

The Poetical Works of Brunton Stephens

Stephens, Brunton (1835-1902)

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The Poetical Works of Brunton Stephens

Fulfilment.

AUSTRALIA FEDERATA, 1ST JANUARY, 1901.

Dedicated by special permission to Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

WE cried, "How long!" We sighed, "Not yet,"
And still with faces downward set
 "Prepare the way," said each to each,
 And yet again, "Prepare," we said;
And toil, re-born of resolute speech,
 Made straight the path her feet should tread:—
Now triumph, faithful hands and steadfast wills,
For, lo! whose pomp the bannered Orient fills?
Whose feet are these upon the morning hills?

Farewell, Sweet Faith! thy silver ray
Now dies into the golden day.
 Farewell, Bright Dream, by minstrels sung!
 For She whom all our dreams foreran
 Has leaped to life, a Pallas sprung
 Consummate from the brain of man,
Whom now we hail in mortal guise and gait,
Thought clothed with flesh, partaker of our state,
Made corporal in us now corporate!

Ah, now we know the long delay
But served to assure a prouder day,
 For while we waited came the call
 To prove and make our title good—
 To face the fiery ordeal
 That tries the claim to Nationhood—
And now in pride of challenge we unroll,
For all the world to read, the record-scroll
Whose bloody script attests a Nation's soul.

O ye, our Dead, who at the call
Fared forth to fall as heroes fall,
 Whose consecrated souls we failed
 To note beneath the common guise
 Till all-revealing Death unveiled
 The splendour of your sacrifice,
Now, crowned with more than perishable bays,
Immortal in your country's love and praise,
Ye, too, have portion in this day of days!

And ye who sowed where now we reap,
Whose waiting eyes, now sealed in sleep,
Beheld far off with prescient sight
This triumph of rejoicing lands—
Yours, too, the day! for though its light
Can pierce not to your folded hands,
These shining hours of advent but fulfil
The cherished purpose of your constant will,
Whose onward impulse liveth in us still.

Still lead thou vanward of our line,
Who, shaggy, massive, leonine,
Could'st yet most finely phrase the event—
For if a Pisgah view was all
Vouchsafed to thine uncrowned intent,
The echoes of thy herald-call
Not faintlier strive with our saluting guns,
And at thy words through all Australia's sons
The “crimson thread of kinship” redder runs.

But not the memory of the dead,
How loved so'er each sacred head,
To-day can change from glad to grave
The chords that quire a Nation born—
Twin offspring of the birth that gave,
When yester-midnight chimed to morn,
Another age to the Redeemer's reign,
Another cycle to the widening gain
Of Good o'er Ill and Remedy o'er Pain.

Our sundering lines with love o'ergrown,
Our bounds the girdling seas alone—
Be this the burden of the psalm
That every resonant hour repeats,
Till day-fall dusk the fern and palm
That forest our transfigured streets,
And night still vibrant with the note of praise
Thrill brother-hearts to song in woodland ways,
When gum-leaves whisper o'er the camp-fire's blaze.

* * * * *

The Charter's read: the rites are o'er;
The trumpet's blare and cannon's roar
Are silent, and the flags are furled;
But so not ends the task to build
Into the fabric of the world
The substance of our hope fulfilled—

To work as those who greatly have divined
The lordship of a continent assigned
As God's own gift for service of mankind.

O People of the onward will,
Unit of Union greater still
 Than that to-day hath made you great,
 Your true Fulfilment waiteth there,
 Embraced within the larger fate
 Of Empire ye are born to share—
No vassal progeny of subject brood,
No satellite shed from Britain's plenitude,
But orb'd with her in one wide sphere of good!

* * * * *

O Lady, in whose sovereign name
The crowning word of Union came
 That sheds upon thine honoured age
 The glory of a rising light,
 Across our record's earliest page,
 Its earliest word, thy name we write . . .
Symbol, Embodiment, and Guarantee
Of all that makes us and maintains us free,
Woman and Queen, God's grace abide with thee.

The Dominion of Australia.

(A FORECAST.)

1877.

SHE is not yet; but he whose ear
Thrills to that finer atmosphere
Where footfalls of appointed things,
Reverberant of days to be,
Are heard in forecast echoings,
Like wave-beats from a viewless sea—
Hears in the voiceful tremors of the sky
Auroral heralds whispering, “She is nigh.”

She is not yet; but he whose sight
Foreknows the advent of the light,
Whose soul to morning radiance turns
Ere night her curtain hath withdrawn,
And in its quivering folds discerns
The mute monitions of the dawn,
With urgent sense strained onward to descry
Her distant tokens, starts to find Her nigh.

Not yet her day. How long “not yet?” . . .
There comes the flush of violet!
And heavenward faces, all aflame
With sanguine imminence of morn,
Wait but the sun-kiss to proclaim
The Day of The Dominion born.
Prelusive baptism!—ere the natal hour
Named with the name and prophecy of power.

Already here to hearts intense,
A spirit-force, transcending sense,
In heights unscaled, in deeps unstirred,
Beneath the calm, above the storm,
She waits the incorporating word
To bid her tremble into form.
Already, like divining-rods, men's souls
Bend down to where the unseen river rolls;—

For even as, from sight concealed,
By never flush of dawn revealed,
Nor e'er illumed by golden noon,
Nor sunset-streaked with crimson bar,
Nor silver-spanned by wake of moon,

Nor visited of any star,
Beneath these lands a river waits to bless
(So men divine) our utmost wilderness,—

Rolls dark, but yet shall know our skies,
Soon as the wisdom of the wise
Conspires with nature to disclose
The blessing prisoned and unseen,
Till round our lessening wastes there glows
A perfect zone of broadening green,—
Till all our land, Australia Felix called,
Become one Continent-Isle of Emerald;

So flows beneath our good and ill
A viewless stream of Common Will,
A gathering force, a present might,
That from its silent depths of gloom
At Wisdom's voice shall leap to light,
And hide our barren feuds in bloom,
Till, all our sundering lines with love o'ergrown,
Our bounds shall be the girdling seas alone.

The Dominion.

(1883.)

OH, fair Ideal, unto whom,
Through days of doubt and nights of gloom,
Brave hearts have clung, while lips of scorn,
Made mock of thee as but a dream—
Already on the heights of morn
We see thy golden sandals gleam,
And, glimmering through the clouds that wrap thee yet,
The seven stars that are thy coronet.

Why tarriest thou 'twixt earth and heaven?
Go forth to meet her, Sisters seven!
'Tis but your welcome she awaits
Ere, casting off the veil of cloud,
The bodied Hope of blending States,
She stands revealed, imperial, proud;
As from your salutation sprung full-grown,
With green for raiment and with gold for zone.

From where beneath unclouded skies
Thy peerless haven glittering lies;
From where o'er pleasant pastures rove
The flocks from which thy greatness sprang;
From vine-clad slope and orange-grove:
From "grave mute woods" thy Minstrel sang;
From Alpine peaks aglow with flush of morn,
Go forth to meet her, thou, the eldest-born.

From where, reverberant at thy feet,
The billows of two oceans meet;
From where the rocks thy treasures hide;
From mart and wharf, and harbour-mouth;
From where the city of thy pride
Ennobles all the teeming South—
To meet her, thou with loftiest zeal inflamed,
Go forth, Victoria, queen and queenly named.

And thou, the youngest, yet most fair,
First to discern, and first to dare;
Whose lips, sun-smitten, earliest spoke
The herald words of coming good,
And with their clarion-summons broke
The slumber of the sisterhood—
Foremost of all thy peers press on to greet

Her advent, strewing flowers before her feet.

And thou, around whose brow benign
Vine-leaf and olive intertwine;
Upon whose victories the Star
Of Peace looks down with no rebuke,
The weapons of whose warfare are
The ploughshare and the pruning-hook—
Take with thee gifts of corn, and wine, and oil,
To greet thy liege with homage of the soil.

Thou, too, whom last the morning-beams
Wake from thy sleep by peaceful streams
Slow westering to the Indian main—
Thou, too, beneath thy later sun
Conspire with these in glad refrain
Of welcome to the coming One,
And from thy fragrant forests tribute bring
Of grateful incense for thine offering.

And thou, Pomona of the South,
Ruddy of cheek, and ripe of mouth,
Who from thy couch of orchard-bloom
With fearless foot are wont to stray
By mountain lakes, or in the gloom
Of forest-depths unknown of day—
Be thy shrill greeting borne upon the breeze
Above the thunder of thy girdling seas.

Nor thou delay, who dwell'st apart,
To join thy peers with gladsome heart—
Whether the summons thee o'ertake
On icy steep or fruitful plain,
Or where thy craggy bulwarks break
The onslaught of the warring main,
Or find thee couched within some ferny lair,
Flax-flower and hyacinth mingling with thy hair.

Bind ye the sevenfold cord apace;
Weave ye the sevenfold wreath, to grace
The brow of her whose avatar
The mighty Mother waits to bless;
In sevenfold choir be borne afar
The music of your joyfulness.
Till o'er the world's disquiet your song prevail—
“Australia Foederata! Hail! all hail!”

The Angel of the Doves.

THE angels stood in the court of the King,
And into the midst, through the open door,
Weeping came one whose broken wing
Piteously trailed on the golden floor.

Angel was she, and woman, and dove:
Dove and angel all womanly blent
With the virginal charm that is worshipped of love
On the hither side of the firmament.

Where a rainbow hideth the holiest place,
Thither she moved, and there she kneeled;
And fain with her wings would have veiled her face,
Ere the bow should be lifted, and God revealed.

'Tis the angels' wont; and afresh she wept,
As with maimèd pinion she strove in vain,
And tremor on tremor convulsively swept
O'er her plumes in a shuddering iris of pain.

And the angels who dwell from sorrow remote
Gazed on her woe as a marvellous thing;
For they wist but of pain from its echoes that float
In the strange new songs that the ransomed sing.

“Sister,” at length said a shining one,
“To whom earth's doves for a care were given,
What hast thou done, or left undone,
That grief through thee should be known in heaven?”

“When together for joy the angels sang,
Calling the new-made world to rejoice,
Sweeter than all hosannas that rang
Was the trembling rapture that thrilled thy voice.

“For thine was the grace to minister there—
Oh, favoured child of the heavenly host!—
To the sacred and lovely lives that wear
The mystic shape of the Holy Ghost.

“And we marked thy flight as the flight of a dove,
Till the luminous vapours around thee curled,
And we said, ‘She is glad in her errand of love
To the happy glades of the new-born world.’

“And now thou returnest woe-stricken as one
That hath fallen from grace and is unforgiven.

What hast thou done, or left undone,
That grief through thee should be known in heaven?"

Faint was her voice as an echo heard
From the past by the soul in dreamful mood;
Sweet and sad as the plaint of a bird
Mourning forlorn in solitude.

"I tended my doves," she said through her tears,
"By day and by night, in storm and calm.
Happily flew the uncounted years
In bowers of myrtle and groves of palm.

"Many, alas, were the beautiful dead,
But the life of the race was always new,
For, ever ere one generation fled,
Out of its love another grew.

"And many a dove for man's sake died,
Noted in heaven with none offence,
Save when the heart of the cruel took pride
In slaying the witness of innocence.

"When countless seasons had come and gone,
Come and gone as a happy dream,
One noon of summer I lingered upon
The eastward marge of a sacred stream.

"And lo, 'mid a crowd on the further side,
That stood in the stream or knelt on the sod,
I saw—though a veil of flesh did hide
The splendour of Godhead—the Son of God.

"And ev'n as I gazed, the azure above
Burst into glory that dimmed the sun;
And the Spirit of God in the form of a dove
I saw descend on the Holy One.

"I deemed that my task was over then;
'Tis the dawn,' I said, 'of the reign of love;
Henceforth my doves will be safe with men,
Since God hath hallowed the form of the dove.'

"Then I soared aloft, but again returned;
For I said in my heart, 'I will not cease
From my care, till man from His lips hath learned
That the birds have a share in the Gospel of Peace.'

"And it chanced on a day in the soft springtide,
When birds were joyous and love was sweet,
I saw the Lord on a mountain side,

And with Him were twelve, who sat at His feet.

“And I heard Him say, ‘Not a sparrow doth fall
To the ground but your Father taketh note,’
Then all the air grew musical,
And song awoke in each warbling throat.

“For into bird-music the message passed,
And from choir to choir in melody ran;
And I said, ‘My mission is over at last.
Farewell, my doves. Ye are safe with man.’

“Weeping, yet gladsome, I soared aloft,
Being fain of the glories of other spheres,
Whose beckoning lustre had lured me oft
In starry midnights of bygone years.

“And on seas of ether and isles of light
Through ages of joy I floated or trod,
Till I chanced on an angel in upward flight,
Bearing an infant home to God.

“And a waft of earth from the flowers that lay
On the young dead breast came sweet and faint;
And again, dream-echoed from far away,
I heard in the woodlands the turtle's plaint.

“For memory woke at the flowers' sweet breath,
And my spirit yearned to the earth again,
And I cried, ‘Canst thou tell, oh angel of death,
How fare my doves at the hands of men?’

“‘Sad is their lot,’ the angel sighed;
‘For the pleasure of man they suffer pain;
And the heart of the cruel taketh pride
To slay thy doves and to number the slain.’

“I knew no more till the vapours of earth
Clung to my wings, and a pealing sound
Smote on mine ear, and voices of mirth;
And beneath me a dove fell dead to the ground.

“Leave me with God; for ye cannot know
How death takes shape in the human hand,
Nor the subtle devices that work for woe;
But the Lord will hear and will understand.

“And if, as I clove my unseen way
Between my doves and the deadly rain,
It was given unto me to become as they,
To share their wounds and to know their pain—

“Surely the rather will God give ear
To one who knoweth what He hath known;
Surely the rather will Jesus hear,
Who suffered, as I, for love of His own.

“Can it be that the great Lord doth not know
How Christ is needed on earth again?
Rise, lingering curtain! that I may show
The wounds of my doves, and may pray for men.”

* * * * *

Slowly the rainbow rose, parting in twain;
And, lo, in the midst of the throne of love
There stood a Lamb as it had been slain;
And over the throne there brooded a Dove.

The Dark Companion.

THERE is an orb that mocked the lore of sages
Long time with mystery of strange unrest;
The steadfast law that rounds the starry ages
Gave doubtful token of supreme behest.

But they who knew the ways of God unchanging,
Concluded some far influence unseen—
Some kindred sphere through viewless ethers ranging,
Whose strong persuasions spanned the void between.

And knowing it alone through perturbation
And vague disquiet of another star,
They named it, till the day of revelation,
“The Dark Companion”—darkly guessed afar.

But when, through new perfection of appliance,
Faith merged at length in undisputed sight,
The mystic mover was revealed to science,
No Dark Companion, but—a speck of light.

No Dark Companion, but a sun of glory;
No fell disturber, but a bright compeer;
The shining complement that crowned the story;
The golden link that made the meaning clear.

Oh, Dark Companion, journeying ever by us,
Oh, grim Perturber of our works and ways—
Oh, potent Dread, unseen, yet ever nigh us,
Disquieting all the tenor of our days—

Oh, Dark Companion, Death, whose wide embraces
O’ertake remotest change of clime and skies—
Oh, Dark Companion, Death, whose grievous traces
Are scattered shreds of riven enterprise—

Thou, too, in this wise, when, our eyes unsealing,
The clearer day shall change our faith to sight,
Shalt show thyself, in that supreme revealing,
No Dark Companion, but a thing of light.

No ruthless wrecker of harmonious order;
No alien heart of discord and caprice;
A beckoning light upon the Blissful Border;
A kindred element of law and peace.

So, too, our strange unrest in this our dwelling,
The trembling that thou joinest with our mirth,

Are but thy magnet-communings compelling
Our spirits farther from the scope of earth.

So, doubtless, when beneath thy potence swerving,
'Tis that thou lead'st us by a path unknown,
Our seeming deviations all subserving
The perfect orbit round the central throne.

* * * * *

The night wind moans. The Austral wilds are round me.
The loved who live—ah, God! how few they are!
I looked above; and heaven in mercy found me
This parable of comfort in a star.

Spirit and Star.

THROUGH the bleak cold voids, through the wilds of space,
Trackless and starless, forgotten of grace,—
Through the dusk that is neither day nor night,
Through the grey that is neither dark nor light—
Through thin chill ethers where dieth speech,
Where the pulse of the music of heaven cannot reach,
Unwarmed by the breath of living thing,
And for ever unswept of angel's wing—
Through the cold, through the void, through the wilds of space,
With never a home or a resting-place,
How far must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Once on a time unto me was given
The fairest star in the starry heaven—
A little star, to tend and to guide,
To nourish and cherish and love as a bride.
Far from all great bright orbs, alone,
Even to few of the angels known,
It moved; but a sweet pale light on its face
From the sapphire foot of the throne of grace,
That was better than glory and more than might,
Made it a wonder of quiet delight.
Still must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

On the starry brow was the peace of the blest,
And bounteous peace on the starry breast;
All beautiful things were blossoming there,
Sighing their loves to the delicate air:
No creature of God such fragrance breathed,
White-rose girdled and white-rose wreathed;
And its motion was music, an undertone,
With a strange sad sweetness all its own,
Dearer to me than the louder hymn
Of the God-enraptured seraphim.—
How far must I wander? Ah Heaven, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

In a round of joy, remote and alone,
Yet ever in sight of the great white throne,
Together we moved, for a love divine
Had blent the life of the star with mine:—
And had all the angels of all the spheres
Forecast my fate and foretold my tears,

The weary wand'ring, the gruesome gloom,
And bruited them forth through the Trump of Doom—
Hiding a smile in my soul, I had moved
Only the nearer to what I loved.
Yet I must wander! Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Ah, woe the delusive demon-light
That beckoned me, beckoned me, day and night!
The untwining of heartstrings, the backward glance,
The truce with faith, and the severance!
Ah, woe the unfolding of wayward wings
That bore me away from all joyous things,
To realms of space whence the pale sweet gleam
Looked dim as a dimly-remembered dream—
To farther realms where the faint light spent
Vanished at length from my firmament;
And I seek it in vain—Ah God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

On sleepless wings I have followed it
Through the star-sown fields of the Infinite;
And where foot of angel hath never trod
I have threaded the golden mazes of God;
I have pierced where the fire-fount of being runs,
I have dashed myself madly on burning suns,
Then downward have swept with shuddering breath
Through the place of the shadows and shapes of death,
Till sick with sorrow and spent with pain
I float and faint in the dim inane!
Must I yet wander? Ah God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

Oh could I find in uttermost space
A place for hope, and for prayer a place,
Mine were no suit for a glittering prize
In the chosen seats of the upper skies—
No grand ministration, no thronèd height
In the midmost intense of unspeakable light.
What sun-god sphere with all-dazzling beam
Could be unto me as that sweet, sad gleam?
Let me roam through the ages all alone,
If He give me not back my own, my own!
How far must I wander? Oh God, how far?
I have lost my star, I have lost my star!

In the whispers that tremble from sphere to sphere,
Which the ear of a spirit alone can hear,

I have heard it breathed that there cometh a day
When tears from all eyes shall be wiped away,
When faintness of heart and drooping of wings
Shall be told as a tale of olden things,
When toil and trouble and all distress
Shall be lost in the round of Blessedness.
In that day when dividing of loves shall cease,
And all things draw near to the centre of peace,
In the fulness of time, in the ages afar,
God, oh God, shall I find my star?

The Story of a Soul.

WHO can say "Thus far, no farther," to the tide of his own nature?

Who can mould the spirit's fashion to the counsel of his will?
Square his being by enactment—shape his soul to legislature—
Be himself his law of living, his own art of good and ill?

Who can sway the rhythm of breathing? Who can time his own heart beating?

Fix the pitch of all soul music, and imprison it in bars?
Who can pledge the immaterial affinities from meeting?
Who can make him his own orbit unrelated to the stars?

I had marked my path before me, not in flowery lane or by-way,
Unbeguiled of all bird-singing, by no voice of waters won;
And across life's silent glacier I had cut a clear cold highway,
Little recking of the avalanche, or all-dissolving sun.

I had said unto my soul, Be thou the lord of thine own Reason;
Get thee face to face and heart to heart with everlasting Truth;—
Thou art heir of all her beauty if thou dare the lofty treason
To clasp her and to kiss her with the valiant lips of youth.

Not in outer courts of worship, not by darkly-curtained portal,
But within her inmost chamber, in the glory of her shrine,
Shalt thou seek her and commune with her, a mortal made immortal
By the breathing of her presence, by her fervid hand in thine.

With no garment-clinging vassalage, unawed of all tradition,
Alone, alone of mortals shalt thou gaze upon her face;
And the years shall pass unheeded in the wonder of the vision,
And her attributes unfolding make thee free of time and space.

So I left the dewy levels, and with upward-pointing finger
Marked my goal among the snowy peaks o'er pleasure and o'er pain;
And the shining arms of Aphrodité beckoning me to linger
By her side amid her rosy bowers were stretched for me in vain.

And I heard the world pass by me with a far-off dreamy cadence
Of an alien music uninformed with meaning to mine ears;
And all sweet melodious laughter in the voice of men and maidens
Came with distance-saddened undertone, a mockery of tears.

Till alike the throb of pleasure and alike the great o'erflowings
Of the springs of sorrow seemed to be forgotten things of yore;
Till the world passed from beneath me, and the rumour of its goings
Far diffused into the silent ethers reached my soul no more.

And the bodiless and shadowless mute ghosts of contemplation,
Charmed from spells of bookish lore, were my companions on my way;

And their flake-light footfalls cheered me to a dreamy exaltation
Where the soul sat with the godheads, unassailable as they.

I had lost the glow of Nature; and the pride of clearer seeing
Was to me for all elation, for the sunset and the flowers,
For the beauty and the music and the savour of all being,
For the starry thrills of midnight, for the joy of morning hours.

Down the slopes I left behind me fled the creeds of many races,
Fled the gnomes of superstition, fled rebuking fiends of fear,
And I smiled as I beheld them from the calm of my high places
Cast integument and substance, melt in mist and disappear.

So I held my way unwavering in dismal mountainpasses,
Though a voice within my soul was loud, "In vain, and all in vain!"
And I heard the unassuaging streams far down in deep crevasses,
And I stumbled snowblind 'mid the boulders of the long moraine.

Still I said, I will not falter, nor revisit earth for ever,
Who have breathed the breath of deity and lived Olympian hours!
—When the summer smote the glacier, and the ice became a river,
And I found me in the valley clinging wildly to the flowers!

Clinging wildly, clinging fondly, in a mad repentant fashion,
To the blossoms long forsaken, to the graces long foregone,
Paying lavishly in tears and sighs the long arrears of passion,
And re-wedded to the joy of earth by one fair thing thereon!

Fools and blind are we who think to soar beyond the reach of Nature!
Fools and blind who think to bid the tide of feeling from its flood!
Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?
Or compel the summer fervours from the solstice of the blood?

Not "as gods." Not yet. Our roots are in the earth that heaves beneath me:
With her rhythm we move and tremble, with her starry dance we whirl.
Lo, she laughs when I would fly to where her arms shall not enwreath me,
Draws me back with cords of golden hair, o'erthrows me with a girl!

What was I to deem it duty thus to sunder Truth and Beauty—
Thus to die among the living, and to live among the dead?
Ah, the hands of Truth are boonless, and the lips of Truth are tuneless,
When we sever her from Love, and throne her coldly overhead!

Now I know her drawing nearer in a fairer light and dearer
Than in wastes of icy solitude or page of weary tome—
In the gleam of golden tresses, in the eye that smiles and blesses,
In the glowing hand that presses Love's approved conviction home.

Truth is sphered in sweet communion. Truth is life and love in union.
Hand in hand from spiritual founts we catch the circling thrill.
We are not compact of reasons. There are changes in our seasons;

And the crescent orb of youth has many phases to fulfil.

Mute Discourse.

“Fulmina. . . . coelo nulla sereno.”

—LUCRETIUS.

GOD speaks by silence. Voice-dividing man,
Who cannot triumph but he saith, Aha—
Who cannot suffer without Woe is me—
Who, ere obedience follow on the will,
Must say, Thou shalt—who, looking back, saith Then,
And forward, Then; and feebly nameth, Now,
His changing foothold 'twixt eternities;
Whose love is pain until it finds a voice—
Whose seething anger bubbles in a curse—
Who summarizes truth in party-cries,
And bounds the universe with category,—
This word-dividing, speech-preëminent man,
Deeming his Maker even as himself,
Must find Him in a voice ere he believe.
We fret at silence, and our turbulent hearts
Say, “If He be a God He will speak out.”
We rail at silence, and would fain disturb
The duly ordered course of signless years.
We moan at silence, till our quivering need
Becomes incarnate, and our sore desire
Passes into a voice. Then say we, “Lo,
He is, for He hath spoken; thus and thus
He said.”

So ever radiating self,
Conditioning a God to our degree,
We make a word the top of argument—
Fond weaklings we, whose utmost scope and goal
Is but a pillared formula, whereon
To hang the garlands of our faith and love.
Well was it in the childhood of the world
To cry for open vision and a voice:
But in the riper time, when we have reached
The kindly heart of universal law,
And safe assurance of essential good,
Say, rather, now that had there been *no* God,
There had been *many* voices, freaks of sound,
Capricious thunders in unclouded skies,
Portentous utterance on the trembling hills
And Pythian antics in oracular caves—
Yea, signs and wonders had been multiplied,

And god succeeded god, the latest ever
Lord-paramount, until the crazèd world
Had lost its judgment 'mid contending claims.

O men! It is the child's heart in the man's
That will not rest without a lullaby—
That will not trust the everlasting arm
Unless it hear the voice in tale or song.
It is the child's heart in the man's that seeks,
In elements of old Semitic thought,
And wondrous syllables of Grecian tongue,
Recorded witness of another way
Of things than that which God hath willed to be
Our daily life. And if in times of old
The child-heart caught at wonder, and the charm
Of sundered system—if untutored faith
Found confirmation in arrested suns,
And gnomon-shadows of reverted hours,
And in the agonized Thus saith the Lord
Of mantled seers with fateful burden bowed—
We, children of a clearer, purer light
(Despising not the day of smaller things,
Nor calling out to kick the ladder foot
Because our finger-tips have verged on rest)—
We, youths, whose spring brings on the lawful hope
To loose the girdle of the maiden Truth,—
We, men, whose joyous summer morn hath heard
The marriage bell of Reason and of Faith—
We, turning from the windy ways of the world,
And gazing nearly on the silent march
Of love in law, and law in love, proclaim
“In that He works in silence He is God!”

So, from the very permanence of things,
And voiceless continuity of love,
Unmixed with human passion, fretted not
By jealousy, impatience, or revenge,
We gather courage, and confirm our faith.
So, casting back the scoffer's words, we say,
Even because there is no fitful sign,
And since our fathers fell asleep all things
Continue as at first—this wonder of no change
Reputes the God, to whom a thousand years
Are as one day. Yea, to the willing ear,
The dumb supremacy of patience speaks
Louder than Sinai. And if yet we lack
The witness and the voucher of a voice,
What hindereth that we who stand between
The living Nature and the living God,

Between them, yet in both—their ministers—
By noble life and converse pure, should be
Ourselves the very voice of God on earth,
Living epistles, known and read of all?

O Brothers! Were we wholly soul-possessed
With this Divine regard—would we but soar
Beyond the cloud, and centralize our faith
Upon the stable sun—would we reject
Kaleidoscopic views of broken truth
Distorted to the turn of perverse will—
Make daylight through traditionary ranks
Of intervening hells, and fix the eye
Upon the shining heart of Supreme Love,—
Would we . . . But why prolong the bootless “would”?—
I, who know all the weakness and the fear,
The weary ways of labyrinthine doubt,
The faintness on the dizzy height—who lack
The Gabriel-pinion wherewithal to range
The unsupported medium of pure sky—
Who know the struggle of the natural soul,
Breathing a finer ether than its own—
Who, venturing on specular power too vast,
Scathed by my own reflector, fall down blind;
Who, at the least wind of calamity,
Drag shiftlessly the anchor of my hope,
And, shrieking from the waves, catch gladly at
A Name and Sake wherewith to close a prayer!

Yet though I faint and fail, I may not take
My weakness for the Truth, nor dare misread
The manual sign of God upon the heart,
The pledge, beyond the power of any voice,
Of sure advance unto the perfect whole;
Nor treat the tablet-tracing of His hand
As it were some old tombstone left apart
In grave-yard places for the years to hide
Deep in irrelevant and noxious growth.
Oh, Brothers! push the weeds aside, lay bare
The monument, and clear the earthy mould
From the Divine intaglio. Read thereon
The uncanceled charter of your native hope,
Nor crave articulate thunders any more,
Read there the universal law of good;
Unqualified evangel; blessedness,
The birthright of all being; peace, that lends
No weak subscription unto sin, and yet
Disarms despair. Read, and believe no more
In final triumph of concreted sin

In any soul that cometh forth from God,
And lives, and moves, and hath its being in Him.
Read thus, and pray the while that he who writes
Reck his own rede.

Oh, Sister, would I bruise
The snowy petals of thy prayerful faith,
Or chill the tendril-twinings of thy hope
With evil influence of wintry scorn?
Would God that any faith of mine could give
Such quiet stability unto my feet
As thine to thine! Oh, if thy kneeling wakes
A smile at all, 'tis Heaven that smiles because
Thou ask'st so little! God will o'erfulfil
Thy dreams of silver with unmeted gold.
Oh, Sister, though thou dost believe in wrath,
Though shapes of woe flit through thine imagery,
Though thou has ta'en the cloud into thy faith,
The little rift of blue that breaks thy dark
Brings thee more comfort and more fixèd hope
Than unto me this cloudless open vast
Wherein my soul floats weary and alone!

Yet think not we are voyaging apart
To different havens. Truth is one. Yet One
Alone hath reached it in straight course. Each soul
Hath its own track, its currents, and its gales;
And each toward sequel of attainment must
Fetch many a compass. Some keep land in view—
The beacon-hills of old authority—
And draw assurance from a shore defined,
Though it be dire with cloud, and capes of wrath;
While some shoot boldly into perilous seas—
Pacific-seeming seas, yet not without
A weary loneliness of land forsook,
And fear of sudden cyclone, and still more
Deceitful calm. Or, if the metaphor
Be yet too cruel for a sister's heart,
Oh, think that in the common way of love
We are never out of hearing; but may each,
Whene'er we will, join hand with each, and say,
“God—Father—Love,” the triune sum of truth,
And Watchword of the universal Christ.

Sister, I think, and in the thought take heart,
That when the Day of Reconcilement comes,
As come it will, the all-transmuting Truth
May find affinities in things that seem
To us the very elements of war.

Dost thou remember how, in childhood's days,

One gave us with to recognize the south
By turning faceward to the mid-day sun;
And we believed, and took the facile plan
For unexceptioned law? But even now
I hear the chime of Austral noon, and, lo,
The sun is in the north? Yet 'tis the same
Bright sun that shone and shines upon us both,
On me the evil, and on thee the good;
Yea, more, it is the same, noon-glaring here,
That now with hints of orient twilight steals
Over the stillness of thy morning dreams.

Dost thou remember how in those old days,
The dear old days that ne'er may come again—
Though love, like history, repeats itself,
But with the larger feature, stronger hand,
And keener sense, evoked of common grief—
When we would scan the circling mountain-cope
That made our little valley all a world,
One taught our young unlearnèd lips to say,
“The Sensible Horizon;” then dissolved
Our bounded dream, and showed our widening minds
That this was not the limit of the truth,
But grew from our own petty finitude; and far
In unconceived remote another line,
Yet only in concession named a line,
“The Rational,” made space intelligible,
And gave relation to the stars. Yet not
The less our early mountain-narrowed sky
Was still *the* sky to us, cloud, storm, and all.
Oh take my parable, and fondly think
That though the years have brought me wider range,
And shifting zeniths been my law of life,
Did thou and I yet tread the native vale,
I not the less, beneath that homely sky,
Would point to it whene'er we spoke of heaven.

Cape Byron.

UPON the orient utmost of the land,
Enfranchised of the world, alone, and free,
I stood; before me, and on either hand,
The interminable solace of the sea.

A white-winged hour of heaven, a fugitive
Of which the angels wist not, hither fled,
Whose plummy, rustling whispers bid me live
Its length of moments as if grief were dead.

Oh memorable hour of beauteous things!
The heaving azure melting into light;
The chequered sport of fleet o'ershadowings;
The nearer emerald curling into white;

The shoreward billows merging each in each,
To sunder yet again, fold, and unfold;
The shining curve of far-receptive beach;
The silvery wave-kiss on the gladdened gold;

The grandeur of the lone old promontory;
The distant bourne of hills in purple guise,
Athrob with soft enchantment; high in glory
The peak of Warning bosomed in the skies!

Oh all too fair to be so seldom seen,
This shadowy purple on the mountains sleeping—
This sapphire of unutterable sheen—
This beauty-harvest ever ripe for reaping!

For what high end is all this daily boon,
Unseen of man, in sightless silence spent?
Doth lavish Nature vainly importune
The unconscious witness of the firmament?

Or is it that the influent God, whose breath
Informs with glory sea and shore and hill,
His infinite lone rejoicing nourisheth
Upon the beauteous outcome of His will?

Or is it but a patient waiting-while
Against a day when many an eye shall bless,
From lowly cottage and imperial pile,
This wide tranquillity of loveliness;—

Against a day of many-thronging feet,
Of virtues, valours, all that builds and saves—

Of human loves responsive to the sweet
Melodious importunity of waves?

I only know that this empurpled range,
This golden shore, this great transcendent sea,
Are now a memory that will not change
Till I become as they—a memory.

The Goths in Campania.

(Placidia, in the Tent of Adolphus.)

I.

I AM not Roman when he looks upon me
 With those mild eyes of unaccustomed blue;
Woman, not Roman, when his strong embraces
 Crush me with rugged promises of love.
Time was, ere yet the Gothic trump had broken
 The dream of that inviolate majesty
Whose very sleep was empire—Rome its pillow—
 Its couch, the world—its overhanging, heaven;
Time was, when only words of courtly homage
 Brought to mine ear the import of such praise,
As had bestirred Divinity to wonder
 That men should deem it of so high account,
When careful speech of long premeditation
 Lost grace and aptitude in present awe;
When lips, late ruddy with the blood of Caesars,
 Grew white in rash petition for such boons
As gods had smiled at—unrewarding favour,
 A word, a look, yea, even indifference,
As if in me the fear of adverse fortune
 Had recognized some godhead of caprice.
But when the sun shone in the palace garden,
 And May was in the roses and in me,
And all my soul cried out for what it had not,
 To crown the life of summer and my own,
Honorius' sister, Theodosius' daughter,
 Placidia, I, of Roman maidens first,
Had welcomed fellowship and clasped intrusion;—
 Yet no man asked my heart, no man my love.
None to the longing of my life made answer;
 None broke the still Imperial solitude
With sweet audacity of hardy wooing;
 None wronged the princess by the woman's right.
Such time had been, until this bold Adolphus
 With warrior-laugh o'erleaped prerogative,
And caught me for a spoil beneath his buckler,
 The princess captive, but the woman free.
A dreary code of law inscribed in purple
 Had been the record of Placidia's years,
But that this Goth from out the Boreal lustre

Of his blue eye shed heav'n upon the page,
And wrote in crimson characters of triumph
The story of a glad captivity.
For in restraint of foot I leaped to rescue
From golden chains and regal servitude;
And this my durance is a fond redemption
That makes me free to love, and to be loved.

