,
Thy deep-drawn plan !

Have we not follow'd in the height and deep
The uttermost abstruse invention
Of thy withheld intention,
Waking, asleep ?

Thou know'st because the outward sense is dumb
Sight does not satiate the eye,
Nor hearing satisfy,
Nor comfort come.

IN THOSE HEIGHTS

So through the pageant of the world we move
Demanding ever stronger spells,
Thy greater oracles
To search, to prove.

And if, when weaker sentiments invade,
The rigours of our wintry course,
Abstention and divorce
Make hearts afraid—

O then be with us and about us then,
And laying bare thine inmost heart,
Make us, when far apart,
Dispense with men !

So shall we not life's outward semblance ask
When face to face with thy true being,
Who know beyond all seeing
What seen things mask.

The wise are lone amidst the concourse loud,
And we who scan thy mystic pages
More lone midst all the sages
Than they in crowd :

Alone translated to Olympian places,
Because if adorations mount
Past common worship's fount
Shine no gods' faces.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

To simple sense whom signs alone concern
Nature her sacraments dispenses,
But oft denies the senses
Which signs discern.

On simple souls the Church confers communion,
But him who antitype descries,
And type as type, denies
Her rites, her union.

Therefore be with us—as thou canst defending ;
Light through thine echoing halls ; we are,
Beyond those regions, far
Call'd and ascending !

OUT OF THE FULNESS

OUT OF THE FULNESS

ARGUMENT.—Many records of Eucharistic experience will have informed many, who do not, perhaps, realise it for all that, of the true inwardness of the experience mentioned at the close of this poem. What the Vision is, and why it connects with rest, are questions which are therefore very simply answered. It is the awaking of the consciousness to an eternal presence within itself. The rest is of that kind which is at the source of activity, namely, the rest of the centre. A certain recognition of the state, which is like a land that is very far away, may be attained by removing from the mind the conception of location or environment, and of time, by presenting to ourselves, as ourselves, the simple notion of activity functioning by an inherent necessity. The vehicle of this sacramental experience is an intense light, heat and rapture. The sense of extension may be lost in a very curious manner by those who are sufficiently self-instructed to make the picture inward and not objective to the mind's eye, which the mind will invariably do with a fatal facility unless there is a strong compulsion of the will drawing in the concept to the centre.

To pass from life aside,
And deep on one design,
Less stated than implied
By Nature's heart, incline ;
And passing thro', to use
A language long unheard :
These make it vain to muse
On tender glance or word—

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Ask nursing heart of song
Where wingèd thoughts may sleep ;
Such nests of love belong
To dreams less grave and deep.

Shall lover, lacing arms
With maid in moonlight, praise
These poems for their charms,
To him attribute bays
Who holds such virgin grace
Can none in truth discern,
Nor clasp with close embrace
Howe'er his ardours burn.
Yea, though she yielding lies.
She from his grasp has fled
'Midst secret mysteries
Of body and bridal bed.
Will she that heart's spouse greet
By terms to mine akin,
Who does not dream how sweet
That prize she hides within ?

On matron's household ground
What ardours could I stir
From mystic songs profound,
Too sad and strange for her ?
She reigns how calm, how safe,
A star above the wild,
A moon where waters chafe,
Which mellows and makes mild.

OUT OF THE FULNESS

Her microcosmos, wrought
By her own hand, she leads,
Quick for the day's import,
Strong for the moment's needs.
But life's eternal sense
Ranks in her sober head
Of lesser consequence
Than the guest's well-air'd bed.

What boots mine art's device
To men on 'change, whose fate
Hangs on a closing price,
A rise, a discount-rate?
The social webs enmesh,
The webs constrain and drive,
And toil all human flesh
Scourges to keep alive.
Why squander time and breath
Who can that wills take heed?
Life is all whirl and death,
If that be rest, God speed!
E'en thou, O priest, content
In thy peculiar school
To class each sacrament
By number, name and rule!—
Is word of mine endow'd
With skill to catch thine ear,
Are seven in Rome allow'd
And three in England here?

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

But if, accepting those,
From Nature's teeming store
My secret song disclose
Some saving thousands more ;
Nor yet of both kinds these
Exclusively, or one,
But of all stars, all seas,
Each element, each sun ;
In all a gate flung back
For grace abounding still,
Floodgate and torrent's track,
Where all partake at will—
How sound my tidings then ?
Stars speak to stars, but thou,
O priest-voice, leading men !
And this voice mingle—how ?

All things on sea and land
Speak to my soul, and each
Blythe voice I understand,
Answer in flowing speech.
Quantities, measures, rhymes,
Harp-string and organ note
Surround me at all times ;
Stars that in ether float,
Sun in his flaming course,
All the world's lights, and all
Darkness and tempest's force,
Thrill me with frequent call.

OUT OF THE FULNESS

Bear I no tidings true
Which all might hear and learn,
Plain Nature, simple view
And little child discern?
Soul, high encompass'd, tell—
Surely the world can know!—
How the small fonts as well
As great with mercy flow;
Grace to the humblest field
Of daily life is lent,
For each is sign'd and seal'd
With marks of sacrament.
In Wall Street dare we say
An office God disowns?
Why, angels pass that way,
As by the masters' thrones!
The keen winds sweeping there
Do proud hosannas sing,
Yea, even as in the fair
White city of the King!

But ah! those signs august,
For ever far and nigh
Through all life's fume and dust!
The sacrament of high
Aspiring human love,
Spotless and awful, raised
To one White Throne above,
And there undimm'd, undazed!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And ah ! most blessed feast
Of wonder, to behold
The sacraments no priest
Has ever bought or sold,
Nor saint need e'er dispense !
Ah ! utterly to feel
With fulness deep, intense,
Whatever veils conceal,
Beyond all type and veil,
Deep within deep, far down,
Yet not beyond all hail,
The Vision and the Crown !

Hence ¹to myself I speak,
But not with selfish mind ;
Yea, rather do I seek
Some brothers of my kind,
Who shall discern the drift
Of this my mystic tongue ;
For them my voice I lift,
To them my songs are sung.
They know these measures roll
Set to a sacred rite,
Perform'd within the soul
'Midst incense, pomp and light.
I know what stars have shone
To soothe what seas unblest ;
I fix my faith upon
The Vision, and I rest.

THE HAUNTED DIAL

THE HAUNTED DIAL

ARGUMENT.—Following from what has been said, one may even dare to hint that among all the sacraments of Nature, that which most shows forth the source and term of the soul is the pageant of a vortex of flame. It brings with it a recognition of rest and attainment, of delight at the heart of dread, which is offered by no other symbol among the forces of the universe. This recognition may be taken, from its intentness, to be very close at the roots of all experience.

WHAT can'st thou tell me, O dial!
Of the days which have been and are,
A mystic procession upflowing,
As star from the East follows star?
I have come through the past from afar,
Yet the vistas stretch solemn and straight;
Can the mind forecall, at the end of all,
What things may befall and wait?

O ever as heaven moves round thee
Thy slow shade forward steals!
It tells of the days and their sequence
But nought of their source reveals,
Nor all that their end conceals;
Before, behind thee a blank unseen,
At a pageant of days in a mystic haze
Thou dost stand and gaze, between.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Therefore thou art as our symbol,
As if in man's image art thou ;
For looking before and after,
We know not of whence nor how,
Nor whither our trending now ;
But the space between with its groves and
flowers,
But the gloom and glance of the time's
advance,
These are thine with their chance and ours.

Here then in the copse and woodland
And here in the glade, besprent
With a glory of scarlet tulips,
I take thy sacrament ;
For I see with a heart content
That the signs decreed by the common
mind,
Which are none to me, are renounced by thee
For the deeps we see behind.

Thou art not as some think vainly
The type of a wing's swift rush,
The sweep of a flood-tide passing,
The vortex and the crush,
But the solemn throb and the hush
Of the great durations which ne'er diminish,
And for evermore are behind, before,
And will not pass o'er nor finish.

THE HAUNTED DIAL

What then is the cloud of a moment
Which hides thy ghostly hand?
The bringer of rain in summer
To a thirsty and panting land;
Herald at most of the storm and grand
Ravage and battle on plain and hill;
Yet brief is the space ere a moon's bright
face
Shall the height and the base make still!

Say what dost thou write in the darkness?
Of star or moon record?
The light of all brightness only
Writes on thy mystic board!
Pass, Light withdrawn and restored!
Yet may the infinite, perfect beam,
Intransitory, adorn thy story
With more than glory of dream!

Ah, spell me thy hauntings ever!
Haunted by light thou art,
And time with its changes noting
Dost stand from both apart;
Like the inmost human heart,
One truth confessing 'midst all that
shows,
The depth and height of the splendour
bright,
When the light of all light o'erflows.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

From home eternal to home eternal,
High soul of man impell'd,
Fling too thine ancient watchwords,
In spite of the light withheld !
Walker in shadows of eld,
Searcher of God by the ways unknown,
The storm and cloud to withstand endow'd,
Unto light being vow'd alone!

O secret of light supernal !
O Dial of God's great sun !
What unto thee shall be darkness
When darkness is over and done ?
I seize as the soft hours run
A hint of the haunting of souls involved
Where the light rays beat, and the centres
meet,
In the great white heat dissolved.

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA

ARGUMENT.—The sea is the most boundless, most catholic, most ascertainable and obvious of all the natural sacraments, and it is in this sense that they are said in the poem to originate from and return to it. Unlike fire, it does not convey a sense of rest, but rather one of action unfinished, and it is therefore here typified as the course of all our quest. For the same reason it is the most eloquent of all the sacraments, and that which most nearly touches on the translatable state. It does not seem impossible that a great poet might rise up among us on a day with the sea's rendering. The least of us can gather something at its margin.

I

A voice in the dark imploring,
A sweet flute play'd in the light,
An organ pealing and pouring
Through the world's cathedral height—
And again the charge and the flight,
The clash and hurtle of fight.
O thou art grand, thou art lonely,
In thy melody, in thy moan,
With the sense of the world unknown
Filling the known world only!

Great voice which invokes and urges
The strenuous souls to strive,
Gather thy waves, thy surges,
Thy breakers heap and drive,

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Thy long tides marshal and lead ;
The little ripple shall plead
In little whispers on golden sand
And further out on the rocky strand,
Where white crests crumble and white spume
scourges,
Thy drums and tocsins and horns shall blow,
Thy long reverberant beatings come and
go,
From where thy surf-line in sky-line merges
To where by sounding buffet and blow,
Blare of peans and muffle of dirges,
Capes which crumble and torn cliffs know
The strength and stress of thine ebb and
flow—
Waste and know thee and thee confess.
We do not know thee, we own, we know ;
But our soul's might in thy might rejoices,
Our hearts respond to thy wild vast voices !
Thought with its fleetness swift wings from the
course of thee ;
Tongues in the speech of thee ;
Hope at the source of thee ;
Fire from the gleams of thee, strength from the
force of thee ;
Width through the reach of thee ;
Depth from thy deepness, unfathom'd by plum-
met,
And height from thy night-sky's impervious
summit—

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA

Omen and sign !

These have we drawn from thee, these do we bring
to thee ;

Nature's great sacraments rise from and spring to
thee.

All other ministries—sun when 'tis shrouded,
Moon in the morning light meagre and pallid,
Stars overclouded—

All are invalid

For spaces and seasons, but thou,
Thy greatest ministry is always now.
O sacramental sea, terrible sea,
Thine are the words of the mystery—
Grand-word and pass-word and number thine,
Grades and degrees to the height advancing,
And the golden dawn and the glory glancing
Far and away to the secret shrine !

II

There shall be no more sea, they say,
On Nature's great coronation day,
When the Bridegroom comes to the Bride.
Shall earth then lose her sacraments of tide—
Motion, measures tremendous, echoing far and
long—
Glisten, sparkle and glow, ring of an endless song ?
O words prophetic, ye princes and priests attend,
This is the Quest's end promised, the marvellous
end

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Of all our voyage and venture since time began :
To the Quest for ever the sea's voice calleth
 man,
And this in a mystery world by only the side-light
 broken—
That a Quest there is and an end—is the single
 secret spoken
 All over that vibrant main :
Of the Quest for ever it tells, of the ends and dooms
 to gain.

I rise in the morning early, I vest myself in
 haste ;
I pass over highway and byway, the fielded land and
 the waste ;
As much as a man may prosper, all eager I climb
 and go down,
For this day surely meseems that the Quest may
 receive a crown.
To and fro in the search I hurry, and some men bid
 me narrate
What means this fever, and why so eager, and
 whether their help I wait ;
Not as yet they know of the Quest, although they
 are questing early and late.
And others, my brothers, the same great end pur-
 suing,
Stop me and ask, What news? Fellow Craft, is there
 anything doing?

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA

Is there light in the East anywhere, some sign set
forth in a star,
Or a louder watchword utter'd from over the
harbour bar?
And above the light swift music of all its fleeting
joys
The world spreads daily through length and breadth,
the great Quest's rumour and noise—
Who sought it first, who longest, and who has at-
tain'd almost—
All this in town and in village its heralds proclaim
and post;
But the sun goes down and the night comes on for
a space to quench endeavour,
And star after star through the spaces far takes the
track of the Quest for ever!

III

So forth in the hush and the haunting I pass, even I,
to the shore,
And the sea in the sunshine crooning pervades me
with deep unrest,
For it speaks of the Quest, of the Quest,
With a torrent of tongues in a thousand
tones
And a far-off murmur of viewless zones,
Old and new, new and old, of the Quest,
Amen, it speaks evermore!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The whole wide world of voice and of rushing
 sound

You may seek through vainly,
 But never a voice is found
To search the soul with such deep unrest,
 Or to speak of the Quest
 So plainly.

Then surely thither the Quest's way lies
 And a man shall not err therein,
Yet not on the surface surely seen with eyes,
For thence the swallow has come and thereon the
 sea-mew flies,
And the haunting ships with tremulous sails, we
 learn,
For ever about it hover, pass to their place and
 return,
And over the wastes thereof the tempests ravage
 and burn,
Or the sea-spouts spin,
 But not of these is the Quest;
In the deep, in the deep it lies—
 Ah, let me plunge therein!

But the caves of the deep are silent, and the halls
 of the deep are still;
Not there is the clarion bird
Or the wind's loud organ heard,
 No blythe voice cries on the hill.

HOW I CAME TO THE SEA

A sail, a sail for the seaman, sailing East and West ;
And a horse for the rover when he goeth over the
dappled down and road !

But a man may better remain in his own abode
Who is vow'd to the wonderful end which crowns
the Quest ;

For sail and compass, and coach and steed and the rest,
The King's highway, and the beaten track, and the
great sea-road—

Are these the way of the Quest ?

Travel, travel and search, eyes that are eager glisten
(To-day is perchance too late),

I stand on the marge and listen
(To-morrow is stored with fate) ;

I stand on the marge and wait.

I know that the deep with its secret is a sacramental
hymn ;

Enough that it speaks to me vaguely with meanings
reserved and dim,

Saga and rune of eld ;

Enough that its volume and grandeur hint the great
tale withheld ;

While far through the depth and the darkness, the
echoing halls of the soul

Reply to the roar and the roll,

Themselves in the mystery tongue,

All the world over sung,

As the sibyl awaking from dream

In oracles mentions the theme

That has never been spoken or spell'd.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS

ARGUMENT.—There should be no need to say that the sacraments are ministrant and not explanatory. Their explanation is the call of the prophet, who is also the poet, and, as already said, no elucidation can be more than experimental and approximate. In the last resource the mystery always rests. It is the same with the dark or averse sacraments, the ministry of evil. And this is why faith is the most abiding seal of man's life in the universe. There is a very real sense in which the whole life of man is a recurring act of faith, by and in which he is alive. The warrant of faith is in experience, and although this kind of testimony is also recurrent incessantly in the diurnal story of the ages, it has vast fields of untried investigation, some of which have been partly entered, as we know by the annals of sanctity.

AWAKE, revolving many troublous themes,
Because of Thee I suffer, and in dreams
Am darkly haunted. Yea, with soul adread
I must confess thee, and, inclining head,
To thine admitted majesty defer.
How sovereign wast thou who wast Lucifer !
And all God's world bears testimony still
To the dark law of thy perverted will.
Oh, in the days when, first by light renew'd,
I found all Nature and her life endued
With blessed sacraments, at bed and board
The uncreated beauty I adored

THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS

Through shining veils, and galaxied about
My path God's omens glitter'd and gave out
Deep meaning and high promise, which compell'd
At once all avenues of sense. I held
All strangeness sacred, and, as flame in flint,
Sought God conceal'd in every mystery hint.
Too soon, perchance, on moonless nights like this,
When all the order of the world we miss
Amidst thick darkness, as a man his way,
Whom storm surprises in the waste astray,
Black aspects of the sacramental scheme
Are thrust in roughly on our mystic dream,
And midst the sacred ministries proclaim
A baleful presence and a sign of shame ;
That in the great hierarchic chant of things,
One evil voice continually sings ;
And when our mystic nourishment we take,
That cups are poison'd which our thirst should
slake.

To thee, O Lucifer, for our own woe,
Are many sacraments reserved, I know,
And many others in life's holy place
Exposed for worship as a sign of grace !
Thy baptisms of water and of fire,
Thine ordinations and thine unctions dire
Hast thou, and efficacies strange subsist,
And a rare savour, in thy Eucharist,
Where lying latent, under semblance dim,
Thou dost win entrance and abide in him

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Who cometh kneeling to thine altar rail ;
And thou hast many priests within the pale
Of thy communion, licensed to dispense
Thy mystic treasures ; and when men go hence,
All seal'd and fortified with thy last rites,
How oft they pass expecting thy delights,
And the good things which thou hast stored to
see,
Longing they look and fall asleep in thee.

How in those sacraments whose order fair
Is like a wall about us, everywhere
With life our life environs, and in them,
As the hills stand around Jerusalem,
God hidden, in all ages and all lands,
With a great power about his people stands,
Came this invasion of the evil sign ?
Prophets show forth in vain and seers divine ;
The old-world legends dimly strive to tell ;
And the lone thinkers on the problem dwell,
Break up the answering words and form again ;
We must confess where no one can explain—
We must confess at least who speak in song ;
We know that mischief and misrule and wrong
Befell the garden of the soul's content ;
We know not who laid waste its fair extent,
Who fill'd the springs with bitterness, who broke
The music up, and to such sad-eyed folk,
Haunted with memories of some former sin,
Turn'd those who once abode in joy therein.

THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS

Yet many fruits and many flowers are left,
Nor is the garden of all lights bereft ;
Sacred to incense still are places found,
And songs do also in the garden sound ;
Nor, Master, yet so densely intervene
The flaming clouds of any sunset scene,
That cloud or light can veil thee or make known ;
And being mindful of our star and throne,
All attestations of desire and awe,
Thy words flame-written on the soul, her law
And that great longing wherewith all are bent
To get behind the veil of sacrament,
We do believe, past every veil and gate,
That to the centre we shall penetrate,
Which yields no form, nor is by form express'd,
And that this centre is our end and rest.

PART II

*OF THE MORALITY OF THE
LOST WORD*

Διάγνωσις

WITH a measure of light and a measure of shade,
The world of old by the Word was made ;
By the shade and light was the Word conceal'd,
And the Word made flesh to the world reveal'd
By the Word obscured of the outward sense
Is the Lost Word sought in the search intense,
Through a world of words which are void and vain,
By the widow'd world of the soul in pain ;
And never while shadow and light are blended
Shall the world's Word-Quest and its woe be ended,
And never the world of its wounds made whole
Till the Word made flesh be the Word made soul.

THE CHILDREN OF THE MYSTERY

SOROR FIDES RECTA *The Widow*

THE SONS OF THE WIDOW—

FRATER SAPIENS DOMINABITUR

ASTRIS *Astrologer (Astrologus)*

FRATER EST IN MERCURIO . . . *Spagyrite (Spagyricus)*

FRATER BETH ELOHIM *Intendant of the Building*
(Procurator)

FRATER SECUNDUM ORDINEM . . *Grand Pontiff (Pontificus)*

SOROR STELLIFERA *Child of the Second Birth, or*
Daughter of the House

FRATER PACIFICUS

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS

COUNT PHENIX

Chief Huntsman, Warden of the House, Lesser Brethren, Servants
and Pages, Chorus of Suppliants

The Scene is the House of Long Sorrow ; the Place, in the Land of
the Living ; the Time, yesterday, to-day, and—for ever ?

