

Blanche Lisle and Other Poems

Augusta Webster

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BLANCHE LISLE.

I.

Reveries.

THE gold-barred shadows slumber on the grass,
Unstirred by breathing of the languid day,
Seldom and slow the lazy cloudlets pass,
Flecking the blue sky with their silvered grey,
And faintly floating on to fade away.
The noontide hush has come: with closed beak
Sits the small minstrel voiceless on the spray,
Silence, so silent that it seems to speak,
Broods in that strange, weird stillness laughter dares not break.

For there is voice in silence when it rests
Upon the quiet earth like a rapt sleep,
A speechless voice that brings to many breasts
The feeling of a mystic presence deep
With unshaped thoughts, and wordless hopes that keep
No hold save in the shrine of such repose,
When the lulled mind holds all life's turmoils cheap
As myths that pass, how it scarce recks or knows,
But wandering through high dreams to greater stature grows.

Such silence shadows now the lonely glade:
The gossip grasshopper has not a word,
The early morning's whispering wind is laid,

No breath awakes the broad trees ancient-yearred,
On sleeping slopes the light oats droop unstirred,
The sluggish river sweeps un murmuring by;
The one dull sound that through the hush is heard,
Of tedious booming bees that homeward fly,
But makes the unmarred stillness brood more heavily.

Far back the old red house seems all asleep,
No hum of being stirring through its walls,
It frowns like some enchanted ancient keep
Where drowsiness on whoso enters falls,
And with the might of sloth its captives thralls;
Two cedar giants, glooming at each side,
Throw dull dark shadows on the dull dark walls;
In front the sombre ilex branches wide,
And massive, mournful yews the light of heaven hide.

She gazes at it, resting in the shade
Of a wide-branching many-belted oak
Its huge-zoned trunk with thick green moss enlaid
Tracing the coilings of the slow blue smoke
With dreamy wistful eye of discontent,
Such as the vague complaint may best express
Of a young spirit in its yearnings pent,
Too curbed for joy, too care-free for distress,
Wearied of all things, most of its own weariness.

Thus wearied gazed she on the silent hall,
Wherein the heavy months like years crept by
Ever unchanged, each listless day like all;
So had she grown to youth from infancy,
No other thing of youth or brightness nigh,
Her guides the spinster aunt demure and sage,
Counting her knitting with a time-dimmed eye,
And the sick uncle querulous with age,
Studious of pedigrees and dull heraldic page.

And cloistered thus she grew to girlhood's grace
Mid calm home joys, yet, as her soul outspread,
She tired of the old legends of her race,
Tired of a life that seemed spent with the dead,
Looked into coming time with a vague dread
That all her morrows should be yesterdays,
Each morrow, like the long day that had fled,
Waking and dying in the selfsame ways,
Like long-repeated melody's too tedious phrase.

And something of this thought spake in her now
As she lay pensive 'neath the leafy screen:
The shadow rested on her cheek and brow,
But little flecks of sunshine slipped between
The close-pressed boughs, and glittered golden sheen
On the soft bronzing of her loosened hair,
And kissed the dimpled chin upraised to lean
On the supporting hand so small and fair,
Kissed the soft smiling lips that had some droop of care.

Slowly the thin smoke-haze rose in the air,
She watched its lazy wreathings pensively,
As if some magic power rested there
To shape the outlines of her destiny;
Then sudden starting with an almost cry
"Same, still the same, the same until one dies!"
Bent languidly her head from gazing high,
Dropped long dark lashes over hazel eyes,
And let her thoughts in words half sung, half murmured rise.

"Oh, weary moments, weary hours and days,
Oh, weary years, pass me more quickly by,
I am all weary with your long delays,
I have not lived, yet half would wish to die.

"Oh, weary life, hast thou aught other birth,
Than in the mystic shadowings of a dream?
Is any real being in this earth,
Or do ourselves and all things only seem?

"Life! I am sick to very death of thee,
Of thee, if that indeed I feel thy glow,
If I am not, as sometimes seems to me,
A misty phantom in a phantom show.

"All things are dreary, to what end is youth?
I that am young yet feel so tired and old;
Oh, languid life, and hast thou not in truth
In all thy dross one little grain of gold!

"All things are dreary, all things are a dream,
Oh, life, if thou art nought but troubled sleep,
Fade quickly by from me and cease to seem,
Or art thou earnest, give me life more deep."

Abrupt she ceased her low complaining strain,
Her own impatient fancies to reprove.
"Ah, weak! to let such longings wild and vain
The knowledge of life's good from me remove,
Ungrateful too to those who give me love;
What if the glories of our line long gone,
Have made them hold our name and state above
Their present, and more love to be alone,
Than let less grandsired friends approach our fancied throne,

"Shall I for this give way to weak despair
What that my aunt's rare words be something dry,
And something vexing be her over care,
What that, still practising preached industry,
She holds day sent her knitting pins to ply?
She is so good, so simple, so true-souled!
If tedious grow my uncle's heraldry,
His changing temper range from hot to cold,
No nobler truer heart beat in his sires of old.

"And I were all ungrateful not to prize
Those who have rested all their love on me."
Thus self upbraiding lightly did she rise,
Moved from the shadow of the broad-armed tree,
With smooth proud step not from some languor free,
And passing by the river strolled along,
Watching it calmly sweeping to the sea
Its onward even current broad and strong,
And gave it greeting soft in a remembered song:

"Smooth, glimmering stream, with sweeping'glide,
Passing away from me,
Why gleams such bright smile on thy tide?"
"I hasten to the sea.

"Green forest-trees woo me to stay,
Low whispering to me,
Love-chiding flowerets gem my way
I pass on to the sea.

"And one dear bud has azure gleam,
Blue, like the sea, its eye,
It sighs, 'Forget me not, sweet stream'
I grieve, but I pass by.

"Gladly on to the deep blue sea,
It calls to me to come,
The trees and flowers speak not to me,
Like the voice that calls me home.

"Onward with steady flow I glide,
On to my home in the sea."
"Well may thy smile be bright, clear tide,
Would I could go with thee."

BLANCHE LISLE.

II.

Together.

ABOVE the elm-capped hillock had begun
To fade to violet the western sky,
The crimson death-bed of the summer sun.
He looked into the darkness of her eye
Watching its changes half inquiringly,
As if the passing reveries to guess
That seemed to shape them there as they stole by,
And fathom in the pure deep loveliness
Of hazel stars, the thoughts they could so well express.

And she like a fair statue sate the while,
Watching the sunset glare grow less and less,
Watching its waning glimmer with a smile
Half sad, and yet so full of happiness,
Till he with feigned reprovings broke her dream:
"What, love, are all thy longings fixed so high!
What, all thy love gone heavenward, it would seem,
All to thy sister spirits in the sky!
Not one small thought for me, then must I go and die!"

Oh! what a wealth of love she smiled on him.
"Ah! I was calling back past memories,
From that old time when life was lorn and dim,
They were as bright, last summer's sunset skies,
But oh! how fainter in my languid eyes;
I scarcely knew their beauty, being lone

And weary of this world that now I prize.
Ah! the long days with that long summer flown,
How like a far-off age of dreamland have they grown.

"How were they weary! And mine eyes were wet
Of mine own listlessness in very scorn,
And when I watched the slow sun westward set,
I joyed that day was o'er, and with the morn
I longed for death to come and bring again
Unconscious in the place of conscious sleep,
And hated being that seemed so in vain,
Seemed only good to slumber and to weep
And waiting heaven's rest, a weary vigil keep.

"And did not know what Autumn had in store,
That when the first red leaves dropped from the tree,
I should be weary and alone no more;
That Autumn's first sere days would bring me Thee,
Ah! Love thou hast brought life with love to me."
"And thou to me! Oh! Blanche, my soul grows faint
In this great love that is too great for me,
Earth has no words its burning depth to paint:
Thou art my hope and heaven, I know no other saint.

"My only prayer is uttered in thy name,
I breathe it lowly at the holy shrine:
What prayer could I devise **that** does not frame!
My Blanche! **My** Blanche! 'Tis bliss to speak it, mine!
Yet promise me by all that is divine
In the high heaven; all deadly in deep hell:
That rather should dull hateful death be thine,
Than other bridegroom!" "Ah! you love not well,"
She said, "that seek to bind love's truth by needless spell."

She spoke all sadly, for to her it seemed
Her faith was better guarded by her love;
And though she would not think, yet she half dreamed
Who trusted least, least worthy trust might prove;
Yet signing the blest cross, 'gainst dread she strove,
Gave the wild promise that he wildly sought;
And theirs seemed joy, all might of doubt above,
And only traced silence voiced their thought;
Oh! happy moments with love's happy stillness fraught!

And all the while the rose-clouds paled to grey,
And the last golden glimmer left the sky,

Dimming no more the waking star's cold ray;
At last he spoke: "Dearest, too early die
Those ruby sunset streakings from on high,
Since dying so they chase our steps away,
Yet ere we bid our solitude good bye,
I give you, as you asked of me, the lay
I made for you when turning homewards yesterday.

"Love, all my being has grown love for thee,
Love, all my heaven lightens in thine eye,
Some of my great love render back to me, Or let me die.

"Love, all my soul is gladdened by thy smile,
Love, all my soul were anguished by thy sigh,
Oh! love me though it were but for a while, Or let me die.

"Nay love me ever, ever while I live,
Let me have comfort in thy constancy,
Oh! for my true deep love some comfort give, Or let me die.

"Love, ere I linger on unloved by thee,
In the forsaken grave-yard let me lie,
Love, some return of love give back to me, Or let me die."

She wept, yet laughing said, "Wise matrons tell,
Men do not die for lady's cruelty,
And though I think indeed you love me well,
And though I hold your faithfulness full high,
Yet left I you I think you would not die;
And were our plighted contract set aside
You would grieve much I think, but live and I
Nay, do not gaze on me with wounded pride;
But rather hear how as you sang my heart replied:

"Since I have known thy true deep love for me,
To thy deep love, deep loving I reply,
And were the years to sever me from thee, Then should I die.

"I love not for a while, but evermore,
Till my last day wanes in life's clouding sky,
And could my trust in thy great love be o'er, Then should I die.

"Ah! could the promise of our plighted troth

Be marred by some now hidden destiny:
Love, it were worse than agony to both:But I should die."

He gently chiding at her doubting mood,
They rose and loitered through the avenue,
That reached to where the gloomy mansion stood,
Behind its melancholy screen of yew,
The white moon glimmering through the cold dim blue
Of the pale eve, her crescent not yet bright,
Young silver herald stars still small and few,
Watching the coming of the silent night,
Rich for those two, with dreams of past and new delight.