II.

Yet there are moments, when as now he slumbers
Beside my feet, 'mid these disorder'd spoils
That make my prison-tent a Roman ruin—
Fierce moments of resurgent memory,
Full of rebuke of race and name forsaken,
And peopled with the spirits of the past.
Oh, it doth wrench me when his heedless fingers,
Circling the chalice in Falernian dreams—
The golden chalice that my father drank of,
Enriched with his own emblems, priceless work,
Gazing whereon his well-instructed spirit
Enhanced the vintage with the pride of art—
Relax and glide adown the rare embossment,
Until they touch that laurelled head, whose nod,
More than of Jove, shook not Olympus only,
But Jove himself, and all his kindred gods.
Then, daughter, sister, princess, rise within me,
A trinity abhorrent of itself—
That other self, which, when Adolphus sleepeth,
Sleeps, and, when he awaketh, wakes to him.

III.

Why should the spirit of my father vex me?
Or what allegiance owe I unto him
Who dwells apart, inglorious in Ravenna,
And could not, if he would, renew my state?
I see them not, and wherefore should I deem me
So much beholden to the unbeheld?
I hear them not; shall I be answerable
To irresponsible death and voiceless sloth?
They touch me not; can unembracing shadow
With close assurance compass me about?
Nor eye, nor ear, nor any sense declares them,
Unseen, unechoing, uncomfoting:
But eye, and ear, and every sense is captive,
And thrall for ever to the comely Goth.

Why should the spirit of my father vex me?
Behold, I give to him a worthier son!
And though he be barbarian who woos me,
The Roman bride shall wed his heart to Rome.

IV.

One thing I owe—beyond all ransom precious—
To father, brother, and Imperial name,
The chastity that makes me worth the winning,
A virgin love unstained of force or guile.
For this I thank thee, Theodosius, father;
For this, Honorius, thy fraternal name;
Nor thee the less, thou sleeping soul of honour,
That no barbarian art in sense of law.
For this, to silk and purple, crowns historic,
Goblets of gold and priceless spoil of pearl—
To all the glories of the cunning workman,
Sculptured or graven, or inlaid with gems—
To all the glittering legacies of triumph,
And hoarded trophies of a thousand years—
To all the wealth of harvest, pasture, vintage,
To corn and cattle, oil, and spice, and wine—
Yea, to the sacred things of God, most welcome!
Since thou hast kept *me* sacred, even from thee.
The noon consumes me in the thick pavilion,
Yet I am fain of close-drawn solitude,
Lest I should look upon the godless riot,
That, once seen, haunts me like a dream of shame
For all around the large-limbed Goths were lying
Beneath the plane-trees—yet but half-perceived
'Mid soft entanglement of arms and tresses
By captive beauty wreathed around its lords;
The pride of Romans, daughters of great houses,
Hiding their faces from my pitying gaze
In hideous refuge of barbarian bosoms . . .
God pardon them the wrong He hindered not!
God take my thanks for what is more than empire,
And speed the warrior whom no greedy haste
Hath spurred beyond the pace of loyal loving,
The pure caress, and broken utterance
Of mingling tongues half-learnt in march of conquest—
To which the ordered flow of Roman speech
Is feeble—rich in sweetest hesitations,
And wishful voids of tongueless eloquence.
He stirs, and this pavilion's girth becometh
My orb of lands, and hallowed round of love.

He wakes, and country is a dream forgotten:
Where thou, Adolphus, art, there is my Rome.

A Coin of Trajan in Australia.

THROUGH what strange winding ways of circumstance,
Through what conspiracies of time and chance,
 By what long chain of hands, from his who pressed
Upon thy disc the Imperial countenance,
 Then threw thee, one of many, with the rest—
By what long chain of hands, a living line
Of transfer hast thou come from his to mine?

Could I but trace thee back from mine to his,
Through the long process of the centuries
 From touch to touch of hands that took or gave,
And read as current things the destinies
 Writ on each palm—of master, matron, slave—
Whereon a moment thou hast lain, I should
Know all that life can hold of ill or good.

How strange to think, nigh two millenniums gone,
While yet thy legend white from mintage shone,
 At such an hour of just such day divine,
Some Roman maiden's hand thou layest upon,
 Whose living warmth became a moment thine—
That into this thine actual substance stole
The gentle tremors pulsing from her soul!

Nor yet less strange to think of what long space
Thou layest forgot in some forgotten place
 While Empire fell, or passed to Pontiff-Kings,
And while the gradual darkening of thy face
 Was all thy share in all the change of things,
Till some chance hand thy secret touched at last
And drew thee forth to witness of the past;—

To be, when after lapse of many days
Thy vagrant fate through unrecorded ways
 At length had brought thee to this alien clime,
A voice that, heedless all of blame or praise,
 Protests the spirit of a regal time
Against a later dispensation, when
No more doth glory sway the souls of men.

Sway me one instant with the glory gone,
One dazzled moment let me gaze upon
 What is impossible again to be,
This image and this superscription con
 As when in silver glow of novelty

They stood for present Empire, and designed
A god incarnate throned amid mankind!—

* * * * *

Oh, magic disc, responsive to my mood!
I saw him on his dizzy altitude,
 Serene, august, the lord of all the world!
Imperial in a space of light he stood,
 While round his feet in storm-lit turmoil whirled
A cloud of striving Dignities, that hid
From him all nether woes ill-augured.

Above distraction, and beyond dispute,
The incommunicable attribute
 Of majesty made fiat of his breath;
And when all fain of some imagined suit
 I lifted suppliant hands for life or death,
And caught his glance of calm Olympian pride,
I swooned, and, swooning, “Ave Caesar,” cried!

* * * * *

The glory-tissued vision, warp and woof,
Dissolves before the sense of self-reproof.
 Ah, foolish-fain of pictured History!
This in the only land beneath heav'n's roof
 Where never yet hath manhood bent the knee
 To man the one sole continent whose sod
The foot of regnant kingdom ne'er hath trod!

And yet—and yet—though all around us lies
The freest land beneath the o'er-arching skies,
 Rich in a polity of common weal,
Is there among us aught that justifies
 The scorn of ancient things? Can we repeal
The union 'twixt the present and the past,
And place ourselves as first, whom God made last

Because of that which was is that which is;
We are the children of the centuries;
 And if our ancients in excess of awe
To Caesar rendered even more than his,
 We reap their legacy in sense of law;
Yea, Freedom conscious grew by stress of thrall
The might of one revealed the strength of all.

The Boy Crusader.

“OH father, is that Jerusalem—
Those walls and towers so strong!”
“Ho, boy, we are yet in our own fair France,
That is only Avignon.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, are these the Jordan's banks?
Let us rest in those vineyards fair”
“Ho, boy, these are only the banks of the Rhone,
And we may not linger there.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, I fear them—the waves! the waves!
Is Jerusalem over the sea?”
“Ay, over the sea and then over the hills—
But cling, my boy, to me.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, is that Jerusalem,
Like a shell of gold in the bay?”
Nay, it is only Palermo, boy;
And this is Saint Rosalie's day.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, I feared the sea, but more
I fear this burning sand”
“Good cheer, my boy; take heart of grace,
We tread upon holy land.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, can it be Holy Land,
With all this blood and death?”
“That was Acre we stormed, my boy;
Now let us to Nazareth.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, the hills are so high—so high!
Is Jerusalem very far?”
“Hush, hush, my boy, and I'll tell you the tale
Of the Kings who followed the Star.”

* * * * *

“Oh father, the hills are so steep—so steep!
Will Jerusalem soon be near?”
“Boy, what had it been had you carried the cross,
Instead of your father's spear?”

* * * * *

“Oh father, I am weary and faint;
This must be Calvary!”
“Good cheer, my boy; but one hill more;
Jerusalem is nigh.

“The men-at-arms have passed the ridge.
Hark, boy, how the warriors sing!”
“I only hear the sound of harps,
And waters murmuring.”

“Wake, boy, this is no time to fail!
Oh best of happy hours!
Behold at length Jerusalem—
Its gates, and domes, and towers!”

“Father, I see Jerusalem,
Ah, nearer than you deem!”
“Your eyes are closed, you see it not,
Or see it in a dream!

“Your eyes are closed, my boy, my boy!
Your face is to the West!”
“Father, I see it overhead,
And, oh, so full of rest!

“There are little children clothed in white,
And angels leading them;
There are streets of gold and gates of pearl!
At last—Jerusalem.

“And our little Marie is beckoning me,
In her hand a diadem.
Father, I must go on before
We'll meet in Jerusalem.”

Had I But Known

(From the French Version of a Russian Song)

I LOVED thee! Ah, those vows of love,
So fondly made, so soon unmade!
I trusted thee all men above—
Ah, fatal trust, so soon betrayed.
A dream that wore the face of truth
Was what I loved. The dream has flown.
All, all I've lost, faith, hope and love,
Had I but known! Had I but known!

Thou weapest. Would that *I* could shed
A tear for either joy or grief!
But from the heart grown cold and dead
There springs no fountain of relief.
Now all my life is tearless pain,
My hope forgetfulness alone,
And all my speech the one refrain—
Had I but known! Had I but known!

Once More.

“INTERMISSA DIU BELLA.”

I HAD not thought again to be
 A dreamer of such dreams as these.
The springtime is no more for me;
 My summer died beyond the seas.
From what untimely source begin
These stirrings of the life within?

I had not thought again to taste
 The bitter sweet, the joyous pain.
I dreamed that I had trodden waste,
 Beyond the power of sun or rain,
The soil that grew the passion fruit;—
Then, whence this blossom underfoot?

I had not thought again to see
 Beyond the homely pale of truth;—
The lights and shapes of witchery,
 That glorify the skies of youth,
I only know as perished things;—
Whence, then, this flash of angel wings?

How spend the day, yet save the hours?
 I had my day; the hours are fled.
How eat the fruit, yet hold the flowers?
 I ate the fruit; the flowers are dead.
Oh, what divine or fiendish art
Hath twined fresh tendrils round my heart?

I said, 'tis good to be alone,
 No alien hand to urge or check.
I said, my spirit is my own,
 To loose or bind, to save or wreck.
I trod on Love, called Reason lord;—
Lo, whence this subtle silken cord?

Oh, who shall tell if this be strength
 Re-risen, or ghost of old defect?
The truth of manhood come at length,
 Or weakness born of purpose wrecked?
I only know it is the whole
Arch-craving of a hungry soul.

I only know that all the hordes
 Of buried hopes and jealousies

Are risen again and crossing swords,
And that 'twas but an armistice,
A breathing time 'twixt strife and strife,
Which I had deemed a peace for life.

Oh! who can tell where duty lies—
To urge, repress, advance, or stay?
To grasp at Good in Beauty's guise,
Or brush the pretty lure away,
Ere doubtful war of hopes and fears
Consume the hoarded strength of years?

Stanzas for Music.

Now once more the world is bright,
Gone the clouds that hid the light,
Gone the mists that dimmed my sight
 Gone sigh and tear.
As the sunshine after rain
Mirth and gladness come again,
“Sweet is pleasure after pain,”
 Hope after fear.

Now again the joyous Hours
Strew my path with leaves and flowers,
Leading where enchanted bowers
 Bid Love repose.
And I follow full of glee,
Weary though the way may be,
For my love is waiting me
 There at its close.

Song from “Fayette.”

WHY doth the dawning speak of her?
What kindred hath she with the morn?
Why should my wakening thoughts transfer
To her the glow in Orient born?
I only know that wheresoe'er
Awaketh Beauty, she is there.

Why is the noontide full of her?
What kindred hath she with the sun?
Why should the whole world's minister
Be eloquent alone of one?
I only know that wheresoe'er
Exulteth Beauty, she is there.

Why is the midnight fraught with her?
What kindred hath she with the night?
O dreams that are of things that were,
Ye change my darkness into light!
I know, I know that wheresoe'er
Reposeth Beauty, she is there.

A Lost Chance.

[It is stated that a shepherd, who had for many years grazed his flocks in a district in which a rich tin-mining town in Queensland now stands, went mad on learning of the great discoveries made there.]

JUST to miss it by a hair's breadth! Nay, not miss it! To have held it
In my hand, and oft-times through my fingers run the swarthy ore!
Minus only the poor trick of Art or Science that compelled it
To unveil for others' good the hidden value, and to pour
On a thousand hearts the light of Hope, that shines for *me* no more!

To have held it in my hand in vacant listlessness of wonder,
Taken with its dusky lustre, all incurious of its worth—
To have trod for years upon it, I above, and Fortune under—
To have scattered it a thousand times like seed upon the earth!
Who shall say I am not justified who curse my day of birth?

To have built my hovel o'er it—to have dreamed above it nightly—
Pillowed on the weal of thousand lives, and dead unto my own!
Planning paltry profits wrung from year-long toil, and holding lightly
What lay acres wide around me, naked-bright, or grass-o'ergrown—
Holding lightly—and for that I curse—no, not myself alone!

For a youth made vain with riot, for the golden graces squandered,
Home forsaken, dear ones alienated, Love itself aggrieved,
I had sworn a full atonement, to the ends of earth had wandered,
Drunk the dregs of expiation, unbelauded, unperceived—
Heav'n alone beheld, and—mocks me with what “might have been” achieved!

All the cold suspicion of the world I took for my demerit,
Its deceit my retribution, its malignity my meed:
When Misfortune smote, un murmuring I bowed my head to bear it,
Driven to minister to brutes in my extremity of need—
Who shall say *now* it delights not Heaven to break the bruised reed?

In the round of conscious being, from the rising to the setting
Of Thine imaged self, Thy merciless, unsympathizing Sun,
Was there one from hard Disaster's hand so piteously shrinking
Whom this boon had more advantaged? God, I ask Thee, was there one?
In Thy passionless immunity, Thou knowest there was none!

To the wrongs the world hath wrought me, to its coldness and disfavour,
To the wreck of every venture, to enduring unsuccess,
To the sweat of cheerless toil, the bread made bitter with the savour
Of the leaven of regret and tears of unforgetfulness,
Hadst Thou need to add Thy mockery, to perfect my distress?

For I hold it cruel mockery in man, or God, or devil,
To assign the poor his blindfold lot from weary day to day,
In the very lap of Affluence, on Fortune's highest level,
Then, upon the brink of revelation, trick his steps away,
And flash the truth upon him when the chance is gone for aye!

I had soothed repulse with hope, matched disappointment with defiance,
Or opposed a pliant meekness to the driving storms of Fate:
But—the merely “coming short!” Oh, what remedial appliance,
What demeanour of resistance shall have virtue to abate
The nameless woe that trembles in the echo of Too Late!

Oh, the might have been! the might have been! the sting of it! the madness!
What a wave of the Inexorable chokes my fitful breath!
What a rush of olden echoes voiced with manysounding sadness!
What a throng of new despairs that drive me down the path of death!
Who is there in heaven who careth? Who on earth who comforteth?

They on earth but seek their own. In eager crowds they hasten thither
Where I trod so late unconscious on futurities untold.
And I! I, whose all is gone! The curse of desolation wither—
Whom? - Myself, who, year-worn, turn again unto the sin of old?
Or the fiends who sold me poison for my little all of gold?

Both! All men! Yea, Heaven! But chiefly those who prosper where I languished!
Those who reap the ripe occasion, where in many a wandering line
The old traces of my footsteps, worn in fevered moods and anguished,
Now are paths of rich expectancy for other feet than mine!
Can I breathe without upbraiding? Shall I die without a sign?

It was mine! *Is* mine, by Heaven! Consecrated to me only,
By the sacred right of service, by the pledge of weary years!
By the bond of silent witness, by communion dumb and lonely,
By the seal of many sorrows, by the sacrament of tears!
Mine!—The echoes laugh, and fiends of hell are answering with jeers.

* * * * *

Where am I? and who are these?—Nay, nay. Unhand me! Let me go, sirs!
I am very very rich! I've miles on miles of priceless ore!
I will make your fortunes—all of you!—and I would have you know, sirs—
There is not a single sheep amissing—Loose me, I implore!
It is only sleep that ails me—let me sleep—for evermore!

Adelaide Ironside.

(Australian Painter. Born at Sydney, 17th November, 1831. Died at Rome, 15th November, 1867.)

[GUARDIAN ANGEL.]

KNOWEST thou now, O Love! Oh pure from the death of thy summer of sweetness!

Seest thou now, O new-born Delight of the Ransomed and Free!
We have gathered the flower for the fruit; we have hastened the hour of thy meetness;

For thou wert sealed unto us, and thine Angel hath waited for thee.

Not in disdain, O Love! O Sweet! of desires that are earthly and mortal,
Not in the scorn of thine Art, whose beginning and end is Divine,
So soon have we borne thee asleep through the glow of the uttermost portal,
But in the ruth of high souls that have travelled with longings like thine.

Nothing is lost, O Love! O mine! and thy seemingly broken endeavour
Here re-appeareth, transfigured as thou; yet the Art of thy youth;
And the light of the Spirit of Beauty is on it for ever and ever;
For Art is the garment of Praise, and the broidered apparel of Truth.

Seest thou now, O Love! how Art, in a way to mortality nameless,
Liveth again, soul-informed, love-sustained, self-completing, for aye?
How thy heart's purpose was good, and the dream of thy maidenhood blameless,—
How thy fair dawn is fulfilled in the light of ineffable day?

Seest thou now, O Love! O Fair! how the high spiritlife is Art regnant—
Art become bliss, and harmonious response to the Infinite Will?
Fused and transfused into Love, with the germs of eternity pregnant—
Crowned as the law of the beauty of Holiness; throned, yet Art still?

Not then in vain, O Love! thy dawn, nor the dream of thy holy ambition;
Never a trace of thy finger hath witnessed for Beauty in vain;
In the bloom of the noon of thine ardour thy soul became fair for fruition;
We have smitten the green into gold but to spare thee the harvest of pain.

Nothing that came from thy hand, O Love, made void, cut off, evanescent,—
From the infantile essay that strove with the weapon of outline alone,
To the Angels thou lovedst to portray with luminous plumes iridescent,
Till thy soul drew so near unto us that we took thee for one of our own.

Now may'st thou trace, O Heart! Sweet Heart! from on high all the way I have led thee,

From the youth of a world in the Seas of the South to unperishing Rome;
For the lure of thy following soul was the sheen of my wings that o'erspread thee,
Flushing with reflex of glory the path of thy pilgrimage—home.

By the way of the age of the world I have chosen to lead thee to glory;
Of the wine of the might of the world have I given thee to drink ere thou slept;
Where the Masters have walked I have laid thee, ensphered with the darlings of
story;

I have waked thee a perfected spirit; matured, yet thine innocence kept.

There, too, I led thee to feed thee with prescience and keen imitation
Of the art-adjutant Grace that hath given thee, a love-gift, to me;
By the work of my hands did I wake in thee foretaste of Transfiguration,—
For thine Angel once wrought upon earth as thou; and his work thou didst see.

Now is thy spirit, O Love, in mine. In thy heart I behold thou dost know me.

I looked for thy glad recognition; no converse of aliens is this;
Oft when thy longings went upward, thy soul, like a mirror below me,
Caught my own loveliest visions in shapes of Elysian bliss.

Name me not now, O Love! O mine! for the name of my days of wayfaring
Still hath the note of a fevered desire, and an echo of pain.

Come thou, O Gift of long hope, to the home of thine Angel's preparing!
There I shall show thee the mercy of God, and the things that remain.

The Chamber of Faith.

THERE'S a room in my soul that has long been closed;
Many and many a year has passed
Since I stood at the door and looked my last
On the things within, all seemly disposed
In the curtained obscurity, nevermore
To be lit of the sun through window or door;—

Looked my last with a sense of crime,
On the smooth white bed where my dead had lain,
At the cross I had left on the counterpane,
Having kissed it twice and a long third time
Ere I laid it down where the head had been,
With a rose for the breast, and a lily between;

At her altar-table, where, side by side,
Lay her Bible, her Hymnal, her Book of Prayer;
At her silent harp, at her hallowed chair,
Where, ever at morning and eventide,
With her hand on my head, and my head on her knee,
I had knelt, that her blessing might rest on me;

At saint and angel on wall and screen,
Painted, and carven, and silken wrought,
At flower and bird, by her hand and thought
Moulded to meanings of things unseen;
At the sombre recess where, dimly descried,
Hung the shadowy form of the Crucified.

Looked my last with a sense of crime,
As one who, free of intent to slay,
Hath yet unwitting made wide the way
For death to enter before his time;
For, had I not strayed from her sheltering side,
Peradventure my mother had not died.

For this was the Chamber of Faith, my Mother,
Faith that was Mother, and Sister, and Wife,
Joy of my joy, and life of my life,
Fair as none else was fair, loved as no other,
Mother to nourish me, Sister to cheer,
Wife to be dearest of all held dear.

And all of her now was the void she had left,
And a stillness that even a sigh had profaned—
Gone, with her mysteries unexplained,
And all her tokens of purport reft,

Save the reproach I seemed to trace
In the dumb appeal of each angel face.

So I closed the door and departed—alone:
And all these years I have dwelt aloof,
In a turret chamber over the roof,
With undarkened outlook on all things known,
On horizons that ever enlarge and withdraw,
On the boundless realms of immutable law.

Bereft of Faith, but redeemed from fear,
With enfranchised vision, with reason free
From the bondage of ancient authority,
I say to myself it is good to be here,
High o'er all vain imaginings,
And face to face with the truth of things.

But at times, in the night, to the drowsing sense
The sound of a harp played long ago
Floats faintly up from a room below,
The old music of love and reverence,
And I wake, and, behold, all unaware,
I have left my bed, and am kneeling in prayer.

It is thus to-night, and with heart oppressed
By the heavy hand of the truth of things,
I am fain of the old imaginings,
And a hope arises within my breast,
That beyond the beyond and above the above
There yet may be things that I know not of.

I will go down to the Chamber of Faith;
Perchance in her symbols I yet may find
Some meaning missed, some drift undivined,
Some clue to a refuge this side of death,
Where Reason and Faith, where Man and Child,
Where Law and Love may be reconciled.

* * * * *

* * * * *

I stand in her precincts, alien, estranged,
A waking man in a place of dreams.
How ghostly the room in the lamplight seems!
Yet all is familiar, all is unchanged;
All that was fair, still fair to see,
Save the flowers, which have withered—for these were of me.

Frescoed seraph and carven saint
Gaze on me still with their wistful appeal,
Oh, Heavenly Ministries, would I could feel
Some thrill of response however faint,
Some touch, some grace of the olden days
That would quicken my heart to prayer and praise!

Lo, for a moment, I burn to accost
Your Lord of Love in the old sweet way;
I seize the harp and begin to play,
But the chords are loose and the key is lost,
And the sudden dissonance shatters the mood
Wherein the unseen is the understood—

Shatters the mood and arrests the thought,
The fluttering thought that essayed to soar
To the region where seraph and saint adore,
To the sphere where the wonders of Faith are wrought,
And her symbols decline to pigment and stone
As I lapse again to the seen and known.

Wherefore, then, should I linger here?
What is it I seek to understand?
I open her Scriptures with random hand,
And I chance on the words of the holy Seer
Which one of old in his chariot read,
“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter is led.”

And I turn to the Christ. Though my lamp grows dim,
I can see the tortured arms outspread,
The broken body and drooping head,
And I would I could weep as I wept for Him,
And I cry as I bend the unwonted knee,
Quicken me Jesu! Quicken me!

Thou in whom God and man are met—
(If indeed the twain in one can meet)—
Quicken me, Lord, as I kneel at Thy feet!
By Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat,
By Thy Cross and Passion, Thy Death, Thy Grave,
Save!—(if indeed Thou hast power to save).—

By Thy rising again—(if indeed Thou didst rise)—
Oh, if and if! Oh, doubt upon doubt!
I cannot pray. My light flickers out,
And the Christ is hid from my straining eyes,
And my groping hands, in the darkness drear
Clasp but an image. The Lord is not here.

Oh, ye who have taken away my Lord,

In these palsied lips that are powerless to pray,
In this fount run dry, in this life grown grey,
Behold your exceeding great reward!
Oh, gather the strong to your side if you will,
But leave to the weak our Saviour still!

Why shame myself thus with a witless plea?
There is none, there is none that hath taken away.
I alone did kiss and betray;
But with tears I did it; and, oh, it may be
That this way Renunciation lies
That Faith herself is my Sacrifice!

And who knows but beyond the narrow scope
Of these chamber walls, she lives again,
A transmuted force unnamed of men,
One wave whereof is this trembling hope,
That beyond the beyond and above the above,
There yet may be things that we know not of?

Stabat Mater.

NIGH the cross with sorrow laden,
Weeping stood the Mother-maiden
While her Son in torment hung:
Sadly moaning, deeply wailing,
Now the cruel sword prevailing
Pierced her soul with anguish wrung.

Oh how sad that spirit lowly,
Blessèd Virgin, pure and holy,
Mother of the Only-born.
She with bitter grief and sighing,
Piteous Mother of the dying,
Saw her son with anguish torn.

Who could, tearless, thus behold her,
While such agonies enfold her,
Mother of the Crucified?
Who could see the Christ before him
See his Mother grieving o'er Him,
And unpitying turn aside?

In His torment she beheld Him,
While the cruel scourge compelled Him
Others' sins to expiate,
Saw her Son so meek and tender
Forth His stainless spirit render,
Hers, yet dying desolate.

Mother, fount of all affection,
Let me, bowed in sore dejection,
Share the grief and bear the rod.
Let my soul with ardour glowing,
Hence abound to overflowing
With the love of Christ my God.

Holy Mother, pierce my spirit
With the wounds for my demerit
Borne upon the accursed tree.
Let me, keenly sympathising,
Feel the torment agonising,
Of the cross endured for me.

Tear for tear, thy sorrow bearing,
Be it mine, thine anguish sharing,
While I live to weep with thee,
With thee at the cross abiding,

With thee mournful watch dividing,
This I ask thee tearfully.

Virgin, virgins all excelling,
May my spirit near thee dwelling,
Feel thy bitter grief its own;
Share the Saviour's dark affliction,
Passion, scourge, and crucifixion,
Pang for pang and groan for groan.

Pierce me till my spirit bleedeth,
Pierce me till my sense recedeth,
Blood-enraptured clean away.
Virgin blest when time is ended,
Be my soul by thee defended,
In the dreadful Judgment Day

Christ, when hence my soul is fleeting,
Through thy mother mercy meeting,
Be the palm of victory given.
When this mortal bond shall sever,
Take my spirit home for ever,
To the glorious rest of Heaven.

Psalm XC.

O God, the everlasting One,
In Thee alone, from sire to son,
Through generations all, our race
Hath found a sure abiding place.

Before the mountains rose from earth,
Before the world itself had birth,
Ere yet the heav'ns were spread abroad,
Thou wast and art eternal God.

But man, the creature of Thy breath,
Thou humblest to the deeps of death;
Few days and sad thou giv'st and then
"Return," Thou say'st, "ye sons of men."

For, lo, the space of thousand years
To Thine unchanging eye appears
As yesterday to mortal sight,
When passed, or as a watch of night.

As comes a flood on those who sleep,
So over man Thy wrath doth sweep.
As fades the freshness of the grass,
So swiftly doth his vigour pass.

As grass at morn he flourisheth;
Cut down, at eve he lies in death;
Like flame Thy wrath against us burns,
And all our life to anguish turns.

Thou our iniquities hast set
Before Thy face, unpardon'd yet;
Our secret sins, in darkness done,
Thy light reveals them ev'ry one.

And all our days beneath the blast
Of Thy consuming wrath are past;
Our barren lives from year to year
Ev'n as an idle tale appear.

In seventy years our race is run,
And what if here and there an one,
Through greater strength four-score attains
He only added sorrow gains.

And soon the longest life is o'er,
We pass away and are no more.

Oh, who Thine anger can express,
Thine ire is as Thine awfulness.

Lord, teach us so our days to count,
That as we mark their small amount,
Our hearts we may the more apply
To learn Thy wisdom ere we die.

Return, Oh God. How long wilt Thou
Thy grace withhold? Oh, even now,
In mercy hear Thy servant's voice,
That all our days we may rejoice.

According as the days have been
Wherein we have but sorrow seen,
According to our years of ill
Do Thou our lives with gladness fill.

Give Thou to us Thy works to know;
Thy glory to our children show,
And on Thy servants let there rest
The beauty of the Holiest.

To all the work we do on earth
Give Thou, O Lord, enduring worth;
Yea, that our handwork may endure,
Do Thou, Eternal, make it sure.

Australian Anthem.

MAKER of Earth and Sea,
What shall we render Thee?
 All ours is Thine:—
All that our land doth hold,
Increase of field and fold,
Rich ores and virgin gold,
 Thine—Thine—all Thine!

What can thy children bring?
What save the voice to sing
 “All things are Thine?”—
What to Thy throne convey?
What save the voice to pray
“God bless our land always,
 This land of Thine?”

Oh with Thy mighty hand
Guard Thou the Motherland;
 She too, is Thine.
Lead her where honour lies,
We beneath other skies
Still clinging daughterwise,
 Her's, yet all Thine.

Britons of ev'ry creed,
Teuton and Celt agreed,
 Let us be Thine.
One in all noble fame,
Still be our path the same,
Onward in Freedom's name,
 Upward in Thine!

Australian Anthem.

(Later Version.)

MAKER of earth and sea,
What shall we render Thee?
 All things are Thine!
Ours but from day to day
Still with one heart to pray,
“God bless our land always,”
 This land of Thine.

Mighty in brotherhood,
Mighty for God and good,
 Let us be Thine.
Here let the nations see
Toil from the curse set free,
Labour and Liberty
 One cause—and Thine.

Here let glad Plenty reign;
Here let none seek in vain
 Our help and Thine—
No heart for want of friend
Fail ere the timely end,
But love for ever blend
 Man's cause and Thine

Here let Thy peace abide;
Never may strife divide
 This land of Thine.
Let us united stand,
One great Australian band,
Heart to heart, hand in hand,
 Heart and hand Thine

Strong to defend our right,
Proud in all nations' sight,
 Lowly in Thine—
One in all noble fame,
Still be our path the same,
Onward in Freedom's name,
 Upward in Thine

The Midnight Axe.

I.

THE red day sank as the Sergeant rode
Through the woods grown dim and brown,
One farewell flush on his carbine glowed,
And the veil of the dusk drew down.

No sound of life save the hoof-beats broke
The hush of the lonely place,
Or the short, sharp words that the Sergeant spoke
When his good horse slackened pace,

Or hungrily caught at the ti-tree shoots,
Or in tangled brushwood tripped
Faltered amid disrupted roots,
Or on porphyry outcrop slipped.

The woods closed in; through the vaulted dark
No ray of starlight shone,
But still o'er the crashing litter of bark
Trooper and steed tore on.

Night in the bush, and the bearings lost;
But the Sergeant took no heed,
For Fate that morn his will had crossed,
And his wrath was hot indeed.

The captured prey that his hands had gripped
Ere the dawn in his lone bush lair
The bonds from his pinioned wrists had slipped,
And was gone he knew not where.

Therefore the wrath of Sergeant Hume
Burned fiercely as on he fared,
And whither he rode through the perilous gloom
He neither knew nor cared,

But still, as the dense brush checked the pace,
Would drive the sharp spurs in,
Though the pendent parasites smote his face,
Or caught him beneath the chin.

The woodland dipped, or upward bent,
But he recked not of hollow or hill,
Till right on the brink of a sheer descent
His trembling horse stood still.

And when, in despite of word and oath,
He swerved from the darksome edge,
The unconscious man, dismounting loth,
Set foot on a yielding ledge.

A sudden strain on a treacherous rein,
And a clutch at the empty air,
A cry in the dark, with no ear to mark
Its accent of despair—

And the slender stream in the gloom below,
That in mossy channel ran,
Was checked a space in its feeble flow,
By the limbs of a senseless man.

II.

A change had passed o'er the face of night,
When, waking as from a dream,
The Sergeant gazed aghast at the sight
Of moonlit cliff and stream.

From the shallow wherein his limbs had lain
He crawled to higher ground,
And, numb of heart and dizzy of brain,
Dreamily gazed around.

From aisle to aisle of the solemn wood
A misty radiance spread,
And like pillars seen through incense stood
The gaunt boles, gray or red.

Slow vapours, touched with a mystic sheen,
Round the sombre branches curled,
Or floated the haggard trunks between,
Like ghosts in a spectral world.

No voice was heard of beast or bird,
Nor whirr of insect wing;
Nor crepitant bark the silence stirred,
Nor dead nor living thing.

So still that, but for his labouring breath,
And the blood on his head and hand,
He might have deemed his swoon was death,
And this the Silent Land.

Anon, close by, at the water's edge,
His helmet he espied,
Half-buried among the reedy sedge,

And drew it to his side.

And ev'n as he dipped it in the brook,
And drank as from a cup,
Suddenly, with affrighted look,
The Sergeant started up.

For the sound of an axe—a single stroke—
Through the ghostly woods rang clear;
And a cold sweat on his forehead broke,
And he shook in deadly fear.

Why should the sound that on lonely tracks
Had gladdened him many a day—
Why should the ring of the friendly axe
Bring boding and dismay?

And why should his steed down the slope hard by,
With fierce and frantic stride—
Why should his steed with unearthly cry
Rush trembling to his side?

Strange, too—and the Sergeant marked it well,
Nor doubted he marked aright—
When the thunder of hoofs on the silence fell,
And the cry rang through the night,

A thousand answering echoes woke,
Reverberant far and wide;
*But to the unseen woodman's stroke
No echo had replied.*

And while he questioned with his fear
And summoned his pride to aid,
A second stroke fell sharp and clear,
Nor echo answer made.

A third stroke, and aloud he cried,
As one who hails his kind;
But nought save his own voice multiplied
His straining sense divined.

He bound the ends of his broken rein,
He recked not his carbine gone,
He mounted his steed with a groan of pain,
And tow'rd the sound spurred on.

For now the blows fell thick and fast,
And he noted with added dread
That ever as woods on woods flew past
The sound moved on ahead.