THE LOST WORD

OF THE MORALITY OF THE LOST WORD

ARGUMENT.—This poem will perhaps be regarded as intelligible by assuming that it pictures in its form of dramatic mystery the declension of a great Church or ecclesiastical system from which the divine gift and leading have been taken, and, decaying gradually through a cycle of human thought, its doom is sealed at last by the confession of a false deliverer and the sacrifice of spiritual intuition symbolised by the Daughter of the House. Those who accept this view must account the actual consanguinity instituted between the Church or Mother, with the priest as son, and the star-reader and the alchemist, as decided anachronisms. But such an institution may also be taken to indicate that the poem has a different meaning, one, however, which must be left to the discernment of a few readers because it is hostile to the spirit of the age. A single hint can be given. Those who know that, apart from operations of the rational spirit, there is a higher gift of knowledge communicated through one simple and eternal convention sacramentally to the soul of man, will know what complexities of convention are symbolised by the House of Long Sorrow, and that the immolation of the Daughter of the House has been enacted through the ages. They will know, in spite of some inferences which might seem irresistible from the poem itself, that the *Soror Stellifera* died as *virgo intacta*, as it was impossible that she should do otherwise. She would bear, however, the imputation of sin; and hence the imputation in the poem. Hence also the lacuna noticeable between the second and third acts, when something is supposed to intervene, but it is rest rather than activity.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

ACT I

SCENE.—*A vaulted hall in the House of Long Sorrow.*

The walls are damp and peeling ; patches of old pictures show beneath the crumbling plaster. The proportions and design are noble, but the plinths and pilasters are mouldering, and the old carvings are defaced. In places the roof has fallen and gnarled ivy hangs through, waving in the wind. The hall is hung with tattered banners and standards bearing faded emblazonments and many royal arms and devices. Below these are other banners and pennons, but new, common and gaudy, with tawdry designs and high colourings. On the eastern side a great gothic window is draped with blackened cloth of gold, so that all light is excluded.

The WIDOW, old and furrowed, wearing a gown of rusty black with long train, is discovered on a high dais under the eastern window, with the Sons of the WIDOW grouped round her, as if for ritual. She is counting the beads of a rosary and intoning between the decades after the manner of plain-chant.

THE WIDOW.

Except the Lord the House shall build

But foolish pains take those who labour ;

Except the Lord to guard have will'd

Deflects the shaft and turns the sabre ;

THE LOST WORD

Watchmen pacing to and fro,
Sad-eyed hodders climbing slow,
Have their barren labour's woe.

But when the House which His decree
So firmly built and strongly warded
Is left to storms of land and sea,
Of His eyes' light and power defrauded—
O more than woe of toil in vain !
O waiting which is worse than pain
Till He come to His own again !

[The chimes ring in the belfry.]

What hour strikes now ?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The hour of saffron wings.

The morning breaks.

THE WIDOW.

What morning ?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Of the stars
Which sing together, of the promised light
Which shall not pass, of sorrow fled away,
Of weeping lifted into steadfast joy—
King's morrow and the Word restored in full.

THE WIDOW.

What day is this ?

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The day of need which ends
In God's great chance embraced. It is Thy day,
O God, the tide of harvest and ripe fruit,
And all the leaves are green in all the world :
The old hopes throng the heart !

THE WIDOW.

Do the dead wait ?

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

With still white faces to the East.

THE WIDOW.

And they

That live ?

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

They wait : the hush'd, expectant cry
Beats in their hearts, like a bird's wings before
The bird bursts skyward crying melody.

THE WIDOW.

And is the old house ready ? Is it swept
And garnish'd ? Are the banners on the walls ?
Do all the ancient watchwords from the gates,
The four-square towers, the battlements, the roofs
Ring proudly to the corners of the earth,
A thousand voices as a single voice,
Proclaiming to the City and the World
One faith, one hope and one expectant joy
Prolong'd throughout the ages ?

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The house waits.

THE WIDOW.

Unbar the western windows, open wide
The doors and gates, proclaim upon the steps :
The house is ready and the heirs thereof.
O dead who fell asleep in the faith of Him
And live therein ! O living, stay'd about
With the hope of Him, now dead of His desire !
O falling house by love of Him held up !
Cry at the doors, we wait ! Cry at the gates,
Our faith is living still—the dead alive
Because of it, the living cannot die
Because of it, and the old house is strong,
Master of all our hearts, because of it !
Cry, Come ! Cry, Come !

FRATER VIATORIVS.

We have cried it in our hearts,
Have cried it with our voices through the woods
And forests ; the earth rings with it, the earth
Is warm and rich and lush because of it :
Its echoes move for ever with the winds
About the rolling sea.

THE WIDOW.

What sign is there ?

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The sign of morning in the eastern sky ;
The sign of fire and light on forest-trees,
Through all the landscape to the water's edge ;
The sign of sanguine mist upon the sea,
Sparkle and dancing wave.

THE WIDOW.

No sign in these !
Days break as hearts break for the eyes' vain watch ;
Hearts break as bread breaks at the dreadful board
Where his high seat stands vacant, where his hand
Dispenses not.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Come, let us seek the Word !

CUSTOS INVISIBILIS.

The Word is lost.

THE WIDOW.

Who crieth in our hearts
Till vaulted roofs repeat, and corridors
In muffled echoes and whispering galleries
With mournful murmurs far reverberate :
"Lost," and "the Word is lost," and so return
Back to the heart that message of all woe
Which sinks lead-molten in the depths thereof,
And once again upwelling from the depths
The sense of loss cries horridly throughout
The heart and house.

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Chain up the gates without
And bar the doors within, be windows closed
And all the draperies drawn about the ways
Of light and sound, lest echoes should go forth
And in the towns and villages proclaim :
The Word is lost.

FRATER VIATORIUS.

We hush our hearts in vain,
For the heart shouts, and all the world has heard
Long ere it spoke within us, that the Word
Is lost : we hide it from ourselves alone.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

We know at least its legend lives in faith :
I will consult the sacred oracles.

[He goes forth with lights and incense before him.]

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Enters with her train of virgins.

Seek not the living amidst the dead : the Word
Has risen and gone forth. It is not here ;
In the free world it dwells and in the Soul.
This house of clay and perish'd memories
Shall know the voice no more. Come forth, all ye
That truly seek it, from these walls come forth !
Here is no longer an abiding-place.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE WIDOW.

Peace, dreaming daughter of a later day!
This is the holy palace of the King,
Whence his Word only from the first of things
Has sounded down creation's echoing aisles;
And if beneath the chancel and behind
The altar, tabernacle or mercy-seat,
A little while slumbers the voice withdrawn,
And there is silence through the galleries
Of universal worship, O again
A little while and forth its music peals,
With all the worlds restored in all their joy!

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Once in the glorious past the Word was ours,
And the King tarried in our courts and halls.
We had no need to speak it when the King
Was with us in the morning of the world.
But the King left us when the sun was high
In the house of beauty; yea, in the noon of time,
And bade us keep the Word, his Word of Life,
Till His sure coming at some good hour ere night.
Then did we treasure it a little space,
A little hour, a little age of time.
Ah, sadness! After the Word slipp'd away
Out of our hearts, but tarried on our lips—
How long? A silver moment! Then it died
As a dewdrop on the petals of the rose,
And when we found our lips were crack'd and dry,
We sought to speak it, but the Word was lost.

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PROCURATOR.

Ill has it fared in the old house since then !

THE WIDOW.

O, all the world was ours ! We ruled it all
By the Word's might.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But this has pass'd from us.
In vain we kept the secret of our loss,
And put forth sounds to imitate the Word,
And all the while waited and call'd on Him
Who could restore our treasure.

THE WIDOW.

And our reign.
But now our need becomes a woeful want ;
The naked waste is richer, the green burn
Has brighter depths ; all worship lost to us,
We are bywords only in the place of life.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The age has left us, as the ebbing sea
Leaves arid sand-hills dry and white at noon—
All place, all ministry, all meaning gone.

THE WIDOW.

As spins the desolated, lifeless moon,
All sharp with lights and shadows, and devoid

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Of atmosphere, our nimbus slipp'd from us,
Veils rent, our sacraments as things of scorn,
Naked we stand, and laidly and ashamed . . .
See ye no signs?

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The sign of Nature's light,
Strong, splendid, lightly leaping—the great sun
Comes forth. All stars have ceased to prophesy.

THE WIDOW.

I seem to stand upon an open door's
Dark threshold ; nothing shows to me beyond,
And yet a sense of expectation fills
My shrivell'd heart, at once with hope and dread.
If skies are silent, in the heaven of mind
I hear strange sounds and ominous reports.
A mystic whisper hisses through the house.
Hearken, Beth Elohim, my son, my son !
What dost thou hear ?

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The swing of closing doors
Down distant corridors, the creak of rusty gates
Startled to move on unaccustom'd hinges,
And spread through all the throbbing of the tense
And sickly silence of great galleries,
Of rooms untrodden and long cathedral aisles.

THE LOST WORD

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The measure and the number of the law
Which built the house, of meaning, virtue now
Long voided.

THE WIDOW.

Are there tidings of the night?
Have any watch'd, have any work'd therein?
Does thine arch-secret quiver on the verge
Of knowledge, by thy furnace-doors, my son,
Spagyricus?

FRATER SPAGYRICUS.

As dying tapers dart
And quiver and are quench'd, till now I see
My secret is the secret of the King,
And still is hidden in a mystery.

THE WIDOW.

Our woe is with us and the want thereof.

FRATER SPAGYRICUS.

We put red gold into the crucible.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

And here is lead.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Gnomon and astrolabe—
We calculate the shadow of our loss.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Divining ever and discerning nought.

THE WIDOW.

*As FRATER SECUNDUM ORDINEM returns with
lights and incense borne before him.*

Call on the Master in the morning ; chant
Thy masses ; consecrate the wine and bread.
Perchance He stands without the door, perchance
Will knock between the pauses of the bell,
The elevation and the Agnus-time.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

By apostolic virtue vested in
This servant of the servants of the Lord
Set in the Master's seat, I do proclaim—
The Word is found ; commit it to your hearts ;
Proclaim it through the city and the world.
As o'er the sacred host, with bended head,
Cry, "INRI," the most holy Word long sought.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The House of God is empty and up to let.

AN ACOLYTE.

There is no wine to mingle.

THE WIDOW.

O tears of Christ !
Uplift the chalice, let the air distil

THE LOST WORD

Blood drops therein ; our sorrow's bloody sweat
Has thicken'd it. Extremity ere now
Has wrung a miracle : one sign, one sign !

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

The world is full of cyphers and of signs.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But all the Keys we wrought to loose their gates
Have broken in the locks ; the master-key
Is missing.

THE WIDOW.

Fortitude and patience ! Hope
May perish ; but, erect and swerving not,
I call upon the King with burning heart,
And that cry, prevalent o'er time and space,
Goes searching up and down the boundless world,
And it will find Him out. O soon or late,
Touch'd with the woe thereof, the King will come—
Heart, beyond deepest heart—is nigh perchance !

THE WARDEN OF THE HOUSE.

Our messengers are scouring all the ways.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But ah ! what tidings ?

A MESSENGER (*entering*).

There is fire and sword,
And pest is ravaging the place of life.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Strange fingers trace strange words on every wall.

THE WIDOW.

Mine eyes are dim ; I cannot see them. Read !

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

They flicker, like the firelight in the dark ;
They come and go. I cannot read them. See :
The ancient ensigns wave in the wind's fresh gust ;
Perchance it is the shadows which they cast.

THE WIDOW.

Fails e'en thy faith, rooted in earth of stars !
Perchance the wind is writing the Lost Word.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Strange characters of tongue conceal'd too long—
How long !

THE WIDOW.

Pronounce the watchword of our strength.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

The King cometh.

THE WIDOW.

How it echoes from the past !
We went to meet Him out of Egypt, call'd
By prophets forth and urged by dreadful signs.

THE LOST WORD

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Our tribes were scatter'd in the wilderness.

THE WIDOW.

We sought Him ; Calvary and Golgotha
Loom'd on us in the night of our distress.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

But when the clouds were rifted by a light
Red as the wrath of God, scarlet as shame,
We saw Him crown'd with thorns and cross-en-
throned.

THE WIDOW.

They noised Him far abroad, who died and rose :
He left us with the Word upon His lips.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Too lightly graven in our hearts, too light.

THE WIDOW.

We went again into the wilderness
And heard the holy echoes of that Word
In Thebaid caves, on breathless Carmel tops.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

They call'd us forth to worship : He is there :
He sits in Rome. And we received our King
In poison'd hosts and Borgia chalices.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

They snatch'd his chalice from our lips, they gave
A mutilated Christ ; they rent the House
Of God with fell dissensions on the Word,
And with the letter and dead symbols made
An empty war-cry, for the Word was lost.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

And now the stays are taken from the house ;
All men pass over on the further side,
Lest they be buried in the fall thereof.

THE WIDOW.

But we remain under the sinking roof,
Nursing the watchword in our hearts : The King
Cometh ! Crying the watchword on our lips :
He comes. O surely in this need extreme
At length He comes.

THE WARDEN.

The house is falling.

THE WIDOW.

Let
The King come to His ruins.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Were it well
To question now ? Perchance the King will come
Did stars, prophetic of the fate of man
Or fate dispensing, ever heed or spare ?

THE LOST WORD

Man working only with some law of grace
Believed he ruled them to a milder end,
But in the last resource the rule is theirs.
And man has hedged himself about and made
A magic ring of prayer, has dress'd himself
To subtle combat, has set star to star,
Check'd destiny by God's will and his own,
And said : I conquer ; but the stars, serene
And sure, still span the threads of fate together,
And when the mesh was drawn he strove in vain.
So also we who put the Holy Word
To auction in the past ; who bought and sold
And traffick'd in it till the sacred gift
Became a byword ; who gave out false words ;
Who utter'd counterfeit and worthless coin
As true mint under warrant of the King ;
Have check'd and countercheck'd the wrath of Him
With prayers and watches and humilities,
Saying : the King will come, the King forgives !
Perchance the King will come in wrath alone,
Perchance a strong delusion comes instead,
Perchance 'twere better did we abrogate
The rite of old which memorised our loss,
Crying no more : Come, let us seek the Word !
But saying rather : Since the Word is lost,
Come forth from this old House !

FRATER PROCURATOR.

A fissure yawns
From base to roof upon the southern side.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The very rats in corridors and lofts
Make sudden leaps for safety ; the blind hound
Slinks howling down the stairway ; underneath
His feet, which falter, all the winding steps
Tremble and creak.

THE WARDEN.

We cannot save the house ;
We yet may save ourselves. Come forth !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

The King
Shall find us camp'd amidst the meadow-sweet
In this fair spring-time under fairest sky.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Non nobis, Domine : non nobis. We
Have loved the Lord's House and the place where
once

His glory minister'd. For this last time
Flectamus genua. The House hath swerved.
Levate. We have kept His doctrines sure
Till now the House of Doctrine overthrown
Expels us. Therefore, Lord, impute it not
For sin to us if with reluctant steps
We quit Thy Holy Place and fix our ark
Of refuge where foundations cannot split,
Or roof-tree fall, or vaulted roofs give way,
Till Thy Lost Word at end of all return
And wreck Thy world of Nature, as this house
Of grace is wreck'd.

THE LOST WORD

THE WARDEN.

O ye who would be saved
Come out of her !

THE WIDOW.

Nay, rather, seek the Word !

THE WARDEN.

The house is in its agony. Come forth !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

The Word has pass'd into the world without ;
It fondles green leaves in the sunlight, sighs
Among the floral wonders of the fields,
And lifts the light voice of the brooks and birds
To rushing music. Hark, and far away
Resounds it in the organ of the sea !

THE WIDOW.

Come, let us seek the Word !

CHIEF HUNTSMAN (*enters*).

There is no corn
In stall or stable left : all creatures starve.

THE WIDOW.

Our need increases from a narrow track
To now a bridle path, and now again
It opens out into a broad high road,
Down which the steeds and coaches of the King
Roll smoothly. The King cometh.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE WARDEN.

We have watch'd
With trimm'd lamps through the night : the oil is
spent :
We have no money.

THE WIDOW.

I besought a sign :
Here is the sign of our necessity.
He comes ere night.

*[There is a noise of many voices in the
four quarters of heaven.]*

FIRST VOICE.

The King is on the sea.

SECOND VOICE.

The King is in the hills.

SHEPHERDS (*entering*).

We have seen His star
Shine like a beacon in the East.

THIRD VOICE.

The King !

A STRANGER (*enters*).

The Word is found.

A PAGE OF THE GATE.

It is May-morning now.

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Meseems, the world is one great incense-pot
Which swings about the altar of the sun.

FRATER DIACONUS (*enters with aspergillus*).

The plain chant throbs through the cathedral aisles;
A hand unseen is on the organ keys:
Unearthly notes stream from string'd instruments.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Refloret omnia: we knew thy day
Would come.

THE WIDOW (*rising*).

Our enemies confounded stand,
But Thou hast kept Thy servants and Thy sons
From shame.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Our foot is on the world's neck now:
Our heels shall grind the serpents of the world.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Lord, we have kept Thy presence in our hearts!

A HERALD (*enters*).

The King, the King, the true Legitimate!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE WIDOW.

O Lord, O Lord that we desired so !

AN ACOLYTE (*enters*).

A voice behind the altar has cried :

The King !

SEXTON (*enters*).

There are strange lights among the crypts.

THE WIDOW.

The dead

Light tapers for the tripods and the shrines.

ANOTHER ACOLYTE (*enters*).

A great white hand has kindled from the roof
The great pasch candle.

THE WIDOW.

It is Easter-Tide.

Bid the bells ring ; bid beacon fires on all
The hills about blaze high to tell the ships
At sea, and signal to all villages ;
Bid all the villages and lonely ships
Far out respond with beacons and with lights :
The stars shall know the coming of the King.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Who cries the King, sweet mother ? To the soul
He only comes. When voices on the hills

THE LOST WORD

Proclaim His presence, whether East or West,
He bids us heed them not. The soul alone,
From all the quarters of her wide domain,
Shall know His coming when the King returns.

THE WIDOW.

Void not His presence when He knocks without !
O not in shadow, type or sign He comes !
No subtle essence in the sap of life,
No change of order working in the heart :
He comes, a man like us.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Comes woe, comes loss !

A MAID (*enters*).

We have clean sheets of flax to dight his bed.

THE WIDOW.

Make it white samite : He will make—the King !

A SCULLION (*enters*).

There is black bread upon the board.

THE WIDOW.

His word
Will make black bread white meat. O Golden
Dawn,
When all the order of the world renews !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

CELLARER (*enters*).

There is spring water in the wine-pails.

THE WIDOW.

He
Makes richer wine than ran in Galilee.

A VOICE (*without*).

The Word is found.

THE WIDOW.

Ah God, the King has come !

AN USHER.

The Count Phœnix.

THE LOST WORD

ACT II

SCENE.—*A certain garden in the House of Long Sorrow. At the further end there is a Grotto, and within this is a Shrine where there are many candles lighted. A procession passes through in the following order, and goes about to the Grotto: a CROSS-BEARER with ACOLYTES; two surpliced children with incense, and behind them veiled maidens strewing flowers; PRIESTS with golden copes, preceded by one bearing a sanctuary bell. It is the afternoon of a brilliant day in the summer. The WIDOW is seated under trees at some distance from the Shrine, on a high-backed chair with faded canopy overhead. The Sons of the WIDOW pass to and fro near her, speaking earnestly and with animated gestures. A spectator would observe that no heed is paid by any one to the religious rite which is beginning, and the chants of which mingle confusedly with the dialogue throughout all its length.*

HYMN.

A voice came out of the South and fell,
With a pleasant rain, O Israel !
And a second spring there came to thee,

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

A sowing-time, and the goodly sheaves,
Before the fall of the autumn leaves,
We have look'd to see.

A wind rose up in the North and blew
Meadows and mournful marshes through,
Till the air was cleansed and the sky was clear,
And a time of joy after mourning fell,
For they wiped thy tears, O Israel !
And the Crown came near.

A light rose up in the East and gilded
The House of Life which the Lord had builded ;
And a Building-Word from the Lord there came,
As over the roof the glory fell,
And thus it was raised, O Israel !
By might of the Name.

The clouds went into the West, and lo !
Henceforward only the light we know,
And here in place of the frozen clime,
And in place of the sorrowful house which fell,
Is a house for ever, O Israel !
And a harvest-time.

THE WIDOW.

The Keepers of the outward Word proclaim
The outward meaning ; we have need thereof
No more. The Word is at our gates, and now
The Word has pass'd the threshold. It awakes
Strange echoes, not in galleries alone

THE LOST WORD

But in the heart, yea, in the heart of hearts :
It quivers almost on the lips of all ;
The recollections shaping in the mind
Wake ; I could speak it now, I dream, I dream,
Waiting alone upon the Master's lips.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

Why keeps the Master from the sons He loves ?

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Perchance His ruin'd chancel fills no more
With common daylight, through the fractured roof
Pouring ; His presence with diviner light
Possessing our poor place of earnest prayer,
Our mournful shrine of patience and of hope.

HYMN.

Blessed hope ! From day to day
We have watch'd, we have pray'd ; in our watching,
O Master ! we pray,
Surprise us ere sleep on our eyes seal up lips and
the hearts in us dumb,
Which like children would scream Thee a welcome,
can whisper Thee, Come !
We have watch'd with Thee more than one hour ;
ah, tarry no longer, but come !

FRATER VIATORIVS.

I saw His garments gleaming in the woods,
And all fair creatures follow'd from afar.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER PROCURATOR.