BLANCHE LISLE.

III.

The Old Year's last Midnight.

THERE stood a ruined chapel all alone
In a far corner of the ill-kept park,
Almost forgotten now, though long ago
It was a building of some name and mark,
For here were sculptured warriors grim and stark,
The buried heroes of the race of Lisle,
And proud inscriptions, time-defaced and dark,
Lettered the pavement of the damp cold aisle,
Vaunting the quiet dead, who fell to dust the while.

Green slimy patches festered on the wall,
The ivy crept in through the broken pane,
And let his sharp-notched leaves in wreathings fall
O'er the rich blazoning's enamelled stain
That flaming gules and or did still remain
Forcing the light that from the heavens came,
To story, as it passed through symbols vain,
The earthly glories-of an earthly name,
And in the house of God, man's honours to proclaim.

Chill murky vapour deepened the deep gloom,
The quaint carved woodwork rotted in decay,
The falling rain would trickle on the tomb
Where fair dame Maude in chiselled slumber lay,

Her once white marble now all stained and gray;
Piecemeal the gilding from the roof had gone,
The mouldered tapestries had dropped away,
All was in ruins, all was drear and lone,
The tomb of a proud race, whose day of pride was done.

Here, though thus wasted, was the burying-place
Of all the Lises; here was her uncle's pride,
That he, though the last lord of all his race,
Blighted with poverty, yet when he died,
Should rest in peace his father's grave beside;
This was his grief and shame, that peevish fate
The power to shew due reverence denied,
To raise it once again to fitting state,
As house of prayer to God, and rest-place of the great.

Old legends ran, that whoso, having claim
To count the sleepers there his ancestry,
In the night's shadow hither lonely came,
When the old wearied year began to die,
And waited till he gasped his last, long sigh,
Should see some presagings of coming fate,
Should learn in some prophetic mystery
What change of good or ill for him did wait,
Ere the advancing year passed through December's gate.

And when the year's last sun sank lustreless,
She, these wild stories running in her head,
And being wilful with much happiness,
Decreed within her, ere that night had fled,
To seek the dusky precincts of the dead,
And kneeling patient by the crumbling shrine,
Where her forefathers all had worshipped,
Seek to discern some vision or some sign,
Whereby the sweet, hope-laden future to divine.

For in the lightness of her heart she said,
"There was a time when I, poor trembling fool,
Had shrunk from such a quest with palsied dread,
But I have gathered courage in Love's school,
And all my soul through love has waxen bold,
And, though my faith in these old tales is small,
And as a fair fantastic myth I hold,
This power the happy future to forestall,
Yet will I test its truth and see what may befall."

Then did she count the hours impatiently,
Deeming the round-faced clock a world too slow,
And when the yellow moon had mounted high,
Slanting pale silver on the sparkling snow,
She hastened o'er her young lithe form to throw
The full-spread mantle's comfortable weight,
Speeding through corridors long, dark and low,
Till moaned at her soft touch the creaking gate,
Passed out in the cold night, to ask the dead of fate.

There was strange stillness in the wintry night,
The old familiar path she daily paced
Seemed all mysterious in its shimmering white,
The leafless boughs in frosted mail encased,
Strange phantasies in their thick network traced,
The wild snow wilderness that round her lay,
Seemed to her fancy some enchanted waste,
Where she was bound to hold her even way,
Through a long pale-lit night and never know the day.

For there is weird enchantment in the gleam
Of vague moon-radiance on the peaceful snow;
As one were hero of some ghost-stirred dream
Or mystic legend from the long ago,
Doomed in atonement for some sinful woe
Or rash upbraiding of Heaven's tutelage,
Ever through faint illumined gloom to go
On some unvarying goal-less pilgrimage,
By time and death forgotten from long age to age.

Or wanderer in some world not yet awake,
But slumbering beneath a sunless sky,
While yet nor flower nor green-speared blade can break
Through the still weight of its dead purity,
Where never touch of spring-time dancing by,
Has hung the waving leaves upon the tree,
But all things in dim lifelessness still lie,
Not being yet but waiting time to be;
So in such night has earth, snow-shrouded, seemed to me.

She paused one moment by a lonely pine
That stood where the small curving path, that led
Down to the chapel, broke from the straight line
Of the wide walk; then faster onward sped,
(The crisp snow crackling 'neath her buoyant tread,)
On, through the sloping pathway's gloomy shade
Whose leafless branches met above her head,

Brushing white showers from the thorns decayed,
Until she came at length into the quiet glade.

The huge door, groaning heavily, gave way,
She passed and was alone in that strange place;
All was not darkness, one wide silver ray
Fell full on sleeping Maude's cold, changeless face,
Fell colourless, and slanted whitely down
On the tombed floor, but on her folded vest,
Through rich-hued panes, were deeper tintings thrown,
Deep solemn violet upon her breast,
And dark blue shadows on her marble form did rest.

A sanguine stream as though of crimson blood,
Stole to the tomb where the crusader lay,
A stormy knight of myth-decked hardihood.
Mailed as though only resting from a fray,
His stiff palms pressed together as to pray;
Prayer not unneeded, since his fiery life,
If all be true that ancient legends say,
Left, with wild enterprise and warfare rife,
Small time for thought of prayer, or shriving ere the strife.

One fleck of amber kissed the sacred rood,
All other things were indistinct in gloom,
And over all the chapel seemed to brood
The stillness and the strangeness of the tomb:
Trembling she stole along the vaulted aisle
She could not choose but tremble now and heard
The fevered beating of her heart the while,
But, passing to the altar undeterred,
Knelt, and pure orisons for grace and strength preferred.

Yet could not hinder thoughts of other things
The oneness of her heavenward thoughts to mar,
Nor crush the host of quick imaginings
That with her complines in her soul waged war,
Nor from her mind the memory wholly bar
Of those old tales and legendary rhymes:
Three times she heard the village church from far,
Ring out the quarters in its cadenced chimes,
And an expectant dread crept o'er her at such times.

But when the third had ceased, that was the last
Before the long, loud midnight strokes should clang,
There seemed a sudden tempest to o'ercast

The night, and with a funeral pall to hang
The hidden sky; then in mad tumult rang
Wild shrieks of moaning wind, as though in vain
Howling for freedom from some frantic pang;
The ivy flapped across the darkened pane,
And gurgled boisterous the splash of falling rain.

The stillness of the night had passed away,
And all was turmoil and fierce hurricane;
Louder still louder roared the storm's hoarse fray,
Still did she kneeling at the shrine remain,
Till, anguished by her heart's too throbbing pain,
She sank beneath her terrified distress;
Her wearied senses left their lawful reign,
And she in a deep languor, motionless,
Lay for a while the prey of dull unconsciousness.

And when she wakened there was calm again,
Yet all was darkness in the sacred pile,
Save where with torches came a dark-robed train,
Noiselessly gliding up the central aisle,
Till, one by one, the solemn funeral file
Passed where she knelt, and looked with stony glare,
And face cadaverous and ghastly smile,
Drew slowly o'er her their pale torches' flare,
Then passed beyond the shrine and waited silent there.

It seemed to her that she had often seen
Among the ancient portraits of her race,
Some such as these in life had surely been:
Lo, thus perchance was Maude's angelic face,
Not in cold death departed all its grace;
Thus her stern brother scowling might have died;
The huge crusader's bulk next could she trace;
This was the proud "Hard lady's" stately glide,
Yes these were they, whose lineage was her house's pride.

Slowly and mournful at the last there came,
Some bearing a white-draped covered bier,
Then, following, a stately widowed dame,
Oh, horror! as the spectre group came near,
She saw **his** face, though never known, held dear,
The sire who had not seen her when he fell,
Like Bayard knight without reproach or fear,
And left the young bride whom he loved so well,
In rosaries of tears her few lone years to tell.

But the tall lady looked upon the ground
And so unrecognized passed sadly by,
To where **they** stood the shrouded bier around,
Wringing their hands as in mute agony,
At that which hidden underneath did lie,
Till the tall phantom lady raised her head,
And, beckoning, turned on Blanche a rayless eye
Whence all the light of life and love had fled
It was her mother's face, as she had seen it dead.

She could not choose but come, she could not choose,
Though but to think of it was half despair,
And made her forehead chill with clammy dew,
Drawn by the terror of that cold, still glare,
But raise the pall to learn what rested there:
It slumbered very beautiful and white,
A pallid face like a carved angel's fair,
Framed in rich chestnut tresses soft and bright,
Lovely in the deep calm of death's undreaming night.

She saw it, saw her face as it should be
In the unconsciousness of that last sleep,
She had no power from that dread sight to flee,
She had no power to stir, no power to weep,
A silent horror seemed through her to creep,
And held her in a marble agony:
Till, thinking of her love so glad and deep,
She burst into a sudden anguished cry
Not this, not Death! O God! so young, so loved to die!

And with that cry the phantoms ceased to be,
And a swift rushing sound of surging waves
Rose through the chapel, as when the wild sea
Hoarse clamouring for yet more victims raves,
A sound of surging waves that seemed to rise
And whelm the spectre-train beneath their spray;
And then a purple vapour dimmed her eyes,
Wherein the chapel faded quite away,
She as in conscious trance borne on still waters lay.

The sound of surging waves more far did grow,
And on a quiet stream she seemed to lie,
While the smooth current passed on calm and slow,
With a light ripple as she floated by,
And **he** stood watching her with troubled eye,
Yet seemed to deem the effort hard and vain

To stay her course, and she must pass and die,
Stood gazing with a frightened look of pain,
Yet holding out no hand to bring her back again.

The bitterness of death was in her heart,
The bitterness of grief too great to bear;
With a keen sudden pang from her did part
Knowledge of life and knowledge of despair
In death-like rest. Next morn they found her there,
And bore her homeward through the tearful rain,
And brought back life with much long patient care,
And she had comfort when she woke again,
And met her love's fond eyes, and lost in them her pain.

BLANCHE LISLE.

IV.

Floating on.

O'ERHANGING trees cast shadows on her brow,
That form the semblance of a funeral wreath,
And on her cheek the streaming moonbeams show
The beauty and the ghastliness of deaths
So floats she on the cold pale stars beneath,
That only at their imaged glittering gaze,
Heeding not her; and the night-breeze's breath
Sports with the rippling waves amid the maze
Of chestnut hair, her pride in long forgotten days.

So the cold river bears her to the sea,
For ever from her quiet haunts away,
And the bowed, melancholy willow-tree,
That oft has hid her weeping, bends its spray,
And kissing her seems wooing her to stay,
No, onward! they who loved her shall not know
How fair she was in death; they shall not pray
Beside her corse; and is this greater woe?
So would she have it, and 'tis best it should be so.