But his courage rose with the quickening pace,
And mocked his boding gloom;
For fear had no abiding-place
In the soul of Sergeant Hume.

III

Where the woods thinned out and the sparser trees
Their separate shadows cast,
Waxing fainter by slow degrees
The sounds died out at last.

The Sergeant paused, and peered about
O'er all the stirless scene,
Half in amaze, and half in doubt
If such a thing had been.

Nor vainly in search of clue or guide
From trunk to trunk he gazed,
For, lo! the giant stem at his side
By the hand of man was blazed.

And again and again he found the sign,
Till, after a weary way,
Before him, asleep in the calm moonshine,
A little clearing lay;

And in it a red slab hut that glowed
As 'twere of jasper made.
The Sergeant into the clearing rode,
And passed through the rude stockade.

He bound his horse to the fence, and soon
He stood by the open door.
With pallid face upturned to the moon
A man slept on the floor.

Little he thought to have found him here,
By such strange portent led—
His sister's son, whom for many a year
His own had mourned as dead;

Who had chosen the sundering seas to roam,
After a youth misspent,
And to those who wept in his far-off home
Token nor word had sent.

The face looked grim, and haggard, and old,
Yet not from the touch of time;—
Too well the Sergeant knew the mould

And lineaments of crime.

And "Better," he said, "she should mourn him dead
Than know him changed to this!"
Yet he kneeled, and touched the slumbering head,
For her, with a gentle kiss.

Whereat the eyelids parted wide,
But no light in the dull eye gleamed:
The man turned slowly on his side
And muttered as one who dreamed;

He stared at the Sergeant as in a trance,
And the listener's blood ran cold
As he pieced the broken utterance,
That a tale of horror told;

For he heard him rave of murder done,
Of an axe and a hollow tree,
And "Oh, God!" he cried, "must my sister's son
Be led to his death by me!"

He seized him roughly by the arm,
He called him by his name;
The man leaped up in mazed alarm,
And terror shook his frame.

Then a sudden knife flashed out from his hip,
And they closed in struggle wild;
But soon in the Sergeant's iron grip
The man was as a child.

IV.

A wind had arisen that shook the hut;
The moonbeams dimmed apace;
The lamp was lit; the door was shut;
And the twain sat face to face.

In question put and answer flung
A weary space had passed,
But the secret of the soul was wrung
From the stubborn lips at last.

As one who resistless doom obeyed
The younger told his sin,
Nor any prayer for mercy made,
Nor appeal to the bond of kin.

"The quarrel? Oh, 'twas an idle thing—

Too idle almost to name;
He turned up an ace and killed my king,
And I lost the cursèd game.

“And he triumphed and jeered, and his stinging chaff,
By heaven, how it maddened me then!
And he left me there with a scornful laugh—
But he never laughed again.

“We had long been mates, through good and ill;
Together we owned this land;
But his was ever the stronger will,
And his was the stronger hand.

“But I would be done with his lordly airs;
I was weary of them and him;
So I stole upon him unawares
In the forest lone and dim.

“The ring of his axe had drowned my tread;
But a rod from me he stood
When he paused to fix the iron head
That had loosened as he hewed.

“Then I too made a sudden halt,
And watched him as he turned
To a charred stump, in whose gaping vault
A fire of branches burned.

“He had left the axe by the half-hewn bole,
As whistling he turned away;
From my covert with wary foot I stole,
And caught it where it lay.

“He stooped; he stirred the fire to flame;
I could feel its scorching breath,
As behind him with the axe I came,
And struck the stroke of death.

‘Dead at a blow, without a groan,
The sapling still in his hands,
The man fell forward like a stone
Amid the burning brands.

“The stark limbs lay without, but those
I thrust in the fiery tomb——”
With shuddering groan the Sergeant rose,
And paced the narrow room,

And cried aloud, “Oh, task of hell,
That *I* should his captor be!

My God! if it be possible,
Let this cup pass from me!”

The spent light flickered and died; and, lo,
The dawn about them lay;
And each face a ghastlier shade of woe
Took on in the dismal gray.

Around the hut the changeful gale
Seemed now to sob and moan,
And mingled with the doleful tale
A dreary undertone.

“I piled dry wood in the hollow trunk,”
The unsparing shrift went on,
“And watched till the tedious corse had shrunk
To ashes, and was gone.

“That night I knew my soul was dead;
For neither joy nor grief
The numbness stirred of heart and head,
Nor tears came for relief.

“And when morning dawned, with no surprise
I awoke to my solitude,
Nor blood-clouds flared before mine eyes,
As men had writ they should;

“Nor fancy feigned dumb things would prate
Of what no man could prove!—
Only, a heavy, heavy weight,
That would not, would not move—

“Only a burden ever the same
Asleep or awake I bore,
A dead soul in a living frame
That would quicken nevermore.

“Three nights had passed since the deed was done,
And all was calm and still—
(You'll say 'tis a lie; I say 'tis none;
I'll swear to it, if you will)—

“Three nights—and, mark me, that very day
I had stood by the ashy cave,
And the toppling shell had snapped, and lay
Like a lid on my comrade's grave—

“And yet, I tell you, the man lived on!
Though the ashes o'er and o'er
I had sifted till every trace was gone

Of what he was, or wore:—

“Three nights had passed; in a quiet unstirred
By wind or living thing,
As I lay upon my bed I heard
His axe in the timber ring!

“He hewed; he paused; he hewed again.
Each stroke was like a knell!
And I heard the fibres wrench, and then
The crash of a tree as it fell.

“And I fled; a hundred leagues I fled—
In the crowded haunts of a town
I would hide me from the irksome dead,
And would crush remembrance down.

“But in all that life and ceaseless stir
Nor part nor lot I found;
For men to me as shadows were,
And their speech had a far-off sound.

“For I had lost the touch of souls;
Men's lives and mine betwixt,
Wide as the space that parts the poles
There was a great gulf fixed.

“Sorrow and joy to me but seemed;
As one from an alien sphere
I lived and saw, or as one who dreamed.—
I was lonelier there than here.

“To the sense of all life's daily round
I had lost the living key,
And I grew to long for the only sound
That had meaning on earth for me.

“Again o'er the weary forest-tracks
My burden hither I bore;
And I heard the measured ring of the axe
In the midnight as before.

“And as ever he hewed the long nights through,
Nor harmed me in my bed,
A feeble sense within me grew
Of friendship with the dead.

“And believe me, I could have lived, lived long,
With this poor stay of mine,
But the faithless dead has done me wrong:
Three nights and never a sign,

“Though I've thrice out-watched the stars!—Last night,
Seeing he came no more,
Despair anew was whispering flight,
When I sank as dead on the floor.

“Take me away from this curs'd abode!
Not a jot for life I care;
He has left me alone, and my weary load
Is greater than I can bear.

“But I say if my mate had walked about
I had never told you the tale!”
As he spoke the sound of an axe rang out,
In a lull of the fitful gale.

He sprang to his feet: a cunning smile
O'er all his visage spread;
“Why, man, I lied to you all the while!
It was all a lie!” he said.

“Leave go!”—for the trooper dragged him out
Under the angry sky.
“The man's alive!—you can hear him about!—
Would you hang me for a lie? . . .

“Not that way! No, not that!” he hissed,
And shook in all his frame;
But the Sergeant drew him by the wrist
To whence the sounds yet came,

Moaning ever, “What have I done
That *I* should his captor be?
Oh, God! to think that my sister's son
Should be led to his death by me!”

The tempest swelled; and, caught by the blast
In wanton revel of wrath,
Tumultuous boughs flew whirling past,
Or thundered across their path:

Yet ever above the roar of the storm,
Louder and louder yet
The axe-strokes rang, but no human form
Their wildered vision met.

When they reached a spot where a charred stump prone
On an ashy hollow lay,
The doomed man writhed with piteous moan,
And well-nigh swooned away.

When they came to a tree on whose gaping trunk

Some woodman's axe had plied,
The struggling captive backward shrunk,
And broke from the trooper's side.

“To left!—for your life! To left, I say!”
Was the Sergeant's warning call:
For he saw the tree in the tempest sway,
He marked the threatening fall.

But the vengeful wreck its victim found;
It seized him as he fled;
Between one giant limb and the ground
The man lay crushed and dead.

The Sergeant gazed on the corpse aghast,
Yet he cried, as he bent the knee,
“Father! I thank Thee that Thou hast
Let this cup pass from me!”

Opening Hymn.

[Sung at the Opening of the Queensland National Society's Exhibition,
1876.]

WHILE nations joining gifts
Their fanes of Art adorn,
Hear, Lord, the lowly voice that lifts
The song of the youngest-born.
The gifts of the youngest-born,
We spread them forth to Thee,—
What toil hath wrought, what skill hath taught,
What Freedom hath brought the free.

No storied name we vaunt,
Nor martial trophies raise;
No battle-riven banners flaunt
The triumphs of other days.
But triumphs of peaceful days
Adorn our jubilee:
Here toil and skill Thine ends fulfil,
With hands that from blood are free.

We pile the arms of Peace,
Her trophies manifold,
Her ploughshare swords, her shields of fleece,
Her armour of bloodless gold.
Our treasures of fleece and gold
We consecrate to Thee,
With choicest yield of fruitful field,
And spoil from the forest-tree.

We bless Thee for our land,
Broad streams and gladdening rills,
For flocks that roam on ev'ry hand,
For herds on a thousand hills.
From all its thousand hills
Our land doth call to Thee,
Still do Thou bless with happiness
This youngest of the free.

Johnsonian Address.

READ AT THE INAUGURAL DINNER IN THE NEW PREMISES OF THE JOHNSONIAN CLUB, 7TH JANUARY, 1899.

“LET observation with extensive view
“Survey mankind from China to Peru”—
(And whence—permit me in parenthesis
To ask—on such historic night as this
Could one more fitly, seasonably, quote
Than from some page that Samuel Johnson wrote,
Our Godsire, in the honoured name of whom
This feast we spread, this temple we illumine,
These long church wardens we)—but to resume—
“Let observation with extensive view
“Survey mankind from China to Peru,”
And judgment following observation try
Those countless multitudes to classify.
Camper, and Blumenbach, and Cuvier too,
Surveyed mankind from China to Peru,
And many a savant of more modern fame
With the same end in view has done the same
Seeking some formula that should embrace
The thousandfold divisions of the race—
And yet the theme grows more and more occult,
For each presents a different result.

Let *us* essay the task.—Imprimis, quit
Their uncouth jargon that but darkens wit.
What least pretence of light can mortal see
In “Dioscurian Mongolidae?”
What help in “Xanthochroic” can be found?
Is “Hyperborean Samoeid” aught but sound?
“Dolichocephalic” ’s a wild guffaw,
“Orthognathous” and “Prognathous”—mere jaw.
Not ours to come to grief upon the rocks
Of groups and families and unplaced stocks,
Branches, varieties and sub-varieties
That only swell their total of dubieties—
But, as of old the Gentile and the Jew
Made up the whole world in the Hebrew view,
So we (to-night at least) will hold it true
That all mankind divides itself in two—
Two classes only form the race of man—

JOHN-SO-NI-AN and NON-JOHN-SO-NI-AN.

And we, the Hebrews of this later day—
“The Chosen People,” one might fitlier say—
We, too, have wandered in the wilderness
For many a year without a fixed address—
(I do not say “the Wilderness of Sin;”
The cases are sufficiently akin
Without that detail being counted in)—
We, too, from shifting stage to shifting stage
Have plodded through our thirsty pilgrimage,
A tabernacular existence led
(As our sonorous godsire would have said);
From well to well—at least from pub. to pub.—
We've humped the sacred Lares of the Club,
Still keeping, like the Jew, a hopeful eye
Upon the Promised Land of by-and-by.

And now, when twenty homeless years have passed,
Behold us in that Promised Land at last,
Vagrants no more, but making jubilee
Under our own vine and our own figtree.
But here the parallel fails.—Unlike the Jew,
We have not played the privative cuckoo;
We've turned no Gentile fledgling from its nest,
No Non-Johnsonian fowl have dispossessed;
We have ourselves the twigs and mosses laid—
In point of fact, our home is pure home-made.

But “twigs and mosses!” What a sorry trope
For this grand culmination of our hope—
This lordly pleasure-house that we have built—
This brave o'erhanging wonderment of gilt—
This spacious hall, where festival is graced
With all the garniture of art and taste,
Rich with pictorial treasures that display
Whatever portraiture can well portray,
From grisly Johnson in his suit of snuff
To simpering Chloe in her native buff—
Those cloisters, in whose tessellated aisles
Sits Nicotina wreathed in vaporous smiles—
This billiard-chamber where our privileged ears
May hear all night the music of the spheres—
This *salle de lecture*, this ideal bar,
Where shipwreck lurks not, where no sirens are—
This whole substantial fabric of *no dream*
But solid brick and perdurable beam!

But what if, sloughing off the things that were,
We shed the old Johnsonian character?
If this migration to a home delectable
Should land us in the groove of the Respectable?
Oh, never may we shame our godsire thus!
Still let his golden words appeal to us,
“I’m with you, boys,” when in the midnight dark
His roystering comrades roused him for a lark;
“I’m with you, boys,” he answered with delight,
And Heaven alone knows what they did that night!
Still may these royal words define the true
Johnsonian temperament and point of view;
Still walk we in the old Johnsonian road,
“I’m with you, boys,” our motto and our code;
Still be our virtues in this order reckoned—
Fellowship first, Decorum a bad second.

Nor fear that moral poison lurks herein—
Desipere in loco isn't Sin;
Take *him* for type who, Wisdom's hierarch,
Retained the relish of the midnight lark;
Take *this* for counsel, keep it to the letter—
Be good as Johnson—but, oh, don't be better!

So walking in the light his spirit sheds,
This gilded splendour will not turn our heads;
So to the Gentile scorner who would say
That luxury is the herald of decay,
Our answer, framed in fashion old and famous,
Shall be “*Domum, non animum, mutamus!*”

For My Sake.

(Written in aid of the Children's Hospital.)

MATTHEW XXV. 40.

“INASMUCH as ye gave ear unto the sighing
Of the least of these the children of my care,—
Of your love from death redeemed them, or in dying
Stood between them and the shadow of despair;—

“Inasmuch as when the little ones did languish,
Ye put forth the hand to make their burdens light;—
Inasmuch as when they lay on beds of anguish,
Ye were with them in the watches of the night;—

“All the joy ye brought to light when sorrow hid it
Now awaits you, an exceeding great reward.
As ye did it unto these, to ME ye did it;
Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”

“Lord, when sought we out the children that did languish?
When put forth the hand to make their burdens light?
Lord, we wist not when they lay on beds of anguish,
And we slept throughout the watches of the night.

“For our lives were full of trouble and of labour,
And the night followed hard upon the day:
Had we lingered with the children of our neighbour,
Our own little ones had perished by the way.”

“Inasmuch as though ye might not touch or tend them,
Ye were with them in your love to heal and save,
And were hands and feet to those who did befriend them,
By the gold and by the silver that ye gave.

“Find your treasure where your ransomed ones have hid it;
Take it back a thousandfold for your reward.
As you did it unto these, to ME ye did it;
Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”

The Famine in Ireland,

1879–80.

THEY *shall* not perish! Not if help can save
Our hunger-stricken brethren from the grave!
They *shall* not perish! With no impious breath
We vow that Love shall stronger prove than Death!

Say not, 'Tis vain to strive against the Hand
That writeth Judgment o'er a mourning land!—
Say not, 'Tis Heav'n that worketh good or ill;
And if our brother die—it is God's will;—
Say not, if He is pleased to hide His face,
'Tis ours and theirs to wait returning grace;
Nor, listless, into prayerful chambers creep,
And be content to weep with those who weep;—
Say not that Nature but fulfils her plan,
Through righteous retribution teaching man;
Nor round your easy acquiescence draw
The curtain of inexorable Law.

Say rather, *We* are now the hands of God
To pour our fruits upon their fruitless sod!
Say rather, *We* are God's incarnate Will
To feed His lambs, His children's mouths to fill,
And in our very plenty read the sign
That we are chos'n as instruments Divine!
Say rather, if His face be darkened there,
'Tis ours to light the darkness of despair,
And through the tears that dim their sorrowing eyes
Show God reflected from our happier skies!
And what though Nature in her changelessness
Works out her ends through cycles of distress,—
We too are Nature! and, enthroned above
All other law, we own the Law of Love!

Therefore they *shall* not perish!—Oh sad Isle,
Endure thy burden yet a little while—
Yea, but a little while, for bounteous Heaven
The lightning for our messenger hath given,
To flash from cape to cape, o'er ocean's bed,
The word that for thy need becometh bread!

Oh grief-worn father, gazing on the soil
That mocks thy husbandry; whose fruitless toil
Provides no answer to the children's cry;
Who turn'st aside lest thou should'st see them die;
Lo, God hath not forsaken ev'n thy least.

Turn yet again: Help cometh from the East!

Oh drooping mother, bowed with hopeless cares
That labour lightens not, nor tears, nor prayers,—
Who spread'st ev'n now before thy famished brood
The scanty remnant of unwholesome food,—
Once more let hope awake within thy breast.
Be of good cheer: Help cometh from the West!

Ye little ones, whose raiment, rent and old,
Scarce hides the forms that tremble in the cold;
Whose play is silenced; all whose frolic wiles
Are turned to weariness; whose sunny smiles
Have vanished from the hunger-wasted mouth,—
Be warmed and fed: Help cometh from the South!

Say we too much? Nay, less than this would shame
Alike our hearts, our honour, and our name.
Nothing too much while Famine stalks abroad,
And Winter grips the shivering lambs of God!
Nothing too much while weeping kindred cry
To happier kindred, "Save us, or we die!"
Nothing too much while we whose bread is sure
Have hearts to pity, hands to help, the poor,—
And eyes in Ireland's hour of need to see
Queensland's, Australia's opportunity!

A Historical Problem.

AN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT PERSIA.

Read at a Smoke Concert* given in honour of General Sir Henry Wylie Norman, G.C.B., by the Officers of the Civil Service, in the Centennial Hall, Brisbane, on 3rd October, 1893.]

KING AHASUERUS in his palace at Shu-Shàn
Gave a feast unto his princes, Tarshish, Meres, Memucàn,
And some others whose outlandish names it boots not to rehearse—
You will find them all in “Esther,” chapter First, and fourteenth verse.

And when the feast was at its height, and jest and story flew,
And reverberant laughter shook the hangings, white, and green, and blue,
Ahasuerus hammered with his sceptre on the board,
And at the royal signal silence promptly was restored.

“Great lords, our Privy Councillors,” the mighty monarch said,
“The chiefest of our provinces is now without a head;
“Assyria is vacant; and we ask you, who is he
“Who worthiest is to rule the roost in that great Satrapy?”

Then one named one; another, one; till all had said their say;
But at each name the monarch shook his head and answered “Nay.
“Ye only think,” he cried, “of high degree and princely birth;
“Hen-w―y-nor is the man for *Us*, whose claim is simply—*worth*.”

Hen-w―y-nor! At the name there burst so joyful a hurroo
That the palace-hangings swayed in curves of white and green and blue;
And, waving golden goblets, Tarshish, Meres, Memucàn,
Etcetera, shouted “Live the King! Hen-w―y-nor is the man!”

Now, Hen-w―y-nor was a modest chief, who ruled a scanty folk,
And his soul was filled with wonder when the news upon him broke
(Which proves, if proof is wanted, that a man may be alert
And wideawake to everything except his own desert).

The war-worn hero fain had put the glittering prize aside,
But Duty called with trumpet-tone and would not be denied,
And at the old familiar sound his answering spirit leapt,
And his posts were straightway flying with the message “I accept.”

And his people—ah, his people!—they were glad and they were sad:
They were proud and yet cast down: the news was good, the news was bad.
Each felt higher by a cubit, and yet lower by a head,
And they bragged of his promotion, mingling tears with what they said.

But where all sincerely sorrowed, Persian chroniclers agree
That the saddest of the mourners were the *Civil Scribery*—
A superior class of men, who, these same chroniclers declare,
Were the best of all good fellows in that land—or anywhere.

Now the Scribery had a custom, quite peculiar to this folk,
To give departing friends an apotheosis of smoke;
So they waited on the Satrap, and besought him to submit
To the process on such evening as His Altitude thought fit.

“ 'Tis small honour *we* can render,” said the scribe who spoke their views;
“We are poor, Sir—devilish poor—with ten per centum off our screws;
“But we'd fain give you a pleasure to remember when you're gone”—
And the kindly Satrap bowed his honour'd head, and said “I'm on.”

But when the deputation had departed, there came near
A stealthy-footed chamberlain who whispered in his ear,
“There s a Farewell Ode included in the *pleasure* they prepare!”—
And the hero of a hundred fights dropped back into his chair.

Yea, he whose eye had ever in fierce conflict brightest glowed—
He who before had ne'er known fear—now quailed before the Ode!
And he cried, “Is there no outlet from this horrible abyss?
“Chillianwallah, Delhi, Gujerat, were not a patch on this!

“Yet stay!”—for now a happy thought took shape within his brain—
“You cannot Farewell-Ode a man who chooses to remain!”
Oh, blessed inspiration! the solution clear he saw!
And out he rushed, and wired Ahasuerus, “I withdraw!”

* * * * *

Exit Farewell Ode. But synchronously with its exit came
A new problem into history that still preserves his fame,
For historians still dispute the question, each with some fresh lie,
Why Hen-w―y-nor slung Assyria—But *we* know the reason why.

* The Concert was given on the occasion of the withdrawal by Sir Henry Norman of his acceptance of the appointment of Governor-General of India, and after the announcement of his intention to retain to the end of his term the governorship of Queensland, and was substituted for a Farewell Concert, at which, when his departure for India was in prospect, he had promised to attend.

“Our Hope.”

[Written on the reported discovery of a boat cast on the beach near Cape Palmerston, evidently built from the remains of a large ship, and having painted on bows and stern the words “Our Hope.”]

A WIND-BORNE shred of that mysterious scroll
Wherein the secrets of the deep are writ:
An echo of the warfare of the soul:
A stranded hope; “Our Hope”—so runneth it.

So runneth it; a tale of manful aim,
Of clinging trust, of hope that would not die,
Shrunk to the piteous legend of a name,
That lingers in baptismal mockery.

“Our Hope!” Poor chronicle unsouled of sense!
Drear ghost of shattered hope!—but potent yet
With wail of sea-sepulchral eloquence
To wake conjecture, and confirm regret!

Brief words and few; but needs no more to tell
Of hope from shipwrecked hope through toil renewed;
And how from some lone isle with glad farewell
THEY launched upon the awful solitude.

How day by day they stared at ocean's rim
With straining eyes, for sail, or cliff, or tree,
Till all things paled, and ev'n “Our Hope” grew dim,
And dark-winged night came brooding o'er the sea.

Or how beneath a fateful sky o'ercast,
'Mid panting silence of deceitful calms,
The long sore shrift of prayerful vigils passed,
With heaven-turned faces and uplifted palms.

Or how, when quivering up the orient slope
Of dawn, the opal splendours thrilled and spread,
Glad in the joy of hope renewed, “Our Hope”
With homeward throb across the waters fled.

How day brought night, and night reluctant morn,
Till hope deferred became a wild despair,
And shoreless sunsets laughed their dreams to scorn,
And Doom hung lurid on the burdened air.

How one by one, no more by hope beguiled,
Fed the hot winds with taint of dying breath,

Until the last lone lingerer, fever-wild,
Arraigning Heav'n, leaped madly into death.

Is this the last of hope?—An empty shell
The bitter end of many a toil-drawn sigh?
“Why make we such ado?” Were it not well
To fold our robes about us, and to die?

To build—put forth—and cease: Is this our tale?
Shall baffled effort mock us evermore?
Come forth, oh brighter Faith, with golden sail,
And bring us tidings from the further shore!

Shine forth, O Faith, from out the viewless scope
Of rich fulfilment far o'er mortal dreams!
Shine forth with joyous tidings of “Our Hope”
Home-haven'd by the marge of crystal streams!

My Chinee Cook.

THEY who say the bush is dull are not so very far astray,
For this eucalyptic cloisterdom is anything but gay;
But its uneventful dulness I contentedly could brook,
If I only could get back my lost, lamented Chinee cook.

We had tried them without number—cooks, to wit—my wife and I;
One a week, then three a fortnight, as my wife can testify;
But at last we got the right one; I may say 'twas by a fluke,
For he dropped in miscellaneous-like, that handy Chinee cook,

He found the kitchen empty, laid his swag down, and commenced;
My wife, surprised, found nothing to say anything against;
But she asked him for how much a year the work he undertook—
“Me workee for me ration,” said that noble Chinee cook.

Then right off from next to nothing such a dinner he prepared,
That the Governor I'm certain less luxuriously fared;
And he waited, too, in spotless white, with such respectful look,
And bowed his head when grace was said, that pious Chinee cook.

He did the work of man and maid—made beds and swept out rooms;
Nor cooled he in his zeal, as is the manner of new brooms:
Oh, he shed celestial brightness on the most sequestered nook,
For his mop and pail were everywhere—my cleanly Chinee cook.

We got fat upon his cooking; we were happy in those days,
For he tickled up our palates in a thousand pleasant ways.
Oh his dinners! Oh his dinners! they were fit for any duke!
Oh delectable Mongolian! Oh celestial Chinee cook!

There was nothing in creation that he didn't put to use,
And the less he got to cook with, all the more he could produce,
All nature was his kitchen range, likewise his cook'ry book—
Neither Soyer nor Meg Dod could teach that knowing Chinee cook.

And day by day upon my wife and me the mystery grew,
How his virtues were so many and his earnings were so few;
And we laid our heads together to find out by hook or crook,
The secret of the cheapness of that priceless Chinee cook.

And still the sense of mystery grew on us day by day,
Till it came to be a trouble, and we wished him well away;
But we could not find a fault in one so far above rebuke—
Ah, we didn't know the value of that valuable cook.

But one day when I was out he brought my wife a lot of things,
Turquoise earrings, opal bracelets, ruby brooches, diamond rings,

And he ran their various prices o'er as glibly as a book,
And dirt cheap, too, were the jewels of that jewel of a cook.

I returned, and just in time to stop the purchase of the lot,
And to ask him where on earth those costly jewels he had got,
And when I looked him in the face, good gracious how he shook!
And he says, says he, "Me bought him"—did that trembling Chinee cook.

And I a justice of the peace! O Fortune! how unkind!
For a certain Sydney robbery came rushing to my mind
"You bought them! Ah, I fear me, John, you paid them with a hook!
I am bound to apprehend you, oh unhappy Chinee cook!"

So the mystery was solved at length; the secret now we saw;
John had used us as a refuge from the clutches of the law;
And, now, alas, too late would I his frailty overlook!
He is gone, and I am left without my skilful Chinee cook.

Oh, could I taste again of those delicious luscious things,
I could pardon him the robbery of other people's rings;
I exaggerated principle, my duty I mistook,
When I handed over to the law my peerless Chinee cook.

What would I give just now for one of his superb ragouts,
His entremets, his entrées, his incomparable stews?
Oh, art and taste and piquancy my happy board forsook,
When I came the J.P. over my lamented Chinee cook.

Take away the hated letters. 'Twas my "justice" robbed my "peace";
Take my name from the commission, and my matchless cook release.
But I fear my Johnny's dead, for I am haunted by a spook,
With oblique eyes and a pigtail, like my lost, my Chinee cook.

My Other Chinee Cook.

YES, I got another Johnny; but he was to Number One
As a Satyr to Hyperion, as a rushlight to the sun;
He was lazy, he was cheeky, he was dirty, he was sly,
But he had a single virtue, and its name was rabbit pie.

Now those who say the bush is dull are not so far astray,
For the neutral tints of station life are anything but gay;
But, with all its uneventfulness, I solemnly deny
That the bush is unendurable along with rabbit pie.

We had fixed one day to sack him, and agreed to moot the point
When my lad should bring our usual regale of cindered joint,
But instead of cindered joint we saw and smelt, my wife and I,
Such a lovely, such a beautiful, oh! such a rabbit pie!

There was quite a new expression on his lemon-coloured face,
And the unexpected odour won him temporary grace,
For we tacitly postponed the sacking-point till by-and bye,
And we tacitly said nothing save the one word, "rabbit pie!"

I had learned that pleasant mystery should simply be endured,
And forebore to ask of Johnny where the rabbits were procured!
I had learned from Number One to stand aloof from how and why,
And I threw myself upon the simple fact of rabbit pie.

And when the pie was opened, what a picture did we see!
They lay in beauty side by side, they filled our home with glee!
How excellent, how succulent, back, neck, and leg, and thigh!
What a noble gift is manhood! What a trust is rabbit pie!

For a week the thing continued, rabbit pie from day to day;
Though where he got the rabbits John would ne'er vouchsafe to say;
But we never seemed to tire of them, and daily could descry
Subtle shades of new delight in each successive rabbit pie.

Sunday came; by rabbit reckoning, the seventh day of the week;
We had dined, we sat in silence, both our hearts (?) too full to speak,
When in walks Cousin George, and, with a sniff, says he, "Oh my!
What a savoury suggestion! what a smell of rabbit pie!"

"Oh, why so late, George?" says my wife, "the rabbit pie is gone;
But you *must* have one for tea, though. Ring the bell, my dear, for John."
So I rang the bell for John, to whom my wife did signify,
"Let us have an early tea, John, and another rabbit pie."

But John seemed taken quite aback, and shook his funny head,
And uttered words I comprehended no more than the dead;

“Go, do as you are bid,” I cried, “we wait for no reply;
Go! let us have tea early, and another rabbit pie!”

Oh, that I had stopped his answer! But it came out with a run:
“Last-a week-a plenty puppy; this-a week-a puppy done!”
Just then my wife, my love, my life, the apple of mine eye,
Was seized with what seemed “mal-de-mer,” — “sick transit” rabbit pie!

And George! By George, he laughed, and then he howled like any bear!
The while my wife contorted like a mad “convulsionnaire;”
And I—I rushed on Johnny, and I smote him hip and thigh,
And I never saw him more, nor tasted more of rabbit pie.

And the childless mothers met me, as I kicked him from the door,
With loud maternal wailings and anathemas galore;
I must part with pretty Tiny, I must part with little Fly,
For I'm sure they know the story of the so-called “rabbit pie.”

The Squatter's Baccy Famine.

IN blackest gloom he cursed his lot;
His breath was one long weary sigh;
His brows were gathered in a knot
That only baccy could untie.
His oldest pipe was scraped out clean;
The deuce a puff was left him there;
A hollow sucking sound of air
Was all he got his lips between.

He only said, "My life is dreary.
The Baccy's done," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
By Jove, I'm nearly dead."

The chimney-piece he searched in vain,
Into each pocket plunged his fist;
His cheek was blanched with weary pain,
His mouth awry for want of twist.
He idled with his baccy-knife;
He had no care for daily bread:—
A single stick of Negro-head
Would be to him the staff of life.

He only said, "My life is dreary.
The Baccy's done," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary
I'd *most as soon* be dead."

Books had no power to mend his grief;
The magazines could tempt no more;
"Cut Gold-Leaf" was the only leaf
That he had cared to ponder o'er.
From chair to sofa sad he swings,
And then from sofa back to chair;
But in the depth of his despair
Can catch no "bird's-eye" view of things.

And still he said, "My life is dreary.
No Baccy, boys," he said.
He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
I'd *just as soon* be dead."

His meals go by he knows not how;
No taste in flesh, or fowl, or fish;
There's not a dish could tempt him now,
Except a cake of Caven-dish.
His life is but a weary drag;
He cannot choose but curse and swear,

And thrust his fingers through his hair,
All shaggy in the want of shag.

And still he said, "My life is dreary,
No Baccy, boys," he said.

He said, "I am aweary, aweary;
I'd *rather far* be dead."

To him one end of old cheroot
Were sweetest root that ever grew.

No honey were due substitute
For "Our Superior Honey-Dew."

One little fig of Latakia
Would buy all fruits of Paradise;
"Prince Alfred's Mixture" fetch a price
Above both Prince and Galatea.

Sudden he said, "No more be dreary!
The dray has come!" he said.

He said, "I'll smoke till I am weary—
And then, I'll go to bed."

Off the Track.

OH where the deuce is the track, the track?
Round an' round, an' forrard, an' back!
“Keep the sun on yer right,” they said—
But, hang it, he's gone an' got over my head!

“Make for a belt of apple trees;”—
Jist so. But where's yer belt, if ye please?
By gum, it's hot! This child'll melt,
An' there ain't no apples, nor ain't no belt.

“Keep clear o' the timber-getters' tracks,”
But wich is wich, I'd beg to ax?
They forks and jines, the devil knows how—
I wish I'd a sight o' either now!

“Leave the track,” sez they, “when you sees
Some yards to the right two big grass trees.”
Two! It's dozens on dozens I pass—
Most on 'em big, an' all on 'em grass.

Oh where the deuce is the track, the track?
I'm fairly taken aback, aback.
“Keep tow'rd the river. You can't go wrong.”
Whew? Can't I, though! That was rayther strong.

“Follow the lay o' the land,” sez they;
But, Lord, this flat ain't got no lay!
Whew! Ain't it hot on the pint o' the nose?
An' the more I mops the hotter I grows.

“An' when you comes to the foot o' the range”—
WHEN! That's the pint. But ain't it strange,
That the further I goes, to left or right,
The more there ain't no range in sight.

Gum trees, gum trees, slim an' high,
Timber green an' timber dry.
Blackened stumps an' fallen logs—
Lively work as on we jogs!

Oh the devil an' all take the flat, the flat!
I'm one myself for the matter o' that.
I'm mazed, an' so is the brute I rides,
An' the sun's getting over the left besides.

Dash it, I'll follow my nose, my nose!
Step out, straight forrard, here goes, here goes!

Let the sun be left, or the sun be right,
Summat or other must come in sight.

* * * * *

Well, well! If this ain't too bad by half!
Lor', how the beggars 'll laugh an' chaff!
Back to my startin' point? Yes; tis so.
I put up them slip-rails six hours ago.

Drought and Doctrine.

COME, take the tenner, doctor . . . yes, I know the bill says “five,”
But it ain't as if you'd merely kep' our little 'un alive;
Man, you saved the mother's reason when you saved that babby's life,
An' it's thanks to *you* I ha'n't a ravin' idiot for a wife.

Let me tell you all the story, an' if then you think it strange
That I'd like to fee ye extry—why, I'll take the bloomin' change.
If yer bill had said a hundred . . . I'm a poor man, doc, an' yet
I'd 'a' slaved till I had squared it; ay, an' still been in yer debt.

