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JAMES R. CALLOWELL
Four hundred and fifty copies of this book printed on Van Gelder hand-made paper and the type distributed.
POEMS BY
FRANCIS
THOMPSON

PORTLAND MAINE
THOMAS B MOSHER
MDCCCCXII
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Go, songs, for ended is our brief, sweet play;
Go, children of swift joy and tardy sorrow:
And some are sung, and that was yesterday,
And some unsung, and that may be to-morrow.

Go forth; and if it be o'er stony way,
Old joy can lend what newer grief must borrow:
And it was sweet, and that was yesterday,
And sweet is sweet, though purchased with sorrow.

Go, songs, and come not back from your far way:
And if men ask you why ye smile and sorrow,
Tell them ye grieve, for your hearts know To-day,
Tell them ye smile, for your eyes know To-morrow.

Envoy to New Poems, 1897.
FOREWORD

THE great white highway of Literature, we cannot too often recall, becomes at times a veritable via dolorosa strewn with bones of pilgrims who, such is the tragic comedy of the artistic temperament, "went miserably astray in the twilight." To cite five modern instances only, the world of Letters has seen within two decades quick confusion come upon James Thomson, "B. v.," Ernest Dowson, Oscar Wilde, Simeon Solomon; last of all Francis Thompson who assuredly in name and fame was not least in this list of the brotherhood "of celestial vision."

Francis Thompson," born at Preston, 1859, the son of a doctor afterwards in practice at Ashton-under-Lyne," died of tuberculosis in a London hospital, November 13, 1907, "at dawn — the dawn that was the death-hour in his poem Dream-Tryst."

1 See articles by Mr. Wilfrid Meynell in The Athenæum for November 23, 1907, (since reprinted as a biographical note to the Selected Poems, 1908), and Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in The Academy under same date. It has been announced that Mr. Everard Meynell was engaged upon a life of Thompson, which at present is not forthcoming. One of the sanest critical estimates of the poet is given in Poets of the Younger Generation by William Archer, 1902.
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The pity of such a life is summed up in a single poignant line: "'Twas but a piece of childhood thrown away." Well might this latest victim of unmerciful disaster have said in all sad sincerity:

"Farewell!
Nor grieve that I ere you to quiet rest have won,
Rather with me rejoice!"

Turn to what "great verse" Francis Thompson has left "unto a little clan." His earliest book, which we here reprint entire with the addition of three hitherto uncollected Odes, was simply entitled Poems, 1893, followed by Sister-Songs: An Offering to Two Sisters, 1895, New Poems, 1897, and Selected Poems, 1908. In the capacity of reviewer and essayist a considerable body of prose remains scattered about in The Academy and The Athenæum and possibly a few other literary journals.¹ A brief booklet entitled Health and Holiness, 1905, and his posthumous Essay on Shelley, 1909, with a life of Saint Ignatius Loyola, 1909, would seem to complete the sum of Thompson's labours.²

¹ These or the bulk of them are given in A Renegade Poet and Other Essays by Francis Thompson with an introduction by Edward J. O'Brien, Boston, 1910.

² Among uncollected poems there are two for October, 1895, and June, 1896, reprinted in The Catholic World, for February, 1908, which also contains a fine friendly appreciation by Father Gerrard who knew Thompson personally.
If the first appraisers of Thompson's three books of song were not wholly disposed to accept Coventry Patmore's generous estimate of his work there is no lack to-day of voices crying aloud the merits of the dead master. Conceivably the poet might be made to suffer from the praises of a coterie whose critical judgment is of small consequence in any lasting audit. Something far other than the fantastic fanfares of perverted poetizing must be sought and found if their writer's fame is to remain secure against assault.

On the other hand, if any doubt exists, when this superbly gifted poet is under fairly normal conditions and has the Muse within control, what we have to offer should settle it forever. Surely, if we seek the lyric cry it is here. Take the poem called Daisy: it has an atmosphere sought for in vain outside of Wordsworth and George Meredith. The same can be truthfully said of Dream-Tryst, To My Godchild, and The Poppy. As for The Hound of Heaven and To the Dead Cardinal of Westminster they need no praise of ours: mystical they may be and are, but even so, even if alloy has been added to the virgin gold, it has been added simply that the work be done at all: especially true is this of the first named poem.

Browning divulged the secret process when at the beginning of The Ring and the Book he told us,

1 In the Fortnightly Review for January, 1894.
FOREWORD

“There’s one trick,
(Craftsmen instruct me) one approved device
And but one, fits such slivers of pure gold
As this was,—such mere ooings from the mine.”

“But his work ended, once the thing a ring,
Oh, there’s repristination! Just a spirt
O’ the proper fiery acid o’er its face,
And forth the alloy unfastened flies in fume;
While, self-sufficient now, the shape remains,
The rondure brave, the lilted loveliness,
Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore.”

IV

It is inevitable, perhaps, that a diversity of opinion
will remain when all is said fairly and freely—a
perversity, rather, as some of Thompson’s friends may
urge—concerning a songsmith of such unique endow-
ments. But poetry, if it is great is not to be wrapped
up in the cerements of any religion, Jewish or Gentile;
to deliver its message to mankind it must come in its
own divine right—naked and alone! It is not
enough either, to affirm that Thompson possessed the
cosmic vision. If he did, all we can say is that the
cosmos revealed itself to him as through a glass darkly.
One must perforce still ask: will verse of this esoteric
aloofness ever become widely known and accepted of
men? In view of the contumely which oftimes con-
fronts those who have fallen upon the evil days of
popularity we do not know that his admirers would
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even wish it. He was one of the world’s wastrels, but “the general mist of error” which wrought such havoc in his life is at an end. It may even come to pass that Mr. George Meredith’s testimony at the poet’s graveside will serve as his epitaph and the world’s estimate in one: “A true poet, one of a small band.” To speak as Shelley spoke: “He has outsoared the shadow of our night,” and “is secure, and now can never mourn.”

V

A few words as to Thompson’s kinship with certain great Jacobean poets and we have done. For one thing he was a weaver of imperial purple. Take three brief passages like these:

“And all man’s Babylons strive but to impart
The grandeurs of his Babylonian heart.”

“How many Ninevehs and Hecatompyloi,
And perished cities whose great phantasmata
O’erbrow the silent citizens of Dis.”

“The fiery pomp, brave exhalations,
And all the glistering shows o’ the seeming world,
Which the sight aches at, we unwinking see
Through the smoked glass of Death.”

From Sister-Songs the following lines read like a sestet out of some lost sonnet by Michelangelo:

“Yea, ere Saturnian earth her child consumes,
And I lie down with outworn ossuaries,

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Ere death's grim tongue anticipates the tomb's
Siste viator, in this storied urn
My living heart is laid to throb and burn,
Till end be ended, and till ceasing cease."

Now consider what the earlier poets had to say concerning Death:

"'Tis of all sleeps the sweetest:
Children begin it to us, strong men seek it,
And kings from height of all their painted glory
Fall like spent exhalations to this centre."

"'Tis less than to be born; a lasting sleep;
A quiet resting from all jealousy;
A thing we all pursue; I know, besides,
It is but giving over of a game
That must be lost."

"We cease to grieve, cease to be fortune's slaves,
Yea, cease to die, by dying."

With these funereal pomp's let us compare the final lines in Thompson's An Anthem of Earth and so take leave of him:

"Now, mortal-sonlike,
I thou hast suckled, Mother, I at last
Shall sustenant be to thee. Here I untrammel,
Here I pluck loose the body's cerementing,
And break the tomb of life; here I shake off
The bur o' the world, man's congregations shun,
And to the antique order of the dead
I take the tongueless vows: my cell is set
Here in thy bosom; my little trouble is ended
In a little peace."

T. B. M.
A WORD ON FRANCIS THOMPSON

From The Saturday Review, November 23, 1907
Slain by life, Francis Thompson is no more. He is now one with the noble company of poets of whom the world was not worthy. . . . I have said he was slain by life, and it is the simple truth, for life is coarse and clumsy when it touches a soul made of coloured mist and airy fire. . . . Francis Thompson was a spiritual exile. . . . He endured unimaginable squalors. . . . Like De Quincey, he knew Oxford street for a stony-hearted stepmother. Like De Quincey he wandered through the London streets by night and in one of his poems [see Sister-Songs, Part I, Section 8] he hints at a story which recalls the romance of De Quincey and Ann. . . .

Thompson's poetry is a "wassail of orgiastic imageries." He is a poet's poet, like Shelley and Blake. In order to follow him as he soars from image to image and symbol to symbol, you must have the rare wings of imagination. His masterpiece, The Hound of Heaven, is molten white with the passion of the imaginative conscience, the anguish of the soul that flies before the dim vision of a pursuing God.

This gift of dreadful vision is not found in Crashaw or in Patmore, in Donne or in Herbert, and therefore it seems to me that Thompson is essentially more akin to Blake, Coleridge, and Rossetti than to the ecclesiastical mystics. He is a Twentieth Century mystic with a Sixteenth Century manner. His Latinisms, his neologisms, and his conceits are derivative; his gorgeous imagery is his own.

JAMES DOUGLAS.
A WORD ON FRANCIS THOMPSON

The news comes to me on a little black-edged card that Francis Thompson died at dawn on 13 November. He was a Roman Catholic, and we are asked to pray for his soul. It was a light that death could not put out, a torch that no wind could blow out in the darkness. From us indeed it is now turned away, and that little corner of the world to which the poet gives light is darkened.

For Francis Thompson was one of the few poets now or lately living in whom there was some trace of that divine essence which we best symbolise by fire. Emptinesses he had and extravagances, but he was a poet, and he had made of many influences a form of new beauty. Much of his speech, which has a heaped imagery unique in our time, seems to have learnt its technique from an almost indiscriminate quarrying among old quarries, and is sometimes so closely copied from that which was fantastically precise in Crashaw, Donne, Vaughan, that we wonder why it was not a few centuries ago that someone said:

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A WORD ON FRANCIS THOMPSON

"Life is a coquetry
Of Death, which wearies me,
Too sure
Of the amour;
A tiring-room where I
Death's divers garments try,
Till fit
Some fashion sit."

No one since that time, when "conceits" could convey poetical substance, has touched so daintily on plain words, giving by the touch some transfiguring novelty. If it was a style learnt, it was a style perfectly acquired, and at times equal to its original.

Words and cadences must have had an intoxication for him, the intoxication of the scholar; and "cloudy trophies" were continually falling into his hands, and half through them, in his hurry to seize and brandish them. He swung a rare incense in a censer of gold, under the vault of a chapel where he had hung votive offerings. The incense half obscures the offerings, and the dim figures of the saints painted on the windows. As he bows there in the chapel he seems to himself to be in "reverberant Eden-ways" or higher, at the throne of heaven, borne on "plumes night-tinctured, englobed and cinctured of saints." Passing beyond the world he finds strange
shapes, full of pomp and wearing strange crowns; but they are without outline, and his words disguise decorate, but do not reveal them.