Yes, let the great deep chaunt the requiem hymn;
Man may not, since that cankering grief within
Had made God-given inward sight grow dim,

BLANCHE LISLE.

Gazing too sadly long, and it was sin
The rest she sought, we dare not say did win;
Her soul, too leaning grown for anguish lone,
Set to soft music, could not bear the din
Of the world's turmoil, when the voice was gone
That made all melody, till Earth held but that one:

Held only that for her, and when it went,
There seemed no joy upon sad Earth for her;
Her days were long with heavy discontent,
No might of comfort in her soul could stir,
Save in the thought that, since he could not err,
His heaven-sworn faith should never be distraught,
Never his heart from her be wanderer,
And she had rest in that one happy thought,
From the lone misery wherewith her days were fraught.

She had no word of anger or of blame
For him whose weakness wrought her so much woe,
But, since not of his will their parting came,
Held him all guiltless, triumphing to know
His heart still hers; till came that bitter blow
That he was comforted and she was lone;
Never again the icebound tears could flow,
Her aching heart seemed crusted with chill stone,
The sunlight of her life for evermore had gone.

And all the purpose of her days seemed done,
When that last gleam of hope had died away,
Love had grown life, till life and love were one.
Now chaos seemed the earth, twilight the day,
And Hope stood too far off to bid her pray;
Ah! wild, weak heart! Yet judge her pityingly,
Knowing the grief that led her so astray;
It was not death, it was but rest to die,
To rest upon the waves that sing as she floats by:

"She has come to us to rest; Hush, she is asleep, Sleeps gently on our breast Wake her not, she will weep.

"We have seen her, lone and drear, Weep the twilight long, Saw her, and we thought to cheer, Murmuring our song.

"Showed her the pale sparkling star, Glittering in our tide, Her own beauty fairer far Wearily she sighed.

"Laid at her feet long moonbeams, Bright as o'er her head Circl'd by the silver gleams, Bitter tears she shed.

"Then we caught them in our waves, Bore them to the deep, She will find them in its caves Wake her not, she will weep.

"We will bear her carefully In her happy sleep, We will hide her from man's eye, Hide her in the deep."

Thus sang the stream, as though it did rejoice
That in that rigid calm, so still and pale,
The weary one had rest; and the low voice
Of sad winds sighing down the quiet vale,
Swept through the boughs in mournful cadenced wail,
And answered the light wavelets in long sighs;
The night-owl shrieked from a green broken rail,
Peering at her with earnest wistful eyes
And she passed on beneath the quiet moonlight skies.

SONG.

LIGHT, wandering, murmuring wind,
Setting the silvered leaves astir,
Leaving her southern home behind, Whisper of her.

White, moonlit clouds that through the sky,
Like vague prophetic shadows err,
Shape in your mystic tracery Shadows of her.

Still, star-set, night, so calm and deep,
Watching the silent earth, that seems
Lost in the languor of kind sleep, Frame her in dreams.

ODE TO TRUTH.

THOU proud-eyed queen of noble souls,
Who sittest lily-crowned,
And seest how the small world rolls,
In its own woe-waves drowned,
Heeds its own humming, has no ear
To tune its voice to thine more clear,
Its measures, as they sound,
Ring ever falser to thy key,
Till thine discordant seems to be.

Oh! raise thy saddened voice more high,
Till the whole life-crowd hears

SONG.

Thy sweet, stern godlike melody,
Whose echoes ring through years.
Flash out from Custom's shrouding veil,
And bid who love thee not grow pale,
And bow them down in tears,
And in thy beauty know thy strength,
Thou, sovereign of their lives at length.

Flash out, for all has grown untrue,
And they, who love thee best,
Seek darkling what things they should do;
Seek doubting and distress;
Unknowing who are feal to thee,
Scarce knowing what themselves may be;
And falsehood and unrest
With flickering wildfires vex their gaze,
And cloud their ways with baleful haze.

Flash from the Veil, lest it be found
Thy deathful winding sheet,
The veil that humble Eld first bound
Around thy worshipped feet,
That, widening with the years, now holds
Thee prisoned in its mazy folds,
In bondage most unmeet;
And, were thy radiance but less bright,
Would dark thee wholly to our sight.

Lo! Custom should not be thy lord,
But thy subservient slave,
The harmony set to thy word,
The love-drawn trembling wave,
To follow forth thy moonlike wake,
Albeit for the following's sake
The breasting rocks it brave;
Or the fair form that holds enshrined
A holy, pure, directing mind.

Ah! it were well if this world's laws,
By which our earth-steps move,
Had thy commanding will for cause,
Thou who art one with love,
With wisdom one, if not triune,
Yet modulations of one tune:
Wildly their fancies rove,
Who read unwisdom in thine eye,
Or link thee with discourtesy.

SONG.

Oh! light of heaven, most proudly fair,
Be thou my fateful star
To shape my life, and let me dare
Though thou shouldst bode me war,
World war with which I could not cope,
Construct on thee my horoscope;
Thou, with thy pure rays, bar
Out from my soul the cankering rust,
Strewed by deceit and pale distrust.

They, the corrupting fiends that prey
Upon the heart's best blood,
And in its faintness steal away
The last belief in good;
The last sweet hope of good on earth,
The last kind hope of its own worth,
That iris-trembling stood,
And cheered it from unholy woe
Oh! their hard might let me not know.

Hear, lily-crowned, how from the dust
Lowly to thee I cry,
Oh! give me truth and give me trust,
Still give, or let me die,
I would not tremble in thy way ;
Ah! should I tremble, send a ray,
Thy message from on high,
And keep me strong and keep me brave,
Or be I shielded by the grave.

THE FOOLISH WEAVER.

I WOVE myself a golden web,
And oh! it shone so bright and fair
That I went weaving fearless on,
Although my heart lay in its snare.

Still weaving on until my life
Had light alone from its rich sheen,
And all things else, unseen for me,
Became as though they had not been.

Still weaving, until grief and care
Seemed but the myths of legends old,
And what had I to do with them!

THE FOOLISH WEAVER.

So wove I still my web of gold.

Ah! what has touched the golden links,
That they have grown an iron chain?
Oh! cruel fetters round my heart!
Oh God! I faint beneath the pain.

Woe! for 'twas sorrow's death-cold hand,
And I am hers for evermore,
Woe! for my life has scarce begun,
And the youth of my soul is o'er.

Woe! for the golden web I wove
Dull death alone can burst apart;
Woe! for the rust of iron links
Eats deep into my aching heart.

Ah! how, poor weaver, should I speak,
How dare I speak to comfort thee!
The knotted web thyself hast wrought
Will not unravelled be by me.

I can but marvel at its strength,
I can but sorrow at thy pain,
And I will weave no golden web,
So shall I know no deathful chain.

MARGARET BENEATH THE WAVES.

I DO not weep at night, for then in dreams
Her angel presence makes my happy sleep
Rich with a life more real and more deep
Than the cold being of the morrow seems;
In the strange midnight hush I lie
In rest, and hear her voice, and know she cannot die.

I do not weep at morn, for then above,
In the pure sapphire of the sunlit sky,
I see the holy smile in her blue eye,
And I am glad with memory of her love;
Through the translucent morning air
I gaze on the bright heaven, and see that she is there.

MARGARET BENEATH THE WAVES.

But when the dull slow eve creeps coldly o'er,
The cruel, evening hour that saw her die,
I hear her sobbing in the chill wind's sigh,
And feel my life shall know her never more;
And then, in wildest woe, I hear
The far off moaning sea I dare not gaze on near.

I hear the dreadful moaning of the sea,
And then my tortured spirit wildly raves,
And all my hate wakes to the hateful waves
That hold her evermore away from me.
Ah! through the quiet of the eve
I hear their hollow sound, and hopeless, vainly grieve.

Oh! cruel deep, how dare I look on thee?
Thou hast my soul in thy dull cells beneath.
Oh! cruel death! oh! tardy—coming death,
That from my sorrow wilt not shelter me,
Oh! take me weary to thy rest,
And let me sleep with her the last sleep of the blest.

BALLAD OF THE BITTER KNIGHT.

I LORDED in an ancient hall,
 Sing merrily, sing merrily,
The night owl haunts the fire—laid wall,
 And I will laugh until I die.

I loved a maiden fair as Heaven,
 Sing merrily, sing merrily,
A weary wife to a churl is given,
 And I will laugh until I die.

My worshipped mother was my pride,
 Sing merrily, sing merrily,
A stain was on her when she died,
 And I will laugh until I die.

I had a sister, dear to me,
 Sing merrily, sing merrily,
She sleeps beneath the moaning sea,
 And I will laugh until I die.

I chose a friend, he had my trust,

BALLAD OF THE BITTER KNIGHT.

Sing merrily, sing merrily,
He trod my honour to the dust,
And I will laugh until I die.

I came of name and lineage high,
Sing merrily, sing merrily,
My name is soiled by calumny,
And I will laugh until I die.

My youth of faith and love is lorn,
Sing merrily, sing merrily,
I scorn the world that gives me scorn,
And I will laugh until I die.

Earth holds no hope to warm my breast,
Sing merrily, sing merrily,
I will not seek unhallowed rest,
And I will laugh until I die.

SONG.

FADE fast, bright day, in the rich west,
And leave the sky to slumbrous night;
For I am fevered with unrest,
Weary with fulness of delight.

Pass through the gold and ruby bars,
Die on thy purple bed of state,
Die, ere the stray impatient stars
Wake all their host to mock thy fate.

Press thy last kiss on the hill crest,
Fade in the arms of eve, and die
Mid the wild splendour of the west,
And let the dusk night dim the sky.

Haste and bring rest, soft, slumbrous night,
And bring more near the glad sunrise,
That gives me back the new delight
Of looking into love-filled eyes.

ATHENS.

I.

DIMMED eye of Greece, sad city of great dead,
Thyself nor wholly dead, nor drawing breath
Wholly in life; crowned yet with spectre wreath
From thine old bridegroom Past, and newly wed
To the young Present, that walks seeking yet
The laurelled crown he shall, world-witnessed, set
Upon thy brow, ere yet thy lawful fere;
Have his love songs no music in thine ear?
Is thy heart buried in the hollow tomb?
Is thy strength faded in the misty gloom,
The golden mist of time, where rainbowed shine
Thy glory, and the glories like to thine,
An iris archway through the veil they only make divine.

II.