He pass'd like one that hath the feet of ghosts,
How lightly gliding over broken stairs,
And in high turrets have I seen His eyes
Turn mildly on the wreckage of the house :
How meet that He surveys whose word rebuilds !

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Anon He spake with acolytes, and grave,
Sweet words exchanged with sweet-voiced singing
 boys,
And kiss'd, I think, those lips which praise of Him
So oft has parted.

THE WIDOW.

Doing all things well.

HYMN.

How well, O Lord, how sweet in Thee,
That Thou didst hide so long from me,
And when I sought Thee long and far
Thy voice was in the Evening Star,
Thy face was o'er the dark'ning sea,
And hence I could not reach to Thee !
How sweeter still if Thou from far
Wouldst pass to me, wouldst leave Thy star,
Or walk across the darkening sea,
And night or morning come to me,
Because I cannot reach to Thee !

THE LOST WORD

THE WIDOW.

My heart is troubled at His absence ; seek
The King ; fall prostrate at His feet and say
That those who worshipp'd Him of old, who long
Did wait His coming, whom His presence fill'd
With life, and joy of life, expectant seek
His presence ; that His rites without the walls
Are practised here under the open sky :
May He be with us to infuse His light,
And make them other than a show which shows
No more, since He came back, the end of all ;
Make meanings new to fill them, and our hearts
With joy in them, as He is all our joy.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

My heart is troubled, but the dread therein
Is not His absence whom we hail as King.

HYMN.

My feet were on the mountain in the morning and
they said that He was here ;
Then I cried : O Lord ! Where art Thou ? and the
sea where it was seething answer'd : Near.
And I saw the sun move forward from the peaks
and morning spaces to a torrid house high over
in the noon,
But I think it was the heart within me whisper'd :
Get thee down out of the mountains, for be
certain He is coming very soon :

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Hence they found me in my white robes in the
meadows when the darkness was enlighten'd
by the moon.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

High stars, me visit for my doubt alone
If He be King ! And Thou who from of old
Hast chosen the unlikely instrument
To manifest at times Thy power, at times
Thy love, Thy mercy, pardon if it prove
That this is Thine anointed, and on me,
Sparing this falling house, turn, if Thou wilt,
Thy wrath alone, whose messenger has brought
No word of all by which a yearning heart
Might dare confess him to itself as Thine !

THE WIDOW.

It is His pleasure to conceal the Word.

HYMN.

Our sins alone to such confusion
And unto these last woes have brought us ;
But spare, O Lord, that strong delusion,
The fear of which Thy Word has taught us !
O, if Thy promise fair we fail to see,
We seek at least to die adoring only Thee !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

He will declare Himself anon—anon.
Our hopes are all in Him ; did He deceive—
O, we most wretched, and lost most of men !

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PACIFICUS.

One sign alone to pacify the heart !
To make Faith's cry less abject, and Faith's gift
Less void, or in the face of evidence.

THE WIDOW.

What need has He of signs? And yet one sign !
Ask and receive at will ; knock and all gates
Fly open—it is here, the sign of Faith :
I do believe that we have seen the King !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

And when our foot is on the nation's neck,
And when we tread them in the press of wrath,
His wrath, and triumph in His victory,
We to our triumph, and the world its cost
Shall know the King. *Flectamus genua.*
Levate. By the faith at heart of doubt,
Thou who art King, forgive us !

FRATER PROCURATOR.

How the house,
Like to some tree torn up, leans over, poised
Towards frightful fall. Bid all our craftsmen come
To shore its gaping sides.

THE WIDOW.

What need has He
Of craftsmen when the Building Word is His ?

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER PACIFICUS.

He hath not utter'd it.

THE WIDOW.

He tries our faith.

HYMN.

My wings are broken with my flight,
Mine eyes are dim through Thy great light,
My heart is dead with hope and fear ;
Though Thou art near, though Thou art near,
I cannot reach Thee, fallen here.

If Thou wilt raise me, I am blest—
O let me die upon Thy breast !
Ah, better, if Thy mercy deign,
In holy sleep I will remain
And wake beneath Thine eyes again !

THE WIDOW.

O we have hoped and waited and held on
So long ! And He is here, and now our hearts,
Too tensely strain'd, must hurry Him or burst.
Let the old house dissolve : I wait on Him.
In His good time, which never is too late,
This house and all things shall the King make new.

HYMN.

Thine is the world, and Thou through all
Dost utter forth Thy far-resounding call !

THE LOST WORD

Grant us, at early morn or sombre close of day,
Who hear Thy call, to take up staff and scrip and
 come away ;
But if we fail to find Thy place in ways so wide and
 worlds so far,
O when we stand and call on Thee, turn Thou aside
 and hasten where we are !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Meanwhile He tarries in waste places ; He
Too waits, but whether on the master-word,
Or this great need of ours, too narrow yet
To show His power who is so strong to save,
Or some accepted time—who knows ? Meseems
His eyes are on the daughter of the house.

THE WIDOW.

What if our daughter were the Queen to come !

FRATER PACIFICUS.

She shrinks from Him : He hath said words to her.
What words ! O Lord, our faith is sorely tried !
How doth Thy day-star visit us ? What light
Comes lurid with Thine orient from on high ?
The serpent's glitter lies behind his eyes.

HYMN.

The serpent wreck'd Thy garden, Lord,
Of all glad things the Giver ;
But Thou at need with arm and sword
From snake and snare deliver !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER PACIFICUS.

As snakes charm birds, He charms her : she grows
lean,
She withers, and her garments, trailing light,
Have faded ; all the music of her eyes
Is silent now, and void of all its light
Her radiant voice.

THE WIDOW.

Our daughter wrecks the house.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

He asks for her : she flies into the woods.
He watches on her coming, as God waits
The wandering soul to lead it back to Him :
She tarries in waste places of the world ;
The stars turn dark at her who turns from light.
If we be weigh'd in her and if in her
Found wanting, what is there will save the house ?
Rejected is the King our corner-stone,
And then the King will leave us, and unroof'd
We shall go forth while all our foes prevail
Against us. Haste into the woods and wilds !
We must prevail upon her and at need
Compel.

THAT STRANGER.

The King is in His gardens now.

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Make acts of faith : display our faith in Him.
Lord, we have look'd for Thee : we are glad, O
Lord !

HYMN.

Come quickly, we cried, O Lord ! Perchance it
was morning's prime
And the world was young in the morning ; fair
over our faces fell
The golden locks and the dark locks : a moment
only of time,
But it seem'd that an age toil'd past and a world
went by.
The locks are white on those heads so bright, and
the hearts have burnt to a shell ;
But a rumour, a whisper, a word, a trumpet-voice
came nigh :
It answer'd : Behold, I come ! And age upon age
ran by,
As it seem'd but a moment leaping from then to now,
And this is Thy light on our brow.
Sun-down glory of all, we know not when nor how,
Whether space and time have drifted,
But we know that our eyes are lifted
And that this is the light of Thine eye :
World over world we have doubtless travell'd and
far through the starry spaces,
Till sweetly, softly we find Thee here, Thy face
shining over our faces.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE WIDOW.

I am the oldest in the house : I know
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Wisdom, from the mouth of the Most High
Forth issued, and from end to end extending,
In strength disposing all and tenderly,
Thy way of prudence teach, to us descending !

PAGE OF THE GATE.

I am the youngest in the house : I know
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Lord of Hosts and Duke of Israel,
Who didst, on Sinai's Mount Thy Law revealing,
From burning bush and prophet's brows dispel
Misrule and night, put forth Thine arm of healing !

A BONDSMAN.

I am the oldest servant in the house :
He is the King. *Flectamus genua.*

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O root of Jesse, as a sign erected
To quell the kings of earth through Kingship
stronger,
Though oft by nations of the earth rejected,
Come down and set us free : delay no longer !

THE LOST WORD

BONDSWOMAN.

I am the youngest of the serving maids :
He is the King : *flectamus genua*.

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Key of David, every door and gate
Loosing and locking, from this house of anguish
Lead forth Thy bound ones, yea, from dungeons
 strait
And shadows deep of death wherein they
 languish !

FRATER QUÆSTORIUS.

I am the treasurer : He has fill'd the purse :
He is the King. *Flectamus genua*.

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O day-star, splendour of eternal light,
O Sun of Justice, come, Thy beams maintaining,
And through the mists and darkness of the night
Give light to those too long in night remaining !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

I am the priest and the Shekinah fills
The Holy Place ; incense and altar-lights,
Fire and the smoke of fire show forth His name :
He is the King : *flectamus genua*.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O King of nations and the corner-stone,
Conjoining all in one divine communion
Of saving faith and rest in Thee alone,
Those whom Thou madest lift into Thy union !

FRATER VENATICUS.

I am chief huntsman : in the woods at morn
I pass'd Him ; all that lives obeys the King.

GRAND ANTIPHON.

O Lawgiver, Emmanuel and King,
Saviour of nations and their expectation,
Our Lord, our God, when adverse hosts enring,
Strong to redeem us, haste to our salvation !

FRATER SYMPHONICUS.

The world has turn'd into a psaltery.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

All computations show that He is due :
He bears all marks and signs.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

The King demands

A sacrifice.

THE WIDOW.

Not sacrifice but glory.

THE LOST WORD

CUSTOS INVISIBILIS.

Hereof is Antichrist and Lucifer.

THE WIDOW.

The spirit of the house which from of old
Took voice cries sadly in the heart of us ;
But who is strong to save ? Not he, not he !

HYMN.

Thy voice across the waters of the sea,
Thy voice far off in Thine eternity,
As here we stand and wait !
But whether time be early or be late,
Stars in their rising or their setting,
We know not in this trance unbroken,
All time, all space, and all forgetting,
Except that Thou art there and Thou hast spoken.

[SOROR STELLIFERA *passes ghost-white over the*
grass with the COUNT PHŒNIX.

THE WIDOW.

Thou can'st save only ; we are Thine alone.
Dark stars have haunted us through all our days,
Dark stars have ruled our destiny, and dark
Our house is, and long its sorrow, and perturb'd
And shrouded are our hearts, since Thou didst go :
Now art Thou with us ; now the brightest stars
Rule ; night and stars thereof in glory flower.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

*Credo videre bona Domini
In terra viventium.*

COUNT PHŒNIX.

*With upraised hand, as if in blessing, but extending
three fingers.*

A little while
And I go forth, but I requite ye first :
Ye shall remember me.

THE WIDOW.

Our doom is Thine !

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Non nobis, Domine, non nobis.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

*Passing on with the Daughter of the House, and
speaking to her apart.*

I
Come forth from the eternal, and I take
Thee forth from time : out of the great quick joy
I come to lead thee back into My joy.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If Thou be King, set up this sinking house.

THE LOST WORD

COUNT PHŒNIX.

What part have I therein, except in thee ?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

If Thou art King, place in the day-star now
Thy royal sign.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

What is thy day-star's light ?
My darkness : I will place my sign on thee :
My seal upon thee shall outflame all stars,
And from thy brow such fire thy house shall save.

[They pass on.]

CHORUS OF SUPPLIANTS.

Thy hands are white,
Thy heart is pure,
We saw thy face in dreams of light ;
Thou wast our moon in that old night,
Which cannot in this day endure,
His presence makes and thou reflectest,
A mirror's shining ecstasy.
Ah, move not happy moon away !
More chaste than any moon in sky,
More soft than gentlest human eye.
Ah, close not eye of holy light
And all felicitous augury !
Ah, look not from this sun away,
Lest thou should'st cloud our shining day !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Which in his absence thou directest,
O loving face, to light our way !

The birds in the green of the woodland cry to thee,
Leaves in the woods beseech thee,
Soft sea-murmurs and voices sigh to thee,
All the low breezes which faint as they reach thee
And pibroch winds from the hills beseech thee.
Patient, humanly, yearning faces
Of cattle in meadows are turn'd to pray thee ;
With passionate, tender and superhuman yearning,
The heart of the human world to thy heart, dear
heart, is turning.
And turn not away thy heart,
With the springs of its love, which never in vain
we turn'd to,
Who turn as the spikenard sunward to thee where-
soever thou art,
And forever thy light have yearn'd to.

THE LOST WORD

ACT III

SCENE.—*Without the gates. Rock and precipice, and above these a sheer height. It is night, and there is the rumour of many voices crying in the night. The moon breaks forth fitfully through black plumes and ragged masses of cloud surging above the peak. At these moments the House of Long Sorrow is seen riven from cope to base, far away to the left, with a confused crowd gathered at the gate, bearers of banners and canopies, incense-bearers, and the carriers of sacred vessels. In the narrow pathway winding upward among the rocks the COUNT PHŒNIX ascends, followed by SOROR STELLIFERA. There is a great heat in the air, with falling of rain at intervals and the rumbling of thunder far away.*

COUNT PHŒNIX.

The storm is on the mountains : I am call'd.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Is this thy promise to redeem the house ?

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

COUNT PHŒNIX.

I have many mansions.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

 If a mercy-seat—
Though hidden somewhere from the sight of all—
Be set within thy heart, I pray thee pause,
Being outworn and perishing.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

 Look up :
There is keen air upon the height, and flame
Streaming above the height, and I am call'd ;
Thou shalt learn all before I leave thee, yea,
The Word in secret and the power thereof,
Which fills all life.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

 Dark Master, darker woe !
They bound me truly in my love for them ;
They led me shackled in the bonds of love,
And offer'd up the saddest sacrifice
Which e'er was smitten since the world began,
And the envenom'd knife is in my side ;
It cuts past heart and flesh into the quick
And inmost core of a death-wailing soul
Which bleeds for ever.

[They pass on.]

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PACIFICUS (*enters*).

Our sweet soul is lost :
They stole our soul away ; they have put out
Her gentle light : she cannot fly to us ;
Her wings are broken now ; and in this dark
We cannot see her. O most piteous quest !

[*He ascends.*

*Smoke and red light issue from the House of Long
Sorrow. The crowd still massing at the gates
begins to form into a disorderly procession, and
amidst strident cries and the uproar of many
voices, a chant is heard at intervals.*

CHORUS VIATORIUS.

O Blessed City, Inmost Shrine,
Still let thy light from far away
Soft over all our ways incline !
Yet we may reach thee, yet thy day,
Light as the leaves fall—thus and thus—
Shine on us holy and glorious.

O Blessed City, the heart is dim
With the tearful mist of a white desire,
And words of longing the lips o'erbrim,
But songs are feeble to voice our fire ;
The music falters and thought is cold
Which springs in the soul for thy roofs of gold.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

O Blessed City, O magnet walls,
Out of the weary and darkling time
Lift us into thy timeless halls !
Far have we stray'd from thy healthful clime
Through poison'd wastes and a hemlock sea ;
Still we are townsmen and sons of thee.

On the Peak. Fire and Storm.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Look back.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The house is flaming.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou see
Those crested riders in the path beneath ?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see the plumes of hearses.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou mark
The smoke and flame of torches in the gorge
Below us ?

THE LOST WORD

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see demon eyes ascend,
And muffled faces in the darkness grow :
They move about us now on every side.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Dost thou behold the life which fills the world
Burst suddenly up from path and gorge far down,
And deeper still from misty mountain pools,
From forest coverts and turbid water-ways ?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see consuming fire.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

Thou hast the Word :
Ignem Natura renovatur integra !
Thou lookest on the glory of the world.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

I see thy lurid hell.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

The Word is thine.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

SOROR STELLIFERA.

An all-embracing pity from the heart
Within me wells up suddenly and flows
Towards all that lives and suffers or is lost,
Engulph'd in this great woe.

COUNT PHŒNIX.

My people call.
[*He disappears.*]

FRATER PACIFICUS (*from below*).

O arms upflung under the violet light !

The Burning Gates.

THE WIDOW.

Our daughter does not come.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

And he is gone.

THE WIDOW.

And the Lost Word is with him.

FRATER PROCURATOR.

The house sinks.

Let us go forth.

THE WIDOW.

The Word !

THE LOST WORD

FRATER PACIFICUS.

She dies thereof.

FRATER ASTROLOGUS.

All things have fail'd us. The stars lie ; the sun
Betrays us ; signs upon the earth and sea
Have mock'd us. End it now.

THE WIDOW.

I do believe
That the King cometh.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Yet shall the Word be found.

THE WARDEN OF THE HOUSE.

Bring forth the starving horses through the smoke :
There is grass somewhere in the world beyond.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Come forth to seek the Word !

THE WIDOW.

Perchance to greet
The King.

FRATER PONTIFICUS.

Who cometh in the morning.

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FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Dawn !

[*The light breaks.*]

On the Peak. The smoke of the Burning House rolls up from below, and over the human voices there is heard from time to time the scream of frightened horses, with the bellowing of kine. There is also ever and anon a sudden crash of cymbals, with beating of tabours, and occasionally the winding of a solitary horn. A fitful chanting ascends at intervals.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

The gorges in the mountains and the wind
Among the mountains and the lights on snow,
But the steep prospect is the gulf's great depth !

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

In the day of the wrath of the Lord expell'd,
Out of the gates we have loved we go,
With the signs of pity and grace withheld,
Nor what shall befall us know.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

To totter only where of old we stood,
To find the stars quench suddenly, to feel
A sudden sinking of the rifted earth,
And here the very end, the dirge of all !

THE LOST WORD

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

Sad perforce is our slow retreat,
Turn we often with lingering feet,
Follow we forward with bended head,
Humble enough to be comforted,
Wretched enough to be heard who pray
For a cup so bitter to pass away.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

Past every point of being have I gazed :
Nothing beyond !

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

O if a visible hand had driven
Forth to the waste like our sires of eld !
Yea, if the lightning our house had riven,
Over us only our foes prevail'd ;
If forth we went in the storm and stress,
Surely the woe of the heart were less !

SOROR STELLIFERA.

A very simple thing
And easy to be full up to the brim
With sorrow ; to look back with wistful mind
When there was not one sorrow in the world
Without some healing balm which seem'd as sweet
As joy unended !

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THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

But stone by stone has the house sunk down
And left us homeless, to camp without,
Lodge, if we will, in the distant town,
Or quarter in villages round and about,
Nothing ordain'd us, nothing denied—
Whether to part where the ways divide,
Whether to wander or pause and rest,
Who in this doubt shall declare the best?

SOROR STELLIFERA.

They gave me sacraments and means of grace
In childhood, and they bade me love my house,
As they had loved me who abode therein,
And thus have brought me past all thought to woe.
They gave me sacraments and means of grace,
Pour'd consecrated water on my head,
And the cleansed spirit soar'd past Nature's range :
Now past the range of Nature have I gazed
On voids beyond.

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

Foes that turn'd in the past to rend us,
So helpless finding, would now befriend us ;
Those who betray'd of the hearts we cherish'd
Could half rekindle the love that perish'd.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

There comes before my eye
The light on leaves in gardens blithely gleaming
So sweetly brooding on the velvet lips

THE LOST WORD

Of full-blown roses ; apples to the sun
Their shining faces turning ; over all
The paths and beds the busy work of winds
So full of pleasant purpose unconcern'd ;
And at the heart a mystery, within
The mystery a hint of such a crown,
Of undiscover'd kingdoms full of life,
And all in reach and all a little part—
So small a part—of such a joy to come.

THE CHANT FROM BELOW.

If we had strength or the steel to arm us,
Nothing is left with the will to harm us ;
So utterly broken and bow'd are we
That the very branch of the woodland tree,
Which sways in the breeze and the night-light
near us,
Has a gentle thought at the heart to cheer us.

SOROR STELLIFERA.

A little space of life and hope and love,
And so at end I put my life away.

[*Cadit Stella.*

*The defiles and gorges of the mountains through which
the procession is pouring in full sunlight, bearing
the scorched and tattered banners, sacred vessels
and broken emblems rescued from the ruins of the
House of Long Sorrow. Some are mounted on
lean horses and mules, and the Children of the*

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Exile are in wains drawn by oxen. Others are walking. The priests, deacons and acolytes preserve something of the aspect of a religious procession. The rest are still in disorder, and some fall by the way. The WIDOW is seated in a gilded chariot decorated with artificial flowers, and is encircled by the Sons of the WIDOW.

THE CHANT CONCLUDED.

And not with evil intent to flout us
Flaunts such a glory of light about us,
But rather a pity misplaced possesses
The fond old heart of the world without us,
A vacant craving conceives to cheer us
With vapid kindness of crude caresses,
And, more to parade benign intentions,
Spreads gewgaw tinsel and outward gleam,
Her old, expended and crass conventions,
To cover the acrid truth of things
With shallow pleasaunce of hackney'd dream,
And loss which never the heart expresses
With irritant pipe of the voice which sings.

FRATER SYMPHONIACUS.

Who goes before us in the rock-hewn way ?

FRATER PACIFICUS.

A little child upon a great white horse,
Who gives the sunlight back from golden hair
And the lithe wonder of his naked limbs

THE LOST WORD

Thrice glorified. Whence comes he ! The old house
Has known him not, whom now we mark alone.

FRATER SYMPHONICUS.