When he chanted in his chapel of dreams, the airs were often airs which he had learnt from Crashaw and from Patmore. They came to life again when he used them, and he made for himself a music which was part strangely familiar and part his own, almost bewilderingly. Such reed-notes and such orchestration of sound were heard nowhere else; and people listened to the music, entranced as by a new magic.

When he put these dreams and this music into verse, with a craft which he had perfected for his own use, the poetry was for the most part a splendid rhetoric, imaginative and passionless, as if the moods went by, wrapped in purple, in a great procession. The Hound of Heaven has the harmonies of a symphony, and there are delicacies among its splendours, and, among instants of falsely fanciful sentiment, such august moments as this:

“I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity,
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.”

xix
A WORD ON FRANCIS THOMPSON

It is full of fine and significant symbolism, it is an elaborate pageant of his own life, with all its miseries, heights, relapses, and flight after some eternity; but, as he writes it, it turns intellectual, and the voice is like that of one declaiming his confession. It was not thus that Christina Rossetti let us overhear a few of the deepest secrets of her soul.

The genius of Francis Thompson was oriental, exuberant in colour, woven into elaborate patterns, and went draped in old silken robes, that had survived many dynasties. The spectacle of him was an enchantment; he passed like a wild vagabond of the mind, dazzling our sight. He had no message, but he dropt sentences by the way, cries of joy or pity, love of children, worship of the Virgin and Saints and of those who were patron saints to him on earth; his voice was heard like a wandering music, which no one heeded for what it said, in a strange tongue, but which came troublingly into the mind, bringing it the solace of its old, recaptured melodies. Other poets of his time have had deeper things to say, and a more flawless beauty; others have put more of their hearts into their song; but no one has been a torch waved with so fitful a splendour over the gulfs of our darkness.

ARTHUR SYMONS
DEDICATION

TO WILFRID AND ALICE MEYNELL

IF the rose in meek duty
   May dedicate humbly
To her grower the beauty
   Wherewith she is comely,
If the mine to the miner
   The jewels that pined in it,
Earth to diviner
   The springs he divined in it,
To the grapes the wine-pitcher
   Their juice that was crushed in it,
Viol to its witcher
   The music lay hushed in it,
If the lips may pay Gladness
   In laughters she wakened,
And the heart to its sadness
   Weeping unslakened,
If the hid and sealed coffer,
   Whose having not his is,
To the loosers may proffer
   Their finding — here this is;
Their lives if all livers
   To the Life of all living,
To you, O dear givers!
   I give your own giving.
BEFORE HER PORTRAIT IN YOUTH

As lovers, banished from their lady's face,
And hopeless of her grace,
Fashion a ghostly sweetness in its place,
Fondly adore
Some stealth-won cast attire she wore,
A kerchief, or a glove:
And at the lover's beck
Into the glove there fleets the hand,
Or at impetuous command
Up from the kerchief floats the virgin neck:
So I, in very lowlihead of love,—
Too shyly reverencing
To let one thought's light footfall smooth
Tread near the living, consecrated thing,—
Treasure me thy cast youth.
This outworn vesture, tenantless of thee,
Hath yet my knee,
For that, with show and semblance fair
Of the past Her
Who once the beautiful, discarded raiment bare,
   It cheateth me.
As gale to gale drifts breath
   Of blossoms' death,
So dropping down the years from hour to hour
   This dead youth's scent is wafted me to-day:
I sit, and from the fragrance dream the flower.
   So, then, she looked (I say);
   And so her front sunk down
Heavy beneath the poet's iron crown:
   On her mouth museful-sweet
   (Even as the twin lips meet)
   Did thought and sadness greet:
   Sighs
   In those mournful eyes
   So put on visibilities;
As viewless ether turns, in deep on deep, to dyes.
   Thus, long ago,
She kept her meditative paces slow
Through maiden meads, with waved shadow and gleam
Of locks half-lifted on the winds of dream,
Till love up-caught her to his chariot's glow.
Yet, voluntary, happier Proserpine!
   This drooping flower of youth thou lettest fall
I, faring in the cockshut-light, astray,
   Find on my 'lated way,
   And stoop, and gather for memorial,
   And lay it on my bosom, and make it mine.
To this, the all of love the stars allow me,
   I dedicate and vow me.
I reach back through the days
A trothed hand to the dead the last trump shall not raise.
The water-wraith that cries
From those eternal sorrows of thy pictured eyes
Entwines and draws me down their soundless intricacies!
TO A POET BREAKING SILENCE

Too wearily had we and song
Been left to look and left to long,
Yea, song and we to long and look,
Since thine acquainted feet forsook
The mountain where the Muses hymn
For Sinai and the Seraphim.
Now in both the mountains' shine
Dress thy countenance, twice divine!
From Moses and the Muses draw
The Tables of thy double Law!
His rod-born fount and Castaly
Let the one rock bring forth for thee,
Renewing so from either spring
The songs which both thy countries sing:
Or we shall fear lest, heaved thus long,
Thou should'st forget thy native song,
And mar thy mortal melodies
With broken stammer of the skies.

Ah! let the sweet birds of the Lord
With earth's waters make accord;
Teach how the crucifix may be
Carven from the laurel-tree,
Fruit of the Hesperides
Burnish take on Eden-trees,
The Muses' sacred grove be wet
With the red dew of Olivet,
And Sappho lay her burning brows
In white Cecilia's lap of snows!

Thy childhood must have felt the stings
Of too divine o'ershadowings;
Its odorous heart have been a blossom
That in darkness did unbosom,
Those fire-flies of God to invite,
Burning spirits, which by night
Bear upon their laden wing
To such hearts impregnating.
For flowers that night-wings fertilize
Mock down the stars' unsteady eyes,
And with a happy, sleepless glance
Gaze the moon out of countenance.
I think thy girlhood's watchers must
Have took thy folded songs on trust,
And felt them, as one feels the stir
Of still lightnings in the hair,
When conscious hush expects the cloud
To speak the golden secret loud
Which tacit air is privy to;
Flasked in the grape the wine they knew,
Ere thy poet-mouth was able
For its first young starry babble.
Keep'st thou not yet that subtle grace?
Yea, in this silent interspace,
God sets His poems in thy face!
The loom which mortal verse affords,
Out of weak and mortal words,
Wovest thou thy singing-weed in,
To a rune of thy far Eden.
Vain are all disguises! ah,
Heavenly *incognita*!
Thy mien bewrayeth through that wrong
The great Uranian House of Song!
As the vintages of earth
Taste of the sun that riped their birth,
We know what never cadent Sun
Thy lampèd clusters throbbed upon,
What plumed feet the winepress trod;
Thy wine is flavorous of God.
Whatever singing-robe thou wear
Has the Paradisal air;
And some gold feather it has kept
Shows what Floor it lately swept!
"MANUS ANIMAM PINXIT"

Lady who hold'st on me dominion!
Within your spirit's arms I stay me fast
Against the fell
Immitigate ravening of the gates of hell;
And claim my right in you, most hardly won,
Of chaste fidelity upon the chaste:
Hold me and hold by me, lest both should fall
(O in high escalade high companion!)
Even in the breach of Heaven's assaulted wall.
Like to a wind-sown sapling grow I from
The clift, Sweet, of your skyward-jetting soul,—
Shook by all gusts that sweep it, overcome
By all its clouds incumbent: O be true
To your soul, dearest, as my life to you!
For if that soil grow sterile, then the whole
Of me must shrivel, from the topmost shoot
Of climbing poesy, and my life, killed through,
Dry down and perish to the foodless root.

Sweet Summer! unto you this swallow drew,
By secret instincts inappeasable,
That did direct him well,
Lured from his gelid North which wrought him wrong,
Wintered of sunning song;—
By happy instincts inappeasable,
Ah yes! that led him well,
Lured to the untried regions and the new
Climes of auspicious you;
To twitter there, and in his singing dwell.
    But ah! if you, my Summer, should grow waste,
    With grieving skies o’ercast,
For such migration my poor wing was strong
But once; it has no power to fare again
    Forth o’er the heads of men,
Nor other Summers for its sanctuary:
    But from your mind’s chilled sky
It needs must drop, and lie with stiffened wings
    Among your soul’s forlornest things;
A speck upon your memory, alack!
A dead fly in a dusty window-crack.

O therefore you who are
    What words, being to such mysteries
As raiment to the body is,
    Should rather hide than tell;
Chaste and intelligential love:
    Whose form is as a grove
Hushed with the cooing of an unseen dove;
    Whose spirit to my touch thrills purer far
Than is the tingling of a silver bell;
    Whose body other ladies well might bear
As soul,—yea, which it profanation were
For all but you to take as fleshly woof,
    Being spirit truest proof;
Whose spirit sure is lineal to that
    Which sang Magnificat:
Chastest, since such you are,
Take this curbed spirit of mine,
Which your own eyes invest with light divine,
For lofty love and high auxiliar
In daily exalt emprise
Which outsoars mortal eyes;
This soul which on your soul is laid,
As maid's breast against breast of maid;
Beholding how your own I have engraved
On it, and with what purging thoughts have laved
This love of mine from all mortality.
Indeed the copy is a painful one,
And with long labour done!
O if you doubt the thing you are, lady,
Come then, and look in me;
Your beauty, Dian, dress and contemplate
Within a pool to Dian consecrate!
Unveil this spirit, lady, when you will,
For unto all but you 't is veiled still:
Unveil, and fearless gaze there, you alone,
And if you love the image—'t is your own!
IV

A CARRIER-SONG

I

SINCE you have waned from us,
Fairest of women!
I am a darkened cage
Song cannot hymn in.
My songs have followed you,
Like birds the summer;
Ah! bring them back to me,
Swiftly, dear comer!

Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

II

Where wings to rustle use,
But this poor tarrier—
Searching my spirit's eaves—
Find I for carrier.
Ah! bring them back to me
Swiftly, sweet comer!
Swift, swift, and bring with you
Song's Indian summer!
Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

III

Whereso your angel is,
My angel goeth;
I am left guardianless,
Paradise knoweth!
I have no Heaven left
To weep my wrongs to;
Heaven, when you went from us,
Went with my songs too.

Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

IV

I have no angels left
Now, Sweet, to pray to:
Where you have made your shrine
They are away to.
They have struck Heaven’s tent,
And gone to cover you:
Whereso you keep your state
Heaven is pitched over you!
_Seraphim,_
_Her to hymn,_
_Might leave their portals,_
_And at my feet learn_
_The harping of mortals!

v

She that is Heaven's Queen
Her title borrows,
For that she pitiful
Beareth our sorrows.
So thou, _Regina mī_,
_Spes infirmorum;_
With all our grieving crowned
_Mater dolorum!
_Seraphim,_
_Her to hymn,_
_Might leave their portals,_
_And at my feet learn_
_The harping of mortals!

vi

Yet, envious coveter
Of other's grieving!
This lonely longing yet
'Scapeth your reaving.
Cruel! to take from a
Sinner his Heaven!
Think you with contrite smiles
To be forgiven?

Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

VII

Penitent! give me back
Angels, and Heaven;
Render your stolen self,
And be forgiven!
How frontier Heaven from you?
For my soul prays, Sweet,
Still to your face in Heaven,
Heaven in your face, Sweet!

Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!
SCALA JACOBI PORTAQUE EBURNEA

HER soul from earth to Heaven lies,
Like the ladder of the vision,
Whereon go
To and fro,
In ascension and demission,
Star-flecked feet of Paradise.

Now she is drawn up from me
All my angels, wet-eyed, tristful,
Gaze from great
Heaven's gate
Like pent children, very wistful,
That below a playmate see.

Dream-dispensing face of hers!
Ivory port which loosed upon me
Wings, I wist,
Whose amethyst
Trepidations have forgone me,—
Hesper's filmy traffickers!
THOU dost to rich attire a grace,
To let it deck itself with thee,
And teakest pomp strange cunning ways
To be thought simplicity.
But lilies, stolen from grassy mold,
No more curlèd state unfold
Translated to a vase of gold;
In burning throne though they keep still
Serenities unthawed and chill.
Therefore, albeit thou 'rt stately so,
In statelier state thou us'dst to go.

Though jewels should phosphoric burn
Through those night-waters of thine hair,
A flower from its translucid urn
Poured silver flame more lunar-fair.
These futile trappings but recall
Degenerate worshippers who fall
In purfled kirtle and brocade
To 'parel the white Mother-Maid.
For, as her image stood arrayed
In vests of its self-substance wrought
To measure of the sculptor's thought —
Slurred by those added braveries;
So for thy spirit did devise
Its Maker seemly garniture,
Of its own essence parcel pure,—
From grave simplicities a dress,
And reticent demurenesses,
And love encinctured with reserve;
Which the woven vesture should subserve.
For outward robes in their ostents
Should show the soul's habiliments.
Therefore I say,—Thou 'rt fair even so,
But better Fair I use to know.

The violet would thy dusk hair deck
With graces like thine own unsought.
Ah! but such place would daze and wreck
Its simple, lowly rustic thought.
For so advancèd, dear, to thee,
It would unlearn humility!
Yet do not, with an altered look,
In these weak numbers read rebuke;
Which are but jealous lest too much
God's master-piece thou shouldst retouch.
Where a sweetness is complete,
Add not sweets unto the sweet!
Or, as thou wilt, for others so
In unfamiliar richness go;
But keep for mine acquainted eyes
The fashions of thy Paradise.
VII

HER PORTRAIT

Oh, but the heavenly grammar did I hold
Of that high speech which angels' tongues turn gold!
So should her deathless beauty take no wrong,
Praised in her own great kindred's fit and cognate tongue.
Or if that language yet with us abode
Which Adam in the garden talked with God!
But our untempered speech descends — poor heirs!
Grimy and rough-cast still from Babel's bricklayers:
Curse on the brutish jargon we inherit,
Strong but to damn, not memorise, a spirit!
A cheek, a lip, a limb, a bosom, they
Move with light ease in speech of working-day;
And women we do use to praise even so.
But here the gates we burst, and to the temple go.
Their praise were her dispraise; who dare, who dare,
Adulate the seraphim for their burning hair?
How, if with them I dared, here should I dare it?
How praise the woman, who but know the spirit?
How praise the colour of her eyes, uncaught
While they were coloured with her varying thought?
How her mouth's shape, who only use to know
What tender shape her speech will fit it to?
Or her lips' redness, when their joinèd veil
Song's fervid hand has parted till it wore them pale?

If I would praise her soul (temerarious if!),
All must be mystery and hieroglyph.
Heaven, which not oft is prodigal of its more
To singers, in their song too great before;
By which the hierarch of large poesy is
Restrained to his once sacred benefice;
Only for her the salutary awe
Relaxes and stern canon of its law;
To her alone concedes pluralities,
In her alone to reconcile agrees
The Muse, the Graces, and the Charities;
To her, who can the trust so well conduct
To her it gives the use, to us the usufruct.

What of the dear administrress then may
I utter, though I spoke her own carved perfect way?
What of her daily gracious converse known,
Whose heavenly despotism must needs dethrone
And subjugate all sweetness but its own?
Deep in my heart subsides the infrequent word,
And there dies slowly throbbing like a wounded bird.
What of her silence, that outsweetens speech?
What of her thoughts, high marks for mine own thoughts to reach
Yet (Chaucer's antique sentence so to turn),
Most gladly will she teach, and gladly learn;
And teaching her, by her enchanting art,
The master threelfold learns for all he can impart.
Now all is said, and all being said,— aye me!
There yet remains unsaid the very She.
Nay, to conclude (so to conclude I dare),
If of her virtues you evade the snare,
Then for her faults you'll fall in love with her.
Alas, and I have spoken of her Muse—
Her Muse, that died with her auroral dews!
Learn, the wise cherubim from harps of gold
Seduce a trepidating music manifold;
But the superior seraphim do know
None other music but to flame and glow.
So she first lighted on our frosty earth,
A sad musician, of cherubic birth,
Playing to alien ears—which did not prize
The uncomprehended music of the skies—
The exiled airs of her far Paradise.
But soon from her own harpings taking fire,
In love and light her melodies expire.
Now Heaven affords her, for her silenced hymn,
A double portion of the seraphim.

At the rich odours from her heart that rise,
My soul remembers its lost Paradise,
And antenatal gales blow from Heaven's shores of spice;
I grow essential all, uncloaking me
From this encumbering virility,
And feel the primal sex of heaven and poetry:
And parting from her, in me linger on
Vague snatches of Uranian antiphon.

How to the petty prison could she shrink
Of femineity?—Nay, but I think
In a dear courtesy her spirit would
Woman assume, for grace to womanhood.
Or, votaress to the virgin Sanctitude
Of reticent withdrawal's sweet, courted pale,
She took the cloistral flesh, the sexual veil,
Of her sad, aboriginal sisterhood;
The habit of cloistral flesh which founding Eve indued.

Thus do I know her: but for what men call
Beauty — the loveliness corporeal,
Its most just praise a thing unproper were
To singer or to listener, me or her.
She wears that body but as one indues
A robe, half careless, for it is the use;
Although her soul and it so fair agree,
We sure may, unattaint of heresy,
Conceit it might the soul's begetter be.
The immortal could we cease to contemplate,
The mortal part suggests its every trait.
God laid His fingers on the ivories
Of her pure members as on smoothèd keys,
And there out-breathed her spirit's harmonies.
I'll speak a little proudly: — I disdain
To count the beauty worth my wish or gain,
Which the dull daily fool can covet or obtain.
I do confess the fairness of the spoil,
But from such rivalry it takes a soil.
For her I'll proudlier speak: — how could it be
That I should praise the gilding on the psaltery?
'Tis not for her to hold that prize a prize,
Or praise much praise, though proudest in its wise,
To which even hopes of merely women rise.
Such strife would to the vanquished laurels yield,
Against her suffered to have lost a field.
Herself must with herself be sole compeer,
Unless the people of her distant sphere
Some gold migration send to melodise the year.
But first our hearts must burn in larger guise,
To reformate the uncharitable skies,
And so the deathless plumage to acclimatise:
Since this, their sole congenere in our clime,
Droops her sad, ruffled thoughts for half the shivering time.

Yet I have felt what terrors may consort
In women's cheeks, the Graces' soft resort;
My hand hath shook at gentle hands' access,
And trembled at the waving of a tress;
My blood known panic fear, and fled dismayed,
Where ladies' eyes have set their ambuscade.
The rustle of a robe hath been to me
The very rattle of love's musketry;
Although my heart hath beat the loud advance,
I have recoiled before a challenging glance,
Proved gay alarms where warlike ribbons dance.
And from it all, this knowledge have I got,—
The whole that others have, is less than they have not;
All which makes other women noted fair,
Unnoted would remain and overshone in her.

How should I gauge what beauty is her dole,
Who cannot see her countenance for her soul;
As birds see not the casement for the sky?
And as 'tis check they prove its presence by,
I know not of her body till I find
My flight debarred the heaven of her mind.
Hers is the face whence all should copied be,
Did God make replicas of such as she;
Its presence felt by what it does abate,
Because the soul shines through tempered and mitigate:
Where — as a figure labouring at night
Beside the body of a splendid light —
Dark Time works hidden by its luminousness;
And every line he labours to impress
Turns added beauty, like the veins that run
Athwart a leaf which hangs against the sun.

There regent Melancholy wide controls;
There Earth- and Heaven-Love play for aureoles;
There Sweetness out of Sadness breaks at fits,
Like bubbles on dark water, or as flits
A sudden silver fin through its deep infinites;
There amorous Thought has sucked pale Fancy's breath,
And Tenderness sits looking toward the lands of death;
There Feeling stills her breathing with her hand,
And Dream from Melancholy part wrests the wand;
And on this lady's heart, looked you so deep,
Poor Poetry has rocked himself to sleep:
Upon the heavy blossom of her lips
Hangs the bee Musing; nigh her lids eclipse
Each half-occulted star beneath that lies;
And in the contemplation of those eyes,
Passionless passion, wild tranquillities.
EPILOGUE

TO THE POET'S SITTER

Wherein he excuseth himself for the manner of the Portrait

ALAS! now wilt thou chide, and say (I deem),
My figured descant hides the simple theme:
Or in another wise reproving, say
I ill observe thine own high reticent way.
Oh, pardon, that I testify of thee
What thou couldst never speak, nor others be!

Yet (for the book is not more innocent
Of what the gazer's eyes makes so intent),
She will but smile, perhaps, that I find my fair
Sufficing scope in such strait theme as her.
"Bird of the sun! the stars' wild honey-bee!
Is your gold browsing done so thoroughly?
Or sinks a singèd wing to narrow nest in me?"
(Thus she might say: for not this lowly vein
Out-deprecates her deprecating strain).
Oh, you mistake, dear lady, quite; nor know
Ether was strict as you, its loftiness as low!

The heavens do not advance their majesty
Over their marge; beyond his empery
The ensigns of the wind are not unfurled,
His reign is hooped in by the pale o' the world.
'T is not the continent, but the contained,  
That pleasaunce makes or prison, loose or chained.  
Too much alike or little captives me,  
For all oppression is captivity.  
What growtheth to its height demands no higher;  
The limit limits not, but the desire.  
Give but my spirit its desirèd scope,—  
A giant in a pismire, I not grope;  
Deny it,— and an ant, with on my back  
A firmament, the skiey vault will crack.  
Our minds make their own Termini, nor call  
The issuing circumscriptions great or small;  
So high constructing Nature lessons to us all:  
Who optics gives accommodate to see  
Your countenance large as looks the sun to be,  
And distant greatness less than near humanity.  