For what is ancient time, the untried youth
Of the vexed world that vexèd learns out truth,
That it such spirit-awe from us should claim?
That half-despair wakes at its name,
Lest we, though more be less than it,
We, that in garnered store from others seem
Wiser in our worldly wit,
Be weaker in soul wisdom, and but dream?
What but that through its vesture gleam
The wealths of perished years,
The love, the courage, the renown
Of noble deaths, of noble lives,
Such jewels as thy treasure gives,
Sad Athens, with thine eyes cast down!
Not for thy lost cast down, and fired with tears,
Their glory passes not like them away,
Oh, weeping! for thou hast no more such sons as they.

III.

School of the world, I tram to thee
As thou wast in thy prime,
Glad as thy sunlit clime,
Lovely and free
As thy bounding sea,
And wild in thine ire as when whirlwinds' fray
Howls from on high,

ATHENS.

And hurls the white waves in the surging bay;
Till they froth mad fury in seething spray
At the sky.
I see thee when thy right arm, bared in war,
Made pale the jewelled despot from afar,
And a vague dread
Fell on the shuddering armies at thy gate,
When the proud Persian in his purpled state
Grew faint and fled
From the fierce vengeance of thy righteous hate,
And thy free shores were ghastly with his dead.

IV.

I turn to thee as thou wast then,
When all thy sons were men.
Long ages count the time, and there may be
Haply again such mother-joy for thee:
But when? Thou waitest long
Ere such another son to thee be given
As he, the swan-voiced with the eagle song,
The Christian sage that knew no Christ,
Shrouded in Wisdom's veil unpriced,
Preaching like an ambassador from Heaven;
Or he, sharp speechèd, whose grand, lowly boast
Was not to know:
Thy sage unbeautiful, whose laurelled ghost
Gives thee not pride alone, but just, repenting woe.

V.

Long waitest thou, in silence listening
Ere Echo's harp once more be silver-strung,
And thrilling ring
Rich with the music from such Orphic tongue
As his, thy king of words.
Thy lonely Pnyx stands desolate,
Its orators all day the trilling birds;
But when the pale eve darkens late,
Shadows its worn steps crowd,
Ghosts of its masters long ago,
And gaze with strange eyes, mournful proud,
On the deep sea far below;
Down where the sighing waves enfold
The isle that names the proudest gem
Of Athens' warrior diadem,
And phantom voices murmur low:
"Goddess blue-eyed, goddess great-souled,

Once more to thy chaste bosom hold
Thy city, thine in days of old."

VI.

In vain the phantom—cry,
Her glory has gone by:
City, that erst has heard the voice
Of the great Gentile saint,
Canst thou no more rejoice?
Is thy dulled spirit faint,
Now that a greater God has named thee his,
Than Zeus of fabled might?
And does the sunlight of a holier bliss
Gild but thy night?
Ah! though the years have veiled thine ancient creed,
Has the Maid Mother's gentle smile indeed
Less soul—inspiring power,
Than her stern beauty with the azure eyes,
That seemed to thee to gaze from thy pure skies
In thy strong hour?

VII.

And yet we will not mock thee in thy fall,
Though thou shouldst never rise again;
But rather joy thy life was lived at all,
And not in vain.
Let none despise the mouldering wall,
That was a mighty palace in past days;
Let no man pain,
With idle taunts at the time—dazzled gaze,
The heart of the blind mother of his youth,
Once so strong beautiful: and thou,
Erst the wise learner of undying truth,
The ancient teacher of the yet young earth,
Pale Athens, to thine age we bow
With saddened reverence for thy fallen worth,
Yea, mourn thy faded might with venerating ruth.

LIFE'S HERO.

MARK the cross upon thy brow,
Take thy way with faith and will,
Cleave thy right hand to the plough,
Toil thou on with strength and skill

Take thou counsel with thy God,
Ask not if the toil be light,
Ask not who the road have trod,
Ask thou but if it be right.

Be not slave to thy good name:
It is well thy kind to please.
Dear are love and praise and fame,
But the truth is more than these.

Be not slave to thy good name:
So thy life be brave and true,
What to thee is worldlings' blame?
Have they knowledge what they do?

Let them blame thee, shall their words
Have such power thy soul to shake?
Wilt thou take them for thy lords?
They are dreaming, thou, awake.

Let them praise thee, little worth
Is their praise thy mind to move:
He who rules the restless earth
Looks unblinded from above.

Heed them not, but pass thy way,
Striving to be truly great:
Guide thy steps by wisdom's ray,
Careful, yet unfeared fate.

Yet, doubt not, that noble minds
Shall note with love thy steadfast tread;
Weaker, whom poor envy blinds,
Know thy worth when thou art dead.

Doubt it not, so shall thy soul
Glad thine age with inward youth.
Go thou on to thine high goal,
On in love and might and truth.

CRUEL AGNES.

HER hair was brown as autumn leaves,
Fine as the web the spider weaves;
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
Her eye was blue as summer sky
When summer's noontide sun is high;
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

Her breast was white as scented May
When sweet spring flowers the hawthorn spray;
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
Her heart was cold as winter's chill
When all the streams are iced and still.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

She was the fairest maid of all,
Her pride was great as her love was small:
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
He was noble and brave and true,
His love was much as his lands were few.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

He told his love; with a light smile
She trifled with her curls the while:
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
She heard his love—prayer, nothing loth,
And pledged her hand and gave her troth;
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

But yet she told him in her pride
She could not be a poor man's bride;
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
She bade him toil from morn to night
To raise his fortunes to her height.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

He left his home in stranger hands,
And sought for gold in far off lands:
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
He crossed again the stormy brine,
"Love, I am rich, now art thou mine:"
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

She said, "There needs a famous name
Such honour at my hands to claim."
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
He wandered once again afar,
To win the glories of the war.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

He would not flee, he would not yield,
He perished on the battle field.
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
They brought him, back to his last rest,
Her love—gift never left his breast;
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

And ere a month had passed away
She passed his grave in bride's array;
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
And sold, to be a noble's wife,
To an old baron her young life.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

She queened in jewels and in gold,
But ere the time her brow grew old:
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
The damp sod pressed upon his breast,
But he had peace in his lone rest.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

Her days warred on in woe and strife,
And she was weary of her life:
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
Her tyrant lord, with cold stern eye,
Was well content to see her die.
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

She called her old nurse to her side
On the chill morning when she died;
The white snow falls on the long low graves,
And bade her see her grave was made
By that low grave where he was laid;
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

Saying, "Though I gave him no true love,
Holding myself too far above,"
The white snow falls on the long low graves,

CRUEL AGNES.

"Yet shall I rest more calmly near
The only one that held me dear."
And oh! so loud as the wild wind raves.

THEY WILL DIE.

I.

I PLUCKED sweet laughing roses from the spray,
And said, "Oh! fair, I twine you in my life,
So shall your sweetness glad my saddest day,
And I forget it in the bitter strife
Wherewith the world wears on its warring way"
There came a whisper from the light-fleeced sky,
"Ah! they will die."

II.

I twined a silvery green elastic bough
Of pensive willow to soft mourning wed.
"Since gathered joys must fade from me, be thou
The tender memory of such loved dead,
My sad, sweet, comforting companion now"
Sighed slowly from the greyly clouding sky,
"Even that will die."

III.

I decked me with the laurel's emerald glow,
And spake, "Ah! glorious leaves, that perish not,
Sheen verdant on my shadow-coolèd brow,
Sheen verdant still, when my pale corse forgot,
Decaying in the grave lies lone and low"
Moaned the cold wind that hurried harshly by,
"One day they die."

IV.

I bent me hoping by the cross-blessed tomb
There grew beneath crisp everlasting flowers
I spake to them, "Cold flowers, that grow in gloom,
Yet bear the promise of long golden hours,
Eternal, be my garland in the room
Of those, too fragile, from Earth's smiling bowers"
Came then a sweet voice from the sunset sky,
"These do not die."

THEY WILL DIE.

ST. KATHARINE'S TIRING MAID.

NO loving voice may name me bride,
Thou choosest me for thine,
I bow to thee, my mystic guide,
Thou sweet St. Katharine.

Fair mistress saint, I picture thee
With shadowed golden hair,
And crystal eyes that seem to me
To smile at my weak care;

Word-gifted eyes, not large, full-fringed,
Of life-lit thoughtful grey,
Yet with some hue of heaven tinged,
Grave eyes that could be gay.

Veiled into softness, shadowed
By the encroaching tress,
Thy solemn brow, full-curved, wide-spread,
Wears a grand lowliness.

Thy lips shaped to a ready smile,
Even in their smilings speak;
Thy soul too proud, too high for guile,
So proud, and yet so meek.

Thy cheek not pale, as though from tears,
But with rich rose-bloom glad,
For inward grief vexed not thy years,
Too saintly to be sad.

But deep-joyed Wisdom dowered thy life
With all her love and truth,
And with her hidden sweets made rife
Thy glorious, soaring youth.

And Heaven around thy path lay spread,
And thine enraptured eye
Knew visions of the blessed dead,
Yea, saw the Deity.

Fair saint, I will not, dare not say,
That I have ne'er in thought
Wandered a moment from thy way
Ah! dreamings dearly bought!

But if I dreamed, the dream is o'er,
And I return to thee,
If with a heart still something sore,
Sweet Katharine, pardon me.

I have been, as thou wouldst me, cold
To many a loving prayer,
Untempted by the gleam of gold,
Unshaken, through thy care.

And if I, weak, have dreamed at last,
Chide thou not, holy one:
The flattering wildfire faded fast,
The false, fair dream is gone.

'Twas but in thought I turned from thee:
Take back thy votary,
Thou choosest me, and I shall be
Thine handmaid till I die.

A TIME TO MOURN.

METHINKS if sorrow's shadow fell
Darkly upon my life,
I would not struggle with the spell:
'Tis true, forgetfulness were well,
But they who strive with thought can tell
How vain, how sad the strife.

Methinks that if I lost a friend,
I would not seek to fill
The vacant place, nor would I bend
My strength to bid my mourning end,
And Memory in the tomb descend,
E'en would she work my will.

But I my loss would so brood o'er,
It should not seem to be,
So should remembrance bring before

A TIME TO MOURN.

Mine eye the loved one, so restore
The friend, far off sometimes before,
Then never far from me.

Methinks I would not seek to hide
The knowledge of a woe
From mine own heart, though they may chide
Who can do this, and turn aside
Their thoughts, nor let in their stern pride
Themselves their suffering know.

But freely I hot tears would shed,
Till I no more could weep,
Would think how happiness had fled,
Mourn till my heart I had wept dead,
And sorrow that had bowed my head,
For weariness must sleep.

THE DANDELION.

STUDDING the grass with golden sheen,
Like starlet fallen on the green,
 A blossom prized by none,
Unheeded or passed by with scorn,
Gleam from the shadow of the thorn,
 An image of the sun.