The oldest and the youngest of the house
He seems ; direct along the lineal way
He leads us : surely in this need extreme,
Not utterly cast out, the sign long sought,
Forbearing violence and void of haste,
All silently the flower-sweet natural air
Gives up, as thuribles their incense smoke.
We see the shoulders and the hinder parts
Of that which never is by face reveal'd,
The ante-natal watcher of the House.

FRATER PACIFICUS.

Forth from this vista o'er the world we gaze
And the great undeclared, inscrutable time
To come far stretches, as a strenuous wind
Tears through some fissure in the wall and thence
Fills chambers vast and resonant vestibules.

FRATER SYMPHONICUS.

So take we forth our parable made void ;
At least before us there are fields unknown,
And past the sorrow of the ages lies,
May be, the still immensity of God.

PART III

OF THINGS HEARD AND SEEN

A BALLAD OF WHITE MAIDENS

A BALLAD OF WHITE MAIDENS

ARGUMENT.—The spirit of man has worshipped at many shrines, and has dwelt in many gardens of being. We bear within us the perpetuated memories of several natures from which we have emerged successively. We were doubtless in exile then, and we are conscious vaguely now that we are in a state of constraint and inhibition, that we have entered the terrestrial paradise of the body either through a specific misconstruction or as a fatal consequence. It has often been said, though not perhaps truly, that we are here for our education, because it is certain that we are being taught and led. But whence we came in so far a past we stood in no need of education, and are here as by the last grave mischance in a long series. We are now under the yoke of education for no other reason than our return. We have not perchance incurred the final penalties, and hence there may be other gardens.

THE KING SPEAKS

As I walk'd in the moonlight, a garden I found
By strange sorcery wrought all about and around ;
Where the voices are muffled, the vistas are blurr'd,
Dense incense makes faint the indicible word,
Folding round broider'd vestments and far-flashing
 gems
Of pontiff's tiaras and king's diadems.
The cups of the tall-springing lilies confuse
With white maidens' faces moist-eyed, while the
 dews

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Shine ghostlike and pallid on mist-breathing grass,
Where pearl-sprinkled sandals fall light as they
pass ;

The maid's trailing garments glide over and raise
Such light stir as June in her slumberous days
Permits to low zephyrs with pauses between
Lest they wanton too long with the leaf's silver
sheen ;

The cooing dove murmurs in languorous elms
Of the dream and the dreamer in reverie's realms.

O willow-sweet maidens ! What maidens are these,
Curd-white in the moonlight and honey-lipp'd
breeze ?

Old voices grow faint, from the summit they fall,
Your measures enchant me, I come at your call.
O faint grow the tocsin, the trumpet, the drum !
Enswathe me, enfold me ; white maidens, I come !

Ah, stay me with lilies, sweet press of your faces,
The nearness and warmth of your mystic embraces,
Dissolving the lonely inviolate state
Which I shared with the dwellers outside of your
gate !

By a superincession fantastical, sweet,
I am merged in the maids of this shadow'd retreat ;
They are I, I am they, neither many nor one,
As the light and the warmth from the fount of the
sun.

A BALLAD OF WHITE MAIDENS

THE KING SLEEPS

Within the charm'd walls is a place of delight,
And a world from its windows shines strange to the
sight,

With the pomp of the night and the glory of day
Where the long golden prospects stretch shining
away.

With pennons and banners the pageants pass by,
And the crash of their music goes up to the sky ;
The centre and shrine is the paradise fair
And crown'd midst his maidens the monarch is there.
O wrapp'd all about by the ministry blest
And the intimate sense of the garden of rest,
How vague are the legends, the memories dim
Of the King's distant country surviving for him !
But a hint in the stars, but a voice in the wind,
An echo of canticles lost to the mind,
Welling up from the depths in the sea's organ voice,
Bear witness how far he has err'd in his choice.

In the garden are stairways and turrets and towers ;
'Twas spring when He enter'd, and sweet were the
flowers ;

The maidens sang ballads, how blithe to the heart !
All bells rang the nuptials of Nature and Art,
And the world to the walls in high carnival came,
Bright eyes full of rapture, bright faces aflame ;
But what of that moaning when music is still'd ?
That ache in the pause which no pageant has fill'd ?

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The garden has hill-tops, the stars live above ;
It is summertime now and the world is all love ;
The maids in full chorus sing jubilant odes,
A glory abides in the vistas and roads.
O high the emprizes and high the renown,
And the King hath his maidens, the King hath his
crown !
But what of the whispers which hint in his sleep ?
Do hearts never sorrow ? Do eyes never weep ?

The garden has sycamores stately and old ;
O the time is rich autumn, the leaves are all gold,
Round maids in the moonlight, high-seeming and
soft,
But a mist looking mournful envelops them oft :
With a voice full of loss falls the wave on the
strand ;
Lone horsemen ride hurriedly far through the land ;
Cold sleet against windows beats heavy and drives
On the overblown blooms and the bees' ravish'd
hives.
All voice in that garden dies down in a dirge,
And the King hath his sorrow to crown him and
scourge.
Far, far through the windows his vision is strain'd,
The young have grown old, and the old have not
gain'd
Save in sense of illusion and measureless loss ;
As the weary wayfarer goes dragging his cross

A BALLAD OF WHITE MAIDENS

O'er the stones of the road to the hills out of reach,
Where storms utter faintly their ominous speech ;
'Mid the ghosts of the maidens, ah, vain let him roam,
And remember at last how he stray'd from his
home !

Deep frost in the garden, the maidens are dead,
The King is a-cold with the snows on his head ;
Through the rime on the windows forth-looking
sees he

The dearth and the dark where the glory should be.
Where now are the stars and the altitude keen,
All the music of old in the shining demesne,
The fellowship lofty reserved to adorn
That secret pageant and state inborn ?
The heart cannot dream it though hearts may
yearn,

Nor the way of attainment the eye discern,
But the King in the garden, of all bereft,
Knows that which was priceless for this was left,
For a paradise fated with time to end,
The place of the Vision whence Kings descend ;
And over the desolate, lonely road
Dim eyes put forth from his waste abode,
To watch for a herald with tidings sent
From the land withdrawn of the soul's content,
For a beacon speaking the darkness through
Of the light beyond and the further blue,
Past all sea-cries for a distant tone
From the royal realm which was once his own.

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THE KING'S GOING FORTH

When will it come to him? Comes it now?
Falls there a gleam on his clouded brow?
The wasting garden is moist and wan,
Far has the King of the Garden gone!
Whither he travels and what may chance—
Whether restored from the life-long trance,
Whether to tarry in exile far
Where other illusive gardens are—
Who shall acquaint us? He that knows
The one true place for a King's repose,
And, long though he travel the outward track,
That the King came forth and the King goes back.

CLAVIS ABSCONDITORUM

Wherefore, perchance, at a time assign'd
Some key to the mystery Kings may find,
Why maidens five in a garden dwell
And Kings delude by their potent spell.
Peace may the King on his ways attend,
All things lead him to reach his end,
Stars be his pathway and suns his track,
For the King comes forth and the King goes back!

EPILOGUE

Ballad of maidens white to see,
All are spelling thy mystery;
Faint is the music and low the tone,
Lead us still, lead us to reach our own!

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY

ARGUMENT.—The terrestrial life of man is like a product of sorcery. External things are communicated to us by virtue of an adjustment with the faculties which contain us in just that measure, and possessing that correspondence between the appearance and the reality, which suggests the idea of magic. The transformation of the magic of Nature into the divine magic is the great secret. This transformation takes place in virtue of another adjustment between the mind quickened by a saving light and the external ministry, which thus becomes sacramental. By yielding implicitly to the enchantment of the first sense of Nature, we condone our exile and abide in a fatal illusion, though no doubt it remains benevolent and offers a delectable ministry. This enchantment dissolves under the consciousness of another citizenship.

ARGUMENTUM MIRABILE

Voice and the Word proclaim, but the outward
Voice may fail,
In song and psalter the numbers falter, yet a hint
may redeem the tale:
Hear therefore why, from a losing quest,
In a place of spells I dream'd of rest,
And there had thought to remain—
But a lone star rose on the heart's repose,
And it drew me to quest again.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

PROEM

Short the distance and smooth the road,
Not too far from a man's abode—
Seek, you shall find it; far and nigh
Stretches the Land of Sorcery.

THE PROSE

Where never a sense of the world beyond
On the soul bewitch'd intrudes,
But to soft spells only is sense in bond,
And, if illusion, delight deludes;
Where the heart does not yearn
Past what eyes discern,
And far in some land remote—
Perchance unfriendly, at least unknown—
Picture the bliss and the vision alone;
Here let me anchor a stranded boat,
And taste the joy of the heart and eye
In the Blessed Life of Sorcery.

I have voyaged far and my sails are rent;
The mast is splinter'd, the rudder is bent.
I have been where billows their might expend
On pitiless walls where the world has end,
But turret or window or hand extended
Found I none when the quest was ended,
And an icy blast o'er the pathless track
Seized me and toss'd me, and drove me back.

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY

Here the air is heavy with spells,
From a sky overflowing the soft charm spills,
A loving litany breathes in wavering hills
And faintly chimes in the bosks from floral bells,
Or sighs in a veil on the surface of tarns and wells.
Here too the sheeted hyacinth meadows
 Suspire and yearn,
Melt in the purple splendour, flicker and burn,
Through vistas of trees prolong'd and the musk-
 dark shadows
 Of haunted dells.

Far off the glister of shining surf looks white ;
How far, how soften'd comes the roll of the open sea,
And the long low-breathing wind is hush'd as a
 wind may be ;
The amber light of the afternoon is caught
And hidden in thickets and traps which mazy
 leaves have wrought
And talismanic figures of flowers that none can
 name
But the nameless mystic people,
Or moved in tongues of fire on vane and steeple,
On crumbling towers in pageants of auburn flame.

Hark a little and hark, for close at hand
Is one light voice you can hear and understand
In the plash and purl of the brook !
Otherwise, over the open road and leafy lane or lawn

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The silent wain by a silent team with its harvest
load is drawn,
Though the road may rise or fall,
And only silent figures slip past through the
trancèd land,
For ever wearing the dreamful elfin look
And ever the wondering guise of him who has
heard the faerie call.

And yet, and now, and surely a voice uplifted,
With subtle mastering melody suddenly fills the air;
From the midst of a secret centre suddenly rifted,
A penetrant vibrant music sounding everywhere,
Through every leaf and blade of grass is sent,
As over the strings of its instrument,
Sweeping, sweeping, sweeping; the earth with its
volume stored
Is a quivering sounding board,
And the sea, with melodious roar,
For ever and ever responds on the long pulsating
shore.

The faces of women are faces of strange enchanted
flowers,
Giving forth fragrance of incense and sounds of
flutes on the deep,
In the sweetest, stillest, and deepest charm of the
elfin hours;
And the children are blossoms in bud, which
smile in the light, and sleep;

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY

White lilies, pallid and pure, in a shimmering cloud
of pearls,
Are the choric bands of the girls,
And royal-hued ruddy roses of eager and splendid
boys,
Heavy and lissom of limb, tan-faced, full of glories
and joys,
Their moist lips full and intense,
Welling over with rippling speech ;
Yet a strange transfusion of sex and form and sense
Swims undeveloped in each ;
And all the men in the land, if men be a part of
the scheme,
Walk through the haunted places dissolved in vision
and dream.

O holy, holy, holy, wild-sweet to the ear and eye,
Is the Blessed Life and the Haunted Life in the
Land of Sorcery !

Will I not dwell in these ways for evermore ?
Breathe harps and all ye strings in a world of
strings,
And every voice in a world of voice and choir,
Over the sea and the shore
Lowly and faintly and fading far away,
With a sudden tremor and hint of all unspeakable
things,

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The dusk in the heart of the fire,
 Lowly and faintly and fading far away ;
Over the senses breathe till the senses swim ;
Chant in the dells and dingles, among the groups
 so dim,
Standing at footpath ends—anthem, litany, hymn
 Of the world's delight, from the pleasant rite
 In the missal of Faerie !

The anthems swell and never a chord is lost,
 The light of the Vision floats for ever around,
And the perfect peace of the heart, by an anxious
 thought uncross'd
 Of the life in life, in the Blessed Life is found,
All under the purple sky,
 Which swoons and falls in a mist
 Of opal and amethyst
On fields and meadows and hills in the Land of
 Sorcery.

ENVOY

At evening the light of a lone star fell through the
 lilac gloaming and gloom,
And a voice fell with it, meseem'd, in the midst of
 that choric spell on the sorcery craft and bloom,
And, stilling the pulse of a thousand strings,
Said : Sails may fail thee, but wings—take wings !
Then suddenly out of the land withdrew
The savour, the music, the scent, the hue ;

THE BLESSED LIFE OF SORCERY

A curtain of darkness droop'd from the sky
On the Blessed Life of Sorcery.
The star in the distance sings and sings ;
I have burn'd my ships, I return with wings ;
O'er the wall at the world's end eyes of pity
Shine on the quest for the Mystic City.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

HOW ONE OFFERED INCENSE

ARGUMENT.—Besides the sorcery of Nature there is the instituted sorcery of the conventions of human life. Nature really gives away her secret at all points, and the unknown surges in through the fissures, but intermittently, because, howsoever our restriction has been brought about, we are not intended as yet to escape from it. The occasional contact with this unknown, which has its physical evidences, is salutary as an assurance of the impermanence of the present sacramental order ; but our cortex of convention has so addicted us to what can be discerned through it, and has so encompassed us with a reputed and artificial knowledge, that it is seldom, and as if by accident, that we obtain the brief experiences which are otherwise possible. Convention necessitates convention, and we attain experience now more readily by an instituted process.

JUST where the forest thins towards its edge,
On the western side
Is a clearing wide,
Or a glade, if you will,
And beyond the forest a quickset hedge,
And this is the brow of the hill.
Over the hillside climbs the wheat ;
In the August sun like a golden tide
It washes over the whole hillside,
Except for a narrow and tortuous track
Left for the passage of hardy feet.
Far down a little bridge looks black,

HOW ONE OFFERED INCENSE

Spanning a stream which chimes and tinkles,
Leaps in the sunlight, sparkles and twinkles,
Rolls its smooth white pebbles, and sprinkles
Crisp green turf upon either hand.
Further again is the rising land,
This time with bearded barley and rye
Draped in the sunlight gorgeously ;
And, climbing over that further slope,
A splendid stretch of the sky's blue cope
Bends to the West and the breeze comes
thence
Over the low plain keen and intense,
Rife with rumour of riot and rout,
Salted and strong from the sea far out.

To watch the sunset smoulder and burn
Over the surf-line churn'd and creamy ;
To see the mists on the plain assemble,
The dotted lights of the inns dissemble
Their fullest light
Till it's really night :
To see the sky turn mauve and dreamy
And so many stars in the dark a-tremble ;
To hear the anthem roll of the main
And the strong response of a seawind's strain—
Take your stand on the further height ;
But for real magic 'twixt eve and night
And a speculation strange and deep
From the inmost heart of the house of sleep,

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At a fitting hour the hills forsake
For the edge of the woodland cover and brake.
Over the clearing high and far
You shall see only a single star ;
Stand in the dubious light convoked
Trees like mystae muffled and cloak'd ;
And lone in the midst of the lonely glade
To the cubical stone which no hand has made,
Shalt thou in the border twilight bring—
If thou hast the gift of soul to bear
A glimpse of the secrets of earth and air—
As an outward sign of the heart's desire,
Thy little parcel of sacred fire
And an incense pot for an offering.

May one who has offer'd his incense tell
Of something which follows this kind of spell ?
Say that the smoke will rise and spread,
Making a nimbus round one's head,
And glade and bush through the vaporous mist
Take shapes uncertain which writhe and twist ;
The sky looks marshlike, the star is dim,
And the air, which haply is moist and damp,
Seems to cling close and just to swim ;
The coal glows dull like a dying lamp,
And the moss-grown altar-stone unbidden
Passing into the cloud is hidden.
A change comes over the face of things,
And twixt the sense of a soul alone

HOW ONE OFFERED INCENSE

And the subtle hint of invisible wings,
Tense expectation thrills and swings ;
Till suddenly welling and surging round,
Down from the welkin and up from the ground,
From common motion and sight and sound
Isolated and terribly free,
The sense of a thing which is all unknown
Shapes in a moment and freezes thee.

Scatter the coals, for the rite is done ;
Go to the hillside—one by one
Number the stones on the downward way ;
Note how the wheat-ears bend and sway ;
Get with haste to the village and choose
The tavern which most the yokels use ;
Or hang on the bridge till one comes near
With a light step and a listening ear ;
You have touch'd as close as a rite may reach
To that which lies undeclared behind
The things of Nature and things of mind—
Out of vision, exceeding speech—
And it isn't intended that men should get
A fuller glimpse of the secret yet.

Meanwhile it shows you that this life's scheme
Has more of omen and sign and dream
Than enters into the hearts of those
Who cannot the inner eyes uncloze ;
And that after all the life of man
Is shaped on a sacramental plan,

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That all the light which he gets is clouded
Because of the manifold veils between,
The truth which he seeks to clasp is shrouded
And thus the beauty he longs for seen.
Yet truth and beauty and light exist,
And the sign is bright and the veil mere mist ;
The border twilight melts at times,
And through the twilight and over the verge
Gleams from beyond do at times emerge—
Meaning of sorrow and sense of song,
The second import of runes and rhymes,
The seed of right at the core of wrong,
And in many legends and mystic tales
A rumour of what is behind the veils.

Nota Bene—the heart's desire
Is surely good as a charcoal fire,
And the heart, I think that we all may own,
Is as much an altar as woodland stone ;
Wherefore the incense cloud may well
Be aspiration's transforming spell,
And for shades and forests and woodland dew
And the lone star's lustre sifting through,
With all other things that I've been telling,
Choose any corner in your own dwelling.

A DOOR FOR WHITE DOVES

A DOOR FOR WHITE DOVES

ARGUMENT.—As it is good to make contact occasionally with that unknown which encompasses us, so also it is good on a time for the sacramentalist to renounce all interpretation, and enjoy for a little the beauty and the melody of the outward signs.

I SING not now of a thought from sight
In a word evasive hidden,
Of signs which stand for a sense unseen,
The little signs and the worlds they mean,
But an arch so old and a sward so green,
And the sudden flight in the tawny light
Of doves through that arch unbidden.

Science of motion, wings of white,
Gay, so gay, in the beams so bright,
In the warm rich stream of the amber beam—
Gleam, dream, glory and gleam !
The honey-bee hums in the hawthorn hedge,
The wild rose slumbers on plinth and ledge,
And over the wide world's sapphire edge
The rich ripe corn of the world is roll'd,
As rocks in its laver the burning gold.
The whirr of the wings of the doves goes by,
And a singing bird hangs in the flame of the sky ;
Hot is the scent of the wheat and dry ;
And sinking slowly and circling down
A petal falls from the rose's crown ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Soft on the soft sward falls and reposes
As a gentle breath stirs the swooning roses.
And the doves come forth and the doves go in ;
Here in a low flight circle and spin
Over and under the arch and out,
And out and over the arch and in,
Wheel and circle and plunge about.
Sweet and warm is the air they stir,
And pleasant the chirp of the grasshopper ;
Motion, melody, scent are kin,
And the doves come forth and the doves go in.
The second sense on a day like this,
Meseems, a moment the mind may miss,
Midst incense, music and lights content
With the outward grace of the sacrament.
Therefore for once of mere doves in flight
 The rhymes shall end as the rhymes begin ;
Of the full rich light upon wings so white,
 As the doves come forth and the doves go in.

ENVOY

Why hint so deeply, O mind within,
Of the going forth and the coming in
 Of doves through an arch unbidden ?
Do I not know that the whence and where
Of the life of man finds its symbol there ?
But in light so bright and on sward so fair
 O let what is hidden be hidden !

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY

ARGUMENT.—Of how great quests may be voided. It has been agreed that man is passing through a great school of experience, but it has been said also that there was no experience of which he stood in need originally. The sense of dependence is necessary if we are to be taught and led, but to this passive condition must be added a strenuous activity in the maintenance of the soul's life. The tongues of men and angels, all power in signs and miracles, all missions and high destinies are surely, apart from this, but the pomp and pride of the outward life, and in the end they must fail us. Divorced from these higher considerations, even the simple love of personal independence is an error of enthusiasm, and the toil which secures it is but arrogance. To keep one's soul alive is better than to see God, if that were possible, by an act of objective vision.

I SHAPED within my thought all goodly aims,
Too grandly built to crumble or incline ;
The soul baptizing gave them holy names,
They flourish'd, they were mine.

And first from man's pursuits my schemes I took
And glorified the world for glory's praise ;
In camps and courts and colleges I shook,
With sounding feet, all ways.

But night and silence fall on every quest,
And on ambition's peak I paused and heard
A voice unbidden utter in my breast
One vapid, vacant word.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

*Gold rose and red rose, sun-down glory and all
The light of flame and the trump of fame ; but the
rose and the star shall fall !*

Perchance, I cried, a refuge for the heart
Is found in beauty ! And my soul in her
All life transforming by the hand of art
Shall grace on life confer.