We, therefore, with a sure instinctive mind,  
An equal spaciousness of bondage find  
In confines far or near, of air or our own kind.  
Our looks and longings, which affront the stars,  
Most richly bruised against their golden bars,  
Delighted captives of their flaming spears,  
Find a restraint restrainless which appears  
As that is, and so simply natural,  
In you;— the fair detention freedom call,  
And overscroll with fancies the loved prison-wall.  

Such sweet captivity, and only such,  
In you, as in those golden bars, we touch!
Our gazes for sufficing limits know
The firmament above, your face below;
Our longings are contented with the skies,
Contented with the heaven, and your eyes.
My restless wings, that beat the whole world through,
Flag on the confines of the sun and you;
And find the human pale remoter of the two.
TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

I WILL not perturbate
Thy Paradisal state
With praise
Of thy dead days;

To the new-heavened say,—
"Spirit, thou wert fine clay:"
This do,
Thy praise who knew.

Therefore my spirit clings
Heaven's porter by the wings,
And holds
Its gated golds

Apart, with thee to press
A private business;—
Whence,
Deign me audience.
Anchorite, who didst dwell
With all the world for cell!
My soul
Round me doth roll

A sequestration bare.
Too far alike we were,
   Too far
Dissimilar.

For its burning fruitage I
Do climb the tree o' the sky;
   Do prize
Some human eyes.

You smelt the Heaven-blossoms,
And all the sweet embosoms
   The dear
Uranian year.

Those Eyes my weak gaze shuns,
Which to the suns are Suns,
   Did
Not affray your lid.

The carpet was let down
(With golden moultings strown)
   For you
Of the angels' blue.

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But I, ex-Paradised,
The shoulder of your Christ
    Find high
To lean thereby.

So flaps my helpless sail,
Bellying with neither gale,
    Of Heaven
Nor Orcus even.

Life is a coquetry
Of Death, which wearies me,
    Too sure
Of the amour;

A tiring-room where I
Death's divers garments try,
    Till fit
Some fashion sit.

It seemeth me too much
I do rehearse for such
    A mean
And single scene.

The sandy glass hence bear—
Antique remembrancer;
    My veins
Do spare its pains.
With secret sympathy
My thoughts repeat in me
Infirm
The turn o' the worm

Beneath my appointed sod;
The grave is in my blood;
I shake
To winds that take

Its grasses by the top;
The rains thereon that drop
Perturb
With drip acerb

My subtly answering soul;
The feet across its knoll
Do jar
Me from afar.

As sap foretastes the spring;
As Earth ere blossoming
Thrills
With far daffodils,

And feels her breast turn sweet
With the unconceiv'd wheat;
So doth
My flesh foreloathe
The abhorred spring of Dis,
With seething presciences
  Affirm
  The preparate worm.

I have no thought that I,
When at the last I die,
  Shall reach
  To gain your speech.

But you, should that be so,
May very well, I know,
  May well
  To me in hell

With recognising eyes
Look from your Paradise —
  "God bless
  Thy hopelessness!"

Call, holy soul, O call
The hosts angelical,
  And say,—
  "See, far away

  "Lies one I saw on earth;
One stricken from his birth
  With curse
  Of destinate verse.
"What place doth He ye serve
For such sad spirit reserve,—
   Given,
In dark lieu of Heaven,

"The impitiable Dæmon,
Beauty, to adore and dream on,
   To be
Perpetually

"Hers, but she never his?
He reapeth miseries,
   Foreknows
His wages woes;

"He lives detached days;
He serveth not for praise;
   For gold
He is not sold;

"Deaf is he to world's tongue;
He scorneth for his song
   The loud
Shouts of the crowd;

"He asketh not world's eyes;
Not to world's ears he cries;
   Saith,—'These
Shut, if ye please;'

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"He measureth world's pleasure,  
World's ease as Saints might measure;  
For hire  
Just love entire

"He asks, not grudging pain;  
And knows his asking vain,  
And cries—  
'Love! Love!' and dies;

"In guerdon of long duty,  
Unowned by Love or Beauty;  
And goes—  
Tell, tell, who knows!

"Aliens from Heaven's worth,  
Fine beasts who nose i' the earth,  
Do there  
Reward prepare.

"But are his great desires  
Food but for nether fires?  
Ah me,  
A mystery!

"Can it be his alone,  
To find when all is known,  
That what  
He solely sought

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"Is lost, and thereto lost
All that its seeking cost?
    That he
Must finally,

"Through sacrificial tears,
And anchoretic years,
    Tryst
With the sensualist?"

So ask; and if they tell
The secret terrible,
    Good friend,
I pray thee send

Some high gold embassage
To teach my unripe age.
    Tell!
Lest my feet walk hell.
A FALLEN YEW

It seemed corrival of the world's great prime,
Made to un-edge the scythe of Time,
And last with stateliest rhyme.

No tender Dryad ever did indue
That rigid chiton of rough yew,
To fret her white flesh through:

But some god like to those grim Asgard lords,
Who walk the fables of the hordes
From Scandinavian fjords,

Upheaved its stubborn girth, and raised unriven,
Against the whirl-blast and the levin,
Defiant arms to Heaven.

When doom puffed out the stars, we might have said,
It would decline its heavy head,
And see the world to bed.

For this firm yew did from the vassal leas,
And rain and air, its tributaries,
Its revenues increase,

And levy impost on the golden sun,
Take the blind years as they might run,
And no fate seek or shun.
But now our yew is strook, is fallen — yea
Hacked like dull wood of every day
To this and that, men say.

Never! — To Hades' shadowy shipyards gone,
Dim barge of Dis, down Acheron
It drops, or Lethe wan.

Stirred by its fall — poor destined bark of Dis! —
Along my soul a bruit there is
Of echoing images,

Reverberations of mortality:
Spelt backward from its death, to me
Its life reads saddenedly.

Its breast was hollowed as the tooth of eld;
And boys, their creeping unbeheld,
A laughing moment dwelled.

Yet they, within its very heart so crept,
Reached not the heart that courage kept
With winds and years beswept.

And in its boughs did close and kindly nest
The birds, as they within its breast,
By all its leaves caressed.

But bird nor child might touch by any art
Each other's or the tree's hid heart,
A whole God's breadth apart;
The breadth of God, the breadth of death and life!
   Even so, even so, in undreamed strife
   With pulseless Law, the wife,—

The sweetest wife on sweetest marriage-day,—
   Their souls at grapple in mid-way,
   Sweet to her sweet may say:

"I take you to my inmost heart, my true!"
   Ah, fool! but there is one heart you
   Shall never take him to!

The hold that falls not when the town is got,
   The heart's heart, whose immurèd plot
   Hath keys yourself keep not!

Its ports you cannot burst — you are withstood —
   For him that to your listening blood
   Sends precepts as he would.

Its gates are deaf to Love, high summoner;
   Yea, Love's great warrant runs not there:
   You are your prisoner.

Yourself are with yourself the sole consortress
   In that unleaguerable fortress;
   It knows you not for portress.

Its keys are at the cincture hung of God;
   Its gates are trepidant to His nod;
   By Him its floors are trod.
And if His feet shall rock those floors in wrath,
Or blest aspersions sleek His path,
Is only choice it hath.

Yea, in that ultimate heart's occult abode
To lie as in an oubliette of God,
Or as a bower untrod,

Built by a secret Lover for His Spouse;
Sole choice is this your life allows,
Sad tree, whose perishing boughs
So few birds house!
DREAM-TRYST

The breaths of kissing night and day
   Were mingled in the eastern Heaven:
Throbbing with unheard melody
   Shook Lyra all its star-chord seven:
When dusk shrunk cold, and light trod shy,
   And dawn's grey eyes were troubled grey;
And souls went palely up the sky,
   And mine to Lucidé.

There was no change in her sweet eyes
   Since last I saw those sweet eyes shine;
There was no change in her deep heart
   Since last that deep heart knocked at mine.
Her eyes were clear, her eyes were Hope's,
   Wherein did ever come and go
The sparkle of the fountain-drops
   From her sweet soul below.

The chambers in the house of dreams
   Are fed with so divine an air,
That Time's hoar wings grow young therein,
   And they who walk there are most fair.
I joyed for me, I joyed for her,
   Who with the Past meet girt about:
Where our last kiss still warms the air,
   Nor can her eyes go out.
A CORYMBUS FOR AUTUMN

HEARKEN my chant, 't is
As a Bacchante's,
A grape-spurt, a vine-splash, a tossed tress, flown vaunt 't is!
Suffer my singing,
Gipsy of Seasons, ere thou go winging;
Ere Winter throws
His slaking snows
In thy feasting-flagon's impurpurate glows!
The sopped sun — toper as ever drank hard —
Stares foolish, hazed,
Rubicund, dazed,
Totty with thine October tankard.
Tanned maiden! with cheeks like apples russet,
And breast a brown agaric faint-flushing at tip,
And a mouth too red for the moon to buss it,
But her cheek unvow its vestalship;
Thy mists enclip
Her steel-clear circuit illuminous,
Until it crust
Rubiginous
With the glorious gules of a glowing rust.

Far other saw we, other indeed,
The crescent moon, in the May-days dead,
Fly up with its slender white wings spread
Out of its nest in the sea's waved mead!
How are the veins of thee, Autumn, laden?
Umbered juices,  
And pulpèd oozes  
Pappy out of the cherry-bruises,  
Froth the veins of thee, wild, wild maiden!  
With hair that musters  
In globèd clusters,  
In tumbling clusters, like swarthy grapes,  
Round thy brow and thine ears o’ershaden;  
With the burning darkness of eyes like pansies,  
Like velvet pansies  
Wherethrough escapes  
The splendent might of thy conflagrate fancies;  
With robe gold-tawny not hiding the shapes  
Of the feet whereunto it falleth down,  
Thy naked feet unsandallèd;  
With robe gold-tawny that does not veil  
Feet where the red  
Is meshed in the brown,  
Like a rubied sun in a Venice-sail.

The wassailous heart of the Year is thine!  
His Bacchic fingers disentwine  
His coronal  
At thy festival;  
His revelling fingers disentwine  
Leaf, flower, and all,  
And let them fall  
Blossom and all in thy wavering wine.  
The Summer looks out from her brazen tower,  
Through the flashing bars of July,
Waiting thy ripened golden shower;
Whereof there cometh, with sandals fleet,
The North-west flying viewlessly,
With a sword to sheer, and untameable feet,
And the gorgon-head of the Winter shown
To stiffen the gazing earth as stone.