And thus despised it droopeth not,
But, heedless of its lowly lot,
 Still turns its golden eye
Upwards, upwards to the sun,
Ceasing not till evening dun
 Drives him from the sky.

The yellow sunbeams do not know
That for their love it is too low,
 The sunbeams kiss it bright,
And so through the long summer days
It lifts on high its happy gaze,
 Loved by its well-loved light.

FORSAKEN.

I WOULD not buy my happiness

THE DANDELION.

At price of thine,
My words shall only come to bless
This other newer love of thine,
And I will lay no bitter stress
On the forgotten promise of thy love,
But rather shall this sad sweet memory prove
Comfort in my so great distress,
It **once** was mine.

Thy newer love shall have from me
No thought of hate,
But whoso can awake in thee
A love that seems to me so great,
Shall higher in my honour be,
As being raised by thee to so much height.
Ah! no, I will not whisper of my right,
I bear my sorrow, be thou free,
I blame but fate.

My fate, O God! my fate to know
This agony,
To hold long combating with woe,
Struggling to hide it from all eye,
Nor pain thee with a mournful brow
I will not vex thee with my misery,
I will not chide at thine inconstancy:
Be happy still, as thou art now,
And pass me by.

HOPE.

HOPE, only hope, for hope I wildly call,
Yet have no faith in her enticing smiles,
Her smiles are voiceless who has smiles for all.

Though something of our sorrow she beguiles,
Well were it, for the soul that would be strong,
To gaze on fate undazzled by her wiles.

Who chases wild-fire gleam is led awrong,
Better it is to plod the weary way,
Although the goal be far, the road be long,

Than, following the glimmering, luring ray
Of fancied cheerful light by warm fireside,

HOPE.

To chase the flickering star, and go astray.

Better in the stern knowledge to abide
Of the hard now, than with the misty glow
Of golden futures present pain to hide.

A man is surer victor o'er his foe
In the cold shade, than dazzled with strong glare,
And it is better to see all one's woe,

Well knowing it, but not as in despair
Holding nor less nor greater than it is,
So one may grow the stronger through his care.

So let him take the sorrow that is his,
And through the very burden greater grow,
If that the burden be not borne amiss.

Not with unequal pressure weighing so,
To cripple him in limb, or dwarf his height,
Or make his laggard step unsure and slow;

But stedfast carried with the even might
Of an untrembling well-enduring will;
Strength grows through grief, when it is used aright.

There is no power in grief the soul to kill,
That bravely in endurance finds its good,
And sharply anguished lords its anguish still.

Nor has it need of Hope's inspiring food
To nerve its forces to the battle won,
Needs not her glittering bow to span its flood,

But its own iris in God's hidden sun,
To its own self is sign of promised peace,
When the wild fury of the waves is done.

And even in its trouble still has peace,
Knowing its fate, yea, knowing it may be
That for its sorrow earth has no surcease.

HOPE.

Hope, I have madly called and longed for thee,
Although I knew thy silver words were vain,
But now I pray thee do not comfort me,

Since it is better to grow strong through pain,
Although the blow like a keen death–stroke fall,
Than in a flattered waking dream remain.

HER MARRIAGE EVE.

I WILL not wish thy liquid glance less bright,Less wildly free,
Though its deep languor of lash–shadowed lightGleams not for me.

I will not wish thy blushing dimpling smileLess warm to be;
Mine eyes are sad, but thou, smile on the whileAh! not for me.

I will not wish away the wealth of tressThat garlands thee,
Although thy care to braid its loveliness,Be not for me.

I would not bid thee share my partOf bitter lee;
Go gladly on with him who has thy heart,Ah! not for me.

Yet I would wish thou hadst not left me yetSadly to see
Thy young life–poem to love's music set,Ah! not by me.

No matter wake thy dawning marriage–tideWith thornless glee;
Smile thou still on, a loved and loving bride,Ah! not for me.

TO ONE WHOM I WOULD FORGET.

I WRONG mine honour to descend
To scorn of thee.
It is not thine to comprehend
Aught that has birth or life in me,
And if my spirit will not bend
To stoop beneath the low–arched vault
Wherein thy puny soul is penned,
Not thine the fault.

Not thine the fault thou canst not feel

HER MARRIAGE EVE.

The pride of truth,
That Self's dull armour clogs with steel
The soaring impulse of thy youth,
And thou, poor slave to thine own weal,
Hast dreamed it blended with deceit,
And offered what thou hast of zeal
At shrine unmeet.

There is a veil before thine eyes
That dims God's light,
And shapes small things in giant guise,
And nothing noble shapes aright,
As, when the night-fog shrouds the skies,
The glimmering lamps that cheer the haze
More glorious to dull gazers rise
Than Heaven's rays.

Thou wast not fashionèd to see
The littleness of Life:
It seemeth a great thing to thee
To soar a conqueror in the strife
Who most the flattered theme shall be
Of empty gossip's babbling page;
And pass their rivals, in degree
Some fancied stage.

Thou wast not fashionèd to know
The majesty of Life,
To feel how this wide world below
With nobleness and strength is rife,
And learn to lift thee from the woe
Of all its marring littleness,
To know each soul hath gifted glow
Some lives to bless.

Go, writhe thy reptile way along,
Go, smile and lie,
And do to nobler hearts some wrong
By might of well-glozed calumny;
But, though thou find among the throng
Some sightless few to trust thy wile,
Know thou shalt never crush the strong
With thy poor guile.

Go, twine thou on thy serpent way,
In that mock sun

That glitters a dim fireless ray,
And thy poor cheated faith has won
To make it monarch of thy day;
But dread, it haply disappears,
And thou art left to grope thy way
 Long sunless years.

Pass on, I somewhat soil my mind
 In thy contempt,
Yet were I scornless I were blind,
And I am bitterer that I dreamed
Some hidden spark in thee to find
That might awake to truth and good,
And that my hopes spake as the wind,
 Not understood.

Go, and such happiness attend
As thou canst know:
No envying ear my thought shall lend
To learn how whirrs thy fortune's wheel:
Be glad, but never seek to blend
One thread of life with mine; for me,
I pray thee never call me friend
 That could not be.

ENDURING.

THOUGH I have cause to weep, I will not let
 The bitter tears have course upon my cheek;
Ah! though my memory's strength will not forget,
 My proud pained heart shall be too strong to break.

I hold it but as selfishness and sin
 To mourn away one's heart in musings sad,
To shadow others with the grief within,
 To dim the smiles that might make some hearts glad.

I shall know sorrow long but silently,
 Long time I shall feel very tired and lone,
What then? shall I, fainthearted, pray to die,
 I, that the might of inward life have known?

There is some kindly work for me to do,
 And so my life will not be lived in vain
I have some cause to weep, but not again

ENDURING.

Shall tremble in mine eyes the scalding rain.

Ah me! perchance I have some cause to chide,
Yet are my chidings by my heart gainsaid,
It may have been it was my sin of pride
That made me lightly scorn to be afraid.

I **have** some cause, and yet I would be blind
To that which has cast shadows on my youth,
The one poor weakness of a noble mind
That in nought else were wanderer from truth.

And if that one light fault has worked me wrong,
Doubtless it was unknowing and unwilling:
Be mine all blame, who vainly held me strong,
As mine the poisoned cup my weakness filled.

I will not chide, scarcely will I regret,
Scarce wish the dreaming past unlive again:
I shall be sad, but I have courage yet,
And I shall be the stronger through this pain.

OUR AFTERNOONS.

THE light breeze makes the wavelets dance
And ripple round our boat,
Bright sunbeams through green branches glance,
And on the wavelets float.

We read with deep soul-stirring thrill
Words of the long-past dead
We cease, the song seems echoed still
By the trees above our head.

They tell us of those old old times
When the far dead were young,
They murmur low the old old rhymes
Voices long hushed have sung.

They tell how men of ages gone
Beneath their shade would lie,
Of fairy music's silver tone
Ringing sweet melody;

OUR AFTERNOONS.

When there was haunt of elf and fay
By moonlight dancing by
Pleasantly pass the hours away
Listening dreamily,

Or gazing at the clouds that sail
Through the blue summer sky,
Bidding them shadow out some tale,
Some fancied history.

So pleasantly the summer hours
Pass all too soon away,
Till, weeping dewy tears, the flowers
Mourn for the dying day.

SONG. SPRING.

SWEET Spring, come back with all thy woodland joys,
Bring back the murmur to the tree,
Wake all the forests with the happy noise
Of running waters once more free.

Smile the cold snow—clouds from the gladdened sky,
Warm the chilled earth with tepid showers,
Wake in the copse the cuckoo's chanting cry,
Sprinkle the meads with little flowers.

Rouse all thy chirping tiny minstrels, ring
With silver trebles through the air,
Let the tired earth renew in happy spring
Her youthful pulses, and be fair.

DEAD VIOLETS.

THEY took them from the woodland glade
Where they awoke
Beneath the sprouting hawthorn shade,
Before the chestnut leaves were spread,
Long ere the buds burst on the oak,
Or yet the lime was flecked with red,
And smiled on spring with love—dewed eyes.
They took them from the sweet spring air,
They took them from the sweet spring skies,

SONG. SPRING.

They took them for they were so fair,
And they are dead.

They took her from the woodland cot
Where she had birth,
And seasons of her even lot
Passed light and happy o'er her head,
And her glad heart laughed in young mirth:
She was too beautiful, they said,
To gladden some poor rustic's days ;
They took her from obscurity,
They gave her worship, gave her praise,
But she had need of love more high
And she is dead.

THINKING OF THEE.

THE sunset crimsons on the heights,
Flushing the cold snow with its kiss,
The crags are rich with yellow lights,
I am all lost in silent bliss, Thinking of thee.

The red light pales along the range,
And glooms to mournful violet,
The dying glow grows sad and strange,—
My eyes with some stray tears are wet, Thinking of thee.

Fall on her, tell her, dying glow,
How I am dreaming of her here,
And kiss for me her snowy brow,
Love, I am weak with hope and fear, Thinking of thee.

ONCE LOVERS.

SOME adverse fate had sundered them in youth,
I know not what, perhaps the cankering might
Of falsehoods clustered round some unkind truth,
Perhaps some half—imagined trifling slight
Grown greater viewed through love's fond microscope,
That ended in agreed inconstancy
And long life—sorrow for their youth's lost hope,
Perchance themselves could scarce have told you why;

But they were parted, and the silent years

THINKING OF THEE.

Rolled heavily across their lonely ways,
And her blue eyes grew lustreless from tears,
And he was bitter at these present days,
Holding them far removed from love and good
And only lifeful through the lust of pelf,
Holding them guilty, in his vexèd mood,
Of all that grief which he had wrought himself.