So I became an artist, and forth brought
Strange life begotten but not born, to fill
The world with beauty ; and the canvas taught
Beauty, and teaches still.

Rich wert thou, world, in that imperial time,
By art transfigured and that art mine own ;
But far withdrawn I found one frozen clime
Within me, bleak and lone.

*Soul bless'd is soul express'd ; colour, melody, verse !
High God was lonely when He lived only : thereof
is the universe !*

Dirge-laden winds along the waters sweep ;
E'en storms are chanted ; when the light flows
back
Light leaps the carol zephyr and the deep
Follows a flute-note's track.

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY

So up creation's scale the seeker takes
His search, and music's rapture fills the world;
But discord inly finds a thousand snakes
In those sweet numbers curl'd.

*Still fill, slow distil; acrid cup be fill'd!
The silent trance for a vacant glance! And the
empty soul is still'd!*

O there are towers which ghosts will not frequent,
And marshes where the bittern will not cry,
And seas accursed where never tide is sent,
And wastes which know not sky!

But if to utter brings at least relief,
And if relief means refuge, space for work,
Free breath, what wonder in the word of grief
The word of grace should lurk?

So in the revolutions of the soul
Was I reborn a poet, and I wed
The wondrous meaning to the metre's roll,
And life interpreted!

Then all the outward life of man and beast
Transmuting turn'd to something "rich and
strange,"
And a new Eos rose in a new East,
O'er earth of broader range.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The Blessed Vision at the gates abode,
The pageant pass'd in every leafy lane,
The Quest was heard upon the open road,
Strange galleons swept the main.

I look'd within, but there no haunted room
Where ghostly presences sit throned and veil'd ;
An empty place which never in the gloom
One form divine exhaled.

*Cross comes, loss comes : thus is the hope destroy'd,
The harp of gold is a symbol cold if the soul be
vain and void.*

Thereat I sought, because of fell distress,
A higher ministry ; the altar blazed
A thousand lights pontifical ; to bless
The saving host I raised.

O never priest with consecrating word
Lord Christ set thus before adoring sight
Of sacramental wonders seen and heard,
Went forth the word of might.

All men saw angels tarrying in the street,
The rush of white wings over all the land,
And where the wicked city's pulses beat
The Kingdom was at hand.

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY

But as from lonely fortress high erect
 Commanding wastes unmeasured, lone and grey,
And acrid further waters scarcely fleck'd
 With cruel points of spray ;

I saw the lone soul's Kingdom stretch within,
 Where sat the soul in solitary state ;
Long dead and pass'd beyond the reach of sin,
 Or chrisem to consecrate.

*Dark soul, hark ! Toll bells of the dead without ;
So let it fade, all vain parade : wrap the dark
pall about !*

I made myself a King in my despair :
 There fell a glamour upon earth and sea,
And starry banners blazon'd all the air,
 And men said : it is He !

The Sabbath splendour of the Prince of Peace
 Fell on deliver'd nations bending low ;
All Nature chanted for her heart's release
 Grand Antiphons in O.

Great state and golden age and glorious dower :
 No King of Kings had ever reign'd till then,
And I alone in that tremendous hour
 A mendicant of men !

*Quail not, fail not, Soul, in thy haunted room !
Fair when they rise are the shapes and eyes as the
faces pass in the gloom !*

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Come forth, thou giver, of all gifts bereft !
Who healest all save thine own dread disease ;
No further path of ministry is left ;
Spare then thy services !

Much didst thou manifest ; be now withdrawn ;
Much didst thou brighten ; to thyself be light !
Still in thine absence there is scarlet dawn,
Nor lustres fail at night.

Open, ye gates, and open, portals, wide,
Wild land of Faerie ! Let the dreamer through !
Green world and sea world past all shore and tide,
Sky world beyond the blue !

So I became a prince in Fairyland ;
Mine the weird rite and mine the potent spell,
Stars in my crown and lilies in my hand
And feet on asphodel.

I was the Vision and the Eye that sees,
The blazon'd symbol and its inmost drift,
The Quest and Seeker and the Bourne of these,
The Giver and the Gift.

But when I look'd within, the soul was blind,
The pageant tattered and the place unkempt ;
Vague quests ill follow'd by no path defined,
Gifts with no grace to tempt.

THE PLACE OF THY GLORY

*Sink not, think not, all must be night and storm ;
To sweeter motion subsides the ocean and flowers
into light and form.*

So thence I pass'd outside all elfin speech
To snatch prerogatives and powers which yield,
Far past the compass of theurgic speech,
Worlds of all dread conceal'd.

I saw the gods which Julian saw of eld,
And after others which we name not now
Except with incense-worship, and beheld
Light on the Father's brow.

Ah, woe is me ! To see God's shining face
O'er Christ's white throne bend down, yet not
to die !
And the great masters in the holy place—
How dead within was I !

But humbly now, to this dim world restored,
By temple doors I stand, a man reprieved ;
The broken bread which kindly hands accord
With bended head received.

God bless the givers and the gifts make blest,
For by this sacrament withheld before,
Deliver'd hardly from a life's unrest,
My soul is dead no more.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

A PORTION OF MY INHERITANCE

ARGUMENT.—Of how great quests appear to the lesser man. All highest things are unpractical, and among others the sacramental life. They are passed over, therefore, by those who regard the admitted business of existence as of any moment. That business is of no moment in itself. Even the material welfare of nations is of no consequence apart from eternity : nations must pass. These are hard words to the outward man. So also when Faith, Hope and the higher Charity call forth a soul, this great election is, to simple sense, a matter of dole and delusion. It is the result of a bewrayment, as when fairies call forth a maiden to follow some unending quest. A few obey the call indirectly, and, perhaps, outside all expectations, on some great day those whom their ways have divided will somehow meet and kiss.

ONE day agone, one weariful,
One day of faded light,
Of shade that chill'd but could not cool,
Of blister'd bloom and blight !
May-day, fay-day, all the world was bright
Till they lured my lady fond—
Esclairmonde—
By an elfin rite.

One night agone ; the stars have shed
Their light in tears ; if they be dew,
'Tis meet, since she bewray'd is fled,
That light and verdure follow too !

A PORTION OF MY INHERITANCE

A venom in the dew distils ;
The long enchanted lawn exhales
An acrid odour ; hemlock fills
The wingless air ; it dulls and stills
The busy murmur of the vales,
The quicken'd sense which haunts the hills,
And in the mystic thicket kills
With nightshade fumes the nightingales.

Ave, Ave ! Voices come and go ;
Baneful, painful, breathing far and low—
“ Esclairmonde ”—
Throbbing from the bourne beyond,
Liturgic voices slow.

One moon ago ; the moon has ceased
Her hauntings of the starry maze ;
There is no light from West to East ;
The sun is dead, the skies are haze.
Softness and dampness and decay
Confuse the swimming seasons here,
And all is marsh from May to May
And thicker mist when June is near.
May-day, fay-day, all the spring turn'd sere
When they brought to Esclairmonde
Smoking censers from beyond.
The dark heavy incense swells ;
All the dying dales and dells
Echo still with tinkling bells,
Chimes and spells
Rung from elfin thuribles.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

One year ago; and Nature bleeds
The sap of life from every vein;
The mould is over-rich; the seeds
Have rotted; an unwholesome stain
Makes lepers of the strongest weeds;
The hemlock only blooms again,
And sickly, fungous growth possess
The monstrous boles of pining trees;
The nightshade at the air's caress
Feeds with more poison these.

Lightly, brightly, all amidst the vapours light,
Underneath soft eyes and fond—
Esclairmonde!—
Elfin vestments white.

Pomp of elfin, pomp of fay,
Blazon'd banners' soothing sway,
Draw thy dreaming soul away
Through thine eyes enthrall'd, avow
Gossips of the vacant brow.
I opine, since loss of mine
Better makes the heart divine,
That three maidens, Esclairmonde,
Coming from the bourne beyond,
In the dusk and ghostly mean
Eventide and night between—
Thy sweet face was peering forth
From the window facing north,

A PORTION OF MY INHERITANCE

The embayëd window north—
Wailing, wailing, drew thee forth.
And because no human hand
Wipes the tears from Fairyland ;
And because no human art
Heals the broken elfin heart ;
And no words that man can spell
Shall redeem the tax to hell,
They have lured thee, Esclairmonde,
Far beyond ;
Choir and incense gone before
And the banners evermore
Dripping with the dreary mist.
They who draw thee know not why ;
They are lonely, they persist ;
When their spells possess the eye
Seldom human wills resist.

Follow fast and follow fond !
They shall lead thee, Esclairmonde ;
And I seek the elfin track
Not to bear thy semblance back,
Since the ghost-world, woe is me,
Touching, makes a wraith of thee !
But to join thy useless quest
And to share thy long unrest,
Esclairmonde, O Esclairmonde !
Homeless, haunted, pass'd beyond,
Wraiths are in the world alone
Where thy steps no more are known.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And, a mournful ghost, I take
Woe of mine from bower to brake,
From brake to sodden mead, and see,
Evermore escaping me,
Choir and incense gone before
And the banners evermore,
With fantastic plunge and twist,
Looming strangely in the mist,
And thy pale ghost by maidens three
Ever faster led from me,
Passing every house of rest ;
Pass'd the gateway of the blest,
 And far into dim lands beyond
The march of muffled music steals,
The incense vista curls and reels,
 The low chant dieth far beyond ;
Far die the ghostly censer bells,
Confused amid a world of spells ;
A ghost behind, a ghost before,
And woe on both for evermore,
 O Esclairmonde ! O Esclairmonde !

LA VIE INTIME

LA VIE INTIME

ARGUMENT.—Far beneath the soil of history strike deep the roots of legend, and they penetrate sometimes into the sub-conscious abysses of the soul. In truth we know not all that we have passed upon our way, or what mutations are possible to us. Legend says that the sex of a body is changed by passing under the rainbow. The soul in her fantasy undergoes many metamorphoses, and strange gateways of existence open before her. The sense of these experiences and their memory are perpetuated in terrible prehistoric myths. Over the border-line constituted by the convention or adjustment between man and external things, two worlds seem to stretch which the mind differentiates most easily by the ideas of upward and downward, but both are really within us. There is a way within the soul by steep paths into the Divine Vision; it may be further than the stars, but it is there. There is a way within the soul to a phantasmal under-world which puts on many vestures of the life of sense, but does not really partake it. The source of many physical aberrations may lie in these stagnant tarns and silent pools of our submerged being, and still make possible many unsanctified communions.

THE FIRST SCROLL

A BOW OF PROMISE

O BRIGHT between the South and West
That wonder fled before!
So flies, O heart, thy hope of rest
In front for evermore!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Far on that gleam of gorgeous dyes
I spurr'd my russet steed ;
The woof disclosed a thousand eyes—
Now grope I blind in need.

She rode upon a palfrey white,
More white than milk was she,
And her white garments gave strange light
Of golden broidery.

Strange rhymes from witch-lips fill'd the glade
And ballad music stirr'd,
Rain spangles hung from leaf and blade
Shook bells at every word.

And evermore the rainbow drew,
Betwixt the South and West,
Its shifting pageant silent through
That strange green world unblest.

O follow fast ! O follow far !
O follow yet ! she cried :
Betwixt the sunset and the star
I see the ways divide ;

But one shall lead to convent walls
While one leads on to mine ;
The casements of my joyous halls
Beyond the rainbow shine.

LA VIE INTIME

O heed not thou the key of gold
 Shall slip into the grass ;
And when white hands a wine-cup hold
 Set close thy mouth and pass.

For this is the key of the convent door,
 And that which the cup conceals,
To him that crosses the convent floor,
 Another life reveals.

Farewell all knightly life of earth,
 With the gold key in thy hand !
Magic measures, music, mirth,
 Quests and gestes of Faerie Land !

Farewell the wassail and the bowl,
 When the gold cup is drain'd !
To quench the thirst it brings the soul
 Hath never man attain'd.

From out the convent windows gaze
 The cloister'd eyes within,
And watch the steep upwinding ways
 Which lead from the world of sin ;

From the world of sin and joy they lead
 By a fasting waste without ;
Through ways of weed from the green sweet mead,
 To the frozen height and drought.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And he that reaches the peaks of ice
Sees over the void untrod
How glister the gates of Paradise
When shut at the word of God.

But the pleasant arch of the rainbow bends,
And its sheen is fair in the spring-tide sky,
With the earth's green turf at one of its ends,
At the other is Faerie.

Where the ways divide in the saffron light
A flame in the West leap'd red,
And the Key from the rainbow burnish'd bright
Slipp'd out as the rainbow fled.

With a music-waft the air gave up
From God's most holy place
A priestly youth with a golden cup,
White alb'd, with shining face.

The witch-queen over her palfrey lean'd ;
She drew my bridle round ;
The witch-queen croon'd and the witch-queen keen'd ;
We sprang into faerie ground.

With the sudden shot of a shaft, the bow
Sprang over and spilt its dyes,
And a change as swift with the gaudy flow
Forth leap'd in her eager eyes.

LA VIE INTIME

Ye wist I knew what the legend said ;
My birth-cross saved me then ;
But the witch-maid taken by me to wed
In place of the maids of men

Had suffer'd the change which the songs portend—
Ah, woe on those limbs so fair !
From witch-built halls at the rainbow's end
Fled I through the haunted air !

THE SECOND SCROLL

A VOICE IN THE HEIGHT

If only the blood of the race of man
In the veins of the mother that bore me ran,
And only the soul of the open sea
Dwelt in my father, a rover free,
Then something came from a secret place
And look'd me, a young child, in the face,
And all the natural world became
A pageant unstable as smoke and flame ;
Sunsets faded and stars went out,
But pressing me closer round and about
Than the common modes by which man is fenced,
Another order and rite commenced ;
In quiet garden and market town
Strange processions went up and down ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

In dusky corners and rooms secluded
Warm arms encircled and lips intruded ;
Stealthy tortuous corridors stirr'd
With the whisper of an unearthly word ;
In the very bed where my mother placed me
Strange, trembling creatures cried and embraced me.

There was no river so high, so clear,
But a face not mine would there appear,
And if in summer I plunged therein
Something kiss'd me which seem'd like sin,
And hands which never could lift to bless me
Up through the cool depths came to caress me.
Over the edge of the world astray,
How swift I pass'd from the world away
To see those sights of glory and joy,
Alike forbidden to man or boy,
In a place so pale with an eye so dim,
Had never the fairies come to him.
Yet the light had something of autumn's shine,
And the blush of the leaf in its last decline,
And the sights if seen by an angel's eyes
Would have lost him for æons his native skies.

Why was I taken from Nature's arms,
And taught so early on secret charms
To nourish the innocent heart's desire ?
To fan the flame of a fervent fire

LA VIE INTIME

Under the eyes, at the lips of those
Whose kisses are more than Nature knows,
Whose arts far down in the scale of things
Are sweets full of poison and mortal stings?

Ah, but a melody faint at times
Drown'd for a little those drowsy rhymes
Which the nameless loves of that world unknown
Over the nuptial bowers intone,
And limbs which have never by man been seen
Poppies and hemlock slipp'd between!
O eyes unsated and grey with want!
O hearts inhuman of fire the font!
O shameless bodies and eager faces,
With human sex to your scarlet graces
E'en in the secret of bliss denied!
Who was the bridegroom and who the bride?
He who hath seen your arms extended
Shall know of a hunger and want unended.

Gentle melody, tones rejoicing,
Worlds beyond worlds and their secrets voicing,
O but in slumber I heard the call—
Heard and hearken'd, and over all,
Heart and body and mind and eye,
Fell the great longing to reach your cry!
Not into Nature's gates returning,
Forth I went and carried my yearning,

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

For he that strays from her realm in vain
Seeks therein to return again,
But somehow, somewhere the place to reach
Where dwelt that singer of mystic speech,
Chanting somewhere, how far, how high,
So blythe, so sacred a litany !
O if the natural world to nought
Brings what the heart and the eyes have sought,
That have look'd on things to our eyes forbidden,
Surely a place of peace is hidden !
Surely the mystic voice which sings
Of the sacred city and its secret things,
Not in vain on the mountains far,
Nor taken vainly from star to star,
Forth from the great delusion leading,
Carries the heart with a hope exceeding,
Where, in the light of all light descried,
One shall be bridegroom and one the bride !

THE THIRD SCROLL

THE EXPENDED WAYS

Ah ! whither now shall one bewray'd,
Through listless paths and wrack
Of longing dull'd but not allay'd
Descry the true way back ?

LA VIE INTIME

The mists about me crawl and creep,
Warm folds, which swathe and wind,
The swooning soul in languor steep,
And every nerve unbind.

Landscape and seascape far and near
Are voiceless, void and grey ;
Thought sets as moon, if moon were here,
Where two eves make one day.

This pallid screen which hangs between
All-kindling heaven and earth
Can bring no purpose fair and clean
Mid sodden light to birth.

O the worn way and the lorn way,
And the way that never ends,
Where the light is as the night is,
But never night descends !

And shapes of all things form and fade,
With outlines vague and strange ;
Where the pace is slow for the pulse is stay'd,
And nothing is swift but change ;

Where the male rose blooms like the maiden rose
And the maid like the man appears ;
Is it night or noon in the sky ? God knows,
Where the dark mist flows with tears !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Body and ghost are spectres pale,
Shadow and substance fuse in one,
The distance melts and the prospects fail—
Who knoweth of star or sun?

Mind cannot think or sad heart dream,
Maim'd by the dreary spell,
Which none can escape on road or stream—
Take the woodland, try the dell;

Try the ghostly groaning mere,
Take the sand-strewn ways of weed—
Who shall sail and who shall steer?
Who shall spur the flagging steed?

O for a bolt from heaven to fall,
And a rain to follow fast!
Waste and ravage of storm, and all
The strength of a clarion blast!

I yearn for the rainbow's farther side!
I dream of the golden key!
The angel-priest where the ways divide
And the cup of the mystery!

The convent gate and the heights untrod
In a silent world of ice!
I ask but to gaze on the hand of God
As it shuts me from Paradise.

LA VIE INTIME

THE FOURTH SCROLL

RESTORED TO LIGHT

A faint light shining for a space ;
A breath of wind upon the face ;
A stirring in the mist ; a sigh ;
A sense of distance, height and sky ;
A little wave of melody !
O but how beautiful to see
The light leaf dance upon the tree,
The bloom upon a hedgerow stirr'd
By transport of a singing bird,
And after darkness and eclipse
The sun upon the sails of ships
All up and down the dancing sea !
O but how beautiful to hear
A little whisper in the ear,
A smaller voice than note of bird,
A still small voice, a mighty word,
A whisper in the heart to say
That God is not so far away !
And when the torpid soul is stirr'd
The voices of all the worlds are heard,
And all the world's lights come and kiss
The sleeping soul to waking bliss,
While joy of new-found life and hours
Bursts everywhere into dews and flowers—
Dews and flowers and fragrance sweet,
In the month of May with her light feet ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The promise of fuller scent and tune
Under the florid lips of June ;
And the gorgeous glory in the eye,
All among roses, of rich July ;
The blessed vision which crowns the year,
When August apples and corn appear.
Out of darkness and sorcery,
Out of the spell and the mystery,
As a mother with accents mild,
Nature has call'd back her lost child
From the other side of the world so far,
And has taken him for a little while
Into the refuge of her smile,
Until from one of her far-off heights,
Peak that glisters or gleaming star,
Some hand shall kindle the greater lights,
Discover a pathway leading straight,
As it might seem, to a convent gate,
And into a different world of spell,
As it might be, lead by a convent bell
Gently over the hill-tops ringing ;
From the star and over the peak,
And over the peak and beyond the star,
A voice, a chorus, a cosmos singing
Of one thing needful which time out of mind,
All worlds over, the nations seek,
And past all worlds shall the nations find.
By which also, restored to sight,
From the hells of sense and the spells of night,
Having my peace with Nature made,

LA VIE INTIME

And taking humbly, as best I may,
To the convent gate my pilgrim way ;
If by a chance that key should slip
From another rainbow into a glade,
And the mystic cup be placed to my lip,
O what shall loosen one fervent grip,
And O where else be the thirst allay'd !
Or having the key of the convent door,
Will I not stand on that sacred floor,
And gaze with the cloister'd eyes within,
— On the paths which lead from my great sin
Up to the sacred peaks and light,
Holy and holy and holy height ?
And I know that over the void untrod,
Wherever I pause between,
Far though they shine from the peaks of ice,
Shall glister the gates of Paradise,
Unbarr'd by the hand of God !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE KING'S RENDERING

A TRANSCRIPT

ARGUMENT. — Among the veiled memories of the soul two kinds are imperfectly distinguished. One is of the soul's participation in the universal life, as when, like beads and sparkles, welling up from deeps of water, there may rise upon the surface of our consciousness strange sensations of kinship with clouds, birds, the sunlight on a golden vane, and the soul says unto itself: 'These also have I been. But it is really a fictitious impression which mistakes the present kinship of all being for psychological identity. The true memory is more usually awakened, among external objects, by the opening of vast distances, and the soul knows thereby how far she has travelled; she knows also the vast distances that are within her; she knows, amidst the twilight of our life, that once the King-Spirit dwelt within her, till the great wars and devastations began, and how then the King went forth. Yet he returns surely to enlighten the city of the soul. She dreams even that he tarries in the engirding secret lands, or that he moves slowly through the outskirts and mean places of the suburbs of the city of man. But she looks certainly for his entrance.