Well, you see the wife's got notions on a heap o' things that ain't
To be handled by a man as don't pretend to be a saint;
So I minds “the cultivation,” smokes my pipe, an' makes no stir,
An' religion an' such p'int's I lays entirely on to her.

Now, she's got it fixed within her that, if children die afore
They've been sprinkled by the parson, they've no show for evermore;
An' though they're spared the pitchforks, an' the brim-stun', an' the smoke,
They ain't allowed to mix *up there* with other little folk.

So when our last began to pine, an' lost his pretty smile,
An' not a parson to be had within a hunder mile—
(For though there is a chapel down at Bluegrass Creek, you know,
The clargy's there on dooty only thrice a year or so)—

Well, when our yet unchristen'd mite grew limp an' thin an' pale,
It would 'a' cut you to the heart to hear the mother wail
About her “unregenerate babe,” an' how, if it should go,
'Twould have no chance with them as had their registers to show.

Then awful quiet she grew, an' hadn't spoken for a week,
When in came brother Bill one day with news from Bluegrass Creek.
“I seen,” says he, “a notice on the chapel railin' tied;
They'll have service there this evenin'—can the youngster stand the ride?

“For we can't have parson here, if it be true, as I've heard say,
There's a dyin' man as wants him more'n twenty mile away;
So —He hadn't time to finish ere the child was out of bed
With a shawl about its body an' a hood upon its head.

“Saddle up,” the missus said. I did her biddin' like a bird.
Perhaps I thought it foolish, but I never said a word;
For though I have a vote in what the kids eat, drink, or wear,
Their sperritual requirements are entirely *her* affair.

We started on our two hours' ride beneath a burnin' sun,
With Aunt Sal and Bill for sureties to renounce the Evil One;

An' a bottle in Sal's basket that was labelled "Fine Old Tom"
Held the water that regeneration was to follow from.

For Bluegrass Creek was dry, as Bill that very day had found,
An' not a sup o' water to be had for miles around;
So, to make salvation sartin for the babby's little soul,
We had filled a dead marine, sir, at the fam'ly waterhole.

Which every forty rods or so Sal raised it to her head,
An' took a snifter, "just enough to wet her lips," she said;
Whereby it came to pass that when we reached the chapel door
There was only what would serve the job, an' deuce a dribble more.

The service had begun—we didn't like to carry in
A vessel with so evident a carritur for gin;
So we left it in the porch, an,' havin' done our level best,
Went an' owned to bein' "mis'rabable offenders" with the rest.

An' nigh upon the finish, when the parson had been told
That a lamb was waitin' there to be admitted to the fold,
Rememberin' the needful, I gets up an' quietly slips
To the porch to see—a swagsman—with our bottle at his lips!

Such a faintness came all over me, you might have then an' there
Knocked me down, sir, with a feather, or tied me with a hair.
Doc, I couldn't speak nor move; an' though I caught the beggar's eye,
With a wink he turned the bottle bottom up an' drank it dry.

An' then he flung it from him, bein' suddintly aware
That the label on't was merely a deloosion an' a snare;
An' the crash cut short the people in the middle of "A-men,"
An' all the congregation heard him holler "Sold again!"

So that christ'nin' was a failure; every water-flask was drained;
Ev'n the monkey in the vestry not a blessed drop contained;
An' the parson in a hurry cantered off upon his mare,
Leaving baby unregenerate, an' missus in despair.

That night the child grew worse, but all my care was for the wife;
I feared more for her reason than for that wee spark o' life. . . .
But you know the rest—how Providence contrived that very night
That a doctor should come cadgin' at our shanty for a light. . . .

Baby? Oh, he's chirpy, thank ye—been baptized—his name is Bill.
It's weeks an' weeks since parson came an' put him through the mill;
An' his mother's mighty vain upon the subjick of his weight,
An' reg'lar cook-a-hoop about his sperritual state

So now you'll take the tenner. Oh, confound the bloomin' change!
Lord, had Billy died!—but, doctor, don't you think it summut strange
That them as keeps the Gate would have refused to let him in

Because a fool mistook a drop of Adam's ale for gin?

Marsupial Bill.

A Christmas Story.

*

1

IT was the time when geese despond,
And turkeys make their wills;
The time when Christians, to a man,
Forgive each other's bills;
It was the time when Christmas glee
The heart of childhood fills.

2

Alas! that, when the changing year
Brings round the blessed day,
The hearts of little Queensland boys
Wax keen to hunt and slay—
As if the chime of Christmas time
Were but a call to prey.

3

Alas! that when our dwellings teem
With comfits and with toys—
When bat and ball and wicket call
To yet sublimer joys—
Whatever can't be caught and killed
Is stale to certain boys.

4

Strange that, with such instructive things
From which to pick and choose,
With moral books and puzzle maps
That "teach while they amuse,"
Some boys can find no pleasure save
In killing kangaroos.

5

Where Quart Pot Creek to Severn's stream

Its mighty tribute rolls,
There stands a town—the happiest town,
I think, betwixt the poles;
And all around is holy ground;
In fact, it's *full* of holes.

6

And there, or thereabouts, there dwelt
(Still dwells, for aught I know)
A little boy, whose moral tone
Was lamentably low;
A shocking scamp, with just a speck
Of good in embryo.

7

His name was Bill. To wallabies
He bore an evil will;
All things that hop on hinder legs
His function was to kill,
And from his show of scalps he won
The name, Marsupial Bill.

8

His face and form were pinched and lean,
And dim his youthful eye:
'Tis well that growing Queensland boys
Should know the reason why;—
My little lads, 'twas all along
Of smoking on the sly.

9

Through this was William small and lean,
Through this his eye was dim,
Nor biceps rose on nerveless arm,
Nor calf on nether limb;—
Ye growing boys and hobbledehoys,
Be warned by me—and him.

10

His elevated shoulders stood
But little way apart;

His elbow joints—Oh, poor avail
Of mere descriptive art!
I would I had an artist man
To show them William's “carte!”

11

And should you ask how such a one
A mighty hunter grew,
So many flying does outsped,
So many boomers slow—
Bill owned a canine mate, to which
His victories were due.

12

A brute so complex that he set
“The fancy” all agog;
Of breed that ne'er found name in ex-
hibition catalogue!
Oh, would I had an artist man
To show them William's dog!

13

On Christmas-eve, at set of sun,
A hollow tree he sought;
A match, a scratch, a puff, and Bill
Was lost in smoke and thought,
And “all his battles o'er again”
In fervid fancy fought.

14

No ha'penny thing, no penny thing,
No thing of common clay
Such brilliant memories evoked,
With hopes as bright as they—
It was his father's Sunday pipe
That Bill had stolen away.

15

For many a time and oft had he
Admired the wondrous bowl,
The stem, the mouthpiece, and the *tout*

Ensemble of the whole,
Until desire of it had grown
A portion of his soul—

16

Until desire o'ergrew the fear
Of kick, or cuff, or stripe.
That eve, when Bill stepped forth from home
The guilty scheme was ripe—
His right-hand trouser-leg concealed
His father's Sunday pipe.

17

And now within a heaven of smoke
Against the tree he leant,
The while the mellow influence
Through all his vitals went,
And for the first time in his life
He knew what meerschaum meant.

18

So subtly stole the influence
His inmost being through,
He did not mark the sudden bark
That signalled kangaroo,
Nor noted that his constant mate
Had vanished from his view.

19

His mind and eye were on the pipe
And he had just begun
To count how many scalps would go
To purchase such a one,—
When turning round his head, he saw,
Against the setting sun,

20

A Boomer! . . . and, as when the waves
Close o'er a drowning head,
Sudden the whole forgotten past
Before the soul lies spread,

And all the charge-sheet of a life
In one brief glance is read—

21

Ev'n so in instant tumult thronged,
About his wildered mind,
A thousand shapes of wounded things,
Of every size and kind;
And some were scalped, and some were maimed
And some were docked behind.

22

The kangaroo, the wallaroo,
The wallaby was there;
The 'possum jabbered in its fright,
Sore wept the native bear;
The stricken paddamelon moaned
Its ineffectual prayer;
The battered 'guana fixed on him
Its dull remonstrant stare;
While tail-less lizards swarmed and crawled
About him everywhere;
And limbless frogs denounced him with
The croaking of despair;
And tortured bats with ghostly wings
Clung to his stiffened hair;—
But suddenly the vision passed,
And Bill became aware
That he was in the Boomer's arms,
And bounding through the air.

23

Hop, hop, they went, o'er broken wilds,
Where, stacked in many a mound,
The hoards of clay-embedded ore
Rose grimly all around:—
Unheeding miners' rights, they jumped
A claim at every bound.

24

Then on o'er wastes so very bare
That even “stripping” ceased;

And as they neared the hill countrie
The frightful pace increased;
Nor granite slope nor timbered ridge
Told on the tireless beast.
The sun went down, the full-orbed moon
Came swimming up the East,
Nor yet the “old man” slackened speed,
Nor yet his prey released.

25

Still on and on, till from a cliff
A sentry challenged near,—
Though what the challenge or reply
No mortal man may hear;
We only know that for a sign
Each drooped his dexter ear.

26

Whate'er it meant, the “old man” checked
His onward course thereat,
Dropped Bill, and dragged him by the wrists
A cross a wooded flat,
To where the KANGAROO-GEMOT
In full assembly sat.

27

Ringed by the fathers of the tribe,
Surrounded yet alone,
The Bossaroo superbly posed
Upon a granite throne—
A very old “old man” who had
Four generations known.

28

Upon his mournful eye the woes
Of all his race were writ;
Yet age and sorrow had not dimmed
His majesty a whit;
And, oh, his metatarsal bones
Displayed the real grit!

29

Nor unattended sat the sires;
 Behind them crouched their mates;
Nor kangaroos alone composed
 The Congress of the States,
But all proscribed marsupial breeds
 Had sent their delegates.

30

Lo, at a signal from the boss
 The serried ring gave way,
And through an opening in the throng
 The captor dragged his prey,
Bowed to the chair, then called to aid
 A strapping M.L.A.

31

And thus, betwixt a double guard,
 The prisoner found his place;
And all around were wrathful eyes
 Without a gleam of grace;—
One wild concatenated scowl
 Was focussed in his face.

32

Now hitherto poor Bill had been
 As dumb as dumb could be,
But at that pandemoniac scowl
 His struggling tongue got free;
He lifted up his voice and cried,
 “Oh, please, it wasn't me!”

33

A tumult rose; but with a sign
 The boss the riot checked,
Then cleared his throat and bade the guard
 The prisoner's clothes inspect:—
“Ay, ay, Sir!” came the prompt reply,
 Or words to that effect.

34

They spake the language that was heard

While yet the world was young;
And he who knows it knows all speech
That out of it hath sprung:—
(With compliments to Dr. Hearn,
It was the Aryan tongue).

35

And should you ask how Bill was up
To every word they said,
And how such antiquated lore
Had got into his head—
'Twas his pre-natal memory
That served him in such stead.

36

They searched the prisoner's clothes, and first
They brought the pipe to view,—
For though it is a mystery
To me as well as you,
It is a solemn fact that Bill
Had stuck to it all through.

37

Then one by one his poor effects
Were collared by his guards,—
Peach-stones, fig-chew, a catapult,
A greasy pack of cards,
A half-cut cake of cavendish
(Prime quality—Gaujard's);

38

But when from out a leathern sheath
A blood-stained knife they drew,
All round the court, from hand to hand,
They passed it in review:
Each sniffed the blade in turn, and each
In turn said—“Kangaroo!”

39

And last, a printed document
Their simple souls perplexed:

Each eyed the paper learnedly,
And passed it to the next;
But not an Aryan of them all
Could even guess the text.

40

At length they summoned to their aid
An old and learned clerk,
Who, as tradition told, had been
With Noah in the ark—
Though possibly tradition here
Had overshot the mark.

41

And while a murmur of applause
Through all the Congress ran,
Bowed with the weight of many years
Hopped forth that gray “old man,”
Mounted his ancient spectacles,
Sneezed thrice, and thus began:—

42

“Whereas it is expedient to
Encourage the destruc-
tion of marsupial animals—
(Sensation and a ruc-
tion in the court, with groans and cries
From joey, doe, and buck)—

43

“Be it enacted therefore by
The Queen's most Excellènt
—er—Majesty—er—by and with
The advice and the consent
Of Council and Assembly of
Queensland in Parliamènt—

44

“In the construction of this Act—”
But here arose a sort
Of interruption from the Right,

Betwixt a cough and snort;
While from the less fastidious Left
Came cries of “Cut it short!”

45

Then clause on clause, with careless haste,
The learned clerk despatched;
But when he read, “The scalps when shown
Must have the ears attached,”
The whole assembly rushed the guard
And at the prisoner snatched.

46

But when the reader raised his voice,
And thus gave forth the sense,
“For kangaroo scalps ninepence each,
For wallabies' *three* pence,”
Division rose amongst his foes,
And stayed their violence.

47

For those at ninepence each, elate
At such a mark of fame,
Drew back, and left the threepenny mob
To do the deed of shame;
But the low-quoted wallabies,
Disgusted, dropped the game.

48

Bill strove to speak; his voice was drowned
With catcall, groan, and hiss,
Until the Bossaroo, with slow
Judicial emphasis,
Said, “Capias-nisi-prius—Boy,
What say you to all this?”

49

Then silence fell upon the peers,
And on the threepenny mob,
The while this wicked little boy
Said, snivelling through a sob,

“Oh please, I never done it, sir—
No, never; sepmebob!

50

“I am a gentle orphan boy,
Nor never jines no row:
My father is a tributer,
My mother keeps a cow:
We always lives respectable:
We tries it, anyhow:
The bill as that old bloke has read
I never seen till now;
And that 'ere blood 's on that 'ere knife
Since father killed the sow.”

51

Then spake the Boss:—“The quality
Of mercy is not strained;
Yet there is still a point or two
We'd like to have explained,
Ere we absolve you from the charge
Whereon you stand arraigned.

52

“But since the law is merciful,
And hastes not to condemn,
If witnesses to character
Exist, go, fetch us them:
The court will sit to-morrow night
At nine fifteen, p.m.

53

“And since without your father's pipe
You dare not home return,—
(Our ancient brother with the specs
Has twigged the whole concern;
And, truly, what he doesn't know
Ain't worth your while to learn):—

54

“And further, since the oath of man

Is but of scant avail,
And few like Regulus return
Spontaneously to jail—
(My fit is coming on; I feel
The symptoms in my tail)—
We will dispense with oaths, and keep
The meerschaum as your bail.

55

“To-morrow—(oh my vertebrae!)
To-morrow night at eight,
At the Wheal Edith, by the flume,
A corp'ral's guard will wait;
These shall escort your witnesses,
Blindfolded. Don't be late.

56

“And this remember—(oh my joints!)—
Not one of all the race
Whose leaders boss this scalping job
May stand before my face;
The witness of a Britisher
Will prejudice your case.

57

“Now he who brought you will reverse
The process—(oh my toe!)—
Your downward path is up above,
Your upward down below:
Stand not upon the order of
Your going, sir; but go.

58

“And take this for thy dowry, boy,
'Existence is a sell,'
I once was bitten by a dog,
Since which I am not well.
Methinks my speech already shows
Symptoms of doggerel.”

* See note at the end of the volume.

Part Second.

1

FAST flew the hours. We may not tell
Of William's weary quest,
How round the outskirts of the town
He roamed like one possessed—
Nor with what guileful arts he plied
The foreign interest.

2

Enough that at the appointed hour,
With backers at his back,
He faced the noble Bossaroo,
(Still hypochondriac)—
And introduced his witnesses,
A yellow and a black;

3

A placid-eyed Mongolian
From sandy Pechelee,
Who'd stimulate an inch of soil
To do the work of three,
Or make a metamorphic rock
Sprout into cabbagee;

4

A big buck nigger next; who once
Bowed down to stocks and stones
(For years digested captives formed
The tissue of his bones),
But now he is an Anglican,
Who a live "Bissop" owns,
Besides a gorgeous suit of slops,
And the proud name of Jones.

5

Slow rose the lordly Bossaroo,
And bade unveil their eyes;
And, when those aliens gazed around

On all that dread assize,
They howled in unison and made
Night hideous with their cries.

6

For Bill had lured them lyingly—
But why should we explain;
The whole thing was exceptional,
And can't occur again.
Besides, to poke at mysteries
Is wanton and profane.

7

With single will they turned on Bill,
And blazed his evil name;
With double tongue their charge they flung,
And swore unto the same;
With treble spite did both unite
To spoil his little game.

8

“Me see him catchee kangaloo,”
Deponed on oath Ah Chee;
“Me see him—hi! hst!—soolem dog,
No mind my cabbage—
Me lose hap clown, him knockee down
Ten twenty lettucee!”

9

“Massoopy Bill, him wicked boy,”
Deponed the South Sea swell;
“Two moon, come Bissop preach in church,
Him loaf outside an' yell;
Me run—him run—me catch—him say
‘Tree scalp if you no tell.’

10

So, when the learnèd clerk had both
Their depositions read,
The judge drew forth his judgment cap,
And put it on his head,

And sentenced poor Marsupial Bill
To hang till he was dead.

11

“But since”—so spake the Bossaroo—
“From evidence we know
That many a scalped and gory head
This night through him lies low,
We'll scalp him first!”—and all the house,
Nem. con., cried “Be it so?”
And as a sign and seal of doom,
Turned down the right thumb-toe.

12

“With his own knife,” the Boss resumed,
“Ah Chee shall do the deed—
The gods poetic justice love—
And make the assassin bleed
By his own proper instrument.
Mongolian, proceed.”

13

What followed next, who gave the word
For mate to link with mate,
Nor Bill, nor Jones, nor yet Ah Chee
Can very clearly state;
But that 'twas a corroboree
All three corroborate.

14

In vain poor William prayed—in vain
His suppliant knees he bowed,
And by a pile of sacred names
For mercy cried aloud—
The point was at his occiput,
When, lo! from out the crowd

15

Stepped forth a rare and radiant dame,
The Boss's pride and stay,
(The dam of Bossárovitch,

Still young, though somewhat gray,
An elegant marsupial,
Well-mannered, *bien née*)—
Stepped forth before them, and remarked
Seductively, “Belay!”
Then, kneeling by the judgment seat,
Thus sweetly said her say:—
“Most Noble Grand, have you forgot
That this is Christmas Day?”

16

“Beseech you, bid that heathen hand
Withhold the bloody knife!
Recall your fearful words of doom—
Nay, turn not from your wife,
But give me as a Christmas Box
The little captive's life.”

17

Then quickly from his granite throne
Down leaped the Noble Grand,
And, kneeling, kissed right courteously
His royal lady's hand;
Then, as he raised her up, pronounced
The joyful countermand;
Whereat the rest turned up their toes,
That Bill might understand
The Congress willed his days should yet
Be long upon the land.

18

Then raged the revelry anew,
With sound of drum and fife;
The Boss himself forgot his woes,
And danced as if for life;
While the old clerk forgot *himself*,
And kissed the Boss's wife.

19

And when there fell a weariness
On all the panting throng,
And Bossaroo and ancient clerk

Alike had nigh “gone bong”—
Amid a jaded pause was heard
A call for “Joey's Song!”

20

And presently a little head,
As from a little nest,
Peeped o'er a snug maternal pouch,
And sang its little best,
(The song is very rare, and full
Of antique interest):—
“What does little Joey say
In his pouch at peep-of-day?
'Let me hop,' says little Joey;
'Mother, let me hop away.'
'Joey, rest a little longer,
Till the little legs are stronger.'
So he rests a little longer,
Then he gaily hops away.”

21

He ceased; the pre-diluvian clerk
Rose on his quivering shanks,
And with a well-turned compliment
Proposed a vote of thanks—
Just then a breathless picket broke
All gory through the ranks!

22

But ere his trembling tongue had time
To tell his tale of woe,
And why thus grimly he disturbed
The happy *status quo*,—
With giant bound Bill's faithful hound
Leaped madly on the foe!

23

Ah, then and there was sudden scare,
The swiftest took the lead;
Ah, there and then—but oh, the pen
Is impotent indeed!
Oh, would I had an artist man

To show the Great Stampede!

24

What next befell may somewhat strain
The limits of belief;
But where so many marvels are,
Why boggle at the chief?
'Twere shame if lack of faith should cause
Our moral come to grief.

25

From all the flying ruck the dog
Had singled out the Queen;
Another instant and the Boss
A widower had been,
When—(that's a pithy saw that bids
Expect the unforeseen)—

26

BILL CALLED HIM OFF! The dog drew back,
And on a boulder leant.
'Twas months ago, and still that dog
Is pondering the event,
And even to this very hour
Can't fathom what it meant;
It was a thing so utterly
Without a precedent.

27

But Bill, the Chinaman, and Jones,
The Queen, and you, and I,
We know the secret of the change,
We know the reason why;
And—may I be allowed to add?—
The moral hangs thereby.

28

But since nor boy nor man receives
Advice without a pang,
And this narrator's muse has failed
To catch the proper twang,—

The moral hanging plainly there,
Suppose we let it—hang.

A Piccaninny.

Lo by the “humpy” door a smockless Venus!
Unblushing bronze, she shrinks not, having seen us,
Though there is nought but short couch-grass between us.

She hath no polonaise, no Dolly Varden;
Yet turns she not away, nor asketh pardon;
Fact is, she doesn't care a copper “farden.”

Ah yet, her age her reputation spareth;
At three years old pert Venus little careth,
She puts her hand upon her hip and stareth;

All unabashed, unhaberdashed, unheeding,
No Medicean, charmingly receding,
But quite unconscious of improper breeding.

'Tis well; it smacks of Eden ere came sin in,
Or any rag of consciousness or linen,
Or anything that one could stick a pin in.

Could boundaries be neater? posture meeter?
Could bronze antique or terra cotta beat her?
Saw ever artist any thing completer?

A shade protuberant, beyond contesting,
Where this day's 'possum is just now digesting,
But otherwise, all over interesting;

Trim without trimming, furbelow, or bow on;
Was ever sable skin with such a glow on?
So darkly soft, so softly sleek, and—so on?

Was ever known so dark, so bright an iris,
Where sleep of light, but never play of fire is—
Where not a soupçon of a wild desire is?

O swarthy statuette! hast thou no notion
That life is fire and war and wild commotion?
A burning bush, a chafed and raging ocean?

Hast thou no questioning of what's before thee?
Of who shall envy thee, or who adore thee?
Or whose the jealous weapon that shall score thee?

Hast thou no faint prevision of disaster—
Of dark abduction from thy lord and master—
Of aliens fleeing, kindred following faster?

No faint forehearing of the waddies banging,
Of club and heelman together clanging,
War shouts, and universal boomeranging?

And thou the bone of all the fierce contention—
The direful spring of broken-nosed dissension—
A Helen in the nigger apprehension?

Nay, my black tulip, I congratulate thee,
Thou canst not guess the troubles that await thee,
Nor carest who shall love or who shall hate thee:

Recking as little of the human passions
As of the very latest Paris fashions,
And soaring not beyond thy daily rations!

Die young, for mercy's sake! If thou grow older,
Thou shalt grow lean at calf and sharp at shoulder,
And daily greedier and daily bolder;

A pipe between thy savage grinders thrusting,
For rum and everlasting 'baccy lusting,
And altogether filthy and disgusting;

Just such another as the dam that bore thee—
That haggard Sycorax now bending o'er thee!
Die young, my sable pippin, I implore thee!

Why shouldst thou live to know deterioration?
To walk a spectre of emaciation?
To grow, like that, all over corrugation?

A trifle miscellaneous like her, too,
An object not “de luxe” and not “de vertu”—
A being odious even to refer to?

Her childhood, too, like thine, was soft and tender;
Her womanhood hath nought to recommend her;
At thirty she is not of any gender.

Oh, dusky fondling, let the warning teach thee!
Through muddiest brain-pulp may the lesson reach thee.
Oh, die of something fatal, I beseech thee!

While yet thou wear'st the crown of morning graces,
While yet the touch of dawn upon thy face is—
Back, little nigger, to the night's embraces!

Hope nought: each year some new defect discloses;
As sure as o'er thy mouth thy little nose is,
Thy only hope is in metempsychosis.

Who knows but after some few short gradations,
After a brace or so of generations,
We two may have exchanged our hues and stations?

Methinks I see thee suddenly grow bigger,
White in the face and stately in the figure,
And I a miserable little nigger!

Should this be thus—oh come not moralising!
Approach not thou my humpy poetising!
Spare thine Iambics and apostrophising!

Let subtle nature, if it suit her, black me,
Let vesture lack me, bigger niggers whack me,
Let hunger rack me, let disaster track me,
And anguish hoist me to her highest acme—

Let me bear all thine incidental curses,
Nor share the smallest of thy scanty mercies,
But put me not—oh, put me not in verses!

She grins. She heedeth not advice or warning,
Alike philosophy and triplets scorning.
Adieu, then. Fare thee well. Ta-ta. Good morning

To a Black Gin.

DAUGHTER of Eve, draw near—I would behold thee.
Good Heavens! Could ever arm of man enfold thee?
Did the same Nature that made Phryne mould thee?

Come thou to leeward; for thy balmy presence
Savoureth not a whit of *mille-fleurescence*:—
My nose is no insentient excrescence.

Thou art not beautiful, I tell thee plainly,
Oh! thou ungainliest of things ungainly;
Who thinks thee less than hideous doats insanely.

Most unaesthetical of things terrestrial,
Hadst thou indeed an origin celestial?—
Thy lineaments are positively bestial!

Yet thou my sister art, the clergy tell me;
Though, truth to state, thy brutish looks compel me
To hope these parsons merely want to *sell* me.

A hundred times and more I've heard and read it;
But if Saint Paul himself came down and said it,
Upon my soul I could not give it credit.

“God's image cut in ebony,” says someone;
'Tis to be hoped some day thou may'st become one;
The present image is a very rum one.

Thy face “the human face divine!” . . . Oh, Moses!
Whatever trait divine thy face discloses,
Some vile Olympian cross-play pre-supposes.

Thy nose appeareth but a transverse section:
Thy mouth hath no particular direction,—
A flabby-rimmed abyss of imperfection.

Thy skull development mine eye displeases;
Thou wilt not suffer much from brain diseases;
Thy facial angle forty-five degrees is.

The coarseness of thy tresses is distressing,
With grease and raddle firmly coalescing,
I cannot laud thy system of “top-dressing.”

Thy dress is somewhat scant for proper feeling;
As is thy flesh, too,—scarce thy bones concealing:
Thy calves unquestionably want re-*vealing*.

Thy rugged skin is hideous with tattooing,
And legible with hieroglyphic wooing—
Sweet things in art of some fierce lover's doing.

For thou some lover hast, I bet a guinea,—
Some partner in thy fetid ignominy,
The *raison d'être* of this piccaninny.

What must *he* be whose eye thou hast delighted?
His sense of beauty hopelessly benighted!
The canons of his taste how badly sighted!

What must his gauge be, if thy features pleased him?
If lordship of such limbs as thine appeased him,
It was not “*calf-love*” certainly that seized him.

And is he amorously sympathetic?
And doth he kiss thee? . . . Oh my soul prophetic!
The very notion is a strong emetic!

And doth he smooth thine hours with oily talking?
And take thee conjugally out-a-walking?
And crown thy transports with a tom-a-hawking?

I guess his love and anger are combined so;
His passions on thy shoulders are defined so;
“His passages of love” are *underlined* so.

Tell me thy name. What? . . . Helen? . . . (Oh, OEnone,
That name bequeathed to one so foul and bony
Avengeth well thy ruptured matrimony!)

Eve's daughter! with that skull! and that complexion?
What principle of “Natural Selection”
Gave thee with Eve the most remote connection?

Sister of L. E. L. . . . of Mrs. Stowe, too!
Of E. B. Browning! Harriet Martineau, too!
Do theologians know where fibbers go to?

Of great George Eliot, whom I worship daily!
Of Charlotte Brontë! and Joanna Baillie!—
Methinks that theory is rather “scaly.”

Thy primal parents came a period later—
The handiwork of some vile imitator;
I fear they had the devil's *imprimatur*.

This in the retrospect.—Now, what's before thee?
The white man's heaven, I fear, would simply bore thee;
Ten minutes of doxology would floor thee.

Thy Paradise should be some land of Goshen,
Where appetite should be thy sole devotion,
And surfeit be the climax of emotion;—

A land of Bunya-bunyas towering splendid,—
Of honey-bags on every tree suspended,—
A Paradise of sleep and riot blended;—

Of tons of 'baccy, and tons more to follow,—
Of wallaby as much as thou couldst swallow,—
Of hollow trees, with 'possums in the hollow;—

There, undismayed by frost, or flood, or thunder,
As joyous as the skies thou roamest under,
There shouldst thou . . . Oooey! . . Stop! She's off.
. . . No wonder.

New Chum and Old Monarch.

“Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir.”

—CANNING.

“CHIEFTAIN, enter my verandah;
Sit not in the blinding glare;
Thou shalt have a refuge, and a
Remnant of my household fare.

“Ill becomes thy princely haunches
Such a seat upon the ground:
Doubtless on a throne of branches
Thou hast sat, banana-crowned.

“By the brazen tablet gleaming
On the darkness of thy breast,
Which, unto all outward seeming,
Serves for trousers, coat, and vest;—

“By the words thereon engraven,
Of thy royal rank the gage,
Hail! true King, in all things save in
Unessential acreage.

“Such divinity doth hedge thee,
I had guessed thy rank with ease—
Such divinity—(but edge thee
Somewhat more to leeward, please).

“Though thy lineage I know not,
Thou art to the manner born;
Every inch a king, although not
King of one square barleycorn.

“Enter, sire; no longer linger;
Cease thy signals grandly dumb:
Point not thus with royal finger
To thy hungry vacuum.

“Though thy pangs are multifarious,
Soon they all shall pass away:
Come, my begging Belisarius—
Belisorous I should say.

“Fear not; I am the intruder;
I, and white men such as I:
Simpler though thou art, and ruder,

Thou art heir of earth and sky.

“Thine the mountain, thine the river,
Thine the endless miles of scrub:
Shall I grudge thee, then—oh never!—
Useless ends of refuse grub?”

“Lay aside thy spears—(I doubt them),
Lay aside thy tomahawk;
I prefer thee, sire, without them,
By a somewhat longish chalk.

“Lay aside thy nullah-nullahs;
Is there war betwixt us two?
Soon the pipe of peace shall lull us—
Pipe a-piece, *bien entendu*.

“Seat thee in this canvas chair here;
Heed not thou the slumbering hound;
Fear not; all is on the square here,
Though thou strangely lookest round.

“Or if thou, my chair deriding,
Follow thine ancestral bent,
To the naked floor subsiding
Down the groove of precedent,—

“If the boards have more temptation,
Wherefore should I say thee No,
Seeing caudal induration
Must have set in long ago?”

“Take thou now this refuse mince-meat;
Pick this bone, my regal guest:
Shall a fallen warrior-prince meet
Other welcome than the best?”

“Treated like a very rebel,
Chased from town at set of sun,
Wert thou ev'n the debbil-debbil,
Thou shouldst eat—when I am done.”

On the bare floor sat the sable
Chieftain of a fallen race,
Two black knees his only table,
“Wai-a-roo” his simple grace.

Stood I by and ruminated
On the chief's Decline and Fall,
While his highness masticated
What I gave him, bone and all.

“Chief,” said I, when all had vanished,
“Fain am I thou shouldst relate
Why thou roam'st discrowned and banished
From thy scrub-palatinatè.”

Stared the chief, and wildly muttered,
As if words refused to come;
“Want him rum,” at length he uttered;
“Black f'lo plenty like him rum!”

“Nay! 'Twill make thee mad—demoniac!
Set thee all a-fire within!
Law forbids thee rum and cognac,
Though in mercy spares thy gin.

“Come; thy tale, if thou hast any.”—
Forth the chieftain stretched his hand,
Stood erect, and shouted “Penny!”
In a voice of stern command.

“Out upon thee! savage squalid!
Mine ideal thus to crush,
With thy beggary gross and solid,
All for money and for lush!

“Out upon thee! prince degenerate!
Get thee to thy native scrub!
Die a dog's death!—or, at any rate,
Trouble me no more for grub!

“At him, Ginger! Up and at him!
Go it, lad! On, Ginger, on!
King, indeed! the beggar! . . . Drat him!
One more fond illusion gone.”

The Headless Trooper.

“No; not another step, for all
The troopers out of hell!
I'll camp beside this swamp to-night,
Despite the yarns you tell.
I'm dead beat, that's a solid fact;
The other thing's a sell.”

And Ike gave in—good, easy Ike;
Though now and then he stole
A glance across that dismal swamp,
Lugubriously droll;
'Twas plain that Headless Trooper lay
Heavily on his soul.

And, ere he slept, again he told
That tale of bloody men;
And how the Headless Trooper still
Rode nightly in the fen;
And then he slept, but in his sleep
He told it all again.

I cannot rest beside a man
Who mutters in his sleep;
It makes the chilly goose-flesh rise,
The epidermis creep—
(’Tis no objection in a wife—
You get her secrets cheap).

I put a hundred yards between
The muttering Ike and me:
I lay and thought of things that were,
And things that yet might be:
I could not sleep; I know not why;
My hair rose eerily.

I rose and sat me on a log,
And tried to keep me cool;
I thought of “Hume on Miracles,”
And called myself a fool;
But still the proverb racked my soul,
“Exceptions prove the rule.”

The moon was full; the stars were out;
I tried to fix my eye
Where Night laid shining love-gifts
On the bosom of the sky;—

But well I knew that all the while
The Thing was standing by.

How tall this pine tree on my left!
How graceful in its height!
Its topmost branches seem to touch
The very brow of Night;—
But all the while I knew the Thing
Was panting at my right.

The 'possum leaves his hollow tree;
The bandicoot is glad;
It is the human heart alone
The still night maketh sad;—
And all the while the Headless Thing
Was wheezing there like mad.

How ghostly is the mist that crawls
Along the swampy ground!
The Headless Thing here cleared its throat
With most unearthly sound!
And then I heard a gurgling voice,
But dared not glance around.

“They shot me; Was it not enough?
Look, darn you! Here's the hole!
Was this not passage amply wide
For any human soul?
But, no! the blasted convict gang
Must likewise take my poll!”

I turned; looked up; and at the sight
My heart within me sunk:
'Twas new to me to find myself
In such a mortal funk;—
But newer still to fraternise
With a bifurcated trunk!

Above the neck no trooper was;
But formless void alone;
There physiognomy was *nil*,
Phrenology unknown;
Where head had been there but remained
The frustum of a cone!

Nay; I retract the “formless void;”
The case was otherwise;
For on the clotted marge there spun
A living globe of flies!
When one is dealing with the truth

One can't be too precise.