In crystal Heaven's magic sphere
Poised in the palm of thy fervid hand,
Thou seest the enchanted shows appear
That stain Favonian firmament;
Richer than ever the Occident
Gave up to bygone Summer's wand.
Day's dying dragon lies drooping his crest,
Panting red pants into the West.
Or a butterfly sunset claps its wings
With flitter alit on the swinging blossom,
The gusty blossom, that tosses and swings,
Of the sea with its blown and ruffled bosom;
Its ruffled bosom wherethrough the wind sings
Till the crispèd petals are loosened and strown
Overblown, on the sand;
Shed, curling as dead
Rose-leaves curl, on the fleckèd strand.
Or higher, holier, saintlier when, as now,
All nature sacerdotal seems, and thou.

The calm hour strikes on yon golden gong,
In tones of floating and mellow light
A spreading summons to even-song:
See how there
The cowlèd night  
Kneels on the Eastern sanctuary-stair.
What is this feel of incense everywhere?  
Clings it round folds of the blanch-amiced clouds,  
Upwafted by the solemn thurifer,  
The mighty spirit unknown,  
That swingeth the slow earth before the embannered Throne?  
Or is’nt the Season under all these shrouds  
Of light, and sense, and silence, makes her known  
A presence everywhere,  
An inarticulate prayer,  
A hand on the soothed tresses of the air?  
But there is one hour scant  
Of this Titanian, primal liturgy;  
As there is but one hour for me and thee,  
Autumn, for thee and thine hierophant,  
Of this grave ending chant.  
Round the earth still and stark  
Heaven’s death-lights kindle, yellow spark by spark,  
Beneath the dreadful catafalque of the dark.

And I had ended there:  
But a great wind blew all the stars to flare,  
And cried, “I sweep the path before the moon!  
Tarry ye now the coming of the moon,  
For she is coming soon;”  
Then died before the coming of the moon.  
And she came forth upon the trepidant air,  
In vesture unimagined-fair,  
Woven as woof of flag-lilies;
And curdled as of flag-lilies
The vapour at the feet of her,
And a haze about her tinged in fainter wise.
As if she had trodden the stars in press,
Till the gold wine spurted over her dress,
Till the gold wine gushed out round her feet;
    Spouted over her stained wear,
And bubbled in golden froth at her feet,
    And hung like a whirlpool’s mist round her.
Still, mighty Season, do I see ’t,
Thy sway is still majestical!
Thou hold’st of God, by title sure,
Thine indefeasible investiture,
    And that right round thy locks are native to;
The heavens upon thy brow imperial,
    This huge terrene thy ball,
And o’er thy shoulders thrown wide air’s depending pall.
What if thine earth be blear and bleak of hue?
    Still, still the skies are sweet!
Still, Season, still thou hast thy triumphs there!
How have I, unaware,
Forgetful of my strain inaugural,
    Cleft the great rondure of thy reign complete,
Yielding thee half, who hast indeed the all?
I will not think thy sovereignty begun
    But with the shepherd sun
That washes in the sea the stars’ gold fleeces
    Or that with day it ceases,
Who sets his burning lips to the salt brine,
    And purples it to wine;
While I behold how ermined Artemis
Ordainèd weed must wear,
And toil thy business;
Who witness am of her,
Her too in autumn turned a vintager;
And, laden with its lampèd clusters bright,
The fiery-fruited vineyard of this night.
THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
   I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
   Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
   Up vistaed hopes I sped;
   And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
   From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
   But with unhurrying chase,
   And unperturbed pace,
   Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
   They beat—and a Voice beat
   More instant than the Feet—
   "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
   Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followed,
   Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside)
But, if one little casement parted wide,
   The gust of His approach would clash it to.
   Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
   And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
   Smiting for shelter on their changèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn: Be sudden — to eve: Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that, after which I strayed,
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies,
*They* at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;  
But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair  
With dawning answers there,  
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.  
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share  
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;  
Let me greet you lip to lip,  
Let me twine with you caresses,  
Wantoning  
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,  
Banqueting  
With her in her wind-walled palace,  
Underneath her azured dais,  
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,  
From a chalice  
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."  
So it was done:  
I in their delicate fellowship was one—  
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.  
I knew all the swift importings  
On the wilful face of skies;  
I knew how the clouds arise  
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;  
All that 's born or dies  
Rose and drooped with—made them shapers  
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—  
With them joyed and was bereaven.  
I was heavy with the even,  
When she lit her glimmering tapers  
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
    Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
    I laid my own to beat,
    And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
    These things and I; in sound I speak —
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
    Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
    The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
    My thirsting mouth.
    Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
    With unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed majestic instancy
    And past those noisy'd Feet
A voice comes yet noisy'd —
    "Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
    And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
    I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years —
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
    Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
    Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
    Ah! must —
Designer infinite! —
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
    From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
    Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity,
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again;
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?
Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!

"Strange, piteous, futile thing!
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said),
"And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come.”

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
“Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.”
A JUDGMENT IN HEAVEN

A THWART the sod which is treading for God* the poet paced with his splendid eyes; Paradise-verdure he stately passes* to win to the Father of Paradise, Through the conscious and palpitant grasses* of intertangled relucent dyes.

The angels a-play on its fields of Summer* (their wild wings rustled his guides' cymars) Looked up from disport at the passing com'er,* as they pelted each other with handfuls of stars; And the warden-spirits with startled feet rose,* hand on sword, by their tethered cars.

With plumes night-tinctured englobed and cinctured,* of Saints, his guided steps held on To where on the far crista'lline pale* of that transtellar Heaven there shone The immutable crocean dawn* effusing from the Father's Throne.

Through the reverberant Eden-ways* the bruit of his great advent driven, Back from the fulgent justle and press* with mighty echoing so was given,

Note—I have throughout this poem used an asterisk to indicate the caesura in the middle of the line, after the manner of the old Saxon section-point.
As when the surly thunder smites * upon the clanged gates of Heaven.

Over the bickering gonfalons, * far-ranged as for Tartarean wars,
Went a waver of ribbèd fire *— as night-seas on phosphoric bars
Like a flame-plumed fan shake slowly out * their ridgy reach of crumbling stars.

At length to where on His fretted Throne * sat in the heart of His aged dominions
The great Triune, and Mary nigh, * lit round with spears of their hauberked minions,
The poet drew, in the thunderous blue * involved dread of those mounted pinions.

As in a secret and tenebrous cloud * the watcher from the disquiet earth
At momentary intervals * beholds from its raggèd rifts break forth
The flash of a golden perturbation, * the travelling threat of a witchèd birth;

Till heavily parts a sinister chasm, * a grisly jaw, whose verges soon,
Slowly and ominously filled * by the on-coming plenilune,
Supportlessly congest with fire, * and suddenly spit forth the moon:
With beauty, not terror, through tangled error* of night-dipt plumes so burned their charge; Swayed and parted the globing clusters* so, —— disclosed from their kindling marge, Roseal-chapleted, splendent-vestured, * the singer there where God's light lay large.

Hu, hu! a wonder! a wonder! see,* clasping the singer's glories clings A dingy creature, even to laughter * cloaked and clad in patchwork things, Shrinking close from the unused glows * of the seraphs' versicoloured wings.

A rhymer, rhyming a futile rhyme,* he had crept for convoy through Eden-ways Into the shade of the poet's glory, * darkened under his prevalent rays, Fearfully hoping a distant welcome * as a poor kinsman of his lays.

The angels laughed with a lovely scorning:* — "Who has done this sorry deed in The garden of our Father, God? * 'mid his blos- soms to sow this weed in? Never our fingers knew this stuff: * not so fashion the looms of Eden!"

The singer bowed his brow majestic, * searching that patchwork through and through,
Feeling God's lucent gazes traverse * his singing-stoling and spirit too:
The hallowed harpers were fain to frown * on the strange thing come 'mid their sacred crew,
Only the singer that was earth * his fellow-earth and his own self knew.

But the poet rent off robe and wreath, * so as a sloughing serpent doth,
Laid them at the rhymer's feet, * shed down wreath and raiment both,
Stood in a dim and shamed stole, * like the tattered wing of a musty moth.

"Thou gav'st the weed and wreath of song, * the weed and wreath are solely Thine,
And this dishonest vesture * is the only vesture that is mine;
The life I textured, Thou the song * — my handicraft is not divine!"

He wrested o'er the rhymer's head * that garmenting which wrought him wrong;
A flickering tissue argentine * down dripped its shivering silvers long:—
"Better thou wov'st thy woof of life * than thou didst weave thy woof of song!"

Never a chief in Saintdom was, * but turned him from the Poet then;
Never an eye looked mild on him * 'mid all the
angel myriads ten,
Save sinless Mary, and sinful Mary * — the Mary
titled Magdalen.

"Turn yon robe," spake Magdalen, * "of torn
bright song, and see and feel."
They turned the raiment, saw and felt * what
their turning did reveal —
All the inner surface piled * with bloodied hairs,
like hairs of steel.

"Take, I pray, yon chaplet up, * thrown down
ruddied from his head."
They took the roseal chaplet up, * and they stood
astonished:
Every leaf between their fingers, * as they bruised
it, burst and bled.

"See his torn flesh through those rents; * see
the punctures round his hair,
As if the chaplet-flowers had driven * deep roots
in to nourish there —
Lord, who gav'st him robe and wreath, * what
was this Thou gav'st for wear?"

"Fetch forth the Paradisal garb!" * spake the
Father, sweet and low;
Drew them both by the frightened hand * where
Mary's throne made irised bow —
"Take, Princess Mary, of thy good grace, * two
spirits greater than they know."
EPILOGUE

VIRTUE may unlock hell, or even
A sin turn in the wards of Heaven,
(As ethics of the text-book go),
So little men their own deeds know,
Or through the intricate mêlée
Guess whitherward draws the battle-sway;
So little, if they know the deed,
Discern what therefrom shall succeed.
To wisest moralists 't is but given
To work rough border-law of Heaven,
Within this narrow life of ours,
These marches 'twixt delimitless Powers.
Is it, if Heaven the future showed,
Is it the all-severest mode
To see ourselves with the eyes of God?
God rather grant, at His assize,
He see us not with our own eyes!

Heaven, which man's generations draws
Nor deviates into replicas,
Must of as deep diversity
In judgment as creation be.
There is no expeditious road
To pack and label men for God,
And save them by the barrel-load.
Some may perchance, with strange surprise,
Have blundered into Paradise.
In vasty dusk of life abroad,
They fondly thought to err from God,
Nor knew the circle that they trod;
And wandering all the night about,
Found them at morn where they set out.
Death dawned; Heaven lay in prospect wide:—
Lo! they were standing by His side!