'Twas when the great Telesma of the sun
With ardent flame inform'd the torrid zone,
And summer's heavy heat possess'd the air
With spells successively of rapture, great
Strange longing, rapture dim; a day of bland
And happy parable, emblazon'd round
With symbols; matron Nature teeming, rich,
Full-lipp'd and yielding. In such hour I shut
My house of dreams and forth I fared alone

THE KING'S RENDERING

Into the splendid sacramental world,
Where, all the sacramental veils dissolved,
Shone midst the light flamboyant and flaming heat
The Corpus Christi feast of earth and sea.

Now is the morning coming, the hush'd night
Hath surely pass'd ; without that house of dreams
Midmost within the city I pause, and know
What wonder and high truth of all the world
Stands at the doors and knocks : whence dream is
done !

He then shall hear who will, a rich device,
The quest and pageant of the coming King !

All in the little tower that crowns the Church
Hear ye the pleasant bells which stir in sleep
With muffled cadences and whisper'd chimes !
Files past the fair procession ! Those twin yews,
The two proud peacocks of the legend, shaped
Uncouthly, feeling, through their long drear spell,
That pride and vanity are over, stir
All tremulous, as if with sudden wind.

For in the night we rode to save the town.
And overtaking ever and anon
Belated market-waggons, saw, aroused
And wonderstruck, the yokels heavy-eyed
Mark scared in vision that goodly train go by,
With the great Graal's glad light encompassing ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Fair horses plunging, steaming in the light ;
Vast banners streaming, swirling, taken past
By Gilead winds ; the King of all the world—
So in my heart I hail'd my heart's dear lord—
Rex quondam ille et futurus rex—
Riding his great white horse with reverent mien
Behind the holy vessel, set about
With sweetness and with savour. Next in place,
With mien erect but still an ancient man,
The King's sword-bearer came ; Excalibur
Lay keen in sheath, the sharp quick light thereof,
Like unto thirty torches, and the gold
Inscription round it, ray'd on every side,
And all the scabbard's wealth of jewell'd length
And haft transfigured.

Past the roadside stream
Where crooked willows trembled, crouch'd and
croon'd ;
The windy rookery swaying in the old
Elm-tops ; the narrow bridge—a shallow pool
Below it shining faintly ; and across
The little remnant of the open heath
Dotted with pointed tents all white and ghostly ;
Past old decaying houses deeply shrouded
In thicker ivy than the walls which bore it ;
Past windows dim, with dainty blinds drawn close
In little villas ; and past the creaking sign
Whereby the great roads enter from the West

THE KING'S RENDERING

An abject village street ; the shutter'd shops
Of that mute place ; still eastward, where the bridge
Crosses the road ; and as we drew to this
A train of waggons steaming slowly show'd
Forth-hanging guards and drivers eager-eyed,
Awestruck and crying.

Thereat I fell to dream :
What wonder in the city of the King
When the King came into his own : what joy
Among the common people when the King
Stood manifest : what poets should come out
To meet him : with what lights should altars blaze :
What flowers be strewn : what bells and bells peal
forth :
What merchants, councillors and princes haste
To proffer homage : and what peace in all :
What putting by of sorrow and of shame :
What goodness raised to sanctity : what sins
By pardon purified : what wounds made whole :
What sudden change in heart and end of all.

Thereafter pass'd the pictures of the quest,
The inception's fever and high colouring
Kindled its fires within me, going out
From the great city through those long green lanes
By a free way far stretch'd into the West.
Came too the pain of doubt, the questioning,
The aching sense of loneliness and of loss,

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Faring through mournful marshes where the mist
At sunset flamed with a dull ruddy light
Which after ever in the moonlight turn'd
To rolling seas. Again, distraught, I heard,
Through smoke and smoulder of the sunset time,
The plaint of plovers, heard the bitterns cry
Strangely, with breasts and wings incarnadined,
Flocking and flying towards the falling Sun.
And further still, descending steep hillsides,
I saw below me the forest tree-tops sweep
Bending and crashing before the risen wind,
Spelling out wild reverberant messages.

Through fields of bearded barley, fields of rye,
Through winding byways all among tall ripe wheat,
Still faring forward many a morning after ;
Betwixt the teeming life of lush hedgerows,
The rich disorder'd growth of bank and ditch,
Right in the drowsy heat and harvest wealth,
Scented and songful, of early autumn sunshine ;
Circling of gaudy moths, the birr and buzz
Of bees, dove-croonings, splendid heavy flight
Of armour'd dragon-flies ; by lonely wells
Disused and the forgotten source of springs ;
By open roads scored white on breezy hills
And white and brown through miles of lilting vales
And worlds embower'd of pool and meeting stream ;
Past apple-orchards, russet, green and red ;
So to the sea—the questing restless waste

THE KING'S RENDERING

Of the tumultuous ocean ! How it cried
Loud in the moonlight terribly—how broke
Ever its long white line of angry surf,
Chafing beyond the bar, broke and reform'd,
Toss'd high, toss'd higher, where the beacon lamps
Set in tide-isolated lighthouse towers
Seem'd to flash watchwords through the infinite !

But after in the morning glory's pearl
Of shell, pale pink, convolvulus and rose—
Bell-like, far-echoing, caroll'd along the coast,
Sea voices taking shape, as soul's take flesh,
Scatter'd light music, breath'd between the songs
Sweet little words of prophecy, soft words
Of promise, high resounding words of hope ;
Till all the landscapes and the seascapes merged
In world of dream, the hills abode in light
Down streaming from the gold-bright city above ;
All visible realities assumed
A richer tincture, an uplifted type ;
And in the human side of earthly things
A higher magic confess'd its mystery
Even in cottage homes and humble farms.

So swept the path of quest into a place
Of very sacrament and mystery.
Vested in samite strange ships glided down
Sea-ways, full-tided, swirling, glisterful ;
The savour of the spicery of the world

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Hung over all the shore ; high mystic chants
Swept and re-echoed through the haunted air,
Telling of Aromat and the holy cup.
There fell the subtle hint of perilous quests
In turrets dimly seen between old trees,
In moated manors mouldering far away
From all frequented roads. Unlook'd for glades
Of strange encounter open'd out in bosks,
Where steaming summer draws rich humid scents
From yielding lealf-mould ; in waste places rose
Old chapels, and the sieges set therein
Were less for worship than for vision's gifts ;
The reverence of high feasting rang throughout
The sparged and censured extent of castle halls ;
Pavilions rose on lawns by power of words ;
White doves flew past with golden censers borne
In bills anointed, from their choric wings,
Spread wide, expanding measured melody ;
Children in sacred vestments went before,
With sacred lights, far-shining priest-like men
From those far countries which are reached by
none
That traverse sea or land.

In such a place
The path of quest and promise was closed about
With eager faces ; on the faces fell
The white light shining from the Holy Graal.
I saw them—even I—a man unclean :
The faces shone of angels and of men ;

THE KING'S RENDERING

The face of Galahad, of Perceval,
The face of Lancelot sanctified by woe
And seal'd by priesthood. More than all I saw
The fair uncover'd visage of the King,
The King's face in his splendour, as the King
Came out of Avalon, in the morning glory
Passing with royal train along the coast,
Whereon the light sea scatter'd foam and song ;
Fair orchards ripen'd in the mellow sun ;
The white road ran behind his horse's hoofs ;
Over the bridges, over the hills, and all
Through fields of barley, miles of wheat and rye ;
Out of the West, far forth into the East,
By secret paths for many and many a day
All reverent riding behind the Holy Graal,
Amidst all manner of sweetness and of savour.

And reaching now the lion-guarded gates
Of that old convent house and school of saints
Which past the river and a hundred meads
Descries the dim horizon of the hills,
I saw the vision of a pallid nun,
With quivering aureole, watching on her knees
And praying. Then I knew the mourning queen
Had look'd again upon her master's face,
And all must come to pass as I was warn'd
Already in my quest. The glorious train
Swept by ; there fell a hush among the stars,
A stir in streets, a spell upon the wind,

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And whereabouts the silent highway flows
Beneath the rude arch of a formless bridge,
Some homeless urchin on the kerb asleep,
Lifting his bare head from his ragged knees,
Scream'd worship as an angel's broider'd hem—
The twelfth fair master in a scarlet cope
And white dalmatic—brush'd with sudden touch
His naked feet.

In that same hour a light
Began to kindle faintly in the East ;
The eastern heaven dissolv'd its scatter'd stars
In many hued solutions. For the morn
Was now at hand ; the stir of human life
Must soon begin ; whereat I felt my heart
Leap in my side, foreseeing those great things
Which every man should witness. As I rode
My palfrey humbly far behind the train,
The narrow street which skirts the water-side
In squalid slumber stirr'd ; at early inns
And coffee-houses, waggoners look'd forth
From grimy windows, bargemen crowding doors
Stared as in dream, stone-turn'd for wonderment.
So pass'd the pageant ; on the hush thereof
An awestruck sob ensued, a stir widespread
Through all the town, shouting of many voices,
Clatter of doors and casements. Over all
That shoeless urchin shriek'd, and beat the air
With yearning hands, fast following.

Below

The bridge a whistle of some early steamer

THE KING'S RENDERING

Blew keenly in the thin keen morning air
As first we enter'd on the smoother ways
And broader streets, where life awaited light
And light of life unlook'd for thus drew nigh.

Amidst dull echoes of a hundred feet
In the old capital of Middlesex,
Again the cloud enveloped us ; again
We rode invisible ; his own choice kept back
The blessed revelation of the King
Because the Holy Graal must first be set
For worship on the minster altar high,
Midmost within the city. Whatsoe'er
Wild rumours of some unknown mystery
Ran like light fire from all the western side,
The great metropolis to light of day
Woke up once more on common toil intent,
Nor knew what should befall it. I alone,
Foreseeing all, stole hurriedly and closed
My house of dreams, and cast the keys away,
And riding thence in haste to reach betimes
The minster shrine, hereby proclaim to all
The quest and pageant of the coming King.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

HOW I ALSO SANG MASS

ARGUMENT.—When too ardently pursuing the life of the outward sense we lose consciousness of the spiritual life, something has in a real manner passed away from us which is beyond all price for purity and loveliness ; and the way of recovery is often hard and dolorous, haunted by a sense of misery which is for us in its realisation greater than the dereliction of Judas or the timeless want of Lucifer. Yet the sense of loss is the pledge of recovery, and the soul returns into her consciousness, as a priest passing into a temple, and saves all her generations and peoples. But the divine must be manifested within us, and the work is not accomplished until we can say in the symbolism of the poem : *Ite, missa est.*

AND therefore when the palsied hours
Reach'd towards the end of all ;
When petals from the scarlet flowers
Dropp'd through the empty hall ;
And, betwixt a shriek and moan,
All over the floor of stone
The wind of the world outside
Took and scatter'd them wide
And far through the open doors ;
When a shaft of the sunlight broke,
Like smouldering fire and smoke,
Through the painted windows lifting high
Their forest of tangled tracery ;

HOW I ALSO SANG MASS

And over the dunes, through the brushwood maze,
The cries which echoed all day drew off afar
Towards the holocaust fire of the sunset and the
long drawn under-haze,
Forth I issued alone, and heard
The final note of the day's last fountain-hearted
bird
Spring to the fountain light of the night's first star

Whereat at length my heart sustain'd
The utter sense of loss,
And that first ghostly lawn I gain'd
As one who drags his cross.
And there, as over a mountain ledge,
On the south horizon's terminal edge,
Where the ragged road of that restless place
Suddenly seems to fall into space,
I saw how the pageant, rank by rank,
Paused on the brink, there gleam'd and sank.
So took they, 'twixt the day and the night,
My wonder forth on her palfrey white,
And the whole world's dissolving spell
Mutter'd and moan'd confused farewell,
While life fell suddenly dark and cold,
As over the terrace and through the gate
And far through the woodland and farther still, all
over the open wold,
With a vacant heart and a voided will,
Forth I hurried, and still

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Sang on the crest of the coppice that bird which
tarried so late
To the early star far over the naked crest of the hill.

I will not dwell on that night's eclipse
 When all the world's woes came ;
The secret want with shrouded lips,
 The grief too deep for name,
And found a name to ease their grief,
And show'd their wounds and won relief,
And then, confessing, look'd on mine,
Saying : No sorrow is like to thine,
For the Master of all in His great day
Shall scarcely wipe thy tears away.
One also from afar came down,
And said : Twelve stars were in my Crown ;
The lilies of that green world, besprent
Through bosks and valleys, made white my star of
 old ;
Deep is my loss and far my lapse, but further is thy
 descent,
And I know by thine eyes of doom
That I rise from the curse and gloom,
And the glory of morning blooms where the lights
 of the rose unfold.

Another from the marshes rose
 With dripping cloak and hood,
Wolf-eyes that had not known repose
 Through years, or look'd on good ;

HOW I ALSO SANG MASS

With aspect of a man long dead,
Whom loathing earth refused a bed,
Empty and yet compell'd to be—
O weary of all the skies was he !
And from his neck—what load of pain !—
There hung a heavy and tarnish'd chain,
Of the thirty pieces of silver wrought
By which Christs and Kings have been sold and
bought.

For a little space he gazed, then cried,
Hands stretch'd, like one that is crucified :—
Woe and woe but an end of woe,
With a hope at end, as a light in darkness born,
Because it is given to gaze at length on a face from
every face distinguished here below
By mine own sorrow and loss,
And deeper, is scored thy cross,
As the pit than the grave is deeper, O thou of all
forlorn !

And therefore as the night of murk
Drew towards a morning chill ;
And light began like a yeast to work,
Nameless, stealthy and still,
And a torpid shuddering life to stir,
It seem'd that the burden of Lucifer,
With the twelve stars dark in his crown,
And of Judas the chain'd fell down,
While those twain over the steep hill trod,
As souls set free that return to God.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

But forth abroad through the day's bright heart,
God's hand under, I moved apart ;
And a Borgia poison as I went
Pass'd into every sacrament ;
The vision went out in the eyes that see ;
The star absinthos and wormwood hissing into all
sweet waters fell ;
The chrysm destroy'd the dying man, as Nature the
honey-bee ;
And with heavy feet as I fared
I straiten'd the road and prepared
A pathway sheer for the world to pass, going down
to the gates of hell.

How on this middle deep and dark
Should light and joy be rain'd ?
Ah, by what process hard, remark,
Redemption's height is gain'd !
Yet over the marsh and over the sky
And the unclaim'd wastes I testify
That the morning comes, howe'er delay'd,
Till the saddest feet through a glory wade,
And the aching head cannot fail to lift,
Eyes look where the white cloud - splendours
drift ;
That when the eyes behold what gem
Is set in the great world's diadem,
There is no soul in the deep abyss
But shall remember crown and bliss.

HOW I ALSO SANG MASS

And the light behind is the light before,
 When over the wreck and the ravage and into
 the day's deep wells,
And onward still till the light without is for ever
 and evermore
The joy of all light within,
While over the cross and the loss the great clouds
 circle and spin,
As the bane from the soul uplifted the curse from
 the earth expels.

So therefore in those softer hours
 Which soothe the close of all,
I stood as one midst lights and flowers
 By an altar fair and tall,
And in priestly vestments even I
Intoned the mystical liturgy;
Yea, with unearthly and shining eyes
I, even I, offer'd sacrifice,
And uttered the kingly and terrible terms
Which, veils assuming, the King confirms,
While the painted windows lifted high
Their forest of tangled tracery;
And the heavy shafts of sunlight broke
Through the shifting denseness of incense-smoke;
When I—even I—with hands made clean
And hyssop-sprinkled, more white than snow, as God
 in the past cried: "Light"—
And the light flash'd forth, by a mystic word said:
 God, and his Christ was seen:

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

By which do I testify
That the soul of itself can die,
Yet in death is He strong to save, since I have seen
crown and height.

SUMMA TOTIUS MYSTERII

Now therefore concerning that wonder white
Over a world's edge drawn from sight—
This also surely is thine own loss,
And, because of the crown, like me
Thou must partake of the curse and cross
Till a mass shall be sung by thee;
But that which was taken is not confess'd
Betwixt *introibo* and *missa est*:
Say therefore, as man and his angels do,
Worlds over, *refugium meum es tu*,
Though, for myself, on that great day
I cried but *Tu Autem Domine*.

PART IV
OF WORLDS NOT REALISED

WOODLAND MYSTICS

WOODLAND MYSTICS

ARGUMENT.—Man alone is the channel of the divine voice, and in a certain secret manner he brings God into activity, effectuating at all points the latent conformities and correspondences which compose the bond of relationship between the human and divine. The call of grace in each one of us is like a message from man to man, and follows us with a sense of human companionship. Anthropomorphism is at the heart of the universe.

THE Blessed Master from the world beyond
Came in the morning redness of my life
And singled me from all my name and race
For ministry in secret through the world,
And I have never left him night or day
Through all the lonely wanderings and ways;
Great is the enterprise, the end is sure :
In very truth the Blessed Master came !

You ask how first the Blessed Master came :
When first my heart was stirr'd to choose the path
Of quest, the Venerable Master came.
How came the Venerable Master ? Say,
What other likeness could he wear but ours ?
A man of men, of royal aspect he :
By just so much as man to things divine,
Aspiring tends, comes the divine to man,
And so as man the Blessed Master came.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Where met the Master and the friend he loves?
Where should they meet but in familiar scenes?
The cotter need not look beyond his gates,
Nor woodman fare beyond the fallen tree,
Nor any turn the corner of a street;
In East or West or Zenith seek him not—
O Blessed Master, he is here and now!

To me at eve the Blessed Master came—
Thee haply call'd he with the morn's first bird,
And other some at middle night or noon—
With Nature round, to me at eve he came.
The sunset's scarlet heart had fix'd mine eyes,
And when they moved a mist of flame and blood
Seem'd rolling round me : a majestic shape
Dilated in it suddenly I saw
Beside me, and my spirit by his voice—
The Master's blessed voice—was inly thrill'd.

The Blessed Master came at eve to me;
He bade me follow; in the autumn cold
I took the fields, and through an old swing-gate
Pass'd into spongy marshes. Still my mind
Recalls the copse of willows where the moon
Through naked boughs look'd at us. As I cross'd
The crumbling stile, a minute's space I paused,
For who had stood there set apart so far
From all the world, O Blessed Master, say?
From that old house had ever maid or youth,

WOODLAND MYSTICS

At the star-promise of thy word most true,
Gone forth at night to follow far on thee,
And paused, as I, in that familiar copse,
Where late and early on my face the moon
Had look'd so oft, which would not know me more,
Yet all its woodland mystics spell the same
In calm and wind, while I was call'd away
The hallow'd bound of all man's life to win?
O Venerable Master, pausing there,
What marvel was it if my human heart
Should keep the memory of that dreaming copse,
In yellow moonlight lying, fresh for ever,
Though to the stars exalted?

Long ago—
O long ago! And I have follow'd far—
With thee, still with thee, ever, Friend, with thee!
And the old house from the old roof-tree falls,
For death and change have been at work in all;
But still the woodland spells its mystic speech
In calm and wind, and all its speech I know:
'Tis ever fresh within my human heart.
O when the Blessed Master came at eve
That dreaming copse, in yellow moonlight lying,
Bears witness in me through eternity
Of how in very truth the Master came!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

VISTAS OF COMPASSION

ARGUMENT.—As all the greatest things of life are outside logical demonstration, so there are within us many concealed depths which exceed our powers of expression. The sense of them is frequently awakened in an all-mastering manner by simple and seemingly unconnected things of the outward world.

A LULLABY heard in a sunlit glade
And a voice in a forest bower ;
The tender tones of a youth or maid,
And the wistful want of the world display'd
Comes over the heart with power :

With a sense of hunger and aching deep
No tongue can in words translate ;
But pity flows over for paths so steep,
The hopeless height where the white worlds sweep
And the cloud on the golden gate.

O lullaby, soothe the babe's repose !
O voice, on the huntsman call !
A tenderness lives in the heart of the rose—
O sweet-lipp'd lovers ! Who knows, who knows
The secret measure of all ?

KNOWING THY LIKENESS

KNOWING THY LIKENESS

ARGUMENT.—The rest of Nature is in man, and Nature shares his quest, for she is the line of his limitation. He is like the sea, and she is like the great concavity which contains it.