The loathsome whirling substitute
 Buzzed in the vacant space,
And a thousand thousand little heads
 Of one head took the place:—
And oh, the fly expression
 Of that rotatory face!

The breast was bare; the shirt thrown back
 Exposed the wound to view:
The bullet, in its course of death,
 Had cleared an avenue:—
Oh Gemini! I saw the Twins
 Distinctly shining through!
And those same Twins are shining still
 To prove my story true.

In breeches, boots, and spurs arrayed
 The nether Trooper stood;
The soundless phantom of a horse
 Grazed in his neighbourhood,—
At all events went through the form
 Of hoisting in his food.

“What would'st thou, Headless Trooper,
 On the night's Plutonian shore?”
I took it from Poe's Raven
 I had read not long before;
And I more than half expected
 He would answer “Nevermore!”

But the Trooper only answered
 By a perfect storm of sighs,
Which, through his crater issuing,
 Played Hades with the flies,—
As I have seen Vesuvius
 Blow ashes to the skies.

“O wherefore, Headless Trooper,
 With the living intermix?
Since thou art dead, and hast no head,
 Why kick against the pricks?
Why dost thou not, as others do,
 Get clear across the Styx?”

The Trooper cleared his cone of flies,
 And through his crater said,
“'Tis true I have no business here,
 'Tis true that I am dead;

And yet I cannot cross the Styx—
They've fixed a fare '*per head!*'

“Fain would I cross as others do—
Fain would I pay my shot!
They only mock me when I ask
For leave to go to Pot!
How *can* I pay so much '*per head!*'
When I no head have got?

“Yet what could I, thus headless, do
In that last Land of Nod?
It is not that the thing is dear,
So much as that it's odd;—
They only charge an obolus,
A sort of Tommy Dodd.

“I've tried the ferryman with gold—
With every coin that goes:
He merely cries, 'Oh, go *a-head!*'
And, laughing, off he rows.
He can't twit me, at all events,
With paying through the nose!

“A drachma once I offered him,
Six times the fare in Greek;
He merely cursed my 'impudence,'
And pushed off in a pique:—
I didn't think a faceless man
Could be accused of cheek.

“From day to day, from night to night,
My prayer the wretch denies;
Yet even in this headless breast
Some grateful thoughts arise—
For though he's blasted all my hopes,
He cannot blast my eyes.

“I know not where the convict crew
My missing head consigned,
But I am doomed to walk the earth
Till that same head I find.
Oh, could I come across it,
I would know it though I'm blind,—
The bump of amativeness sticks
So strongly out behind!

“The mouth extends from ear to ear;
The hair is fiery red;
Perchance it might attract thine eye

Who art not blind or dead;
I pray thee help me to obtain
My disembodied head!”

“Oh Headless Trooper, fain would I
With thee the search begin,
But ere the day I must away,
And trudge through thick and thin;
For I am bound to Stanthorpe town,
And time with me is tin.

“But ere upon my pilgrimage
With dawn's first streak I go,
I fain would do what in me lies
To mitigate thy woe.
If I can serve thee anywise,
I pray thee let me know.”

The Trooper thought a little space,
His body forward bowed,
With plenteous sighs dispersed the flies,
And once more spoke aloud:—
“Tis long since I have tried the weed,
I'd like to blow a cloud.”

“How canst thou, headless man, who hast
No lips wherewith to puff?”
Here deprecatingly he waved
His hand, and said, “Enough.
Myself will guarantee the how,
If thou supply the stuff.”

I took a meerschaum from my pouch,
A meerschaum clean and new,
As white as is undoctored milk,
As pure as morning dew:—
I pray you mark that it was white,
’Twill prove my story true.

I passed it to him, filled and lit,
Still wondering in my mind.
“Thanks, generous colonial,
Thou art very, very kind.
Now pick a thickish waddy up,
And plug my wound behind.”

I picked a thickish waddy up,
And did as I was bid;
And right into the bullet-hole
The amber mouth he slid;

And then !—You never saw the like;
At least *I* never did.

Like a forge bellows went his chest,
And upward from his cone
There shot a vaporous spire, like that
From Cotopaxi blown.
The flies unglobed themselves, and fled
With angry monotone.

So fierce the blast, the pipe was void
Ere one might reckon ten;
And then with gesture wild he signed
To fill the bowl again;
The which I did, till he had smoked
Enough for fifty men.

Hour after hour he drew and blew,
Till twist began to fail,
Till all the sky grew dim with smoke,
And all the stars grew pale;
Till even the seasoned stomach turned
Of him who tells the tale.

The smoke mixed darkly with the mists
On the adjacent bogs,
And roused the hoarse remonstrant wail
Of semi-stifled frogs,
The 'possums all within a mile
Went home as sick as dogs.

But suddenly the phantom steed
Neighed with sepulchral sound,
And where both man and horse had been
Nor man nor horse was found!
I stood alone; the meerschaum lay
Before me on the ground.

The meerschaum lay upon the ground—
This much I may avouch;
I took it, and with trembling hand
Replaced it in my pouch;
And, overcome with nausea,
I sought my grassy couch.

The sun was up when I awoke,
And in his gladsome beams
I mocked the things of yesternight,
And laughed away my dreams:
Disciples of the School of Doubt

Are always in extremes.

But when I roused me from my couch
To take my morning smoke,
Like lightning flash the verity
Upon my laughter broke;—
The scarcity of 'baccy proved
The thing beyond a joke.

And when my pouch I opened next—
(Now check the wanton jeer)—
My pipe, my new, fresh meerschaum pipe—
('Tis true as I am here)—
My pipe was "*coloured!*" as if I
Had smoked it for a year.

My pipe was coloured!—no, not brown,
But black, as black as jet.
You don't believe it?—Man alive,
The pipe is coloured yet!
Look here—why, here's the best of proofs—
The pipe, videlicet.

Nonsuited.

“DEAR Richard, come at once;”—so ran her letter;
The letter of a married female friend:
“She likes you both, and really knows no better
Than I myself do, how her choice will end.
Be sure of this, the first who pops will get her.
He's here for Chris——” Whatever else was penned
Dick never knew: nor knows he to this day
How he got drest, and mounted—and away!

Like arrow from the bow, like lightning-streak,
Including thunder following fierce and quick,
By ridge and flat, through scrub and foaming creek
Dick galloped like a very lunatic;
Whipped, jerked, and spurred, but never word did speak,
Although his thoughts rushed furious and thick,
Headed by one he strove in vain to wipe out,
The fear that this same “he” might put his pipe out.

And faster yet, and ever faster grew
The maddening music of the pace, until
The station-roofs gleamed suddenly in view,
Quivering in noon-heat on the vine-clad hill:
When all at once his bridle-rein he drew,
But not from craven fear or flagging will,—
Though, truth to tell, his heart a moment sank
To see the river nearly “bank and bank.”

For Bowstring was the choice of all his stud,
And *he* at least had no fair bride to win;
And wherefore should he risk *him* in the flood?—
A question Bowstring also asked within:
For though he was a squatter's horse by blood,
And held the grazing interest more than kin,
He eyed the huge logs wheeling, bobbing, bowling,
As if his soul objected to “log-rolling.”

And by that curious telegraphic force,
Outspeaking half-a-dozen formal speeches,
That works its quick inexplicable course
Through saddle-cloth, pigskin, and buckskin breeches,
Until the dumb opinion of a horse
Its sympathetic rider's spirit reaches—
Dick, feeling under him the strong flanks quiver,
Knew that his thoroughbred would funk the river

A moment more, Dick from his seat had leapt,
 Ungirthed, uncurbed, unreined his trembling steed;
Who straightway vanished from his sight, nor kept
 The high tradition of a loyal breed,
But quickened by no stimulus except
 His own unbridled (and unsaddled) greed,
Before a man had time to reckon two,
Was gorging in fresh fields and pastures new.

Then Dick threw off his boots, undid his belt,
 Doffed—here we shirk particulars. In brief,
When nought remained but his primeval pelt,
 He tied his garments in his handkerchief;
Then feeling as “the grand old gardener” felt
 (After the apple), crouching like a thief,
Down to the stream did this lorn lover slink,
And threw his bundle to the further brink.

Nor longer paused, but plunged him in the tide,
 A hero and Leander both in one;
Struck the entangling boughs from either side,
 And held his head up bravely to the sun;
Dodged the huge logs, the torrent's strength defied;—
 To cut it short, did all that could be done;
Touched land, and uttering a fervent “Thank . . .
—Just then his bundle floated by, and sank.

Take Yarra-bend, take Bedlam, Colney Hatch,
 And Woogaroo, and mix them weight for weight,
And stir them well about—you could not match
 Dick's madness with the whole conglomerate.
If the Recording Angel did but catch
 One half his ravings against Heaven and Fate,
And rising creeks and slippery banks, some day
Poor Dick will have a heavy bill to pay.

Was ever lover in so lorn a case?
 Was ever lover in so wild a mood?
He nearly pulled the beard from off his face;
 He would have rent his garments, if he could.
How could he woo a dame his suit to grace
 Who had *no* suit, save that wherein he stood?
Oh! what were youth, wealth, station in society,
Without the textile adjuncts of propriety!

When oaths and half-an-hour were spent in vain,
 It dawned on Dick that he might slyly crawl
From tree to tree across the wooded plain,
 And gain “the hut,” that stood a mile from all

The other buildings—whence some labouring swain,
Unscared by nudity, might come at call,
And lend, for thanks or promissory payment,
Whatever he could spare of decent raiment.

From one variety of Eucalypt
Unto another, blue gum, spotted gum,
Black-butt, etcetera, Dick crawled or skipped,
Bitten and blistered like the newest chum;
Till, marking where the open level dipped,
Distracted with mosquito-martyrdom,
He rushed and plunged—and not a bit too soon—
Into the coolness of a quiet lagoon.

No, not a bit too soon; for something white,
Topped by a parasol of lustrous pink,
At this same perilous moment hove in sight,
And glided gently to the water-brink;
The while in thickest sedge the rueful wight
Hid his diminished head, and scarce did wink—
No more a gallant daringly erotic,
But consciously absurd and idiotic.

'Twas she—his love; and never had he thought
Her face so beautiful, her form so stately;
Ophelia-like she moved, absorbed, distraught;
'Twas plain to Dick she had been weeping lately;
And now and then a weary sigh he caught,
And once a whisper that disturbed him greatly,
Which said, unless his ears played him a trick,
“What in the world can have come over Dick?”

And presently, through his aquatic screen,
His hated rival he beheld advance,
With airy grace and captivating mien,
And all the victor in his countenance:
And too, too late he learned what *might have been*,
When at her watch he saw the lady glance,
And heard her say, “Here's Fred. The die is cast!
I gave poor Dick till two; 'tis now half-past.”

And then Dick closed his eyes, his ears he stopped;
Yet somehow saw and heard no whit the less,—
Saw that the lover on his knees had dropped,
And heard him all his tale of love confess;
And when the question had been duly popped,
He heard the kiss that sealed the answering “Yes!”—
'Twas rough on Dick: ah me! 'twas mighty rough:
But he remained true blue (though all in buff),—

And never winced, nor uttered word or groan,
But gazed upon the treasure he had lost,
In agony of soul, yet still as stone,
The saddest man since first true love was crossed:
And when at length the mated birds had flown,
He waited yet another hour, then tossed
His modesty unto the winds, and ran
Right for the hut, and found—thank Heaven!—a man.

* * * * *

On that same evening, in his rival's coat,
Waistcoat, and things, Dick sat among the rest
And though he could have cut their owner's throat,
He kept his feelings underneath his vest,
And proved by some mendacious anecdote
That he was there by chance—a passing guest.
One boon at least stern Fate could not refuse:
He stood that evening *in his rival's shoes*.

The Great Pig Story of the Tweed.

“HANDS off, old man!” the young man cried—
They stood beside the Tweed,
Where still the name of Murder Creek
Records some bloody deed.

The old man seized the hapless youth,
With frantic grasp and rough,
By what is popularly called
(But vulgarly) the scruff;

And shouted as he twirled him round,
And shook him to and fro,
“Was them consignments pigs? . . . Great Scott!
Was them things pigs or no?”

Wild-eyed and gaunt, and grim he stood,
Beneath the scorching noon,—
Cantharides P. Roebuck, late
Of the steamboat Arakoon.

He was an ancient mariner,
A Yankee skipper he,
Whom winds of adverse destiny
Had blown across the sea;—

Whom hither still had Fate pursued,
And served with many a trick,
Till now he roamed the Tweed a one-
Idea'd lunatic;—

Whom all men shunned, for whosoe'er
Upon his beat might chance,
Was bound to hear his tale in each
Minutest circumstance.

A tale that haunted such as heard,
Nor left them night or day;
A torturing enigma, too,
That turned their wits astray;—

For ofttimes they, like him who told,
Would vaguely wandering go,
And cry, “Was them consignments pigs?
Was them things pigs or no?”

“Hands off!” again the young man cried.
“It's this way, boss, you see,

We've come a stretch of thirty mile,
Her uncle, her, an' me.

“You see it's this way. Parson comes
Our road but once a year—
We lives at Yougerbungaree,
Just thirty mile from here;—

“At sundown yesterday I spied
The parson ridin' past;
I runs to Sue's, an' ‘Sue,’ says I,
‘Our chance is come at last!’

“This morning to his camp we goes,
Us three, an' mother, four;
‘Splice us,’ says we, but parson, he
Puts in his blessed oar.

“ ‘Fill up this form,’ says he. We fills.
‘Hullo!’ he cries, ‘my dear!
Father alive? You under age?
Me marry ye! No fear.’

“(Don't throttle, boss!)—Says parson then;
‘Go, seek a magistrate;
Get his consent; an' hurry back;
I leave to-night at eight.’

“So off we starts, ten mile an hour—
(For heav'n's sake let me speak!)
You see, it's this way, boss; they've gone
To square it with the beak.

“I'm only hangin' round. I fixed
To meet them there at one;
An' if I fail, my pretty Sue
Will think I've cut an' run.”—

“Was them things pigs?”—“Oh drat the pigs!
It's this way, boss,—we're late.
Think, thirty mile! the mokes dead beat!
An' parson off at eight!”

'Twas all in vain; and when at length,
Exhausted, limp, and pale,
He gave reluctant ear, 'twas thus
The skipper told his tale.

“I took the things on board as pigs,
As pigs I signed for them;
I passed an entry on them—pigs!

Pigs, sar, from starn to stem.

“Wal, wal; I little guessed that Fate
Would play it down so low.
Was them things pigs, d'ye hear! . . . But how
The [Hades] should you know!

“It was the steamboat Arakoon,
A craft of coasting fame;
Cantharides P. Roebuck, sar,
Was skipper of the same.

“The iserlated cusses here
Was runnin' all to seed
When first the steamboat Arakoon
Come tradin' to the Tweed.

“Pigs, pigs, all sprung (mark that) from two,
They fetched them by the score,
An' nary strain had crossed the breed
For twenty year an' more.

“I cleaned the settlement of pigs,
Upp'd steam an' tore for town,
Nor guessed that them all-fired galoots
Had been and done me brown.

“An' sech a voyage! grunt and squeak!
(Pard, never load with swine.)
Whate'er the durned abortions wur,
The grunt was genu-ine.

“A hundred thousand times I swore
To drown them in the sea;
But, lord, they had an idgiot look
That fairly gravelled me.

“We made the port. Upon the wharf
A Brisbane butcher sot,
An' through the roarin' of the steam,
He hollered, ‘What ye got?’

“ ‘Got pigs,’ sez I, ‘like bullocks, sar!’
Cries butcher, ‘I'm your man,’
An' clewin' up his apron, slick
Along the plank he ran.”—

(But here the youth renewed his plaint;
“Have mercy on me mate!
It's thirty miles! the mokes dead beat!
An' parson leaves at eight!”)

“He eyed the brutes,” the tale flowed on,
“An' tossed his cussèd head;
An' turnin' on his heel, sez he,
‘I thought 'twas *pigs* you said.’

“ ‘An' ain't *them* pigs?’—but he was gone.
Wal, though I biled at this,
I tried my level best to see
The p'int he took amiss.

“But 'cep' a kinder cur'ous smile
That squintin' didn't mend,
An' an appealin' way they had
Of settin' up on end,—

“An' cept' about the snout a tech
Of Native Porkypine,
I couldn't see no reason why
That parcel wasn't swine.

“Wal, stranger, just as I had cussed
My liver into tune,
Another bloomin' butcher stepped
On board the Arakoon.”

(But here, at sound of distant hoofs,
The captive writhed anew;
“That's them!” he cried, “They've given me up!
Oh curse your pigs and you!”)

“No, pard—it ain't no use to squirm.
Whar was I? le'mme see.
Another butcher jumps aboard;
‘Good marnin', sar,’ sez he.

“Got any p—?’ But here he stuck.
The critturs caught his eye.
Sakes! how he stared as one by one
The things meandered by.

“At length sez he, astoopin' down,
The better to survey,
‘I wonder now what day o' the week
The Lord created they!

“ ‘What name, mate?’ ‘Pigs, sar, PIGS!’ I yelled,
‘As prime as ever growed!
D'ye know pigs when you see them, sar?’
‘Oh, *pigs*,’ sez he, ‘be blowed.’

“Pard, should you come across him, say

That I apologize;
For, oh! I banged that butcher's head
Agin the smokestack guys!

“I sought an old an' trusted friend,
A butcher in the town;
I struck his diggin's, seized him, hailed
A shay, and yanked him down.

“I carried him aboard—he was
A heavy man and slow—
‘Now on your naked oath,’ sez I,
‘Air them things pigs or no?’

“He made no sign, he made no sound,
But something in his eye,
As plain as signal lights, declared
The contract was awry.

“At last sez he, consid'rin' like,
An' strokin' down his jaws,
‘Cantharides P., it seems to me
Them pettitoes is claws!’

“ ‘Great Neptune!’—that was all I said,
And fell down in a swoon,
A broken wreck, upon the deck
Of the steamboat Arakoon.

“But twurn't Finis yet, old hoss,
For at the smell of gin
Cantharides P. Roebuck's soul
Jumped back into his skin.

“ ‘Go, fetch me a zew-ologist!’
I thundered as I rose.
‘Let's see what larnèd science makes
Of them 'ere pettitoes!’

“ ‘Who knows of one?’—The fireman's son
Sez, ‘Captain, if you please,
If what you mean stuffs beastises,
I'll fetch you wan o' these.’

“ ‘Go, bub!’ I cried. ‘Make tracks to onst,
An' ketch him out or in!—
This butcherin' conspiracy
Is just a trifle thin.’

“Wal, pard, the great man came. I slipped
A sov'rin in his hand,

Which, though he 'peared almighty skeered,
He seemed to understand.

“Sez I then, as he stooped an' spread
His hands upon his knees,
'Illustrious zew-ologist,
What articles air these?’

“A wild surprise lit up his eyes
As through his specs he blinked,—
'Dear me,' sez he, 'I always thought
That griffins wur extinct!’

* * * * *

“From that to this is blank—all blank;
But if 'tis true they say,
I ordered round the vessel's head,
An' ran her down the Bay.

“An' there, in spite of mate an' crew,
An' cook an' fireman's son,
I slung the critturs overboard,
An' drowned them every one.

“An' now beside this blessèd Tweed
I wander day an' night,
An' vainly ask of airth an' heaven
To read the riddle right.

“I ask the sea, I ask the skies,
I ask it high an' low,—
Was them 'ere shipments pigs? . . . Great Scott!
Was them things pigs or no?’”

* * * * *

That night at Yougerbungaree,
The house clock striking ten,
Into a maiden's presence burst
The most distraught of men.

“Oh, Ned, he's gone!” the maiden wailed.
“How could you treat me so?”—
For all reply there came the cry,
“Was them things pigs or no?’”

Born Before his Time.

BROWN was weeping; likewise cursing; and with amplitude of reason;
For a letter had been handed him that very afternoon
Which proved he had been cruelly begotten out of season,
That, in fact, he had been born a hundred centuries too soon.

From the day a friendly hint had told of coal on his selection,
In the house, the street, the office Brown had revelled in a dream,
Wherein himself and family and all the Brown connection
Figured floating in a golden barge adown a silver stream.

Now he wept; and little wonder; all his gorgeous hopes had faded
With the letter of the expert, lying crumpled at his feet,
Which reported, with a wealth of scientific terms paraded,
That the “coal” was hardly lignite, though a little more than peat.

“But some day,” so ran the missive, “it is bound to prove a treasure.”
(Here a moment's re-awakened hope had cheered the reader's soul)
“What with gas elimination and accumulated pressure,
“In ten thousand years or so it will be marketable coal.”

Such the wherefore of the change from exultation to lamenting—
And he lifted up his voice and cursed the author of his birth,
Through whose rash precipitation, unconsulted, unconsenting,
He had thus been dumped ten thousand years too soon upon the earth.

Not alone his sire and mother he denounced and execrated,
On their parents and fore-parents his anathemas he hurled,
As one and all, in series, or in concert, implicated
In his premature appearance on this carboniferous world.

For a change he cursed himself, as the untimely culmination
Of the whole precocious family that bore the name of Brown;
Till, exhausted of ferocity, the rage of imprecation
Into unavailing optatives broke impotently down.

“Oh that things,” he raved, “had always been as in the early ages,
“Before the human race had lost the art of going slow,
“When the life of man proceeded at such very easy stages
That the proper age for wedlock was a hundred years or so!

“Would that each of my forefathers, like Methusalem, had waited,
“Who till nigh upon two hundred shirked the matrimonial rôle!
“Then I had not been ten thousand years unduly antedated,
“But would doubtless in the future be co-eval with my coal.

“Now not for me shall this potential wealth be resurrected;
“This bottled sunshine immature shall mellow not for me!

“Now another hand shall reap where I have—where I have selected,
“And another lap receive the fruit that ripens on my tree!

“Oh that I had been consulted ere the world was set in movement,
“When Providence was mapping out the future course of time,
“I had certainly suggested as a manifest improvement
“That a coal-seam and its owner should together reach their prime.

“I shall be a blessed fossil when the land shall yield its treasure,
“I who registered the area and paid the money down—
“Paid the money, little recking of another's gain and pleasure—
“Oh that I could sleep ten thousand years and wake again John Brown!”

PART II.

And the gods whom he had railed at in his petulant misprision
Heard the prayer and sent such answer as appeared to meet the case:
Heavy slumber fell upon him, and 'twas given him in a vision
At the date himself had named to re-awake to time and space.

On his treasure-ground he stood; for though his data were deficient,
The old land-marks being down, and every feature new and strange,
Yet, as dreamers are at moments unaccountably omniscient,
He was 'ware of his selection in despite of time and change.

And, behold, a crowd of workers, working leisurely and coolly,
Who with marvellous machinery were scooping up his coal,
Which an aeronautic vehicle received, and, freighted fully,
Soared away with at the touch of some invisible control.

Then within the soul of Brown did grievous sense of wrong awaken,
And on one who made to pass him he imposed a sudden hand—
“Tell me, tell me,” he demanded, “where my coal is being taken.
“At whose order has this trespass been committed on my land?”

To whom in turn, the other, when a moment he had pondered,
As if dubious how to grapple with an ignorance so great,
“From what planet in formation have you innocently wandered?
“*My coal.*’ *My land.*’ . . . Poor waif, you've come ten thousand years too late.

“In this world where every man an altruistic democrat is,
“We avoid as much as possible the use of my's and thy's:
“Up in Saturn or in Neptune or where'er your habitat is
“I presume you still are wallowing in the stage of merchandise.

“You should have timed your visit for that earlier dispensation
“When the individual flourished, reaping where he did not sow,
“When *he* was counted wisest in his day and generation
“Who made the largest profit with the smallest quid pro quo.

“Now a man reaps what he sows, and when his measure overfloweth
“He who lacks may freely take, as each for each and all doth live,
“Here are neither rich nor poor, no man exacteth, no man oweth,
“And the zest of labour groweth with the vital need to give.

“And as touching this same mineral, whose multifarious uses
“By our prodigal progenitors were only half divined,
“Wheresoever to man's comfort or his pleasure it conduces,
“There—his want his only title—there the owner you will find.”

* * * * *

Brown awoke another man, the situation now surveying
In the light of such new knowledge as prophetic vision brings;
'Twas a chastened Brown who mopped his forehead, tremulously saying,
“By the Lord, I must anticipate that frightful state of things!”

So he went and squared the expert, who indited a voluminous
Report upon the merits of the hypothetical coal,
While relays of goodly samples most seductively bituminous,
Judiciously distributed, beguiled the public soul.

Then a Company was floated and . . . the rest needs no relating,
Brown, of course, sold out in time, nor have his riches taken wings.
Brown is happy and respected; and he doesn't mind narrating
How he managed to anticipate “that frightful state of things.”

Progress in the Pacific.

LAPP'D in blue Pacific waters lies an isle of green and gold,—
A garden of enchantment such as Eden was of old;
And the innocent inhabitants, pure children of the sun,
Resembled those of Eden, too—in more respects than one.

But included in its list of charms this peaceful isle possessed
A feature that seemed rather out of keeping with the rest;
A huge volcano frowned above palm-grove and taropatch
That ev'n for Krakatoa might have proved an equal match.

“Might *have* proved,” I say advisedly,—for ages now had past
Since this passion-worn volcano in a fit had breathed its last;
Now flowery vegetation draped its shoulders like a shawl—
Only the sullen cone stood unapparelled over all.

To this happy bower of innocence, this Island of the Blest,
Came two Melbourne Presbyterians—no matter on what quest—
Leading men in Church and Market, always found within the ring,
John McTaggart, William Wallace, Agents for—for everything.

How glowed their weary hearts before the beauty of the scene,
The palm-groves, the acacia-groves, and all the varied green!
How swelled their souls with sentiment when, swarming from their huts,
Oame the simple natives wooing them with pigs and cocoa-nuts!

“Eh, man, but this is sweet!” said John, and wiped away a tear.
“It is good for us (I say with the apostle) to be here.
The islands are God's handiwork, their beauties are His own—
And, Weelyum—man, there should be lots of sulphur in that cone!

“These natives are a guileless folk, as we can well discern,
But how to make gunpowder is a thing they yet may learn.
Now, gunpowder leads to homicides, and other sinful scenes,
And I feel it is our duty to deprive them of the means.

“So lest some flagitious traders should come fossicking about,
This very day we'll purchase that volcano out and out.
Lest guilt should stain these blameless souls we'll form a Sulphur Co.”—
And, William, though a silent man, replied to him, “Juist so.”

Then they summoned their interpreter and made their wishes known,
And before the day was over that volcano was their own,
And the chiefs were paid the price in costly axes, hooks and knives,
While invaluable necklaces were showered upon their wives.

But not before McTaggart had impressed the native mind
With a solemn deed of transfer of a strictly legal kind,

Which Scripture, fraught, as was supposed, with threats and terrors dark,
Was attested by the signature of “Na-Galoo, His Mark.”

Then home they sailed, nor thought again for many and many a day
Of their potential riches in that island far away:
They had other fish to fry and other irons in the fire,
And success upon success but seemed to multiply desire.

But at length there came a season when their wealth developed wings,
And their hearts grew sad within them at the general look of things,
But most of all they sorrowed at the worldliness and pride
Of the smarter men who bested them and hustled them aside.

Said McTaggart, “Let us quit this sordid sphere, and for a while
Let us bathe our souls in innocence in yon sequestered isle;
The aims of men are vanity; life's but a fleeting show—
And the *Argus* says that sulphur's up.”—And William said “Juist so.”

So they raised, and raised with credit, all the necessary plant,
Nor forgot amid their haste that solemn league and covenant;
And thus and thus it came to pass ere many days had fled
That the island lay before them, and the grey cone towered o'erhead.

But where—where were the simple folk that greeted them of yore
And who were these red-shirted swells that met them on the shore,
And covered them with muskets of a fashion obsolete,
But possibly still lethal if discharged at twenty feet?

Alas, too soon they gathered from their semi-English speech
That the sixty three Kanaka bucks who blocked them on the beach
Were time-expired “Returns,” enlightened men, who not in vain
Had spent the intervening years in Queensland trashing cane.

“You come take solfa,” cried a Chief, who recognised the two,
“Flenchman Comp'ny buy him solfa. Solfa no belonga you
We sell him Comp'ny thing man call in Queensland mineral lease”—
And sixty-three Kanaka smiles broke up the evening peace.

Then McTaggart, white with godly ire, yet calm in sense of right,
Drew forth the sacred covenant and spread it to the light,—
“I bought your hill entire,” he said; “the whole volcano's mine!”
But the Chieftain took the document and read it line by line

Read it word by word and line by line, date, signature and all,
As one who fain would do the right although the heaven's should fall,
Then delivered this decision, “Hill belonga you all right.
But paper no say solfa. Flenchman buy him *that*. Goo' night.”

* * * * *

“Is this the land,” McTaggart cried, “where we had fondly thought

To bathe our souls in innocence and bag what we had bought!
Sawtan hath made this isle his own! Arise and let us go.
Weelyum, Progress is a curse! a curse!" And William said "Juist so."

A Son of the Soil.

SAID the Preacher “All is Vanity!”—appending as a reason
That the things we find our pleasure in are bound to pass and pall;
But it seems to me that whatso'er endureth for a season
Isn't half as vain as whatso'er hath never been at all.

When you find that what you've hitherto been wont to make a boast of
Must be numbered with the ejects that from muddled brains proceed—
When you find that in respect thereof there isn't ev'n a ghost of
Fact to back it up—ah, then, you may cry “Vanity,” indeed.

From my tend'rest years I've plumed myself on being an Australian—
An Australian pure and simple, of the most authentic brand;
Scotchman, Englishman, and Irishman alike to me were alien;
I was sibber to King Billy through our common mother-land.

To the pride of local genesis my being was surrendered,
The worthiest of immigrants I looked upon with scorn
As exotic interlopers under foreign skies engendered,
Though transplanted to my country fifty years ere I was born.

What although they wove the fabric of Australia's starry banner
From the fibre of their being till the tissue was complete,—
'Twas for *us*, the young, to wave it in our own emphatic manner
In the face of all things ancient, European and effete!

“Ours the fitter hand to hold the reins,” I sedulously boasted;
And whenever at the festal board occasion would allow,
“Australia for the Australians!” with a hip-hooray I toasted
And to-day I learn I'm no more an Australian than a Chow.

Would to heav'n I'd been content to play the “Native” single-handed,
Nor sought to be enrolled in that accursèd A.N.A., *
But the vain ambition seized me to be registered and branded
As an *organised* Australian—and I gave myself away.

Not long to crush my fondest pride the ruthless Council tarried;
Yester eve I made my overtures, the answer came at morn—
“Dear Sir, at last night's meeting 'twas unanimously carried
“That a person born at Battersea is *not* Australian-born.”

“At Battersea?” “At Battersea?”—Unwitting of objection
I had hardly even looked at my certificate of birth,
Which, now “Returned herewith,” brought dimly back to recollection
A tale of my nativity on t'other side the earth.

How my mother (rest her soul) by wayward appetences fretted
Cried aloud for the Old Country and a breath of English air;

How my father, ripe for holiday, her last caprice abetted. . . .
And I, a mere expectancy, went them unaware.

And though the self-same year in shining dells of myrtle found me,
Where the wattle shed its perfume and the lories flashed their gems,
And the white acacia blossoms flaked the verdure allaround me—
I had been born in London, on the Surrey side of Thames.

Oh, vanity of vanities, the birth I made a boast of!
Oh, unsubstantial eject of an inadvertent brain!
And the self-confounding sentiment I made so brave a toast of
Gr-r. I danced on my certificate—and even that was vain.

* * * * *

I have slept upon the question. I have faced the problem squarely
At the favoured hour of wisdom when the darkness turns to grey.
I have reckoned up “nativity” impartially and fairly,
And I've come to the conclusion they are fools, the A.N.A.

If begotten *of* and *from* the soil, what lack I to be native?
What matters where my skin first felt the chill of mundane airs,
If my origin was here, in this alluvium procreative
Whose substance reached me through two generations of forbears?

That an accidental deviousness in time of incubation
Should make my whence irrelevant, and pin me to Whereat—
Do they really mean to play on me with calm deliberation
A pyramidal, orbicular absurdity like that!

But no matter. Let them hug their narrow canons of admission:
The A.N.A. are not the only natives in the land.
There is yet another outlet for my dominant ambition;
I will hie me to King Billy; he will take me by the hand.

He will lead me to his tribe, on slight preliminary payment;
As a resurrected ancestor my status shall be fixed;
As a native of the natives I will rid me of my raiment;
I will rub me with goanna grease and charcoal intermixed.

I'll adorn my head with feathers, and to decorate my body
I will grave it o'er with diagrams, and fill the grooves with clay.
I will capture me a lubra by the suasion of a waddy—
And who'll be native, then, my high and mighty A.N.A.?

* Australian Natives' Association.

“Universally Respected.”

I.

BIGGS was missing: Biggs had vanished; all the town was in a ferment;
For if ever man was looked to for an edifying end,
With due mortuary outfit, and a popular interment,
It was Biggs, the universal guide, philosopher, and friend.

But the man had simply vanished; speculation wove no tissue
That would hold a drop of water; each new theory fell flat.
It was most unsatisfactory, and hanging on the issue
Were a thousand wagers, ranging from a “pony” to a hat.

Not a trace could search discover in the township or without it,
And the river had been dragged from morn till night with no avail.
His continuity had ceased, and that was all about it,
And there wasn't even a grease-spot left behind to tell the tale.

That so staid a man as Biggs was should be swallowed up in mystery
Lent an increment to wonder—he who trod no doubtful paths,
But stood square to his surroundings, with no cloud upon his history,
As the much-respected lessee of the Corporation Baths.

His affairs were all in order: since the year the alligator
With a startled river bather made attempt to coalesce,
The resulting wave of decency had greater grown and greater,
And the Corporation Baths had been a marvellous success.

Nor could trouble in the household solve the riddle of his clearance,
For his bride was now in heaven, and the issue of the match
Was a patient drudge whose virtues were as plain as her appearance—
Just the sort whereto no scandal could conceivably attach.

So the Whither and the Why alike mysterious were counted;
And as Faith steps in to aid where baffled Reason must retire,
There were those averred so good a man as Biggs might well have mounted
Up to glory like Elijah in a chariot of fire!

For indeed he was a good man; when he sat beside the portal
Of the Bath-house at his pigeon-hole, a saint within a frame,
We used to think his face was as the face of an immortal,
As he handed us our tickets, and took payment for the same.

And, oh, the sweet advice with which he made of such occasion
A duplicate detergent for our morals and our limbs—
For he taught us that decorum was the essence of salvation,
And that cleanliness and godliness were merely synonyms;

But that open-air ablution in the river was a treason
To the purer instincts, fit for dogs and aborigines,
And that wrath at such misconduct was the providential reason
For the jaws of alligators and the tails of stingarees.