The rhymer a life uncomplex,
With just such cares as mortals vex,
So simply felt as all men feel,
Lived purely out to his soul’s weal.
A double life the Poet lived,
And with a double burthen grieved;
The life of flesh and life of song,
The pangs to both lives that belong;
Immortal knew and mortal pain,
Who in two worlds could lose and gain,
And found immortal fruits must be
Mortal through his mortality.
The life of flesh and life of song!
If one life worked the other wrong,
What expiating agony
May for him damned to poesy
Shut in that little sentence be—
What deep austerities of strife—
“He lived his life.” He lived his life!
WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And, with the sea-breeze hand in hand,
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day!

71
Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
   On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
   Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face!
   She gave me tokens three:—
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
   And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
   A still word, — strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
   Fly down to her little hand.

For standing artless as the air,
   And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
   And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end:
   Their scent survives their close,
But the rose's scent is bitterness
   To him that loved the rose!

She looked a little wistfully,
   Then went her sunshine way:—
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
   And the leaves fell from the day.
She went her unremembering way,
    She went and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
    And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
    Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
    The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
    Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
    And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
    That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain,
    And perish in our own.
THE MAKING OF VIOLA

I

The Father of Heaven.

Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Twirl your wheel with silver din;
Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Spin a tress for Viola.

Angels.

Spin, Queen Mary, a
Brown tress for Viola!

II

The Father of Heaven.

Weave, hands angelical,
Weave a woof of flesh to pall—
Weave, hands angelical—
Flesh to pall our Viola.

Angels.

Weave, singing brothers, a
Velvet flesh for Viola!

III

The Father of Heaven.

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-browned pools of Paradise—
Young Jesus, for the eyes,
For the eyes of Viola.
Angels.

Tint, Prince Jesus, a
Duskèd eye for Viola!

IV

The Father of Heaven.

Cast a star therein to drown,
Like a torch in cavern brown,
Sink a burning star to drown
Whelmed in eyes of Viola.

Angels.

Lave, Prince Jesus, a
Star in eyes of Viola!

V

The Father of Heaven.

Breathe, Lord Paraclete,
To a bubbled crystal meet —
Breathe, Lord Paraclete —
Crystal soul for Viola.

Angels.

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a
Flashing soul for Viola!

VI

The Father of Heaven.

Child-angels, from your wings
Fall the roseal hoverings,
Child-angels, from your wings,
On the cheeks of Viola.
Angels.

Linger, rosy reflex, a
Quenchless stain, on Viola!

VII

All things being accomplished, saith the Father of Heaven.
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
Bear her down on spyless wing,
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
With a sound of viola.

Angels.

Music as her name is, a
Sweet sound of Viola!

VIII

Wheeling angels, past espial,
Danced her down with sound of viol;
Wheeling angels, past espial,
Descanting on “Viola.”

Angels.

Sing, in our footing, a
Lovely lilt of “Viola!”

IX

Baby smiled, mother wailed,
Earthward while the sweetling sailed;
Mother smiled, baby wailed,
When to earth came Viola.
And her elders shall say:—
So soon have we taught you a
Way to weep, poor Viola!

x

Smile, sweet baby, smile,
For you will have weeping-while;
Native in your Heaven is smile,—
But your weeping, Viola?

Whence your smiles we know, but ah!
Whence your weeping, Viola?—
Our first gift to you is a
Gift of tears, my Viola!
TO MY GODCHILD

FRANCIS M. W. M.

THIS labouring, vast, Tellurian galleon,
   Riding at anchor off the orient sun,
Had broken its cable, and stood out to space
Down some frore Arctic of the aërial ways:
And now, back warping from the inclement main,
Its vaporous shroudage drenched with icy rain,
It swung into its azure roads again;
When, floated on the prosperous sun-gale, you
Lit, a white halcyon auspice, 'mid our frozen crew.

To the Sun, stranger, surely you belong,
Giver of golden days and golden song;
Nor is it by an all-unhappy plan
You bear the name of me, his constant Magian.
Yet ah! from any other that it came,
Lest fated to my fate you be, as to my name.
When at the first those tidings did they bring,
My heart turned troubled at the ominous thing:
Though well may such a title him endower,
For whom a poet's prayer implores a poet's power.
The Assisian, who kept plighted faith to three,
To Song, to Sanctitude, and Poverty;
(In two alone of whom most singers prove
A fatal faithfulness of during love!);
He the sweet Sales, of whom we scarcely ken
How God he could love more, he so loved men;
The crown and crowned of Laura and Italy;
And Fletcher's fellow—from these, and not from me,
Take you your name, and take your legacy!

Or, if a right successive you declare
When worms, for ivies, intertwine my hair,
Take but this Poesy that now followeth
My clayey hest with sullen servile breath,
Made then your happy freedman by testating death.
My song I do but hold for you in trust,
I ask you but to blossom from my dust.
When you have compassed all weak I began,
Diviner poet, and ah! diviner man;
The man at feud with the perduring child
In you before song's altar nobly reconciled;
From the wise heavens I half shall smile to see
How little a world, which owned you, needed me.
If, while you keep the vigils of the night,
For your wild tears make darkness all too bright,
Some lone orb through your lonely window peeps,
As it played lover over your sweet sleeps;
Think it a golden crevice in the sky,
Which I have pierced but to behold you by!

And when, immortal mortal, droops your head,
And you, the child of deathless song, are dead;
Then, as you search with unaccustomed glance
The ranks of Paradise for my countenance,
Turn not your tread along the Uranian sod
Among the bearded counsellors of God;
For if in Eden as on earth are we,
I sure shall keep a younger company:
Pass where beneath their rangel'd gonfalons
The starry cohorts shake their shielded suns,
The dreadful mass of their enridgèd spears;
Pass where majestical the eternal peers,
The stately choice of the great Saintdom, meet—
A silvern segregation, globed complete
In sandalled shadow of the Triune feet;
Pass by where wait, young poet-wayfarer,
Your cousined clusters, emulous to share
With you the roseal lightnings burning 'mid their hair;
Pass the crystalline sea, the Lampads seven:—
Look for me in the nurseries of Heaven.
THE POPPY

TO MONICA

SUMMER set lip to earth's bosom bare,
And left the flushed print in a poppy there:
Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping flame.

With burnt mouth red like a lion's it drank
The blood of the sun as he slaughtered sank,
And dipped its cup in the purpurate shine
When the eastern conduits ran with wine.

Till it grew lethargied with fierce bliss,
And hot as a swinked gipsy is,
And drowsed in sleepy savageries,
With mouth wide a-pout for a sultry kiss.

A child and man paced side by side,
Treading the skirts of eventide;
But between the clasp of his hand and hers
Lay, felt not, twenty withered years.

She turned, with the rout of her dusk South hair,
And saw the sleeping gipsy there;
And snatched and snapped it in swift child's whim,
With — "Keep it, long as you live!" — to him.

And his smile, as nymphs from their laving meres,
Trembled up from a bath of tears;
And joy, like a mew sea-rocked apart,
Tossed on the wave of his troubled heart.

For he saw what she did not see,
That — as kindled by its own fervency —
The verge shrivelled inward smoulderingly:

And suddenly 'twixt his hand and hers
He knew the twenty withered years —
No flower, but twenty shrivelled years.

"Was never such thing until this hour,"
Low to his heart he said; "the flower
Of sleep brings wakening to me,
And of oblivion memory."

"Was never this thing to me," he said,
"Though with bruised poppies my feet are red!"
And again to his own heart very low:
"O child! I love, for I love and know;

"But you, who love nor know at all
The diverse chambers in Love's guest-hall,
Where some rise early, few sit long:
In how differing accents hear the throng
His great Pentecostal tongue;

"Who know not love from amity,
Nor my reported self from me;
A fair fit gift is this, meseems,
You give — this withering flower of dreams."
“O frankly fickle, and fickly true,
Do you know what the days will do to you?
To your Love and you what the days will do,
O frankly fickle, and fickly true?

“You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or days:
’T will pass with the passing of my face.
But where I go, your face goes too,
To watch lest I play false to you.

“I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,
Knowing well when certain years are over
You vanish from me to another;
Yet I know, and love, like the foster-mother.

“So, frankly fickle, and fickly true!
For my brief life-while I take from you
This token, fair and fit, meseems,
For me—this withering flower of dreams.”

* * * * * * *

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread:
The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper
The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang ’mid men my needless head,
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:
The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper
Time shall reap, but after the reaper
The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper!

83
Love! love! your flower of withered dream
In leavèd rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time.

Love! I fall into the claws of Time:
But lasts within a leavèd rhyme
All that the world of me esteems—
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.
TO MONICA THOUGHT DYING

YOU, O the piteous you!
Who all the long night through
Anticipedly
Disclose yourself to me
Already in the ways
Beyond our human comfortable days;
How can you deem what Death
Impitiably saith
To me, who listening wake
For your poor sake?
When a grown woman dies
You know we think unceasingly
What things she said, how sweet, how wise;
And these do make our misery.
But you were (you to me
The dead anticipatedly!)
You — eleven years, was 't not, or so? —
Were just a child, you know;
And so you never said
Things sweet immeditatably and wise
To interdict from closure my wet eyes:
But foolish things, my dead, my dead!
Little and laughable,
Your age that fitted well.
And was it such things all unmemorable,
Was it such things could make
Me sob all night for your implacable sake?

85
Yet, as you said to me,
In pretty make-believe of revelry,
So the night long said Death
With his magniloquent breath;
(And that remembered laughter
Which in our daily uses followed after,
Was all untuned to pity and to awe):

"A cup of chocolate,
One farthing is the rate,
You drink it through a straw."

How could I know, how know
Those laughing words when drenched with sobbing so?
Another voice than yours, than yours, he hath!
'My dear, was 't worth his breath,
His mighty utterance?—yet he saith, and saith!
This dreadful Death to his own dreadfulness
Doth dreadful wrong,
This dreadful childish babble on his tongue!
That iron tongue made to speak sentences,
And wisdom insupportably complete,
Why should it only say the long night through,

In mimicry of you,—

"A cup of chocolate,
One farthing is the rate,
You drink it through a straw, a straw, a straw!"

Oh, of all sentences,
Piercingly incomplete!
Why did you teach that fatal mouth to draw,
Child, impermissible awe
From your old trivialness?
Why have you done me this
Most unsustainable wrong,
And into Death's control
Betrayed the secret places of my soul?
Teaching him that his lips,
Uttering their native earthquake and eclipse,
Could never so avail
To rend from hem to hem the ultimate veil
Of this most desolate
Spirit, and leave it stripped and desecrate,—
Nay, never so have wrung
From eyes and speech weakness unmanned, unmeet;
As when his terrible dotage to repeat
Its little lesson learneth at your feet;
As when he sits among
His sepulchres, to play
With broken toys your hand has cast away,
With derelict trinkets of the darling young.
Why have you taught — that he might so complete
His awful panoply
From your cast playthings — why,
This dreadful childish babble to his tongue,
Dreadful and sweet?
NOTE


II The Nineteenth Century ode appeared in The Academy for December 29, 1900.