Not at the gate of heaven, not in the land
Of psychic dream, pours forth thy soul in song,
Lark of the marshes, of the pastures rich !
Enough thou singest in a pearl-grey sky ;
The still'd sea rimpling on the hush'd sea-sand
Pauses in sunlight with uplifted crests
And listens. Ever in a dream at noon
Lie lake-like, croon upon the crimped shore
And languish, shallow sea ! There shall not fail
Slow flights of solan geese with flashing wings,
And round the fosses and the dykes and meads
The martin ever with a plaintive note,
And doleful mew, shall call. So still wash on !
With mazy melodies of winds and birds
Mingle, thou far-off voice ! Thy dim blue line,
Amidst the placid magic of a faint
Ethereal mist upon a silent verge
Mixes with silent sky. O double blue !
Blue of the ocean, blue of heaven above,
Still draw the soul, alike on marsh and height,
Where the mole burrows, where the eagle soars—

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

On the high crests, on the precipitous crests,
Whence torrents plunge to meet thee, draw the soul
Amid the lonely walks of daily life,
And on the summits of exalted thought
Attract her still, and give the wild, white wings
Which o'er thee bear thy furthest-flighted bird ;
Then in the vastness of thine underworld
She shall abide with thee—till twilight falls,
Possess thy splendour, thine immensity,
And compass all thy bounds in loving thought,
Yea, in adoring thought, and shall awhile
Be satisfied and deem at length she rests,
Made one with being which is vast as her's.
Yet thou shalt fail, for twilight shuts thee in ;
Thy strong spell utterly dissolves, thy voice
Grows hoarse and ominous, cold vapours brood
About the shining beauty of thy breast ;
And, when the shifting wind begins to chafe,
That bitter discontentment of thy depths
Spumes upward, a vain madness passes through
Thy barren nature ; on the rocks, the beach,
Thou ragest, passionate and anguish-tost.
Grand art thou then, yet peace is far from thee !
And when the startled moon among the clouds
Begins to scurry, and with fitful rays
Thine eager waste illumines, dire thou art,
With wretchedness full-voiced in all thy waves,
And then we know thee in the want thou hast.
O for the footsteps of the Prince of Peace
To still thy tumult, for his voice to still

KNOWING THY LIKENESS

Our stormy hearts! There is no help in thee;
Our need is thine, and what, O sea, thou art,
All Nature is, a message to the soul,
Assuagement sometimes and some ministry,
But not true rest or true beatitude!

Yet in the sweet peace of a day to come
There shall be no more sea of storm and pain,
But splendid calm, lucidity and depth,
With gladness in immensity like thine,
O royal ocean whom we hail and love!

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

TO YOU IN ABSENCE

ARGUMENT.—We do not see Nature as she is, for we behold too much the exhibition of our own limitations. Beyond these there is the fuller man, the higher truth, the greater beauty and the undeclared reality.

WHEN I have seen thy sunset smoke

How I have long'd for thee !

When through the fire and light

A deeper heart of light and fire

Has open'd from the infinite,

Deep as that void was my desire,

O heart of light ! O heart of fire !

Thy very self to feel and see

In ecstasy of sense and sight ;

The nuptials of the depth and height ;

Beyond the outward beauty's show,

The evanescent gleam and glow,

Ah, thee to know, ah, thee to know !

We do but see thy painted face,

Symbol and vesture of thy grace :

The long-drawn forests trail and bend,

The long paths wind and have no end,

The swimming floods their founts pour out,

The tides of the mysterious sea

That writhing vastness turns about,

And all draw out our souls to thee.

TO YOU IN ABSENCE

When darkness on the earth and ocean
Only unfolds the sense of motion,
 Sound and the echo of all sound
 Surging sharpen'd senses round,
There seems a closer contact made
Than when thy features stand display'd,
 But oh, not thee, ah no, not thee!
The portrait of a face conceal'd,
An absent person's picture shining ;
And we before it stand divining
What thou art like and where art thou :
Does the light fall thus on thy brow ?
And do thy sweet eyes glance like this ?
Lips something as the lips we kiss,
And such a voice, to cheer and bless,
Of music's dulcet tenderness ?

We know thy picture well, ah well !
From out the blazon'd frame of things
It almost steps at times to tell
How close our heart's imaginings,
 Beata Pulchra, spring to thee !
About thy country's shrouded sphere
Gather we tidings far and near ;
And through the sunset and the star,
Through all the fields of space afar,
The long-drawn fire and light which fills
The openings beyond the hills,
 We pass in flight of thought to see—
O antitype of all things fair,
If thou art there, if thou art there !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Surely thy country is our home
And all is exile here,
And surely we shall reach thy place ;
We must be meant to see thy face—
Who also from afar have come,
With faces veil'd as thine is now
And other than our looks appear—
We know not how, we know not how !
While still we tarry far away,
And still pursue the anxious quest,
In beauty let thy picture stay,
In beauty and in light express'd
Throughout this long dream-haunted day ;
On sea and land, on land and sea,
Long haunted with the dreams of thee ;
And therefore, till the light shall fail,
O thou in absence, thee we hail !

FOUNDATIONS OF SAPPHIRE

FOUNDATIONS OF SAPPHIRE

ARGUMENT.—Man is the adornment and illuminator of Nature, and in his light does she behold light. She has meanings only because of him, sacraments because he is in need of them, beauty because he can discern it. He responds to all her prophecies with a complete assurance, and realises all her yearnings.

A KEEPER's stray shot suddenly divides
The evening silence, then the dogs respond,
And up the steep hill's moist and rutted road
Hardly the waggon horses toil and strain.
An ancient beech is by me, broad of girth
And all about the roots enrich'd with moss,
While up the wooded vista of the slope
Only the bush makes dark the rover's way.

Blest be this undergrowth! May rain and dew
Increase it still! Blest be the tranquil breeze
Which after fragrant showers has blown across
Those darksome downs that ring the country round!
And blest this autumn sky invested thus
With spring's pure freshness! So the soul assumes
A priestly function, to the evening sky
Her solemn salutation here ascends,
Blessing, invoking. Here the peace without
Makes peace within, the peace profound within
Sheds deeper peace without than Nature knows,
Save in the mystic equipoise of man's

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Immortal part with her essential life,
Exalting both and both therein repose,
In common bliss dependent each on each
And unified.

Sweet Spirit of the sky—
So speaks the Soul, vibrating, brimm'd with song—
The peace of God o'er all thy broad expanse
Be spread for ever ! May thy roving clouds,
Which carry coolness and life-yielding showers
From zone to zone to freshen every field,
To swell the streams and seas, thyself invest
With beauties new ! May each returning eve
From one new star, more bright than all before,
Enrich thy gem-set crown with silver gleam,
Thy lucid spaces purify and fill
As with the lenity and grace of God !
O may thy peace and beauty's broad increase
On hearts distil in other showers and dew !
May all bright eyes beneath thy glance uplifted
Be with thine azure, with thine argent rays,
Suffused, and melted towards love's mildest mood,
Yet thy full joy reflect in every glance !

Ascending still this winding woodland road,
I see thy gentle blue to golden green,
Like shapes in sleep transfigure. Then it seems
Thine answer comes ; thy splendour passing down
Invests the soul and blesses in return ;
Man's love for Nature on himself devolves
In lucid gifts ; he sees, he feels, he knows,
And inspiration to a throne of thought

FOUNDATIONS OF SAPPHIRE

Uplifts him. Take, sweet Nature, take thy child !
Speak in the winds of evening, speak in mists,
Speak in the revelation of the stars !
And in the terror of the midnight hush,
Wherein the lone sea washes far away,
Reveal and speak !

So art thou child no more—
This mystic Nature utters to the soul—
But, one in essence, thou art old like me
Yet ever young, for ever changed and born,
And through the pageant of created things
Thou slowly passest towards the utmost point ;
And all my light goes with thee, all my hopes
Spread wings before thee, and the end, the end,
Is not so distant but its glory streams
Far and away, not from the East or West—
O not from star or sun—far and away,
Where the heart rests—all in the light, the light—
Truth-light and love-light, splendour of over-soul
Making the soul a splendour ; and my form,
Which is the circle of created things,
Glowes in thy glory, in thy change transforms :
For what divides us, whether dark or day ?
What makes our union ? Ever that which joins
The God encompassing to thee within !

And in the fading splendour of the West,
When spent larks drop, when waters merge in mist,
Who wills may read this message of God's light
And find already in his inmost self
The first faint gleams of that effulgence shine.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

A SONG OF THE SLEEPING WORLD

ARGUMENT.—The consciousness of the sleep of Nature is ever present to the mystic, and is explicable by the fact that man, her informant, is himself in a condition of dream, as indeed is made evident by the grotesque fantasmagoria of accepted human interests. The sleep, however, has so many aspects of lightness that a simple kiss might, we feel, awaken us. Such a kiss is not necessarily that of the death-angel. Prior to that some of us have been wonderfully awakened, while many doubtless continue to sleep thereafter, but that sleep is not the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

But not of the hush when the wind sinks down,
And the sea on the shore lies still,
As the winding highway broad and brown
Which clambers the crest of the hill;
Or the moonshaft struck through a cloven cloud
To repose on a mist impearl'd,
Where slips some stream through a valley of dream,
Is the song of the sleeping world !

For the world still sleeps when the rack goes past
And the heart of Nature fails
At the bolt's reply to the moaning blast,
As the scattering storm assails ;
Sleeps in the stir which the morning brings,
Sleeps through the Spring's new birth—
O the joyous word of the loudest bird
Is a song of the sleeping earth !

A SONG OF THE SLEEPING WORLD

For Nature is steep'd in a trance intense
And strangely moves in a dreamer's round,
As those that walk in their sleep with sense
And soul unconscious to sight and sound ;
At times to the waking point approaching
Sinks again into slumber deep ;
An earthquake rends or a star descends—
She stirs or cries in her sleep.

'Tis man alone, in a world of spell,
Wakes or believes that he wakes and sees
More than a tremulous pendant bell,
Rock'd in the arms of an evening breeze ;
More than the rack of a sea distraught
By a dreamer's vision of darkness born :
He too perchance in an anxious trance
Tosses and waits for the coming morn.

Sleep that has kiss'd us too long, too long,
Where is the prince with the kiss that wakes ?
What will that bring to us, sorrow or song ?
What more sad than the sleep it takes ?
Mournfully, smouldering sunset, fade,
Mournfully kindle, O morning blue !
But a day is at hand for the sea and land,
And a day for the soul is due !

Then shall it come with a trumpet's blare,
Fife and trumpet and roll of drum,
Tramp of cavalcades filling the air,
And the prince of all in the morning come.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Come in the morning or come in the night,
 Whence we know not, O Lord of bliss !
Come at our call, and the lips of all
 Will be coals of fire to thy kiss !

Wake us, we sleep but we dream of thee,
 Dreams, we have known them in lips and limb ;
O never was swoon on the earth or sea
 But it came at the thought of him !
And hark through the wide earth, hushing and
 stirr'd,
 A whisper, a rumour, a hint goes by,
And the breeze falls soft as thy lips will oft—
 O kiss us then lest we die !

BURDEN

For that light is the gleam of thine eye,
And waking, as yet we must wake, how bright
Is the light in which we shall see thy light !

MIRRORS OF LIFE

MIRRORS OF LIFE

ARGUMENT.—We look through many glasses of Nature, and if at times the sacraments do not seem to minister, great parables still speak amidst the melodies. The message of every parable, the depths of every mirror, proffer to us a universal warrant for all our hopes. And this is so of necessity, because the height is reflected in the depth, and the depth exhales to the height.

NIGHT deepen'd round me on those upland slopes,
The phosphor dome of heaven diffused its green
And failing glow, yet all the ghostly hills
Loom'd through the dusk distinctly. On the
loose

And yielding soil of some fresh-furrow'd field,
Uncertain, lost, I fared, then, stricken, paused,
For, lo, the dread arc of a flaming disc
Rose o'er the hill, as if an angry eye
Unfolded, loom'd—unradiating, red—
And with an awful aspect seem'd to watch
My doubting steps!

Unwittingly—I thought—
Here have I stepp'd perchance on ghostly ground,
And now the presence of the phantom scene
Comes with accusing front. My steps intrude
One moment more to see that face unveil'd,
Then will I fly!

Advancing there, I met
The lifting moon, who raised her weeds of mist

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And sweetly turn'd a bright, benignant brow
To greet me.

Poet, whether peace or storm,
Prevail, is Nature ever fair to thee ;
And, Man, in her abyss of very dread,
Bares thee a midmost heart of pure goodwill !

The setting sun, an orb of lurid fire
Enring'd with golden mist, stood clear below
A curtain-cloud, with loose serrated fringe
And purple folds, involving heaven in gloom,
While on the earth the patter of the rain
Fell audibly. A sudden rainbow spann'd
Both sea and sky, then as in dream dissolved,
While slowly round to join the train of night,
With twilight mixing, moved that sombre cloud,
And lost at length left bare the heaven o'erhead—
A lucid lilac soon with stars besprent.
Once more there rose a vast and angry form
Like that which first came up out of the sea ;
With front appalling ask'd, it seem'd, of earth
Some vanish'd brother ; but the world was mute,
Whereat the rended inmost heart sent forth
Its shaft of lightning ; scream'd a riven oak ;
Then, shorn of strength, that cloud in gentle tears
Dissolved, and, mixing with the evening dews,
Call'd forth new lives to compensate for life
Destroy'd.

So ever out of wrath and wreck
The living spirit which abides in all

MIRRORS OF LIFE

Still reconstructs the plastic house of life ;
There is no loss, no waste, rejection none.
Pass to the height, O Soul, pass to the height !
But in the dregs and depth of very death
The very life shall find and work in thee.

Night on the waters of the deep ! Those loud
And sullen voices, with the rising wind
Combining, made a roar of sound confused
And far prolong'd. The zenith of the sky
Was clear and blue ; but hazy vapour dwelt
Along the soft horizon ; and above
The ocean eastward a fantastic heap
Of livid cloud. Mine eyes were fixed thereon,
When in the midmost heart began to glow
A ruddy point of light. The crescent moon,
The young September moon her golden horn
Protruded, brightening. On a wall I lean'd ;
Its base was in a terrace built above
The loud, besieging sea. With anxious eyes
I watch'd the pregnant struggle in the sky
Of moon ascending and of cloud which strove
To quench the generous gift of light, to earth
So welcome, and those eager, moaning waves.
O ever and anon the golden arm,
Again thrust upward, for the queen of stars
Made passage, who emerged at times to full
But hasty view ! And so, with varying chance,
The war endured, until the wearied orb
Defeated ceased to tinge her sullen foe.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The shallow water shimmer'd in the light
Of harbour lamps, and evermore the main
From out the depth and vastness of the night
Brought voices wild which stirr'd within the soul
All heights, all depths, which spoke and speaketh
still

One message to the future as the past,
Prolong'd from age to age, and there are none
On earth to understand it.

Nay, the heart

Interprets all the voices of the main,
The low light whisper under skies serene,
The swell at middle night beneath the stars,
And all the dread and strident trumpet-roar
Of the storm-stricken water's waste distress;
And there is nowhere any voice or sound
Which does not offer in the midst thereof
The hidden secret of the hope ungain'd,
But very sure. The moon shall shine once more,
The clouds shall melt, the light shall fill the world,
The summer glow lead on to rosy dawn
And rosy dawn to perfect noon of bliss;
While this most bright procession of the world
But dimly limns, O soul, thine own romance!
Not only we to reach our end in God
Are moving on, but the divine great ends
Make flight towards us on eager wings of time,
And somewhere surely in the wonder-gleam
Life and that crown of life shall meet and join.

TO COME INTO THY PRESENCE

TO COME INTO THY PRESENCE

ARGUMENT.—Many activities of man, which are not of great interest intrinsically, convert naturally into parables, and are then full of precious speech. His wings beat restlessly over many seas, and show forth the soul's great research through the cosmos. But it should be remembered that the soul is not outward bound in reality; it is rather on a journey to the centre.

FORTH ! To the great free world unknown
Of the wonderful measureless mind,
As who goes sailing over the sea
Till the shore dissolves in the mist behind !
For the soul is free as the sail is free—
Slipping through many a mystic zone
On the light curl'd crests of the sea,
In the lightsome arms of the wind—
On the dancing waves of the fancy sea
At the will of the wings of mind.

Blythely the voyage begins—ahoy !
Shout to the ships with their sails all shrouded,
Safely moor'd in the harbour wide ;
Over the bar and beyond the buoy,
Hail to the craft with its canvas crowded
Waiting the turn of the tuneful tide !
How many ships in the roadstead ride !
Tarry who will till the skies are clouded—
Over the great sea, hearts of joy,
Over the ocean far and wide !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Some for the pilot wait, and some
For convoy tarry, and some slip round
From point to point of the shining shore ;
Some will perchance to destruction come
Where black reefs over the breakers roar,
Or not far out on the sand-banks ground ;
But sail we further and dare we more,
Where never the dripping lead took sound,
Or the look-out sighted a distant shore,
Or a sail in front was found !

Who strives to follow our viewless track ?
Who watches for tidings of how we fare ?
One God speed bid us, and so good-bye !
For this is the voyage, whence none come back,
To the other side of the world so fair ;
And we cleave the main and we cleave the sky,
And we follow the tide of the starry track
Through the shining isles of the stars so high ;
But whatever befalls us we turn not back,
O we turn not back lest we die !

We hurry in front of the speeding world,
And our flight transcends all flights of time,
For our quest is the end of all.
The sails are spread and the sails are furl'd,
As make we here for a distant clime
And linger we there at a port of call,

TO COME INTO THY PRESENCE

With the flush and rush of the quest on all ;
Till at length we have lost the speeding world,
Till somehow slipping from space and time
We are moor'd at the end of all.

Swift sky over our heads run past,
Swift sea under our keels slide through,
Swift worlds circle about, away !
We cannot travel too fast, too fast,
With thought still chiding the long delay ;
Deep sea's greenness and far sky's blue,
When will you open the pathway true,
Out of the night time and out of the day,
Which when the worlds and their light are past
To the light of the end leads through ?

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

EVEN LIFE FOR EVERMORE

ARGUMENT.—The most concrete comparison which can be made of human life is to liken it to a paper currency. In a bankrupt nation that currency is valueless, and though it may continue in circulation for a time, it must come to nothing in the end. But if there is a treasury where the notes may be converted into that for which they stand as tokens, then the paper currency is worth the face-value which it bears. That which gives value to temporal life is its convertibility into life eternal, separated from which it is worthless, as the end of each man makes evident.

ONE inward hope reads import into life :
We shall not wholly die, our best persists,
And we therein are of eternity.
Seek, it will yield not, through the ample range
Of circumstance, some perfect end of mind
Which man achieving, may desist, and say :
Should I die now and wholly cease to be,
I count it blessed to have lived. Is time
A foreword of eternity? Is that
Which men call life some transitory mode
Assumed by conscious and eternal truth
Of real being? Then are all things good.
Does the soul live? Then is there nothing mean
Or void of worth. Eternity partakes
No trivial and no transitory act,
And time itself, which is a dream thereof,
Has issues passing through the infinite.

EVEN LIFE FOR EVERMORE

But if the testifying voice within,
Which utters forth the watchwords of the soul,
Lies in the dark place of our mystery,
Then life is nothing, for behold it ends !
And love is nothing, for that ends with life ;
And sacrifice put up for others' weal
Is folly at white heat. A little while
And death shall swallow up our offering,
While that for which the sacrifice is made
Shall perish too. What then is left of all ?
And what shall profit ? E'en to raise the race
Is nothing, serves no purpose at the close ;
For in a little age the race itself
Will also vanish—when the stars shall fall
And, drawn into the red sun's flaming font,
This earth shall feed her father and shall end.
Bold minds may face it, striving to extract
Some ghost of joy from very woe thereof,
But all is artifice and counterfeit,
All worthless that which into nothing leads.

Black frost binds hard and holds the waste of life ;
No phantom sun can warm it. Ah, perchance
There shall be morning on the hills ! A light
All proudly bursting from the eternal sun !
No frost is then too black to melt therein.
Nay, mark, it glistens : that is rime alone,
And all the bulbs and buds of blessed spring
Are waiting only the descending ray
To burst and blossom ! It is here, the light

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Which draws the tender plant of rising life
Up from the dark but serviceable soil
Wherein the sower's hand hath planted it ;
And earth no more is barren : from one seed
A harvest springs, and the whole land is fill'd
With plenty.

On the winter of the mind
So also rises spiritual light,
And all the seeds of hope and thought begin
To germinate, the wilderness becomes
A planted ground which fructifies and blooms,
And this is presently a paradise
Wherein the soul descends, whose angel rule
Draws all the bitter order of the world
Full sweetly round into the perfect way.

Then not in vain shall man, forsaking sense,
Abide by choice in the domain of mind ;
And not in vain shall soaring mind ascend
The solemn summits of uplifted thought—
There is the mead of souls. The crown is there.
No quest can fail whereof the end is this ;
Wings shall not want when weary feet give way,
Angels shall bear us when our pinions tire,
And if the angels falter in the white
Flame of the holy place, One shall be there,
And under us the everlasting arms.