But, alas, our friend was gone, our guide, philosopher, and tutor,
And we doubled our potations, just to clear the inner view;
But we only saw the darklier through the bottom of the pewter,
And the mystery seemed likewise to be multiplied by two.

And the worst was that our failure to unriddle the enigma
In the “rags” of rival towns was made a by-word and a scoff,
Till each soul in the community felt branded with the stigma
Of the unexplained damnation of poor Biggs's taking off.

So a dozen of us rose and swore this thing should be no longer:
Though the means that Nature furnished had been tried without result,
There were forces supersensual that higher were and stronger,
And with consentaneous clamour we pronounced for the occult.

Then Joe Thomson slung a tenner, and Jack Robinson a tanner,
And each according to his means respectively disbursed;
And a letter in your humble servant's most seductive manner
Was despatched to Sludge the Medium, recently of Darlington.

II.

“I am Biggs,” the spirit said ('t was through the medium's lips he said it;
But the voice that spoke, the accent, too, were Biggs's very own,
Be it, therefore, not set down to our unmerited discredit
That collectively we sickened as we recognized the tone).

“From a saurian interior, Christian friends, I now address you”—
(And “Oh heaven!” or its correlative, groaned shudderingly we)—
“While there yet remains a scrap of my identity, for, bless you,
This ungodly alligator's fast assimilating me.

“For although through nine abysmal days I've fought with his digestion,
Being hostile to his processes and loth to pulpify,
It is rapidly becoming a most complicated question
How much of me is crocodile, how much of him is I.

“And, oh, my friends, 'tis sorrow's crown of sorrow to remember
That this sacrilegious reptile owed me nought but gratitude,
For I bought him from a showman twenty years since come November,
And I dropped him in the river for his own and others' good.

“It had grieved me that the spouses of our townsmen, and their daughters,
Should be shocked by river bathers and their indecorous ways
So I cast my bread—that is, my alligator—on the waters,

And I found it, in a credit balance, after many days.

“Years I waited, but at last there came the rumour long expected,
And the out-of-door ablutionists forsook their wicked paths,
And the issues of my handiwork divinely were directed
In a constant flow of custom to the Corporation Baths.

“’Twas a weakling when I bought it; ’twas so young that you could pet it;
But with all its disadvantages I reckoned it would do;
And it did: Oh, lay the moral well to heart and don't forget it—
Put decorum first, and all things shall be added unto you.

“Lies! all lies! I've done with virtue. Why should *I* be interested
In the cause of moral progress that I served so long in vain,
When the fifteen hundred odd I've so judiciously invested
Will but go to pay the debts of some young rip who marries Jane?

“But the reptile overcomes me; my identity is sinking;
Let me hasten to the finish; let my words be few and fit.
I was walking by the river in the starry silence, thinking
Of what Providence had done for me, and I had done for it;

“I had reached the saurian's rumoured haunt, where oft in fatal folly
I had dropped garotted dogs to keep his carnal craving up”
(Said Joe Thomson, in a whisper, “That explains my Highland collie!”
Said Bob Williams, *sotto voce*, “That explains my Dandy pup!”)

“I had passed to moral questions, and found comfort in the notion
That fools are none the worse for things not being what they seem,
When, behold, a seeming log became instinct with life and motion,
And with sudden curvature of tail upset me in the stream.

“Then my leg, as in a vice”—But here the revelation faltered,
And the medium rose and shook himself, remarking with a smile
That the requisite conditions were irrevocably altered,
For the personality of Biggs was lost in crocodile.

* * * * *

Now, whether Sludge's story would succeed in holding water
Is more, perhaps, than one has any business to expect;
But I know that on the strength of it I married Biggs's daughter,
And I found a certain portion of the narrative correct.

“Big Ben.”

DIED AT YAAMBA CREEK, JULY, 1872

DE mortuis nil ni-

Si bonum: R.I.P.:—

No more upbraid him:—

Nay, rather plead his cause,

For Ben exactly was

What Nature made him.

Not radically bad,

He naturally had

No leaning sinwards;

But Nature saw it good

One life-long crave for food

Should rack his inwards.

According to his lights,

And to the appetites

In him implanted,

He did his level best

To feed—and all the rest

He took for granted.

Ere birth he was *laid* low,

And yet no man I know

For high birth matched him:

Apollo was his sire,

Who with life-giving fire

Ab ovo hatched him.

Just over Capricorn

This same Big Ben was born,

A feeble lizard;

But with the years came strength,

And twenty feet of length—

The most part gizzard.

By Fitzroy's rugged crags,

Its “sawyers” and its snags,

He roamed piscivorous;

Or watching for his prey,

By Yaamba creek he lay,

In mood carnivorous.

Unthinking little hogs,
And careless puppy-dogs
 Fitzroy-ward straying,
Were grist unto his mill. . . .
His grinders now are still,
 Himself past preying.

Whether in self-defence,
Or out of hate *pre pense*,
 Or just for fun shot,
Are things beyond my ken—
I only know Big Ben
 Died of a gunshot.

It was a sorry case;
For Ben loved all our race,
 Both saint and sinner;
If he had had his way,
He would have brought each day
 One home to dinner:—

Loved with that *longing* love,
Such as is felt above
 The Southern Tropic:—
Small chance was ever his,
But his proclivities
 Were philanthropic.

There are who would insist
He was misogynist—
 'Tis slander horrid;
For every nymph he saw,
He would have liked her— raw,
 From toe to forehead.

Then let his memory be;
No misanthrope was he;
 No woman-hater;
But just what you may call,
Take him for all in all,
 An *alligator*.

The Southern Cross.

(A FRUSTRATION.)

FOUR stars on Night's brow, or Night's bosom,
 Whichever the reader prefers;
Or Night without either may do some,
 Each one to his taste or to hers.
Four stars—to continue inditing,
 So long as I feel in the vein—
Hullo! what the deuce is that biting?
 Mosquitos again!

Oh glories not gilded but golden,
 Oh daughters of Night unexcelled,
By the sons of the north un beholden,
 By our sons (if we have them) beheld;
Oh jewels the midnight enriching,
 Oh four which are double of twain!
Oh mystical — bother the itching!
 Mosquitos again!

You alone I can anchor my eye on,
 Of you and you only I'll write:
And I now look awry on Orion,
 That once was my chiefest delight.
Ye exalt me high over the petty
 Conditions of pleasure and pain—
Oh Heaven! here are these maladetti
 Mosquitos again!

The poet should ever be placid.
 Oh vex not his soul or his skin!
Shall I scare them with sulphurous acid?
 It is done, and afresh I begin.
Lucid orbs!—that last sting very sore is;
 I am fain to leave off, I am fain;
It has given me uncommon dolores—
 Simpliciter, pain.

Not quite what the shape of a cross is—
 A little lop-sided, I own—
Confound your infernal proboscis,
 Inserted well nigh to the bone!
Queen-lights of the heights of high heaven,
 Ensconced in the crystal inane—
Oh me! here are seventy times seven

Mosquitos again!

Oh horns of a mighty trapezium!
 Quadrilateral area, hail!
Oh bright as the light of magnesium!—
 Oh hang them all, female and male!
At the end of an hour of their stinging,
 What shall rest of me then, what remain?
I shall die as the swan dieth, singing,
 Mosquitos again!

Shock keen as the stroke of the levin!
 They sting, and I change in a flash
From the peace and the poppies of heaven
 To the flame and the fuel of—dash!
O Cross of the South ! I forgot you,
 These demons have addled my brain.
Once more I look upward. . . . Od rot you!
 You're at it again

There ! stick in your pitiless brad-awl,
 And do your malevolent worst!
Dine on me, and when you have had all,
 Let others go in for a burst!
O silent and pure constellation,
 Can you pardon my fretful refrain?
Forgive, oh forgive my vexation—
 They're at it again!

Oh imps that provoke to mad laughter,
 Winged fiends that are fed from my brow,
Bite hard! let your neighbours come after,
 And sting where you stung me just now!
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
 Round blotches I rub at in vain!
Oh Crux! Whatsoever I've written,
 I've written in pain!

Ye chrysolite crystalline creatures,
 Wan watchers the fairest afield,
Stars—and garters, are these my own features
 In the merciless mirror revealed!
They are mine, even mine, and none other,
 And my hands how they slacken and strain!
Oh my sister, my spouse, and my mother!
 I'm going insane!

Quart Pot Creek.

ON an evening ramble lately, as I wandered on sedately,
Linking curious fancies, modern, mediaeval, and antique—
Suddenly the sun descended, and a radiance ruby-splendid,
With the gleam of water blended, thrilled my sensitive physique—
Thrilled me, filled me with emotion to the tips of my physique,
Fired my eye, and flushed my cheek.

Heeding not where I was going, I had wandered, all unknowing,
Where a river gently flowing caught the radiant ruby-streak;
And this new-found stream beguiling my sedateness into smiling,
Set me classically styling it with Latin names and Greek,
Names Idalian and Castalian, such as lovers of the Greek
Roll like quids within their cheek.

On its marge was many a burrow, many a mound, and many a furrow,
Where the fossickers of fortune play at Nature's hide-and-peek;
And instead of bridge to span it, there were stepping-stones of granite,
And where'er the river ran, it seemed of hidden wealth to speak.
Presently my soul grew stronger, and I, too, was fain to speak:—
I assumed a pose plastique.

“Stream,” said I, “I'll celebrate thee! Rhymes and rhythms galore await thee!
In the weekly ‘poet's corner’ I'll a niche for thee bespeak:
But, to aid my lucubration, thou must tell thine appellation,
Tell thy Naiad-designation—for the journal of next week—
Give thy sweet Pactolian title to my poem of next week.
Whisper, whisper it—in Greek!”

But the river gave no token, and the name remained unspoken,
Though I kept apostrophising till my voice became a shriek;—
When there hove in sight the figure of a homeward veering digger,
Looming big, and looming bigger, and ejecting clouds of reek—
In fuliginous advance emitting clouds of noisome reek
From a tube beneath his beak.

“Neighbour mine,” said I, “and miner,”—here I showed a silver shiner—
“For a moment, and for sixpence, take thy pipe from out thy cheek.
This the guerdon of thy fame is; very cheap indeed the same is;
Tell me only what the name is—('tis the stream whereof I speak)—
Name the Naiad-name Pactolian! Digger, I adjure thee, speak!”
Quoth the digger, “Quart Pot Creek.”

Oh, Pol! Edepol! Mecastor! Oh most luckless poetaster!
I went home a trifle faster in a twitter of a pique;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living rhyming being
Ever yet was cursed with seeing, in his poem for the week,

Brook or river made immortal in his poem for the week,
With such name as “Quart Pot Creek!”

* * * * *

But the river, never minding, still is winding, still is winding,
By the gardens where the Mongol tends the cabbage and the leek;
And the ruby radiance nightly touches it with farewell lightly,
But the name sticks to it tightly,—and this sensitive physique,
The already-mentioned (vide supra) sensitive physique,
Shudders still at “Quart Pot Creek!”

In a 'Bus.

(A SPRING CONTRAST.)

A QUARTER of a century ago,
Just such a face as this upon me shone,
 And in a 'bus too;
And then, as now, it was the warm springtide;
And then, as now, there was no soul inside
 Excepting us two.

There are the same blue eyes, the delicate nose.
Same rosebud mouth, and cheeks of blushful rose,
 Same chin bewitching;
Same throat of sheeny white and perfect mould,
Same light-brown hair, with scattered threads of gold
 The brown enriching.

Ah! how this present beauty's counterpart
Woke instant tumult in my fluttering heart—
 Pain, pleasure, blended!
Yet this one is as beautiful as that . . .
Dear me! why don't my heart go pit-a-pat
 Now, as it then did?

One glance of *those* bright eyes, and all was o'er:
I wished to die; at least I cared no more
 For life without her:—
These, glancing on me now, are quite as fair;
Yet, strange to say, I do not seem to care
 One bit about her.

I wished I were a glove upon that hand—
The eardrop in her ear, the zone that spanned
 Her waist so trimly;
And now, in view of equal charms, the bliss
Of such astounding metamorphosis
 I see but dimly.

Well I recall the mad desire to hear
Her name who turned the common atmosphere
 To heavenly ether:—
Why is it that I do not now, as then,
Care twopence if the name be M. or N.,
 Or both, or neither?

Well I remember how I longed to pay
Her fare, or in some other lordly way

Impress her duly:—
Why is it, then, though not less generous grown,
I'm better pleased this nymph should pay her own
Than mulct "yours truly"?

And how quick-soaring hope as quickly fell
When I descried a military swell
Her brooch portrayed in;
Why is it, then, 'twould leave me undistressed
If a whole regiment adorned the breast
Of this fair maiden?

And how my anguish, when she drew her glove,
And showed the plain gold sign of wedded love,
Refused assuagement:—
Why is it that I do not care a jot
If this one wears such fateful ring, or not—
Plain, or engagement?

Is it because my taste hath changed its style,
And now prefers, in place of Venus' smile,
The frown of Pallas?
Ah no: Minerva, too, has lost her sway;
I met her antitype this very day,
And felt quite callous.

Is it the climate? Ah, if vernal airs
Incline the heart to amorous affairs,
This Austral season
Should stir in every vein, when beauty's by,
The throb of lusty youth! Oh no; the cli-
mate's not the reason.

Is it the place! Still, no; this threepenny 'bus
Is much the same as rolled the twain of us
Through Piccadilly;
And fitter place, when all is said and done,
There could not be for "bussing." (Pass the pun;
I know it's silly.)

Is it that I have learned their sweetest smiles
And airs and graces are but "wanton wiles,"
And mere pretences?
Or is it that the naked eye of youth
Sees all through glamour, while I see the truth
Through convex lenses?

But wherefore beat about the bush, old man?
You know that you can give, if any can,
Reasons in plenty.

Must I, then, own it?.. 'Tis—because—because—
I am not quite—not quite—the man I was
At five-and-twenty!

An empty socket shows where passion burned;
My sense of beauty now, alas, has turned
Pure intellectual,
And to arouse a tumult in the brain,
Or thrill the system with delicious pain,
Quite ineffectual.

So, I may gaze on her, and gaze my fill. . . .
D'ye know, I think I'm somewhat human still;
I like her, rather;
But oh, how things are changed from what they were!
For all she is so fair, I feel to her
Just like a father.

She dowers me with a smile from lip and eye,
And while I wonder what she meaneth by
The sweet bestowment,
“Please pass my fare,” comes from her beauteous lips,
And, as I take the coin, our finger tips
Meet for a moment.

A thrill! A thrill! I do declare, a thrill!
Upon my honour, I believe I'm still
Intensely human!
I pause and ponder what I mean to do.
Methinks I'd better scuttle home unto
My own old woman.

A Brisbane Reverie.

MARCH, 1873.

As I sit beside my little study window, looking down
From the heights of contemplation (attic front) upon the town—
(Attic front, per week — with board, of course — a sov'reign and a crown);—

As I sit—(these sad digressions, though, are much to be deplored)—
In my lonely little attic—(it is all I can afford;
And I should have mentioned, washing *not* included in the board);—

As I sit—(these wild parentheses my very soul abhors)—
High above the ills of life, its petty rumours, paltry wars—
(The attic back is cheaper, but it wants a chest of drawers);—

In the purpling light of half-past six before the stars are met,
While the stricken sun clings fondly to his royal mantle yet,
Dying glorious on the hill-tops in reluctant violet,—

Just the time that favours vision, blissful moments that unbar
The inner sight (assisted by a very mild cigar),
To behold the things that are not, side by side with those that are,—

Just the very light and very time that suit the bard's complaint,
When through present, past, and future, roams his soul without restraint—
When no clearer are the things that are than are the things that ain't;—

With a dual apperception, metaphysical, profound,
Past and present running parallel, I scan the scene around—
(Were there two of us the attic front would only be a pound).—

Beneath mine eyes the buried past arises from the tomb,
Not cadaverous or ghostly, but in all its living bloom—
(I would rather pay the odds than have a partner in my room).

How the complex *now* contrasteth with the elemental *then!*
Tide of change outflowing flow of ink, outstripping stride of pen!
(Unless it were but no they only take in *single* men).

Where trackless wilderness lay wide, a hundred ages through—
I can see a man with papers, from my attic point of view,
Who for gath'ring house assessments gets a very decent screw.

Where forest-contiguity assuaged the summer heats,
It is now an argued question, when the City Council meets,
If we mightn't buy a tree or two to shade the glaring streets.

Where no sound announced the flight of time, not even crow of cock,
I can see the gun that stuns the town with monitory shock,

And a son of that same weapon hired to shoot at one o'clock.

Where the kangaroo gave hops, the "old man" fleetest of the fleet,
Mrs. Pursy gives a "hop" to-night to all the town's *élite*,
But her "old man" cannot hop because of bunions on his feet.

Where the emu, "at its own sweet will," went wandering all the day,
And left its bill-prints on whate'er came handy in its way,
There are printed bills that advertise "The Emu for the Bay."

Where of old, with awful mysteries and diabolic din,
They "kippered" adolescents in the presence of their kin,
There's a grocer selling *herrings* kippered, half-a-crown per tin.

Where the savage only used his club to supplement his fist,
The white man uses his for friendly intercourse and whist,
Not to mention sherry, port, bordeaux, et cetera—see list.

Where dress was at a discount, or at most a modest "fall,"
Rise "Criterion," "Cosmopolitan," and "City Clothing Hall,"
And neither men nor women count for much—the dress is all.

Where a bride's trousseau consisted of an extra coat of grease,
And Nature gave the pair a suit of glossy black apiece,
Now the matrimonial outfit is a perfect golden fleece.

Where lorn widows wore the knee-joints of the late lamented dead,
We have dashing wives who wear their living husbands' joints instead—
Yea, their vitals, for embellishment of bosom, neck, and head.

Where the blacks, ignoring livers, lived according to their wills,
Nor knew that flesh is heir to quite a lexicon of ills,
Five white chemists in one street grow rich through antibilious pills.

Where the only bell was the bell-bird's note, now many mingling bells
"Make Catholic the trembling air," as famed George Eliot tells
Of another town somewhere between more northern parallels.

(But in case the name of Catholic offend protesting ear,
Let Wesleyan or Baptist be interpolated here,
Or that bells make Presbyterian the trembling atmosphere.)

Where the savage learned no love from earth, nor from the "shining frame,"
And merely feared the devil under some outlandish name,
There are heaps of Britishers whose creed is—very much the same!

Where the gin was black—(methinks'tis time the bard were shutting up:
The bell is ringing for the non-inebriating cup,
And even attic bards must have their little "bite and sup.")

From an Upper Verandah.

WHAT happier haunt could the gods allot
For loftiest musing to sage or bard?—
Yet I would that this upper verandah did *not*
Look down on my beautiful Neighbour's Back-yard!

I stir the afflatus: Descend, O ye Nine!
Let the crystalline gates of the soul be unbarred!
No. My thoughts *will* keep running in one fixed line—
The clothes-line that hangs in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

Let me gaze on the hills; let me think of the sea;
Of the dawn rosy-fingered—the night silver-starred:—
(What dear little feet must the owner's be
Of those stockings that hang in my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

Let me tune my soul to a measure devout:—
Ah, the musical mood is all jangled and jarred,
While things with borders, and things without,
Keep flutt'ring down there in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

Are the True and the Good and the Beautiful dead,
That I win not one gleam of Pierian regard?
(Does she suffer, I wonder, from cold in the head?—
Such a lot of *mouchoirs* in my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

Comes the fit. While it sways me, high themes would I sing!
Prometheus! Achilles! Have at you! *En grade!*
Alexander the Great—(oh that *I* were a string
On that apron hung out in my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

I will shut my eyes fast—I have hit it at last,
Now my purest Ideals flit by me unmarred;
And odours of memory rise from the past,
(And an odour of suds from my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

Ah, yes! when the eyelids together are prest,
Every vestige of earth we throw off and discard.
(These are flannels, I think. Is she weak in the chest?—
There! I'm looking again at my Neighbour's Back-yard!)

Since the Muses back out, let Philosophy in:
Let me ponder its problems cold and hard.
Ah! Philosophy dies in a celibate grin
At that bolster-case down in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

Oh shame on my rapidly silvering hairs!
Oh shame on this veteran battered and scarred!

I to be witched with these frilled—affairs!

Confound my neighbour! Confound her Back-yard!

Why seek for the blossoms of Auld Lang Syne,

When the boughs where they budded are blasted and charred?—

Faugh! the whole concern's too alkaline—

It's washing day in my Neighbour's Back-yard!

On a Fork of Byron's.

[One of a set in the possession of the late C. W. Pitts, Esq., Stanthorpe.]

LIKE any other fork.—No mark you meet with
To point some psychological conceit with.
An ordinary fork. A fork to eat with.

No individuality of fashion:
No stamp of frenzy fine, or poet-passion;
An article in no respect Parnassian.

No muse “with ivy never sere” hath decked it:
In fact, it would be foolish to expect it.
I question if the muses recollect it.

A plain straightforward fork; yet interesting,
As to the world in general attesting
That poetizing hinges on digesting.

A fork not standing on its merits merely,
But, being Byron's, testifying clearly
That verse and victuals are related nearly.

Quite genuine; crest and all; a fork to swear by;
Some poet-stories doubtless hanging thereby,—
Associations such as gold can ne'er buy.

For 'twixt the fork and the divine afflatus
The links are perfect; there is no hiatus;
Fork, stomach, brain, pen,—all one apparatus.

So when the food that on the fork ascended
Grew into verse as with the brain it blended,
The fork wrote just as truly as the pen did.

For though the fork the earlier resource is,
Between the two no violent divorce is,—
I hold them to be correlated forces.

Perchance the unsuspected ministration
Of this same fork first set in circulation
The coinage of his rich imagination.

Perchance this very fork could give the clue to
What many of the famous thoughts were due to,
That now are part of me, and part of you too.

And if its prongs administered the fuel
That working duly unto brain-renewal

Kindled the thoughts that even yet fire *you* all,—

This very fork—(unless I quite astray be,
And you of unimpressionable clay be)—
A factor in *your* moral product may be.

And musing thus, does not this fork begin to you
To seem as consanguineously akin to you
As if the bard himself had stuck it into you?

'Tis ever thus: what Genius consecrateth
The nearest with the most remote collateth,
Till meanest use on highest issue waiteth.

This salad, now, in which the fork I'm pressing,
Wherein are all sweet savours coalescing—
What subtle shoot of genius efflorescing
Flowered in the flavour of so rich a blessing?
Is it that Byron's fork, some charm possessing,
Transmutes the—stop a bit—Who did the dressing?

The Power of Science.

“ALL thoughts, all passions, all delights,
 Whatever stirs this mortal frame.”
Are but the legacies of apes,
 With interest on the same.

How oft in studious hours do I
 Recall those moments, gone too soon,
When midway in the hall I stood,
 Beside the Dichobune.

Through the Museum-windows played
 The light on fossil, cast, and chart;
And she was there, my Gwendoline,
 The mammal of my heart.

She leaned against the Glyptodon,
 The monster of the sculptured tooth;
She looked a fossil specimen
 Herself, to tell the truth.

She leaned against the Glyptodon;
 She fixed her glasses on her nose;
One Pallas-foot drawn back displayed
 The azure of her hose.

Few virtues had she of her own—
 She borrowed them from time and space;
Her age was eocene, although
 Post-tertiary her place.

The Irish Elk that near us stood,
 (Megaceros Hibernicus),
Scarce dwarfed her; while I bowed beneath
 Her stately overplus.

I prized her pre-diluvian height,
 Her palaeozoic date of birth,
For these to scientific eye
 Had scientific worth.

She had some crotchets of her own,
 My sweet viviparous Gwendoline;
She loved me best when I would sing
 Her ape-descent and mine.

I raised a wild pansophic lay
 (The public fled the dismal tones);—

I struck a chord that suited well
That *entourage* of bones.

I sang the very dawn of life,
Cleared at a bound the infinite chasm
That sunders inorganic dust
From sly-born protoplasm.

I smote the stiffest chords of song,
I showed her in a glorious burst
How universal unity
Was dual from the first.

How primal germs contained in one
The beau-ideal and the belle;
And how the "mystery of life"
Is just a perfect cell.

I showed how sense itself began
In senseless gropings after sense;—
(She seemed to find it so herself,
Her gaze was so intense.)

And how the very need of light
Conceived, and visual organs bore;
Until an optic want evolved
The spectacles she wore.

How headless molluscs making head
Against the fashions of their line,
On pulpy maxims turned their backs,
And specialized a spine.

How landward longings seized on fish,
Fretted the type within their eggs,
And in amphibian issue dif-
Ferentiated legs.

I hopped the quaint marsupials,
And into higher mammals ran,
And through a subtle fugue I stole
From Lemurs up to Man.

How tails were lost—but when I reached
This saddest part of all my lay,
She dropped the corners of her mouth,
And turned her face away.

And proud to see my lofty love
So sweetly wince, so coyly shrink,
I woke a moving threnody—

I sang the missing link.

And when I spake of vanished kin,
Of Simian races dead and gone,
The wave of sorrow from her eyes
Half-drowned the Glyptodon.

I turned to other, brighter themes,
And glancing at our different scales,
I showed how lady beetles are
Robuster than the males.

I sang the Hymenoptera;
How insect-brides are sought and got;
How stridulation of the male
First hinted what was what.

And when—perchance too fervently—
I smote upon the chord of sex,
I saw the tardy spark of love
Blaze up behind her specs.

She listened with a heightened grace,
She blushed a blush like ruby wine,
Then bent her stately head and clinked
Her spectacles on mine.

A mighty impulse rattled through
Her well-articulated frame;
And into one delighted ear
She breathed my Christian name.

And whispered that my song had given
Her secret thought substantial shape,
For she had long considered me
The offshoot of an ape.

She raised me from the enchanted floor,
And, as my lips her shoulder met,
Between two asthmas of embrace
She called me marmosette.

I strove to calm her down; she grew
Serener and serener;
And so I won my Gwendoline,
My vertebrate congener.

The Courtship of the Future.

(A PREVISION.)

(A.D. 2876.)

HE.

“WHAT is a kiss?”—Why, long ago,
When pairs, as we, a-wooning sat,
They used to put their four lips. . . . so, . . .
And make a chirping noise. . . . like that.
And, strange to say, the fools were pleased;
A little went a long way then:
A cheek lip-grazed, a finger squeezed,
Was rapture to those ancient men.

Ah, not for us the timid course
Of those old-fashioned bill-and-cooers!
One unit of *our* psychic force
Had squelched a thousand antique wooers.
For us the god his chalice dips
In fountains fiercer, deeper, dearer,
Than purling confluence of lips
That meet, but bring the Souls no nearer.

Well; 'twas but poverty at worst:
Poor beggars, how could they be choosers!
Not yet upon the world had burst
Our Patent Mutual Blood-Transfusers.
Not yet had Science caught the clue
To joy self-doubling, -squaring, -cubing,—
Nor taught to draw the whole soul through
A foot of gutta-percha tubing.

Come, Lulu, bare the pearly arm;—
Now, where the subtle blue shows keenest,
I hang the duplex, snake-like charm,
(The latest, by a new machinist).
And see, in turn above my wrist
I fix the blood-compelling conduits . . .
Ah, this is what the old world missed,
For all the lore of all its pundits!

I turn the tap—I touch the spring—
Hush, Lulu, hush! our lives are blending.
(This new escapement's quite the thing,

And very well worth recommending.)
Oh circuit of commingling bliss!
Oh bliss of mingling circulation!
True love alone can merge like this
In one continuous pulsation.

Your swift life thrills me through and through:
I wouldn't call the Queen my mother:
Now you are I, and I am you,
And each of us is one another.
Reciprocally influent
The wedded love-tide flows between us:—
Ah, this is what the old fables meant,
For surely, love, our love is venous.

Now, now, your inmost life I know,
How nobler far than mine and grander;
For through *my* breast *your* feelings flow,
And through my brain your thoughts meander.
I feel a rush of high desires
With sweet domestic uses blending,
As now I think of angel-choirs,
And now of stockings heaped for mending.

And see—myself! in light enshrined!
An aureole my hat replacing!
Now, amorous yearnings half-defined,
With prudish scruples interlacing.
Next, cloudlike floats a snowy veil,
And—heavens above us!—what a trousseau!..
Come, Lulu, give me tale for tale;
I'll keep transfusing till you do so.

SHE.

Oh, love, this never *can* be you!
The stream flows turbid, melancholic;
And heavy vapours dull me through,
Dashed with a something alcoholic.
The elective-forces shrink apart,
No answering raptures thrill and quicken;
Strange feelings curdle at my heart,
And in my veins vile memories thicken.

I feel an alien life in mine!
It isn't I! It isn't you, Sir!
This is the mood of Caroline!
Oh, don't tell *me!* I know the brew, Sir!

Nay, nay,—it isn't “the machine”!
This isn't you—this isn't I, Sir!
It's the old story—you have been
Transfusing elsewhere on the sly, Sir.

The Gentle Anarchist.

[From an Unpublished Opera Libretto.]

I AM a gentle Anarchist,
I couldn't kick a dog,
Nor ever would for sport assist
To pelt the helpless frog.
I'd shoot a Czar, or wreck a train,
Blow Parliament sky-high,
But none could call me inhumane;
I wouldn't hurt a fly.
I wouldn't hurt a fly,
And why indeed should I?
It has neither land nor pelf
That I covet for myself,
Then wherefore should I hurt a fly?

I am a gentle Anarchist,
I live on herbs and fruits;
It don't become a communist
To eat his fellow-brutes.
I'd fire a town, upset a state,
Make countless widows weep,
Yet I am so compassionate
I wouldn't kill a sheep,
I wouldn't hurt a fly;
And why indeed should I?
If it doesn't interfere
With my personal career,
Why the dickens should I hurt a fly?

I'm such a gentle Anarchist
I hate all hunting men;
I couldn't hook a fish, or twist
The neck of cock or hen.
I'd level gaols, let scoundrels loose,
Blow priests and churches up—
But, oh, my pity's so profuse
I couldn't drown a pup.
I wouldn't hurt a fly;
And why indeed should I?
Unless, that is to say,
I found it in my way,
And then it's all up with the fly.

Macaulay's New Zealander.

IT little profits that, an idle man,
On this worn arch, in sight of wasted halls,
I mope, a solitary pelican,
And glower and glower for ever on Saint Paul's:—
Will no soft-hearted mortal be so very
Obliging as to row me o'er the ferry?

Here three-and-thirty years* I've stood estranged,
A dream of ruin all around me stretching;
And centuries shall see me yet unchanged,
Ever in act to sketch, but nothing sketching;
Mutely immutable, constrain'dly still,
With nought to stand against, except my will.

A wondrous lot is mine; ye bide your doom
Till men say Vixit: mine begins ere birth;
A lonely ghost projected from the womb
Of Time-to-come, I linger now on earth.
Ye vertebrates date back, while I commence
My weary present in the future tense.

A weird eidolon; a born paradox;
A fixture framed of incorporeal particles;
Yet dropped in many an Editorial box,
Blown thence in squibs, or hurled in Leading Articles;
A Nomad, though my permanent address is
In Volume Second of Macaulay's Essays.

I was not born of woman (see Macduff—
Nor stare to hear my lore so far extends;
The sire who bore me trafficked in such stuff,
And had his Shakespeare at his finger-ends:
The quitch is in the blood—such blood as ghost has;
I know as much as he; at least, almost as).

I was not born of woman; gave no pain;
Through no preliminary stage did pass;
But sprang, a Pallas, from Macaulay's brain,
Though not like her, with spear and helm of brass;
My spear, a pencil of Queensland plumbago;
My casque, a felt one—latest from Otago.

And therein lies the sting of all I bear—
That after brooding ages on mine arch,
And treasuring what the centuries prepare,
And noting what ye proudly term the March

Of Progress, and assimilating all
“The long result of Time,” see “Locksley-hall;”—

That after seeing all that mortal can,
That after learning all that man can learn,
This forecast shade, already more than man,
Must go and be a baby in its turn!
I've got to go and be a little kid,
When old perhaps as Cheops' Pyramid!

I've got to wear a little purfled cap;
Pass through, perchance, some brutal mode of swaddling;
To gather tissue from a bowl of pap;
To undergo no end of molly-coddling;
To be brought up by hand, or, worse and worse,
To be a parasite upon a nurse.

And in due course this cultured soul of mine
Must learn its Catechism by easy stages;
And sundry rods shall yet be steeped in brine,
To stimulate the heir of all the ages;
And men shall file away with prose and rhyme
To sharpen *me*, the foremost file of time.

I pray you, purist, faint not at the word;
For in the distant day whereof I speak,
Your chastened phrases shall be held absurd;
What you call slang shall be our Attic Greek;
And every man be file, or bloke, or cove;
And bloods make oath by Gum, instead of Jove!

For standing here, immovable and dumb,
An arch-Stylites, birth, not death, awaiting,
Faint inklings reach me of the time to come,
Beneath the loud To-day reverberating;
And I could tell of things so strange and wild,
Your wisest don would feel himself a child;—

Could show up many a now-belauded quackery;
Could play the deuce with half your saints and sages;
Could settle for you whether Boz or Thackeray
Shall be the admiration of the ages;
And whether Morris, Swinburne, and Rossetti
Shall number with the great, or with the petty;—

Could tell how empire shall have changed its place,
But must not “blow,” *although* an Australasian;
Could tell you which shall be the ruling race,
But may not shock the orthodox Caucasian,
Nor dare your curiosity assuage,

Lest I should make half-castes become the rage;—

Could tell you quite a fairy tale of science,
And wonders in Political Economy,
That set your time-worn statutes at defiance,
And hold them out of date as Deuteronomy:
The darky, boss; the trashy white, a “brudder;”
Man at the prow, and woman at the rudder;—

How all shall go by natural selection;
No man allowed to live unless good-looking;
How love shall vent itself in vivisection,
And charms be rated subsequent to cooking;
How girls instead of knitting sofa-covers,
Shall spend their leisure in tattooing lovers;

And how magnetic belts with dazzling hues
Shall draw unwilling arms around the waist;
How damsels to enhance their lips shall use
Odylic force condensed into a paste;
And woo the bashful from his slow simplicity
With cakes of desiccated electricity; —

How education, as a general rule,
Shall be conducted by familiar spirits;
How “circles” shall be formed in every school,
And rappings shall reward superior merits;
And how the spectroscope, applied to spectres,
Shall re-enact all history, on reflectors; —

And how your vaunted patents and inventions
Shall be for playthings to the great hereafter
And all your philosophical pretensions
Be themes of inextinguishable laughter
Your engineering form for future times
The droll machinery of pantomimes.