And onward heavily the long years moved
Till the last light of youth had died away,
And he had wed at length, but had not loved,
Or had not loved as in that far off day,
And he had seen his wife and babe lie dead,
And in that pain his bitterness had passed;
And she had loved again, but had not wed,
And had forgot the sadness of this last;

And each had memory of that old tie,
And held it as a perished happiness,
An hour of hope for ever floated by
And whelmed beneath a wide sea of distress:
Yet with such golden-gleaming moments set,
That it was better to recall the woe
Than not recall the joy, and so forget
The deep delight of that lost long ago.

So, each remembering the other's smile,
As it had sparkled on a youthful face,
They met when time had dragged a weary while;
And it was as a cruel jest to trace
The unforgotten lineaments below
The crust of age beginning their decay,
The marring lines upon the saddened brow,
The thinner tresses glimmering with grey.

Each, being scarcely conscious heretofore
How life's high season past its noon had grown,
Now seeing how the other's prime was o'er,
They in that mournful waning read their own;
And if the heart of either yet did hide
Some hopeful relic of the old romance,
When thus they met again, so changed, it died
Beneath the coldness of the other's glance.

And each at first with courtesy was cold,
Deeming like coldness in the other's word,

THINKING OF THEE.

Yet each, remembering their love of old,
Was with the echo of that love-song stirred;
Yet fearing to be met with scorn or blame,
Or jar in anything the other's pride,
Had care to mention no familiar name,
Or touch on aught to their vexed youth allied.

But when some summer days had passed, they sate,
They with the others, resting in the shade
Of a huge lime, and watched the day grow late
And the red sunset streakings glow and fade,
And then, not dreaming that they gave her pain,
Nor seeing, for the branch-barred light was dim,
They teased her for a favourite simple strain
Which she in other days had sung to him:

And at the last she yielded to their prayer;
Her voice, though sweet, had lost much with the years,
Yet as she sang the old love-hallowed air
It moved and weakened him to almost tears,
And as she finished with a lessening swell,
There rang in that last fall such mournful chime,
He could not but believe that she as well
Was thinking sadly of that happy time:

And with the thought a sudden hope there came,
That though their youthful fire had burned in vain,
And smouldered ashes smothered the spent flame,
Some spark of life and heat might yet remain,
And they who had worked out each other's woe
Might find together yet a happy peace,
And hand in hand through their still autumn go,
And watch their quiet wintry days decrease.

So when they rose and turned to go within,
The merry laughs dancing as they went
His and her cousins, though they were not kin
Light with the fulness of their young content,
Pelting with clinging burrs in warring play,
And floating thistledown on the light wind,
He, walking by her, lingered on the way,
Checking their pace, till they were left behind.

He looked at her: "When first that song I heard,
'Twas on the evening of that day," he said,
"That first we held long converse and unheard,

When we, rain-driven, sheltered in the shed."
She sudden, "And when last you heard that song,
'Twas the last time we met before before
Well, I as well as you may have been wrong
'Tis best we speak of those old days no more."

And yet they spoke of them, and yet they spoke
So long that lit stars gleamed upon their talk,
And when the Moon to her full glow awoke
They two were pacing the broad terrace walk;
And the young faces peeping from the room
Were bright with laughter at their quaint conceits
On the old couple that in life's pale gloom
Of twilight dared to seek love's morning sweets.

And when they knew, ere the next morn had come,
That in their talk through that clear summer eve
Those two had shaped themselves a wedded home,
It seemed almost too wondrous to believe;
And they were merry at the sober pair,
"What Rachael! an old maid for many a day,
Well, if she weds, no spinster need despair,
And such a bridegroom half his scant hairs grey!"

But they in quiet talk together said,
"We cannot feel the raptured mood of youth,
Fancy and passion far from us have fled;
But we can love in such an earnest truth
And such a well enduring tenderness,
As if not love yet looks to love beyond,
And loving thus may dare ask God to bless,
And link ourselves into a holy bond."

And sitting once in the wide oriel,
Hid by a drooping curtain's damask fold,
She heard their youngest cousin jesting tell,
How foolish love-dreams were in one so old.
And, coming forward with forgiving smile,
Said, "Ah! sweet May, your words to you sound sage,
Yet you will know when you have lived awhile
How hard it is to comprehend one's age.

"For though deep lines may creep across the brow,
And we grow grave with greater weight of care,
While life has still its full heart-stirring glow
We scarcely feel how worn and old we are,

And so, sweet May, I do not feel too old
To take on me the sacred name of wife,
And I have hope that some of Love's pure gold,
Shall gleam beneath the current of our life."

So when the russet autumn season came,
And brown leaves rustled crisp beneath their tread
He came again his placid bride to claim
In the old village church, and they were wed;
And they were calm, and younger seemed to grow,
Now that their happiness was not apart,
And when the years had crested them with snow,
They smiled to youth, and were not old in heart.

THE LAST MORNING.

AH me! the earth is very beautiful:
Far down below my prison-tower I trace
The eager river broadening to the sea,
Between its sudden crags and fir-coned heights,
Far off I see the long blue mountain range
All mellowed with the early morning mists,
The pallid brow of the white giant warm
With the full glory of the morning beams;
In long expanse I see the sloping fields,
The waving barley yellowing in the sun,
A golden sea upon the laughing earth,
I hear the merry mowers in the meads
Sing, to the burden of the busy scythe,
A happy song of Home and Fatherland.

Of Home and Fatherland! Oh! blessèd Christ,
Although I know how near my life death is,
I cannot read it written in my heart
That home and fatherland are now for me
A past beyond all hope for ever past;
I cannot, I that should but think of death,
Keep back my brain from happy phantasies;
I picture to myself my glad descent
Along the little rock-path by the shore,
How I would tarry for a moment's glance,
Where the light tamarisk branches from the crag
High up behind our little vine-wreathed home,
And I should shroud among its feathery green
To learn if all my dear ones yet were left,
And I should see them in the quiet eve,
The children playing by the low-rimmed wall,
My little Paul and baby Beatrice,

THE LAST MORNING.

Throwing small pebbles in the fringing sea
Oh! blue blue sea, these seas have no such blue;
The others sitting on the cypress bank,
My father kingly in the youth of age,
And my sweet mother with her silvered hair,
Silvered too soon in her despair for me,
And my fair sister my loved Angela,
And Nina, oh! my Nina, best beloved,
My little Nina, my deep-eyed desire,
My young true wife, she would be with them too;
And they would speak low-voiced and I should know
That they were talking mournfully of me,
And I should bound along the slanting ledge
Upon them unawares, and there would be
Such joy as should redeem all foregone pain.

Oh, weakness thus to trifle from the truth,
Soon, very soon, before the eastern sun
Slants its warm rays upon the vine-clad slope,
I shall be sleeping with the quiet dead.
Oh, God! forgive me that I cannot yet
Call back my spirit from the dreams of life,
Life that throbs on so strongly through my veins,
That half it seems a thing impossible
That life and I should not be wholly one,
Inseparably one.

I will not look,
Save in farewell when the last moment comes,
Out on the brightness of the happy earth
That laughs my thoughts away from needful gloom
Smile on, fair skies, I shall not see you more,
Dance on, gold stream, I shall not see you more,
I will but look upon the dank blotched walls,
And think of Death.

I do not fear to die;
It is no idle boast, why should I fear?
Have I not suffered torments and despair,
Yea, all the agonies of living death;
Have they not penned me far from all I loved,
And anguished me with misery of dread,
Of dread most dreadful, lest, because my tongue
Refused with Judas-words to minister
To their foul thirst for blood and count their names,
My brethren in our just and holy cause,
And, yielding them to an unrighteous doom,
Blight fatally our country's budding hope,
The hellish might of angered tyranny
Should wreak its threatened vengeance on the heads

Of my beloved ones, and torture them
As I was tortured? Have I not endured
All pain of flesh and spirit that cold hate,
With voice deliberate and rigid smile,
Could press upon my life? How should I fear?
For I had seen the shadow of this death
Far off, and grown familiar with its shape,
When first my step was on the rugged path,
Where **It** stood threatening my bold advance.

So let it come, I shall have quiet rest
From this long hateful prison weariness;
What horror could there be in silent death,
Like the dull horror of a long decline
Through lagging prisoned years to helpless age,
To feel the falling power of the numbed brain,
Palsied by sickness of monotony,
Droop into dotage, or perchance grow wild
In madness?

Surely they grow merciful;
I thought that they had doomed me to such fate,
And I should linger in a living tomb,
A life less conscious of life's energies
Than the brown spider crouching on the walls
Upon the long-blurred patch, my fancy shaped
To Nina's waving tresses.

So, the strong blue fly,
Bursting the fragile mesh, has marred its web:
It hurries down Strange that I trifle thus!
My wilful thoughts as in a clueless maze
Keep wandering fondly from my purposed goal,
My sight, that should be dim in trance of prayer,
Has keenest knowledge of all circumstance,
Seems even to count o'er the very motes
In the kind sunbeam that has found its way
Through narrow bars to bring me ere I die
A sweet farewell from the fair outer world.
The small-orbed past revolves before my soul,
Darkening the greater future's mystic sphere
From her strained eyes. Yet needs it that I fit
Myself with calm devotions for mine end
Before he comes who very soon will come,
The wordy priest who shrived me yesternight,
A good man doubtless, but he vexes me
With much continuance of servile prate
Of homage due to loving governors
Whom I have wronged **I** wronged! Wronged **Them**
Whose hateful yoke has wrung my bleeding land!

THE LAST MORNING.

Ah! He forgave, whose dying agonies
Are sculptured on this ivory crucifix,
Once Nina's. Mary mother, while I kiss
These piercèd feet, do thou pray Him for me,
And calm my spirit into happy prayer.

DISQUIET.

OH! foolish troubled heart,
That wilt not be at rest,
But sorrowful thou knowest not why
Throbbest within my breast,
Murmuring at thy lot,
Hoping what thou knowest not,
What aileth thee?
Longing so wearily,
What aileth thee?

Not grief thy foe can be,
Life works thee no such ill,
It is not love that wakens thee,
Why art not sleeping still?
By strange feelings stirred,
Pining like a prisoned bird,
What aileth thee?
Longing so drearily,
What aileth thee?

Hast thou some weird voice heard,
That bade thee rest no more?
Oh, prithee slumber once again,
Thou wast so still before;
Wherefore so troubled art?
Rest, rest, oh! foolish heart,
What aileth thee?
Longing so wearily,
What aileth thee?

THE MARTINS IN THE CHURCH-TOWER.