A SONG OF SOUND AND OF SILENCE

A SONG OF SOUND AND OF SILENCE

ARGUMENT.—Nature is inarticulate because man is imperfect in his language. He is ever on the point of true speaking, and when he is uttered forth she will answer.

THE groves are fill'd with murmurs and the ways
With sound ;

The choric birds sing canticles of praise ;
Along the stony ground

The hoofs of horses clatter and resound,
Waking reverberations strange and deep ;
E'en in the dead of night

Is Nature ever stirring in her sleep,
And the sea, far and near,
With stress and tumult shouts into the ear :

The winds take up the message and repeat,
O'er far-off meadows peals their anthem sweet ;
A thousand cries

Are round us ; ever when a hush succeeds
Stars in the circle of the moving skies
Float whispers down, and upon flowers and weeds
Not without murmur does the dew descend.

O chants and litanies intoned so loud,
O medley'd minstrelsy of pain and mirth,
Ascending a confusèd crowd,

And echoing from end to end
Of all the resonant earth !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

A spell upon your music lies,
As hangs enchantment upon drooping eyes,
And howsoe'er your founts are stirr'd
There issues not the saving Word ;
The music's volume and the organ's roll—
In place of voice and speech, that melody of soul.
Stars seem to strive at speech and birds at rhyme,
And pregnant rumours pass at even-time,
While out on the tremendous main
The surges break and form, and break again ;
We seem to wait
For ever at the opening gate
Of human and intelligible speech,
And ever still the Word is out of reach.

When in the higher moments of the soul,
Ascending from divided things,
Almost it seems to snatch the whole
Of that which Nature's chorus sings,
There is no vital note or tone
It all rejects or all can own—
A something subtle falling short
Of base and bond subtending all ;
How deep is here the chord's report,
How shallow there the notes may fall,
As ever on the deeper meaning's brink
The oracles back into vagueness sink,
And wanting the true Word, or dispossess'd,
Nature is consolation but not rest !

A SONG OF SOUND AND OF SILENCE

Maintaining still a solemn state
And pageant, inarticulate
At every gateway of our dreams
Her echo or her rumour seems ;
A tale upon the point of telling,
A prophecy for ever spelling
And yet not wholly spell'd,
Because the application is withheld ;
The matter of the Word on every side
Resounding, but the sense denied.

Perchance in some far epoch of the past,
O Nature's music, to the Word thou wast
More closely wedded than is speech to man !
Perchance thy measure moveth still
To meet the meaning which shall fill
Thy widely resonant span.
Howe'er this be, we know the Word is ours,
Though not in all the fulness of its powers ;
And in the great concerted plan
Perchance thy strings and tones are lent
As an accompanying instrument
By man alone interpreted,
And from his voice and speech, in tone and string,
Reflected meaning borrowing :
Sound to us therefore as we dream and drift,
Who dost assist the soul her voice to lift,
By her unseen conductor taught and led ;
And when time's gates flow open still prolong
Past all thy measures her supernal song !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

PHASES

ARGUMENT.—The proper study of Nature is in its infancy. The study which has been so successful, though from another point of view it is so hopeless, in the hands of material science, increases the temporal comfort and providence by which man is more favourably conditioned for the attainment of his true end, for which a voluptuous ease is desirable. Were other things equal, the way to God would be easier in the palace than the cottage, and in purple and fine linen rather than in coarse garments. In such a quest we should do well to ask for our daily meat and wine to be given us as well as our super-substantial bread. But this apart, the physical investigation of Nature is less important than the study of her meanings, so that we may wrest from her their withdrawn secrets, as storm and darkness show forth the light of the end.

WINTRY and wild and wasting and above
All winds in woe, out of the bleak grey sky,
With sharp-tooth'd wings, it blows—the eastern
wind—

And like a two-edged sword its sleety breath
Cuts and drives through. The bitter sea beneath
Assumes a kindred mood, and wrought thereby
Responds in fury, raging on the rocks,
And quiet coves, where sunny shallows smiled
And plash'd and rippled in a milder mood,
Filling with savage voices. Pause and watch
The troubled morning ripen far across
Those spuming billows; through the lifting mist
The lone and dreadful ocean shows no life

PHASES

Of boat or bird. One presence on the peak
Of yon sea-splinter'd spur, with bony arms
Incites the winds and waters on to war ;
She only calm, the foe of peace and man,
Bids strife and tempest still possess the world.
The elemental battle as of old
Deepens about her. Who shall break her spells
And bid the baleful fury hold henceforth
The shafts and fatal watchwords of the fight ?

The answer comes : the rose is in the East ;
There at the source of strife comes the Lord Day,
Comes splendid Sun dispersing dark and cloud ;
The driven mists before his rays dissolve,
The phantom flees, a sudden stillness steeps
The weary space of air ; the ocean springs
Lightsome and gladsome, blue beneath the blue,
Clear depth and lucent height.

O dark and storm,
O peace and glow, your phases haunt the soul,
The world unknown of man within himself,
And from this pageantry of Nature we
May learn the mystic lesson of the East !
Whence first the darkness comes first comes the light,
Whence bitter winds the morning's fragrant joy ;
And so the desolation and the gloom
Obscure of souls are visitants of God,
From the same world unknown of that dread will
Which brings His morning beam of life and grace
To soothe, to comfort and to purify.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

When on the aspirations of the heart
A darkness falls and, all her aids withdrawn,
No comfort comes to cheer thy lonely soul,
God is not with thee less in dark than light,
And in aridity and drought discern
His ministry and thy best way to Him!
A little while He leaves thee, to return
In fuller sweetness—ah, He leaves thee not!
His consolation, not His ward or watch,
Withdraws awhile, and thus He leads thee on,
That thou through dereliction and great pain
Mayest pass forth into felicity.
God waits behind the darkness of thy soul
As waits the sun to gladden earth and sea,
And bitter winds possessing all the East
Can hinder not nor darkness bar the way.

THERE AND HERE

THERE AND HERE

ARGUMENT.—The physical evolution of man is not of much consequence, though it may be true in the temporal order, but his evolution through the universe of voices and meanings, until he shall comprehend all, is the sublime cosmic plan. It is this which he must follow, and Nature is shouting to him through all her avenues, and would seem to lead on the quest.

THE sunset floods the ways with flames,
A glister fills the air,
And sudden pomp of mystic names
Shines burnished everywhere ;
Far out of sight the lark proclaims
That what we seek is there.

The sward contracts beneath our feet,
And softly murmurs " Here ! "
The dingles, full of dim retreat,
Murmur, " Conceal'd, but near ! "
The further vistas all repeat,
" This way it shall be clear ! "

The shoal stream lispers, " Forward still ! "
" You cannot seek in vain ;
Beyond the hollow and the hill
I hear and hear again ! "
The flood cries, " That resistless will
Draws all my springs amain ! "

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

The ocean hurtling far away
 Beyond the bay and bar
Alone moans ever night and day,
 “ For ever far and far ! ”
And yet beyond the spume and spray
 Hope brightens in the star.

BE YE COMFORTED

BE YE COMFORTED

ARGUMENT.—Do not go forth into the universe, let us rather take it within us; when we have received its full communication we shall know that which is beyond it. In this way environment is transcended. It may be, as we have said, that there are other and larger forms of limitation awaiting us, but God is within and without, as we shall know at length when all the outward orders are dissolved.

For every man the tangled skein of life
Betrays one leading thread, one Gordian knot
Secures that clue, and howsoe'er we strive,
Twine and untwine the labyrinthine mesh,
The grand Tantalian maze, the mystery,
Line upon line to more fantastic shape
Is twisted. Baffled ingenuity
Returns upon itself, a vain expense,
And still the leading thread that Fate assign'd
At each man's birth remains within his hands,
Because the knot which ties it is himself.
And is there any man, however far
He ventures down into his nature's depths,
Has yet unravell'd his own mystery?

Mournful it is amidst the night to sit
And spell the doubtful message of the stars,
To place what vague construction best appeals

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

On half-caught voices speaking in the wind ;
Mournful to wait until a wiser hand
Unties the knot, and lets the mesh fall down.
Stars teach us patience, lift upon the wind
Your voices, ministers unseen, and thou,
Take heart, O Soul ! Emancipated, wing'd
Thou shalt come forth and raise into the light
The guiding line which somehow led thee on
Where mazes end, where oracles declare
Their purport, where the light speaks clear and loud.
To-day perchance, to-morrow is not long,
E'en at an age's end, nigh is the time !

But order now the temple of the mind,
So we be ready when the hour arrives ;
That so no crookedness and twist within
Prevent the correspondence of the soul
With the best order that the soul has dream'd.
O be we inly rectified and right,
And stand we clear before the mystery,
And open we in all to gain our sun,
And if the light should tarry, be we still
Patient and purged, and not a day too late !
The cords may want some pulling at the end
To straighten them, the parting veil may need
Some happy violence to cast it quite
Aside for ever, and the light beyond
Ask something from the boldness of the eye
Which meets it first. And if indeed there be
God's wisdom latent in life's parables,

BE YE COMFORTED

Then all the unsolved problem of ourselves,
Subtended by the sapience of God,
Is sacred from the presence of the King ;
There dwells his secret, there his rumours stir,
And there be sure the royal voice shall first
Proclaim the great arcanum over which
We dream and brood. O long and dolorous way,
Thine end is all within ! O life-long search,
Thy crown is there ! O light of all desired,
There art thou shrouded, there wilt manifest !
O God our end, if we can meet with Thee
In any place apart from all the world,
It is there only, and abiding there,
Waiting for Thee, our mystic comfort comes ;
That none shall lose Thee who make search within,
If, O our God, Thou art !

And hark, the soul
Speaks in the depths of man and testifies !
Prophets may fail us and the Christs may die,
And many Calvaries and Golgothas
Be waiting still the saviours of the race,
But never has the sibyl soul adjured
Made any answer from her oracle,
But—God is with me, and within me God !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

QUIET NIGHT AND PERFECT END

ARGUMENT.—As there is an outward Nature, so there is an external man, and this also must be dissolved. It is indeed one process. To this Nature aspires blindly, but man knows what he seeks.

THE desert cries for the city,
The city, from strife and stress
Of the weary weeks, for a refuge seeks
In the cave and the wilderness.

I know that the marsh, exhaling
White mists to a liquid star,
In the windless night to a sacred height
Aspires, and the light afar.

I know that the woods wind-driven
Send thoughts with a bird on high,
Through white cloud-clusters, when young March
blusters,
For the peace of a purple sky.

The torrents pour through the chasms
To the unplumb'd wells below,
And to ocean's vastness with a sure flight's fastness
All eager waters flow.

QUIET NIGHT AND PERFECT END

But O the city, the desert,
The founts, the marshes, the streams,
Wild waters falling which are crying and calling
As they roll, O Soul, in thy dreams !

Earth knows not what it is seeking,
Though still to the search impell'd ;
But thou can'st divine what an end is thine
And the course to that end withheld.

Thou hast sought in the city and desert,
Thou hast sought in the height and deep,
And the goal to win is not found therein ;
But a certain trance and sleep,

'Twixt space and time, gives issue
By a wonderful path and lone,
Leading keen and straight to a mystical gate,
And beyond the gate it is known.

It is known the end and the vision
Which is neither to East nor West,
And the North cannot tell it, nor the sweet South
spell it,
But the end of the path is rest.

The high thoughts reel and waver,
And sense in that realm untrod
Light cinctures melted long since unbelted,
But the end of the path is God !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE

ARGUMENT.—In the last resource we can assuredly do nothing for ourselves, and must therefore wait on God. We believe that at length He will manifest within us in His fulness; we trust that the time is at hand; it is always near, according to the measure of eternity. What is slow is our gift of conscious attainment; but the deep goes on calling to the deep, and there will be a great meeting of the waters.

WHEN valiant souls have climb'd the furthest
heights,
And hear beyond the stir of mortal man
A dimmest echo, Thou art far away!
We strive to reach Thee with uplifted heads;
Our straiten'd natures, bursting bar and bond,
From all of self set free, by yearning's strength
And the fierce energy of consuming will,
Divide the blackness of the night of sense—
The mystic night obscure which parts the Soul
Ascending Carmel's mount from her true Spouse.
Yet upward, upward, seems there light at hand!
The darkness whitens, morning comes apace!
Faint shines already on her straining sight
The blessed Master's hills and fair demesne,
And soon in bush or bower or garden close,
In dighted hold or chamber shall we meet
The blessed Spouse and Master face to face.

THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE

Resplendent Vision of eternal joy,
Best, brightest, dearest, holy, holy One,
Life's measure, life's totality, life's end,
We cannot reach Thee till Thou come to us,
Nor dwell with Thee till Thou abide in us,
Nor see Thee till Thou art reveal'd in us,
Nor any way, till Thou art known in us,
Can we Thy saving beauty's fulness know !
But we must reach Thee, know Thee and possess ;
Thou art our nature's one necessity,
And whatsoe'er we lose, in life or death,
No part in us of body, mind, or soul
Renounces Thee. The good which works in us,
The yearning towards Thee—both are part of
Thee,
And Thou art in us when we know it not.
Be more in us, that we may more be Thine
Be with us ever till the soul enlarged
And fortified grow fit to gaze on Thee !
Then let the night melt on the mountain tops—
Star of the Morning, rise, lighten us then !
The time is surely near ; our part is done :
Lo, we have search'd the world, crying on Thee !
Lo, we have mounted every steep of mind,
And now we wait upon the upmost range :
Horeb and Calvary and Sinai,
All peaks where man has suffer'd and has seen
Some little corner of the mystery,
Are far below ; they profit nothing more :
We must have all of truth, O Lord, and Thee !

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So call we Thee, the infinite between :
We can no more ; therefore thy time has come :
O thou desired of the eternal hills,
Spirit of strength, Spirit of counsel, come,
And come, O holy God ! Come, Prince of Peace !
Lo, we are holy, and we call on Thee,
Wasteful and wanton, but the more we call !
Whatever good or evil dwells in us,
The time hath come when Thou must all be ours.
Amen, it shall be so : we will not wait :
Maker of all desire, Thou knowest this,
Thou knowest us. We do not call alone—
The voice of Antichrist and Lucifer,
With every voice, in agonised appeal
Invoke Thee now. And Thou, O Lord, wilt
come,
Thou wilt not fail or tarry or bestow
A part again, or offer type and sign,
But Thou wilt wholly give Thy gracious self,
When all our need will cease, for Thine are we,
Father and Mother of the gods and men !

I LOOK TO SEE

I LOOK TO SEE

A SONG OF VISION

ARGUMENT.—Let us desire above all that time when every sacrament shall fail us. We are in sadness and disunion with them all—very far from our home and our destiny—far from saying what we mean, thinking that which we would—possessing as we feel that we could be possessed, seeing as we are seen. We also look, therefore, to see, to feel and to know, and our expectation is voiced forth in a loving note of triumph.

As a man when the twilight falls sober and grave
on the brightness
And, pungent with mystic aroma of turf and of
earth, in its lightness
The mist, from the vague ground exhaling, some
zephyr's breath urges
To form in the hollows, in meadows, midst muffled
dead marches and dirges,
Deploying—battalions in bosks—here a banner unfurl'd;
There a pennon, a streamer put forth; all the ghosts
of the world
'Twixt the trees gather'd watching; and he, though
the footway is known—
In the broad road ends yonder—uncertain, impress'd
by the lone

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And the sense of the vague and the dim, for the
light in the distance
Looks forward, not lost or distress'd, guessing well
where the glimmer must be—
As he looks without pausing, so I to sure ends of
existence,
O I look to see !

Yet perchance the unknown shall await him ; white
bird on the wing
From out of the mist in the coppice unthought of
shall suddenly spring ;
With flight that is low and uncertain, o'er meadow
and brake,
Him who sought but his home in the village shall
tempt and shall take
On the chase, till the moonset may find him astray
by high walls
Of a bright burnish'd palace built fair in a land of
enchantment and thralls.
And the task of the world is before him, to win the
world's flower,
One maid of all maids, and behold him, the man in
the magical hour !
So bent upon far-shining ends, pressing on where
they gleam
By some path unexpected, perchance what was
dream'd not by me
I shall reach in my longing, and that overstanding
all dream
O I look to see !

I LOOK TO SEE

The thought in its flight may escape me, but I
follow still ;
The Word of my art is remote. Where the keen
star broods over the hill,
Where the dark clouds hang out, flashes flame, the
red flame o'er the storm-driven deep,
Where the winds have their caverns, 'tis far, but
longer the way I must keep.
The heart that is flagging goes forward, the eye that
is weary is bent
Where the Thought with the Word is united ; and
albeit the day is far spent,
The night comes when no man can labour—see,
eve closes round—
O I know, where the circle is woven which hallows
a glorious ground !
In the church of all art shall its priest the high
union effect
'Midst the strings and the horns and the organs, and,
bent on the knee,
Shall the great Œcumenical Council confess it, and
therefore erect
Do I look to see !

We clasp but the shadow of love, which is longing
and thirst,
And no man possesses another, for bonds which
have never been burst

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

Enswathe and divide us from each, and our separate
life

Intervenes like a wall in all nuptials; no woman is
wife

Or ever call'd any man husband, save only in
sign;

But because of the want and the longing, the strong
flame which burns in the shrine

And feeds on the heart that sustains it, I know,
beyond sense,

O I know my Redeemer is living; that keen and
intense,

By some change in the substance of being, that union
divine,

To which all our blind motions reach out, shall
the ends of all longing decree;

And that out of the flesh I shall gaze on the love
which is mine,

So I look to see !

The darkness falls over the waste, the great deep in
the darkness roars,

But the shores, it would seem, have no sea, and the
sea in the dark has no shores;

The God-light falls lost, if it shine, on the eye
unresponsive and blind,

And the eye that would see hath no light as we
tread the dark maze of the mind.

I LOOK TO SEE

Who knows what is urging us forward midst shrill
battle-call?

The arrows scream round ; if we fall, shall we lie—
can we tell—as we fall?

O light in the darkness gleaming through a world
of false-seeming and wraith,

Our trust may be cold and half-hearted, but yet all
our trust is in thee,

And our peace past the fields of dissension because
of thee, Faith,

Do I look to see !

To hear and to see and to know, and, immersed
where the lights never fail,

Confess that at length we have truly transcended
the world of the veil ;

We have pass'd through the region of omen, and
enter'd the land of sight ;

O thanks be to God for the pillar of smoke by day
and the pillar of fire by night ;

The voice in the cloud and the burning bush and
the holy places trod ;

For the soften'd grace of the shaded face and the
back of the Lord our God ;

For the shadow'd home and the light beyond, for
the secret pulses stirr'd

By the parable dim and the mystic hymn and the
first sense of the Word !

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

But O for the end and the vision, beyond the gate
and the way,

The light which the eye cannot picture, repose in
activity free !

The veils of the world are about me, sad dreams of
the night and the day,

But I look to see !

VALETE

VALETE

ARGUMENT.—Having contemplated all these joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, having found that all sacramentalism and all external things, with their activity, and the enterprise and activity of all outward humanity, are but lights and messages pointing us to another path, these measures end with a certain sense of fulness and accomplishment. As the rendering of a part of that part which reflects the whole, their close, in the seer's mind, is not without summonses and warnings beforehand of other tidings.

THE heart of the woodland
Gives range to the rover,
The broad tidal ocean
To ships that come over,
And some on the mountain
And some in the hollow
Are free, as it bids them,
Their fancy to follow.
But song, having bless'd them,
Must leave them unheeded,
Since, more than new accent,
The new theme is needed.
If woods could be greener
And seas might be broader,
More stars overwatch'd them
In luminous order ;

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

If touch'd by the tincture
Transmuting existence
The height were exalted,
Transfigured the distance ;
If wings should be granted
Like doves for swift flying,
And sight as an eagle's
Sun-bathed for descrying ;
Still wings would droop downward,
The vision must falter,
And mists would all glory
Diminish or alter.

Ah, ye that go outward
Where cold lie the snows on
The track up those mountains
'Tis death to repose on !
Ye too that go outward
Where winds with their moaning
In spume on the tost seas
Your dirge are intoning ;
All ye that go outward
Where dryads have hidden
Snake-fangs in the forests
For hunters unbidden ;
Hath dream in the brightness
When sense-veils grow thinner
No vision's bright prospect
Conjured from the inner ?

VALETE

With mournful and mystic
Penumbra is shrouded
That threshold which opens
On splendours unclouded.
O ways unobstructed,
Eluding detection,
I found you, I enter'd,
One day of election!
And, lo! through what regions,
Because of her trances,
The spirit, unbonded
By vision, advances!

O beautiful outward!
O inward! Divine is
Your ray on the outward,
Now each of them mine is!
What secrets, what meanings,
Informing, uplighting!
This life's common story
Turns mystical writing;
All that which is beauty
A light is shed down on,
While thought is new vested,
High song hath its crown on;
And all is romance, from
The green leaf's light flutter
To strong spirit music
Which tongue cannot utter.

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION

And seen in the brightness
And heard in the glory,
By this book of vision
And magical story,
In strange ballad measures,
Some part have I striven
To give of those marvels
Which I have been given.

THE END

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