Your steam—your boast! What is it but a vapour?
Or what more fleeting simile will do:
'Twill be effete as—let me see—what paper?
Eureka!—say, the “Saturday Review!”
Whose name, indeed, shall live—simply because
These lines give token such a paper *was*.

For there be those whose memory shall rot,
And pass, and be as it had never been;
Of such my famed progenitor's is not;
Valhalla holds him in the high serene:—
My Prospero! Oh may he prosper where he is,
Untouched by that unenviable caries!

For though I dumbly execrate the day
 When first he chained me here, a lorn eidolon,
To be a literary popinjay,
 And market-stock for every sucking Solon,
Be Hyperborean calm his long reward!
I'm proud of him; you know, he was a lord.

Mundanes, I say Good-bye, as on ye march;
 I fain would shake your hands, but can't get at you,—
My prison-ruin waiting in the arch,
 As in the marble waits the future statue.
I hate you, London-bridge! And if Saint Paul is
 A name I loathe, the fault is Lord Macaulay's.

Witlings, a word: bring me no more to book;
 And take not any more my name in vain;
Cast, if ye will, one final, loving look,
 As upon one ye ne'er shall see again.
Behold me—let it be the last occasion—
Served up in verses for “The Australasian.”

* Macaulay's New Zealander dates from 1840.

Convict Once.

Proëm.

I, HYACINTH, of whom she wrote, now write:
Not from the hope of fame, or wish for praise;
But that in waning of her latter days,
She willed her warning tale should see the light,

And whispered with her fading breath that I
Should soften nothing that she did reveal,
But charter her confession with a seal
Of manual pardon—as I do hereby.

And ere ye scorn her troubles, passion-fed,
Her wilful choosing of the crooked path,
And ere ye make a virtue of your wrath,
I pray you all, remember—she is dead.

Forgive the passions that she could not curb,
The heaving trouble of a fevered breast.
She's very quiet now. She hath her rest:
And there is none can wake her, none disturb.

I, who have most to pardon, pardon all,
As I myself beseech forgiving grace;
And live in hope that I shall see her face,
Even as an angel's, at the Judgment call.

Part First.

I.

FREE again! Free again! eastward and westward, before me, behind me,
Wide lies Australia! and free are my feet, as my soul is, to roam!
Oh joy unwonted of space undetermined! No limit assigned me!
Freedom conditioned by nought save the need and desire of a home!

* * * * *

II.

Wrought even to pain with emotions long-prisoned and ardours volcanic,
Great with the promise of things that have grown in the silence of years,
Seems to me now that my soul should be mother of issue Titanic.
Drunken with Freedom I leap, as a maddened steed plunges and rears.
Seven retributive years have not left my tried spirit unshaken,

Vulture-like tearing me, harpy-like soiling me, blinding my eyes.
Yet from the depths I emerge; like a giant refreshed I awaken,
Strong for the purpose of life, for the struggle, the victory, the prize.

Ah! I must calm me, remembering that Freedom restores me to Duty—
Not to the license and rapture of such as have struggled and won.
Passion hath proved itself fatal, and fatal the magic of beauty;
I must try wisdom and prudence, contented to walk ere I run.

Have I not found what I longed for? Already my star is propitious.
Heaven hath found me a home where life's sweetest amenities smile;
Lowly indeed, but unmerited; poor to a spirit ambitious,
Yet a sweet oasis-fountain whereat I may linger awhile.

Here I behold it, my long-cherished dream of a home in the wild wood:
Here I shall hide my reproach, and my name shall be MAGDALEN POWER.
Never again shall I utter the name that I bore in my childhood;
Know it shall none, save the Angel that watched at my christening hour.

Now I begin life again; but a clearer, a stronger beginning:
Not as a child, but a woman—a teacher of children not mine.
What can *I* teach them? *My* lesson? Repenting is longer than sinning?
Nay; I can read; I can write; I can moralize line upon line.

Branded no more as a felon:—but hush! let such phrases be banished!
Let me recall the old precepts that moulded my innocent youth!
Knowledge, and Beauty, and Goodness, thank God, have not utterly vanished:
Quick to perceive them as ever; alive to the glory of Truth.

No more abasement! I'm weary and blind with the tears of repentance:
Though it was wrong, and I know it, yet surely such weeping is vain.
Have I not borne to the full all the pangs of my terrible sentence?
Shall there no harvest arise from this plentiful penitent rain?

Worshipping sorrow it seems, thus to sacrifice life on its altar;
Petting my error it is, thus to water it evening and morn:
Cherishing aye in my breast, as a fetish, a scarce escaped halter—
This is the culture of Terror—Idolatry worthy of scorn!

I will no more of it.—Twenty-three years have I lived; and my labour
Vanity, fruitless regret, and a secret that may not be told,
Honour-imperilling, head-overhanging, like Damocles' sabre,
Swinging and threat'ning my new-donned propriety scarce a day old.

Ha! I must clothe me with armour; yet not in the garb of defiance:
Bravery burnished flings back every incident ray of the sun:
Darkly encased I shall be in a corslet of quiet reliance;
Shield I shall carry of triple propriety; sword I'll have none.

Is this hypocrisy? Is it a refuge 'twixt seeming and being?
Self-enforced virtue (who knows?) may develop from habit to love.

Heedless of obstacles, patient for ends, strong of heart, and far-seeing,
I may be wise as the serpent, yet innocent still as the dove.

Die then, sad memories, leaving behind you nor token nor relic!
Hark how the tremulous night-wind is passing in joy-laden sighs;
Soft through my window it comes, like the fanning of pinions angelic,
Whispering to cease from myself, and look out on the infinite skies.

Out on the orb-studded night, and the crescent effulgence of Dian;
Out on the far-gleaming star-dust that marks where the angels have trod;
Out on the gem-pointed Cross, and the glittering pomp of Orion,
Flaming in measureless azure, the coronal jewels of God;

Luminous streams of delight in the silent immensity flowing,
Journeying surgelessly on through impalpable ethers of peace.
How can I think of myself when infinitude o'er me is glowing,
Glowing with tokens of love from the land where my sorrows shall cease?

Oh, summer-night of the South! Oh, sweet languor of zephyrs love-sighing!
Oh, mighty circuit of shadowy solitude, holy and still!
Music scarce audible, echo-less harmony joyously dying,
Dying in faint suspirations o'er meadow, and forest, and hill!

I must go forth and be part of it, part of the night and its gladness.
But a few steps, and I pause on the marge of the shining lagoon.
Here then, at length, I have rest; and I lay down my burden of sadness,
Kneeling alone 'neath the stars and the silvery arc of the moon.

Peace-speaking night of the South, will thine influence last through my sleeping,
Dream with my dreaming, awake with my waking, and blend with the morn?
Or shall I start as of old, and my pillow be wet with my weeping,
Victim alternate of self-accusation and impious scorn?

Have I so cast out myself that the morrow's meridian shall find me
Lightly esteeming the earth, and with spirit affianced to heaven?
Have I said, once and for ever, "Proud Lucifer, get thee behind me!
Leave me to die in the desert, if only my sin be forgiven?"

Let me not hoodwink myself. Of the many desires that come thronging—
Demons they may be, or angels of brightness, I hardly know which—
One I retain unto death, one supreme irresistible longing;
Heaven without it were poor, and earth with it ineffably rich.

Can it be wrong? It was God, and not I, who created me woman,
God who enthroned on my heart the imperious ideal of man;
Dowered me with instincts of love, that shall rule till I cease to be human:
Shall the Creator require of the creature beyond what she can?

Ah! but the soft, subtle voice of the Night whispers, "First be thou worthy:
Vaunt not thyself till the work of thy hands is recorded above:
Gird thee for labour; and if, being earthly, thou needs must be earthy,

Pray that through Duty alone thou attain to the pleasaunce of love.”

III.

PLEASANTLY, almost too pleasantly, blendeth to-day with to-morrow.

Hours are as moments: a twinkle of white wings, and, lo, they are gone!
Day bringeth work without bondage, and night bringeth dreams without sorrow:
Pleasantly, almost too pleasantly, life is meandering on.

Precious my charge, and delightsome: three spirits all joyous and tender—
Children of nature and innocence, breathing the freshness of flowers.
Love-tokens are they from Paradise, warm from the kiss of the Sender,
Blooms of promise still rich with the glow of the Amaranth Bowers.

Hyacinth, Lily, and Violet—pleasant conceit of their christening:
Hyacinth, darkly embowered in the riches of clustering curls;
Slenderly delicate Lily, a lily transfigured and glistening;
Violet, lowly and meek, yet the joy of my garland of girls.

Happy their lot—in themselves, in their sire, in a mother's affection;
Happy in mutual love all the merry bright round of the years,
Little they reckon of the travailing world, with its nameless dejection;
Even their sighs are the surfeit of joy, laughter-laden their tears.

Lofty things move them to worship; adoring they wonder, but fear not;
Little things minister pleasure, as ever it fares with the good;
Nature to them utters low subtle voices that other ears hear not;
Marvellous harmonies greet them from river, and mountain, and wood.

Down in umbrageous retreats, chosen haunts by the shadow-flecked river,
Drinking delights from the murmur of streams and the flutter of wings,
Streams as they murmur, bright wings as they flutter, green leaves as they quiver,
All have strange music for them, and a tale of invisible things.

Almost I fancy them other than human; great Nature's own daughters,
Beings of Fable that only the rapture of Fancy conceives,
Naiad-like, laving white feet in the dimpled disturbance of waters,
Dryad-like, peering bright-visioned thro' tremulous umbrage of leaves.

Otherwhile mounted on steeds and in madness of motion careering,
Fitfully seen thro' far vistas, and mazy divergence of trees;
Elfin-revealings of fleetness and liberty sudden appearing,
Vanishing whither they list, uncontrolled as the libertine breeze.

Train them and form them! Ah me! it is they who, unconscious, have wrought me
Back to the form that I bore when I bloomed as the darling of home.
I their preceptress! Ah me! with their innocent smiles they have taught me
Lessons more glorious than Greece, aspirations more lofty than Rome.

Mine is the lore of dark ages, of empires convulsed and war-wasted,
Rapine and bloodshed, the ebb and the flow of perpetual strife;

I of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil have tasted;
Fitter for *them* were the fruit of the Tree, angel-guarded, of Life.

IV.

HYACINTH loves . . . I have noted of late the mysterious transition;
Soft silken-footed approaches of something that whispers a change;
Chrysalis-stirrings that herald the full-winged and perfected mission;
Timid assumptions of woman-demeanour unwonted and strange;

Beautiful sequence of vermeil suffusions and paleness unbidden;
Dream-lustred eyes that look inward on something to others unseen;
Reveries sudden, and maidenly languor, and sighs but half-hidden;
Pensive reserve over-drooping the virginal grace of her mien.

Saddened, yet listlessly happy; ah, well I remember the token,
Well I remember the oxymel mingling of pleasure and pain!
Some face hath gleamed upon hers, and the sleep of her childhood is broken;
Hardly she knows as yet whether to rise or to slumber again.

V.

WANDERING to-day by the river where refuge is greenest and coolest,
Watching beneath me the moving mosaic of shadow and sheen,
Came I on Hyacinth, radiant, elated, her bloom at the fullest,
Rapt, like a vision-filled soul that hath quaffed of divine Hippocrene.

No need of words to interpret those moist lips half-parted and glowing,
Nor the luxurious droop of the eyelid with pleasure opprest,
Nor the strewn wealth of her tresses, in careless dishevelment flowing,
Nor the warm crimson that blushed thro' the gossamer folds on her breast.

Heedless and hearing not, trance-like—the sun thro' the bowerage above her
Scattering broken effulgence, like largesse of gold, on her charms—
Stood the flushed impress of maidenhood fresh from the kiss of a lover,
Fervid in recent release from the passioned entwinement of arms.

Such I divined, with an eye and an instinct for love's hidden history;
Thrilled by ineffable sympathies, every sweet token I knew,
Gathered in fancy the fluttering threads, and unravelled the mystery,
Read, like a scroll, the yet lingering signs of reluctant adieu.

Lower her eyelids drooped, closing; then rose, and the sensuous present
Broke once again into verdure and song, on her eye and her ear;
But the entrancement of vision was gone, and the bloom evanescent
Passed into sorrowful paleness, and died in the track of a tear.

Then, while her ringlets, in silken compliance and rich adaptation,
Rounded each movement with graces, as music the words of a lay,
Stooped she a moment, and, fluttering still with Love's sweet trepidation,

Caught up a scroll from the grass at her feet, and moved sighing away.

And, till the sun set, empurpling the glorified hills with its splendour,
Lone in her chamber sat Hyacinth, writing the words on her soul;
Then, as the glory died, yielding to radiance more softened and tender,
Forth from her chamber came Hyacinth, singing the song of the scroll:

“Ever thou speakest of angels, my love, and I fear me, I fear me,
Thou art too heavenly pure to commèrce with such grossness as mine.”
“Angels are lower than God, and when thou art anear me, anear me,
Godhead looks into mine eyes—for thy kinship, through grace, is Divine.”

“Ah, but the angels will find thee in sleep, and will take thee, will take thee,
Bearing thee far from me, leaving me weary, forsaken, and old.”
“Yea, but thou likewise shalt sleep, and my singing shall wake thee, shall wake thee,
Over the crystalline sea, by the city of jasper and gold.”

“Ah, but the angels are better than I! and will love thee, will love thee,
Teaching thee music I know not, and whispering secrets of bliss.”
“Yea, but though angels, no angel I'll cherish above thee, above thee;
Nought, till thou come to thy love, save the feet of my God, shall I kiss.”

“Ah, but the angels, the iris-winged angels, will hate me, will hate me,
Soiled with the touch of corruption, and swathed in the cerements of sin.”
“Nay, at the glistening portals of pearl I'll await thee, await thee,
Bearing thee radiant attire for the joy of thine entering in.”

“Ah, but the angels, the aureoled angels, adoring, adoring,
Will they not mock us, faint-quiring the notes of our penitent strain?”
“Nay, for our hymns have a theme of Redemption, high-soaring, high-soaring,
Far o'er the music of angels, the song of the Lamb that was slain.”

* * * * *

“Where hath she learned it?” quoth one; and “Who wrote it? who gave it?” another:
Hyacinth answered with silvery laughter, and sought her lone room.
“Surely my child has some secret at heart,” said the wondering mother.
I alone knew why she brooked not the question of whence or by whom.

All the night long in her slumber I heard the unconscious out-pouring
Of her young spirit in jubilant thoughts from the dream-broken strain;
Ever she murmured—“a theme of Redemption high-soaring, high-soaring,
Far o'er the music of angels, the song of the Lamb that was slain.”

VI.

“PLEASANTLY,” said I? Yea, pleasantly! Three summer months of contentment,
Bright with bright faces, and sweet with sweet voices, or sleeping in smiles.
Here the green earth is the heaven-domed temple of poet's presentment,

Manifold harmonies rolling for ever thro' long forest aisles.

Softly I've moved through the time with the echo-less footfalls of Duty,
Wearing the garments of meekness and schooling my heart to constraint,
Shunning my mirror for dread of the slumbering demon of Beauty:
Puritan I in my plainness of garb, in demeanour a saint.

All I resolved I have done; much in spirit, and wholly in letter;
Faultless my conduct and converse . . . but where is the sign of return?
See, I have prisoned my life in routine till my soul is no better
Than the grey ashes that lie in the coldly-symmetrical urn.

Am I then weary of well-doing, deeming it fruitless endurance?
Nay, but my spirit is cloyed with the feast of perpetual sweets.
I was not moulded for peace, or the dreamless repose of assurance.
Oh, I am faint with the opiate breath of these woodland retreats!

This is not life, to be bowed in the heart-hush of worship for ever,
Softly asleep on my shadow to glide o'er a summer-lit sea.
Life is not passionless calm, but the turbid delight of the river.
Give me the billowy Jordan! . . . enough now of blue Galilee.

All my young dream was of heroes; my play was Olympian frolic,
Venus, Minerva, Alecto, alternate—love, wisdom, and gall.
What is the mood of my life-music now? Why, a piping bucolic,
Babbling melodious of pastoral peace and content; that is all.

Soul cannot march to the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle.
Rather the war-blast of passion were thrilling again in mine ears!
Oh for a touch of the palpitant world! for the glory of battle!
Show me once more the proud wave of the banners, the gleam of the spears!

What would I conquer? Myself? So I might; but such war were inglorious.
How should it yield me the rapture that only the conqueror feels?
What were the spoils of the slain? To what Capitol march when victorious?
Whom should I drag thro' the dust, captive-bound at my chariot-wheels?

Oh, I am sick of unlaurelled self-conquest! A region fire-smitten
Lies at the feet of the victor, unworthy the cost of the strife.
What is the fruit of my summer of meekness? Behold, I have *written!*
Ink! where the blood should have been, and the dust of the battle of life!

Stay. Let me question myself. Whence this change of mood? Yesterday only
All in my heart was the hush of the temple, conventual calm.
Yesterday quickening Nature sufficed me; alone, but not lonely,
Breathing concordant with all things, embraced in the infinite psalm.

Now all this musical silence but frets me. I live, but I sing not,
Save in harsh discords that jar with the tender discourse of the flowers.
Soft airs are wooing my brow with their winnowing wings, but they bring not
Tribute of hope. Time's too smooth, and I chafe at the impotent hours.

What hath unfellowed me thus from the spirits of beauty beside me?
Why do I turn from the honey of life to the blood-kindling wine?
Yesterday, heaven was opened: I saw, but its bliss was denied me,
Saw it in Hyacinth's eyes with the Demon of Envy in mine.

Even as she passed from my sight, while the branches yet shook from her presence,
Rose in unblest resurrection the sepulchred passions of yore.
I to go dreaming of life while this novice is drinking its essence!
I to be almost content with the dregs, while her cup runneth o'er!

Say, were an angel cast down by mischance at the great consummation,
Would not his sharpest distress be the gleam of his home in the skies?
Even the shadow of heaven were worse torment than hell's conflagration:
What then for me was the reflex of Eden in Hyacinth's eyes?

Shut out from life and from love by hard circumstance, not from unmeetness,
Can I untempted look on while another sits down to the feast?
Why must I drag through the hours when this Hyacinth leaps to completeness,
Leaps to her queenly meridian, still flushed with the roseate east?

“It is because thou hast sinned.” Oh emaciate ghost of repentance!
Thou here again with thine offerings of sackcloth, and ashes, and tears!
Pointing thy skeleton finger at Law! See, I point to the Sentence,
Paid to the uttermost farthing by weary fulfilment of years.

What, then? Shall envy inherit me wholly? A thousand times, Never.
It hath but waked me once more from the spell of a somnolent hour,
Stirred up the thorns in the nest, struck a spur in the flank of endeavour:
I am the old self again. I am . . . Nay, I am Magdalen Power.

VII.

STRANGERS to-day; a momentous event in this slumb'rous seclusion:
Lily and Violet sadly impatient of precept and books:
Hyacinth calmer, but fluttering dove-like with pretty confusion;
Something of mystery, too, in those quick interrogative looks.

“Are they from far?” I ask carelessly. “Not from a very great distance,”
Violet answers; “but oh! 'tis so seldom they visit us now.
There was a quarrel, you know,” she continues with prattling persistence,
All unaware of the shadow that gathers on Hyacinth's brow.

“Something I don't understand, about cattle, and buying, and selling;
Arthur Trevelyan was rude, and dropped words about ‘ill-gotten gear;’
Father was angered, and said that no Convict should darken his dwelling:
But he repented, and wrote to both father and son; so they're here.”

“What is a Convict?” she asks me; “Trevelyan's a Convict, they tell me.
It must be something, I'm sure, to be proud of, if Raymond is one.”
Ah, cruel question that would to my own definition compel me!

Hyacinth comes to my rescue: "A Convict! Young Raymond is none!
"Tell me," she said, and I mark the unwonted and quivering passion,
"Can it be just that a son should inherit a father's disgrace?"
Gladly I catch at the turn of the theme, and reply, "'Tis a fashion
That were best honoured by breach." There's a story in Hyacinth's face.

VIII.

OFT hath it pleased me in day-dream and night-watch to mould an ideal:
Is not my heart-wish incarnate, new risen or dropt from above?
One sudden gleam of a face, and my cherished ideal is real!
There moved my miracle, there passed my Fate, whom to see is to love!

Somewhere I've read that the gods, waxing wroth at our mad importunity,
Hurl us our boon, and it falls with the weight of a curse at our feet:
Perilous thing to intrude on their lofty Olympian immunity!
"Take it, and die," say the gods, and we die of our fondest conceit.

Is it so now with myself? I have riven the night-watches asunder,
Murmuring "Give me to see him," and fretting the beautiful skies.
Lo, I have seen him! And now, I shrink, trembling with impotent wonder,
Pondering, Is it the blessing I craved, or a curse in disguise?

Yes, I have seen him; and envious murmur and fretful rebellion
Pause as I muse on a possible future, and gird up my strength.
How my wild spirit was hushed when I looked on this Raymond Trevelyan!
Prince of my dreams, by the throb of this heart, thou art come—come at length!

IX.

DOWN in the vines he is sitting, the fruitage, leaf-shadowed above him,
Lending concomitant charm to the ripeness that flushes his cheek.
There is the glory of summer about him. I see him, and love him,
Asking not why. I but know that the strong one is come to the weak.

Down in the vines he is sitting; and radiance leaf-softened and golden
On the broad calm of his brow through the veil of the vintage is shed.
Blest be each bough that enshrines him! Henceforth I am ever beholden
Unto the slenderest, tenderest leaflet that shelters his head.

Down in the vines he is sitting; I see him leaf-circled and Faun-like,
Such as I've seen in my dreams, in like halo of amber and green,
With those same love-seeking glances, so placidly, dreamily, dawn-like,
Quiet as the birth of the dew, as the star of the morning serene.

Dream, heart, no more of thy lyre-lauded heroes, and demi-gods storied!
Open thine eyes on the breathing fulfilment of beauty and strength!
Down in the vines he is sitting; I see him leaf-girt and leaf-gloried;
Prince of my dreams, by the throb of this heart, thou art come—come at length!

X.

ONLY two syllables uttered—"Good-night;" a conventional pressure—
Nay, not so much—a mere meeting of finger-tips formally deigned.
Nothing for heart to interpret; no look to remember and treasure:
Lovingly courteous to others; to me alone coldly constrained

Yet he is mine. I have marked him for mine. Am I fantasy's minion?
Slave to a self-born philosophy? victim of doating conceit?
Or, am I privileged priestess, beholding dark things Eleusinian,
Piercing the thought of the gods, and fore-casting the way of their feet?

Gods, gods, and gods! I am weary of gods! I have looked on humanity,
Living, and breathing, and glowing, and burning—limb, body, and face!
Time that my dreams become touch, that I cease from this bodiless vanity,
Wistfully rounding my vacuous arms to the shape of embrace!

XI.

OVER my mirror. 'Tis time that I look to my weapons and armour.
Keener than ever, I fancy, the penetrant edge of my glance.
I can remember a fuller-orbed cheek, and a rose blushing warmer;
But on my brow is no line sorrow-furrowed, no wake of mischance.

Loves he dark tresses, I wonder, in sinuous subtlety twining?
Loves he dark eyes, fired with love, and star-sympathied passion of night?
Loves he the long drooping eye-lash, half secret half story combining?
Loves he the lithe grace of undulous ease, and imperial height?

This is the reflex of beauty I gaze on, the beauty I've hidden,
Most from myself, and have struggled thro' years of control to forget,
Deeming it e'en as a perilous thing, and a weapon forbidden,
Piercing the hand of the user, and dealing but shame and regret.

Wherefore should beauty be evil? and that which in lilies and roses
Men deem most gracious and holy be fatal in woman alone?
Why should the flower seek the light, while the woman in cloister reposes,
Sealed down by vows from the eyes that were made to drink love at her own?

Beauty, like Knowledge, is Power; what of Beauty and Knowledge colleaguering,
Guided by keen-visioned Prudence to work to one ultimate goal?
Not Cleopatra herself, 'mid the lurements of Tarsus intriguing,
Boasted this tri-une endowment concluded in body and soul.

Not as my past is my present. No more as a child shall I stumble,
Hastening the end by false measures, and grasping the fruit immature.
I shall be patient. The time may be long, and the means may be humble,
But he is mine; I have marked him for mine; and the triumph is sure.

This idle curl that I smooth even now betwixt finger and finger,

Silkenly circling his own shall he press upon amorous lips;
Yea, on the yielding delight of this breast shall that conquered head linger,
And 'neath the veil of these tresses lie hid in enamoured eclipse.

But my lamp pales as I gaze; and I feel the weird tremor that thrilleth
Brain, heart, and limb, when the night seems to yield up its soul unto day.
Now to mine orisons. Shall I then speak as the spirit not willeth?
Nay: I must couch me unshriven. To-night I am powerless to pray.

XII.

WAS it a chance or a Providence brought me once more to the river?
Wandering whither I knew not, and cared not, I came as before
Unto the spot. It was ever my solace to wander; and ever
Seem I allured to the stream: for the rush and the musical roar,

Rhyming and chiming in mystic agreement with that which works in me,
Bravely concurring with thoughts of wild action and furious delight,
Win me from baleful contentment, from dreamy oblivion win me,
Call me to live and to dare, re-endow me with motion and might.

How I have smiled at my school-bred compatriots languidly viewing
Ivy-clad relics caducous, and morbidly learned in decay!
Give me the bountiful rush of my river, its ever-renewing
Life and festivity, song, dance, and revel by night and by day!

Surely 'twas this and not espionage guided my fanciful wandering,
Drew me thro' bosky entanglement e'en to the ripple-wooded marge;
Couched me in reedy concealment, and set me conjecturing, pondering,
Ever on life, and on *my* life; when, lo, by the mangroves a barge,

Fairy-like, noiselessly gliding! Or ever I saw him I knew him—
Knew by the sudden rebound of my blood, and the quiver of limb!
Knew, too, that rustling of leaves, and the gleam of white vesture that drew him
Unto the haven appointed—the heaven of Hyacinth and him.

Then the old story, the Adam-old story, the Eve-old love story:
Rapture of lips, and entwining of arms, and commingling of sighs,
Heart-to-heart clings, and glad jets of tears; all the glow and the glory
Of a ripe summer of love sunned in splendour of amorous eyes.

Was it in generous forbearance I bore me so calmly, so mildly,
Marking the kiss-dented lips, and sweet license of zephyr-blown hair?
Who could have dreamed of young Hyacinth clasping and clinging so wildly?
She of the angels! In sooth such embracement is not of the air.

Well: 'tis enough. A new obstacle. Sometimes the ghost of it haunted me,
Breathing on sparks of suspicion that now are enkindled to flame.
Phantom no more: I have seen, and the glare of the truth hath not daunted me;
Truly, forewarned is forearmed, and I grow but the more to mine aim.

She is a child; I a woman; and he! could he fill up the measure
Of the great longing I read in his eyes with a kiss or a song?
Greatness of heart soon outgrows the milk-dainties of infantile pleasure.
Weak silly-winning young ways are poor wiles for the wise and the strong.

It is not ivy he needeth, the boughs of his manhood caressing,
Ivy that drains what it clings to, and sappeth the life of the tree.
It is the earth for the roots, and the blood of the storm, and the blessing
Wrapt in the rolling of vapours, and born of the sun and the sea.

These would I give him, a closer embrace than poor parasite-clinging,
Being his meat, and his drink, and his strength, and his light, and his breath!
Is not this better than daintiest love-lore of sighing and singing?
Hyacinth! Hyacinth! It is not you, it is I . . . his till death!

Yea, though I saw you to-day in the rapture of parasite clinging,
Luring the strength from his heart, and suspiring a mutual breath,
Practising daintiest love-lore of kissing, and sighing, and singing,
Hyacinth! Hyacinth! . . . it is not you . . . it is I . . . his till death!

XIII.

LET me be justified in my own sight. She is young, and before her
Lies all the wide world to choose from. Would God that it were so with me!
Hers is blind impulse: she cannot have chosen: and Raymond reigns o'er her
Only by right of first comer. Not such would my fealty be!

Not with the eye of a child do I measure those opulent merits—
Frame of Antinöus, utterance of Pericles, heart of "The Just."
All the more mine do I claim him because of the taint he inherits:
This were a shame unto her in high places of blue-veined disgust.

Shall I invoke higher motives, and sanction my purpose by duty?
Well, an I would, so I might, and no more than my duty fulfil.
Am not I Hyacinth's keeper, aedile of this temple of beauty,
Bound by my service and honour to watch and to guard? . . . And I *will*.

XIV.

LINGER, oh Sun, for a little, nor close yet this day of a million!
Is there not glory enough in the rose-curtained halls of the West?
Hast thou no joy in the passion-hued folds of thy kingly pavilion?
Why shouldst thou only pass through it? Oh rest thee a little while, rest!

Why should the Night come and take it, the wan Night that cannot enjoy it,
Bringing pale argent for golden, and changing vermilion to grey?
Why should the Night come and shadow it, entering but to destroy it?
Rest 'mid thy ruby-trailed splendours! Oh stay thee a little while, stay!

Rest thee at least a brief hour in it! 'Tis a right royal pavilion.

Lo, there are thrones for high dalliance all gloriously canopied o'er!
Lo, there are hangings of purple, and hangings of blue and vermilion,
And there are fleeces of gold for thy feet on the diapered floor!

Linger, a little while linger. To-morrow my heart may not sing to thee:
This shall be Yesterday, numbered with memories, folded away.
Now should my flesh-fettered soul be set free! I would soar to thee, cling to thee,
And be thy rere-ward Aurora, pursuing the skirts of To-day!

Shall I not doat on to-day that hath brought me the earnest of blessing,
Young buds of friendship whose promise the coming of time shall fulfil?
First the green blade; then the ear, from the green to the yellow progressing;
Then the full corn in the ear, golden waving, to reap when I will.

For, as it fell out to-day, I was sought and was found of young Raymond;
And he hath told me his story, beseeching my counsel and aid:
Closest of friends, we are Pythias out-Pythias'd and Damon out-Damon'd;
Man unto man is as nought to our friendship of young man and maid.

All this is well. It is something to nourish a secret between us.
All this is well. There are meetings, and moon-light and star-light in store.
Ah, my poor "mournful OEnone," dost think there is pity in Venus
When she contends with her peers for the prize? Such have I, and no more.

This is not new in the love-lore of woman—love's messenger pleading
Subtly and warily, making the cause of another her own;
Skilfully pouring in shaft upon shaft, till the love that lies bleeding
Turns to the smiter for help, and finds rest in her bosom alone.

Didst thou not dream then, my love, when I proffered a guerdonless traffic
'Twi't that poor dove and thyself, that thy trust was most sweetly beguiled?
Didst thou then deem me so icy-angelic, so snowy-seraphic,
That I but gazed on thine eyes to reflect back their light on a child?

Ah me! this turmoil of heart! Is it truly a change for the better?
Once I remember a setting of sun, yea, and settings of suns,
Greeted with welcome when warder, and order, and grating, and fetter
Passed into darkness and silence—twin-heaven of the spirit that shuns

Daylight and audible life. Oh my soul! the delight, the delicious
Pressing together of arms, and up-gathering of knees to the chin,
And the spent air breathed for warmth 'twixt the breasts, while the darkness
propitious
Softer than wool wrapt me round with a dreamless oblivion of sin!

Which is the better?—the torpid collapse of spent penitence crouching
Into the darkness and solitude, hugging the joy of the night,
Or the fierce gladness of day that would hinder the sun from his couching,
Mad with the bitter-sweet wine of desire, and the pain of delight?

Is there no midway for such one as I am 'twixt being and doing?

Is there no choice save the lotus of sleep or the apple of strife?
Is there no bliss that is neither dull rest nor a fevered pursuing?
Is there no twilight dividing the noon-flame and night of my life?

Well, what I am, that I am. It is better to scheme than to slumber.

What was this goodness that sometime I strove for? Supineness, constraint,
Mortification of spirit, and crosses and thorns without number,
Pride in abasement, and sombre complacency of embryo saint.

That is all over; and, saving some fitful remembrance of pity
Piercing the joints of the harness, to break ere it reaches the heart,
All is as erst. . . . Touching Hyacinth, she must to school, to the city.
This I advise for her good—for her good (perhaps mine, too, in part).

XV.

VASTNESS of verdurous solitude, forest complexity boundless,
Where is no stir save the fall of a leaf, or the wave of a wing:
Lone sunny regions where virginal Nature roams ceaseless and soundless,
Rich with the richness of summer, yet fresh with the freshness of spring:

Where is no stir save of leaf in its falling, or bird in its winging,
Or the unfrequent sweet idyll low-murmured by devious streams;
Where is no passion, or sign of desire, save the infantile clinging
Of the young tendrils, or opening of flowers to a morning of beams.

That was but yesterday. Comes a brief journey . . . a sleep . . . and the morrow
Wakes on the City, with issuing forth of tumultuous life—
Wakes upon quickening footsteps, and faces acquainted with sorrow,
Hurried uptaking of burdens, and voices familiar with strife.

Marvel of contrast, that seems like the swift incoherence of vision!
As peradventure it may be; for who can say more than “It seems?”
Surely all life is a dream, mis-begot of Olympian derision,
And the divided strange courses of men are but dreams within dreams.

Let me dream on, then. Of late I confess I have dreamed somewhat pleasantly.
Last night I dreamed of a school in a convent. And Hyacinth and I
Came to the gate. So we knocked at the gate, and it opened, and presently
Hyacinth passed from my sight, and I heard a voice sobbing “Good-bye.”

Poor little Hyacinth! But it was better, assuredly better.

You'll be too busy to think, and too much with the angels to care.
Now you are safe from the freaks of young fantasy—safe as your letter
Is *not* to pass from my hand into his. You'll forget him in there!

XVI.

BACK to my woods; back to Lily and Violet; back to the daily
Track of the wheels, and the hidden rotation of wheels within wheels.

But there is hush in the home all unwonted. Where three voices gaily
Sang to one tune, there is silence, save whispers, and wordless appeals
From sad young eyes unto mine, as the last who have seen and have kissed her,
Fretting my soul with unspoken entreaty and inquest of truth,
Seeming to ask with sharp scrutiny, "What hast thou done with our sister?
Art thou more cruel than death, that thou grudgest the years of her youth?"
Give me a woman to strive with, a man, or a demon, or angel!
When did I tremble or cringe, when the proud and the strong were my foes?
But from the weaklings of Christ, from the delicate lambs of Evangel,
From the lorn looks of young innocents—save me, oh save me from those!

Part Second.

I.