WE build our nests in the old church-tower,
The ivy shades us from rain and shower,
We peep through the leaves at the world below,
We see when they come, we see when they go;
Hiding the ivy leaves among,
They can hear our twittering song,

DISQUIET.

But they little think we are watching them.

Downward we look from our sheltered home,
We see when the laughing weddings come,
The white-robed bride with eyes drooped down,
With shining gems, and blossoming crown:
The martins looking from above
Know if her thoughts be thoughts of love,
Or pride in the robe and garland and gem.

We see when the funeral train comes slow,
Solemn and hushed through the porch below;
And we see them pass to the place of rest,
Heavy and sad as with grief opprest,
We know if it be true and deep,
If their lost shall be lone in sleep,
Or their spirits shall seek the loved one still.

We watch when the Sunday bell rings loud,
The mien demure of the church-going crowd
We watch to see the out-pouring throng,
We know who has found the sermon long,
Who has fretted to be away,
We know the hearts that love to pray,
And we know those that harbour thoughts of ill.

Little men think as they pass below,
What secrets the fluttering martins know,
Of what we have heard and what we have seen,
Nestling beneath our dark ivy screen,
Hiding the glossy leaves among:
They can hear the martins' song,
But they little know the tales we can tell.

We tell them forth to the bright blue sky,
And the gossiping breezes passing by
Listen and echo them out again,
But they never tell their stories to men;
Passing us heedless as of old,
They know not of their stories told,
In the old church-tower where the martins dwell.

THE KILLARNEY SNAKE.

IS the time come? is it to-morrow yet?

THE KILLARNEY SNAKE.

He said, "To-morrow I will set thee free."
Do holy men their plighted words forget,
Wait I a morrow that shall never be?
I am so weary of this darkness round,
I am so weary of this gurgling sound
While the small waves leaping play
Over my prison and then away,
Chasing those that have gone before,
Chasing them on towards the shore
Where I so fain would be;
Decking it with a fringe of spray,
Resting a moment and then away,
Back to the wide lake-sea,
Ah! they sing so loud, I cannot hear
If the sweet birds are carolling
That trill at morn with a treble chime
From out the shade of the scented lime,
The arching lime-tree by the spring;
But surely the morn must be very near,
I have waited for it so long.
I call to the waters, "Oh, is it time!"
But they bubble on in an unchanged rhyme
Their ceaseless wearisome song.
But he is holy, he will not forget
My morrow comes, Is it to-morrow yet?

Dimly sometimes I hear the voice of men
Borne floating over me,
But not as they were wont to be,
Their words sound strange and new;
I cry, "Ah, spake he true?"
But they pass and give no answer again:
Ah! I wait and wait till the morrow come,
They pass on gladly and hie them home,
I cannot hie me to mine,
My pleasant home in the hollow root,
Where the loving briony vine
Twines closer and closer each trailing shoot,
Garlands the alder-tree over my head,
And waves a light shade o'er my grassy bed,
And droops its red knots when the winds are still.
And smiling buds at my alder's foot
Smile ever at buds in the flashing rill,
So like I think sometimes they are the same,
And the long waving grass
And the large dock-leaves hid me when men came
And sought to do me ill,
And the green brambles would not let them pass.

For these things loved me, and I loved them too,
But vain their help to hide me from his eye:
I came from sporting by the waters blue
With the light foaming waves that wantoned by,
They have forgot their playmate now;
I twined me round a sunlit bough
Like a rainbowed creeper wreath,
While down the bright rays beamed
Till all my glory gleamed
Many-hued like the flowers beneath,
And brighter than the golden glare
Of yellow gorses on the heath
That breathed through the sweet air.
And I joyed to be so fair,
Joyed me that all things were so beautiful.
He came so softly that I did not hear,
He spake so softly that I could not fear,
His words of very pleasant hopes were full;
He said he knew a home where I should dwell,
More fair than mine beneath the alder-tree,
And so into this prison lured he me,
Then hurled it in the lake, but as it fell
He said, "To-morrow I will set thee free,"
Oh, will to-morrow never be?

I sought them not, then wherefore did men come?
They were intruders in **my** lonely home.
I chose a haunt that was all lone and still,
And fled from theirs and would have done no ill
Had they but left me in my alder stem,
Left me the little grassy spot
They surely needed not.
Was there not room without for them?
Did they grudge me a little grass? ah, why?
Will they not set me free once more?
Shall I never more see the sunny sky?
Shall I sport with the waters blue no more?
I am so weary of their ceaseless sound
Gushing and gurgling over my head,
Beating against my narrow bed;
I am so weary of this darkness round;
When will to-morrow come and set me free?
I do not wait a morn that shall not be,
Do holy men their plighted words forget?
Surely I do not hope in vain?
I shall be free from this dull prisoned pain.
Is it not come? Is it to-morrow yet?

NOTE TO THE KILLARNEY SNAKE.

THE legend runs that before St Patrick's ministry, Ireland was infested with innumerable reptiles all of which he banished for ever from the country. But one large snake which haunted the borders of the lake of Killarney found its beautiful home too pleasant to be prevailed on to leave it either by persuasions or threats. The saint, finding all his exhortations thrown away, presented himself one morning to the snake, carrying a large chest heavy with clasps. "See," he said, "let there be peace between us. You may stay in this neighbourhood as long as you live, and I have brought you a beautiful house far better than that hole of yours. We can put it under the same tree." But the snake suspected a snare, and refused the gift. At last, tired of combating the saint's arguments and half convinced by his fair words, it crept into the chest, letting however part of its tail drop over the side by way of securing a retreat. "Ah! I told you it would be too small," it said, preparing to get out. But, "Take care of your tail, my darling," cried St Patrick, slamming down the lid so as to force it to jerk it in quickly, and fastening the strong clasps. "Let me out, Oh! let me out," pleaded the snake. "Yes, to-morrow," answered St Patrick, as he hurled its prison far into the waters. And on a still day, as you sail over the lake, you may hear the poor captive calling plaintively from below: "Is it to-morrow yet?"

RAFAELE D'URBINO.

THE misty vapour of the incense floats
Heavy with vague perfume
Through all the dim aisle's mellow gloom,
And the grand melody of full-voiced notes
Swells splendid sadness through the massive dome,
Peals out in solemn symphonies
Deep with the awfulness of death,
Then in a sobbing cadence dies
To a low mournful breath,
As if far angel-voices called him home:
And through the throng there sighs a stifled wail
Of parting blessings and of men that weep.
But he is calm and pale
In a rapt sleep.

And there he lies,
A dream of beauty in the pride of youth,
Something of that which never dies
Of Inspiration's ever sacred truth,
Whose glorious seal was on him set,
Rests dovelike yet
On the sweet sternness of the marble face,
And still some trace
Of that great spirit lingers on the brow
It thrills not now.
He waits, a silent guest
In the time-hallowed twilight pile,
Taking his solemn rest.
On his still lips a tranced smile
Beams awful saintliness, as though there gleamed

Upon his soul from the great heaven above
All that mysterious loveliness of love
His glorious life had dreamed
More clearly now revealed and more divine,
And all his being were a God-filled shrine
Holy with visions of God's sacred things
Seen fainter once in his imaginings;
And highest worlds of beauty lay outspread
Before him dead.

Speak not his praise,
Lo, the great marvel of his last great days
Breathes from the walls a nobler voice than thine,
And myriads' enraptured gaze
Giveth sure-witnessed silent sign
Of the long fame the future shall afford
Better than thy weak word;
But gaze thy fill
On the half human, half celestial grace,
The shapes of beauty on that magic space,
And the grand shadowing on high
Of man-enshrined Divinity,
Until there thrill,
Swelling with worship through thy heart
The sweetness and the majesty of art.

Priest of the beautiful, ah! shall indeed
So soon the craving thankless dust
Hold thee in its dread trust
And must the mystic spirit of thy creed
Lose its most pure interpreter in thee?
Ah! can it be
That thy rich pencil never more
Shall map in glories thine angelic soul
With its pure depths of saintly lore?
Shall shape no more 'neath thine inspired control
Those holy types with angel-might to thaw
Sad world-chilled spirits from Self's frozen sea,
Whose icy barriers round them press
And sun them from the memory of earth's strife
Into a joy of loving awe,
A half forgetfulness of life
In the eternal meanings rife
In their deep loveliness.
Till even thou art lessened in their light,
And they, outshapings of thy will,
Dim with their radiance from the dazzled sight
The moment's memory of thy skill,
And have a being of their own:

And such to thy large mind had seemed in truth
The grandest homage to thy genius shown,
Thou artist–worshipper of truth:
But not the less thy well remembered name
Shall ring well–loved in many a far–off clime
And the long after years chime out thy fame,
Noble amid the noblest sons of Time.

Ah! how they weep,
And he is placid as were not for him
The fast–rained scalding drops that make eyes dim:
Their bursts of sorrow wild and deep
Break not his sleep,
The heavy mass of sable fold
Stirs not upon his breast,
The silenced heart is cold.
How fair he is in that last rest,
Call it not sad,
Ye mourn and weep as sore distressed,
His face is glad.
Vex not with cries his spirit back from God;
In little space his path on earth was trod,
But that it was most glorious maketh not
Its briefness sadder, but as more divine.
Better such briefness than a dull decline
Into long dreary age's doting lot;
For him, not only thou, imperial Rome,
Nor thou alone, fair Italy, shall boast his worth,
But from far countless lands shall loudly come
A voice of mother–pride that claims him son of earth,
Of universal earth, that for the great
Knows no small rights of birth or place,
But names them children of her one vast state,
Of her one race.

SONG OF THE SEPTEMBRISEURS.

THERE is dearth
On the earth
Who brought it there?
Let them live,
Let them thrive
On their dainty fare.

Let them laugh
As they quaff
While we droop and die
Let them smile

SONG OF THE SEPTEMBRISEURS.

All the while
At our starving cry.

Let the poor
Still endure
And their hearts be sad
Let the great
Keep their state,
Let them eat and be glad.

Let them feed
Till they bleed
'Neath the people's darts
Oh! 'tis good
When our food
Is their quivering hearts!

Oh! 'tis fine
The rich wine
From their streaming veins
Let them feel
Our sharp steel,
Let them die in long pains.

Let them weep
As they sleep
And dream of our name
Let them quake
When they wake
Before death of shame.

Let them writhe
'Neath the scythe
That shall mow them down
Let them know
All the woe
Of the people's frown.

For the hour
Of their power
Has passed away,
And the might
As the right
Is ours to-day.

A CONGREGATION.

THE balmy evening air stole in
To a twilight–glimmering room,
There sat three fair young maidens
In girlhood's early bloom.

And I was with them too, for well
I loved with them to be,
For light and merry were their words,
Their laugh so glad and free.