III The ode on Cecil Rhodes is taken from The Academy and Literature for April 12, 1902.
I

VICTORIAN ODE

NIGHT; and the street a corpse beneath the moon,
Upon the threshold of the jubilant day
That was to follow soon;
Thickened with inundating dark
'Gainst which the drowning lamps kept struggle; pole
And plank cast rigid shadows; 't was a stark
Thing waiting for its soul,
The bones of the preluded pomp. I saw
In the cloud-sullied moon a pale array,
A lengthened apparition, slowly draw;
And as it came,
Brake all the street in phantom flame
Of flag and flower and hanging, shadowy show
Of the to-morrow's glories, as might suit
A pageant of the dead; and spectral bruit
I heard, where stood the dead to watch the dead,
The long Victorian line that passed with printless tread.
First went the holy poets, two on two,
And music, sown along the hardened ground,
Budded like frequence of glad daisies, where
Those sacred feet did fare;
Arcadian pipe, and psaltery, around,
And stringèd viol, sound
To make for them melodious due.
In the first twain of those great ranks of death
Went one, the impress recent on his hair
Where it was dented by the laureate wreath:
Who sang those goddesses with splendours bare
On Ida hill, before the Trojan boy;
And many a lovely lay,
Where Beauty did her beauties unarray
In conscious song. I saw young Love his plumes deploy,
And shake their shivering lustres, till the night
Was sprinkled and bedropt with starry play
Of versicoloured light,
To see that poet pass who sang him well;
And I could hear his heart
Throb like the after-vibrance of a bell.
A Strength beside this Beauty, Browning went,
With shrewd looks and intent,
And meditating still some gnarlèd theme.
Then came, somewhat apart,
In a fastidious dream,
Arnold, with a half-discontented calm,
Binding up wounds, but pouring in no balm.
The fervid breathing of Elizabeth
Broke on Christina's gentle-taken breath.
Rossetti, whose heart stirred within his breast
Like lightning in a cloud, a spirit without rest,
Came on disranked; Song's hand was in his hair,
Lest Art should have withdrawn him from the band,
Save for her strong command;
And in his eyes high Sadness made its lair.
Last came a shadow tall, with drooping lid,
Which yet not hid
The steel-like flashing of his armèd glance;
Alone he did advance,
And all the throng gave room
For one that looked with such a captain's mien:
A scornful smile lay keen
On lips that, living, prophesied of doom.
His one hand held a lightning-bolt, the other
A cup of milk and honey blent with fire;
It seemed as in that quire
He had not, nor desired not, any brother.
A space his alien eye surveyed the pride
Of meditated pomp, as one that much
Disdained the sight, methought; then at a touch,
He turned the heel, and sought with shadowy stride
His station in the dim,
Where the sole-thoughted Dante waited him.

What throngs illustrious next, of Art and Prose,
Too long to tell; but other music rose
When came the sabre's children: they who led
The iron-throated harmonies of war,
The march resounding of the armèd line,
And measured movement of battalia:
Accompanied their tread
No harps, no pipes of soft Arcadia,
But — borne to me afar —
The tramp of squadrons, and the bursting mine,
The shock of steel, the volleying rifle-crack,
And echoes out of ancient battles dead.
So Cawnpore unto Alma thundered back,
And Delhi's cannon roared to Gujerat:
Carnage through all those iron vents gave out
Her thousand-mouthèd shout.
As balefire answering balefire is unfurled,
From mountain-peaks, to tell the foe's approaches,
So ran that battle-clangour round the world,
From famous field to field
So that reverberated war was tossed;
And — in the distance lost —
Across the plains of France and hills of Spain
It swelled once more to birth,
And broke on me again,
The voice of England's glories girdling in the earth.

It caught like fire the main,
Where rending planks were heard, and broadsides pealed,
That shook were all the seas,
Which feared, and thought on Nelson. For with them
That struck the Russ, that brake the Mutineer,
And smote the stiff Sikh to his knee,— with these
Came they that kept our England's sea-swept hem,
And held afar from her the foreign fear.
After them came
They who pushed back the ocean of the Unknown,
And fenced some strand of knowledge for our own
Against the outgoing sea
Of ebbing mystery;
And on their banner "Science" blazoned shone.
The rear were they that wore the statesman's fame,
From Melbourne, to
The arcane face of the much-wrinkled Jew.

Lo, in this day we keep the yesterdays,
And those great dead of the Victorian line.
They passed, they passed, but cannot pass away,
For England feels them in her blood like wine.
She was their mother, and she is their daughter,
This Lady of the water,
And from their loins she draws the greatness which they were.
And still their wisdom sways,
Their power lives in her.
Their thews it is, England, that lift thy sword,
They are the splendour, England, in thy song,
They sit unbidden at thy council-board,
Their fame doth compass all thy coasts from wrong,
And in thy sinews they are strong.
Their absence is a presence and a guest
In this day's feast;
This living feast is also of the dead,
And this, O England, is thine All Souls' Day.
And when thy cities flake the night with flames,
Thy proudest torches yet shall be their names.

O royal England! happy child
Of such a more than regal line;
Be it said

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Fair right of jubilee is thine;  
And surely thou art unbeguiled  
If thou keep with mirth and play,  
With dance, and jollity, and praise,  
Such a To-day which sums such Yesterdays.  
Pour to the joyless ones thy joy, thy oil  
And wine to such as faint and toil.  
And let thy vales make haste to be more green  
Than any vales are seen  
In less auspicious lands,  
And let thy trees clap all their leafy hands,  
And let thy flowers be gladder far of hue  
Than flowers of other regions may;  
Let the rose, with her fragrance sweetened through,  
Flush as young maidens do,  
With their own inward blissfulness at play.  
And let the sky twinkle an eagerer blue  
Over our English isle  
Than any otherwhere;  
Till strangers shall behold, and own that she is fair.  
Play up, play up, ye birds of minstrel June,  
Play up your reel, play up your giddiest spring,  
And trouble every tree with lusty tune,  
Whereeto our hearts shall dance  
For overmuch pleasance,  
And children's running make the earth to sing.  
And ye soft winds, and ye white-fingered beams,  
Aid ye her to invest,  
Our queenly England, in all circumstance  
Of fair and feat adorning to be drest;
Kirtled in jocund green,
Which does befit a Queen,
And like our spirits cast forth lively gleams:
And let her robe be goodly garlanded
With store of florets white and florets red,
With store of florets white and florets gold,
A fair thing to behold;
Intrailed with the white blossom and the blue,
A seemly thing to view!
And thereunto,
Set over all a woof of lawny air,
From her head wavering to her sea-shod feet,
Which shall her lovely beauty well complete,
And grace her much to wear.

Lo, she is dressed, and lo, she cometh forth,
Our stately Lady of the North;
Lo, how she doth advance,
In her most sovereign eye regard of puissance,
And tiar'd with conquest her prevailing brow,
While nations to her bow.
Come hither, proud and ancient East,
Gather ye to this Lady of the North,
And sit down with her at her solemn feast,
Upon this culminating day of all her days;
For ye have heard the thunder of her goings-forth,
And wonder of her large imperial ways.
Let India send her turbans, and Japan
Her pictured vests from that remotest isle
Seated in the antechambers of the Sun:
And let her Western sisters for a while
Remit long envy and disunion,
And take in peace
Her hand behind the buckler of her seas,
'Gainst which their wrath has splintered; come, for she
Her hand ungauntlets in mild amity.
Victoria! Queen, whose name is victory,
Whose woman's nature sorteth best with peace,
Bid thou the cloud of war to cease
Which ever round thy wide-girt empery
Fumes, like to smoke about a burning brand,
Telling the energies which keep within
The light unquenched, as England's light shall be;
And let this day hear only peaceful din.
For, queenly woman, thou art more than woman;
Thy name the often-struck barbarian shuns;
Thou art the fear of England to her foemen,
The love of England to her sons.
And this thy glorious day is England's; who
Can separate the two?
She joys thy joys and weeps thy tears,
And she is one with all thy moods;
Thy story is the tale of England's years,
And big with all her ills, and all her stately goods.
Now unto thee
The plenitude of the glories thou didst sow
Is garnered up in prosperous memory;
And, for the perfect evening of thy day,
An untumultuous bliss, serenely gay,
Sweetened with silence of the after-glow.
Nor does the joyous shout
Which all our lips give out
Jar on that quietude; more than may do
A radiant childish crew,
With well-accordant discord fretting the soft hour,
Whose hair is yellowed by the sinking blaze
Over a low-mouthed sea. Exult, yet be not twirled,
England, by gusts of mere
Blind and insensate lightness; neither fear
The vastness of thy shadow on the world.
If in the East
Still strains against its leash the unglutted beast
Of War; if yet the cannon's lip be warm;
Thou, whom these portents warn but not alarm,
Feastest, but with thy hand upon the sword,
As fits a warrior race.
Not like the Saxon fools of olden days,
With the mead dripping from the hairy mouth,
While all the South
Filled with the shaven faces of the Norman horde.
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

AS, fore-announced by threat of flame and smoke,
Out of the night's lair broke
The sun among the startled stars, whose blood
Looses its slow bright flood
Beneath the radiant onset of the sun;
So crouches he anon,
With nostrils breathing threat of smoke and flame,
Back to the lairing night wherefrom he came.

And who is She,
With cloudy battle smoking round her feet,
That issues through the exit-doors of death;
And at the alternate limit of her path,
Where first her nascent footsteps troubled day,
Forgotten tumult curls itself away?
Who is she that rose
Tumultuous, and in tumult goes?

This is she
That rose 'midst dust of a down-tumbled world,
And dies with rumour on the air
Of preparation
For a more ample devastation,
And death of ancient fairness no more fair.
First when she knew the day,
The holy poets sung her on her way.
The high, clear band that takes
Its name from heaven-acquainted mountain-lakes;
And he
That like a star set in Italian sea;
And he that mangled by the jaws of our
Fierce London, from all frets
Lies balmed in Roman violets.
And other names of power,
Too recent but for worship and regret,
On whom the tears lie wet.