EVEN as water to him who thirsts wayfaring, dust-dry and burning,
After sore heat and long stumbling in courses with never a rill,
Weary with counting of ridges, and barren result of much turning,
Tempted to curse God and die, let the afterward be what it will,
Even as the brimming delight of the wine-cup by fair hands commended
Unto hot lips that are sanguine from onslaught and stiff-set from ire,
With the undoing of baldrick and panoply heavy and splendid,
Changed for a girth of white arms, and the softness of silken attire;
Even as pressure of ministering hands on the fevered and aching
Brow of the sorrowful, morrow-full sire and provider of bread,
Wherein is grace of sweet solace and peace, and a virtue awaking
Unexplained hope, and discernment of bliss all round and o'erhead;
Even as green rivage with homestead, rose-garden, and grass-lawn trim-shaven,
Unto eyes weary with wide waste of waters and seething sea-foam,
Changing the spirit of heaviness into the joy of the haven,
And the long vigils of storm to the rest and observance of home;
Even as the stirring of leaves on the boughs after breathless unbroken
Months of dead drought, when the earth is as iron, and heaven as brass,
When the rain-argosy cometh, and sendeth a sigh for a token,
And there is hope in the flowers, and a wave on the languishing grass;
Even as the coming of dawn to the pilgrim in trackless wild places,
Lighting up landmarks of old, and confirming his face to the south
Zionward,—even to Jerusalem the Golden, where rest is and grace is,
Whither he toils, angel-tended, with Songs of Degrees in his mouth;
Even as the coming of night to the premature children of labour,
Smit to the heart of their youth with the curse of the iron and steel—
Night with re-unions of home, or sweet converse of neighbour with neighbour,
Proffering the peace of her stars for the wildering whirl of the wheel;

Even as all golden moments, all joyance of welcome transition,
Gathered from all the wide circuit of life and concluded in one;—
So to Love's fever and fret, its sore travail and thirsting ambition,
Comes what my lips and my heart knew to-day at the set of the sun!

II.

HE is not faithless or fickle, and had he all shamelessly yielded
At the first stroke, I had spurned him, and left him ignobly to die:
Or I had dallied a little, and played with the potency I wielded—
Kissed him perchance, and then loathed him, and branded his love with a lie.

I might have gazed on his eyes till the light of allurement had quenched them;
Suffered a violent brief little bondage of manly embrace;
This way and that way have parted his hair with my fingers, then clenched them,
And with the scorn of a woman have smitten him full on the face.

But he is noble and virtuous, patient of evil appearance;
Charity in him is sovereign; it suffereth long and is kind.
“She may seem wholly estranged; all is darkness; but time bringeth clearance,
And I will grope in my darkness, content for her sake to be blind.”

Long months of silence, and agonized waiting, and ever-increasing
Substance of wonder still found him believing the message would come:
Yet not as mine could his suffering be, a hid torture unceasing,
Knowing the cause, yea, and *being* the cause, and yet wilfully dumb.

Ah, those poor letters of his and of hers! Like things murdered they haunt me.
Dead things have power on me, though with the quick I be fearless and brave.
Surely the fire would consume them! But how if the sight of them daunt me?
And should I open my desk, it would seem as I opened a grave.

There are some things even I cannot do. False I could not declare her;
Nor could I ruthlessly slander a living love never withdrawn.
How could I rail at poor Hyacinth, knowing her purer and fairer
In the well-springs of her soul than the opaline deeps of the dawn?

Thanks to her father, her blundering father, who spoke of her marriage,
Right in the hearing of Raymond, as something quite fixed and at hand:
Vulgarly boasted of fortune in store for her, “servants and carriage,”
And of the change of her name to a name that is known in the land.

Thanks to her father, who knows not the obstacle, knows not the wayward
Heart of a girl that no arbiter brooks in the gift of her youth;
Sees not, gold-dazzled, the scorn of the world when December looks Mayward;
Thanks to her father mistaking his easy consent for the truth

Hyacinth seen, and admired, and desired—this I knew and concealed it;
Fain would have shaped it to something, and profited somehow thereby;
Made it available, made her seem saleable, subtly revealed it:

Thanks to the old man again, who has saved me the crime of a lie.
This was the spark. It was not of my lighting. Mine only to breathe on it.
Ready the fuel, long-dried by suspense, to flame into a hell!
Mine but to watch the dark cauldron of agony bubble and seethe on it,
Then to sing soft incantations that loosen and alter the spell.

Wherefore record them: the wiles and the low-whispered counsel, the honeyed
Words of feigned comfort, the maxims of wisdom, the fanning of pride,
Praises disguised as dispraise of alliances landed and moneyed—
Damning excuses, replete with exposure, while seeming to hide?

Wherefore? There are, and myself am of such, who are slaves to an inward
Devil of self-contemplation that drinks its own blood and own breath,
Lapping insatiate at all streams alike be they Godward or sinward;
Making good evil, bad worse: self-consuming, yet frugal of death.

Even as the shedder of blood ever fleeing the dread scene of slaughter,
Yet by centripetal charm ever drawn to the spot where the hand
Points from the shuddering earth, or the sodden white face on the water
Stares its unsinking appeal till his days be cut off from the land,—

So do I circle and hover, so flee, and yet circle and hover
Round my past deeds, and past purpose, and central arcana of sin.
When shall I know the great sigh of relief, the “Thank God, it is over”?
Ah, could I think death were better, how soon should I slumber therein!

Strange I should love to record what, already too luridly lettered,
Burns on the tablets within me in lines of unquenchable fire.
Strange there is respite in singing of self, that the Demon sleeps fettered,
When of my passion-strained heart-strings I make me and wake me a lyre.

Even as I've seen in fair Italy, where the weird mystical mountain
Travailing mightily foams with red ruin from summit to base;
Seen there the cunning in art, ere destruction is quenched at its fountain,
Take of the lava, and make of it things of adornment and grace;

Yea, of the spume of convulsion make things to be worn on the bosom,
Out of the travail of darkness bring issue of beauty to light,
Fashion a dove in its tenderness, simulate softness of blossom,
Lips that subdued the Immortals, or brows of Olympian might;

So do I take of my sin, and my suffering, and labour of passion,
Mould them to semblance of beauty of Nature, or classic conceit,
Smooth them, and lose me the body of pain in the sense of the fashion,
Binding distress itself captive to art in the linking of feet.

Yet, to re-track all the wiles one by one—nay I cannot, I may not.
Under the web is complexity, subtle, and hopeless to trace.
Raymond is blameless. How could he be else? There are things that I say not
Which would redeem him in eyes the severest from ban of disgrace.

III.

DID not I dream that true happiness sat in the throne of attainment,
Crowned with the crown of victorious endeavour, and sceptred with palm?
Did not I see Fate herself flower-subdued, and in rosy enchantment,
And the importunate problem of life lying stifled in balm?

Is it the way of high Heaven to mock us with tokens of favour,
Lavish of sunshine to ripen the growth of our dearest device;
Then to deceive us with harvests that nourish not, fruits without savour,
Hemlock and hebenon clothed with the semblance of balsam and spice?

Is the high God of Evangel more cruel than gods of old fable?
Tantalus only *beholds*, never touches, the fruit ere it slips;
But this Jehovah—He filleth our hands with it, heapeth our table;
Then laughs in heaven when it changes to ashes and fire on our lips!

Yes; turn on Heaven! Call the gods, then the God of gods, scornful and cruel!
Rail at the pitiless Triads that rule us, and mock us, and curse!
Call up thine ancient despair, challenge Nemesis' self to the duel!
Arm thee with Greek old-world blasphemies! . . . Feel'st thou then better, or worse?

Thou hast the wish of thine heart. Would'st have more? See, 'twixt finger and finger,
Lo, how he twineth thy hair, and then lifts it to amorous lips!
See, on the yielding delight of thy breast doth the conquered head linger,
And 'neath the veil of thy tresses lies hid in enamoured eclipse!

Wherefore the fret? Is it surfeit of pleasure or surfeit of sinning?
Would'st thou have appetite grow with the feeding? the lust of the eyes
Ever renewed with the gazing? And knew'st thou not from the beginning
That, when sin hath its desire, the desirableness thereof dies?

Is it God's way that in nature He suffereth His own disappearance,
Leaves it to work to its end in the groove of immutable rule;
But that in things of the spirit He willeth direct interference,
Giving the crown to the simple, and meting out grace to the fool?

Is this His sovereign and awful prerogative: joy He retaineth
Absolute, in His own hands, to bestow, to withhold, to destroy?
What shall it profit a man that he prosper, if joy *He* restraineth
Who can give joy without cause and a bounteous cause without joy?

I am a fool to indulge me in sadness of spirit-communing.
Thought is all sadness; but night is all kindness: the stars are on high.
It is the hour. I will rush to him, cling to him, revel to swooning
In the dear love of him. Eat, drink, be merry, to-morrow we die!

IV.

WHAT have I gained? One grand moment, one moment supreme and delirious.
Something hath perished from earth and from heaven since that eve when he spoke:

That one prime eve, when the moon was a sun, and the brightness of Sirius
Glowed in the tiniest star, and the palpitant firmament broke

Everywhere into confusion of glory, and sordid conditions,
Earthy and palpable, clean fell away from our feet and our eyes,
And in the mid-air we seemed, ether-fed with unspeakable visions,
And there was none save us twain in the lands, or the seas, or the skies!

Now is no life at my heart save the life of the serpent that hisses,
Coiled round its roots, giving slime for all moisture, and poison for dew.
Now I but mourn o'er a grace unrenewed. All in vain do his kisses
Press on a passionless cheek, that is cold as the conscience I slew.

One supreme moment; no more. And the joy of it died with the using:
One sublime bound to the copestone of bliss, then the chilling recall:
One sudden sense of a crown, then the sting of the thorns of accusing:
One sudden draught of the nectar, that turned as I drank into gall.

What shall I curse? The poor hands that lie lifelessly lax when he takes them
Into his own? Or the arms that are flaccid and powerless to cling?
Or the set lips without fervour? The eyes whose effulgence forsakes them?
Or the thin, quavering, passionless voice that refuses to sing?

There is no good thing, I think, 'neath the sun. And yet somehow it seems to me,
When I saw *her*, that true happiness shone like the sun from her face
As he drew near to her. Glimpses of Hyacinth come in my dreams to me,
Radiant, elated, and clothed on with joy as an angel of grace.

All for young Raymond—my Raymond too! But there's a curse on my loving;
Curse of an inward recoiling, and curse of an outward decline;
Curse of an outward supineness, and curse of an inward reproving;
Cursed most of all in that memory of intercourse other than mine!

What shall the end be? Ah me, my wrecked reason refuseth conclusions.
Lacks there but madness to fill up my cup of reproach to the brim?
God! send me rather the sharp fires of hell than the reign of delusions!
This is the one thing I ask Thee, to slay me ere judgment grows dim!

V.

WHY walk we softly and whisper to-day, as if one in a fever
Slept, and life lay in the stifling of sound, and the batment of breath?
Know we not well that no step can awake her, no dissonance grieve her?
Know we not well the omnipotence of the last febrifuge—Death?

Surely we know she is dead to our reverence and muffled dissembling,
Past all our little proprieties, in unprofanable spheres;

Yet we walk softly, and whisper, and do our least office with trembling,
As if the vibrating air yet made converse of sound in her ears.

This is the riddle of Death: while she lived, no such reverent seeming
Silkened our ways. She is dead, and we whisper, move softly, and weep;
As if our delicate walking would rhyme with the peace of her dreaming,
As if the music of whispers would deepen the hush of her sleep.

Surely we know all must die: yet we cherish and hoard up our reverence,
Until the known are unknown; then subside to unechoing feet.
Were it not wiser and better to count on the moment of severance,
And pay the dues of the tomb in the house, in the mart, in the street?

VI.

HYACINTH'S mother. . . . One question appals me When spirits are bounded
No more by straight circumscription and narrow availment of brain,
When they are done with all mediums wherewith our dull nature is rounded,
Can they then look, soul to soul, on the secrets of such as remain?

Then she knows all; and my heart like a scroll lieth open before her,
And I am read as I am in the merciless noonlight of truth,
As the high-priestess of craft, the arch-scorner, the self-god adorer,
As the contemner of innocence, and the deceiver of youth!

Hush! This is dotage of morbid timidity, fruit of long waking,
Offspring of death-bed anxieties, weak suicidal despair.
I will throw off superstition, arise when the daylight is breaking,
Look on the body, and touch it, and breathe in the death-laden air.

I will be friendly with death, and familiarly handle and think of it,
Call its deep peace a delight, and its etiolation a grace.
Surely 'tis wise now and then just to sip at the cup ere we drink of it,
Wise to strip Doom of its terror by looking it full in the face.

VII.

LO, where it lies, not yet wholly cut off from the land of the living.
What is there in it should haunt me, and thrill with mysterious awe?
Is it not matter as I am, obedient to sunlight, and giving
Even in its shadow the tenebrous token of natural law?

Yea, by the shadow it casts one might reckon the hour of the morning.
It is then subject of time, and the changing relations of space.
Is it then other than I, save the fashion of outward adorning,
Other than I, save the shroud, and the flowers, and the hue of the face?

Oh, who will read me this Death? Who will read me this stranger Life-mystery,
Pierce to its primary subtlety, seize it, and drag it to light,
Show me its essence, its fount, its transmission, its law, and its history?

Oh, who will teach me what Day is, ere yet I go down unto Night?
Ever the problem besets me, in labour, in sorrow, in laughter:
Mystery of mysteries, too wide for conception, too deep and too high!
Imbecile! What doth it profit to gaze on the mists of Hereafter?
Turn me away from them. Eat, drink, be merry, to-morrow we die!

VIII.

AH, but to-morrow we die not. For morrow, and morrow on morrow,
Each with a cry of awakening, and stretching importunate hands,
Rending the garments of sleep, and unveiling new danger and sorrow,
Bursts on the soul of the schemer, and bids it take heed how it stands.

Hyacinth cometh. No delegate Fury of wrath unrelenting
Ever tracked mortal as tracks me the pallid reproach of her face.
Yet even one tear is denied me. I find me no place for repenting,
Cast forth all lawless and lonesome beyond the attraction of grace.

Oh, there are deep and dark places on earth where I fain would be lying,
Fain would be sleeping unrecked of, and hidden away from the sun,
Where is no next, and no imminent, where even death is past dying,
Where is no doing or undoing, where all is done and undone!

What have I done that the heaven frowneth o'er me, and earth reeleth under?
Hypocrite heaven, and hypocrite earth, as if sin were yet young,
And it behoved you to trumpet the marvel with tempest and thunder!
Ye who have smiled upon sin since the song of Creation was sung!

Have ye not smiled upon all the seven sins, yea, on seventy times seven,
That ye must blare out your wrath at *my* deeds with tempestuous din?
Were ye not glowing in greenness, oh earth, and in azure, oh heaven,
When the fair hand of our mother was laid on the key-note of sin?

Was your complaining thus thunderous, the hue of your vesture thus sable,
When the fell Serpent hissed hideous triumph with pestilent breath?
Were ye so fruitful of gloom when the life-blood of innocent Abel
Wrote on the flowers of the field the first line of the annals of death?

Where were your flood-gates of anger when Ammon-encompassed Uriah,
Victim of lust, in the fore-front of battle fell prone to the earth?
Hid ye your beauty with sackcloth and weeping when Queen Athaliah
Spared not the innocent souls whose one crime was the fount of their birth?

Can I not picture you glorious in verdure, and azure, and amber,
When the proud Tullia swerved not her wheels from the corse of her sire?
Can I not conjure the sunshine that gilded the porphyry chamber
When the blind son of Irene lay moaning his eyelids of fire?

Ha, ye must flash! ye must bellow! Yet have ye no potence to scare me.
Full in the face of your fury I tell you my life is my own;

And I shall end it to-day, let your thunderous futility dare me
Even as it will. I am I—I am mine, God-forsaken, alone!

Yea, and I know it is sin, and as sin I yet dare it, and do it.

Death is a light thing, and death is your inmost, your utmost, your all!
And if the wages of sin is but death, see, I crave it, I sue it;
Sue it as wages, for worse thing than life is can never befall.

Oh for the Sea! 'Twere so easy to cease in its yielding embracement,
Caught like a rain-drop, and merged in the hugeness of infinite rest,
Only the laugh of a ripple o'erbubbling the dimpled displacement,
Then the great level of calm, and the hush of the passionless breast.

Curse on those undulous pastures, and far vista'd woods unavailing,
Scant of contiguous umbrage, unmeet for the tomb that I crave!
Oh for the dark-curtained sleep of the Sea, for her kindly, unfailing
End of all dolorous things in the bliss of the kiss of the wave!

Would that my oft-haunted river were deep as the concave of ocean,
Tideless as Euxine, and true to the secrets of final despair!
God! it would wake me, methinks, to be dragged in its libertine motion;
Stranded, perchance, to be flouted once more by the sun and the air.

I do remember that once in my wanderings I noted a lakelet,
Strangely sequestered, and high on a ridge unfrequented and steep.
Green things drank lovingly of it, and lightly in many a flakelet
Floated shed tribute of lilies thereon, a sweet refuge—and deep.

Thither I'll hie me, and lay down my burden of sin and of sorrow;
Cast me therein with one instant and ultimate thrill of release;
And the great world shall go round to renewing of days; but to-morrow
I shall be deep in the heart of the hills, at the centre of peace!

Part Third.

I.

IT was a fever, they tell me: to me 'twas a sleep and a waking;
Yet not a sleep without dreams: if indeed they were dreams that I saw.
Never, I think, shall I call it a dream: but the truth and the breaking
Up of all dreams, and a glimpse of superlative being and law.

Sweet, passing sweet, is this light of the morning, by green leaves made tender,
Tender and mellowed on lids fever-folded, yet sick of repose;
Even as this leaf-mellowed glow to the flood of meridian splendour,
So is the life that we live to the life that such visions disclose.

Sweet is this dance of the shadows of leaves on my coverlet, ever
Shifting and changing, yet silent, impalpable, fretting no fold;
Even as this shadowy dance to the forest's tumultuous quiver,
So is the life that we live to the life that in vision is told.

As I lie here on the dubious bank betwixt waking and slumber,
Life on earth seems but a window that straitens our view of the skies;
And all our fluttering joys and life's things of desire without number
Are but the lattice-leaves, tempering God's light to our infantile eyes.

I have beheld what hath changed me, I know not in body or spirit,
Far in a region where leagues are no measure, and time is no bound;
Up in the realms imperturbable, which the high spirits inherit;
Out of the reach of all seasons; beyond the last echo of sound.

First there came one like a storm-cloud, and bore me high up on the mountain,
Showed me the kingdoms of earth, and the glory thereof, and the power;
Ope'd me the well-springs of Love, drew the wine of Desire from its fountain:
"Bow down and worship," it said, "and all this will I give for thy dower."

Then came, all star-girt, another, and caught me away, and I know not
Whither he bore me, because of the pure inaccessible ray,
Save that it was in the land where the beams of eternity flow not
From any sun, and no morning or evening divideth the day.

As in a chrysolite sea I beheld the great cycles of story,
Circling and widening afar at each pulse of the will of the King:
But where I stood there was darkness that marred the immaculate glory;
Shadowed therein I beheld me, a guilty and shuddering thing.

And while I stood all estranged, without welcome, or greeting, or token,
There was a voice in my soul, "Thou must weep, if thy spirit would live."
Came a great longing for tears, and the spell of the vision was broken,
And on my bed I lay tremulous, weeping, and crying "Forgive!"

Lo, by my side, all in white! it was Hyacinth, fair as the morning;
And on her face were the meekness and peace of an angel of heaven.
Keener than anger is pity, and love than the weapons of scorning;
Lifting her finger she smote me with—"Hush! All is known and forgiven!"

II.

LITTLE by little the tale of the stroke and the fever I gather,
As I lie bridging oblivion, and weaving her words into form;
How I was found as one dead, on a hill-side, by Hyacinth's father,
Struck by the uppermost boughs of a tree that was wrecked in the storm.

How, after days of the semblance of death, there came fever and raving;
How the brain's anarchy loosened the tongue from its wonted control;
How I spoke wildly and darkly of Raymond and Hyacinth, craving
Death for my body because of them, uttermost death for my soul.

How it was deemed as a duty to one whom no care could recover,
Freely to search for some token of kindred, or trace of a friend;
How in the scrutiny Hyacinth chanced on the words of her lover,

Read and knew all, yet forbore to add woe to my imminent end.
 How, too, at length I had rest, and the burden of heavy complaining
 Changed to the sighing of rapturous vision, and trancēd repose.
 Well: it is over. Where now is the passion that knew no restraining?
 But is the evil past? Will the shed petals return to the rose?
 Full of crushed fragments my hands are. Ah me, can I e'er re-unite them
 Into the sacrament cup of the love I have broken and spilt?
 How they two clung as the vine and the elm ere I saw, but to blight them!
 Is there a river of tears that can cleanse out the mildew of guilt?
 Is there no way? Ah, no way. From my raving her father, astonished,
 Gathered a part of poor Hyacinth's story, sufficient for wrath;
 Led her away from me, questioned her, threatened, upbraided, admonished,
 Tyrant and father by turns; till, unpurposed, their devious path.
 Ceased at the grave of her mother. Which seeing, the old man, with weeping,
 Knelt, and made Hyacinth kneel on the verge of the flowerless sod:
 "Now, by my dead, hear me swear; by the heart of thy mother here sleeping"—
 And he uncovered his head, and uplifted his hands unto God.
 And as he raised them the gleam of the known wedding-ring on his finger,
 Catching his eye as it glittered, gave form to the words of his oath:
 "See it," he said, "it was hers; and by all the pure memories that linger
 Round it, I make it the sign and the seal of a covenant for both.
 "When I shall offer this ring as a sacred and covenant token
 Unto a convict, the choice of thy father: then love where thou wilt.
 Can I more fitly say Never? Enough. When my purpose is broken,
 Go thou to Raymond, and make thyself kin to dishonour and guilt."
 Could he more fitly say Never? I know him, a puritan cleaving
 Unto the letter of covenant, a word-clinging Jephthah in vows.
 He will go down to the grave with his vow in his right hand, believing
 He hath done well by his children, his honour, his name, and his house.

III.

I AM not done with my shame. As a garment it clingeth around me.
 Even as a shroud it doth cover me, paralyzed, swathed in disgrace.
 Fast in the folds of obstruction, as one of the dead it hath wound me,
 Holding me motionless: and as a face-cloth it covereth my face.
 What shall I do with my life, now I live? Could there be restitution,
 Then were there something to live for, a guerdon to strive for and win.
 Is there no hope, and must life be henceforward a slow dissolution,
 Passive and tearful purgation of soul from unspeakable sin?
 In the old days there was refuge in orisons, vigils, and fasting,
 Cloistered retirement, and matins, and vespers, and garments of grey;

Wherein the broken in spirit caught glimpses of joy everlasting,
Turning their life into night that the night might inherit the day.

Queens, and Kings' daughters, and delicate damsels, their pride and their beauty
Laid on the altar of Jesus. I think of such things and am fain.
Faugh! It was cowardice all, and the sickly evasion of duty!
Shame may be turned to a snare, and repentance made fruitless and vain.

I shall not cease to upbraid me. My burden is fixed. I will bear it.
Yet must this bondage of shame be unwound that my soul may respire.
Hid 'neath the vesture, and next to the flesh, as a chain I will wear it,
As did the monarch of old that was stained with the blood of his sire.

So may I fight as he fought, with the iron memorial cherished
Under all kingly array, until life was laid gloriously down:
Also the world holds him kindly, and tearfully tells how he perished:
His was a crown and a chain; oh, may mine be a chain and a crown!

IV.

I HAVE made all my confession; the truth, and the whole, and truth only;
Made it with anguish of spirit, and weeping, and hiding of face.
But I have justified *him*. So far well. Single handed and lonely
I must begone with my burden. My guilt over-shadows the place.

Raymond is far from us. Driven from his peace by my fitful demeanour,
Sudden he leaped at a chance of adventure, and passed from his home.
He too must know. Then my spirit may yield to a sorrow serener,
Seeking some token of duty to beckon me whither to roam.

Hyacinth fighteth against my new purpose. His love is for ever
Closed against *her*, so she reasons. The oath of her father endures.
Also she pleads her worth poor; "If in you he has found what I never
Could have been unto him, let the means pass; not the less is he yours."

Piteous dove! though thy pardon extend unto seventy times seven,
I shall not strain the advantage; thy loving is better than mine:
Clinging like Sterope unto a mortal, like her I lose heaven.
Now through repentance and duty I look to a union divine.

Surely God loves thee, thou sweet one! The Psyche that moves in thy moving,
Looks through thine eyelids, and breathes in thy breath, is some angel of grace!
Kiss me, O Hyacinth! that the sweet sense of forgiving and loving,
Some little fifth of thy nectar, may pass from thy lips to my face!

V.

ONCE again out in the breeze and the sunlight, heaven o'er me, earth under!
Grown unfamiliar by reason of sickness, all beautiful things
Meet me with hundred-fold welcome, each green leaf a jubilant wonder,

And the old throb of delight in the music of fluttering wings.
Now I can smile with the flowers; for to day I have learned what hath brought me
Nearer akin to them. Ere this same summer hath numbered its hours,
I shall be mixed with their roots. There came one here to-day who hath taught me
How there is that in my heart which shall lay me ere long with the flowers.

Science hath uttered its sentence. I own to a transient terror;
Only a little at first, then a sense of unspeakable rest.
Taken away from the evil to come! The long bondage of error
Soon shall be over! I carry my ransom about in my breast.

Ah, it is well. For I know my own heart: had I lived, I had striven
With a too violent haste and much stumbling to seize on the prize.
Now I am cast back on mercy, content to be simply forgiven,
Beggared of righteousness, pleading but needfulness, Magdalen-wise.

Yet it is strange I should smile with the flowers. I was wont to dis sever
Nature and Grace. Behold Grace lends to Nature a kindlier charm.
All things are bright with a glorious light of redemption, and never
Seemed all the verdurous umbrage so gracious, the rose-blush so warm!

Once on a time, to me beauty seemed only a beautiful dying,
Like to the moribund glow of the doomed one, illusive as sweet.
Death! I had deemed it the end of all beauty, the hid underlying
Worm at the root of all loveliness, making each grace a deceit.

This from afar. But now, nearer, I hail it the needful condition
Of the superlative life; not a pause, but a step, and a birth;
As but a yew-shadowed avenue leading to splendid fruition,
And the fulfilment of that which is writ on the flowers of the earth.

It is but closing the eye for repose, ere we wake to the wonder
Waiting our vision through slumber made strong to behold the Divine.
It is but turning the web we have seen as yet only from under,
That we may look on the tissues of life in completed design.

'Tis but the fall of the seed when the season of blossom is over,
Dying to spring up anew from the womb of its burial clod.
'Tis but the clasp of the die on the coin, which the mould must once cover,
Ere it shine forth with the bright superscription and image of God.

Once in mine agony, once in my darkness of purpose I sought it,
Wilfully blind to its issues, and caring for respite alone;
Trampling the jewel of life under foot that was His who hath bought it;
Lord, re-unite the poor fragments, and set them at last with Thine own!

Not with Thine amethysts, not with the emerald, sapphire, and ligure,
Lest I be shamed into nought, as a star when the sun is on high;
Not with the Urim and Thummim, of Light and Perfection the figure,
For I am dark and imperfect; no gem of Thine worthless as I.

Oh, if it be that a pearl is a tear, as a pearl do Thou set me
Where infant-angels shall point to me, asking the meaning of pain.
So in the day when Thou gatherest Thy jewels Thou wilt not forget me,
Though I be dim with remembrance, and shades of old sorrow remain.

VI.

STRANGELY I wake to high thoughts, and beneath them a quiet gratulation,
Like a hid brook whisper-quiring the lordly old music of pines;
And, around all, as a glory, an incense of sweet consecration
Wraps me in mists of devotion that soars beyond visible signs.

Through the thin wall that divides us I hear the low breath of the sleeper,
All whose blest dreaming is worship, whose veriest breathing is prayer.
Oh to be like her! so meet for the Master, so ripe for the Reaper,
Clothed on with gentleness, full of sweet amnesties, stainlessly fair

Let me but look on her. 'Twill be a sacred and privileged portal
Unto new day but to mark how the stages of crimsoning morn
Quicken the life in her cheek—how the mortal that shrines the immortal
Grows out of darkness from grace unto grace, re-illuminated, re-born.

Peace to this chamber. Now kneeling I gather the breath of her purity.
See how the delicate pinions of dawning seem fondly to sweep
Over faint outlines and twilight suggestions of shapely obscurity,
Brushing the tokens of night from the maiden-white marvel of sleep.

Seems as Aurora were groping for beauty, and, lo! having found it,
Flushes with roseate rapture, and, bounteous, hastes to unfold
All the rare gifts she hath gathered from Orient, and lavish around it
Various profusion of homage in amber, and crimson, and gold.

Not on the mountain-tops only the glad things of dawning are treasured,
Not in the vaporous magic with bright dreams bewitching the air,
Not by proud eminence only the scope of her bounty is measured,
Sweetest it lies on my sweet, on her face, and her aureoled hair.

Soft sits the light on her beautiful brow; no such radiance is given,
In the morn's kiss, unto uppermost leafage or eastern-most peak:
There is no hue on the rainbow-winged messengers floating in heaven
Like the ethereal pigments that blend in the bloom of her cheek.

What are thy visions, fair slumbering sister? What alchemy hidden
Orbeth the tremulous dream-drop that pearls the dark fringe of thine eye?
Oh, if thou sorrowest even in sleep, by thy sleep am I chidden:
There was no tear in the peace of thy dawn ere my shadow passed by.

I should go from thee—from all that is thine; and yet fondly I linger,
Thinking some providence yet may redeem the foul wrong that I weep.
May not some juncture of good, like an angel with beckoning finger,

Wave me the way of redress, and establish thy joy ere I sleep?
Oft where the clouds gather darkest, the star of our comfort is shining.
Black though the night of our sorrow, who knows but the dawn may be nigh?
I will not speak of my secret of death, till the signs of declining
Warn me to flee to the city: to choose me a home where to die.

Part Fourth.

I.

I HAVE no heart and no time to go forth to the world, there to choose me
One who may be to my children a mother in room of the dead.
Soil-rooted, I am no more of society. I should but lose me
In its mad vortex And yet, it behoves me to choose, and to wed.

“No more for love. As thou seest, I am old, and my summer is over.
Yet 'tis for love, too, the love of a father who fears for his own.
It is for them. Mark, I plead not in guise of a passionate lover.
Plain in my speech, what I offer are honour and duty alone.

“Beauteous I see thee; yet 'tis not thy beauty that tempts me to sue thee:
'Tis that I've noted thee faithful in many things, weighty and small.
Gifted I know thee; yet not thy attainments could tempt me to woo thee:
Nought I behold save that *thou* lovest *them*, and *they thee*—this is all.

“If I should say I am rich and thou poor, this were little to claim thee.
If not for love of my little ones, let my poor quest be as nought.
Cast it aside as unseemly, incongruous: I shall not blame thee.
Better my children left motherless than a false motherhood *bought*.

“Ponder it. Give me thine answer in peace. Be it joyous or grievous,
Thou hast my blessing: thy will shall be sacred as heaven's decree.
If thou rebukest my haste, 'tis because thou art purposed to leave us,
Therefore I speak ere thou goest; and what are the world's ways to me?”

II.

THOU then declinest to answer me openly, till thou hast pleaded
(Well, too, thou pleadest) the cause of my child. Would my will were my power!
Mightier things than all words for the same have in vain interceded—
Her dim sad eyes, and the cheeks that are blanching from hour unto hour.

“But from my youth up, my word has been sacred. The roots of mine honour
Must be upturn ere I yield to the breaking of covenant vow.
Yet my heart weeps for my darling, yea, bleeds to have mercy upon her!
And I have pleaded with heaven that a way might be shown, even as thou.

“Yea, were the brand of the law on *thy* name—shall the mere words offend thee?—
As I have done, even thus would I do, for the love of my child.

Could thou but show me a way, it were token that heaven did send thee
That my pledged faith and her heart-wish should meet and embrace—
reconciled.”

III.

DOTH the excess of joy kill? When the chalice of pleasure o'erfloweth,
Is it the time of the end? I am sick unto death of delight.
Why should I tarry when life is fulfilled, and no longer bestoweth
Anything better than that which hath been. Let me sleep. It is night.

No sleep for joy! When he brought them together, and blessed them in union,
There was a note in my heart that rang death. As I write, once again
Quivers the welcome vibration that rings in the heavenly communion.
Oh Thou that comest, come quickly, triumphant o'er death and o'er pain!

'Tis but the heart of my flesh that doth flutter. Thine infinite merit
Helpeth me mightily o'er the dark mountains that Thou too hast trod.
Into Thy hands I commend me, eternal and merciful Spirit.
Come Euthanasia! Let it be kneeling. . . . My Lord and my God!

Note.

“MARSUPIAL BILL” was preceded in the *Queenslander* by the following paragraph, which is here quoted in order to show that the story is not altogether without foundation in fact:—

“We (*Stannum Miner*) are indebted to Mr. James Warrell, of Sugarloaf, a gentleman on whose veracity we place the best reliance, for the following account of a most extraordinary occurrence. We give the statement as nearly as possible in Mr. Warrell's own words:— ‘I give you the details of a very rare occurrence. A boy of mine, about 11 years old, was sent a message last Saturday week, about 1 o'clock p.m. About half-way between my place and Connolly's, on a well-used road, a kangaroo came from behind, took him up, and carried him, without stopping, to the Maryland Company's ground—about a mile-and-a-half—over some very rough country. The lad got back home about dusk, his face bloody, and seemingly half mad. He soon became sensible, however, and by the time I got home—an hour afterwards—he was sufficiently recovered to be interviewed. “Well, Willie, did you not see the kangaroo before he caught you?” “No, he was just on to me before I knew.” “Were there any more kangaroos?” “Not then, but about half-way there was a big mob of kangaroos, and we all went together.” “I suppose you were crying?” “Yes, all the way.” “When he dropped you, what did he do?” “Nothing; stood and looked at me for a minute, and then went off with the mob.” “What did

you do then?" "I don't remember anything after that. After sundown I found myself at the Lincolnshire mine, near where the engine was, and then I made for home." I think the lad must have been crazy for a while; his coat was split open down the back, but, although his face was covered with blood when he got home, there was not a scratch on him. The kangaroo must have been a good-sized one to carry him (about 65 lbs. weight) so far, and without a spell; and it seems strange that in the act of jumping he did not strike the boy with his feet. I have not the slightest reason to doubt the truth of the boy's statement. What was the motive that prompted the action? Some say that if there had been any water convenient he would have drowned the boy. I have a notion that the kangaroo was one that had lost its joey, and was making an attempt to adopt one.' Moral: When a child of tender years goes alone where kangaroos may be, a dog, large or small, is very good company."