But then was no gay mirth, they sat
So still, so thoughtfully,
I scarce could think they were the same
That laughed so merrily.

One, dusky–haired, with deep grey eyes,
But not with wonted look
Half proud half glad, in silver tones
Read from the holy book.

Her sisters listened to her voice,
The one with golden hair,
And brightly tinted cheek and lip
As only youth can wear;

And one with paler blush–rose hue
And hair of deepest brown,
With half–formed smile and look oft worn,
Her dreamy eyes cast down.

They closed the sacred page, they knelt
And breathed the old Church–prayer:
'Twas a scene to paint, the twilight room,
And they so young and fair.

And methought perhaps the angels
Who keep kind watch o'er men,
And oft must weep their stubborn hearts,
Might smile with pleasure then.

WELCOME.

SPEED, gliding vessel, through the seas,
Bringing her back again;
Blow briskly, merry rushing breeze,
Hasting it through the main.

Come quickly, quickly, happy hour,
That gives her to her home,
Fall lighter, little pattering shower,
I shall not hear her come.

Sigh lighter, rustling waving leaves,
Peace, little trilling bird
Chirping her welcome from the caves,
Lest her light step be not heard.

She is coming whom we lost a while,
She is very near the shore,
And we shall see her sunny smile
Her loving eyes once more.

DAWN.

THE young light trembles through the waking sky,
And smiles the shadow of sad night away,
The white stars fade before the morning's eye,
Sinking to death with the dead yesterday
There rests the shadow on my morrow's sky
Of a past yesterday that will not die.

The sleep-closed flowers, starred on Earth's peaceful breast,
Unfold to sun glad dew-tears from their eyes
The dawn-stirred birds awake from happy rest
To happier life, and gush glad minstrelsies
I only waken from a troubled sleep
To hate the day, wherein I dare not weep.

Would I could die with thee, sad secret night,
Kind with the comfort of unlocked despair:
I hate the day, that round me with its light
Wakes countless eyes to vex me with their glare.
Ah! must I live the bitter mockery

WELCOME.

To smile away the hours and long to die!

EDITH.

I LOVED him Heaven's self above,
I was too proud to own my love;
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
He angered at my rightful pride,
He seemed a while to turn aside.
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

I smiled through all the bitter pain,
I frowned when he came back again;
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
I said, "May Margaret is fair,
Your wooing prospers better there;"
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

I said, "May Margaret has gold,
Wisely your love-tale you have told;"
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
"I speak a friendly word," I said
"Go, ask May Margaret to wed."
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

His face grew pale, and he was gone,
He went, Oh God! how was I lone!
Oh! well that a maiden should be proud!
Oh God! those weary months of snow!
But none had knowledge of my woe.
And my bridal-robe will be a shroud.

I did not even hear his name
Until the leafy summer came;
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
And then May Margaret came and said,
Another month would see them wed;
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

I gave her joy with many a smile,
Laughed and longed for death the while;
It fits that a maiden should be proud,
I could not hope, I would not weep,
I prayed for everlasting sleep;
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

EDITH.

Yet prayed I might have so much grace
As once again to see his face;
Oh! well that a maiden should be proud,
And when the day was grey and late,
I met him near the churchyard gate.
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

And I had courage from my pride,
Knowing another was his bride;
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
I did not fear my thoughts to free
Knowing that he was lost to me.
And my wedding robe shall be a shroud.

I said, "I care not now to hide
The love my haughty words denied;"
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
"You are not worth such love as mine,
That could not all its force divine."
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

"You are not worth such love as mine,
That on her weakness can recline;"
It fits a young maiden to be proud,
"Tis well in her your joy to find
A baby face, a baby mind;"
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

"You should have prized my scorn above
Such easy won unmeaning love;"
'Tis well that a maiden should be proud,
"Yet now she needs must be your wife,
Know Love for you was all my life!"
And my wedding-robe must be a shroud.

Oh! there was anguish in his eye,
He looked as one about to die;
'Tis well that a maiden should be proud,
But when he spoke his voice was strong
"May Edith you have done me wrong;"
And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

"Long since I had a heart to give,
You crushed it down, it could not live;"

EDITH.

Oh! well for a maiden to be proud!

"And I can never love again
With that deep love that seemed in vain."

And my wedding dress will be a shroud.

"Such love as I on you had set
I could not give to Margaret;"

'Tis well that a maiden should be proud,

"But in my wearied heart I said,
That Edith whom I loved is dead."

And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

"May Edith you can never be
That which you once have been to me;"

'Tis well that a maiden should be proud,

"May Edith I can never be
As if you had not been to me."

And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

"My heart is slain with wild regret
But I have rest in Margaret;"

Oh! well for a maiden to be proud,

"Edith, my hope in you is o'er,
Though she is less, yet is she more."

And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

I hear the merry marriage bells
Clanging through the echoing dells;

Oh! well that a maiden should be proud!

I pray that they ere long may toll
The death-knell for a parting soul.

And my wedding-robe will be a shroud.

THE FISHERMAN'S BETROTHED.

THE crimson sun glared on her as she sat
Gazing far out upon the glassy sea,
The ebbing waves along the flaky sands
Fringed their wide smoothness with small tufted weeds,
And plashed on the long ledge of jutting rocks
Low-ridged beneath her feet She did not heed
The fiery sunset-kiss upon her brow,
She did not hear the gurgle of the tide,
But bent her head to catch some far-off sound,
And strained wild eyes with weary watchfulness
To pierce into the nothingness of space,

THE FISHERMAN'S BETROTHED.

Where the blue sky was one with the blue sea.

Above the merged horizon rose a speck
That seemed to hang a while in middle air,
Then, heightening into shape, came smoothly on,
Its brown sails rounded with the drowsy wind
Whose lazy life-beat breathed it to the land,
And as it neared there swelled through the still eve
The cheery sound of rough men's voices, glad
With the good meed of honest-handed toil,
And thought of thankful homes and coming rest
For healthy weariness of nervous limbs.
Then, when she saw the heavy-laden boat,
Not seeking other hamlet on the coast,
Pass steadily into the narrow bay
High-cragged, where she sat watching from her rock,
She scared the sea-birds with shrill welcomings,
And laughed wild triumphings aloud to those
Who were not there to hear her, since she wept
And angered always when they broke her law
Of exile from the loneliness of her haunt.
"Ah! see," she laughed, "you would have had me think
The waves, grown mad with spite, had whelmed my love
Down to their hateful caves, and held him there,
A festering corpse among the whitened bones
Far in the cruel depths of the dull deep,
The prey of creeping sea-snakes, reptile shapes,
All slimy horror and limp shapelessness
Ah! but I knew it false see, the still sea
Curling so lovingly along the shore,
The gentle sea is calm as when he left
In the bright morn Who whispered, 'Years ago'?
'Long years ago'? Yes, years. Ah! so they said,
So voices, mocking voices, oft have come
And whispered in my ears through the long day
Till they half maddened me. But eve is come,
The happy eve, and he is coming now;
He promised, when he left me with the morn,
His boat should skim the first back to our bay,
First land its netted spoil upon the sands,
And the dear evening hours should all be mine:
And now he comes! Aye, look now, you who said
He would not come again, look now, and hear
How I will call, and he will answer me."

And so she stood on her rock-seat, and called
Wild greetings all delirious with joy,
Until the dark-sailed boat, low with the weight
Of scaly plunder, had drawn very near,

THE FISHERMAN'S BETROTHED.

And down the cliffs there hurried gossip groups
And merry children shouting, clapping hands,
And knotted round the beachèd landing-place,
While the loud keel groaned on the meeting shore:
But she remained where she had watched it come,
Thinking, "He knows that I am waiting here,
And he loves best to find me thus alone;
I will not seek him in the jeering crowd,
In truth, I would not have him fully know
How eagerly I longed for his return;
But I will wait him here he will come soon."

She saw the fishers pass along the cliffs,
Girt with the loving concourse from their homes,
But saw him not: she saw the stranded boat
Untenanted, and knew the talking knots
Of waiters for the coming fisher fleet,
And knew him not among them; then she sank
In patient weariness on her lone rock,
And sighed amid the ebbing waters' sighs,
"He said he would be first: well, 'twill be soon."

Into the bay there thronged the swarming skiffs,
Pressing wide-winged along their homeward course;
And, one by one, she saw them touch the land,
And heard them grating harshly on the beach,
Till all had come, and all lay high and void
And glooming darkly in the growing dusk,
And stillness brooded o'er the blackening shore
Vague with the evening mist. On the wide plain
Of cold grey-glimmering waters nothing stirred,
Save the first ripple of the waking waves,
The wild birds roosted in their silent clefts.
She waited weeping, "Ah! he has not come!
Yet he will come. Bid the wild voices cease,
Dear Lord, the voices full of bitter words
That fill my brain with fire. How, dead long years!
Dead in the arms of the all-grasping waves!
How should he die, since they have come in peace
That left with him at morn? Nay, he will come,
He has but tarried, tempted by the shoals
That lie in myriads round some far-off point,
A while behind the rest. **H**e shuns no toil.
Yet he is wrong to break his faith with me,
And scare me so with absence. He must come
Soon, very soon, for the dark night draws nigh.

The wild wind shrieking wakened with the night,

THE FISHERMAN'S BETROTHED.

And lashed the high crest of the full tide's flow,
And whirled the writhing surges round her feet,
And dashed the drenching flakes of briny foam
On her dark tresses flapping with the gusts,
The maddened clouds raced frantic through the sky
The hazed stars peering through their changing gaps;
"Oh! God," she cried, "great God, watch over him,
And bring him safely through the howling storm.
Alas! why did he loiter from the rest?
Could he not hear among the first shrill winds
The nearing sound of the fierce hurricane?
But he will come there is no danger yet
And he must needs be very near at hand:
Yes he will come." But when they forced her home,
She wakened for a moment from her hope
Into a frenzied tumult of despair,
Despair soul-maddening, as on that dread eve,
Seven summers since, when with the sunset glow
The fisher barks thronged home with saddened crews,
And he, whelmed by a sudden short-lived squall,
Slept with his brother underneath the waves.
And with such agony as when she heard
That which had wrung her heart from that sad hour
To wild forgetfulness even of its cause,
She knew it suddenly, his drowning death,
And shrieked, "Dead, dead! they were true voices, dead!
He dead! then let me die!" And then indeed
It was as though she died, faint in the trance
That ever wrought by such brief anguished bursts
Lulled them to rest. But with the next day's fall
She watched again for him that never came,
But slept unwakened by the splash of the waves:
And thus from eve to eve she watched for him,
And thus, because she would not be withheld,
Waiting for him one summer eve, she died.