But not to these
She gave her heart; her heart she gave
To the blind worm that bores the mould,
Bloodless, pertinacious, cold,
Unweeting what itself upturns,
The seer and prophet of the grave.
It reared its head from off the earth
(Which gives it life and gave it birth)
And placed upon its eyeless head a crown,
And all the peoples in their turns
Before the blind worm bowed them down.
Yet, crowned beyond its due,
Working dull way by obdurate, slow degrees,
It is a thing of sightless prophecies;
And glories, past its own conceit,
Attend to crown
Its travail, when the mounded time is meet.
Nor measured, fit renown,
When that hour paces forth,
Shall overlook those workers of the North,
And West, those patient Darwins who forthdrew
From humble dust what truth they knew,
And greater than they knew, not knowing all they knew.
Yet was their knowledge in its scope a Might,
Strong and true souls to measure of their sight.
Behold the broad globe in their hands comprest,
As a boy kneads a pellet, till the East
Looks in the eyes o' the West;
And as guest whispers guest
That counters him at feast,
The Northern mouth
Leans to the attent ear of the bended South.
The fur-skinned garb justling the northern bear
Crosses the threshold where,
With linen wisp girt on,
Drowses the next-door neighbour of the sun.
Such their laborious worth
To change the old face of the wonted earth.

Nor were they all o' the dust; as witness may
Davy and Faraday;
And they
Who clomb the cars
And learned to rein the chariots of the stars;¹
Or who in night's dark waters dipt their hands
To sift the hid gold from its sands;²
And theirs the greatest gift, who drew to light

¹ Measuring the stars' orbits.
² Discovery of new stars.
By their sciential might,
The secret ladder, wherethrough all things climb
Upward from the primeval slime.¹

Nor less we praise
Him that with burnished tube betrays
The multitudinous diminutive
Recessed in virtual night
Below the surface-seas of sight;
Him whose enchanted window gives
Upon the populated ways
Where the shy universes live
Ambushed beyond the unapprehending gaze.
The dusted anther's globe of spiky stars;
The beetle flashing in his minute mail
Of green and golden scale;
And every water-drop a-sting with writhing wars.
The unnoted green scale cleaving to the moist earth's face
Behold disclosed a conjugal embrace,
And womb —
Submitting to the tomb —
That sprouts its lusty issue:² everywhere conjoins
Either glad sex, and from unguessed-at loins
Breeds in an opulent ease
The liberal earth's increase;
Such Valentine's sweet unsurmisèd diocese.

¹ Evolution.
² The prothallus of the fern, for example; which contains in itself the two sexes, and decays as the young fern sprouts from it.
Nor, dying Lady, of the sons
Whom proudly owns
Thy valedictory and difficult breath,
The least are they who followed Death
Into his obscure fastnesses,
Tracked to her secret lair Disease —
Under the candid-seeming and confederate Day
Venoming the air's pure lips to kiss and to betray.
Who foiled the ancient Tyrant's grey design
Unfathomed long, and brake his dusty toils,
Spoiling him of his spoils,
And man, the loud dull fly, loosed from his woven line.
Such triumph theirs who at the destined term
Described the arrow flying in the day —
The age-long hidden germ —
And threw their prescient shield before its deadly way.

Thou, spacious Century!
Hast seen the Western knee
Set on the Asian neck,
The dusky Africa
Kneel to imperial Europe's beck;
And that refused head plucked to the day
Of the close-hooded Nile.
Hast seen the West for its permitted while
Stand mistress-wise and tutelar
To the grey nations dreaming on their days afar,
From old forgotten war
Folding hands whence has slid disused rule;
The while, unprescient, in her regent school
She shapes the ample days and things to be,
And large new empery.
Thence Asia shall be brought to bed
Of dominations yet undreamed;
Narrow-eyed Egypt lift again the head
Whereon the far-seen crown Nilotic gleamed.
Thou 'st seen the Saxon horde whose veins run brine,
Spawned of the salt wave, wet with the salt breeze,
Their sails combine,
Lash their bold prows together, and turn swords
Against the world's knit hordes;
The whelps repeat the lioness' roar athwart the windy seas.

Yet let it grieve, grey Dame,
Thy passing spirit, God wot,
Thou wast half-hearted, wishing peace, but not
The means of it. The avaricious flame
Thou 'st fanned, which thou should'st tame:
Cluck'dst thy wide brood beneath thy mothering plumes,
And coo'dst them from their fumes,
Stretched necks provocative, and throats
Ruffled with challenging notes;
Yet all didst mar
Flattering the too-much-pampered Boy of War:
Whence the far-jetting engine, and the globe
In labour with her iron progeny,—
Infernal litter of sudden-whelpèd deaths,
Vomiting venomous breaths;
Thicker than driven dust of testy March
When the blown flood o'erswells,
The armèd parallels
Of the long nations' columned march;
The growl as of long surf that draweth back
Half a beach in its rattling track,
When like a tiger-cat
The angry rifle spat
Its fury in the opposing foemen's eyes; —
These are thy consummating victories,
For this hast thou been troubled to be wise!

And now what child is this upon thy lap,
Born in the red glow of relighted war?
That draws Bellona's pap,
Fierce foster-mother; does already stare
With mimicked dark regard
And copied threat of brow whose trick it took from her? —
The twentieth of Time's loins, since that
Which in the quiet snows of Bethlehem he begat.
Ah! born, grey mother, in an hour ill-starred,
After the day of blood and night of fate,
Shall it survive with brow no longer marred,
Lip no more wry with hate;
With all thou hadst of good,
But from its blood
Washed thine hereditary ill,
Yet thy child still?
Ill

CECIL RHODES

DIED MARCH 26, 1902

THEY that mis-said
This man yet living, praise him dead.
And I too praise, yet not the baser things
Wherewith the market and the tavern rings.
Not that high things for gold,
He held, were bought and sold,
That statecraft's means approved are by the end;
Not for all which commands
The loud world's clapping hands,
To which cheap press and cheaper patriots bend;
But for the dreams,
For those impossible gleams
He half made possible; for that he was
Visioner of vision in a most sordid day:
This draws
Back to me song long alien and astray.

In dreams what did he not,
Wider than his wide deeds? In dreams he wrought

1 "Once or twice in those seven years of our intercourse
a flame of his old poetic fire blazed out, and once I was able
to divert the flame into the pages of The Academy. When
Cecil Rhodes died—that great dreamer and great man of
action—I telegraphed to Thompson to hasten to the office.
That was on a Monday. He appeared on the Tuesday. I
asked him point blank if he would write an ode on Cecil
What the old world’s long livers must in act forego.
From the Zambesi to the Limpopo
He the many-languaged land
Took with his large compacting hand
And pressed into a nation: ’thwart the accurst
And lion-larumed ways,
Where the lean-fingered Thirst
Wrings at the throat, and Famine strips the bone;
A tawny land, with sun at sullen gaze,
And all above a cope of heated stone;
He heard the shirted miner’s rough halloo
Call up the mosqûd Cairene; harkened clear
The Cairene’s far-off summons sounding through
The sea’s long noises to the Capeman’s ear.

Rhodes for the next issue of the paper, and without waiting
for his refusal talked Rhodes to him for half an hour, roused
his enthusiasm, and he departed with a half promise to
deliver the ode on Thursday morning. Thursday came and
nearly passed. I sent him three telegrams, but received no
answer. It was necessary to go to press at eight o’clock.
At half past six he arrived, and proceeded to extract from
his pockets a dozen and more scraps of crumpled paper, each
containing a fragment of the ode. I pieced them together,
sent the blurred manuscript to the printers, gave him money
for his dinner, and exacted a promise that he would return in
an hour to read the proof. He returned dazed and incoher-
ent, read the proof standing and swaying as he read, and
murmured: ‘It’s all right.’ It was all right. I am prouder
of having published that ode than of anything else that The
Academy ever contained.”—C. Lewis Hind (former editor
of the London Academy), in Harper’s Weekly, January 18,
1908.

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He saw the Teuton and the Saxon grip
Hands round the warded world, and bid it rock,
While they did watch its cradle. Like a ship
It swung, whileas the cabined inmates slept,
Secure their peace was kept,
Such arms of warranty about them lock.
Ophir \(^1\) he saw, her long-ungazed-at gold,
Stirred from its deep.
And often-centuried sleep,
Wink at the new Sun in an English hold.
England, from Afric’s swarthy loins
Drawing fecundity,
Wax to the South and North,
To East and West increase her puissant goings-forth,
And strike young emperies, like coins,
In her own regent effigy.
He saw the three-branched Teuton hold the sides
Of the round world, and part it as a dish
Whereof to each his wish
The amity of the full feast decides.

So large his dreams, so little come to act!
Who must call on the cannon to compact
The hard Dutch-stubborned land,
Seditious even to such a potent hand.
Who grasped and held his Ophir: held, no less,
The Northern ways, but never lived to see
The wing-foot messages
Dart from the Delta to the Southern Sea.

\(^1\) Rhodesia, according to some modern views.
Who, confident of gold,
A leaner on the statesman's arts
And the unmartial conquests of the marts,
Died with the sound of battle round him rolled,
And rumour of battle in all nations' hearts.
Dying, saw his life a thing
Of large beginnings; and for young
Hands yet untrained the harvesting,
Amid the iniquitous years if harvest sprung.
So in his death he sowed himself anew;
Cast his intents over the grave to strike
In the left world of livers living roots,
And banyan-like,
From his one tree raise up a wood of shoots.
The indestructible intents which drew
Their sap from him,
Thus, with a purpose grim,
Into strange lands and hostile yet he threw,
That there might be
From him throughout the earth posterity:
And so did he—
Like to a smouldering fire by wind-blasts swirled—
His dying embers strew to kindle all the world.

Yet not for this I praise
The ending of his strenuous days;
No, not alone that still
Beyond the grave stretched that imperial Will.
But that Death seems
To set the gateway wide to ampler dreams;
Yea, yet he dreams upon Matoppo hill,
The while the German and the Saxon see,
And seeing, wonder,
The spacious dreams take shape and be,
As at compulsion of his sleep thereunder.
Lo, young America at the Mother's knee,
Unlearning centuried hate,
For love's more blest extreme;
And this is in his dream,
And sure the dream is great.
Lo, Colonies on Colonies,
The furred Canadian and the digger's shirt,
To the one Mother's skirt
Cling, in the lore of Empire to be wise;
A hundred wheels a-turn
All to one end — that England's sons may learn
The glory of their sonship, the supreme
Worth that befits the heirs of such estate.
All these are in his dream,
And sure the dream is great.

So, to the last
A visionary vast,
The aspirant soul would have the body lie
Among the hills immovably exalt
As he above the crowd that haste and halt,
"Upon that hill which I
Called 'View of All the World';" to show thereby
That still his unappeasable desires
Beneath his feet surveyed the peoples and empires.
Dreams, haply of scant worth,
Bound by our little thumb-ring of an earth;
Yet an exalted thing
By the gross search for food and raimenting.
So in his own Matoppos, high, aloof,
The elements for roof,
Claiming his mountain kindred, and secure,
Within that sepulture
Stern like himself and unadorned,
From the loud multitude he ruled and scorned,
There let him cease from breath,—
Alone in crowded life, not lonelier in death.